

I THINK WE'RE ALONE NOW

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DRAFT DATED
2/11/16

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EXT. TOWN - DAY

The perfect portrait of New England in springtime bloom, awash in a soft mid-morning light.

All is deathly quiet.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Every streetlight extinguished.

Not a car on the road. Not a soul to be seen.

Rows of shops closed for business. Their storefront windows eerily pristine, adorned with classic Americana kitsch.

Two empty rocking chairs tremble in the breeze.

A flock of sparrows coasts overhead, beyond the web of tangled branches. A v-formation of little black and brown specks soaring the skies, returning home for the season.

PRE-LAP: Tick. Tick. Tick.

INT. FOYER - FIRST HOUSEHOLD - DAY

A wall clock, keeping time.

It's cozy in here, but not warm. A palpable chill hangs over the lived-in parlor. Nobody's been by in some time.

Four beaming, airbrushed faces in a framed photograph on the mantelpiece. Father, mother, two-point-five kids.

The glass on the frame is just barely frosted over.

ANGLE on the FRONT DOOR.

From outside: A pair of muted FOOTSTEPS.

The adjacent window QUIVERS as a small SCREWDRIVER slides in underneath the sill.

It's a tight fit. The screwdriver's shaft SCISSORS back and forth, slowly forcing its way through. GRINDING the sill's hardwood base into FLAKES, misting through the air like snow.

A GLOVED HAND reaches into the newly formed crevice, angling its way toward the front door. TWISTING the LOCK...

The door swings open, revealing a MAN, early 30s, on the porch. He wears a fleece jacket, baggy workman jeans and hiking boots. Thick-framed glasses. Average build.

This is DEL.

He scuffs his boots on the floor mat. Surveys the room.

His eyes land on the ticking wall clock. He plucks the clock from its moorings. Removes the batteries.

The ticking sound abruptly dies.

He re-hangs the clock. Straightens it.

He deposits the batteries in a zip-lock bag. Folds the bag into the front pocket of a worn Kipling backpack. Swings the backpack over his shoulder.

The ape keychain dangles at Del's side, open-mouthed in a state of perpetual awe.

INT. VARIOUS - FIRST HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del rummages clinically through the empty home.

He strips the batteries from the smoke alarm. From Daddy's electric toothbrush. From the kids' toy RCs and night lights and mobile gaming consoles. From Mommy's vibrator.

He neglects the wad of cash on the dresser. The jewelry. The flat-screen television.

He scans the bookshelf, index finger outstretched. Plucks out the more obscure titles.

He removes the family portrait from its frame. Sets the frame upright just where he found it.

EXT. FIRST HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del kneels in the grass, a surgical mask over his nose and mouth. He's spray-painting a large white **X** across the lawn.

He gets to his feet. Brushes the dirt from his knees. Strips off his gloves, revealing two pale, bony hands.

We pull back to see every single house on the block, all the way to the end of the street, marked with the exact same **X**.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Del stands at the edge of the water, stark naked, hosing himself down with a portable camping shower.

EXT. DEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Six buckets of fresh lake water rattle in the rear enclosure of Del's pick-up truck.

Del brakes at an intersection. Looks both ways. Continues on.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Del coasts the aisles with a shopping cart.

Most of the grocery's stock is still in place, though the fluorescent lights, fridges and freezers are down.

He checks expiration dates. Takes only what he needs.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del's truck pulls to a stop outside the town library.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del replenishes the AAA batteries in his Brother P-Touch® Label Maker.

He traverses the stacks, adding the books from his haul to the library's inventory. Labeling them with their proper Dewey Decimal codes.

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

A wide assortment of plants, shrubs and vegetation. Del circulates, spritzing each of them with water.

He listens closely. The roots purr and gurgle under their soil, lapping up the new liquid.

He savors the sound.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Del pilots a heavy-duty street sweeper up and down the road, its twin brushes WHIRRING and GRINDING.

INT. READING ROOM - LIBRARY - DAY

Del sits on the floor, piecing together a three-dimensional puzzle of the Taj Mahal.

We pull back to discover the room is carpeted with a seemingly endless array of 3D puzzles, all completed.

EXT. SOUND - DAY

The sun's last light casts intense and powerful streaks across the sky. A lone sailboat bobs on the ocean's surface.

Del's bare feet hang from the boat's edge as he reads one of his books. His nose swathed in layers of sunblock.

His fishing rod STIRS. Del JUMPS.

He abandons his book, grabbing hold of the rod and reeling in his line, mad with excitement.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - NIGHT

A toy aquarium, battery-operated, filled with plastic clownfish and glowing neon blue water.

Del's curled up on a hammock in the darkness, munching on a well-balanced meal of cooked fish, brown rice and veggies.

He watches an old screwball comedy on a laptop. Chuckles through mouthfuls of food.

He keeps an eye on the laptop's battery power. It's dwindling at nineteen percent.

A mammoth pile of unused laptops and portable DVD players rests beside his hammock, stacked like pancakes.

EXT. ROOFTOP - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del spreads out on a blanket, gazing up at the nighttime sky.

Every single star is visible, every constellation defined, an awesome natural panorama that belongs to Del and Del alone.

He falls asleep smiling.

INT. BATHROOM - LIBRARY - DAY

Del shaves in the mirror. Clips his fingernails. Tweezes his eyebrows. Swabs the wax from his ears.

He pops two gummy vitamins.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Del jogs past rows and rows of suburban houses marked with his white X.

He crosses into a new part of town, where the front lawns are still bare. Unexplored territory.

Del stops to catch his breath. He scans the area. Listens.

Hears movement.

He turns, alarmed.

It's the window blinds from a nearby house. They're rustling, scratching softly against the glass...

Somebody's inside.

Del approaches the porch, moving furtively.

He presses his ear to the door.

From the other side -- something's CLAWING against the door's paneling. Something low to the ground.

Del thinks.

He turns the knob. The door's unlocked. He pushes it open...

A small DOG bursts forth, wild with newfound freedom. Pawing frantically at Del's leg. Eyes wide and watery.

It's a pug, and a fat one at that. Filthy. Rabid with energy. And its sharp talons, long ungroomed and ill-maintained, CUT DEEP into Del's SKIN...

Del shakes the thing off his leg. Nudges it outside with his leg. Shuts the door behind him.

INT. SECOND HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

Del instantly GAGS.

This place REEKS. It's PUTRID.

Flies circling in droves. Dog shit everywhere.

Del whips the surgical mask over his nose and mouth. He breathes heavily, his eyes pooling from the stench.

He makes his way through the house. Steps over a big, bulging bag of DOG KIBBLE -- year's supply -- it's been CLAWED INTO.

He proceeds cautiously into the kitchen. The flies' buzzing amplifies, grows DEAFENING...

There it is. Slumped across the tiled floor, contorted in an awkward, awful position... a BODY.

A woman. Very old. Very dead.

Del processes the gruesome scene.

He continues into the living room.

There's a second body, slouched over in a leather armchair. Head facing away from Del and toward the defunct television.

A halo of flies overhead, almost angelic.

The husband. Also very old. Also very dead.

The TV remote still locked in his hand.

Del pulls away the surgical mask. Squats down to meet the rotting corpse face-to-face.

The man's eyes are marbled over, glazed white.

Del shimmies the remote from the man's ice-cold hand. Pops out the batteries. Pockets them.

INT. SECOND HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del hops over the woman's body to the trash drawer. Extracts the garbage bags all at once.

He sweeps up the mess. Scrubs the floor. Collects the doggie droppings and scattered pet food into the bags.

He yanks the rug out from under the furniture. Tears out the shower curtain. Wraps the bodies into them, burrito-style.

He pulls the couple's yellowed wedding portrait from its frame. They look youthful, happy.

He replaces the empty frame on the bureau.

EXT. SECOND HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del takes out the trash.

He pauses at the sight of the fat pug dog, sitting eagerly on the curb. Staring back at him. Tail wagging.

INT. DEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Del loads the bodies into the back of his truck.

The dog's seated in the passenger seat, gazing out somberly at the newly sprayed white X on its owners' lawn.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Del off-loads the bodies into the dirt.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Del digs a hole with a well-worn shovel.

The dog watches at his side, panting.

INT. DEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Del returns to his truck. He looks in the side mirror.

The dog's pacing the woods in circles, sniffing around at the patch of fresh grave.

Del starts his car.

The dog looks up.

Del turns away. Starts driving.

The dog barks, strained. Chases after the truck with effort, its stubby legs giving out easily.

Del accelerates, staring forward. The dog's barking grows distant in his wake.

He flinches. Takes his foot off the gas. Allows the dog to catch up to him.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del dumps a bucket of water over the dog.

He grooms the dog's nails with a small pair of scissors.

He peeks under the dog's hood. It's male. He prints out a label. Affixes it to the dog's new collar.

"NAME: DEWEY."

INT. STREET - DAY

Del walks Dewey on a leash.

Dewey circles a fire hydrant with mild interest.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Del and Dewey play fetch. Dewey moves very slowly.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del eats a home-cooked meal at a cluster of desks, reading a library book on pet care.

Dewey lingers at his feet. Del feeds him a baby carrot.

INT. CHILDREN'S SECTION - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del installs Dewey in an enclosed pen outfitted with bean bag cushions and a bowl of water.

Dewey roams the perimeter, restless. Del exits.

INT. DRUG STORE - DAY

Del picks from an assortment of colorful chew toys. Tests their squeaking capabilities.

INT. CHILDREN'S SECTION - LIBRARY - DAY

Del returns to Dewey's pen with a shopping bag filled with toys and treats.

He stops. The bean bags are TORN APART. Beans EVERYWHERE. Water bowl OVERTURNED. The pen's BREACHED... Dewey's GONE.

Del rounds a corner. A shred of paper catches on his shoe. He inspects it -- it's a page from a picture book.

Ripped apart. Destroyed.

He looks ahead. Sees the remnants of an entire stock of children's books, all RIPPED to SHREDS.

Del panics. He sinks to his hands and knees. Tries to gather the scraps and re-order them.

It's a hollow task. They're all ruined.

Del starts to tear up.

He turns. Dewey's gazing at him. Munching on one of the pages. Unrepentant.

Del takes a deep breath.

INT. DEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Del drives, steadfast.

In the passenger seat: An overflowing trash bag filled with every last one of the pet supplies.

He peers in the rearview. Dewey stares back at him, curious.

EXT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del parks his car for the evening.

He's alone now.

INT. CHILDREN'S SECTION - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del surveys the empty space where Dewey's pen once was.

He smooths out the creases in the carpet.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del re-files the books on pet care.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del watches another old screwball comedy.

He doesn't laugh. Shuts the laptop.

EXT. SOUND - DAY

It's a windy day at sea. Del's sailboat rocks with the waves, swaying up and down.

Del shrouds himself in a blanket.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del eats dinner in silence.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del stares at the plastic fish in his toy aquarium, swimming back and forth, smiles etched on their faces.

He turns on his side in the hammock. Tries to sleep.

Just then: A low RASP. Barely audible.

Del perks up. He scrambles to his TRANSISTOR RADIO. Tunes it to the correct frequency.

