

Super Dark Times

Written by

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1	EXT. WOODS - DAWN	1	*
	<u>A DEER</u> stands by the treeline on the edge of a field.		*
	The Deer looks up, frozen, staring at something off screen, then suddenly it takes off, <u>running full speed</u> , bounding across the land out into a clearing up ahead.		*
			*
2	EXT. SOCCER FIELD - MOMENTS LATER	2	
	The Deer is running on the neatly trimmed grass. Up ahead A SCHOOL BUILDING is visible.		*
3	EXT. HIGH SCHOOL	3	
	The rising sun reflects on the windows. They're large, practically floor to ceiling.		
	THE DEER		*
	bombing across the field, getting closer to the school. It's hooves kicking up mud. It's eyes black and emotionless. Eventually it connects with		*
			*
	THE WINDOW		*
	Its face smashing into the glass. We see it <u>in slow motion</u> .		*
	The window explodes around the deer, glass shards floating in the air; blood tearing off the deer's body and mixing with the hovering glass.		*
			*
4	INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER	4	*
	Several static shots of the aftermath. The shattered classroom window; in the hallway, blood spattered and smeared across the pristine white tile; a trail showing the path the wounded animal took, leading to:		*
			*
5	INT. CAFETERIA	5	
	The Deer has collapsed in the middle of the room, exhausted, bleeding out. A huddled brown lump gasping for air.		*
	A JANITOR enters and pauses at the sight of it. He drops the mop and runs down the hallway.		*
			*

CUT TO:

6 INT. CAFETERIA - MORNING

6

Faculty members crowd around the scene, whispering, shocked, disgusted, sad. Two POLICE OFFICERS make their way through.

THE DEER

Kicks and squirms with what little life it has left. The Officers look down at the poor creature, then around at the STUDENTS lining the walls.

One Officer looks at the other and silently kneels down by the dying animal. He gently takes its head in his hands.

While he holds it still, the other Officer raises his boot, bringing it down hard on the animal's neck. It takes two STOMPS to do the job, but the deer stops moving, its neck broken.

He gets closer, makes sure the animal has stopped breathing, and stands. He gives it a gentle kick. The Students stare, some even crying.

TITLE CARD:

SUPER DARK TIMES

FADE IN:

A COLORFUL PIXELATED IMAGE

Moving, undulating, totally abstract. Colors shifting, bathed in static. Uncomfortably close to a

TV SCREEN

Just an indecipherable mess of colors and static until suddenly out of the blur and fuzz a person can be seen, but then it's gone again, flickering back and forth like a magic-eye painting. The image suddenly clears again.

A TOPLESS WOMAN

Here then gone. The volume is raised on the TV and little stabs of music cut through the white noise, funky porno bass accompanied by moaning.

SCRAMBLED TV PORN. It goes on a bit longer. Almost like video art.

From nearby, we hear the VOICES of two teenage boys

JOSH (O.S.)
Would you?

ZACH (O.S.)
I think so.

CUT TO:

A YEARBOOK PHOTO OF A GIRL

She's probably pretty. Hard to tell with that awkward school photo smile. *

JOSH
Yeah, I would too. *

They flip to a photo of ANOTHER GIRL. Blonde hair. Braces. *

ZACH
I don't know, probably.

JOSH
Meh, blonde. *

ZACH
I see. *

ANOTHER GIRL, unquestionably attractive. *

BOTH
Yes!

A YEARBOOK PHOTO OF A WOMAN. A teacher. The name underneath reads 'Mrs. Hunt.' *

ZACH
Ohh, yes. Twice. If she'd let me. *

ONE LAST PHOTO. Cute girl, terrible picture: mouth half open, clearly not ready for the camera to snap. *

7 INT. TV ROOM - AFTERNOON

7

The scrambled porn plays on TV while the two boys sit on the couch flipping through their 8th grade yearbook. They are ZACH and JOSH. Both 14 and trying too hard: Zach with his short sleeve shirt and tie. Josh with his blue hoodie and Elvis Costello glasses. *

Zach's finger is still on the photo.

ZACH
Allison Banister.

Josh answers instantly.

JOSH
Obviously yes. Any time, anywhere.

ZACH
Really? Anywhere? Like ANY where?

JOSH
Son, I'd do that shit for the talent show if that's what it took. Onstage in front of everyone: Fuck. Yes. You wouldn't?

*
*
*

Zach is reluctant to answer after Josh's declaration.

ZACH
She's cool. We've known her since, elementary. I mean, I like her.

*

JOSH
Me too.

*

ZACH
We just actually know her. She and I hang out sometimes in English so... Feels weird talking about her.

*
*

An awkward pause between them. Clearly they're both into her. Josh changes the subject.

*

JOSH
Uh-huh. Got any drinks?

ZACH
Caffeine free Coke.

JOSH
Well then...

8 INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

8 *

Zach and Josh are slipping on their jackets and boots.

*

JOSH
Man, I hate the fucking winter. It's such a schlep to do anything.

*
*
*

ZACH
Yeah, but the snow is pretty.

JOSH
(laughing)
It's pretty?

Zach shrugs off Josh's continued laughter and calls out to his mother.

ZACH
Mom! ...MOM! We're going out for a few minutes!

They head out through the door that leads into the garage.

Zach's mother, KAREN, belatedly answers, shouting back from wherever she is.

KAREN (O.S.)
WHAT?

But there's no one to hear.

9 EXT. ROAD - AFTERNOON

9

The boys peddle through the wintry landscape: trees and parks and subdivisions. It's lovely. Mythic, in a way.

10 EXT. GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

10

Two pumps and a convenience store.

Standing outside the store are two more boys: DARYL, messy in appearance; kind of a dipshit. And a younger, sharp-eyed kid named CHARLIE.

Zach and Josh talk quietly as they approach.

JOSH
Oh, shit. Is that Daryl?

ZACH
Leave him alone.

Daryl and Charlie are already approaching.

DARYL
'Sup, cockbiters?!

JOSH
 (already sick of him)
 Great.

*
 *

Daryl rushes them and puts up his dukes like an old timey boxer. Zach responds in kind and they circle each other, horsing around.

*

Josh waves at Charlie, sizes him up. Awkward introductions.

JOSH
 Hey, I'm Josh.

CHARLIE
 Hey.

JOSH
 You don't go to our school.

*

CHARLIE
 Nope. Callaway Middle. Go Cougars!

*

Charlie's a master of deadpan sarcasm. Josh laughs a little.

Zach breaks from Daryl's affectionate headlock and chimes in.

ZACH
 He's Carol's little brother.

JOSH
 Oh, okay! Right.

ZACH
 Carol Sharp.

JOSH
 I know who Carol is.

DARYL
 Everyone knows Tig!

*

He pantomimes a set of large breasts.

CHARLIE
 Come on, man.

DARYL
 Tig Bitty Sharp! You love it. You
 LOVE it!

He grabs Charlie's head and buries it in his pantomime cleavage.

Charlie pushes him off. *

CHARLIE
You smell like cat box.

DARYL
Man, if I had tits I'd play with them
constantly. *

ZACH
Word. What are you guys doing here? *

Daryl shrugs hard. *You're lookin' at it.* *

DARYL
You?

ZACH
Just grabbing drinks and stuff.

DARYL
Cool.

ZACH
You want to--

DARYL
Nah, cause I'm broke as fuuuuck!

Zach hesitates before saying:

ZACH
I have a couple of bucks if you
guys--

DARYL
Hell yeah!

Daryl and Charlie head into the store. Josh gestures to
Zach, angry but silent. *What the hell are you doing?!* *

Zach signals back, innocent. *What? These guys are alright!* *

11 INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

11

The four boys wander around, examining everything, making
their selections. *

CHARLIE
Melon soda sounds gross. *

JOSH
Why would they make it if it was
gross?

DARYL
They make tons of gross stuff, man.
Pickles are gross.

Josh is drawn to the small section of foreign food: strange
cans of nectar, bags of dried fruit, etc. Daryl steps up
beside him and snatches a bag.

DARYL (cont'd)
Dried squid?! Holy shit!

CHARLIE
Mmm.

JOSH
Somebody eats it.

DARYL
Nobody eats this.

Zach suddenly grabs the bag from him and heroically marches
to the register. The others follow. They place their
selections down on the counter.

ZACH
I'll get it.

The other three wait outside while the store owner rings it
all up. He's an amusingly odd middle aged guy named DUKE.

DUKE
Hey there, my friend.

ZACH
Hi.

DUKE
You guys just hanging out?

ZACH
Yeah.

DUKE
What are you with these losers for?
Don't you have a girlfriend?

ZACH
(laughs)
No.

DUKE
No girlfriend? You have a job?

ZACH
No.

DUKE
There's your problem, my friend: you need more money. You looking for a job?

ZACH
Not really.

DUKE
If you ever think you want one, come talk to me. I own the sandwich shop down the street. Great sandwiches. You want a job, you stop by.

ZACH
Alright.

DUKE
Alright, the total is 8.87.

12 EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

12

The dudes crowd around as Zach parcels out the snacks.

JOSH
Thanks, Zach.

ZACH
It's cool.

Charlie starts chanting, maintaining his deadpan demeanor.

CHARLIE
Squid! Squid! Squid!

Zach unveils the bag of spicy dried squid.

JOSH
I can't believe you got that.

DARYL
I want to see you eat it.

Zach theatrically pops a piece into his mouth. Chews. The others stare. He keeps his cool for several seconds... then breaks.

He grabs a bottle of soda from the bag in a big ass hurry. He fumbles and drops it when he tries to get it open. When he finally succeeds, it explodes, soda fizz streaming out.

Daryl laughs his ass off. Zach takes a huge swig of the soda. Josh pats him on the back. *

JOSH

You okay?

Zach nods.

JOSH

Give me one.

He reaches for the bag of squid.

DARYL

You guys are whacked. *

Josh chews with much less fanfare.

JOSH

It's not terrible.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but it's not Skittles, either is it?

JOSH

It's not Skittles.

CHARLIE

Skittles is fucking delicious.

Josh offers the bag to Daryl. He sighs and reaches for a piece. *

13 EXT. ROAD - AFTERNOON

13

The four of them are walking through a field beside the road, Josh and Zach pushing their bikes, talking, laughing, goofing around. Daryl smokes a cigarette, trying to look cool. They pass *

14 DARYL'S HOUSE

14

A small duplex, not a dump exactly but a far cry from Zach's house. *

Behind the house are huge power lines, running parallel to the street, long connections which probably power the whole county.

ZACH

You live off the pipeline, that's cool.

DARYL

Yeah, me and Charlie go back here all the time.

They walk through Daryl's back yard and into

THE PIPELINE

It's a huge strip of land that's been cleared of trees. This is where the county's utilities are run through: power-lines overhead and water pipes buried in the ground, creating a no-man's land that stretches as far the eye can see in either direction.

The guys walk out and follow along the path of the power-lines overhead. Tall trees surround them.

The power lines cut shapes against the cloudy blue sky.

Daryl lags behind, coughing between drags on his cigarette.

ZACH

What's up with your lung, dude?

DARYL

Nothing. I'm just tired. My parents rented True Lies last night and when they went to sleep I watched that strip tease on repeat. Jerked off two and a half times.

CHARLIE

That a record?

DARYL

Tried for three but my dick got sore, had to put some ice on it, but the tray wasn't filled so I settled for a piece of steak from the freezer.

ZACH

Jesus.

JOSH
Did you put the steak back in the
freezer?

DARYL
Hell no, I cooked it up, scarfed that
shit and passed out on the couch.

The other three are stunned.

DARYL (cont'd)
I'm fucking with you! Of course I put
it back.

CHARLIE
Dude-

DARYL
This is not the point of the story!
The point is: bitch be *hot*. Like
Charlie's sister.

Zach laughs.

DARYL (cont'd)
Or Zach's mom.

Zach stops laughing. Josh grins at him.

DARYL (cont'd)
Right?!

JOSH
He's not wrong.

15 FURTHER DOWN THE PIPELINE

15 *

They reach one of those huge steel-grid structures where the
power-lines connect. The four boys stop beneath it and stare
up at the towering edifice.

METAL EXTENDS INTO THE SKY, the black cables on top 50, 75,
100 feet up?

JOSH
So if you touched the wire at the top
you'd be electrocuted?

CHARLIE
Only if you were also touching the
metal part, that's how birds can sit
up there.

DARYL
Yeah, man if you were just swinging
from the cable you'd be fine. My
uncle did it once.

ZACH
Seriously?

JOSH
Sure...

DARYL
Won a thousand bucks, but broke his
fuckin' leg tryin to get down.

CHARLIE
I guess that evened out then.

DARYL
Hell yeah it did. Slickest shit I
ever saw.

JOSH
I could do it.

DARYL
Are you special forces?

JOSH
No.

DARYL
Well, my uncle was, so fuck you.

Josh walks over and starts climbing the structure. After a
beat they all climb on as well.

Four boys attempting to scale a metal tower in the middle of
an open field.

CHARLIE gets about five feet off the ground before looking
down.

CHARLIE
You know what? Nope.

He jumps down and dusts his hands off. Shielding his eyes
with a hand-visor and looking back up at

THE OTHER THREE BOYS

Still slowly climbing, Josh clearly in the lead.

CHARLIE

Be careful!

DARYL

Mom? Is that you down there?

CHARLIE

Yeah, I wanted to tell you about me
and your friend Charlie.

DARYL

Puss!

CHARLIE

Never mind. Don't be careful.

DARYL

That's more like her, hi mom!

Daryl cackles to himself. As he does, his foot slips on a
rung of the tower. He has to hold tight with his arms in
order not to fall.

DARYL

Shit. These shoes have no grip. *

CHARLIE

Just let go, you're not that high.

DARYL

Fuckin--

Daryl lets himself hang and drops down to the ground.

DARYL

Fuckin shoes, no fuckin grip.

CHARLIE *

We can't all be special forces.

Zach Keeps climbing but he's still behind Josh. *

ZACH'S POV *

We see Josh several feet higher than him on the tower.

The sun is just behind his head, keeping us blind to Josh's
face and creating an exquisite halo around him.

JOSH

Come on, you can make it.

Zach is getting fatigued. And scared. *

ZACH
I don't know, man, I think I'm going
down. *

JOSH
No, come on!

Zach squints in the sunlight, trying to see Josh's face.

ZACH
I can't.

JOSH
A little more.

ZACH
Sorry. *

JOSH watches as Zach climbs down and jumps off. For a moment
he's up on the tower alone. *

THE THREE BOYS *

Below are looking up at him, framed against the sky. *

ZACH
(calling out)
I guess you win.

