

JOSH

Gary Ross

9

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FADE IN:

LA. AERIAL SHOTS

A series of still images flow seamlessly from one another as the city begins to get closer. Brown hills... power lines... billboards... palm trees.

MAN'S VOICE

You the manager of the team?

BOY'S VOICE

Yeah I'm the manager of the team.

MAN'S VOICE

You know the player's names?

BOY'S VOICE

Yeah I know the player's names.

CLOSER

There's no glamour in this part of LA. It's East Hollywood and Spanish rooftops mingle with all the Korean writing on the signs.

MAN'S VOICE

So who's on first?

BOY'S VOICE

That's right.

MAN'S VOICE

I mean the fellow's name.

BOY'S VOICE

Who.

MAN'S VOICE

The guy on first base.

BOY'S VOICE

Who's on first.

MAN'S VOICE

That's what I'm asking you.

STREET LEVEL. DUSK. (LIVE ACTION)

It's an ethnic stew. An Angeline billboard sits atop a Korean golf shop. The CAMERA tightens on a used vintage bookstore and next to it, a comedy club.

MAN'S VOICE

What's the guy's name on first base?

BOY'S VOICE

No "what's" on second.

MAN'S VOICE

I don't know.

BOY'S VOICE

He's our third baseman.

INT. COMEDY CLUB

It's empty. Well, almost empty. A few people mingle at the bar in the back of the room, totally oblivious to the act on stage. There, under a spot light, a man in his early forties sits with a 13 year old kid on his lap. They are dressed in matching sport coats. The man has his hand up the back of the kid's jacket, "ventriloquist" style. (That's their "act": The dad is the ventriloquist and the kid is the "dummy")

MAN

You got a first baseman?

KID

Of course.

MAN

When you pay the first baseman, who gets the money?

KID

And why not, he's worth every penny.

Deafening silence...

LATER.

They sit on bar stools in the back talking to the MANAGER of the club. The boy has a coke. The man (JEFF) has twisted his cocktail napkin into a rope. He's good looking, in a "day-player" kind of way: white teeth and some self conscious "stubble." His son JOSH sits next to him, clearly comfortable in a night club. As his dad negotiates with the manager, Josh pops a cocktail olive.

JEFF

What are you talking about? It's the same as it's always been.

MANAGER

It's not the same. He's bigger now. It doesn't work anymore.

JEFF

Well, sure--it doesn't work at 6:30. Give us a decent time slot...

MANAGER

What am I gonna do? Put a kid on at midnight?

Jeff looks at his son as if to say "you got a problem with that?" Josh shakes his head.

MANAGER

Look, when he was little it was funny.
'Cause the whole ventriloquist thing...

JEFF

You're just used to it.

MANAGER

They're not laughing.

JEFF

Are you kidding. What about that woman
at the bar?

(imitates her laugh)

Ah-heeeeee. Ah-heeeeee.

JOSH

He's right, Dad.

Jeff turns.

JOSH (CONT'D)

I'm too big.

They lock eyes. Josh shrugs.

JOSH (CONT'D)

I am.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN. LATER.

They sit at a big prep table being fed a free meal by the staff.
Josh has a huge plate of spaghetti and meatballs. His Dad eats
a spinach salad.

JEFF

What if I was the dummy and you were
the ventriloquist?

JOSH

Well that makes no sense.

JEFF

Yeah, but that's the joke. See the big
guy is the dummy and the little guy is
the ventriloquist.

JOSH

That only works if you already know we
were ventriloquists.

JEFF

(thinks)

Well--can they know that?

JOSH

How are they gonna know that?

Jeff ponders...

JOSH (CONT'D)
Look, you're not a comic anyway.
You're an actor. This'll just let you
focus more.

JEFF
That's true.
(beat)
You want some more meatballs?

JOSH
No. I'm good.

JEFF
You sure? It's really OK. The owner's
gone.

JOSH
(beat)
Why, do you want a meatball?

JEFF
(smiles-turns)
Hey Marco, can he have a couple more
meatballs?

Josh smiles at his Dad. Loves him.

JEFF (CONT'D)
You want to get a movie?

JOSH
Oooh. What?

JEFF
I don't know. On The Waterfront? We
could do the cab scene.

Josh raises an eyebrow. OVER THIS:

BRANDO (V.O.)
My night Charlie...

CLOSE UP. BIG SCREEN TV.

It's the cab scene from on the waterfront but weirdly, Brando is
in stereo

BRANDO
My night. I coulda taken Wilson apart.

REVERSE ANGLE. COUCH

Josh and his Dad sit side by side, with the bag of popcorn.
There is already an empty one on the coffee table. Jeff
contorts his face into Brando's agony as he recites the dialogue
in sync to the movie.

JEFF AND BRANDO
 You was my brother Charlie. You
 shoulda looked out for me a little bit.
 You shoulda taken care o' me.

JOSH
 (doing a PERFECT Rod
 Stieger)
 Oh I got some bets down for you. You
 saw some money.

JEFF
 (louder than Brando)
 YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, I COULDA HAD
 CLASS! I coulda been a contender. I
 coulda been ~~somebody~~... Instead of a
 bum. Which is what I am. Let's face
 it.

He gnarls his face in anguish--acting his heart out.

JOSH
 (hitting pause)
 That was awesome.

JEFF
 Do you want to do it?

JOSH
 Naw. How 'bout the godfather?

JEFF
 Again?

Josh pushes two cheetos in his cheeks and transforms into the
 aging Don...

JOSH
 When it was your time, I thought you
 would be the one to hold the strings.
 Governor Corleone. Senator Corleone.
 I wanted more for you Michael.

JEFF
 (smiles)
 Fine. Put it in

BLUE SCREEN. LATER.

The movie has obviously ended and a low electronic tone has
 replaced the soundtrack.

REVERSE ANGLE. COUCH.

Josh's head leans against his dad as they snore together.
 Sometime during the night, they got into the barbecue potato
 chips and the empty bag sits beside them. After a moment, Jeff
 stirs and looks down at Josh sleeping against him.

He smiles. (Greatest sight in the world) Jeff leans forward and checks his watch then rises from the couch and turns, gently scooping up his son. It's a bit of a strain, Josh is a little large for all of this. He starts to carry him toward his room while Josh starts to wake up.

JEFF

(John Wayne)

Don't quit on me soldier. I'm gonna get you up over that hill.

Josh blinks his eyes open as his Dad carries him through "enemy fire."

JEFF

(still John Wayne)

C'mon buckaroo. You still got a lot o' livin' to do.

INT. BEDROOM

Jeff stumbles into the room and tosses Josh onto his bed. His son gives a bleary smile.

JOSH

What time is it?

JEFF

Two thirty.

JOSH

I gotta brush my teeth.

JEFF

You're tired. You can brush em in the morning.

JOSH

Oh, listen. We got that sales call first thing.

JEFF

(remembering)

Right.

JOSH

And we gotta send off that invoice to Arizona.

JEFF

Right! Dammit!

(beat)

You know you were really good in that Brando stuff tonight.

JOSH

Oh thanks. And don't forget the gas bill.

(MORE)

JOSH (cont'd)
You gotta send it certified from the
post office by end of the day tomorrow.

JEFF
I love you Buddy.

JOSH
I love you too.

His Dad gives him a big kiss and turns off the light. As the
switch clicks...

THE SUN

Comes up over the Spanish rooftops and billboards of their
neighborhood. It's an LA dawn complete with a vague yellow haze

CLOSE UP. JOSH'S WATCH

It beeps at him from the night-stand. His hand rummages
around... finds the button on the bezel...

INT. LIVING ROOM.

In the breaking light of day, the details of their lives emerge
in WIDE ANGLE. Part dorm room, part office, part sports bar,
part warehouse... the place is a festival of chaos. A
basketball hoop sits in the corner next to a big screen TV. A
mobile hangs from the ceiling fashioned from soda bottles and
dental floss. The dining room table has been converted to a
work area with computer screens and huge stacks of papers, some
a couple of feet high. There's a cardboard cut-out of Tiger
Woods. A poster from Taxi Driver.

JOSH...

Wipes the sleep from his eyes as he pads his way over to...

JEFF'S ROOM (DOORWAY)

Josh looks across the room at his father still asleep. An
electronic alarm is beeping gently beside him but it just
syncopates to the snoring.

JOSH
Dad?

No luck. Josh walks over to the bed. Shakes his father's
shoulder. The alarm continues to beep...

JOSH
Dad wake up.

INT. LIVING ROOM. HALF AN HOUR LATER.

They sit on opposite sides of the dining room table, facing each
other behind computer screens. Jeff drinks a large mug of
coffee. He wears a telephone headset.

JEFF

...It's a resistance based system, but the unique thing about our product is that it works 23 different muscle groups with one piece of equipment.

Jeff leans around his computer screen and makes eye contact with Josh. He holds up his mug and mouths the word "decaf???" Josh shakes his head no. His Dad gives a "could-have-fooled-me" look and continues with the sales call:

JEFF (CONT'D)

That's right and it's really easy to use. You can master the whole Flexigym workout in less than 15 minutes.

(beat)

What's that? How does it compare?

He looks to Josh: "how does it compare?" Josh furiously TYPES an INSTANT MESSAGE while his dad reads the response fluidly.

JEFF

Well, first of all--we're a professional exercise system. This isn't a consumer level product...

Josh nods. TYPES some more...

JEFF

(reading his lines/making them "his own")

...And our price point is 40% lower than a comparable system. I really think your clients are going to love it.. You know this is even used by the Austrian ski team in the off season.

Jeff leans around the monitor, and mouths "Austria? Are you kidding?" Josh shrugs, nods and types some more.

JEFF

(reading)

Yeah, and they love it. Especially the cross country guys.

There is a KNOCK on the door.

DIFFERENT ANGLE.

Josh and his father look panicked for a second. They know who this is. Josh unhitches the headset and crosses to the door, bolting the chain across it.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR.

Josh's opens up and peers out from the narrow crack.

JOSH

Oh, Mr. Timovich.

REVERSE ANGLE

A Romanian man in his mid fifties stands in the hallway.

TIMOVICH

I told you. I come every morning from now on.

JOSH

Oh. Right. I told my dad. And he knows about the rent situation.

TIMOVICH

He knows.

JOSH

Yes. He knows.

TIMOVICH

He's going to pay his rent, or he just knows?

JOSH

Hmm.

TIMOVICH

Why don't you let me talk him...

He puts a hand on the door. Starts to push it...

JOSH

I can't let you in Mr. Timovich. He won't let me open the door when I'm here all alone. He was very clear about that.

TIMOVICH

I hear him inside.

JOSH

Oh no. That's the TV.

TIMOVICH

If your dad is on TV, you wouldn't owe me so much rent.

INT. APARMENT.

Jeff, now very animated, has his feet up on the table.

JEFF

Well listen, if this whole thing works out maybe you could even go to Austria.

Josh manages to shut the door and turns to see his father leaning back in the swivel chair--clearly improvising.

JEFF
Oh yeah, we do that kind of thing a lot. For sure.

Josh looks horrified. He crosses to his keyboard and starts TYPING furiously.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Oh--Hang on a second Peter.
(reads)
OK, like I said--there are only six units left and I really don't want you to miss out.

Josh nods: that's better.

JEFF (CONT'D)
What's that? A free trial?

Josh types. His dad reads.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Well we really don't have free trials. But our return policy is guaranteed.
(beat)
What does that mean? What does that mean...

Josh looks stumped too. Thinks for a beat. Types.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(reading)
It means we guarantee that all of this equipment is able to be returned.

Jeff gives a big "thumbs up."

CUT TO:

INT. CAR. LATER.

Jeff drives an old Camaro down Rossmore. Josh is buried in his notebook.

JEFF
That was fantastic. You know you really ought to write. That was great dialogue.

JOSH
It was a sales call, Dad.

JEFF
Well yeah. But what's Mamet? That's salesmen. And what's the greatest American play ever written?

JOSH
(out the window)
I know...

JEFF
No c'mon. What is it?

JOSH
I know, Dad. Death of a Salesman. But
I'm not writing about a salesman. I AM
a salesman. I mean, you're a--we're a
salesman...

JEFF
Right. And great writing comes from
truth, like Elliot always says.

JOSH
(beat)
You think he dyes his hair?

JEFF
(beat/sacrilege)
Josh--he's my acting teacher.

EXT. STREET.

Their Camaro turns a corner onto a side street, then recedes
into the distance...

CUT TO:

A SCHOOLYARD... LUNCHTIME.

It teams with kids at various stages of teenage angst. Pre
puberty. Puberty. Puberty and then some. The noise is an
intense adolescent roar, pierced by occasional shrieks or peels
of laughter.

LONG LENS. JOSH

He moves through it in his own bubble, the rest of the
schoolyard in soft focus. Josh is a head shorter than many of
kids and something feels strange: like he's either younger or
older than the whole world around him.

BOY'S VOICE
Yo. Josh.

WIDER

An Asian kid of 15 comes up beside him. Josh glances over but
keeps walking.

JOSH
Hey Kip.

KIP
Can I borrow three bucks?

JOSH
You're into me for six already.

KIP
Yeah, I know but...

JOSH
(stops)
Don't get in too deep Kip. I really
like you. Don't let this get ugly.

He pushes the bills into Kips hand and then pats him on the side of the face, Mafia style.

KIP
Where do you get this shit?

Kip turns to go as Josh's CELL PHONE goes off.

JOSH
Hey Dad.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREET. DAY.

Jeff stands in line at a cattle call holding his headshot. There are twenty other guys who look almost exactly like him. It must be a Ralph Lauren ad because everybody is dressed in denim. He clutches the cell phone.

JEFF
(into phone)
Yeah, he said all the elastic bands
were defective.
(listens)
I don't know, I think it snapped or
something.

SCHOOLYARD

Josh plugs his free ear while he talks on the cell phone

JOSH
...Well we don't guarantee that stuff.
The contract says we're not responsible
for manufacturer defects.

Josh glances up and sees something. His stare fixes in the distance on...

HIS POV. LONG LENS

A pretty hot girl (5'7") heading into one of the class rooms.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Dad it's class. I gotta go.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM. BETWEEN PERIODS....

Dozens of kids mill around the desks waiting for class to start.

JOSH

Watches from the back, with his eyes fixed on the front row of desks.

LONG LENS POV. THE GIRL.

He's got great taste. LIZ MCGOWAN has a huge white smile. Bright sparkling eyes. She's one of those girls who will never go through an awkward period. Liz drops her books on one of the desks and heads outside, waiting for class to begin.

CUT TO:

FRONT OF THE ROOM. A FEW MINUTES LATER...

Their science teacher spreads a lesson plan across his desk

JOSH
Mr. Makouche?

MAKOUCHE
Yes Josh.

JOSH
Are you going to be assigning those research groups today?

MAKOUCHE
Good memory.

JOSH
So that's a yes?

The teacher raises an eyebrow.....

JUMP TO:

A FEW MINUTES LATER....

Josh stands with Nathan, a classmate (who happens to have a spot in the front row, right next to Liz's backpack.)

NATHAN
FIVE BUCKS!

JOSH
Keep your voice down.

NATHAN
Dude. That's insane. All I gotta do is give you my seat and you give me FIVE BUCKS!

JOSH
 (strained whisper)
 Nathan if you don't shut up, I'm not
 gonna give you anything.

The BELL goes off. Josh shoves a bill in his hand.

JUMP TO:

CLASS. (10 MINUTES LATER)

Josh sits in his recently purchased front row seat. Liz MacGowan sits to his left. Some other girl he won't remember sits to his right. Josh stares straight ahead for fear of letting his eyes wander. Mr. Makouche describes their research project.

MAKUCHE
 I expect all of you to go to the
 library, get the research you need on
 your own. This is a project that will
 last the length of the term but that
 doesn't mean I want you to ignore it
 until the end.

JOSH'S POV. LIZ'S DESK

He steals a glance: Her hand, her notebook, her fingernails, her friendship bracelet obviously given to her by some... friend. She draws absentmindedly on the front of the notebook. Graceful, pretty, lazy spirals... like smoke rings...

MAKUCHE
 And work together. That means time in
 the library, time after school. Maybe
 even time on the weekends.

CLOSE UP. JOSH

On the weekends.... Just imagine... He keeps looking forward...

MAKUCHE
 OK. I'm just gonna do this by rows.
 Jennifer, Paige, Josh and Liz, you're
 one group... David, Jackie, Nathan
 and...

MAKUCHE'S VOICE fades into the background as the news begins to sink in... His pulse quickens...

EXT. SCHOOL. LATER

There is a din of after school freedom. Josh walks up the sidewalk in his own world again, but this time a little slower. The schoolyard is a blur around him.

JEFF (O.S.)
 Buddy?

WIDER.

He looks to see his Dad moving up the sidewalk.

JOSH
Oh... Hey.

JEFF
I was calling you. You didn't hear me.

Slight beat. Josh is still dazed. His Dad is thrown for a moment.

JEFF
I'm parked over here.

JOSH
Oh. 'K...

He glances up the block toward the Camaro...

INT. CAR. LATER.

Josh still staring out the window--focused somewhere between the windshield and infinity.

JEFF
So you know... They don't really want you to do much the first time. It's more just seeing if you look right for the part physically.

JOSH
Sure.

JEFF
But I figure, if they're looking for "rugged" they're not gonna want somebody in their twenties. A lot of these guys were way younger than me.

JOSH
That makes sense.

JEFF
Are you okay?

JOSH
Yeah. I'm fine

JEFF
(studies his son)
You sure?

JOSH
Yeah. We gonna watch the game tonight?

JEFF
We got a date.

JOSH
"We?"

JEFF
(of course)
Yeah.

JOSH
I dont know.

JEFF
This girl is great.

JOSH
So you go. It's your date.

JEFF
It's fine. I told her all about you.
She's dying to meet you. Honest.
It'll be fun. I promise.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER. NIGHT

They sit three across, with Jeff in the middle. Josh and his Dad share a big tub of popcorn while his date (Nadine) sits, hands folded, on the other side. She wears a lot of makeup and a low cut dress all to no avail. Josh and his dad huddle, "conferring" on the movie in hushed tones. There is a sudden volley of GUNFIRE.

JOSH
Awesome.

Nadine glances over at them. Josh takes a sip of his drink and offers his Dad some Red Vines.

CUT TO:

EXT. HER APARTMENT. NIGHT

It's a small Spanish Duplex. Jeff's Camaro pulls up to the curb and a moment later, the door opens. Josh hops out first. Lifts the seat so Nadine can climb out of the back.

JEFF
Listen, you sure you don't want to....

NADINE
Oh no. I'm really tired and I have to get up at 6. Why don't you guys go bowling yourselves.

JEFF
(beat)
I totally understand.

NADINE
Well good night Josh. It was really
nice to meet you Josh.

JOSH
'Night.

And she heads up the block PAST THE CAMERA...

EXT. APARMENT.

The one palm tree outside their building is illuminated in a
garish blue light.

JOSH (O.S.)
How 'bout George Bush as a priest

INT. BEDROOM.

Josh is under the covers. His dad stands at the foot of the bed
performing-- a night time ritual.

JEFF
OK. Lemme think...

He pauses then contorts his face into W's gape.

JOSH
(pretty good George Bush)
*Come here my child. And receive your
Holy 'Reunion'.*

Josh cackles.

JOSH
That's good.

JEFF
Gimme another one.

JOSH
Um...
(beat thinks)
Dirty harry as a shrink?

JEFF
(loves it)
Ha! OK hang on....
(pause)
*Go ahead, punk. Tell me about your
childhood.*

Josh cracks up. Thinks about. Cracks up again. They look at
each other and laugh together. Who needs anyone else.

