HOT SUMMER NIGHTS

A TEENAGE LOVE STORY

Written by
Elijah Bynum

THE FOLLOWING IS BASED ON A TRUE STORY....

....MORE OR LESS....

OVER BLACK

DANIEL (V.O)
Every moment in life is the result of all the moments preceding it...or some shit like that.

From the darkness we hear a harrowing roar. Powerful and tragic. Like the aching cry of some prehistoric beast.

CLOSE ON A HIGHWAY SIGN: WELCOME TO CAPE COD

Nightfall. We are in the middle of a violent hurricane and what we just heard was the wind.

Stinging rain slams into the earth. Snapped power lines and uprooted trees. Nothing's safe. Mother Nature's genocide.

I-6 Westbound. Breaklights for miles. Every Tom, Dick and Harry is headed for the hills. Except for one crazy bastard.

Driving headfirst into the storm's mouth is a '91 CHEVY CORVETTE. It blows past us, leaving behind a trail of light in the fog.

INT. '91 CORVETTE. NIGHT

Behind the wheel sits DANIEL MIDDLETON (18). The boy next door. Awkward, shy and boyishly handsome, although he doesn't know it yet.

His childlike features suggest innocence but the fire behind his eyes says otherwise. Checks his rearview. Clammy hands tighten around the wheel. Knuckles whiten.

DANIEL (V.O)
We like to highlight so called "life altering moments" but fail to realize it's everything leading up to that moment that caused it to happen.

It's unclear if Daniel is being followed but his paranoia has him convinced.

DANIEL (V.O.)
One moment runs into the next. Each one dictating our trajectory. Each one equally important.

Daniel switches lanes. Hits the accelerator.

DANIEL (V.O)
But in the present we are blind. We think we have the ability to stay one step ahead, but, as always, life catches up and we are left thinking... “whoa”.

Ahead lies an intersection. Yellow light. Daniel guns it.

DANIEL (V.O)
Because by the time tomorrow arrives it becomes today all over again.
(beat)
And nobody knows what today will bring. Nobody.

BAM! BLIND SIDED by a TRUCK. A violent cacophony of twisting metal and crunching glass. The vehicle tumbles across the road -- somersaulting end over end.

Lands upside down on its ROOF and skids off the road-- wrapping itself around a steel telephone pole. Upon impact Daniel is EJECTED through the windshield.

ROAD SIDE

Sprawled across the breakdown lane. His arm, dislocated at the shoulder and bent around his head. Blood leaking from his ear.

Hang on the grizzly sight. The car engine hums. Wheels turn. The wind growls.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Whoa.

BLACK

Over black we hear the mellifluous opening chords of Cyndi Lauper’s *Time After Time.*

CLOSE ON DANIEL’S FACE

Immense concentration. He stares RIGHT AT US. Perched on his head sit a pair of industrial strength headphones.

INT. BED ROOM. DAY

Daniel lays on his bed. PENTHOUSE MAGAZINE resting over the covers. He masturbates vigorously. Lauper, filtering through the headphones, dulls his senses to the outside world.

There’s sad and then there’s this.

Pull back to reveal his room. Action figures. Red Sox hats. A Guns and Roses poster on the wall. A Calvin and Hobbs book.

It's very much the room of a boy who has yet to find himself.

Complete silence except for the distinct swishing sound of bedsheets pumping up and down.

BACK ON DANIEL'S FACE

Back in his world--the song crescendos. His face contorts. Climax imminent.

OVER THE TOP of the magazine we see the door fling open. DANIEL'S MOTHER walks in.

MOTHER
Jesus Christ!

Her coffee mug drops, shatters-- except it's not coffee. It's red wine.

Daniel scurries to cover himself--the headphone cord rips loose and his WALKMAN breaks on the floor.

Shielding her eyes, Mom steps out and pulls the door closed.

HALLWAY

She hovers outside the door.

MOTHER
I didn't see anything.

DANIEL
(through door)
Go away.

A beat.

MOTHER
I'm making eggs.

DANIEL'S ROOM

Panting from both shock and ecstacy, Daniel's trembling hand reaches for his INHALER. He inhales two quick sprays.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

A new coffee mug is topped off with RED WINE. Daniel's Mother stands over a skillet, eyes glazed over. Her thinning hair and sunken cheeks imply tough times. The bags hanging under her eyes confirm them.

DANIEL (O.S.)
What'd you wanna talk about?

She shakes from her reverie. Daniel sits at the kitchen table.

MOTHER
Before we talk about anything I just wanna clear the air.

She walks a plate of burnt eggs over and places them in front of Daniel. She sits.

MOTHER
I know we agreed we weren't gonna harp on it but today would've been his birthday and it feels silly not to acknowledge that.

FLASHBACK. EXT. BACK YARD COOKOUT. DAY

Through grainy, hand held HOME VIDEO we watch DENNIS MIDDLETON (47) turning hot dogs on the grill.

He's confident yet modest. Salt of the Earth.

DANIEL (V.O)
My father was a man's man. The kind of guy who pulled the chair out for a lady, shaved with a straight razor and changed his own oil.

FLASHBACK. EXT. BACK YARD. POOL. LATER.

HOME VIDEO: Dennis sneaks up behind Daniel's Mother. She looks younger. Heathlier. Happier. He tosses her into the pool. She SCREAMS.

MOTHER
Dennis! You bastard!

DENNIS
What's that? You can't swim? Fear not my love.

He hurls himself into the pool. Splash.

DANIEL (V.O)
He was the kind of man I would never become.

Dennis grabs his wife around her hips and pulls her close. She playfully fights away, then gives in.

DENNIS
(looks into the camera)
You gettin' this, Danny? Look at your mother. You're smarter than me and you're better lookin' so If you're half as lucky you'll find a woman as beautiful as I did.

They kiss. She nudges him away.

MOTHER
(giggling)
You're still a bastard.

DANIEL (V.O)
When he died the light inside of me burned out with him.

FLASHBACK. EXT. HOUSE. DAY

An ELDERLY WOMAN exits her house in a bath robe to fetch the morning paper. It's not there. She looks around, dumbfounded.

DANIEL (V.O)
I quit my paper route without giving notice. After a week Mrs. Schrader phoned the police to report that the Puerto Rican kids had been stealing her newspaper.

FLASHBACK. DANIEL'S BACK YARD. DAY

Daniel tosses a bundle of BASEBALL CARDS on top of a stack of NEWSPAPERS. Lights a match and set them on FIRE.

DANIEL (V.O)
I also burned the baseball cards my father had bought me last Christmas. Somehow I thought it'd help me cope.

FLASHBACK. DANIEL'S HOUSE. GARAGE. DAY

A raging FIRE. Black smoke. FIREFIGHTERS hose down the flames which are licking up the garage walls.

DANIEL (V.O)
In doing so, the garage and half of my neighbor's lawn burned down. I told my mother it was an accident. But the school pyschologist, Mr. Wembley, told her otherwise.

FLASHBACK. MR. WEMBLEY'S OFFICE. DAY

Bald, moustached and bifocaled, MR. WEMBLEY talks to us from behind his desk.

MR. WEMBLEY
What we're looking at here, ma'am, is what we call a cry for help.

FLASHBACK. PINE GROVE CEMETERY. DAY

Grey skies. Light drizzle. Daniel stands over his father's grave. His face flat and numb.

DANIEL (V.O)
Months had passed since his death and I still hadn't cried. And I felt guilty about that.

BACK IN KITCHEN

MOTHER
So. I've been thinking, you know, and...how would you like to live with auntie Barb this summer?

DANIEL
On the fuckin' Cape?

MOTHER
Yes. And mind your mouth.

DANIEL
What am I gonna do, dig for clams all day? Collect sand dollars?

MOTHER
I'm sure you'll find something. There are nice girls on the cape in the summer time, ya know. Maybe you'll even meet one. A real one.

DANIEL
Jesus, ma.

MOTHER
It'll be good for you and it's better than moping around Leominster all summer with what's-his-face.

DANIEL
Is this one of those times when you make it seem like I have a choice but I actually don't?

She miles as if to say “yes, it is”. Daniel looks out the window, shakes his head and sighs.

DANIEL
This is bullshit.

MOTHER
Know what I did the summer after highschool?

DANIEL
(sarcastic)
No. Because you haven’t told me a thousand--

MOTHER
Learned to ride a horse, that’s right.

DANIEL
(under his breath)
Was that before you started drinking at breakfast?

A nerve hit, her face pinches tight and the last of her calm motherly patience slips away.

MOTHER
What was that?

DANIEL
Nothing.

A tense beat. He looks away, her eyes bore into him.

MOTHER
You know, I hoped by this age you’d have a little of your father in you.
(she stands)
Just a little.

She leaves the kitchen. Daniel looks down at his plate of eggs. The yolk bleeding into the ketchup...

He slides it away. Appetite gone.

EXT. TOWN OF HYANNIS. DAY

White houses, black shudders, American flags, manicured lawns and sea-shell drive-ways. Timeless New England charm.

DANIEL (V.O)
Aunt Barb lived in a town named Hyannis.
(MORE)

DANIEL (V.O) (CONT'D)
And that particular summer would be the hottest summer in 68 years.