The sound sharpens. It's a VOICE.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Hello?

Del's eyes widen.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Can anyone hear me?

Del watches the radio in awe.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Please. Please, somebody be there.

Del grabs the radio. Holds down the talk button. Opens his mouth to speak... He falters.

DEL

(weak)

No.

Del takes his finger off the button.

DEL (CONT'D)

No.

He SMASHES the RADIO.

DEL (CONT'D)

No.

He chokes. Hyperventilates. Inhales sharply.

DEL (CONT'D)

Oh god. Oh god.

Suddenly:

BANG. BANG. BANG.

From outside. Sounds like a HAIL of GUNFIRE.

Del BOLTS.

EXT. ROOFTOP - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del rushes out onto the roof, just in time to catch the mighty FIREWORKS DISPLAY on the HORIZON.

The night sky is RIDDLED with TECHNICOLOR. The stars flushed away, overwhelmed by the dramatic BARRAGE of LIGHT and SOUND.

Rockets soaring upward and rippling through the atmosphere, exploding violently, shredding the heavens... It's BLINDING.

Del shields his face. Covers his ears. Screams.

His voice is DROWNED OUT.

INT. BATHROOM - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del barricades the door. Blacks out the window with thick strips of duct tape, immersing himself in TOTAL DARKNESS.

We can still hear the fireworks in full force outside.

Del locks himself in a stall, curling his knees up into his chest. He gropes a SWITCHBLADE in his hand.

His grip is shaky, unstable. The knife drops to the floor, landing with a small CLINK.

Del shuts his eyes. Takes a series of deep breaths.

DEL

(in SOTTO)

Please. Please no.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - NIGHT

The radio, smashed into pieces, crackles quietly.

WOMAN (O.S.)
(distorted)
Can you hear me now?

The receiver light fizzles out.

INT. BATHROOM - LIBRARY - DAY

Del wakes up.

It's quiet outside.

He takes a peek through the window. The skies are clear.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del sidles out from the library's double doors.

There's no one in sight.

He listens closely. Hears a sound, very distant.

It's a CAR ALARM.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A terrible wreck.

There's a STATION WAGON up on the curb, FLATTENED under a felled LAMPPOST. Windshield SMASHED IN. Engine FUMING.

The alarm BLARES.

Del approaches cautiously, knife outstretched.

The driver's incapacitated. Maybe dead.

Del squints for a better look. The driver is female. Almost certainly the woman from the radio.

He edges closer. She's young. Late teens or so. Gash on her forehead. Looks nasty.

Probably dead.

Del opens the car door.

The body slumps out into Del's arms.

He checks for a pulse... Her eyes flicker open.

They stare at one another.

WOMAN

You're here.

She smiles.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna fuck you into the next
dimension.

She laughs. Slips back into unconsciousness.

Del sets her down in the grass, taking care not to bang her head. Returns to the car.

The dash is papered with deflated potato chip bags and empty liquor bottles and stray undergarments.

He looks in the backseat, spots her transistor radio. Her leftover fireworks. A Polaroid camera. A GameBoy. Two bulging floral-print suitcases, frayed at the seams.

He pops the glove compartment. Finds a small HANDGUN, buried among loose papers.

He peers over his shoulder at the young woman splayed out on the grass. Contemplates his next move.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del unzips the suitcases. Sifts through the wrinkled clothing and toiletries.

He uncovers a weathered PHOTO of a FAMILY. Taped together in places -- it looks as if it's been torn up before.

The girl. Her mother, father, little sister. All smiles.

Underneath, he finds a newer series of overexposed Polaroid selfies taken at various iconic national landmarks. In each of them, the girl mugs for the camera with a ridiculous face.

He lingers on a photo taken at the crest of the Grand Canyon.

She's sticking her tongue out at him.

This is GRACE.

INT. BEDROOM - ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Grace stirs awake. Her vision stabilizes.

She's in a BEDROOM, sparsely decorated. The windows are BOARDED SHUT from the outside. A sliver of DAYLIGHT pours in from a neglected crack.

She sits up with pain. Runs her hand through her hair. Her forehead's dressed in layers of GAUZE. It STINGS.

She gets to her feet. Feels DIZZY. Grabs a trash can, digs her head in. HURLS.

GRACE

Ugh. Fuck me.

She wipes her mouth. Heads to the door. Reaches for the knob.

It's LOCKED. She RAPS her FISTS on the DOOR.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello--?

Nothing.

She flings open the dresser drawers. They're all EMPTY.

The room's been cleaned out completely. The only spare item a bottle of hand sanitizer on the night stand.

She hears a pair of FOOTSTEPS. Turns back to the door. Sees a shadow pass across the small round PEEPHOLE.

DEL (O.S.)

Is there anyone else?

GRACE

What's going on?

DEL (O.S.)

Answer my question, please.

GRACE

What's your question?

DEL (O.S.)

Is there anyone else?

GRACE

It's just me in here.

DEL (O.S.)

I know that already.

GRACE

Oh, so it's my fault your question
was fucking stupid.

The shadow disappears from the peephole.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Wait!

DEL (O.S.)

Is there anybody else?

GRACE

There's no one else.

DEL (O.S.)

Anywhere?

Grace's eyes narrow in on the door.

GRACE

Are you not--

DEL (O.S.)

Anywhere?

There's a hint of panic in his voice.

Grace processes. She exhales slowly.

GRACE

Anywhere.

DEL (O.S.)

It's just you?

GRACE

Just me and you.

DEL (O.S.)

That's all?

GRACE

Yeah. That's it. We're it.

A long pause on the other end.

DEL (O.S.)

Why are you still alive?

INT. HALLWAY - ABANDONED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Del stands on the other end of the door, watching Grace through the peephole's fishbowl POV.

Grace looks directly at him.

GRACE
Why are you?

INT. BEDROOM - ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Grace waits. Finally, Del speaks up.

DEL (O.S.)
What about the gun?

GRACE
Gun? Which gun?

DEL (O.S.)
The gun in your glove compartment.

GRACE
Oh, that gun. I found it on the road a few months back. I figured maybe it'd come in handy one day.

DEL (O.S.)
Against who?

GRACE
Well... who's to say they don't all come back from the dead and try to eat our brains?

DEL (O.S.)
That won't happen.

GRACE
Why not?

DEL (O.S.)
Because it doesn't happen.

GRACE
And the entire human population of earth dropping dead in a single instant on a Tuesday afternoon, does that not happen either?

No response.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Will you let me out?

DEL (O.S.)
I can't yet.

GRACE
Come on, man.
(a pause)
I'll make it worth your while.

She lets the last word linger.

DEL (O.S.)
I'm going to unlock the door.
That'll cue you to start counting
to fifteen Mississippi. I'll be
counting too, from farther away.
After fifteen Mississippi you can
open the door. I won't be here.
Don't look for me.

GRACE
Hold on.

DEL (O.S.)
There's a car outside, it's got a
full tank of gas and all your
belongings, minus the gun. You
shouldn't have that.

GRACE
Dude, what the fuck--?

DEL (O.S.)
You have to leave. You have to
leave and forget you were ever here
and never come back. Please.

GRACE
But... we're all that's left.

DEL (O.S.)
I'm going to start counting now.

GRACE
Are you listening to me? I said
we're the only ones still out here!
We're the sole fuckin' survivors,
man! You can't just ghost me like
we're in fucking middle school--!

DEL (O.S.)
One Mississippi.

The doorknob CLICKS.

DEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm leaving now, two Missi--

Grace opens the door. Meets Del head-on. Smirks.

GRACE
You're tall.

DEL
What are you doing?

GRACE
You sounded shorter.

DEL
Please go back inside and close the door, this isn't right. It's not what we talked about.

GRACE
You're bossy too. We can work around that.

DEL
There's nothing to work around. You're leaving.

GRACE
You think it's a coincidence we found each other?

DEL
No. You were drinking and you crashed your car on my street.

GRACE
Ah, that's right.

DEL
It's not funny. In your drunken binge you took down a lamppost, and now I have to fix it. That's going to require substantial renovations and-- and considerable labor--

GRACE
Labor.

DEL
Yes. Manpower.

GRACE

Man-power.

DEL

Stop that.

GRACE

C'mon. You know as well as I do why
He kept the two of us alive.

DEL

Who? Who kept us alive?

Grace points upward.

DEL (CONT'D)

Wow. Okay.

GRACE

Haven't you ever heard of "be
fruitful and--

DEL

--and multiply," yes. It's from the
King James Bible, Genesis 1:28,
call two twenty fifty-two.

GRACE

What's that?

DEL

It was an English translation
commissioned by King James I in the
early sixteenth century-- or maybe
the seventeenth--

GRACE

Not the Bible, the number.

DEL

Genesis 1:28 is where the passage
appears in the text.

GRACE

The second one. The two-twenty
whatever you said...

DEL

Two twenty fifty-two. It's the call
number for that edition.

GRACE

Call number?

DEL
Every book has one.

GRACE
They do? Are you sure?

DEL
Yes, I'm very sure. I don't really
have time to talk to you anymore--

GRACE
Are you retarded or something?

Del SNAPS.

DEL
Fuck off. Okay? Just... please
leave me alone. I have a lot of
work to do today. I'm already
behind schedule, even without
factoring in the lamppost.

GRACE
I can't believe this.

DEL
The engine's running in your car.
You're wasting gas.

GRACE
Right. And that's bad for the
environment.

He gives her a look. She laughs.

DEL
You're making fun of me.

GRACE
No.

DEL
I've gotta go.

He turns to leave. Grace's smile fades.

GRACE
No. Come on.

Del starts down the stairs.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You're making me feel like I'm a
fucking asshole or-- hey, listen,
I'm sorry-- will you wait a minute?

Del quickens his pace. Grace follows him outside.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Grace steps out into the light. She looks around in awe.

GRACE
Oh my god.

Del hands her the car keys. She barely notices.

GRACE (CONT'D)
This is where you live? You really
live here all alone?

DEL
Yes.

GRACE
Where are the bodies?

DEL
Which ones?

GRACE
Which ones? All of them. Everyone
died where they stood, all at once.
No warnings, no symptoms, just--

She turns to Del.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You can barely drive a mile without
getting one of them caught in your
tires. Everywhere you look it's
just piles and piles of bodies. And
the smell, that god-awful smell
that's everywhere...

She inhales the cool air.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It's not here.

DEL
Nope.

GRACE
What happened?

DEL
I buried them.

GRACE
All of them? Alone? That's impossible.

DEL
No, it's just tedious. I started with the public spaces. The outdoor areas. Then I moved on to the shops and restaurants and offices. As of late I've been clearing out the residences. The town's population was 9,539. I'm at 8,840. That's a 92% clearance rate thus far. It's actually 92.6, but I round down.

GRACE
Why?

DEL
Rounding up would be giving myself more credit than I deserve.

GRACE
No. I mean, why did you bury all the bodies?

DEL
(matter-of-fact)
They smelled. They were ugly. So I got rid of them.

Grace thinks.

GRACE
I want to stay.

DEL
That's not possible.

GRACE
Don't you ever get lonely?

Del cracks a smirk.