JEFF
Well you better rest up Buddy. Big
game tomorrow.

JOSH
Oh right. Playoffs.

JEFF
Where's your game face?

Josh grimaces to a sneer. Jeff smiles, crosses over to the bed, and kisses his son the forehead.

CUT TO:

A CLANKING BAT...

As a coach hits infield practice to a serious group of Little Leaguers.

IN THE STANDS...

Jeff settles in with a huge thermos of ice tea, a score sheet, and a cushioned pad for the wooden bleachers. He smiles at the other parents.

SERIES OF SHOTS. FIELD

All the normal pregame rituals. Scorecards are exchanged--the pledge of allegiance recited. All the kids in the dugout crowd the fence while the kids on the field scrape at the dirt, waiting for the first pitch. There is no sign of Josh.

SHOT. JEFF

He glances at his watch and then toward the pitchers mound. It's playoffs after all and Jeff has a buoyant look of anticipation. All at once, Josh's VOICE crackles through the cheap P.A. system.

JOSH (O.S.)
(announcer-ish)
Well it's a beautiful day for a ball game, so welcome to everyone out there-- from all of us here-- at PONY LEAGUE BASEBALL...

INT. SCORER'S BOOTH. BEHIND THE PLATE

It's a plain room, made of plywood that doubles at the equipment shed. There are rakes, and shovels and screens for throwing batting practice. Josh has cleared out a little area in the midst of all the equipment. He spreads his statistics out in front him, very professionally. An eight year old sits next to him, pushing the buttons for the electronic scoreboard.

JOSH
OK. Our first hitter is Chad Miller from Warren G. Harding middle school. Chad is a 7th grader who likes science, math, and BMX bicycle racing...
(pause)
C'mon Chad. "Ride" one outta here.

SHOT. JEFF

He loves it. Claps twice and gives a fist pump toward the booth. The dad sitting next to him shoots a withering look.

JOSH (O.S.)
Oooh yeah, strike one on an excellent
fastball that *just barely NICKED* the
outside corner.

The umpire turns around and shoots Josh a look. "No need to point the close ones." Josh gives him a thumbs up and goes back to the mike.

JOSH
OK, Arzi back on the rubber.
(beat)
Arzi looks in-- He sets at the belt....
Into his windup now and now the
pitch...
(pause)
A WICKED slider in for a strike at the
knees. And all Miller could do was
admire the artwork.

JEFF

Fist pumps again.

JEFF
Ha! Fantastic.
(claps twice/elbows the guy
next to him)
...Admire the artwork...

MAN
That's my son.

JEFF
Oh. Sorry.
(smiles)
Still just two strikes.

The man turns back to the game as Jeff looks over at the booth and claps twice in encouragement.

CUT TO:

LATER. (POST GAME.)

Chad's team lost and they are a little more sullen than their competitors as they line up for the high fives.

KIDS
Good game, good game, good game...

ANGLE. "PRESS BOX"

Josh comes out of the storage shed clutching his notebook full of stats. He carries his microphone in a case.

JEFF

Good game.

And he high fives his son.

POP BACK. EXTREME TELEPHOTO

They are walking to their car across the huge gravel parking lot. Jeff has his arm around his son as they head away from the little league field--a father/son ritual. But they aren't alone. As the CAMERA PANS with them (LONG LENS) it's clear that someone is watching them from a long way away. Their dialogue is vague with only a word or two from Jeff or the distant sound of Josh's laugh.

The SHOT PANS with them until they reach the Camaro. Josh leaps over the door of the convertible and lands in the front seat, action-hero style. Jeff climbs in, fires up the car, and throws it in reverse. The POV CONTINUES TO FOLLOW THEM OUT...

CUT TO:

INT. ACTING CLASS. NIGHT.

Jeff is on stage at a small theater on Fountain. He's dressed in a white "wife beater" -- his hair strangely slicked back. Jeff speaks urgently to a blond woman several feet away while his acting teacher, ELLIOT, watches from a small desk on the side of the stage.

JEFF

(tortured expression)

There is such a thing in the state of Louisiana known as the Napoleonic Code-- according to which, whatever belongs to my wife also belongs to me or Vice Versa...

ELLIOT

Mr. Frankel?

Jeff turns, as the scene is stopped. (Bad news.) He slowly makes eye contact.

JEFF

Yeah?

(beat)

Uh, yes?

ELLIOT

Mr. Frankel, are you imitating Marlon Brando in my acting class.

JEFF

No! God no!

ELLIOT

You could have fooled me.

JEFF

Well it's not an imitation. I mean
certainly... Yes it's an influence...
of course...

ELLIOT

You know Mr Frankel, if you would read
the text instead of watching the movie
you might find out there is more to
Tennessee Williams than you think.

WIDER. FROM THE 'AUDIENCE'

There are some TITTERS around the class. Josh, seated in the
back row, glances down at the ground.

CUT TO:

A HOT FUDGE SUNDAE. LATER

It drips with Chocolate, marshmallow, nuts and butterscotch.
Josh's spoon takes a big chunk and the CAMERA follows it up to
his mouth.

WIDER. RESTAURANT.

JOSH

Cmon, if he didn't respect you so much
he wouldn't be so hard on you. He
knows you're the most talented guy in
that class.

JEFF

I dont know.

JOSH

Of course. Look, he's not hard on
Benson, and Benson's hopeless.

JEFF

(brightening)

Yeah--that's true.

JOSH

You want some of my ice cream?

JEFF

(smiles)

No. You have it.

Jeff feels his phone vibrate. He reaches into his pocket, pulls
it out, looks down at a text and suddenly freezes.

JOSH
(beat)
What?

CLOSE UP

Jeff stares at the text. Completely frozen. He stays motionless for a couple of seconds.

JOSH (CONT'D)
What is it?

Jeff shakes his head. Puts the phone in his pocket.

JEFF
Nothing.
(beat)
Let's go.

JOSH
Right now?

JEFF
Yeah I gotta... You done?

Josh looks down at his sundae.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Take it with you.

JOSH
It's ice cream.

JEFF
(still distracted)
Right.

He pulls some cash from his pocket and tosses it on the table.

JOSH
You left twenty bucks.

JEFF
It's OK. She deserves it.
(pushes back his chair)
C'mon, we better go

Josh starts to make the proper change but Jeff moves around to his side of the table and quickly puts an arm around his son.

JOSH
What's the rush?

He draws Josh close and holds on. (Weird) Josh looks up at his Dad as if to say "what the hell is going on" but Jeff just flashes a frozen smile, and starts them for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH'S ROOM. NIGHT.

He sleeps under the covers with his limbs sprawled every direction, and seems suddenly typical for 13 year old kid.

BUT...

IN THE LIVING ROOM....

Jeff is wide awake. He sits motionless on the couch with his cell phone in his hand. . The shopping channel is on-- the sound MUTED. Jeff reads a text, over and over again, staring at his phone...

RING...

CUT TO:

JOSH'S ALARM

Goes off at 7:30 in the morning. Sunlight streams into his room.

CLOSE. JOSH

He blinks. Winces. Blinks again and pulls a long breath as he forces himself out of bed.

TIGHT SHOT. TRACKING WITH HIM...

He pads toward his Dad's room making the daily ritual to wake him up. Josh stops in the doorway like he always does only this time...

HIS POV

The bed is empty. Hasn't even been slept in. Josh turns in panic. Bolts into the living room, where...

REVERSE ANGLE...

Jeff is still sitting on the couch, with the shopping channel playing in the background. He's obviously been passed out for hours.

JOSH

Dad?

He wakes with a start. Glances around. Gets his bearings.

JEFF

Oh. Hey.

Jeff suddenly remembers something--looks down at his cell phone.

JEFF (CONT'D)

(beat)

What time is it?

JOSH
7:30

JEFF
Do we have a call today?

JOSH
Nothing scheduled. Unless you want to try those guys in Seattle....

JEFF
No, no. That's OK. Can we do it tomorrow?

JOSH
Uh...Sure

CUT TO:

INT. CAR. LATER

On their way to school. Josh does homework. His dad stares at him. Josh glances up and sees his Dad staring at him. Beat...

JOSH
Look out!

Jeff swerves to avoid a car. Almost clips its bumper. He puts his eyes back on the road....

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD. LATER.

Josh is conducting another transaction with Kip--his favorite customer. Josh peels off a couple of bills and hands it to him. Kip is obviously getting in deeper. The BELL rings. Josh smiles and heads off to class in the noontime rush. OVER THIS:

JEFF (V.O.)
No you can't.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Why not.

JEFF (V.O.)
Because...

But the ROAR of a BUS obliterates the end of the sentence, and...

CUT TO:

THAT BUS...

...as it clears frame, revealing:

A COFFEE SHOP

In the Miracle Mile district. THROUGH A VERY LONG LENS, from across the street, we can see Jeff, seated at a window booth, talking to a blonde woman in her mid-thirties. From a hundred yards away, through a layer of traffic, it's hard to make out what they are saying.

WOMAN

That's not what you said before.
That's not what you said when I wrote
to you.

JEFF

I don't care.

WOMAN

Well you can't just...

ANOTHER BUS

It obliterates both the image and the conversation as it WIPES by right next to the lens. As it clears, the sound returns...

WOMAN

I have a right.

JEFF

And you gave up that right.

WOMAN

No one can give up something like....

THIS TIME, A TRUCK...

Lumbers by with a low diesel ROAR. When it CLEARS FRAME they are just staring at each other.

WOMAN

I was twenty years old.

JEFF

And you left Cindy. You took off.

WOMAN

Cynthia.

JEFF

What?

WOMAN

I go by Cynthia now.

JEFF

Jesus.

3 CARS IN A ROW...

CYNTHIA

I just want to meet him.

EXT. JOSH'S STREET. NIGHT.

He moves up the sidewalk on a waveboard. Josh fishtails the back end of the board back and forth as he moves through a Hasidic family heading the other direction.

FOLLOWING HIM...

He reaches the front walk of his building, kicks the board up into his hand and starts inside. As he reaches the STAIRWELL Mr. Timovich sticks his head out of his ground floor apartment.

TIMOVICH

Joshua...

JOSH

I will. I promise. I just really...
Gotta pee....

He bolts upstairs two steps at a time, disappearing around the bend in the stairwell.

JOSH'S FLOOR

He slows to a walk as he reaches his door. Josh slings off his backpack and fishes through his pocket for the key. He finds it and swings the door open.

INT. APARTMENT.

He finds his Dad sitting on the couch all over again. It's not that different than the scene he found in the morning. Josh looks at him for a beat. Moves in slowly.

JOSH

You OK?

Jeff nods. It's clear that he's not. Josh drops his backpack--crosses to the couch.

JOSH

What's wrong?

Jeff looks up at him.

JOSH

(sitting)

What?

CLOSE UP. JEFF.

He takes a deep breath like he's gong to talk but doesn't.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Is it those guys from Arkansas? Dad they're bluffing. They can't even sue us from there.

JEFF
It's not that.

JOSH
Then what?

JEFF
God--this is hard.

JOSH
(getting worried)
It's OK. Just tell me.

JEFF
Well--when you were little... You know--
-I never wanted you to feel like you
weren't loved. Even though it was
just the two of us, I never wanted you
to feel like you were abandoned, just
because mom had left.

JOSH
I know that.

JEFF
So when I thought you were old enough,
I told you how she had, you know, gone
to Burma and all.

JOSH
To the Buddhist convent.

JEFF
(winces)
Right.

JOSH
For the relief work.

A BIGGER WINCE. This is murder. He looks down.

JEFF
Well do you remember how I told you
that she couldn't write to you...

JOSH
Because of the vow of silence.

JEFF
Right well--it turns out she wasn't in
Burma.

JOSH
(beat)
Where was she?

JEFF
...Colorado.

JOSH
(beat)
I'm confused.

JEFF
She was twenty years old, Josh. And there was no way she could take care of a baby on her own. We weren't even married, I mean--we didn't even know each other that well and...

JOSH
(puts up his hands)
Wait, wait. Wo wo wo...

JEFF
(quickly)
She LOVED you Josh. She did. And I loved you. But, we thought the best... the nicest thing to do was to find you a good home where someone could really take care of you. And there was this great couple in the Valley... really nice people and...

JOSH
Like an adoption?

JEFF
Yeah.

JOSH
(beat)
I'm adopted???

JEFF
No! God no! Not really.

JOSH
(ashen)
You know there's not a lot of gray area in that statement.

JEFF
Well, we were going to let you be adopted and we were right about to do it, but... when you were born... when I saw you--I just couldn't do it.
(pause)
Because you're my boy.

JOSH
Jesus.

JEFF
So I adopted you. I mean--I didn't have to, 'cause I'm your father. But... I did.

JOSH
So where is she?

JEFF
Now?

JOSH
Uh.. Sure.

JEFF
In a gated community off of Mulholland.

JOSH
Holy shit...

JEFF
I've wanted to tell you so many times..

JOSH
Then that whole vow of silence thing...

Jeff looks down. Josh looks straight ahead. A second or two...

JOSH (CONT'D)
What about those postcards? You know,
from Burma?

Jeff winces again.

JOSH (CONT'D)
...You wrote those!

JEFF
I didn't want you to feel that you had
a mother who didn't love you.

JOSH
BUT I DIDN'T!

JEFF

Draws a breath.

JEFF
She's moved here now. And when she
left she said she didn't want any
contact or I wouldn't have--you know--
sent the postcards. But she's here now
and she says...
(quieter)
...she wants to meet you.

Silence. They stare at each other for a beat. Like an asteroid
just fell through the roof....

JEFF

You don't have to do it. I checked with social services and when she abandoned custodial responsibility she forfeited all right to...

JOSH

(soft)

She wants to meet me?

JEFF

Yeah.

JOSH

She said that?

JEFF

Well, yeah. And texted.

Josh slumps backward on the couch staring into middle space--the whole world turned on its side.

JEFF (CONT'D)

So.

(pause/difficult)

...Do you want to meet her?

JOSH

Looks up at him. The words sink in. An actual possibility...

JOSH

I don't know. I mean, no. I don't think so... I don't know. It's weird.

(dazed)

I think I just want to go for a walk.

JEFF

(panic)

What?

JOSH

Just--for a few minutes.

JEFF

No...

JOSH

Why not?

JEFF

(no good reason)

It's gonna be dark.

JOSH

It's four.

Jeff just stares, terrified.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Look, I'm coming back. I just... I
need to clear my head a little.

He gets up from the couch. Jeff looks panicked.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Dad, it's twenty minutes.
(beat)
I'll be back. I promise.

EXT. STREET. LONG LENS

Josh walks down the street in a daze. Urban life bustles around him.

JUMP TO:

EXT. URBAN PARK

He sits on a small bench in an urban "pocket park," staring straight ahead. There is a patch of grass and a play structure. Across the tiny lawn, some mothers are pushing their toddlers on the swings.

JOSH

Sits and watches.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT. LATER

It's dark now. The door swings open as Josh takes a few steps inside, carrying a bag from Popeye's Chicken. Josh reaches for the light switch. His Dad is sitting on the couch.

JEFF
Oh my GOD.

JOSH
It's fine.

JEFF
(rising)
It's dark.

JOSH
I'm OK Dad.

Josh puts the bag down on the counter as Jeff crosses over, and clings to him in a hug.

JOSH
I'm alright.

JEFF

(holding on)

I figured you were just taking a little while, and then when it got dark I started to worry so I went down to the park, but there was no one there either and it was starting to get really dark and...

JOSH

I was just getting chicken.

JEFF

(an actor)

But it felt so real

He hugs Josh all over again, burying his face in his chest.

JOSH

(muffled/into his shoulder)

Mm fn Dd. It's OK. Rrilly.

(beat)

I ws jst gting dnnr.

He lets him go so Josh can breathe.

JOSH (CONT'D)

There's extra-crispy in the bottom.

JEFF

Oh.

(his favorite)

...Thanks

Jeff glances toward the bag.

JOSH

You could have told me.

JEFF

(beat)

I know.

JOSH

You really could have. I could have handled it.

JEFF

I know. I'm sorry.

JOSH

It's Ok. There's biscuits in there too.

Josh leaves the bag and crosses over to the coffee table. His Dad follows him.

JEFF

I wanted to tell you so many times.
Every time I got close, something would
stop me.

(beat)

I guess after a while, I started to
believe it all myself.

JOSH

Even Burma?

JEFF

Well...

JOSH

So what's she like now?

JEFF

What do you mean?

JOSH

I mean has she changed? Is she
different? Is she the same?

JEFF

Well... She's married.

JOSH

To who?

JEFF

I don't know. Some military guy.
Businessman. Something like that.

JOSH

What about that picture. The one in my
room?

JEFF

No no-- that's her. We took that when
we were in Big Sur.

JOSH

How 'bout the little gold Buddha?

JEFF

(wince)

No, that's from Glendale.

JOSH

So why does she want to meet me?

JEFF

I don't know--she's here now and...

STOPS himself.

JOSH

And...

JEFF
 ...And she says every son ought to get
 to know his own mother.

JOSH
 She said that?

JEFF
 Yeah.

Josh sits.

JEFF (CONT'D)
 I would have told you... I *should* have
 told you but...

JOSH
 Its ok. I dont want to.

JEFF
 You dont?

JOSH
 No. I mean...
 (long beat...)
 No.

JEFF
 (relief)
 Cause you can if you want.

Josh looks at him. It hangs in the air for a moment...

CUT TO:

LATER... (CELL PHONE)

JEFF
 Well he doesn't want to Cynthia.
 (Pause/listens)
 Yes I asked him.
 (Pause/listens)
 No you can't hear it for yourself. He
 doesn't want to talk to you.
 (pause/listens)
 Well he said he doesn't want to see you
 and that's the same thing, isn't it?
 (pause)
 Well I think it's the same thing and
 it's up to me.
 (beat)
 Yes, after living with him for fourteen
 years I think I DO know what my child
 is thinking....

BUT...

EXT. SCHOOLYARD. DAY.

...he has no idea. Josh sits at his usual spot on the side of the yard as the world swirls around him. He stares straight ahead at...

HIS POV. LIZ MACGOWAN AND FRIENDS

She clusters with a group of girls speaking rapidly in hushed tones. Josh watches them the way you'd study a group of leopards or cheetahs: close enough to observe the smallest movements--far enough to still go undetected. It's a strange and alien species: They toss and flick their hair in unison. They shriek together in long peels of laughter. Liz loosens and re-ties her pony tail and all of her friends do exactly the same. It's remote... unknowable... exotic...

SCHOOL BELL RINGS:

INT. SCIENCE CLASS. LATER.

50 kids are bored out of their minds with an eye on the huge clock above the blackboard. All except one.

JOSH

Listens intently from his seat near the back, riveted on every word.

MAKOUICHE

So we see that not all characteristics are inherited directly from the parent. If one parent has a recessive allele and it pairs with the recessive gene from the other parent, you could end up with blue eyes even if both your parents had brown.

Josh leans forward...

MAKOUICHE

In this green muck frog for example, the skin color is directly inherited from the father, but if the father's gene is recessive and the mother's gene is dominant the skin color of the mother will be expressed even though it is the father who usually determines that particular trait.

Josh lowers his pencil.

CUT TO:

JOSH AND JEFF

Watching a big screen with their heads cocked in the exact same position. The WORLD SERIES plays over

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
It's two and one to Pujols here in the
third. Chamberlin looks in. Shakes off
Posada. Shakes him off again.

INT. BIANCO'S PIZZA. WIDER.

They sit amongst their friends: a lot of the guys from the restaurant and a few others from acting class. Josh and Jeff are parked at a bar table in the front, right under the big screen. It's October and these are holy days for baseball.