SUPERIMPOSE: SUMMER 1991

EXT. BACK YARD COOKOUT. DAY

Two TEENAGE GIRLS dash through a sprinkler while their FATHER flips burgers on the grill.

EXT. BEACH. DAY

Hundreds of people lay stretched out along a overcrowded beach.

DANIEL (V.O)
When the heat wave hit at the end of May people thought it would lift in a week.

INT. RESTURANT / KITCHEN. DAY

A mad frenzy inside the hot and stuffy kitchen. Sweat and steam. The CHEF barks out orders at his exhausted staff.

TRACK with a tray of ICE CREAM SUNDAE's as they are carried out the double doors--

RESTURANT MAIN ROOM

--and set down before a WEALTHY FAMILY.

EXT. COUNTRY STORE. DAY

A HUSBAND and WIFE sit on a wooden porch outside. Bags of ice around their head and ankles. He's shirtless. She's in a bra.

DANIEL (V.O)
It wouldn't end until the hurricane in August. As a matter of fact everything would end with that hurricane.

EXT. SUMMER COTTAGE. DAY

A forest green BMW pulls up to picturesque cottage which must have just leapt off Norman Rockwell's canvas.

From the back seat emerges a GOLDEN RETRIEVER followed by A BROTHER and SISTER. Both 17. Both none too pleased. HUSBAND and WIFE smile and exchange a satisfactory nod.

DANIEL (V.O)
Every year, between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the summer birds would flock to the Cape--barreling off the 6 and carrying with them an air of pretentiousness you could smell from Worcester.

The golden retriever BARKS.

INT. SUMMER COTTAGE. DAY

The FAMILY walks in and places their bags down.

DANIEL (V.O)
They would call it home until it was time to migrate back to the lives that awaited them.

EXT. CABANA. DAY

A lively COCKTAIL PARTY is underway. Dozens of SUMMER BIRDS mill about, greeting one another.

A HUSBAND pops a bottle of champagne. His WIFE giggles.

WIFE
(coy, playful)
Richard, the sun's still up.

DANIEL (V.O)
During those three months they were the first-class citizens of the peninsula.

He takes a swig straight from the bottle. She yelps.

EXT. RUN DOWN HOUSE. DAY

Shabby lawn and chipping paint. In the drive-way sits a rusty boat that looks as if it hasn't touched water in two decades.

DANIEL (V.O)
There were two types of people out here. Summer birds and townies.

Daniel's '82 DATSUN pulls up outside. AUNT BARB waddles out the screen door dressed in a black dress.

DANIEL
Hey aun--

AUNT BARB
Leave your shit, we're late.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Not hard to guess which one Aunt Barb was.

INT. RUN DOWN FUNERAL HOME. DAY

Resting on top of a closed casket is the framed picture of a 17 YEAR OLD BOY. His glowing smile all the more tragic.

DANIEL (V.O)
Ricky Orwell was a townie, too. Or at least he *was* before he and his prom date were killed by a drunk driver on the Mass. Pike.

Daniel approaches the coffin and glances down at the Ricky Orwell's lifeless face.

LATER

Daniel stands alone towards the back of the main room.

DANIEL (V.O)
And although I didn't know him from a hole in the wall, for some reason I felt...

DANIEL
(out loud to himself)
So sad.

A RELATIVE overhears this and turns to Daniel.

RELATIVE
Isn't it? What do you remember most about him?

Off Daniel's expression.

DANIEL (V.O)
Maybe the heat was getting to me.

INT. CORNER GROCERY STORE. DAY

Daniel stocks boxes of cereal.

DANIEL (V.O)
Ricky Orwell had worked as a clerk at my aunt's corner grocery. When he died I took his job.

EXT. BEACH. DUSK

Alone on the beach, Daniel chucks a rock into the rising tide. It disappears, not even leaving a ripple.

DANIEL (V.O.)
I was an only child and was never one to make friends easily. Over the years I had become very good at being alone. Frankly, it was the *only* thing I was good at.

EXT. LEWIS BAY WATERFRONT. DUSK

Daniel stands before the JFK MEMORIAL which includes a fountain and a field-stone. The inscription reads:

"I believe it's important that this country sail and not sit still in the harbor- JFK."

It's as if the late president's words travelled three decades just for Daniel.

INT. PIZZA JOINT. NIGHT

Daniel chews a piece of crust as he plays PAC-MAN on an old arcade machine.

DANIEL (V.O)
But I always wanted to be something more. Something I was proud of.

PAC MAN is eaten. Screen reads: GAME OVER. Daniel leaves.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE. NIGHT

A line of parked CARS stretch back half a mile. Scores of drunk TEENAGERS flock across the lawn towards the house.

They laugh and shriek and enjoy being young. Wind past them up to the front door where Daniel stands before a juiced up makeshift BOUNCER.

The Bouncer holds a clipboard, scanning for names. Daniel looks on with a false sense of hope.

BOUNCER
(without looking up)
Sorry, bro.

Daniel turns, dejected, and brushes against the flow of teens pouring inside.

Then he looks up and sees it. A candy red ‘87 CHEVY CAMARO CONVERTIBLE roaring in. VAN HALEN blaring from the cockpit.

The crowd parts, allowing the Camaro to pull into a RESERVED parking spot right in front of the house.

DANIEL (V.O)
And every now and again I’d see him. Always with a girl. Always with a smile.

Out steps HUNTER STRAWBERRY(19), sporting a black V-neck and acid washed jeans.

He possess a rugged, Brandoesque masculinity. A teenage hearthrob with enough edge to make his girlfriend’s father lose sleep.

Accompanying him are two blondes and a brunette that are so hot you’re mad at them.

DANIEL (V.O.)
He was one of those rare individuals who’d been comfortable in his skin since he spouted baby teeth. The teenage version of Joe Camel. Only cooler.
(beat)
He was everything I wished I could’ve been.

The girls, drunk with laughter, brush past Daniel. To them he’s invisible.

DANIEL (V.O)
And for those fleeting moments when our paths overlapped I got to live in the life of Hunter Strawberry.

As Hunter glides through the crowd he’s met with an array of greetings. High-fives from the guys and cheek kisses from the girls.

When he passes Daniel he looks him square in the eye and nods. Cool as fuck, and keeps moving...

DANIEL (V.O)
Yes, that really was his name.

EXT. CHEVY CAMARO. OPEN ROAD. DUSK

Hunter cruises along. Wind in his hair, sun at his back and a glint in his eye reserved for those at ease with the world.

DANIEL (V.O)
He dug pretty chics, fast cars and rock and roll. He was an old soul. Beyond his years and ahead of his time. A relic from some forgotten era.

EXT. GAS STATION. DAY

Hunter fills his tank.

DANIEL (V.O)
He had been on his own since he was fourteen years old.

A SOCCER MOM and her child pull up to the next pump. Hunter smiles and WINKS. Soccer Mom shudders and drives away.

DANIEL (V.O)
And controversy like that was too big for little Hyannis.

INSERT: A POLICE OFFICER talks to us from his cruiser.

POLICE OFFICER
The boy’s a criminal.

INSERT: A TEACHER talks to us from in front of a chalkboard.

TEACHER
A Ne’er-do-well.

INSERT: A BASEBALL COACH from the pitcher’s mound.

COACH
Waste of talent.

He SPITS.

INSERT: A PRIEST on the alter, he looks at us and CROSSES himself.

DANIEL (V.O)
Naturally, rumors began to grow. His reputation was built by a collection of stories circled around dinner tables and through highschool hallways.

INT. BED ROOM. NIGHT

Hunter in bed with an attractive OLDER WOMAN. Post coital. He sees she’s asleep, slides out of bed and slips out of the room.

DANIEL (V.O)
After he was expelled from school junior year word around Hyannis was he had slept with vice principle Finney and never called her back.

She rolls over and throws an arm over the vacant spot, notices he's gone and sits up looking perturbed.

DANIEL (V.O)
Or so they say...

EXT. SAIL BOAT. NANTUCKET SOUND. DAY

Clad in seer-sucker shorts and Grateful Dead T-shirts, a few adult SUMMER BIRDS set sail off the sound. Washing down oysters with Grey Goose.

DANIEL (V.O)
But he didn't need school and within six months Hunter Strawberry was a prosperous business man. You see, along with their oxford's and country club memberships, the summer birds also brought a bottomless appetite for marijuana.

The SUMMER BIRDS are doubled over it fits of LAUGHTER.

SUMMER BIRD
(knowing)
For the love of Pete, what was in that cigarette?

DANIEL (V.O)
They couldn't get enough...

EXT. DARK ROAD. NIGHT

WE ARE LOW to the ground, racing behind the forest green BMW as it tears down a stretch of road.

Pan up to see the silhouettes of TWO TEENAGE HEADS through the rear window. Cherry red embers floating before each one.

The car pulls away from us and disappears around a bend, leaving behind nothing but a stream of WHITE SMOKE which hangs lazily in the thick summer air.

DANIEL (V.O)
...and neither could their kids.

INT/EXT. HUNTER'S CAMARO OUTSIDE SUMMER COTTAGE. DAY

Hunter fingers through a handful of cash.

DANIEL (V.O)
It had to come from someone and Hunter Strawberry was more than obliged.

