

Life, Itself

by

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OVER BLACK.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Cue *Love Sick*. Bob Dylan. Track
one, *Time Out of Mind*.

CUE SONG: *Love Sick* by Bob Dylan.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Yeah, that's good, real good.

The Narrator clears his throat, begins:

NARRATOR (V.O.)
We open tight on a man.

A MAN, 20s, handsome, fills the frame.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Hold up, let me rephrase: we open
on "our hero."

Oh, just FYI: **Sam Jackson** is voicing the narrator. Not sure
why but he is.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
We push in on his face.
(a beat)
Muthafucka I said push in on that
shit!

The camera quickly jolts to life, pushes in clumsily. Sam
calms down and describes our hero:

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
Mid twenties, handsome, gay but gay
in that cool cat kind of a way, gay
like "Billy on the Street" gay, gay
like "yeah, I'll suck a dick we
don't have to make no thang about
it."

Our hero nods slightly, as if agreeing.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
Yeah that's one cool dicksuckin'
cat we got over here. But right
now, this cat is anything but cool.
This cat's in crisis.

Our hero speaks direct to camera, sheepish and emotional:

HERO

I feel... ashamed, I guess. I know this doesn't make me look very good. But it's breaking me and...

His voice cracks.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

Let it go, brother. Let it go like a Pixar ho - let it go, let it go.

HERO

It's just... he and I have been together for so long. And I know it sounds cliché but... I guess, I like knowing he's always on my team, you know?

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

I know, my brother. I hear you, my brother. Let. It. Go.

HERO

But this new guy has come along...

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

Proceed.

HERO

He's new. He's exciting. And he's so much younger.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

Ain't no shame, brother.

HERO

And I know I can't just "stick" with someone out of loyalty.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

You know this.

HERO

Okay, I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna put Todd Gurley in at my flex running back spot and drop Jamal Charles. Maybe I'll pick up Miami D off waivers.

A beat.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

WHAT IN THE FUCK!?

Sitting opposite the young man is a FEMALE THERAPIST (40s, red hair, we see her from behind).

THERAPIST

Henry: we've talked about how
obsessing over fantasy football
can't simply replace obsessing over
food.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

SAY WHAT NOW!?

HERO/HENRY

No, I know.

THERAPIST

Have you made yourself throw up
this week, Henry?

HERO/HENRY

(ashamed)

Yes.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

THE FUCK!?

As the therapist and hero continue talking...

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

Okay, my bad, that motherfucker is
definitely not our hero.

(then)

But look at that pretty therapist
over there. Soothing him. Calming
his anorexic fantasy football-
loving ass down. Push in on her
for a sec.

Nothing.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

(again)

I said push in motherfucka!

The camera jolts to life again, pushes in on her.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)

Oh yeah, now I'm seeing it. That's
a hero right there. The amazing
smile, the long red hair, the
freckl... wait a second: hold up...
is that Julianne Moore!?

It is!

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
 Motherfucker it is! That's "Still
 Alice"! That shit made me cry!
 She forgot EVERYTHING!!! Okay!
 Now we're talking. Ladies and
 gentlemen: we got ourselves a hero.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Julianne Moore walks out into the street. Sam Jackson resumes narrating to the best of his ability.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
 Now, like any great hero, our hero
 wasn't perfect. Far from it.

Julianne lights a cigarette, tries to hail a CAB.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
 She smoked, first of all, which
 they normally don't let you show in
 movies any more even though we all
 still smoke sometimes... oh don't
 even start, you know you smoke
 sometimes. You and the wife have a
 date night, you each have two
 martinis, you guys are feeling wild
 so you buy a pack of smokes on the
 way home and you each smoke one in
 the 7-Eleven parking lot. Then she
 makes you throw out the pack, but
 instead of throwing it out you hide
 it in a plant outside the house and
 some nights, after she goes to
 sleep, you sneak out and have one.
 But then one night she catches you
 when you come to bed, 'cause she
 smells that shit on you like she's
 a detective - she smells that shit
 on you like she's Jimmy Smits in
 "NYPD Blue" and she's cracked the
 fucking case - and you get in a big
 fight and-- **WHAT IN THE FUCK!?**

As Sam has been telling this story, we've been watching Julianne Moore trying to catch a cab.

Having no luck, she has ventured further and further into the street and, at exactly the time of Sam's "**WHAT THE FUCK**", has gotten run over by a bus.

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
 Oh shit! Oh shit! Julianne Moore
 just got straight up run over by
 the bus!

People run to the scene of the accident...

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
 Maybe she's okay, maybe she's just
 lying under the bus dazed.

A GOOD SAMARITAN (30s) takes charge, starts motioning for the
 bus to back up.

GOOD SAMARITAN
 Back up the bus! Back it up!

SAM JACKSON (V.O.)
 She's gonna be fine. She's our
 hero and she's gonna be fine-- OH
 FUCK!

ON JULIANNE

Completely smushed. It's like something out of "Walking
 Dead" but worse.

The Good Samaritan starts VOMITING and spectators start
 SCREAMING and CRYING.

A LITTLE HISPANIC BOY inside the bus presses his face to the
 window. His eyes well with tears.

As more people gather, a man pushes through, out of the
 crowd...

It's SAM JACKSON. Right before passing through frame he
 says...

SAM JACKSON
 Fuck this, I'm out.

CUT TO:

A COMPUTER SCREEN

We see exactly that, the words typed in screenplay format...

SAM JACKSON (CONT'D)
Fuck this, I'm out.

We are in...

INT. STARBUCKS - MORNING

Our REAL HERO is writing the bizarre screenplay we've been watching.

Note: it's the Good Samaritan from the accident.

A real NARRATOR (female) takes over:

NARRATOR (V.O.) (O.S.)
 Will Dempsey was thirty-one years
 old when he finally gave up on his
 Sam Jackson unreliable narrator
 screenplay.
 (beat)
 He'd been working on it since 7:30
 AM.

Will looks up at the clock. It's 7:47 AM.

Will closes the computer, stands, heads to the counter.

A way-too-chipper FEMALE BARISTA greets him.

BARISTA
 Top of the morning to you, good
 Sir! What can I get for you!?

WILL
 Double espresso, large cup.

BARISTA
 And would you care for anything to
 eat?

WILL
 A fuck you?

BARISTA
 I'm sorry?

WILL
 (big smile)
 I said "no thank you."

BARISTA
 (confused)
 Oh, okay, right.

WILL
 ("thank you so much")
 Fuck you so much.

She looks up, confused. Did she just hear that again?

But Will is just smiling big at her.

She gives up, takes his cash.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (O.S.)
Will was not well. But you don't
need me to tell you that.

Will stands in the waiting area. Out of nowhere, he starts
SINGING. Loudly. People stare.

He's singing Bob Dylan's *Standing in the Doorway*.

WILL
(doing Dylan)
*I'm walking through, the summer
nights/The jukebox, playing low.
Yesterday everything, was going too
fast/Today it's moving too slow...*

VOICE (O.S.)
(calling out)
Will!?

Will jolts to a stop. A SECOND BARISTA is holding out his
now-ready coffee. Will approaches.

SECOND BARISTA
Double espresso, large cup?

WILL
Yeppers.

Will takes the large cup. Opens the lid.

From his back pocket he takes out a small glass BOTTLE OF
WHISKEY and pours the whole thing into the cup.

He does a long pour. Announces it:

WILL (CONT'D)
(loudly)
I'm doing a long pour.

Everyone in the Starbucks is now watching him.

Will reaches into his pocket, takes out a PILL BOTTLE. He
removes a pill, downs it, turns back to the barista.

WILL (CONT'D)
Want one?

SECOND BARISTA
No thanks.

WILL
It's Xanax.

SECOND BARISTA
Still no.

WILL
Boo humbug.

SECOND BARISTA
(correcting)
Bah humbug.

WILL
That's what she said.

SECOND BARISTA
Huh?

Will SHRUGS, starts singing another verse:

WILL
*I got no way left to turn/I got
nothing left to burn...*
(then)
It's Dylan, people! *Standing in
the Doorway!* Third track on *Time
out of Mind*. His comeback album.
The whole thing's like a giant
fucking Keats poem.
(a beat, then)
Give it a chance, it'll grow on
you.

A STARBUCKS MANAGER approaches.

MANAGER
Sir?

WILL
Oh man. Are you gonna make me
leave? Bah humbug.

Will gives a proud thumbs up to the second barista ("nailed it.")

CUE SONG: Bob Dylan's *Standing in the Doorway*.

SLOW MOTION ACTION as the manager and other Starbucks employees push/carry Will out of the store...

Just before he's out the door, Will yells:

WILL (CONT'D)
I'm telling you: give it a chance,
it will grow on you!

From somewhere unknown, a WOMAN'S VOICE echoes Will's:

WOMAN'S VOICE (PRE-LAP)
(laughing)
Just give it a chance, it will grow
on you.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING (SIX MONTHS EARLIER)

We follow an adorable MINI GOLDDOODLE into a sun-kissed bedroom.

The same BOB DYLAN SONG is playing.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
It will grow on me? He sounds like
he's suffering.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Bob Dylan does not sound like he's
suffering.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Well he doesn't sound like he's
singing.

The OFF-SCREEN WOMAN LAUGHS.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
You're a heathen.

The dog tries hopping up on the bed.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(loving)
C'mere, Fuckface.

The mini Goldendoodle does in fact wear a nametag reading:
"Fuckface."

Hands reach down, pull the dog up. The hands belong to...

WILL (in bed)

The Will of six months ago is a different Will - fresh faced,
sober, and handsome. Happy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Will hadn't always been "not well."
It had really only been since his
wife had left him that...

(then)

You know what, we'll get to that.
Right now let's enjoy them as they
were.

Will turns over with the dog and faces his wife... ABBY
DEMPSEY (30, knockout).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Will loved his wife Abby with an
intensity usually reserved for
stalkers. She was everything a man
could ask for in a wife. She was
nurturing, and she was beautiful,
and she ate any kind of sushi the
chef served to her, even the uni.

(then)

Yes, Will was sure of it: Abby
Dempsey was absolutely perfect. At
least back then she was.

Abby takes the dog from Will.

ABBY

Okay, okay, just listen to this
next song for thirty seconds and
tell me Bob Dylan is not a poet.

WILL

You have been listening to this man
gargling for a month straight.

ABBY

I'm in a phase, Baby. C'mon, lean
into this with me. It's Dylan's
comeback album!

Abby sits up, animated.

ABBY (CONT'D)

They were counting him out, Man!
They said you don't come back from
the crazy he had and then... BOOM!
1997. *Time Out of Mind!* Three
Grammys, Album of the Year, he told
everyone "I'm Bob Dylan and you're
not so eat a dick."

WILL

Bob Dylan told everyone to "eat a dick?"

ABBY

Metaphorically, yes, he did.

(then)

Listen to this track. Really listen, then tell me he's not a poet. I read this literary analysis online, they say he drew on the poetry of Keats--

Will fakes SNORING.

ABBY (CONT'D)

C'mon, Babe, this is important to me.

Will opens his eyes, looks at her. He loves her so completely that it practically seeps from his pores.

He nods.

She smiles, hits a button on her iPod.

CUE SONG: *Not Dark Yet* by Bob Dylan.

A new Dylan song fills the room. They sit there for thirty seconds, listening. At a certain point, Abby simply closes her eyes and sings along, swaying.

Will just watches her. Smitten. Always smitten.

BOB DYLAN (O.S.)

*There's not even room enough, to be
anywhere/It's not dark yet, but
it's getting there.*

Abby stops the song. Opens her eyes. Will smiles at her.

ABBY

(knowingly)

Don't.

WILL

He sounds like he has a giant cock lodged in his throat.

She playfully smacks him with a pillow.

ABBY

Asshole!

Will rolls on top of her. They wrestle playfully, until...

ABBY (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, wait, watch Fuckface,
are we rolling on Fuckface? Will,
careful.

Will sits up. Abby rolls out from under the covers.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I'm starving. I need to shower or
we're gonna be late for your
parents.

As she stands we realize Abby is very pregnant. Explosively pregnant.

WILL

Hey?

Abby turns. Pregnant, hair in her face, luminous.

WILL (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

Hey!

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. FRATERNITY PARTY - NIGHT (10 YEARS EARLIER)

A MUCH YOUNGER ABBY (20) dances with a HOT GUY on a sweaty,
beer soaked dance floor.

A MUCH YOUNGER WILL (21) stands holding two beers behind
them.

WILL

Hey!

They don't hear Will over the music.

WILL (CONT'D)

I GOT YOU A BEER!

Abby and Hot Guy stop dancing, turn.

HOT GUY

Thanks, man!

Hot Guy takes both beers and hands one to Abby.

She smiles apologetically at Will and resumes dancing with
the other guy.

Will watches, either devastated or nonplussed.

You can never quite tell with Will.

INT. FRATERNITY PARTY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Will sits on the stairs, watching the party absentmindedly, nursing a beer.

A beautiful pair of legs steps into his sightline. He smiles without even looking up.

Abby sits down next to him into frame. They face forward, watching the party.

WILL
What happened to Fuckface?

ABBY
Tim.

WILL
If you say so.

She smiles.

ABBY
I wasn't into him.

WILL
Oh. Too bad for Fuckface.

ABBY
Tim.

WILL
Sure.

A beat. They watch Tim/Fuckface dance with a new girl.

WILL (CONT'D)
He looks like one of those
Valentine's Day stuffed animals,
doesn't he? Like one of those
perfect fluffy teddy bear dogs
things with the button eyes?

ABBY
You jealous?

WILL
Just observant.

ABBY
 (small smile)
 If you say so.

A beat. They sip their beers in contented silence.

ABBY (CONT'D)
 Are you ever going to ask me out,
 Will?

WILL
 Just waiting for the right moment.

ABBY
 Oh, okay. Good to know.

Another long beat. They sip their beers.

ABBY (CONT'D)
 You might want to get on it, is
 all. Because I'm contemplating
 going home with Tim--

WILL
 Fuckface.

ABBY
 Both of them, out of sheer
 loneliness.

WILL
 Okay.

ABBY
 Okay?

WILL
 Okay. Good to know.
 (then)
 But I'm still waiting for the right
 moment.

She SIGHS, frustrated, stands.

ABBY
 I'll see you later, Will.

She turns to go. Will calls after her.

WILL
 I'm waiting for the right moment,
 Abby, because once I ask you out,
 there won't be any turning back for
 me.