DEL
No. I don't get lonely.

GRACE

You're... you're telling me you're totally fine allowing the human race to go extinct?

DEL

It's out of my hands.

GRACE

Did you fall asleep during sex ed? I'm game, man. DTF. You don't even have to buy me dinner first.

She extends her arms outward.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Take me, you bastard.

DEL

Okay. How old are you?

GRACE

Nineteen. I think. It's been hard to keep track.

DEL

Great. So the average age of menopause is fifty-one. That gives us roughly thirty-two years in which we can propagate.

GRACE

I love it when you talk dirty.

DEL

Oh, I'm just getting started. Now best case scenario, my sperm's hyper-virile, we max out our capacity and have you on rotation twelve months out of the year.

Grace winces.

GRACE

You want to put me on rotation? Like a cow?

DEL

Don't look at me. I'm just fleshing out your repopulation theory to its logical extreme.

GRACE

Right. Sure.

DEL

Now, assuming none are multiple births, no twins or triplets in the mix, that's forty-two children maximum. Right? I think that's right. We can get a calculator.

GRACE

Oh no, I trust your data.

DEL

Great. So that's forty-two of our children that are then obligated to breed with their siblings to further procreate. And due to the heightened risk of developmental disabilities in inbred children, our descendants would have a severely diminished capacity for survival and would likely die out within a matter of one or two generations, max.

GRACE

You don't know that.

DEL

Of course I do.

GRACE

It worked before.

Del shakes his head.

DEL

I don't believe in myth. It's good literature, that's all.

GRACE

How can you be so cynical?

DEL

I'm a pragmatist. I recommend it highly. Good-bye now-- I'm sorry, what did you say your name was?

GRACE

Grace. Grace Wilkins.

DEL

Good-bye, Grace Wilkins. Best of luck out there.

Del strolls off.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Del fills his buckets with water. Grace appears beside him.

GRACE

I can help clear the bodies.

DEL

I don't need help. I'm 92% done.

GRACE

You'll get done a lot quicker with an extra pair of hands. And we can start planning our expansion.

DEL

Expansion?

GRACE

To the next town. And the next one after that. I bet we can clear the whole county in no time.

DEL

I'm not interested in clearing the county or any of the other towns.

He gets to his feet.

DEL (CONT'D)

My obligation starts and ends with this town. It's my home. It's been my home as long as I've lived. The least I can do is keep it clean.

GRACE

But there's so much else out there.

DEL

That's a subjective opinion.

GRACE

When was the last time you left?

DEL

I'm not sure how that's important.

GRACE

That long, huh?

Del doesn't respond. He hauls the buckets to his truck. Grace grabs two herself.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I'm staying here whether you like it or not.

DEL

Why? I've been nothing but rude to you all morning.

GRACE

I'm an extrovert. I wasn't built to be alone. You can ignore me all you want, give me the silent treatment, whatever. I don't need to talk to you. Just let me talk at you.

He looks to her.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I need to know there's someone else that can hear me.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del files books with a pair of noise-cancelling headphones clamped over his ears.

Grace trails. He pays her no mind.

GRACE

(voice raised)

I was making my way up the coast. My aunt got me this guide of the fifty U.S. landmarks you need to see before you die. One per state, and it ends at Niagara Falls. Have you been to Niagara Falls--?

He walks right past her into the next aisle.

Grace pulls a book from the nearest shelf and inserts it elsewhere, out of alphabetical order.

She catches up to Del. Removes his headphones.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You like books?

DEL

Yeah, I do.

GRACE

Me too!

DEL
That's great.

He fastens the headphones over his ears once more.

GRACE
We should start a book club!

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Grace watches from the shore as Del sails. She polishes off a beer, crushes the can and chucks it into the water.

She raises one hand to eye level. Pinches the sailboat with her index and middle fingers.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del prepares an intricate sushi platter for himself, complete with wasabi, ginger and soy sauce.

Grace observes the meal in awe.

GRACE
Are you eating fish?

DEL
It's salmon sashimi.

He nips at the fish with a pair of chopsticks.

GRACE
Some apocalypse this is.

She gets up. Browses the stacks.

GRACE (CONT'D)
So why do you think it happened?
Why did everyone die like that?

DEL
No use in speculating. I doubt
we'll ever know for sure.

GRACE
Maybe it was the Rapture.

DEL
Maybe. Probably not.

He sucks his chopstick clean.

GRACE

Where were you when it--?

DEL

I was sleeping.

GRACE

You were sleeping at two-thirty on a Tuesday afternoon?

DEL

I worked nights.

GRACE

Where'd you work?

DEL

Here. I was the night custodian.

GRACE

Huh.

DEL

It wasn't so bad. My job was to keep everything in order. I like doing that. And they let me read whatever I wanted in my downtime. It was quiet. It was just me.

Grace turns to him.

GRACE

Didn't you ever feel lonely?

DEL

That's the second time you've asked me that.

GRACE

I'm curious.

DEL

You're curious?

He pivots his chair to her.

DEL (CONT'D)

You really want to know when I felt lonely? I felt lonely when it was me and 9,538 other people here. Is that what you wanted to hear? Was that answer satisfactory, or would you like to ask me again?

He stops. Settles.

DEL (CONT'D)
I didn't mean to raise my voice.

GRACE
It's okay. I can leave.

DEL
What?

GRACE
I'll leave you alone. It's fine.
You've clearly got something good
going here. Good for you, I mean.
You're happy, and I guess I thought
I could-- I don't know-- at the end
of the day it's not fair for me to
put my shit on you. I'm sorry.

Del nods. Grace forces a smile.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'll go pack my things.

She exits.

Del folds his napkin.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Grace loads the car with her luggage.

She gets behind the wheel. Stares forward.

Her eyes start to well.

GRACE
Fuck.

She wipes them clean with the inside of her sleeve.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Fuck me. Okay.

She winds the key in the ignition. The car sputters to life.
Her foot hits the gas pedal...

A tap on the driver's window.

It's Del, crouching down to meet her at eye level.

GRACE (CONT'D)

What?

Del cups a hand to his ear. Grace cranks down the window.

GRACE (CONT'D)

What is it?

DEL

You should put on your brights.
It's dark out there.

GRACE

Oh. Yeah, thanks.

She flicks on the brights.

GRACE (CONT'D)

See you around.

DEL

You don't have to go just yet.

GRACE

The last thing I need is for you to
feel sorry for me. If I get going
now I think I can make it to
Niagara Falls by sun-up.

DEL

What's in Niagara Falls?

GRACE

It's one of the landmarks in my
aunt's guidebook. I was telling you
earlier-- you must've had the
headphones on. Anyways, it's the
last one and then that's it.

DEL

That's it?

GRACE

It's my last landmark.

DEL

What happens after that?

GRACE

What do you mean?

DEL

Once you've reached Niagara Falls.
Where do you go afterwards? Up to
Canada, or--?

Grace shakes her head.

GRACE

Stop.

DEL

Can you answer my question?

GRACE

Why? What does it matter anyway?
It's not like you care.

DEL

You shouldn't go to Niagara Falls.
Not yet. You can stay here for a
little while, get your bearings.

GRACE

Stop. Just stop. Please.

DEL

What kinds of movies do you like?

GRACE

Movies?

DEL

We have a great catalogue of DVDs
back at the library. I watch them
on laptops, the portable players,
anything I can get my hands on. You
could borrow one or two of them
sometime. The DVDs, I mean. Drop
them off in the return slot when
you're finished.

(a pause)

Do you like comedies?

GRACE

Yeah. Yeah, I like comedies.

DEL

We've got a whole section that's
just comedy films. And not just the
mainstream stuff either. Some of
the titles have been out of print
for-- well, I guess they're all out
of print now, technically.

GRACE

Why are you saying all this? I thought you wanted to be alone.

DEL

I do. At the moment, your leaving here and never ever coming back is a very exciting prospect for me.

GRACE

Thanks.

DEL

But if I'm forced to think about it long-term, I'll admit there's a very slim possibility that there could come a day when I change my mind and decide that I could do with some company after all. But by that point you'd be long gone and it'd be virtually impossible for me to ever find you again.

GRACE

Okay?

DEL

There's a terrifying degree of permanency there, don't you think?

GRACE

I guess.

DEL

What I'm trying to say is, if you leave now our goose is cooked before it even hatches.

GRACE

Cooked goose sounds pretty tasty right now.

DEL

I wouldn't know. I'm a pescatarian.

GRACE

Of course you are.

Del shrugs.

DEL

We'll give it a try.

GRACE

Are you sure?

DEL

No, of course I'm not sure. I'm agreeing to a trial period, during which time we set a very strict series of boundaries. As I believe I've said, I take a great civic pride in keeping this town operational, and I can't risk my daily routine being disrupted--

Grace gets out of the car. Stares at Del for a long beat.

DEL (CONT'D)

What? What's wrong?

She gives him a big hug.

Del tenses uneasily in her grip.

GRACE

I don't even know your name.

DEL

It's Del.

GRACE

Just Del?

DEL

Yeah. Just Del.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Del rigs a series of cords around the fallen lamppost. He harnesses them to the back of his truck.

He hops in his car. Nudges the gas.

The lamppost slowly cranes upright.

EXT. DEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Del brakes at the intersection from earlier.

To his surprise, a SECOND CAR wipes right past his, blasting an upbeat TUNE from the RADIO.

Grace gives a friendly wave. She continues down the road in the opposite direction.

Del shakes it off. Moves along.

He glances in his rearview. Pulls a u-turn.

EXT. THIRD HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del sees Grace's car parked outside of a house with a bumblebee mailbox.

The lawn is unmarked.

INT. FOYER - THIRD HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del hastens inside.

DEL

Grace--?

All of a sudden, a LARGE MASS plummets out from the second floor, TUMBLING like a SLINKY down the STAIRCASE, landing right at DEL'S FEET.

He looks down. It's a BODY.

GRACE

Sleep well?

Grace appears at the top of the stairs.

DEL

What are you doing?

GRACE

Clearing the house. I didn't see a white X on the lawn, so I figured it was up for grabs.

She vanishes down a hallway.

GRACE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I couldn't have picked a better one to pop my cherry either. This lady's got loads of good shit. I think she might be a hoarder.

DEL

Wait a minute.

Grace doubles back into view.

GRACE

Is everything all right?

DEL

No. No, it's not "all right."

He meets her halfway up the staircase.

DEL (CONT'D)

Let's get one thing straight.
Clearing the houses, that's my job.
I do that by myself. You see an
unmarked lawn, you stay away.

GRACE

I'm trying to help.

DEL

And I appreciate that. I really do.
But there's a very particular way
that this needs to get done.

GRACE

That's fine. Show me what to do.

DEL

Wouldn't you rather just watch a
movie or something?

GRACE

No, I want the civic pride crap.
I'd like to serve as a productive
member of my community.

Del sighs.

DEL

Okay. Follow me.

INT. KITCHEN - THIRD HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del extracts the batteries from an electric can opener. He
drops them into his zip-lock bag.

DEL

Batteries. They're the single most
important commodity the dead have
to offer.

GRACE

The necrophiliac in me would have
to argue with you.