He starts the engine and speeds away.

EXT. VARIOUS BACK DECKS. DAY

PAN across a strip of white decks jutting from expensive SUMMER HOMES. BBQ's and cocktail hours.

DANIEL (V.O)
People came to Cape Cod to disconnect from the world. And that's exactly what he helped them do.

EXT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Party in full swing. *Summertime* by Jazzy Jeff & Fresh Prince fuels the inebriated teenagers who vibe in youthful gusto.

DANIEL (V.O)
His parties were that of legend. Setting as the backdrop for storied nights which would be recounted for decades.

TWO GIRLS make-out. Tongues' unabashed.

DECK

Hunter stands alone on a deck high above the crowd--smoking a cigarette--vacant eyes watch the sea of party-goers beneath.

Pale moonlight illuminates his face just enough for us to see the loneliness which accompanies him.

DANIEL (V.O)
But despite all that he had; part of Hunter Strawberry was missing. An emptiness that no amount of liquor, cheap sex or glorified attention could fill. At the end of the night he was still just a townie...

A SUMMER BIRD GIRL slinks out and whispers something in his ear. She grabs his hand. Hunter snubs out his cigarette and follows her inside.

EXT. CORNER GROCERY STORE. DAY

Hunter stands near the entrance playing “hey mister”. A black SAAB pulls up and the same SUMMER BIRD GIRL and her PARENTS (the pot smoking summer birds from the boat) get out.

All three of them cast their eyes down and walk past Hunter as if he doesn’t exist.

DANIEL (V.O)
...and he knew that’s all they’d ever see him as.

INSIDE GROCERY STORE

Daniel is mopping the floor, looking at Hunter out the window.

DANIEL (V.O)
In an odd way we were alike.

Hunter looks inside. Their eyes meet. Daniel quickly drops his head and shuffles away. Then he stops. Turns.

DANIEL (V.O)
We both wanted to be part of something.

EXT. CORNER GROCERY STORE. MOMENTS LATER

DANIEL (O.S.)
That won’t work.

Hunter turns to find Daniel, gives him a dubious once over.

DANIEL
Not here at least. Most the customers are sort of....I know you usually probably go down to Rhode Island because they have more lenient laws about alcohol or whatever but that’s, what, like an hour both ways? And you throw a lot a parties--I’ve heard-- and that’s a lot a driving and if you’re not getting reimbursed for gas that, like, pretty much blows... so I was thinking-- not a lot but just now-- I was thinking I have like a whole storage room of beer back there so maybe next time you have one of your soiree’s I would swing by? Bring some libations.

Hunter simply stares back. Eyebrows piqued. An amused little grin working the corners of his mouth.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Soiree's? Libations? What the fuck? It felt like an eternity. And then, all he said was--

HUNTER
Wicked.

Hunter hops into the CAMARO convertible like a character from Grease and peels away--tires kicking up gravel.

DANIEL (V.O)
And so it began.

EXT. HUNTER'S BEACH HOUSE. DAY

Daiquiri's. Tiki torches. Planned chaos and nary a policeman in sight. Daniel and Hunter cross the lawn, both carrying two 30-PACKS. Daniel stops and takes in the scene as if admiring a fine piece of art, Hunter doesn't break stride.

HUNTER
It's better inside.

The enter past the Door Man that had turned Daniel down just days before. Daniel glances back at the winding line of desperate faces.

INSIDE--MOMENTS LATER

Deafening music. Daniel's POV--moving through an ocean of drunk teenagers. Bodies on bodies. Fish out of water.

INT. BACK BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER

Four shirtless DUDES, all blitzed out of their minds, sporting backwards Red Sox caps sit around a BONG. In unison they acknowledge Hunter.

Daniel awkwardly searches for one to exchange pleasantries with. They don't seem to notice him.

HUNTER
(throws an arm around Daniel)
This is the guy who brought all the brew. He's the fuckin' man.

The Dudes look up and nod approvingly. Hunter looks to Daniel, not sure of his name.

HUNTER
Uh...

DANIEL
Daniel. Dan. Well my mom--

HUNTER
I'm gonna call you Danny. Cool?

DANIEL
Cool.

DUDE #1 grabs the BONG and takes a massive hit. He holds the smoke in, throws back a shot of Jack Daniels then cracks a beer and chugs it down in a fluid, succinct motion.

Upon completion, he exhales the pot smoke from his lungs--COUGHING--and beating his chest like a gorilla in heat.

DUDE#2
Pussy.

DUDE#1
Fuck your mother.

As soon as Dude#1 says it he wishes he could have it back. The room goes silent as everyone's eyes fall to the floor. Or out the window. Or the bong. Anywhere but Hunter, who watches beer dribble from a overturned can.

Breaking the awkward silence, Hunter picks up the BONG proffers it to Daniel.

HUNTER
Batter up.

Daniel already looks as if he needs to vomit. He takes the bong with an unsure hand. Hunter registers.

HUNTER
Ever smoke bud before?

DANIEL
Of course.

DANIEL (V.O)
I lied.

HUNTER
Well you've drank, right?

DANIEL
Yeah, of course.

DANIEL (V.O)
I lied again.

HUNTER
Then there's nothing to it, dude.

Daniel puts his mouth to the bong. Hunter lights the bowl. Water gurgles. Smoke percolates. Silence falls over the room.

Daniel inhales. Deep. The audience is impressed.

HUNTER
The force is strong with you, young Skywalker.

Daniel pulls the bong away from his lips and frantically reaches for the shot of liquor. He throws it in his mouth and fights to swallow but instead ERUPTS into a hysteric coughing fit.

Snot, smoke and whiskey shoot from his nostrils. The cough intensifies, dropping him to the floor. His body shakes. The Dudes go apeshit.

The coughing fit subsides, Daniel lays sprawled out on the floor--eyes glossed over and fixed on the ceiling.

Tears running down his icy, pale face aren't enough to conceal the proud grin.

For those paying attention you'll notice that this is the first time we've seen him smile.

Move closer on Daniel. Laughter from the meatheads begins to fade as does the noise from the party. Move closer.

Sound falls further away...

DANIEL (V.O.)
I was born again.

EXT. PUBLIC POOL. DAY

Daniel stands at the end of the DIVING BOARD. The June sun, so fucking bright.

Eye lids droop like melted wax. A blissful smirk. We see images through his drug induced eyes. Enhanced colors. Utopia. Nirvana. Chemically manufactured happiness.

He jumps straight up...

DANIEL (V.O)
A lot of things happened to me that summer.

Then lands on the board catapulting himself even HIGHER.

DANIEL (V.O)
I lost my virginity. I witnessed a murder. I grew up.

Lands and springs higher...

DANIEL (V.O)
It was both the best and the worst summer of my life.

At the peak of his jump he sees her...

Across the pool, toweling off, is MCKAYLA (16). Time grinds to a glacial pace and Daniel is literally SUSPENDED in air.

She's the kind of beauty that can stop your heart--or in this case time--dead in its tracks. She's the inspiration of fantasy and the killer of dreams.

By 16 she's already caused more heartbreak than most women do in a lifetime and she knows it; arming her with moxie that entices just as much lust as it does envy.

DANIEL (V.O)
But that's not what this story is about. This story isn't about me, or Hunter Strawberry or the hottest summer in 68 years.

Her electric crystal blue EYES meet Daniel's.

DANIEL (V.O)
This is a story about love.

Time resumes. Daniel plummets down and SMACKS his head on the diving board-- body crumpling limply into the pool. SPLASH!

Onlookers gasp.

VIEW FROM BOTTOM OF POOL

Serene and tranquil. No noise save for the sound of rising bubbles and the hum of the pool's ventilation system.

DANIEL (V.O)
And right there, in that very moment, I fell in love.

SLAM TITLE: HOT SUMMER NIGHTS

EXT. DESERTED BEACH. DAY

Sheets of rain fall from the sky. Out over the ocean, thunder clouds break open and give way to golden bands of light cascading from the heavens. The water glitters. Majestic.

Daniel glides through the hostile deluge. Coolly obstinate. McKayla walks towards him. White T-shirt aptly stuck to her supple skin. Their eyes interwoven.

They meet and embrace--framed under the arch of a RAINBOW--holding eachother as if it were the eve of the apocalypse.

Their lips move closer for what promises to be the most earth shattering kiss ever known to mankind.

But before they meet she gently pulls away. Looks deep into his eyes, transpiercing his soul. And says--

MCKAYLA
(in a guy's voice)
Is he breathing?

POOLSIDE

Daniel jolts awake--spitting water from his lungs.

LOW ANGLE

We are GROUND LEVEL looking up at three heads hanging above--silhouetted against the biting mid-day sun. His eyes adjust and sees that it's Dude #1 and Hunter.

HUNTER
That was a nasty little spill, my man.

DUDE #1
Bro...I think you were dead there for a minute.

Daniel rubs his eyes and coughs.

DANIEL
I do too...

Dude and Hunter laugh. Daniel doesn't. He's hoisted up and they help him walk away. Arms around shoulders.

He throws his eyes back towards the area where he saw her.

She's gone.

<u>FLASHBACK.</u> EXT. BRICK WALL. DAY

TRACK along an inane scribble of dripping PINK SPRAY PAINT until we are dollying alongside it's source.