JOSH hears him but says nothing. Up here he has a pretty
wide view: trees and houses spreading out in the distance.
He stares out at the town. Over it. Down on it. *

We hold on his face in the quiet for an uncomfortably long
beat.

16 EXT. STREET - EVENING

16

Zach and Josh bike down a street past a "SCHOOL ZONE" sign.

ZACH
Let's cut through.

17 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - EVENING

17

It's vast and mostly empty, clearly a weekend. They take
their time, slow-pedaling and talking as they cross the lot. *

ZACH

I feel bad for him. He was a friend of mine in third grade. Not his fault his dad's fucking poor.

JOSH

Doesn't make him not a douchebag. You still see him at school?

ZACH

Yeah we have health together. He's always trying to talk to Cindy Maples.

JOSH

The one everybody says went to the hospital because she had a frozen hotdog stuck in her?

ZACH

I guess so. Maybe she's his type. Cold meat and all...

They get to the edge of the lot and continue across the grass toward the football field. As they pass the building Zach looks to his left and sees

THE BROKEN CLASSROOM WINDOW

Now patched over with cardboard, a temporary fix until the school can replace the glass.

Josh stops suddenly. Zach looks at him, Josh nods toward

THE BLEACHERS

Up ahead. A group of OLDER KIDS hanging around underneath, smoke wafting out in waves.

ZACH

Just keep going. We don't have to stop.

Josh nods. They pick up the pace, trying to act casual.

As they pass we get a better look: these guys are seniors, some of them maybe even older. Empty beer cans. Cigarettes. Joints.

One of them is younger, more Josh and Zach's age, with dyed-blue hair, this is JOHN WHITCOMB.

He sees them but says nothing. One of the older guys does, a sneering son of a bitch named CHAD. *

CHAD

Hey!

Josh and Zach keep going, Zach muttering under his breath.

ZACH

Shit. Bad idea. Just go.

CHAD

Yo! I'm talking to you! *

Chad's buddies laugh. Josh grits his teeth and turns, throws his arms out and shouts.

JOSH

What?!

CHAD

You seen my cunt?

JOSH

What?

ZACH

Forget it, come on.

CHAD

You seen my cunt? *

John Whitcomb speaks up, trying to clarify. *

JOHN WHITCOMB

Dana, his girlfriend. *

ZACH

Nah, we haven't seen anybody. We gotta get back.

Chad snaps and points at Josh in recognition.

CHAD

Josh, right? How's Danny doing?

JOSH

He's fine.

CHAD

He get that "basic" training? They broke him in yet?

The other guys start laughing. Josh isn't amused.

CHAD

Tell him I want to hang out when he's
back home. I'm sure by then he'll
suck better dick than her anyway.

(clarifying for his
friends)

Josh's brother joined the Navy.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Josh is trembling with anger. He mumbles to himself.

JOSH

It's the marines.

*

Chad gets up and steps toward them.

CHAD

What's that?

Josh is consumed with rage. He won't back down, even though
they're clearly outweighed and outnumbered.

*
*

JOSH

It's the fucking marines.

*

Chad bursts out laughing. His friends do likewise.

*

CHAD

Damn right it is.

He pantomimes a jackrabbit hump in the air.

CHAD

You guys want to join the 'fucking
marines'? I'm recruiting tonight.

*

Zach pulls Josh away.

*

CHAD (cont'd)

Aw, don't run away, Weezer!

*

Explosive, drunken laughter. Zach and Josh mount their bikes
and speed off.

*
*

18 EXT. SUBDIVISION - EVENING

18 *

They walk their bikes down the street. Not talking much at
first.

ZACH
I think he really wanted to screw
your brother. *

JOSH
Danny doesn't do that.

ZACH
Josh, I know. I just thought it was
funny that the dude was so committed
to the idea.

JOSH
Fuck John Whitcomb, too. Just sitting
there while his cool senior friends
act like total assholes. What kind of
dipshit puts Kool-Aid in his hair?

ZACH
John's okay.

JOSH
He used to be. I just hate all those
guys. People like that are fucking
worthless.

Zach nods, listening, trying to figure out a way out of the
conversation. He looks both ways down the street. He has an
idea.

ZACH
Yeah, I know but we're over it...
Here, let's go this way. *

JOSH
Why?

They walk on.

ZACH
That's her house. *

He points to a cramped little two story.

JOSH
Allison? You've been to her house? *

ZACH
Nah, we used to ride the same bus
back before they changed the route. *

They both stand looking at it.

JOSH
I wonder which one is her window.

ZACH
Perv.

Josh casually extends his middle finger but keeps his eyes on the house.

JOSH
She's cool, right?

ZACH
She's very cool. We can leave her a note, if you want: "Dear Allison, I have this idea for the talent show..."

Josh laughs, remembering his own joke.

JOSH
You remember last year when she tried to open that glue bottle?

ZACH
(confused)
No.

JOSH
We were working on that project. She couldn't get it. It had dried shut or whatever and she was just struggling. I couldn't take my eyes off her. And then all of the sudden it went, like ruptured, spurted this white glue all over her hands.

Zach listens, not sure where this is going, but not wanting to interrupt.

There are FLASHES as Josh speaks. Memories. Fleeting images.

ALLISON'S HANDS COVERED IN GLUE

JOSH (cont'd)
And she just giggled and said "whoops".

ZACH
But you couldn't stop thinking about...

Zach cups his hands to his mouth and shouts.

ZACH (cont'd)

HANDJOBS!

It echoes down the empty street. Followed by startled laughter from Josh.

JOSH

Shut up! We gotta go now!

ZACH

Driveway's empty, they're not home.

JOSH

There's other people on this street!

Zach waves dismissively, but a LIGHT suddenly goes on in one of the windows of Allison's house.

ZACH

Shit!

Josh pedals like a maniac down the street. Zach frantically tries to catch up. They round a corner, completely out of breath, but safely out of sight. They pant and cough and laugh madly. Infectiously. Tears stinging their eyes.

19 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

19

Zach's mother, KAREN, cooks dinner. She's in her late 30s, doing her best run the household on her own, succeeding for the most part with affable grace. She turns briefly when the boys come in behind her.

KAREN

Josh, are you staying for dinner?

JOSH

No, ma'am, I'm just grabbing my stuff.

KAREN

Great! I didn't make enough.

JOSH

My parents have been wanting me home more at night. Mom gets depressed if I'm not.

KAREN

Aw!

ZACH
He's joking, mom.

*
*

JOSH
See ya, Zach. Mrs. Taylor.

*
*

ZACH
Later.

*
*

He's gone.

ZACH (cont'd)
What are we having?

KAREN
Cubed steak. Oh! You, sir, got a
telephone call...

*
*
*

She raises her eyebrows and looks at him.

*

ZACH
Okay... why are you being weird?

*

KAREN
It was a girl. Allison something. She
left a number.

*
*

He heads upstairs, snagging the post-it with the number off
the downstairs phone.

KAREN (cont'd)
Ten minutes till dinner!

*
*

20 INT. ZACH'S ROOM - NIGHT

20

He punches the number in on a white cordless phone. He
lingers over that last digit... should he or shouldn't he?

Fuck it. He presses the button.

As he waits for it to ring, he loosens his tie and carefully
puts in on a hanger with a half dozen other PRE-TIED
NECKTIES. Clearly it's part of his 'look'... But he doesn't
know how to tie them himself.

*

The phone rings and rings. A male voice answers.

*

VOICE
Hello?

ZACH
Hi. Is, uhm, is Allison there?

VOICE

Nope.

Muffled speaking in the background, a second voice. A girl.

ALLISON (O.S.)

Who is it? Give me it! Jerkoff! *

Zach listens nervously as the phone is handed over. He starts to pace, walking circles around the room.

ALLISON (O.S.)

Who's this?

ZACH

This is Zach.

ALLISON

Oh, Zach! Hi! Sorry, my brother...

ZACH

It's cool. Did... you call me? *

ALLISON

I did! Sorry, I still had your number from that thing we did in Mrs. Moore's class, with the planets. Remember? The Mars thing we did. (singing) "You'd be dead on the planet that's red with an atmosphere of mostly... CARBON DIOXIDE!" *

ZACH

Yeah, I remember. *

ALLISON

I hope you don't mind-

ZACH

No way. *

ALLISON

Cool. *

ZACH

Cool.

ALLISON

So, the reason I'm calling- Can you hang on a second?

She must have her hand over the phone. It muffles her voice, but doesn't completely block it out. *

ALLISON (cont'd)

Get the fuck out! I'm on the phone! I mean it!

*
*

That same male voice can be heard, shouting something in reply. There's banging, footsteps, a slamming door, dogs barking. Then she's back as if nothing happened.

*

ALLISON

Hey, sorry. Zach?

ZACH

Uh huh.

ALLISON

The reason I'm calling: I'm having kind of a birthday party thing. It's really more of a hang out, you don't have to bring presents or anything, but it's at my friend Rebecca's house, Rebecca Burton, she's in our English class...really cool. We're just gonna watch some horror movies and stuff but I thought that you and Josh should come. You still hang out with Josh Templeton, right?

*
*

*

ZACH

Yeah, he just left. It's funny, we were actually talking about you.

*
*

ALLISON

You were? What did you say?

ZACH

Uh. All good stuff.

ALLISON

Ha. You guys made up that handshake in 7th grade! Oh god, that used to make me pee!

ZACH

Do you want his number?

ALLISON

From laughing.

ZACH

-Yeah. Do you want his number?

ALLISON

Nah, you can tell him. I've been calling people all day.

*

ZACH

Okay, yeah, no, you should really call him yourself. I don't know if I'll see him.

ALLISON

No rush. It's not until the 22nd.

*

ZACH

Totally. I think we both-

ALLISON

Cool. It'll be fun. I haven't seen Josh in forever. I was on A team last year. We had no classes together.

ZACH

I know.

Click. Someone's picked up another phone in her house. That male voice, crisp and clear.

VOICE

Get off the goddamn phone!

Zach panics and hangs up. He immediately regrets it. He stares at the receiver, waiting for her to call back. She doesn't.

21 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

21 *

We soar over the streets towards the school. Classic. Idyllic.

*

*

22 INT. HALLWAY - HIGH SCHOOL

22

Zach is at his locker, putting books away and grabbing his LUNCH BAG. A guy and girl make out heavily at a locker next to him. Someone shouts from the crowd. A TEACHER.

*

*

*

TEACHER

Allison!

Zach turns. There she is.

ALLISON BANNISTER

She looks much better in person than she did in her yearbook photo. Zach watches her talk with the teacher, slowly putting her hair into a pony tail. After a moment Josh walks up to him.

JOSH

Hey.

ZACH

Hey.

Josh unslings his backpack. It's a struggle. The thing is HUGE! Stuffed with textbooks.

ZACH

Dude, use your locker.

JOSH

I can't remember the combination.
What are you looking at?

ZACH

Put some in my locker then. Or ask in the office.

JOSH

It's fine. I don't care. Here's that stuff for math.

He removes a paper and hands it to Zach.

ZACH

What stuff?

JOSH

Mrs. Louis.

ZACH

Shit, I forgot!

JOSH

I remembered this morning. You can copy during lunch.

ZACH

Cool.

They start off down the hall together, forcing their way through the stream of people. Zach glances back. Allison is gone.

Daryl Sneaks up behind them. He reaches out and FLICKS the back of Josh's ear. *

JOSH

Ow! Dick.

DARYL *

You guys hanging out again after school?

JOSH *

Maybe. We'll see.

DARYL *

I can ride over, meet up with you.

A big kid, a SENIOR, walks right into Daryl.

SENIOR

Watch it, you piece of shit!

Daryl is instantly submissive.

DARYL *

Sorry.

The guy walks away. *

DARYL (cont'd)

Guy fucking ran into me. You see that?

He shouts once he thinks the senior is out of earshot.

DARYL

Faggot!

The senior turns around and charges at him. Zach and Josh watch the CHAOS erupt as the senior throws a fist into the side of Daryl's head. *

The crowd parts for them. "Fight! Fight!" TEACHERS come running out of their rooms. They pull the older kid off Daryl and try in vain to herd the crowd of students to class. *

23 EXT. COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

23 *

There are a handful of students eating lunch outside on styrofoam trays. *

Zach and Josh are sitting together in the grass, Zach quickly copying down Josh's MATH WORKSHEET as Josh LAUGHS, remembering the incident with Daryl.

JOSH

It was pretty funny how that guy just pounded Daryl's head. I mean I hope he's okay. But it was funny.

Zach finishes up and hands the paper back to Josh.

ZACH

Thanks again.

JOSH

No problem.

They people-watch for a minute. Other tables. More popular kids.

One TALL GUY in particular catches their attention. EUGENE, a junior, holding court at one of the the picnic tables.

ZACH

You hear about that guy?

JOSH

What guy?

ZACH

Eugene. That junior guy on the basketball team. There's all these weird rumors.

Josh shakes his head. He hasn't heard anything.

ZACH (cont'd)

Yeah, they say he can levitate or something.

JOSH

What, like float?

ZACH

I guess so.

JOSH

Bullshit.

ZACH

That's what I said. But Glen Nopal saw it, says it's legit. So who knows.

Zach goes back to eating. The anecdote is over for him. *

JOSH
Go ask him to do it. *

ZACH
What, go over there and bother that
dude? Fuck that noise. *

JOSH
I want to see it. *

ZACH
What? *

JOSH
If this guy can levitate. I want to
see it. *

ZACH
Then you ask him. *

Josh gets up without a word and stalks across the courtyard. *

ZACH (cont'd)
Josh! *

Zach trails after him. *

ZACH (cont'd)
Dude, come on. *

But Josh has already reached *

EUGENE'S TABLE *

The older kids all turn to stare at him, standing there,
tense with determination. *

The GIRLS seated around him burst into cruel teenage
laughter. But Eugene keeps his cool. *

EUGENE
What's up, man? *

JOSH
Let's see it. *

CUT TO: *

24 INT. HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

24 *

Zach and Josh stand awkwardly. Not sure what to do. *

EUGENE *

Ten bucks. *

Josh immediately digs through his pockets. *

JOSH *

I have three. Zach? *

ZACH *

Two. *

EUGENE *

You good for five more tomorrow? *

They nod. *

EUGENE (cont'd) *

I'm trusting you, now. It oughtta be
fifteen but your brother had the
hook-up. You ever get ahold of that
dank he used to sling make sure I'm
the first to know. How's that for a
deal? *

Josh doesn't know what he's talking about. *

JOSH *

Sure. Deal. *

Eugene bumps his fist and starts to inspect the stalls,
leaning down to make sure he doesn't see any feet. *

Then he marches past them, grabbing the trash can in the
corner and sliding it over in front of the door. *

ZACH *

I don't know if that's gonna stop the
door from opening- *

Josh nudges him. Eugene walks back to them and stands inches
from their faces, looking down on them. *

EUGENE *

Now stand right here and don't move.
Don't talk. Keep your eyes open and
on me. *

Eugene grabs their shoulders and nudges them a few inches to
the left, and then back. *

He looks over his shoulder at the space behind him, aligning his sight with their point of view. *

He begins to mutter gibberish under his breath. His grip slowly loosens on their arms and he starts to backpedal, eyes still closed. *

ZACH
(whispering)
What the hell is this? *

JOSH
(whispering)
Shh. Just keep looking. *

Eugene turns around and walks a very slow and deliberate 7 paces forward, counting out each step. He slowly pivots on his heel and suddenly, he lifts up. Josh and Zach's eyes dart down to Eugene's feet and sure enough, they are off the ground. *

JOSH
Holy shit! *

ZACH
No fucking way. *

Zach grabs his bag and starts toward the door. *

JOSH
Where are you going?!