JEFF
Will you listen to that guy.
(imitates the announcer)
"Shakes off Posada. Shakes him off
again..." You're better than that.

JOSH
Dad, please. That's John Miller.

JEFF
I know. But you are.

JOSH
(sharply)
No I'm not! Alright.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Swung on and missed strike three.

JEFF
(recoils)
Alright.
(quieter)
Sorry.

Awkward silence...

LATER....

The game is still going on but it's a blowout.

ANNOUNCER
So at the end of 7, it remains
Cardinals 9 Yankees 3.

Everyone is milling around paying very little attention to the screen. A group of guys share a pitcher. Josh is seated in the corner and appears to be staring at the wall.

CLOSER

But he's not. In the SMOKED MIRROR of the pizza joint, Josh studies his chin... his eyes... his hair... his mouth... After a moment or two, the CAMERA RACK FOCUSES to reveal his father, in the background chatting up a waitress in her mid thirties. She wears a tight tank top and seems too tan.

JOSH

Watches his Dad leaning closer to the woman. He flashes a big smile. She smiles back. Josh looks at his own face as the camera RACKS back to the mirror. Will anyone ever smile back?

LIZ (V.O.)
Aren't you Josh?

He just stares.

LIZ (V.O.)
Excuse me? Aren't you Josh?

He still doesn't respond.

LIZ (V.O.)
Hell-ooo-o

EXT. SCHOOL. LUNCH COURT

Josh is standing face to face with Liz and her pack--but instead of watching them at a safe distance, he is suddenly ambushed, no more than a couple of feet away. They have tight leotards, and glistening hair, and jewelry, and breasts. Josh can't speak.

LIZ
Aren't you Josh?

JOSH
(as if remembering)
Uh. Yeah. Hey.

LIZ
Hey. So...
(smiles)
We're your research team.

Liz and her friends laugh at the concept.

LIZ
Omigod now he looks really scared.

They laugh together again.

LIZ
OK so we're not exactly scientists but we're kinda cute. Well Jennifer is.

JENNIFER
Please, you are SO much cuter than me.

JOSH
(all breath/no volume)
...Hi.

LIZ

(reacts to his nerves)

Uh--hi. Anyhow, they say this has to be about "some aspect of the energy cycle." And, well-- since you're a lot brainier than we are we thought you could bail our asses out.

(smile)

What do you think? Can you 'bail our asses out?'

CLOSER

Maybe it's just their physical proximity. Maybe it's the personal use of word "asses." But Josh goes a little red, then feels himself going red, then starts to breathe harder, then feels that, then starts to sweat, then wonders if the sweat is visible, and when the words finally do come out...

JOSH

(shaky)

I could, maybe. Well...yes... Try...

What? (Weird sentence) They look at each other, oddly for a moment. Two of the sidekicks giggle.

LIZ

Well... OK. We'll see ya then.

JOSH

(now without any breath)

For sure.

They whisper some more as they leave. Josh is left standing-- his feet in concrete.

CUT TO:

A URINAL (CLOSE)

The silver valve. The flushing handle. The tile wall beside it. We're in his POV.

JOSH (V.O.)

"I could maybe--well, yes, try?"

He stares straight ahead peeing.

JOSH

(angrier)

"I could maybe well yes try?"

Finishes peeing. Stands there anyway. He looks up at his own reflection in the mirror above the urinal.

JOSH

(to "himself")

Idiot.

INT. APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Jeff is sitting by the phone, playing back a voice mail over the speaker.

SOFTBALL BUDDY

We're gonna be at field 3. That's across La Cienega on the SOUTH side of the park.

The door opens. Jeff immediately hangs up. He looks across the living room where Josh drops his books and crosses to their kitchen table.

JOSH

I want to meet her.

JEFF

What?

JOSH

I want to meet her. Just once. That's all. Fifteen minutes. I just want to know what she's like.

JEFF

Oh. OK...

JOSH

You can come too if you want.

JEFF

No. That's OK.

A pause...

JOSH

I just need to see her. I just want to hear what she sounds like... and looks like and...

JEFF

I understand.

EXT. APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Crickets and car noise. A motorcycle goes by.

INT. APARTMENT. NIGHT.

It's completely dark except for a New York Mets night light in the hallway that has been burning since Josh's childhood.

SHOT. DOORWAY TO JOSH'S ROOM

Jeff stands in the doorjamb watching his son sleep.

REVERSE ANGLE.

It's the same view he's had since Josh was a baby. Only now his feet stick out from the end of the bed. Other than that--it feels the same...

CUT TO:

TRAFFIC

As a BUS wipes the frame, and reveals

THE SAME COFFEE SHOP

Where Jeff met Cynthia a few days before. Only now the booth by the window is empty.

INT. CAMARO.

They are parked around the corner. Jeff looks over at his son.

JEFF
I'll come if you want me to.

JOSH
No, that's OK. I can do it myself.

JEFF
You sure?

JOSH
Yeah.

He pops open the door and hesitates.

EXT. STREET.

The sounds of a busy intersection flood his world and all of a sudden he seems alone in it. Pedestrians, trucks, a motorcycle. Like crossing a threshold...

JOSH'S POV

MOVES up the block toward the entrance to the coffee shop. He sees it coming closer. 30 feet.. 20 feet... 10... feet.

INT. COFFEE SHOP.

He opens the door and walks inside. An old woman sits alone at the corner. (Not her.) A couple huddle together in the back. There is no one else sitting alone. Josh walks past the "seat yourself" sign and takes a booth by the window....

CLOSER

He glances around. The girl behind the counter is picking at her nails and the waitress is replacing some Jello in the refrigerator case. It's almost 2:30 and the lunchtime rush is over. Josh looks toward the DOOR.

HIS POV

A young woman in her mid twenties enters the place in a hurry. She wears a tank top and a long skirt and seems preoccupied--like one of those girls in Elliot's class. Her? They lock eyes for a second. Doesn't seem possible. Then...

A VOICE
(behind him)

Josh?

He turns around and...

A DIFFERENT WOMAN

Cynthia has a well frosted blonde haircut and carefully applied makeup. She's only 5'3" (that explains it) but in heels with her "plucky" attitude, she seems a bit taller. She wears one of those expensive velour sweat suits that Josh can't remember the name of. Still, there is something weirdly familiar. Not that he's seen her before--just that it feels like he has. It's like going to a hotel that you've always imagined but only from the brochure.

JOSH

Wow.

CYNTHIA

Hi..

JOSH

(beat--extends his hand)

I'm Josh.

CYNTHIA

Yeah. I'm--Cynthia.

(nervous)

Guess...I'm your Mom.

WIDER. TABLE

She stands frozen in the aisle. Josh glances toward the booth and awkwardly, she sits. They just stare for a beat in a 50/50 profile.

CYNTHIA

(pushed smile)

Don't look very Buddhist, do I?

JOSH

No.

(a pause)

You look like your picture.

CYNTHIA

So do you.

Forever. (This isn't easy) They study each other's features. More time goes by...

CYNTHIA
You hungry?

JOSH
Not really.
(beat)
Kinda queasy, actually.

Cynthia nods. Takes a BIG breath... She glances around--preparing...

CYNTHIA
Look, First I want to say that...
(beat)
God, this is so weird--I've rehearsed this thing so many times...
(back to her speech)
First I want to say that "I'm sorry."
No one should have to grow up without a mother and if you're old enough to have a baby you ought to be old enough to take care of one.

JOSH
(beat)
You rehearsed that?

CYNTHIA
Yeah--why?

Josh shrugs.

WAITRESS
Ready to order?

They glance up to see the WAITRESS standing table-side.

JOSH
I don't know..

CYNTHIA
Why don't you have something anyway.
Maybe it'll settle your stomach.

It sounds weirdly maternal, but he takes it in. He pauses for a beat then...

JOSH
OK.

He looks down at the menu. She scans it as well.

WAITRESS
I can come back.

CYNTHIA
No, no.
(looking up at her)
(MORE)

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
I'll have the Asian special salad, but
no toasted coconut, no mandarin orange
segments and I'd like the sesame peanut
sauce on the side.

JOSH
You must come here a lot.

CYNTHIA
No. Just seemed like the best thing
they had.

JOSH
You just read all that?

CYNTHIA
Yeah

JOSH
When?

CYNTHIA
Oh. Whenever I see something visually,
it just sticks in my head like that.

JOSH
(nods)
I know what you mean.
(closes the menu)
I'll have the Santa Fe burger, but no
red onion, no southwest chipotle relish
and I don't want it succulently
drenched in 'your' sauteed mushrooms.

He looks over at Cynthia.

WAITRESS
To drink?

JOSH
(still looking at Cynthia)
Dr. Pepper.

CYNTHIA
(a little stunned)
Me too.

The waitress leaves. They stare for a beat.

CYNTHIA
(studies him)
You know you have his eyes.

JOSH
Yeah you know we argue about that. He
says I have his eyes... I say he's got
mine. It's like socks.

Cynthia laughs

JOSH

Wow.

CYNTHIA

What?

JOSH

I snort too. Like that.

CYNTHIA

I snorted?

JOSH

Are you serious? You could call
wildlife with that.

Snorts again.

JOSH

So what happened?

CYNTHIA

What? ...Then?

JOSH

Yeah. You know--when you took off and
we never heard from you again.

DIFFERENT ANGLE.

She shifts in the booth....

CYNTHIA

You know Josh, it would be perfectly
normal for you to be angry at me. I've
read a couple of books and they all say
that anger is a very appropriate
emotion in this situation. It's
understandable, in fact.

JOSH

Were you in love with him? At first?

CYNTHIA

I... Don't know. It's hard to say. We
were young.

JOSH

You can't be in love if you're young?

CYNTHIA

You can. I guess.

(beat)

It was tough. We didn't have any
money. We didn't know each other very
well...

JOSH

And you had me?

CYNTHIA
(beat)
Yeah.

JOSH
And...

CYNTHIA
(deep breath)
And we both thought it was too hard to
take care of a baby on our own.

JOSH
But he did. He took care of me. On his
own.

CYNTHIA
Yeah. He did.
(beat)
And he did a terrific job.

Everything stops. The moment hangs in space...

WAITRESS (O.S.)
Santa Fe Burger?

They look up to see the WAITRESS holding plates.

JOSH
Um... here.

WAITRESS
And you've got the salad.

CYNTHIA
(smiles)
Right.

The waitress deposits the food and clears frame. Each of them takes their drink, pulls the paper off the straw with their teeth and puts it into their Dr. Pepper. They are a mirror image of each other.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

They freeze like that, in the exact same position and realize what they are looking at. Josh smiles first. Can't help it. She smiles too. The moment breaks...

CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S CAMARO

He has fashioned a small building out of popsicle sticks and straws. And empty popsicle box sits beside him next to a plastic bag from Seven Eleven. Jeff glances out the window... tinkers with the roof of his little structure... checks his watch...

CYNTHIA (V.O.)
I worked in a bakery.

CLOSEUP. CYNTHIA. INSIDE THE RESTAURANT NOW

She leans forward now. More relaxed. The salad has been eaten-discarded. Josh works on a huge ice cream sundae.

CYNTHIA
I was behind the counter and he used to come in every morning for a blueberry muffin. I thought he was cute but I didn't really know him. Then one day he comes in and he looks me right in the eye and says "You know what? You look amazing today." And he just had this big smile on his face and that's all any girl really wants. For a guy to look her right in the eye and just say "You know what? You look amazing today". So I'm all flustered and I give him the wrong muffin and he goes "no blueberry. You know-- like always." And he knew. And I knew that he knew. And then I was a goner.

Josh takes a huge spoonful of butterscotch.

JOSH
Yeah. He does that. That blueberry thing.

CYNTHIA
Really?

JOSH
No. I'm kidding. But he does like muffins.

They laugh together now. (Same time) Silence for a beat. But a comfortable one.

CYNTHIA
Well listen--it's Five and I promised I wouldn't take more than 45 minutes.

JOSH
Right.

CYNTHIA
Can we get together again some time?

JOSH
Um. I'm--not sure.

CYNTHIA
(quickly)
I understand.

JOSH
It's just..

CYNTHIA
What? Weird?

JOSH
Honestly---it's just a little scary.

CYNTHIA
(beat)
Will you think about it?

Beat. He thinks about it....

EXT. SIDE STREET.

Josh walks up the block in a little bit of a daze. He has just turned the corner when a CAR HORN starts blaring at him from up the street.

WIDER.

JEFF is leaning on the horn, waving and pointing to himself:
"I'm over here."

PEDESTRIAN
Hey shut up!

Jeff stops honking as Josh acknowledges him with a wave.
Moments later he pops open the car door.

JEFF
Hey.

JOSH
(getting in)
Hey.

His Dad studies him for a beat.

JEFF
How was it?

JOSH
(beat)
OK.

JEFF
What? OK? I mean just like... OK?

JOSH
Yeah.

JEFF
So when you say "OK"...

JOSH
I mean its ok. I don't think I'm gonna
see her again.

Jeff exhales. Relief. He tries to fight the smile but cant
help it. He turns the key and pulls out into traffic...

CUT TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY. NIGHT.

Josh picks up a 5-10 split and whirls around in victory. He
thrusts his hands up in the air and is instantly met with a huge
bear-hug

JEFF
Awesome! Yes! 5-10 banana split!

Jeff rocks Josh back and forth in an excessive victory
celebration. After a second or two, he still hasn't let go.

JOSH
Dad.
(smothered)
Its ok Dad.
(beat)
Dad...

And he slowly releases his grip

JEFF
Right. Ok. Sorry.

Josh rotates his neck, recovering from the hug. Jeff moves back
to the scoring table as Josh goes to retrieve his ball

CLOSER. JOSH

He picks it up and spins it in his hand with the professionalism
of someone who has watched too much ESPN. Josh dries his hand
off with the little blower then takes his stance. He sights the
headpin down the lane, relaxes into a "bowlers slouch" then
glances to his right.

JOSH'S POV

Three alley's over is a blonde girl with shoulder length hair.
She wears a "peasant" top and jangly bracelets. She moves
gracefully--beautifully. The girl leans over to get her ball
and then lifts back up, showing half of her profile... Liz
MacGowan.

JOSH

Swallows. Stares. Freezes. Watches..

HIS POV.

...as she moves up to the line; rolls a ball that hugs the gutter; then turns back to her friends, with a huge, buoyant smile but....

CLOSER

...it isn't LIZ MACGOWAN at all. She's a pretty girl, older than Liz (maybe 17) but without her striking eyes or easy grace...

JOSH

Stares for a beat looking for the girl she should have been.

JEFF
(same accent)
C'mon big fella. Do it fer the city of Akron.

He jolts out of the moment. Looks straight ahead.

CUT TO:

THE REAL LIZ MACGOWAN

From four rows behind her in the back of the class. She sits at her usual spot in front, surrounded by her posse and from this angle Josh can just see the gentle contour on the side of her cheek. THE SCHOOL BELL RINGS and...

JUMP CUT:

FRONT OF THE CLASSROOM

As all the kids file out. Josh is one of the throng and is just heading for the door when he hears Makouche call his name.

MAKUCHE
Joshua.

He stops... Turns. Mr. Makouche moves out from behind his desk while the rest of the kids file out.

MAKUCHE
Have you got a second?

JOSH
Sure.

MAKUCHE
This is your genetics quiz.

INSERT. TEST PAPER

It's multiple choice and has a HUGE 100% written across the top in RED...

EXT. SCHOOLYARD. SAME

Josh walks out of class looking down at the quiz. He glances up. Slows.

HIS POV

Liz is clustered with her posse on the side of the schoolyard. He watches for a beat as she gets a phone call and walks away from her friends with the cell to her ear.

FOLLOWING LIZ.

She talks for a moment head down, trying to block the schoolyard noise. After a beat she nods, flips the phone shut, and looks for her friends who are nowhere in sight.

JOSH (O.S.)

Hey.

WIDER

She looks up to see him leaning against the fence somewhat nonchalantly. He flashes a smile.

LIZ

(startled)

Oh. Hi.

JOSH

So listen, I was starting to take a look at that science report...

(stop/suddenly)

You know what? You look amazing today.

LIZ

What?

JOSH

No you do. You really look "amazing" today.

She looks over at him a little startled. This could go either direction.

LIZ

Really?

JOSH

(right in the eye)

Yeah. You do.

Long Pause. (Probably longer for Joshua) After a while, Liz flicks her hair slightly.

LIZ

Well thanks.

(pause)

(MORE)

LIZ (cont'd)
 Hey why don't you give me your number
 and I'll text you when we can all get
 together. I mean--we gotta get going
 on this thing.

JOSH
 For sure.

LIZ
 Or here--I can just give you mine. And
 you can let me know what's good for
 you. I'll round up the rest of the
 girls.

JOSH
 (disbelief)
 Oh. OK.

INSERT. LIZ MACGOWAN'S HAND

She rips a corner off a piece of notebook paper and grabs a pen
 from her purse. He watches her write each digit--for him:
 8..3...2. "dash" 1...4...5...9. Then her hand folds it in half
 and gives to him...to keep.

JOSH
 (swallows)
 Cool.

LIZ
 (smile)
 Great. Well see ya.

Her look lingers for a beat as she turns and goes off in search
 of her friends...

CUT TO:

COFFEE SHOP. DAY.

Josh and Cynthia are back in the exact same spot, only now she
 is on the left and he is on the right. The body language still
 mirrors one another, but now each of them leans forward,
 engaged in a much more animated conversation. Cynthia gestures.
 Josh nods. Josh responds. Cynthia laughs...

MAN'S VOICE
 Where's Josh?

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT KITCHEN

Jeff sits at the large prep table with a bowl of pasta. Jeff
 glances up at one of the waiters.

JEFF
 (eating)
 Seeing his mom.

Marco stops. Stares. A couple of cooks turn as well.

COOK
Che cosa he detto?

MARCO
Sta vedendo la sua madre. Smusso lo
credo

JEFF
(mouthful)
What? He's sees his mother on
Thursdays, Marco. What's so weird
about that?
(beat)
I think it's great.

They shrug and turn back to the stove as Jeff twists his fork in the spaghetti.

INT. APT. DAY

Josh and Jeff sit face to on a sales call. Josh types the dialogue. Jeff performs it with a flourish.

JEFF
Yes. You can actually get all the
exercise you need in one twelve minute
workout per week. That's because the
flexi gym works five different muscle
groups at once.
(beat)
What? Is that safe?

He looks toward Josh who nods. Types.

JEFF
Oh sure. In fact the flexi gym often
is prescribed by doctors in difficult
rehab cases.
(beat)
Hmm? "For example?"

He looks over at Josh who is staring out the window.

JEFF
For example...
(cant get his attention.
Jeff speaks louder)
For example...

Snaps his fingers. Josh comes back. Types.

JEFF
Well one man was able to resume his
career as a firefighter after a near
fatal injury.

Jeff gives Josh a thumbs up, who nods and looks back out the window.

CLOSER JEFF.

He studies his son for a beat, a little troubled. Jeff keeps selling, but now his mind is elsewhere as well.

JEFF

Well yeah the price is flexible too...

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. FOLLOWING THURSDAY. IN THE RAIN.

A winter storm pelts the street. Josh and Cynthia talk over french fries on the other side of the streaked glass.

CYNTHIA

I don't know if you can have two crushes at once. Not if you're a girl.

He nods.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Is this just a general question or is it someone in particular?

JOSH

Just-- you know... Um--general...

CYNTHIA

Sounds like it.

JOSH

Well--mainly general.

She smiles.

