

CROWBAR SMILE

by

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OVER BLACK:

SOUNDS OF A MAN AND WOMAN MAKING LOVE

Both of them loud and enthusiastic.

CAMERA drifts down out of the blackness to find:

NATE, a 17-year-old boy, asleep and alone in his bed, smiling faintly.

CUT TO:

NATE'S SEX DREAM

MATCH CUT as Nate is having exaggerated porn sex with an attractive woman, powering towards the finish line with the suavité of an oil derrick. The woman matches his efforts, writhing and moaning. As we MOVE CLOSER, we SEE the woman's face for the first time.

She's...er...significantly older than we expected. She's real-person appealing, but even make-up can't hide the fact that she's late 30's. Maybe even (gasp!) early 40's.

CUT TO:

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Nate's brow involuntarily TWITCHES. He's not smiling anymore.

NATE  
(mumbles, surprised)  
Ms. Gilbert?

BACK TO:

THE DREAM

as the Dream-Nate shrugs it off and hammers it home until, dream-like, they both orgasm loudly at precisely the same moment. The woman collapses, sweaty, on top of Nate.

Then, Nate turns his head -- except it's not Nate anymore! It's a MAN in his late 40's, with a military crew-cut...

The man speaks directly INTO CAMERA:

MAN  
Whaddaya think of your new mom, Nate?  
She can cook, dance, shoot pool -- and  
boy, can she fu-

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM

NATE's eyes open wide with horror.

NATE  
AGGGGHHH!

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Nate pushes his face into the steamy shower, trying to clean his brain from the outside.

Outside the shower, towel around his waist, Nate examines himself in the full-length mirror on the back of the bathroom door. He clenches his stomach muscles, in search of six-pack abs. Flexes his arms, popping his biceps. Not terrible, but not what he wants, either.

He spies a pair of dirty socks on the floor and picks them up. He bunches them in a ball and slips them under his towel, creating an impressive crotch bulge. He turns to the side to get a different angle in the mirror.

NATE  
(deep, Elvis voice)  
Hey there...

The door OPENS and a WOMAN stands there, wearing only a towel:

WOMAN  
Oh, Nate! I'm sorry!

NATE  
Ms. Gilbert!

She is the same 40-something woman from Nate's dream.

Embarrassed, Nate fumbles to drop the socks, but in the process his towel comes loose and almost falls off; he grabs at it just in time, clutching it against his groin. Equally embarrassed, Ms. Gilbert averts her eyes.

MS. GILBERT  
Take your time.

As she backs away, she bumps into Nate's DAD (the man from the dream), who is utterly and unapologetically naked.

DAD  
(hearty & loud)  
Who wants pancakes for breakfast? I'm  
riproarin' and rarin' to go.

MRS. GILBERT  
 (re: his nakedness)  
 Jim...

NATE  
 (re: his nakedness)  
 Dad...

DAD (cont'd)  
 What're you girls embarrassed about?  
 Nothing either of you hasn't seen.

Ms. Gilbert ducks away, retreating to the bedroom. Nate's dad pats her ass as she goes.

DAD (cont'd)  
 (admiringly)  
 You'd never think Linda was on the far side of 40, just looking at that bod, would you?

NATE  
 I'd rather not answer that question.

DAD  
 What's the matter?

NATE  
 It's just weird, she was my English teacher.

DAD  
 In sixth grade! Should every teacher you've ever had be forever off limits? Where this puritanical crap of yours comes from, I don't know.

Nate's father strides into the bathroom and Nate flees, still holding the towel over his crotch.

DAD (cont'd)  
 (examining his nose hairs in the mirror)  
 You wanna kick some balls around after breakfast?

NATE  
 Dad, it's graduation week...

DAD  
 You think they'll honor that scholarship if you show up out of shape in the fall?

NATE  
 (closing himself in his room, resigned)  
 No...

DAD  
 (flinging them)  
 And pick up these dirty socks!

The two BALLED-UP SOCKS hit Nate's closed door with a soft THUD and fall silently to the ground.

NATE (V.O.)  
 Sorry you had to see my dad's nads...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dad's cooking pancakes. Ms. Gilbert reads the paper. Nate, dressed for a run, whips up a protein smoothie.

NATE (V.O.)  
 ...I mean, he's in good shape and all -- ex-marine, eats healthy -- but still, who really wants to see a 45-year-old guy's meat and two veg? No thank you.

DAD  
 Pancakes are ready.

NATE  
 I'm going for a run.

Nate quickly downs the shake and heads out the door.

DAD  
 Running is for pussies!

MS. GILBERT  
 Jim, please...

CREDITS OVER:

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE CAMPUS - DAY

Nate leaves the house, which sits in the middle of an idyllic, green East Coast boarding school campus. He sets the timer on his watch and starts running, winding through the grounds.

NATE (V.O.)  
 Dad's dated pretty much every unattached teacher on campus -- plus a few who weren't, if-ya-know-what-I-mean. Consensual, don't get me wrong! He's not a creeper, just an OG ladies man. Though it's a lot to live up to. He got me a PornHub Premium subscription and some condoms for my 13th birthday. No pressure or anything...

Nate runs past the playing fields, where bleachers and a stage are being set up for the graduation ceremony.

NATE (V.O.)

This is Lawrenceville, by the way.  
Boarding school. Co-ed. My Dad's the  
soccer coach.

Nate runs out the school gates into the tiny town of Lawrenceville. The campus lines one side of the main street, with cute Mom & Pop shops (stationers, pizza, a bike shop) on the opposite side. A banner above the street reads: "Congratulations Graduates!"

NATE (V.O.)

I can't believe I'm telling you this, because what happened this past summer is only like the most embarrassing part of my life so far, but at least I'm not on YouTube, talking about my eating disorder or how I pop my zits. I mean, kill me now.

Nate runs past MOUTH, an 18-year-old sweet-talking natural salesman, who is on the front steps of the pizza joint, making deals with underclassmen.

NATE (V.O.)

Oh, that's my friend Mouth. His dad's legit rich, and bought him all this fancy computer equipment, so he downloads current movies from some illegal Chinese website, hosts the files on a private server, and charges kids a monthly fee to access it. He's like our own personal Netflix.

MOUTH

(waving as Nate runs by)  
Hey Nate, I got the new X-Men!

NATE

Cool! Later.

Nate keeps running.

NATE (V.O.)

Someday, he'll either be in jail, or president.

(beat)

He'll walk in the commencement ceremony, but won't actually graduate til he passes summer school. His dad's so embarrassed, he's telling all his rich friends Mouth will be in Europe for the summer.

Nate turns off the main street and heads down a rolling, country road.

NATE (V.O.)

Which comes back to my theory about the zit-poppers on YouTube. I think everyone has something they're too ashamed to talk about. I'm just tired of feeling embarrassed, and, like them, I'm thinking if I go public with it, the feeling might go away.

(beat)

I just like to think I'm doing it in a little more dignified way.

INT. SCHOOL - LATER

Showered and changed, Nate signs out his cap and gown from a table in the front hall of the school. He takes the gown out of the cellophane and holds it up for size.

NATE (V.O.)

I'll just tell you straight out: I was the last remaining virgin in my graduating class. Well, next to last -- it was me and Ben, who's been my friend since forever.

Coming down the hall towards Nate is BEN CHERNOFF (17), a proud *Magic: The Gathering*-playing geek -- arm-in-arm with ALICE CHEN (17), his female counterpart.

NATE (V.O.)

Ben had a girlfriend, which you'd think would be a sure thing, but they agreed they'd wait until college. They both got into MIT, early admittance. Nerd love, isn't it cute?

Ben and Alice kiss sweetly before Alice walks away.

NATE (V.O.)

I took some comfort in the thought that I would at least do it before Ben. But, little did I know, the humiliation was just beginning.

END CREDITS; INTERTITLE, OVER BLACK:

"JUNE"

BACK TO:

Nate and Ben walk down the hall together, moments later. Ben has dropped a bombshell and Nate looks stunned.

NATE

You and Alice...when?

BEN  
 (ecstatic)  
 Last night! It was awesome!

NATE  
 I can't believe it...I mean, that's  
 great!  
 (beat)  
 For you. So spill it, how'd it happen?

BEN  
 It was right after the trig final. Her  
 roommate was gone. We were hanging out in  
 her dorm and things just...happened.  
 Three times! She's a wild woman!

NATE  
 Describe, I need details!

BEN  
 It was... I can't, Nate. It's not right  
 to Alice.

NATE  
 We've talked about this event for so long  
 I can't even remember a day we  
 didn't...talk about it. And finally, it  
 happens and you can't give me details?

Mouth appears, throwing an arm around Nate's shoulders.

MOUTH  
 I'll tell you. It was eight seconds of:  
 (mantra-like)  
 "I cant believe I'm really doing it, I  
 can't believe I'm really doing it" -- and  
 two seconds of:  
 (funny orgasm sound)  
 "Agggghhhhaahhhhh!!!"

BEN  
 Hey, it was at least...a couple minutes.  
 The third time. That's kind of long,  
 right?

MOUTH  
 My record's three and a half hours, dude.  
 (off Ben's disappointed look)  
 Don't worry, you'll work up to it.

An older WOMAN strides by; the guys straighten up.

WOMAN  
 Hello boys.

GUYS  
Hello Principal Lang.

PRINCIPAL LANG  
Nate, are you mowing lawns this summer?

NATE  
I sure am.

PRINCIPAL LANG  
I have a customer for you, a friend of mine. Come by the office and I'll give you the number.

NATE  
Thanks a lot, I appreciate it, ma'am.

As the principal leaves, Mouth makes butt-smooching sounds.

MOUTH  
"Ma'am"! Cut me a break.

But Nate doesn't respond; something has caught his eye and he's gone into a bit of a trance.

BEN  
Uh-oh, it's that time of day again.

MOUTH  
What?

BEN  
When Nate turns towards Mecca and prays.

Nate is mesmerized, watching CAROLINE -- an attractive, athletic preppy blonde -- walk down the hall.

MOUTH  
Jesus, you pine away after the ice queen for the last three years and then you bitch and moan about your virginity. It's kind of hard to take you seriously.

NATE  
What do you mean?

MOUTH  
Why don't you do something about it? Like talk to her.

NATE  
I'm waiting for the right moment. I don't want to screw it up.

BEN  
God forbid you rush into it willy-nilly.

NATE

I can't help it, I've just always had this picture in my head of how it would be...

As Nate trails off, Mouth sees him still watching Caroline, who is bending over to get something out of her knapsack.

MOUTH

Yeah, I've had that picture in my head too -- usually with a bottle of hand lotion nearby -- but it doesn't mean I'm gonna deny myself waiting for it.

BEN

Carpe Diem, dude.

MOUTH

Yes, we know you got an "A" in French...

BEN

No, I said --

NATE

I know, I should just fucking do it.

CUT TO:

EXT. DORM - NIGHT

Music blares from a second-floor dorm room.

INT. MOUTH'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Party central. Packed with seniors full of nostalgia and contraband beer.

Nate sits on a ratty couch with Ben and Alice; he stares at Caroline, who's across the room in a cluster of yearbook-signing friends.

BEN

Stop staring and just go jump her.

NATE

Shut up, Ben.

Mouth comes over, carrying RENA, a bleach-blonde babe in a spandex dress, over his shoulder.

RENA

Put me down, Andrew!

He unloads her.

MOUTH

Can you get me a beer, sugar?

RENA

What's the magic word?

(he whispers something in her ear)

You bad boy!

She KISSES him -- a juicy one with tongue. Ben and Nate try not to stare. Alice rolls her eyes. Rena disengages and weaves across the room towards the keg.

BEN

(with awe)

Catholic girls...

(Alice flicks him in the head)

Oww!

MOUTH

Catholic college girls.

NATE

The watch is working tonight!

BEN

(agreeing)

The watch.

ALICE

What watch?

Mouth rolls up his sleeve to show Alice a gaudy 1970's WRISTWATCH.

MOUTH

Wilt Chamberlain's watch. Got it on eBay.

It's my lucky charm.

(lewd)

And I do mean lucky.

BEN

Nate could use a little Wilt luck. He's working up the nerve to talk to Caroline.

MOUTH

Here's a little secret from me to you, Nate-Dog. The trick to seducing any woman.

(to Alice)

I'm afraid this is confidential information, you'll have to leave.

ALICE

No chance. I'm hearing this.

MOUTH

Okay... I'm gonna bestow this upon you.  
 (leans in)  
 You tell pretty girls they're smart --  
 and you tell smart girls they're pretty.  
 Works every time.

Nate and Ben nod at the jedi wisdom of it. Mouth's girlfriend returns and hands him a beer.

MOUTH (cont'd)

Thanks baby, you're a genius.

She kisses him; he winks at the guys.

BEN

It's brilliant.  
 (to Alice)  
 But you, of course, are both.

ALICE

Mmmm-hmmm. Nice save.

NATE

(re: Caroline)  
 She is both, so what do I do?

ALICE

Nate, just be yourself.

They all turn and stare at her for a second, as if she had suggested a voodoo spell, then continue, ignoring her.

MOUTH

You work both sides. I'm telling you,  
 flattery gets you everywhere. Everywhere.  
 (rubs his watch on Nate's head  
 for luck)  
 May the Wilt be with you.

Nate hikes up his confidence and heads towards Caroline, who is pouring herself a soda. He sidles up to her.

NATE

Hey. You look really nice tonight.

CAROLINE

(yelling over the music)  
 What?

NATE

(louder)  
 You look nice.

CAROLINE  
 (self-absorbed)  
 Oh, I know. I think last impressions are as important as first ones, so I bought this to wear tonight.

NATE  
 Oh. That's...really smart.

She smiles blankly at him; it could be she couldn't hear him over the music, or it could be she thinks he's a total dork. He presses on.

NATE (cont'd)  
 I was hoping you'd sign my yearbook.

CAROLINE  
 Sure.

As she signs, she's distracted by some preppy guys by the door. They wave and she holds up a "wait a sec" finger.

NATE  
 That was fun working on that History project together last semester...

CAROLINE  
 (handing the book back)  
 Oh, that was you! Yeah, it was great.

She walks off towards the preppy guys.

NATE  
 Hey, what did you mean by last impressions?

CAROLINE  
 I'm leaving for Europe tomorrow. See ya!  
 Actually, I guess I won't!

And she's gone. Nate looks down at what she wrote in his yearbook. It says: "*To Neal. Have a nice life! Caroline.*"

NATE  
 (yelling after her; it gets lost in the music)  
 My name is Nate! And you're not that pretty or smart anyway!

Nate looks around the room. Lots of drunken, tearful goodbyes. Group selfies. Mouth and his girlfriend making out on the couch. Ben and Alice huddling cutely, heads together.

On the other side of the room is MARISSA, a mousy girl with a sad, crooked smile, a sort of mirror image of Nate, standing alone with her drink, looking out at the crowd.

She's the Ally Sheedy *Breakfast Club* character in a world full of Molly Ringwalds.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nate wanders out into the hall by himself and sits down in the stairwell. A tipsy couple almost trips over him on their way out.

TIPSY GUY

Sorry man. Happy graduation!

Following behind the couple is Marissa. She stomps down the stairs, clearly not in a celebratory mood.

NATE

Hey. Happy graduation.

MARISSA

Fuck off.

NATE

Just trying to be nice.

But she's gone. Mouth comes out of the party and into the stairwell. He stops when he sees Nate.