Del glares at her.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Bad joke.

DEL

This next part is crucial. You might want to hold your breath.

He removes the trash bag from the garbage drawer. Flings opens the refrigerator, revealing a menagerie of rotted, moldy food items.

GRACE

Ugh. So gross.

Del begins emptying the fridge contents into the bag.

GRACE (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

DEL

Cleaning.

GRACE

Why? No one's ever stepping foot in this house again after we leave.

DEL

How do I explain this? Okay. In thermodynamics, there's a term called entropy. It's understood as a measure of disorder, the capacity for randomness in a given system.

GRACE

I took biology in high school. I know what entropy is.

DEL

But have you ever considered its implications? The more entropy in a system, the more potential for chaos. Variables upon variables. Endlessly unpredictable outcomes. But when you reduce the amount of entropy in a system...

He strings up the bag with a tight knot.

DEL (CONT'D)

You can control for error. With every piece of trash we pick up, that's one less force for disorder in the universe.

He hands Grace the bag. Procures another.

DEL (CONT'D)

Now imagine a system with no disorder whatsoever. In theory you could predict, with stunning accuracy, most everything that will ever happen within that system.

GRACE

It's like a vacuum.

DEL

It's exactly a vacuum. And so long as we're committed to serving as agents of order rather than chaos, it stays that way.

GRACE

But why would you want to know everything that's ever gonna happen? That seems so dull.

DEL

It's comforting. It gives me peace.
(a pause)
That's just me though.

He moves on to the next room, leaving Grace to process.

INT. STUDY - THIRD HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del peruses the bookshelves. He cradles an extensive handwritten inventory binder in one hand.

GRACE

Can I see that?

DEL

Knock yourself out.

Grace scans the binder. At first glance, it's countless pages of utter gibberish.

She squints. Del's handwriting is neat, albeit microscopic. Additions are painstakingly scrawled into every margin, along with corresponding call numbers.

GRACE

How can you read all this? It's making me nauseous.

Del smirks.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Seriously, dude. This is more than
a little cuckoo.

DEL
I'm a completist. Having as full a
catalogue as possible is very
important to me.

He picks a book from the shelf. Examines the back cover.
Plops it into his backpack.

GRACE
But you can't possibly read all
these books. Not in one lifetime.

DEL
Is that a challenge?

GRACE
No. God no.

Del steps back from the shelves.

DEL
You didn't see anything upstairs,
did you? Any books, larger books,
maybe by her bedside?

GRACE
I wasn't really paying attention.

DEL
Hm. I'll be back.

He sprints upstairs.

GRACE
Was there something you were
looking for in particular?

DEL (O.S.)
Yes. At the time of her death, Mrs.
Lipschitz owed the library over
seven hundred dollars in late fees.

GRACE
Holy fuck. How many books did this
lady steal from you?

DEL (O.S.)
One.

INT. BEDROOM - THIRD HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del searches the bedroom.

GRACE (O.S.)
You charged her seven hundred
dollar late fees on a single book?

He yanks open the bedside drawer. Nothing but old trinkets
and travel brochures.

DEL
This was a special book. Are you
familiar with Tolstoy?

GRACE (O.S.)
Was he the one they stabbed in the
eye with an ice-pick?

DEL
No, that was Trotsky. Leo Tolstoy
was one of the greatest writers to
ever walk the earth.

GRACE (O.S.)
Never heard of him.

DEL
Regardless. Six years ago Mrs.
Lipschitz checked out our best
edition of *War and Peace*. Call five
eighty-three sixty or so. Fourteen
hundred pages. Leather-bound.

He reaches deep into the recesses of the adjacent closet.

DEL (CONT'D)
She claimed our records were wrong,
that she never checked it out in
the first place. Eventually we were
forced to write it off as a loss.
But I always had a feeling...

No luck. He withdraws his hand.

DEL (CONT'D)
Shit.

GRACE (O.S.)
Found it.

Del turns.

DEL
Really?

INT. STUDY - THIRD HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del returns downstairs.

DEL
Where is it?

Grace nods to a giant tome propping up the sofa's bum leg.
Del's face falls.

GRACE
I guess Tolstoy's not for everyone.

She digs out the book. The sofa collapses on one side.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Here you go. One big, fat copy of
War and Peace.

She hands Del the book. He looks down at it sadly.

DEL
She stretched out the leather.

GRACE
Ready to go?

DEL
Almost.

He bends down, lifts the sofa and replaces the weak leg with
a small wooden block.

DEL (CONT'D)
There.

INT. FOYER - THIRD HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Grace lingers in the house. Through the window behind her, we
catch a glimpse of Del spray-painting the front lawn.

Her gaze lands on an empty picture frame, sitting upright on
the mantelpiece.

She peers out the window. Watches Del work.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Grace stands at the precipice of a freshly dug grave. Del prepares to bury the deceased homeowner.

GRACE
Shouldn't we say a few words?

DEL
We don't have time.

Grace grabs the shovel from Del's hands.

GRACE
You knew her. She was a person. Not just some piece of trash.

DEL
You really believe that?

GRACE
Yeah, I do.

DEL
So all those bodies you saw lying in the streets, the ones you told me got caught up in your tires wherever you went-- you didn't say words for any of them, did you?

GRACE
No.

DEL
Exactly.

GRACE
But I held my breath.

DEL
What?

GRACE
Every time I saw one of them I held my breath for ten seconds. Like I was driving through a tunnel or something. If I stopped before ten seconds I'd make myself start over from the beginning. It was just this stupid thing I did. I'm not even sure why.

DEL
And what happened when you saw
clusters of them all at once?

GRACE
I held for longer.

Del nods.

DEL
Okay.

He straightens his posture. Inhales deeply. Holds.

Grace takes a second to catch on.

She follows his lead.

They wait.

They exhale.

GRACE
Bye, Mrs. Lipschitz.

She lowers the first mound of dirt into the hole.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Del enjoys a shower by the lake.

Behind him, the water's surface begins to RIPPLE ever so slightly. He doesn't notice.

GRACE
Boo!

Grace POPS OUT from UNDER the WATER.

Startled, Del TOPPLES into a nearby BUSH.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Whoops. Sorry.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Grace paces the frozen food aisle, all but cleared out. She frowns at a stray pint of gelato, melted and shriveled.

GRACE
Man. What I wouldn't give for some
Neapolitan ice cream right now.

At the next aisle over, Del examines the granola selection with a discerning eye.

DEL
What's that?

GRACE
You're joking, right? The three flavors. You know what this is.

DEL
Maybe. I haven't got much of a sweet tooth.

GRACE
You're lucky. Since I've been on the road my two primary food groups are Pop Tarts and potato chips. You should've seen what I looked like before the apocalypse. No ass whatsoever. Now? Now I have a *donk*.

DEL
I hadn't noticed.

Grace reaches the wine and spirits aisle. It's pristine. Not a bottle missing.

GRACE
Hey Del, you a big drinker?

DEL
Not so much, no.

GRACE
All right. More for me then.

She clears the tequila shelf.

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

Grace admires the plant life.

GRACE
I can't believe you've been able to keep these alive for so long.

Del brushes past her, watering a nearby row of gardenias.

DEL
They're owed most of the credit. These are the sole survivors of a particularly harsh winter.

Grace pokes gently at a bright pink orchid flower.

DEL (CONT'D)

I do my part in feeding them, but every last plant in this habitat had to make a case for itself. And under suboptimal conditions, they each managed not only to survive but to thrive. Trust me, they wouldn't be here anymore if they didn't want to be here.

Grace laughs.

DEL (CONT'D)

What's funny?

GRACE

I mean, they're pretty and all, but you're talking about them like they're people. They're just roots and leaves. They don't exactly possess the power of free will--

DEL

Shh. Listen.

Del holds the base of the orchid to Grace's ear. He sprinkles a few droplets of water on the soil.

Grace listens as the roots drink. She smiles.

GRACE

They sound happy.

DEL

They are.

EXT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Grace tears open a bag of popcorn kernels.

She spreads the kernels out onto a sheet of tin foil.

She folds the tin foil into a pouch, affixes it to a stick and hangs it over a campfire.

A cacophony of low POPS.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del powers up one of his laptops, inserts a DVD disc. He turns to Grace, who munches quietly on a bowl of popcorn.

DEL

Tonight's film is *Africa Screams* from 1949, starring the great Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. Keep your eyes peeled for Max Baer and Shemp Howard in supporting roles.

He takes a breath.

DEL (CONT'D)

The film has a total runtime of eighty minutes, but we'll enjoy a brief intermission at forty-five minutes as we switch to a new laptop with more battery life.

Grace gives a thumbs-up.

DEL (CONT'D)

Thank you.

He sits down beside Grace. The film begins.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Del and Grace watch as Abbott and Costello bumble around the jungle in ill-fitting safari gear.

Del chuckles heartily at each wisecrack. Grace takes a long sip from her wine glass.

GRACE

I'll be right back.

Del doesn't seem to care.

Grace heads off into the stacks. She roams aimlessly, arms swinging at her sides. Bored.

She stumbles upon a door that reads EMPLOYEES ONLY. A faint neon blue glow pours out from underneath, soaking her toes.

She inches closer. Opens the door. Peeks her head in.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Grace wanders inside the makeshift bedroom. Sees the toy aquarium, the hammock, the pile of laptops.

She probes the space. Her gaze falls on a large stack of PHOTOGRAPHS hidden in a dark pocket of the room, bound together with a thick rubber band.

She takes a look at the woman in the first photo.

It's Mrs. Lipschitz, on vacation in Italy.

The missing photo from the picture frame.

Grace pulls off the rubber band. She sifts through the photographs one by one.

The first few are familiar to us: the elderly couple's wedding portrait, the airbrushed nuclear family.

They're the newest in a stack of hundreds.

Grace opens a nearby filing cabinet, revealing an impossibly comprehensive collection of similar PHOTOGRAPHS...

A town's worth of people smiling back at her.

EXT. ROOFTOP - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del and Grace gaze up at the stars from a picnic blanket.

GRACE

I never knew there were so many.

DEL

I did.

GRACE

Why do you keep doing that?

DEL

What?

GRACE

Never mind.

She stretches out on the blanket.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You know I used to pray every night
before I went to sleep?

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

Me and my sister, we'd kneel down at our beds, clamp our fingers together and we'd pray. My parents too. Real ride-or-die God-fearing folk, we were. My dad was a pastor. He died on the toilet. I'm not really sure what that means...

Del turns to her.

DEL

Do you still believe?

GRACE

I have no idea. I'm in the market if you've got anything good.

Del shrugs.

DEL

Just the basic thermodynamics.

GRACE

Y'know, Del, I envy you.

DEL

Why?

GRACE

You were asleep. All you had to do was wake up, walk outside and find the world changed.

DEL

I guess.

GRACE

Yeah. Must have been nice.

She chugs her wine bottle dry. Sets it off to the side.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I'll bet it never even crossed your mind what I was doing when it happened.

DEL

I figured it'd be impolite to ask.

Grace grins stupidly. She's drunk.

GRACE

I was with a boy.

She gives Del a knowing glare.

He slides away from her.

DEL
It's getting late.

