

# **Sidney Hall**

By:

Shawn Christensen and Jason Dolan

SIXTH DRAFT  
Feb. 9, 2016  
*(A Stranger in our Midst)*

Jonathan Schwartz  
Super Crispy Films  
310.453.4545  
CrispyFilms@Gmail.com

BLACKNESS

SIDNEY (V.O.)

There was a brilliant way about Velouria. She had a virginal quality that contrasted her ice cold outer shell. Looking back, I realize I was the only one to notice.

1 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY -- DAY

1

SLOW MOTION: The back of a beautiful CHEERLEADER, as she walks towards the hallway exit.

SIDNEY (V.O.)

Yeah, she was a bitch for sure. Her breasts, her cheekbones, her legs; she saw it all in the mirror every morning, and was well aware of the power held therein. No one could touch her or intimidate her. She rarely looked anyone in the eye. I once saw Brad Dorsey, captain of the soccer team, crying by his locker. She dumped him after one date and took his balls with her. From that day forward he was pronounced the 'class faggot', and never played sports again. This was a prime example of the witchery she cast.

As she exits the school, the outside sunlight swallows her up into a bright white void.

2 INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- DAY

2

SIDNEY HALL, 18, giving an oral presentation.

SIDNEY 18

(reading)

But I wasn't attracted to her pale beauty. I was more turned on by the little girl within, wound tight. And it was this thought that I masturbated to every afternoon, and not her thighs or flat stomach. When I climaxed, I imagined her breaking down and begging me never to leave her, because I was the only one who truly understood the Velouria within. And when I was finished, I looked at the small puddle of cum I had generated, and wondered, why did I just waste this on a table top?

He looks up from his essay. The reaction from his CLASSMATES is a mixture of confusion and disgust.

BRETT NEWPORT, an 18 year old jock wearing a Letter-man jacket, sits in the back laughing to himself.

A girl in the front row, completely repulsed, asks Sidney:

GIRL  
Um... how old were you when this story took place?

SIDNEY 18  
You mean, how young was I?

GIRL  
Right, whatever.

SIDNEY 18  
Sixth grade.

Their teacher, MRS. SENNETT, slightly dumbfounded, comes to her senses as she rises from her desk.

MRS. SENNETT  
Sidney, I asked the class to write an essay on the meaning of life.

SIDNEY 18  
I thought this was appropriate for that topic.

MRS. SENNETT  
Well, it's not.

3

**INT. LARGE EMPTY CLASSROOM -- DAY**

3

DUANE JONES, an African American English teacher and editor of the school newspaper, sits at his desk, eating his lunch.

DUANE  
Sidney, Sidney, Sidney. She's going to fail you.

Sidney, sitting on a window sill, eats a candy bar throughout the talk.

SIDNEY 18  
I just hate her, you know?

DUANE  
I don't like her much either, but it doesn't mean she's a bad teacher. She had a book published.

SIDNEY 18  
A romance novel.

DUANE

Still, you're going to have to find a way to get a passing grade from her. You better rewrite those essays.

SIDNEY 18

It's either 20th century writers or Shakespeare with her. No in-betweens. What about Twain? What about Hawthorne? Enough of this Steinbeck shit already.

DUANE

Sidney, I went to a meeting earlier today and I fought for you. But she thinks you've targeted her, and let's face it, she's right.

SIDNEY 18

What if I wrote a novel? If she can do it, I can do it.

DUANE

No one's questioning your ability. It's your subject matter that's getting you into trouble. You know what they'd do to me if I printed half the stories you've submitted for the school paper?

Sidney, slouching in his chair, seems defeated. Duane realizes he's being rough on him, and leans back in his seat, arms behind his head.

DUANE (CONT'D)

All right, let's say you *did* write a novel... what would it be about?

Sidney thinks about it.

SIDNEY 24 (V.O.)

It's about a suicide victim from a small town...

4

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / TOKYO -- MORNING**

4

Sidney, **now 24**, wearing glasses, is having a discussion with a female Japanese INTERVIEWER.

The studio is deathly quiet, save the occasional flash photos being shot from a tiny audience.

JAPANESE INTERVIEWER

And, why do you think your story has captivated so many people?

SIDNEY 24

Because I wrote a story from the point of view of the person who killed himself.

(MORE)

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)

And some say that comes off as an uncomfortable perspective, but it doesn't stop them from reading it.

JAPANESE INTERVIEWER

You've drawn some criticism for people taking your book's anti-establishment message too seriously. The London Times accuses you of forming "an unhealthy zeitgeist of misguided youth" -- that your book glorifies suicide.

Television POV: Sidney's interview on a nearby monitor in the studio.

SIDNEY 24

No, it glorifies life - which is why people take it so seriously. It's life-affirming and that's why millions of people respond to it.

JAPANESE INTERVIEWER

To that point, how do you follow up a book like "Suburban Tragedy"?

SIDNEY 24

I can't think about it that way. I just keep writing.

JAPANESE INTERVIEWER

And when do you think you'll release your next book?

SIDNEY 24

(beat)  
Soon.

5

**INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / HALLWAY -- MORNING**

5

Sidney 24's personal assistant, GINA KAEL, 30, quickly walks him through the backstage area with notebook in hand. They pass several STUDIO TECHNICIANS and WORKERS.

GINA

You have an eleven o'clock at Sushidai with Porter House, a one o'clock live interview with CCTV, and your flight leaves at five.

SIDNEY 24

And?

GINA

And... Doctor Baum says you haven't contacted the therapist he recommended, and that he will reschedule your MRI... again.

Sidney signs an autograph for a FAN, while walking.



LEWIS  
(turns around)  
Yeah.

SIDNEY 18  
How ya doing?

LEWIS  
Good. Just studying for this test  
on Economics next period.

SIDNEY 18  
I was driving by your house last  
night and I saw an ambulance in the  
driveway. Is everything cool?

LEWIS  
Oh, you saw that?

SIDNEY 18  
Yeah, what's going on?

LEWIS  
Nothing. My father got sick. I  
mean, he had a heart attack and the  
ambulance came to pick him up.

SIDNEY 18  
Is he all right?

LEWIS  
Um, he passed away this morning.

SIDNEY 18  
WHAT?

A few STUDENTS look over in response to Sidney's outburst.  
He quiets down.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, man. That's terrible.  
But what are you doing here, man?  
Fuck Economics. Doesn't your mom  
need you or something?

LEWIS  
She said I shouldn't worry and I  
should go to school.

SIDNEY 18  
I'm really sorry, Lewis...

LEWIS  
That's okay. Sidney, could you do  
me a favor? Could you please not  
tell anybody about this?

SIDNEY 18  
Okay. No problem.

LEWIS  
I just don't want anyone to know...  
I don't want them making fun of me.

SIDNEY 18  
Who would make fun of that?

LEWIS  
They would. They all would...  
Please don't tell anyone?

SIDNEY 18  
Sure, yeah of course. Whatever you  
want.

Lewis returns to his studies... Sidney feels bad for him.

9 **INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT**

9

Sidney, 24, enters his apartment, carrying his luggage from his Japan trip. The hardwood floors of his large, spacious living room CREAK with every step he takes. Furniture is scarce. Several cardboard boxes line the left side of the room.

He finds a note on the mantle above the fireplace next to his various literary awards.

As he reads the note, we can tell it's not good news. He crumples it up and tosses it in the trash.

10 **EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY / POLICE SCENE -- NIGHT**

10

Police lights flashing everywhere. A handful of ONLOOKERS are outnumbered by POLICE OFFICERS and FIREMEN. Some smoke is seeping out of the third floor window.

Amidst the commotion, a MAN, 50's, forboding but reserved, appears in the foreground. We'll call him THE SEARCHER.

Wearing a hat and trench coat, he calmly takes one last drag from his cigarette, before dropping it to the ground.

An old rag lays next to where the cigarette lands. He leans down to take a closer look... unraveling the rag. Inside it, is a hand-carved wooden troll. He examines the odd little troll for a beat, before packing it away in his jacket.

11 **INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY / READING ROOM -- LATER**

11

The Searcher enters the crime scene -- a smoke-filled room with more firemen and police officers. A male REFERENCE LIBRARIAN is explaining what happened to a couple of POLICE OFFICERS.

LIBRARIAN  
The guy's a lunatic. He came in  
here ranting about something.  
(MORE)

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)  
Then, next thing I know, the place  
is on fire.

OFFICER 1  
And how did the fire start?

The librarian moves about the room to illustrate.

LIBRARIAN  
I told you, he came in here with a  
pile of books. He stood on that  
chair, unzipped his fly, and  
pretended to urinate on them. But  
I guess it was lighter fluid.  
Before we had time to react, he lit  
them on fire.

The Searcher listens to the Librarian's statement, as he  
scans his fingers over some dusty books.

OFFICER 1  
What did he look like?

LIBRARIAN  
I don't know, he was filthy. He  
had a beard and sunglasses and an  
old gray sweater. He was clearly  
mentally slow.

A female assistant, JEANINE, who is helping clean up the  
books in the background, interjects.

JEANINE  
He's been in here before.

LIBRARIAN  
It's not the same guy.

JEANINE  
It is the same guy. I never forget  
a face, and besides, he had a very  
distinct smell-

LIBRARIAN  
Well, we can't turn away people  
because they *smell*, Jeanine.

OFFICER 2  
All right, one at a time...

Suddenly, the whole room starts TALKING over each other and  
ARGUING.

During the commotion, the Searcher calmly grabs a nearby fire  
extinguisher, and aims it at a book jacket with a small  
flame. He SPRAYS the book jacket, causing a startling SOUND.

The whole room stops.

The Searcher approaches the Officers, flashes a badge, and  
WHISPERS something to them...

The Librarian watches, as the Police Officers step aside, and the Searcher approaches him.

SEARCHER  
What is your name?

LIBRARIAN  
(agitated)  
Bauer... David Bauer.

SEARCHER  
(motioning)  
Mr. Bauer... please, sit down.

Mr. Bauer relents, and they both sit at an unoccupied table.

After a beat, the Searcher removes a photo from his inside breast pocket. It's a mug-shot of a man who fits Mr. Bauer's description -- a bearded man with scraggly hair.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)  
Is this the man you're referring to?

MR. BAUER  
Yes! That's him. That's the one.

SEARCHER  
You're absolutely sure?

MR. BAUER  
Positive.

The Searcher nods -- this is his guy.

SEARCHER  
This man owns a dog -- an old hound dog about *this* big.  
(illustrating height)  
Did you see happen to see him?

MR. BAUER  
It's against Library policy to allow pets in the building. So, no.

SEARCHER  
(half to himself)  
I wonder then... what he did with the dog?

MR. BAUER  
How should I know? Maybe he left it at home like a normal human being.

SEARCHER  
If he had a home, that would be a wonderful option.

MR. BAUER  
Well you'll excuse me, if I don't  
have sympathy for people who burn  
books.

SEARCHER  
Neither do I. But your opinion on  
his mental capacity is superfluous.

MR. BAUER  
Superfluous? Look, I'm not an  
idiot, alright? I know what I saw.

SEARCHER  
No, I'm sure you're a very  
intelligent person, Mr. Bauer.  
However... I know something you  
don't.

MR. BAUER  
Yeah, what's that?

The Searcher reaches down, and picks up a burnt book jacket  
off the ash-ridden floor.

SEARCHER  
I know why he burned the books...

MR. BAUER  
Why?

The Searcher slides the burnt image of a younger Sidney Hall  
next to the mug-shot photo...

SEARCHER  
Because he wrote them. Good day,  
Mr. Bauer.

The Searcher rises as Mr. Bauer stares in awe at the two  
photos side by side... the two images of Sidney couldn't look  
any more different.

12      **INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY AISLE -- DAY**

12

Another library -- another time.

Sidney, 18, is stocking books from his cart.

Brett Newport appears around the corner and approaches him.

SIDNEY 18  
Can I help you with something?

BRETT  
Yeah, I need to talk to you.

SIDNEY 18  
If you're looking for a book on  
'How to Please Your Woman', the  
card catalog is right over there.

Brett grabs Sidney by the ear.

BRETT  
Fuck you, Hall. We need to talk  
now, you understand?

13

**INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY LOUNGE -- MOMENTS LATER**

13

Sidney and Brett sit in silence across from each other. These two have rarely exchanged words. Then...

BRETT  
I liked your essay the other day.

SIDNEY 18  
You did? Why?

BRETT  
'Cause it was honest. All the rest  
were bullshit. But yours was  
honest.

SIDNEY 18  
Thank you. I lied.

Brett nods.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
Listen, Brett. We wouldn't be  
caught dead talking to each other  
in the halls. If I went to one of  
your football games, I wouldn't  
know which one you were. Yet, here  
we are for the very first time, and  
you want to talk to me about my  
homework?

BRETT  
That's not true. We hung out once  
in the fifth grade. I was running  
away from home, and you lent me an  
extra bicycle.

SIDNEY 18  
(impressed)  
You... remember that?

BRETT  
Yeah I remember that, dipshit. We  
rode up to that hill over by the  
winery. That's actually what I'm  
here to talk to you about.

SIDNEY 18  
That was a long time ago. I'm...  
surprised you're bringing it up.

BRETT  
Do you remember what we did when we  
got there?

SIDNEY 18  
I remember you had a paper bag wrapped in rope, kind of bulky. We buried it on Farmer's Peak, and uh, you wouldn't tell me what was in it.

BRETT  
Right. Well, I need it back.

SIDNEY 18  
What do you want me to do about it?

BRETT  
I don't know that area, man. Never been back since. All the hills look the same to me. It'd take me years to figure out where we hid it.

SIDNEY 18  
And you need *my* help?

BRETT  
Yeah. Yeah Hall, I need your help, all right? There, I said it.

SIDNEY 18  
I don't know, Brett. Why should I help you? You're a disaster. The day after we hung out, you pretended like nothing happened. I went up to say hello, and you laughed in my face. You were an asshole then, you're an asshole now. Tell me one good reason why I should care?

Brett, who would normally turn this into some sort of confrontation, just stares at Sidney for a moment.

BRETT  
You're right. Forget it.

And with that, Brett gets up to leave.

As Brett exits the library, Sidney sits alone and curious, surrounded by a sea of library books...

DISSOLVE TO:

14 INT. PORTER HOUSE LOBBY -- DAY

14

Sidney, 24, surrounded by a sea of books again... This time, he is at a Publishing House, lost in his thoughts.

Across the lobby, a MAN gets up from his chair, and reaches for his jacket. It's a *letter-man* jacket that reads: "*Newport*"

Sidney is transfixed -- BLINKS -- the jacket turns out to just be a normal blazer, as the MAN puts it back on.

SECRETARY

Sidney?

Sidney looks up.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Sorry for the wait. Harold's ready for you.

15

**INT. HAROLD KREMER'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

15

HAROLD KREMER, 50's, good-looking eccentric, sits at his desk across from Sidney in his large office. He shoves Thai food in his mouth, while speaking.

Sidney slumps into a chair, observing the disgusting fashion in which Harold eats his food.

HAROLD

Sidney, you don't look good. You look like a whipped puppy dog. You look like you've recently been pissed on and dropped in a septic tank.

SIDNEY 24

Really? I look like all those things?

HAROLD

You've been number one on the New York Times Best-Seller list for eight months, and still no smile. What ails you? What can I do?

SIDNEY 24

I'm having panic attacks.

HAROLD

That's good. All of my clients have panic attacks.

SIDNEY 24

No offense, but none of your other clients have my kind of pressures. I'm one of the best writers you represent.

HAROLD

(smiling)  
You're the best writer, period. Still, if you weren't having panic attacks I'd be very worried.

Harold reaches in his drawer and pulls out a folder. As he comes around the desk, Sidney notices he's only wearing boxers.

SIDNEY 24  
No, it's different. I'm seeing things. Things that aren't there.

Harold sits next to Sidney, in his boxers.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
Like right now, it looks like you're not wearing pants.

HAROLD  
I'm *not* wearing pants.

A small silence.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
Sidney, do you know what I have in this folder?

SIDNEY 24  
No.

HAROLD  
It starts with the letter "p".

SIDNEY 24  
Protest letters?

HAROLD  
No. Not protest letters. Christ, man, you've got to get optimistic. Forget about Montana. They don't read books in Montana.

Harold hands over the folder.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
Everything that we've worked for, that we've talked about, has come down to *this*.

Sidney opens up the folder. He expresses mild shock.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
(handing over the folder)  
The Pulitzer... Prize. You're a *finalist*. We'll find out the winner later this month.

Harold's cell phone rings -- he stands up to take the call as Sidney reviews the file.

SIDNEY 24  
Pulitzer..?

HAROLD  
(on phone)  
Listen, whatever you want, it's not as important as what I'm doing right now. Love ya, buh-bye.

He hangs up -- looks at Sidney.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
Can I get a fucking smile now, or what?

SIDNEY 24  
Francis Bishop. Should I be worried about him?

HAROLD  
Forget the other guys. You're a shoe in.

Sidney browses the other finalists, as Harold's Secretary brings in a pair of pressed pants.

SIDNEY 24  
(reading)  
"Prologue to Paris"... That's a good title.

HAROLD  
(putting on his pants)  
I'm having a party tonight. There's gonna be women, alcohol and a lotta snow. You going?

SIDNEY 24  
Nope. I don't do parties, Harold, you know that.

HAROLD  
You're gonna be the guest of honor.

SIDNEY 24  
Even worse.

16 **EXT. SIDNEY 18'S NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY**

16

Sidney, 18, walks home from school. His neighborhood is set in a secluded wooded area. Pine trees, weeping willows and a few elms sporadically fill the yards of the houses. Most of the lawns are neglected and there are some trailers at the top of the street.

He approaches his house -- a modest house, slightly unkept.