CYNTHIA

I promise--whoever she is I'm not gonna tell her.

INT. APARMENT.

The same rainstorm pelts the window. Jeff stares at the streaks of water. After a beat he turns back across the room at his computer on the dining room table.

COMPUTER SCREEN.

It blinks to life. A start up icon appears followed by all of jeff's files. There aren't many. Maybe five folders on his desktop: "Phone orders"... "Online Orders"... "Fantasy football"... And "JOSH."

His cursor moves over to file and he double clicks icon. A million icons appear and he clicks one that is clearly familiar.

CLOSER. COMPUTER SCREEN

The photograph appears. Josh is two years old sitting in front of a birthday cake wearing a New York Mets bib.

He's comprised of pounds and pounds of baby fat--the cutest kid in the world. Even at that age Josh points to the cake with an almost knowing expression on his face: "Yeah. Those are my candles."

JOSH (V.O.)
Why Cleveland.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. THE FOLLOWING THURSDAY...

The rain is gone. They sit in the same booth. Blazing sunshine.

CYNTHIA
I was going to chiropractic school.
Then I met this stockbroker and we
moved to Miami.

JOSH
You're a chiropractor.

CYNTHIA
God no. Half a semester. I know
enough to hurt somebody.
(beat)
We need more barbecue sauce.

JOSH
No kidding.
(beat)
I thought you went to art school.

CYNTHIA
That was later. In Colorado. But I
didn't really go. I was just enrolled.

JOSH
You move around a lot.

CYNTHIA
I did then.
(beat)
I'm here now

FULL SHOT. COMPUTER SCREEN (PHOTOGRAPH)

It's another birthday but this time Josh is eight. He has huge bucked teeth and is performing a magic trick with a top hat. A stuffed rabbit comes out of the top...

The cursor clicks twice and a new window opens up obscuring the picture. It's an email

FROM: JFRANKEL@AOL.COM

TO: JFRANKEL@HOTMAIL.COM

DEAR BUDDY: HAPPY BIRTHDAY! CAN YOU BELIEVE WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR EIGHT YEARS ALREADY!

I HAVE A REAL CARD FOR YOU LATER BUT I WANTED YOU GET THIS WHEN YOU GOT UP. PS: I ATE THE CHINESE FOOD FROM LAST NIGHT BUT THERE IS STILL PIZZA IN THE TIN FOIL.

SHOT. JEFF.

He stares. Clicks the mouse...

COMPUTER SCREEN

A new e mail. This one is dated one year later.

DEAR BUDDY:

I HEARD DAVID MILLER CALLED YOU A DWEBB. WELL THERE'S A LOT WORSE THINGS TO BE CALLED. HERE ARE SOME REALLY BAD ONES: MEAN (FOR NO REASON.) A LIAR. (EXCEPT TO MAKE MONEY. EVERYBODY LIES TO MAKE MONEY.) BORING (PROBABLY THE WORST THING--AND BUDDY YOU ARE ANYTHING BUT BORING) LONG AFTER THE DAVID MILLERS OF THE WORLD COME AND GO, YOU WILL STILL BE JOSH FRANKEL. HOW GREAT IS THAT? I LOVE YOU. AND I'M SORRY I ATE YOUR CHOCOLATE PUDDING.

The Cursor clicks. ANOTHER E MAIL:

JUST WATCHED CHINATOWN BUT DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE YOU UP.OMG WERE YOU RIGHT!!! WHAT A MOVIE! WE HAVE GOT TO WATCH IT AGAIN TONIGHT. (YES I KNOW ITS AN EXTRA DAY'S RENTAL)

SHOT. JEFF.

He turns away from the screen...

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. THE FOLLOWING THURSDAY...

They sit face to face across some french fries.

CYNTHIA

Then I went to Arizona. Then I was in culinary school but I hated it..

JOSH

Really?

CYNTHIA

Yeah. You know, I like to eat but...

JOSH

Sure.

CYNTHIA

Then I met Rob and that was it.

JOSH

It?

CYNTHIA

...Yeah.

JOSH
What's it?

CYNTHIA
Good question. Want some more fries?

JOSH
Sure.

CYNTHIA
You know I wrote a lot of letters. I just never mailed them.

JOSH
That's ok.

CYNTHIA
It was just... hard to know what to say...

CUT TO:

THE COMPUTER SCREEN.

A blank e mail fills the monitor. Only the address has been filled in:

FROM: JFRANKEL@AOL.COM TO: JFRANKEL@HOTMAIL.COM

Typing appears. DEAR BUDDY.... A pause. And then it gets erased. HEY-JOSHI GUESS WHAT! Erased again. DEAR BUDDY.... THIS IS ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS WHERE.... The typing stops.

SHOT JEFF.

He just stares at the screen... His own voice:

JEFF (V.O.)
Thanksgiving?

INT. APARMENT. LATER...

Josh is there with a doggy bag from the diner.

JOSH
Yeah. Its Thursday anyway. And she's dying to see you.

JEFF
I dont know.

JOSH
She told me to invite you.

JEFF
(beat)
Does what's his name know?

JOSH
Rob?

JEFF
That's his name?

CUT TO:

A DOOR OPENING.

CYNTHIA
HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

CYNTHIA

Stands in front of them wearing more make-up than usual and a huge smile. She has on a red mohair "holiday" sweater.

CYNTHIA
Hell-oo.
(kisses josh. Turns to...)
Hi Jeff.
(kiss him too/turns behind her)
And this is Rob.

A trim (trimmed) vigorous man in his early fifties steps forward. Rob Chambers projects confidence and a really firm handshake.

ROB
Jeff, Josh...
(all wasp)
Happy Thanksgiving.

JEFF
Oh yeah. Happy--um-Thanksgiving to you.

JOSH
(whisper)
The pie.

JEFF
Oh yeah. Here. Josh and I made this.

ROB
Says DuPar's on it.

JEFF
I know. That's the joke.

Sits there. Silence. Rob smiles bigger (if that's possible.)

UP ANGLE. LIGHT SOCKET

There is a bare bulb against a plain white ceiling. KORN is playing at TOP VOLUME.

SHOT. DUANE CHAMBERS (SILENT)

15 years old. Zits. Too much hair. Josh's "stepbrother" stares straight up in the air, with headphones on. His room is completely barren except for cardboard boxes and ten out state license plates on the wall above his bed. The lights flick on and off repeatedly.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

His dad, Cynthia Josh and Jeff are all standing in the door to the room. Rob flicks the light switch again. Slowly he removes the headphones.

ROB

Hey big fella. This is Josh. I thought maybe you guys could hang out a little. Where's Kyle?

DUANE

His room I guess.

ROB

We're on the table in 20.

INT. EMPTY LIVING ROOM.

Packing boxes are still everywhere despite the fact that they have lived there 4 months. It's a McMansion in every sense of the word. A huge crystal chandelier hangs from a ceiling that is only 9 feet tall. The massive fireplace is fronted in brown marble. If anything, the lack of furniture doesn't make the place look bigger. All the enormous detailing and grandiose ornaments give it a case of dwarfism: like they took a Versailles and dehydrated it.

ANGLE. DINING ROOM (FURNISHED)

Across the empty living room, through an open portico, Cynthia is busy decorating a holiday table. It appears to be one of the few furnished rooms and there are pumpkins and squashes and a beautiful fall centerpiece. The turkey sits on the table waiting for Rob to carve it. Cynthia hurries around lighting candles.

INT. DUANE'S ROOM

He has taken off the ear phones because his Dad told him to. Duane sits on the floor across from Josh.

JOSH

(beat)

What's with all the license plates?

DUANE

That's where we've lived. My dad keeps moving for better jobs so I take a license plate wherever I go.

(MORE)

DUANE (cont'd)
(beat)
You get high?

JOSH
No.

DUANE
Cool.

JOSH
That's a lot of license plates.

DUANE
No shit. Tell him that.

JOSH
(beat)
You've got two Michigans.

DUANE
Yeah. That's where we're from. My mom
still lives there.
(suddenly yelling)
KYLE! Dinner in 10!

INT. DINING ROOM.

Rob carves the Turkey with patriarchal flourish.

ROB
(moving a drumstick)
And here you go....

CYNTHIA
Good job sweetie.

ROB
(Grin)
I love to carve.

Josh looks up at his Dad and they try to avoid a smile.
Nonetheless Jeff mouths the line silently: "*He loves to carve.*"
Cynthia hands Josh a plate.

ROB
So Cyn tells me you're an actor.

JEFF
(turns)
Uh. Yeah.

ROB
Anything I've seen?

CYNTHIA
Oh. Jeff's done lots of stuff. TV.
Soap operas...

ROB
We love the movies. Especially in the summer.

(beat)
What about you Josh. The acting bug rub off on you yet?

JOSH
No. Not really.

JEFF
Josh is really talented. He's the announcer for his Pony league.

ROB
Announce hunh? Do you play?

JOSH
No.

JEFF
But he announces the whole game. It's great...

(looks at Josh who SHOTS HIM A GLANCE...)
...Of course he doesn't like to do it outside the booth.

ROB
Well you oughtta come with us. My company's got terrific Laker seats.

CYNTHIA
That's a great idea. I hate to go. You could go with Duane and Kyle.
(turns to Rob)
Honey you could take all three boys..

Josh looks at Jeff. Beat...

JEFF
Yeah. That's a great idea. You guys should go.

JOSH
Well...

KYLE
They're floor seats.

DUANE
No they're not. Idiot.

KYLE
Well they're almost floor seats.

JEFF
It sounds like fun.
(across the table to Josh)
Buddy?

JOSH
Uh--Sure.

Silence...

JEFF
(pushed smile)
This is a great house.

CUT TO:

THE LAKER GAME.

Crowd ROARS. Kobe drives the lane. Crowd roars some more...
STANDS.

Josh sits next to Rob who sits next to Kyle and then Duane.
Kyle looks pretty bored but Duane listens to Godsmack on his iPod. Great seats indeed. 6 rows from the bench.

CLOSER

There is a three point shot from the baseline and the crowd leaps to their feet, Josh and Rob included. They settle back into their seats.

ROB
Guy is awesome. What's that like 20 points?

JOSH
Twenty three. They oughtta be doing that more. It frees up the paint for Kobe.

ROB
(impressed)
Completely.

A steal and a layup. Another cheer. Rob high fives Josh. Kyle shoots a look

CUT TO:

POST GAME.

The four of them make their way toward the exit with the throng. Rob slows.

ROB
You guys want a souvenir or something?

KYLE
Pllllleease.

ROB
Why not?

KYLE
(keeps walking)
Um--gay?

ROB
(pauses)
It's not gay Kyle, it's sports.
(stops at the stand)
You want something Josh?

CLOSER. SOUVENIR STAND

JOSH
Oh. That's OK.
(glances up)
I've got my own money.

ROB
Don't be silly. Here get whatever you
want. You want a sweatshirt?

Duane turns up his iPod as Josh moves toward the souvenir stand.
He looks up at the wrack of stuff. The vendor comes over and
Josh motions him closer.

JOSH
(quietly)
...Can I get an extra large?

INT. THEIR APARTMENT. (LIVING ROOM) NIGHT.

It's late. Past midnight. Jeff holds up the Laker sweatshirt
which is huge.

JEFF
Oh that's great buddy. Thanks.

JOSH
They had another one in purple but I
thought you'd get tired of it.

JEFF
I saw you like four times on TV.

JOSH
Really.

JEFF
Yeah. First you had a cherry icee.
And then a soft pretzel.

JOSH
You could see all that?

JEFF
Whenever they had a time out. Unless
Bynum got in the way. That guy is big.

JOSH
(smiles)
No kidding.

He glances down the price-tag on the sweatshirt.

JEFF
Josh. This is 87.50?

JOSH
Rob paid for it.

Pause....

JOSH (CONT'D)
Its fine, Dad. He offered. He said "do
you guys want a souvenir?"

JEFF
Well did they get a souvenir?

JOSH
Yeah. They got T-shirts

JEFF
A t-shirt isnt a sweatshirt.

JOSH
Dad, I offered to pay. What's the
problem?
I thought you'd like it.

Jeff looks at him. Pulls a deep breath..

JEFF
Its great. Thanks
(sudden smile)
Hey--I think I may have gotten an
audition.

JOSH
REALLY?

JEFF
Yeah. That girl Olga in class? Well
she brought her manager one night she
said maybe he'd meet with me.

JOSH
That's awesome!

JEFF
Well you know, it's not anything yet
but...

JOSH

C'mon. It's great. He likes you enough to meet you. And once he gets in a room and sees how much you can do...

JEFF

Yeah. I mean--let's hope.

(pauses....)

This is really great, Buddy. Thanks a lot.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP. A DOOR.

Opera is coming from the other side. Jeff's hand reaches into frame. Pounds it. Waits. Pounds it again. The door swings open to reveal TIMOVICH, staring at him through thick glasses. He wears a robe.

JEFF

What the hell is this?

WIDER

Jeff waves a sheet of paper in his face... an eviction notice.

TIMOVICH

I give you plenty of warning.

JEFF

You don't leave this kind of thing on my door. You understand? Josh could see this. It's not his problem. Its my problem. He's a kid.

TIMOVICH

(beat)

Since when Joshua is kid?

JEFF

That's not the point. You have something to say, you say it to me.

TIMOVICH

(shrugs)

Fine. You have one week to solve this problem. Then I change locks.

Jeff blanches for a beat.

JEFF

Fine.

EXT. SCHOOL. DAY

Josh is pondering a choice at the vending machines when his cell phone rings.

JOSH
 (flips open the cell phone)
 Hey Dad. I'm late for class. I...
 (hears a girl's voice on
 the phone)
 Oh--hi.
 (swallow/glances around)
 Yeah. I'm over by the...
 (beat)
 Oh. There you are.

JOSH'S POV

He turns to see Liz and her cohorts making their way through the lunchtime crush.

LIZ
 Hey.
 JOSH
 (fairly composed)
 Hi

LIZ
 So like we read the whole chapter and
 we've got no idea how this works.

JENNIFER
 Well, like a little idea.

LIZ
 Right OK. A little. But what's a
 chloroplast?

JOSH
 Um--it's a little cellular structure
 inside the plant that holds the
 energy...

LIZ
 Okay so we can't work at Jen's because
 her mom is a total stress case and we
 can't work at my house because my
 brother would drive us nuts so... Can
 we work at your house?

JOSH
 My "house?"

LIZ
 Yeah. Cause obviously we've got a
 little work to do an besides--it'd be
 fun.
 (beat)
 Have you got a pool?

JENNIFER
 (reacts to the forwardness)
 Liz....

LIZ
What? Well it would be fun...

JOSH

Swallows. Thinks. And then in a split second...

JOSH
Yeah. I've got a pool, but...

He hesitates....

LIZ
But?

She looks at her friends in disbelief.

JOSH
Its just not a real good time for... my
mom right now.

CUT TO:

JEFF...

...standing at the foot of the bed, in their usual nightly
ritual.

JEFF
Ok. How bout Dick Cheney as a crossing
guard?

JOSH
Sure.

Jeff stands back and pantomimes holding up a sign as he prods
the kids with his foot.

JEFF
Cmon. Move it. Hurry up you little
prick.

Josh chuckles for a moment. Stops.

JEFF
(beat)
What's the matter.

JOSH
Nothing.

JEFF
Bullshit.

JOSH
Really.

Jeff waits--studies his son...

JOSH (CONT'D)
Well, I just wondered... Nevermind.

Jeff crosses over to the head of the bed.

JEFF
What, Buddy? Cmon. You can ask me anything.

JOSH

Looks up at his Dad for a beat....

CUT TO:

SPLASH!

A girls body hurtles through space landing in the middle of the pool

WIDER.

Three kids, Josh included, frolic in shallow end.

INT. KITCHEN.

Cynthia stands in the kitchen looking out at something she never thought she'd see. Her son, with his friends at her house...

SHOT. KYLE...

He stands at his bedroom window, pressed up against the Venetian blinds.

KYLE
(calling to his brother)
Dude. This is insane.

INT. DUANE'S ROOM

pressed against his window as well.

DUANE
I know. And he's such a dork.

INT. APARMENT.

Jeff is on a sales call but there is no one sitting across from him. His voice is pitched higher--a little more urgent than usual.

JEFF (V.O.)
That's right. It works five different muscle groups..
(beat)
Yeah. All at the same time. That's why it's such a concentrated work-out.
(pause/listens)
(MORE)

JEFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
 What's that? Pilates? Well I think
 it's pretty similar. But also it's
 much um... you know uh....
 (can't quite find the
 word...)
 Well I know you've never heard of us
 but there's really no comparison. This
 is a much more complete workout.
 (pause)
 We're considered a rehab process by
 doctors too.
 (another pause)
 ...What doctors?

He glances up at the empty computer across the table--it's
 reflex. Josh is missing. Just his chair and his red
 sweatshirt.

JEFF
 Well...all sort of doctors.
 (pause)
 Yeah sure--think about it but...

CLICK. He freezes for a beat, before taking a deep breath...

EXT. CHAMBERS PATIO AND OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT AREA.

Josh and the girls sit around the large glass table by the
 barbecue. All of them are wrapped in towels. There are bags
 of chips, soda, and cartons of cookies.

JOSH
 ...So there's a balance in the
 solubility from outside the cell wall
 to inside the cell wall....

JENNIFER
 Uh--translation?

JOSH
 Well...

LIZ
 You have to have just as much liquid on
 either side of the cell for it to pass
 through membrane.

JOSH
 (impressed)
 That's right.

LIZ
 Well dont look so shocked. Just cause
 I'm you know--blonde and kind of...um.

CYNTHIA
 Who wants some watermelon?

Cynthia comes out carrying a tray that is laden with fruit. Despite the cookies, chips, carrot sticks, and coffee cake, she has decided to bring a whole watermelon and ten oranges.

JENNIFER
(an aside)
Your Mom frickin rocks.

CYNTHIA
Why thank you.

She sets the fruit down and turns back toward the house.

LIZ
And this place is awesome. Where's
your room?

JOSH
My room?
(freezes)
....My room.

Cynthia overhears and turns back from the screen door

CYNTHIA
Joshua Frankel you may not take these
nice young ladies into your room. It's
a pig sty.

CLOSE UP JOSH (LONG LENS)

He locks eyes with Cynthia. Josh acknowledged the "save."

JOSH
Ok "mom." Whatever you say

CYNTHIA
(private smile)
Have fun kids.

And she turns and heads inside...

INT. APARMENT.

Jeff is on his fourth sheet of calls. He takes a large swig of water and does a stretching exercise with his face. Points to the number.... Deep breath. Dials....

JEFF
(a little more desperate)
Hello Mr Bannersack? Yeah. Jeff
Frankel calling you back about the
Flexigym... Oh. That's funny.
Because I got a message that you
called...

EXT. STREET. DUSK

Josh climbs out of Cynthia's SUV and heads up the walk. There's a spring in his step as he jumps the little dying hedge in front.

INT. APARTMENT.

He swings open the door (still singing from the car radio) and slings down his book bag. Jeff turns in his chair and hangs up quickly

JEFF

Oh, hey.

JOSH

Hey.

JEFF

(tossing his headset)
I got burgers. There's one on the counter.

JOSH

That's ok, I...
(hesitates)
...ate.

JEFF

How was it?

JOSH

Great. I think it's really gonna be terrific. This cell stuff is cool and we're gonna add a whole thing on osmosis...

(stops/sees the cluttered desk)
You doing calls?

JEFF

Oh--yeah... I was just trying some of those Arizona leads. In fact I wanted to ask you...

JOSH

Oh! I Didn't tell you! They're gonna put the whole thing in the science fair. The best three get to present in front of the school and I'd be shocked if we weren't one of those.