GRACE
You don't want to hear my story?

DEL
Maybe tomorrow.

Grace edges closer.

GRACE
You ever fuck a girl in the back of
your truck? Pull her panties down
over her knees, take her from
behind--?

DEL
Come on. Don't do that.

GRACE
What?

DEL
Don't take this to a vulgar place.
We were having a good time.

GRACE
I can get you off.

DEL
That's a bad idea.

GRACE
Oh, I think it's an excellent idea.

She reaches for him. He gets to his feet.

Grace's smile fades.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

DEL
You've had too much to drink.

GRACE
I know what I'm doing. You don't
have to treat me like a child.

DEL
Then stop acting like one.

Grace stands up.

GRACE
I get that you're nervous. It's
okay. I can help you.

DEL
You should get some sleep. We have
a long day ahead of us tomorrow.

GRACE
Wait.

DEL
Take any of the marked houses. The
doors are unlocked.

He disappears inside.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del paces the room, breathing quickly.

His face grows FLUSH. His hands ball into FISTS.

DEL
Fuck. Fuck you. Piece of shit--!

He HURLS a dead laptop AGAINST THE WALL, where it SMASHES
into PIECES. Takes ANOTHER. SNAPS the thing in HALF. KICKS
AWAY at his PILE. Parts go FLYING.

He stops. Draws the air back into his lungs with effort.
Allows his heartbeat to settle, matching the soft pulse of
the toy aquarium's neon blue glow.

He glances down at the floor. Assesses the damage.

The room's a MESS.

Del shakes his head. Bends down. Starts cleaning.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Grace listens from outside the door, lips pursed.

She exhales coolly. Takes off.

INT. BATHROOM - LIBRARY - DAY

Del brushes his teeth. Spits.

His eyes are lined with dark circles.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del walks out into the daylight.

He searches the block. No sign of Grace anywhere.

INT. BEDROOM - NEW HOUSE - DAY

Grace changes into a sweatshirt. Stuffs stray belongings into her suitcase. Forces the old thing closed. Zips.

She examines the tattered photo of her family. Folds it gently into her back pocket.

She peers out the northernmost window. Sees the library across the street. Sees Del.

He's standing on the curb, searching. He looks uneasy.

Grace's eyes dart to her suitcase. Back outside.

To her surprise, Del's staring directly up at her.

He chances a wave from the curb.

Grace thinks.

She waves back.

INT. BASEMENT - FOURTH HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Pairs of HANDPRINTS coat the walls in UV green and purple. All shapes and sizes. Glow in the dark, psychedelic basement decor. The only hint of life in this otherwise shadowy tomb.

From above, the door CREAKS OPEN.

A beam of LIGHT streaks through the dark abyss, exposing the musk and rotting vapor below.

Grace descends the stairs with caution.

We catch quick glimpses of her face, in green and purple hues, as she passes the glowing handprints.

She reaches blindly. Knocks over a lava lamp.

She aims her flashlight down at her feet. The shards of broken glass. The wax congealed in a fat, solid glob.

It almost sounds like it's wheezing.

From upstairs:

DEL (O.S.)
Everything all right?

GRACE
Yeah. I'm good.

She bends down and removes the batteries from the base of the broken lamp.

EXT. SOUND - DAY

Multiple fishing rods perch from the rim of Del's sailboat, each with a line cast out to sea.

Del glares up from his book. Grace sits across from him in a bathing suit top and floppy hat, engrossed in a magazine.

She turns the page. Adjusts her aviators. Ignores Del.

Del resumes his own reading.

Suddenly, the rod at Grace's side WOBBLER.

She lowers her magazine. Looks to Del.

The line TIGHTENS. The rod's SLIPPING.

Del's eyes widen.

DEL
Go--!

Grace LUNGES for the ROD, the sunglasses FLYING from her face. She GRINDS IN the REEL...

Another line CATCHES. Del SPRINGS to ACTION.

INT. STAFF KITCHEN - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del filets a tuna with a sharp knife.

He cuts the hunk of fish into small slices.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del and Grace eat an elaborate sushi dinner.

Grace maneuvers her chopsticks awkwardly, struggling to find the right grip on the slippery fish.

Del watches her with mild amusement, using his own pair with an expert's dexterity.

Grace succeeds in guiding the tuna over her sauce tray. She gives Del a self-satisfied smirk.

Her chopsticks' hold FALTERS. The tuna PLOPS into the tray, DRENCHING HER in SOY SAUCE.

Grace sighs. She looks up at Del.

Del neatly sets his own chopsticks aside. Reaches for the fish with his bare hands.

Grace smiles. Abandons her chopsticks. Digs in.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Del and Grace watch another old comedy.

On the screen, some poor buffoon topples down a flight of stairs and lands in a trash can.

Grace's eyes shift to Del. He's laughing. She follows his cue. Erupts in a belly laugh. Oversells it.

Del turns to her, startled.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Del and Grace play a spirited game of ping-pong.

They're both oddly adept. The ball zooms back and forth over the net, their strokes intensifying with each volley.

Del hits a pop-up. Grace goes in for the kill. Puts it away. Throws her fists overhead in victory.

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

Grace scatters seeds in a pot of soil. She adorns the pot with a smiley-face sticker.

Nearby, Del picks heirloom tomatoes from one of his plants.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - DAY

A finely detailed town map hangs on the wall. Each of the cleared lots is marked with a white **X**.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FIFTH HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Grace tosses Del a rolled-up trash bag, javelin-style. He catches it with one hand.

EXT. FIFTH HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Grace pushes a wheelbarrow packed with corpses across the front lawn. She winds past Del, who mows the grass.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del files new books into the collection.

Grace whirls behind him on a hoverboard, leafing through a dense manual on solar energy.

EXT. ROOFTOP - LIBRARY - DAY

Del and Grace attempt to install a set of solar panels on the roof. They prove increasingly unwieldy.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Del teaches Grace how to drive the street sweeper.

She SLAMS her FOOT on the GAS. The vehicle HURTLES FORWARD, nearly RAZING another LAMPPOST.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Grace chases after a stray chicken.

Panicked, the chicken averts Grace's clutches.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Del and Grace eat scrambled eggs on a park bench.

Grace offers a bite to the chicken, who nips at it happily.

INT. ROOFTOP - LIBRARY - DAY

Del adjusts the angle on one of the solar panels.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Grace reads a magazine, feet propped up on the table.

Overhead, a single light bulb SPARKS TO LIFE.

Grace stares up in awe. Basks in the artificial glow.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - DAY

The white Xes multiply across the map.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Grace rides her bike through the neighborhood. Every lawn is marked, some of the Xes faded with time.

She stops for a quick stretch. Notices something strange off in the distance. Squints for a better look.

Directly beyond her lies a DRIVEWAY partially obscured by a curtain of overgrown WEEDS. Blending into the scenery.

Grace wheels her bike forward. Pushes past the weeds.

The driveway is ripe with cracks and fissures, a bedrock of greenery fighting its way out from underneath. The path ends at the foot of a decrepit HOUSE.

The front door dangles off its hinges. Windows shattered. Lawn unkempt with tufts of dead grass.

Grace whips out her RADIO.

GRACE

Del? I found something. Over.

She waits.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Come in, Del. I'm on Putnam Avenue,
off of Young O. Over.

Static.

Grace holsters her radio. She approaches the house slowly, abandoning her bike on the ground.

INT. LAST HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Grace wipes past a veil of cobweb. Sidesteps overturned furniture, long decayed and worn through by termites.

Among the ruins: Dead plants strewn across the coffee table. Early '80s-era television with the screen bashed in. A goldfish lying belly-up on the surface of muck green water.

EXT. BACKYARD - LAST HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Grace wanders into the backyard, which sits at the threshold of a vast wooded wilderness.

She navigates the minefield of crushed beer cans, cigarette butts and crumpled trash. An empty can of lighter fluid.

Her eyes are drawn to the grill. Caught between the grates are charred flecks of paper. The mutilated remains of pages, covers, bindings... They're BOOKS. Or were.

Grace turns. She comes face-to-face with a MAN, stooped in a plastic lounge chair on the patio.

He stares directly at her. His eyes are a pair of lifeless orbs, glazed translucent white. His mouth hangs open, showcasing a set of rotten teeth.

Grace absorbs the gruesome sight.

Her gaze strays downward. She spots a lone photograph, old and faded, discarded among the garbage and dead leaves.

It's a BOY, pre-teen, standing at the edge of a lake.

The same lake Del frequents.

His eyes are closed.

DEL (O.S.)

This is Millburn. Not Putnam.

Grace looks up. Sees Del.

DEL (CONT'D)

I told you not to go into any of the unmarked houses alone. I told you that.

GRACE

I'm sorry.

DEL

You were never supposed to be here.

GRACE

We can clean it up. We can clear it together, just like the others.

DEL

I don't want it cleared. This house doesn't get cleared.

He shifts his gaze to the man in the lawn chair. His mouth twists into a grimace.

DEL (CONT'D)

This makes no fucking sense.

GRACE

It's just a house.

DEL

Not the house. You. You were never supposed to be here in the first place. It was just-- it was just supposed to be me.

GRACE

What?

DEL

This, all of this, it wasn't ever the Rapture or the bubonic plague or any of that. How do you not get it by now?

(a pause)

It was me.

Grace's head stirs.

GRACE

What are you talking about?

DEL

I wanted them all to go away. I wanted them to leave me alone and be gone forever. That's what I wished for. And that's how it happened.

He sniffs in the cool air.

DEL (CONT'D)

I closed my eyes and I concentrated with every fiber of my brain and I wished for this. Exactly this.

GRACE

Del.

DEL

It's like you said. Afterwards all I had to do was wake up and find the world changed.

He laughs to himself. Grace stares at him.

DEL (CONT'D)

I had it all worked out. It all made so much sense. Until you. See, for the life of me I can't seem to wrap my head around just why in hell you're still here too.

He shifts his balance. Rocks back and forth on his toes.

DEL (CONT'D)

You know the first thing I saw when I woke up that day? The playground behind the old elementary school. Same school I went to as a kid. They were out for recess.

His eyes start to mist.

DEL (CONT'D)

I couldn't just leave them there like that. What kind of person would-- who would--

He falters. Grace takes a step toward him.

GRACE

You didn't do this.

DEL

I did. I did it.

GRACE

No you didn't. Because then you'd really be all alone. I'd be dead with the rest of them.

Del smiles sadly, lips pursed.

DEL

Yeah.

GRACE

Mhm.

Grace kicks into high gear. Claps her hands together. Ties her hair up in a ponytail.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Now I don't know about you, but I'm gonna clear this house. I'm gonna pave the driveway and pick up the trash and... and scrub the walls till they shine like the fucking Chrysler Building.

DEL

Why?

GRACE

Because that's what we do. We clear. Right?

Del nods.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Right. Now let's pick up the pace, we've got a schedule to maintain.

She returns inside, a skip in her step.

Del lingers in the backyard, his gaze fixed on the shreds of paper in the grill.

INT. VARIOUS - LAST HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Grace swiffers the floors. Collects the garbage. Sews up the tears in the furniture fabric.

