"COMPASSION"

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ST LOUIS MO. 63121

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ACT ONE: ENTANGLEMENT

HOLD ON BLACK.

MARK (VO)

People never believe it but I can remember being in my mother's womb.

A slow, subtle sound begins to build, a low buzzing.

MARK (CONT.)

It was a feeling of containment, and the only time I've felt someone else's emotions. I don't think you're supposed to remember that.

The buzzing is joined by a rising hum.

MARK (CONT.)

I think it makes a person crazy to know that much love.

The hum shifts suddenly to a high-pitched whine which holds at its peak and then silences.

FADE IN: SECOND DESTINATION - TIME UNCLEAR

We are looking down the barrel-end of a white corridor, or at least, half of a corridor.

The left side is walled with ceiling, floor, etc.

A lone door halfway through the left wall rests, closed.

Our view of the **right half** of the corridor ends where a **wall would be**, but that half of the hallway is a **formless expanse of white**, as if the left half of a **rectangle** were drawn on a blank piece of paper.

The door on the left wall begins, S.M., to open.

A man's body follows the opening of the door, also in S.M.

He is **naked** and curled in **fetal position** and **suspended** two feet or so off of the ground as he **slowly floats** out into the **corridor**.

His face is calm and ready.

Suddenly, moving slowly but at a faster rate than the man, a pair of woman's arms extends from the doorway, closing in on the man's body before he has even made it past the length of the open door.

The hands find his waist, grip, and jerk him violently backwards, back through the doorway.

CUT TO:

INT. A MODERATE-SCALE APARTMENT - TWILIGHT

E.C.U. Two sets of eyes, one behind the other, showing that the owner of the first pair has her head pressed against the back of the owner of the second pair's.

The second (front pair) or eyes are wide and wired, and we hear his **gasping breath** and see shivers overtake his face every few seconds.

Behind his head, the **first** pair of **eyes**, the girl's, are open, glassy, clearly lifeless, as is her still, blotchy pale face.

Her body is stiff.

Rigor mortis, revealing that she can't have departed more

than a few hours prior.

Both eyes are young.

We **pull back** to high corner of the room where wall and ceiling meet.

The apartment's wooden floor and brown walls make it cozier than the rent would suggest is possible.

It's about as nice as a college kid can afford, the kind of place that **impresses** friends by reminding them of their grandmother's house.

Sparsely furnished, maybe someone who just moved in; aside from a piano by the right wall.

On the floor in the **middle** of the room are the **owners** of our two sets of eyes.

Owner and thief, truthfully.

He is shivering and lying on his left side, naked.

She lies, also on her **left side**, behind him, her **body** pressed up to his; her **right arm** draped over his **shoulder**.

We see **no marks** on her body at first, but there is a pool of blood that has settled behind her.

He is holding her right hand with his across his chest.

Her left arm, unseen, is under his head cushioning it.

It's a lover's position. He begins to cry softly.

MARK (QUIETLY SOBBING)

No, no, no, no, why wouldn't you come with me...why couldn't you...why not Stephanie?

SLOW FADE

OUT:

OPEN ON:

INT. POST OFFICE - MIDDAY

We see Mark once again. Mark is a junior in college.

He is **pale** with **brown hair** that he keeps clean and clothes that would seem **simple and arbitrary** if they weren't just a little too **well chosen** and arranged.

He stands at the counter waiting patiently while the clerk handles and weighs the **package** Mark is sending, a square **box** that could hold a smallish microwave or fifteen or so paperbacks.

CLERK

Any hazardous materials in here, sir? Any food, weapons, chemicals...

MARK

Mmm, records.

CLERK

Okay, and when do you need these to get-hold on, this address isn't coming up...

Mark leans across the counter.

Behind him, a couple exchanges rolling eyes.

MARK

Here, can I see that? This happens every time...

The clerk reluctantly angles her computer screen so that Mark can see it.

CLERK

But the only option this address is giving me is-

Mark is pointing to the screen.

MARK

Yes, that's right.

The clerk nods.

CLERK

Oh okay, well that makes sense then! Sorry for the confusion. Would you like to see the shipping options?

MARK

No thank you. Priority, no insurance, please.

The clerk nods, hovers her fingers over the duct-taped receipt printer in anticipation, tears off the printed receipt and hands it to Mark.

CUT TO:

INT. STEPHANIE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

It's a convertible, which **Stephanie** drives without effort or vanity.

Mark is riding passenger, **blank-faced**, though it's a face that naturally tilts slightly towards **content** expression.

It's a curious face: simultaneously expressing a **clear yet** appealing insincerity.

It's a mask that begs to be dug under and plundered for the no-doubt dark and titillating roots of such a façade.

For her part, Stephanie is also a **brunette**, straight-haired (kept a little longer than is stylish), with a **warm** face that can, in an instant, turn **younger and colder** than she seems to ever have been.

MARK

Let me see how it feels...

He is reaching across to the wheel.

Stephanie squeals and bats his hand away.

His faint smile blossoms, but his eyes are curious, almost wildly.

MARK

I've never had one before, I mean, everybody wants to know what it's like, don't they?

STEPHANIE

Yes, but most of them wait until I've stopped driving to ask for a turn.

Mark laughs easily.

They are entering the highway via ramp.

MARK

You're too funny sometimes, Stephanie. I'm just glad there are girls like you around...

Stephanie looks flattered, and then waves her right hand in a "continue" motion.

STEPHANIE

Girls like me?

MARK

Ah well...I'd like to take you places anyhow.

STEPHANIE (LAUGHING)

How naughty, Mark! Can't you wait until we get back to my apartment?

Mark smiles, seeming pensive.

They exit and stop at a light.

STEPHANIE

Oh come on, you must be used to it by now...

MARK

Ah, it's just a little different.

STEPHANIE

Don't even *some* girls in the country talk like that? Make jokes-

MARK

I didn't know many, frankly.

STEPHANIE

What, girls or jokes?

Mark groans.

MARK

Let me tell you about that later...

Stephanie nods as they pull up to an unassuming apartment building.

INT. STEPHANIE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

It's the same room. Stephanie is playing the piano, hunched forward, hands moving as if mechanically, like a marionette.

It's an undulating lull, minor melody, hypnotic.

MARK

You're breaking my heart.

Mark's face is intent, though he appears unmoved.

She stops playing and laughs nervously.

STEPHANIE

Mark, do you like music? I didn't even think to ask you, and, it would be rude to bang away if you don't enjoy it.

MARK

Who couldn't like music? I meant it, that was lovely. Devastating.

Stephanie looks flattered but confused.

STEPHANTE

Well which one was it?

Mark, standing behind her, slides his **hands** onto her **shoulders** and rubs them.

The marionette strings are cut and she lolls her head backwards, muscles loosening instantly.

She softly moans.

He wears a curious look on his face, detached but fascinated. C.U. his hands slide from her shoulders down her chest towards her **breasts**.

O.S. her moans increase.

CUT TO:

C.U. of Stephanie's face, shoulders and neck. She is lying

on her back, hands above her head.

She is holding a **white bedsheet** and her hands clench it while shifting it around **over** her face, most of which is covered by the **sheet** except for her **open mouth**, which sighs and groans.

Her **neck** and **head** are moving back and forth, pushed by an **unseen force**.

She climaxes and the movement stops.

EXT. THE BALCONY - EVENING (SAME)

Stephanie and Mark smoke.

She is wrapped in a blanket, he has put on his jacket.

STEPHANIE

That was really nice...

Mark smiles and **extinguishes his cigarette** even though he's only halfway through it.

MARK

It's interesting to me...making people feel things...seeing them feel things.

Stephanie laughs.

STEPHANIE

Well now I feel like a science project, doctor...

Her voice trails off as she takes a drag.

STEPHANIE

What's your last name?

Mark is staring her directly.

MARK

My name is Mark Terrence Kennedy.

STEPHANIE

Wow.

MARK

Wow.

STEPHANIE

Oh shut up, I wasn't making fun of your name.

MARK

You're a mind reader now?

STEPHANIE

Well you seemed bothered by it, you got all quiet.

MARK

Just something on my mind. Something I've been waiting to try for awhile.

Stephanie smiles again.

STEPHANIE.

Hmm...what could you possibly mean?

Mark leans over and pulls her **head towards his**, hugging her with her head over his **left shoulder**.

Her eyes close and she smiles warmly.

MARK

I like being close to you...

STEPHANIE

Mmmm, I have you right here and I still don't feel close enough.

We pull away and observe the moonlight through trees.

A sharp cracking sound from back on the balcony sends the winged occupants of one tree flying.

We pull back to the balcony where Mark is now **cradling** Stephanie's body, turning her away from him and holding her **slouching frame** with his **arms** under hers.

Her eyes are wide and panicked and her breath is rapid and shallow.

She is trying to speak.

MARK

Tell me what you feel... I know you can't speak, but I can hear your thoughts.

Her lips move limply. Her eyes water.

MARK

You can hear me, can't you? I spent a long time practicing so that you would be able to hear me. Blink if you hear me, Stephanie.

She blinks and tears roll down her cheeks.

MARK

It's okay, it's okay.

He is beginning to look feverish and focused.

He rises and half drags her back into the apartment, sliding the **balcony door** closed behind him.

He lays her down in the middle of the floor.

MARK

You are probably in shock and scared and I understand but I'm going to fix that. I'm going to take you with meyou're the one I want to come with me.

His eyes are aglow now, something is stoking the fire.

Mark walks to the **kitchen** and returns with a **butcher knife**. He lies down on his side directly facing Stephanie.

He slides his **hand** around her **back**, still holding the **knife**.

He stares into her eyes.

MARK (FOCUSED)

Look at me, look at me, look at me, listen to me...

Her eyes begin to lull.

We hear the same low buzzing sound begin.

It soon rises to a louder hum.

MARK

Ten, nine, eight...ten, nine, eight...ten, nine, eight...ten, nine, eight...

She can't feel anything, but she hears the **sound** of the **knife** entering and her **eyes burst open**.

The hum jolts to the high-pitched whine and holds.

MARK (A FEVERISH SCREAM, HIS BODY SHAKING, HIS EYES LOCKED ON HERS)

Ten, nine, eight! Ten, nine eight!

Her eyes begin to deaden and he closes his, whimpering and savagely pounding the side of his head against the wooden floor over and over.

Finally he **passes out**, his breath leaving his pursed lips in a **tortured groan**.

Stephanie isn't moving.

We hold on her eye for a long moment.

Suddenly, O.S., we hear Mark gasp back to consciousness. Cut to a high wide shot as he clasps her and begins to cry.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

The campus Arts and Performance building auditorium.

It takes us a moment to see **Mark** among all of the other blue button-down, black slack-wearing young men.

Mark is sitting between another young man and woman, whose casual way of talking to each other over Mark suggests that they are friends of his.

To Mark's left is **Sonny** and opposite him, clearly flirting, is **Raleigh**.

SONNY

...and I don't think that anybody

noticed, but you can never tell...

RALEIGH (GRINNING)

Mmm, and then when you least expect it somebody gives you a knowing smile and calls you to the corner-

SONNY

Well I'm trusting you with my secret, aren't T?

MARK

It's starting...

The lights dim.

We hear the sound of orchestra pit tuning.

Pull in closer and closer on Mark's face and hold on it.

MARK (VO)

I chose to major in music because it is the best mask for me. Music is the most powerful blending of emotional exchange. Composition is an act of compassion- whether selfish or not, it is the desire to share. And the appreciation of music is pure empathythe taking of someone else's feelings into your own mind and body. When I listen to music, I feel nothing. I am still searching for empathy, still intoxicated by the idea of feeling what somebody else does...the memory of my mother...before my birth...the concept is unforgettable but the taste of it faded a long time ago."

EXT. OUT FRONT OF THE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Mark, Sonny, and Raleigh sit around a circular metal table in uncomfortable looking chairs.

Sonny is **smoking**.

The end of a wave of audience members is passing them on their way out of the Arts and Performances building. Mark watches them.

Sonny watches Raleigh.

SONNY

So Raleigh, are you a freshman?

RALEIGH

No, actually, I'm a junior.

Sonny wears a devilish grin.

He is taller than Mark with wavy, straw-colored hair.

His words try to fit him into the **spoiled playboy** caricature but he is a **poor** boy done good trying his best to live out a fantasy.

SONNY

We didn't see you around last year...or at least I didn't. Mark?

Mark looks back at the two and smiles.

MARK

Oh god, well, you do look familiar. Did you take any psychology classes?

RALEIGH

No, actually-

SONNY

Did you go to many of the shows here?

Raleigh is soft-spoken and warm, though she has more reason than most to be sad.