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)

I won't date anyone else for the rest of my life, I won't love anyone else for the rest of my life, I won't really care about anything else for the rest of my life. I am going to fall in love with you with such intensity that I may not be able to think straight for the next few decades. I'm waiting for the right moment, Abby, because when I ask you out it will be the most important moment of my life and I want to make sure I get it right.

ON ABBY: blown away and a little stunned.

Will just shrugs, casual, and sips his beer.

WILL (CONT'D)

So that's why.

ABBY

Okay. Good to know.

A charged silent beat. Abby stands to go.

WILL

Abby.

She turns.

WILL (CONT'D)

You want to go to the movies with me?

ABBY

(confused)

Wait... are you asking me out?

Will shrugs.

WILL

The moment felt right.

Abby smiles. They fall in love, instantly.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - MORNING

We're back to PRESENT-DAY-STARBUCKS-DRUNK WILL DEMPSEY.

He walks down the street, wobbling and swigging from his Starbucks cup of coffee/whiskey.

He pulls an iPod from his pocket.

He puts on HEADPHONES.

He scrolls forward to track number 5 on Dylan's *Time Out of Mind* album: *Trying to Get to Heaven*.

Instantly, all the sounds of the city vanish. We hear only the song...

BOB DYLAN (O.S.)

*The air is getting hotter/ there's
a rumbling in the skies/ having
waded through the high muddy water/
with the heat rising in my eyes.*

The sights and sounds of summertime New York flood past Will.

He takes them all in, hyper-focused on each detail:

- A MAN walks his TINY DOG.
- A WOMAN tries to hail a CAB.
- A COUPLE holds hands while pushing a stroller.

BOB DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Every day your memory grows
dimmer/it doesn't haunt me like it
did before/I've been walking
through the middle of
nowhere/trying to get to Heaven
before they close the door.*

Will ENTERS the front REVOLVING DOOR of an office building.

He just goes around and around, never getting out. Listening to Dylan.

A man at sea.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Will sits in a chair, staring forward, almost catatonic.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

How are you doing today, Will?

Will stares forward.

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

Will?

Will looks up, a bit startled.

REVEAL: a pretty therapist - DOCTOR KATE MORRIS (35) - sitting opposite him in a therapist's office.

Dr. Morris is attractive and has red hair. *Note: this looks lot like the opening therapy scene.*

WILL

I'm sorry, what did you say?

DR. MORRIS

I asked how you were doing today.

WILL

Oh. You know. Same.

(then)

Has anyone ever told you that you look like Julianne Moore?

DR. MORRIS

You did. Yesterday.

WILL

Well I've got a good eye because you're a dead ringer.

Will sips from his alcohol filled Starbucks cup.

FLASH: *Young Will and Young Abby on their first date, in a packed movie theatre, enjoying a re-release of "Pulp Fiction" with other Tarantino fanatics. Sam Jackson is screaming: "I'm a mushroom-cloud-layin' motherfucker, motherfucker" and Abby is loving it. Will watches her, watching it, and takes her hand for the first time.*

BACK TO WILL, in therapy.

WILL (CONT'D)

I tried to masturbate the other day. I tried thinking of her, but I couldn't get it done so...

This hangs there.

WILL (CONT'D)

Then I tried thinking of you, but that's when I realized how much you look like Julianne Moore and I started thinking about what I'd seen her in last and it was "Still Alice" and then well, you know...

(then)

I mean, you jerk off to "Still Alice" you need to be institutionalized.

DR. MORRIS

You were institutionalized.

WILL

Touché.

A beat.

FLASH: *Young Will and Young Abby lying in bed, post-coital. He's tracing her back with his fingers, memorizing her.*

BACK TO WILL, in therapy.

WILL (CONT'D)

She left six months ago today.

DR. MORRIS

I know. But you've been in a facility almost that entire time, Will. And I'm trying to get a sense - Will, are you listening to me? - I'm trying to get a sense of how you're doing being back out in the world again.

WILL

Oh. You know. Same.

DR. MORRIS

You keep saying that.

WILL

I keep meaning it.

DR. MORRIS

Have you spoken to her? Since you've been out?

FLASH: *A bleary-eyed Will sits in a fancy Italian restaurant with Abby. He implores her to come back to him. She refuses, stands, and leaves - tears in her eyes.*

BACK TO WILL, in therapy.

WILL
(lying)
No.

A beat.

DR. MORRIS
Have you gone to see your parents
yet, like we discussed?

WILL
I don't want to.

DR. MORRIS
Will, part of the reason you were
discharged and put into my care was
so you could start--

WILL
I DON'T WANT TO, OKAY!

Silence.

WILL (CONT'D)
That was weird. Sorry.

A long beat.

DR. MORRIS
Yesterday you said that since you'd
been discharged you'd been feeling
aimless.

WILL
Well, I usually have good aim, so--

Will stops short.

DR. MORRIS
What, Will? What's wrong?

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. CARNIVAL - EVENING (9 YEARS EARLIER)

COLLEGE-AGE WILL is participating in a SHOOTING GAME at a
carnival/fair. He hits his mark.

COLLEGE-AGE ABBY cheers.

Will receives a TEDDY BEAR, hands it to Abby.

WILL
We'll name him Fuckface.

Abby LAUGHS.

ABBY
Every teddy bear in our lives
cannot be named Fuckface.

WILL
I like reminding you of the life
you could have had if I hadn't
rescued you.

ABBY
(laughing)
Do you now!?

WILL
(à la John Wayne)
Yes, Ma'am.

Will tips an imaginary cap and blows on the gun like a
gunslinger. She LAUGHS.

Will grabs her and she GIGGLES/SQUIRMS. But quickly they
settle into the embrace.

Will looks her in the eye:

WILL (CONT'D)
Let's get married.

Abby freezes ever so slightly.

ABBY
We've only been dating a few
months, Will.

WILL
And I think I've shown great
restraint waiting this long.

She can't help but smile.

WILL (CONT'D)
You want to say yes so bad it
hurts.

ABBY
I don't.

WILL
You do.

ABBY
You're cocky.

WILL
I'm right.

She smiles. Will reaches for the toy gun. He puts it to his head, does his best John Wayne again:

WILL (CONT'D)
Little Lady, say yes or let me put
myself out of my misery.

ABBY
Stop that, c'mon.

WILL
Come on, Little Mama.

ABBY
(laughing)
Will, enough.

Will relents, lowers the fake gun. But then... he shoves it in his mouth.

WILL
(mumbled)
"Yes, I will marry yo--

ABBY
Will!

Will clocks her discomfort, removes the gun.

WILL
(apologetic)
That was weird. Sorry.

ABBY
I love you, Will. You're the love
of my life, I'm sure of it. But it
scares me how much...
(then)
It scares me how much you feel,
Will.
(beat)
I never would have thought that
could be a thing that scared me
but... I may not be equipped to be
loved this much.

WILL
I only know one way to love you,
Abby.

ABBY
I know, but--

WILL
(matter-of-fact)
I'll find another way.

This stops her. Will thinks, then:

WILL (CONT'D)
Yeah, I'll find another way. I
will love you however you're
equipped to handle it, Abby. I
will love you with restraint, I
will love you on odd days of the
week, I will figure out how you
like your love and I will make it
to order for you--

ABBY
We'd have to get a dog.

Will stops short, momentarily thrown.

WILL
Okay.

ABBY
I mean, I want kids too, but not
for a while.

WILL
Okay.

ABBY
But a dog first. A small dog.

WILL
Yup.

ABBY
My parents died young and that
makes me sad sometimes.

WILL
I know.

ABBY
It will probably make me a bad
mother.

WILL
I disagree but okay.

ABBY
Mainly I want the dog, that's the
big thing. A small dog.

WILL
I'm completely on board with the
dog.

ABBY
Okay, I'll marry you.

WILL
Okay.

ABBY
Okay.

Will hands Abby her Teddy Bear.

WILL
Wanna meet my parents?

ABBY
Sure.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

The door opens revealing:

IRWIN (65) and LINDA (61) DEMPSEY, Will's delightfully over-
the-top New Yorker-for-life parents. They SQUEAL with
delight at the appearance of...

WILL AND ABBY, 9 years aged forward since the previous scene.

*Note: these are the pregnant, Bob Dylan loving/hating
versions of Will and Abby from that morning roughly six
months ago.*

LINDA
Abby! My God, look at you. You're
positively...

ABBY
Revolting?

LINDA
No, you're--

ABBY
Gassy?

LINDA
No!

WILL
She is pretty gassy, Ma.

Will's father nods.

IRWIN
That means it's gonna be a boy. I practically needed a hazmat suit when your mother was pregnant with you.

LINDA
(nodding)
It's true.

Will turns to Abby:

WILL
My dad says that the farts mean it's a boy.

ABBY
Well, that makes them all worth it.

Abby turns to Linda.

ABBY (CONT'D)
I'm almost afraid to ask, but did you...

LINDA
Meatloaf just came out of the oven.

Abby practically collapses in relief.

ABBY
Oh, God bless you, I've never craved anything like this. Linda, get me to that meatloaf and you can nag, pester, and back-handedly insult me to your heart's content.

Abby ENTERS, eager. Linda follows her, equally eager.

LINDA
Oh good!
(getting right to it)
Abby, honey?
(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

Did you forget to put on socks or was that a choice? Because it's very chilly out and...

Will and his dad share a look, SHRUG, and follow.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - LATER

The four of them sit at a dining room table, eating.

Abby is positively chowing on that meatloaf. Will watches her go at it.

He smiles and looks off to an ADJACENT LIVING ROOM.

It's already a SHRINE/PLAYGROUND for his unborn child. A crib, play toys, play area, the works.

WILL

Ma, you are aware that the kid isn't going to actually live with you, right?

LINDA

I got carried away, sue me. Here, eat, before she gets it all.

Linda serves Will meatloaf. His father motions toward the baby mess.

IRWIN

Baby clothes, baby swings, baby stem cells, who knows - I don't know what half this shit is. All I know is that I spend all day breaking down the goddamn Amazon boxes.

LINDA

Sshh you. Here, Honey, a little more.

Linda goes to give Will more meatloaf. But Abby - without breaking stride - slaps the spoon away and takes the rest for herself like an animal feeding on a kill.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I'm going to be a grandmother, I just can't believe it. Abby, don't take this the wrong way--

WILL
Here we go.

LINDA
But selfishly I'm just so glad your
parents are dead.

WILL
Boom.

LINDA
Oh stop it, Abby knows what I mean.

WILL
She does?
(to Abby)
You do?

ABBY
(mouth full)
She'll explain.

LINDA
What I mean is...

ABBY
(chewing)
See?

LINDA
... all I ever wanted was for Will
to marry a woman with dead parents
so I didn't have to share the
grandchildren. And he did. My
prayers came true.

WILL
Jesus, Ma!

LINDA
Oh, Abby knows what I mean.
(then, immediate)
Ooh, Abby, did you look at that
book I sent you yet...

As CONVERSATION CONTINUES in the background, Will looks over
into that adjacent living room filled with baby products...

WILL (PRE-LAP)
Both Abby's parents died in a car
accident when she was a little
girl.

CUT TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Back to present-day/messed-up Will in therapy with Dr. Morris.

WILL
Abby was in the car. She was seven.

DR. MORRIS
Okay.

A beat.

WILL
"Okay" feels like a strange response to that new information.

Dr. Morris smiles.

DR. MORRIS
I was caught off guard.
(then)
You don't talk about Abby a lot.

WILL
You don't ask about her a lot.

DR. MORRIS
I ask about her constantly.

WILL
Tomato, potato.

DR. MORRIS
(correcting)
Tomato, tom-ah-to.

WILL
Let's call the whole thing off.

DR. MORRIS
Your sessions with me are mandated, Will.

WILL
No, I meant... "tomato, tom-ah-to, let's call the whole thing off."

DR. MORRIS
I'm not following.

A beat.

WILL

My God, this is some kind of rhythm we have, huh, Doc? Maybe this is why I can't jerk off to you.

A really awkward beat.

WILL (CONT'D)

(apologetic)

That was way inappropriate.

(explaining)

I was institutionalized.

DR. MORRIS

Why don't you tell me about Abby, Will? I'd like to know more about her.

WILL

Well, then you've come to the right place, Doc. I am the world's foremost expert on all things Abby.

(beat, then)

Or I was, I guess.

(then)

No, I still am, I mean it's not like someone else learned more about her in the past six months.

(then)

I mean someone could have, I've been locked up and God only knows what she's been up to wherever she is--

DR. MORRIS

Will.

WILL

Right. Let me tell you about Abby.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - DAY (THIRTY YEARS AGO)

ABBY'S MOM gives birth. Her FATHER cheers her on. Will becomes our third narrator (so far)...

WILL (V.O.)

Abby Leshar was born on June 30th, 1985. The legend goes that when she was born, she didn't make a peep.

The baby comes out. The doctor prods it. Nothing.

WILL (V.O)

For five minutes, little Abby just sat there, taking in the world. Not so much as a single cry.

The baby just sits there, contented.

WILL (V.O.)

In the years to come, her parents would always say that there was nothing wrong with baby Abby. She just didn't have anything to say yet.

PRESENT DAY WILL steps into frame with Dr. Morris (the scene participants don't "see" them).

WILL

Now keep in mind, I'm getting all this second hand. I never met any of the people here except Abby.

DR. MORRIS

Understood.

WILL

Her parents die. Pretty soon. Long before I come into the picture.

DR. MORRIS

No, I know.

WILL

And it's not like I know any of these doctors or nurses, why would I?

DR. MORRIS

Let's move along, Will.

WILL

Okay.

INT. ABBY'S HOME - YEARS LATER

An adorable FIVE-YEAR-OLD ABBY dances in the living room. Her parents sit on a couch, watching and laughing.

WILL (V.O)

By all accounts, Abby's early childhood was a happy one.

ON HER PARENTS (40s)

Adoring their child.

WILL (V.O.)

Her parents - Jack and Elizabeth - were kind-hearted and good-hearted and all the other kinds of "hearted." They were literally *both* elementary school teachers. It's actually how they met...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY (1988).

Elizabeth (Abby's mom) sits by herself eating in the teacher's lounge. She takes a big bite of her sandwich.

Just then: Jack (Abby's dad) approaches, sits next to her.

JACK

You mind if I sit?

She goes to answer, but catches herself (her mouth is full). She motions for Jack to sit, he does.

She covers her mouth and continues chewing quickly.

WILL (V.O.)

If Abby's mother had known she'd meet her future husband at precisely that moment, she probably wouldn't have taken a huge bite of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich just seconds before.