ZACH
I saw it, okay? Now I'm going to class. *

Eugene remains hovering. Josh turns back to him. silent and amazed. *

25 INT. HIGH SCHOOL AP HISTORY CLASS - AFTERNOON

25 *

The doors busts open and Zach enters, sweating. The room is filled with kids in an auditorium setting. All eyes on him. *

ZACH
Sorry, I'm sorry. *

DR. ARNOLD
Oh Zach. Wonderful to grace us with your presence. *

Zach slumps down in his seat. *

ZACH
 Won't happen again sir.

Kids giggle. The teacher continues his lecture about something historical.

He sits motionless, lost in thought, only to look up directly in front of him and catch Allison Banister's ponytail, bobbing up and down as she takes notes. It's hypnotic. We hold on this for a bit.

He is transfixed. When suddenly she turns to him, slowly over her shoulder. Her eye catches his.

ZACH (cont'd)
 Hi.

Allison smiles and silently mouths "hi".

26 EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

26

Three bikes are leaned up against the side of the garage.

27 INT. LIVING ROOM - JOSH'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

27

Josh, Zach and Daryl are sitting on the living room couch, all staring at the TV. We can't see what's onscreen, but those familiar will recognize the sounds of *True Lies*.

JOSH
 I heard she has a dick.

Daryl is already vehemently shaking his head. He approaches the TV, not willing to let Josh take this away from him.

DARYL
 Dude, do you see a dick?

JOSH
 That's what I heard.

DARYL
 Rumors, man! Don't believe everything you hear.

ZACH
 That's what I've been telling him.

Josh glares at Zach. He's pissed... but not about Jamie Lee Curtis.

JOSH *
We saw him do it! You ran off like a *
bitch! *

Daryl can sense something's up. He doesn't want to be left *
out. *

DARYL *
What? Why? *

JOSH *
Nothing. *

DARYL *
Tell me! *

JOSH *
...We saw Eugene Douglas levitate *
today. *

ZACH *
Well, we saw *something*. *

DARYL *
You don't believe it was real? *

ZACH *
I don't know. I mean, I guess it *
looked real, but come on. *

DARYL *
You come on! I'm with Josh, I believe *
in all that fucked up black magic *
shit. *

JOSH *
Thanks Daryl. *

DARYL *
Oh man, did you guys hear what *
happened to Pat and Derek. *

ZACH *
What happened to Pat and Derek? *

DARYL *
you remember they were hanging *
out with fucking what's-his-name, *
that blonde kid from Callaway? *

JOSH *
Ryan. *

DARYL
Yes. Fucking Ryan. I always
wondered why they hung with this
little piece-of-shit blonde kid. Did
you guys know that Ryan is like super
rich?

ZACH
He is?

DARYL
Yeah, I mean like his parents have so
much money he just tells them how
much he needs and they give it to
him. So Pat and Derek had this idea
that they would convince him to buy a
shit ton of weed from some friends of
theirs, right?

Zach and Josh look away from the TV to hear the story.

DARYL (cont'd)
We're talking mad money, like five
hundred dollars.

Josh pauses the movie.

JOSH
500 dollars in cash?

DARYL
Yeah. So he gets it and he goes to
meet these "friends of Pat and Derek"
and some dudes show up in ski
masks... and it's fucking Pat and
Derek. But then hey pull a gun and
are like "give us the money" and he
thinks they're joking, cause
obviously it's just them. He's like
"come on Derek" or whatever, and the
dude fucking pistol-whips him.

ZACH
What?

JOSH
Like when you hit someone with a gun.

ZACH
I know. They pistol-whipped Ryan?

DARYL
Took his money and booked. Of course
Ryan eventually goes to his parents,
crying, tells them the whole thing
and now those fucking guys are
probably going to juvie.

ZACH
Wow.

DARYL
This all went down in the pipeline
right where we were kicking it
yesterday.

JOSH
Right behind your house...

DARYL
No doubt.

28 INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

28

They are sitting around on the countertops, having recently
raided the family fridge.

DARYL
Where are your folks?

JOSH
They both work and my little brother
has all these, like, lessons and
stuff, so no one is usually here
until around five or six.

ZACH
Josh's little brother is like a
prodigy or something.

JOSH
Yeah I guess so.

DARYL
I thought you had an older brother.

JOSH
I do. Danny's in the marines.

DARYL
His shit still here?

JOSH
His shit?

Zach nods, playing along.

ZACH
You know, his shit!

JOSH
I guess...

*

29 INT. DANNY'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

29

The three of them linger in the doorway.

JOSH
Take your shoes off.

DARYL
What? Lame.

ZACH
Chill out, Daryl.

JOSH
My mom'll know.

DARYL
Who cares?

JOSH
She does.

DARYL
Alright, fine.

They leave their shoes in the hall and slip into the room. There's an aura about the place. Everything seems to have been kept exactly as it was when Danny left.

*

*

It's full of classic Cool Older Brother Shit: POSTERS of hot girls, STACKS of anime DVDs and comic books, souvenirs from the Renaissance Festival, a WATER BED.

*

The boys wander around, snooping.

Zach Finds a pair of nunchucks and swings them around without grace or skill.

*

Daryl runs his fingers through a bowl full of pocket change and unearths a plastic bag filled with weed.

*

*

DARYL
No way. Can I have some? *

JOSH
No, you can't have some.

DARYL
I'll buy it off you.

JOSH
No!

DARYL
Seriously, you should sell it. This
is easily a hundred bucks worth. *
More, maybe.

Josh looks questioningly at Zach. *Is this true?* *

ZACH
I guess.

JOSH
Does pot go bad?

DARYL
I don't think so.

JOSH
Then he'll probably be looking for it
when he gets back.

DARYL
I mean, it might. I don't know!

Zach laughs, still twirling the nunchucks. Josh snatches the *
bag and prepares to put it back in its hiding place.

DARYL
Please, dude! Please, like a pinch!
Let me get one pinch!

JOSH
Why?

Daryl softens. He's pleading, now. Sincere.

DARYL
I've never done it before. Have you?

JOSH
No.

DARYL

You?

ZACH

Once. Back in Colorado.

DARYL

Was it awesome?

Zach shrugs.

DARYL

He won't know. Not enough for him to know. How long's he been gone?

JOSH

A year. He's got eight years of active duty, but maybe next Christmas...

DARYL

He can't even smoke weed while he's a marine, this isn't Vietnam. They'll kick his ass out.

*

Josh buries the baggy in change once more.

JOSH

I'll think about it.

DARYL

You'll think about it.

JOSH

That's what I said.

Zach swoops in to keep the peace. He swings the nunchucks.

ZACH

We should get a watermelon. These things are pretty badass.

*

DARYL

Lemme see.

Daryl EYES the change bowl once more before fully engaging with the nunchucks. Josh hesitates. He has something to say but can't decide if he should say it.

*

JOSH

He's got something better than that.

*

Josh walks over to the closet and opens it.

A SAMURAI SWORD

Sits, resting on hooks mounted on the wall. The sword is beautiful and ominous. Alluring. The boys stare.

ZACH
How did I forget about that?

JOSH
No one's touched it since he left.

DARYL
How sharp is it?

JOSH
It's not bamboo grade. So not like a real real sword, but it's got an edge to it. Better than a display thing. We used to slash milk cartons with it.

DARYL
So... can we, like, *do* that?

30 EXT. ROAD - AFTERNOON

30 *

The three boys are riding down the road, plastic grocery bags hanging from their handlebars. Milk cartons.

They swerve around one another, laughing, joking.

Suddenly, Daryl stops.

DARYL
Give me the sword.

ZACH
What?

He points down the street on the sidewalk ahead of them.

CHARLIE

Is a few yards ahead, walking the same direction, his back to them. Unsuspecting.

ZACH
What are you gonna do?

DARYL
Just say hi.

Zach hands the sword over. Daryl dismounts.

JOSH
Be careful, man.

But Daryl's already racing forward, sidestepping like a ninja, hurrying up behind Charlie. When he gets fairly close, he SHOUTS and RAISES THE SWORD!

Charlie spins and screams, falling over. Daryl loves it.

CHARLIE
What the hell?

DARYL
Check it out!

He brandishes the sword.

CHARLIE
Where'd you get that?

DARYL
It's his brother's.

Zach and Josh have arrived.

CHARLIE
What are you guys doing?

CUT TO:

31 EXT. FIELD - AFTERNOON

31

A MILK JUG - soaring through the air against a blue sky in ultra slow motion. *

Whack! The sword swings in and slices it clean in two, water flying everywhere. Josh's expression is one of ecstasy as water cascades down on him in **ultra slow motion**. *

The four boys cheer and laugh - **ultra slow motion**. *

ZACH
Let Charlie go. *

Josh hands the sword to him.

DARYL is sitting a few feet away, emptying the tobacco from the end of a cigarette. He pulls the BAG OF WEED from his pocket, pinches off a bit and stuffs it in. *

ZACH turns and sees what he's up to. They lock eyes a moment, Daryl freezes. *

But Zach looks away. He won't rat him out. Daryl finishes and lights up. Puffs. Coughs. Laughs at his own cough. *

Charlie and Josh are still goofing around with the sword, setting another jug up on an the old fence post they've found.

Daryl COUGHS again. Charlie looks over. *

CHARLIE
You alright over there?

DARYL
What?

ZACH
Forget it, Charlie. *

But now Josh is paying attention, too.

CHARLIE
What is that?? *

DARYL
A cigarette.

Josh is suspicious

JOSH
Yeah?

Daryl tries to ignore the whole thing.

DARYL
Alright. My turn. Let me see the sword.

But Josh is pissed. He storms over.

JOSH
Daryl, what the fuck? *

DARYL
Give me the sword.

He snatches The Sword from Josh's hand.

JOSH
Did you take the weed from my brother's room?

DARYL
It's a cigarette! Okay? It's a
fucking cigarette.

Josh looks to Zach for confirmation. None is forthcoming, so he looks to Charlie. Charlie glances at Daryl.

*

CHARLIE
That's what it looks like.

Josh isn't buying it. He can tell they're trying to avoid a confrontation.

JOSH
Bull. Give it to me.

DARYL
My cigarette? What are you gonna do
with it?

JOSH
Daryl!

DARYL
Come get it!

He tries to make a game out of it, waving the sword around.

JOSH
I'm not kidding.

ZACH
Daryl.

DARYL
What?

ZACH
If you took the bag just give it back
to him.

Daryl sighs, angry at Zach's betrayal. He starts off, sword in hand.

ZACH
Daryl, come on.

Zach grabs his shoulder. Daryl SPINS around, lifting the sword.

ZACH (cont'd)
Shit!

Angry, he bats the sword away. *

ZACH (cont'd)
What the hell?

Daryl shakes his head, distraught.

DARYL
Fuck you guys.

He flicks his joint/cigarette at Zach's face, sticks the sword into the ground and storms off. Charlie is clearly uncomfortable, not wanting to take sides. *

JOSH
Asshole.

ZACH
Just leave him alone for minute.
He'll calm down.

Josh calls after him.

JOSH
You steal anything else from my family?

Daryl ignores him.

JOSH
How would you like it if I went to your house and took shit from you? Oh that's right, you don't have anything because you live in a fucking duplex. *

Daryl turns around and takes a few steps toward the group.

DARYL
Hey Zach, thanks for inviting me out. Too bad your boyfriend's on the rag. Make sure to slap him around a little bit tonight, keep him in line. *

CHARLIE
Okay, everybody just shut up. *

ZACH
This is stupid, give me the bag. *

Daryl pulls the bag of weed from his jacket and hands it over. Zach stoops to pick up the samurai sword. He turns them both over to Josh. *

ZACH
Here's your stuff back.

JOSH
Thanks.

CHARLIE
Guess we should call it a day.

Zach shakes his head at Josh and they all start to head back to the road. *

Charlie winces at Daryl, trying to cheer him up. *Jeez, that was nuts.* It doesn't work. Daryl turns away from him, he's angry, embarrassed. *

They walk in silence for a moment, heading out of the field.

Suddenly, Daryl takes a SWING at the back of Josh's head. BAM!

CHARLIE
Stop!

But Daryl's on him, swinging like crazy. Pissed.

Charlie and Zach look at one another, each expecting the other to step in and stop them.

Josh and Daryl wrestle in the grass. Charlie tries to laugh at the ridiculousness of the situation as he shouts at them. *

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Okay! Stop it, guys! *

And then there's a SCREAM. No. Screams. From both of them. One of pain. The other of horror. *

Zach kneels beside the struggling pair.

BLOOD *

In the grass (or snow). Everywhere. *

THE SWORD *

Is embedded in Daryl's neck. Charlie finally loses his cool. Completely. He shrieks. *

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Oh my god, oh my god!

Zach is horrified.

ZACH
Jesus, Josh!

JOSH
I didn't! He fell!

Daryl GASPS for air. Trying to speak. He can't. It'd be so much better if he didn't try, if he didn't GURGLE. *

ZACH
Oh god, what do we do?

JOSH
Take it out! Take it out!

CHARLIE
No!

But it's too late. Zach's already removed the sword and tossed it aside.

GUSH! A spray of crimson into the dirt.

CHARLIE
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LEAVE IT IN!

Charlie's lost it. His adolescent voice is cracking. *

He lunges at Zach. Swats at him. Zach shoves him back and Charlie goes sprawling on his ass. *

DARYL *

Crawls away, hand over the gaping hole in his throat.