She is from a small town where her parents got the urge to settle down after years of war protesting and Grateful Dead concerts.

Her dirty blond hair falls to her shoulders.

Her heart sinks easily to her legs.

She has as much of an **obsession** as **Mark** and keeps it just as well hidden.

RALEIGH

Actually I took last year off. Some personal things.

SONNY

Oh god I'm sorry, Raleigh...

Sonny wears a genuinely pained face.

SONNY

I feel like an idiot...

RALEIGH

How were you to know? Besides you're responsible for getting me out and about for the first time in a while. It's been nice.

MARK

Do you like music?

Sonny shoots him a face, feeling that the question is too light.

Raleigh, for her part is relieved to move on to lighter conversation.

Raleigh smiles and nods demurely.

RALEIGH

Yes.

The crowd has thinned and one last **middle-aged man** holds the door for his **wife** and **children**.

Mark, Sonny, and Raleigh are all caught up silently staring at this for a moment, necks craned back towards the building entrance.

SONNY

There but for the grace of God go we...

MARK

Oh fuck you Sonny. What the hell do you have against families?

The middle-aged man's head jerks towards the sound of the

obscenity and he scowls.

Mark doesn't seem to notice.

Sonny takes a final drag and puts his cigarette out.

SONNY

Nothing. Let's get out of here.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - NIGHT

The broad wooden tracks clearly haven't been used in many years.

Sonny is whistling and Raleigh is carefully stepping from one track to another, avoiding the edges with her feet.

Mark seems restless as they walk.

MARK

I'm going to head back soon, just to let you guys know.

Sonny stares at his feet and grins, Raleigh is halfway between blushing and looking panicked.

SONNY (QUIETLY)

You should stay...

MARK

Nah, you know me.

Raleigh looks intrigued.

RALEIGH

What, do you never stay out late?

Mark begins to respond but Sonny waves a hand in an "I've got this" motion.

SONNY

Mark doesn't smoke.

Listing with his fingers.

SONNY

He doesn't drink. He doesn't mess around with drugs- not even pot or pills-

MARK

...and no Raleigh, I don't particularly care for staying up unnaturally late. It's its own kind of drug.

Raleigh tiptoes, nearly falling for a moment and regaining her composure.

RALEIGH

Well I don't drink much or anything like that so I like to stay up. I like that kind of...intoxication. You start to talk honestly.

SONNY

Which also happens when you're drunk...

RALEIGH

Yeah, but then you're clumsy and reckless and probably ruin whatever bonds you form by doing or saying something stupid. It's a shortcut to intimacy.

Mark is frowning and has stopped walking, though he continues after a moment.

MARK

That's interesting.

SONNY (LAUGHING)

Be careful what you say, Raleigh, you'll turn poor Mark here into a lush. He likes things that make people feel. He studies feelings.

MARK

Yes, well right now I'm feeling exhausted, so I'm going back. It was nice to meet you Raleigh.

She nods.

RALEIGH

You too Mark.

Cut to a high shot of the three as Mark breaks off from the group and heads back through the brush lining the tracks.

INT. MARK'S ROOM - NIGHT (SAME)

This is Mark's room.

The room on a surface level is unremarkable except perhaps for its neatness considering its owners age and gender. The **door** opens and **Mark** enters.

He carefully removes his tie, unbuttons his pants, pulls his shirt out and begins to unbutton it.

CUT TO:

EXT. A GRASSY FIELD - AFTERNOON.

We see **young Mark** and his friend talking and laughing. There's no other sign of life for miles.

Both boys are wearing back-packs and look freshly out of class.

MARK (VO CONT.)

One day I was with a friend talking about dreams. He was telling me all of his...submarines and vampires and breasts and all that. Me, I don't dream much. Barely at all, actually. I have a few that I remember from when I was young, but at some point; maybe nine or ten, they just stopped.

We see young Mark slowly unzip his **backpack** while his friend watched intently.

Mark pulls out a few pieces of white poster-board paper which seem to house fairly intricate sketches.

MARK (VO CONT.)

My friend wanted to know about my dreams. He wondered why I didn't dream much. I drew him pictures of my dreams and how they made me feel. All night I felt electric, like you feel when you're waiting for you chance to kiss a new lover for the first time. I knew that I was going to do something for the first time. It was the reason I didn't dream at night: all day I dreamt of the thing I desired. I didn't know why I wanted it, but it built up in my stomach just knowing that I would actually do it.

During this next portion of Mark's speech, we see close ups of Mark's head, throat, and hands.

MARK (VO CONT.)

Head light, throat clenched, hands shaking, the whole bit...
Anyhow, we stayed in the field until late, after dark.

Medium cuts of **Mark** and his **friend** talking and whispering in the moonlight.

MARK (VO CONT.)

When I was a kid I used to think about how, if I could have one ability, it would be the power to transmit thoughts to other people. Full thoughts: dreams, spiraling logic, flashpoint switches in emotion, jumbled order that adds up to a conclusion. There's no way to say something like that, but sometimes you can come close.

That's how it was with my friend that night. I was describing my dream to him and somehow...I found the words...I was able to translate it. It was a such a thrilling experience, I felt like I could do anything. Somewhere in the center of my pounding chest, a switch flipped that freed me from any perception except my all-consuming lust

to share my private knowledge.

The buzz begins to sound.

Mark takes **one piece** of construction paper and **crumples** it up in his hand, though it's thick so it is still **moderately large** when balled up.

He **leans forward** to his friend, who nervously leans in for a **kiss**.

Mark, with sudden and wide-eyed ferocity, grabs the boy's face with his left hand, thumb in the boy's right eye socket and finger gripping his forehead.

Up-shift to a louder hum.

With his right hand he takes the **crumpled-up paper** with the drawing of his dream on it and forces it and the fist holding it into his friend mouth, pushing his arm in to the **wrist**.

MARK (FRENZIED, BARELY ABLE TO SPEAK OUT OF EXCITEMENT)

It's okay, it's okay! You'll be fine, and you'll know what I feel, you'll know!

The boy's eyes are clenched shut.

His arms, which he had been leaning on behind him, spring forward instinctively to grip Mark's arm; but this makes him fall onto his back in the grass and soil.

The high-pitched ringing takes hold.

Cut to **Mark's face** as he stares, mouth slightly open, at his friend.

O.S., Mark's friend gags and wretches.

Blood and vomit spray up Mark's arm and onto his face and neck.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAME FIELD - AN HOUR LATER (NIGHT)

Mark's friend is lying face-down in the grass, a pool of blood beneath is face.

Though it's pressed against the soil, his jaw is clearly broken and jutting out at an unnatural angle.

Next to him, Mark is unconscious on his back, mouth open. Close in on his face.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. FIRST DESTINATION - TIME UNCLEAR

Soft music plays, a string piece.

Mark, naked and curled up, is moving roughly across a red cavernous floor, as if being dragged by an unseen force.

He is holding his eyes closed tightly.

Nothing but the floor can be seen.

The cavern is pitch black, but a light shines on Mark's body

MARK (QUIETLY, INTENTELY)

Ten, nine, eight...the, nine eight...

His arm grips his friend's body, though by the waist now, not the throat.

His friend's eyes are open and he looks worried, though physically he is restored.

FRIEND

What's happening Mark? Is this your dream? I'm scared...

MARK

Don't worry, don't worry. I know how to do this.

FRIEND

Have you done it before?

MARK

No, but I know I can do it.

The cavern's low rumble blends with the soft music.

The odd momentum of their bodies becomes shakier and shakier.

FRIEND (WHIMPERING)

It hurts so bad...

MARK

You have to forget it all. Forget it all or you can't come!

FRIEND

I'm trying!

Ahead there is a doorway at the end of the cavern.

White light is visible around it's edges. We see the two near it, and Mark stretches out his free arm, eyes flaming.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK AT THE FIELD - DEAD OF NIGHT

Only the body of Mark's friend remains.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPTY HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS - NIGHT

Mark is running furiously through the campus.

C.U. of his right arm as he runs.

He is holding it with his left arm.

There is line of deep teeth marks a few inches below his wrist.

The top of his hand is bit up, scraped up, and somewhat burned by stomach acid.

FLASH CUT

TO:

C.U. Mark's arm.

Faded traces of scarring can be seen on his hand and two or three spots where teeth broke the skin have left faint though permanent marks.

We see that he is:

EXT. A DORMITORY BALCONY - DEAD OF NIGHT

He smokes a cigarette, right hand up to his mouth, and subconsciously runs his **left fingers over the scars**.

From no visible source, we here the sound of a voice-mail greeting, the beep, and Sonny's voice leaving a message.

After a minute of reflection he rises and puts the **cigarette** out in an **ashcan**, turns, and re-enters the building.

FADE OUT:

EXT. POST OFFICE - MORNING

Establishing shots of the exterior of the building. We cut inside.

Mark is stepping up to take his turn with the clerk, who smiles at him.

CLERK

Hello, how are you doing today?

Mark steps up with a \mathbf{box} nearly identical to the one from his previous visit.

He looks a little worse for wear.

Perhaps behind on a **shower** or two with some **shade** under the eyes.

MARK

Wonderfully. And yourself? I need this one to go quickly. Overnight maybe.

The clerk, a middle-aged woman, nods.

CLERK

Okay hon, let me just weigh that first.

MARK

Sure, sorry.

He places the box on the scale.

CLERK

Any hazardous materials in here? Food products, poisons-

Mark is **smiling** hard.

MARK

Just records today.

EXT. DORMITORY BUILDING - SAME

Mark sits on a bench, smoking, and writes in a notebook.

He moves his lips as he writes, saying the words to himself.

RALEIGH (OS)

Mark? Is it Mark?

He looks up, frowning at first, and then smiles.

MARK

That's right, and you're Raleigh, Sonny's new obsession.

He pronounces the word in a way half menacing and half playful.

Raleigh chooses the latter interpretation and smiles, blushing a little.

RALEIGH (STARING DOWN)

Oh well, if he only knew...nice that you remembered my name though!

MARK

That's perfectly fine- I tend to not forget things.

He moves from the middle of the bench to the side, opening a seat.

RALEIGH

What, ever? Must all get pretty jumbled in there.

She sits down.

MARK (GRINNING)

I guess I am a little...jumbled.

There is a moment of silence.

RALEGIH

Um, I don't really know you, but, I've been thinking about it and, would you mind if I asked something? Sonny mentioned that you have a hobby, or a project, or something that you two work on?

Mark raises an eyebrow.

MARK

He did, did he?

RALEIGH

Well yeah, and then afterwards he was freaking out and said he shouldn't have mentioned it, but I figured you seem nice and I doubt it's anything you'll get mad about, so...

MARK

Oh...No, I don't mind. Sonny was just being an ass about it. Using it to impress you by making me out to be odd or something like that.

RALEIGH

Well, I hope Sonny doesn't have any illusions about me, because-

MARK

Oh he does. But it isn't your fault or my fault or anything like that. He's just one of those needy boys whose parents didn't hug him enough or something.

RALEIGH

Well now I feel bad for him.

MARK

Then don't worry about blowing him off. Pity is the worst reason to be with somebody. Pity is a source of problems in general.

Raleigh ponders this, and then smiles wryly.

RALEIGH

So is that your secret hobby? Heartlessness?

MARK

Oh I have a heart.

INSERT A SUDDEN FLASH OF MARK SNAPPING STEPHANIE'S NECK.

RALEIGH

So...

Mark sighs and pulls out another cigarette, offering a second one to Raleigh, who accepts.

MARK

Well. I do have a...hobby is the wrong word. Hmm. Obsession is way too strong of a word-

RALEIGH

...and I thought I couldn't get more curious.

Mark pauses, smiles, and angles his head.

MARK

I suppose it's more like a personal project.

Raleigh brings her **legs** up and sits cross-legged, staring down at the **ground**.

MARK

When I was a kid, I used to get sick a lot. I'd get confused and have strange dreams and...things like that; sleep walking, all that. I never wanted to

play with my friends either. I kept to myself and my pets. I don't know, I was a sick kid, always sick; that's my memory of childhood...but my father had this friend. Doctor Connelman. He was some sort of general practitioner or something...witch doctor, I don't know...

We pull back from the bench while Mark continues to speak, and travel up the dormitory building to a high window.

We push through the window.

MARK (OS, CONT.)

My father used to "consult" with Connelman. It was strange, because my father had a store, and I always thought it was business that they were talking about.

We shift in the room, moving towards a **tall closet** against the right wall.

MARK (OS, CONT.)

But whenever things would get really bad with me my dad would have me see Connelman. He would come into my room and then...I don't know.

Into the closet.