JACK

Hi, I'm Jack.

She goes to respond, but is still chewing. She motions at her mouth, apologetically. Chews.

He waits. And waits. She can't get it down. They start laughing.

REVEAL opposite them:

Will and Dr. Morris sit at the table watching the game of peanut butter induced charades/hysterics.

WILL

Now is this a meet-cute, or is this a meet-cute.

(then)

Screenwriting term. I've been writing.

He watches them.

WILL (CONT'D)

It's strange to think about isn't it? How a completely random moment involving peanut butter, a moment that happened before I was even born, shaped my entire life.

DR. MORRIS

Are you glad it happened?

Will watches them.

WILL

Ah, well that, Dr. Morris, is the big question, isn't it? Because if it hadn't happened...

We see all of the following in FLASHING SNAPSHOTS from the past - like a high-speed MONTAGE.

WILL (V.O.)

Abby's parents would never have met, they'd never have married, they'd never have honeymooned in Aruba where they conceived Abby. They'd never have seen Abby come into the world without a peep, they'd never have watched her blonde hair turn brown as she got older. They'd never have watched her become obsessed with dancing, then soccer, then horses. And, of course, Christmas. Always Christmas - the lights, the gifts, and above all: the Rockettes. So obsessed with the Rockettes was Abby that every year they'd have to drive into the city to see them perfo--

SMASH! Their car (Abby in backseat) is BLINDSIDED.

BACK TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT)

Will stares ahead, thinking.

WILL

Her parents died instantly. Abby was trapped in the backseat of the car with them for over an hour until they got her out. Her father...

(beat, then)

Her father was decapitated by the steering column.

A loaded beat.

WILL (CONT'D)

I know, right!? That's always the detail that gets people. I mean the story in and of itself is tragic, of course, but when you give someone that image - that singular image of a seven year old girl trapped in a car with her decapitated father - then it all really just lands, doesn't it?

(then, chipper)

Anyhoo... you asked about Abby so I'll continue, but be forewarned, her next decade isn't so great.

More SNAPSHOTS from the past. We start with little Abby (fresh off car accident) in a police station.

WILL (V.O.)

Abby's parents didn't plan on dying together. So there was no will, and no plan for Abby. Seeing as all her grandparents were deceased, Abby's Uncle Joe was given custody. Uncle Joe wasn't a nice man. And when I say that, I don't mean he didn't hug her. I mean he bought her a puppy and then killed it when it chewed up his couch. I mean he sporadically molested her for the better part of six years until at fifteen years old she borrowed a gun from a wannabe gangbanger at her school, put it to her Uncle Joe's head, and told him in no uncertain terms that...

Fifteen-year-old Abby tells her uncle...

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD ABBY
I will fucking kill you if you ever
touch me again.

She lowers the gun...

WILL (V.O.)
Then she shot him in the knee so he
knew she wasn't playing.

She does. Uncle Joe howls in pain.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Will smiles.

WILL
Like a movie, right? I always
pictured a young Natalie Portman
playing her.

DR. MORRIS
I don't know who that is.

WILL
You don't know who Natalie Portman
is!? Doc, you gotta get out more.

DR. MORRIS
I'm sure you're right, Will.

WILL
Tell you what, you come over one
night, we'll marathon young Natalie
Portman: "The Professional,"
"Beautiful Girls," you'll
understand.

DR. MORRIS
Please continue, Will.

Will SHRUGS.

WILL
Things got better from there.

More SNAPSHOTS from Abby's past.

WILL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Obviously damage had been done.
Decapitated father, molesting
uncle, you don't just bounce back
from that. But Abby was smart.
(MORE)

WILL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Determined. A dreamer. A reader.
She hunkered down, got herself into
college, started seeing a therapist
on campus who truly changed her
life, and even made a really close
friend...

INT. LIBRARY - EVENING

YOUNG ABBY (20) sits in a library studying.

Across a few tables, YOUNG WILL throws candy at her. They
starts silently food fighting.

Once again, PRESENT DAY WILL steps into frame with Dr.
Morris.

WILL
Look, Doc, it's me! This is what I
looked like at twenty-one.
(then, realizing)
Holy shit, my hairline has really
receded, hasn't it?

He examines his twenty-one-year old self (who, unaware,
continues food fighting with Abby).

WILL (CONT'D)
Look how much lower my hairline was
back then. Fuck me.

DR. MORRIS
I think you look very much the
same.

WILL
And I think I look like a different
person.

DR. MORRIS
Tomato-tomahto.

Will smiles.

WILL
Look at us, Doc, look at us. Maybe
we have a chance after all.
(then)
Anyhow...

Will leads Dr. Morris out of the library and through...

EXT. CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

Where we see college-Abby everywhere... playing intermural soccer, reading on the lawn, making out with Will, etc.

Will and Dr. Morris walk through these scenes, one after another.

WILL

Abby came into her own in college. She engaged with the world, became extremely popular, even fell in love (not to toot my own horn but toot toot). She graduated top of her class with an English Lit degree, wrote her thesis on...

ABBY (PRE-LAP)

Will! Will!

Suddenly we are in...

INT. FRAT PARTY - NIGHT

THREE FRAT BOY IDIOTS hold Will upside down, readying him to chug from a keg.

Young Abby rushes over toward Will, nonplussed by the fact that he's upside down over a keg.

ABBY

The unreliable narrator!

WILL

Huh?

ABBY

(mile-a-minute)

My thesis! Unreliable narrators are considered a "device," right? Don't answer, they are. They don't get a lot of literary analysis because it's a gimmick, a trick. I mean yeah, *Canterbury Tales* gets a shout out for having one, but usually it's the stuff of popcorn crime novels and thriller movies. Agatha Christie, *Usual Suspects*, so on and so forth. But I'm going to argue that by definition, any narrator is unreliable.

(MORE)

ABBY (CONT'D)

Because when someone is telling a story, there is always a distance from the actual story to their *telling* of the story. Therefore, any story that has EVER been told has an unreliable narrator. The only truly reliable narrator would be someone hypothetically telling a story as it happens before our eyes, which is obviously impossible. And what does that mean?

(deep breath)

It means that the only truly reliable narrator is life itself. But life itself, by its very nature, is an unreliable narrator, too - because it is constantly misdirecting us, misleading us, taking us on a journey where it's literally impossible to predict what is going to happen next. That's my thesis: life as the ultimate unreliable narrator.

(then)

What do you think?

WILL

I think--

ABBY

It'll make more sense when I write it. Love you! Bye!

She races off.

Will's friends stuff the spout back in his mouth as he watches her race off.

He's literally upside-down, in love.

BACK TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Will sits, lost in thought. He looks up at Dr. Morris.

WILL

Hey, before, when I invited you over to watch Natalie Portman movies, you know I was just being funny, right?

DR. MORRIS

I do.

WILL

Because I'm still married. At least I think I am. I haven't signed any papers or anything yet. Don't know how this works.

DR. MORRIS

It's fine, Will.

WILL

Okay.

A long beat.

DR. MORRIS

Tell me about your marriage?

WILL

You want me to tell you about my marriage?

DR. MORRIS

I do.

WILL

Then you haven't been listening. It doesn't matter what I tell you, Doc.

His eyes suddenly well with tears.

INT. BEDROOM - 6 MONTHS EARLIER

We're back where we first saw Will and Abby together, in bed six months earlier, talking about Bob Dylan.

WILL (V.O.)

I could tell you all about our marriage. I could tell you every detail of that morning she left me.

We pick up mid-scene (we've seen this already).

ABBY

I'm in a phase, Baby. C'mon, lean into this with me. It's Dylan's comeback album!

WILL (V.O.)
 But is my memory even remotely
 accurate?

We REWIND, play the moment again.

ABBY
 (irritated)
 I'm in a phase, Will. Why can't
 you just lean into this with me?
 One *fucking* time, just lean into it
 with me.

WILL (V.O.)
 I could tell you how much fun we
 had together that morning.

We've seen this next part, too:

WILL
 He sounds like he has a giant cock
 lodged in his throat.

She playfully smacks him with a pillow.

ABBY
 Asshole!

Will rolls on top of her. They wrestle playfully, until...

ABBY (CONT'D)
 Okay, okay, wait, watch Fuckface,
 are we rolling on Fuckface? Will,
 careful.

WILL (V.O.)
 Or...

We REWIND, play this part again:

ABBY
 Will, get off me. Watch Fuckface,
 are we rolling on Fuckface?
 (then, urgent)
 WILL, GET THE HELL OFF OF ME!

Will gets off her, surprised.

WILL (V.O.)
 Maybe I'd been smothering her for
 years. Smothering her with my
 love, with my dreams, with a baby
 she wasn't ready for.

FLASHES/SNAPSHOTS:

- Will putting that toy gun to his head.
- Will's parents house filled to the brim with toys.
- Abby's enormous belly.
- Fifteen-year-old Abby holding that gun to Uncle Joe's head.

WILL (V.O.)

Maybe I was just another man who
looked like he was there to save
her life, when he was really just
there to ruin it.

We SPLIT SCREEN two versions of Abby on that bed, swaying to Dylan:

In one version, she looks ethereal, happy, contented.

In the other, she's wet eyed, lost in thought, extremely damaged.

WILL (V.O.)

Was she unhappy all along? Was my
dream girl just something I'd
created in my mind's eye. A
narrative trick, to get us through,
you know... a life.

BACK TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Will sits with Dr. Morris. He takes a sip of his coffee/whiskey.

WILL

This is some heavy philosophical
shit we're delving into.

DR. MORRIS

It is, yes.

He drinks more. Dr. Morris leans forward.

DR. MORRIS (CONT'D)

Will, can you talk a little about
that day?

Will shakes his head "no." Dr. Morris continues anyways.

DR. MORRIS (CONT'D)
 You had a nice morning with Abby
 talking about Bob Dylan--

WILL
 (fierce)
 You're not listening, Doc!
 (then, calming)
 It may *not* have been a nice
 morning. It may have been a
 smothering morning, that's what I'm
 trying to fucking tell you!

His outburst is uneven and unnerving. Dr. Morris takes a
 beat, presses on:

DR. MORRIS
 And you went to your parents for
 lunch, and then what happened?

WILL
 (starting to cry)
 She just left me.

DR. MORRIS
 She didn't *just* leave you, Will--

WILL
 You don't want me to do this, Doc.
 Charmingly fucked up Will is a lot
 more fun than deeply fucked up
 Will.

DR. MORRIS
 Will--

WILL
 I'll remind you that deeply fucked
 up Will has tried to kill himself
 two times in the past six months.

DR. MORRIS
 I'm aware of that--

WILL
 I'll remind you that the first
 thing deeply fucked up Will did
 after he got out from the hospital
 was buy a gun so he could get it
 right the third time.

Dr. Morris goes silent. This is new information.

She nods, leans forward, says gently:

DR. MORRIS
Have you seen Abby since you've
been released, Will?

Will closes his eyes, remember:

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

We've seen this image before: Will begging Abby to come back
to him.

ABBY
(crying)
You know I can't.

WILL
Please Abby. Just come back--

DR. MORRIS (O.S.)
(interrupting)
Will?

Will looks up (towards her voice):

WILL
I'm talking to my wife!

DR. MORRIS (O.S.)
But your wife wasn't there, was
she?

We WIDEN... we see Will is sitting at a table by himself.

And Will sees it, too. He knows it. He admits:

WILL
No, she wasn't.

Will just stares at the empty seat across from him. He
announces to no one in particular:

WILL (CONT'D)
I'm not well. I'm very sick.

BACK TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Morris leans forward.

DR. MORRIS
 You're not sick, Will. You're sad.
 You're mixing meds. You're not
 yourself.
 (then)
 Tell me about that morning.

We see the previously seen images that Will describes:

WILL
 We talked about Bob Dylan. We
 laughed. We almost crushed the
 dog. We went to my parents. We
 ate meatloaf.

He stops. Tears are streaming down his face.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

Pregnant Abby and happy Will exit his parents.

ABBY
 Oh my God, I ate too much.

WILL
 You ate the gross national meatloaf
 product of a small nation.

ABBY
 (nodding, sad)
 We may have a meatloaf instead of a
 baby.

Will LAUGHS.

WILL
 Walk it off?

ABBY
 Please yes.

He takes her hand. They head down the bustling New York City
 street, slowly, contentedly.

After a long beat...

ABBY (CONT'D)
 The baby is a girl, Will.

Will turns, surprised.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I know we weren't going to find out but a nurse slipped up and... I feel shitty knowing without you knowing:

(then, nervous excitement)

Will, in about three weeks you're going to have a daughter.

Will stands there in stunned silence.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Say something.

Slowly, Will smiles.

ABBY (CONT'D)

What?

WILL

Now I get it.

ABBY

What!?

WILL

I know what you want to name her.

Abby smiles mischievously, starts crossing the street. She turns back to Will.

ABBY

I know you don't like his music but--

WILL

I love it.

Abby smiles. It's a smile that could light up a city block.

And suddenly we hear SCREECHING TIRES. She turns in the direction of the sound.

BACK TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tears stream down Will's face.

WILL

It's all I see. Twenty-four hours a day. If I think about something else for one second, it comes back like a wave the next. The bus.

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)
 Her face. That singular image of
 my girl...
 (gutted)
 Lying there... just gone.

SNAPSHOTS: Like Will's early screenplay (but this time mercifully avoiding the gore - though we can imagine):

- A screeching bus, pandemonium.
- Will screaming to back the bus up.
- The little Hispanic boy crying inside the bus. Will briefly locks eyes with the boy.

DR. MORRIS
 Will, you suffered a horrific,
 horrific trauma--

WILL
 (realizing)
 I can't live without her.

DR. MORRIS
 You can. For your baby you can.
 (then)
 Your baby survived, Will.
 Miraculously, she lived. Wouldn't
 Abby want you to be there for your
 daughter?

Will nods, broken.

DR. MORRIS (CONT'D)
 So why haven't you been to your
 parents yet? Why haven't you seen
 your baby?

WILL
 Because she was right: I loved her
 too much. I loved her too hard.
 All I see is her face.
 (then, nodding)
 I'm just done.

Will stands, a newfound determination on his face.

DR. MORRIS
 Will, please sit down.

WILL
 If I don't leave now, I never will.

DR. MORRIS

Will--

WILL

I'm sorry, Doc, you're very nice,
but I don't want to be here
anymore. I have to do this now or
I never will, please close your
eyes.

(then)

I wasn't the hero of this story.

And before we even know what's happening, Will reaches into his sock, pulls out his gun, puts it in his mouth, and fires.