She rolls a coat of white paint over the graffitied walls.

She purges the contents of the refrigerator. The pantry shelves. The dirty dishware in the sink.

Among them is a cracked ceramic bowl, hand-painted with a child's watercolor illustrations.

She turns. Del's holding the trash bag open for her.

EXT. BACKYARD - LAST HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del and Grace heave the man's petrified corpse from the lounge chair into an open body bag.

Grace musses back the man's unruly hair.

Del zips the bag shut.

EXT. DEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Del and Grace ride in silence.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Del slides the body into a fresh grave.

He looks to Grace. She digs the shovel into the earth.

DEL

Wait.

He peers down into the hole.

He inhales through his nose.

Grace does the same.

Ten seconds pass.

They exhale through their mouths simultaneously.

GRACE

Is that all?

DEL

Yeah. That's all.

He takes the shovel. Starts burying.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Del marches back to the truck. Grace catches up to him.

GRACE

Del?

He whisks around to face her.

She takes hold of his hand. Clasps it tight.

He glares down tensely at their intertwined fingers. Looks back up at Grace. She's staring deep into his eyes.

They're inches apart now.

Del pulls her in close. Kisses her.

He withdraws quickly.

DEL
I'm sorry.

GRACE
Why?

He thinks.

DEL
I don't know.

INT. BEDROOM - GRACE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Del's asleep. Peaceful.

Grace lies beside him, wide awake.

She veers away from him. Stares ahead solemnly.

In the distance, we hear the very faint hum of a CAR ENGINE.

EXT. SOUND - DAY

The sun edges slowly over the horizon. The first rays of daylight flicker off the ocean's surface.

INT. BEDROOM - GRACE'S HOUSE - DAY

Del's eyes sway open.

He shifts to Grace's side of the bed.

She's not there.

Del checks his watch. Gets up. Gathers his clothes.

He hears a series of murmurs through the wood panelling in the floor. Vaguely distorted. Coming from downstairs.

It's a voice. But it's too low to be Grace's.

He listens closer. The voice is MALE.

INT. STAIRWELL - GRACE'S HOUSE - DAY

Del pads down the stairs.

The man's voice grows sharper.

MAN (O.S.)
That's amazing. That's really
tasty. Is that cilantro?

Del approaches the dining room. He sees Grace seated at the table, her back to him.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hello?

GRACE
Yes.

MAN (O.S.)
It is cilantro?

GRACE
Yes.

MAN (O.S.)
I knew it. Just like they have back
at the club. *Cee-lan-tro*. Mm.

Del stops in the doorway. Grace turns to him.

A full breakfast spread out on the table. Scrambled eggs and hash browns. Three place settings.

Three people.

Across from Grace, a MAN and a WOMAN, both late 40s. Napkins folded neatly into their laps.

They exchange a quick look with one another.

MAN (CONT'D)
Hi there!

The man gets up from his chair. His collared shirt is tucked into his pants, girding a beer belly.

MAN (CONT'D)
Grace didn't mention she had
company. I'm Miles. Miles Mercer.

Miles extends his hand outward.

Del stares past him.

MILES

This is my wife Violet.

Violet smiles politely. Del doesn't reciprocate.

Miles lowers his hand. He cranes his head to Grace.

MILES (CONT'D)

He's not deaf, is he?

GRACE

No.

VIOLET

I think maybe he feels we're encroaching.

MILES

Ah. Well, we certainly didn't mean to cause any trouble. We'll be out of your hair just as soon as we're done with our breakfast.

Del glares up at him. He nods.

MILES (CONT'D)

Would you care to join us? Grace here prepared one hell of a meal. It'd be a shame to see it go cold.

VIOLET

Don't be shy. Have a seat.

Del sits at the table, his nerves flaring.

MILES

(to Grace)

Go on. Make him a plate.

Del peers over at Grace. She avoids him.

MILES (CONT'D)

Grace.

Grace abruptly grabs a plate. Shovels it full of eggs.

MILES (CONT'D)

So what's your name?

DEL

Del.

MILES

Del what?

DEL

Just Del.

MILES

Come on. Del's the name of my laptop. It's gotta be short for something, hasn't it? Let's see. Stop me when I've got it. Delroy? Delbert? Delano--?

DEL

I'm just Del.

MILES

Well, if you say so.

Violet turns to Del. She speaks slowly.

VIOLET

This is a lovely town, Del. Do you live here all on your own?

DEL

Until recently. Yes.

VIOLET

And your bodies?

DEL

Buried.

VIOLET

That's nice.

MILES

It's like exactly how we do in Texas, isn't it? Albeit on a much smaller scale-- I'm sure Grace's told you all about Fort Worth--

Del flinches.

MILES (CONT'D)

Did I say something wrong?

DEL

(to Grace)

Who are they?

Grace gazes down at her plate.

MILES

Well, we're the Mercers. I think we already covered that.

VIOLET

Grace, don't bite your fingernails.

Grace retracts her hands from her mouth.

MILES

So Del, what exactly are your intentions with our daughter?

Del tightens.

GRACE

Excuse me.

She gets up.

MILES

Sit down.

She does so, reluctantly.

MILES (CONT'D)

(to Del)

You seem surprised. Has Grace not told you about us?

Miles turns to Grace.

MILES (CONT'D)

She's never once mentioned having had parents? No? Didn't come up?

DEL

I don't understand.

MILES

What's there to understand? Grace is our daughter. I'm her father. Vi's her mom. She's our baby girl.

Del processes this. They're not the family from Grace's photo. Not by a long shot.

DEL

Are you sure?

MILES

What kind of a question is that? Of course I'm sure. Tell him, Grace.

Grace stares forward blankly.

MILES (CONT'D)

Come on. Set him straight.

GRACE
They're my parents.

MILES
I don't think he heard you. You're
gonna have to speak up.

GRACE
(louder)
They're my parents.

Miles nods, satisfied.

MILES
Honey, why don't you go upstairs
and pack your bags? It's a long
ride back, and I'm playing in the
tournament on Sunday.

DEL
Tournament?

VIOLET
Miles is an excellent golfer.

MILES
You don't play, do you, Del?

Del's head stirs.

MILES (CONT'D)
You should consider taking it up.
Back in Fort Worth we have quite
the league going.

DEL
Who?

MILES
What do you mean, who?

GRACE
I'll go pack.

MILES
Wait a second.

GRACE
I need to go to the bathroom.

MILES
You can hold it.

DEL
Who else is there?

MILES
Where? You mean... you don't know?

DEL
Don't know what?

Miles assesses Del, eyebrow arched.

VIOLET
You've been alone here all this time? You haven't-- haven't left--?

MILES
Didn't go out looking for other survivors...? Nothing like that?

DEL
No.

He glares across the table at Grace. She can't bring herself to look back at him. The color drained from her face.

MILES
So you've been in this town all along, all on your own-- and as far as you knew you were the last man left on earth till we showed up for scrambled eggs.

Miles laughs to himself.

VIOLET
Miles.

MILES
I'm sorry. It's just, you really can't come up with this stuff.

VIOLET
We're still his guests.

DEL
There are more of you?
(to Grace)
You told me--

MILES
What did she tell you, exactly?

Del turns to Miles.

DEL

That no one else had survived. That it was just the two of us.

MILES

Now why would she go and say something like that?

Grace averts his gaze.

MILES (CONT'D)

Two? Try hundreds. Thousands, even. And that's just Fort Worth. We've got a settlement in Dallas too.

Del shuts his eyes. Tries to tune him out.

MILES (CONT'D)

Every day brings new faces. We have signs up on practically every major highway. You can't miss 'em.

VIOLET

I designed some myself.

MILES

Violet's a graphic artist.

VIOLET

Well, I'm no Rembrandt or anything. I used to freelance for Ackerman Agency in San Diego, California. Of course, that was in my twenties... I'm rambling, aren't I?

MILES

In any case, you'd be amazed to hear all we've accomplished in Texas. We're rebuilding America, one sector at a time.

DEL

Stop.

MILES

We got the lights turned back on. Got the Internet up and running again. Phones. Power plants. Basic currency. You name it. We even recycle. Hell, we're just about more eco-conscious than ever--

DEL

Stop.

Del gets up from his chair.

DEL (CONT'D)
It's time for you to leave.

He glances over at Grace.

DEL (CONT'D)
All of you.

He exits. Miles looks around the table.

MILES
Huh. Guess he's not a recycler.

He helps himself to Del's plate.

EXT. GRACE'S HOUSE - DAY

Grace rushes after Del.

GRACE
I'm sorry.

Del ignores her. Keeps walking.

GRACE (CONT'D)
They're not good people. You can't believe what Miles says. The world they live in, it's different from the way things were. It's not--

DEL
Are they your parents?

GRACE
I met them in Fort Worth. They had some kind of fucked-up adoption program. You really don't understand what it's like down there-- I had to run away--

DEL
You lied to me.

GRACE
I had to.

DEL
Why?

GRACE
You would've never let me stay.

DEL
And fuck you?

GRACE
I know. I know it looks bad. But after I left Texas I was on the road for months-- I hadn't seen anyone else in all that time. Let alone in a place like this. I don't know what I was thinking.

DEL
You're a teenager.

GRACE
I'm nineteen.

Del pauses mid-stride.

DEL
This is all my fault. I let you in here. I trusted you.

GRACE
No.

DEL
Y'know, this is kind of funny. It's really actually very funny.

He bites his lip. Stares Grace in the eyes.

DEL (CONT'D)
I think you're the worst mistake I've ever made.

GRACE
Don't say that.

DEL
You should go. I really need for you to go.

GRACE
You don't mean that. You don't.

Del shakes his head.

DEL
Go home, Grace.

GRACE
Fuck you.

DEL

Uh-huh.

GRACE

I'm serious. You're a selfish fucking prick and all you care about is lame old movies and-- and the Dewey fucking Decimal System. You shouldn't even be allowed to call yourself a person. You're a robot. You're a fucking robot incapable of human emotion. And you know what? It's really sad.

She catches her breath.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Do you have anything to say?

DEL

Not really.

GRACE

Okay.

She makes for the house.

DEL

Wait.

She stops.

DEL (CONT'D)

What was the gun for?

Grace looks back at him.

Her eyes are glistening.

GRACE

You don't--

The door opens. MILES steps out onto the porch.

MILES

Sweetie, we're just about ready to hit the road. If there's anything else you wanted to take with you--?

Grace hesitates.

GRACE

I'm coming.

She brushes past Miles into the house.

MILES

How's that for hustle?

Miles flashes a friendly smile at Del.

Del turns away. He walks back to the library in silence.

Miles's smile dissipates.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del works his way through a backlog of unsorted books, a welcome distraction.

He inputs letters and numbers into his handheld label maker. A new label sputters from his device with a protracted BEEP. He smooths it over a book's spine...

MILES (O.S.)

You busy?

Del looks up, startled. Miles leans casually against the stacks, hands in his pockets.

DEL

Yes.

MILES

Okay, don't mind me then. I'm just looking to borrow an audiobook or two for the ride. I'll be cooped up with two women for twenty-plus hours, Lord help me.

DEL

Sorry. The collection's private.