MOUTH

Hey dude.

NATE

What's going on?

MOUTH

Did you see someone come by here?

NATE

Just that Marissa girl. What a bitch.

MOUTH

Yeah, I don't know what she was doing here -- I didn't invite her. Anyway, I was looking for that Tony kid. He wanted to buy a movie pass.

(beat)

You alright?

(Nate shrugs)

She blew you off, huh.

NATE

I can't believe I wasted three years thinking she was the one. Not to mention that now I'm never gonna get laid.

MOUTH

You've had opportunities -- you're just ridiculously picky. Remember that girl with the curly hair who liked you last year? You could have gone out with her.

NATE

She had those weird eyes -- it never seemed like they were both looking at you at once.

MOUTH

You aren't fucking her eyes! Don't be such a perfectionist.

NATE

(defensive)

I kind of thought I was a romantic.

(quietly)

She moved away, anyway.

MOUTH

Listen, it's kind of like that thing my dad always says: if your only goal in life is to get rich, it's not hard. It's just that most people want more.

NATE

(sarcastic)

Like they wanna be happy or something?

MOUTH

My point is, if your only goal was to get laid, it wouldn't be that hard. But you, my friend, want more.

NATE

I just have this idea that it should be special -- that she should be special. Beautiful, smart, funny, sexy... Is that too much to ask?

MOUTH

Yes.

(stands up)

But you never know -- there's nothing quite as perfect as the one you haven't met yet, right?

Mouth slaps Nate's shoulder and heads back into the party.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Nate pulls his dad's pick-up truck up to the curb of a small, old-fashioned house, double-checking the address on a piece of paper that Principal Lang gave him. The houses on either side have carefully tended flower beds and shrubs, but this yard has had minimal attention.

He rings the doorbell and waits. A WOMAN finally answers the door. She is in her early thirties, strikingly attractive and well put-together. Her hair is still wet from the shower and she is putting on her earrings as she greets Nate.

WOMAN

You must be Nate.

NATE

That's me. You're Mrs. Bradley?

She smiles a warm, pretty smile.

JULIA

"Ms." -- and you can call me Julia. Come on in.

Nate follows her inside, wishing he'd worn something better than old sweatpants and a ratty Black Keys T-shirt.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE; LIVING ROOM

As they walk down the hall, Nate notices a series of framed photos: beautiful, "artsy" black-and-white female nudes. She notices him trying to look and not look at the same time.

JULIA

You like those?

NATE

Uh, yeah.

JULIA

They were taken by an ex-boyfriend -- he's a big photographer now in New York.

NATE

You mean...

JULIA

(laughing)

Yeah, they're me. I keep them there to remind me to haul my lazy ass to the gym every now and then.

Nate follows her into the kitchen, admiring her not-so-lazy ass.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN

Nate and Julia sit at the kitchen table.

JULIA  
I'll need the lawn mowed weekly, plus there may be odd jobs around the house.

NATE  
No problem.

JULIA  
And the occasional errand. I assume you have a drivers' license.

Nate pulls out his wallet and flashes her his license. She plucks it out of his hands and studies it. Nate seems a little embarrassed.

NATE  
That picture was taken a while ago... more than a year.

CLOSE ON: the picture. Nate looks extremely young.

NATE (cont'd)  
I've grown a lot in the last year.

JULIA  
(reassuring)  
Oh, I can see that. This says you weigh 130, but you must be at least twenty pounds more now.

NATE  
At least.

JULIA  
(handing it back)  
You're seventeen.

NATE  
Uh, yes I am. But just for another few weeks...

JULIA  
I always say age doesn't matter, as long as you can get the job done, right? Shall I show you the yard?

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE - DAY

They stand on the front porch, surveying the lawn.

NATE

Doesn't look like it's been mowed in a while.

JULIA

I think the grass likes to rest in the winter, so I leave it alone. The neighbors don't like it, but it works for me. I just hire someone new every summer.

NATE

Why someone new?

JULIA

Just variety, I think the grass likes variety.

(she turns to him and smiles)

That, and they all keep going off to college.

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE

Nate is almost done mowing the lawn. Julia comes out of the house carrying keys and a briefcase. Nate kills the mower. She hands him an envelope with some cash in it.

JULIA

I've got to go to work, so here you go, for today.

NATE

Thanks.

She walks towards her car. He trails her like a puppy.

NATE (cont'd)

Where do you work, if you don't mind my asking.

JULIA

Princeton. The university.

NATE

I've heard of it. Where, like administration offices or something?

JULIA

Well, I couldn't type very well, so they just made me a philosophy professor.

NATE

(terribly embarrassed)

Oh, wow, I didn't mean... That's cool.

Amused, Julia gets into her car: a black BMW Z4 convertible.

NATE (cont'd)

Maybe I can take one of your classes --  
I'll be going there in the fall.

JULIA

Congratulations.

NATE

I have a soccer scholarship, but I need  
to earn \$2000 to fill the gap.

JULIA

Well, I'll see what kinds of jobs I can  
come up with to keep you busy. I'd like to  
help a promising young man like yourself.

NATE

Well, you don't really know that I'm  
promising...

JULIA

No, I don't -- "promising" implies  
something that hasn't happened yet. But  
I have a good feeling about you.

She starts the car and drives away with a little wave. Nate  
waves back goofily.

CUT TO:

INT. DAD'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

NATE

You don't understand: she's perfect.

Ben and Mouth share a dubious look.

BEN

Here we go again, Caroline the Squeakquel.

The three guys lounge on the floor of Nate's dad's room,  
flipping through fifteen-year-old women's magazines (Cosmo,  
Glamour, etc.) and a similarly vintage porn collection.

MOUTH

Why does your dad keep your mom's old  
magazines with his porn collection?

NATE

I don't know.

BEN

They do add a female perspective.

NATE  
 (defensive)  
 I have learned a lot from them.

MOUTH  
 Yeah, all you ever wanted to know about yeast infections.

NATE  
 Whatever -- listen, this woman Julia is beautiful, smart, sexy, funny -- and I think she likes me.

BEN  
 See I almost believed you until that last part.

NATE  
 Seriously, this is it.

MOUTH  
 What, the older woman, teaches you everything, "summer you become a man" scenario?

BEN  
 (obnoxious)  
 She's a professor, so she likes teaching! Nude pictures -- she likes sex! It's a natural!

NATE  
 You guys have watched way too much porn.

MOUTH  
 Vintage dad porn.  
 (deep, porn-guy voice)  
 "Excuse me, ma'am, but your lawn needs some of my special fertilizer..."  
 (cheesy porn music)  
 Bow-chica-bow-bow...

Ben cracks up.

NATE  
 I'm deadly serious, you guys. This could be life-altering -- truly memorable.

BEN  
 You've got about as much chance with that woman as Mouth does of getting straight A's in summer school.

NATE  
 Thanks for the vote of confidence.

MOUTH

Same.

NATE

(to Mouth)

What are you doing here, anyway. Don't you have summer school?

MOUTH

(with a grin)

Wouldn't really be school if I didn't cut class.

Ben is studying an article in Cosmo; he holds it upside down, then sideways trying to understand what he's looking at.

MOUTH (cont'd)

What are you looking at?

BEN

"The Cosmo Kama Sutra: the perfect position for you."

Mouth tears the magazine out of his hands and reads:

MOUTH

The "Erotic Accordion" -- ideal for the "Johnny-come-quickly" who needs help keeping a lid on it.

Mouth and Nate laugh.

BEN

(embarrassed)

Just help me out -- I don't understand this stupid drawing. Nate, stay there for a second.

(Ben pushes Mouth towards him)

And you stand there.

NATE

This is creepy.

BEN

I'm not asking you to have sex with him -- just lift your knees...and you sorta squat...

Ben starts positioning them, like an X-rated Twister game.

MOUTH

Am I the guy?

BEN

Uh, actually, you're the girl.

MOUTH

Forget it.

BEN

You were a wrestler -- you touched other guys all the time.

MOUTH

Wrestling is not gay, that's a myth. And I don't have a problem with gay, I'm just not gay.

BEN

We know, Joe Hetero, just help me out. You might learn something.

Ben tears a centerfold out of a Penthouse magazine and tucks it into the collar of Mouth's T-shirt; the woman's head is folded over so Mouth's head is where hers had been, and her body extends down Mouth's chest.

MOUTH

Don't ever say we never did anything for you.

Ben and Mouth try to ignore their awkward positioning and chat as Ben studies the picture some more, figuring it out.

MOUTH (cont'd)

So Nate, say that God takes pity on your ass and you do get your chance with this woman -- aren't you afraid you'll make an idiot of yourself?

NATE

Shut up, Mouth.

MOUTH

No, I'm serious. No way a virgin is going to impress a woman of the world.

NATE

(worried)

Really?

MOUTH

You've been so obsessed with the idea of the perfect woman that you never thought what you'd do if it actually happened.

NATE

Shit, you're right.

MOUTH

You need to go into training, dude. Luckily, I know the perfect coach.

NATE

Let me guess -- you?

BEN

(consulting his magazine)  
See, then it says here you bend your  
knees and "ride him like a Harley"...

(off Mouth's look)

I'm not making this up. And I didn't  
even get to the part about his "little  
lumberjack".

MOUTH

Okay, this is going too far...I don't  
want nothin' to do with his lumberjack.

As Mouth and Nate start disentangling themselves, the door  
opens and Nate's Dad stands there, having caught the last  
line and seen their compromising position.

There is a long moment of silence -- the guys stand there,  
frozen. Mouth is still wearing the centerfold like a bib.  
Finally, Nate's Dad cracks a little smile.

DAD

Nice tits, Mouth.

He leaves, closing the door.

DAD (O.S.) (cont'd)

Dinner's in an hour!

Mouth crumples up the centerfold and whips it at Ben.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Graduation. Families sit on folding chairs on the grass. Up  
on the stage, the Principal drones on. The senior class, in  
caps and gowns, mill around, waiting to march. Nate, Ben and  
Mouth cluster together.

MOUTH

Sit-ups.

NATE

Sit-ups?

MOUTH

I'm telling you, if you haven't had sex  
in a while, or ever, the first thing  
that'll tire out is your stomach muscles.

NATE  
 (making a mental note)  
 Okay, sit-ups.

MOUTH  
 And we gotta get you laid.

NATE  
 Yeah, that's the point of this whole thing.

MOUTH  
 No, you need to get laid before you "get laid". You want the perfect first time? Doesn't exist. You gotta separate them -- like going to City Hall to get a marriage license and then doing the big ceremony with the tux. You still say you got married in the tux, even though it was official before that.

BEN  
 Lemme get this straight: you're going to practice having sex before you lose your virginity? That is so Nate.

NATE  
 (reluctant)  
 I guess it would take some of the pressure off.

MOUTH  
 Exactly. Practice makes perfect.

NATE  
 But practice with who? I don't know if you noticed, but that's kinda been my problem all along.

MOUTH  
 Yeah, but the difference is, now you're willing to do it just for the sake of doing it, right?

NATE  
 I guess.

MOUTH  
 Then leave it to me.

The school band sputters to life, playing "Pomp and Circumstance". An officious ADMINISTRATOR herds the seniors together.

OFFICIOUS ADMINISTRATOR  
 A through C please, A through C line up!

Alice bounds over and grabs Ben.

ALICE

Let's go!

BEN

(lovestruck, to Nate)

We're alphabetically next to each other  
when we graduate. So perfect, right?

Alice pulls Ben away, leaving Nate and Mouth together.

MOUTH

Now, we're gonna have to be mercenary.  
Assume there are two types of girls.

NATE

Those that divide people into two types  
and those that don't?

MOUTH

No, fuckable and worthless.

The "A though C" line advances towards the stage. As the Assistant Principal announces a name, the graduate steps up onto the stage, shakes hands with the Principal and accepts their diploma to parents' applause and camera flash, before exiting off the opposite side of the stage.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Willa Byrne...Willa will be attending  
Vassar on an academic scholarship.

A large, plain girl bounds up to accept her diploma.

MOUTH

Worthless. See how easy it is?

NATE

(embarrassed to be overheard)

Shhhh -- that's so harsh.

MOUTH

I don't mean worthless in a cosmic sense.  
Willa's a very nice person. I just mean,  
for our purposes here, of getting our  
little Nate laid, she is not useful to  
us, is she? You tell me.

NATE

I guess not...

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Marissa Carrillo...Marissa will be...  
(fumbles with her notes)  
Marissa's future plans are undecided.

Marissa (the unhappy girl with the crooked smile, from the party), scoots across the stage quickly, as though she were hesitant to waste a second of the audience's time. She wears combat boots under her robe, and receives a bit less applause than the other graduates.

NATE & MOUTH

Worthless.

NATE

I think she's gay actually.

MOUTH

(shrugs)  
Could be.

NATE

She never went out with anyone. She barely even talks to anyone.

MOUTH

She talked to you.

NATE

Yeah, when we were five. Five-year-olds will be friends with anyone.

Marissa's DAD stands off to one side of the audience, dressed in the uniform of the school's grounds maintenance crew. He claps loudly and proudly; Marissa catches his eye and smiles underneath a veil of hair.

NATE (cont'd)

Look at her mouth, it's like a crowbar the way it goes up only in the corner.

MOUTH

Looks more like someone hit her in the face with a crowbar.

They laugh. As Marissa leaves the stage, her father embraces her in a big hug.

MOUTH (cont'd)

God, how embarrassing. If my dad was a maintenance man I'd shoot myself.

They are close to her earshot and she glances over at them, her crooked smile gone.

NATE

Shut up, man.

Marissa glares at them, fighting tears as she walks by. Nate sees and feels bad about it, but Mouth seems oblivious, and has already turned his attention back to the stage, where Ben is getting his diploma.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Benjamin Abraham Chernoff... Ben will be attending MIT this fall.

NATE MOUTH  
(turns from Marissa) Woo Ben!  
Go Ben!

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL (cont'd)  
Alice Young-Mei Chen... Alice will also be attending MIT in the fall.

NATE MOUTH  
Alright Alice! Go you horny geek girl!

OFFICIOUS ADMINISTRATOR  
D through G please! Line it up!

MOUTH  
Let's rock this shit.

Nate and Mouth high-five and head for the line.

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE CAMPUS; GRADUATION - MOMENTS LATER

As Nate lines up, a girl's hands cover his eyes from behind.

GIRL  
Guess who?

NATE  
I recognize that voice...  
(he grabs her wrists and pulls her around)  
Amber, hey!

He hugs AMBER, a spunky girl with flashy jewelry, shiny lip gloss, big boobs and confidence to burn.

AMBER  
You look great!  
(feeling his biceps)  
Have you been working out?

NATE  
(embarrassed)  
A little...

AMBER  
(hugging Mouth)  
Hey, honey.

MOUTH  
Hey Amber. Are you around this summer?

AMBER  
Yeah, my dad lives nearby. Let's try and  
get together, you guys! Text me!

She flits away.

MOUTH  
Okay, totally fuckable -- and she'd  
totally do you.

NATE  
Yeah, me and half the class.

MOUTH  
So? She gave me a killer BJ last year in  
the girls' bathroom.  
(with admiration)  
What a slut. You want me to ask if she  
would? Seems like she likes you.

NATE  
(tempted)  
I don't know...  
(reconsiders)  
No. It would be like "take a number and  
have a seat."