Lined up along a shelf near the top of the closet are a series of small objects.

It soon becomes apparent that they're **gerbils**, dead and dried out.

The animals are arranged in pairs.

MARK (OS, CONT.)

All I know is that it helped.

CUT BACK TO THE BENCH:

Mark begins to look something close to vulnerable and stops for a moment.

Raleigh, whose **eyes** have been locked on his **face** for the past few seconds, stares back **down**.

MARK

It gave me a calm feeling that I've always looked for.

RALEIGH

Physical calm?

MARK

Something that most people just feel. It's just...really hard for me to get there.

Silence.

RALEIGH

So, are you still sick?

AND BACK TO THE ROOM:

The pairs of animals are split into two arrangements.

Half of them, five pairs or so, are larger gerbils gutted with skin pinned back and smaller gerbils curled up fetally inside their gaping cavities.

The other four or five pairs have the smaller animal's **head** placed in a hole in the larger member's **chest**, which has been **hollowed out** as if with an **apple corer**.

BACK TO THE BENCH:

MARK

Yes, I'm still sick.

RALEIGH

So...your project-

MARK

I have to find him.

Raleigh frowns and looks towards the building.

RALEIGH

I think I know how you feel. Everyone has things they go through the day for.

Myself included.

FADE OUT:

INT. MARK'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

C.U. Mark sleeping.

Light bathes him as he sleeps curled up indistinctly under the covers.

Suddenly he wakes, eyes opening wide and looking panicked. He rolls, rises, and stumbles out of bed, naked. He moves to and leans on a nearby dresser.

He pounds his fist on it.

BLACK:

ACT TWO: ENCHANTMENT

INT. SONNY'S CAR - MIDDAY

Mark rides passenger while Sonny drives.

They are on country roads that seem markedly far from the campus.

Mark is leaning against his window, left leg up, looking overall quite comfortable, and possibly trying to sleep.

Sonny glances at him and speaks.

SONNY

Hey, I got a question.

Sonny looks over to Mark who nods in a "go ahead" guesture.

SONNY

Did you have some kind of long, intimate talk with Raleigh?

MARK

This is a question?

SONNY

Well...I figured you could shed some light, considering...

Mark sits up.

MARK (CLEARLY ANGRY)

Considering what? You've known me, what, a year? And you know I get sick, and even leave town to go to the damn hospital for days. So what am I going to do with your precious new plaything?

Sonny suddenly looks a little panicked.

SONNY

All right, all right, god I never know when something's going to offend you. You can be such a damn animal sometimes.

MARK

The only thing that offends me in this world is wasted time. There's too much torment in my life to dick around when it comes to finding Connelman.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMALLER TOWN'S MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON.

Establishing shots of various dive barbecue joints, kids squinting in the high sun's light, an inordinate amount of pick-up trucks, etc.

Cut to Mark and Sonny approaching a library, a plaque on whose wall reads "Monroe County Branch Library".

INT. LIBRARY - SAME

Mark walks to the checkout desk.

A highschool-aged girl attends it.

SONNY (SMILING)

After school job?

The girl frowns.

GIRL

What do you need?

MARK

I see, saving up to buy some manners, are we?

He steps closer to the girl, but Sonny pulls him back.

SONNY

Come on, Mark, all kids that age are dicks...

MARK

I wasn't.

SONNY

Oh yeah, you were a little angel, I'm sure.

Mark lets out a long breath.

The girl at the desk is starting to look a little nervous.

She speaks earnestly, as if confessing something.

GIRL

I got this job to save up for a tattoo actually. My brother died. I want his name on my arm forever.

MARK

You miss him then, I suppose?

The girl frowns again, though in a curious way rather than a rude one this time.

GIRL

Well of course...what kind of question is that?

SONNY

Don't mind him. I gave him shit the whole ride here, he's a little on edge. Oh, and he asks because people's feelings interest him. He studies them.

He turns to Mark.

SONNY

Mark I want to go home.

MARK

I haven't even seen the damn papers.

SONNY

Right, right.

He turns back to the young attendant.

SONNY

Where do you guys keep your public records? Newspapers, business licenses, things of that nature...

The girl still wears a half-frightened, curiosity-aroused look on her face.

She points past Sonny.

GIRL

There's a room back there next to where the computers are. It's all back there.

SONNY

Great, wonderful.

He turns to Mark who stands still, looking at the girl.

SONNY

Come on-

MARK

I'm gonna ask her a few questions. I'll be right in there. You know what to look for; Connelman-

SONNY

Right 1992 or somewhere around there.

Mark nods. Sonny throws his hands up and heads to the room.

EXT. TREE-LINED STREET - DUSK

Tree, lampost, tree, lampost, tree...No leaves on the ground, but they would look fitting there.

The paralleled cars are mostly a **decade** or two past their expiration **date**.

A couple walks down the right side of the street.

Soon, Raleigh passes them coming from the other direction.

She turns and walks up the steps leading to an **unassuming** brown brick house.

INT - THE SAME HOUSE - TWILIGHT

C.U. a **hand** with **pencil** flies across **paper**, stopping and starting in unnatural, stilted movements; somehow fluid though jerky.

A soft, minor string composition is playing.

The paper is a large un-ruled sheet.

RALEIGH (OS)

Is...is it going to make sense like...like a normal letter?

We hear a low moan, also off-screen.

RALEIGH (OS)

Oh, I'm sorry I forgot you can't talk right now.

We pull out to see Raleigh sitting on a florally decorated couch

She is leaning forward on her elbows, which rest on the end of a large glass table.

There is a **steaming pot** of tea on the right end of the table and **two cups**, as of yet unfilled, next to it.

A middle-aged man sits across from her.

This is **Karl**, the owner of the hand. He has short graying hair and thick rimmed glasses.

He looks unnatural leaning forward, as if he usually practices good posture.

His left elbow rests on the **table** and his left hand is cradling his **forehead** and **closed eyes**.

His right hand is whirring across the paper.

He emits low groans from time to time.

The room is simply decorated, as if **Karl** keeps or moves most of it out when with a "customer".

There are calming, forgettable paintings, dark heirloom bookcases, knickknacks behind glass, a chess set, etc.

Back at the table, Karl's hand slows down and eventually stops.

He sighs and leans back, taking his **glasses off** and wiping his face.

When he speaks he does so with a faint German accent.

KARL

What you need to do now is to take this paper with you and then the next time that you feel...

He motions with his hands and Raleigh nods.

RALEIGH

Right-

KARL

...close to her, perhaps? Then you open this up, you find a quiet place, and you read it.

He rises and smoothes out his wrinkled pants, placing his glasses back on.

KARL

Would you like some tea?

Raleigh smiles and shakes her head 'no', staring at the paper and clearly anxious to take it.

KARL

Excellent. I don't particularly like tea myself, but when people come over here, they expect...

Again, he finishes his sentence with broad gestures.

RALEIGH

So when do you think I might be able to do this?

KARL

On your own?

RALEIGH (LIPS PRESSED TOGETHER LOOKING ANXIOUSLY HOPEFUL)

Mmm.

KARL

Honestly it could be you can do it right now or it could be months, years... it could be never.

RALEIGH

No!

Her outburst was unintentional.

Karl's face shows his sadness for her plight.

RALEIGH

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. It's just that I feel all the time like she's trying to say things to me, and I want so badly for that to be true...

Karl sits down.

KARL

And you say you've tried mediums, meditation, these things?

She nods.

KARL

Can I ask if you've tried counseling, a priest, friends and family?

Tears streak her face and she takes a moment before speaking.

RALEIGH (NODDING)

For two years before I started this. Meditation works well, but that's when I feel her telling me that she has a message-

Karl holds a hand up to motion her to stop.

He moves and brings her a cup of tea and a handkerchief.

KARL

It's okay darling, it's okay. Well I can tell you that there are things here for you. I know when I'm being spoken through and when I'm not, and this time your Lilly was with us. I just want you to know that it's rare for someone who comes to me to be able to channel their loved one through writing. They're still in the storm—still hearing all of their remembered conversations and these feelings are so strong...it's hard for them to know what's new and what's old...

Raleigh wipes her face and nose and then speaks.

RALEIGH

So how do you do it?

Karl sits down again.

We start to **pull in** on Raleigh's face, tightening to a **close up** of her **eyes** as Karl speaks.

KARL

Well my darling, I am not close to these losses. I'm not a man of strong feelings anyways, that's what you need for this. Emotions are what keep us from the next world. That's why we must live, to be ready to die and let go of these feelings. While you're alive, a person must be in the center- too many feelings and you're blind to the spiritual; too few feelings and you'll be drawn to the next world like water circling a drain, and it will overwhelm

you...

SLOW FADE

OUT:

HOLD ON BLACK.

EXT. LECTURE BUILDING - MIDDAY.

Raleigh, along with a hoard of students, is leaving the building.

Sonny is there to meet her, and as he approaches her she sees him and smiles broadly.

RALEIGH

Hey Sonny!

He reaches her.

SONNY (SMILING)

Hey, how are you? I haven't seen you since the night of the concert, though Mark mentioned talking to you...

RALEIGH

Yeah, it was just the once. Haven't seen him around since then.

SONNY

Ah well, he and I go out and run errands sometimes, we were doing that this weekend....

RALEIGH

Yeah, um, he actually told me about that when we talked so, no worries, he's fine with me knowing I guess.

Sonny looks concerned.

SONNY

Hey are you hungry?

CUT TO:

C.U. MARK'S BLANK FACE. STIRRING ORCHESTRAL MUSIC PLAYS,

NEARING A CODA, BUILDING TO RELEASE.

We're in the auditorium again.

This time it's only Mark and Sonny in the audience.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILWAY TRACKS - NIGHT

Sonny jogs ahead of Mark, pulling his **tie** off and loosening his **belt**. **Mark** is lighting a cigarette behind **Sonny**, who turns around a looks at him.

SONNY

Hey, do you have another one?

Mark takes the cigarette he just lit and hands it to Sonny, who frowns.

MARK

I don't have any fucking diseases.

Don't be such a spoiled little rich boy.

Sonny stops moving and stares Mark down.

SONNY

Man come on! What's the problem?

Mark kicks a rock.

MARK

Nothing. I'm going home.

SONNY

Fine! You goddamn lunatic, I'll see you whenever the fuck I see you!

INT. LOW-END RESTAURANT - LUNCH TIME

Sonny and Raleigh sit at a table.

SONNY

So Mark is acting up. He gets this way. I don't know, it's like...quilt maybe?

That's kind of the closest thing. He reminds me of a friend I used to have who was an alcoholic. Not like a joking alcoholic, a real one. It was such an ugly sight. But the guilt, the pathetic guilt that tortured him. Sometimes it made him act worse than just being drunk.

Raleigh has put her fork down.

SONNY (CONT. SMILING NOW)

Sorry! Not meal talk, I know... Well what do you think?

RALEIGH

I don't know what to think. I'm a little confused as to why you're asking me, actually...

Her face shows soft concern rather than any manner of offense.

SONNY

Well I don't really know anybody else that knows Mark. Just the fact that he spoke to you on his own time...I mean he and I have been friends since Freshman year when we lived together, but...even that surprises me sometimes. I guess I'm just a little worried about him because he's been acting strange lately. And whenever I try to talk to him he snaps at me. So I figured you might be able to...

Now Raleigh has completely abandoned her meal.

RALEIGH

God...Sonny I thought you were just trying to take me out-

SONNY

No I am, I am! Never mind, it's just been on my mind. Forget I said anything.

He fumblingly picks up the wine menu in an effort to change

the subject.

SONNY

Um, what sort of wine do you like?

RALEIGH

Oh, you'd better choose, I'm not that much of a wine drinker.

YMMO

Really? Okay, well I really like...um... Merlot, there's a Merlot here...

RALEIGH

With pasta?

SONNY (SMILING, TRYING TO COVER UP HIS

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE)

Oh god, that's how distracted I am...what about Pinot Noir?

INT. DORMITORY LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Raleigh has just entered the building.

She heads towards the elevator and enters it.

Just then, Mark enters the building and heads towards the elevator.

Raleigh scrambles and manages to stick her arm through the doors before they close.

Mark sees this, jogs up, smiling, and enters.

MARK

Sorry! You didn't have to do that.

RALEIGH

No, it's okay. Long time no chat! What's in the bag there?

Mark is holding a plastic supermarket back which looks to be full of anything but groceries.

MARK

Ah, this is just some...art supplies.

Silence.

RALEIGH

So Sonny and I went out to lunch.

The elevator signals and opens.

It's her floor.

RALEIGH

Would you mind, actually?

She gestures at the hallway.