JEFF

That's great.

JOSH

(beat)
So what about the Arizona leads?

JEFF
Nothing.

JOSH
Really, its ok. What?

JEFF
Its fine. I'm just gonna follow them up tomorrow.

JOSH
Hey--why dont you pick me up at the house tomorrow and you can see the chart and the diagrams and everything.

JEFF
You're going there tomorrow?

JOSH
Yeah. I'm going there all week. All our stuff is up there.

JEFF
(beat)
Oh.

JOSH
Is that ok?

JEFF
'course.

JOSH
I'll be back earlier.

JEFF
Its fine Buddy. Sounds awesome.
(beat)
Its great to hear you so excited.

EXT. ACTING CLASS. DAY

Dozens of students are streaming up the steps into the theater.

JEFF
Olga!

He spots someone in the crowd and starts pushing his way toward her.

CLOSER. DOORWAY

A blonde woman in a fake fur is making her way into class. She could be anywhere from 20 to 35. Olga is from Moscow.

JEFF
Olga!

She turns (barely). Jeff catches up with her, out of breath.

OLGA
(moving toward class)
I cannot help you. This man is not my
manager anymore

JEFF
No, I....
(catching his breath)
...didn't want an audition

OLGA
(pauses)
Oh?

JEFF
(deep breath)
Didn't you say your boyfriend owned
gyms?

OLGA
Is not my boyfriend. Is my "sponsor."

JEFF
Fine. Didn't you say your "sponsor"
owned gyms?

CUT TO:

POOLSIDE.

Josh and the girls are buried in day two of the project.
Cynthia has set out an ample buffet around the table.

JOSH
...So the plant turns the sun's energy
into sugar molecules...

JENNIFER
Omigod--you can get carbs from sitting
in the sun? I like--want the umbrella.

LIZ
Jen shut up. You are so *ridiculous*.

EXT. WAREHOUSE.

Its seedy. A little frightening. East of Echo Park. Some guys
down the street have a car up on blocks and are stripping the
body parts. Music is blaring. Jeff looks up at the entrance.
Just an unmarked door with lots of locks. He thinks about it for
a beat...

JEFF'S VOICE (V.O.)
Well the retail on the unit is 550
dollars but if you bought it in this
kind of volume we might be able to do
it for 400.

INT. WAREHOUSE

An ersatz photo studio has been created in one corner with strobes, umbrellas and a hanging backdrop. Two black leather couches form a seating area on the other side. Olga from acting class is draped on one of them. Her boyfriend and two cohorts sit on the other.

DMITRI

This is rubber bands?

JEFF

It's a resistance based system. It uses industrial grade elastic components.

(beat/sweats)

Now... I don't know. I could talk to the distributor. Maybe we could go as low as 350 but I doubt it.

They speak to each other in Russian. Jeff glances to his right where a girl of 16 emerges from a hallway wearing a long T-shirt and flip flops. She rubs her eyes and stumbles around a corner-- clearly she just woke up. There are some vending machines on their sides.

DMITRI

So. If we buy--fifty...

JEFF

Fifty?

DMITRI

Yeah.

JEFF

Oh. Well... We only have twenty in stock, but I could get more in a couple of days.

DMITRI

Ok.

JEFF

...Ok?

DMITRI

Sure.

JEFF

Oh well. Great. Let me make some calls and see how many I can get.

INT. APARMENT. NIGHT...

Jeff is on the phone turned his chair away from the computer, looking out the window.

JEFF

C'mon you know I'm good for it. We've been selling for you for how long?

(beat)

Well he's not here right now. You can talk to me.

(pause/listens)

No -- I can't wire you the payment thats what I'm saying. These guys are going to pay me in a cashier's check. Why would you turn down an order like this? Just send me the machines. I'll pay you the minute its done.

(pause)

Sure Fine. Call me back. Thanks.

And he hangs up. Stares at the phone.

EXT. STREET. MULHOLLAND ESTATES.

A patrol car rolls by slowly...

EXT. PATIO

The project is starting to take shape: large charts and diagrams laid out on poster board.

INT. KITCHEN.

Cynthia has gotten more sophisticated in the snack department. There are mini pizzas and frozen egg rolls...

JOSH

Can we get online?

CYNTHIA

(glancing up)

Sure. How come?

JOSH

We need the molecular weight of carbon.

CYNTHIA

Oh.

(thinks)

...16.

JOSH

(beat)

Are you sure?

CYNTHIA

I think so.

Josh looks at her oddly.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Organic chemistry. One semester. Then I met a surgeon.

JOSH

Wow.

CYNTHIA

You want an eggroll?

INT. COFFEE SHOP.

Jeff sits alone in his regular booth. There is a copy of Dramalogue on the table but he isn't reading it. He's working the phone.

JEFF

(into his cell)

Yeah it's my third message... Well when will he be back?

(pause)

Great. I'll call you then.

He disconnects and stares at the cell accusingly. He puts it down. Glances out the window....

EXT. CHAMBERS DRIVEWAY. LATER

The girls head toward Cynthia's SUV for a ride home. Josh stays behind.

LIZ

You're not gonna ride with us?

JOSH

Oh no. My Dad's picking me up today.

LIZ

I thought that other guy was your Dad.

JOSH

Oh no. He's...
(what is he exactly)
...not my dad

LIZ

So where's your dad?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET.

Jeff moves rapidly up the block with the cell phone to his ear. He loses service. Hits send again. Head up the front walk toward the apartment and doesn't even see the small red sign in front of the building.

INT. STAIRWELL.

Jeff heads the stairs with the phone still on his ear. He gets to his door, pulls out his keys, wedges it against his shoulder as he fits the key into the lock...

PAUSE.

He jiggles the lock. Nothing. Jeff pulls out the keys. Checks them. Put it back into the lock. Tries to turn it...

CLOSER

That's when he notices the shiny new dead-bolt and the brand new brass doorknob.

CLOSER STILL

He starts to sweat... Looks at the door to their apartment.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE

He sinks down to the stoop in front of their apartment. Takes out the phone. Looks at for a beat--dials a familiar number...

CLOSE UP. JOSH'S BOOK BAG

The cell phone is ringing but there is no one to hear it.

EXT. CHAMBER'S BACKYARD. DAY.

Josh stands at the edge of the patio staring out across the backyard.

HIS POV.

A large piece of orange nylon is waving like a flag in the middle of a green lawn.

ROB'S VOICE
(from "within" the tent)
KYllle!

Josh stares.

ROB'S VOICE
KYYYYLE!

INT. "TENT"

Rob is engulfed by the orange plastic with a piece of nylon rope in his mouth. He holds a metal pole with one hand and fiddles with a cotter pin in the other.

ROB
(slightly defeated)
DUANE?

JOSH
I don't think he's here?

Rob turns to see Josh sticking his head into the bright orange mess.

ROB
(turns)
Oh. Hey.

Pause...

JOSH
(examines the mess)
Want some help?

ROB
Well--I was just trying to get this
pole onto that little grommet.
(beat)
Can you grab that?

JOSH
Sure.

He grasps the flapping orange fabric, holding it aloft.

ROB
I think if I can just slide it up over
that little notch there...

JOSH
(looks)
I don't think it goes like that.

Rob freezes clutching the three different pieces of tent.

ROB
What do you mean?

JOSH (CONT'D)
Well, this is the pole that goes over
the top. See how it's tapered like
that?

He points down to the diagram at their feet.

ROB
Oh.... Right.

Rob turns his head to read the upside down instructions...

ROB (CONT'D)
Yeah. You're right. Whaddaya know.

EXT. STREET. MULHOLLAND ESTATES.

Jeff's Camaro speeds up to the curb. He bolts from the door and heads toward the house. Jeff is frantic. Breathless. He starts toward the front door when he suddenly pauses, hearing some voices in the backyard...

MOVING WITH HIM...

He heads up the small walkway on the side of the house. Jeff unlatches the little wooden gate--moves slowly past the trash cans and the yard equipment as he get to the backyard and suddenly stops...

HIS POV. BACKYARD.

Josh and Rob stand side by side admiring the bright orange tent--perfectly erected in the middle of the lawn. Its a weird image. Almost a classic portrait of a father and son...

JEFF

Can't move. He looks at the two of them looking at the tent, then turns and bolts for the street...

EXT. STREET. DOWN THE BLOCK...

He hurries toward a neighbors yard and gets some refuge in a hibiscus bush. Jeff takes out the cell phone and dials quickly.

CLOSER.

He braces for the voicemail but suddenly a person answers. Jeff is taken aback for a beat...

JEFF

Hello?

(pause)

Yeah hi. Its Jeff Frankel again. Is he in?

(forcefully)

Well I'll hold

(slightly surprised)

Oh. Alright...

Jeff steadies himself. Pulls some long deep breaths. He starts to run the lines in his head but a voice comes on the other end.

JEFF

Yeah. It's jeff Frankel. Listen I need those units...

(explodes)

You dont understand. I NEED THEM!

We've always done well for you! We're always on time--we've never stiffed you...

(long pause)

What? Really? When?

(pause)

What time tomorrow?

(beat)

No no. I'll pick them up.... Yeah,

That's great.

(longer pause)

Thank you. I mean--thank you I really appreciate this.

DIFFERENT ANGLE.

Jeff lowers the phone. He glances next to him at a bright hibiscus flower staring him in the face. He pauses for a moment as the whole thing sinks in... Shock. Relief. Disbelief. He takes a beat--punches a new number.

JEFF

Hey. Yeah its me. How ya doin? How's Josh--having fun? Good. Listen, I was just wondering if he could stay with you guys overnight. I know its last minute but I just have some work stuff tomorrow and...

(beat)

Camping trip?

(pause)

Oh, that's nice of you. I'm sure he'd love to go. Yeah he loves to camp.

(beat)

Yeah you're right. But he would love it if he ever did it.

(pause)

Well you never know. Why don't you put him on. I'll talk to him.

Pause... The longest pause in the world. Jeff looks around the neighborhood. Every house identical.

JEFF

Yeah, hey Buddy. How you doing. Sorry I just got hung up on some stuff.

(pause)

Listen--Cynthia told me they're going camping this weekend and she asked if you wanted to come, isn't that great?

(beat)

Well its great because she asked and it might be great because....

(pause)

Well I thought it might be a blast for you. We've never really gone camping except when we waited for those Tom Petty tickets and that was just in a parking lot so....

(pause)

I want to hang out with you too. I just got a lot of stuff this weekend...

AERIAL. ANGELES CREST NATIONAL FOREST.

The Chambers SUV drones up the long mountain highway just North of San Bernadino...

ROB

Come on guys share the charger!

INT. SUV

Rob drives. Cynthia in front. Josh sits between the two brothers both of whom are both plugged into I-pods. The cargo area packed to the gills.

DUANE
It's my charger.

KYLE
But it's not your electricity.

DUANE
...What?

ROB
Just share it.

EXT. GREEN LAKE.

It's a smaller lake in the woods near Big Bear. The campsites are packed pretty close to each other--an outdoor version of togetherness. Rob wrestles with the orange tent (having had a dry run at home). Duane and Kyle are each holding a pole. Josh holds the instructions while he sits on an ice chest.

ROB
Guys--we're going to be doing this every day on the Canada trip and that's only three weeks away. The faster we can do it, the more time we'll have to spend on the water.

KYLE
How do I hold a pole faster?

ROB
What?

KYLE
No, like--I'm serious. How do I hold a pole any faster?

JOSH...

Glances over at the adjacent campsite. There is blaring rap coming from a bunch of white kids with hip hop denim shorts down their ass. A jet ski revs in the shallow water. Josh looks around at this alien netherworld: coolers, beer cozies, lawn chairs...

CYNTHIA
I've got to go get ice and butter. I'm gonna go to the camp store.

JOSH
(quickly)
I'll go with you.

ROB
Honey we just parked the vehicle.

CYNTHIA
So we'll walk.

HIGH ANGLE. WOODS. LATER

They walk up the long dirt road that leads from the highway down to the campsite. Both of them stick their hands in their pockets--a mirror image...

EXT. EQUIPMENT RENTAL YARD. EAST LA

Jeff stands with Dmitri and his cohorts in a light drizzle. A rental truck is parked beside them. There are some scattered pieces of equipment to rent. Back hoes. Trenchers. U-Haul trailers. It's a strange place.

JEFF
Where's the health club?

DMITRI
This is just equipment yard. The clubs are all over.

JEFF
Oh...

DMITRI
(toothy smile)
Beverly Hills.

JEFF
That's great.
(hands him a contract)
So I need you to sign this.

DMITRI
Of course.

He takes the contract and signs it quickly with a flourish. Jeff looks reassured.

JEFF
And you have cashiers check?

DMITRI
Naturally.

Jeff takes. Examines it. Seems relieved.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
We should unload now, yes?

JEFF
(glancing up)
Shit.

DMITRI

What?

JEFF

It's raining.

INT. CAMP STORE.

It's pouring. Josh and Cynthia stand in the doorway with a plastic bag of groceries. The rain is coming down in sheets.

JOSH

Should we go for it?

CYNTHIA

Five more minutes.

JOSH

I dont think it's gonna get better.

CYNTHIA

Yeah, but if we go back know I have to take care of everybody in the mud and I really think the five minutes might help me.

Josh nods. They look at the rain.

EXT. CAMP ROAD. LATER...

They are running with their bag of groceries (plastic) up the camp road which is starting to turn to get sloppy.

EXT. CAMPSITE.

They arrive to a mud flat. Duane is sitting under the orange fabric, shielding himself from the rain. Rob stands in it, trying to build the tent frame. Kyle still holds the same pole he was holding before, awaiting further instruction. Rob looks down the diagram which is turning to pulp.

ROB

It's OK Kyle, drop the pole.

KYLE

I got it.

ROB

I know you've got it. Now I'm saying drop it.

He lets go of his section as well, and the large "half dome" of aluminum sags into the mud. Rob takes a deep breath his face covered with rain water and sweat. He looks over at Cynthia and Josh.

CYNTHIA

(cheery)

We got the groceries.

Rob nods--crosses to them...

ROB

Honey. I don't know what to say. This is a problem now. I don't think we have all the parts we need. Something is different and I definitely cannot figure it out in the middle of a rainstorm.

(beat)

Josh I think you'd agree.

Not much choice. Josh agrees.

ROB

(with "strength")

The way I see it we've got three choices. We can head back; we can stay in the car; or we can get a motel room and try to figure it out tomorrow, but it's my honest assessment...

(jabs at the air/authority)

...my honest assessment is that it's gonna be very difficult to put this up in this kind of weather with no light.

CYNTHIA

Well, I think we should see if we can find a motel.

Josh glances next to them at the adjoining campsite. There appears to be an eight man tent complete with front porch. The people are driving a five year old pick up truck and have a large carton from Pic and Save...

JOSH

How much are motel rooms?

ROB

I don't know, like a hundred bucks. Honey why don't you go sit in the car, there's no need to...

JOSH

What if I can get that tent for a hundred bucks?

Rob pauses. Looks over at the adjoining campsite.

ROB

Well Josh I don't think you can find a store right now that...

JOSH

No I mean that tent. Their tent. Give me a couple of minutes, I think I can get this done.

INT. JEFF'S CAR. NIGHTTIME

He is parked under a streetlight in a residential neighborhood. It's quiet. Peaceful. A light rain Jeff holds the cashiers check in his hands as he examines it in the glow of a streetlight. After a moment or two, he folds it up carefully and puts it in his pocket.

EXT. CAMPSITE. NIGHT

The rain has diminished to a gentle shower and the huge eight man tent glows from within...

ROB (O.S.)
See boys, that's business.

INT. TENT.

The whole family sits around a folding table in their new home. There is a warm pot of chili on the camp stove.

ROB (CONT'D)
That's what business is. You take what life gives you and you adapt.

Duane shoots a look at Josh who shrugs: "hey what can I do?"

ROB
There aren't any rules. And nobody is ever, ever gonna do it for you.

KYLE
You said life has rules and you gotta know the rule book.

ROB
That's life, Kyle. This is business.

CYNTHIA
You kids want some chili?

EXT. CAMPSITE

The Chambers' tent glows a gentle yellow...

CUT TO:

DAWN...

As it breaks over downtown LA.

EXT. WASHINGTON MUTUAL. MID CITY BRANCH.

Jeff is waiting outside the entrance as a security guard turns the latch and opens the doors at 8:58 AM.

INT. BANK

Jeff sits at one of those little desks where "larger" transactions happen. He leans back as his "representative" processes the deposit on her terminal.

CLOSER

She looks at his Cashiers check. Enters some numbers. Glances at the deposit slip. Enters them again. Her brow furrows.

JEFF
What's wrong?

She punches her keyboard again.

BANK REP
I just... I don't show a record of this.

JEFF
(smile)
Well no. You wouldn't. I mean--it's a new deposit...

BANK REP
No. I mean don't show a record of this bank....

Jeff blinks.

JEFF
Well. Maybe you just haven't... It might be out of state or something.

BANK REP
No it's identified as a California charter. It has a bank number...

She enters it again...

JEFF
(a little heated)
Look it's definitely a bank. I mean thats a *cashier's check*....

BANK REP
Sir I understand. But all the banks are coded by a charter number and I'm telling you, this one isn't here.

JEFF
Well thats impossible. How could it not exist?

The question hangs in the air for a beat...

EXT. RENTAL YARD. DAY

It's much busier than it was the day before. Jeff stands talking with a foreman as equipment rolls by in the foreground.

JEFF
Dimitri. The Russian guy.

FOREMAN
There's no Dmitri here.

JEFF
He was here yesterday! I gave him my gym equipment.

FOREMAN
We were closed yesterday.

JEFF
...Closed?

FOREMAN
Yeah. There's no gym equipment. We rent back-hoes. You're welcome to look but..

CLOSEUP JEFF...

The rest of the sentence fades away as he moves over to the trenching machine and sinks slowly onto the fender.

POLICE DETECTIVE (V.O.)
This is actually pretty common.

INT. RAMPART DIVISION. STATION.

It bustles. Jeff sits facing a cop across a small wooden desk.

POLICE DETECTIVE
It's a lot like the Nigerian car scam. You list your car on Craig's list. You get a call from a guy who wants to send it to relatives in Nigeria. He supposedly wires money to your account...

JEFF
So what do I do?

The detective just looks at him. For a while.

CUT TO:

AERIAL. THE CHAMBERS SUV.

It's a gorgeous day. The car exits the freeway at Sunset, taking Josh home. CAMP SONGS emanate from inside the car.

SINGING
"Oh they had to carry Harry to the Ferry.
(rest)
"Oh they had to carry harry to the shore...

THE CAR

Turns onto Josh's street.

SINGING

"And the reason that they had to carry
Harry to the ferry--was that Harry
couldn't carry anymore....

EXT. JOSH'S APARTMENT HOUSE.

The SUV pulls up to the curb in front of the building. There are some cardboard boxes and a floor lamp by the front door.

JOSH (O.S.)

(from inside the car)

That's weird.

CYNTHIA (O.S.)

What?

JOSH (O.S.)

That's our lamp.

EXT. APARMENT.

Boxes. Suitcases. Piles of dishes. All the details of their life together are stacked in the driveway beside the garage. The large basketball hoop lies on its side.

JOSH (O.S.)

It's OK. We'll get it back.

JOSH AND JEFF

Sit on one of the overturned book cases.

JOSH

We will Dad....

JEFF

We can't. It's gone.

JOSH

Then fine. There's other leads. We'll just move more stuff.

Jeff looks at him for a beat. This is hard to say.

JEFF

I borrowed to fill the order.