He gets to his feet, looks down at himself, at the blood. He takes off running further into the woods.

Charlie stands, dumbfounded, calling after him.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Daryl!

But Daryl is running on pure instinct. He has no idea what to do, where to go. He's just running

ACROSS THE FIELD *

Burbling as he goes.

Josh and Zach race after him. Calling for him to slow down. *

He can barely hear. The BEATING of his heart and the heaviness of his BREATH are the only sounds that reach him. He enters the surrounding

*
*
*

32 FOREST

32 *

His eyes are closed. A sprinter at the finish line.

His foot hits the ground at an odd angle. It twists underneath him, sending him sprawling forward and tumbling into a ditch.

*
*
*

Josh and Zach arrive, out of breath, shivering with adrenaline. They look down into

THE DITCH

*

It's a six or seven foot drop to the bottom. That's where Daryl is lying, face down. His ankle is twisted gruesomely. He isn't moving.

*
*

The guys are completely at a loss.

*

JOSH

Is he--

ZACH

I don't know. We need to check on him. Do you know how to check for a pulse?

JOSH

His neck or his wrist, right?

Stalemate. Neither wants to do it. Zach stares at Josh.

*

JOSH

It was an accident.

ZACH

I know.

Zach looks around and sizes up the best way to climb down.

He slowly makes his way to Daryl and kneels beside his head. He reaches out, trying to avoid the wound. The blood.

He presses his fingers to Daryl's neck. He concentrates but it's hard to tell.

ZACH

Daryl?

He shakes him.

ZACH (cont'd)
Daryl? Daryl, can you hear me? Are
you awake, man?

Zach bites his lip and does the thing he really doesn't want
to do: He put his hands on either side of

DARYL'S HEAD

And lifts it up from the ground. Zach kneels lower to the
ground and looks at

DARYL'S FACE

His mouth hangs open and his eyes are blank. With the head
lifted Zach can see the blood continuing to issue from
Daryl's neck.

JOSH
Is he...

Zach is startled to realize Josh is kneeling behind him.

ZACH
I don't know. I can't tell. You
check.

Zach gets up and moves away from the scene, after hesitating
a moment he vomits on the ground. Dropping to his knees
with the intensity of it. When he finishes he looks up.

JOSH is still kneeling over Daryl.

ZACH
What do you think?

JOSH
He's dead.

The two boys stand in silence for a moment.

JOSH seems stunned. No clear emotion on his face. He seems
small, helpless.

ZACH looks at his friend with sympathy. This is a fucked-up
problem but he can at least try to help. He thinks for a
sustained, silent moment.

JOSH (cont'd)
Zach. What do we do?

ZACH
Okay, we need to leave.

Zach walks over and picks up a pile of dead leaves and dumps them on top of Daryl's body.

JOSH
What are you doing?

ZACH
Covering him up. Come on, help me.

JOSH
Are you sure-

ZACH
I don't know, it's something. *

ZACH
Where's Charlie?

JOSH
Shit. I don't know.

ZACH
He took off.

JOSH
He'll tell! We've gotta find him.

ZACH
How? Do you know where he lives? His phone number? He won't tell. He's not stupid.

JOSH
He might try and get help. ...Maybe we should get help. *

Zach continues burying the body with leaves. *

CHARLIE (O.S.)
We should hide this too. *

Zach and Josh turn to see Charlie standing at the edge of the ditch, clutching the bloody sword. *

33 EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

33 *

In another part of the woods, the boys walk together, slowly, looking for a hiding place.

ZACH

Over there.

He's pointing at A TREE with an empty hollow in it. *

Zach removes his sweatshirt and wipes down the sword with it. Then he wedges the sword into the hollow. It's still visible. *

He wedges his sweatshirt in over it, then grabs a handful of wet pine straw and leaves. He crams it in, camouflaging it. *

34 EXT. FIELD - EVENING

34

They wander through the tall grass back to the road. And see *

FOUR BIKES *

Parked at the edge of the field. Josh's, Zach's, Charlie's... and Daryl's. *

Charlie looks at the two boys. Without another word he gets his bike and rides off. *

ZACH

I'll take care of it.

JOSH

Are you sure? *

ZACH

It's fine, I'll move it somewhere. It'll be dark soon and we shouldn't both get home late. *

Josh mounts his bike. He reaches out and touches Zach's shoulder. It doesn't seem like enough. He grips it. Pats him, hard. *

JOSH

Thank you.

They make eye contact. And then Josh is gone. Zach is alone. He takes Daryl's bike and rides it *

35 UP THE ROAD

35

A little way until he sees a pasture with horses off to one side. He goes to park the bike against the fence- then thinks for a second and throws it over, obscuring it in the tall grass. *

36 EXT. HILLY ROAD - EVENING

36

The sun has just set and the light is disappearing fast. Zach is the only thing on this road. He pumps as hard as he can, climbing a hill, reaching the top of it, then beginning his roller coaster-like decent. *

Only instead of standing up or letting the bike just roll, Zach pedals even harder on the incredibly steep downhill slide. *

He pumps faster and faster, the bike wobbling under the strain of the speed. The wind is blowing on his face and he *

CLOSES HIS EYES *

Squeezing tears down his face, pumping harder than ever until, finally, at the bottom of the hill, he loses control of the bike and tumbles down onto the asphalt. *

He hits the ground hard and continues to roll and scrape himself for several more feet. He lands on his back and lies there in the fading light staring up at *

THE SKY *

The stars are just beginning to be visible and the moon in full.

37 EXT. ZACH'S HOUSE - EVENING

37

Zach walks his wrecked bike up to the garage.

38 INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

38

Zach slips in from the garage. He's beat up from his fall, exhausted from everything else. He walks straight to the tap and downs a huge glass of water. He doesn't notice... *

ALLISON *

Is sitting behind him, watching him with nervous curiosity.

He fills the glass again. Halfway through it, he sees her and jumps, startled. Surprise quickly turns to confusion. *What the hell is she doing here?* *

She waves, a little embarrassed.

ALLISON

Your mom... I just stopped by, she said you'd be back. She went to get some Cokes out of the closet.

He just stands there, panting.

ZACH

Oh... I was on my bike.

She notices his bloody elbow.

ALLISON

Oh god, are you okay? *

Karen walks in with a case of soda under her arm. *

KAREN *

It's caffeine free, I hope... Ah, see! There he is.

She smirks at him knowingly. Then notices his wound.

KAREN *

You're bleeding. *

ZACH

It's fine.

KAREN *

What happened?

ZACH

I fell. On my bike...

She lifts his arms to examine it and winces, hissing through her teeth.

KAREN *

That looks nasty. You should clean it.

ZACH

I will.

There's an awkward beat. Allison is realizing that coming here wasn't such a great idea. Zach is still spaced out. Karen has to step in. *

KAREN *

Zach's room is upstairs.

Zach nods in Allison's direction and heads up. She follows, uncertain. She glances at Karen for support. Karen gives her a nod and wave. *He's always like this.*

*
*

39 INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY/ZACH'S ROOM - EVENING

39

Allison starts babbling behind him.

ALLISON

I was just walking and I passed by... I guess I should have called first but I didn't realize I'd be near your house until I saw it and said "oh that's Zach's house, maybe I should stop and yell 'handjobs' at the top of my lungs."

*

Zach glances back at her. She nods, eyebrow raised. Zach takes a breath and stops by the upstairs bathroom to grab a wad of toilet paper. He uses it stop the flow of blood from his elbow.

ALLISON

She's right. You should clean that.

ZACH

I will. Just for now.

She nods and follows him into his room. He sits on the bed, clearly distracted. There's no place for her to sit.

*

ALLISON

...You want me to go?

He doesn't answer. He's trying and failing to hold everything in.

*
*

ZACH

I'm sorry. I-

She's suddenly, surprisingly earnest.

ALLISON

Don't apologize.

She moves to the doorway, out of his line of sight. He buries his face in his hands, rubbing the temples.

*

The door creaks shut. Click.

As soon as he hears it, he lets loose. A big, weird wail. A gasp for air. Not tears or sobs exactly.

Just an exhalation of emotion. He shudders as it leaves him.
Then he sits back. And sees...

ALLISON

Is still there. She didn't leave, only closed the door. He's
instantly startled and embarrassed. She doesn't say
anything, just sits beside him on the bed.

She puts her arm around him. It's a slightly awkward gesture
of comfort, but they stay like that and the awkwardness
subsides.

Zach rests his head on her shoulder. She runs her fingers
through his hair and starts to wipe his tears. He reaches up
and gently grabs her hand, turns to her and brings his lips
to hers.

It's barely a kiss at first, just an extension of intimacy,
but it lingers for a moment before he pulls away.

ZACH

I'm sorry.

40 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

40

Karen is sitting on the sofa, eating toast and reading a
trashy novel. She hears them come downstairs and talk
quietly in the foyer. The front door opens. And closes.

She lays her book down, listening in. There's nothing to
glean, however. Just mumbled goodbyes. Eventually Zach
shuffles in.

KAREN

A short visit then?

ZACH

I'm going to bed.

KAREN

It's early.

ZACH

I'm tired. Probably just read or
something.

KAREN

Are you hungry?

ZACH

Nah.

She can tell something's wrong but doesn't push him.

KAREN

Okay.

He goes. She tries to let him, but she can't. She's up and following.

KAREN (cont'd)

I'm cleaning those cuts!

41 INT. BATHROOM

41

Zach sits on the closed lid of the toilet while Karen works around him, dabbing his cuts with iodine and putting band aids on them.

He sits motionless, allowing her to perform this motherly task.

KAREN

Ouch, you might as well play football.

ZACH

Yeah...

KAREN

Yeah... fuck football.

That almost gets a smile from him and she's happy enough for that.

42 INT. ZACH'S ROOM - NIGHT

42

He's fidgeting in bed, trying to get comfortable. It's not working. He can't sleep. He sits up and sees

A FIGURE

Sitting on the floor in the corner of his room.

He reaches for his bedside lamp. But once it's switched on he can see there's nobody there.

Zach lays back down, but he leaves the bedside lamp on.

Eventually, he reaches for his walk-man, puts in a new tape and hits play. We can hear the low rumble of heavy music.

43 EXT. OPEN ROAD - AFTERNOON 43 *

Seen from high above: a lone rider cruising down the middle of the road. It's Zach on his busted bike. The chain rattling against the bent gear shaft. He's got his headphones on. Exhausted. *

44 EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON 44 *

Kids streaming out of the building. Running, screaming, goofing around.

Zach is there in the throng, searching frantically. Ah-ha!

ZACH

Charlie!

He flags him down. Charlie is not pleased. *

ZACH

We should talk.

CHARLIE

No we shouldn't.

ZACH

Josh wasn't at school today.

CHARLIE

So go talk to him.

ZACH

I am. I'm going to, I thought we should get our story straight-

CHARLIE

There's no story.

ZACH

If someone asks-

CHARLIE

I don't remember. I don't remember what I did last Tuesday. Why would I remember what I did this Tuesday? Probably, I went home after school and stayed there alone until my parents got home. Like I do most weekdays. *

ZACH

You're right. That's good.

CHARLIE

So why'd you come running over here to the middle school to talk to an 8th grader you barely know? ...If anyone asks?

Shit. Zach hadn't thought of that. He gets the drift. He gives Charlie a nod.

CHARLIE

We're not friends.

*

45 EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

45

Zach rings the doorbell. Waits. Nothing. He stares at down at an old doormat: faded letters that say "Welcome Y'all!"

*

He knocks on the door a few times.

ZACH

Josh?

He goes around the side of the house, peering in windows. He lingers outside Josh's bedroom.

ZACH

Josh!

He pauses and turns to see a NEIGHBOR LADY hosing off her back porch. She's stopped what she's doing to squint suspiciously at Zach.

*

He slouches and heads back to the sidewalk and his bike. He sighs and heads home.

*

*

46 INT. ZACH'S ROOM - EVENING

46

Zach is pacing, staring at the white cordless phone sitting on his bed when there's a sudden knock on his door.

*

KAREN (O.S.)

*

Zach?

He throws the phone down, equal parts startled and frustrated.

KAREN (O.S.)

*

Can I come in?

ZACH

Sure.

He sits on the bed. She enters and scans the room.

KAREN *
Do you know a boy named Daryl Harper?
Didn't you two used to play together?

ZACH *
What? Like a long time ago. Why?

KAREN *
His mother called earlier. I guess he
didn't come home last night. Hasn't
come home yet at all. Was he at
school today? *

ZACH
I didn't see him. I mean, I wasn't
looking.

KAREN *
Sure. Do you remember the last time
you did see him?

ZACH
...No. Nope.

KAREN *
She said something about him going to
Josh's yesterday.

ZACH
Huh.

KAREN *
He didn't?

ZACH
No. I was with Josh.

KAREN *
Well, I'll tell her.

ZACH
Yeah, sorry. Wish I was more help, I
just...

KAREN *
You got in late last night.

ZACH *
I guess so.

KAREN

Don't do that anymore. I'm sure Daryl will turn up, but... If something happened, if someone... I don't know. Anyway. Let's try and stick around the house for the next few days, huh?

- 47 INT. ZACH'S ROOM - NIGHT 47 *
- The lights are off. He's staring at
- THE CEILING *
- Glow in the dark STAR STICKERS. A cheerful facsimile of the ones he saw outside earlier. A relic of his childhood still stuck to his ceiling, out of reach. *
- He tosses the covers aside and stands. *
- 48 INT. HALL BATHROOM - NIGHT 48 *
- Zach quietly enters and makes his way over to the cupboard. He finds a bottle of *NYQUIL*, unscrews the lid and takes a large swig from it. And then another. *
- 49 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 49 *
- Zach creeps in and turns the TV on, keeping the volume low. He sets the "SLEEP TIMER" to 30 minutes and lies down on the couch, flipping channels, already growing drowsy. Almost drifting off. *
- 50 INT. ZACH'S ROOM - MORNING 50 *
- BANG BANG BANG! A loud rapping on the door jolts Zach up from sleep. He's bleary eyed. He darts his head around to look at his alarm clock but it's nowhere to be found. *
- ZACH *
- Yeah! Ok! Alright! *
- Zach reaches over and peels back the blinds on the window. *
- ZACH's POV - a field shrouded in fog; no horizon to see. *
- ZACH (cont'd) *
- What time is it? Mom? *
- Silence. *

ZACH (cont'd)

Mom?

Again, no response. He slings himself out of bed.