He wheels a cart into the stacks. Begins filing.

MILES

C'mon. You've got the print copies already, I'm sure. It's just one audiobook. Give me *Tuesdays with Morrie* or something, I don't care.

DEL

I'm sorry.

Miles smirks.

MILES

It's cool. I get it. There's this funny thing I do, when I'm in the bathroom and the toilet paper's, like, facing the wrong way on the hook-- you know, it's supposed to be facing out, easy access-- I've always gotta put it back on the right way. It's just one of those things that freaks me out, y'know? Drives me up the friggin' wall--

DEL

What does toilet paper have to do with books?

MILES

I'm just saying, I can appreciate a man who values organization. It's a hell of an attractive quality.

He gets in Del's space. Breathes out a heavy sigh.

MILES (CONT'D)

You ever get sad sometimes?

DEL

No. Excuse me.

Del separates himself, moves on to the next aisle. Miles lingers behind, kicking at the floor.

MILES

I just-- I feel like I can talk to you, Del. Like you of all people might understand what I'm going through. The world can feel like such a messy place. A man needs to be able to wield some control over his surroundings. And I look at you and your set-up here, and I see a guy who's got it all figured out.

DEL

We all do what we need to do.

Miles appears beside him, snapping his fingers.

MILES

Right. See, that's exactly right. But don't you wish everybody could see things as simply as you do?

DEL
Here everybody does.

MILES
Oh, I get it. Because it's just
you. That's really good. Like I
said, smart fuckin' guy.

He presses a finger to his temple.

MILES (CONT'D)
Y'know, we could use a guy like you
back in Texas. Yeah, I'll tell you,
a guy with your talents would fit
right in there. You could be a part
of something really special, really
cutting-edge...

DEL
No thanks.

Miles stares at him for a prolonged beat. He cracks a smile.

MILES
Aw. Well, you can't blame me for
trying. Keep up the good work, Del.
You've made a fan out of me.

He hands Del a business card.

MILES (CONT'D)
Just in case you change your mind.

He gives Del a sturdy pat on the shoulder, nearly knocking
him off-balance. He wanders off.

Del waits for Miles to exit. He glances down at the thick
card stock, embossed gold lettering:

MILES Q. MERCER
REALIGNMENT SPECIALIST

He crumples the card in his pocket. Returns to his books.

INT. BEDROOM - GRACE'S HOUSE - DAY

Grace strides into her bedroom. She finds Violet rifling
through her suitcase, examining her clothes.

VIOLET
You've got some really cute new
tops here. You'll have to let me
borrow them sometime.

GRACE
What are you doing?

VIOLET
I have to teach you how to fold
your clothes. You just ball them up
like they're garbage. It damages
the material.

GRACE
You can't just go through my things
like that. You're not my--

Violet turns to face her.

VIOLET
Not your what?

Grace falters.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Is everything all right, honey? You
sound stressed.

GRACE
I'm okay.

VIOLET
Really? Are you sure?

She holds out the PHOTO of GRACE and HER FAMILY.

Grace's eyes go hollow.

GRACE
Give it back.

VIOLET
This isn't healthy behavior, Grace.
Running away from home, making us
chase after you to the ends of the
earth. What would your father say
if he saw this picture?

GRACE
Please.

VIOLET
No. I'm sorry. No.

Violet tucks the photo into her bra.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I had another daughter once. You know, before. It's wrong to bring it up, I know that...

She shakes her head.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I can't lose you again. I won't.

GRACE

Violet.

VIOLET

Mom.

Grace tightens.

GRACE

You know what'll happen to me if I go back there. You know what they'll do to me.

VIOLET

You act like it's such a bad thing.

GRACE

I'm scared.

VIOLET

Don't be. I'm here for you.

She wraps her arms around Grace. Brings her in close.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Everything will stop hurting soon.

Grace, head pressed firm against Violet's chest, listens to the beating of her heart.

EXT. GRACE'S HOUSE - DAY

Miles loads Grace's bags into the trunk of his Cadillac. He sidles into the driver's seat. Honks the horn.

Violet emerges from the house, Grace in tow.

Grace pauses. She looks across the street.

The library sits still. No sign of life.

Violet takes Grace by the arm. Ushers her into the backseat.

VIOLET

Buckle up.

Violet hops in the passenger's seat. Gives Miles a peck on the cheek. Miles shifts the car into drive.

Grace takes a last look at the library.

He's not coming.

Miles abruptly hits the gas. SCREECH...

The car peels down the street, zigs at the corner, disappears from view. A cloud of exhaust looming in its wake.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - DAY

Del eyes a photograph in his hands.

We reverse to see: It's the POLAROID of GRACE sticking her tongue out at the Grand Canyon.

He places the photo in his filing cabinet, the newest in his collection. Slides the drawer SHUT.

His gaze wanders to the town map on his wall. It's cluttered with white Xes. Not an empty lot to be found.

100% clearance.

He runs his hand along the map's surface. Reaches the top. TEARS IT DOWN in ONE SWIFT MOTION.

EXT. SOUND - DAY

Del coasts out to sea on his sailboat.

He listens as the waves beat gently against the boat's hull. The only sound for miles.

He stares ahead at the horizon.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

The door jingles as Del strides in.

He stops at the liquor aisle. Processes the multitude of untouched bottles, all coated over in dust.

EXT. ROOFTOP - LIBRARY - DAY

Del cracks open a bottle of vodka. Raises it to his mouth. Chugs. Chugs. Chugs.

He chokes. Erupts in a coughing fit. Lets the bottle drop to the ground, shattering at his feet.

His eyes are watery. Bloodshot.

He teeters his way to the solar panel. Paws at it with both hands. Rends it from its hinges.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Del urinates on a patch of lawn. Crudely traces the spray-painted lines of the white X. Hums a tune to himself.

He hasn't shaved in days.

EXT. LAST HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Del staggers down the unpaved street. Surveys the sad house at the end of the driveway.

He reaches sloppily into his waistband... Draws the HANDGUN from Grace's glove compartment.

He cocks the gun with effort. Steadies his aim. His finger curls the trigger...

BANG. A window BURSTS INTO PIECES.

He feels the rush. He fires again. Again. Again.

The gunshots echo through the empty wood. Birds flee to the skies, squawking in excitement.

He keeps snapping the trigger long after the chamber's expended. His face twisted into something awful.

He chucks the gun at the house.

DEL

Fuck--!

He loses his balance. Lands squarely in the dirt.

DEL (CONT'D)

Fuck you. Fucking...

He tries to get up. His world is SPINNING... His legs give out underneath him. He falls right back down.

He's filthy. Drenched from head to toe in mud and glass and snot and shit. Blistered. Bleeding.

It's not a good look.

Slowly, he reclaims his wits. Focuses on breathing. Staccato and irregular grows deep and pronounced.

Regaining consistency. Or a measure thereof.

He cups his hands together. Spits. Rubs down his eyes with his palms... His vision begins to steady... He hears a BARK.

He tilts his head up. Perks his ears. Listens.

Just then: A second BARK. Low. Strained.

But definitely there.

He looks forward. His eyes narrow.

A few yards away, we can just barely make out the hazy outline of a DOG... A fat, old PUG.

It's Dewey.

Del stares in awe, speechless. The corners of his mouth threatening the slightest of smiles.

He chances a blink. Looks again.

The dog's gone. Disappeared without a trace.

Del processes, dumbfounded.

INT. BACK ROOM - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Del ransacks his stockpile of battery-operated gadgetry.

At long last, he locates his transistor radio. Mangled from the earlier abuse. Taped together. Still workable.

He powers it up. Puts his mouth to the receiver.

DEL

Hello?

He listens. Hears STATIC. Toggles to the next frequency.

DEL (CONT'D)

Hello?

He waits... More STATIC.

It's quiet out there.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The once-clean street is littered haphazardly with crumpled papers, empty bottles and myriad miscellaneous trash.

On the adjacent sidewalk, Del sits cross-legged in one of the two rocking chairs. The other remains empty.

He rocks gently back and forth. His face is sunburnt, his lips chapped. We get the impression he's been stationed here for the better part of the day.

Maybe longer.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Del splashes his face with water. The liquid revives his cracked skin, catches in his graying beard.

He submerges the buckets one by one.

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

Del ambles through the rows of plants, spritzing each with less care than usual. His gait is staggered, sleepy.

He reaches the end of his circuit. Sees Grace's pot of soil. The smiley-face sticker, grinning stupidly at him.

The smallest sliver of GREEN edges out from the dirt.

Del stares down at the new plant, devoid of expression.

He doesn't move for a long time.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Del winds through the stacks.

He stops in the geography section. Plucks out the first road atlas he sees. Flips through. Lands on a specific page.

His eyes dart back and forth, scanning over the complex web of routes and interstates... Fuck it. He TEARS OUT the PAGE.

It's oddly liberating.

INT. DEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Del blows past a stop sign. Speeds through a seemingly interminable sweep of white Xes on either side.

As he accelerates, the Xes mesh into one another, forming twin solid white lines.

Suddenly, he BRAKES.

We're at the edge of the town. The precipice between Del's world and the unknown.

Del hesitates. Nearly chokes.

He grips the wheel tight. Knuckles whitening.

He wills his foot to HIT the GAS.

The engine ROARS TO LIFE. Del's truck FLIES PAST the town limit, kicking up a layer of DUST that takes over frame.

The dust settles... The truck's out of sight.

INT. DEL'S TRUCK - VARIOUS

C.U. on DEL through the WINDSHIELD.

His eyes are FIXED on THE ROAD. We, in turn, KEEP on HIM...

As he soars past open country and cityscapes alike, highway and dirt road, all reflected back in the windshield's glass.

As he swerves around abandoned cars and overturned tractor trailers, crumbled monuments and billowing smokestacks.

As the truck battles a stretch of particularly rough terrain, rattling and hissing in near defeat.

As day turns into night and back to day again.

As a heavy thunder ripples overhead and rain beats down on the truck's flimsy hood and the windshield wipers squeak madly against the surface of the glass.

As the truck is swallowed up in thick blankets of fog, and visibility plummets to zero. Less than zero.

Del's eyelids grow heavy. A five o'clock shadow transpires across his face... He doesn't waver. Keeps the wheel steady.

The truck emerges triumphant from the fog -- all of a sudden, the windshield's glass washes over in REFLECTIONS of LIGHT.

A city skyline, replete with glowing buildings and pulsing neon signs and searchlights, all DANCING WILDLY ACROSS the WINDSHIELD... We KEEP on DEL.

His pupils dilated from the onslaught of light. The corners of his mouth twitching ever so slightly. Betraying nothing.

He pushes forward in silence.

EXT. DOWNTOWN FORT WORTH - NIGHT

Del stares straight ahead. Tries to ignore the white noise of a thousand disparate voices laughing, shouting, their figures drifting across the windshield all at once.

A strange symphony fills our soundscape, intensifying as the truck presses deeper into this urban sprawl... a rhythmic cohesion of voices, pop music, TV fuzz, iPhone ringtones.

As all this BUILDS, and BUILDS, and BUILDS, Del's fingers DIG INTO the steering wheel... He's LOSING IT...