Teenage girls. Three of them. STEPH, OKIE and McKayla walking in stride. They are the very definition of misguided youth.

Steph mindlessly sprays the wall as they walk. All three chew, snap and pop bubble gum.

DANIEL (V.O)
She was the leader of a nefarious crew of rebels with absolutely no cause.

Okie KICKS a postal box.

FLASHBACK. EXT. ICE CREAM STAND. DAY

The girls smoke cigarettes and drink chocolate malts.

DANIEL (V.O)
Attempts were made to brand the group. Names like “the lost girls” and “devils with pretty faces”. But they would never call themselves anything and if you asked them why they’d say--

Steph turns to us...

STEPH
Fuck off.

FLASHBACK. INT. HIGHSCHOOL HALLWAY. DAY

Follow behind Mckayla’s swaying hips as she strides down the hall, leaving behind a wake of turned heads. Some look in contempt. Other’s in want. But they all look.

One of them is Ricky Orwell.

DANIEL (V.O)
She blossomed early. Had a grip on boys from a young age and never let go. She was known to devour their hearts.

FLASHBACK. EXT. HIGHSCHOOL FOOTBALL GAME. NIGHT

PAN across the bleachers until we find McKayla sitting with Steph and Okie. They all wear matching SKIRTS.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Before he died, poor Ricky Orwell had developed something of an obsession with her.

UNDERNEATH BLEACHERS

Ricky Orwell and PHIL BEVERLY (15) peer up through the slotted wood at McKayla’s purple polka-dotted underwear. Their jaws slack, eyes glowing, writhing in muted excitement.

DANIEL (V.O)
There was the time he and Phil Beverly stole a look up her skirt during the homecoming game.

McKayla looks down. The boys duck and scurry away.

FLASHBACK. INT. CLASSROOM. DAY

Ricky Orwell sits at the rear of the class, staring fondly at the back of McKayla's head. Her pony tail. Her scrunchie. The little blond hairs that run down the nape of her neck.

He watches as she takes a piece of PINK BUBBLE GUM from her mouth and presses it underneath her desk.

LATER

Class is over. Students file out the door. Ricky Orwell sheepishly approaches her empty desk, pulls the gum out from underneath and pops it into his mouth. He smiles.

DANIEL (V.O.)
That Bazooka Joe was the closest he would ever come to kissing her. It wasn't until he died that she even became aware that he had ever existed. Other's had better luck.

FLASHBACK. EXT. HIGHSCHOOL GROUNDS. DAY

Mckayla has All-American bad boy KIRBY WELLS (17) pinned to a tree. They make out with the desperate vigor only teenagers can.

DANIEL (V.O)
Freshman year in highschool she was dating senior Kirby Wells.

FLASHBACK. OPEN ROAD. DUSK

She sits on the back of Kirby's MOTORCYCLE as it winds down some long abandoned road towards the setting sun. Neither one wears a helmet. Her hair flows liberally in the wind.

DANIEL (V.O)
She was with him the night he accidently overdosed on heroin. Rumor has it she didn't bat an eye.

FLASHBACK. EXT. SAGAMORE BRIDGE. DAY

A chiseled FOOTBALL PLAYER (21) clad in a varsity letterman jacket crosses the historic bridge in his convertible.

DANIEL (V.O)
But Kirby Wells wasn't her only ex that ended up dead. By junior year she was dating a linebacker on the Boston College football team. He would drive in from Chestnut Hill every weekend just to see her.

<u>FLASHBACK.</u> EXT. MCKAYLA'S HOUSE. DAY

The football player POUNDS frantically on the front door.

FOOTBALL PLAYER
(shouting up at window)
Please, babe! I just wanna talk!

DANIEL (V.O.)
When she dumped him he was so distraught he quit the team.

She closes her bedroom window and cranks up her STEREO.

<u>FLASHBACK.</u> INT. BOSTON COLLEGE DORM ROOM. DAY

A COLLEGE STUDENT walks into the room. His eyes crane up and go wide with horror as they land on a pair of SHOES swaying above the ground.

DANIEL (V.O)
And then not too long after he quit life altogether.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER. NIGHT

Built in the 1950's. A ghost from the distant past. The kind of place that leaves you under a warm blanket of nostalgia, yearning to return to an era in which you never lived.

It's retro double-feature night. THE GRADUATE plays. Light from the screen bounces off car windshields' which are parked in rows along uneven grass.

DANIEL (V.O)
But of course I knew none of this. On that fateful night she was just a girl who happened to get in my car.

INT. DANIEL'S DATSUN. DRIVE IN THEATER. CONTINUOUS

Daniel sits alone. Sipping a coke. His eyes leave the screen and drift towards the BMW parked ahead of him where TWO FIGURES, a guy and girl, are in a heated argument.

The GIRL climbs out and SLAMS the door. Screaming something which can't be heard over the blaring intercoms.

Daniel squints. Is that...yeah, it's Mckayla and she appears to be crying. *She's headed this way. Shit. Did she see me?*

He looks down but the SOUND of his passenger door opening brings his head back up. Mckayla hops in.

MCKAYLA
(without looking at him)
They fall in love and live unhappily ever after. Now can you take me the fuck home?

He doesn't react. Still trying to process what's happening.

The GUY, judging by his cardigan a wealthy summer bird, has stepped out of his BMW and is now approaching Daniel's car. A pack of RAISINETS clutched in his hand, his name is BLAIR PRESCOTT (21). He's Robert Kennedy without the charm.

Blair BANGS on the passenger side window.

BLAIR
(half-soled attempt)
Common gorgeous. Enough with the hysterics, you're embarrassing yourself.

He uses his tongue and index finger to dislodge the candy from his back molars. He BANGS harder.

BLAIR
Who's the river rat?

MCKAYLA
(to Daniel)
Or you could stay here.

Daniel snaps to. He starts the engine, throws it into reverse and guns the pedal.

DANIEL'S CAR--LATER

Driving in silence. It's evident nothing has been said. Mckayla flips down her visor mirror, checks for running mascara, flips it back up. Pulls a cigarette from her purse.

MCKAYLA
Want one?

DANIEL
What? Oh. No thanks.
(beat)
I have asthma.

MCKAYLA
That sucks.

She lights up anyway. Daniel politely rolls down his window. Coughs. He surprises himself by saying...

DANIEL
He looked like a real asshole.

MCKAYLA
And how would you know?

A pause.

DANIEL
He was eating Raisinets.

She looks at Daniel for the first time and giggles in spite of herself.

MCKAYLA
Yeah. He is.
(realizing)
Hey, I know you.

DANIEL
No, I, uh--I don't--

MCKAYLA
Yea-huh, you were the kid who busted his shit at the pool.

DANIEL
Oh, yeah... I was really zonked.

MCKAYLA
Didn't help that you were friggin' staring at me either.

His ears go hot.

DANIEL
What?

MCKAYLA
On the diving board, before you wiped out, don't even act like you weren't.

DANIEL
Your nipples were hard.

The blood immediately drains from Daniel's mortified face. He can't believe those words were his.

He quickly turns on the radio. Anything to fill the excruciating void. The Crest's *Sixteen Candles* comes on.

McKayla looks at him, her face twisted into a wry grin. Intrigued by his fumbling, boyish innocence.

MCKAYLA
You're a little pervert.

DANIEL
No...that's...
(sighs)
No I'm not.

Her grin still withstanding.

MCKAYLA
Sometimes it's good to be a little bad.

He remains speechless. His petrified glare locked on the road ahead. Her eyes linger on him for a beat. Examining...

MCKAYLA
I'm the next left but you should stop here.

The car slows and stops about <u>100 yards from the house.</u> Daniel looks around skeptically.

DANIEL
You sure?

MCKAYLA
Yeah. You don't wanna get too close.

Daniel takes in the house laying ahead. A corroded station wagon sits perched upon cinder blocks in the untamed yard. A malnourished dog paces. A broken home for a broken girl.

They sit in silence for a moment. Listening to the music. As McKayla gazes inside the house we see that underneath her calloused exterior lays a vulnerability raw as an open wound.

MCKAYLA
(opens the door)
Well. Thanks for the ride. Maybe I'll see you around.

DANIEL
Yeah. Maybe.

She gets out, then turns and leans back in the window.

MCKAYLA
What's your name?

DANIEL
Danny.

MCKAYLA
I'm Mckayla. And I'm gonna call you Daniel. Cool?

DANIEL
Cool.

And with that she's gone. Daniel watches her walk away as the ironic 50's ballad CRESCENDOS.

He takes a long and steady pull from his INHALER.

EXT. BEACH. SUNRISE.

Daniel and Hunter watch waves crash ashore. The morning sun crowns the horizon, casting a splendid orange glow across the black sea. Hunter smokes a JOINT.

DANIEL
You ever worried you'll get caught?

HUNTER
What?

DANIEL
Doing...what you do. You ever worried you'll get caught?

Hunter takes a contemplative drag from his joint. Exhales.

HUNTER
In fourth grade we took a field trip to one of those planetariums. They told us that our whole galaxy-- you know, Orion's belt and the milky way and all that shit--they told us that in the grand scheme of things our world and everything in it is nothing more than the size of a grain of sand on some beach.
(hits the joint)
And that's when I stopped giving a fuck.