JOSH

...What?

JEFF

It was fifty units.

JOSH
We only have twenty.

JEFF
I know.

JOSH
So--we owe the company?

Jeff nods.

JOSH
Oh my gosh.
The weight of it hits Josh who visibly sinks.

JOSH
Why didn't you tell me?

JEFF
You seemed so happy. You were seeing
your friends after school and doing
your science... and all the stuff that
a kid ought to be doing.... and I
wanted to give you that. You know? I
just....
(beat)
I'm sorry.

JOSH
It's ok.

JEFF
Im so sorry, Buddy.

JOSH
It doesn't matter. We'll be alright

Jeff glances around. There life is strewn around the parking
lot. Getting more real by the second...

JOSH
So where are we gonna go?

EXT. DANTE'S MOVING AND STORAGE. DUSK

Jeff's friend, Dante leases a small warehouse for home storage.
The other half of the building displays a huge sign from another
business: JICAMA FARMS PRODUCE. Jeff stands at the entrance.

DANTE
I sublease half of it to these guys.
They're pretty nice and they shouldn't
bother you. Only thing is they start
moving the lettuce around pretty early
so...

JEFF
(a little urgent)
That's OK. It's alright.

DANTE
Well, there's a bathroom upstairs in the office. Isn't any shower but he could shower at school after gym class, right?

JEFF
Absolutely.
(beat)
I really appreciate this, Dante. Thank you

INT. WAREHOUSE. LATER.

It's evening and the fluorescent lights have "dimmed" Jeff leads Josh through huge crates that are stacked twelve feet high. It's like a maze.

JEFF
I thought it was cold too but you get used to it.

They turn another corner, emerging from one of the aisles of crates. Josh stops in his tracks.

JEFF
Ok, now, look at that.

THEIR POV.

In a clearing, amongst the crates, is all of their furniture, laid-out in a close approximation of their living room.

JOSH
Oh my God.

JEFF
See? Just like it was. Of course--with a higher ceiling.

Josh wanders forward.

JOSH
Even the jukebox.

JEFF
Yeah. Dante let me use the forklift to move the crates around so the walls are exactly where they would be.

Josh glances up at the overhead fluorescent lights.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Oh yeah. Those don't shut off. But here....

He reaches into his pocket and pulls a pair of airplane eyeshades. Josh looks at them for a moment...

CUT TO:

A DIGITAL CLOCK.

It reads 11 PM. Josh's hand reaches into frame, and turns on the alarm.

WIDER.

He sits on the bed in his "room" brushing his teeth with a paper cup in his hand. There's no sink so Josh spits into the cup without rinsing and feels a jolt from the residue toothpaste. He shivers a little then climbs under the covers.

JOSH

Glances up toward the doorway.

HIS DAD

Smiles at him. Crosses to the foot of the bed like always. There's a pause.

JEFF
Hot chocolate?

JOSH
Wow.

JEFF
I plugged in a hotplate. By the service elevator.

He crosses over the bed and sits on the edge of it. Jeff sets the hot chocolate down on the box that serves as a bed-stand.

JOSH
I like my "room." What's in the crates?

JEFF
Sauerkraut.

JOSH
Really?

JEFF
No. But sauerkraut usually get a laugh.

And it does. Josh smiles at his Dad who smiles back but Jeff's smiles freezes....

JOSH
Stop it.

JEFF
What?

JOSH
Feeling so bad about this.

JEFF
I'm not. I just...
(beat)
...cant help it.

JOSH
Hey--you doubled our square footage and
we dont have an electric bill.

JEFF
Yeah.

JOSH
Plus we can shag flies in the living
room.

Jeff smiles. Touches his sons face.

JEFF
You got your eyeshades?

JOSH
Right here.

He holds them up. Jeff leans over and kisses Josh goodnight. He gets up from the bed and crosses to the "doorway" (a gap between the boxes) but instead of flicking off the light switch as he usually does--he just looks over at Josh. Josh takes the eyeshades and pulls them down over his face...

CUT TO:

4 AM

The digital readout flicks to 4:00 and there is a SUDDEN, LOUD BEEPING. Josh's hand reaches INTO THE FRAME hitting the "snooze" button. But the BEEPING continues.

INT. WAREHOUSE. WIDE

On the produce side, a forklift is backing up moving a huge palette of tomatoes. BEEP BEEP BEEP...

CLOSE UP. JOSH.

Who lifts the eye shades....

CUT TO:

INT. CAMARO. DAY.

They ride to school side by side. Josh looks bleary-eyed out the windshield. His Dad seems tired too.

JEFF

I could ask them to turn off the back-up noise. Wouldn't stop them from working any.

JOSH

Sure.

JEFF

And I asked Dante to help with the air conditioning. I said c'mon--give us five degrees. It's not gonna hurt the lettuce any.

(changes lanes)

I mean, in a market they leave the stuff out all day and it doesn't wilt, right?

He turns to his right to see Joshua leaning against the car door. He's fast asleep. Snoring lightly.

JEFF

Looks the other way out the window. All at once his eyes fill with tears.

JEFF

Shit.

He pounds the steering wheel--lightly, so as not to wake Josh. Jeff draws a deep breath...

INT. CHAMBERS HOUSE. (HALLWAY) AFTERNOON...

Cynthia leads Josh and Jeff down the hall, clutching a fresh set of sheets. She talks more quickly than usual... it's nervous... maybe even giddy...

CYNTHIA

It was just a guest room anyway so there was already a bed. I put a dresser in there and little desk.

JEFF

Thanks....

CYNTHIA

I'll get you a lamp and a chair tomorrow. Here, wait one sec--I'll go grab some towels.

Cynthia shoots a quick smile and then disappears into...

THE LAUNDRY ROOM.

It's tidy and then some. Cynthia climbs on a little step ladder and toward the upper shelves where the towels are neatly stacked.

DOWN ANGLE. CYNTHIA

As she reaches up for them. Her hands are trembling slightly....

INT. HALLWAY

Josh turns toward the wall.

JOSH
(whisper)
We don't have to do this. I can stay there. It's fine.

JEFF
You got three hours sleep.

JOSH
So what.

CYNTHIA
Here ya go.

She emerges with fresh towels and a smile.

CYNTHIA
And I put some of those little hotel shampoos in the shower. If there's one thing we do, it's travel.

DRIVEWAY. DUSK

They stand next to the Camaro. Cynthia stands in the distance by the front door, giving them privacy.

JOSH
What's the difference? We never sleep anyway. We watch movies til three.

JEFF
Its a warehouse Josh--its 45 degrees in that place.
(beat)
This is just til we can find somewhere else.

Josh nods. Holds it together then throws his arms around his dad--hangs on. A head shorter than Jeff--he suddenly looks his age.

JEFF
Im sorry Buddy. Ill figure this out.

CUT TO:

BREAKFAST.

Sunlight streams in the Chamber's kitchen. Everyone sits at regular spots around the table. Josh sits at one corner.

ROB
Bacon fellas?

DUANE
Uh-kay.

ROB
Can you pass the juice sweetie?

CYNTHIA
Here ya go... Josh--pancakes?

JOSH
Sure. Thanks.

KYLE
Ill take some more too.

They eat in silence. Clinking silverware.

EXT. ACTING CLASS. AFTERNOON

All the aspiring actors mill around the entrance smoking or polishing off a Starbucks. Jeff confronts Olga near the entrance

OLGA
He is not my sponsor anymore. This man is awful person.

JEFF
Well great, Olga. But he stole seven thousand dollars from me.

OLGA
And stole more than that from me. I am woman. You understand this?

JEFF
I just want my stuff back.

Olga pauses and looks at him--good luck buddy. She turns and heads inside...

CLOSE UP. A WHITE BOARD.

It is divided up into the days of the week--each one a large box with different colored highlighters.

ROB
So the boys share chores and in exchange for that, we give them a pretty good allowance....

WIDER.

Josh and Rob look at the "white board" together.

ROB
Now I know you're not here permanently,
but I wanted to offer you the same
thing I offer them.

EXT. HOUSE NIGHT.

He lugs a huge trash bag toward the cans out in the yard. The patio is lit with too many outdoor fixtures and a blue glow from the pool...

CLOSER JOSH.

He swings the trash bags with a huge heave and dumps them into the garbage cans. Josh pauses, admiring his work for a beat.

THE WHITE BOARD.

A colored marker finds the name JOSH on the side of the grid and follows it over to "Tuesday" He puts a check mark by the word "trash."

ANGLE DOORWAY.

Cynthia watches him, half covered in shadow.

CYNTHIA
No you don't. Not him.

INT. BEDROOM.

She speaks to Rob in a tense, stifled tone across their bed.

ROB
Cyn...

CYNTHIA
I dont want him checking-off that white
board.

ROB
Kids needs structure.

CYNTHIA
He has structure. That "kid" makes 15
grand a year...
(beat)
Without your white board.

ROB
What's the matter with you?

CYNTHIA
Nothing's the matter with me. I just
don't want to turn him into...

Stops.

ROB
What?

CYNTHIA
(beat)
Something else.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY

It's the same long lens shot from across the street. A truck
wipes the CAMERA revealing the same window, but this time JEFF
and ROB are seated face to face.

JEFF
Thanks for coming. I really appreciate
it.

INT. COFFEE SHOP.

Clatter of dishes. Rob wears a business suit.

ROB
Sure. I've heard a lot about this
place.
(beat)
So what's good here?

JEFF
The atmosphere?

Silence

JEFF (CONT'D)
That's just--you know--a joke...

ROB
Ha. Right. Sure.

Beat.

JEFF
So listen--I know you know everything
that's happened...

ROB
(sympathetically)
Yeah--and I know it's gotta be hard
right now. Josh is a great kid.

JEFF
He is.

ROB

And if I can say so. I think you're acting very responsibly to spare him from all of this.

JEFF

Well thanks.

(beat)

So Cynthia told me that you're in Personnel....

ROB

(nods)

I run the division.

JEFF

Right. Well, I know--that's not exactly a "job counselor"...

ROB

Well actually that's just what it is. I manage people's skill sets to optimize their productivity. In a sense, I'm just a big glorified job counselor.

Rob smiles broadly. Jeff looks at him for a beat.

WAITRESS

Do you know what you want?

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Jeff looks up at her suddenly, as if there is a weight to the question she ever intended....

CUT TO:

INT. CENTURY 21 REAL ESTATE TRAINING PROGRAM.

It's a classroom of twenty students--bright neon and horrible little desks. There is a white board and video screen projecting the Cent 21 power point teaching program. Everyone is arranged in a semi-circle.

TEACHER

(in a GOLD JACKET)

At the end of these nine weeks, when you're wearing your own gold jacket, you are going to be a very different person...

JEFF is seated toward the edge of the circle. He has a (gold) notebook out like everyone else.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

But before you can sell real estate, you've got to have a reason to sell real estate.

(MORE)

TEACHER (CONT'D)
You gotta know why you're putting out
those open house signs at six in the
morning.

He listens. Jots a note.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
OK. Let's go around the room. Sandy,
what are your dreams?

CUT TO:

A TRAY OF FINGER SANDWICHES.

Each one is a perfect little triangle with trimmed crusts.

WIDER. CHAMBERS KITCHEN. THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON

Cynthia has arranged a platter of sandwiches in a spiral like
always. She looks at it.

INT. DEN. LATER.

She quickly counts out stacks of poker chips for Rob's game that
night. There are six seats at the table.

JOSH
Texas Hold'em?

She turns to see Josh standing in the door.

CYNTHIA
(beat)
Every Wednesday. They think they're on
TV.

Cynthia rapidly counts out several hundred dollars, separating
the stakes in even little stacks.

JOSH
Let me guess. Accounting class?

CYNTHIA
(smiles)
I worked in a casino for a little
while.

She finishes the stakes and slides the chips toward the various
chairs.

JOSH
What's the buy in?

CYNTHIA
Four fifty.

JOSH
(beat)
Table stakes, or can you go in your
pocket?

She turn and looks at him...

CUT TO:

POKER GAME. LATER.

Josh has a seat at the table between Rob and his closest (LA)
friend Alan.

ALAN
Where'd a young fella like you get 450
bucks?

ROB
(smiles)
Josh is very enterprising.

JOSH
I used to have a business. On the
internet.

Chuckles all around.

ALAN
Wave of future boys. They can't shave
but they can start a portfolio.

More chuckles. Condescending... The cards are dealt. Josh
looks down at his hand.

JOSH
(innocently)
So, how much to me?

CYNTHIA

Watches from her own doorway leading to the kitchen. A wry smile
but Josh stays in character...

INT. ACTING CLASS. NIGHT.

Someone has had the guts to put up a scene from King Lear.
Elliot sits on the side of the stage in agony as one of the
students tries a soliloquy.

STUDENT
I will endure. In such a night as this!
O Regan, Gonerill! Your old kind
father, whose frank heart gave all,
--O, that way madness lies...

ELLIOT
OK STOP! I can't take it anymore.

AUDIENCE

There are a few snickers but as the CAMERA wanders down the row of students. One of them, isn't even looking at the stage. Jeff is buried in a real estate book, a yellow hi-liter in his hand.

OLDER MAN

(whispers)

Are we still on for that scene?

JEFF

(tunes in/whispers back)

Hunh?

OLDER MAN

Arthur Miller? You said you'd do it with me. You did it last year.

JEFF

Oh. Sure.

(beat)

I guess.

Elliot continues his RANT as Jeff goes back to studying.

EXT. DANTE'S MOVING AND STORAGE. NIGHT.

Jeff leaves the Camaro at the curb and heads toward the neon work lights of Dante's warehouse. He still carries all the Century 21 materials under his arm.

FOLLOWING JEFF

He heads through the gate, past the chain link fence. Jeff starts toward the entrance then looks up and suddenly stops.

JEFF

Oh... Hey.

HIS POV

Josh is sitting on a forklift just outside the main door.

JOSH

(crossing to him)

I've GOT it!

JEFF

Got what?

JOSH

The rent! And then some. Twenty-three hundred bucks...

Josh pulls a wad from his pocket

JEFF
How'd you do that?

JOSH
Poker game. These guys are awful Dad.
One of em went all in on a flush draw
when I had the kicker.

JEFF
What poker game?

JOSH
You know: what's-his-name. He has it
every week. Look...

He fans out the cash--mainly hundreds. Jeff looks down at it...

JOSH (CONT'D)
(off his lack of a
reaction)
What?

JEFF
Nothing. It's great.

JOSH
No kidding. We can move back now.

Josh looks down and sees his father's books for the first time.

JOSH
What's all this?

Pause..

JOSH (CONT'D)
What is it?

JEFF
Real estate course.

JOSH
Why?

JEFF
Because...
(deep breath)
...we need more than a month's rent.

JOSH
I know. And he's got a game every
Wednesday.

JEFF
I gotta figure this out, Josh. I've
got to find a way for us to stop
worrying so much.

JOSH
We never worry.

JEFF
I know. But we need to.

Looks up. Eyes lock.

JEFF (CONT'D)
I need a job.

JOSH
(tightly)
You've got a job. You're an actor.

JEFF
You're not an actor if you dont act.

JOSH
You act all the time.

JEFF
I pay them. They don't pay me.

JOSH
(emphatic/panicked)
You're an ACTOR. And you're a great one!

JEFF
Buddy I love you, and I appreciate that but--we need more than you and me to believe it.

JOSH
I don't understand. You said we just had to get enough money to get back home...

JEFF
I need to make a living. I'm thirty-eight years old.

JOSH
So? In a couple months we'll get the inventory back--we'll be right where we were.

JEFF
That shouldn't be your problem.

JOSH
I dont mind. I just want to go home.

JEFF
Me too. But right now we dont have one.

Josh glances down. Jeff moves forward--puts his arms around him

JOSH
This sucks.

JEFF (CONT'D)
I know.

JOSH
I mean this really sucks.

Josh hangs onto him in the middle of the parking lot.

JEFF
I guess you grew up too fast and I grew
up too slow. We just gotta even it out
a little bit.

Josh pulls back--regaining his composure. Looks at his dad.

JEFF
Why don't I take you back. We'll get a
soft serve on the way.
(pause)
Dipped.

JOSH
(sniffs)
Are you gonna have to wear one of those
stupid jackets?

JEFF
You love stupid jackets.

JOSH
True.

Jeff puts his arm around him and they start to make their way
across the yard.

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER.

It's dark except for a blue light emanating from the den. The
door creaks open...

ANGLE. FRONT DOOR.

Josh takes a couple of steps inside and stops. There is the
distant sound of the TV and its flicker across the hardwood
floor. He follows it....

INT. DEN.

Cynthia is curled up on the couch watching a movie. It's past
two and she's made herself comfortable with a bag of Doritos and
a blanket.

JOSH

Hey.

CYNTHIA

(turns)

Oh--hey. You ok?

JOSH

Yeah. Sorry. Were you worried?

CYNTHIA

No. He texted.

Stops. Glances at the TV...

JOSH

Lost in America.

CYNTHIA

Yeah.

JOSH

You know this?

CYNTHIA

(nods/smiles)

He used to hang out with me before he hung out with you.

JOSH

Sure.

Josh looks at the coffee table. There's an empty bag of chips. a beer bottle.

CYNTHIA

(explains)

He always wanted to play the Albert Brooks part so I got stuck with Garry Marshall.

(thick Bronx accent)

"Vegas gambling--gambling Vegas. There's no Santy Clause here in Las Vegas.

JOSH

That's not bad.

CYNTHIA

Yes it is. You just miss him.

JOSH

Yeah but--it's still not bad.

He glances at the TV.

JOSH

You're past the good scene.

CYNTHIA
I'll rewind.

She grabs the remote and hits rewind. Josh watches the movie scan backwards...

JOSH
Oh. Wait. That's the nest egg scene.

CYNTHIA
I love that too.

She hits pause, then play. Albert Brooks starts to yell at Julie Haggerty about blowing the nest egg. They smile together each one throwing an occasional line...

JOSH
"You can't use the words." No "nests."
No "eggs"....

CYNTHIA
"Birds live in things..."

Laugh together. She turns to him.

CYNTHIA
Want some popcorn?

JOSH
What time is it?

CYNTHIA
(checks)
Two thirty..

JOSH
That's not very responsible.

CYNTHIA
I won't tell if you won't.

She looks over at him with a raised eyebrow. Josh takes it in then reaches for the popcorn and sinks deeper into the couch.

CUT TO:

A BLACKBOARD.

"The good news about bad times."

TEACHER
Ok. What is the "Big O" of real estate? Anybody?

WIDER. CENTURY 21 "CLASSROOM".

Jeff sits in the front row with his "training manual" open.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
One word. "Opportunity."

A few nods. Some students write it down.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Even in times like these, opportunity is everywhere because in tough times, people move. And when people move, houses sell. And you get the same commission whether that house went up or down in value.

More nods. More writing.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Ok. Lets talk about it.
(turns to the board/writes)
"Foreclosure"

CUT TO:

AN EMPTY LIVING ROOM.

Moving boxes are stacked in the corner. But instead of a house that's gone into foreclosure, this is just the way the Chambers have furnished. Josh sits on the floor, against the wall, reading a book with his feet propped up on some rolled up carpet.

He gets to the end of a chapter. Stretches. Yawns. Glances toward the window.

EXT. YARD.

Josh wanders out into the sunlight and looks at the yard. The "filler spout" is streaming water into the shallow end of the pool. Josh wanders over--stares at it--something else catches his eye.

HIS POV POOL HOUSE.

It's the little shed that houses the pool equipment and some garden tools. Josh sees something move past the window... An intruder? He wanders over--carefully--and peers through the dusty window...