51 EXT. HALLWAY - MORNING

51

Zach exits his bedroom and walks down the hall. The silence is overwhelming.

ZACH

Hey mom?

He makes his way into the living room. Nothing, no one. He looks over his shoulder and sees

DARYL

Standing in his bedroom doorway.

ZACH (cont'd)

What the hell man?

Daryl points his finger to the ceiling.

Something hits Zach's hand. He raises it to his eye. Blood? One drop of blood - but from where? He looks up.

A LARGE DARK RED VOID rips through the ceiling, slowly and silently churning like a whirlpool.

Zach stares up at it. Then looks back to his hand. He tries frantically tries to wipe off the blood but it's no use, it just spreads. His shirt is suddenly soaked in blood, as are his hands, and arms.

ZACH (cont'd)

No, no, no jesus-

Suddenly, he cant breathe, he falls to his knees and reaches for his throat. A large gaping hole in his neck, gushing out blood. He panics and tries to wipe it away.

ZACH (cont'd)

DARYL!!!

He spins to find him but he's gone. He scrambles and runs into the bathroom, slams the door and turns to the mirror. He's covered in blood, head to toe, dripping.

Zach SCREAMS, but there is no sound. The mirror cracks, sending his reflection into a scatter shot of anguish.

CUT TO:

52 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

52

ZACH HOVERS above the sofa- and then falls suddenly, jolted awake from the nightmare.

ZACH
Mom! Mom!!!

He clenches his stomach, tears running down his face. Footsteps. Lights flip on. Karen rushes in in her nightgown.

KAREN
What!? Honey what is it!?

She runs to him, cradles him in her arms.

KAREN (cont'd)
Shhh. I'm here sweetey, I'm here.

Zach struggles to get words out.

ZACH
It hurts! In my stomach!

KAREN
Can you describe it? Tell me what it feels like.

ZACH
It hurts!

KAREN
Is it a dull pain or a sharp one?

ZACH
Sharp! It's sharp!

KAREN
Okay honey, I'm going to go get some water, I'll be right back, okay? I'll be right back, sweetheart.

She runs out of the room and returns with a glass of water and a bottle of *pepto bismol*.

KAREN (cont'd)
Drink this.

ZACH
I can't...

KAREN
You have to. Now sit up.

She helps prop him up. He keels back over.

KAREN (cont'd)
I know, I know, but this will make it
better. Now breath...Count to
eight...That's it.

She pours some *pepto bismol* into the cap and brings it to
his lips. She rests her hand on his forehead and slowly
tilts it back.

KAREN (cont'd)
There you go. Better?

ZACH
A little.

KAREN
Are you hungry?

Zach shakes his head "no".

KAREN (cont'd)
You haven't eaten anything, Zach...
that's probably what's wrong.

ZACH
I took some *nyquil*.

KAREN
Or it could be that. Why did you take
nyquil, do you have a cold?

ZACH
I just couldn't sleep.

KAREN
Okay, well no more of that. You hear
me? You can't just take that willy
nilly. Especially on an empty
stomach...

He nods. She pulls down the QUILT draped over the back of
the couch and covers him with it. She sits beside him and
rests his head in her lap, letting him finally drift off to
sleep.

53 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING 53 *

Sunlight breaks through the window and dances across Zach's eyes, gently rousing him awake. *

Karen is asleep on the love seat nearby, a book on her chest. *

ZACH *

Mom. Mom. It's morning, we gotta get up. *

She rises, startled and confused. *

KAREN *

I'm sorry, honey. What time is it? *

Zach looks at the clock on the mantel. *

ZACH *

It's 7. *

KAREN *

SHIT. Shoot. Shoot, okay, gotta go. You get dressed, I'll throw some cereal in a bowl. *

ZACH *

Shouldn't you get to work? *

KAREN *

I will, don't worry, just get changed. *

54 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING 54 *

A few stragglers slip into the building. Zach locks his bike up, staring at the police car parked at the curb in front. *

55 INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MORNING 55 *

Zach walks through the crowd of students. All around him he can hear the murmuring of people talking about Daryl's disappearance. *

56 INT. GYM - MORNING 56 *

The entire student body is seated in the bleachers. Down on the court THE SHERIFF stands with THE PRINCIPLE. *

They share a microphone and talk about how anyone with information should come forward, etc.

Zach scans the crowd eventually he spots Allison on the opposite side of the court. He continues looking but does not see Josh anywhere. Just a bunch of faces, a bunch of people.

57 INT. CLASSROOM - HEALTH ED

57

Students are working silently on a test or something.

AN EMPTY DESK

Stands out ominously in the middle of the room.

Zach is seated toward the back. He looks up at the desk and then back to his work.

Suddenly he feels a kick on his chair. He looks over his shoulder to see a girl, CINDY MAPLES, fiddling with a retractable bic pen.

She nods at Zach and he watches as she starts to retract the pen, bringing the tip up, then down, over and over, faster and faster. Moaning quietly as she does it.

Zach keeps watching, not sure what to do. A few girls nearby stifle laughter.

58 EXT. OPEN ROAD - AFTERNOON

58

Zach is biking alone along the side of the road but suddenly slows to stop. He looks all around him and sees nothing moving in any direction.

He is the only living thing within view. After a moment he gets up and pedals off.

59 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

59

Zach stands looking at himself in the mirror. He runs his fingers through his hair, pulling it away from his face.

He reaches into a drawer and pulls out some electric hair clippers and switches them on.

But before he can get at his hair, he's interrupted by a KNOCK on the door.

ZACH
Yeah?!

KAREN (O.S.)
I'm going to the store do you need
anything?

He opens the door. She sees the clippers in his hand and
makes a frown.

KAREN (CONT'D)
What the hell are you doing?

ZACH
Nothing.

KAREN
Don't be doing what I think you're
doing.

ZACH
I'm not doing anything...

She just stares at him, suspecting otherwise.

60 INT. BIOLOGY CLASSROOM - MORNING

60

Zach sits in class. The TEACHER is taking role.

TEACHER
Zach Taylor?

ZACH
Here.

TEACHER
Joshua Templeton?

No answer.

TEACHER (cont'd)
Josh? No? No Josh? Three days in a
row...

61 EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE - DAY

61

Zach knocks on the door. Josh's Mom answers, she's a
buttoned-up conservative woman who's been through a lot
raising her three sons. Her name is JOAN.

JOAN
Hi there, Zach.

ZACH
Hey, is Josh home?

JOAN
He is.

ZACH
I was worried since he hasn't been at
school.

JOAN
He hasn't been feeling well.

ZACH
Can I see him?

JOAN
Let me see if he's feeling up to it.

She leads him into

62 THE FOYER

62

And walks down the hall to Josh's room. She calls over her
shoulder.

JOAN
Shoes off!

Zach steps on the heel of his left shoe, lifting his foot
out of it. Down the hall, Joan knocks on his door.

JOAN
Honey? Zach stopped by.

There doesn't seem to be a response. She shuffles back
toward Zach and moves past him into the kitchen.

JOAN (cont'd)
Give him a minute.

She returns with two cans of ginger ale which she hands to
Zach.

He hesitates. Is he supposed to go in, now? This is weird.
She gestures him forward.

He stands outside Josh's bedroom door. There's NOISE coming
from inside. Video game music.

ZACH *
Josh? *

 JOSH *
Yeah? *

 ZACH *
It's Zach. *

 JOSH *
...I know. *

 ZACH *
...Can I come in? *

No response. *

 ZACH *
Josh? *

 JOSH *
Yeah? *

 ZACH *
Can I come in? *

 JOSH *
I said 'yeah'. *

Zach turns the knob and enters *

63 JOSH'S ROOM

63 *

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Josh is in the process of turning off the Super Nintendo. He looks rough. Pajamas. Greasy hair. Has he even left the room since everything happened?

 ZACH *
I haven't seen you. I thought I *
should... you know... *

 JOSH *
Mom let me stay home. *

 ZACH *
You told her?! *

 JOSH *
What? No. I said I didn't feel good. *

ZACH
Oh. We shouldn't... like, act weird
or anything, though. Right? It's been
a week.

Josh laughs derisively.

JOSH
Okay, Zach.

ZACH
No, I mean... Just so-

JOSH
Okay.

Zach sighs and sits in a nearby office chair, dropping the
pretense. He just wants to see his friend.

Josh remains on the floor. He starts pulling bits of fuzz
from the carpet and rolling it into a ball with his fingers.

ZACH
Sorry. How are you?

Josh shrugs.

ZACH
No shit. I'm barely sleeping. My
heart will just speed up sometimes.
All of the sudden, just...

He gestures. Josh stares at the little fuzz ball he's made,
pinching it between

HIS FINGERS

Bitten down nails.

ZACH (cont'd)
I feel like we should go back.

This gets Josh's attention.

JOSH
Why?

ZACH
I don't know. To check on him. To
see. ...I had this dream...

Josh looks at him a moment before dropping his eyes again to
focus on

A HOLE

In the knee of Zach's jeans. A small hole. Just the beginning of something larger.

ZACH
It's stupid.

JOSH
Don't go back there. Scene of the crime.

Zach nods. He's overcome with nervous energy.

ZACH
Do uh...So do you have his stuff?

JOSH
What?

ZACH
Daryl's stuff...his backpack, that video.

JOSH
It's here.

Josh nods to the corner of his room. Zach walks over and starts to look through it. He begins to well up.

ZACH
Ok...I guess, like, just keep it hidden?

Josh doesn't respond.

ZACH (cont'd)
Josh, do you hear me?

JOSH
Yeah. It's here. Until I decide to burn it or something.

ZACH
Well, don't do that. Don't do anything without talking to me first.

JOSH
Whatever.

Zach rolls his eyes and sits back down, trying to ease the discomfort of the conversation.

ZACH
What game is that?

Josh says nothing.

ZACH
Look man, it was a fucking accident.
We didn't mean for anything to
happen.

Josh silently watches him border on a meltdown. Zach
clenches the arms of the office chair. He suddenly punches
himself fiercely, twice, on the head.

ZACH (cont'd)
Fuck!

He gets it under control. Somewhat. Josh waits a beat.

JOSH
So did you bring my homework?

This catches Zach off guard. They both laugh. Like this
little shit matters now.

ZACH
No, but... Allison Bannister's
party's tomorrow. We should probably
go.

JOSH
Maybe... You know, I haven't slept,
either.

Zach nods.

JOSH
I probably should.

Zach takes the hint. He stands.

ZACH
Okay. If anyone asks, we didn't see
Charlie or Daryl that day.

JOSH
If anyone asks, we're already fucked.

ZACH
I guess... You should come to the
party. You should come back to
school.

JOSH

Why?

ZACH

I don't want to be alone.

Zach stands to leave. He takes one last look around the room and is suddenly struck with the claustrophobia of this space, too much stuff.

Too many action figures, and stacks of comic books, and video game cartridges spilling out of drawers. The TV seems too big for its stand.

And in the middle of it all Josh is sitting on the floor barefoot in pajama pants. He doesn't look up as Zach turns and exits the room.

64 EXT. SUBDIVISION - AFTERNOON

64

The sun is close to setting. Beautiful but eerie. Zach rides his bike down the street.

UP AHEAD

He sees ANOTHER RIDER on a bike.

ZACH Pedals harder to catch up to him. He gets within ten or fifteen feet but can't quite close the gap. But at this distance we can see the same thing that Zach can see. This looks like Daryl.

THE RIDER

Suddenly takes off! Hauling ass, pedaling away.

ZACH

Narrows his eyes and follows, determined to keep up. He chases him down streets and around corners. The bikes zoom.

They leave the subdivision and take off onto the empty country roads. Eventually, the Rider turns off into a field and disappears beyond a small hill.

65 EXT. FIELD - DUSK

65

Zach stands in the middle of the field, breathing heavily. He lost him.

We should recognize the place even if Zach doesn't seem to. This is the field outside the woods where Daryl died.

Zach looks toward the treeline and sees

DARYL'S BIKE

Lying on the ground. He leans in to inspect it. Then he hears something... a RUSTLING SOUND. Off in the distance. He follows the SOUND into

66 THE WOODS

66 *

Of course. It's coming from the leaf-strewn ditch.

Zach approaches and peers down. Cautious now. Afraid. Something's moving down there, writhing in the dead leaves.

He picks up a heavy rock and hurls it. CRACK! He's hit something. The writhing stops. *Dead? Shit. Now what?*

He slinks down the ditch's earthen wall, wanting to see what it is. What it was. He digs through the leaves, tossing them aside.

Wait. There's something. A leg: pale white skin.

But it isn't Daryl's leg. It's a girl's leg. Bare.

Zach stands. In a daze. Mesmerized. He grips the leg and pulls it, dragging a body into view.

ALLISON

Half naked. Underwear and undershirt. Dead and floppy. Lifeless.

He awkwardly drags the corpse into his lap. His breathing is ragged. He's sweaty. Afraid. Afraid of being caught. Someone seeing him like this. But he's excited too.

He leans in and kisses her cold lips.

After and long, horrible moment, she finally kisses back. Her arms are suddenly thrown around him. She's groggy, half-conscious. But alive.

He lifts her, kissing fiercely, hungrily. Her legs wrap around him as well. He slams her back into the wall of the ditch.

His hips grind. His fingers tangle themselves in her hair.
They pull. She moans. It's fast and violent and...

*
*

Someone's watching. Zach looks up.

JOSH

*

Is there, staring down without expression. Bathed in shadow
aside from a white hot reflection in his glasses.

*
*

Zach doesn't stop. It doesn't faze him at all. His pants are
undone. He's writhing against her. Dead leaves rustling.

Josh watches coldly. Clinically.

Thump, thump, thump. Allison's head against the earthen
wall. Her clouded, empty eyes.

*
*

MRS. BARRON (O.S.)

Zach.

CUT TO:

67 INT. ENGLISH CLASS - MORNING

67 *

Zach lifts his head from the desk. Mrs. Barron has her hand
on his shoulder. The students in the surrounding desks are
all staring at him, Allison included.

*

MRS. BARRON

Stay with us, please.

He's groggy, nauseated by his dream. Allison mouths to him.
"You okay?" He nods. Not convincing.

ZACH

Can I go to the bathroom? I feel a
little sick.

68 INT. RESTROOM

68

Zach stands in front of the sink, staring down at the
stiffness in his pants and the telltale damp patch
surrounding it. Jesus, not just a weird sex dream but a wet
dream, too.

*

He sighs and rolls his eyes, embarrassed. What the fuck is
he supposed to do now? He runs the water, wets his hands and
wipes them on his pants, trying to camouflage the wet spot.
Fuck it. Who cares?