MOUTH  
You're slut-shaming, Nate. So 2000s of  
you. Slutty can be an empowered choice,  
my man, and you can be a beneficiary.

NATE  
Nah...

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Nathaniel Taylor Darnell...

THE BAND strikes up the umpteenth reprise of "Pomp and  
Circumstance" and Nate jogs across the stage to shake the  
Principal's hand.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL (cont'd)  
...This fall, Nate will be attending  
Princeton University --

DAD  
(shouting from the audience)  
On a soccer scholarship!

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
-- on a soccer scholarship.

DAD  
Go Tigers!

Embarrassed but proud, Nate waves his diploma above his head as he jogs off stage. In the audience, Dad and Ms. Gilbert cheer loudly.

Nate joins Ben and Alice in the cluster of already-graduated seniors. They high-five each other. Ben pulls a cold beer out from under his gown and hands it to Nate.

BEN  
Can you believe it? This summer is going to be so much fun!

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Andrew "Mouth" Fisher... Andrew will be attending Hamilton College this fall...we hope.

Nate, Ben and Alice cheer as Mouth dashes across the stage and, instead of shaking her hand, plants a big wet KISS on the Principal's lips. Then he bends over, flips up his gown and MOONS the audience before grabbing his (blank) diploma and running off stage to loud applause. Nate and Ben almost pee themselves laughing.

NATE  
(clinking beer bottles)  
Yeah, it's gonna be fun...

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: Nate's sweating face. He's definitely not having any fun at this moment.

INTERTITLE:

"JULY"

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE CAMPUS; PLAYING FIELDS - DAY

Nate is practicing alone at the far end of the soccer field. He is tough on himself, repeating his drill obsessively until he gets it right. He's working hard, and is clearly very talented.

DAD  
You're dribbling like girls, let's go!

NATE  
 (muttering to himself)  
 Girls can dribble, dad, it's the 21st  
 century.

At the other end of the field, Dad is coaching pee-wee soccer  
 camp, guiding TWO DOZEN TEN-YEAR-OLD BOYS through a slalom  
 course of orange cones.

DAD  
 Pick up the rhythm, guys.  
 (army-style call and response)  
 I don't know, but I've been told...

PEE-WEE PLAYERS  
 I don't know, but I've been told...

DAD  
 Those L-ville girls are mighty cold.

PEE-WEE PLAYERS  
 Those L-ville girls are mighty cold.

DAD  
 I don't know, but I've been warned...

PEE-WEE PLAYERS  
 I don't know, but I've been warned...

DAD  
 Don't waste your time, just stick to  
 porn.

PEE-WEE PLAYERS  
 Don't waste your time, just stick to  
 porn.

Nate shakes his head at what he hears.

DAD  
 Nate! You wanna come over here and help  
 us out with a penalty kick drill -- show  
 these guys how it's done?

NATE  
 Sure.

Nate jogs over.

DAD  
 Watch how Nate strikes on goal here, guys  
 -- and maybe you'll get a scholarship to  
 Princeton someday too.  
 (to Nate)  
 Just hang there for a second while I  
 explain the drill.

Nate waits near the goal.

LISPING PEE-WEE GOALIE  
 (to Nate)  
 Your dad's tho cool.

Nate shrugs, sort of embarrassed by his dad.

While he's waiting, Nate gets down on the ground and starts doing sit-ups. The pee-wee goalie figures they're part of the drill and starts doing them too.

LISPING PEE-WEE GOALIE (cont'd)  
 What do thit-upth have to do with  
 thoccer?

Something CATCHES Nate's eye and he pauses: a black BMW Z4 convertible -- just like Julia's -- cruises slowly past the field. The driver has long hair -- just like Julia. The car pulls up and parks at the curb. Nate stands up.

DAD  
 Okay, the wings are going to dribble down  
 and pass across to you, Nate!

NATE  
 (absently)  
 Okay.

His eyes are locked on the back of Julia's head. In slow-motion, she turns around, catches Nate's eye, SMILES a great smile and WINKS at him!

DAD  
 HEADS UP NATE!

Nate snaps out of his fantasy when a soccer ball SLAMS into his stomach, knocking the air out of him. He doubles over, gasping. His Dad comes over.

DAD (cont'd)  
 That's what happens when you don't look  
 alive out here, guys!  
 (quiet, helping him up)  
 Let's go buddy, shake it off. You okay?

Nate waves him off; Dad jogs back to the other kids.

Still wheezing, Nate glances over at the Z4; as the driver gets out and turns around, Nate sees: it's actually a long-haired man.

LISPING PEE-WEE GOALIE  
 Why were you thtaring at that hippie  
 dude? Ith he your boyfriend?

NATE

Shut up. Shouldn't you be running off to speech therapy class?

LISPING PEE-WEE GOALIE

You shouldn't thingle thomeone out becauth of the way they thpeak. Ith dethcrimination. Self-exthpression ith in the Conthtitution...

As the kid lectures Nate, Mouth rides up on a tricked-out BMX bike and skids to a stop, a huge grin on his face.

MOUTH

Hope you've been doin' those sit-ups, sex machine, 'cause I got a sure thing for ya.

CUT TO:

EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An absurdly fancy restaurant, the kind of place Mouth might have once gone with his Dad -- on Dad's expense account.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Double date. Mouth and Nate are alone at a table set for four. Dinner is over and the girls are in the restroom. Mouth hands Nate his Wilt Chamberlain watch.

NATE

You're giving me Wilt's watch?

MOUTH

Loaning it. The guy slept with 20,000 women -- you only need one. Good luck.

The girls return to the table. Mouth is with his girlfriend RENA (the spandex babe from the graduation party) and Nate is with SIENNA. Both girls are a little over-dressed and over-make-upped. Rena and Mouth play footsie and flirt, but no sparks are flying between Nate and Sienna. They grasp for conversation.

NATE

So, you two know each other from college?

SIENNA

Yeah. Mercer County.

NATE

I hear that's a good school -- as far as community colleges go... You must be pretty smart.

She shrugs.

MOUTH

Nate's going to Princeton in the fall.

Sienna's ears perk up.

SIENNA

Really? How much does that cost?

NATE

A lot... But I have a scholarship.

SIENNA

Oh.

The waiter brings the check. Mouth grabs it; Nate looks relieved.

SIENNA (cont'd)

(casual)

My old boyfriend Pete always said a guy who didn't pay for his date's dinner wasn't a real gentleman.

NATE

Old school, that Pete...

(grabbing his wallet)

Me and Mouth were splitting it, right?

MOUTH

(covering)

Sure. I was just checking the math. Looks good to me.

Mouth hands Nate the check; they share a "WTF?!" shrug. Nate opens his wallet, hesitates a moment before pulling out all his money -- sixty-three dollars -- and laying it down.

EXT. POND IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

There are a dozen empty beer bottles strewn around.

Mouth and Rena are out in the middle of the pond, shirts off, fooling around and laughing; Nate and Sienna make out tentatively on the bank of the pond. She pauses...

SIENNA

Hang on, I don't feel good...

(it passes)

I'm okay.

They return to kissing. In a strange, detached sort of way, Nate puts his hand on Sienna's breast.

When that seems to go over okay, he moves it down to her thigh and tries to slide it up her skirt -- but she stops him.

SIENNA (cont'd)

Pete always said any guy who tried that on a first date wasn't a real gentleman.

NATE

(strained)

That Pete sounds like a real...gentleman himself...

They return to making out. Before long, Nate tries another approach, sliding his hand down her back and grabbing her ass. Again, she stops him.

SIENNA

Don't.

NATE

(joking)

How many more sixty-dollar dinners do I have to spring for first?

She pulls away from him.

NATE (cont'd)

Look, I'm sorry, I don't know why I said that...

SIENNA

(having thought it over)

Five. Maybe four if I really like you.

NATE

You mean, there's really a formula? What if I spent all three-hundred bucks at once on dinner and limo or something?

SIENNA

I don't know. It's not like there's a handbook -- it's just kinda how it works.

NATE

But that's like...sex for money.

SIENNA

What are you calling me?!

NATE

(backing off)

Nothing.

They sit in silence for a minute.

NATE (cont'd)

I'm not rich, if that's what you thought.

SIENNA

Well, I'm not slutty, if that's what you thought.

NATE

It can be an empowered choice...

SIENNA

You thought I'd do it with you, didn't you?

NATE

(unconvincing)

No!

SIENNA

I don't do that anymore. I turned over a new leaf.

NATE

Awesome timing for me.

(Sienna starts crying)

Oh, God, I'm sorry...

SIENNA

(through tears)

I used to sleep with everyone, okay? That's why people wanted to go out with me. That's why Pete went out with me -- and just when I really started liking him, he dumped me. Talk about a double-standard! I didn't fuck myself on our first date! Doesn't that make him a man-slut?

NATE

Hey, whoa, it's okay...

SIENNA

I'm revamping my brand, you know?

NATE

So what if we said fuck this shaming thing, people should do whatever they want, and what we want is to hook up.

(beat)

We don't have to tell anyone.

SIENNA

No! This is not a joke. It's a life strategy. We're not going to Princeton so we have to use what we've got. Why don't you think Rena's slept with Mouth?

NATE  
 (stunned)  
 She hasn't slept with Mouth?

SIENNA  
 He's not Trenton trash like we go to school  
 with -- she wants to hang onto him.

She holds out her left hand, pointing to her ring finger.

NATE  
 (laughs)  
 I can't believe it, they're not...?  
 (beat; then, soberly)  
 I gotta tell you something. He's not  
 gonna marry her.

SIENNA  
 What do you mean?

NATE  
 Trust me, he isn't. His dad would kill  
 him. He's just in it for the fun.

They just sit, watching Mouth and Rena together out in the  
 lake.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE; KITCHEN - DAY

Nate is on the phone in the kitchen. He's dressed for soccer,  
 wearing a Seattle Sounders soccer jersey with Clint Dempsey's  
 name on the back.

MOUTH (O.S.)  
 How was I supposed to know she was a  
 born-again virgin? From what Rena told  
 me, I figured it was a sure thing.

NATE  
 Well, it wasn't. You can take the watch  
 back -- clearly its powers aren't  
 strong enough to help me.

MOUTH (O.S.)  
 Keep it, I got another idea cooking.

NATE  
 Just do me a favor -- don't ever call  
 anything a sure thing, it jinxes it.

Nate's Dad comes into the house with grocery bags and gestures  
 for Nate to go outside to bring in the rest.

NATE (cont'd)  
Gotta go, Mouth.

Hanging up, Nate spots a bottle of wine in the bags.

NATE (cont'd)  
You're making dinner and you bought  
wine? Who's the target du jour?

Ms. Gilbert walks into the house with more groceries.

MS. GILBERT  
I don't know, but I've heard she's  
pretty foxy.

Nate freezes with embarrassment. Dad kisses Ms. Gilbert.

DAD  
I'll say she is.  
(leaving the room)  
Nate, help Linda with the rest of the  
groceries and then we'll practice.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

There is an awkward silence as Nate and Ms. Gilbert unload  
the rest of the bags from the car.

MS. GILBERT  
It's okay, I know all about your dad's  
reputation.

NATE  
I'm really sorry, I didn't realize...

MS. GILBERT  
Please, it's fine. What about you, Nate,  
are you dating anyone?

NATE  
Me? Oh, no. I'm not exactly...dad. I  
guess I've been waiting for the perfect  
girl.

MS. GILBERT  
Then you two are probably more similar than  
you think. Why else do you think your dad's  
dated every available woman on campus?

NATE  
That doesn't...bother you?

MS. GILBERT  
I can't judge your dad by what he's done  
in the past.

(MORE)

MS. GILBERT (cont'd)  
 (with a smile)  
 All I know is I'm more perfect than most.

Dad comes out, dressed for practice, and hurls a soccer ball at Nate's head. Nate catches it.

DAD  
 Let's do it.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Dad's in the goal and Nate is taking shots. Dad stops them all.

DAD  
 You couldn't score on a blind one-legged keeper!

Nate shoots; Dad stops it.

DAD (cont'd)  
 Use your head! If you can't outsmart an old man, how are you gonna beat those Ivy League motherfuckers?!

Nate is fuming. The abuse only makes him play worse. His next shot misses the goal altogether -- it flies under the bleachers where Marissa is sitting, reading and smoking a cigarette.

Nate retrieves the ball with barely a grunt of recognition. Marissa watches as he dribbles it back to the field.

DAD (cont'd)  
 Come on, put it in! I don't think you want it bad enough! I don't think you want to score!

Nate grits his teeth and takes extra care lining up the shot... He shoots high in the corner and it looks like it'll be good...until Dad makes a spectacular leap and grabs it out of the air.

DAD (cont'd)  
 Hand grenades and horseshoes. Try it again.

Dad kicks the ball back to Nate. Nate makes no effort to trap it and the ball rolls away.

NATE  
 I'm gonna take a run. See you later.

Nate takes off, jogging.

DAD

You're quitting? You're not done til I  
say you're done!

As Nate runs off the field, Dad keeps shouting, but we don't hear what he says; all we see is the spit spewing from his mouth as we hear the soft, steady stamp of Nate's sneakers through the grass.

EXT. COUNTRY ROADS - DAY

Nate runs past a corn field; the stalks are waist-high.

He hears the approaching SOUND of an amplified voice. He looks across the corn to his right; running down a parallel road on the other side of the field are a dozen runners in orange and black Princeton Cross-Country uniforms. Their coach drives beside them, shouting instructions through a megaphone.

CROSS-COUNTRY COACH

Keep an easy pace -- seven minute miles,  
max -- and follow Mitchell; he knows the  
route. See you back home.

The coach drives away.

The pack of runners comes up parallel with Nate, separated only by 100 yards of half-grown corn. As they slowly pull ahead, Nate increases his speed to stay even with them.

MITCHELL, the intense, hawk-like leader of the Princeton pack, looks over and notices Nate keeping pace. He accelerates; Nate grins and matches it. Complaints fly from the back of the Princeton pack: "Mitchell, slow down!", "Easy pace, dude", etc.

Mitchell shoots Nate a cocky smile and accelerates again. Again, Nate matches it. Some of the other Princeton runners look over and notice Nate across the field.

PISSED RUNNER

Hey punk, you trying to kill us?

ENTHUSIASTIC RUNNER

You've got balls, kid!

Mitchell pushes his speed up further. The rest of his team falls behind but, on his parallel track, Nate keeps up. They eye each other across the corn as they fly forward. The pace is furious, but Nate is determined not to be beat; Mitchell has lost his cocky attitude. If he lets up for an instant, Nate could pull ahead.

Nate keeps his eye on Mitchell and goes flat out, legs churning. Mitchell looks worried. Nate looks pleased with himself.

Then, Mitchell glances ahead, and his face lights up -- he grins and shoots Nate the finger. Confused, Nate glances ahead and SCREAMS:

NATE

Fuck!

The road that Nate is on ends, coming to a "T" twenty feet in front of him. Unable to stop in time, he stumbles, out of control, off the asphalt and lands on his face in the corn field ahead of him.

He looks up and sees Mitchell and the rest of the team continuing down their road, which didn't end.

Nate picks himself up and brushes the dirt off; he walks away slowly, limping more from hurt pride than his fall. Thunder BOOMS in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Julia answers her door, surprised to see Nate standing there in sweaty soccer clothes. She's clearly been working, with glasses on and a pencil through her hair.