INT. POOL HOUSE

A moment later the door creaks open and Josh sticks his head inside.

JOSH
Oh. Hey.

There's a GASP...

REVERSE ANGLE

Cynthia turns with a start. She sits on the floor surrounded by pool equipment. She has spread out three different books and a loose-leaf binder. The pool heater hisses next to her. Its like studying in a sauna.

CYNTHIA
What are you doing here?

JOSH
Just... walking around...
(takes it in)
What are you doing?

CYNTHIA
Nothing.

Josh looks down at her, surrounded by books. "Nothing?"

CYNTHIA
Just... stuff.

JOSH
Whats a "G.R.E.?"

CYNTHIA
(mortified)
Jesus.

She slides the book under some pool equipment. Josh just looks at her.

CYNTHIA
(stuck)
Its a test.

JOSH
What kind of test?

CYNTHIA
Like--an exam.

JOSH
Well yeah. That's a test.

Josh tilts his head to the side, trying to read the book upside down..

CYNTHIA
(unavoidable/sigh)
Its a test for getting into college.

Josh tilts his head back....

JOSH
(beat)
Again?

CYNTHIA
Ok look...

JOSH
Sorry. I just....

CYNTHIA
You shouldn't come out here anyway.

JOSH
(beat)
Why not?

CYNTHIA
Well...

No good answer to that one.

JOSH
What college?

CYNTHIA
Do I pry into YOUR stuff?

JOSH
No. As a matter of fact--you've always
left me alone.

They lock eyes for a beat. Josh turns and starts for the door.

CYNTHIA
(quietly)
Cal. State Northridge.

Josh stops. Turns back...

JOSH
Wow.
(beat)
Studying what?

CYNTHIA
(deep breath)
English lit.

JOSH
Really?

CYNTHIA
What's strange about that?

JOSH
Nothing. Its just...

Pause.

CYNTHIA
Not practical?

JOSH

I just dont see why that's such a secret?

CYNTHIA

Who says its a secret?

He looks around the pool house: cynthia's books are scattered amongst all the equipment....

CYNTHIA

Well maybe a little "private."

(beat/explains)

Every other time I studied something, it was always to be something else. And now I just want to be me--if I still can...

(deep breath)

And o-kay... that's a really embarrassing thing to say and I guess that's why it's a secret.

(embarassed)

Jesus.

JOSH

Its ok. I wont tell anybody.

CYNTHIA

Thanks.

JOSH

But I gotta tell you. This is a lousy way to study.

CYNTHIA

Well, sure... its a little cramped...

JOSH

You need a straight back chair. Good Light. Plenty of water. And some white noise.

CYNTHIA

White noise?

CUT TO:

A CARWASH

The is churning at over at hundred decibels between the steam cleaner, the spray wax and the massive brushes. Car after car gets pulled through on a chain. Josh leads Cynthia down the long enclosed walkway that overlooks the carwash.

JOSH

(screaming)

HELPS YOU THINK.

CYNTHIA

Great.

JOSH

WHAT?

CYNTHIA

I SAID GREAT!

INT. LUNCHROOM

A little lunch counter that sells hot dogs, hamburgers and those hanging air fresheners for your rear-view mirror. They sit at a small metal table....

JOSH

Ok. There's three parts to the test. Logic, verbal reasoning and math. Why do they make you take math if you're studying English?

CYNTHIA

I dont know. Maybe they think English is too much fun, so you know. They throw some math in there.

JOSH

Right. Its only really good for you if it hurts...

INT. REALTY OFFICE

After hours--bright neon. Stack of open house signs and a helium tank for the balloons. Jeff runs flash cards with his friend (and realtor) Peter who helps him study.

PETER

M.O.G. Certification.

JEFF

Mineral oil and gas.

PETER

Good. Tenancy in common

JEFF

A partnership and...Um... more binding than joint tenancy.

PETER

Excellent! You're totally on this.

INT. CAR WASH. DUSK.

The place is thinning out for the day. One lone car is going through the brushes and a bunch of the guys who work there have knocked off for the day.

JOSH

Ok. Horse is to road, as oven is to:
A) Kitchen B) Bread C) Gas D)
Refrigerator.

CYNTHIA

C) Gas. Cause a horse uses a road and
an oven uses gas.

JOSH

That's right.

CYNTHIA

But you know what I wanted to say?

JOSH

What?

CYNTHIA

Bread. Because a horse going down a
road is beautiful and bread baking in
an oven is just fantastic.

JOSH

Don't say that on the test.

CYNTHIA

Don't worry.

(beat)

What do you think your dad would have
said?

INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE. NIGHT

They've been at it for hours.

JEFF

Non transferable debentures.

PETER

Good...

(next flash card)

Undivided interest.

JEFF

Um-- same as beneficiary remainder
interest except its in common by blood
or marriage.

PETER

Excellent.

CYNTHIA (V.O.)

He was a dreamer

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. DUSK.

Afternoon sun kicks off the window almost obscuring Josh and
Cynthia at their usual booth.

CYNTHIA

He was a dreamer. And I'd never dreamed before so it was, you know "intoxicating."

(beat)

He could get me to believe anything.

JOSH

(smiles)

Yeah. Me too.

Josh picks at his food.

CYNTHIA

He had a place in Echo Park, over the lake--called it "Switzerland."

JOSH

I heard about "Switzerland."

CYNTHIA

It was nice.

(deep breath/stares)

You know, we were going to live in New York and Paris and only work on the stage 'cause movies were crap... Unless of course it was something really great, and then we'd win Oscars but we wouldn't care cause it was really just about the work like Elliot always said.

Josh contemplates a french fry--tosses it back.....

CYNTHIA

Then one day I woke up and said "this is NEVER gonna happen." I'm nuts. And instead of dreaming with him, I just started seeing him as a dreamer. And... that's tough, you know.

JOSH

(he does know)

Sure.

CYNTHIA

So I decided to get "practical."

JOSH

Did you--miss him--ever? After that?

CYNTHIA

Well, that's what's tough about a dream. It sucks waking up.

CUT TO:

DAWN

Breaking over LA. The SOUND of a CELL PHONE RINGING.

INT. MARCO'S APT. CLOSE ANGLE. "MARCO'S COUCH"

Jeff sleeps amidst his work from the night before. The ring-tone jars him to life...

JEFF

Hello?

(beat)

What?

(listens)

Oh shit. I forgot. I can't today,
Bart. I'm slammed.

(beat)

I'm not sure I even remember the scene.

(listens)

Bart... Fine... Fine... Don't yell...

ACTING CLASS LATER....

Elliot sits on the stage, looking down at his sheet of students who have signed up for scenes.

ELLIOT

(reading)

Ok--next is... "Bart Shacknow and
Jeffrey Frankel doing Death of
Salesman."

(sotto)

Oh this oughta be rich.

EXT. SCHOOL.

Josh (as he often does) is watching Liz MacGowen across the yard. But instead of talking to her friends, Liz is chatting with a 9th grade boy: a foot taller than Josh and quite a bit blonder. It doesn't seem romantic but then she laughs and flicks her hair and he can hear that laugh all the way across the yard over by the water fountains...

BARTS VOICE (V.O.)

The door of your life is wide open.

FULL SHOT. STAGE

Bart and Jeff face each other under the stage lights with Elliot looking on from the side.

JEFF

(remembering his lines)

Pop I'm a dime a dozen and so are you.

BART

I am not a dime a dozen. I am Willy
Loman and you are Biff Loman!

Jeff forgets his line for an instant. Glances over at Elliot then remembers it and pauses for a beat...

JEFF

(as Biff.)

I am not a leader of men Willy and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard working drummer who landed in the ash can like the rest of them. I'm a dollar an hour Willy, do you get my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more and you've got to stop waiting for me to bring them.

BART

(as Willy)

You vengeful, spiteful mutt.

JEFF

Pop, I'm nothing.

(stops/then suddenly/
powerfully)

I'm nothing Pop! Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. That's just what I am.

His scene partner blanches--goes up on the line. Jeff keeps going...

JEFF

Will you let me go! Will you let me go for Christ's sake? Will you take that phoney dream and burn it before something happens.

(filling the room)

I'm nothing Pop! Do you hear me? I'm nothing!

Silence. No one in the theater moves. Jeff just stares straight head, looking down on the stage--almost like his privacy has been violated. All at once, Elliot's voice sounds calm, quieter.

ELLIOT

That, ladies and gentleman, is acting.

There's another moment of silence before Elliot starts to clap slowly and rhythmically from the side of stage. Jeff looks up startled as the class joins in...

MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM. (SCIENCE FAIR) DAY

The applause continues as eight groups of students from Mr. Makouche's life science class present their projects at the front of the room.

CLOSER.

Josh stands with Liz and Jennifer next to their detailed display of the energy cycle. Silver glitter simulates the water vapor. Josh smiles. Waves.

JOSH (V.O.)

Hey....

AFTER SCHOOL.

She's standing beside her locker. Liz turns to see him behind her.

LIZ

Oh. Hey

JOSH

That went really well.

LIZ

Yeah.

JOSH

You really nailed that Mitosis part.

(Odd compliment)

LIZ

...Thanks.

JOSH

So, you know. I guess we won't be working much from now on. Since it's you know--over...

LIZ

Right.

JOSH

(non sequitor)

You going to Coachella?

LIZ

What?

JOSH

You know, Coachella. It's this big festival out in...

LIZ

No. I know.

Oh God...

JOSH

Its just that--a bunch of people are going and... I know Zach's mom said she'd drive and... they've got a van, so...

LIZ

Oh.

Pause...

JOSH
Plus I can get tickets--that's easy
cause I know someone who, um... sells
them.

Silence. The longest beat in the world.

LIZ
(beat)
...Sure.

JOSH
(hunh?)
Sure? You mean like... "sure?"

LIZ
(smiles)
Sure.

EXT. STREET.

Jeff walks toward his Camaro in a daze. He stops at the corner and waits for the walk sign. Jeff plucks a leaf from the tree next to him and looks at it--appreciates it...

JOSH

Is just as dazed. He sits at bus stop. Waiting for public transportation to pick him up. The traffic screams by but he doesn't notice. Josh smiles to himself

JOSH
(quoting Liz)
Sure.

INT. CAR. WASH

Josh is now sitting across from Cynthia in the snack shop. He holds a book in front of him: "100 practice tests for the GRE."

CYNTHIA
Really?

JOSH
83 percent, 88th percentile.

CYNTHIA
Yeah but its just a practice test,
right. I mean...

JOSH
You passed. Take a look.... You
passed.

He slides the paper over to her. She stares down at it.

CYNTHIA (V.O.)

No!

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

She sits at the kitchen table with Rob. Cynthia clutches a mug of coffee.

CYNTHIA

I'm not going.

ROB

This isn't like the others. It's a whole division.

CYNTHIA

In Seattle...

ROB

Which is a great town.

CYNTHIA

I don't understand you. We finally have a home.

ROB

And we'll get an even nicer home.

CYNTHIA

House.

ROB

Fine--we'll get a nicer house. Is that some sin?

CYNTHIA

Why are you doing this?

ROB

This is huge Cynthia... It's real security...

CYNTHIA

You want to feel secure? Let's get a couch, or a coffee table or get the paper delivered.

(beat)

Those boys have been to four different schools in three years.

ROB

The boys are fine.

CYNTHIA

How do you know?

INT. KYLE'S ROOM.

He lies on his bed listening with the door open.

CYNTHIA (O.S.)
I'm not moving.

He smiles slightly.

RESUME. KITCHEN

CYNTHIA
I've just gotten to know my own son and
I'm not gonna leave again.

ROB
Maybe he wants to leave too

CYNTHIA
His father lives here.

ROB
(caustic)
Yeah, well...

CYNTHIA
"Well" what?

ROB
Look we can talk about this on the
trip. We'll have plenty of time and...

CYNTHIA
Im not going on the trip.

ROB
Of course you are.

CYNTHIA
And what does that mean? "Yeah, well."

ROB
Cynthia we've planned this trip for a
while. This is "The Big Trip."
They're two man canoes.

CYNTHIA
Then get some Kayaks. I'm not gonna
go. Josh has school and--I've got...
stuff to do.

ROB
...What kind of stuff?

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP. JOSH.

He stares in the mirror blankly, curiously, almost like he's
meeting himself for the first time.

CLOSE UP. JEFF

He stares in the mirror the exact same way.

CLOSE UP. CYNTHIA

So does she...

CUT TO:

KAYAKS

Tied to the top of an SUV.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Two hands secure a roof strap...Tent polls are thrust into the cargo area.... The tail gate is slammed shut... The front GRILL of the car roars to life as the engine fires up....

CUT TO:

AN EMPTY HOUSE.

Living room with no furniture. Dining room with no chairs. A foyer with nothing at all. The place is silent.

KITCHEN.

Cynthia sits at the table doing a crossword puzzle. She fills in a word. Doesn't care. Gets up.

DEN.

Josh is watching the Marx Brothers. He senses something. Turns.

CYNTHIA

Is standing in the doorway. She's brought him a box of Ding Dongs.

CYNTHIA

Duck Soup?

JOSH

Animal Crackers.

CYNTHIA

(nods)

"The other day I shot an elephant in my pajamas."

JOSH

"...How he got in my pajamas, I'll never know."

Glance..

INT. DUNKIN DONUTS. DAY

Jeff has spread his real estate books out over one of the tiny orange tables. He drinks bad coffee into which he does dunk the donut. Cell phone RINGS...

JEFF

Hello?

CYNTHIA

Sits on the patio.

CYNTHIA

I just thought since nobody's here and you never get a chance to spend this much time with him...

(beat)

Yeah. Sure. All weekend. We got nothing but empty rooms...

CUT TO:

A CANNON BALL...

As Josh lands in the middle of pool, knees tucked up to his chest.

WIDER PATIO.

Jeff lies on one chaise lounge and Cynthia lies on another. From the other side of the pool, its any suburban family.

JOSH

(running to the diving board)

Gimme another one.

JEFF

Ok.

Josh climbs on to the board and looks over to his Dad. On a signal, he runs the end, springs off the board....

JEFF

(while he's in the air)

"Royale with cheese."

JOSH

(Before he hits the water)

PULP FICTION!

Splash!

DOORBELL:

AND THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN

To reveal a pizza guy holding five of those insulated pizza carriers.

PIZZA GUY

Sausage and mushroom, Green peppers,
sausage, meatball onions and pepperoni,
extra extra cheese and a barbecue pork
with pineapple .

JEFF

Perfect

INT. DEN. LATER.

Discarded pizza and (several) bottles of beer. Josh drinks Mountain Dew. The three of them sit on the couch while the Godfather plays on TV. Josh, Jeff and Cynthia act it out together: Pacino, Duval and James Caan talk about how to kill Sterling Hayden.

CYNTHIA

(playing Tom Hagan)

Nobody has ever gunned down a New York police captain -- never. It would be disastrous. All the Five Families would come after you, Sonny. The Corleone Family would be outcasts!

JOSH

(good Pacino)

Look. They wanna have a meeting with me, right? Let's insist it's a public place -- a bar, a restaurant -- some place where there's people so I feel safe. If Clemenza can figure a way -- to have a weapon planted there for me -- then I'll kill 'em both.

JEFF

(as Sonny)

Listen to you, nice college boy--didn't want to get mixed up in the family business. Now you wanna gun down a police captain? What do you think this is the Army, where you shoot 'em a mile away? You've gotta get up close like this and bada-bing! you blow their brains all over your nice Ivy League suit. C'mere...

And Jeff KISSES him on the forehead....

CUT TO:

JOSH... SLEEPING.

He is slumped over on the couch snoring gently while Philadelphia Story plays in the background.

KATHERINE HEPBURN

Oh she is yar... Dexter. Isn't she yar.

SHOT. OVER END OF THE COUCH

Jeff and Cynthia sit (with ample space between them) fully engrossed in the movie. As a tipsy Katherine Hepburn swoons to Carry Grant. Jeff looks over at Josh.

He looks back to Cynthia and she smiles--They could be any two parents watching their son passed out on a couch. Jeff smiles.

JEFF

I'll carry him.

CYNTHIA

He'll wake up.

JEFF

Fat chance.

HALLWAY.

He lugs Josh toward "the guest room" a wounded soldier in his arms. The kid is fourteen and Jeff strains under the weight.

JEFF

This used to be easier.

JOSH'S ROOM

He tosses him like a sack of groceries onto the bed. Josh only stirs slightly as Jeff pulls his shoes off and gets him under the covers.

CYNTHIA

You're good at that.

JEFF

Practice.

DOORWAY.

Jeff and Cynthia stand there watching their son sleep. It's easy to imagine him younger four years old... eight years old... Jeff remembers. She has to imagine. Josh's arm sprawls out the side of the bed, a teenager in an adolescent coma. They look at each other and share a smile--he's "theirs" for the first time.

Jeff reaches up... shuts off the light and...

SUDDENLY...

They are both standing in the dark. They look from Josh to each other, their faces inches apart. Imperceptibly (almost irresistibility) they start to move toward each other... the kiss becoming inevitable.

INT. HALLWAY

Before they can even fathom what's going on their arms wrap around each other and are locked in an embrace as they move/stumble around the corner, their bodies pressed up against the wall. Its more passionate now, something reclaimed and uncontrollable: she grabs him, he grabs her...

JOSH

Dad?

They stop. Breathing hard. Both know they heard it. The next time it's a little louder:

JOSH

Dad...

Jeff looks around the corner into Josh's room.

JEFF

(breathing)

Hey Buddy.

JOSH

(groggy)

Is the movie over?

JEFF

Yeah. You passed out so I brought you in here.

JOSH

Oh. Thanks.

JEFF

(smile)

Sure.... Gnight.

JOSH

Love you.

JEFF

Love you too.

SHOT. CYNTHIA

She leans against the wall hearing every word and processing a million more. Shouldn't have. That was crazy. OMG. Please-- Come back. Don't come back. "Dad..."

AND...

He's back. They stand face to face in the hallway. Awkward. Suspended... Neither knows what to say...

JEFF
Wow.

CYNTHIA
Yeah.

JEFF
Well...

And then...

CYNTHIA
You know--we really can't do this.

JEFF
Right..

She glances down and that's all it takes. Jeff looks to the carpet as well.

JEFF
Better--get some sleep I guess.

CYNTHIA
Yeah. There's towels in the powder room. Let me know if you need anything else.

JEFF
I'm fine.

CYNTHIA
Ok...

And he heads past her down the hall...

CUT TO:

EXT. MULLHOLLAND PARK ESTATES. MORNING

Idyllic. Peaceful. Repetitive.

INT. DEN.

Jeff wakes up on the couch. There are still cookies and chips from the night before.

INT. KITCHEN

Cynthia is fully dressed. Coffee brewing. She takes a sip. Her hands shake.

JOSH (O.S.)
Hi.

She jumps. Turns. He's standing in the doorway with sleep in his eyes and a t-shirt. He looks a lot like his dad.

CYNTHIA

(tense)

Oh. Hi sweetie.

(very organized/rapid fire)

I called Zach's mom and I'm going to drop you there at 2:30 tomorrow. They're going to leave for Coachella at 3. I want you to take a couple of cell phones because service might not be great out there and... Oh--Hi.

Jeff is standing in the doorway just beyond Josh. He looks a little bleary too. They wear the same white t-shirt.

CYNTHIA

(even faster)

So guys, I've got to go the bank and stop by Rob's office. There's coffee and some blueberry muffins in the bag.

She crosses quickly toward the door past Jeff.

CYNTHIA

I'll see you later.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

She heads toward her SUV when Jeff comes up behind her.