It is instantaneous, jarring, and - obviously - shocking.

Everything SLOWS and GOES SILENT as Dr. Morris SCREAMS and runs to Will... then out the door (screaming).

CUE SONG: The most populist track from Bob Dylan's *Time Out of Mind* album: **To Make Me Feel Your Love**.

A long beat, as we process this... then:

A new "narrator" takes over, this time A LITTLE GIRL:

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

*Dear Rod. I got your letter and it
was very nice. You spell really
good my Nana says, and you seem
like a very nice boy she says too.*

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A little girl's hand writes this letter, carefully.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

*I think you are lucky that you have
a bird. I have a dog. He is my
best friend. Do you like pizza? I
mainly like pizza and dogs. But
dogs more.*

Reveal: A LITTLE GIRL (6). Adorable. Wise beyond her handful of years.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

(as she writes)

From, Dylan Dempsey.

This is Will and Abby's daughter, aged six years.

Our earlier FEMALE ADULT NARRATOR takes back over.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

To say Dylan Dempsey's childhood was marked by death and tragedy would be the grossest of understatements... and also a little bit douchey.

TIGHT ON SIX-YEAR-OLD DYLAN'S face. She looks directly into lens.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She was literally *born* of death and tragedy.

SCREECH! The sound of a bus. Little Dylan flinches.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Six months into her little life, her father started locking in the pattern.

GUNSHOT! Dylan flinches again.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And this was all before the poor kid even understood what the hell was going on.

INT. BROWNSTONE - DAY (5.5 YEARS EARLIER)

SIX-MONTH-OLD DYLAN plays on the floor.

BEHIND HER:

Slightly out of focus, her grandparents are hysterically crying and holding each other.

Baby Dylan watches them, as if understanding.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The fallout from Will Dempsey's suicide was instant, long lasting, and far reaching.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - EVENING

Dr. Morris sits on the couch, wrapped in a blanket, dazed and teary.

Her HUSBAND rubs her back, but she just stares forward at...

A TV SCREEN

She's watching young Natalie Portman in "The Professional."

INT. DYLAN'S NEW HOME - CONTINUOUS

Baby Dylan watches her grandparents cry.

Little Fuckface (the dog) comes over and licks her face.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Dylan would now be raised by her mid-sixties grandparents, Irwin and Linda. And the odds weren't great that they'd last very long.

ON IRWIN:

He sits on the couch, stares into lens, crying.

As our narrator describes his condition - arrows, stats, and graphics demonstrate what she describes:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Irwin Dempsey was sixty-six years old. He was 5'10" and he weighed 265 pounds. When people would caution that you don't see a lot of nearly 300 pound, 70 year olds walking around, Irwin would always say:

IRWIN

(proud but sad)

You will soon, Mother Fucker.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Irwin had high cholesterol, severe arthritis, and the beginnings of gout. And he was the healthiest of Dylan's new caretakers.

The camera swings over to Linda Dempsey, who now stares directly into lens, crying.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

For two decades, Linda Dempsey had managed her clinical anxiety and depression with a ever-evolving cocktail of Prozac, Zoloft, and white wine.

Linda nods into lens, teary.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And that anxiety and depression did not even account for her only child's suicide, nor the grapefruit sized tumor which she had no idea was growing inside of her.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Irwin stands at Linda's grave with now **EIGHT-YEAR-OLD DYLAN**.

She looks up at her grandfather, sees that he's crying.

She takes his hand.

INT. DYLAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Dylan sits in bed with an aging Fuckface. Around her room, we get a sense of the girl...

- A writing DESK.

- Little girl pinks and purples, mixed - strangely - with BOB DYLAN POSTERS.

- A PHOTOGRAPH of Abby, Will, and a much younger Fuckface in happier/earlier times.

It is almost viscerally painful.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Irwin stands at the half open door. He's holding a glass of whiskey.

IRWIN

How you feeling, Kiddo?

She SHRUGS.

DYLAN

I feel like my whole life is going to be marked by death and tragedy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She did not say this, of course, but if she could verbalize what she was feeling at eight years old, she would have.

Irwin sits next to her. Eight-year-old "Dylan" continues expressing her innermost thoughts:

DYLAN

I crave a happy life, Grandpa. I have an almost desperate craving for stability and happiness, the way fat people crave chocolate or lost hikers crave rescue. I want to live a big great fantastical life. But I'm concerned that the tragedy that seems to follow me - the tragedy that birthed me - will prevent that from ever happening. And I don't know if I can withstand another body blow like this.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But what she really said was:

DYLAN

Are you gonna die, Grandpa?

Irwin takes a sip of his whiskey, thinks. Then:

IRWIN

Yes. I am. And probably sooner than you'd like, Kiddo, if I'm being honest. But I'm gonna fight like hell to stick around for you as long as possible, to prevent one more death from coming anywhere near your doorstep. I'm gonna get on the fucking treadmill, I'm gonna cut back on the red meat, I'm gonna do my best to get you through your teenage years without losing one more goddamn thing.

He nods, determined.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

I'm going to do that for your mother and father. I'm going to do it for your grandmother. But mostly I'm going to do it for you, Granddaughter.

He looks at her, eyes welling with tears and love.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'm going to squeeze out ten more years from this decrepit old body for you, my girl. My angel. My world.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Again: Irwin expressed this all
with:

IRWIN

Nah, no more dying around here,
Kiddo. Okay?

Irwin holds out his whiskey to toast his granddaughter.

She pretends to hold a glass of her own, and "clinks" with
him.

They take a real/fake sip together, and at the same time:

DYLAN/IRWIN

(re: real/fake whiskey)
Ahhhhhh.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But Irwin had no more power to
prevent loss than any of us do.

INT. VETERINARIAN HOLDING AREA - DAY

NINE-YEAR-OLD Dylan sits on the floor.

Next to her, Fuckface lies on his side - dying.

She pets him, gently.

BEHIND HER, Irwin stands with a VET.

He slams his hand into the wall in frustration.

INT. VETERINARIAN PROCEDURE ROOM - LATER

The Vet injects Fuckface, putting him down.

Dylan keeps petting the dog, locking eyes with him.

DYLAN

Tell them I'm nice.

She places that long-ago PHOTOGRAPH of her parents and
Fuckface next to dog.

It will be buried with him.

INT. DYLAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Dylan comes home, begins tearing the Bob Dylan posters off of her wall.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Her mother gets hit by a bus. Her father commits suicide. Her grandmother dies of cancer.

(then)

But it was the death of a mini goldendoodle that ended Dylan Dempsey's childhood.

Dylan turns, looks into lens again.

As she does, and as our narrator continues, Dylan slowly - ever so slowly - MORPHS in front of our eyes from an INNOCENT NINE-YEAR-OLD GIRL to a TEENAGER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

2025 to 2033: the Dylan Dempsey Transformation Years. The years brought puberty. Puberty brought sexuality. Sexuality brought anger. And fear. And confusion. And when the smoke cleared - where that sweet little girl once stood - there remained only a teenager who scared the absolute shit out of everyone.

Dylan turns back to lens, revealing a fully evolved 18-YEAR-OLD DYLAN DEMPSEY.

She is a knockout, in a dangerous, way-too-sexy way.

She begins throwing stuff in a BACKPACK.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Irwin stands at the door again, aged ten years himself. He's thinner. Older.

He may have cut out that red meat, but not the whiskey.

He's holding his ubiquitous glass of it.

IRWIN

Hey.

She doesn't even turn around.

DYLAN
I'm heading out.

IRWIN
With who?

She grabs a pack of cigarettes from a drawer.

IRWIN (CONT'D)
You're not even going to try and
hide those from me?

DYLAN
Aren't we both better than that?

He shrugs in agreement.

IRWIN
(re: cigarettes)
You hear Vermont's made them
illegal?

DYLAN
Remind me never to go to Vermont.

A beat.

IRWIN
("little boy")
Can I have one?

DYLAN
No.

IRWIN
Just one?

DYLAN
No, these things will kill you.

She pops a cigarette in her mouth. Irwin cringes at the sight.

IRWIN
I was hoping we could talk about
college.

DYLAN
We talked about it last night.

IRWIN
We didn't get very far.

DYLAN
Yes we did. We just didn't get
where you wanted.

A beat.

IRWIN
Promise to be home by eleven?

DYLAN
I'd rather not lie to you.

IRWIN
Lie to me.

DYLAN
I'll be home by eleven.

She walks past him. He grabs her arm, turns her.

IRWIN
Dylan.

He looks at her. He looks old, tired.

She softens, ever so slightly.

IRWIN (CONT'D)
Happy eighteenth, Kiddo.

He holds out his whiskey glass, as he once did to that
adorable little girl.

She rolls her eyes, but - after a moment - gives in and
CLINKS an imaginary glass against his.

At the same time, they both sip and...

IRWIN/DYLAN
Ahhhhhh.

Irwin touches her cheek.

And suddenly we see it: sweet innocent Dylan is still in
there, somewhere...

Then she takes Irwin's real whiskey glass and downs it in one
gulp.

DYLAN
Peace.

She winks, EXITS.

INT. CAR - LATER

Dylan sits in the backseat of a small SUV.

THREE YOUNG MEN (two up front, one in back) sit in the car with them. Everyone is smoking.

In the back of the SUV we see music equipment (instruments, amps, etc.).

It is important to remember: it is 2033 now. All around us we notice the changes in costume, in vehicles, in technology. Not a paradigm shift by any means - no flying cars - but it's all part of the landscape.

DRIVER

So I say to her - your friend looks lonely. Why don't the three of us get to know one another--

As the other bandmates "male bond," Dylan looks out the window of the car.

ON STREET

They are passing the very intersection where Dylan's mother Abby - exactly eighteen years earlier - was struck by that bus.

ON DYLAN

As the car comes to a stop at a traffic light. Right at the spot.

Dylan lowers the window and sticks her head (and her entire top half of her body, really) out of the car.

She hovers over the very spot where her mother died.

As the light turns green, Dylan flicks her cigarette out the window...

Onto that exact spot.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - LATER

Dylan is mid-performance, the lead singer for the band.

SIGNAGE announces her band's name: **PB&J**.

Note: their music is the popular underground music of 2032: a violent, electronica-based form of rock 'n' roll.

Watching Dylan screaming and flailing on stage is jarring, to say the least.

But she's also a star performer. Captivating. Raw.

The most damaged people always make for our greatest artists.

The song finishes. The sparse audience CHEERS.

Dylan grabs a MUG OF BEER from a nearby ledge and quietly speaks to the crowd, commanding their attention:

DYLAN

Our last song is kinda personal.
My mom died eighteen years ago
today, and--

DRUNK

Take it off!

DYLAN

(explosive)
FUCK YOU!

Dylan calms herself, takes a sip of her beer, continues:

DYLAN (CONT'D)

They tell me she used to listen to--

DRUNK #2

Show us your tits!!!

Dylan THROWS her mug out at the kid. It shatters in the distance.

Dylan gives up on "context," simply announces:

DYLAN

This is our last song.

Dylan steps over toward a nearby keyboard, begins playing.

Softly she starts singing, beautifully.

It's *To Make You Feel My Love* by Bob Dylan... unplugged.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(singing)

*When the rain is blowing in your
face/and the whole world is on your
case/I could offer you a warm
embrace/to make you feel my love...*

And with that:

The band explodes.

Suddenly this becomes a violent/thrashing version of the one commercial love song on Bob Dylan's otherwise perfectly bleak album.

Dylan is simply on fire: screaming, stalking the stage, letting out as many of the ghosts that haunt her as possible.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE ROOM - LATER

Dylan gives a blowjob to the drummer of the band.

If it was hard to watch Will and Abby's only daughter smoke cigarettes, this is worse.

Way worse.

Adding to the horror, is the fact that HANGERS-ON and other band members are watching this.

Laughing. Pointing.

A NEARBY GIRL is even video-ing the oral sex on her phone.

Finally Dylan stands, the act completed.

Without missing a beat she grabs the phone from the video-taping girl and SMASHES it.

And like that...

Dylan calmly heads to a nearby card table and grabs herself a SANDWICH from a pile of PB&J sandwiches (the band's fuel, and namesake).

She's about to leave, when:

GIRL (O.S.)

You owe me a new phone, Bitch.

Dylan looks up. It's the girl whose phone she just smashed.

DYLAN
(apologetic)
You're right. I'm sorry, I
shouldn't have done that. It's
just been a weird day for me and I
got heated.

She reaches toward her pocket.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
Here, let me see what I have on me--

Without warning, Dylan attacks the girl.

It's brutal - and admittedly strange - to watch a pretty
eighteen-year-old girl get so violent and so feral, so
quickly.

Dylan takes the other girl down and pins her. She starts
pummeling her.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
You think that's funny, taping me?
You're not laughing now are you,
Bitch!?

Punch. Slap. Punch. Dylan smushes that PB&J sandwich into
the girl's face, violently.

Finally Dylan is pulled off of the traumatized and bloody
victim.

Dylan shakes off her "referees," grabs a fresh sandwich, and
EXITS.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dylan walks back to that street corner where her mother died.

It's late, very few cars.

Dylan looks out at the quiet street.

She lights a joint. Smokes it.

She takes a bite of her fresh sandwich. Chews.

She takes another hit from the joint.

And then...

DYLAN'S POV

As she sees her mother and father, at that same street corner, eighteen years earlier to the day:

It's the scene we've seen before, but now their daughter (back then unborn, but now eighteen) is there, too.

ABBY
*... Will, in about three weeks
 you're going to have a daughter.*

DYLAN
 (top of her lungs)
 NO HE'S NOT!!!! FUCKER'S GONNA
 BLOW HIS BRAINS OUT WITHOUT EVER
 MEETING ME!!!

But, of course, Will and Abby can't hear her.

ABBY
Say something.

Slowly, Will smiles.

ABBY (CONT'D)
What?

WILL
Now I get it.

ABBY
What!?

DYLAN
 YOU DON'T GET IT, ASSHOLE! YOU
 DON'T GET IT AT ALL!

WILL
I know what you want to name her.

Abby smiles mischievously, starts crossing the street. She turns back to Will.

DYLAN
 MIGHT WANT TO LOOK TO YOUR RIGHT,
 LADY!

ABBY
I know you don't like his music but--

WILL
I love it.

Abby smiles.

DYLAN
 (sing-songy)
 HERE COMES THE BUSSSSS!

But suddenly a desperation takes over for Dylan.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
 Mom, look out.
 (then)
 Mom? MOM!!! LOOK OUT!