JULIA

Nate. What are you doing here? I thought we said Thursday.

NATE

I know, but it looks like rain and I thought maybe I'd bring those seedlings in -- I wouldn't want them to drown.

Julia points to the containers of not-yet-planted seedlings -- they are already safely under the porch overhang.

NATE (cont'd)

Oh.

(turns to go)

Okay then, see you Thursday.

JULIA

I was just about to take a break. Can I interest you in some lunch?

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE - LATER

They sit in the living room, eating peanut-butter sandwiches. Nineties rock plays on the stereo.

NATE

I haven't really thought much about it. Maybe English. That seems like a safe undecided kind of major.

JULIA

Well what do you want to do?

NATE

I don't know. It seems important to find something perfect and meaningful, but I just don't know what that is yet.

JULIA

Perfect is the enemy of good.

(beat)

Plus, that's the beauty of college; you can figure that stuff out. And with a scholarship, you can do it on someone else's dime.

NATE

(flat)

Yeah.

JULIA

What?

NATE

Nothing.

JULIA

You said you had a soccer scholarship, right?

NATE

Yeah, I'm just kinda sick of playing. But if I don't, I can't afford to go.

JULIA

Well, you're a grown-up Nate, and those are the kinds of trade-offs grown-ups sometimes have to make. But remember, there are usually more options than you think there are.

Nate shrugs. "Smells Like Teen Spirit" comes on the stereo. Julia yelps and runs to turn it up.

NATE

What is this?

JULIA

Back in my day, we called it music.

NATE

Like you're so old!

JULIA

We listened to it while driving around in our horse and carriage.

She starts jumping around the room, doing a weird pogo dance. Nate doesn't know if it's rude to laugh but he can't help it. She grabs him and makes him dance with her. Her energy is infectious and soon Nate is pogo-ing with abandon.

CUT TO:

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: a framed photo of Nate's mom, smiling, gentle.

PAN TO: Nate sitting on his bed, counting crumpled bills and tallying them in a spreadsheet on his computer.

He types "July 2 total: \$775."

At the top of the page, it says: "goal for summer: \$2000"

He grabs his phone and dials.

NATE

Yeah, could I talk to someone in the financial aid office?

INT./EXT. VARIOUS - DAY

MONTAGE:

- As Nate talks on the phone, he deletes the "goal for summer" of \$2000, replacing it with a new one: \$5000.
- Nate mows a lot of lawns. He gets progressively more tan and muscular as he goes.
- Nate paints Julia's porch railing.
- Nate's phone pings with multiple Venmo alerts: "You've been paid by Julia Bradley!", accompanied by playful plant emojis.
- Nate records the totals on a spreadsheet: "July 15 - \$1825"

NATE (V.O.)

Julia gave me a lot of work. I didn't know if it was my imagination torturing me, but she seemed to be getting increasingly friendly.

- Nate drops off several bags of groceries for Julia. She smiles warmly at him, letting her hand linger on his shoulder a moment too long...

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - DAY

NATE (V.O.)

But I knew I couldn't risk making a move until I got some experience -- unfortunately, my prospects were dwindling.

Nate lays on the bed, flipping distractedly through an old Penthouse. He finally flings the magazine aside, picks up his phone and starts texting someone...

INT. PIZZA JOINT - DAY

Nate sits in a booth, waiting. He cranes his neck, looking behind him. When he turns to the front again, Amber is sitting across from him. Her cleavage is displayed to full advantage.

NATE

Oh, hey.

AMBER

Hey.

NATE

Thanks for coming. Great to see you.

AMBER

You too. What have you been up to?

NATE

(nervously fiddling with the salt shaker)

This and that. Working.

Awkward silence.

AMBER

So...what's going on?

NATE

I don't know, I just wanted to say hey, maybe hang out...

Amber seems to suddenly understand what this is about. She puts her hand gently on Nate's.

AMBER

Nate, honey... I'm kind of involved with someone.

NATE  
Oh, that's cool, I wasn't trying to...

AMBER  
(meaningfully)  
We're "officially monogamous".

NATE  
That's...great.

AMBER  
Is that...what you wanted to talk about?

NATE  
(sheepish)  
Yeah.

AMBER  
Don't stress out. It'll happen for you.

NATE  
(surprised)  
How did you...?

AMBER  
(sliding out of the booth)  
Mouth told me.

NATE  
He what?!

AMBER  
I'm not worried about you. You're totally cute and a hottie. Whoever she is will be really lucky.  
(kisses him -- on the lips)  
Too bad you didn't ask me a couple of months ago.

She winks at him and walks away. Nate blushes.

AMBER (cont'd)  
Tell Mouth to call me!

Marissa slides out of an adjacent booth, finished with her slice of pizza, and walks past Nate, having overheard the conversation.

MARISSA  
It's pathetic, really.

NATE  
What?  
(she keeps walking)  
What?!

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE

It's a hot day and Nate is shirtless; he sweats as he paces the lawn mower back and forth across the lawn. He finishes up and turns the mower off.

JULIA

I hope it doesn't make you nervous if I watch you.

Nate jumps a little. He turns to find Julia standing on the porch, dressed in dirty gardening clothes.

NATE

No no, it's fine -- everything okay?

JULIA

Looks great. Do you want some lemonade?

NATE

Oh, yes please.

He bounds up onto the porch. Julia is gazing at the corner of the yard.

JULIA

Don't you think roses would be nice along that fence?

NATE

Sure. You wanna me to put some in?

JULIA

(wistful)  
...oh, no. I'll plant them eventually, but they take so much care and attention. I can't be bothered right now with work and all.

He tries not to stare down her shirt as she leans over to pour him some lemonade. She hands it to him and he takes a sip.

JULIA (cont'd)

I should tell you -- I actually came out here with an ulterior motive.

Nate chokes on his lemonade.

NATE

You did?

JULIA

I was hoping I could convince you to come inside and help me bring some boxes up to the attic.

Nate's is half disappointed and half relieved.

NATE  
No problem.

INT. HOUSE

Nate and Julia struggle together to climb the pull-down ladder, lifting a heavy box up into the attic.

JULIA  
Watch your head. Hang on, let me get up one more.

She climbs another step up; she and Nate are on the same step, very close to each other, lifting the box over their heads.

JULIA (cont'd)  
One, two three...

Together, they heave the box up into the attic...

NATE  
I hope there's nothing --

It crashes down, with a distinct sound of breaking glass.

NATE (cont'd)  
-- breakable.

They laugh.

JULIA  
Nothing important, anyway.

The laughter fades as they seem to realize at the same moment that their faces are only inches apart. The possibility of a kiss flickers between them... Julia gently touches Nate's cheek. She leans in and kisses him; it builds in intensity. Nate suddenly pulls away and jumps down off the ladder.

NATE  
(freaked out)  
I really have to go -- I've got a ton of lawns to do. See you next week?

Nate takes off. Julia looks confused.

CUT TO:

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - DAY

BEN  
(walking in)  
Happy Birthday, ya bastard!

Ben pulls a paper bag from inside his jacket and tosses it to Nate, who's at his computer, checking his savings. Nate pulls a half-empty bottle of tequila out of the bag.

NATE

(over-enunciating, as if to a  
foreigner)

In this country, it's customary to give presents that are new...

BEN

Sorry, it's from my dad's liquor cabinet. Beggars, choosers, etcetera.

NATE

Are you coming out with me and Mouth tonight?

BEN

(wistful)

Wish I could. I have to have dinner with Alice and her grandparents. They don't even speak English and they make this weird Chinese food that's not at all like from a restaurant...

NATE

How's it going with you and Alice, anyway?

BEN

(lackluster)

Oh, okay, I guess...

(perks up)

But I wanna hear about Operation VirginitY -- how's it coming, so to speak?

NATE

Shitty, so to speak. I don't wanna talk about it. Everything's shitty.

(miserable)

We kissed.

BEN

That's huge!

NATE

It's too soon! I'm not ready. What am I gonna do?

BEN

Wing it?

NATE

You're no help. I don't wanna talk about it.

BEN  
 (re: the income spreadsheet)  
 Well, at least you're raking in the  
 bucks.

NATE  
 Julia's given me a lot of extra work. I'm  
 past two-thousand.

BEN  
 That's great -- isn't that what you  
 needed to make? And it's only July.

NATE  
 I need five thousand.

BEN  
 Why?

NATE  
 I don't want to play fucking soccer.

Ben exhales at the sheer bravery -- and idiocy -- of that  
 statement.

NATE (cont'd)  
 If I can earn five thousand dollars, I  
 can fill in the gaps from financial aid  
 and loans to at least swing the fall  
 semester.

BEN  
 Your dad would kill you.

NATE  
 I know.

DAD & MS. GILBERT (PRELAP)  
 Happy Birthday dear Naaaate... Happy  
 Birthday to you!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nate blows out the candles on his "Happy 18th Birthday" cake.  
 Ben, Dad and Ms. Gilbert applaud. Outside, a car horn BLARES.  
 Nate jumps up.

NATE  
 Gotta go!

MS. GILBERT  
 At least take cake for your friends!

DAD  
 Come here, buddy.

Before Nate can escape, Dad pulls him into a bear hug.

DAD (cont'd)  
Happy Birthday, Nate. You're a good man.

NATE  
(pulling free)  
Thanks, Dad. See you later.

DAD  
Don't do anything I wouldn't do!  
(tickling Ms. Gilbert)  
Which isn't much!

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Nate and Ben leave the house. Nate jumps into Mouth's waiting Jeep.

NATE  
(waving goodbye to Ben)  
Say hi to the grandparents!

INT. MOUTH'S JEEP

NATE  
Where to?

MOUTH  
For me to know and you to enjoy. Hope  
you've got your ID.

NATE  
(holding up the tequila)  
And so much more.

They roar off. Ben waves sadly from the curb.

EXT. "CRAY-ZEE CHIXXX" STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Grungy downtown Trenton. "*All nekid, all the time!*" screams the sad neon sign. Nate hands his driver's license to the bored BOUNCER.

NATE  
Read it and weep!

BORED BOUNCER  
(monotone; letting them in)  
Happy Birthday. Enjoy.

INT. "CRAY-ZEE CHIXXX" STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

They sit right up against the stage; Nate studies the dancer with appreciative awe. Mouth plays generous host, handing over cash to keep her close. The song ends and she takes a break.

MOUTH

(to Nate)

Another eight dollar Sprite on me? Come on, live it up!

Nate nods. Mouth flags down a waitress and orders two.

MOUTH (cont'd)

D'I tell you it's over with Rena? She just broke if off -- no explanation.

NATE

(guilty)

Oh, man, sorry to hear that.

MOUTH

It's okay, I always have a couple of pokers in the fire, if you know what I mean...

NATE

You had someone on the side?

MOUTH

I like to say I was "outsourcing my needs"...

Nate shakes his head, amazed.

MOUTH (cont'd)

So, listen... I got a proposition for you.

NATE

I don't know if I have time to write another of your papers...

MOUTH

Oh, shit, I forgot to hand the last one in...

(beat)

Anyway. It's not that. Remember we were talking about a "sure thing"? I got one for you. Gen-u-ine.

NATE

Uh-huh...

MOUTH

I'm serious. I know this girl...  
 (looks around to see if anyone is  
 listening; they aren't)  
 She'll do anything...for 200 bucks.

NATE

(laughs)  
 What, a hooker?

MOUTH

No, she's a regular person.

NATE

Hookers are regular-- Whatever, who is  
 it?

MOUTH

I can't tell you her name, but trust me,  
 she's good.

NATE

Ew. No. Am I that guy? I don't wanna be  
 that guy.  
 (beat)  
 And if I wanted to pay for it, I could've  
 just taken that Sienna girl out three or  
 four more times.

MOUTH

Yeah, but this is guaranteed. A business  
 transaction. Everyone knows the deal up  
 front. And then you're all set to visit  
 that Mrs. Robinson chick.

NATE

Ms. Bradley. Julia.

MOUTH

No one would know. I mean, look at porn  
 and read Cosmo all you want, but you're  
 gonna have to practice to make perfect.

NATE

I know, but that just seems skeevy. And  
 expensive. I don't have that kind of cash  
 to spare.

The waitress delivers two tiny glasses of Sprite.

WAITRESS

Sixteen dollars, sugar.

MOUTH

(handing over a twenty)  
 Keep the change.

She squeezes his thigh in thanks before walking away.

MOUTH (cont'd)

You pay a premium for quality service.  
Think about it.

CUT TO:

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Nate is planting beds of colorful impatiens in the back yard.  
Julia comes out and sits next to him.

JULIA

Nate, listen... I'm going out of town  
for a week. I have a conference in San  
Francisco.

NATE

Okay. I'll have all these done by the  
time you get back, and I can even get  
started on the hedges in the front.

JULIA

Well, that's something I wanted to talk  
about...

The serious tone of her voice makes Nate stop working and  
turn towards her.

JULIA (cont'd)

Nate, do I make you uncomfortable?

NATE

No, no, why would you say that?

JULIA

Just...what happened the other day. I  
think it may have been a mistake. The  
last thing I'd want is for you to feel  
pressured, or compromised...

NATE

(panicked)

No, you don't understand...

JULIA

I's okay. But while I'm gone, I'd like  
you to think about things -- and about  
whether it might be better if you don't  
keep working for me.

NATE

Oh! No! I'm just weird, but it'll be fine  
if you can just wait...

JULIA  
We'll talk when I get back.

She gets up and goes back into the house.

JULIA (cont'd)  
I'll give you keys so you can water the  
inside plants. And the impatiens look  
great.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Nate and Ben are out on the roof of Nate's house, hitting  
golf balls off into the woods as they talk.

BEN  
She is flat-out sexual harassing you!  
She's gonna throw her lawn boy into the  
green bin because he's not putting out!

NATE  
No, seriously, it's not like that at all.  
This is real. She really seems to like  
me...but I think I hurt her feelings.  
It's not that I don't want to kiss her,  
believe me, but I want it to be...

Ben hits a ball and turns to Nate, suddenly serious.

BEN  
Nate, why are you so pathologically  
terrified you won't get it right?

Nate's Dad and Ms. Gilbert leave the house and walk to the  
car, arms around each other, unaware that the boys are  
watching them from the roof.

NATE  
Because I don't want to sleep with a  
million people, looking for the right one  
-- like my dad does. I want to get it  
right the first time -- like my dad did.

BEN  
What do you mean?

NATE  
He got it right with my mom. You should  
hear him talk about her -- I mean he  
hardly ever does -- but it's like she was  
a goddess. I think he's been looking for  
someone that perfect ever since.

BEN

Well, if you really think that Julia is "the one" then you can't let her get away. You have to get as ready as you can and go for it. How long is she gone for?

NATE

Only a week. You're right, I've got to be ready by the time she gets back.

BEN

(raising a solidarity fist)  
By any means necessary.

NATE

By any means necessary...

Nate swings at a golf ball...and whiffs.

OLDER MAN (PRELAP)

Erectile Dysfunction: it's no laughing matter...

CUT TO:

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nate is at the computer, checking his earnings. A pop-up ad blares a Cialis ad; he mutes it. He updates his spreadsheet and looks at the total: \$2400. He subtracts \$200 and looks at the new number...

He hesitates a long moment, then picks up his phone and dials. While it's ringing, he reaches over and turns the framed photo of his mom face-down on the dresser.