*
*

He leans back against the wall and slumps down, breathing heavily, trying to collect himself.

Out in the hallway, the BELL RINGS. The hustle and bustle sounds of class-change pick up. Another KID walks in and goes to the urinal. Zach wipes his eyes and starts to leave.

Over his shoulder he can hear the other KID mocking him, making fake crying sounds.

Zach pushes open the door to the hallway and doesn't look back. He reaches out and POUNDS on a locker door. The sound of it echoes through the hall.

69 INT. HIGHSCHOOL CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

69

Zach sits alone with his headphones on, picking at a tray of food. A group of 5 kids, 2 guys and 3 girls, gather at the table in front of him. He gives them a glance.

GUY 1

How much you want to bet they try and give us a curfew if this idiot doesn't show up soon?

GUY 2

That would blow.

GUY 1

Little bee-otch is gonna ruin it for everybody.

Zach slides the headphones off one of his ears and perks up.

GIRL 1

Don't be a dick, Paul.

GUY 1

I'm just telling it how it is.

GIRL 2

Oh snap, I just saw the craziest thing in Spanish class. You guys know Josh Templeton?

Zach is now fully attentive, pulling his headphones off.

GUY 1

No.

GUY 2

What'd he do?

GIRL 2
 Called Mrs. Campos the c-word! Swear
 to god. He came in all attitude
 today, totally ignoring her when
 called on him. So she goes "I don't
 recall you being deaf, Josh" and he
 was all "I don't recall you being
 such a dumb cunt!"

The girls gasp. The guys laugh.

GIRL 3
 What did she say?!

GIRL 2
 Sent him right to the office.

GUY 2
 Just now?

GIRL 2
 Yeah, right before lunch.

That's Zach's cue. He's gone.

70 INT. FRONT OFFICE - AFTERNOON

70

Zach hurries in. And sits in a chair in the waiting area.
 Next to him is a GOTH KID who listens to loud MUSIC on his
 headphones.

Zach sits low, hoping to go unnoticed by the SECRETARY who
 sits behind the desk ten feet away.

He cranes his neck, trying to see through the window of the
 principal's office across the room. *Is Josh there, on the
 other side?*

After a moment the secretary sees him.

SECRETARY
 Can I help you?

Zach stammers to make something up.

ZACH
 My mom said she was gonna call me
 during lunch. So I thought I'd just
 wait here for a minute to see...

She seems suspicious.

SECRETARY

Okay. But only until class starts.

Zach leans back and looks again at the closed door to the principal's office...

The music from the Goth Kid's headphones gets louder. Steady rhythmic THUMPING.

71 INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - PARTY

71

Zach enter's through the font door. There are a dozen kids around him, talking or listening to music on a boom box. He walks into

72 THE DINING ROOM

72

And finds pizza boxes strewn around the table. He rummages through them but comes up empty-handed.

REBECCA

Pizza went pretty fast.

Zach is startled, he turns.

REBECCA

Hey, Zach.

ZACH

Hey, Becca. How are you?

REBECCA

I'm good! Glad you showed up, Allison will be stoked.

ZACH

Oh yeah?

REBECCA

Yeah, silly.

ZACH

That's cool...

Rebecca lauhgs at this.

REBECCA

Right. So I pretty much barely know you. Even though we have English together.

ZACH

I know, I'm sorry. I'm shy I guess.

REBECCA

Doesn't change the fact that Allison digs you. And if she digs you then how could I not? Let's be friends, yeah?

ZACH

Sounds good.

They shake hands theatrically. He looks over the milling crowd, has to raise his voice to be heard over the music

ZACH

I thought we were just gonna watch movies.

REBECCA

We were but then my grandpa got sick!

Zach looks confused.

REBECCA

So my parents went to visit him in Florida. Party got an upgrade.

She grins and holds up a beer.

ZACH

So uh, where's Allison? I should say hi.

REBECCA

You so should. She's out back.

73 EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

73

Zach steps out onto the porch. Tiki torches, Christmas lights. Much quieter. A smaller group engaged in conversation. Allison immediately rushes him, hugs him. She's a little hyper tonight.

ALLISON

Oh my god, you made it!

She kisses him on the cheek and embraces him again.

JOSH

Hey, Zach.

Zach's eyes widen. Josh is here! Sitting in a deck chair nearby. *

ZACH

Hey, man!

ALLISON

Oh! You guys should do the handshake!

Both Zack and Josh wince a little, clearly embarrassed.

ZACH

Eh. We don't.

JOSH

We don't really do that anymore.

John Whitcomb speaks up from a few seats over. He of the Kool-aid blue hair.

JOHN WHITCOMB

What handshake?

Josh ignores him and pulls a small, wrapped packet out of his pocket. *

ALLISON

Did you get me a present?

ZACH

I thought we weren't supposed to bring presents. *

ALLISON

What is it? *

JOSH

(shrugging) *

Open it.

Allison excitedly does so to find a small baggie, containing some of the weed from Josh's brother's room. *

ALLISON

Whoa! Oh, I know how to do this, I think. Let me see if Becca has papers.

She hurries inside.

JOHN WHITCOMB

Where'd you get this shit, Josh?

Zach eyes Josh warily.

JOSH
Guess I know a guy.

JOHN WHITCOMB
Can you hook me up?

JOSH
Maybe. Hit me up tomorrow. *

Zach watches this exchange with suspicion. *

Allison follows Rebecca back onto the porch. She's delicately holding a small piece of paper. *

REBECCA
Okay, its a page from a bible but its not an important one, its the introduction or something. *

ALLISON
The point is it'll work. I've seen my brother do this a million times.

Allison sits and dumps some of the weed onto the paper and makes a messy joint.

REBECCA
I think we have enough for two, but Allison gets to go twice to start because its her birthday.

It takes a second for Allison to get the joint lit. She awkwardly takes a hit, then another. Coughs. Passes to Rebecca. *

Zach watches Josh, uncomfortable with all of this. He turns to him.

ZACH
I'm gonna head out.

JOSH
See ya.

Clearly Josh plans on sticking around awhile. Zach stands. Allison glances his way. He closes the door on cheers and laughter. *

74 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

74

Zach is walking fast, emotionally strung out.

ALLISON (O.S.)
Hey! You taking off?

ZACH
Yeah, I don't know, not much of a party guy. Just wanted to say happy birthday.

*
*
*

Allison seems genuinely bummed.

ALLISON
Oh.

ZACH
It's fine. I just got a lot going on right now.

ALLISON
That's *why* you smoke. To relax.

*

ZACH
But I'm not into that. And neither is Josh, he just brought all that to impress you, it's fucking lame.

She doesn't respond. She lets his words hang there. He turns to her, not meeting her eyes.

*

ZACH
I'm sorry, Allison. I-

ALLISON
Somebody's lying.

*
*

Zach is startled.

*

ZACH
What?

*
*

Allison tilts her head to the house and smiles, swaying with *Chris Isaac - "Somebody's Crying"* in the background.

*
*

ALLISON
The song...Chris Isaac. Best track on the album.

*
*
*

She moves in for a kiss as he swings his head around and up. Their heads connect with a BANG.

*

ALLISON (cont'd)

Ah!

ZACH

Sorry! I'm sorry.

She starts giggling. He reaches out to touch her head and suddenly instinctively kisses it where they collided.

She stops giggling. He kisses her head again. Then her lips. He stops. They look at one another a moment.

ZACH

I'm sorry. Happy Birthday Allison.

She watches him walk off into the night. Alone, he picks up speed. Jogging. Running through the dark.

75 EXT. TRACK - DAY

75 *

Zach is in gym clothes running laps around the outdoor track. Other students are running as well in groups of threes and fours but Zach is keeping his own company, lost in thought until he sees something.

ZACH'S POV

We see the flashing red and blue lights of police cars in the distance up on the road traveling toward the school.

ZACH

Watches this with no small interest. The cars turn into the school parking lot and OFFICERS walk toward the building

Zach continues running, going faster now, sprinting. His thoughts running wild in his head.

76 INT. LOCKER ROOM - HIGH SCHOOL

76 *

Zach sits on the bench in front of his locker, the energy around him is terrifying and unnerving. The other boys excitedly talking. Zach's in a daze, barely listening. Only certain words reach him and register. Words like

Dead, killed, body, cops.

77 INT. CLASSROOM

77 *

Zach slumps down at his desk, dejected. PHILIP, a kid wearing a baseball cap, sits down at the desk behind him.

*
*

PHILIP
Dude, you hear that shit?

*
*

Zach turns around.

*

ZACH
Huh?

*
*

PHILIP
That guy. He's dead, they found him dead.

*
*
*

ZACH
Who?

*
*

PHILIP
John Whitcomb. The dude with the blue hair.

*
*
*

ZACH
Wait what? He's dead, he died?

*
*

PHILIP
Yeah, they found him this morning.

*
*

ZACH
Fuck.

*
*

PHILIP
I know, right? I had Algebra with him. Small fucking world.

*
*
*

Everything slows down and the sound drowns out. Zach's eyes widen and his mind races. He slowly reaches his hand out over his desk for something, anything.

*
*
*

78 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

78 *

Zach is unchaining his bike, preparing to head home. He glances over at

*
*

THE PARKING LOT

*

To see Eugene sitting in the back of a truck, surrounded by a handful of other students. Including CHAD, the threatening figure from under the bleachers.

*
*
*

79 EXT. PARKING LOT

79 *

Zach hesitantly approaches. *

ZACH
Eugene. Can I talk to you? *

CHAD
You can get your ass beat, faghole. *

ZACH
I wasn't talking to you. *

Ooohs from the surrounding students. But Eugene deflates the situation, patting Chad on the back and leaping down from the bed of the truck. *

EUGENE
It's aight, I gotta dip, anyway. *

He holds up a CD case. *

EUGENE (cont'd)
I'll get this back to you, tomorrow. *

Eugene heads to his own car. Zach follows, dodging a plastic SODA BOTTLE thrown by Chad. *

EUGENE (cont'd)
What's up, little man? You got my five dollars? *

Eugene reaches his car, tosses his backpack into the rear. *

ZACH
Josh didn't pay you? Danny's little brother. *

EUGENE
Why do you think I'm asking you? *

ZACH
Have you seen him at all? He didn't try to sell you weed or anything? *

Eugene narrows his eyes, suddenly on the alert. *

EUGENE
What's that got to do with you? *

ZACH
He's my friend. *

EUGENE

Uh-huh. Well... It maybe came up.
That little dude Chad hanged out
with, with the blue hair, RIP, he had
told me was gonna get some from your
friend. Guess that's off, now, huh?

Zach processes this, deeply troubled by the implications.

EUGENE (cont'd)

Tell you what, when you see him,
remind him that he was supposed to
come straight to me with that kind-
bud. And next time you see me, you
better have my five dollars. Or I'll
let Chad beat it out of you.

He grins, but not maliciously, revving his engine and
pulling out, leaving Zach standing on the blacktop alone.

80 EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

80

Zach and Allison are sitting side by side on the curb
outside, drinking sodas, somber.

ALLISON

I walked in on him once. In the
bathroom, the bus bathroom. On that
field trip to the flight museum, you
remember that?

ZACH

I didn't go.

ALLISON

Oh. Well, he didn't lock the door for
some reason. I saw everything. Full
Whitcomb.

She makes a "meh" face. They sit for a beat in silence.

ZACH

You're friends with Tig right?

She opens a pack of cigarettes and lights one.

ALLISON

Who?

ZACH

Carol. Sharp. She was at your party.

ALLISON
Oh yeah. Sorta.

ZACH
You have her number?

ALLISON
Somewhere at home. I'll have to look.
Here. Got a pen?

He digs one out of his pocket. She takes his hand and writes
a number on his palm. *

ZACH
What's this?

ALLISON
My new number. My own line. Mom and
dad's birthday present. You won't
have to deal with my brother anymore.
Call tonight and I'll dig hers out
for you... If you tell me why you
want it. *

She smiles, Zach dodges the question. *

ZACH
Did you just buy that?

She looks at the cigarette in her hand.

ALLISON
Is that okay? I don't want to scare
you off again.

Zach seems uncomfortable. She playfully nudges him. *

ALLISON
I'm messing with you, dummy. Everyone
knows this guy will sell to anybody.
Just gotta be patient sometimes. *

He glances around nervously, gestures toward the road. *

ZACH
It's fine. But we should probably...
You shouldn't smoke it right here.
You'll get him in trouble. *

She exhales and squints at Zach, casual. She doesn't care.

ALLISON
Asshole sells cigarettes to kids. *

She winks as Duke steps outside with new numbers to display on the gas price sign by the road. He waves to them and smiles. *

DUKE
You found a girlfriend? *

ZACH
Uh... No, we-

DUKE
She's a cute one, my friend. *

ZACH
Sure.

DUKE
I'm serious. *

He is.

ZACH
Okay...

Allison speaks through her teeth quietly so as not to be overheard. *

ALLISON
Told ya.

She stands.

ALLISON
Come on. Be a good "boyfriend" and walk me home.

81 EXT. SUBDIVISION - AFTERNOON

81

Zach walks his bike beside Allison.

ZACH
You don't think it's weird?

She shrugs, not really buying what he's suggesting.

ALLISON
He fell. People climb those towers in the pipeline all the time. You said you and Josh just did it. Makes sense that some people would fall.

ZACH
What if he didn't fall? *

ALLISON
Oh my god.

Zach takes a deep breath. Has she picked up on what he's been hinting at? Maybe he shouldn't have said anything.

ALLISON
You think he jumped!

Zach wrestles with himself. Should he tell her what's really on his mind?

ZACH
I don't know. Maybe. You're right, I guess it's not that weird. Right?

She narrows her eyes.

ALLISON
Why do you care so much?

Zach doesn't know what to say.

ALLISON
God, that made me sound like a dick, didn't it? "Why do you care?" A kid in our class is dead. ...And that Daryl guy's still missing. *

They've reached her house. He walks her up the steps. *

ZACH
Sorry. I just, lately, it feels like I don't have anyone to talk to. *

ALLISON
...It's my fault, isn't it?

ZACH
What?

ALLISON
You and Josh. I could tell you two were... He's got a thing for me.
(off his look)
Zach, I like you. A lot sometimes. But when are you going to stop being surprised at the fact that I'm not completely stupid?

ZACH
Probably now.

ALLISON
Now's good.

She kisses his forehead with a smirk and goes to the door. Stops. Might as well be forward.

ALLISON
Do you want to come inside?