As he passes the garbage cans in the driveway, something catches his eye. He looks inside one of the pails and sees numerous comic books that have been tossed on top of the heap. He removes them and brings them inside.

17 **INT. SIDNEY 18'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS**

17

Sidney's MOTHER, only 37, is in the living room, sitting on the couch, chain smoking menthols, while she gazes at a boat catalogue.

Sidney's FATHER, 38, watches a baseball game.

Sidney comes through the sliding doors and stares at his mother as she takes a swig from an imported beer.

SIDNEY 18  
Please don't throw out my comic books.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
Haven't you outgrown those things?

Sidney looks at his father who watches the television in a zombie-like daze.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Any ideas on who you're taking to the prom?

SIDNEY 18  
I'm not going to the prom.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
Why not?

SIDNEY 18  
Because it's a segregated ritual wherein the unpopular people are ostracized by the beautiful people.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
I don't agree with that. Your father and I have great memories of prom night.

SIDNEY 18  
Yeah... me.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
Why can't you just be normal?

Sidney retreats upstairs, as his mother returns to her catalogue.

Sidney's father sits in his chair, watching the game, as if no one else is in the room with him....

18

**INT. ASSISTED LIVING HOME / SMALL ROOM -- MORNING**

18

Different chair, different time... Sidney's FATHER, older and grayer, eats his oatmeal while watching a 50's sitcom on the television. He is unresponsive to the LAUGH TRACK.

The Searcher gets led in by a HEAD NURSE. He sits next to Sidney's father, and removes his hat, politely.

SEARCHER  
Mr. Hall?  
(beat)  
Mr. *Gerald* Hall?

(Gerald) continues eating, glued to the television.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)  
You like this show?

Still no response.

The Searcher looks around the tiny room: Framed pictures of Sidney as a child, photos of Gerald as a high school football player, and some scattered press articles on Sidney.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)  
I'd like to ask you a couple questions about your son, if you wouldn't mind. I'm looking for him.

No response.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)  
Your son... Sidney?

GERALD  
Sidney...

SEARCHER  
Yes, that's right. Sidney, you remember?

GERALD  
(slowly raises his hand)  
Just before I lost the house... took that picture there.

Gerald motions to a picture on the wall: Sidney, age 24, standing outside the house during a snowfall.

Gerald cracks a proud smile.

GERALD (CONT'D)  
Never came in out of the snow. Just stood there, looking at the house. Very busy man, my son.  
(beat)  
They write about him sometimes, you know. He was on the cover of a magazine once...

SEARCHER  
That he was. Many magazines. Is that the last time you saw him? Around the time he disappeared?

The HEAD NURSE returns.

HEAD NURSE  
I'm going to have ask you to leave sir. No questions about Sidney Hall. This was explained to you.

The Searcher notices a small pile of comic books on Gerald's bedside table. They're dated recently.

SEARCHER  
Who gives you those comic books,  
Mr. Hall?

HEAD NURSE  
Sir, no more questions. Mr. Hall  
is in ill health. Leave him alone.

SECURITY comes in, as the Searcher rises.

SEARCHER  
Sidney gave you those, didn't he?

No response, as the Security Guard steps in front of the Searcher.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)  
How often does he visit you, Mr.  
Hall? Once a month? Once a year?

Gerald returns to his oatmeal and television, as the Searcher gets shown the door.

19

**INT. CAR -- MOMENTS LATER**

19

The Searcher enters his car and stares at the home he was just kicked out of. After a beat, he starts unbuttoning his shirt, revealing a wiretap attached to his chest, and a small recorder.

He takes off the wire and presses 'play' on the recorder:

SEARCHER (O.S.)  
How often does he visit you, Mr.  
Hall? Once a month? Once a year?

Some SCUFFLING sounds.

SEARCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Alright, I'm leaving, I'm leaving.

More SCUFFLING. After a beat:

HEAD NURSE (O.S.)  
(whispers)  
A man comes around from time to  
time. He brings Gerald some comic  
books and they watch television  
together... in silence.

SEARCHER (O.S.)  
What was his name? Are you sure it  
wasn't Sidney Hall?

HEAD NURSE (O.S.)  
That's all I can tell you.

A door SHUTS.

The Searcher presses 'stop' -- jots down some notes.

20

**EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- DUSK**

20

Two football PLAYERS crashing into each other. A whistle BLOWS. The TEAM heads to the locker rooms, as Brett sits on the edge of the bench staring at the football.

Sidney appears and sits on the other end of the bench.

SIDNEY 18

Okay. You've got to leave Lewis Chang alone. I don't even want to see you looking at him, and that goes for Greg and Pyatt and all the other goons.

BRETT

What do you care about him for? I mean, look at him, he's asking for it.

SIDNEY 18

I don't see him asking for it.

BRETT

Fine, whatever, Hall. You better shed some serious light on the situation if I'm gonna throw away one of the few things I look forward to everyday.

SIDNEY 18

Does that mean you'll stop?

BRETT

Yeah, I'll stop. But if he ever grows enough balls to start up with me, I swear to God-

SIDNEY 18

Yeah yeah, you'll shove his dick up his ass, or whatever. He's not gonna start with you. Do we have a deal?

Sidney extends his hand. Brett shakes it.

BRETT

I'll pick you up on Saturday. You live over on Cedar, right?

SIDNEY 18

Yeah.

BRETT

Across the tracks... as my dad would say.

Brett heads towards the locker rooms. Sidney watches him walk away.

21      **EXT. SIDNEY 18'S HOUSE -- AFTERNOON**

21

Sidney 18 walks home from school -- he opens the mailbox and sifts through the mail.

A strange red envelope falls to the ground, marked "Sidney". Sidney bends over and picks it up -- it has no stamp. In cursive writing it reads: "On a Porch by Twilight". Sidney opens it and begins reading.

GIRL (V.O.)

It's late, and I'm confused. I'm confused about a boy who writes the most beautiful stories in his school newspaper. I read each one carefully and paste them in my journal when I'm done. And then I think about approaching him, but quickly realize that I'm not very good at being social, and would probably feel stupid using words that weren't half as compelling as his. I wish I could tell him that he's the most talented person I've never met... But I *have* met him, and my heart sank too low for me to bring up the words. Or maybe that was a dream. Love, Melody.

Sidney turns over the page. Nothing, that's it.

22      **INT. STAFF LUNCH ROOM -- NEXT DAY**

22

Sidney sits with Duane, who is eating his lunch and reading the note. When he finishes, he hands Sidney back the note.

DUANE

I don't think anyone named Melody goes to this school.

SIDNEY 18

Might not be her real name. Do you recognize the handwriting?

DUANE

Nope. But it's nice, very elegant. I should only be so lucky with my students.

SIDNEY 18

So what do you think? Who is she?

DUANE

Have you met anyone recently?

SIDNEY 18

No. Not really. Maybe. I don't remember. But I've got to find her.

DUANE  
Okay... I have a great idea.

SIDNEY 18  
Yeah?

DUANE  
(leans in)  
You walk up to every girl that  
crosses your path, inside and  
outside of class...

SIDNEY 18  
Right.

DUANE  
And you shout MELODY!! And see who  
reacts the most.

Long pause.

SIDNEY 18  
That's it? That's your advice?

DUANE  
Yup. Have fun.

Duane laughs as he walks away.

23

**INT. SCIENCE CLASS -- LATER THAT DAY**

23

Sidney observes his female LAB PARTNER. She, in turn, is concentrating on the Bunsen Burner heating up in front of her.

SIDNEY 18  
(whispers)  
Melody.  
(louder)  
Melody.

No response. His eyes wander around the rest of the class, half of whom are girls.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
Melody.  
(louder)  
Melody.

Nothing.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
MELODY!

The whole CLASS turns around. His lab partner finally looks up at him.

LAB PARTNER  
Are you high?

24       **EXT. TRACK -- DAY** 24

Every time a girl jogs by, Sidney calls out "Melody" to them.

25       **INT. GYM -- DAY** 25

A line of the GIRL'S SOCCER TEAM enter the gym, tired and sweaty from the game.

SIDNEY 18  
(as each one passes)  
Melody. Melody? Hey, Melody!  
*Mel-od-y...*

Finally, a RANDOM GIRL slaps him on her way by. Sidney is perplexed.

26       **INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY** 26

Sidney quietly sneaks into the Dean's empty office. He checks to make sure no one's around, while turning on the PA system, and grabbing the microphone.

SIDNEY 18  
(through microphone)  
Ummm, sorry for the interruption,  
but would Melody... please report  
to the front office. Ah, anyone  
named Melody...

27       **INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY** 27

Mrs. Sennett and the STUDENTS look up at the speaker on the wall.

SIDNEY 18  
(over the PA)  
I repeat, would Melody please  
report to the front office...

SOUNDS of the DEAN yelling at Sidney occur, just before the PA abruptly shuts off -- CLICK. Silence.

28       **EXT. HAROLD KRAMER'S COCKTAIL PARTY -- NIGHT** 28

A large ballroom decorated festively for an Industry cocktail Party. WRITERS, ACTORS, SOCIALITES and INDUSTRY are in attendance. A Jazz band PLAYS in the background.

Sidney, 24, and Gina are at the open bar. Gina is spurning the advances of a Handsome Young DOUCHE BAG.

SIDNEY 24  
How'd you convince me to be here?

GINA  
 It's what I do. And we've only  
 been here three minutes, FYI.  
 Drink up.

She provides him with wine.

A few other PEOPLE surround Sidney, talking his ear off about trivial things. He's too pre-occupied to listen. The seemingly endless chatter becomes a blur of white noise. Sidney is completely not present.

Finally, Harold wanders over to save him.

HAROLD  
 All right, get outta here, you  
 savages! Go eat some hors  
 d'oeuvres or something. Shoo!  
 Shoo!

The crowd retreats away as Harold replaces Sidney's red wine with a whiskey.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
 All the greats drink whiskey.  
 Fact.

SIDNEY 24  
 How soon can I leave?

HAROLD  
 The big "P". I need you to be  
 encouraged by it. I want you to  
 embrace it. It means a lot to a  
 lot of people. Not least of which  
 should be you. You deserve it.

SIDNEY 24  
 What about Francis Bishop?

HAROLD  
 He's a hack! Guy writes six  
 mediocre books, all of a sudden he  
 comes up with one that people  
 actually buy? It's bullshit. You  
 need to get your head straight.  
 Take a vacation, finish your second  
 novel. Get inspired.

SIDNEY 24  
 It's hard to be inspired.

HAROLD  
 You want inspiration? I'll give  
 you inspiration.  
 (shouting out)  
 Ladies and gentleman, attention  
 please!! The greatest writer of  
 our time, Mr. Sidney Hall...

Sidney hangs his head -- totally uncomfortable.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
Is a finalist for a Pulitzer  
Prize!!

Everyone APPLAUDS, HOOTS and HOLLERS, which only makes Sidney more uncomfortable. He endures the hugs and 'congrats', before the crowd eventually dissolves.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
Sidney, I understand what you're going through. I've had three divorces, and I survived them. They're like enemas; they're uncomfortable and invasive, but the next day, you feel like a new man.

Sidney sees ALEXANDRA, a beautiful young 23 year old model, across the floor. She's chatting with some friends, making eye-contact with Sidney.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
You should find yourself a muse,  
Sidney. Loosen up, you know?

Sidney nods.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
I'll round back to you in a bit.  
Don't leave.

As Sidney watches Harold mingle himself away, he suddenly sees BRETT NEWPORT in his trademark Letter-man jacket, standing among the guests, staring back at him. Sidney blinks his eyes... and Brett disappears.

Alexandra approaches Sidney -- snaps him out of it.

ALEXANDRA  
Hi... I'm Alexandra.

They shake hands.

SIDNEY 24  
Alexandra...  
(finishes his drink)  
Would you like to leave with me?

ALEXANDRA  
(scoffs)  
A little forward, aren't we? Do I look that easy to you?

SIDNEY 24  
You look like a vision. And I would very much love to 'not be here' with you... If that's okay.

Alexandra smiles -- it was a pretty good line.

ALEXANDRA  
I'll think about it.



SIDNEY 18  
Excuse me...

Startled, the girl drops her journal and dashes into her house.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
Wait!

Sidney approaches the front railing, but does not proceed up the steps. He spots the journal she dropped on the porch and reaches through the railing to take a look at it...

On the open page, is a well-drafted pen & ink drawing of Sidney's house, with him and his father sitting on his porch, just moments earlier. She's very talented.

Sidney carefully places the journal back where he found it.

32           **EXT. SIDNEY 18'S FRONT PORCH -- A MOMENT LATER**           32

Sidney returns...

SIDNEY 18  
(to himself)  
Why don't I know that girl?

SIDNEY'S FATHER  
(while reading)  
It's the split line.

SIDNEY 18  
Split line?

SIDNEY'S FATHER  
Split line for the school districts. That side of the street goes to Ketcham. This side John Jay. Changed it last year.

Sidney stares back across the street...

DISSOLVE TO:

33           **EXT. SIDNEY'S FRONT PORCH -- DUSK**           33

Same porch, years later... The house is in terrible shape -- it's abandoned, with termite damage and boarded up windows.

Sidney, **now 30**, is barely recognizable, with a thick beard and dark sunglasses. He sits on his old porch, staring at the house across the street as a warm quiet breeze whisks by. One of the plywood boards covering the window **FLAPS** against the sill.

He pulls a bottle of rum from his pocket and takes a swig, as his Hound Dog, **HOMER**, walks up the steps to sit next to him.

After a moment, Sidney takes out a small screwdriver, and kneels down to the floor of the deck. He unscrews a floorboard, and reaches under it... After a moment, he pulls out what he was looking for:

The red envelope from the mysterious girl...

34

**INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT**

34

Sidney, 18, sits in the dark with binoculars, spying out his window across the street to the GIRL'S house.

LENS POV: She is sitting at her desk in her room, observing some black and white photos. She takes out an inhaler and breathes it in two times.

Sidney scans down to her mailbox, which reads "JAMESON". He puts the binoculars down next to a pile of journals.

He picks up a phone book -- flips through it. Finds the number for "Jameson". Picks up the phone. Dials. RINGING can be heard. He picks the binoculars back up and watches. Finally:

LENS POV: The girl picks up the phone.

GIRL'S VOICE  
(on phone)  
Hello?

SIDNEY 18  
Hi. I'm looking for Melody?

LENS POV: She quickly hangs up. DIAL TONE. She looks towards Sidney out her window, and brings down the shade.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
Shit.

Sidney hears his mother and father ARGUING down the hall in their bedroom. He walks over to his door and opens it to eavesdrop.

It is hard to make out some of their dialogue, but it's apparent they are arguing about money and the mortgage. Sidney's mother SLAPS his father.

Gerald leaves the room, as his wife SLAMS the door behind him. He makes eye contact with Sidney in the hallway -- Sidney feels for him. They look at each other for a moment, before his father goes down the stairs.

35

**INT. ALEXANDRA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT**

35

A match lights an elegantly carved candle. Alexandra then blows it out and joins Sidney, 24, on the couch. Sidney is reading a hardcover book called "Prologue to Paris", by Francis Bishop.

SIDNEY 24  
This guy's good... He's really  
fucking good.

Sidney closes the book and looks at the cover. No picture of the author appears on the jacket of the book.

Sidney reaches over and grabs a flask from the end table. After taking a drink, Alexandra gently pries the flask away from him, as well as the book, and places them back on the night stand.

ALEXANDRA  
Don't you ever stop? You've been  
drinking since I met you.

SIDNEY 24  
Five hours ago?

ALEXANDRA  
No, five weeks ago, when we really  
met. And incidentally, I'm tired  
of pretending like we don't know  
each other in public places.

SIDNEY 24  
Where's your sense of adventure?

She's serious.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
You're Harold's daughter.

ALEXANDRA  
I think he can handle it. Besides,  
you're his meal ticket.

SIDNEY 24  
Maybe today. But what about  
tomorrow? What am I to anyone  
tomorrow?

ALEXANDRA  
You should try going to sleep, for  
once. And then tomorrow will  
happen, and you'll know.

SIDNEY 24  
I'm tired of sleeping.

ALEXANDRA  
Maybe you should try it for more  
than four hours.

SIDNEY 24  
All my life, I can't think of one  
positive dreaming experience. Only  
nightmares.

ALEXANDRA  
 Well that doesn't sound very healthy.  
 (reaches inside his shirt)  
 Any particular nightmare that I can help you deal with?

SIDNEY 24  
 I have this recurring one, where I'm being followed by someone I used to go to school with...

36

**INT. THE SEARCHER'S KITCHEN -- MIDNIGHT**

36

Classical MUSIC seeps from across the house.

SIDNEY 24 (V.O.)  
 And he's been watching me...

The SEARCHER sits at a table in his robe, browsing the internet, picking at a box of raisins -- he scans various headlines of Time, the New Yorker, Newsweek, etc.

They read: "Where have you gone, Sidney Hall?", "The decline of an American Aristocrat", "Sidney Hall disappears", etc.

SIDNEY 24 (V.O.)  
 Everywhere I go, he's with me. And I get claustrophobic, like he's strangling me...

The Searcher removes his bifocals for a moment to adjust his tired eyes. He picks up a copy of "Suburban Tragedy" and flips it over -- a teenage Sidney, smiling on the back cover.

He sets it down and picks up a copy of "Stay of Execution", Sidney's *second* novel. The picture of Sidney on the back is a more depressed Sidney, at age 24.

SIDNEY 24 (V.O.)  
 Like he knows all of the bad things that I've done, and he's coming to judge me. And when I wake up from the nightmare... he's still there.

The Searcher gets up and wanders over to his trench coat on the coat-rack. He reaches inside the left pocket and removes the bundled rag he found earlier.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)  
 What do you think he wants?