NATE

Hey, Mouth, it's Nate. Remember that offer you made? Can I just ask you one thing? Is it Amber?

(beat, then casual)

No, no, I understand you can't tell me who it is, but I was just wondering, 'cause, you know, it wouldn't suck if it was her...

(beat)

...yes, she does have a great rack...

(deep breath)

...well, because I was thinking, I think I'm gonna do it.

(listens)

What do you mean it went up? ...no, no...three hundred is okay. Yeah, I'm sure. Okay, call me back.

He hangs up the phone, deletes the "\$200" and types in "\$300". He ponders the change for a moment, then flops back on the bed, staring at the ceiling -- afraid but excited.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)

We arranged it for the next night. There were a lot of rules...

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

NATE (V.O.)

First thing, obviously, was, it was strictly BYO condoms. Thanks to dad, I was set.

Nate opens a dresser drawer -- it overflows with condoms.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

NATE (V.O.)

And I wasn't allowed to tell anyone...

Nate googles "Lawrenceville motels". He finds a place and reaches for his phone to call it when it RINGS, startling him.

NATE

Hello?  
(uncomfortable)  
Hey.

NATE (V.O.)

...not even Ben.

NATE

(bouncing his knee nervously)  
Nah, I think I'm gonna go to bed early...  
(fakes a yawn)  
Yeah, don't even call, I'll be sleeping.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nate is poring over the diagrams of various sex positions in his mom's old Cosmo magazines, as if studying for a test.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nate opens a condom wrapper and carefully examines the condom. He starts to unzip his pants, then thinks better of it and takes a soccer trophy off his dresser. He practices unrolling condoms over the little bronze soccer player.

Just as he's figuring out how to get it right side out, there is a KNOCK at the door; it swings open. Panicked, Nate flings the condom aside and stands up, still holding the trophy.

MS. GILBERT  
 (enters, unsuspecting)  
 Hi Nate.

NATE  
 Hi.

MS. GILBERT  
 (re: the trophy)  
 Reliving your days of glory?

NATE  
 Yeah, good times, good times.

MS. GILBERT  
 Well, I just wanted to let you know that  
 your dad and I are wallpapering and we  
 could use your help.

NATE  
 I...  
 (something catches his eye)  
 ...oh, crap...I mean, I'm busy...

She follows his gaze down to the flung condom that is now  
 clinging to the knee of her jeans.

NATE (cont'd)  
 I'm so sorry...

He inches close to her and gingerly flicks the condom off her  
 knee as though it were a poisonous insect.

MS. GILBERT  
 (afraid to look)  
 Just tell me one thing: used or not?

NATE  
 Not. Definitely not. Don't tell dad, okay?  
 I'll never hear the end of it.

Nate is deadly serious; Ms. Gilbert tries hard not to laugh.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nate straps on Wilt Chamberlain's watch like battle armor, takes  
 a deep breath and walks out the bedroom door.

INT. KITCHEN; EVENING

Dad and Ms. Gilbert are wallpapering the kitchen, making a mess  
 and having a great time. Oldies play on the radio.

Nate walks through.

DAD

Get over here and help us, Nate.

MS. GILBERT

I think your son may have other plans.

She winks at Nate; relieved, he slips out the door.

EXT. MOTEL 6; LOBBY - NIGHT

Nate signs the register and carefully counts out forty-nine dollars in cash for the skeptical Indian desk clerk.

DESK CLERK

Thank you Mr...  
 (reading the register)  
 ...Jägermeister.

EXT. MOTEL 6; ROOM 109

Nate stands in the doorway of the motel room, looking at the depressing cinder-block cubbyhole.

EXT. MOTEL 6; MINUTES LATER

Nate sits on the edge of the bed in his boxer shorts.

He takes a condom out of the new box and places it ceremoniously on the bedside table. After a pause, he pulls another out of the box and ambitiously places it with the first, then thinks better of it and takes it away, leaving only one again.

Then he pulls out an envelope of money and places it carefully beside the condom.

He stares at the cheap digital clock until it blinks from 8:59 to exactly 9pm. He picks up his cell phone and dials.

NATE

It's me. I'm at the Motel 6 on Route One.  
 Room 109.

MOUTH (O.S.)

Okay, here's what you have to do. Unlock the door, turn off the lights, and go into the bathroom to wait. She'll come in and knock on the bathroom door when she's ready. You got the blindfold?

NATE

Yeah.

MOUTH (O.S.)

Okay, put that on before you come out,  
and no peeking. And no talking.

NATE

What?!

MOUTH (O.S.)

Well, you can talk, but she won't answer.  
She wants it to be anonymous. If you don't  
agree to the rules, she won't do it.

NATE

Okay, okay. Just hurry before I change my  
mind.

INT. MOTEL 6; BATHROOM

Nate sits on the closed toilet in his underwear, waiting.

He fidgets, nervous as hell.

He twirls a bandana around his finger; it is printed with the  
"Lawrenceville" school crest.

He rests his head in his hands.

Suddenly a thought occurs to him...

INT. MOTEL 6; SECONDS LATER

He runs out into the dark bedroom, fumbles for his phone and  
types a text message to Mouth.

It reads:

*"is this a bad joke where u bring pple  
here & scare the crap outta me in my  
underwear...?"*

Headlights sweep across the front window and a car pulls up  
in front of the room.

NATE

Shit!

He throws the phone down, dashes back into the bathroom and  
shuts the door.

INT. MOTEL 6; BATHROOM

Nate perches, adrenaline pumping, on the toilet, listening  
and waiting.

After a very long pause, he hears the faint sounds of the front door opening and closing. Nate looks like he might pass out.

He ties the bandana over his eyes, flips the light off and waits in the dark for another eternity.

Finally, there is a soft KNOCK on the bathroom door.

NATE

Come in.

The door opens.

INT. MOTEL 6 - CONTINUOUS

A girl in a plain white bra and panties leads Nate by the hand out to the bed. In the dark, we cannot tell who she is; in fact, throughout the sequence, we never get an identifiable look at her -- we see only separate body parts and shadows.

Everything that follows is awkward and not sexy.

She sits him down and pulls off his boxers. She strips off her underwear and straddles his lap. He reaches out and feels her breasts.

NATE

Oh...

They're small -- certainly not Amber-sized.

NATE (cont'd)

(feigning desire)

...I mean: ohhhh....

She pulls away from him.

NATE (cont'd)

...uh, sorry, there's nothing wrong with them, it's just not who -- uh, what I was expecting...

(quiet)

Okay, I'm going to shut up now.

They make out for a bit, perfunctorily.

NATE (cont'd)

(flat, self-conscious)

You're so hot. You're turning me on.

She reaches over and picks up the condom.

NATE (cont'd)

Um...wait.

(embarrassed)

(MORE)

NATE (cont'd)  
I'm not really...ready. Can you  
like...help me out a little?

She doesn't move.

NATE (cont'd)  
Okay, I take it that's not in the  
contract...

Nate goes in for some more kissing and touching until he's  
ready; he puts the condom on and climbs on top. He doesn't  
really know what he's doing and it's trial and error...

NATE (cont'd)  
There? Oh, sorry...there? Damn it.

She lies fairly still, enduring it, not being much help.

NATE (cont'd)  
How about --  
(apparently succeeding)  
-- oh.

MONTAGE:

They try a number of different positions. No one is having  
much fun.

Time passes on the clock radio: it's 11:15, then 11:30...

Finally, the girl leans in and WHISPERS into Nate's ear:

GIRL  
Come on, aren't you done yet?

That kind of kills what little mood there was for Nate. He  
rolls off her.

NATE  
(lying)  
Yeah.

She quickly pulls on her clothes, slips the envelope of money  
into her pocket and leaves.

When he hears the sound of the door, Nate pulls the blindfold  
off. He is utterly depressed. Humiliated by what he's done  
and humiliated by what he couldn't do.

INT. MOTEL 6; BATHROOM

Nate flushes the condom and stares at himself in the mirror.

NATE  
 (flat)  
 Congratulations.

He quickly leaves the room so he doesn't have to see himself starting to cry.

EXT. MOTEL 6; MINUTES LATER

Nate drops the key into the night check-out slot to avoid facing the clerk.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nate, miserable, is on the phone.

NATE  
 Do you think it counts?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BEN'S ROOM

Ben's room is decorated with posters of badass/sexy sci-fi/fantasy women -- from Lara Croft to Wonder Woman.

BEN  
 Why, because you didn't...

NATE  
 Yeah.

BEN  
 No. Yeah. Do you want it to count?

NATE  
 Yes and no at the same time.

BEN  
 Well, all I can say is I wish I had that problem...

NATE  
 Shut up, I was nervous.

BEN  
 I'm not making fun, I'm serious. It's just that nervous usually speeds things along...

NATE  
 I was just kind of...freaked out.

BEN  
Why?

NATE  
I don't know. I just was.

BEN  
I don't get it, why won't you tell me  
what happened -- or who it was, even?

Nate takes a deep breath. He seems on the verge of telling Ben the whole story.

BEN (cont'd)  
(joking)  
What did you do, get a hooker?

NATE  
A hooker?

BEN  
Sorry. Sex worker.

NATE  
You know, I don't wanna talk about it.

BEN  
What do you mean?

NATE  
(quoting Ben sarcastically)  
I can't. It wouldn't be right to her.

BEN  
What is your problem?

NATE  
Forget it. I gotta go.

BEN  
I don't think it counts if you don't talk  
about it!

Nate hangs up.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE CAMPUS - MORNING

It's a brand new day. Groundskeepers ride mowers in lazy whorls around the green green campus.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Nate downs a protein shake, dressed for a run.

DAD (O.S.)

Nate?

Nate ignores him and heads out the door.

EXT. COUNTRY ROADS - DAY

Nate's the only human in sight as he runs past a field of cows.

NATE (V.O.)

The whole thing was a fiasco. Not only had I been desperate enough to pay for sex, but then I couldn't even do it right.

(beat)

I couldn't believe it had sucked so much. I'd studied. I'd read stupid women's magazines. I'd memorized my dad's vintage copy of *The Joy of Sex* -- despite all the pictures of hairy hippies getting it on. All that armpit hair is almost enough to make a guy quit jerking off to supposedly educational material.

Nate runs past fields of corn; the four foot-high stalks won't be ready for another few weeks, but tiny, perfectly-formed ears are already peeking through the leaves.

This is a long run; he's got a lot of thinking to do.

NATE (V.O.)

But none of it explained what I'd done wrong. Instead of making me relax about Julia, it made me even more nervous. What if I sucked that bad with her too?

(beat)

My dad always said, if I made a mistake, I should at least learn something from it. The only problem was, I had no idea what I had done wrong, and there was only one person who could tell me. If I could get over my utter humiliation, I could ask her. Review the action, analyze the pitfalls -- you know, like a soccer clinic. The other only problem was, I had no idea who she was.

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE STREET - DAY

Nate ends his run on Main Street, where he spots Mouth coming out of the post office, flipping casually through his mail.

NATE

(casual)

So, who was she?

MOUTH

Who?

(realizes, cracks a big smile)

Oh, right! Congratulations! How was it?

NATE

You mean aside from being the most fucked up thing I've ever done?

MOUTH

(opening an envelope)

My Hawaiian wood rose seeds! You can make LSD outta these puppies. Sorry, what were you saying?

NATE

Who was she? It's kinda bugging me.

MOUTH

Don't worry about it, it's not important.

NATE

Oh, shit -- it was that Sienna chick, wasn't it. Fuck, it was. Those were her bony knees...right?

MOUTH

Maybe you don't even know her -- did you think of that?

(beat)

When're you hooking up with that bombass professor?

NATE

She won't be back for another couple days.

MOUTH

Gives you time to rest the equipment. Twice in one week, dude! You're the man!

NATE

(annoyed)

Yeah. I'm gonna cool down, I'll catch you later.

Nate takes off down the street at a slow jog.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Every girl I passed was a suspect.

As he jogs, Nate CONSIDERS each passing woman: an old woman driving a car, a young girl on a bike, a cute teenager holding hands with her boyfriend...

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 All I knew was she was thin and had long,  
 straight hair.

Nate passes several girls who would fit this description...

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 I racked my brain trying to think of any  
 other clues.

He stops at a traffic light, jogging in place as he waits for it to change. Directly across the street, waiting to cross towards Nate, is Marissa, the custodian's daughter. She READS A BOOK as she idly pushes the "walk" button. She hasn't seen Nate yet.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 And then I remembered... Her hair.

INT. MOTEL 6 - FLASHBACK

During Nate's unsexy clinch with the motel girl, his nose is buried in her hair.

BACK TO:

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE STREET - DAY

NATE (V.O.)  
 Her hair had smelled like smoke.

The world telescopes and oozes into slow motion, as Nate watches Marissa pull out a cigarette and light it.

As she takes her first drag, she glances up and CATCHES Nate's eye. Slowly, her mouth curls into that crooked smile Nate and Mouth had made fun of. Only now, it is a cruel, knowing smile. It almost looks like she might burst out laughing.

The light changes and Nate forces himself to jog across the street. Marissa walks towards him and they pass each other in the middle of the crosswalk.

They both know.

Nate turns towards campus and kicks into high gear, running hard, as if trying to sweat out the humiliation.

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE CAMPUS - MINUTES LATER

Nate reaches Mouth, who's sitting on the steps of his dorm, reading a magazine. Nate is so breathless he can barely talk. He rips Wilt's watch off and throws it at Mouth.

MOUTH  
Hey! Watch the watch!

NATE  
Fuck you.

MOUTH  
What?

NATE  
Marissa? Was that some kind of joke?

MOUTH  
No.

Mouth's surprise quickly turns to anger; he actually seems pissed that Nate figured it out.

MOUTH (cont'd)  
And what's the difference? You got what you wanted, so shut up. You weren't even supposed to know.

Mouth turns to go inside.

NATE  
It's fucked up.

MOUTH  
Life's fucked up. That's not my fault.

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE CAMPUS - LATER

Nate walks slowly through campus, thinking.

He sits on the bleachers, watching clouds move across the sky.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Nate pokes through the refrigerator, looking for something to eat. Ms. Gilbert comes in and flips on the light.

MS. GILBERT  
There's leftovers from dinner. I can warm them up for you.

NATE  
That's okay. I can just eat it like this.

He eats the cold leftovers straight out of the tupperware. He's clearly not happy.

MS. GILBERT  
Is...everything okay?

NATE

Yeah.

MS. GILBERT

This can be a tough time, graduation, it's a big transition, lots of changes...

NATE

Yeah. That's not really it.

MS. GILBERT

You know, your Dad's really proud of you.

Nate shrugs.

MS. GILBERT (cont'd)

Well, I don't know what's on your mind, but I do know that if something's bothering you, it usually feels ten times worse when you keep it to yourself. I don't know you very well, Nate, so it doesn't have to be me, but you might want to talk to someone.

NATE

The only problem, is, the only person who would understand is exactly who I don't want to talk to about it.

MS. GILBERT

That's probably all the more reason to. You're a grown up, you can do it. You're not the same little boy who copied a report on The Alamo straight off Wikipedia in sixth grade.

NATE

You knew?

MS. GILBERT

Of course. And I knew you almost confessed.

NATE

I wanted to, but I couldn't. I still think about that.

MS. GILBERT

Well, don't let this become something else that'll bother you years later.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nate looks up Marissa on Instagram. Her profile is private. In her picture, her face is obscured by the book she's holding up in front of it. Her DMs are blocked.