Mark seems confused, and then exits the elevator.

She follows.

RALEIGH

I just kind of want to talk about it. About things in general.

CUT TO:

INT. RALEIGH'S ROOM - DUSK (SAME)

It's also a simple room.

A small t.v., poster or two, violin case leaned against cabinet, etc.

MARK

Actually, I should really-

He's spotted something on the small work table.

MARK

Is this...?

RALEIGH

Yes.

MARK

So where is she?

We see what he's been looking at, five or six small photos of **Raleigh** and another girl, clearly a **lover**.

RALEIGH

She died last year.

MARK

Hmm. Your year off?

RALEIGH

Yes.

She stares at him, clearly expecting to hear his condolences, but he seems **oblivious**, entranced by the photos.

She seems more curious than offended.

RALEIGH

Sonny says you study people's feelings... what does that mean?

MARK

I study music. Feelings are my hobby.

RALEIGH

I thought finding that doctor was your hobby?

MARK

It's all part of the same thing. How did you finally managed to let her go? You're back in school again and you seem well.

RALEIGH

Well for the first few months I just felt rattled. Like buzzing, reeling, blurry, torture...people talk about denial, but really being so shocked that you can't believe something has happened...it's hell. After that I came to, starting drinking and seeing counselors. Starting being told about how this is what happens and it's part of life's bittersweet dance. They had

me looking at everybody I saw each day wondering what private thing they had survived. I just wondered all day; does everybody really get over this? Eventually I started hating everybody for it. People must be cruel and hard to ever move on. It disgusted me. So I got the pills, I got the razor, the rope; had it all because I didn't know what sounded best. And then I smelled something coming through the window that just brought back this memory of her, of Lily, so strong... It just overwhelmed me with nostalgia, with emotion...I felt like she must have had something to do with it. And then from then on just that little bit, just a tiny amount of faith that I hadn't actually lost her forever, it suddenly rushed everything else back into place.

She stops talking, lost staring at the photos.

RALEIGH

I'm sorry. It's all still pretty close for me. I don't mean to-

MARK

No it's quite interesting.

RALEIGH

Yeah for awhile I felt pretty strange still, but I think a lot of people are missing parts and find ways to get little tastes of what they're missing.

She looks at **Mark** as if to make sure she isn't coming off as completely insane.

He stares at her.

MARK

I think you're probably right.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSIC PRACTICE ROOM - TWILIGHT (SAME DAY)

Sonny tunes his violin, still in a nicer, tucked in shirt from his lunch date.

Behind him, **Mark** enters and approaches **Sonny** who doesn't notice.

MARK

Sonny-

Sonny nearly jumps off the chair.

SONNY

Jesus Christ! God, Mark, what the hell do you want?

Mark smiles completely superficially.

MARK

Sonny I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be careless.

Sonny frowns.

SONNY

You're out of your mind. So you're all better now, then? Out of your funk?

MARK

I suppose so.

SONNY

Well don't bother asking what's the matter with me.

Silence.

MARK

What's the-

SONNY

I took Raleigh out and it was a disaster.

MARK

What? When?

SONNY

Today for lunch.

MARK

Oh no, it must have gone fine. I spoke to her today and she seemed to be in a pretty good mood. You probably just think it was worse than it was.

SONNY

Okay so why are you all cheery? You like that info I found for you at that Podunk library?

Mark's eyes widen.

MARK

Oh, I never looked at that.

SONNY

Are you serious? Go on man, I gave it to you, you took it to your room. You're not gonna like it though...

Mark nods, turns, leaves.

INT. MARK'S DORM. - NIGHT

Mark sits on his bed looking at a pile of photocopied items in front of him.

They are **newspaper clippings**, phonebook **entries**, advertisements.

He slides one in particular out, an advertisement announcing:

MARRIAGE COUNSELING

DR. J.H. CONNELMAN

78 CAROWAY ST.

Mark stares at this puzzledly and then moves to his desk where his phone is.

He picks it up and dials.

Soon we hear Sonny answer.

SONNY (OS, OVER THE PHONE)

What did I tell you!

MARK

This isn't a joke, you got me the wrong Connelman.

SONNY (OS CONT.)

Mark, I'm not an idiot, it's the right connelman. There's a photo in one of the other ads. Guess what that one's for?

MARK (AFTER A BEAT)

What.

SONNY (OS CONT.)

Goddamn trumpet lessons. I thought you said that he was either a business colleague of your dad's or a doctor..

MARK

He is. It never seemed strange as a kid that he was both, but he is.

SONNY (OS CONT.)

Okay, well he's a few other things too, why not I guess.

MARK

Sonny...

SONNY (OS CONT.)

Look I found all that for you, but there weren't any forwarding addresses.

Mark takes a few deep breaths.

MARK

More work later then. Thanks for getting me that, at least.

SONNY (OS CONT.)

That's fine. Bye.

Mark hangs up.

HOLD ON BLACK, SILENCE.

FLASH OPEN ON:

INT./EXT. - DESTINATION 0 - TIME UNCLEAR

It looks at first like an unremarkable patch of woods.

We move leisurely winding through **trees** and up and down as the terrain **rises** and **falls**.

After a moment we **lower** to reveal that the **leaf-covered** forest floor is flowing as if pushed by a current.

It undulates and splashes up against the island-like trees whenever it encounters them.

We immediately see **Mark**, naked and curled-up, drifting along in the leafy current.

Leaves and twigs enclose, carry, and roll over him.

We pull in **close** to his body, see his scarred arm, see rocks and sticks pressing and poking and marking him up even further as he **shivers**, utterly **exposed**.

TNT. DARK ROOM - EVENING

We hear the quiet, concentrated sounds of love-making.

On a **simple bed** under a mirror in one end of the room, we see the source of the soft **groans** and **patterned breathing**: **Raleigh** and **Lily** are entwined on the bed.

Most of the sheets have fallen to the floor.

Lily is smaller but more sturdy and sure than Raleigh, who lies beneath her.

Lily's black hair falls on Raleigh's face as Raleigh undulates underneath her.

Raleigh's head moves subconsciously out from under Lily's hair as she sighs and gasps.

Lily follows Raleigh's head with her own and kisses it.

Her **left arm** is slid down between their pressed-together **bodies**, moving quickly.

FADE OUT:

EXT. RALEIGH'S DORM - NIGHT (SAME)

Mark stands in the quiet, empty hallway.

After a moment he knocks on the door.

Raleigh soon comes and opens it looking confused, clearly freshly awoken.

RALEIGH

Mark-are you okay? What time is it?

MARK

I'm fine, and sorry about the time, I just had a question for you.

She looks unsure, but his face **softens** and he seems to clearly **need** something from her.

She steps back, opening the door.

Mark steps in. He steps to the window and looks out of it while speaking.

MARK

Thank you. I hope you don't feel uncomfortable. If I can be honest I feel drawn to your story.

She speaks raw, tired and unfiltered.

RALEIGH

Well it's a little strange Mark, and Sonny, he loves you but he said...well it doesn't matter. If I can be honest too I like having somebody interested.

She moves closer to him, standing behind him while he continues to stare out the window.

Moonlight streams through the blinds onto **Mark** and leaves his shadow covering her.

Raleigh continues speaking, her voice lowering to a near whisper.

RALEIGH (CONT.)

I'm so tired of people just saying they're sad...they're so sad...it's just terrible and they're sad for me...if I still looked at it that way I'd kill myself. It's not sad now. It's become something still alive to me. Something nourishing...thrilling even. She talks to me.

Silence. Mark turns around and looks at Raleigh.

MARK

Show me how you do it.

CUT TO:

We see Raleigh from behind sitting in a tall, wooden chair. She is about four feet from a seven-foot mirror that faces her, propped against her closet door.

A few feet to the right of the door sits **Mark** in a simple chair.

His unblinking eyes are on Raleigh's face.

His mouth is tight, but in a focused, rather than stressed, manner.

Raleigh's breathing is purposeful and slowing.

It is the only sound in the room.

Her shoulders rise and fall as she prepares herself.

RALEIGH

I'll tell you a few things and then...I can't talk any more.

Mark nods in agreement.

RALEIGH

Okay. This is an old technique that my friend Karl taught me. I've started weekly meetings with him, but on my own I do this. I wait for a full moon or a new moon if I can, but a lot of times I can't wait. I only drink water and tea during the day before it. I get my breathing in line - like just now- and while I do that I start to remember things about her.

In the upper right corner of the mirror there is a photo of Lilly.

RALEIGH (CONT.)

And then I just quiet myself and stare and ask over and over in my mind for her to show me things, and then after a while...she does...

Raleigh's voice trails off.

Mark is hooked now. We see him swallow.

Raleigh closes her **eyes** and opens her mouth slightly, breathing heavily.

Her lips move almost imperceptibly, forming silent prayers. A melancholy hum begins, Raleigh's hum this time.

It is soothing and melodic in sharp contrast to Mark's.

It begins to rise and fall liltingly.

Mark's right hand grips the arm of his chair. We see the **burn** and **bite** scars.

The hum builds. C.U. Raleigh's lips just in time to hear a moan escape them.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. CAMPUS GROUNDS - DUSK

We observe a series of quiet scenes; establishing shots of building exteriors, couples sitting on benches, groups walking and laughing.

The sun hasn't set yet, but the distant city's skyscrapers have blocked its light from being able to reach the campus anymore.

We see a walkway leading to the **Performance Auditorium Building**.

A handful of students and professors stream in and out.

We see Sonny among those heading in.

INT. EMPTY CLASS ROOM - TWLIGHT (SAME)

It's small enough to be a high school class room- a space for the kinds of specific music history and theory classes that only draw twenty or thirty students each semester. Whiteboard, chair-desk combos, a podium.

Mark sits at one such desk, a notebook open in front of him.

The whiteboard is marked up with dates and names. Sonny enters through the door, slightly out of breath.

SONNY

Hey, sorry I'm late.

Mark looks up at him.

MARK

That's fine.

Sonny nods and drags the nearest chair next to Mark's.

SONNY

Good. I was on the phone with my momthey might be moving again.

MARK

Really? Same reason?

Sonny stares at his shoes and nods.

MARK

Well I'm sorry to hear that. Aren't you glad you got your loans worked out, though? I know they offered but see, now, they may not even have been able-

SONNY

Yeah I'm glad. Do you want to just do this?

MARK

Sure.

Sonny's phone suddenly intrudes.

MARK

Phone call?

SONNY

No, alarm. Shit. Well I'm headed home to deal with that shit I just told you about, are you all set?

Mark nods.

MARK

You've got it all in pretty clear order. I'll just chase down addresses like usual. Fingers crossed.

EXT. HIGHWAY ROAD - AFTERNOON

Sonny's car is on its last leg.

A rusty red-brown sedan with all of the square style of two decades ago, it is clunking down the highway while the lowering sun casts a half-beautiful, half depressing golden red hue over the road and the expanses of green and concrete lining it.

Inside, Sonny is on the phone.

SONNY

Yeah. Yeah all right so I get there in ten minutes, what's the difference... Hey! Don't talk like that. Come on, they let you talk like that?...Yeah

well maybe you don't have to talk how they talk. Do you hear me doing that? You don't have to be like them just cause they're your parents...all right I'm exiting now, see you soon...

He hangs up.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON (SAME)

It is clearly not the nicest neighborhood.

Pickups and old Cadillacs are the rule.

A shirtless man waters his lawn while his kids run around in the hose's spray.

Another group of men have just pulled into one driveway in a **blue truck** that they clearly work out of; **large stickers** emblazoning it advertise painting and gutter work.

Smoke drifts from cigarettes, joints, and barbecue pits. People yell friendly remarks from porch to porch.

Sonny pulls into one driveway. He

turns off the car.

SONNY

Shit!

He quickly turns around and pulls up a **back pack** he has brought.

He takes off his **designer sun glasses** and places them carefully in a **case** which he places in the **bag**.

He then unbuttons his **nice**, **patterned shirt**, pulls it off and tucks it too in the **bag**, pulling a **t-shirt out**, a freebie rag that advertises a local radio station.

Finally, he steps out of the car and walks up to the small house, which could use the services of the truckload of men down the street.

EXT. SONNY'S BACK YARD - AFTERNOON (SAME)

A couple of five-or-six-year-olds with **dirty hair** and carefree **faces** push each other around in a small red toy car.

Falling is no problem as it's **grass** everywhere in the spare yard, save for a small cheap **plastic kid's pool** which is currently home to **newspapers**, **old shoes**, **tennis balls** and even a crumpled **can** or two.

Sonny's Dad, tall, stocky, sunburnt, warm, leans against the fence.