SIDNEY 24 (V.O.)  
 I don't know, but *he* knows. He knows *everything* about me... And that's what scares me the most. That's what scares me more than anything.

The Searcher unravels the rag, and examines the handmade troll. There are etchings on the bottom of its left foot. The inscription reads "*Johan, Baton Rouge, LA*"

37

**EXT. RUN-DOWN STORE -- AFTERNOON**

37

A sign reads "Johan's". Subtitles read "Baton Rouge, LA".

The Searcher stands in front, observing the chipped-paint exterior. He is officially in the middle of nowhere. He cautiously enters the store.

Inside, there are handmade wooden trolls everywhere -- from three-feet tall to palm-size. Each troll seems to exert a different emotion than the next. No sign of life behind the back desk, or anywhere else. WIND CHIMES seem louder than usual.

He approaches the back desk and rings the tiny bell. Soon after, he hears a flush from behind the door. The door opens and reveals JOHAN TIDEMAND, a fragile old man with a cane.

JOHAN  
Good morning.

SEARCHER  
But, it's the afternoon.

JOHAN  
You sure?

SEARCHER  
(looking at watch)  
Yes, it's a quarter past three.

JOHAN  
Damn.

SEARCHER  
Are you Johan Tidemand?

JOHAN  
That's what people say.

Johan picks up a half-carved troll, and begins sanding it.

SEARCHER  
Did you make each of these trolls yourself?

JOHAN  
They're my children.

The Searcher carefully lifts up an angry little troll.

SEARCHER  
They're fantastic.

JOHAN  
 They're for sale, if you're  
 interested. Buy 'em all, I say.  
 I'd like to retire before I hit 90.

SEARCHER  
 I would love to. But  
 unfortunately, I have another  
 agenda.

The Searcher shows the recent mug-shot of Sidney to Johan.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)  
 Do you know this man?

Johan examines the photo. A smile creeps across his face.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)  
 You *do* know him.

JOHAN  
 Of course. He was one of my  
 biggest collectors, before he went  
 missing. There was a time, a few  
 years back, when he was providing  
 me with half my income. But those  
 days are over now, poor soul.

SEARCHER  
 Have you seen him recently?

Johan becomes suspicious.

JOHAN  
 Who wants to know?

SEARCHER  
 An old friend.

JOHAN  
 Don't lie to me, son. There've  
 been others, just like you, asking  
 the same questions. And they ain't  
 his friends, either. You're  
 wasting your time.

SEARCHER  
 (curious)  
 How often do other people inquire  
 about him?

JOHAN  
 You'll never find him. That's a  
 fact.

SEARCHER  
 And why is that?

JOHAN  
 Because Sidney Hall is *lost*. He's  
 been lost for years.

(MORE)

JOHAN (CONT'D)

Now, how are you going to find someone who doesn't know where he is?

SEARCHER

That's a very good point, sir. Very good point. However, it's not quite accurate.

The Searcher slides the mug-shot closer to Johan.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)

I want you to take a good long look at this mug-shot, Mr. Tidemand, because it was taken very recently.

JOHAN

Okay... so?

SEARCHER

So, no one claims to have seen or heard from Sidney Hall in over five years. And yet... here he is, posing for the New York Police Department, just two months ago.

Johan becomes mildly interested.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)

Now, how do you suppose that's possible?

Johan shakes his head.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)

I'll tell you how...  
(smiles)  
Because he was booked under *another* name.

The Searcher flips the mug-shot over -- it reads "Henry Crowe" on the backside.

Johan reads the name -- shrugs his shoulders, "So what?"

SEARCHER (CONT'D)

Oh, but it gets better, Mr. Tidemand, it gets much better. Because you see, when they took his prints, nothing came up in their database... so they classified him as Henry Crowe. And then, an hour later... they let him go.

(beat)

Now, let's think about that for a second; Here, the NYPD had the world's most reclusive author -- a man who had been missing for over half a *decade* -- and they had him in the palm of their hands and didn't even know it! Can you believe that?

JOHAN  
Am I... supposed to be impressed?

SEARCHER  
Oh no, Mr. Tidemand. *I* am the one  
who is impressed, in this scenario.  
You can be sure of that.

The Searcher unveils a copy of Sidney's fake ID.

JOHAN  
What... do you want from me?

SEARCHER  
What I want, Mr. Tidemand, is to  
know if there are any other things  
that you *make*... besides these  
wonderful wooden trolls?

No response.

The Searcher takes out his badge, and places it on the  
counter.

Johan looks at the badge -- after a beat, he begins to smile.

JOHAN  
It's a trick.

SEARCHER  
What is?

Johan picks up a magnifying glass and holds it up to the  
Searcher's face. Every wrinkle, crow's eye and pock mark on  
the Searcher's face are magnified in all their glory...

The Searcher flinches slightly, as Johan peers through the  
looking glass with wild curiosity.

JOHAN  
You're not like the others. Not at  
all. You're smarter... and that's  
a bad thing.

The Searcher takes back his badge.

SEARCHER  
I'm not after *you*, Mr. Tidemand.  
So I'll offer you a trade. You  
tell me about the documents you've  
forged for Mr. Hall, and I won't  
report about it. You'll never hear  
from me again.

After a beat:

JOHAN  
All right. But just so we're  
clear, this conversation is being  
recorded on *both* sides of the  
table.

The Searcher nods -- touche'.

                  JOHAN (CONT'D)  
He came in a few months ago.

                  SEARCHER  
And?

                  JOHAN  
And I made him a couple ID's, a  
passport and a driver's license.

                  SEARCHER  
You've done this before?

                  JOHAN  
Yes.

                  SEARCHER  
What else?

                  JOHAN  
          (sadly)  
He didn't look good. He wasn't  
Sidney anymore... He was... He  
had his dog with him, to help him  
get around. Said he was sick.  
Said he had a couple loose ends to  
tie up.

                  SEARCHER  
Did he say where he was going?

                  JOHAN  
Nope. No way. He doesn't let on  
what he's up to. Never has.  
That's all I know.

                  SEARCHER  
You said a 'couple' ID's. Is there  
another name he uses?

                  JOHAN  
          (hedging)  
No, that was just a figure of  
speech.

                  SEARCHER  
Mr. Tidemand... is there another  
name that he goes under?

                  JOHAN  
          (begrudgingly)  
Newport... Brett Newport.

This gets the Searcher's attention. He may have hit gold.  
He takes back the mug-shot, and prepares to leave.

JOHAN (CONT'D)  
 (pleading)  
 I don't know what your intentions  
 are... but don't be hard on him.  
 He's really quite a charming guy,  
 when you get to know him.

SEARCHER  
 Good day, Mr. Tidemand.

The Searcher exits.

38           **INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- SATURDAY MORNING**           38

Sidney, 18, packs his journal in a backpack as he waits for Brett to pick him up. He hears a CAR pulling into the house across the street -- looks out the window.

SIDNEY'S POV: A VW Bug pulls into the driveway. The Mystery GIRL gets out of the car, wearing a camera around her neck. She heads towards her mailbox.

Sidney rushes out his door.

39           **EXT. SIDNEY 18'S HOUSE / DRIVEWAY -- SECONDS LATER**           39

Sidney runs out of his house. The Mystery Girl is still at her mailbox.

SIDNEY 18  
 Hello!

Startled, the girl lowers the mail and turns to escape.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
 Wait! Please. Don't walk away  
 from me again. Just give me one  
 minute. Please?

She turns and faces him. She takes out an inhaler and breathes in twice. Puts it back.

GIRL  
 No crossing the street.

SIDNEY 18  
 Okay, okay. I just wanted to... is  
 your name Melody?

She nods.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
 All right. And, have we ever met  
 before? Or was it a dream?

MELODY  
 Yes, we met.

SIDNEY 18  
When?

MELODY  
In the first grade. You gave me a  
Valentine's Day card on the wrong  
day.

Sidney tries to recall this incident.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
On the actual Valentine's Day, you  
kissed me. And I told on you. But  
I secretly liked it, I loved it  
really. I would have kissed you  
back the next day, but we moved to  
the next county.

SIDNEY 18  
And now you've moved back...

Melody shrugs 'yes'.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
Why do you keep running away from  
me?

MELODY  
I don't know, 'cause it's fun?  
Maybe I'm afraid.

SIDNEY 18  
Afraid of what?

Sidney steps into the street.

MELODY  
No crossing the street.

SIDNEY 18  
When can I cross the street?

MELODY  
(beat)  
When I'm ready.

Melody aims her camera, and SNAPS a picture of Sidney. (It is the *same picture* of Sidney from the back cover of his book, revealed in the earlier *Library scene*). And with that, Melody turns and retreats back into her house.

Sidney lies down on the ground, and stares at the cloudless sky. A car's tires SQUEAL up next to him. A door opens, then SHUTS, while the engine is still running -- FOOTSTEPS approach.

The footsteps belong to Brett, standing over Sidney. He's not wearing his letter-man jacket, for once.

BRETT  
What the fuck are you doin', Hall?



HENRY (CONT'D)  
 This is how we live, but it's also  
 how we die."

Sidney nods, uncertain of the boy's intentions. Henry smiles and walks off.

42           **INT. COLLEGE LIBRARY BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER**           42

Sidney 24 flushes the toilet and walks to the sink. A STUDENT is washing his hands in the adjacent sink.

Sidney turns on the faucet and washes his face. He sees a rusty metal red lunch box sitting on the counter.

Everything around him begins to shake, much like an earthquake. But nothing on the counter is moving. It's only affecting Sidney. He holds onto the sink until his knuckles turn white, hoping the room will stop moving.

STUDENT  
 Are you okay?

The lunch box is no longer there.

43           **INT. BRETT'S CAR -- MORNING**           43

Sidney, 18, takes out his dusty notebook, with a good idea of where they should be going.

BRETT  
 What is that, a journal?

SIDNEY 18  
 Yup.

BRETT  
 How long have you kept one of those?

SIDNEY 18  
 Since I was five.

BRETT  
 You know, I wasn't lying to you before, about the essay. I love that shit. All that stuff you rant about in the school paper makes me laugh.

SIDNEY 18  
 Yeah well, maybe someday it'll pay off.

BRETT  
 You should write about me.

SIDNEY 18  
 (scoffs)  
 Yeah, and what would that be about?

BRETT  
My father.

SIDNEY 18  
What about him?

BRETT  
You know who my father is.

SIDNEY 18  
Yeah, he's a Judge, so what?  
Doesn't mean I should write a book  
about him. Doesn't make *you* any  
more interesting either.

BRETT  
Whatever. You'll be singing a  
different tune tomorrow.

SIDNEY 18  
What happens tomorrow?

Brett turns the radio up.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
(over the music)  
What happens tomorrow?

Brett lights a cigarette.

BRETT  
(offering)  
Smoke?

SIDNEY 18  
No.

44 INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

44

Sidney, 24, smoking profusely, types furiously on his trusty old typewriter -- RIPS out the current page out and replaces it with another one. He's on a roll. Takes a swig of whiskey and continues typing.

The TV is on in the background -- Sidney's polarizing novel:

SENATOR DALE (ON TELEVISION)  
...this book essentially feeds our  
youth with a dangerously blind  
idealism, promoting disrespect for  
our elders, and ushering in a  
generation bred on entitlement.  
That it's being included in our  
school curriculums is a dangerous  
sign of the times...

Sidney never looks over -- continues typing, as he takes another SWIG and wipes his brow.

45           **INT. RAISED RANCH / HENRY CROWE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT**           45

Henry is frenziedly typing on his computer. "Suburban Tragedy" is right by his side. He takes a break from the typing and unfolds a piece of paper nearby.

It reads: Oklahoma's 26th Annual Writing Contest.

He smiles at the thought of entering, and tacks up the entry form on the wall in front of him.

Suddenly, YELLING can be heard from the Living Room. His father is drunk again. A glass bottle can be heard being shattered, and an argument is in full effect between his parents.

Henry slowly takes it in... until he starts seething.

CUT TO:

46           **INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING**           46

Sidney waking up in a cold sweat. Bad Dreams. The doorbell is RINGING.

47           **INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS**           47

Sidney opens the door to find Duane, older, drenched in rain, standing in the hallway. Duane looks drained with sadness.

                          DUANE  
May I come in?

                          SIDNEY 24  
Sure...

Duane enters the apartment and slouches down into the nearest chair with his Blackberry in his hands.

                          SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
What's going on?

                          DUANE  
You're elevator is stuck again.  
Walked up seven flights.

                          SIDNEY 24  
Duane, it's four in the morning.

                          DUANE  
Not in Oklahoma.

                          SIDNEY 24  
Well, that's good for Oklahoma, but-

Duane begins reading an article from his phone.

DUANE

(reading)

'Tonight served as a tragic setting in the town of Oklahoma City, when an aspiring writer, Henry Crowe, committed suicide in front of his parents. After a failed attempt to kill his stepfather, Marshall Blake, with a 9mm handgun, he turned the gun on himself and shot himself through the head.'

SIDNEY 24

I don't understand-

DUANE

(reading)

The only thing found on his person was a paperback copy of "Suburban Tragedy" by renowned author Sidney Hall. He owned no less than eight copies of the novel and according to friends, often quoted passages from the book. Henry Crowe is one of many in a growing allegiance of "Suburban Tragedy" followers who take the book so literally that they will attempt to mimic its message and expose the underbelly of suburban America, no matter what the cost. The book has already been banned from school libraries and teaching curriculums in Montana, and this incident will undoubtedly spiral it's resistance upwards. Possibly on a national level.

Duane gently lowers his phone, as Sidney sinks into the chair at his desk, where his typewriter rests.

SIDNEY 24

How young was he?

DUANE

It doesn't make a difference.

SIDNEY 24

How YOUNG was he?

DUANE

Twenty two.

Sidney shakes his head, deep in thought.

SIDNEY 24

I wish I never wrote it.

DUANE

Don't say that. You had to write it. It's inspired more people than you can possibly imagine.

SIDNEY 24  
To do what? Kill themselves?

DUANE  
This was an isolated incident.

SIDNEY 24  
What about Montana?

DUANE  
No one died in Montana. One thing has nothing to do with the other. Now you listen to me. I wanted you to hear this from me rather than Harold or some random reporter, because I'm your friend, and I know how you can get about these things. And whatever happens over the next few weeks, this is not your fault.

SIDNEY 24  
They'll make it my fault.

DUANE  
Maybe... for a news cycle, but you don't read the internet anyway, so just continue that. I'm going to be right here with you through it.

SIDNEY 24  
Were you with me when you told the Examiner that some of Suburban Tragedy was based on real people?

DUANE  
(beat)  
But that's not news... most people know that the book is loosely based on-

SIDNEY 24  
I asked you to lay off the hometown talk.

DUANE  
(stern)  
Well it's *my* hometown, too. Can I not talk about my upbringing? Can I not mention my whereabouts when I met the *great* Sidney Hall? I worked at a school with a name, in a town with a name. But I dare not mention them in public, in fear of getting chastised by my friend and (at times) tormentor. Names that anyone can find, by the way. Because while you're busy as a practicing Luddite, the rest of the world is on the internet, checking their facts and reading their books.

(stands up)

(MORE)

DUANE (CONT'D)

And I have never, not once, gone  
off script about you. I would  
never do that, and I don't  
appreciate the accusations.

Sidney nods slowly -- he knows he's been miserable to be  
around lately.

DUANE (CONT'D)

Now I recommend you get some sleep  
and get your head straight. It's  
going to be a long week.

Duane exits the apartment, leaving Sidney alone again.

48 **EXT. SMALL HILLS -- DAY**

48

Brett's black '78 Corvette pulls off to the side of the road.  
Sidney, 18, and Brett exit the car.

It's a beautiful Spring day, with vast fields of grass and  
small hills as far as the eyes can see. The nearest barns  
and houses are far off in the distance.

49 **EXT. FARMER'S PEAK -- MOMENTS LATER**

49

Brett and Sidney trudge up a large hill, each holding a  
shovel. The midday sun is almost blinding, just coming over  
the crest of the hill. They make their way to the summit, to  
investigate their whereabouts.

Sidney, holding his journal for reference, gestures to the  
left. They shift their location a few feet. Sidney kneels  
down to examine the terrain. Here, in the middle of nowhere,  
stands a small wayward root about 5 inches high, with no tree  
to call it's own.

This is where they'll dig. Brett STABS the ground with his  
shovel, and they begin...

50 **INT. LUGGAGE CAR -- DAY**

50

Years later, a train speeds through similar breathtaking  
valleys, and endless small hills...

Sidney, 30, and his dog are aboard. Homer sticks his nose  
out the open door and breathes in the morning air. Sidney  
pets him, as he takes the red envelope out of his pocket.

He checks the envelope, making sure that Melody's love letter  
is still tucked inside -- once he confirms, he looks back out  
at the beautiful view of rural America...

DUANE (V.O.)

I am riding on a limited express,  
one of the crack trains of the  
nation...

51 INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASS ROOM / NEW YORK -- DAY

51

Duane, older, hair peppered with grays, stands in front of a class room full of STUDENTS, with a picture of Carl Sandburg projected on the wall behind him, as he reads aloud.

The SEARCHER approaches Duane's classroom window, and watches Duane speak from outside in the hallway.

DUANE

...Hurtling across the prairie into blue haze and dark air go fifteen all-steel coaches holding a thousand people. I ask a man in the smoker where he is going... and he answers: "Omaha."

52 INT. CLASS ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

52

The Searcher sits with Duane, deep in conversation. Duane drinks coffee.

DUANE

I've never met anyone like him... and I never will again.

The Searcher jots down some things in his tiny note pad.

DUANE (CONT'D)

I read a story he did in the fifth grade about his dying grandfather. It was raw but articulate. It was brilliant. I thought he plagiarized it.

SEARCHER

So, what did you do?