The sounds RISE to an all-powerful CRESCENDO, and just as it looks like Del's about to BURST, we HARD CUT TO:

EXT. MERCER RANCH - DAY

A modest one-story compound on the city's outskirts.

The early morning sun pokes out from over the mountainside, casting the property in dark amber tones.

Del steps out from his car. Checks the address on Miles's business card. It's a match with the mailbox.

He thinks. Doubles back. Grabs the GUN.

PRE-LAP: Beep. Beep. Beep.

INT. FOYER - MERCER RANCH - DAY

The low hum of electricity.

On the mantelpiece, a high-key photo of MILES and VIOLET.

The image gradually MORPHS into a portrait of the whole family. GRACE wedged uneasily between the two of them.

It's a digital picture frame, cycling through pre-loaded photos on a timer. A wire runs behind the mantel into a hefty surge protector, which in turn plugs into the wall.

ANGLE on the FRONT DOOR.

Del's shadow manifests in the adjacent window, wielding a small screwdriver. He slips it underneath the sill...

We're familiar with this routine already. The RASP of METAL on WOOD. Del's GLOVED HAND reaching inside, curling TOWARD the DOOR... TWISTING the LOCK... CLICK.

Del enters. Looks around. It's as pleasant a house as any other we've seen -- albeit pointedly more high-tech.

The room's centerpiece: A fireplace video, crackling on MUTE.

Del removes his shoes. Sets them at the foot of the door.

He moves very slowly through the house, from the living room into a long, narrow hallway marked by LED night lights.

The door to the first bedroom hangs slightly ajar. He sneaks a peek inside... Two heaps slumped over in a king-sized bed, both dormant. Violet's head poking out from under the covers.

Del gently shuts the door.

He proceeds to the next room. Listens through the door. From the other end, we hear the light WHIRR of MACHINERY.

His HAND rests on the KNOB. He TURNS...

INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM - MERCER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Grace lies in bed, fast asleep.

A heart rate monitor at her side, blipping softly. An IV drip. A tray of medical utensils. Some very sharp.

Del approaches her bedside.

DEL
(in SOTTO)
Grace.

GRACE
Mm.

Grace stirs. Shifts position. Turns away from Del.

He looks CLOSER.

A small patch of hair on the left side of Grace's head has been SHAVED CLEAN... There's a fresh SCAR, approximately two inches in length, on HER SCALP.

Del TIGHTENS.

DEL
Grace. It's me.

Her eyes flicker open. She stares straight past him.

DEL (CONT'D)
I'm gonna get you out of here.
We're gonna go home.

He plucks out her IV. Holds it to her eye line.

DEL (CONT'D)
Can you tell me what this is? Can
you tell me what they're doing--?

GRACE
Tests.

DEL
What kinds of tests?

Grace shrugs.

DEL (CONT'D)
What's going on? Come on. I know
you can tell me what's going on.

GRACE
Tests.

DEL
Bad tests?

She gives him a blank stare.

DEL (CONT'D)
Okay, I'm here now. It's time to
go. Let's go.

He takes her hand.

She looks up at him, curious.

DEL (CONT'D)
You know me.

Grace shakes her head.

DEL (CONT'D)
Yeah you do. Don't-- Stop that.

GRACE
Go away.

She retracts her hand.

DEL
You know who I am.

GRACE
No.

DEL
Yes. Yes you do. Because we're
friends. Because I drove all the
way here for you... you know who I
am. I'm Del, and you're Grace, and
you know who I am-- you know--

Her eyes are glazed over. Hollow.

DEL (CONT'D)
You know me.

She doesn't flinch.

DEL (CONT'D)
No. Don't do that. You know who I
am. You can't-- please-- please
don't do this. Say something. Come
on. Talk to me. Please... Please.

A long silence hangs between them.

Finally, Del pulls away.

GRACE
I think... they'll die.

DEL
What?

He leans back in.

GRACE
The plants.

DEL
What plants? My plants?

GRACE
They're gonna die.

DEL
It's okay. I watered them all right before I left. We just need to get back in time before the next cycle.

GRACE
Really?

DEL
Yeah. They're gonna be fine.

Grace smiles.

DEL (CONT'D)
Are you ready to go?

GRACE
I think.

She sits up. Del helps her to her feet.

INT. HALLWAY - MERCER RANCH - DAY

Grace clutches Del's arm for support.

They push past the door to the master bedroom. Grace's gaze strays over her shoulder.

DEL
We have to keep moving. They could wake up any second--

The FLUSH of a TOILET. A protracted YAWN. From the opposite end of the hallway. In their direct path.

Del and Grace stop dead in their tracks.

The bathroom door CREAKS OPEN... Grace grabs Del TIGHT... Out steps MILES, sleepy-eyed and scratching at his boxers.

He takes a beat to register the two of them.

MILES
We've got a doorbell, you know.

He doesn't stop scratching.

MILES (CONT'D)

Gracie, you're supposed to be in bed. Del, how's about the two of us take a walk outside--?

DEL

We're leaving.

MILES

Leaving? But you just got here!

He looks from Del to Grace.

MILES (CONT'D)

Oh. I see what's going on.

DEL

What did you do to her?

MILES

She's in the middle of an extensive treatment. I'll just put her back to bed and afterwards I can tell you all about it--

Del WHIPS OUT his HANDGUN.

MILES (CONT'D)

Whoa there. You even know how to use that thing?

DEL

I'm not gonna ask again.

MILES

I mean, I'm happy to discuss it. I tried to broach the subject with you last time we met, but you didn't seem all that interested. Honestly, I think you of all people will really appreciate this.

Del lowers the gun.

DEL

What are you talking about?

MILES

How familiar are you with the field of psychosurgery? Not the Ken Kesey shit, I'm talking about genuine impulse correction. Realignment. We're using the power of science to make unhappy people happier.

DEL

I don't understand.

MILES

We've got a team of doctors here in Fort Worth, the best minds on the planet. They've come a long way toward unlocking the complexities of the human brain.

Grace runs a finger along the scar on her scalp.

MILES (CONT'D)

It's nothing to be afraid of. Very much the opposite. We're developing a means by which to control for all types of disorders. Schizophrenia. Depression. Suicidal thoughts.

He takes a step forward.

MILES (CONT'D)

Picture a world where those nasty elements simply don't exist. Where disorder's translated into order. Where every human mind's free from pain. Free from angst and sadness and-- and all-around chaos. It'd be, well, you could say it's...

DEL

Perfect.

MILES

Exactly. It's practically a return to Eden. I'm glad you came here, Del. That you're able to see it all firsthand. I'd like to have you involved as we move forward. I think together we can accomplish some really wonderful stuff.

DEL

No.

MILES

What?

DEL

No. We're going. Excuse us.

MILES

You're just gonna leave?

Miles blocks their path.

MILES (CONT'D)

Now see, I've got a problem with that. A man doesn't just go and break into another man's home, steal away his daughter and expect no pushback on the matter. No way. I'm gonna fuckin' fight you on that one, Del. And I'm gonna win too.

He peers over at Grace.

MILES (CONT'D)

Sweetie, why don't you head on back to bed? You know you've got another round of treatment in the morning--

Grace SNATCHES the GUN from DEL'S BELT in ONE SWIFT MOTION. Before EITHER MAN can REACT -- BLAM!

Miles's HEAD EXPLODES in a MESS of BLOOD and BRAINS.

Grace straightens her posture. She and Del both stares down at the corpse, neither showing any visible reaction.

The door behind them opens. They turn to see VIOLET, clad in her pajamas. Rubbing her eyes. Exhausted.

She gazes past them at Miles's body.

VIOLET

Oh, honey.

GRACE

Where's my photo?

VIOLET

Which photo?

GRACE

The one you took from me.

Violet looks up at Grace.

VIOLET

That photo's long gone.

EXT. MERCER RANCH - DAY

BLAM. BLAM.

INT. FOYER - MERCER RANCH - DAY

Del hastens to the front door, leaving behind a trail of blood-soaked shoe prints.

DEL
Are you coming?

Grace remains in the hallway, the gun limp at her side.

DEL (CONT'D)
Grace--?

GRACE
We have to get rid of them.

She turns to Del.

GRACE (CONT'D)
When they find the bodies, they'll open an investigation. They know who I am. They'll come after us.

DEL
Who will?

GRACE
Do you really want to know?

Del considers this.

GRACE (CONT'D)
We have a few hours before anyone else shows up. We need to make it look like they left town.

DEL
Okay.

GRACE
There should be trash bags and cleaning supplies in the garage. They might have some extra paint back there too.

DEL
Where's that?

Grace points. Del heads for the door.

GRACE
Hey Del? I'm sorry I shot them.

Del stops. He looks back at her.

DEL
No you're not.

GRACE
Is that okay?

DEL
I think so. Yeah.

INT. VARIOUS - MERCER RANCH - DAY

Del yanks out the shower curtain.

He and Grace slide Violet's body onto the plastic. Her head is covered with a SKI MASK drenched in BLOOD.

They roll her into a tight cocoon. Secure it in place with one, two, three layers of packing tape.

They fold Miles's body into a bearskin rug. His head, or lack thereof, also MASKED.

Grace sprays the floor with a cleaning solution. Sops up the bloody footprints with a fat sponge.

Del picks at the flecks of brain matter in the wall with a pair of tweezers. Deposits them in a trash bag.

Grace dances around him, erasing any and all traces of blood with a fresh coat of white paint.

Del peruses Miles's library. Picks out a book he doesn't recognize. Reads the dust jacket. Tosses it in his backpack.

Grace powers down the medical equipment. Changes the sheets on her bed. Smooths out the creases in the fabric.

Del heaves two bulging trash bags into the back of his truck. Miles and Violet's burritoed bodies are already buckled in.

Grace jerks the plug from the digital picture frame. Mi and Vi's smiling faces ZAP to BLACK.

Del activates the kitchen faucet. Marvels at the sight of running water. Cranes his head downward... Lets the liquid flow freely over his face. Drinks.

EXT. MERCER RANCH - DAY

Del exits the house. He sees Grace in the front yard, the paint bin at her side.

He walks over to her. She holds out a damp brush.

Del thinks. He takes the brush from Grace. Kneels into the dirt. Paints a long, thick STRIP of WHITE. Then ANOTHER.

He pulls back, revealing an **X**.

DEL

Ready?

GRACE

Almost.

INT. KITCHEN - MERCER RANCH - DAY

Grace beelines to the freezer. Flings the drawer open.

From FREEZER POV, we look up at Grace's face, awash in a soft orange light. She smiles wide.

INT. DEL'S TRUCK - DAY

Del and Grace hit the road. The city skyline fades to nothingness in the back windshield.

Grace cradles a mammoth bucket of Neapolitan ice cream in her lap. Devouring it by the spoonful.

She offers Del a scoop. He pulls his head away from her.

DEL

You're gonna use the same spoon?

Grace's smile fades.

GRACE

You must be joking.

He keeps his eyes on the road. Doesn't respond.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You are joking, right? Please tell me you're... Del?

Del peers over at her.

He cracks a smile.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You asshole.

ROLL CREDITS.