EXT. MARISSA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nate lurks around a little house on the far edge of campus, trying to see into the windows. It's not as nice as Nate's house. There is a workshop spilling out of the garage and an old truck being cannibalized for parts in the driveway.

He sees a light upstairs and TOSSES a pebble at the window.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)  
(matter of fact)  
She's not here.

Nate JUMPS. He turns to see Marissa's dad taking out the trash.

NATE  
Hey, Mr. Carillo, hi. Do you, um, know  
where Marissa might be?

MR. CARRILLO  
(puzzled to see him here)  
Nate?  
(“how 'bout that”)  
Huh.  
(shrugs, walking away)  
She probably in town somewhere. It's not  
that big a place.

INT. PIZZA JOINT - NIGHT

Nate spots Marissa waiting for her order up at the front counter, by herself, absorbed in a dense-looking philosophy text. Hesitantly, he approaches her.

COUNTER GUY  
(to Nate)  
Help you?

NATE  
Oh, sure, I'll have a slice.  
(turns to Marissa)  
Hey.

MARISSA  
Hey.

The counter guy slides two paper plates with slices across the counter.

COUNTER GUY  
That's two-fifty each.

MARISSA  
(turns to Nate)  
Allow me.

Deliberately, so Nate can see, she pulls the ENVELOPE OF CASH he had given her out of her coat pocket and uses it to pay for the slices. She's enjoying making this as weird as possible for him.

MARISSA (cont'd)  
Aren't you embarrassed to be seen with  
"the custodian's daughter"?

NATE  
Hey, Mouth said that, not me.

MARISSA  
Mmm-hmm.

A jock-y kid comes up to grab his order.

JOCK-Y KID  
Hey Nate. What'cha doing?

Nate instinctively shifts his weight away from Marissa, distancing himself from her.

NATE  
Not much, man.

The kid leaves. Marissa takes her slice and walks away, leaving Nate's slice on the counter.

MARISSA  
You didn't have to say it.

EXT. PIZZA JOINT - NIGHT

Nate comes out after her, slice in hand.

NATE  
Hey, I was hoping we could talk.  
(trying to convince himself)  
I'm not embarrassed.

MARISSA  
Well, you should be.

NATE  
Why?

MARISSA

Come on, at least give me the sick pleasure of seeing you be humiliated.

NATE

(unconvincing)

I'm not. Humiliated. I just want to talk to you.

She keeps moving. He walks alongside her.

NATE (cont'd)

That was fucked up, what happened.

(lowers his voice)

In the motel.

MARISSA

Yeah, I think I recall that. And?

NATE

I just...I feel weird and you're the only one I can really talk to about it.

MARISSA

We had sex. What's there to talk about? Let me guess, you were totally weirded out when you realized you fucked ME, but were too embarrassed to talk about it with your friends, so now you wanna pour your little heart out to ME about how humiliating it was to have slept with ME.

NATE

(embarrassed)

Actually, I just wanted to ask you what I did wrong.

Marissa is surprised.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - NIGHT

They sit on the bleachers, eating their slices.

MARISSA

What do you want to know?

NATE

Well, I guess you didn't, you know...

MARISSA

Please, it wasn't that kind of sex.

NATE

What kind, the good kind?

(she shrugs)

(MORE)

NATE (cont'd)

If you don't mind my asking, why'd you do it? Just for the money?

MARISSA

Would it make a difference if I told you I needed the money for my little brother's heart transplant operation?

NATE

Oh my God, really? Wait... You don't even have a brother.

MARISSA

(surprised)

Good memory. You're right, I don't. But I've got my own twisted reasons.

(holding up her book)

And an expensive reading habit. I don't have spending money falling out of my pockets like some people around here.

NATE

I don't either.

MARISSA

Yeah, I know. So why'd you spend all that money on anonymous sex you didn't even enjoy?

NATE

Its a long story.

Marissa chews her pizza, waiting; it takes Nate a second to realize she wants to hear it.

NATE (cont'd)

I don't wanna say...

(she's still waiting)

I never wanted my first time to be like that, but it's just...I'm in love.

MARISSA

What?!

NATE

Not with you -- I mean, I didn't even know it was gonna be you.

(pauses, baring his soul)

I'm kind of...in love with this woman. She's older. I want to have this perfect encounter with her, this incredible experience, but I wanted to make sure I knew what I was doing.

Marissa laughs out loud. Nate can't believe it.

NATE (cont'd)  
 What? I thought it would help.

MARISSA  
 Who is she?

NATE  
 I mow her lawn...

MARISSA  
 Oh, give me a break.

NATE  
 I'm like really in love with her, and I don't appreciate your attitude.

MARISSA  
 God, you're such a girl, wanting love and sex in one big package with a bow.

NATE  
 So what's wrong with that?

MARISSA  
 I just think love is bullshit. I don't believe in it.

NATE  
 (jabbing at the Sartre book in her coat pocket)  
 What kind of stupid existentialist crap is that? "I don't believe in love."

MARISSA  
 Well, I believe it could exist theoretically, but I've never seen it.

NATE  
 Oh, because you've never been in love, it doesn't exist for other people?

MARISSA  
 No, because "love" is just another way of saying that two people truly appreciate and know each other -- and I just don't believe you can ever really know another person. Most people don't even try.  
 (beat)  
 So for you to be in love with some woman whose lawn you mow? It's idiotic.

NATE  
 Forget it, you don't know anything about her, or me, or us.

He gets up and walks away.

MARISSA

You probably don't know the first thing about her. What's her favorite flavor of ice cream?

(Nate keeps walking)

What perfume does she wear?

Nate turns around and spews back at her, frustrated.

NATE

Shut up. Who cares. What difference does it make?

MARISSA

Would you rather a girl gave you tickets to some random soccer game, or a Seattle Sounders game where Clint Dempsey was playing?

NATE

(momentarily stunned)

How'd you know he's my favorite player?

MARISSA

Lucky guess. My point is, if you don't really know her, what are you in love with? The idea of her?

NATE

Just forget it. You don't know anything.

He turns and walks away.

MARISSA

I know you have sex like a robot.

NATE

Excuse me?

MARISSA

(robot voice)

"Ooh baby, you're so hot."

She stands and does some robotic pelvic thrusts.

NATE

Are you being mean to get back at me for making fun of you?

MARISSA

No, I'm just congenitally mean.

NATE

(walking away)

I hate you.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Nate is practicing one-on-one with his Dad. Dad repeatedly dribbles the ball towards Nate and Nate tries to steal it away and keep Dad from getting past him.

DAD  
 Watch my knees, watch my knees -- and  
 keep your weight forward, 'cause if you  
 don't...

Dad pushes roughly past Nate, who had his weight on his heels; Nate loses his balance and falls hard on his ass.

DAD (cont'd)  
 ...you're toast.  
 (barks)  
 Come on, get up and go again.

Nate brushes himself off and girds for another skirmish. They talk as they play; Dad wins most of the time.

DAD (cont'd)  
 You haven't said what you think of Linda.

NATE  
 I don't know, she's nice.

DAD  
 She's a pretty smart cookie -- and you  
 can't top that ass, can you?

NATE  
 (steering clear)  
 I like her. She's really nice.

DAD  
 (after a moment)  
 Nice enough to be your step-mom?

Nate stops playing.

NATE  
 Are you...getting married?

DAD  
 No. I haven't asked her. But it has  
 crossed my mind.

NATE  
 Are you serious?

DAD  
 Yeah, why?

NATE

I don't know, I just never thought you'd want to...give up certain things.

DAD

There is something to be said for playing the field... A lot to be said for that.

Dad laughs, showing a flicker of nervousness. Nate smiles.

NATE

I think it's a great idea.

Dad takes this in. It's a nice moment.

DAD

Well, you can't go wrong with a woman who makes like the birds that return to Capistrano.

NATE

No, dad, please...

DAD

Swallows! Come on, you used to like that one!

Nate shakes his head, disappointed that the moment was ruined. They start practicing again.

DAD (cont'd)

Angle your body -- force me over!

Dad plows past Nate, and Nate once again hits the dirt.

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Nate unlocks Julia's front door and steps inside.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE

- He walks through the house, watering the plants.
- Walking past her desk, something catches his eye, and he sits down. It's a draft of a paper she's writing. It's entitled, *Inauthentic Connections: The Impossibility of Romantic Love in the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger*. He reads.
- He browses through her bookshelves, reading titles, pulling out books, particularly Plato's *Symposium*.
- At the vanity in the bedroom, he picks up a bottle of her perfume and smells it.
- He examines the types of breakfast cereal in her cupboard.

- He tries on her gardening hat, and looks in the mirror; it looks absurd on him, but he seems oddly pleased.

- He sits in a rocking chair in her living room, still wearing Julia's hat, and simply looks around, as if it was his own home.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Nate takes an easy jog through town. Behind him, he hears the fast-approaching SOUNDS of sneakers on pavement and a megaphone voice. It's the Princeton Cross-Country team.

CROSS-COUNTRY COACH

(from his car)

Pick your feet up, Sully, I want better splits from you today.

The pack comes up on and envelops Nate. Nate accelerates to stay with them, running in the middle of the pack.

FRIENDLY RUNNER

Hey, Corn Boy!

ENTHUSIASTIC RUNNER

Mitchell, look who it is!

Mitchell, the cocky captain, looks back and sees Nate. Nate accelerates and moves up alongside Mitchell.

MITCHELL

(noticing Nate's shirt)

Soccer player?

NATE

Yup.

MITCHELL

All sprint, no stamina.

Mitchell presses his speed up. Nate follows. They pull out ahead of the pack, neck and neck.

CROSS-COUNTRY COACH

(furious)

Mitchell, bring it down -- we have a meet in two days.

Nate and Mitchell run full out, pushing themselves, breathing hard. Behind them, the pack cheers: some for Mitchell, some for Nate. Slowly, steadily, Nate inches ahead. The pack behind them reacts, taunting Mitchell and applauding Nate.

Nate pulls a stride ahead. Mitchell strains to close the gap...

CLOSE on their feet, churning furiously. Time slows. Then Mitchell extends his stride and STEPS on the heel of Nate's sneaker, giving him a flat tire.

The rest happens in a flash: Nate's shoe half off, his stride broken, he stumbles and falls. Mitchell, the coach and the rest of the pack fly past him in a flash.

A stragglng runner stops and helps Nate up.

STRAGGLING RUNNER

You alright, man? I'm sure it was an accident.

NATE

Just leave me alone, go. Go.

The runner reluctantly continues on, following his team. Nate turns and limps back towards campus.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Nate walks around the school track, hands laced on top of his head, catching his breath. Summer football camp is training in the middle of the oval.

As Nate cools down, he notices Marissa sitting on the bleachers, reading and smoking. He turns to walk away, then pauses, turns back and climbs up to talk to her.

NATE

Shouldn't smoke.

MARISSA

I know, but I get such a perverse thrill out of doing it while I watch other people exercise.

(standing up)

I was about to leave.

NATE

Mind if I walk with you?

EXT. CAMPUS

They walk.

NATE

I just wanted to say I'm sorry. You had a point about me not knowing her well enough to be in love, I don't.

(beat)

But I'd like to, I'm optimistic that it's possible and I want to do my best to make it happen.

MARISSA

Fair enough.

They walk in silence for a while.

MARISSA (cont'd)

Sorry I said you had sex like a robot.

NATE

(concerned)

Do I?

MARISSA

Kinda, yeah.

She tries to hold back a smile; he sees her fighting it and has to smile himself. The situation was ridiculous and he seems to have found a sense of humor about it.

NATE

You know, I really meant it -- if there's anything you can tell me that would help...

MARISSA

You don't want sex lessons, you want love lessons -- and you've come to the wrong person.

NATE

Well, it's the twenty-first century -- the sex comes first. I gotta master that if I'm gonna have a shot at anything else. Come on, imagine the perfect guy. What would he do or say that I didn't?

MARISSA

I don't know...

NATE

Think about it.

MARISSA

Yeah, the "ooh baby, you're so hot" is a problem.

NATE

I thought girls like sex compliments. That's what I read, anyway.

MARISSA

'Sex compliments'?

NATE

You know what I mean.

MARISSA

Well, not bullshit like that.

NATE

Well what do you want to hear?

MARISSA

That's exactly the point. You can't just tell people what you think they want to hear -- it has to be genuine. If you really want to have some kind of --

(disdainful)

-- *love connection* with this woman, you have to tell her what you really think. Be yourself.

NATE

Yeah, but 'myself' is a nervous, almost-virgin who can't believe I'm getting a shot at this perfect woman.

MARISSA

Well, there's a certain charm to that. You're not gonna convince her you're a long lost Hemsworth brother. You just have to lay it on the table: I'm a nervous, almost-virgin who can't believe I'm getting a chance with a perfect woman like you. She'll either go for it or not, but if she does, at least she'll like you for who you really are, and isn't that what you would want?

NATE

You've thought about this a lot for someone who doesn't believe in love.

MARISSA

I read a lot.

They wander down a shady hillside next to the library.

NATE

Remember the stream that was here before they built the new library?

MARISSA

Yeah. We used to catch tadpoles and put them in jars. I don't think they ever lived long enough to turn into frogs, but that didn't stop me, I just kept killing those poor tadpoles.

NATE

See, you never saw a frog -- just like you've never seen love -- but you still had hope that one of your tadpoles would turn into one.

MARISSA

Well, I was a lot younger then.

Nate sits down on a small footbridge overlooking a culvert where the old stream surfaces for about two feet, confined to a concrete gully, before being pushed back underground.

NATE

(delicate)  
What happened?

MARISSA

What do you mean?

NATE

I don't know. Just, the way you dress, the things you say. You're a lot different.

MARISSA

I don't know, I just started to hate everyone here.

NATE

Why?

MARISSA

They're all rich preps who fuck around and take for granted that their parents are going to pay for college. Who make fun of you if you don't wear the right clothes or go to the right island for vacation or whatever. Fuck that. Why should I try to compete with those people?

(beat)

Or with you. I mean, you think I've changed? You're the one who started pretending you were one of them.

NATE

You hate me because I'm friends with rich preps? That's like everyone at this school! Besides, you don't have to be rich to go to college. There's scholarships and things.

MARISSA

I didn't apply anywhere.

NATE

Why not?

MARISSA

It would just be the same stupid jerks at college that there are here. Who needs it?

NATE

But you're letting them win. By doing the opposite, you're still letting them rule your life.

MARISSA

Save it, Nate. I'm not going to college.

NATE

But what are you gonna do? I mean, the way things are going...

MARISSA

Don't worry, you don't need to rescue me from some future degenerate life, if that's what you're worried about, so spare me the self-esteem lecture.

NATE

If your self-esteem is so damn good, then why'd you make me wear a blindfold? You thought I wouldn't want to do it if I knew it was you?

MARISSA

You wouldn't have, would you?

NATE

(quiet)  
Probably not.

MARISSA

(sharp)  
You don't get it at all. Having sex with you didn't victimize me, it was fucking baller, it was feminist AF. It was my literal, literal F.U. gesture to you and the rich pricks you sided with. To humiliate you and put you in a position of no power.

NATE

Wow. Okay. Got it.

MARISSA

I didn't even come up with the blindfold idea anyway. That was Mouth.

NATE  
Mouth?

MARISSA  
I don't think he wanted you to know that he knew me.