The back door opens and **Sonny** exits, with a **girl** attached to his **leg**.

He is wearing a big grin, matched and raised by hers.

This is Sarah, Sonny's only sibling.

Thirteen years old, she has dust-colored hair and a smile that she would like to think looks mischievous.

SONNY

Dad I'm in trouble!

DAD (LAUGHING)

Looks like she's got you- not much I can do.

Sonny swings around and scoops up Sarah, holding her like an offering in front of himself as he walks towards his father.

SONNY

Oh...I would say you're getting too heavy for this but you've been too heavy for this for a few years now!

SARAH

Oh be a man!

He lets her down. The atmosphere is joyful.

DAD

She talked about you visiting all week.

SARAH (REDDENING)

No I didn't! I've been busy with my friends...

SONNY

Uh oh, friends? What, are the rules

changing around here? No fair...

DAD

Oh you wouldn't believe what she gets away with when she stays with her mom... the things I hear...

Sonny frowns.

SONNY

Nah, I know she's behaving, cause she's got that good sense that none of us got. Didn't you, Sarah?

She grins, mischievously.

SARAH

Uh huh.

She draws out the second syllable, and then her eyes light up.

SARAH

I'll be right back!

She darts back inside the house.

Sonny shoots his dad an inquisitive look.

Dad shrugs.

DAD

Oh, you'll know soon enough.

He pulls out a pack of cigarettes and lights one, offering another to Sonny, who takes it and begins smoking.

SONNY

So how's it going with this place? Cheryl said you guys-

DAD

Aw, I wish she wouldn't call you like that...

SONNY

Like what? I want to know what's going on, I worry about you guys.

Dad frowns, looking upset.

DAD

Well she doesn't need to be calling you like that. And it's okay, just had a scare. We're not going anywhere.

Sonny takes a long drag and stares at the grass for a moment.

SONNY

Well you know mom found her new place when she moved out, and it was a great deal, I remember her bragging all about it.

DAD

Well that was three years ago- probably aren't a lot of deals like that. Anyways, it's fine! Fine. Cheryl was just worried and you know how much she likes you. You always cheer her up.

SONNY

Well she's great.

Behind them, the door opens.

Sonny lightning whips the **cigarette** out of his mouth and onto the ground, extinguishing it with his **shoe**.

Sarah is soon at their sides.

SARAH

Stop smoking and close your eyes!

Sonny does so, clenching them shut while smiling.

SONNY

You know I quit, it's only dad smoking.

SARAH

Good. Okay, put your hands out!

Sonny holds out his hands.

INT. LECTURE HALL - EVENING

Mark is, once again, one in a sea of faces.

PROFESSOR (OS)

...and composed this opus for his dead lover, who...

Mark looks distracted, and after a moment rises and makes his way out of his aisle.

After leaving the room, Mark moves quickly down the hallway and enters the restroom.

It's empty.

He backs into a corner, eyes wide.

He breathes heavily, face lit by some inner flame.

EXT. WOODED AREA - EVENING (SAME)

Naturally surreal fingers of pale moonlight reach through branches and around trunks.

Mark, dressed up in suit and tie and holding his violin case, wanders slowly through the forested space.

His eyes are purposeful, but he steps in unplanned patterns.

Behind a tree we see a pair of eyes belonging to something animal that has darted its head around.

Mark senses it, stops, turns, and looks.

The eyes belong to a **naked child**, who, frightened, instinctively turns and darts back behind the tree.

Behind Mark, another naked person crawls ferally on all fours into a clearing.

Mark turns slowly and crouches down, facing the **person** and holding an **arm** out.

Crickets rhythm the air.

The moon cuts across the two figures.

Dust and magic in the air is exposed by the moonlight and hangs suspended between the two like infinitely small and light **flakes of snow**.

The **feral person** is, after a moment, also spooked, and darts away.

MARK

No! No!

He stands up again and begins to whimper softly into his arm.

INT. DORMITORY ELEVATOR - EVENING

Sonny, dressed up for a night out, is whispering something into **Raleigh's** ear.

She is smiling in response, wearing a white dress herself.

Her arm is linked in his. The elevator reaches its destination, the only other occupant exits, followed by **Sonny** and **Raleigh**.

They walk down the hallway.

SONNY

It will only take a second. I can't believe I forgot it...

RALEIGH (SMILING)

Well I forgive you.

They round a corner and are greeted by the sight of **Mark** standing outside of **Sonny's** door.

He looks somewhat disheveled, **violin** case at his side and **semi-formal clothes** on; though his **hair** is unkempt and his **eyes** unrested.

SONNY

Mark!

He places a hand over his heart and laughs.

SONNY

Jesus, Mark! What brings you here?

He then looks concerned.

SONNY

We didn't have a meeting set up, did we...?

Raleigh, for her part, looks concerned as well.

RALEIGH

Hey, Mark. Are you feeling all right.

MARK

I'm feeling wonderfully, thank you, Raleigh, and no Sonny, don't worry we didn't have anything planned I just wondered if you might want to-

SONNY

Hey, we're actually just out the door. I left my keys here, but we're already late for our reservation. Is it something really important.

Mark is dumbfounded.

Finally he shakes his head.

MARK

No. Just not feeling too great and wondering about...Connelman.

Sonny, ever oblivious, lights up at this.

He has entered his room, leaving the **door** open, and is speaking from inside while retrieving his keys.

Mark and Raleigh stand patiently in the doorway.

She stares at her feet.

His mind is far away and his eyes locked lazily on some indefinite point on the opposite wall.

SONNY (OS)

Well hey, I actually have some really neat news about that, so lighten up!

RALEIGH

Oh goodness, yes, is it what you told me, Sonny?

SONNY

Mmhm. Not a word, though!

She grins excitedly.

RALEIGH

Oh, you'll like this Mark!

Mark snaps back.

MARK

Like what?

Sonny is back out and locking the door.

SONNY

I have some news for you. But when we get back. You'll make it 'till then, won't you?

Mark manages to smile and even laugh lightly.

MARK

Oh, I think I will. Guess I just missed the boat tonight. Well, good news is good news. You two have fun!

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

C.U. middle-aged man's face.

A hand moves over his face, grips it, twists carefully and quickly.

A snap.

The eyes widen and veins bulge.

We **pull** out in time to see the man's body go **limp** in **Mark's** arms.

He is lying across Mark's lap on a couch.

Across from them, the man's wife is sitting propped up against the base of a marble kitchen island.

Her head is lolling against her chest, her **arms** and **body** also clearly paralyzed.

INT. RESTAURANT -NIGHT (SAME)

Sonny and Raleigh are out once again.

SONNY

...comes back for more, because, apparently, I haven't made my point yet...

Raleigh is laughing at his anecdote.

INT. HOUSE - SAME

C.U. the man's face.

Mark's face enters the frame. He whispers in the man's ear.

MARK

You love her, don't you?

The man nods, panicked, tears beginning to roll down his face.

MARK

That's all I want. That's all I want. I want you to look at her and let her know that even though you can't talk. I want you to feel that as hard as you can.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT (SAME)

We see the building from the outside just in time to watch **Sonny** and **Raleigh** exit looking cheery.

SONNY

To the car...?

RALEIGH

Oh no, no, let's walk for a bit. It's nice out, and I don't want to cut off this conversation.

CUT BACK TO THE HOUSE

We see Mark dragging the man and woman by their legs to the center of the room.

He arranges them on their backs, next to each other.

The low hum begins to fill the night.

Feverishly, he unbuttons his shirt and pulls it off.

He crawls on top of the two, a knee on each one of their chests. He grips both of their faces with his hands, and then slips them down to grip their throats.

He begins to talk through clenched teeth.

MARK

I need what you have...I need it...just think about it and feel it, keep feeling it for each other I just want to squeeze into it...

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT (SAME)

The two would-be lovers walk.

Sonny slips his **arm** over **Raleigh's** shoulder and she responds by leaning into it and placing her head on his chest while they walk.

CUT BACK TO THE HOUSE

Mark savagely slides back, pushes the man and woman's bodies apart, and throws himself face-down between them.

They are on their backs and he is on his stomach.

The hum blends with a buzzing, building in volume.

He has one **hand** on each of their **throats**, **squeezing** slowly tighter and tighter.

Their faces register what's happening but their paralyzed bodies cannot respond.

CUT BACK TO THE STREET

The two sit on a bench now. **Sonny**, seizing the moment, leans in...

CUT BACK TO THE HOUSE

The hum ratchets up to the high-pitched screech.

The man and woman's faces are choking, their eyes beginning roll back.

Mark is smashing his head furiously against the floor, screaming raggedly and desperately.

MARK

Give me what you have! Let me in! Let me in you fucking monsters!

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT THREE: COMPASSION

FADE IN: SECOND DESTINATION - TIME UNCLEAR

We're moving along the same vague red lit cavern.

The knuckled terrain expands in every direction into

darkness, though even the smallest sound echoes, suggesting enclosure.

CUT TO: Mark, crawling on his knees, dragging the man and woman with him by their shirts.

Mark is naked and soaked in sweat, bathed in a red light as he struggles across the black, rocky terrain, groaning with exertion.

Ahead, the doorway opens into the THIRD DESTINATION.

Mark looks to it and for a moment his face shows relief, but then his arms suddenly tense up as the two lifeless bodies are ripped away and slide rapidly away from Mark, who reaches out his arms and lets out a despairing scream as the man and woman's bodies are whisked across the endless cavern floor which batters and bloodies them like heavy rolling dolls.

We track with the bodies pulling farther and farther away from Mark, near the doorway, his screams echoing.

INT. THE HOUSE - DEAD OF NIGHT.

The man and woman lie in the same position on the kitchen floor.

There are scraping and shuffling sounds from out of the room.

Pan to the bathroom down the hallways where Mark is just stumbling in.

His head is a sweaty, matted, bruised mess.

His forehead has bled all over his face- blood which is now mostly dried and **caked around** the right side of his **jaw** having trickled down the side of his head.

His eyes roll and he is clearly only halfway here.

He fumbles around before getting the faucet to run and dips his head under it, resting his arms around the rim of the sink.

Suddenly one of his legs gives and he crumples to the floor.

Cut back out to the kitchen, bodies.

Mark is shuffling around in the background.

We hear a bag unzip.

He moves into the kitchen, now holding a Polaroid camera.

Hands quivering, he snaps a photo, and then another.

He then sets the **camera** down, turns around and picks up his **bag** again, a **back pack**.

He hastily withdraws a large manila envelope and a black pen.

He sets them on the counter.

He inserts the photos into the envelope, writing "Help me." on the back of the second one. He then seals the envelope and reaches into his right jean pocket, withdrawing his wallet.

From it, he fishes out a folded yellow pad sheet:

CONNELMAN, HENRY - 132 KINDLE ST... CONNELMAN, HENRY - 3A GALNER BLDG... CONNELMAN, HENRY - 1643 FAIRVIEW... CONNELMAN, HENRY - 313 WESTVALE...

The list goes on, the rest of the possible addresses uncrossed.

Mark writes out the first **uncrossed** address on the envelope and hastily scribbles his own address in the upper left corner.

He shoves everything into his back pack and zips it up.

Then his face becomes suddenly pale and sick-seeming. He drops the bag.

Blood has begun pouring from his head again and he begins to seem unsteady on his feet.

He reaches his arms out for balance, but ends up falling to his knees.

Dazedly, he reaches into his pocket and takes out his phone.

EXT. CITY STREET: BENCH - NIGHT (SAME)

Sonny and Raleigh sit.

She is leaning on his chest and talking.

SONNY

Are you close to her family?

Raleigh shakes her head, eyes struck with sadness.

RALEIGH

They never knew about us. I met them, sort of, once...Lily and I used to fight about it a lot. I had told my family and they knew all about her. I mean, they loved her ... I used to beg her, beg her, to bring me over to hers, even just as a friend. All I wanted to do was meet them- she used to talk about them all the time. After she died, her family found out everything, I mean, they have all of her stuff- photos, journals- all that. And they hate me. I'm tied to her death forever now; just this shameful secret that came out afterwards to add to the pain they were already going through... I didn't get to go to her funeral. I've never even been to her grave.

A phone rings.

Raleigh's.

She sits up, sniffs, wipes her eyes dry and opens her purse, withdrawing her telephone.

RALEIGH

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT SONNY'S CAR - NIGHT (SAME)

Sonny and Raleigh pull up to the dormitory building.

SONNY

Are you sure you've got this?

RALEIGH (NODDING)

Yeah, he said over and over just me.

SONNY

I don't know, Raleigh...

She puts a finger to his lips.