And suddenly we hear SCREECHING TIRES.

Dylan closes her eyes (she can't watch).

When she opens them, the street is empty once more.

She recovers, takes a bite of her sandwich.

She breathes deeply, looks back up.

BUT NOW, IN FRONT OF HER...

The bus is back (or at least the memory of it).

Pressed up against the glass, inside the bus, is that little four-year-old Hispanic boy.

His eyes are welling with tears.

Dylan's eyes are, too.

They stare at each other.

LITTLE BOY
 Are you okay?

DYLAN
 Does it matter?

She takes a bite of her sandwich.

On the bus, the little boy cocks his head, taking her in.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 If four-year-old Rodrigo Gonzales had really been there that night, he might have told the stoned young woman standing in front of him that it mattered quite a bit to him that Dylan Dempsey was okay.

INT. BUS - 18 YEARS EARLIER

Little Rodrigo sits with his mother and father in the back of a New York City bus.

Rodrigo is adorable, carefree, and curious.

He's holding a plastic Statue of Liberty toy souvenir and wearing an "I LOVE NEW YORK" T-shirt.

His blue-collar parents JAVIER (big smile, barrel-chested) and ISABEL (beautifully tired, stoic) wear similar T-shirts.

They are fighting a losing battle to control their rambunctious son. But they don't seem to mind losing the battle.

This family enjoys one another. They love, openly.

Important note to reader: all conversation within this story will be in Spanish, and subtitled).

RODRIGO

I want to go up front.

ISABEL

Sit, Hijo.

JAVIER

Oh, c'mon, Mamasita, let the boy explore.

ISABEL

(amused smile)

And are you going to walk him up and down the aisle?

JAVIER

(playful teasing)

As a matter of fact I am.

Isabel rolls her eyes as Javier takes Rodrigo's hand.

We follow little Rodrigo down the aisle as he somehow manages to draw smiles from even this jaded New York commuter crowd.

RODRIGO

Hola... Hola... Hola...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Before their trip to New York City, the Gonzales family had never ventured outside of Spain.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The Andulucia region, to be more
 specific.

Rodrigo stops toward the middle of the bus as a man
 entertains him with a magic trick (coin in the ear).

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 They were simple, happy people,
 from a simple, happy place.
 Vacations did not come naturally to
 them - frankly, it never occurred
 to them that they might need a
 break from anything.

A coin gets pulled from a euphoric Rodrigo's ear. Javier
 LAUGHS.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 But little Rodrigo had become
 obsessed with New York City. So
 his loving father bought cheap
 plane fares and booked the most rat-
 infested Manhattan hotel
 imaginable.
 (then)
 Until this moment, it had been the
 trip of a lifetime.

Javier gets drawn into conversation (in Spanish) with a
 nearby older woman as little Rodrigo keeps moving down the
 aisle.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Again: simple people, with their
 own simple, unique, brand of
 happiness.

Javier looks back at his wife, winks at her.

Isabel smiles back, motions for him to keep an eye on Rodrigo
 (who has run up toward the bus driver).

ON RODRIGO:

Approaching the driver.

RODRIGO
Hola.

JAVIER
(few steps behind)
Hijo, leave him.

BUS DRIVER
(looking down momentarily)
No, it's oka--

Someone SCREAMS. The bus driver looks back up and SLAMS ON THE BREAKS.

Rodrigo and Javier (the only ones standing) go flying.

Pandemonium. We've seen this all but from the outside perspective. Now we're inside the bus seeing:

Spectators SCREAMING.

Will Dempsey, outside, FRANTICALLY YELLING for the bus to back up.

The BUS DRIVER doing so.

Little Rodrigo rising to his feet, unhurt, and seeing what's beneath the bus (we don't).

RODRIGO'S POV:

His little body blocks our view of the horrifying carnage.

All we see is Abby Dempsey's unharmed, enormously pregnant, belly.

And, of course, we see Will Dempsey.

Rodrigo locks eyes with Will. His little eyes fill with tears just as...

Javier (forehead bleeding) scoops Rodrigo up and carries him away from the window.

As Javier carries Rodrigo back to his frantic mother, checking for injuries, everything SLOWS.

CUE SONG: A Spanish version of *Not Dark Yet* by Bob Dylan.

Through the following, we stay with traumatized Rodrigo (staring back at the scene of the crime).

NARRATOR (V.O.)
The lives of two families were forever changed that day. The Dempseys were, as we know, shattered - instantly and in full. But for the Gonzales family, it would take some time for the effects of the accident to fully take root.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(then)

And theirs was a family that knew quite a bit about roots.

We hear HAPPY WHISTLING and...

CUT TO:

EXT. OLIVE TREE GROVE (SEVILLE, SPAIN) - DAY

A LABORER'S ROUGH HANDS feel the earth around an OLIVE TREE'S ROOTS, checking on dampness of the soil.

The hands pick up fallen OLIVES from the ground, check for bruises.

LATER:

THE SAME HANDS:

As they ever so gently slide olives off a small branch and into a bucket (*brucatura*).

WE WIDEN:

Revealing that the hands belong to a younger Javier (Rodrigo's father). He's about ten years younger here.

There's something beautiful about this big, barrel-chested young man so gently caring for these olives.

WE WIDEN FURTHER:

Revealing a 200-ACRE OLIVE GROVE.

It's harvest time, and all around Javier, OTHER LABORERS pick olives from other trees.

The other laborers use an easier, and more common "by hand" technique. What they are doing is called "*a mano con telo*" - or, simply, "by hand with net."

In a nutshell: they have placed LARGE NETS around the trunks of the trees, and use a combination of RAKES and LADDERS to loosen the olives en masse (which then fall into the nets).

But Javier just sits up high, WHISTLING, sliding those olives into his bucket by hand - olive after olive.

A FANCY PICKUP approaches and a laborer calls out:

LABORER

He's here.

MURMURS and CHEERS as everyone races toward the truck.

AN ELEGANT MAN (40s) steps out and greets his workers.

This is MR. SACCIONE. He's Italian, dapper, and otherworldly handsome.

And these guys fucking love him.

As he greets each man by name, and shakes their hands, he looks off in the distance...

TO JAVIER:

The only man still working. Sitting atop his ladder, sliding olives into his bucket, contentedly.

The boss may have arrived, but for Javier nothing has changed.

Though he has stopped whistling.

CUT TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - EVENING

A stunning Spanish farmhouse. Views as far as the eye can see.

Mr. Saccione sits at a desk, writing.

Behind him, young Javier steps into the room. He's dirty from work and clearly uncomfortable standing before his boss.

He debates how to announce his presence when...

MR. SACCIONE

Javier, thank you for coming down.

Mr. Saccione turns.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

Come, sit. Sit.

Mr. Saccione motions at an armchair.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

Drink?

Javier shakes his head no. Mr. Saccione sits on the couch opposite him.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

It occurs to me that we've never really spoken. Five years I've owned this land, Javier, and I don't think we've said more than a few words to one another.

Javier shifts uncomfortably.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

I was raised in Italy, you know this, yes? That I'm Italian? Aha, yes, you know. But do you know that I'm only half-Italian? This is true, Javier! My Italian father traveled to Andulucia as a young man and this is where he met my mother - did you know any of this? Did you know my mother was from the area?

JAVIER

No, Senor.

MR. SACCIONE

A royal fuck of a man, my father. Few men have ever been worse, of this I am certain, Javier. He met my young mother, swept her off her feet, then moved her away from everything she knew and everyone she loved. He was possessive and controlling and abusive. And he was rich, which makes a royal fuck of a man like that particularly dangerous-- are you sure I can't offer you a drink? Wine, tequila, anything you want?

JAVIER

(tentative)

Cervesa?

MR. SACCIONE

Yes, of course! Cervesa!

Mr. Saccione hops to his feet, continues his story from the next room:

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

(yelling back)

So there's my young mother - a full blooded Spanish Andulucian cut off from her family, living in the Italian countryside - doesn't speak a word of Italian by the way-- it's a little warm, I'm sorry.

He's returned, hands Javier the beer. He sits back down.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

My father decides he wants an "Italian" wife. An "Italian" family. So he disallows Spanish in his home. He cuts off contact with her family. Mama has nothing to care about. No one to love. And so... she gets pregnant. With me. As I get older, we make a pact: she will teach me Spanish, she will teach me about that half of my heritage - but my father must never know. And over those years - whenever my father travels for work - she secretly arranges for packages to be shipped from her homeland. Spanish foods and wines and treats - we would eat them so fast our stomach would swell, Javier! Always making sure we never left a trace that my father might discover. Our favorite treat was always the Spanish olive oil. Can you imagine, Javier!? There we are in the Italian countryside - home to the richest olive oil in the world - pouring Spanish olive oil down our throats like you and I now drink this cervesa. What a pair Mama and I were. What a pair indeed.

Mr. Saccione sips his beer.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

She died, my mother. When I was just sixteen. As soon as she died, that royal fuck of a man cut me off. I lived in squalor through my teens and twenties. He saw my mother in me, Javier. And in my mother he saw only a dirty Spaniard who had ruined his life.

A beat. Slowly, Mr. Saccione smiles.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

Luckily for me: my father wasn't just a bigot, he was also a narcissist. He never thought he would die, even as he got older, even as he got sicker. And so... he never made a will.

(then)

The moment that royal fuck of a man left this earth, I became a wildly wealthy man, Javier. And the first thing I did was buy this land back in Andulucia, where I now grow hundreds of acres of the olive oil that Mama and I once hoarded. And while business keeps me away most of the time, this land is the only thing that matters to me, Javier. This land is my story, and it is my mama's story. It is everything to me.

This hangs there. Mr. Saccione finishes off his beer.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)

And so, Javier: that is why the olives mean so much to me. And now I must ask you: why do they mean so much to you?

JAVIER

I do not follow.

MR. SACCIONE

The other men use nets and rakes, you pick by hand. You can only pick half as many--

JAVIER

(defensive)

I work twice as long.

MR. SACCIONE

No, I am aware. This is not criticism, Javier. It is simply a question. Why do you work harder than the other men?

JAVIER

Because it's the right way--

MR. SACCIONE
 (exploding)
Jesus, Javier, come on!

He quickly calms himself a little.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)
*I tell you my story. I tell you the
 story of my fuck of a father and my
 poor abused mother... and when I
 ask you for the same all I get is
 "because it's the right way?"*
 (then, jovial again)
*Come now, Javier! Drink your
 cervesa! Tell me your story!*

Javier thinks, puts down his beer.

JAVIER
*I am a simple man. I do not have a
 story. I did not have a fuck of a
 father. My father was funny and
 whistled why he worked, and I like
 having a job where I can whistle
 while I work, too. The rakes
 bruise the olives so I pick them by
 hand. It's the right way. That is
 all.*

Mr. Saccione goes quiet.

MR. SACCIONE
Do you have a family?

JAVIER
*I have a woman. I hope to make her
 my wife.*

MR. SACCIONE
Will you have children?

JAVIER
I believe so, yes. One day.

MR. SACCIONE
*The men love you. I hear you
 telling them stories, making them
 laugh.*

JAVIER
I have a big mouth.

MR. SACCIONE
But with me, you are reserved.

JAVIER
You are my boss.

MR. SACCIONE
I wish to be your friend.

Javier shakes his head.

JAVIER
No. I would disappoint you as your friend.

MR. SACCIONE
I disagree--

JAVIER
I have given my answer.

A beat.

MR. SACCIONE
The other men admire me, and they barely know me. But you - you hear my story and it does not affect you. It does not make you like me.
(beat)
It's okay, you can be honest.

A beat, then:

JAVIER
No. It does not.

MR. SACCIONE
May I ask why--

JAVIER
I would not have taken his money.

A simple answer, from a simple man.

But it says everything.

Loaded silence.

Mr. Saccione nods, stands. He pours himself a tequila.

MR. SACCIONE
Would you like to live here and oversee the men, Javier? As Senorito? You and your future wife and future children could live on the property.

JAVIER

For free?

MR. SACCIONE

Yes, of course there would be a raise--

JAVIER

No. My salary is fair. The free rent would be helpful enough.

A beat.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

I have one condition.

MR. SACCIONE

(smiling)

You have a condition for getting a raise?

JAVIER

I will take care of your land. I will help it thrive and I will treat it as my own. But my whistling is for me, and my big mouth is for the men. You will not ask of that from me ever again.

(then)

In turn, I will be the one man here to never ask anything of you.

As Mr. Saccione considers this...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

At exactly this moment, a mere 4000 miles away, Abby Dempsey (then Abby Leshner) had just finished the first draft of her college thesis...

CUT TO:

INT. WILL'S COLLEGE BEDROOM - DAY

Will sits on his bed. Abby stands in front of him, reading him her paper.

It's surreal to see them again.

ABBY

(reading)

...

(MORE)

ABBY (CONT'D)
 but life itself proves to be the
 most unreliable of narrators -
 forever taking us on a journey
 where it is impossible to predict
 what might happen next.

(breaking from reading)
 Okay, this next part might be too
 flowery---

WILL
 Read, Woman!

ABBY
 I just worry that it's not even
 literary criticism anymo--

WILL
 READ!!!

Abby breathes deep, continues:

ABBY
 Life itself tricks us, it misleads
 us, it paints one man a hero when
 he may well be a villain.

BACK ON: MR. SACCIONE.

ABBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Hero or villain?

BACK ON: JAVIER.

ABBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Villain or hero?

WIDEN, as the two men sip their cervesas in silence.

ABBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Or maybe neither. Maybe life is
 playing the role of unreliable
 trickster, yet again. Maybe those
 it paints as the heroes and
 villains of our stories are
 actually just day players in a much
 bigger movie.

BACK TO ABBY AND WILL.

ABBY (CONT'D)
 Maybe they are simply extras,
 filling the frame, just so the real
 heroes can have bodies crossing in
 the background.

Abby finishes reading, looks sheepishly up at Will.

A long beat of silence, then:

WILL

Holy shit, you're so much smarter
than me.

ABBY

I really am, aren't I?

Will grabs her as she GIGGLES and they start messing around.

As we watch these two ill-fated college kids begin to make the kind of jubilant love only ill-fated college age kids can make...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Abby's thesis was a total disaster. Her favorite and most trusted professor argued - as she feared he might - that she had strayed from literary criticism and had veered into an unwieldy cross of creative writing and seventeenth century French philosophy. He said Abby had essentially regurgitated the philosopher Descartes who in his Third and Fifth Meditations discarded perception as unreliable - which, Abby's favorite and most trusted professor argued, was all Abby was really saying herself.