Daniel smiles.

DANIEL
(playfully)
So *that's* the trick.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Walk on the edge long enough and you're gonna fall. Trick is to enjoy the God damn view first.

A beat as Daniel chooses his next words.

DANIEL
What would you say if I told you I wanted to get involved?

Hunter chuckles to himself. Daniel doesn't. Hunter's smile fades.

HUNTER
You're serious.

Daniel nods.

HUNTER
You're a good kid, Danny, that shit ain't for you. You got things going for you.

DANIEL
Like what? College?
(waves it off)
That's me doing what I'm supposed to do. Life's too short.

HUNTER
Which is why you shouldn't fuck yours up.

DANIEL
I got my reasons, man.
(beat)
I met this girl.

HUNTER
And you think this will prove something to her?

DANIEL
Sometimes it's good to be a little bad.

HUNTER
You get that off a fuckin' bumper sticker?

Daniel regathers and tries again.

DANIEL
'Know how if people tell you you're something enough times after awhile you start to believe it?
(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(beat)
I’m tired of believing it.

Hunter adverts his eyes. He knows all to well how that feels.

HUNTER
No pair of tits are worth the trouble. Trust me. If you’re gonna do it do it for the cash--or the danger--or as a fuck you to your parents--anything but a broad.

DANIEL
Right.

Daniel’s eyes drop--deflated. Subconsciously, Hunter scoops a handful of sand and lets it slip through his fingers. Remorse in his voice.

HUNTER
If you’re gonna go off and do something you can’t undo you better have a damn good reason. There’s no coming back from that.

It’s evident Hunter wishes these words were once shared with him. Daniel does his best to lift the somber mood.

DANIEL
I drove her home the other night, right...and the whole time, dude, I had the craziest fucking bonner.

Hunter chuckles.

DANIEL
I’m serious. It didn’t go down for like half an hour.

HUNTER
So who’s the lucky girl?

DANIEL
You probably know her--her name’s McKayla--her tits are unbeliev--

HUNTER
(closes his eyes)
--Ah shit.

DANIEL
What?

Hunter shakes his head.

DANIEL
What? Is she really a man or something?

Hunter remains quiet.

DANIEL
Say something, dude.

HUNTER
She’s my kid sister you little shit.

DANIEL
(stunned, deflated)
Oh.

Hunter’s tone darkens a little. Silence.

HUNTER
There are plenty of chics out here. Leave her alone.

DANIEL
Okay...

HUNTER
I’m serious. Leave her alone.

The mood downshifts. Evaporating the preexisting levity. There’s a moment of awkward silence. Waves lap. Seagulls cry.

DANIEL
Well forget her then. I still want a piece of your action.

HUNTER
What for?

DANIEL
I wanna enjoy the God damn view.

Hunter lets go a wan smile. His words turned.

HUNTER
(laughs, inwardly)
Gravity, man.

DANIEL
What? You’re high.

HUNTER
Life is like gravity. Doesn’t matter who you are, we’re all gonna end up where we’re supposed to whether we like it or not.

DANIEL
What's that supposed to mean?

HUNTER
(hands the joint over)
Danny Middleton, you ever sell weed before?

DANIEL
(taking the joint)
No.

Daniel nods his head towards the rising sun.

DANIEL
But it's a new day.

He smiles and takes a long drag. Hunter can't help but smile too as he casts his eyes towards the sun.

HUNTER
Yes it is.

INT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY

Daniel and Hunter stand over several bags of WEED spread across the kitchen counter.

DANIEL
India?

HUNTER
Indica. There are only two types of weed. This is one of them.

DANIEL
Really? I thought there were, like, hundreds.

HUNTER
There are hundreds of variations, yeah. Sure. Just like there is green tea, mint tea, peppermint-- whatever--at the end of the day it's still tea. Ya dig?

DANIEL
I think.

HUNTER
(picks up the weed)
Notice the dark leaves? This shit will leave you brain dead and couch locked-- watching 'Knight Rider' reruns while spooning a tub of Ben and Jerry's.

Daniel laughs.

HUNTER
I'm serious. This is important. You wouldn't trust a mechanic who couldn't tell the difference between diesel and unleaded.

Daniel picks up a different looking piece of weed.

DANIEL
Is this the same stuff?

HUNTER
Nah, that's Sativa. The ying to Indica's yang. Go 'head 'n smell it.

Daniel takes a whiff. His nose twitches.

HUNTER
A few pulls of that'll put your brain on skates-- have you contemplating outer space and the evolution all while cleaning the bathroom and alphabetizing your cassette tapes.

DANIEL
To each his own.

HUNTER
To each his own.

INT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. GARAGE. DAY

Daniel and Hunter stand before a work table. On the table are JARS of weed, zip lock BAGS and a SCALE.

HUNTER
(holding up little bag)
One gram costs ten bucks. We call it a dime bag.

DANIEL
Isn't this what we smoked at the party?

HUNTER
Good. I'm working with a natural.
(picks up larger bag)
3.5 grams, also known as an eighth, goes for 30 to 40 depending on how dank the bud is. This is what most people will buy.

DANIEL
(pointing at an even bigger bag)
What's that?

HUNTER
That's a zip. An ounce. 200 bucks give or take. If more people bought these life would be easier.

DANIEL
And what's it called if they want more than that?

Hunter looks up from his work--sporting a sly grin.

HUNTER
A good day.

EXT. HYANNIS PORT. DAY

Passengers board a Martha's Vineyard bound FERRY. A portly GATE GUARD named GUS checks tickets. Daniel and Hunter are next in line.

DANIEL (V.O)
Hunter taught me how to make friends in the right places. How to take care of people.

HUNTER
Morning, Gus.
(re: Daniel)
This is your new best friend.

Hunter gives the nod and Daniel slips GUS a bag of weed.

HUNTER
Beautiful day for the open sea.

GUS
(smiling wide)
Beautiful indeed.

The boys board the Ferry.

INT/EXT. MARTHA'S VINYARD FERRY. DAY

They lean against the rail. Wind passing through their hair as they watch the glittering water pass below.

DANIEL (V.O)
If there was something Hunter did better than anyone it was recognize an opportunity and then seize it.
(MORE)

DANIEL (V.O) (CONT'D)
For instance, he was the only dealer on the Cape who wasn't afraid of the black kids from Oaks Bluff.

EXT. OAKS BLUFF / INKWELL BEACH. PARKING LOT. DAY

Hunter introduces Daniel to two PREPPY BLACK TEENAGERS named BLAKE and MYLES. They look like Tiger Woods and Carlton Banks.

BLAKE
'Preciate you coming all the way out here again.

HUNTER
Not a problem, man. Smoke that shit in good health.

MYLES
Amen.

BLAKE
Preach.

Daniel and Hunter turn and walk away.

DANIEL (V.O)
He let me adopt some of his old customers and helped me make new ones of my own. But most importantly he taught me how to be smart.

BLAKE
Hey man, you ever going to tell me your name?

They turn back around.

HUNTER
Less you know the better, right?

BLAKE
Preach.

MYLES
Amen.

EXT. HUNTER'S GARAGE. DAY

A BACKPACK being stuffed with baggies of weed. Hunter zips the bag then tosses it to Daniel who drops it in the TRUNK of his car. Then he hands him a BEEPER.

HUNTER
(re: the beeper)
Keep this on your hip at all times. Weed heads are impatient, if you take too long to hit ‘em back they’ll call the next guy.

Hunter pulls out his BEEPER, flashes the screen towards Daniel, it reads: 37 NEW MESSAGES.

HUNTER
See what I mean? But as long as this bitch is buzzing we’re gravy.

Daniel nods his head as he climbs into his Datsun.

HUNTER
Okay, you got two drops in Yarmouth, two in Brewster, three in Harwich and one in Chatam. And remember she’s a little deaf so--

DANIEL
Honk twice. I got it.

HUNTER
That’a boy.

Hunter holds out $40 dollars. Daniel looks at incredulously.

DANIEL
What--

HUNTER
For gas.

DANIEL
No, it’s all good, man, I’m okay on gas.

HUNTER
Then buy yourself a fuckin’ milkshake. Just take it.

Daniel takes the money and starts backing out of the driveway. Hunter shouts after him like a concerned mother.

HUNTER
Turn your headlights on and drive slow. Not too slow.

INT. DANIEL’S CAR. MOVING. DAY

Police lights flare up in his REARVIEW mirror.

DANIEL
Shit.

He pulls the car to the side of the road. Cuts the radio.

DANIEL
Shit.

ROADSIDE

We FOLLOW BEHIND the narrow shouldered police officer. Gravel crunches under his boots. Uniform damp with sweat.

This is SHERIFF FRANK CALHOUN(49). He walks with the stiff, calculated gait of a man who takes himself very seriously and has left little room for humor.

DANIEL'S CAR

DANIEL
Be cool...

Knock knock. Calhoun raps his knuckles on the window. His head is back-lit by the sun, masquerading his face behind a shadow. All that can be seen is a hard jaw and dark eyes.

Daniel cranks down the window.

DANIEL
Afternoon offi--

CALHOUN
License.