RALEIGH

I've got it. Worry about Mark, not me, he sounded out of it. Probably just doesn't want you to see him like this...

SONNY

You think he's just trashed? I've never known him to do that.

RALEIGH

You'd be surprised what people can hide.

BACK AT THE HOUSE

Mark is mostly passed out, slumped face-down half over a plush chair near the bodies.

In the silent, unlit house, a creaking is heard and moonlight suddenly drapes itself over Mark's **body**.

He groans and shifts slightly.

RALEIGH (OS)

Mark?

She steps through the doorway and stares curiously at the **two bodies** on the floor, and then at **Mark's**.

She moves towards the motionless forms and kneels over them.

C.U. the woman's glassy, motionless eyes.

A quiet gasp escapes Raleigh's mouth, but her body is still.

RALEIGH (SOFTLY, ALMOST INAUDIBLY)

I don't...

She looks over to Mark.

RALETCH

Are you okay, Mark?

His makes to move and his body slides completely off the chair.

He is clutching the envelope to his ribs.

He coughs, his head lolling, sweat-wet hair falling all over his face, and finally speaks.

MARK

Yes.

She is still staring at the couple.

RALEIGH

Mark, what have you done?

MARK

This is what I do.

RALEIGH

This is what you do?

MARK

This is what I do. This is what I do at night when no one is watching. When people go find what they really need.

RALEIGH

It's beautiful.

Mark laughs, coughs.

MARK

It was a failure. Again.

Raleigh turns her head to look out of a moonlit window, her eyes tearing.

RALEIGH

I wish someone had done it for me and Lilly.

INT. SONNY'S CAR - NIGHT (SAME)

She is driving him back to campus. Mark's head won't stay up.

He holds the **manila package** and moves it to the console between him and **Raleigh**.

MARK

Can we go to the post office?

Raleigh looks alarmed as she glances at Mark, the package, and back at the road.

RALEIGH

Mark, it's the middle of the night. Of course we can't.

Mark is still losing blood and his grip on the night.

MARK

No we need to go now, I need to mail this. Take me to mail this.

RALEIGH

Mark we are not going anywhere except home.

She takes the envelope, opens the glove compartment, sticks it in, and closes the compartment.

C.U. Mark's face as he slips into unconsciousness.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - AFTERNOON

The high summer sun makes all **fairgoers** without hats **squint**, making them look from a distance like they wear plastered grotesque **smiles**.

Families in brightest colored Sunday bests have come to the annual event and mill about the **stalls** and **rides** while **costumed** fairgrounds workers blend in with them; a **clown** here, a **stilt walker** there.

Mark at age six or so, is in the middle of it all. He seems frail and overcome.

He holds tightly to his **mother's hand**, though she is moving so swiftly that it is all he can do to hold on to her arm.

The rest of her is obscured by members of the close-packed crowd.

MOTHER (OS)

Keep up with mom!

Mark frowns.

MOTHER

I'll take you to the best ride. It goes on forever and ever... Do you want to go on forever?

MARK

Yes, but I don't want to ride it alone, I'm afraid to...

MOTHER

That's why you keep up with me and we'll go together.

Mark's grip is slipping as his mother presses on.

Faces turn and peer down at him as he is jostled while holding onto his mother's arm and walking as fast as he can.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. THE DORMITORY BUILDING - NIGHT

Sonny sits on a bench, smoking.

As he does so, headlights flood his face.

His eyes light up.

From across the lawn, Raleigh's car is pulling up and parking.

Sonny's phone rings. He answers.

SONNY

Hey. I know, I see you guys. Is he okay? All right, all right, I'm coming.

He rises, tosses his cigarette out, and strides across the grass towards the **car**.

The driver's side door is opening, Raleigh is stepping out.

RALEIGH

Thanks again.

She hands **Sonny** the keys.

SONNY

Of course. How is he?

Raleigh motions for Sonny to help her as she moves to open Mark's door.

RALEIGH

He's in a bad way. I dunno...he either got into a fight or just got jumped.

SONNY

Well where was he?

RALEIGH

I'm not sure, he gave me directions. It was West.

Sonny reaches for the door.

RALEIGH

Wait...he's probably leaned against it.

SONNY

Hold on then. Um. Okay. I think we should just let him sleep here. I'm gonna leave in the morning.

Sonny lights a cigarette. The night is silent.

The parking lot is unlit, but the driver's **door** of the **car** is still open, spilling light out onto the tarmac.

RALEIGH

You're going like we talked about? I guess Mark still doesn't know...

SONNY

Yeah but it's the best lead we've had yet. And I think he's getting worse.

RALEIGH

Well I don't know how he normally is with his...sickness...but if you've never had anything like this happen then he probably does need to figure things out.

He passes the cigarette to Raleigh, who nods thankfully and takes it.

RALEIGH

I'm coming then. That's how we were gonna do it.

Sonny frowns and shakes his head.

SONNY

This is too strange. Why do you think he called you?

RALEIGH

Because he doesn't want you to see him like this probably.

SONNY

Oh I don't know, Raleigh. I know a lot about Mark. I've seen him go through some weird shit.

RALEIGH

Come on, let's just go now. I'm not gonna be able to focus on anything else. Anyhow it's Friday.

SONNY

Saturday now.

RALEIGH

Saturday then. Sorry, you'll have to sit in the back until he wakes up, unless you want to move him.

SONNY

No that's okay. Let me know if you want me to take over driving.

RALEIGH

Sure thing.

SONNY

In case I fall asleep, it's South on 60 till you hit state road M in a hundred miles or so...oh but you know this don't you. I forgot-

RALEIGH

Like the back of my hand. Been a while though.

SONNY

Have you not been back since. Are you sure you're up for going back?

RALEIGH

If it's where he needs to go...I'll be okay.

They turn, enter the car, and pull out.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

MARK'S CHILDHOOD HOME - TWILIGHT

The hallways floor creaks.

Outside, rain is pouring.

In one small room, sitting on his bed is Mark, seven years old.

From the hallway, outside of Mark's parents' door, we hear them talking.

MOTHER

Before you leave, we wanted to ask you if maybe you could talk to Mark again.

DOCTOR LINENGAN

He's still not feeling well?

MOTHER

It's more than that.

DOCTOR LINENGAN

In what way?

INT. MARK'S ROOM - (SAME)

He sits on his bed.

His door creaks open, and the light falls on Mark's face.

Unseen, Doctor Linengan speaks.

DOCTOR LINENGAN (OS)

Mark, how have you felt since our last talk?

MARK

I've felt nice. I've been taking a lot of walks since it will be too cold soon.

DOCTOR LINENGAN

Mark, I'm going to speak to you like I

would speak to an adult now.

Mark nods.

DOCTOR (CONT.)

Good. Mark, I want to know what it is that you think about that makes you not eat and not sleep. What do you think about that makes you cling to your friends until they're scared?

MARK

It isn't thoughts, Mr. Linengan.

DOCTOR LINENGAN

What is it?

MARK

I feel so sad sometimes. Something just makes me want to cry, like a sad memory. I feel like I'm watching my life from somewhere else where it's already happened and it happened wrong.

DOCTOR LINENGAN

Mmm. I'm going to ask you what you think of when I say some words, okay Mark?

MARK

Okay.

DOCTOR LINENGAN

Are you ready for the first word, Mark?

Mark looks a little unsettled, but he nods.

DOCTOR LINENGAN

The first word is-

Horror ignites in Mark's face.

DOCTOR LINENGAN

Infinity.

FLASH CUT TO:

Back in the present, C.U. Mark's face as he bolts awake, gasping.

MARK

No!

His face is covered in beads of sweat along with dried blood still along his right cheek.

MARK

Where...

Sonny, asleep in the back, is awoken by this.

At the wheel, **Raleigh**, jumps at Mark's initial motion but remains calm.

RALETCH

We're going on a trip Mark. Relax. Get your thoughts together.

Mark is panting and looks utterly confused.

He seems okay, but hasn't looked around the car yet and is startled to hear:

SONNY

We're gonna get you all fixed up, man.

Mark turns around and sees Sonny.

MARK

Pull over! Pull over the car Raleigh! Right fucking now!

Raleigh frowns.

RALEIGH

All right, everything's okay, give me a second we're on the highway for heaven's sake.

There are no other cars in sight on the **country road** and Raleigh swiftly pulls over to the **shoulder** where the road borders a seemingly endless stretch of **cornfield**.

It's about eleven now and the rising sun is bearing down hard.

It's eerily bright and silent.

Mark's door is open before the car fully stops and he is tumbling out of the car.

He runs around the car to the edge of the field.

Raleigh is immediately out too, looking concerned.

A stunned **Sonny** just rolls down his window, looking utterly confused.

Mark half stumbles, half crawls trying to run. He reaches the field and falls to his knees. He wretches over and over, vomiting.

From inside the car, **Sonny** watches as Raleigh leans over **Mark** and talks to him, calming him.

EXT. DIVE TRUCKSTOP DINER - AFTERNOON

Establishing shots of the rusty building.

Cut inside where **Sonny** and **Raleigh** sit at a table, staring at menus.

IN THE BATHROOM

Blood swirls down the drain.

Mark stares in the mirror, wiping his face with paper towels.

He breathes deeply, seeming to come back into his own.

He turns and exits the bathroom, moving to where **Sonny** and **Raleigh** sit.

SONNY

Fresh as the morning dew.

Mark's lips curl as if to smile. He sits down.

The waitress steps up.

She shows the strain of college-aged kids and rising

cigarette taxes.

WAITRESS

Can I get y'all something to drink? Sonny motions to Raleigh, you go first.

RALEIGH

I'll have a beer please.

SONNY

The same.

SERVER

And for you?

MARK

Water.

WAITRESS

Our domestic beers are on a special right now, just so you know.

Mark frowns and lowers his head.

MARK

Water will do, thank you.

The server smiles and leaves.

SONNY

Are you sure you don't want a marguerita, Mark? Maybe just a double scotch, neat?

Mark scowls.

MARK

Christ Sonny what the fuck goes on in your head? You're cracking jokes?

RALEIGH

He's just making the best of things. And we're both happy to see you doing better. But are you sure you don't need a hospital or anything?

MARK

I appreciate the concern but I'd rather not be patronized right now. I'm uncomfortable. I wish you would take me home.

At that moment **shrieks** and **laughter** muffledly explode outside the restaurant **window**.

From the kitchen someone yells.

COOK (OS)

God damnit, it's Cole again!

All three turn to look out the window towards the source of the sound.

A naked, pale, freckly teenage boy is running through the street, leaping.

He passes the restaurant window, calling out "Someone give me a hug!" and opening his arms to **Sonny, Raleigh, and Mark**.

Soon, however, the sirens of a police car can be heard and the boy turns back to the street and bolts past a **woman** who is half-heartedly covering her **daughter's eyes**, though the girl is **peeking** through and laughing.

The waitress is back.

She places the beers and speaks quietly while leaning over to fill Mark's water.

WAITRESS

I am so sorry y'all, this happens every now and then. They get him and give him a good talk but he's a confused boy. Sick. Can't really lock him up or anything...

Mark responds perfuntually.

MARK

What's his name?

SERVER

Cole. His dad's a friend of mine. All his brothers were fine, it was just

Cole...I know his dad takes him out of town every now and then for a few days at a time. They see some doctor a couple of hours away. Some kind of specialist.

Mark is engaged.

MARK

Where? Do you know the doctor's name?
The waitress seems somewhat taken aback.

WAITRESS

No, actually I don't know. Tell you what, I'll be right back with y'all's food and don't worry about the check today, because of the disturbance.

She smiles and makes her way back to the kitchen.

RALEIGH

Well Mark, we haven't even gotten a chance to tell you where we're going! You'll be happy about this.

SONNY

Yeah it's what we were gonna tell you before we went out last night but didn't have time.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY ROAD.

It's desolate, save for when Sonny's car drives by.

SONNY (V0)

We were talking and Raleigh realized that Lily had talked about a man named Connelman. Raleigh always assumed that he was a teacher.

RALEIGH (VO)

Yeah Lily was an artist and she always talked about this guy as being the best painter she had ever met. I thought it was strange that I hadn't heard of him, but I don't follow art really and I just forgot about it until the other night.

INT. SONNY'S CAR - AFTERNOON

MARK

What? Are you sure? An artist?

From the passenger's seat, Raleigh nods.

Sonny drives now while Mark reclines in the back row.

RALEIGH

Yeah I don't know how she found him or anything like that...

MARK

Who would know? Does her family still live here?

RALEIGH (QUIETLY)

Yeah but I don't really know them.

MARK

So what. Who knows anybody.

SONNY

I don't buy that. I know my family.