(then)

Then Abby's favorite and most trusted professor tried to fuck her... which, one might argue, proved Abby's thesis after all.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEVILLE (CITY SQUARE) - LATER

Javier skips through the town square, WHISTLING as always. He holds a rose.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A continent away, Javier Gonzales was worried about none of this. Javier Gonzales didn't philosophize and he never wondered what life had in store for him.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Javier Gonzales knew where he was
going. He'd known all along.

Javier stops in front of a SMALL THEATRE.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

A full-on traditional Flamenco show is in motion.

All eyes in the crowd are on a STUNNING WOMAN (20s), in full Flamenco gear, gracefully and powerfully commanding the stage.

Yes, all eyes are on her... except for Javier's.

He is the one person (in the entire room) looking in the complete opposite direction at...

A WAITRESS (who we recognize as Rodrigo's future mother, ISABEL).

She looks tired. Her dress is prematurely old and worn, like her. She looks up.

She locks eyes with Javier.

He beams and holds up his rose.

She beams back.

Sometimes it's that simple.

EXT. THEATRE - LATER

Javier sits outside by a fountain, holding his rose, waiting.

Isabel EXITS the theatre, looks around for him.

For a moment, Javier just watches her eyes search. This is clearly one of his favorite hobbies, watching Isabel search for him and catching her at the exact moment when she spots him.

Which happens right... now.

She beams. He beams back.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Isabel Diaz had been taught from
 birth to expect a very average
 life.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SMALL HOME - DAY (20 YEARS EARLIER)

We see a composed lineup of SIX YOUNG GIRLS.

The camera pans the line, left to right, starting with three
 GORGEOUS GIRLS:

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 She was one of six sisters, and was
 openly considered to be the fourth
 prettiest.

We stop panning four girls down the line, on ISABEL.

Here she's 7, and ordinary. We push in on her blank little
 face.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 By the same debilitating rating
 system, Isabel was considered the
 third smartest, and fourth funniest
 of the sisters. She'd been born
 average, something hammered home by
 even her favorite relative: her
 abuela.

REVEAL: Abuela (70) in Isabel's face.

ABUELA
*You are not special like some of
 your sisters, but you're not
 useless like the others. You are
 in the middle. Maybe you can be a
 waitress or a teacher one day. Try
 not to get too fat and maybe you
 can even meet a man and have
 someone to share meals with for the
 rest of your life.*

Little Isabel nods.

BACK TO:

EXT. THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

Isabel, smiling, approaches Javier.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Isabel's very average life had played out in the very average fashion that everyone had forecasted for her.

(then)

Until Javier came along.

She arrives at Javier. He hands her the rose.

JAVIER

You were amazing tonight.

ISABEL

Amazing, you say? I was amazing serving tapas and having my ass grabbed by drunks?

JAVIER

The best I've ever seen.

She LAUGHS.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Javier had worked hard to undo Isabel's programming. Slowly, he believed, she was starting to see that she was special enough to deserve a special life, even if it was to be a simple one.

JAVIER

I want to show you something.

EXT. OLIVE GROVE - LATER

We push (high speed) through olive trees until we land on...

A group of shelters and sheds known, collectively, as a CORTIJO.

These are the structures on a farm (*finca*) which house laborers, livestock, mills, etc.

The largest building is a two-story structure, the residence for a SENORITO (Javier's new position).

He now stands in front of this charming two-story home, showing it off to Isabel:

ISABEL

(stunned)

You will live here? All of this is yours?

JAVIER

No, Bonita. Ours. I would like it to be ours.

She looks at him, surprised.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

I can make a life for us now. I will not be a rich man, but I will be a good one. I have devoted myself to you since the moment I first saw you, but now I would like to make it official. Isabel--

ISABEL

Yes.

Javier stops.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

I answer yes. Yes to everything.

Javier smiles, grabs her.

CUE: a CANTE JONDO SONG. Cante Jondo translates as "deep song" - a weighty style of Andulucian Flamenco. It's basically the Flamenco blues.

There is a staccato vocal driving the song that feels like euphoric celebration one moment, desperate sadness the next.

It feels like life.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

Javier and Isabel dance.

As they do, the camera circles them - leaving one of them, picking up the other, over and over again.

As the camera circles... **years pass.**

Facial hair changes for Javier each time we return to him. Hairstyles for Isabel each time we return to her.

Eventually, Isabel becomes pregnant.

They keep dancing, her belly growing larger and larger.

Eventually, there's a baby held between them (little Rodrigo).

As we continue to circle, and they continue to dance, Rodrigo grows to four years old (the age we first met him at).

Throughout this (from outside the large bay window behind them), we sometimes catch MR. SACCIONE, watching them dance.

Usually he looks on with a smile, happy for the sweet young lovers.

But occasionally, there's a glint of something different in his eye. Is it jealousy? Is he coveting Isabel? Their love? Their new son?

It's probably nothing.

But if it's nothing, why does the Flamenco music always sound a little more ominous when the camera finds him?

CUT TO:

INT. JAVIER & ISABEL'S HOME - MORNING

Isabel makes coffee on a small wood-burning stove.

She looks towards the small kitchen table where:

Mr. Saccione plays with little Rodrigo (4). He's brought Rodrigo a beautiful GLOBE.

MR. SACCIONE

... and over there, Javier, that is America.

JAVIER

New York?

MR. SACCIONE

Yes, New York, you remember this!?

(to Isabel)

What a child this is! He remembers my story of traveling to New York from weeks ago, and now connects it to the proper country!

Isabel smiles, delivers the coffee.

ISABEL

He remembers everything you teach him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Isabel could no longer remember when Mr. Saccione first started coming over to visit Rodrigo.

ON MR. SACCIONE and RODRIGO, bonding. Isabel watches.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She only knew that the visits had become more consistent. Usually in the middle of the day, *always* when Javier was in the fields.

MR. SACCIONE

In English, Rodrigo, Nueva York is "New York," can you say this? New York?

JAVIER

New York.

MR. SACCIONE

What a child! In perfect imitation of the accent no less! I just love this child!

Isabel flinches, slightly uncomfortable with that sentiment coming from him.

Mr. Saccione notices, goes quiet.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Isabel liked Mr. Saccione. She liked the things he exposed Rodrigo to - a breadth of knowledge and experience that she and Javier could never access. So while she had never hidden Mr. Saccione's visits from her husband, it was fair to say she'd undersold their frequency and intensity.

Mr. Saccione stands, approaches Isabel.

MR. SACCIONE

I apologize. I overstay my welcome--

ISABEL

No--

MR. SACCIONE

Yes, I do. I have many great things in my life, Mrs. Gonzales, but I fear my strange upbringing has left me with such scars... I have been unable to find the greatest of things. It is not fair for me to try and fill that void here.

He's close to Isabel. It's a bit intimate, quiet.

ISABEL

Don't be silly. We enjoy having you. Rodrigo loves you.

MR. SACCIONE

This is kind of you to say. He is truly such a special boy. Oh the things I might teach him one day! English and literature and--

JAVIER (O.S.)

Hello, Mr. Saccione.

Isabel and Mr. Saccione whirl. Javier stands in the doorway.

MR. SACCIONE

Ah, Javier, good, I came to talk to you about the extension to the mill and brought a gift for your son--

JAVIER

Thank you, but my son has enough toys.

Javier takes the globe away from Rodrigo.

RODRIGO

(crying)

No!

ISABEL

Javier.

Javier shoots her a look, silencing her, and hands Mr. Saccione back the globe.

JAVIER

It is too generous, Jefe. Now come, let me fill you in on the status of the mill.

(pointedly)

(MORE)

JAVIER (CONT'D)

And from here forth, when you need me, you can just send word. I will come to you and save you the trip.

MR. SACCIONE

(getting it)

Of course.

Mr. Saccione tips his cap toward Isabel and Rodrigo.

RODRIGO

(through tears)

I want to go to New York with him!

As Javier escorts Mr. Saccione out of his home, he looks back at his wife.

She looks equal parts furious (at Javier) and ashamed (of herself).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Javier Gonzales was a simple man, but not a stupid one. And that day, he began doing something he'd never done before: planning a family vacation. To a place that - he'd just learned - his son desperately wanted to visit with someone else.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

In FLASHES, we watch the Gonzales family enjoy their New York City vacation:

- They walk the streets of Manhattan. Rambunctious Rodrigo points out everything, enamored with the scope of the city.
- The family sleeps (all in one bed) in a cramped youth hostel. They are surrounded by backpackers and vagrants. But they sleep contentedly, happy as can be. A true family.
- They take in the Statue of Liberty.
- They buy crappy "I love NYC" T-shirts.
- They sit in the back of a bus, wearing their new T-shirts (we've seen this already).
- Javier chases rambunctious Rodrigo down the aisle of the bus (we've seen this, too).

- Javier (bloody) carries Rodrigo away from the front of the bus, post accident.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A pregnant woman eviscerated by a bus. A grown man weeping, desperately. Bystanders screaming. It was only about twenty seconds of footage but it would replay on a loop in little Rodrigo Gonzales's brain for years to come.

CUT TO:

INT. RODRIGO'S BEDROOM (SPAIN) - NIGHT

Little Rodrigo tosses and turns in bed.

He SCREAMS, waking himself. He has wet the bed.

CUT TO:

INT. RODRIGO'S BEDROOM - LATER

Isabel tries to calm her sweaty child, a cold compress on his head.

Javier watches from the doorway. He shifts, unsure what to do.

Everything that makes Javier Gonzales great elsewhere, makes him ill equipped here.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was textbook early childhood trauma... and it was happening to a family without any textbooks.

INT. JAVIER & ISABEL'S HOME - DAY

Rodrigo (now 5) throws a tantrum as Isabel tries to get him to eat.

Javier ENTERS, closing the door behind him. The door slamming makes Rodrigo jump.

Javier and Isabel share a look.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Javier and Isabel fight. Angrily.

The stress of their unwell child is taking a toll.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Rodrigo (now 6) gets in a fight on the playground with another LITTLE BOY.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Javier and Isabel fight again. In a heated moment, Javier punches the wall next to Isabel's head.

He recoils at himself.

She runs off. He grabs a BOTTLE and starts drinking.

INT. RODRIGO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rodrigo, in bed, SCREAMS again... startling himself awake.

He has wet the bed, per usual.

INT. JAVIER & ISABEL 'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Isabel and Javier lie in bed. They hear Rodrigo's SCREAM from the next room and Isabel STANDS to go to him.

Clearly this has become routine.

She stops at the bedroom door.

ISABEL

He is not getting better, Javier.

JAVIER

I know.

This hangs there.

ISABEL

He doesn't talk about it. I try but... he can't. Or he won't.

JAVIER

It was just one moment. How can one moment just...

(MORE)

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 (then, convincing himself)
*He was so little. Soon he'll
 forget. Yes, he will get better,
 Bonita. I know this.*

But Javier's eyes betray him.

ISABEL
We need to get him help.

JAVIER
We took him to all the doctors--

ISABEL
*He needs specialists. In Madrid.
 The doctors the rich people would
 go to.*

JAVIER
We are not rich people.

Isabel looks at Javier. He suddenly gets what she's asking.

ISABEL
*He is our son, Javier. He is our
 little boy and he is in pain.*

Javier looks at his beautiful wife. She's pleading with her eyes. He nods.

JAVIER
Okay.

ISABEL
If you want, I will ask hi--

JAVIER
(sharply)
No.
(then, loving)
No, Bonita. I must.

INT. MR. SACCIONE'S FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Mr. Saccione sits at his desk.

JAVIER (O.S.)
Excuse me, Sir?

Mr. Saccione looks up in surprise.

As Javier begins to speak, uncomfortable...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The things we do for our children
are often the worst things we do to
ourselves.

INT. MEDICAL FACILITY - DAY

Rodrigo works in a room with a THERAPIST. He draws pictures,
plays with toys, etc.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE VIEWING WINDOW: Mr. Saccione,
Isabel, and Javier watch.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Money cannot buy happiness. Good
health, however, is sometimes very
much for sale. And Mr. Saccione
spared no expense when it came to
helping little Rodrigo Gonzales.

CUT TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - LATER

The Therapist talks to Mr. Saccione and Isabel.

Javier is there, of course, but his body language indicates
that he's become a mere support figure.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The diagnosis was, as expected,
textbook: clinical early childhood
trauma at an age when Rodrigo's
still developing brain had been
particularly at risk.

The Therapist continues talking. Mr. Saccione asks the bulk
of the questions. Javier blinks, trying to understand.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It would take time, but it was
treatable. In therapist speak,
Rodrigo would need to learn to
create a coherent narrative about
what happened that day. Being able
to tell the story of the event
would help him master his feelings.
And one day there might be a
breakthrough, a moment when Rodrigo
could fully accept what had
happened to him and begin to move
forward.

Mr. Saccione takes notes. Javier watches, completely out of his depth.

A spectator in his own son's life.

INT. JAVIER & ISABEL'S HOME - MORNING

Mr. Saccione gives Rodrigo a BIRD as a gift (red ribbon on the cage).

Isabel and Javier watch.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Months passed. Mr. Saccione's visits were no longer restricted, his gifts no longer withheld. Javier knew he'd opened the floodgates... he just hadn't realized how much water he was letting in.

Javier leaves the room. No one notices.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Rodrigo (now 7) draws a picture of a the SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT. Front and center is a woman (Abby) on the ground with a huge, pregnant belly.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Rodrigo started improving.

INT. RODRIGO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rodrigo (almost 8) sleeps through the night.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The steps forward were small, but notable.

INT. JAVIER & ISABEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Isabel lies in bed, alone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The therapy was working.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Javier sits at the table, drinking alone again.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Or some might argue, time was
simply healing the wound.

INT. MR. SACCIONE'S FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rodrigo (now 9) sits at Mr. Saccione's desk, writing a letter
(in English) under Mr. Saccione's watchful eye:

RODRIGO (O.S.)
*Dear Dylan. My name is Rodrigo
Gonzales, but I like to be called
Rod. I am from Spain. My uncle
presented me--*

MR. SACCIONE
(correcting)
Gave me.

RODRIGO (O.S.)
*--gave me your address to write you
a letter.*

CUT TO:

INT. IRWIN DEMPSEY'S BROWNSTONE (NEW YORK) - DAY

Irwin (Dylan's whiskey drinking grandfather, remember him?)
walks in the front door of his New York brownstone.

He is holding THE LETTER amidst other mail.