Daniel hands over his license. Calhoun begins filling out a CITATION. There's a dark, forboding aura about him. Almost otherworldly.

CALHOUN
You're new out this way.

DANIEL
Yes sir.

CALHOUN
That wasn't a question.

There's an awkward, uncomfortable silence. Daniel swallows.

CALHOUN
I pulled you over this afternoon
because you have expired.

DANIEL
What?

CALHOUN
Your plates. They have expired.

DANIEL
Oh. Right. Shoot, that's right. I'll be sure--

CALHOUN
I see you passing through here often. I'm curious as to why.

DANIEL
Here? Oh, uh, vi--visiting my grandma. In Wellfleet. She's sick. Real sick.

Calhoun remains silent. Inscrutable. But if you had to guess he's not buying it.

CALHOUN
You're due in for a hard and trying summer.
(glances at the sun)
Looks like we all are. When the air's so heavy you can't breathe and your stomach turns sour, the nights will get long and sleepless and the world can feel like it's folding in. And when it does it's me who will be there to greet you.
(he spits)
The heat will change a man, Mr. Middleton. Make him do things he otherwise would not do.

He scribbles out the last of the citation and RIPS it off the pad.

CALHOUN
And as he yearns for cooler times do you know what it is that will tear him apart?

DANIEL
No sir.

Calhoun leans down and hands over the ticket, <u>revealing his face</u>. It looks as his voice sounded--rawboned and soulless.

CALHOUN
Denying that which is inevitable.
(tips his hat)
See you further down the road, Mr. Middleton.

He walks away. Through the rearview mirror Daniel watches Calhoun recede back to his vehicle.

The interaction has left him shaken and unsettled--stuck with sickening feeling that looms after waking from a bad dream.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BASBALL GAME. DUSK

Stadium lights cast down on a manicured basball diamond. An electricity is in the air. America's pastime. Cape Cod's lifeblood.

Daniel and Hunter sit high in the BLEACHERS chewing sunflower seeds.

HUNTER
Sounds like Calhoun.

DANIEL
Who?

HUNTER
Calhoun. He's the sheriff of this little waterin' hole. That's his game--putting the fear of God in anyone who'll let him.

DANIEL
Well he put it in me.

HUNTER
Don't sweat it, bro.

DANIEL
I don't know about you but I don't wanna end up in Walpole getting raped by a skinhead in the showers.

HUNTER
Whoa. Easy. Take it easy.

DANIEL
(getting worked up)
We're over exsposed--all the back and forth--driving all across--

VENDOR (O.S)
Peanuts!

They turn to find a long suffering PEANUT VENDOR making his way down the steps. He carries concessions and the broken pride of a man who gave up on the world long before it gave up on him.

VENDOR
(sullen)
Get'cha peanuts, here.

They both decline and the Vendor continues down the steps.

HUNTER
Keep your voice down, will ya.

DANIEL
(lower voice)
Right now we're nothing more than glorified delivery boys. The risk verse reward is all fucked.

HUNTER
If your hands are startin' to shake maybe this ain't for you.

DANIEL
You don't get what I'm saying.

HUNTER
(agitated)
No, I don't.

A tense lull in the conversation. Their eyes go to the infield. A BATTER takes the plate. The first pitch. Ball one. Low and away.

DANIEL
We have to choose.

HUNTER
Huh? Choose what? Danny you need to chill, get a beer or somethi--

DANIEL
You want to be the guy selling peanuts or the guy who owns the peanut company?

Hunter turns to Daniel-- a glint in his eyes.

CRACK! The Batter sends a line shot deep into left field. Home run. The crowd ROARS.

Their eye contact doesn't break.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

Hunter's CAMARO winds through a Boston neighborhood which is in it's budding years of gentrification.

INT. HUNTER'S CAMARO. SAME

Hunter drives.

HUNTER
Where're we going?

DANIEL
What do we have now--twenty five customers? Maybe thirty? Altogether about a pound a week, right?

HUNTER
Where’re we going, man?

DANIEL
What I’m saying is we can move five, maybe ten times that much and cut out all the nonsense. How’s that sound?

HUNTER
Sure it *sounds* good. Tit fucking Heather Locklear sounds good, don’t mean it’s gonna happen. Now where’re we going?

DANIEL
That’s because your supplier is crap. No offense, but he is.

HUNTER
Three weeks ago you’d never held a bong before, now you’re gonna tell me how to flip weed?

DANIEL
Have I disappointed you yet?

Hunter looks away. Point taken.

HUNTER
Where the fuck are we going?

Daniel smiles as they pull up outside a HOUSE PARTY. Music pours from inside. Daniel nods towards the house.

HUNTER
You’re not gonna find a bigger connect than I got.

DANIEL
You sure about that?

HUNTER
Nobody out here can get you 10 pounds a week--yeah I’m sure about that.

DANIEL
Can’t be sure until we ask.

Hunter’s eyes crawl across Daniel’s face. He’s not used to having us judgment called into question.

HUNTER
What're you even looking for in there?

DANIEL
A guy with a pony tail?

HUNTER
(scoffs)
A guy with a pony tail.

DANIEL
My cousin says he's cool. It's gonna work. Don't worry.

HUNTER
I'm not worried.

Daniel unbuckles his seat belt.

DANIEL
That's right--you don't worry about anything.

He opens the door.

DANIEL
(Schwarzenegger voice)
I'll be back.

INT. TOWNHOUSE. NIGHT

Follow behind Daniel as he makes his way through the party. Kegs of IPA. Grungy Yuppies. *R.E.M's Losing My Religion.*

TOWARDS THE BACK

PONYTAIL has some poor girl cornered. He's a greasy low-life burnout. A seedy local who never got out and lives for parties like this.

Daniel timidly approaches him from behind. Taps his shoulder. Ponytail startles and spins. He's blasted out of his mind on coke.

PONYTAIL
Whoa! Can't be sneakin' up on people, little man.

DANIEL
Sorry.

There's an awkward beat where they both wait for the other to speak. The poor girl uses this as her window to leave.

DANIEL
I heard you had weed.

Ponytail's shifty bloodshot eyes shoot around the room. Pure paranoia. He takes Daniel by the arm--

PONYTAIL
C'mere.

--and pulls him towards a more secluded hallway.

PONYTAIL
Who are you?

DANIEL
Danny. Taylor's cousin.

PONYTAIL
You a cop?

DANIEL
No.

PONYTAIL
You a snitch?

DANIEL
No. No. Taylor didn't tell y--

PONYTAIL
Okay. Cool...okay...How much you lookin' for, kid?

DANIEL
A lot. Like as much as you can get. Like...pounds.

Ponytail looks up and around once more. Lowers his voice.

PONYTAIL
Yeah?

DANIEL
Yeah.

PONYTAIL
Okay. Okay.

He places a hand on Daniel's shoulder and leans in as if to whisper something and POW! SOCKS him in the stomach.

Daniel pitches forward. BAM! A FIST cold clocks him in the FACE. He drops to the floor--curls into the fetal position.

Ponytail winds up and KICKS him in the ribs.

PONYTAIL
You tell your cousin...

Another KICK!

PONYTAIL
That two bit Jew fuck! You tell him I'm no stupid motherfuc--

WHACK!

Ponytail's body goes limp and he drops to the floor into an unconscious, twitching heap of flesh.

REVEAL: Hunter standing behind him--clutching a 750ml BOTTLE OF LIQUOR. A demented scowl on his face. A burning lunacy in his eyes.

He grabs Ponytail by the throat, crushing his wind wipe. Blood vessels in his eye rupture. Skin turns blue.

Hunter is a man possessed. Void of any cognition. Pure Id.

He picks Ponytail's head back up.

WHACK!

Sounds like a watermelon breaking open.

WHACK!

This time the bottle SHATTERS.

Ponytail's body convulses. A crimson pool of blood leaks from his head. Hunter stands over him. Not an iota of emotion.

Daniel looks on--petrified.

HUNTER
(eyes still on Ponytail)
Let's go.

Daniel scurries up and staggers towards the door. Hunter finally peels his eyes away from his victim and follows behind. Onlookers stand by. Mouths agape.

INT. HUNTER'S CAMARO. MOMENTS LATER

<u>They sit in silence.</u> Hunter gazes into the distance. A cold and numb thousand yard stare. Daniel's hands shake.

HUNTER
Family. That's all I got.
(beat)
That's what I worry about.

He starts the ignition. The engine purrs. And they drive off.

EXT. CUSHMANS DRUG STORE. DAY

A local mom and pop pharmacy that has stood the test of time.

CLOSE ON: Daniel's BLACK EYE staring directly into frame. His cornea rich with ruptured blood vessels.

DANIEL (V.O)
The next time I saw McKayla Strawberry it was a Tuesday. Earlier that day I had tried Nutella for the first time. It was also the same day Terminator 2 came out.

Flip to see what he's looking at: GAUZE and BANDAGES. He grabs a box of each.

DANIEL (V.O)
I don't think any of those events were related but I can't be sure.

He turns and sees Mckayla standing further down the aisle. She hasn't noticed him yet.

He looks away sharply and stands still, trying not to be seen. When he looks back up she's walking into the next aisle. He follows cautiously behind, peeking around the corner.