DUANE

I had him stay after class and confronted him about it. I told him he couldn't possibly have written that story, and I wanted to know where he copied it from... And you know what he said?

SEARCHER

What?

DUANE

He said, "I'll take that as a compliment". And then ran out to catch the bus.

The Searcher smiles. Duane smiles with him.

DUANE (CONT'D)

That's the thing with Sidney. You become a fan, first.

(MORE)

DUANE (CONT'D)

And then you spend the rest of your life trying to become a friend.

SEARCHER

I think you're underestimating the importance you had in his life.

DUANE

I knew what my role was. My role was to guard him against the people who misunderstood him. And I did it to the best of my ability.

SEARCHER

He's been burning copies of his books in stores and libraries across the country.

Duane shakes his head, laughs to himself.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)

That's... funny to you?

DUANE

Sidney was a purist; he never went online. So there's a world where he may actually believe he could burn all his books in existence. He's a romantic, that way.

SEARCHER

You miss him.

DUANE

If he picked up a phone, I would gladly be on the receiving end. But that hasn't happened in years.

SEARCHER

Let me show you something...

The Searcher takes out a small folded map of America.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)

He nearly burnt down half a wing of the Queens Public Library a few weeks ago. Then, someone fitting his description was spotted in Harrisburg, on a freight train.

(draws a line between)

Then West Virginia...

(draws another line)

Then a similar book store fire occurred in Oklahoma City...

(another line)

To me... he's clearly going west.

DUANE

Sidney never much liked it out west. That was all Melody...

Something dawns on Duane.

DUANE (CONT'D)  
 Come to think of it... Sidney owns  
 some property out there. Just  
 about all he owns, as a matter of  
 fact. Held on to it for  
 sentimental reasons. Looks to me  
 like he's heading straight there.

The Searcher's eyes light up -- he leans in keenly.

SEARCHER  
 ...Where?

53

INT. TRAIN STATION -- DAY

53

Suddenly, a dirty, weathered HAND reaches into her booth,  
 clenching a Train Schedule, with a destination circled:

**"Taos, New Mexico"**

The Ticket Agent looks up: It's SIDNEY HALL, age 30,  
 disheveled, thick beard and dark sunglasses. He's barely  
 recognizable.

TICKET AGENT  
 Forty Nine dollars.

Sidney hands over some crumpled money.

TICKET AGENT (CONT'D)  
 I need to see ID for overnight  
 train.

Sidney hands her his License. It reads "*Brett Newport*".

As the Agent rings up his ticket, she hears a dog WHINING on  
 the other side of the window. She looks up, and notices  
 Sidney has a DOG with him -- an old Hound Dog. Sidney kindly  
 pets his dog and feeds him some snacks from his pocket.

SIDNEY 30  
 (softly)  
 It's okay, boy. We'll get some  
 sleep in a few minutes.

TICKET AGENT  
 Ummm... sir? Is that your dog?

SIDNEY 30  
 That is Homer... my friend.

TICKET AGENT  
 Ah, okay, but you can't take him on  
 the train, sir.

SIDNEY 30  
 Please... I have to get on that  
 train.

TICKET AGENT  
I'm sorry. I really am. They  
won't let you on with him.

Sidney nods in defeat, as the Agent hands him back his money.

54

**EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM -- MOMENTS LATER**

54

A few scattered last-minute PASSENGERS hop on the train, as the whistle BLOWS, signaling it will be leaving in a minute.

**ANOTHER LUGGAGE CAR**

Sidney (looking very conspicuous) hangs around the luggage car, way off from the platform and out of view. With a cigarette dangling out of his mouth, he looks around to make sure no one is watching.

When the coast is clear, he suddenly lifts up Homer and places him inside the luggage car.

The train starts to move -- whoops. Sidney quickly grabs his laundry bag and begins chasing the train.

SIDNEY 30  
Shit, fuck, shit.

He tosses his laundry bag on to the car first, as the train speeds up.

Homer sticks his head out from the car. He WHIMPERS as Sidney jogs alongside the train, grasping for a grip on the open door. Sidney dangles from the moving train, and fumbles his way on board.

55

**EXT. FARMER'S PEAK -- AFTERNOON**

55

Sidney, 18, and Brett walk down the hill, carrying their shovels. But Brett now also carries an old, rusty red lunch box.

Sidney suddenly sees a HOUND DOG, running through a field, in the distance. Sidney stops for a second, watching the dog.

After a moment, the dog stops playing and locks eyes with Sidney... Sidney smiles at him. Brett looks back at Sidney.

BRETT  
I don't have all day.

Sidney snaps out of it.

SIDNEY 18  
Look man, if you don't want to tell me what's in that box, that's fine. That's your right. But I would like a little fucking gratitude.

Brett walks back up to him.

BRETT  
You want something else, Hall? The Lewis Chang deal ain't enough for you?

SIDNEY 18  
That's not what I'm saying. I just don't like being treated like shit.

BRETT  
You like Melody Jameson? I saw you talking to her in the street.

SIDNEY 18  
You know her?

They start walking back to the car again.

BRETT  
Yeah dude, she hangs out with my little sister.

SIDNEY 18  
Is she cool? What is she interested in? Does she read?

BRETT  
I don't fuckin' know, Hall. Jesus Christ. I'm not into girls who like long walks on the beach and all that shit. But I can introduce you to her, if you're having trouble.

SIDNEY 18  
I'm not having trouble.

BRETT  
Yeah, yeah, right. God knows, you're too pussy to meet her on your own. I might as well do it for you.

SIDNEY 18  
All right, out of sheer curiosity, what would you do?

BRETT  
My sister's birthday is on Memorial Day weekend. I'll take her out for ice cream or something, and coax Melody to tag along. Then you can show up out of the blue, and boom.

They reach the car.

SIDNEY 18  
Memorial Day? That's next weekend.

Brett pops the trunk and packs the shovels back in.

BRETT  
Yeah, so? You think you can grow  
two balls and a dick by then?

Brett slams the trunk closed.

BRETT (CONT'D)  
Not that it would make a difference  
anyway. She's as prude as they  
come. It would take a crowbar to  
get her legs open.

They get in the car and leave.

56

**INT. PORTER HOUSE / CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY**

56

Sidney, 24, worn thin, sits quietly while Harold fields questions to a handful of REPORTERS sitting in the room, pertaining to the 'Henry Crowe' situation.

Gina, Duane, and other MEMBERS of Porter House publishing are present.

REPORTER 1  
How do you feel about the book  
burnings in Oklahoma?

HAROLD  
Well, you have to buy 'em in order  
to burn 'em. So maybe sales will  
go up.

A slight chuckle from the media. Harold points at the next REPORTER.

REPORTER 2  
Any validity in the comparisons  
between Henry Crowe and the lead  
character in Mr. Hall's book?

HAROLD  
The character in question killed  
himself with a knife, not a gun.  
Any comparison between the two is  
ridiculous horseshit. Next.

REPORTER 3  
Do you think this book will become  
federally censored? And might it  
have an effect on the Pulitzer  
nomination?

HAROLD  
I doubt that'll be taken seriously.  
I couldn't care less about Senator  
Dale's campaign for fascism. If he  
doesn't like the book, don't read  
it.

REPORTER 3  
Do you think he's read it?

HAROLD  
I really don't give a shit.

More raised hands.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
Now, at this time, Sidney would like to make a statement. Please hold all of your questions until after he's finished.

Sidney carefully unfolds a sheet of paper to read aloud. All eyes are on him. The room is deathly quiet.

SIDNEY 24  
It saddens me that a life has been lost. My heart goes out to Henry Crowe's family and friends. I empathize with them, and hope their brighter days will appear sooner rather than later.

(puts the paper away)  
That said... I apologize for nothing. I cannot predict what reaction any particular individual may or may not have to something I've written. Nor can I live in fear or restraint every time I write a word on a page. I can only hope that the books I write, in time, will have a positive impact. And it sickens me to think that some congressmen are using this boy's family, during their time of grief, for political gain. It's shameful.

A low murmur develops throughout the press room. These are strong words.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
And furthermore...

Sidney drifts off and sees Brett Newport, 18, sitting in the back of the room. He hasn't aged a day. Brett, wearing his Letter-man jacket, looks on intently, waiting for Sidney to continue. Sidney lowers his head and looks faint.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
And furthermore...

When Sidney looks up, Brett's still there, as real as day.

HAROLD  
(whispers)  
Sidney. You all right?

The murmurs get louder, wondering what is wrong. Gina rushes over, and quickly pours Sidney a glass of water.

Sidney is about to faint. Duane tends to him, as Harold dismisses the Press.

DUANE  
(whispers)  
Sidney? Talk to me.

SIDNEY 24  
(softly)  
Dr. Baum... Dr. Baum.

Duane looks at Gina.

GINA  
I'll call him.

57 INT. RIVERSIDE MEDICAL CENTER -- DAY

57

Sidney 24 is lying on a movable table. The table slips into the center of a large donut-shaped MRI machine which takes the x-ray images around the body.

58 INT. DOCTOR BAUM'S OFFICE -- LATER THAT DAY

58

Sidney 24 sits across from DR. BAUM, 40's. All around the room are several framed photographs of European cities.

DR. BAUM  
I looked over your MRI. There is evidence of some scar tissue on the side of your brain.

Sidney is distracted by a photograph of Amsterdam.

SIDNEY 24  
You've got a good eye. The canal, the bicycles, the lampposts. It's very Amsterdam. The only thing missing is a hash bar and a hooker.

DR. BAUM  
Sidney, I think you're having partial seizures.

SIDNEY 24  
Seizures? How?

DR. BAUM  
Could be from trauma, could be the result of a serious blow to the head. Has anything like that ever happened to you?

SIDNEY 24  
You mean recently?

DR. BAUM  
Not necessarily. Some people who experience head trauma, don't suffer the repercussions until years later.

SIDNEY 24  
I don't remember.

DR. BAUM  
When you called me last week, you claimed you were seeing things outside the realm of reality. Hallucinations. Are you still experiencing these aberrations?

Sidney sees his MOTHER sitting in the corner. She shakes her head 'no'.

SIDNEY 24  
I have to go.

Sidney rises and walks to the door.

DR. BAUM  
Sidney, there's medication you can take to lessen the severity-

The door shuts. Sidney's gone.

59

**INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- DAY**

59

LENS POV: Melody's house.

Sidney, 18, is looking at her house through the binoculars.

LENS POV: Brett's sister, DARCY, 17, exits the house and heads down the street. We PAN UP to Melody's window, and see Melody entering her room and sitting down at her desk.

Sidney lowers his binoculars -- not sure if he should be spying on her. But he sees some movement, and raises them.

LENS POV: Melody rises and begins to undress...

Whoa. Sidney lowers the binoculars again.

SIDNEY 18  
I'm a stalker. I've been reduced to a peeping tom stalker...

His self-revelation doesn't last long, however, and he raises the binoculars back up.

LENS POV: Melody is now wearing a robe, stuffing her hair into a shower cap.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
Sidney... are you really going to depend on Brett Newport?

Lowering the binoculars, he comes up with an idea. Inspired, he whips out a large red sharpie marker from his desk drawer and scribbles it on some paper to make sure it has ink.

60

**EXT. MELODY'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER**

60

Sidney crosses the street and enters Melody's front yard, holding a large sheet of white foam core underneath his arm. He climbs the wooden steps on the front stoop and leans his sign against her front door. It reads:

**"I'VE CROSSED THE STREET"**

Sidney takes a step back, satisfied with his accomplishment. He starts down the stairs when a gust of WIND suddenly BLOWS the sign off the porch. Sidney races around the side of the house, chasing after his fleeing sign. He finally catches it.

Sidney returns to the porch. He props the sign back up again and turns around.

Melody's MOTHER, suddenly appears on the porch, scaring the hell out of Sidney. She looks like a hippie activist.

MELODY'S MOTHER

May I help you?

SIDNEY 18

Ahhh... I was just um... My name is Sidney Hall, and I'm your neighbor.

Melody's mother looks at the sign Sidney has brought over.

MELODY'S MOTHER

You... crossed the street?

SIDNEY 18

Yes.

MELODY'S MOTHER

Congratulations.

SIDNEY 18

(smiling)  
Thank you.

Sidney looks up at Melody's room and sees her LAUGHING at him

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)

Crossing the street is the hardest thing sometimes. The return trip is much easier.

MELODY'S MOTHER

Thank god for that.

61

## INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT / STUDY -- NIGHT

61

Sidney 24, chain-smoking, types on his old typewriter. He looks slightly feverish as he rips out the current page and throws it away. He grabs a bottle of rum sitting next to him, takes a swig, and inserts a new blank sheet.

He types some more, but quickly realizes that he doesn't like his words again. His hand smashes the keys and the type bars stick together. He stares at them.

As he removes his glasses and tosses them aside, the phone RINGS. He picks up.

SIDNEY 24  
Yeah?

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)  
(over telephone)  
Hey.

SIDNEY 24  
Hey.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)  
You weren't at the Conde Naste party last night. I thought we were supposed to meet.

He takes another swig of rum. Wipes his mouth.

SIDNEY 24  
Look, Alexandra-

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)  
Sidney, I've been doing some thinking and... I want us to become more serious.

The typewriter keys become alive on their own and start typing: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

SIDNEY 24  
What does that mean?

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)  
It means what we're doing is fun, but not really long term.

Typewriter: AND LOSE MY FREEDOM?...

SIDNEY 24  
I can't do that, and you know it.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)  
I want to fall in love with you.

Typewriter: HANG UP THE PHONE.

SIDNEY 24  
Please don't.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)  
I think I'm already falling in love  
with you.

Typewriter: WELL, WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED FALLING IN LOVE WITH  
ME,

SIDNEY 24  
Well, when you're finished falling  
in love with me...

Typewriter: YOU KNOW WHERE THE DOOR IS.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
...you know where the door is.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)  
Are you for fucking real?

Sidney hangs up. The phone rings again. He rips the phone  
cord out of the wall.

He pours his rum over the keys, then removes the cigarette  
from his mouth and drops it into the typewriter's guts. The  
paper immediately catches fire.

He just stares at the small fire in his typewriter.

62      **EXT. BOOK STORE -- DAY**

62

Sidney 30 ties up Homer to a bicycle rack, and pets him.

SIDNEY 30  
All right, I'll be out in two  
minutes. You know the drill.

63      **INT. BOOK STORE -- MOMENTS LATER**

63

Sidney 30 enters, with lighter fluid sticking out of his  
pocket, to the sound of pleasant MUSIC playing over the  
speaker system.

Sidney enters the "Fiction" section. He runs his fingers  
across the spines of the books lining the shelves and comes  
to a grouping with particular indentations at the base.

He removes eight copies of two different books written by  
him, 'Suburban Tragedy' and 'Stay of Execution'.

Sidney crouches down on the ground, takes out the lighter  
fluid canister from his inside pocket and soaks the pages of  
the books. Sidney strikes a match and flicks it on to the  
pile, causing it to BURST INTO FLAMES.

64 **EXT. BOOKSTORE -- A MOMENT LATER**

64

Sidney 30 and Homer are walking quickly away from the store, as smoke emits through the front door. They clumsily turn a corner, as SIRENS can be heard coming towards them.

Homer BARKS, indicating they should duck down another street.

They turn another corner, and a Police Car pulls up towards them. They run in another direction, as two OFFICERS catch up to them.

**MOMENTS LATER**

Sidney 30 is being dragged to a squad car in handcuffs by two POLICE DEPUTIES. Homer BARKS as Sidney gets loaded into a vehicle.

SIDNEY 30  
My dog...

DEPUTY  
Animal control will take care of  
him.

SIDNEY 30  
No, please. He's all I've got.

They SLAM the door on Sidney.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
(in car)  
No! Don't hurt him!

Sidney presses his face against the window, as he watches them detain his dog. He stares at Homer, sadly, as the squad car pulls away...

65 **INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT**

65

Sidney lies on his bed. In the distance, SOUNDS of a local town fair can be heard on this warm Spring night.

The phone starts RINGING. Sidney refuses to look at it. But after it stops, he glances over at it. He checks his watch: 8:15pm.

A KNOCK at the door startles him.

SIDNEY 18  
Come in.

Sidney's mother enters his room with the cordless telephone.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
It's for you.

SIDNEY 18  
 If it's Brett again, tell him I'm  
 not going tonight and that's final.  
 I don't know why he keeps calling.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
 It's not Brett. It's a *girl*.

Now she has Sidney's attention.

SIDNEY 18  
 A girl?

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
 Yup. Someone named Melanie. Do  
 you want me to take a message?

SIDNEY 18  
 No. Ummm... I'll take it. Thanks.

He grabs the phone from her and quickly escorts her out the door.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
 (on her way out)  
 Maybe you should ask her to the  
 prom-

Sidney SHUTS the door on her. A little nervous, he holds the phone to his ear.

SIDNEY 18  
 Hello?

MELODY (O.S.)  
 (on phone)  
 Now how am I supposed to  
 accidentally meet you tonight if  
 you don't show up to the fair?

SIDNEY 18  
 I thought it was too contrived.

MELODY (O.S.)  
 (on phone)  
 Look, I know I've been standoff-  
 ish, but I'm the one who wrote you  
 in the first place, so don't be  
 such a wuss.

SIDNEY 18  
 (smiles)  
 Okay... Where should we meet?

MELODY (O.S.)  
 (on phone)  
 Outside your front door.

DIAL TONE. Sidney stares at the phone before hanging it up.

66      **EXT. SIDNEY 18'S HOUSE / PORCH -- ONE MINUTE LATER**

66

Sidney opens the front door. And there, looking beautiful as ever in a casual skirt, is Melody. She's holding a single rose. Sidney is in love.

SIDNEY 18  
You look... astonishing.

MELODY  
Thank you.