Rodrigo's voice covers the following:

RODRIGO (V.O.)
*I was there the day you were born.
I was on the bus.*

INT. IRWIN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Irwin and Linda (Dylan's grandmother) read the letter at the
kitchen table.

RODRIGO (V.O.)
*I wonder about you every day.
 Actually, I wonder about you every
 minute. I hope you are okay and
 that you are happy.*

INT. DYLAN DEMPSEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Linda reads the letter to Dylan (age six).

RODRIGO (V.O.)
*I was sad for a long time but my
 uncle got me a bird which helps.
 If you are sad maybe you can get a
 bird. Please write me back? I
 really hope very much that you are
 okay. Love, Rod.*

CUT TO:

INT. DYLAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Now Dylan writes back the letter we saw her writing when we first met her at six years old (after Will's suicide).

We hear her little voice through the following:

DYLAN (O.S.)
*Dear Rod. I got your letter and it
 was very nice.*

EXT. OLIVE GROVE - DAY

Mr. Saccione runs through the olive grove like a giddy madman.

He's holding Dylan's LETTER in his hand.

DYLAN (V.O.)
*You spell really good my Nana says,
 and you seem like a very nice boy
 she says too.*

Men (working in the field) watch Mr. Saccione run, confused.

Javier is amongst them.

INT. JAVIER & ISABEL'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Saccione bursts into the house. Isabel and Rodrigo turn. He holds up the letter, excitedly.

DYLAN (V.O.)
*I think you are lucky that you have
 a bird. I have a dog. He is my
 best friend.*

Mr. Saccione hands Rodrigo the letter. Rodrigo slowly opens it, reads.

DYLAN (V.O.)
*Do you like pizza? I mainly like
 pizza and dogs. But dogs more.
 From, Dylan Dempsey.
 (then)
 P.S. - I'm okay. Thank you for
 asking.*

Rodrigo looks up from the letter, dazed. Tears well in his eyes.

RODRIGO
 (realizing)
She's okay.

And in that moment, we can see that Rodrigo is going to be okay, too.

He walks over to his mother, repeats:

RODRIGO (CONT'D)
She's okay.

Isabel nods. Rodrigo hugs his mother and he starts crying. This makes his mother cry, too.

Mr. Saccione watches, moved.

Rodrigo turns to Mr. Saccione and motions for him to join them.

Mr. Saccione hesitates, then does.

As they group hug, Mr. Saccione and Isabel share a charged look.

OUTSIDE THE BAY WINDOW:

Javier watches his family from the spot where Mr. Saccione once stood.

Literally on the outside, looking in.

INT. MR. SACCIONE'S FARMHOUSE - DAYS LATER

Mr. Saccione sits at his desk, writing.

*JAVIER (O.S.)
Do you love her?*

Mr. Saccione stops writing. He doesn't even turn around.

*MR. SACCIONE
Yes.*

*JAVIER
And Rodrig--*

*MR. SACCIONE
Yes.*

Mr. Saccione finally turns to face his accuser.

*MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)
I had pure intentions. You may not
believe me, but...
(then)
Loneliness creates weakness,
Javier. I am not proud.*

*JAVIER
But your father certainly would be.
You've turned out to be your
father's son after all, Sir.*

For Mr. Saccione, this cuts deeply.

He stands, approaches Javier. Mr. Saccione looks him dead in the eye, determined.

*MR. SACCIONE
I give you my word: I will stay
away from them. Your son is
healing, he doesn't need me
anymore. They are your family,
Javier. Not mine.*

He walks back to his desk and sits. But then:

*JAVIER (O.S.)
No.*

Mr. Saccione looks up, as confused as we are.

CUT TO:

INT. JAVIER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Javier sits at the kitchen table, sipping from a bottle.

Isabel enters the room, in a nightgown.

ISABEL

Why have you not come to bed?

She notices a SUITCASE next to Javier.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

What is this?

JAVIER

This is goodbye, Bonita.

Isabel looks confused.

ISABEL

Where are you going?

Javier stands, approaches her.

JAVIER

*I see the way you look at him. And
he at you.*

Isabel raises a brow.

ISABEL

*Javier, you are drunk and you are
jealous--*

JAVIER

I see what he has done for our son--

ISABEL

He helped him get better--

JAVIER

--things I could not do--

ISABEL

You did nothing, Javier!

This hangs there.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
*No? You disagree? Were you
 looking for answers at the bottom
 of those bottles?*

Javier stands.

JAVIER
*I've taken a job up North. I will
 send you all the money. Though I
 suspect soon, you will not need it--*

SLAP!

Isabel slaps him across the face.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 Bonit--

SLAP!

Again.

ISABEL
*So you just gift me to him? After
 all we've been through together...
 like a birthday present, you gift
 me!?*

JAVIER
 You deserve mor--

ISABEL
*Do not tell me what I deserve,
 Javier! I know what I deserve!
 Even as a little girl I knew! Even
 when my Abuela - my favorite Abuela
 - told me I was not special, that I
 was in the middle...*

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ROOM - DAY

Abuela counsels little Isabel (7) - we've seen this before:

ABUELA
*...try not to get too fat and maybe
 you can even meet a man and have
 someone to share meals with for the
 rest of your life.*

Little Isabel nods blankly.

Abuela turns away.

Little Isabel gives her the finger.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Isabel serves tables.

All around her, MEN watch the stunning FLAMENCO DANCER on stage.

*ISABEL (V.O.)
And when you think you saved me,
Javier?*

Isabel spots YOUNG JAVIER watching the show across the room. He's LAUGHING, and DANCING. He's appealing.

*ISABEL (V.O.)
When you think you found me, and
plucked me from my miserable life,
and made me whole?*

LATER:

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Javier laughs with FRIENDS.

Into his line of vision steps Isabel.

She bends over to pick up a napkin, and looks at him, coquettish.

*ISABEL (V.O.)
I found you, Javier. I chose you!*

BACK TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Isabel continues:

*ISABEL
I chose you because I knew I
deserved someone special. Someone
kind, and funny... someone who
laughs with his eyes.*

JAVIER

*So look me in those eyes you love
so much, Isabel! Look me in those
eyes and tell me that you would
have a better life with me than
with him.*

Isabel steps right up to Javier, looks him dead in the eye.

ISABEL

*I would have a better life with you
than with him.*

A beat.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Now get the fuck out of my house.

And as both of them register the unofficial end of their love story...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

*Life - that unreliable, mischievous
little bitch - never stops twisting
our plots.*

(then)

The inseparable, separate.

(then)

Unbreakable love, breaks.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Javier kisses a sleeping Rodrigo goodbye.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

*More heroes exit our plays, without
so much as a curtain call.*

INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Isabel cries to Mr. Saccione.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

*And supporting players suddenly
take over the leads.*

Isabel stops crying. She stands.

ISABEL

Enough. For my son: enough.

She wipes away her tears.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

(strong)

That boy is all I have. And his glass has been half empty for far too long. I do not care what he becomes, just that he finds his way. That he finds his worth.

(then)

You will help him find that with me.

MR. SACCIONE

Of cours--

ISABEL

(firm)

Say it. Say you will help him find his way.

Mr. Saccione looks up. He looks Isabel in the eye.

MR. SACCIONE

I will help him find his way.

Isabel nods, softens. She speaks gently to Mr. Saccione:

ISABEL

I will never love you as I love him.

It's unclear who Isabel is talking about: Javier or Rodrigo.

But Mr. Saccione just nods. He doesn't care.

MR. SACCIONE

I understand.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nine-year-old Rodrigo wakes up. Puts on his sneakers.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

If we've learned anything by now, it's not to get too attached to new heroes. They tend to disappoint. But damn if little Rodrigo Gonzales didn't look like the real deal.

Rodrigo finishes tying his laces. He looks up at camera and...

The little guy winks right at us like he's George fucking Clooney.

EXT. OLIVE GROVE (SEVILLE, SPAIN)

Rodrigo runs through the olive groves, a child at play.

As he runs through the trees, we continually pan down to his shoes, and back up to his face.

Back and forth.

As we do... the shoes change, and Rodrigo ages.

And as Rodrigo evolves during this one single shot/run, his life plays out in voice-over:

RODRIGO (V.O.)
Where's Papa?

ISABEL (V.O.)
Papa went away for a bit, Hijo.

Rodrigo keeps running.

RODRIGO (V.O.)
(later)
Where's Papa?

ISABEL (V.O.)
Papa is gone, Hijo.

Rodrigo runs faster. His hair grows longer. He's ten. Then eleven.

MR. SACCIONE (V.O.)
Now read it again, in English.

RODRIGO (V.O.)
(reading)
YOU don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; but that ain't no matter.

Rodrigo starts filling out, running harder. He becomes a pre-teen... twelve, then thirteen.

TEACHER (V.O.)
Rodrigo is my finest student, Ms. Gonzales.

TEACHER #2 (V.O.)
The most popular boy in my class.

COACH (V.O.)
A tremendous athlete your son. A
gifted runner.

Running faster and faster now. He turns into a muscular teenager... fourteen, fifteen, sixteen...

GIRL (V.O.)
Are you a virgin?

RODRIGO (O.S.)
I am.

GIRL (O.S.)
Would you like not to be?

Now he's a fully-grown eighteen year old. Movie star handsome.

He's no longer running through the olive groves for "play." Now he's running for sport. Driven.

TEACHER (O.S.)
We think he can get an academic
scholarship.

COACH (O.S.)
We think he can get an athletic
scholarship.

MR. SACCIONE (O.S.)
Where do you want to go to school,
Rodrigo?

RODRIGO (O.S.)
America.

Rodrigo is running top speed now. Muscles churning.

His face spreads into a huge smile as he spots...

THE FARMHOUSE.

He's running home.

And he has news.

INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He bursts in the door.

RODRIGO
Mama!? Vincent!?

MR. SACCIONE (O.S.)
We're upstairs.

Rodrigo throws down his bag. He bolts through the house.

RODRIGO
(calling out)
I got in! NYU! Early Admission!

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 New York had once captivated
 Rodrigo's imagination, then haunted
 it, and eventually captivated it
 again.

Rodrigo takes the stairs, two at a time...

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 So it came as no surprise that he
 would be subconsciously drawn back
 to the city one day.
 (then)
 But life tends not to forecast its
 biggest surprises.

Rodrigo enters a bedroom to find...

ISABEL and MR. SACCIONE (both aged nine years) sitting on a
 bed. They've been crying.

Rodrigo stops in his tracks.

They look up at him.

ISABEL
I'm sick, Hijo.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Rodrigo, Isabel, and Mr. Saccione eat at the kitchen table in
 silence.

Finally, Rodrigo puts down his fork.

RODRIGO
I will delay University. I will
stay home until you are better.

ISABEL
Absolutely not.

RODRIGO
(gentle)
It is not your decision, Mama.

MR. SACCIONE
Isabel, with all that is happening--

ISABEL
I said no.

RODRIGO
(again, firmly)
And I said that it is not your decision.

Isabel looks up, surprised at her son's tone.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)
You have given me everything, Mama.
You have given me your life. I can give you this.

ISABEL
Hij--

RODRIGO
(firm)
I can give you this.

He leans in. Takes their hands.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)
We will fix this, Mama. We will fix this the way you fixed me.
Look at me. Both of you, look at me.
(then)
We will fix you.

Mr. Saccione nods. He squeezes Rodrigo's hand.

As they sit there like this, our Narrator repeats an earlier sentiment:

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Money cannot buy happiness. But good health, is sometimes very much for sale.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Isabel receives chemo.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But not always.

She looks awful. Mr. Saccione looks on, confused.

This isn't how it is supposed to go.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Rodrigo tends to his mother, wetting her lips with water.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Rodrigo (now sporting a mustache) and Mr. Saccione play chess in silence.

Waiting for something to change.

EXT. OLIVE GROVE - LATER

Rodrigo (now with a young man's sparse beard) picks olives the same way his father once did... by hand, into a bucket.

All around him, men use the more typical (and faster) techniques involving rakes and nets.

IN THE DISTANCE

Mr. Saccione watches Rodrigo. He smiles sadly. For many reasons.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Rodrigo reads by the fire. Mr. Saccione steps into the room.

MR. SACCIONE
Your mother asks for you.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Rodrigo stops at the door, looks in at his mother.

What we see is shocking:

Isabel has been ravaged by cancer. Bald. Almost unrecognizable.

She motions for Rodrigo to come closer. He does. She speaks quietly.

ISABEL

It has been two years, Hijo. I do not get better. Vincent spends enough so I do not get worse. I just... survive. And you just wait. It is enough.

RODRIGO

Mama--

ISABEL

(lovingly)

It is enough, Hijo.

(then)

Listen to me, come here.

She pulls him toward her. She starts talking, very softly.

We do not translate this. We do not need to. She is telling him to leave her.

And as the mother releases the son from his duty... the son cries.

He cries because what she says is powerful and because he knows she is right.

It is time for Rodrigo Gonzales to start his life.

INT. NYU CLASSROOM - DAY

Rodrigo sits in a class, taking notes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Rodrigo entered NYU a twenty-one-year-old freshman. And as he'd been doing for most of the previous decade, he thrived.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A cross-country track meet.

Rodrigo bursts from the woods, running in a full sprint. He flies past camera.

It takes ten seconds for anyone else to even emerge from the woods.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He lettered in two sports.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Rodrigo gives a presentation.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
His marks were at the very top of his class.

INT. DORM ROOM - EVENING

Rodrigo fools around with an attractive girl.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He even embarked on a relationship with a nineteen-year-old Jewish American Princess from Long Island named Shari Dickstein. She made him laugh. Usually not intentionally.

Shari breaks from their kiss.

SHARI
Oh my gawd, I totally forgot to tell you, I was at Whole Foods, and Rina Rothman was there - such a pig - anyway--

As Shari continues (and Rodrigo suppresses a laugh):

NARRATOR (V.O.)
She wasn't his great love, but she was company, and great love wasn't his priority at the moment.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Rodrigo sits in economy class, sleeping.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He saved every dollar, coveted every vacation. Rodrigo Gonzales had an internal compass, and it always pointed in the same direction.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Rodrigo sits by the bedside of his mother, entertaining her.
Mr. Saccione sits on the other side of the bed.

RODRIGO
*She's from a place called Long
Island. Her name is Shari
Dickstein...*

He shows a picture from his phone.

ISABEL
*But what is she like, Hijo? Tell
me.*

Rodrigo thinks for a beat, then:

RODRIGO
She's loud.