Whatever she's looking for isn't in this aisle either. She moves to the next. So does he. There's a fine line between a creep and a boy in love--he's shaded towards the latter.

He takes a deep breath and musters up all the courage he has. Clears his throat then opens his mouth to speak.....

Nothing comes out.

She starts out of the aisle. Daniel sees his opportunity slipping away and out of sheer reaction violently swats a row of boxes off the shelf. They crash to the floor and scatter She turns. He feigns innocence.

MCKAYLA
Daniel?

DANIEL
Oh. Hi.

MCKAYLA
Wow.
(indicates eye)
Where'd you catch the shiner?

DANIEL
Oh, this? Just a fight.

MCKAYLA
Naughty. I’m guessing I should see the other guy.

Daniel laughs awkwardly.

DANIEL
Yeah...

MCKAYLA
How long have you been following me?

DANIEL
What? Who? Me following you?

She casts her eyebrows and smirks. Not buying the bullshit. He guiltily adverts his eyes. She changes the subject.

MCKAYLA
I’m looking for epsom salt. You ever thrown epsom salt on a slug?

DANIEL
No. What’s it do?

MCKAYLA
It’s awesome. But I can’t find any.

DANIEL
Slugs?

MCKAYLA
Epsom salt.

There’s a gap in the conversation. Sure the silence is uncomfortable but it’s ripe with sexual tension.

HONK HONK. Daniel looks out the store window and sees BLAIR sitting in his BMW. He honks a third time.

His stomach drops through the floor. His chest collapses.

MCKAYLA
I gotta...

DANIEL
Yeah.

She spins on her heels and begins to leave, then turns back.

MCKAYLA
You going to the fireworks Thursday?

DANIEL
I dunno.

MCKAYLA
It’s cheaper than a movie and the cops don’t bust anyone for drinking.

DANIEL
Maybe I’ll check it out.

MCKAYLA
I think you should.

She backs out of the door. Daniel watches as she climbs into the BMW. She glances back over her shoulder and their eyes meet briefly once more before the car pulls away.

EXT. STREET. DUSK

Daniel walks alone down the sidewalk. Head down. Shoulders hunched. The final light of the day at his back.

A BLACK VAN casually rolls past. He hardly notices. Then it’s tires SCREECH. The Van hooks a U turn and accelerates back towards Daniel.

The passenger door flings open and out hops DEX(38). A formidable presence with a face like an old catcher’s mit.

Instinctively, Daniel turns to run away but it’s of no use. Dex snags him by the collar--stopping Daniel in his tracks.

Daniel frantically pulls out his velcro wallet.

DANIEL
Here! Take it! It’s all I have!

Dex ignores the desperate plea.

DEX
We have something you want. No black eye necessary.

After a beat Daniel calms a bit, realizing what this may be.

DEX
We should talk.

DANIEL
How did...how--

DEX
Get in.

DANIEL
I can't do anything without my partner. So unless--

Dex pulls the Van's' sliding door open. Inside is Hunter. Arms folded, trying not to look scared.

DEX
I won't ask again.

INT. LUCY'S 24 HOUR DINER. NIGHT

Daniel and Hunter sit on one side of a booth. Dex and the DRIVER of the Van sit across the table.

DEX
I've been watching you. Longer than you'd be comfortable with knowing. You got reach, I've seen that. You're smart. Careful. But not careful enough. You caught my attention which means before long you'll catch the wrong kind of attention.

HUNTER
Not sure how close you've been watching, bro, but I've been around the block if you know what I mean. Cops out here ain't worth spit in a bucket.

DEX
I'm not just talking about the cops.

Hunter and Daniel trade glances. Hadn't thought of that.

DEX
Know what your problem is?

HUNTER
Got a feeling you're about to tell me.

DEX
You're sitting at the penny slots hoping to take down the house.

Daniel shoots Hunter a passive aggressive 'told you so' look.

DEX
Gotta play big to win big.

Daniel now shifts his entire body so it faces Hunter. Eyes boring into the side of his head.

Hunter gnaws at the inside of his cheek. Foot agitatedly bouncing under the table. He refuses to look back at Daniel.

DEX
All the running around, all the transactions--keep it up and it'll end one of two ways. Either you'll end up in Walpole getting raped by a skinhead in the showers or--

Daniel excitedly pounds the table. Silverware rattles. Dex pauses for a moment....then continues.

DEX
--or the wrong people will find you first and the showers will sound like a good deal.

HUNTER
You've made your fuckin' point.

DEX
The idea is to work as a wholesaler. You have a few guys--four or five--spread out over a couple of cities--and you move in bulk.

HUNTER
And what do you do exactly?

DEX
The man I work for, who you will never meet, will provide as much product as you can handle. I make sure you pay us back on time.

The Driver has yet to speak, he just stares blankly at the boys like a dumb owl.

HUNTER
(re: the Driver)
And what does he do?

DEX
He drives.

DANIEL
How do we know this isn't some sort of sting set up thing...how do we know you're not cops?

Dex deftly SLAPS Daniel across the face.

DEX
Cops can't do that.

Hunter shoots up from his seat, ready for a brawl. But neither Dex or the Driver budge. Completely nonthreatened.

DEX
Sit down.

He holds ground. Fists bawled. Just waiting to be provoked.

DEX
Sit down.

Hunter's not used to being challenged, physically or psychologically, but Dex strikes him a man better left unfucked with.

His fists uncurl and he slowly lowers himself back into the seat.

DEX
What happens from here is something of a trial period. If both parties are happy with the outcome we'll take it from there.

DANIEL
(rubbing his jaw)
How's it work?

DEX
We front you some weight--you have till Thursday and not a second more to flip it and pay us back the principal. No vig. Whatever you make over that is yours to keep.

HUNTER
Thursday? You're only giving us two days?

DANIEL
(to Dex)
What are we looking at?

Hunter glares at Daniel.

DEX
Two pounds. High quality. Better than anything you have. Twelve hundred a piece.

The boys exchange a glance. Each trying to read the other. Hunter tries to conceal his doubt. Daniel, on the other hand, looks different. A burgeoning valiancy within.

DANIEL
That's--

HUNTER
I know what it is.

Their non verbal deliberation continues. Hunter breaks it by looking back to Dex.

HUNTER
Seems kinda steep, I don’t--

DANIEL
How about five pounds?

Hunter’s eyes go wide.

DEX
Think you can handle five?

Hunter’s quick to camouflage any doubt. His eyes narrow.

HUNTER
Shouldn’t be a problem. But say something happens. Say we’re a little late. What happens then?

Dex shrugs.

DEX
You’ve seen the movies.

EXT. LUCY’S 24 HOUR DINER. PARKING LOT. LATER

WHAM! Hunter’s trunk door slams shut. Dex nods at them from the Black Van before it drives away.

Hunter yanks out a pack of CIGARETTES and jostles out a butt.

HUNTER
You out of your fuckin’ mind, Danny?!

DANIEL
I got a plan.

HUNTER
Your brain dead cousin? Same one who caught you that black eye?

DANIEL
Trust me.

HUNTER
And what if it doesn't work?

DANIEL
It has to.
(re: the cigarettes)
Now gimme one of those.

EXT. ALLEY WAY. NIGHT

Follow behind TAYLOR MIDDLETON(24)tearing ass full steam down the alley--BACKPACK swinging from his tattoo laden arms. A fat, overworked, underpaid SECURITY GAURD gives chase.

Taylor was born on the wrong side of the tracks and never looked back. He's the kid that the D.A.R.E Program warned us about and he's currently running like the devil's on his heels.

DANIEL (V.O)
My cousin Taylor lived out in Quincy. He was sent away at ten years old after being caught lighting squirrels on fire at a family cookout. I hadn't seen him since.

Taylor stumbles, catches his balance and without breaking stride checks over his shoulder. FREEZE FRAME on his face.

DANIEL (V.O)
I figured if anyone could get rid of 5 pounds of pot overnight it was him.

Resume. Taylor skids to a stop in front of a CHAINLINK fence. He tosses the backpack over, scales to the top and flips over effortlessly to the other side. He's done this once or twice.

He turns a corner and finds Daniel waiting inside his idling Datsun. Taylor rips the door open and dives in.

DANIEL'S DATSUN

TAYLOR
Go motherfucker! Go!

DANIEL
Did you get it?

TAYLOR
Go!

Daniel jams the gas--sending the car lurching from the shadows. Once on the main road, he slows to an appropriate speed. Cautiously and meticulously checking his mirrors.

DANIEL
Did you get it?

Face split in a grin, Taylor unzips the backpack and begins pulling out wads of CASH.

DANIEL
Why were you running?

Taylor flashes a villainous grin.

DANIEL
(shaking head)
Jesus.

Taylor holds the cash in the air, tilts his head back and hollers to the heavens like some drunken redneck.

TAYLOR
God damn, boy! You grew up fast! What in fuck's hell gotten into you?!

DANIEL
I don't know.

And he really doesn't.

DANIEL (V.O)
It was the biggest gamble I had ever taken.
(beat)
And I won.

INT. HUNTER'S GARAGE. DAY

Dex drops a large DUFFLE BAG on the ground.

DEX
Same time next week.