She extends the flower to him.

SIDNEY 18  
Aren't I supposed to give you the flower?

MELODY  
Normally, yes. But since I wear the pants in this relationship, it's the other way around.

She smiles, as Sidney exits the house and takes the flower, closing the door behind him.

67      **INT. SIDNEY 18'S HOUSE -- SIMULTANEOUS**

67

Sidney's Mother watches her son walk away with Melody from the house. She seems mildly jealous, before retreating back inside -- she looks over her shoulder at her husband, Gerald.

Gerald sits stoically in the living room, watching TV.

68      **EXT. MELODY'S DRIVEWAY -- SIMULTANEOUS**

68

Sidney 18 and Melody approach her parents' VW Bug Hatchback, parked quietly under the moonlight.

SIDNEY 18  
We're taking your parents car?

MELODY  
SHHHH.

Melody looks inside her house at her PARENTS for a beat, before quietly opening the driver door of the buggy and SHIFTING the car in neutral...

The Buggy starts to drift down the driveway.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Quick! Guide it!

Sidney clumsily tries to help guide the car down the driveway, as Melody steers it.

(They WHISPER)

SIDNEY 18  
Why don't we just start the ignition? I think that's what people do, right?

MELODY  
Shush! Do as your told, just until the street.

SIDNEY 18  
We're stealing your parent's car, aren't we? This is stealing?

MELODY  
We're *borrowing*. Borrowing with the intent to return.

SIDNEY 18  
We're one minute into the date, and I'm already involved in a criminal act?

The Buggy starts ROLLING into the grass, on its way towards the street.

MELODY  
Shit, ummm... Okay, hop in! Right now!

Sidney hops inside, just as Melody STARTS the engine, REVVING it in reverse, narrowly missing the mailbox, and backing into the middle of the street.

69 INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

69

Melody SHIFTS the car into "drive", while checking the rear-view mirrors to make sure her parents are still in the Living Room. The coast is clear.

SIDNEY 18  
Okay, I get it. You're grounded, right?

MELODY  
Oh no, much worse. I don't have a license.

Melody hangs a SHARP LEFT and SPEEDS down the street.

Sidney holds on for dear life.

70 INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

70

Sidney 24, completely drunk, sits on his living room floor making paper planes out of his written pages. The fireplace is the only illumination.

He is drained and haggard, leaning against one of his bookshelves.

The jingling of keys can be heard on the other side of his front door. The door slowly creaks open, illuminating a sliver of light across his face. A FEMALE SILHOUETTE enters the room and walks towards him.

He looks up at the figure.

SIDNEY 24

Melody?

The figure turns on a nearby lamp, revealing herself to be Gina, his assistant.

GINA

No... Gina. Remember? The personal assistant you haven't called in a week?

Gina looks around at the disarray. His unfinished manuscript is scattered all over the room. This has happened before.

She goes to the kitchen, gets him a glass of water and brings it to him. She leans over Sidney, lifting up his weary head.

GINA (CONT'D)

Drink this.

He reluctantly takes a sip. She looks at the pages sprawled all over the floor.

GINA (CONT'D)

Looks like you've been busy.

She gives him more water.

SIDNEY 24

They're just words...

GINA

Well, by the looks of it, there's enough here for ten books.

SIDNEY 24

(takes a swig)

Yet there are only about ten pages worth reading.

GINA

Well... which ten?

SIDNEY 24

(shrugs)

Doesn't matter which ten. It's first chapters and first pages and first sentences. But there's no middle or end, or even a plot. The characters keep changing their identities.

(MORE)

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)

I wish I could say there was life and death and plot-twists and three generations worth of richly drawn characters... with hope and courage and regrets and consequences. But the fact is I can't get past the beginning... It's one long intoxicating masturbation session with no climax... When am I going to climax?

He seems delirious.

GINA

When was the last time you slept? Let's get you to bed.

SIDNEY 24

I need you to do something for me. These pages... burn them.

GINA

What?

SIDNEY 24

Burn the book.

GINA

Um, no Sidney, I'm not burning your book.

SIDNEY 24

You don't understand. You have to destroy them.

GINA

You're being drunk and pretentious, and I'm going to slap you in the face. People work their entire lives in this industry and would kill for just a taste of all your praise and accolades... and you just want to throw that all away? I'm not going to do it.

SIDNEY 24

Fine. I'll do it in the morning.

Gina realizes Sidney's dead serious, as he rolls over with his back to her... She doesn't want him to destroy his work.

GINA

I'll... I'll take care of it for you in the morning, if that's what you really want.

SIDNEY 24

(falling asleep)  
Thank you...

Gina's eyes avert to the CRACKLING logs in the fireplace...



SIDNEY 18

So, how do you know about my poems,  
if you're not in my school? Is  
that like a thing you do? Read  
every school newspaper in the  
county?

MELODY

I get them from Darcy.  
(smiles)  
I keep tabs on you...

Sidney smiles -- who's stalking who?

SIDNEY 18

So... Aspirations? Inspirations?

MELODY

(thinking)

Hmmmm, Photography, of course...  
Annie Leibovitz is my hero... I  
like Bob Dylan, Bukowski, Bowie,  
Hemingway, Horror movies... oh,  
and old Atari games. And  
travelling everywhere. You?

SIDNEY 18

Ummm... It's hard to follow up that  
list, but... I've really just been  
writing and reading all my life.  
I'd like to write a novel.  
Something that's going to shake  
people up.

MELODY

Well, if you want to write  
something worth while, you need to  
have experiences, right? See the  
world.

SIDNEY 18

Right.

MELODY

You better get on that, Sidney  
Hall. And be sure to take me with  
you.

SIDNEY 18

(smiling)

Okay.

They win the prize -- it's a strange-looking handmade troll.  
Melody quickly grabs it, wild with curiosity.

MELODY

(reading the bottom of the  
troll)

"Carved by Johan Tidemand". That's  
so random, but awesome.

Sidney watches her, as she's enthralled with the little gift.

After a beat, Melody feels him gazing at her... they look at each other, deep into each other's eyes.

Sidney slowly moves in for a kiss, but Melody slowly retreats to avoid it. Taking the hint that she doesn't want to do this yet, he retreats a little.

SIDNEY 18  
Sorry, I...

Just when it seems like he'll say something stupid, Melody grabs him and lands a huge kiss on him. (A kiss to end all kisses, of course).

BRETT (O.S.)  
What's up, Hall?

Brett comes over with his sister, DARCY, to spoil the moment.

Darcy and Melody smile at each other, as the kiss gets broken up.

SIDNEY 18  
Umm... where were you all week?

Brett sits down at a nearby picnic table.

BRETT  
(dodging)  
I was sick, dude.

DARCY  
Hi, Melody. Can I talk to you for a second?

Melody and Darcy start walking away from Brett and Sidney. Once they're out of hearing distance:

DARCY (CONT'D)  
So... how's it going?

MELODY  
(smiling)  
What do you mean?

DARCY  
You know what I mean.

MELODY  
(half joking)  
I'm gonna *marry* him...

They both start LAUGHING.

Sidney enters his apartment to find semi-packed boxes in the middle of the room.

On his kitchen table, is a returned engagement ring.

Melody is there. At 23, she still has her youthful beauty, but looks more sophisticated. She is packing up the last of her things and doesn't pay much attention to Sidney, as he softly closes the door.

SIDNEY 24  
So... this is it?

MELODY  
I guess so.

As Melody continues to box things up, Sidney walks over to the fireplace. He kneels down. Stares at the ashes of what he assumes were his boxes of pages. Finally, he turns back to Melody.

SIDNEY 24  
Don't leave.

MELODY  
There's no room for me here.

SIDNEY 24  
I don't know what that means.

MELODY  
It means that I'm not a person when I'm with you. I'm Sidney Hall's wife.

SIDNEY 24  
That's not true.

MELODY  
And when I'm with you, it's about you. You're depressed or you're angry or you're jealous or upset. And those just aren't attractive traits, in case you want to know.

SIDNEY 24  
Melody, a kid killed himself three days ago over my book. What am I supposed to do? Jump for joy?

She stops packing for a second.

MELODY  
You see, Sidney? It's all about you again. He didn't kill himself for you, or because of you. He killed himself for the cause. But you haven't been part of that cause for years. It's left you.

SIDNEY 24  
Where have you been staying?

MELODY  
There's nobody else, if that's what  
you're asking.

Melody finishes packing. She lifts up the box and grabs her  
purse -- heads for the door. Sidney jumps up to stall her.

SIDNEY 24  
Stay tonight.

MELODY  
No.

She exits out into the hallway.

SIDNEY 24  
(calling out)  
Stay tomorrow?

She continues to walk down the corridor until she disappears  
around the corner.

Sidney still loves her.

74

**INT. TAOS COUNTY LOCKUP / JAIL CELL -- EARLY MORNING**

74

A dark, desolate space. Sidney 30, who hasn't showered or  
eaten much in days, rests in the corner.

Across the cell sits a skinny, filthy INMATE, playing with a  
marble. The inmate stops for a second and looks at Sidney.

INMATE  
Whatever they got you for, you  
definitely did it.

Sidney ignores him.

Suddenly, the door slides open, letting in a thin ray of  
light right across Sidney's cheek. It's a POLICE OFFICER.

POLICE OFFICER  
Brett Newport.

Sidney sits up.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)  
You've posted bail.

Sidney stands upright, slightly confused, and exits his  
temporary home.

75

**EXT. TAOS COUNTY LOCKUP -- MOMENTS LATER**

75

Endless desert. Nothing but infinite desert plains and blue  
skies surround Sidney, as he steps outside into the pounding  
morning sun and stands in the middle of a sandy parking lot.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Mr. Hall...

Sidney turns to his left, where the voice is coming from...

It's the SEARCHER -- silhouetted in front of the sun.

SIDNEY 30  
(squinting)  
You... bailed me out?

SEARCHER  
Not exactly... I'm borrowing you.  
State Prosecutor says you need to  
return to court in two days.

SIDNEY 30  
Two days?  
(thinking)  
Works for me. Who are you?

The Searcher removes his badge and shows it to Sidney.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
Great... You're bailing me out so  
you can arrest me again.

SEARCHER  
Are you hungry?

No response.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)  
There's a diner across the street.  
Why don't you let me buy you a  
meal?

Sidney laughs to himself -- shakes his head.

SIDNEY 30  
Some strange guy bails me out,  
wants to buy me dinner? Look pal,  
you wanna go out on date with me?  
That's fine, I'm easy. But you got  
to get my dog out, too. Otherwise,  
I'm not moving.

SEARCHER  
(smiles)  
I already did.

The Searcher motions to his car. Homer is inside it, BARKING  
and excited to see Sidney.

Sidney is happy to see his Homer -- he's apprehensive about  
the Searcher's intentions, but doesn't have much choice.

SIDNEY 30  
Okay... let's eat.

Sidney eats his meal as if he hasn't eaten in days. The Searcher sips his tea, and is prepared to relinquish a new dish as soon as Sidney finishes the first one. Sidney seems pale and flushed, perspiring -- feeding Homer some of his meal, as well.

SEARCHER

Mr. Hall... I've been searching for you, for the better half of a year.

(clears throat)

I'm a big fan of your work. I've studied both of your novels, 'Suburban Tragedy' and 'Stay of Execution' and find them to be extraordinary forms of map work.

SIDNEY 30

Map work? You're a psycho fan, aren't you?

SEARCHER

No. Well, maybe a little. After all, life isn't very interesting unless you're a bit psychotic.

SIDNEY 30

Look, I appreciate you bailing me out, but the fact is I'm not a writer anymore. I have no money. There's nothing I can give you.

SEARCHER

That's not what interests me. I've come with the intention of presenting you with a deal. In exchange for me posting your bail, I would like to ask you for a favor. However, I need you to agree to this favor before I explain to you what it is.

SIDNEY 30

No way. You tell me what it is first.

SEARCHER

You're not in a position to bargain, Mr. Hall. Your propensity to start fires in public places has you at a disadvantage.

Sidney balks.

SEARCHER (CONT'D)

Don't worry. What I ask of you won't take too long.

SIDNEY 30

Great. Why'd you have to go and say that?

(MORE)

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)

Before, it was a favor, now all of the sudden, it's a 'time-consuming' favor.

SEARCHER

There's nothing to be afraid of, I assure you. You might even find it therapeutic.

SIDNEY 30

Therapeutic? Do you have any idea what kind of fucked up things I'm imagining right now?

SEARCHER

Just say yes.

SIDNEY 30

YES. Jesus Christ, man. Fine, yes I'll do it. Just tell me what it is already, before I have a heart attack.

SEARCHER

Okay.

(smiles)

I want to write a book about you.

SIDNEY 30

Say again?

SEARCHER

I want to write your biography. Your life.

Silence.

SIDNEY 30

You want to write a book about *me*?

SEARCHER

Yes.

SIDNEY 30

Oh no, no, no, no.

SEARCHER

Oh yes, yes, yes, yes.

SIDNEY 30

Have you ever even written anything?

SEARCHER

I know what you've written. And I believe you are the greatest writer of our time.

SIDNEY 30  
Well, I'm not. That would be Francis Bishop. He won the Pulitzer the year I was nominated.

SEARCHER  
Maybe he didn't deserve it.

SIDNEY 30  
He damn well did deserve it. His follow-up book was proof enough of that. My follow-up was self-indulgent and pretentious. So, if you want to write about the greatest writer of our time, go write about Francis Bishop.

SEARCHER  
I can't. I'm no good at autobiographies.

SIDNEY 30  
Well then, I don't know what to tell you-

All of a sudden, the Searcher's last statement registers with Sidney.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
You're... Francis Bishop?

The Searcher nods.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
But, the badge you flashed me...

SEARCHER (FRANCIS BISHOP)  
Oh, that.

He takes out his badge.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
I got it at a dollar store. Exact replica. No one's ever noticed.

SIDNEY 30  
You mean, like... just-a-buck?

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Right. Just-a-buck.

Sidney slowly develops a smile.

SIDNEY 30  
How many people have you shown that to?

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Everyone from here to Philadelphia.

Sidney starts to CRACK UP (this guy is crazy).

Francis LAUGHS with him.

SIDNEY 30  
 You... impersonated officers of the  
 law. That's like...  
 (laughing)  
 ...not legal.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 I showed it to actual *cops*! They  
 totally bought it -- didn't even  
 flinch!

They're both doubled over in stitches.

SIDNEY 30  
 Why would you even do that?  
 That's... fucking crazy, man.

Francis tries to catch his breath, as he tries to explain it.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 I don't know... I guess, I've just  
 never done investigative journalism  
 before, you know? So I went all  
 in... Mid-life crisis, I suppose.

Finally, the laughter simmers down.

SIDNEY 30  
 You have family?

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 A son...  
 (fondly)  
 A very handsome son.

Sidney nods as they share a smile -- mutual admiration.

SIDNEY 30  
 That was... insane. I haven't  
 laughed like that since... forever.

77

**INT. HIGH SCHOOL / HOMEROOM -- MORNING**

77

Sidney, 18, sits at his desk and immediately opens his letter from Melody. It reads: "*Sidney, I had a great time the other night. I'm glad you crossed the street. Even if my Mother thinks you're a weirdo. Love, Melody*"

A slight smile develops on Sidney's face, as he carefully folds up the note.

A BEEP sound comes from the school loudspeaker.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 (over loudspeaker)  
 Good morning, students. This is  
 Mr. Bennett, your principal  
 speaking. I have... very sad news.  
 (MORE)

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
A student here at John Jay, Brett  
Newport, passed away last night.

The CLASSROOM uproars with whispers of shock. The TEACHER  
quiets everyone down.

Sidney looks up at the speaker -- can't believe it.

PRINCIPAL  
(over loudspeaker)  
His cause of death is unknown at  
this time. He was a good student  
and a great athlete, and it is a  
tragedy to lose someone with such a  
spark for life. I would like to  
extend condolences on behalf of  
myself and the school faculty to  
his friends and family. I'm now  
going to ask everyone to please  
rise, for a moment of silence.

The Classroom rises.

78

**EXT. LOCAL PARK -- DUSK**

78

Sidney 18 is slouched over -- Melody sits next to him with  
her arm around him. She has her camera around her neck.

MELODY  
Why would someone... kill himself?

Sidney shakes his head.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
I'm afraid to call Darcy. She's my  
best friend, you know? But I feel  
like she wants to be alone.

Sidney looks out on the sunset, very confused about the  
entire Brett situation.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
I wish I could have been there five  
minutes before he did it. I would  
have shaken him and said "Don't do  
it, man... you have your whole life  
ahead of you. The good things  
outweigh the bad."

SIDNEY 18  
That's just not true for some  
people.

MELODY  
I always felt like something was  
going on in Darcy's house that was  
sort of... taboo. Secrets, you  
know? Very dark secrets.

Sidney understands completely.

SIDNEY 18  
I've got to get out of here.

Melody turns his head towards her, so they're looking into each others eyes.

MELODY  
I'll go with you.

SIDNEY 18  
No, I mean, "out of here".

MELODY  
Yeah, me too.

SIDNEY 18  
Really?

MELODY  
Yes. Really. And I can take us.  
My parents are about to buy a new  
car, so they're giving me their old  
bug. We can leave after the school  
year.

SIDNEY 18  
Where would we go?

MELODY  
Does it matter? We can just head  
west.

SIDNEY 18  
(smiling)  
Just west, huh? No destination?

MELODY  
Well, maybe.

Melody takes out her Trapper Keeper, and pulls a photograph  
out of it.

CLOSE ON: A picture of a unique Desert Home.

SIDNEY 18  
What's this?

MELODY  
I don't know. I saw it in a  
magazine and tore it out.  
(motioning)  
But look how weird it's built. So  
cool, and it's in the middle of  
nowhere, where the sky is actually  
blue and not all polluted.