ZACH
Yeah.

A beat. He doesn't move from the sidewalk.

ALLISON
But you're not going to. *

He tries to think of something to say. All he can do is shake his head. Allison nods in response. She gives up on him, goes inside and closes the door behind her. *

82 INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON 82 *

Zach unlocks the door and walks inside, he can feel the silence. *

ZACH
Mom?!

He takes his shoes off and walks into the

83 KITCHEN 83 *

And pours a huge glass of orange juice.

The answering machine is flashing. He presses the button to hear his mother speaking: *

KAREN (O.S.)
Hey, honey! I'm gonna be home a little late, so eat whatever you feel like for dinner. Just don't go anywhere. I'll be home as soon as I can. I love you. *

She makes a kissing sound. He kisses back. He stands alone in the kitchen for a moment, debating. Then heads back out the door. *

- 84 EXT. SUBDIVISION - LATE AFTERNOON 84
 Zach pedals furiously out of the neighborhood and down
- 85 COUNTRY ROADS 85 *
- He's hurrying somewhere, biking as quickly as he can. On toward that familiar
- 86 FIELD 86 *
- He parks his bike and walks through the tall grass into
- 87 THE FOREST 87 *
- A grim retracing of his steps. He walks carefully, almost respectfully. This is, after all, a graveyard of sorts.
- For a few moments he seems lost, looking around in every direction, trying to determine where they had been. They were running after him, but which way... Then he spots the drop off up ahead *
- THE DITCH *
- Where Daryl took his last spill.
- Zach approaches slowly and as he reaches the edge of the drop, he can see the scene from above. But it's wrong. Something is out of place here. Zach can see *
- THE PILE OF LEAVES *
- That he and Josh had covered Daryl's body with, but it's thinner and more scattered now.
- Someone's been here.
- DARYL'S BODY *
- Is slightly uncovered. An arm exposed. A hand.
- Zach works up the nerve to climb down and get a closer look. He steps with caution, not wanting to leave any sign of his presence and needing to keep a certain distance from the body. He squints at the exposed *

HAND

The fingers are missing. Sliced clean off. He leans in. *What the fuck?* He kicks a few of the leaves off, trying to see more. There are

STAB WOUNDS

In Daryl's back. Half a dozen. He kicks off more leaves and finally gets a good look at

DARYL'S HEAD

Zach can't look at it for long, maybe only a glimpse, but... The skull's been crushed.

He stumbles, weak in the knees for a moment before realizing that whatever happens, he can't stay. He gathers himself and turns to go. He stops on his way to check

THE HOLLOW TREE

But both the sword and Zach's sweatshirt are gone.

ZACH

Shit.

He paces, worked up, frustrated, tense beyond belief.

88 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

88 *

Zach grabs the phone and glances at his hand to dial Allison's private number. She answers quickly, a smile in her voice.

ALLISON

Hey!

ZACH

Hey... do you have that number?

She is suddenly cold and businesslike.

ALLISON

Yeah, hang on.

Zach listens as she puts the phone down, angry at himself, scared out of his mind.

89 INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

89

Charlie's working on an enormous desktop computer. The phone rings behind him. He answers.

*
*

CHARLIE
Sharp residence.

*

ZACH
Charlie? It's Zach.

CHARLIE
...How'd you get my number?

ZACH
Don't worry about it. Listen.

*

CHARLIE
Okay.

ZACH
Shit... Okay I'll just say it... it's Josh.

*
*

CHARLIE
What's Josh?

ZACH
The killer. I think he Killed John Whitcomb.

90 INT. KAREN'S CAR - EVENING

90

Karen is driving down the road, listening to the radio. Her headlights fall on a kid on a bike in front of her. A blue hoodie. She pulls up beside him and rolls her window down.

*
*

KAREN
Josh?

*

He stops and turns.

JOSH
Mrs. Taylor.

*

91 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

91

Zach clutches the phone, pacing.

CHARLIE
Killer? Zach what the hell...

*
*

ZACH

I'm still figuring it all out but I had to talk to somebody who knew and you're the only who does, so... I've tried talking to Josh but there's something wrong with him. He was so pissed at Daryl for ganking his brother's pot but the other night he just gave it away.

*
*
*
*

CHARLIE

What?

ZACH

Yeah, to this girl we know as a gift and he said he'd sell some to John Whitcomb.

*
*
*

CHARLIE

So?

*
*

ZACH

He hated John Whitcomb. Him and those guys he hung out with.

*
*
*

CHARLIE

What guys? Zach-

*
*

ZACH

Forget it, doesn't matter. I'm saying like a week ago Josh was talking about how much he hated John Whitcomb and now John Whitcomb turns up dead in the pipeline where we hung out with Daryl that day? He was gonna sell him the pot! Like that story Daryl told us. He said he would sell to him, lured him out there and got him alone so he could kill him!

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

92 EXT. KAREN'S CAR - ROADSIDE

92 *

Josh is standing on the side of the road. She's pulled over now.

KAREN

You shouldn't be out here like this at night. Not with everything that's been going on. Where are you headed?

*
*
*

JOSH

I was actually on my way to see Zach.

*

KAREN
 We haven't seen you around lately.
 Everything alright?

JOSH
 We had a fight the other day-

KAREN
 Well, that's between you two. I'll
 keep my nose out but you shouldn't be
 out here alone. Get in. You can put
 the bike in the back.

93 INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

93

CHARLIE
 Alright, he's acting weird. So are
 you! So am I, probably.

ZACH
 I know, but I couldn't stop thinking
 about it. I went back out to the
 woods where Daryl was but it was
 different, someone else had been
 there before me, he was moved around
 and-

CHARLIE
 You went out there? What did-

ZACH
 Look, the sword was gone. The tree
 was uncovered and the sword was gone,
 along with my sweatshirt.

CHARLIE
 But--

ZACH
 Three people knew about the sword.
 You, me and Josh. And I don't think
 you went back out there alone.

CHARLIE
 No.

ZACH

I think Josh did and I think he took the sword and messed with Daryl then he pushed John Whitcomb off of that tower and I don't know what he's doing now. I called but there's no answer.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Charlie sits with the phone against his ear, emotionless. His blank expression becomes one of disgust

*

CHARLIE

That's so fucked up.

ZACH

I know, I still can't bel--

CHARLIE

Why would you add all this nonsense onto the situation? Isn't it bad enough as it is? Daryl's dead, isn't that enough drama for you?

*

ZACH

We don't know he was dead.

CHARLIE

He looked pretty dead. Did you check for a pulse?

ZACH

I'm not fucking Doogie Howser! Yeah, I thought he was dead. But either way someone went back there. And if they found him alive then they finished him off. And if he was dead then they were just fucking around with the body. And that's even worse!

*

*

CHARLIE

It is.

ZACH

It wasn't me. And it wasn't you.

CHARLIE

So it was Josh? He's your friend, isn't he?

ZACH

Yeah.

CHARLIE

So why go out of your way to put this on him? I think we're all to blame for what happened to Daryl, all three of us. Don't just blame him to avoid feeling guilty about it.

ZACH

Then where's the sword?

CHARLIE

Leave it alone, Zach!

ZACH

Did you take it?

CHARLIE

No! Did you? How do I know you didn't take it? How do I know it's even gone? Want to take me out and show me? Lure me back out there? You, me, no witnesses? No thank you.

ZACH

Listen to me!

CHARLIE

Listen to yourself. You're losing it. Don't call again. *

Charlie hangs up. Zach sits in the empty living room. *

94 LATER

94 *

Zach idly eats leftovers, while half paying attention to whatever horrific movie is on TV. There are periodic SCREAMS, but they don't faze him. *

Eventually, Karen bursts in, her arms full of stuff (purse, mail, briefcase, fast food bags). *

KAREN *

Look who I found!

Zach turns to see Josh standing right behind her. *

ZACH

Hey.

JOSH

Hey.

Karen can sense the tension. Tries to break it. *

KAREN
I got chicken. *

Zach looks at his empty bowl. *

ZACH
You told me to eat whatever.

KAREN
Did I say that? Bah. It'll reheat.
Josh, you want some? *

JOSH
Nah, I shouldn't stay long.

ZACH
We'll be outside a minute.

Karen watches them step out through the garage. *

95 EXT. ZACH'S HOUSE

95 *

ZACH
What are you doing?

JOSH
I don't know. I wanted to say hi. And
I guess apologize for ditching you at
the party. *

ZACH
You didn't, I ditched you. *

JOSH
I guess so. It would've been cool to
hang out. It was a fun party. *

Josh seems sincere, almost vulnerable. But Zach is too
focused to see it. *

ZACH
Look, someone went out there. They
took the sword and- *

JOSH
Can't we just talk- *

ZACH
That doesn't surprise you? That
someone took the sword? Did you go
back out to see him?

JOSH
Why the fuck did you go back out
there?

ZACH
Just to look.

JOSH
Is this all we can do now?

ZACH
You want to hang out? John Whitcomb
is dead too, now. What the fuck is
that all about?

Josh turns and walks away. Leaving Zach to stand and wonder
how this could've gone better.

96 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

96

The horror movie still playing on the television. Karen
looks up from her plate of chicken and watches Zach enter
the room. She drinks from a bottle of beer.

KAREN
He left?

ZACH
Yeah.

KAREN
I wish you'd told me. I could've
driven him.

ZACH
He'll be fine.

KAREN
Are you going to be fine?

ZACH
Yeah, it's ok. It's not a big thing.

KAREN
They found that Whitcomb boy. That's
two in a week.

Zach nods. Nothing to say. *

KAREN
I keep thinking if I was his
mother... *

She's tearing up just imagining it. Zach fidgets on the
couch, pretending to focus on the movie as she sniffles away
quietly beside him. *

KAREN (cont'd) *

Come here.

ZACH
What? *

KAREN
Come here. Fucking hug me! Jesus. *

He obeys, scooting over to her awkwardly. She embraces him.
He lets it happen. It's a tender moment for her. She strokes
the back of his head, rocking him softly. *

On screen someone is SCREAMING and SCREAMING. Karen doesn't
even notice. *

97 INT. ENGLISH CLASS - DAY 97 *

Zach sits at his desk as the teacher talks about *Wuthering
Heights* or some other classic. His attention is elsewhere.
He's hypnotized by *

THE CARDBOARDED WINDOW *

This must be the room that the deer ran into. The duct tape
holding the cardboard in place has come loose. The wind is
picking up outside. It whistles. The cardboard flaps. *

ALLISON *

Looks over at him. He doesn't even notice. She leans over
and continues whispering to Rebecca beside her. The wind
keeps howling outside. *

98 INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON 98 *

The house is quiet. Zach opens the fridge a grabs a BEER
BOTTLE from the back. After a moment's thought, he reaches
in and grabs another. *

99 INT. ZACH'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

99 *

Zach sits on his bed sipping beer. The familiar YEARBOOK is in his lap, but now instead of looking at girls, Zach looks at a photo of

*
*
*

HIMSELF

*

It wasn't long ago, but he seems so much younger.

*

After a moment he flips a few pages and scans the names intently until he finds

JOHN WHITCOMB

*

And finally

JOSH

*

He closes the book, lays his head back.

*

Suddenly, he's startled by a KNOCK at the door.

*

KAREN (O.S.)

*

Sweetie? It's for you.

ZACH

*

Who is it?

KAREN

*

Ralphie.

Zach makes a face. *Who the fuck is that?*

*

ZACH

Okay.

KAREN (O.S.)

*

It's locked.

He unlocks the door and takes the phone.

*

KAREN

*

Why is it locked?

ZACH

*

Sorry. I didn't know you were home.

*

She offers him the phone and a raised eyebrow before retreating down the hall.

*
*

ZACH (cont'd)

*

Hello?

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Turn the news on, asshole.

ZACH
Charlie?

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Just turn it on.

ZACH
What channel?

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Three.

ZACH
Who's your cable provider?

Charlie sighs.

ZACH
The channels might be different.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Just find the local news.

*
*

100 INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

100

*

Zach sits on the couch gazing at

*

THE TV

*

The news is on. Karen walks in with a cup of yogurt.

*

KAREN
What is this?

*

ZACH
The gas station.

The convenience store they go to after school. The news camera zooms in on a shot of

DUKE

*

Being taken out in handcuffs by county police officers. The newscasters rattle on about "allegations of sexual assault on minors" and how he's "being questioned regarding the recent disappearance of one local teen and the death of another."

*

KAREN
I knew it!

ZACH
What?

KAREN
That guy was always so weird.

ZACH
I guess so.

KAREN
Of course he is! They're saying he
killed that Whitcomb kid. Maybe now
that they've caught him they'll find
that other one.

ZACH
Daryl.

KAREN
Daryl. If anything good can come out
of this maybe they'll find him alive.

Zach says nothing.

101 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - AFTERNOON 101

Zach grimly pedals his bike down the street toward Josh's house.

102 EXT. JOSH'S FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER 102

Zach knocks, but there's no answer.

He checks to make sure he's not being watched before reaching down to retrieve a spare key from under the welcome mat, and slips inside.

103 INT. JOSH'S HOUSE 103

The place is silent. Eerie. Zach breathes heavily as he creeps down the hall. His voice cracks when he calls out.

ZACH
Josh?

He lingers outside Josh's bedroom. He kneels down and tries to peer under the door: nothing to see.

He knocks. Then knocks louder... At last he turns the knob. *

104 INT. JOSH'S ROOM

104

Immediately Zach sees a lump on the bed. It startles him, but it's just bedding. Dirty clothes. He's alone in the room. He starts to tear the place apart, searching. There's got to be some clue... At last he finds *

A CORDLESS PHONE RECEIVER

Lying at the foot of the bed. He picks it up and examines it. *Who's Josh been calling?* *

A NOISE! A creak! Someone in the hallway?

He slips around the corner... *

AN UGLY OLD DOG *

Shambles up to him, panting and coughing.

ZACH
Jesus, Maggie.

He gives her a pet and shoos her away.

105 INT. JOSH'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

105

He starts toward the kitchen with the phone receiver still in his hand but stops. *

106 INT. DANNY'S ROOM

106

Zach slips inside and makes his way to the closet. He opens the door...