Sonny looks over at Raleigh, who appears mildly upset.

SONNY (CONT.)

Just be patient, Mark.

MARK

Patient! Are you kidding me? Lily knew Connelman- that's unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable.

RALEIGH

We'll go see them. I need to talk to them too.

SONNY

Raleigh are you sure?

She never stops staring directly ahead at the road.

RALEIGH

That's right I'm sure.

They drive on.

EXT. TREE-FILLED YARD OF LILY'S HOUSE - EVENING.

It's far enough out in the countryside that the **bugs** outsound any other noise, seeming like the echo of the **star-filled sky**'s constant flicker.

It's a **cloudless** night, brisk-weathered, sobering and welcoming.

The house's high upper windows are lit.

It's a wooden affair, dark, painted recently.

Sonny's car pulls up and parks in the wheel-worn dirt path that leads up to the left side of the house and is already occupied by an old Buick.

The front door is already opening as Mark steps out.

From it emerges a man, late 50's, short, round-faced, dark-eyed, the fire gone from them.

MR. CATALAN

Lost?

MARK

No we're here to talk to you and your wife, actually.

MR. CATALAN

That's funny, most all of the visitors I've had recently are here to talk to me about my wife.

MARK

Excuse me?

Behind him Raleigh and Sonny have stepped out.

Sonny lights a cigarette.

In the fading light, and from the thirty-or-so foot distance, Catalan hasn't recognized Raleigh.

MR. CATALAN

I'm saying you won't find Janet here. She's got her own place now. Her name's Stafford and she's in Garland City.

RALEIGH (SOFTLY)

We'd be fine speaking with just you then Mr. Catalan.

There's a moment of insect chatter as smoke from **sonny's cigarette** drifts up and past **Catalan's** face, which has

warmed at the prospect, seemingly the first friendly one in

Catalan's recent life.

MR. CATALAN

Well yes please, come up- soon as you're done smoking of course. Actually...yes...just let me see about cleaning up for a minute...

The small man turns and hurries into the house. Raleigh and Mark wait while Sonny finishes smoking.

SONNY

So he doesn't recognize you? Or I guess he wouldn't...

RALEIGH

Oh no, he would. If not from the few times I tried to talk to them, then from all of her photos. He either can't see me in this light or he's pretending he can't.

Sonny tosses the butt.

CUT TO:

INT. CATALAN HOME - NIGHT (SAME)

The three enter the front door and stand, unsure, in the entryway.

SONNY

Mr. Catalan?

From beyond some wall, Catalan's voice calls back.

CATALAN

One moment! Have a seat, make yourselves at home.

Sonny and **Raleigh** look at each other and finally sit on a couch which faces another small couch with a coffee table in between.

Mark stands, examining the room and its décor.

Finally, Catalan re-enters the room, this time holding a large box. His face is pale and his hands shake.

CATLAN

It is you...

Raleigh nods, looking confused. Sonny stands up and moves to Catalan, taking the box from him and setting it down on the table.

CATALAN

Thank you.

There is silence.

RALEIGH

We've come here for a couple of reasons. Not just about Lily.

Mark has circled the room and is now behind Catalan.

He kneels down and stares at Catalan.

MARK

Which item would you like to address first, Harry?

Catalan seems confused.

CATALAN

Here...

He reaches for the box.

He opens it and pulls out a handful of its contents, photographs.

He places them next to the box on the **table**, and then retrieves a large **notebook** from the box.

Raleigh reaches hungrily for the photographs.

Upon closer examination she realizes that they are not just of **Lilly**, but of **she and Lilly**. She gasps quietly.

CATALAN

See, now Janet hated these. We fought and fought about it. You can't cry if you're screaming, I suppose, so she yelled and stomped for weeks after we lost Lilly.

Each photo has had Raleigh torn out of it, only to be glued back in place.

They have clearly been restored carefully and slowly.

CATALAN

When she left I found where she had thrown all of the pieces. She could cut them up- she *loved* cutting them up in front of me- but she couldn't throw away Lilly's memories... After she left I put them back together.

Raleigh is shaking her head.

She opens her mouth as if to speak but then stops, unable, overwhelmed.

Sonny, standing uneasily behind Catalan, looks worried and moves to her, placing his hands on her shoulders.

Mark kneels in front of Catalan and stares at him directly, his face close to the man's.

MARK

Why wouldn't you see Raleigh after your girl died? Why wouldn't you? I don't want you to think about it I want you to answer me. Feel what you feel.

Catalan stares down at the floor.

CATALAN

I, I...how should I answer that?

Mark's eyes never blink.

MARK

Exactly as you feel about it.

CATALAN

I don't know what-

RALEIGH (OS)

Mark, let him be, it's okay.

Mark turns, and then smiles, rising and moving back to examining the cabinets.

MARK

Sorry to interfere.

Raleigh has risen and is leaning on Sonny now.

Her voice is quiet and somber but sincere.

RALEIGH

Thank you Mr. Catalan. I'm glad I finally got to meet you, and I'm sure you'll see me again soon.

Catalan's face lights up.

CATALAN

Oh please take anything you want, and please come back soon.

Raleigh nods, smiling sadly.

RALEIGH

Thank you. I'm sure I'll take some of

these things next time I'm here.

Raleigh then turns to Sonny, squeezes his arm, and exits the front door.

Mark follows behind her, and as he holds the door for them, Sonny whispers to Mark.

SONNY

I'll see what I can find out about Connelman. Smoke a cigarette and then we'll go.

MARK

Hey-

SONNY

Come on Mark, it's too much for you to resist. I'll get the information. You leave the poor man alone. Go smoke.

CUT TO:

INT. SONNY'S CAR

The three push on, headlights the only thing illuminating the road.

Raleigh remains silent and seemingly composed, though Sonny keeps a concerned eye on her.

After a minute or so dark coniferous trees that line either side of the highway begin to recede and after a wide left turn a small main street area emerges.

MARK

Look, I agree that it sounds really strange but why the hell would Catalan lie?

SONNY

He could have any number of reasons. Obviously his personal involvement with this whole...situation...is suspect. Or at least I think so.

RALEIGH (QUIETLY)

Mr. Catalan isn't suspect.

SONNY

Well I don't like how he was acting. I'm just saying that he says he has no idea where Connelman is, but I felt like he knew more.

A moment of silence passes.

SONNY (CONT.)

And frankly, I think he could have been a little more apologetic, considering.

Raleigh keeps quiet, her eyes saddening.

MARK

This is a whole separate thing. And you don't lie about Connelman. That just doesn't make sense.

SONNY (MUMBLING)

Sometimes your needing to find him doesn't make sense. You don't lie about Connelman...what or fucking lightning strikes you?

Mark, from the looks of it, hasn't heard a word of this.

His eyes are wide and locked outside the window.

The car is stopped at a light where the country road they have been driving on meets the small town's main street.

In the pale yellow blend of moonlight and streetlights, a hearse is slowly crossing the **main street**.

It is clearly and **old, beat up** station wagon that has been painted black and had a canopy fixed to the roof.

The inevitable dirge of cars follows soon after, many of them pick-ups.

There is even a tractor.

SONNY

Ah, of course...

Raleigh is watching intently, seemingly uncomfortable.

RALEIGH

You know, I've always been told that self-awareness is the thing that makes us human. To me, self awareness means awareness of your life. But some animals mourn the dead, so they're aware of death. Aren't they self aware then?

Sonny answers quietly after a moment's contemplation.

SONNY

I don't think we can say what makes us human. When you're in the storm, you can't see the whole picture....

The procession continues and the light goes from green to yellow to red.

Raleigh shifts in her seat.

RALEIGH

Hey I'm gonna run into that gas station there and buy some cigarettes.

Without waiting for a response she opens her door and exits, stepping onto the sidewalk and heading to the nearby gas station on the corner of the two streets.

SONNY

So...are you doing all right? Feeling better? Seems like you've had a hell of a few days.

Mark shifts uncomfortably, nodding his head in rapid confirmation.

MARK

I feel like myself.

And as an afterthought.

MARK (CONT.)

Thank you, thank you very much for getting me and, um, for all of this.

He gestures vaguely.

Sonny nods in reply.

SONNY

Well of course. I think we all needed the change of scenery.

MARK

Well that's what life is, right? Changing scenery.

SONNY

Oh I don't know about that...what about how we react to the scenery? Our emotions?

MARK (QUIETLY, WATCHING THE PROCESSION)

You are where you are. And you are who you are near, and what's near you.

SONNY

Hmm.

He takes a long drag on his cigarette.

SONNY

So what are you near right now?

MARK

I don't know, but something. Very close to something. I feel that very strongly. Like...the echo of something that hasn't happened yet.

Sonny is looking at Mark next to him.

A loud horn suddenly sounds behind them.

Eyes dart forward.

The procession has passed and the light is green.

SONNY

God damnit.

The car jolts forward and **Sonny** turns left, searching for a place to pull in and park, but nothing presents itself.

Finally he turns up a driveway, hastily pulls back out and heads back towards the intersection and gas station.

A block or so away from the filling station Mark grabs Sonny's shoulder and points.

Raleigh is on the sidewalk moving towards them, a bag in her hand, looking hysterical.

Sonny pulls over as far as he can get.

There are no cars behind for the time being.

Mark and he jump out of the car.

Raleigh is sobbing like a lost child.

RALEIGH

Where did you go? Where did you go to? Why did you leave me alone?

SONNY

Raleigh! I'm sorry, I'm so sorry we had to move...

She lurches forward dropping her back and throws herself onto Mark, clinging to his chest and sobbing in his shirt.

His face shows surprise but also something like a rush.

His arms hang limp at his side **Sonny'**s voice trails off and he stares somewhat slack-jawed.

Mark now appears distinctly uncomfortable.

Finally he half-gingerly steps backwards, pressing **Raleigh** off of him.

MARK

Sonny...

Sonny steps forward and takes the girl as **Mark** turns and walks away briskly, lighting a cigarette and shoving his hands in his pockets.

HOLD ON BLACK:

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT (SAME)

Mark hurtles through the trees.

MARK (MUMBLING, TEETH CLENCHED, ANGRY)

Come on man, come on...you keep your fucking hands off her! She's not the one. You're so close...you're so close.

He pulls off his shirt and closes his eyes, turning into deeper trees and letting them scratch and cut him.

He stops and takes off his pants.

Soon **naked**, he begins to cry and falls to his **knees**, stumblingly **crawling** aimlessly in a **circle**, obscured from sight by brush.

He lets out a hellish wail.

EXT. QUIET MOTEL - NIGHT (SAME)

Establishing shots.

It's a simple building but fine, one of two or three nestled near the small town's entrance to the highway.

CUT IN to the ROOM.

Raleigh is emerging from the bathroom wrapped in a towel, hair still wet.

Sitting at the foot of the bed is **Sonny**, who is nursing a **cup of coffee**.

She approaches him and he holds it out.

RALEIGH

Thank you. And again, I'm sorry.

SONNY

Oh god, Raleigh, you know it's fine. It's been a hell of a day all around.

RALEIGH

I know but I'm really worried about Mark. I didn't mean to put him off.

She sips.

SONNY

I wouldn't worry. Mark has been this way as long as I've known him. I remember going to a party with him a month or two after we became friends. I got into it with a couple of guys who were...I think they were making fun of my car, hmm, anyhow after they had passed out Mark poured an urn from one of their mother's ashes down the sink. I couldn't believe it, he was heartlessand he wouldn't leave either. He insisted that we stay so he could see how they reacted in the morning. Anyways, two weeks later at another party this drunk girl comes up to him and is just all over him; and his eyes lock up- I mean he looked like he was freaking out. After that he just disappeared, went home. So don't worry about him. He'll call when he's collected his thoughts.

Raleigh sits down.

RALEIGH

Thanks again...

Sonny laughs lightly.

SONNY

Don't worry about it.

He fishes out a cigarette pack from his coat pocket but finds that it's empty.

SONNY

Hey, I'll be right back, I have another pack in the car. You okay?

Raleigh nods and smiles, drinking her coffee.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Sonny exits the motel and is walking towards the car.

As he reaches the passenger side door and begins to unlock it he is startled by **Mark** who is walking towards the car

from the edge of the lot.

Mark is clothed again, though now visibly slashed up from the trees.

Still, he is smiling politely.

SONNY

Mark! How did you know we were here?

MARK

Went back to the gas station. The owner said you had asked where the nearest motel was and he gave you directions here.

SONNY

Oh, oh of course...need a smoke?

MARK

No actually, thanks though.

SONNY

Right. Well we're up in 217. Go get yourself cleaned up and I'll be back in a minute.