SIDNEY 18  
You know where it is?

MELODY  
 No idea.  
 (laughs)  
 Somewhere in the desert, in the  
 Western Hemisphere.

SIDNEY 18  
 (laughs with her)  
 Well, that narrows it down.

MELODY  
 Okay, but seriously we're going to  
 go to this house one day.

SIDNEY 18  
 (smiles)  
 We will?

MELODY  
 When we're *old*. Like 30.  
 (laughs)  
 And... it will be on this date.  
 What's today?

SIDNEY 18  
 (thinking)  
 It's May...

MELODY  
 May 25th! So okay, so on May 25th,  
 when we're 30 years old, we'll go  
 to this awesome house.

SIDNEY 18  
 And?

MELODY  
 And we'll have a lot of sex, and  
 sleep on the lay of the land, until  
 the sun rises. And then we'll  
 bathe in a desert hot spring,  
 before a tortoise attacks us.

Sidney smiles. Sounds amazing.

SIDNEY 18  
 Of course we don't know where it  
 is...

MELODY  
 That's just a little detail.  
 Besides, it's all about beginnings,  
 anyway. And you already have the  
 best beginning money can buy.

SIDNEY 18  
 Yeah? And what's that?

MELODY  
 You want to write a novel, don't  
 you?

SIDNEY 18

Yeah.

MELODY

Well chew on this. A high profile Judge's son kills himself in front of the fam. And you may have been one of the last people to see him alive. Now, if that doesn't qualify as the beginning of a great book, I don't know what does.

Sidney has an awakening. She's right.

79

**INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT**

79

Sidney sits in front of his typewriter. Some newspaper clippings of Brett Newport are scattered on his desk.

He inserts a fresh piece of paper into the teeth. He types: "**Suburban Tragedy**" He then types: "**By Sidney Hall**"

He pulls the sheet of paper from the typewriter and lays it flush on his desk. He then loads another piece of paper and begins typing at a furious pace:

*"The core of our nation is etched inside these plastic smiles and endless rows of nowhere houses. This is how we live, but it's also how we die."*

80

**EXT. TAOS PUBLIC PARK -- LATE MORNING**

80

Homer runs around, as Francis and Sidney, 30, sit on a jungle gym across the street from the diner.

The late afternoon sun creeps up on Sidney's rugged face.

SIDNEY 30

How'd you find me, anyway?

FRANCIS BISHOP

It wasn't easy. Ultimately... Duane Jones, I suppose.

Sidney smiles, shaking his head.

SIDNEY 30

Naturally... It's always the nice ones who open the door to anybody.

FRANCIS BISHOP

He opened a door on "Suburban Tragedy", as well...

SIDNEY 30

Like what.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Brett Newport, for example. He says you knew him, but you've always denied that.

SIDNEY 30  
Look, Francis. I respect you as a writer, I really do. But there's nothing to write about me, and even if there was, it would be a conflict of interest. We were rivals.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
I wasn't inspired by our rivalry, I was inspired by your books. Every time I stare at my awards, a small piece of me withers away, because I know they don't belong to me. They belong to a recluse, whose presence I sorely miss. Even if we never really met.

SIDNEY 30  
I don't know if you got this about me, but I'm not exactly the type that 'opens up'.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Did you know Brett Newport?

SIDNEY 30  
(beat)  
He was just another face in the hall to me.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Another face in the hall that you use as a pseudonym?

SIDNEY 30  
I've used many pseudonyms. What difference does it make?

FRANCIS BISHOP  
(leans in)  
Because if you *did* know Brett Newport... and your lead character is based on Brett Newport... then that puts you as one of the central characters in the book, as well.

SIDNEY 30  
So?

FRANCIS BISHOP  
(half-joking)  
So then your book becomes a *non-fiction* entity... And then I don't win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, against the best novel of the 21st century.

SIDNEY 30

Is this about *you* or Brett Newport?

FRANCIS BISHOP

It's about *Sidney Hall*; and all of the people who have haunted him. Why hide behind the cryptic names?

SIDNEY 30

People like the cryptic names. They respond to them. They don't give a fuck about reality. And they sure as hell don't give a fuck about me.

FRANCIS BISHOP

You can't possibly believe that. You've inspired an entire generation of lost souls. Both of your novels are still on the New York Times Best-Seller list as we speak. Yet, here you are, in the middle of nowhere, without two dimes to rub together. *Talk* to me.

SIDNEY 30

I had nothing to do with the release of that second novel. They hailed it as some sort of stream of consciousness bible, when really it's just a bunch of unfinished sentences. A buncha lies. I wrote a story, and people bought it.

FRANCIS BISHOP

But now you've *become* the story. Don't you see? *You are* the story.

This revelation hits Sidney hard. He takes it in...

SIDNEY 30

(beat)

I can't do this. This is bullshit.

FRANCIS BISHOP

You can do it. You *need* to do it. You're Sidney Hall! I don't care what you've been telling yourself these past few years. You've become something of a living legend. Most writers haven't even begun to tap their genius by your age. And you retired at twenty-five? *That's* the bullshit!

SIDNEY 30

You don't know anything about me.

FRANCIS BISHOP

Exactly! So *tell* me.

BEAT. Sidney thinks it over... glances at the date on Francis's cell phone. It reads: "**May 25**"

SIDNEY 30

Okay... I need you to drop me off at a place just outside Taos... There's something I need to do there. After that, I'll maybe possibly think about 'sharing' or whatever the fuck it is you want me to do.

Francis smiles.

FRANCIS BISHOP

Deal.

81 INT. TRAIN -- DAY

81

Sidney, 24, rides a commuter train alongside the snowy Hudson River. He stares off at an endless row of houses on the other side of the river, as the sun reflects off the surface of the water.

82 EXT. SIDNEY'S NEIGHBORHOOD -- AFTERNOON

82

Sidney 24 enters his old neighborhood, during a snow flurry, for the *first time* in years... He approaches his parents house, but just stands outside of it -- taking it in for a moment... He sees an illumination of a TV inside the living room. Perhaps his father is still watching the television...

Rather than go inside his house, he crosses the street to *Melody's* house instead -- walks around the backside.

83 EXT. MELODY'S HOUSE / BACK PORCH-- CONTINUOUS

83

Melody is reading a book on the patio, as Sidney approaches her. She looks up from her book, surprised to find Sidney standing there.

MELODY

What... are you doing here?

SIDNEY 24

Visiting my wife.

MELODY

Well, she's busy right now.

Sidney hands her a small envelope.

MELODY (CONT'D)

What is this?

SIDNEY 24

Open it.

Melody reluctantly opens the envelope -- secretly curious to see what's inside it. She pulls out a photo of the unique desert house in New Mexico. It's architecture is strange and beautiful.

MELODY  
You... found it?

SIDNEY 24  
I *bought* it for you...

Melody looks up -- taken aback. She can't believe it.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
We can go there whenever you want.  
We can go there now.

MELODY  
I... I can't do that.

SIDNEY 24  
What happened to being spontaneous?  
What happened to just going west?  
New beginnings?

MELODY  
We're not kids anymore, Sidney. I  
can't just get in a car and drive  
off forever.

SIDNEY 24  
Why not?

MELODY  
Because, I have a job and a career  
and-

SIDNEY 24  
You're a painter. You can paint  
from anywhere.

MELODY  
Sidney-

SIDNEY 24  
And I can write from anywhere.

MELODY  
Sidney-

SIDNEY 24  
And if not west, then east, or  
north, or south. Europe, Asia,  
doesn't matter to me, as long as  
I'm with you-

MELODY  
I'm pregnant...

Everything stops.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
And... it's yours.

Sidney is stunned, slumping down in a patio chair -- a deer in headlights.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
So 'no'... I can't just 'go west'.  
I can't be... spontaneous anymore.

She digs her inhaler out of her purse -- takes a breath, as she tries to hold back her tears.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
Do you even *want* to start over?  
Do you even care? Because if you  
do, some things need to change.

Sidney looks up.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
Are you cheating on me?

SIDNEY 24  
No. I'm not cheating on you.

MELODY  
Because, if you are, now's the time  
to tell me. I get it, we've been  
apart from each other, so this is  
your one 'get out of jail free'  
card.

SIDNEY 24  
Melody... I'm done with that. And  
I want to bring up this child with  
you. Please... give us a chance.

Melody gets up and retrieves something from inside the porch. She returns with Sidney's "*I CROSSED THE STREET*" sign.

MELODY  
Remember this?

Sidney nods.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
If we're going to make this work,  
we need to get back to this moment.  
And the rest of our lives have to  
be as true as this moment was,  
here.

SIDNEY 24  
Come back with me tonight.

MELODY  
I leave tomorrow.

SIDNEY 24  
That's forever from now. Tonight.

Sidney smiles, hopeful -- charming. Melody mulls over it...

84           **INT. LARGE EMPTY CLASSROOM -- AFTERNOON**

84

Duane is editing the school newspaper by himself. He looks around his messy desk, searching for a missing article. After sifting through the numerous papers, he rises from his desk and walks over to some cubby holes marked with different students' names. He scans down to 'Sidney Hall'.

In Sidney's slot, he finds the article he was searching for. Then, just underneath some folders, he spots a forty page document. He pulls it out. It reads:

**"Suburban Tragedy"** by Sidney Hall

Duane returns to his desk and begins reading the manuscript.

85           **INT. SIDNEY 18'S HOUSE / FOYER -- EVENING**

85

Sidney's Mother opens the door. Duane stands before her. He politely removes his fedora hat.

DUANE

Hello ma'am. You must be Sidney's mother.

No response.

DUANE (CONT'D)

Well... my name is Duane Jones. I teach English at the high school.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER

Is something wrong?

DUANE

No, not at all. As a matter of fact, Sidney's one of our brightest students. I was wondering if I could speak with him?

Sidney sprints down the stairs.

SIDNEY 18

Hey man, what's going on?

Duane looks at Sidney's mother. After a beat:

SIDNEY'S MOTHER

Make it quick. He's grounded.

86           **INT. SIDNEY 18'S KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER**

86

Duane sits across the table from Sidney with his briefcase laid out in front of him. They both drink Cokes.

DUANE  
One thing is certain, I'm not getting any younger. Almost got in an accident on Route 9 because my mind was so scattered. I was thinking about you and all the trouble you get me in. I hope you appreciate it.

SIDNEY 18  
I'm in love with my neighbor.

DUANE  
Why didn't you tell me you started writing a book?

SIDNEY 18  
Oh, uh... I don't know. I was afraid you wouldn't like it.

DUANE  
Well, I read what you have so far.

SIDNEY 18  
And?

DUANE  
And I thought it was manipulative. It manipulated me through the first chapter, it forced me through the second, and it dared me to reach the third. It was honest, personal and valid. I loved it. And I want to know what happens next.

SIDNEY 18  
You do? Really?

DUANE  
I do. Of course uh... Your choice of subject matter is a bit controversial. And as brilliant as the pages are right now, you're going to get some heavy criticism for it down the road.

SIDNEY 18  
Okay.

DUANE  
You know, Sidney, I took it upon myself to send your pages out to a couple friends of mine who are in the publishing business.

SIDNEY 18  
Did anyone respond?

DUANE  
Yes.

SIDNEY 18  
Who?

DUANE  
Porter House.

SIDNEY 18  
Porter House? What'd they say?

DUANE  
(smiling)  
They said it was brilliant. They want to meet with you as soon as possible. There could be money involved.

SIDNEY 18  
Really?

Sidney gets up, filled with excitement.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
I can't believe it!

DUANE  
Now ah, in these situations, a professional writer would call upon someone to, you know, hold the meetings and negotiate and stuff like that. And seeing how you're inexperienced in those sort of things, I was just wondering if maybe, you'd maybe, consider-

SIDNEY 18  
You want to be my agent?

DUANE  
Well, yes. If you'd have me.

Sidney extends his hand. A big smile creeps across Duane's face as he shakes Sidney's hand.

DUANE (CONT'D)  
This is great. This is just great. We'll meet with them tomorrow at 1:00.

SIDNEY 18  
What about class?

DUANE  
Fuck it.

Francis' car pulls into the driveway of the unique desert home we've seen in pictures. But even though the architecture sets it apart... in real life, it's unkept and abandoned.

Sidney and Francis get out of the car. Homer hops out with them.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
It's a beautiful house.

Francis looks at the shoddy yard.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
Well kept...

Sidney nods.

Francis seems disappointed as they stop at the front door. He hands Sidney his card -- Sidney takes it.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
Mr. Hall, I understand your reservations about a biography, and I respect your decision. But I also suspect, that once I leave here, you won't be contacting me...

No response.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
So, before I leave, I want you to know... That this has been a very personal journey for me. I want you to know... that I have a son who would probably not be alive today, had he not randomly picked up a book called "Suburban Tragedy" out of my study...

Sidney turns towards Francis.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
When his mother passed, he hardly spoke to anyone... until he read that book. So I guess you could say that your novel brought my son back to me. And he's all I've got, Mr. Hall... he's everything.  
(beat)  
So you see... for every Henry Crowe, there are countless others, I suspect... who relate to your work in a way you'll never fully understand.

No response.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
In case our paths never cross again, it has been a privilege meeting with you. If only for a brief moment.

Francis extends his hand. Sidney shakes it. He turns to leave.



91      **INT. DESERT HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER**

91

Sidney 30 carefully places the red envelope on the dining room table. He takes out the troll they won at the fair from his laundry bag, and places that on the table, as well.

He leans down to Homer, and pets him.

SIDNEY 30  
Well, Homer, this is it. The  
moment we've been waiting for...

Homer whimpers slightly.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
It's been a long time since I've  
seen her...  
(realizes something)  
Oh I almost forgot.

Sidney rummages through his bag, and pulls out the single rose that Melody gave him on their first date. It's carefully preserved in a ziploc bag.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
She'd kill me if I forgot this.

He gently removes the flower from the bag, and places it inside a vase on the table. As he tries to make it look perfect... he notices his hand begins to TREMBLE.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
No... not yet-

Sidney DROPS to the ground. Hard. He starts going into CONVULSIONS. He tries to grasp the table leg, as he has a seizure.

Sidney suddenly passes out -- Homer starts BARKING.

BLACKNESS

92      **EXT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT**

92

Sidney, 24, leaves his building with Melody, for a date. He's dressed up and ecstatic that she's taking him back.

REVEAL: Alexandra, across the street, spying on Sidney and Melody, as they walk down the street. She's *seething*...

93      **INT. CANDLE 79 RESTAURANT -- NIGHT**

93

The restaurant is packed. Sidney 24 and Melody sit upstairs in a booth. They are picking at edamame. Melody takes her inhaler from her purse and squirts a breath into her mouth.

MELODY  
 You know you should really call  
 your father, at least. He's  
 letting that place go. You should  
 talk to him.

Sidney nods (ambivalent), as Melody places her inhaler down  
 next to her plate.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
 Your mom moved out on him... in  
 case you wanted to know.

Sidney didn't know this... he's clearly affected by it.

Melody shifts subjects.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
 So... I was thinking about names.

SIDNEY 24  
 For our child?

MELODY  
 If it's a girl, Helen. If it's a  
 boy, Homer.

SIDNEY 24  
 Homer? That's a terrible name.  
 He's going to get the shit kicked  
 out of him.

This brings laughter from them both. As they laugh, Sidney  
 becomes distracted by a person sitting at the table behind  
 Melody. It looks like Lewis Chang -- the Lewis from high  
 school.

Melody notices that Sidney is staring at someone behind her.  
 She turns around. It is an Elderly Woman. She looks back at  
 Sidney.

MELODY  
 Do you recognize her?

SIDNEY 24  
 I thought maybe...

MELODY  
 Are you okay?

SIDNEY 24  
 I saw Dr. Baum a few weeks ago.

MELODY  
 What for?

Sidney sees Dr. Baum where Lewis Chang was just sitting. He  
 is shaking his head in disappointment.

SIDNEY 24  
It was nothing. Just a checkup on  
some headaches I've been having.

MELODY  
Yeah well, we know where those come  
from...

SIDNEY 24  
(deflecting)  
I'm fine.

MELODY  
It's obviously not fine if you had  
to see Dr. Baum again.

SIDNEY 24  
It's just stress. That's it. I  
promise.

MELODY  
All right. I need to go to the  
bathroom. But this conversation is  
not over. Okay?

Sidney nods as Melody gets up to leave. He watches her walk  
to the stairs leading down to the bathroom.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
You'll alienate her...

Sidney looks up at his Mother who stands with his Father.  
His Father looks like he wants to say something, but can't.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)  
...just like you've alienated me  
and your father...

Sidney's high school teacher nemesis, Mrs. Sennett sits at  
the table next to him with Duane.

MRS. SENNETT  
What did I tell you, Duane? He  
writes about confrontation, but in  
real life he avoids it.

HAROLD (O.S.)  
Sidney...

Sidney sees Harold at yet another table.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
We lost the Pulitzer to Bishop.  
It's just politics.

Henry Crowe sits across from Harold.

HENRY  
"The core of our nation is etched  
inside these plastic smiles and  
nowhere houses..."

BRETT (O.S.)  
You hold the key.

Now Brett is sitting across from Sidney. Voices start overlapping.

MRS. SENNETT  
He avoids confrontation.

HAROLD  
They're pulling your book from  
Barnes and Noble....

HENRY  
"This is how we live, but it's also  
how we die..."

Now Gina is sitting next to him with her note pad.

GINA  
Sidney, I'm not going to burn those  
pages.

Sidney, perspiring, drinks his entire glass of water as the voices become louder and louder.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
You've alienated everyone.

HAROLD  
Did you fuck my daughter, Sidney?

GINA  
You need to talk to the press,  
Sidney. You can't hide forever.

BRETT  
Sidney, you hold the key.