Isabel and Mr. Saccione explode LAUGHING.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Like so many of the biggest years
of our lives, it flew by. But in
truth, that year was just a setup -
a preamble to the biggest day of
Rodrigo Gonzales' life: March 31st,
2032.

CHYRON: MARCH 31st, 2032.

INT. DORM ROOM - MORNING

Rodrigo lies next to Shari. He's awake.

She's asleep, snoring. He watches her, thinking.

He stands, starts dressing.

Shari stirs.

SHARI
Where you going?

RODRIGO
Just going for a quick run.

A beat.

SHARI
Bonita.

RODRIGO

Huh?

SHARI

When we started dating you called me "Bonita." You would have said: "Just going for a quick run, *Bonita.*"

(then)

It always made me feel like Kelly Ripa.

A loaded beat, then:

RODRIGO

Shari--

SHARI

I'm pregnant.

Fuck. Rodrigo's world spins like a top.

Shari sits up, starts dressing.

SHARI (CONT'D)

I know. Lots to talk about, obvi. Hey - will you take me for brunch? There's this place I want to try, it's Vietnamese, I'm assuming that's like Dim Sum or something but I'm dying to try it.

Rodrigo just stands there, speechless.

SHARI (CONT'D)

We can talk at brunch. At the Vietnamese place. I really want to try it.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - LATER

Rodrigo and Shari walk down the city street.

Shari talks a mile a minute. Rodrigo just stares, lost.

SHARI

So I just started feeling shitty a few weeks ago. I thought I was just getting a really bad period, ever since I got off the pill I've been getting bananas periods, you know?

(MORE)

SHARI (CONT'D)

But it wasn't stopping so I went to my gyno and he was like "are you sexually active" and I told him about you and then he did the test thing and blammo. I hadn't even thought to try an at-home test, for whatever reason my brain didn't go there what-so-fucking-ever.

Beat. Rodrigo just stares. She continues, nonplussed.

SHARI (CONT'D)

Anyways, I know we haven't been together very long and clearly this is as what-the-fuck as you get. I don't really know what your deal is with religious stuff, but I think I should probably just get an abortion.

She turns back to him.

SHARI (CONT'D)

Are you like super against that? Abortion?

Shari has stopped out in the street, looking back at Rodrigo.

Rodrigo, still speechless, looks to her right.

A TAXI is speeding down the side street right at her.

SHARI (CONT'D)

I know abortion's a big thing for Christians - you're Christian I assu--

At the last second, Rodrigo grabs her arm and pulls her back to safety.

The CABBIE blares on his horn. Shari barely notices.

SHARI (CONT'D)

Anyhow, we don't have to decide all this now, but I would like to make the call early before the thing has a head and stuff.

Rodrigo stares.

CUT TO:

INT. VIETNAMESE RESTAURANT - LATER

Shari eats noodles sloppily.

SHARI

So the way I see it, we have like
three options...

She SLURPS. Rodrigo's brain explodes with each slurp.

SHARI (CONT'D)

Option One: we have it. I mean, a
mixed race baby with our skin
complexions would be amazeballs.
My family has batshit money, we
could get nannies and stuff, I
don't know, probably a bad idea.

SLURP. Brain explosion.

SHARI (CONT'D)

Option Two: abort. But again, I'd
like to make that call sooner than
later before the thing has a head
and stuff.

SLURP. Brain explosion.

SHARI (CONT'D)

Or Option Three: we can just agree
this is all an insane APRIL FOOL'S
JOKE!!!!

A long beat of silence.

RODRIGO

(confused)

What?

SHARI

April Fool's, Bitch!

RODRIGO

What is that?

SHARI

Seriously? You don't know April
Fool's?

Rodrigo stares blankly at her.

SHARI (CONT'D)

On the first day of April you play practical jokes on people and yell April Fool's!

RODRIGO

But it's March 31st.

SHARI

I thought you'd see it coming if I did it on April Fool's Day.

RODRIGO

I didn't even know what April Fool's Day was.

SHARI

Well I didn't know that.

Rodrigo processes.

RODRIGO

So there's no baby?

SHARI

Dude, no! Oh c'mon, that was funny! You have to admit, that was funny.

Rodrigo puts down his napkin. Breathes deeply.

RODRIGO

Shari--

SHARI

Oh fuck, you're going to break up with me aren't you?

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He was.

As we watch Rodrigo do the deed...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Obviously nothing thus far had indicated that March 31st would be the most important day of Rodrigo's life. The entire day - as so many of life's days are - had been a misdirect. A fake out. Literally...

Shari is hysterical.

SHARI
IT WAS JUST AN APRIL FOOL'S JOKE!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE (SEVILLE) - DAY

We take in the familiar farmhouse.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
No, sometimes the most important
days of our lives begin, and we're
not even there to see it.

INT. FARMHOUSE (SEVILLE) - DAY

A nurse cares for Isabel. Mr. Saccione helps the nurse. The
room is filled with a quiet desperation.

Isabel Gonzales is dying.

MR. SACCIONE
I must call Rodrigo.

Isabel shakes her head.

MR. SACCIONE (CONT'D)
(pleading)
Isabel.

ISABEL
(weakly)
Let him be young for one more day.
He will come after.

MR. SACCIONE
Isabel--

ISABEL
No. Not like this.

Isabel touches Mr. Saccione's arm. He looks at her for a
long, silent beat.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
You are a good man, Vincent.

MR. SACCIONE
No, I--

ISABEL

You are.
 (then, again)
 You are.

He's emotional now.

They sit there like that for quite a while, just looking at one another, saying a silent goodbye.

A silent thank you.

And then:

VOICE (O.S.)
Hello, Isabel.

They look up.

Standing at the doorway is Javier, Rodrigo's father. He has aged 13 years since we last saw him.

He looks to Mr. Saccione, nods.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 All of life's surprises are not bad ones.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - 25 YEARS EARLIER

Mr. Saccione WRITES A LETTER at his desk.

Note: This is how we first met him, all those years ago.

NARRATOR
 Mr. Saccione was a letter writer. He always had been. He believed in the power of the written word, the force of actually sitting down and writing to someone by hand.

(then)
 The bulk of Mr. Saccione's letters were to one man:

We see the letter heading: *Dear Papa.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 Almost every day - his own private therapy - he would write to his deceased father. He would release his anger about his abusive upbringing.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 About what it had done to him, and
 to his mother. And then...

Mr. Saccione finishes the letter. Signs it. And throws it
 in the fire.

CUT TO:

INT. ISABEL & JAVIER'S HOME - 13 YEARS EARLIER

We've seen this scene before: Mr. Saccione giving little
 Rodrigo (9) a bird:

NARRATOR
 But as Rodrigo started healing, so
 did Mr. Saccione.

INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The desk (and pen) sits, unused.

NARRATOR
 The letter writing slowed. Then
 stopped. Until...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - 12 YEARS EARLIER

We've seen this before, too.

Javier and Mr. Saccione confront one another that fateful
 night (right before Javier makes his choice to leave)

MR. SACCIONE
 (to Javier)
*I give you my word: I will stay
 away from them. Your son is
 healing, he doesn't need me
 anymore. They are your family,
 Javier. Not mine.*

He walks back to his desk and sits. But then:

JAVIER
 No.

Mr. Saccione looks up, as confused as we are.

The rest of this scene we haven't seen yet...

JAVIER (CONT'D)

They are better off with you. I cannot help my son the way you can. And I have already lost my wife, even though she will deny it. I will not return. I will not confuse things.

(then)

I ask only one favor.

CUT TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - OVER THEN NEXT TEN YEARS

Mr. Saccione writes letters. Tons of letters. He writes about Rodrigo, about Isabel, about his olives.

NARRATOR

And with that, Mr. Saccione's letters found a new recipient.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Javier, taking a break from work, reads under a tree.

NARRATOR

A man whose only request was that he be kept up to date on those he had abandoned, but still cherished.

ON THE LETTER

The bottom of it reads: *"She is dying, Javier. Come home."*

BACK TO:

INT. ISABEL'S ROOM - PRESENT DAY

Isabel looks at Javier, stunned to see him.

Her eyes well with tears. Javier's do, too.

He steps to the other side of her bed (opposite Mr. Saccione).

He sits. His voice breaks as he says...

JAVIER

Hello, Bonita.

Isabel is crying now. She reaches out slowly. Takes Javier's hand.

She reaches out her other hand. Takes Mr. Saccione's.

As she says goodbye to the two men who loved her we...

CUT TO:

INT. DORM ROOM - LATER

Rodrigo, fresh from his "break up," walks back into his room.

As he does, his cell phone RINGS.

The caller reads: "*Tio*" (Uncle).

Rodrigo answers. We can tell, immediately, that he is getting the bad news.

His mother has died.

CUE SONG: "*To Make You Feel My Love*" by BOB DYLAN.

The song takes over as we watch Rodrigo receive the news.

OVER THE NEXT FEW HOURS we watch him process.

He cries. He paces. He sits. He thinks. He grieves.

All to "*To Make You Feel My Love.*"

NARRATOR

When critics reviewed Abby Dempsey's favorite album - Bob Dylan's 1997 release, *Time out of Mind* - the song "*To Make You Feel My Love*" was the source of much criticism. Every track on the album brimmed with unrelenting melancholy and sadness. But there, smack in the middle of it all, sat an unabashedly populist hit song. A love song. A song that in years to come would be covered by Garth Brooks, of all people. Critics argued that putting an on-the-nose love song in the middle of an album about despair and tragedy, was Dylan's only misstep.

(then)

Others argued that it was his point.

Rodrigo stands. He puts on running shoes.

He needs to move.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - CONTINUOUS

Rodrigo runs through the night, flying past pedestrians on the New York City sidewalks.

He runs and runs and runs. He's trying to outrun his loss, his grief.

NARRATOR

Rodrigo Gonzales had not returned to the corner of 32nd and 3rd until that night. He'd started a new chapter in New York, and hadn't felt a need to re-open his saddest one.

(then)

But that night he *wanted* to be sad.

Rodrigo stops in his tracks.

He is looking at something.

Or someone.

RODRIGO

Are you okay?

VOICE (O.S.)

Does it matter?

REVEAL: Dylan Dempsey, 18 years old.

Dylan is standing exactly where we left her - at the street corner where her mother died.

She turns toward Rodrigo.

Just like her long lost maternal grandmother before her, Dylan has taken a bite of her peanut butter and jelly sandwich at the exact moment she's met a boy.

She holds up her hand, silently asking for a moment, trying to get down her sandwich as she quickly wipes off her mascara streaked face.

Rodrigo cocks his head, takes her in.

NARRATOR

My father, Rodrigo Gonzales,
officially met my mother, Dylan
Dempsey that day - the most
important day of his life.

CUT TO:

INT. BALLROOM - PRESENT DAY

AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN (30s) stands on stage. This is our
narrator.

WOMAN

They would not spend a single night
apart for the next 42 years.

This is high-end BOOK READING. And from signage, we see that
the woman is reading from her own novel:

**LIFE, ITSELF (an unreliable memoir) by Elena Gonzales-
Dempsey.**

ELENA

(trying again)

They would go on to have four
children, seven grandchildren. A
love story for the ages.

She looks out...

IN THE CROWD

At Dylan and Rodrigo. We recognize them instantly, even
though they're now deep in their 60s.

BACK TO ELENA

She continues reading.

ELENA (CONT'D)

My grandmother, Abby Dempsey,
argued in her failed college thesis
that life itself is our most
unreliable narrator. She argued
that one never knows where their
story is going, nor who the heroes
of it are going to be.

(beat, then)

(MORE)

ELENA (CONT'D)

And while it's true that life has often made it difficult to pinpoint the heroes of my family's story, my parents have always made it incredibly easy for me.

She looks back out at them.

ELENA (CONT'D)

My parents found the populist love song in the middle of our family's often very melancholy album.

Out in the crowd: Rodrigo smiles, takes Dylan's hand.

Elena smiles back at them, continues reading:

ELENA (CONT'D)

I wonder sometimes what my grandmother Abby would have made of that, philosophically. That her own child - the girl she named after her favorite gravel voiced musician - found a love story with no twists, no plot turns, and no surprises. Just consistency. Oh, what I'd have given to have met her. To have told her that. To have told her that we were all okay.

(then)

And what I'd have given to have met my grandmother Isabel as well. Unlike Abby, she was neither a writer nor a philosopher. But sometimes I wonder if she didn't understand exactly what Bob Dylan was going for.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE BEDROOM - DECADES AGO

We're back with Isabel, sick in bed, saying goodbye to twenty-one-year-old Rodrigo before sending him off to NYU.

This is the scene we didn't translate before.

RODRIGO

Mama--

ISABEL

(lovingly)

It is enough, Hijo.

(then)

Listen to me, come here.

She pulls him toward her. She starts talking, very softly.

ELENA (V.O.)

Spanish does not often translate perfectly, but what Isabel said that day to her son - my father - it required no translation.

Note: this is the same speech we saw earlier in Spanish without translation, but now it is actually delivered by Isabel in English.

ISABEL

You have had many ups and downs in your life, Hijo. Too many. And you will have more. This is life. This is what it does. Life brings you to your knees. It brings you lower than you think you can go. But if you stand back up and move forward - if you go just a little further - you will always find love.

(then)

I found love in you, Hijo. And my life - my story - it will continue after I am gone. You, Hijo, are my story. You are your father's story. You are your uncle's.

Rodrigo is crying now.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

My body fails me, Hijo. But you ARE me. So you go now. Give me a beautiful life. And when life takes us to our knees, you stand us back up. You get up, and go further, and find us the love.

BACK TO:

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Elena continues:

ELENA

I am not sure whose story I have been telling. I am not sure it is mine, or if it some character's who we've not met yet. I'm not sure of anything. All I know, is that at any moment, life will surprise me. It will bring me to my knees. And when it does. When I think I cannot recover, I will remind myself...

She looks out, finds her parents.

ELENA (CONT'D)

I will remind myself that I am my father. That I am my father's father. And I am my mother, and my mother's mother. I am their story, and they are mine. And while it may be easy to wallow in the tragedies that shape our lives... while it's natural to focus on those unspeakable moments that bring us to our knees... we must remind ourselves that if we get up, if we just take the story a little bit further...

She is crying now. She looks directly at her parents.

ELENA (CONT'D)

If we go far enough, there is love.

Her parents are crying now, too.

ELENA (CONT'D)

(again)

If we go far enough, there's love.

Elena closes her book.

Rodrigo and Dylan beam at their youngest daughter, the latest hero in our ever-evolving story.

And with that, our story does what our story never really does...

It ends.

FADE TO BLACK.