JEFF

Hey.

CYNTHIA

(taught)

Oh. Hey.

JEFF

Look, umm...

CYNTHIA

(quickly)

Don't worry. Stuff happens.

JEFF

(slowly)

O-kay...

CYNTHIA

(same smile)

Or you know. Didn't happen. So--its fine... 'Cause--you know--we're grown ups.

What does that mean? She fumbles for her keys.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Look it might be a little awkward if you were still here when Marta shows up.

(MORE)

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
 She's--you know--part of the family and
 I don't really speak spanish but I
 think there's a lot of gossip with her
 friends and so...

JEFF
 (beat/wounded)
 ...Sure.

Cynthia looks around her: The house, the street, the brand new palm trees:

CYNTHIA
 Ok then. See you later..

And she turns quickly toward her car...

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. DAY

Its a gated community much like Rob and Cynthia's. Two hands shove an open house sign into brand new grass. OPEN ALL WEEKEND! SATURDAY AND SUNDAY!

INT. OPEN HOUSE.

Jeff is wearing a (borrowed) Century 21 Gold Jacket. He looks at himself in the smoked-mirror of the "formal" dining area. He has weird combination of pride and contempt...

PETER
 (showing up)
 Wow. Look at you.

INT. ZACH'S MOM'S VAN...

On the way to Coachella. Josh sits in the back between Liz MacGowan and Jennifer.

EXT. COACHELLA MUSIC FESTIVAL

If you're 16 this is paradise. If your 13 its a glimpse of the future. Any festival is about size and anticipation: Huge sound towers... Massive scaffolding... rock and roll busses.... Throngs of kids....

JOSH

Stares up at it all. A little in awe. Liz is giddy beside him.

LIZ
 Omigod.
 (turns to Josh)
 Ok this is like --SO nice of you.

JOSH
 Well...

JENNIFER
Omigod, ok like this just like
Omigod...

All at once Josh's watch starts to beep. He glances down at it.

JOSH
Oh--hang on one sec... Ill be right
back.

He takes out his cell phone and walk away from them, finger in his ear.

INT. OPEN HOUSE.

There are a pile of brochures. Jeff stares out across the (empty) foyer waiting for a buyer

INT. CYNTHIA'S SUV. CAL STATE NORTHRIDGE PARKING LOT.

She stares out the windshield with a similar expression. Cynthia sits there for a beat. Then draws a DEEP breath. Exhales. Phone rings.

CYNTHIA
Hello?
(beat)
Oh hi... No not yet

INTERCUT WITH JOSH.

Plugs his ear against the crowd and the music

JOSH
Well hurry. You've got 5 minutes.
(beat)
You're gonna do great. You're so ready.
I just called to wish you...

He turns and stops mid-sentence.

JOSH'S POV

Liz is face to face with the same boy she was talking to at school. He's 5' 9". His jeans are ripped up.

JOSH
...luck.

INT. OPEN HOUSE.

Peter and Jeff have set up a little table in the foyer with all their literature on it.

PETER

Ok they sign the sheet right here.
Give everyone a brochure, but don't
spend too much time if you don't think
they're serious. The main thing is to
get the phone number.

JEFF

Uh huh.

PETER

Are you listening?

JEFF

Yeah. Of course.

PETER

Well I hope so. You're getting half
the money if you sell it.

JEFF

(beat)

I'm listening

INT. GRE TEST CENTER.

60 prospective students sit at little desks waiting to take
their exam. Most are in their twenties. Cynthia sits in the
back.

PROCTOR

You will have 45 minutes for each
section. Please make sure that the
number at the top of your answer sheet
matches...

She glances to her right and then her left.

PROCTOR

And begin.

All the heads dive down into their booklets, making Cynthia
stand out even more. A thirty five year old woman in a sea of
20 year olds...

CUT TO:

22,000 KIDS.

Packed onto the open field at COACHELLA. Thousands of bodies
jump and jerk in silhouette. The sweat and energy are palpable.

JOSH

Cranes his head to see the Kaiser Chiefs on stage. Liz stands
next to him and at 5'7" its a little easier for her to see.

ON STAGE...

The band is playing their hit "Ruby": Let it never be said-- that a romance is dead.

SHOT. JOSH AND LIZ

He looks up at her, as she moves in and out of the blinding lights--getting swallowed up by the music. Her body sways... her hips sway. She looks over at Josh and in the enthusiasm of the moment, flashes him the whitest, most grateful smile...

INT. CHAMBER'S DEN.

Cynthia sits alone. She grabs the remote. Looks at it. Hits the button...

PHILADELPHIA STORY

Comes back on the screen from where it had been paused. Katherine Hepburn is dealing with the shame and the hangover from her long night with Jimmy Stewart. She looks delightful and mortified....

CYNTHIA

Shuts it off quickly and stares a blank screen.

EXT. COACHELLA.

The band is finishing an encore and taking a final bow. The crowd goes nuts.

LIZ
(shouting)

C'mon.

JOSH

Where?

LIZ
Dredg is gonna play over in the small tent.

JOSH

Who?

LIZ
Dredg. C'mon. Eric knows a guy who knows the lighting guy.

She motions to...

ERIC (the boy from school) who is now standing next to her. Josh winces. He should have a nastier name than "Eric."

LIZ
C'mon.

And she grabs his hand. Josh looks down at his hand in the clutch of Liz's (good news.) But then he looks over and realizes that her other hand is in the clutch of Eric's (bad news.) They make their way like a chain (Jennifer in tow) through the dense crowd, across the festival grounds, toward a canvas tent on the opposite side.

INT. TENT.

Its more densely packed and even hotter in here. (Also really dark.) Bodies sweat, mingle. It's palpable

From JOSH'S POV there is a slight glimpse of the stage and a lot bouncing heads. Liz looks over at him--nods: *Isn't this awesome?* Josh nods back. They press forward. Get separated. He glimpses her again, five people away. Jennifer is beside him suddenly. They press closer to the stage. He cranes his head. Can't see Liz. Sees Eric for a glimpse. Then sees Liz. Closer still. It's getting louder.

SHOT STAGE.

Kids press up to it. Nearly climb on it. The lead singer kneels at the edge, letting some teenage girls worship his guitar. The volume is deafening....

JOSH...

Has gotten separated from everybody and is suddenly alone. The music kicks up and the kids lapse into frenzy. The room is bouncing. He presses toward the stage. Vague faces... bodies... then suddenly....

HE SEES IT.

Eric has kissed Liz and the two of them are making-out up against the side of the stage. Or maybe she kissed him but, that would be a lot less likely. Yeah--he must have kissed her. But by now she has wrapped her arms around him and is holding the back of his head, moving her fingers through his hair while he presses them up against the stage. He looks like he's kissed a lot of girls before.

JOSH.

Stands there. Frozen. Watching. The concert swirls around him but he's someplace else. His own place. Protected by his own little force field... He keeps staring.

WIDER

Jennifer is suddenly next to him. She sees him. She sees him staring. She sees what he is staring at. Josh barely notices her as she sizes him up: everyone else is hooking up so...

JENNIFER
(over the music)

Hey.

Josh just looks at her.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
(having to YELL)
Want to hang out?

JOSH
(turns/dazed)
What?

JENNIFER
(louder)
Close your eyes.

And he does. And she kisses him. And its the wrong girl but he kisses her back. Out of pain. Which is the last reason that any first kiss ought to happen but he kisses her anyway.

They stop kissing and he looks at her, then back over at Liz MacGowan who is locked in a clench with Eric (whoever that is.) Josh sees them going at it for a moment and then he can't watch anymore and turns back to Jennifer. He kisses the wrong girl all over again....

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. MORNING.

Jeff puts out another sign this time with balloons. PRICE REDUCED! Some sprinklers go on in the background.

INT. OPEN HOUSE. 10 AM

He stares out across the family room toward THE POOL where an undersized waterfall gurgles into the spa.

FULL SHOT. CYNTHIA

She stands in the kitchen staring out at her pool as well. Only she sees something different.

HER POV

Joshua is sitting on the diving board, swinging his legs and staring down into the water.

JOSH'S POV. JOSH.

As he looks at his own face in the swimming pool, he tosses little berries from some bush into his reflection. It ripples and distorts and then comes back together as "him" while the ripples fade.

CYNTHIA (O.S.)
Hey

Josh looks up. She's standing beside the diving board.

Oh. Hey. JOSH

You ok? CYNTHIA

Sure. JOSH

You have fun? CYNTHIA

Yeah. JOSH

Is it Liz? CYNTHIA

Yeah. JOSH

CYNTHIA
(pause)
Why don't you see what your Dad is
doing today?

JOSH
He has to work. I dont want to bother
him.

CYNTHIA

Looks at him for a beat.

INT. OPEN HOUSE.

A young couple (the woman 8 months pregnant) strolls through the "gourmet kitchen." Jeff sits at the table, next to the brochures, gazing out across the patio toward the pool.

HIS POV. SUBURBAN BACKYARD.

The POV PANS from the barbecue, to the outdoor table, to the "family fire pit" to the small patch of lawn with a wooden swing-set: two swings, a rope ladder and a small metal slide....

MAN
Are these granite?

INT. KITCHEN.

The young husband standing next to the Wolf Range.

JEFF
Hunh?

MAN
The counter-tops. Are they granite?

JEFF.
Oh. I think so.

MAN
Well -- there's a big difference.

JEFF
Is there?

MAN
Don't you think?

JEFF
(turns from the window)
Well...
(thinking)
...when you make a bunch of pancakes...
And you put them out there... And your
kids look up at you in the morning like
you're magic. It doesn't really matter
if they're granite or not. But yeah I
think they are.

Jeff smiles at him. The woman--very pregnant moves next to her husband. Laces her hand in his.

WOMAN
You have kids?

JEFF
A son.
(beat)
"Josh."

WOMAN
I love that.
(mulls the name)
Josh. Joshua. That's a great name.

JEFF
He's a great kid

MAN
(warming up)
What's the square footage here?

JEFF
(looks at the sheet)
Um--4500.

MAN
That's a little less than we were
looking for.

JEFF

Yeah but... if you dont mind me saying so-- How much do you really need. The question isn't how big it is, or how many bathrooms it has... the question is can you see yourself here--you know--for years. Sitting on that couch. Doing all the homework. Watching the football games. Falling asleep. That's what makes it your house. Not all this other stuff that we try to sell you. None of that really matters. (glances around)
You know, I think this is a really nice room.

REVERSE

They stare at him a little surprised. Jeff's cell phone rings.

JEFF

Hello?

There's a pause. He turns to the side. Bends over slightly

JEFF (CONT'D)

What? When? ...Is he ok? Right. Got it. Ill be right there.

He flips the phone shut and turns to the them quickly.

JEFF

Look--I have to go--Im really sorry. It's kind of a.... There's a little lock box on the front door, with the key in it. Just turn off the lights and trip the dead bolt when you leave.

EXT. CHAMBERS HOUSE.

A lone gardener wields a leaf blower down the block as the Camaro pulls up to the curb. The engine goes quiet.

INT. DEN.

Josh sits on the couch watching TV with the sound muted. The CNBC stock ticker sends four different exchanges across the screen at once--all in different colors. Josh watches the numbers and symbols change without expression....

JEFF

Watches him from the doorway.

JEFF

Hey, Buddy.

JOSH
(turns)
Oh. Hey

JEFF
You okay?

JOSH
...Sure.

JEFF
That bad?

Josh shrugs. Jeff nods and heads into the room.

JEFF (CONT'D)
So, let me guess--it hurts in places
you didn't know you had?

Josh turns. How did he know that?

JEFF
(smiles)
She must be a great girl.

JOSH
(pain)
She is.
(looks at him)
Is that the jacket?

JEFF
Yeah

JOSH
Its not that bad.

JEFF
Man, you are a mess.

Josh smiles and he sits down on the couch.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Look, Josh--you're an amazing person--
and I *know* that. And if she can see
that, then good for her--but if she
can't see that, then it doesn't make
you any less amazing.

Josh looks over at him...

JEFF (CONT'D)
Yeah. And I know I'm your Dad and none
of this helps but it's true.

JOSH
(faintly)
Thanks.

JEFF
So who's the other guy?

Beat. How did he know that too?

JOSH
Some jerk.

Jeff nods.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Tall jerk.

Nods again.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Cool, tall jerk.

JEFF
Good musician?

JOSH
I think so.

JEFF
Figured.
(beat)
And right now you're going: "Gee, I wish I was a cool, tall jerk." But do you really?

Now Josh turns all the way around on the sofa. Faces his dad.

JOSH
No.
(pause)
Sort of.

JEFF
Cause you're *Josh Frankel*. And he's not. I mean Jesus what kind of a trade is that? After he's done being cool you're still gonna be *Josh Frankel*. Just think about what that means.

JOSH
I'm really trying.

JEFF
I know you are Buddy. You can't get someone to love you. They either do or they don't.

TOP OF THE LANDING

Cynthia's standing there clutching the bannister as their voices drift up the staircase.

JEFF (O.S.)

And there's no sense in trying to be something you're not, because then they're not in love with you anyway... They're just in love with something you invented. Does that make sense?

JOSH

Yeah.

INT. DEN.

Josh looks at his dad.

JOSH

Did you ever feel this way about somebody?

JEFF

Sure. I don't think I ever stopped.

CYNTHIA

She has tears in her eyes. She makes a sudden decision... Starts down the marble staircase... Across the oversized foyer... On her way to the...

ROB (O.S.)

Hey hey hey...

She stops. Turns and sees..

ROB

Standing in the doorway wearing khaki and his "river" hat. He has that weird look of manly pride on his face.

ROB

Back from the wild.

CYNTHIA

Oh.

(frozen)

Hi.

ROB

(hugs her grime and all)

You shoulda seen these boys Cyn. Woulda made you so proud.

(kiss)

How bout some soup?

EXT. DRIVEWAY. LATER (EXTREME TELEPHOTO)

You can't hear what they are saying but Jeff and Josh are leaning on the fender of the Camaro, sitting side by side.

INT. KITCHEN.

Cynthia stands at the window looking out at them. Rob's voice echoes behind her.

ROB

...Not just a manager, Cyn--it's a Regional Vice President. Double the salary--half that in BONUS. And we talked about it, the whole time on the river and you were absolutely right. I said "boys this is it. We're not moving again, I promise. And you know what? They were really happy about that.

CYNTHIA

(quietly/still looking out the window)

I'm not going.

ROB

Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

(calm/measured)

I'm not. I'm not going to Seattle. You go to Seattle.

ROB

Hey...

He moves up to her. Puts a hand on her shoulder. She turns-- faces him.

CYNTHIA

It's fine, Rob. Go to Seattle.

ROB

Look, if this is about Josh...

CYNTHIA

You mean my son? Who I never knew?

ROB

He can come too.

She looks back out the window--Jeff and Josh still leaning on the car.

CYNTHIA

No he can't.

ROB

What if he wants to?

She turns back

ROB (CONT'D)

You sell yourself short sweetie. You don't think he likes being here. With his mom... In a real home. Where else is he gonna go?

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN HOUSE. WIDE ANGLE.

Its dusk. Jeff pulls the metal sign out of the front lawn. There are wilted balloons attached to it.

INT. FOYER.

The couple locked up just like he asked them to. Jeff trips the dead bolt. He swings open the front door and crosses to the large stack of brochures sitting on the table. He glances down at them. Pauses...

INT. CHAMBERS DEN. NIGHT.

Cynthia sits on the couch. The flickering light from the TV plays across her face and you cant tell what the movie is but you can tell that it's black and white. She eats some popcorn. Chews.

EXT. BANK. DAY (LONG LENS--FROM ACROSS THE STREET)

Three minutes to opening but instead of Jeff waiting outside the door, this time its Cynthia. After a few seconds the security guard unbolts the front door and she heads inside.

A TRUCK WIPES. And when it CLEARS....

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY

Jeff sits in his usual spot. The seat across from him is empty.

INT. COFFEE SHOP.

He looks down at a newspaper. Feels a rush of wind as Cynthia lands in the booth across from him.

CYNTHIA

Sorry.

JEFF

That's ok.

CYNTHIA

Traffic was nuts and....

She stops mid sentence. The waitress shows up.

WAITRESS

You guys ready?

CYNTHIA
I need a minute.

WAITRESS
Oh. Ok.

And she leaves again. Cynthia draws a breath...

CYNTHIA
Look...
(this is hard)
...Rob's job came through.

JEFF
Oh. Congratulations.

CYNTHIA
So that means we're gonna be moving to
Seattle.

JEFF
Wow.

CYNTHIA
Yeah.
(beat)
And Rob offered to let Josh stay with
us until you're--you know--on your feet
again...

JEFF
Well... That's nice of him....

CYNTHIA
Yeah. But it got me thinking. I mean
thinking really hard about what's best
for me but also what's best for Josh
and... here.

She hands him a manila envelope.

JEFF
What's this?

CYNTHIA
Child support. That's for you

He opens the envelope. Its jammed with hundreds.

JEFF
Cyn thats nuts.

CYNTHIA
No it's not. I owe that to you.

JEFF
No you don't.

CYNTHIA

Yes I do

(beat)

You know, you may think you don't have a job, but you have the greatest job in the world. And you've done it better than almost anyone possibly could have. That kid... that kid is so incredible. Don't you see yourself in his eyes. That's a success Jeff. That's a success like almost no one ever has. And I'm so unbelievably lucky that I've gotten to know him, but he doesn't belong with me, he belongs with you. So I want you to take that because.....

JEFF

I sold a house.

CYNTHIA

What?

JEFF

I sold a house yesterday. They wrote an offer. I made 12,000 dollars. We're moving back in.

CYNTHIA

(beat)

How.

JEFF

Well---I told them... what a family should fee like. 'Cause--I remembered what a family should feel like

(reaches out)

Don't move to Seattle

His hand is grasping hers. She tenses.

CYNTHIA

Jeff...

JEFF

No don't. Stay here. Look, it's not for me, its for you.

(beat)

The other night when we got together again...

CYNTHIA

Jeff dont...

JEFF

No listen. When you kissed me I didn't suddenly think "oh my God, we belong together again." I mean, sure I hoped that--I never stopped hoping that--but that isn't what I thought.

(MORE)

JEFF (cont'd)
 I thought I'm not sure she belongs
 here. I'm not sure this is the place
 for her. And it if it is then fine.
 But if its not then, please dont go to
 Seattle

She just stares at him.

JEFF (CONT'D)
 So here's my offer...

CYNTHIA
 Your offer?

Jeff slides the envelope back across the table.

JEFF
 Joint custody. You have him Tuesday
 through Thursday and every other
 weekend...

CYNTHIA
 I...

JEFF
 And we see how that goes. If you want
 to do it more then we'll work that out.
 (beat)
 You're his mom. He should be with you.

Silence. Cynthia stares at him stunned

JOSH (O.S.)
 Hi guys.

WIDER.

He ambles in like any teenager collapsing next to Jeff in the
 booth

JOSH
 (to his Dad)
 Sorry I'm late.

He glances between them

JOSH
 What's going on.

JEFF
 Nothing

He looks at Cynthia

CYNTHIA
 Just... talking.

More silence.

JOSH

Well did we order. I'm starving.

The waitress appears.

WAITRESS

Ok. Now that we're all here.

JOSH

I'll have curly fries with extra seasoning salt.

CYNTHIA

(fighting a tear)

Me too.

JOSH

And strawberry milk shake with extra whipped cream

JEFF

(a smile)

Me too.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. THROUGH THE WINDOW

The three of them sit in their regular booth like any family on any ordinary day. The CAMERA POPS back across the street as the traffic from the city wipes the frame

THE END