Alexandra appears, furious.

ALEXANDRA  
You're fucking married?

GINA  
Of course he's married. How could  
you not know he's married?

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
You've alienated everyone...

Sidney closes his eyes, trying to make them all disappear, but the voices only get louder. Melody returns.

MELODY  
Sorry. Line at the bathroom.

Sidney opens his eyes. Everyone has disappeared, except for one. Melody looks up at Alexandra, mistaking her for the waitress.

MELODY (CONT'D)  
 Thanks for waiting. I've decided  
 and I'm going to have the Risotto.

Sidney looks up at Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA  
 Fuck you, Sidney. Fuck you.

Melody looks at Alexandra, confused -- she is obviously not  
 the waitress.

MELODY  
 Who is this, Sidney?

SIDNEY 24  
 (to Alexandra)  
 You're a hallucination.

Alexandra slaps Sidney across the face. She is obviously not  
 a hallucination. He looks at Melody, who is shocked.

MELODY  
 What's going on here?

SIDNEY 24  
 No... No wait a second. Wait a  
 second...

Sidney is in pain again from the stress. He holds his  
 temples to constrain it. Alexandra glares at Melody -- she's  
 clearly drunk.

ALEXANDRA  
 (to Melody)  
 What's going on here, I've been  
 fucking your husband.

Melody reacts towards Alexandra with indignation.

MELODY  
 Excuse me?

ALEXANDRA  
 You're excused.

Melody looks to Sidney for an explanation.

MELODY  
 Sidney... Sidney?

Sidney is stiff as a stone. Speechless.

ALEXANDRA  
 Tell her, Sidney. Tell her you're  
 in love with me.

Sidney stares off, hoping this is all a nightmare.

ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)  
 TELL HER.

MELODY  
 (disbelief)  
 What is this?

SIDNEY 24  
 I'm... I'm...

Sidney clutches his head like a vice.

Melody finally realizes Alexandra is telling the truth. She's devastated. She gets up from the table and runs out of the restaurant. Sidney looks at Alexandra, who is equally devastated.

ALEXANDRA  
 (crying)  
 You don't get away with it... it's  
 not fair...

Sidney realizes Melody is gone. He ignores Alexandra and goes after Melody. Alexandra bursts into tears, completely falling apart.

Melody has forgotten her inhaler, next to her wine glass.

94

**INT. EL PUEBLO HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT**

94

Francis Bishop packs his suitcase, with the television playing in the background. He's on his cell phone.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 (on cell)  
 How's the apartment? Better than  
 the dorm?  
 (smiles)  
 Good... I'll be able to come in the  
 day before graduation, and we'll  
 have dinner.  
 (notices something on TV)  
 Okay... I love you, too.

Francis hangs up, entranced by the television.

TV ANCHOR  
 About an hour ago, renowned author,  
 Sidney Hall, was admitted to the  
 Holy Cross Hospital in Taos, New  
 Mexico...

Francis sits on the bed.

TV ANCHOR (CONT'D)  
 This is the first time that the  
 notoriously reclusive Mr. Hall has  
 been heard from or seen in public  
 in over five years...

His cell phone RINGS -- "UNKNOWN" number. Francis quickly answers.

FRANCIS BISHOP

Hello?

95      **EXT. GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL -- NIGHT**

95

A light thunderstorm. Dozens of PHOTOGRAPHERS and REPORTERS are staked outside, trying to gain access. The tabloids seem to be the most obvious of the press junkies.

Francis Bishop exits his sedan and pushes through the crowd. He finally reaches the head SECURITY GUARD planted at the front entrance. Francis shows his ID.

FRANCIS BISHOP

(over the chaos)

Francis Bishop! He requested me.

The guard looks at the HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR, who nods in confirmation. They open the doors and wave him inside.

96      **INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY / 4TH FLOOR -- MOMENTS LATER**

96

Francis Bishop and the Administrator walk down the corridor towards Sidney's room with a slight sense of urgency.

ADMINISTRATOR

When he gained consciousness, we asked him who he wanted us to call. Mother, cousin, best friend, anyone. But you were the only one he mentioned. You're the only person he wants in the room.

FRANCIS BISHOP

What happened?

ADMINISTRATOR

He had a Hemorrhagic stroke. A neighbor heard his dog barking and found him. Ended up saving his life, that dog.

They arrive at Sidney's room -- it's being protected by two SECURITY GUARDS.

FRANCIS BISHOP

Is he all right?

ADMINISTRATOR

His body is failing him, Mr. Bishop... but his mind seems sharp; he still has a sense of humor. He claims it's the comfiest bed he's slept in, for years.

Francis looks at the closed door, and then back at the Administrator -- slightly scared to walk into the room.

Other PERSONNEL and DOCTORS, loiter around the hallway, looking at Francis -- the man of the moment...

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 (stalling)  
 I guess, uh... I should go inside  
 the room, now.

The Administrator nods. After a beat, the Guards open the door, and Francis slowly enters...

97

**INT. SIDNEY 30'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT**

97

Francis enters a dimly lit room, with the blinds up and the window ajar. The sound of RAIN can be heard bouncing off the sill. Reflections of siren lights bounce off the deep night sky.

Sidney is lying in bed and his sunglasses have been removed, revealing his foggy blue eyes. He seems thinner, but still rugged and more pale than ever. A tray of food sits next to Sidney's bed, untouched.

Francis cautiously enters and sits in a chair next to the patient. Sidney opens his eyes as much as he can. He slowly turns to Francis and works up a small smile.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 Hello, Mr. Hall.

SIDNEY 30  
 Call me... Sidney.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 Yes, of course. I apologize.

Francis shifts uneasily in his seat a bit, unsure of Sidney's motivations.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
 How are you feeling?

Sidney motions with his hands for something. It takes some effort.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
 Oh, a cigarette.

Francis scrambles inside his coat for a pack of cigarettes. When he finds it, he takes out a single cigarette and places it in Sidney's hand. He then helps Sidney light it with a match.

SIDNEY 30  
 Who's... outside?

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 The Press. Everyone. I can't explain it, but it's madness. They're all here for you.

SIDNEY 30  
I know... what they're here for.

Sidney tries his best to sit up a little.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
Did you bring...

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Yes. I brought everything you  
asked.

Francis removes the tray of food from the folding table and  
lays out the items in it's place, naming them as he goes.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
A small tape-recorder, two Uni-ball  
pens, three pads of paper, a large  
bottle of champagne, and your bag.

SIDNEY 30  
And Homer's at the house?

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Yes... I promise to look after  
him... while you're here.

Sidney nods with approval. Everything is here. He takes a  
moment to contain his thoughts and prepare himself for the  
world of information he's about to unleash. Sidney indicates  
the heart rate monitor.

SIDNEY 30  
Unplug that, please. I can't  
concentrate.

Francis realizes he is serious and reluctantly complies.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
(quoting to himself)  
"Whatever happens in the desert,  
stays in the desert..."

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Pardon?

SIDNEY 30  
Nothing... Let's get started.

98

**INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING / LOBBY -- NIGHT**

98

Melody enters the lobby with Sidney 24 chasing after her.  
She goes to the elevator, face dripping with tears.

SIDNEY 24  
What are you doing?

MELODY  
Getting the rest of my things.

SIDNEY 24  
Let me explain.

MELODY  
Explain what? That you're a liar  
and a cheat?

SIDNEY 24  
What was I supposed to do? You  
just told me you were pregnant. We  
were apart from each other, I was  
confused-

MELODY  
I wish you never crossed that  
street. I wish I never met you.

SIDNEY 24  
Don't say that.

She keeps pressing the button until the doors finally open.  
She enters the elevator and Sidney follows her inside.

99

**INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- EVENING**

99

Sidney, 18, packs his bags, including his clothes, a solid  
pile of journals. Some of the journals are half-burnt.

His mother stands in the doorway.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
What are you doing?

SIDNEY 18  
I'm leaving. For good.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
The hell you are.

SIDNEY 18  
Just leave me alone.

She approaches him from behind, grabs his duffle bag and  
DUMPS it on the floor.

100

**INT. SIDNEY 24'S ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS**

100

Melody enters the elevator and goes straight to the corner,  
refusing to acknowledge Sidney.

Sidney stands by the doors as they close. He's ashamed.

MELODY  
How many have there been?

SIDNEY 24  
Don't do this.

MELODY  
Three? Four? Ten? HOW MANY?

SIDNEY 24  
It didn't mean anything, all right?  
You're the only person in my entire  
life that means anything to m-.

MELODY  
Oh, don't give me that BULLSHIT.

SIDNEY 24  
It's not bullshit. Would you  
please look at me.

Melody refuses to look at him. Suddenly the elevator CLUNKS  
to a STOP and the lights go out. Blackness.

MELODY  
Oh my god. Are you fucking kidding  
me?

SIDNEY 24  
Melody, listen to me.

MELODY  
GET AWAY FROM ME.

She tries to start the elevator again, but to no avail.

SIDNEY 24  
*Talk to me.*

MELODY  
That's funny coming from you...

101 **INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- EVENING**

101

Sidney's mother continues to stare him down.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
With what money? You can't even  
afford to get on a bus.

SIDNEY 18  
I sold a book.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
What do you mean you sold a book?

SIDNEY 18  
I got an advance on a book I'm  
writing.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
For how much?

SIDNEY 18  
None of your business.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
Damn well right it's my business.

SIDNEY 18  
Everything's your business. You  
throw my things, you spy on me. I  
can't breathe.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
I've put every dime I've ever  
earned towards you. All of my  
money.

SIDNEY 18  
You mean *Dad's* money. It's called  
"workman's comp", and it's no way  
to make a living.

And with that, she becomes hysterical -- starts SLAPPING him.

Sidney tries to grab her arms during the struggle, but she  
PUSHES him away, causing him to fall down, and PUNCTURE the  
temple of his head on the corner of his desk.

102      **INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING / ELEVATOR**

102

Sidney 24, strikes a match, illuminating the elevator.  
Melody presses the button to start the elevator again.  
Nothing. She presses it again. Still nothing.

MELODY  
This can't be happening.

SIDNEY 24  
Maybe this is a blessing in  
disguise. Maybe we can talk about  
things that we *never* talk about!

MELODY  
Like what, Sidney? Like how many  
times you've said you loved me and  
then snuck off to sleep with  
someone else?

SIDNEY 24  
She was the only one, I swear to  
god. I mean, recently, she's been  
the only one...  
(digging his hole deeper)

MELODY  
I'm feeling claustrophobic...

The match goes out.

103      **INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM**

103

Sidney's mother continues to hit him, as he feels some blood  
on the side of his bed.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
 You don't get to choose when you  
 leave!

Suddenly, Sidney's father appears out of nowhere and YANKS Sidney's mother off of him.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
 Let go of me! Why are you  
 defending him?

She struggles to get free, but Gerald clutches her hard.

104      **INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING / ELEVATOR**      104

Sidney 24 STRIKES a match and presses the Emergency Bell button, again

SIDNEY 24  
 Lights should be on, soon.

He bangs on the doors for a moment to get someone's attention. No one responds.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
 Hello? Can anyone hear me!?

Nothing. He rings the emergency bell again, a bit more stern. He then turns around to find Melody leaning up against the corner, a bit scared.

He takes in the situation for a moment. He goes through her purse.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
 Where's your inhaler?

Melody shakes her head.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
 Did you leave it at the restaurant?

She doesn't know. Sidney tries to hide his panic.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
 Okay, don't worry. We'll get out  
 of here real soon.

The match goes out.

105      **INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM**      105

Sidney 18 lays on the floor, arms over his head in case his mother gets free. He watches his father STRUGGLES to hold her back.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER  
 He's leaving. He said he's leaving  
 me. He's not... He can't...

Suddenly, Sidney witnesses a rare moment of fortitude from his father, as Gerald starts to whisper to his wife...

GERALD  
 (calmly)  
 Velouria...?

She calms down for a second, still breathing heavy.

GERALD (CONT'D)  
 Velouria... Let him go.

SIDNEY'S MOTHER (VELOURIA)  
 No.  
 (softer)  
 No, no, no.

GERALD  
 Velouria, he doesn't belong here  
 anymore. You've got to let him go.

Velouria shakes her head in disbelief.

GERALD (CONT'D)  
 Let him go...

She slumps down into a chair and weeps, burying her head in her hands.

106

**INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING / ELEVATOR**

106

Melody is crouched in the corner, now breathing heavily. Sidney, 24, is frantically banging on the doors.

SIDNEY 24  
 What the FUCK!  
 (banging the door)  
 We're stuck in the elevator! Can  
 anyone hear us?! HELLO?!

He kneels down next to Melody, who is staring off like a deer in headlights. He strikes another match.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
 (softly)  
 Honey? Honey? Just... pretend  
 like we're in a big open space. A  
 large field, okay?

She nods quickly.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
 Close your eyes and pretend it's me  
 and you in a large field, with a  
 huge blue sky.

Tears streaming out of her closed eyes, she nods again. Her breathing is getting worse. The match goes out.

107 **INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM**

107

Velouria wipes the tears from her eyes, before standing up. She looks at Sidney -- embarrassed.

VELOURIA

Is this because of the other night?

SIDNEY 18

(shaking his head)

It's not... just one thing, mom.

Humiliated, she exits the room, leaving Sidney and his father, sitting across the room from each other.

Gerald rises and walks to the door.

GERALD

I'll... get you an ice-pack.

He leaves the room.

108 **INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING / ELEVATOR**

108

Sidney, 24, with his coat off and tie undone, is BANGING on the door still. But he's weaker now, and can't hit so hard. He looks over at Melody -- she's BREATHING very heavily now in the corner, sweating and completely drained.

SIDNEY 24

I'm right here with you, okay? I'm right next to you.

He again tries to pry the doors open with his hands. But it's no use. He rushes over to her, holds her head up, and STRIKES another match. Her face is red and wet from tears. He tears up a little with her.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)

It'll be all right. It will be all right.

He is trying to convince himself more than her, it seems. A VOICE emerges from the other side of the door.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hello? Someone in there?

Sidney gets up immediately and leans against the doors.

SIDNEY 24

Yes! My wife and I are trapped in the elevator. She has asthma and we don't have her medication!

VOICE (O.S.)  
 There's a citywide blackout. It  
 may take a minute to get someone up  
 here.

SIDNEY 24  
 Okay, if you could just... hurry.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 I'll be right back.

Sidney kneels down and holds Melody, whose BREATHING becomes more and more rapid. He holds her to his body, gently.

109      **EXT. SIDNEY 18'S HOUSE / DRIVEWAY -- DUSK**      109

Sidney 18 holding an ice pack to his head, throws his bags in the back seat of Melody's car. Before he enters in the passenger seat, his father stands in the front doorway of the house. Sidney gets in.

Melody backs out of the driveway onto the street, and slowly drives off. Sidney's father waves his hand for the final goodbye, and Sidney returns the gesture by leaning his right hand on the window. His father gets smaller and smaller as they drive further away. Finally... gone.

110      **INT. SIDNEY'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT**      110

Francis has his pen and notebook ready.

Sidney, 30, has his bearings back temporarily and takes a swig of champagne before starting. He speaks softly and carefully, taking breaths between words now and again.

SIDNEY 30  
 I called you here tonight for three reasons. One, is that I want you to write this little book of yours, and you seem ready and willing to take on the task. Two, is that I don't have time for the details, only the guts of the story. I know I can trust you to fill in the rest. And three... is that you're the only person I know.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
 (smiles)  
 Okay... so where should we start?

SIDNEY 30  
 We'll start with the person "Suburban Tragedy" is based on. Someone I knew long ago, who inevitably changed my perspective on life forever. His name was Brett Newport...  
 (sighs)  
 And this is how I killed him...

111 **EXT. FARMER'S PEAK -- DAY**

111

Sidney, 18, and Brett have dug themselves a nice sized hole on the hilltop. Finally, Sidney HITS something.

Brett shoves him out of the way, and starts digging it out with his hands. He eventually pulls out a metal red lunch box with remnants of a paper bag surrounding it.

Brett rips off all of the paper bag, and wipes away the dirt. Slowly, he opens the lunch box to make sure the contents are still there. A slight smile on his face reveals that all is well.

SIDNEY 18

What is it?

BRETT

None of your business.

Brett shuts the lunch box and grabs his shovel to leave.

SIDNEY 18

Fine.

Sidney takes his shovel as well, and they walk back down the hill.

112 **INT. BRETT'S CAR -- DUSK**

112

Brett holds the lunch box tight in his lap while driving. Sidney looks over, half wondering about its contents and half just not wanting to deal with this situation anymore.

As they pull up to Sidney's house, a black town car with its headlights on, waits across the street for their arrival.

BRETT

Shit.

Brett quickly passes off the lunch box to Sidney.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Hide it under your seat. Now.

Sidney shoves the lunch box under his seat.

Brett's father, JUDGE GEORGE NEWPORT exits the town car. He approaches the driver's side and Brett rolls the window down.

BRETT (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

GEORGE

Your sister told me where you were. The question is, what are you doing here?

BRETT  
I'm hanging out with a friend.

George slaps Brett on his face, hard.

GEORGE  
Your mother's been worried about  
you all day. She called the god  
damn police.

BRETT  
Overreact, much?

George OPENS the door and pulls Brett out by his ear.

GEORGE  
Get out of the car!

When Brett's seat empties, the door slams shut, and Sidney overhears pieces of the argument through the closed windows.

Brett tries to get a word in, but to no avail. His father is furious. Some hitting is involved, and Sidney can hear them arguing about military school, which Brett will supposedly attend in two weeks. Then, George tells him to leave his car there and to come with him.

After a minute of this, the door opens. George pushes his son's head into the car to tell Sidney 'goodbye'.

BRETT  
I gotta go, man. I'll come back  
for the car later.