Mark nods and walks towards the stairs slowly, quickly disappearing up them.

Sonny opens the door and leans into the car, shuffling papers and empty cigarette boxes aside, occasionally checking to see if they have any left.

After a moment he stops, remembering, and opens the **glove** compartment.

From it he withdraws **Mark's** manila envelope, which he pauses and eyes.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT (SAME)

Raleigh drinks her coffee and watches a film on t.v.

T.V. (OS)

"I want ice cream...Beverly, will you bring me some ice cream?"

The door opens and Mark steps in.

Raleigh places her drink down and rises.

RALEIGH

Mark! Oh, what happened to you?

MARK

Nothing, I-

Just then the door bursts open, and Sonny rushes in.

The **door** knocks **Mark** in the back, lurching him forward and down onto his knees.

SONNY

What the fuck is this?

He holds the envelope in his hand, waving it hysterically.

Mark picks himself up and spins to face **Sonny**, then he turns to **Raleigh**, confused.

RALEIGH

Mark, I'm sorry, I put it in the glove box, you wanted to mail it...

SONNY

Excuse me? Excuse me? You've seen this? I don't believe it I'm- honestly, I'm, ...I have no idea what to say...

He flounders.

Mark folds his arms across his chest and shakes his head, his face an image of fury.

SONNY

Mark, everyone's a little strange man, I know you're a little fucking strange... I mean we all have shit we need, but what is this? Huh? What is this?

Mark's lips are pursed tightly.

MARK

It's mine, that's what it is.

There is silence.

Mark finally speaks again, pitched at a primal roar.

MARK

It's mine!

Sonny can't help but teeter.

RALEIGH

Sonny, we didn't want you to know...

Sonny takes on a mocking tone, indignant.

SONNY

Oh yeah, Sonny can't know about our secret, about our little secret.

His hand is shaking.

He throws the envelope on the floor.

He covers his mouth with his hand and turns to the door.

After a moment he opens the door and exits, speaking as he does.

SONNY

I have to go see my sister...

He leaves, slamming the door.

Raleigh puts her cup down and moves towards Mark.

RALETCH

Mark, I'm so sorry, I should have taken that out of there, I should have thrown it away.

She moves to Mark, but he defers and moves to the door.

MARK

Wait here.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT (SAME)

Sonny paces back and forth in front of his car.

Mark stops a few feet from him.

MARK

Are you confused?

Sonny laughs coldly.

SONNY

I'm amazed you aren't asking how I feel.

MARK (SMILES)

How do you-

SONNY

Mark did you really do that?

Mark nods.

MARK

I kind of feel like you've read a poem of mine or something. I know it's strange, but it's personal, and it makes sense to me.

Sonny stares directly at Mark.

SONNY

Yeah but that's what most people do. They write poems. They write songs. Or drink all day and cut themselves, or whatever.

MARK

Do you think the world would be better if I was different?

SONNY

For those two people it would be.

He shuffles his feet for a moment as if regretting saying this so forcefully.

SONNY (CONT.)

Mark I don't even know, man, but I just liked having a friend. You know? My family's let me down. My friends from high school, the few that I had, let me down. I don't like playing the hand I've been dealt- but you always seemed fine with yours. Hell you had it worse than me. Sick, no explanation, I saw it in you. But you stuck to it. It was what you got and you're trying to deal with it. Me, I'm disgusted by the hand I've been dealt...

MARK

Raleigh likes you.

Sonny nods and blows out a long breath of smoke.

SONNY

Yeah, sure...

MARK

I'm going to go for a walk. I think you should take Raleigh somewhere though. And while you're there I need you to decide what you're going to do about the envelope. If you're going to forget it or if we need to deal with this.

Sonny laughs again.

SONNY

That's not how it works.

MARK

Why not?

Sonny is silent.

SONNY

Where should I take her?

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

A quiet area, perfect for the **cemetery** that it houses. It is a small grassy area marked only by a **short** metal gating that is rusted and untended.

Sonny's car pulls up.

Raleigh exits it and walks up to the entrance to the cemetery, opening the gate and entering.

CUT IN to the car where Sonny waits.

SONNY

Oh!

He turns back and fishes around in the back seat.

Finally he retrieves a **package** wrapped with colored construction paper and bearing the words "For Colin, from Sarah (remember me?)" on it.

Sonny smiles at this.

He gingerly peels away the layers of colored paper.

He gets to the inner contents of the package.

It is a **hand-knitted scarf** with a card sitting on top of it that reads "stay warm and visit us soon!"

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT (SAME)

Mark sits, writing in a notepad, in a chair next to the lamp.

He squints in the faint light of the cheap lamp, smoking a cigarette while he writes.

After a moment he turns the **lamp** off and moves to the window where he twists open the **blinds**.

The moonlight streaming in is just enough to write by.

As **Mark** moves back to his seat and notepad, **Raleigh** enters the door.

RALEIGH

Hi.

MARK

Hey, how was your trip?

RALEIGH

It was good. Sonny says it was your idea.

Mark nods.

RALEIGH

Well that's appreciated.

MARK

Where is he?

Raleigh stares him down.

RALEIGH

I think you know.

Mark packs up his notepad and opens the desk drawer, placing it in there.

Raleigh sits down on a bed. Something seems to be on her mind.

RALEIGH

I have something to ask you.

Mark turns and looks at her, though she continues to stare straight ahead at the wall.

There is silence for a moment.

MARK

What is it?

Raleigh stands up and wraps her arms around him, burying her head in his chest.

His face is blank, solemn, condemned.

RALEIGH

I...want you to do it to me, Mark. Let me go. Let me leave.

He is silent.

RALEIGH

Don't you want to do it? Don't you want to?

Mark says nothing.

Raleigh looks up at him with tears rolling down her cheeks.

The low humming sound fills the room.

RALEIGH

Please Mark? Please? Lilly wants you to. She told me she wants you to do it. She said so, Mark, she did.

She is staring at his face.

His eyes are locked forward, his mouth open, his breathing growing tense.

The hum is rising, and growing louder.

Raleigh clutches him tighter.

RALEIGH

Mark-

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT (SAME)

Mark walks quickly and deliberately.

He leaves the lot and comes to a street in such poor condition that the moonlight illuminates more than the two dim streetlights still working.

Mark begins crossing when a vehicle takes a fast turn onto the street a block to the right.

Mark turns to see the source of the noise just in time to see the makeshift hearse from the earlier funeral procession screech to a halt a foot or so before striking him. Dust rises in the headlights.

Mark cannot see the driver.

He steps back to the curb and the hearse drives on.

After it passes, Mark sees a small grungy bar directly across the street from him.

Mark crosses the road and enters the bar.

There are a handful of salt-of-the-earth types inside the small, barely lit space.

Mark ambles slowly to a small table, sits down, and lights a cigarette.

A man, unseen, sits down across from **Mark** and places a shot in front of him.

Mark stares at it, frowning, looks up at the man, looks back down, and then takes the drink and downs it, coughing and sputtering afterwards.

He shivers and wipes his mouth.

Almost immediately, the **man** slides another full shot in front of **Mark**, whose mouth opens as if to say something. Instead he also drinks that, reacting slightly less violently.

Mark nods and smiles.

It is pained from the drink, but perhaps the first true smile from him.

Slowly, he mouths "thank you".

The **jukebox** kicks in with The Platters "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" playing.

Mark turns to watch an elderly couple dance.

They cling to each other, fitting as if they were built that way.

They are holding tightly and not holding at all in the same instant.

Mark looks back at the table, where the man has slid another drink.

Mark swipes at is, but his hand passes through the glass. He pauses and sits up straight for an instant and then looks at the man as if questioning if he noticed this; but after receiving no confirmation he slowly grips the glass and drinks it.

This time he takes it relatively easily, though he begins to move in sloppy, tipsy motions.

A **hum** suddenly sounds, building much too rapidly to a high pitched **whine**.

MARK

What does it mean?

His eyes begin to roll.

He leans forward, resting his head on the table.

The sound is unbearable, unrelenting, until it suddenly stops.

EXT. FOURTH DESTINATION

C.U. Mark's eyes, wide with pleasure, reveal his mouth, agape, and gasping, moaning, silently.

We pull back to reveal Mark, his face still a portrait of ecstasy.

Surrounding him is **body** after **naked body**, creamy porcelain sea of **women**, smooth white waves rolling but never crashing, all feeling and sharing and closeness and pushing so close as to enter and pass through another person and feel their entire form surround and cloak and press and share and feel.

Every way he turns he is in this pressing, intimate **overwhelm**.

CUT TO AND HOLD ON BLACK.

INT. BACK IN THE BAR - DEAD OF NIGHT

Mark is on the ground beneath his table, having slipped off at some point.

He rouses slowly and picks himself carefully up, sitting back in his spot.

He clutched his head and shakes the cobwebs out, trying to gauge his location.

The bartender appears with broom in hand. He

is middle aged, salt and pepper beard.

BARTENDER

Hey man, I didn't want to wake you up, but it's past closing time. I was gonna let you sleep until I finish cleaning and lock up...

Mark shakes his head and raises a polite hand.

MARK

No, that's fine. Can you tell me: who was that man sitting with me?

The bartender shrugs.

BARTENDER

Well that's the doctor. Name's Henry. Guess you aren't from here?

Mark is already up and heading hastily, still drunkenly, for the doors, without saying a word.

As he exits, the bartender calls out.

BARTENDER

Hey, are you okay? Where are you going?

Mark speaks as he slips out the door, his tone bearing certainty not heard before, though still fused with desperate desire.

MARK

I have to find him!

EXT. BAR - NIGHT (SAME)

Mark bursts through the doors.

It is an eerie, ashy twilight now.

The small town is utterly empty-desolate.

Mark's mouth hangs open and his eyes show terror and confusion.

He breaks into a **desperate run** down the street, craning his head this way and that as he does, seeing nobody, finding no relief.

EXT. A TWILIT HILL

It is a stark, small, sharp hill- a dark grassy mound in relief against a pink and bluish dusk sky.

Mark soon enters the frame climbing the hill.

C.U. Mark as he struggles up the hill, occasionally
slipping and clutching at clumps of grass to pull himself

further up the steep hill.

Finally he reaches the top. C.U. Mark's face as he stands, heaving, with the pastel sky behind him.

His face finally shows some surprise and relief at whatever he is seeing.

Hold on Mark's face.

CONNELMAN (OS)

Hello Mark.

MARK (GASPING)

Hello doc.

He laughs and wipes his face.

MARK

God, it's good to see you. But doc, I don't know what's going on. It's starting to get...strange... I'm not quite sure what I'm feeling lately.

CONNELMAN (OS)

Compassion, Mark. It's washing over you.

Mark looks unconvinced.

MARK

I don't know about that.

He looks suddenly crushed, nearly tearful.

MARK

I really doubt it, doc.

Tears are streaming down his face. He falls to his knees.

MARK

Doc you gotta help me. I'm...I'm losing it. I feel so scared right now. Something just makes me want to cry, like a sad memory. I feel like I'm watching the world from somewhere else where it's already happened and it happened wrong.

CONNELMAN

That's where I come in, Mark. Everyone reaches that point, everybody gets there. And isn't it nice to have me to come to?

Mark nods through tears.

The wind whips his hair and the tails of his shirt.

CONNELMAN

I want you to repeat after me. Compassion. It's washing over me. Go on and say that. Can you say that for me, Mark?

Mark raises his head, eyes glistening.

He opens his mouth, and begins to move his lips, forming the words, but no sound comes out.

Mark, noticing this, looks stricken and covers his mouth, and then stares at his hand.

CONNELMAN

Compassion. It's washing over me.

Mark covers his mouth tightly with both hands, eyes wide with horror, hands gripping his mouth and face so tightly that his cheeks are white where his **fingers** are **pressed**.

Mark groans something incomprehensible.

CONNELMAN

I'm going to say a word now to you Mark. I want you to tell me how it makes you feel. I'm going to do it on the count of three. Are you ready?

Mark, still on his knees, still tightly covering his mouth shakes his head wildly in a "no".

CONNELMAN

Good. One...

Mark is swinging his head side to side, trying to signal a denial.

CONNELMAN

Two...

Hair tangled and matted, eyes wide, sweat and tears...

CONNELMAN

Three...

SHARP CUT

TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD

"PULSE NIGH TO PULSE AND BREATH TO BREATH - WHERE HUSHED AWAKENINGS ARE DEAR - BUT I HAVE A RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH - AT MIDNIGHT IN SOME FLAMING TOWN - WHEN SPRING TRIPS NORTH AGAIN THIS YEAR." - ALAN SEEGER

THE END.