NATE  
Of course he knows you, the class isn't that big.

She uses a stick to play with wet leaves in the ditch, reluctant to spell it out.

MARISSA  
No...I don't think he wanted you to figure out that he...knew me.

NATE  
(as it dawns)  
You...and Mouth? But the guy's a dick to you -- he's everything you just said you hated. Why would you do that?

MARISSA  
(tough)  
Like I told you, class warfare. Revenge.  
(then, unsure)  
I don't know. He wasn't like that when we were alone.

NATE  
Do you like him?

MARISSA  
(unconvincing)  
No.

NATE  
He used you!

MARISSA  
No he didn't. I used him.

Nate jumps up and runs off.

MARISSA (cont'd)  
Nate!

INT. MOUTH'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Nate bursts into Mouth's dorm room. The only person there is an EAGER UNDERCLASSMAN sitting at Mouth's computer.

NATE  
Where's Mouth?  
(off the kid's blank look)  
Andrew, where's Andrew?

EAGER UNDERCLASSMAN  
I think he's at chem lab.

NATE  
What are you talking about, he hasn't  
gone to a single class all summer.

EAGER UNDERCLASSMAN  
(shrugs)  
I don't know. He said something about  
an extra credit project.

Nate is totally baffled by that. He turns to go, then turns  
back.

NATE  
Who are you?

EAGER UNDERCLASSMAN  
Manny. I'm doing Andrew's problem sets  
for Algebra Two. Can I take a message?

As Nate turns to leave, Marissa is coming up the stairs after  
him; Nate pushes past her.

MARISSA  
Wait, Nate...

INT. CHEM BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Nate tries to push through the metal doors to the chemistry  
lab, but they are locked. He bangs on them.

NATE  
Mouth, it's me. Open the door.

Mouth opens the door a crack and looks out suspiciously. He  
has a white labcoat and safety goggles on.

MOUTH  
What do you want?

NATE  
(angry)  
You pimped your girlfriend?

Mouth pulls him inside quickly.

INT. CHEM LAB - DAY

There is an elaborate set-up involving beakers and flasks and rubber tubing and open flames on the counter behind Mouth; he's clearly in the middle of something...

MOUTH

The fuck are you talking about?

NATE

You pimped your girlfriend.

MOUTH

Who, that Marissa chick? She's not my girlfriend.

Nonchalant, Mouth returns to whatever dubious experiment he's conducting, holding a tray with a thin layer of crystallizing liquid over the flame with tongs.

NATE

Well, you were sleeping with her.

MOUTH

So?

Marissa bursts through the doors.

MOUTH (cont'd)

Jesus, will you lock that door. This isn't exactly legal.

NATE

Neither is loaning out someone you're sleeping with for money. It's disgusting.

MOUTH

Oh, when someone sells it it's disgusting but when you buy it, it's okay?

NATE

You took advantage of her!

MARISSA

No he didn't. I was okay with it.

NATE

Well, you shouldn't have been!

MOUTH

Whoa, whoa, whoa -- where do you get off throwing stones, holy roller? There is no blameless party here -- she sold it, I made the deal and you bought it.

(MORE)

MOUTH (cont'd)

Why is it suddenly different because you found out we hooked up a couple of times?

NATE

She likes you!

MARISSA

No, I don't!

MOUTH

(to Marissa)

It was just sex, right?

MARISSA

Yeah, it was just sex. I didn't care.

Though she tries to hide it, Marissa seems a little hurt by Mouth's casual attitude.

NATE

You don't care when he calls you names? I know you care, I've seen it in your face.

(quiet)

I don't know, it just strikes me as wrong. I'm sorry, it's wrong. The whole thing was wrong.

MARISSA

It was wrong for you, Nate. But you can't say what's wrong for other people.

MOUTH

So...are we all squared away here? No one is any worse than anyone else?

(Nate shrugs)

No one's perfect.

(can't resist)

But I would like to point out that at least I've never paid for it.

Nate stands there for a second, stunned, then jumps Mouth.

NATE

Fuck you!

They grapple; Mouth stumbles backwards, knocking over Bunsen burners and flasks. Glass breaks and burning liquid spills across the counter and down onto the floor.

MARISSA

Stop it!

She tries to pull them apart, but they won't stop pummeling each other.

Suddenly, a small EXPLOSION rocks the lab; the guys stop fighting and look around. They and Marissa are unharmed, but covered with soot. The counter where Mouth's chemistry experiment had been is now a charred and smoking heap of...well, whatever counters are made of.

A fire alarm BLARES and ceiling sprinklers turn on.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE; WAITING AREA

Mouth and Nate sit sullenly in the waiting area, wet and black with soot.

NATE

(finally:)

What kind of stupid moron tries to make acid in the school chem lab?

MOUTH

Shut up, Nate, it would've worked if you hadn't fucked it up.

NATE

Jesus Christ, my dad is gonna kill me.

MOUTH

Save me the anxiety attack, will you? It's gonna be fine, a slap on the wrist.

NATE

(exploding)

It's not going to be fine! I could get kicked out of college -- and unlike some people, I actually want to go!

(beat)

Actually, this is perfect for you, it's exactly what you wanted.

MOUTH

Yeah, right, I always wanted to get caught blowing up the school.

NATE

No, I mean you never really wanted to graduate. You've done everything possible not to graduate -- and you know why? Because you're The Man here. If you go to college, you'll be a small fish, a no-one, and that'll suck. So maybe if you screw up summer school bad enough, they'll hold you back another year. Keep it up, you could be the first 30-year-old high school senior! Think how cool you'll be then!

The door to the Principal's office opens and Marissa comes out with her father, who glares at Nate and Mouth as he escorts her away. She stares at her shoes, never meeting their eyes.

PRINCIPAL LANG

Nate, I left a message for your -

DAD

(arriving, angry)

What kind of foolish sheepshit is this?

Principal Lang ushers Nate and his father into her office, with a parting word for Mouth:

PRINCIPAL LANG

You may be last, but you're certainly not least.

NATE (V.O.)

The principal wanted one of us to step up and take the blame. No one would. Marissa and I hadn't been the ones making controlled substances in the chem lab, and Mouth was chickenshit.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

The Principal lectures Nate; Nate nods, appropriately contrite. Dad simmers silently.

NATE (V.O.)

She gave us a few days to think about it and said that if no one came forward, she'd refer the matter to the police. I was pissed that Mouth didn't step up -- he was going to fuck Princeton for me. Mouth didn't care about blowing college -- he was just scared shitless of his dad.

EXT. CAMPUS

Nate and his dad walk home.

NATE (V.O.)

My dad was no teaparty either. I was grounded for the rest of the summer, allowed to leave only for work.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERTITLE, OVER BLACK:

"AUGUST"

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

A cab pulls up and Julia gets out.

INT. JULIA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

She pushes through the door into the dark house and dumps her luggage; she shuffles, distracted, through the house while flipping through the mail she's brought in.

She snaps on a small light and something CATCHES her peripheral vision: her living room is filled with roses. And not your everyday cut, longstem roses, either -- these are full-sized rose bushes in plastic pots, ready for replanting.

She turns on another light to take a better look and GASPS! Nate is sitting in a chair in the living room.

JULIA

Nate! What are you doing?

NATE

Welcoming you home.

JULIA

Why are these bushes in here?

NATE

I remember you said they were your favorite flower.

She smiles, shaking her head, then walks into the kitchen. Nate looks puzzled, as though he was hoping his gesture would have made a little bit more of a splash.

JULIA (O.S.)

I take it this means you want to keep working for me?

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Nate wanders in. Julia is poking around, looking in the fridge.

JULIA

Would you like something to drink?

NATE

Uh, sure. I'll have a scotch on the rocks.

Trying to hide her smile, Julia opens the liquor cabinet.

JULIA

Single malt? Single grain? Blended?

NATE

I...oh, to be honest, I've never had scotch. I just thought it sounded like a cool thing to say.

She laughs. He relaxes a little bit -- the honesty thing just might work, after all.

JULIA

Well, I'm going to have a cup of tea. Would you like one?

NATE

Sure.

He sits at the kitchen table as she putters about, filling the teapot, setting out mugs.

NATE (cont'd)

How was your trip?

JULIA

Oh, fine.

NATE

What do you do at those things? Talk about philosophy all week?

JULIA

Sort of. I presented a paper that I wrote.

NATE

Oh, that's great. The one about love?

JULIA

(she laughs, surprised)  
About love? Sort of.

NATE

Can you tell me about it?

JULIA

(offhand)  
To be honest, I don't really want to get into it -- it's complicated.

He looks stung by her comment; her attitude softens.

JULIA (cont'd)

Look, I just came back from talking about it all week -- it's the last thing I want to do right now.

She sits down at the table across from him.

JULIA (cont'd)  
But I am glad to see you.

NATE  
You are?

JULIA  
Yes.

She takes the clip out of her hair and leans back in her chair.

JULIA (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
And it's sweet that you're interested in my work.

NATE  
I really am.  
(trying to be casual)  
I was just doing some reading, brushing up on the fundamentals, you know, like Plato's *Symposium*...

JULIA  
(laughing)  
Oh really?

NATE  
Yeah, and how the whole "philosophy of love" started with that woman named... D, something with a D --

JULIA  
Diotima. Philosopher and priestess.

NATE  
Yeah.

They're both kind of turned on by the connection; Julia leans in towards him as they talk.

JULIA  
And did you read what she said about young people and love?

NATE  
Um... You know, I might have fallen asleep before I got to that part.

JULIA  
She said young people should first be taught to love *one* beautiful body, which leads to an appreciation of beauty in *all* bodies.

NATE  
She...said that?

They're both sitting forward in their chairs, their faces just inches apart. Electric eye contact.

JULIA

Eventually one transcends the physical and learns to appreciate the beauty of the soul. Finally, one experiences pure virtue, gains immortality and the love of the gods. And this, argues Plato, is why physical love is so important.

NATE

That's so...so --

Julia leans over and KISSES Nate. It's dreamlike, perfect. The teapot WHISTLES.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As they kiss, Julia guides Nate across the dark room towards the bed. Nate can hardly keep from grinning. It's happening!

The bedside LIGHT comes on.

JULIA

Timer.

She heads to turn it off.

NATE

Leave it on?

JULIA

Oh?

She stands in the soft lamplight and undresses, giving him plenty of time to look.

She sits beside Nate and slides his clothes off.

NATE

Slow.

JULIA

You've done this before, haven't you?

NATE

Oh, sure. But I just want to appreciate every second with you.

Eyes locked, they touch each other slowly, taking their time. Nate lays on top of Julia as they kiss. She peels off the last of his clothes. Things really start heating up... Nate leans in and whispers in her ear.

NATE (cont'd)  
 You are so beautiful.

Julia smiles and tries to turn her head to kiss Nate, but he has more to say and gently holds her down as he keeps talking softly in her ear. This isn't bullshit, either -- he is so sincere he's practically shaking.

NATE (cont'd)  
 (whispering)  
 You're beautiful and smart and funny  
 and amazing and I've thought about this  
 moment for months. I was so scared it  
 wouldn't be perfect -- but it is...

JULIA  
 (a little taken aback)  
 Nate...

NATE  
 (whispering)  
 Have you ever seen hawks having sex?  
 (she shakes her head)  
 They meet in the sky. Join together  
 while they're flying and tumble down  
 together like nothing else matters,  
 like there's no ground beneath them.  
 That's what it feels like with you,  
 like I'm just falling, and there's no  
 one else in the world but us.

He stops talking and the room is silent. Neither of them moves. A tear runs down her face. Nate feels it on his cheek and looks at her, sees she is crying.

NATE (cont'd)  
 (alarmed)  
 What did I say?

JULIA  
 No one else has ever talked to me like  
 that.

NATE  
 Really?

JULIA  
 Well, they have, but no one who was as  
 genuine, really genuine deep down, as you  
 seemed to be.

NATE  
 I was. I am. I didn't mean to make you  
 cry.

JULIA

It's okay.

She takes a deep breath and wipes her face dry, then abruptly GETS UP out of the bed.

JULIA (cont'd)

I'm sorry, Nate.

NATE

Why are you sorry?

JULIA

I can't do this.

NATE

(upset)

What did I do wrong?

JULIA

Nothing. You're seventeen.

NATE

Eighteen!

JULIA

Eighteen.

NATE

So?

JULIA

This means more to you than it does... I can't, in good conscience...

NATE

But, but...Plato's *Symposium*, the priestess, the beauty of the soul!

Julia shifts her weight, unsure what to say. Nate realizes what is happening.

NATE (cont'd)

You just wanted it to be sex.

JULIA

(softly)

Yes.

NATE

I can do that!

JULIA

No, you can't.

NATE

It doesn't have to mean anything to me,  
honestly!

JULIA

How can it not mean anything, Nate? It's  
just the kind of person you are.

NATE

(desperate)

I can be different!

JULIA

Why would you want to be? You're a great  
kid, a great...young man.

NATE

I'm old enough!

JULIA

It's not that you're too young, believe  
me, it's just that you're too...real.

NATE

You thought I was just some...lawn boy  
that you could fuck.

JULIA

I'm sorry. It was just supposed to be a  
fun little summer...thing, not a  
relationship.

NATE

It couldn't be a relationship?

JULIA

(harsh)

No.

NATE

(angry)

You've done this before? Fucked the lawn  
boy?

From her look, the answer is yes. Nate is devastated.

NATE (cont'd)

Seriously?

JULIA

(cold)

Nate, I'm tired. I just got home. I  
really don't feel like dealing with  
your commentary on my life.

NATE

But -

JULIA

I think you should leave now.

She throws on a robe and exits, leaving him on the bed, alone.

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nate drives away, lawnmower in the bed of the pickup. As he cruises down the quiet streets, he sticks his head out the window, letting the night air blast him full in the face.

INT. NATE'S HOUSE; KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nate sneaks quietly through the dark kitchen...

DAD (O.S.)

(pissed)

In here. Now.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Nate faces his Dad.

DAD

I didn't realize the lawnmower had headlights.

NATE

(feeble)

I had to finish up some planting, it couldn't wait.

DAD

If the word "grounded" doesn't mean anything to you, maybe the words "I'll take the keys to the truck and drive you to and from your jobs like a little kid" might.

Nate silently tosses the keys to his dad and walks upstairs. Surprised, Dad says nothing.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nate is tallying his summer income on the computer.

NATE (V.O.)

Without Julia, I'd never make enough money to quit soccer.

He enters hypothetical figures, trying to make them add up to \$5000, but each time, he comes up short.

NATE (V.O.)

She'd given me lots of work, and paid twice as much as anyone else. Even if I found new customers and worked my ass off for the last three weeks of summer, my best case scenario came up short.

Nate slams the laptop shut.

NATE

Fuck.

His phone RINGS; the display says it's Ben.

NATE (cont'd)

Hey, Ben.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

BEN

So I'm thinking of taking the blame for Mouth's chem explosion.

NATE

Why? You weren't even there.

BEN

I know, but I'm thinking I might want to take a year off before college anyway, so I may as well do it and get you guys off the hook.

NATE

What are you talking about? That's idiotic. Besides, what about Alice?

BEN

Well, that's kind of why I want to take time off...

NATE

Why, so you guys can hang out together?

BEN

No, more the opposite. I'm kind of thinking I might not want to go to the same school as her, and this might be a way to avoid a big breakup scene, you know?