No samurai sword. An empty spot where it used to hang. *

107 INT. JOSH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

107

Zach finds the base for the cordless phone. There's a **caller ID digital readout that shows recent numbers.** *

He pushes the button to cycle through them. There's one that shows up a couple times. Once just 15 minutes ago. And once before that. The day before... *

He runs his hand through his hair... then looks at his open palm. *

THE PHONE NUMBER *

That Allison wrote on his hand. It's smudged and barely visible. It's the same number. Josh has been calling Allison? *Where is he now?* *

108 EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

108

A doorbell rings. Josh stands outside on the step. He has a duffle bag over his shoulder. After a beat the door opens and we see Allison and Rebecca. *

ALLISON
Hey, Josh. *

JOSH
Hi, Allison. *

REBECCA
You should come in.

JOSH
I'd love to. *

109 INT. JOSH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

109

Zach stands thinking. The pieces are coming together... he's interrupted by the SLAM of a car door from outside. He looks and sees *

JOSH'S FAMILY *

Joan, Josh's Dad and younger brother, all walking up to the house. No Josh. That's all Zach needed to see. He runs and bursts out the front door, just as Joan is opening it. *

JOAN
Zach? Where did you-- *

110 INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

110

Josh leans against the wall, silently drinking an entire glass of milk. Allison and Rebecca sit opposite him, waiting patiently. *

Techno MUSIC plays from a room somewhere deeper in the house. *

REBECCA

So?

JOSH

So, so.

REBECCA

So you went to that "guy" you know?
How much and how much?

Josh removes the baggie of weed from his hoodie pocket and hands it to her.

JOSH

This much and on the house.

Rebecca grabs him and kisses him on the lips playfully.

REBECCA

This guy's awesome.

They both turn to

ALLISON

Standing by a little nervously.

ALLISON

Zach's not coming, is he?

She doesn't do a very good job hiding her disappointment.

JOSH

No, he said he couldn't make it.

111 EXT. SUBDIVISION - AFTERNOON

111

Zach is racing, panting, making his way to Allison's house. He drops his bike and bounds up the stairs to her front door. He frantically knocks and rings the bell.

112 INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

112

REBECCA

More for us! Come on.

She leads the way down the hall, toward the music. Josh and Allison are alone for a moment. They laugh awkwardly.

JOSH

Ladies first.

113 EXT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

113

At long last, the door opens, revealing Allison's brother DENNIS, 24, shaved head, blue work shirt, smoking a cigarette with a cordless phone pressed to his ear.

DENNIS

(to phone)

Shit yeah, uh huh, hold on...

(to Zach)

What?

ZACH

Uh, is... I'm Zach.

DENNIS

Alright.

ZACH

Is Allison home?

DENNIS

Who wants to know?

ZACH

Zach.

Dennis smirks a condescending smirk.

DENNIS

I'm messing with you.

ZACH

I know. Don't. Don't do that. Is she here?

DENNIS

Why?

ZACH

She's not.

Dennis shakes his head.

DENNIS

I think she's with that bitch from down the street...

ZACH

What bitch?

DENNIS

Rebecca whatever.

ZACH

Where?

DENNIS

Her house I guess.

ZACH

Was there a guy with them?

DENNIS

Man, fuck off.

He waves goodbye and shuts the door. Zach stands silently panicking for a moment, every second might count here and he doesn't know what to do. *

He rings the bell again. And again. And again. Dennis opens the door. *

DENNIS

What the hell?

ZACH

If Allison doesn't call you in twenty minutes, call the police. Tell them to get to that bitch Rebecca's house down the street. *

DENNIS

Listen- *

ZACH

Twenty minutes, I'm not fucking kidding. *

114 EXT. SUBDIVISION - CONTINUOUS

114 *

Zach runs. Trying to remember which house was Rebecca's. He takes a wrong turn and ends up in a cul-de-sac. He panics and doubles back. *

ZACH

Shit shit shit! Where was it?

115 INT. REBECCA'S ROOM

115

Allison and Rebecca are goofing off and dancing to the music on the CD player. Trading swigs from a bottle of white wine and hits off a joint. *

JOSH

Just sits, watching, smiling. Allison offers him the joint, but he just shakes his head, politely declining.

JOSH

I'm good.

ALLISON

You sure? I thought we were hanging out.

REBECCA

We are!

She grabs the joint from Allison and puffs... exhaling the smoke in Josh's face and laughing before looking down to see his open duffle bag and...

THE SWORD

She takes it out and holds it up.

REBECCA

Whoa, what the fuck is this?

ALLISON

That is a fucking sword.

(to Josh)

Can we see it?

JOSH

You're doing it.

The two girls play with it some more, miming like they're fighting. Precariously swinging the sword all around, making sound effects.

JOSH continues watching calmly. Eventually he gets up and approaches them.

JOSH

Okay, my turn.

116 EXT. SUBDIVISION - AFTERNOON

116

Zach hurries up the street. He spots the house. And sure enough Josh's bike is parked outside.

He walks to the front door. He tries the knob and it's unlocked. He turns it and steps inside.

117 INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

117

None of the downstairs lights are on. The sun is setting outside, the house growing dim and eerie. *

Zach darts his eyes around the room, looking for anything to indicate what he might be stepping into here.

He sees nothing. But he hears...

THE MUSIC playing from somewhere down the hall. And above that... A WHIMPER... He freezes, stock still. His eyes go wide. What did he just hear? Muffled VOICES. *

He moves to the fireplace and digs through the fireplace tools. No poker? He settles for the shovel and starts down *

THE HALLWAY *

With a few doors on either side, bathrooms or closets but at the end of the hall, straight ahead...

A DOOR *

Open just a crack. Pink light spills out from inside, across the carpet. The MUSIC is more present now. *

THE WHIMPER is louder and more resonant. It's not yelps or coos, it's one long sustained, but muffled MOAN that has peaks of high squealing which are louder in volume. *

Zach moves slowly.

THE MOANING is louder and louder. It's a painful, awful sound. The MUSIC underscores it all. *

Zach walks all the way up to the door and peers in

THROUGH THE CRACK *

Just a sliver of the scene is enough. He can see ALLISON at least. Her head hanging down so that her long hair obscures her face. She's the one moaning. Whatever's happening can't be good... *

He pushes the door open slightly. Now he can see that she has her shirt off. Barefoot in a white bra and shorts. Her hands are bound and she is gagged, sitting on the floor. *

He can see that she is trembling and that there is blood on and around her feet.

Rebecca is lying on the bed. She's not moving. *

Josh comes into view. His back is to the door. Zach can't see his face but it's clearly him. *

ZACH *

Is panicked. Devastated. He stands there a moment, trying to decide what to do. *

Allison Notices him. Her eyes widen. *

Josh turns. The boys make eye contact. Zach is tearing up. *

ZACH *

Josh. *

Josh SLAMS the door shut. Allison SCREAMS through the gag. *

Zach throws his shoulder against the door. No good. He kicks and stomps.

ZACH (cont'd) *

Josh!! You fucking fuck!!! *

There's a clatter and a CRASH from the other side of the door. Then more screams. Suddenly not just frightened but terrified. Pleading.

Then a THUD. And SCREAMS of pain. *

The door won't give at all. Something's blocking it. Zach gives up on it and charges back outside. *

118 EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - EVENING

118 *

Zach runs around the side of the house, shouting at the top of his lungs. *

ZACH

HELP! HELP ME! SOMEBODY! HE'S KILLING THEM! HELP ME! HELP ME!

He finds the window that must lead into Rebecca's room. He bashes at it with his shovel. Worthless. *

There's a DECK CHAIR. He grabs that and starts pounding.

Muffled SCREAMS emanate from inside. *

Zach hoists that chair, swings for all he's worth. *

The window breaks. He forces the screen out of his way and climbs in, taking his little fireplace shovel with him. *

119 INT. REBECCA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

119 *

The place is a wreck. Pink walls. Red floors.

Clothes strewn about. And a sizable BOOKSHELF on the floor in front of the door. That must be what had been keeping him out... but it's pulled aside now. And the door is open.

Josh is gone.

ALLISON is writhing weakly in the corner. Zach races to her side. Her head hangs forward. *

THE BACK HER NECK *

Is horrific. There are bruises and lacerations. Deep ones. Josh tried to use the sword on her neck, to cut off her head. Not quite bamboo grade. Sharp enough to cut through milk cartons. This is what it does to a human neck. To Allison's neck. These horrible, ragged hacks. *

She's barely moving. Losing consciousness. Zach cries out. He screams for help again. *

The house CREAKS. *

He realizes for the first time that Josh might still be here. Allison has gone limp in his arms. He sets her down and stands, watching the doorway. *

ZACH

Josh?

He stoops to collect his shovel and steps toward the doorway. He takes a deep breath, pulls the door open and steps out into *

120 THE HALLWAY

120 *

He swings his shovel, but connects with nothing. *

ZACH

Jo-

But then Josh rounds the corner, sword in hand. *

Zach goes low and tackles him. The two boys grapple with each other. It's not unlike the earlier confrontation between Zach and Daryl. *

Eventually, Zach manages to get free. He scurries back and stands. *

They face one another. *

ZACH (cont'd)
What the fuck? Josh, what the fuck?!

Josh just stares at him, shaking. Zach is terrified.
Adrenaline surging through him. *

JOSH
Is she dead? *

ZACH
Fuck you. Her brother called the
police. *

JOSH
I don't care. *

There's an emptiness in Josh's voice. He continues to stand
there. Shaking. Zach's shaking now, too. *

ZACH
Please please please don't. Okay?
Josh? *

Josh starts breathing heavier. Huffing. Puffing. Working
himself up. *

There's nothing behind Zach but a bathroom. He has to get by
Josh if he wants to get out.

He makes a break for it, dashing forward and to the side,
trying to dodge around Josh and his sword.

He makes it but Josh is right behind him. He swings the
sword, hitting Zach in the shoulder. *

Not sharp enough to slice deeply into him, but sharp enough
to cut. And fucking hurt. Zach SCREAMS. *

Josh brings the sword down hard, to Zach's head. CRACK!
Right on the top of Zach's skull, splitting the skin. CRACK! *

Blood streams down Zach's face. He collapses. *

Josh is on top of him, stabbing frantically with the sword.
Zach squirms around and manages to kick Josh back. *

He gets to his feet and stumbles out the front door, into
the yard. *

121 EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - EVENING

121

Zach races out as fast as he can go. Josh comes bounding after him. Josh bellows and takes another swing. *

A LITTLE GIRL *

Stands in the doorway of one of the nearby houses. She watches silently.

Josh catches up with Zach. He swings again. *

Zach's ankle twists beneath him and he falls into the street.

Josh straddles him again. This time when he stabs he makes contact. He pierces Zach's thigh. *

Zach grabs the blade and shifts to the side, pulling it out, forcing it away from him.

A CAR *

Drives past. Slows. Then speeds the fuck up and peels out. Dogs start barking in the distance. And beyond that...
SIRENS. *

Zach swings blindly up at Josh, trying to fend him off. Josh doesn't give a shit. With his free hand, he swings back. *

But suddenly A MAN rushes up behind Josh and catches him under the arms, pulling him away from Zach. *

The Man holds tight against Josh's struggles. *

In a rage Zach stands and rushes at Josh. Takes a good, cheap swing. *

The Man tries to pull Josh away. He's shouting at Zach, trying to calm him down.

PEOPLE *

Are out now. All standing in their yards. Staring. Nervous. The Man's actions have made others braver, though. More come to help restrain the kids. *

Josh manages to wriggle free and collapse on the blacktop. Before anyone can seize him, Zach rushes over. He KICKS Josh in the face. *

The people stand watching. *

DENNIS

Comes running over from his house, surprised at the sudden activity.

JOSH

Is through fighting back. He just lies there.

ZACH

Kicks again. And STOMPS and SCREAMS.

The Man is able to subdue Zach just as the red and blue lights of the police cars arrive. The sirens drown out everything.

Others are helping Josh to his feet, holding him up.

The Man holds Zach back. It's not necessary, however. The fury is gone. He's spent. He's done.

He and Josh make eye contact with one another.

ZACH'S FACE

Still shows emotion.

JOSH'S FACE

Holds none.

The two boys are stuck there. They stare at each other until police come and handcuff each of them and put them in separate cars.

122 IN ONE CAR

122 *

Josh sits staring off.

THE SEAT-BACK

In front of him is black vinyl, cracked in a few places with heat and age. Josh stares into these lines, cracks, creases. There is nothing more interesting.

123 IN THE OTHER CAR

123 *

Zach leans back and looks

OUT THE WINDOW *

He sees all of the activity of police taping off the area and holding the onlookers back. Rebecca's parents pull up in their car, totally confounded. *

He sees paramedics wheel out two gurneys. Dennis runs up and alongside the one that clearly carries Allison. She reaches up to take his hand. He gets into the back of the ambulance with her before it speeds away. *

Zach smiles slightly. She's alive. He looks down at his handcuffed HANDS, moving them a bit despite the restraint. Finally he settles with them in his lap. *

FADE TO: *

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|---|
| 124 | EXT. WOODS - DAWN | 124 | * |
| | Silence. Time has passed. Winter has moved on. Spring is here. | | * |
| | A deer stands alone, picking at some plants when suddenly it looks up. It stares into the forest at something unseen. The wind picks up. Trees sway. The deer takes off. | | * |
| 125 | EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAWN | 125 | * |
| | Breaking across the soccer field, it b-lines towards | | * |
| 126 | EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAWN | 126 | * |
| | It catapults towards the school, just like before, but right before it's about to smash into a window it comes to a grinding stop. | | * |
| 127 | INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - MORNING | 127 | * |
| | Allison jumps up from sleep with a gasp, drenched in sweat. | | * |
| 128 | INT. SHOWER - MORNING | 128 | * |
| | She stands. Eyes closed, the water cascading down her face. | | * |

129	INT. ALLISON'S KITCHEN - MORNING	129	*
	She sits at the table eating a bowl of cereal. Dennis sits next to her. Her mother comes in and gives her a kiss on the head and whispers something into her ear. Allison nods. Her mother smiles.		* * * *
130	INT. CAR - MORNING	130	*
	Allison stares out the window as Dennis drives her.		*
131	INT. HALLWAY - DAY	131	*
	Allison stands at her locker, staring into it. After a moment she grabs her AP History book and closes the door.		* *
132	INT. AP HISTORY - DAY	132	*
	The teacher lectures. The students take notes. Allison fiddles with her pony tail unconsciously, then slowly brings her hand down to her neck where she gently rubs the scars that remain there. It's healed now as time has passed, but its still a visible relic of something terrible.		* * * * *
	A MALE STUDENT sits behind her. He stares at her pony tail and then down at the back of her neck.		* *
	Without looking back Allison undoes her pony tail and lets her hair down, covering up the scar.		* * *
	The teacher asks a question. Allison raises her hand		* * *
	CUT TO BLACK		*