SIDNEY 18  
That's cool.

BRETT  
Remember, Hall... you hold the key.

GEORGE  
'You hold the key'? What the hell  
is that?

George takes Brett back out of the car and SLAMS the door shut again. They enter their town car and drive off.

Sidney takes the lunch box out from under the seat. He looks at it for a moment. What should he do?

113

**INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER**

113

Still looking at it -- the clock ticking. The lunch box sits quietly on Sidney's dresser and Sidney is sitting on the edge of his bed.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
I stared at that lunch box for over  
half an hour. What was the best  
way to go about this?

(MORE)

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 It was obvious enough I had to open it. The question was, would it be an important object? Because if it was, that might be time consuming. Melody was still forefront on my mind. And truth be told, I hadn't properly jerked off to her yet; Which was something I had been waiting to do all day. But somehow I felt obligated to bring closure to this current development. Even though, deep down I knew that once I opened that box, it would ultimately not be the ending, but rather just the beginning of something very unfortunate. And sadly, I was right.

Sidney places his hands on the lid and lifts it up. Inside this rusty box lies a videotape and a .22 Caliber handgun. Sidney removes the gun first.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 He must have stolen daddy's handgun...

114 INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

114

Sidney, 24, sits at his dining room table, and opens the exact same red lunch box, revealing the exact same handgun. The videotape is absent. He takes out the gun and closes the box.

115 INT. SIDNEY 18'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

115

Sidney, 18, removes the videotape -- no label, no note, nothing. He inserts the tape into his VCR and watches the television with a bit of shock.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 There, documented on video, was Brett's father, Judge George Newport, having sex with an underage girl from behind.

Close on Sidney's face, saddening as the tape goes on. All that can be heard are sex noises and garbled dialogue.

GEORGE (O.S.)  
 Hold still until I'm done.

More groaning and grunting.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 But he was never done.... And when it was finally over, he told her to put her clothes back on, and he would arrange for a car to take her back to school. Middle School, by the looks of it.

(MORE)

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 He then reminded her that he and  
 his wife had theatre tickets Friday  
 night and would need her to baby-  
 sit Brett and Darcy.

Closer still on Sidney, hand on forehead, head hung low.

TV: The Judge's office is now empty.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 And then, just minutes after the  
 Judge left, it all came together...

TV: Brett, looking very young, enters the room.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 God, he couldn't have been older  
 than ten...

TV: Brett advances towards the camera.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 He walked up to the camera, which  
 apparently was hidden inside a  
 bookshelf of sorts, and turned it  
 off. Then everything went black.

BLACKOUT. TV fuzz appears. Sidney, 18, stares at the  
 television, dumbfounded.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 Smart kid. Smart fucking kid. Who  
 would've known that underneath that  
 football helmet was such a clever  
 kid? And such a damaged soul?

Sidney 18 stops the tape and immediately starts writing in  
 his current journal.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 A soul that may well have been on  
 it's way to greatness, had it not  
 been stilted by an upbringing I  
 couldn't even begin to imagine.

While writing in his journal, Sidney 18 looks out the window  
 at Brett's Corvette parked in his driveway.

116

**INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- DAY**

116

Sidney sits in class the following day. He looks over at  
 Brett's seat -- empty.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 He wasn't in school the following  
 Monday. He was probably grounded  
 and beaten, which would have  
 explained the bruises I saw on his  
 face later that week.

117      **EXT. COMMUNITY DAY FAIR -- NIGHT**

117

Numerous FAMILIES wandering around from one booth to the next.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 What was I to do with this tape?  
 It's hefty weight was lodged on my  
 shoulders, and Brett was nowhere to  
 be found all week. On Saturday,  
 things got worse.

Melody and Sidney are engaged in conversation when Brett and Darcy meet them at the table.

SIDNEY 18  
 Where were you all week?

BRETT  
 I was sick, dude.

DARCY  
 Hi, Melody, can I talk to you for a  
 second?

Melody and Darcy walk away. Brett looks at Sidney. His demeanor is very serious. He sits next to Sidney.

BRETT  
 So ah, do you still have the thing?

SIDNEY 18  
 Yeah. I can bring it to the finals  
 on Monday if you want.

BRETT  
 Did you watch it?

SIDNEY 18  
 Look Brett, it's really none of my  
 business.

BRETT  
 (more stern)  
 Did you watch it?

Sidney nods.

BRETT (CONT'D)  
 I'm gonna fuckin' kill him, I swear  
 to god. Next time he tries to  
 touch me, I'm gonna take out a  
 knife and stab him in his fucking  
 neck.

Brett puts his head in his hands. Sidney tries to think of the right thing to say.

SIDNEY 18  
 You know, if you turn the tape in  
 to the authorities, he won't be  
 around anymore.

Brett is tearing up. He looks across the grounds at his  
 sister, Darcy. She's laughing with Melody about something.

BRETT  
 He rapes Darcy.

SIDNEY 18  
 Okay... Brett, you have to turn  
 the tape in as soon as possible.

BRETT  
 (looking at Darcy)  
 She won't say anything. But I know  
 he does it. I hear her crying  
 through the wall some nights.

Brett lowers his head again, angry.

SIDNEY 18  
 Brett? Do you hear me? This has  
 to end. I mean, that's why we dug  
 it up, right? So it could end?

Brett nods a little bit, but his mind is clearly elsewhere.

BRETT  
 I'm gonna kill him. I'm gonna stab  
 the fuckin' bastard.

SIDNEY 18  
 Brett? Don't do anything stupid,  
 man. You hear me? Just wait until  
 Monday, okay? On Monday we'll turn  
 it in. I'll go with you.

Brett nods again. Sidney's very worried about him, and they  
 sit there for a while.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 I should have turned that tape in  
 the next day. I should have  
 listened to his words and taken  
 them more seriously, but I didn't.  
 I chose to wait until Monday, when  
 it was too late.

118 INT. SIDNEY 18'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

118

Sidney, 18, and Melody come through the front door quietly,  
 so they won't wake up Sidney's parents.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 I came in later that night...

As he closes the door behind him, Sidney sees a light emitting from the living room. He enters the living room holding Melody's hand. His Mother is sitting in front of the lit fireplace, waiting for him. She looks like she's been drinking.

SIDNEY 18

Mom?

The videotape is resting in her lap...

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)

Mom. This is Melody. She lives across the street.

Velouria doesn't care. Sidney sees the videotape.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)

What's that?

She looks down at the tape, with tears of anger swelling in her eyes.

VELOURIA

I found this in your VCR.

Sidney suddenly realizes the seriousness of the situation.

SIDNEY 18

Whoa... Wait a second. That's not what you think-

VELOURIA

I don't know what to think. I don't know if it's porn or some black market S&M shit, but it's much sicker than what I imagined you'd have.

She stands up brewing with rage -- a time bomb ready to explode. Sidney sees her laundry basket is filled with his journals.

VELOURIA (CONT'D)

And after finding this, I started to read your journals. I figured maybe I could get some insight into my son. But instead, I read about drugs and masturbation and black school teachers. Oh, and let's not forget the wonderful passages about myself, described as a *whore*. A high school cheerleader who got "knocked up by the tight end"...

(enraged)

Well, fuck you!

And with that, she tosses the tape into the fireplace. Sidney SCREAMS and quickly scrambles for a poker to salvage the video tape.

Velouria starts grabbing his journals and tossing them into the fire as well. Without Velouria noticing, Melody grabs as many notebooks as she can, and hides them behind her back.

VELOURIA (CONT'D)  
 Maybe you'll think twice about what you write, next time. Maybe you'll give me a little respect.

Velouria, eyes filled with tears, rushes out of the room.

Sidney finally gets hold of the poker and drags out the remnants of the tape. Unfortunately, it's too late...

He stares at the melted plastic; then slowly crumbles to the floor, shocked. Melody stands in the corner of the room, clutching the few notebooks she was able to save.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 Later that night, Brett called me to ask when we should meet up. But I had to tell him the tape was gone.  
 (beat)  
 He hung up on me.

119 INT. SIDNEY'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

119

Francis is writing furiously to catch up with all of this information. Sidney, 30, stares at the ceiling, filled with regret.

SIDNEY 30  
 He died on an unusually cold Sunday. Stabbed himself through the stomach...  
 (deep breath)  
 There were rumors that he did it to avoid Military School. But I knew the truth.

The recorder STOPS. Francis scrambles to reset it. Sidney keeps going.

SIDNEY 30 (CONT'D)  
 There was a memorial for him on the school grounds. Girls would use it as an excuse to get out of class. They'd claim they were shaken up and had to go visit it.

120 INT. STUDY HALL -- DAY

120

Sidney sits behind Lewis.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
 But that was all bullshit. Because nobody really gave a fuck about Brett Newport.

Lewis is in a good mood. Sidney taps him on the shoulder.

SIDNEY 18  
Psst, Lewis.

Lewis turns around.

SIDNEY 18 (CONT'D)  
How ya doing?

LEWIS  
I'm okay.

SIDNEY 18  
You heard about Brett?

LEWIS  
Yeah... I'm glad he's dead.

Lewis turns back to his studies.

121 **INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT -- DUSK**

121

Sidney sits in his living room, a near empty bottle of Scotch in his lap -- and Brett's Father's handgun next to him.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
I found out a few years later that Brett's father played a large role in getting my books banned from school libraries across the mid west. Un-fucking-believable.

The television is showing footage of Judge George Newport's press conference. He shines his fake smile and answers questions accordingly. The television is on 'mute'.

Sidney rises, grabs the gun, and walks out to the terrace.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
Ironically, his was the last face I clearly saw...

122 **INT. GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL -- NIGHT**

122

Sidney drifts off.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Sidney?

No Response.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)  
Sidney? Are you still with me?

Sidney comes back around.

SIDNEY 30  
I killed Brett Newport.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
No, Sidney. You can't blame  
yourself for that.

SIDNEY 30  
I killed him. I may not have been  
there when the knife went in... but  
I've been there ever since. And  
he's been with me, watching me.  
Reminding me that the entire course  
of a person's life can change in a  
millisecond. But you see... his  
was only my first murder...

Sidney drifts off again.

FRANCIS BISHOP  
Sidney? Sidney?

SIDNEY 30  
Where was I?

FRANCIS BISHOP  
You had a gun.

SIDNEY 30  
No. I was in an elevator...

123

**INT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING / ELEVATOR**

123

Sidney strikes another match. This is his last one. He holds Melody, who is wheezing now, straining to get control over her breathing. She looks at Sidney, begging him with her eyes to save her. But he can't. He's totally helpless.

MEN are on the other side of the shaft, trying to get the doors open.

SIDNEY 24  
(whispering)  
Melody? Stay with me. We're  
almost free. Don't you hear them?

She clutches his arm, digging her nails into his skin until blood is drawn.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
You're doing great, honey. Just a  
few more minutes, okay? Just a few  
more minutes...

Her hand loses its grip and goes limp.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)  
Melody... Honey?

Her body becomes still. Her breathing comes to a halt. The match extinguishes.

SIDNEY 24 (CONT'D)

Melody?

(tearing up)

Melody? No. Please, god,  
please...

He shakes her gently...

But she's gone...

124      **EXT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT**      124

Police cars and an ambulance await outside, sirens spinning. The PARAMEDICS cover Melody's face; then load her into the ambulance. Doors shut. Black.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)

Once Melody left me, I realized my  
life was meaningless.

125      **EXT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT / TERRACE -- CONTINUOUS**      125

Sidney, 24, looks down at the PEOPLE in the streets, as he holds the handgun... Half teary-eyed and half perspiring, he slowly raises the gun... but thinks better of it.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)

It dawned on me, out there on my  
terrace, looking out at all of  
those wonderful city lights...

Sidney 24 TOSSES the gun over the railing, into darkness.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)

...that I was just one of those of  
those millions of city lights; a  
tiny little pixel buried within the  
white noise of life, blinking on,  
for a just a brief second in  
time....

126      **EXT. SIDNEY 24'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- MOMENTS LATER**      126

Sidney grabs his coat, and looks around his apartment...

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)

I didn't want to be a Martyr... I  
wanted to be *nobody*. And I walked  
out of that apartment with only the  
clothes on my back, to *become*  
*nobody*. I never returned again...

Under a little post-it which reads:  
**"Things to look forward to"**

Sidney takes out a pen and writes: "*May 25th*" And then walks out of his apartment, for good.

127      **EXT. RURAL AMERICA -- DUSK**      127

Sidney, 30, and Homer eat quietly, living off the land.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)  
And while I was living off the  
land, dreaming of Melody, they took  
everything from me...

128      **INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY**      128

Velouria sits with her LAWYER at a table with Harold and MEMBERS of Porter House Publishing. A copy of 'Stay of Execution' sits on the table...

Harold makes his case to release Sidney's second book.

HAROLD  
It's been many months now, Mrs. Hall... And I can't think of anything that would preserve your son's legacy more than releasing this book. It's widely known his wish was for the public to have the opportunity to read his last book, no matter what happened to him.

VELOURIA  
How would you know that?

HAROLD  
One of our vice presidents, Gina Kael, was his personal assistant for years.

GINA is revealed to be sitting next to Harold.

VELOURIA  
I don't know... It doesn't feel right.

GINA  
No one knew him better than I did, Mrs. Hall. He entrusted me with these pages. He wanted the world to see them.

Harold slides a check down the table for Velouria to read. She picks it up and is visibly shocked at the number.

Velouria looks to her LAWYER for advice. But her lawyer nods, assuring her that it is the right thing to do.

She finally signs.

129      **EXT. SUBURBAN YARD -- AFTERNOON**

129

Melody, 26, is pushing a young CHILD on a swing set. Sidney, 28, looks on. A happy family.

SIDNEY 30 (V.O.)

I dreamt my life continued as it should have. I dreamt of a family, and moving out of the city. I dreamt of Melody at thirty, forty, fifty. Growing old with each other. Holidays together. I dreamt that nothing ever went wrong, and that I was happy.

130      **INT. GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL -- DAWN**

130

Sidney lays in this new hospital bed, in just about the same position.

SIDNEY 30

But, I drove her away. I dared her to leave me and she did. When I woke up, I was numb. I've played her death scene in my head over and over again. Hoping against hope that the ending would change, and she would wake up and say "Sidney, I won't leave you just yet. I'm still breathing". But of course...

Sidney can barely speak anymore. He falls into a daze momentarily. Francis places his hand on Sidney's arm.

FRANCIS BISHOP

Sidney?

SIDNEY 30

(barely)  
My Melody. The only half of me that mattered...

Sidney's heavy breathing is taking its toll. He's tired. Francis pats Sidney on his arm again.

FRANCIS BISHOP

(softly)  
Sidney? Sidney, can you hear me?

Sidney slightly nods.

FRANCIS BISHOP (CONT'D)

Why don't we take a small break, okay? I'll get us some coffee.

Sidney moves his eyelids to show he understands. Francis gets up quietly and leaves the room.

Sidney's POV: his hazy eyes fixated on emptiness. He then experiences a flashback.

131 **EXT. FARMER'S PEAK -- DAY (FLASHBACK)** 131

*Sidney and Brett, both 10 years old, peddle up to the hill at Farmer's Peak, skidding their bikes to a halt and creating a cloud of dust. They run up the hill, find their spot and begin digging.*

*When they finish digging, Brett takes out a small item, wrapped in a brown paper bag, and places it inside the ground. Sidney quickly fills back in the dirt with him.*

*When Sidney gets up to leave, he notices Brett is still sitting there, staring at the ground.*

132 **INT. GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL -- DAWN** 132

**DREAM SEQUENCE:** He then experiences a vision of Melody. She is looking at him, smiling, with nothing but a thick haze of white surrounding her. He sees himself gazing back at her much like he did for their first kiss. She lightly touches his cheek and slowly moves her hand down his neck.

MELODY

You don't have to apologize anymore. I want you to come home.

They kiss each other with a mix of love and longing. The white becomes brighter and brighter, enveloping them until they disappear, leaving a huge sun-like void.

133 **INT. SIDNEY'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- MORNING** 133

Francis returns to the room holding a cup of coffee. Sidney appears to be asleep. Francis sets the coffee on the table and adjusts Sidney's covers, tucking him in. Then, something catches Francis's eye;

Francis looks back at Sidney. He lifts his arm and checks his pulse. Nothing. Francis slumps down in his chair, with great sadness. A tear develops in his eye. He looks down at the notebook he's been writing in all night. He scans all the way back to the first page.

At the top of the page, he had written "The Story of Brett Newport". He takes a pen and crosses out "Brett Newport" and replaces it with "Sidney Hall". He then places the notebook down, and leans over Sidney to kiss him on the forehead.

FRANCIS BISHOP

Good night, my friend.

He takes the mini-recorder, the notebook and his trenchcoat, and leaves the room.

134 **EXT. GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL -- MINUTES LATER** 134

Francis is greeted by the same chaos of press from the night before, as he exits the building.

There are more PEOPLE than ever, awaiting the word on Sidney's status. Fortunately, they are unaware that Francis has that answer.

Francis bypasses the media blitz, and walks towards his car. After dumping his notes in the backseat, he takes one last look at Sidney's window. A nurse draws the shades. He gets into his car and drives off.

135      **INT. MELODY'S CAR -- DAY**

135

Sidney, 18, and his new found love, Melody, driving down the Taconic. They are conversing and laughing. Melody grabs one of his journals from the back seat and hands it to him. He begins to read some passages from it.

They're favorite SONG comes over the radio. They're filled with life -- the future unwritten.

136      **EXT. TACONIC PARKWAY -- CONTINUOUS**

136

Melody's car cruises down the parkway, heading for a new life. The trees that surround their path are filled with vibrant greens, suggesting a fresh, healthy era, with much to look forward to -- a new chapter in their lives.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

\*