NATE

You want to get busted for production of a Schedule Three Controlled Substance so that you don't have to break up with Alice? Wait, why do you want to break up with Alice?

BEN

I don't know, it's just not working out.

Nate sighs.

NATE (V.O.)

The more reluctant I'd been to tell Ben what was going on, the more he'd assumed I was having all kinds of porn-worthy adventures. And the more he thought about the greener grass I was supposedly mowing, the less interested he was in regular old sex with Alice.

It's a long conversation; the two guys have a lot to catch up on, and we see them sprawled out on the floor, talking as the hours pass.

NATE (V.O.)

In order to convince Ben he wasn't missing anything, I had to tell him the whole story. Everything. Mouth, Marissa, and the fiasco with Julia. Once I got started, it really wasn't that hard to tell him.

NATE

(still on the phone to Ben)  
...so basically, I didn't really accomplish anything I wanted to do: there was no perfect experience, it's debatable whether I even lost my virginity, and I didn't earn enough to quit soccer.

BEN

Aw man, sexual harassment is no joke.

NATE

Right? I get it now.

BEN

Well, with the soccer thing, you could just not go to Princeton.

NATE

I thought of that...

BEN

(pumping him up)

That would show your dad! Take a year off and apply somewhere else, somewhere cheaper. Do it on your own terms!

NATE

(resigned)

You know, when it comes right down to it, it's pretty hard to turn down an Ivy League education -- even if it means I have to play that stupid, suck-ass sport.

BEN

I guess... It was a fun idea for a second, though.

NATE

Yeah. But hey, if Mouth doesn't confess, I'll probably get booted from Princeton -- and in a sick kind of way, that's kind of what I hope happens.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Middle of the night. Nate is asleep.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Nate, how bad do you want to go to college? Nate? Nate!

Nate WAKES with a start. Mouth is standing over his bed.

NATE

How'd you get in here?

INT. NATE'S HOUSE; KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

MOUTH

Window was left wide open.

Mouth climbs up on a chair to go back out the window over the kitchen sink.

NATE

Hey brainiac...

Nate opens the door, indicating an easier way out.

EXT. MARISSA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mouth carries a bouquet of supermarket daisies.

NATE

I don't know if this is such a good idea.

MOUTH

Don't you want to go to Princeton?

NATE

Not really, if I have to play soccer.

MOUTH

(stops in his tracks)

Then you take the blame.

NATE

No! But if it turns out that I can't go, then so be it.

MOUTH

What do you want, Nate? You can't put your fate in other people's hands. If you don't want to go, take the blame; if you do, then help me convince Marissa to take it.

NATE

Isn't there another option?

MOUTH

(up at her window)

Marissa! Marissa!

She opens the window, cranky.

MARISSA

What do you want?

Mouth tosses the flowers up to her and she catches them.

MOUTH

(sweet)

Is there any way you would consider taking the hit for the lab thing? It would mean so much to us.

MARISSA

Oh, really, us?

MOUTH

Yeah.

MARISSA  
Really, Nate?

Nate hesitates, torn.

MOUTH  
(to Nate, pissed)  
Whose side are you on?

NATE  
(quiet)  
I think you should say it was you.

MOUTH  
Why?

NATE  
Because it was.

Disgusted with Nate, Mouth turns back to Marissa.

MOUTH  
Come on, Mariss... Me and Nate are gonna be so screwed if we take the blame -- what do you have to lose?

MARISSA  
(as if considering it)  
What do I have to lose...

Marissa stands there for a long time, looking down at them. First hurt, then rage washes over her face.

MARISSA (cont'd)  
What do I have to lose...you fucking asshole?

She rips the heads off the daisies and FLINGS them down at Mouth, followed by the stems and crumpled wrapping. She disappears into her room and returns with more projectiles.

MARISSA (cont'd)  
(shouting)  
I really didn't care if you "used" me for sex, because at least I got something out of that.

She throws a stuffed animal, magazines, a snow globe. Mouth and Nate duck. The lights of neighboring houses come on. Nate smiles appreciatively at her tirade.

MARISSA (cont'd)  
But this? For you to assume that I'll never do anything where it'll matter if I was busted for drugs? Fuck you!

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

What's going on?

MARISSA'S DAD (O.S.)

Marissa?

Marissa flings out a fistful of money; twenties flutter down around Nate and Mouth.

MARISSA

And you suck even worse in bed than Nate!

She SLAMS her window shut. Nate glances up and sees her looking down at him. She gives him a half-smile before disappearing from view.

MOUTH

What is that supposed to mean?

NATE

It means you must suck pretty bad, dude.

Mouth hauls back and PUNCHES Nate. Everything goes BLACK.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Morning. Nate is stirring, but in no rush to open his eyes. He's got a nice fresh shiner.

He hears the SOUNDS of a woman exerting herself. Soft, rhythmic, grunting and heavy breathing. He cringes... Then voices, talking in quiet, urgent tones.

MS. GILBERT (O.S.)

Jim, please...

DAD (O.S.)

Come on, I want to do it.

MS. GILBERT (O.S.)

Move your hand. Let me do it myself.

Nate puts the pillow over his head; this is the last thing he wants to wake up to...

DAD (O.S.)

Fine, if you wanna get all Gloria Steinem on me and throw your back out in the process, be my guest.

Huh? Nate gets out of bed and opens his bedroom door.

Ms. Gilbert is struggling to carry a cardboard box of her belongings down the stairs while Nate's Dad watches her.

MS. GILBERT

Sorry, Nate, we were trying not to wake you. What happened to your eye?

NATE

Nothing. What are you doing?

Ms. Gilbert and Nate's Dad share a look.

MS. GILBERT

(slightly icy)  
You tell him.

She carries the box down the stairs.

DAD

Linda's moving out.

NATE

Why? I thought...

DAD

When it came right down to it, I couldn't bite the bullet and commit, and she said sayonara. Can't blame her, really.

NATE

I kind of thought she was perfect...

DAD

No such thing as perfect.

NATE

For you, I mean.

DAD

(shrugs)  
Nothing quite as perfect as the one you haven't met yet though, is there?  
(ruffles Nate's hair)  
Just can't tame the Darnell boys, huh?

Nate pulls away, clearly disappointed with his dad.

DAD (cont'd)

Principal Lang called this morning.

NATE

Yeah?

DAD

Mouth took responsibility for the explosion.

NATE  
He did?

DAD  
You're off the hook -- they won't tell  
the police -- or Princeton.

NATE  
(flat)  
That's good.

DAD  
(enthusiastic)  
Whaddaya say we get in a couple hours of  
light practice after breakfast?

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Nate SLIDES, chest-first, into a mud puddle.

It's drizzling and the field is muddy, but that doesn't stop  
Dad from dribbling the ball around his fallen son and scoring  
on the empty net.

DAD  
That's eight to two, me!

NATE  
(getting up)  
Dad, let's go, we're gonna tear up the  
field.

DAD  
(taunting)  
Are you afraid of a little mud? Is your  
skin too delicate?

NATE  
Come on, not today, please?

DAD  
(passing him the ball)  
Come on, you start, let's go.

NATE  
Dad, I don't want to.

DAD  
Where's the toughness, where's the  
fighting spirit?

Nate sighs and dribbles the ball towards his dad. Dad lunges  
for it, but Nate skirts around him and heads for the goal.  
Dad sprints back and comes in for the tackle again.

They dance at full-speed, dodging and weaving and spinning as Dad tries to steal the ball from Nate. Nate is incredible, but Dad isn't going to let him win easily.

Thirty feet from the goal, Nate pauses, staring his dad in the eye, daring him to commit to one direction or another. Dad is poised to strike. Nate fakes one way, but Dad doesn't go for it. Nate hovers for a long moment, then spins away, his body darting one way, his legs seemingly going the other -- he SHOTS, the ball flies past Dad, and Nate SCORES. It's beautiful.

Dad retrieves the ball from the goal without a word.

NATE  
I'm going in.

DAD  
What? You make one lousy goal and you quit? The score's only eight-three.

Nate turns and walks off the field. Dad sneers.

DAD (cont'd)  
What are you going to do, leave? Are you gonna go for a run? Don't be such a fucking wuss.

Nate stops walking and turns around.

NATE  
Dad, I don't want to play.

DAD  
I don't care what you want, get your ass back out here.

Nate stands, feet firmly planted, as the rain gets heavier. He takes a deep breath.

NATE  
No, I don't want to play at all. In college. Anywhere. Ever.

Dad LAUGHS.

DAD  
Right! So you're gonna pick up the phone and say, to the coach of the best team in the Ivies, that you don't want to play for his team?

NATE  
Yeah. I don't want to play. I hate it.

DAD  
You hate it? Since when?

NATE  
Since always.

DAD  
Oh, this is beautiful, this is rich.  
"Since always."

NATE  
I'm serious.

DAD  
And where exactly is the money to pay for college going to come from?

NATE  
I don't know. I'll defer for a year and figure it out. I almost made enough to do it this year.

DAD  
What, mowing lawns?

NATE  
Yeah, I made almost four thousand dollars. I've been saving all summer so I could quit.

This takes Dad by surprise; he realizes how serious Nate is.

NATE (cont'd)  
But I didn't make enough. I never play well enough, I never work hard enough, and now I didn't make enough. Big surprise.

Nate walks off. Dad just watches him go, holding the muddy soccer ball in his hands. He is heartbroken, devastated by Nate's revelation.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Nate walks back up to the house. Marissa is sitting on the porch, waiting for him.

NATE  
Hey.

MARISSA  
Hey. You hear about Mouth?

NATE  
Yeah. I guess he suddenly grew a conscience.

MARISSA

Nah.

(she holds up Mouth's watch)  
I just told him he'd never see Wilt's watch again if he didn't 'fess up.

NATE

Where'd you get that?

MARISSA

My front lawn. Probably flew off when he decked you.

NATE

He'll be okay. His dad'll just build them a new gym and they'll drop the whole matter.

MARISSA

Yup. I, uh...wanted to wish you luck with Julia. When's the big love-in?

NATE

Already happened. It was a fiasco, I don't want to talk about it.

(off Marissa's look)

I misread it, okay? She wasn't ever going to fall in love with me, she just wanted to sleep with me.

MARISSA

Niiice.

NATE

Yeah, I was being used for my body. Can you believe it?

MARISSA

Happens.

NATE

Yeah, well...it's not too great on either side, I guess.

MARISSA

No.

Nate's Dad stomps onto the porch and into the house, ignoring Nate and grunting a greeting to Marissa. He SLAMS the screen door on his way inside.

MARISSA (cont'd)

Something going on?

NATE

I may have just made the hugest mistake in my life, but you know what, I don't care.  
 (exhilarated and scared)  
 I'm not going to school next year. I don't want to play soccer.

MARISSA

Woo! Delinquents unite!

She high-fives him.

MARISSA (cont'd)

That's pretty brave.

NATE

Stupid's more like it, but I guess I'd rather be stupid than chickenshit.

MARISSA

You seem happy about it, though.

NATE

Sure, it feels great when you jump out of the plane, right up until you hit the ground.

MARISSA

Well, maybe your parachute will work. You're on a roll.

NATE

What are you talking about, I am so not.

MARISSA

The soccer thing is brave. The thing with Julia was pretty brave.

NATE

What do you mean? She stomped on me!

MARISSA

But you stuck your neck out, you went for the perfect experience.

NATE

But it wasn't perfect.

MARISSA

Still, that's better than never taking the chance in the first place. People basically live their lives in all kinds of fucked up ways, just to avoid being stomped on.

(beat)

(MORE)

MARISSA (cont'd)

Trust me, I'm an expert. I stomp on myself before anyone can do it for me.

NATE

What do you mean?

MARISSA

The stuff with Mouth. With you. I thought I was somehow getting back at both you guys by sleeping with you, but it kind of backfired.

(beat)

I don't think I'm ever gonna have sex again.

NATE

Who knows, maybe you'll fall in love.

MARISSA

(snorts)

Yeah, right.

NATE

Someone once told me, "there are always more options than you think there are."

MARISSA

What is that supposed to mean?

NATE

(shrugs)

Nothing, I guess.

They just sit quietly, side-by-side, looking out at the rain.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)

You know, I really would've been perfectly happy to have taken the year off to think about what happened...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NATE'S HOUSE - DAY

Nate answers the door. The Princeton Varsity Cross-Country COACH stands on the front porch.

CROSS-COUNTRY COACH

Nate Darnell?

NATE (V.O.)

...but one of those options I hadn't even thought about reached over and slapped me upside the head.

EXT. PRINCETON CAMPUS - DAY

The Cross-Country Coach, his arm around Nate's shoulders, makes introductions to the rest of the team. Nate is dressed in the team colors. Mitchell (the guy that Nate raced and nearly beat) glares at Nate, but the rest of the team gives him a warm welcome.

NATE (V.O.)

The Princeton Cross-Country coach wanted me on his team so bad he got me even more money than my soccer scholarship.

EXT. CROSS-COUNTRY MEET - DAY

Nate runs in a cross-country meet, part of the Princeton team.

NATE (V.O.)

Dad hasn't quite adjusted to the idea of me not playing soccer, but he will.

Nate's Dad, dressed in his soccer coach uniform, watches from the sidelines, twitching with mixed emotions; he's proud, but unable to cheer for Nate just yet.

EXT. PRINCETON CAMPUS - DAY

Nate walks through campus, thrilled to be one of hundreds of lost freshmen.

NATE (V.O.)

It's pretty strange not to have the old crew around...

INT. MIT DORM ROOM

NATE (V.O.)

Ben and Alice went off to MIT together and they're trying to make a go of it.

Ben and Alice play a first person shooter game. Alice's character -- a mercenary with an enormous gun -- saves Ben's character by blowing up an enemy tank in a gigantic FIRESTORM.

NATE (V.O.)

I hope it works out -- I don't know where Ben's gonna find another girl who's as badass with an Uzi as Alice.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Mouth gets a stern talking to by Principal Lang, which he accepts dutifully.

NATE (V.O.)

Lucky for Mouth, the Principal never realized the true purpose of his little experiment; she bought his claim he was only trying to earn extra credit for the chemistry class he was in danger of failing. The last part was true, at least.

She finishes lecturing, shakes Mouth's hand and hands him a diploma.

NATE (V.O.)

The whole thing was dropped and Mouth went off to his dad's alma mater.

INT. FRATERNITY HOUSE

Mouth participates in some fraternity pledging ritual involving beer, a goat and a roomful of rowdy drunk guys just like Mouth.

NATE (V.O.)

We didn't talk before he left, and I don't really care if we ever do again. I'm not worried about him though; depressingly, guys like Mouth always seem to do just fine.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Nate walks down the main street in Lawrenceville, turning into the pizza shop, where Marissa greets him.

NATE (V.O.)

The best thing about Princeton is it's really close to home, so I can see Marissa. I'm working on getting her to apply to college. It's a tough sell, but I've got time...

Nate and Marissa walk together down the street, talking and eating their pizza slices.

NATE (V.O.)

So, before you make fun of my pathetic summer behind my back, first think what you've done that you aren't particularly proud of. Shit happens, right? And I guess it all turned out fine in the end, but still, do me a favor -- don't tell anyone about it, okay?

Nate reaches out and holds Marissa's hand -- a passing kid does a double take at the sight, but Nate doesn't care. Marissa notices and smiles her crooked smile.

FADE OUT.