He shakes hands with both Hunter and Daniel before climbing into the Black Van and driving off.

Once the van is out of sight Daniel jumps up and down-- bursting with excited energy.

DANIEL
Did I tell ya or did I tell ya?

Hunter smiles weakly and looks downward at his high-tops.

DANIEL
Common. Say it.

He playfully punches Hunter in the arm.

DANIEL
Say it...

HUNTER
You were right. I was wrong.

He puts an arm around Hunter.

DANIEL
It’s all good. You know what they say about broken clocks.

HUNTER
Actually, nah, I don’t.

The boys stare at the bag on the floor.

DANIEL
Man. I have a feeling this is the start of something huge.

Daniel bends down to examine the contents in the duffle bag.

Hunter’s smile quickly fades and an unsettling darkness fills his eyes.

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS. NIGHT

We are at the annual FIRE WORKS show and it really is the talk of the town. Hundreds of people mill about hay lined walk-ways boarded with an array of concessions.

Hot dog stands. Cotton candy. Giraffe shaped balloons. The fireworks show is mere moments away and the air is buzzing with excitement.

BLAIR feeds a piece of fried dough to a giggling Mckayla. Emotionally she’s not there but over time she has mastered the art of pretense.

Joining Mckayla and BLAIR are Steph, Okie and one of BLAIR’s BUDDIES.

BLAIR
I’m gonna go grab some more booze from the Beemer. You ladies have any requests?

MCKAYLA
Something strong.

BLAIR
You little devil.

BLAIR slaps McKayla’s ass then grabs his buddy in a headlock and they walk away.

OKIE
He’s fuckin’ wicked hot, Kay. Not to mention, like, rich as f’ing God.

MCKAYLA
He’s okay.

OKIE
You always do this. You wouldn’t know prince charming if he came in your mouth.

MCKAYLA
Ew. Sick.

OKIE
I’m just saying.

MCKAYLA
Whatever, Okie.

Okie nudges Steph.

OKIE
Um, hello, am I wrong?

STEPH
Fuck off.

ON DANIEL

Moving towards the group. Clutched behind his back is a BOX of EPSOM SALT.

FRIED DOUGH STAND

Okie sees Daniel approaching.

OKIE
Wow. Loserville U.S.A. Two o’clock.

McKayla looks up and sees Daniel. He locks eyes with her and holds it for the duration of the conversation.

DANIEL
Hey.

MCKAYLA
Look who showed up.

DANIEL
I brought you something.

MCKAYLA
Oh yeah?

He pulls the box of salt from behind his back. Her cheeks flush red. She's used to boys trying to impress her, she's not used to it working.

DANIEL
I gave it a shot. You're right, it is awesome.

MCKAYLA
Where'd you...find this...?

Daniel shrugs. *Nothing to it.*

OKIE
What the fuck's going on?

Sparks fly. Intense eye contact. Okie's question goes unanswered.

In the distance, Daniel see's BLAIR and his buddies heading back--six packs and brown bagged liquor bottles in tow.

DANIEL
Don't kill 'em all at once.

She fights back a smile.

MCKAYLA
Make sure you do the same.

DANIEL
It's too late.

A grin crawls across his face. He looks deep into her eyes.

DANIEL
I'm hooked.

His eyes linger for a second more before he turns and leaves.

OKIE
Um, what the hell was that?

McKayla doesn't respond. She's too busy watching Daniel walk away. BLAIR returns.

BLAIR
Who let the clodhopper out of his shed?

Everyone laughs. McKayla doesn't.

ON DANIEL

Heading towards us. Over his shoulder we can see the group laughing at his expense. He pulls out his inhaler, shakes it and brings it up to his lips.

Then he hesitates, stops walking and turns around. He DROPS the inhaler to the ground and makes a beeline for McKayla.

We follow behind him as he approaches. Resolute. A boy who will not be deterred.

BLAIR
Listen you piece of trash she doesn't--

He struts up to McKayla, grabs her by the hips and KISSES her.

At first she's startled, then after a second or so she drops the box of salt and kisses him back.

Just then the FIREWORKS go off.

Red, white and blue explosions flood the night sky.

DANIEL (V.O)
Okay so there weren't any fireworks.

The fireworks immediately evaporate from the sky and the rest of the GROUP stands in collective awe watching the kiss.

DANIEL
But of all life's moments we're lucky if we can call a handful of them "perfect". A super-massive black hole could have swallowed the entire universe but nothing could have taken that moment away from me.

INT. NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM. GIANT OCEAN TANK. DAY

Daniel and McKayla stand before the gigantic glass tank. A window into another world. Sharks, sting rays and sea turtles float in the abyss. The water's soft blue glow bouncing off their faces.

His hand brushes against hers. Fingers interlock. They smile.

EXT. NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM. GIFT SHOP. DAY

Daniel and McKayla walk out of the store. She holds a plastic bag with a GOLDFISH.

MCKAYLA
Daniel meet Oliver the fish. Oliver the fish, meet Daniel.

DANIEL
How do you know his name is Oliver?

MCKAYLA
(duh)
Look at him.

She holds the bag up to Daniel's face.

MCKAYLA
Here, give him a kiss.

DANIEL
(ducking away)
Ah!

MCKAYLA
(faux pout)
What if a wizard turned me into a fish? Would you stop kissing me, too?

DANIEL
Nah.

He throws his arm around her.

DANIEL
If you were turned into a fish I'd learn how to breathe under water.

EXT. KARTWHEELS GO KART TRACK. PARKING LOT. DAY

Standing outside Daniel's Datsun, shotgunning can's of Busch. Beer foam dribbles down their chins. Daniel gags and spits.

She can't hold her laughter and the beer erupts from her mouth and nose.

INT. KARTWHEELS. MOMENTS LATER

It's the Chuckie Cheese of Cape Cod. Batting cages. Mini golf. Ice cream stands and--

Go Carts! Daniel in one cart, McKayla in the other. She revs her engine, he responds. Go! Their cars peel out and begin whipping around the track, laughing so hard they can't breathe.

DANIEL (V.O)
We were both wandering souls, lost and drifting about in a random world.

She loses control of her cart and they SLAM HEAD FIRST into each other.

DANIEL (V.O)
And for whatever reason we had collided.

INT. DANIEL'S DATSUN--MOVING. EVENING

They sing along with a song on the radio. The parking lot for Lucy's 24 hour diner is approaching on the right.

DANIEL (V.O)
But of all the girls in the world I *could* have fallen in love with I fell for the only one that I couldn't.

Daniel spots Hunter's CAMARO parked in the lot and....vroom, keeps driving...

McKayla looks out at the passing diner. Confused.

MCKAYLA
Thought you wanted pancakes.

DANIEL
Chinese sounds better.

Odd. He goes back to singing, trying his best not to show the sweat. After a moment she's over it and back to singing.

DANIEL (V.O)
And I wasn't the only one venturing onto dangerous grounds.

INT. LUCY'S 24 HOUR DINER. SAME

Hunter sits alone in a booth, smoking a cigarette while sipping a milk shake.

He doesn't see Daniel's CAR passing out the WINDOW because his eyes are currently stuck on a table of TEENAGE GIRLS.

And although her back is turned, one in particular has him rapt in adoration. Her pony tail. Her scrunchie. The little blond hairs that run down the nape of her neck...

Her name is AMY (15). She's a blonde haired blue-eyed angel--so traditional she makes American pie insecure.

GIRLS TABLE:

They share a huge plate of FRENCH FRIES.

FRIEND #1
Oh my Gosh. Amy, he's like, so staring at you.

AMY
Stop.

FRIEND # 2
He's such a fox.

FRIEND #1
Ew. More like a retarded grease monkey.

FRIEND # 2
Whatever. I'd let him take a bite...

FRIEND #1
Yuck.

FRIEND # 3
Oh no. Oh no, he's coming over.

Amy turns her head to find Hunter approaching. A thumb hooked in his belt loop, he braces a forearm against the coat rack and leans in.

HUNTER
Hey.

AMY
I have a boyfriend.

Hunter smiles.

HUNTER
Nah, you don't. But if you don't quit being so friggin' cute you will soon.

The girls blush as if he's talking directly to them. Amy dips a french fry in KETCHUP and pops into her mouth, doing her best to remain impervious.

AMY
You don't know the first thing about me.

HUNTER
I know you like ketchup.

An involuntary grin slips across Amy's mouth. Hunter smiles.

EXT. CARNIVAL. NIGHT

Ferris wheel lights and the smell of candied popcorn. A magical evening. Hunter and Amy walk hand in hand.

DANIEL (V.O)
He was the town's black eye and she was pure as the driven snow but as fate would have it they had found each other.

LATER

Hunter sits in a dunking booth. Amy winds up and strikes the target--he plunges into the water. Soaking wet, he climbs out and bear hugs her. She screams.

DANIEL (V.O)
They had been going to the same school since the first grade but he had never noticed her.

LATER

They strike various poses in a PHOTO BOOTH. The flash bulb POPS.

DANIEL (V.O)
Maybe he had readjusted his priorities. Maybe it was her timely growth spurt. Maybe she was just tired of playing by the rules.

LATER

They make out at the top of the FERRIS-WHEEL.

DANIEL (V.O)
Whatever it was, the girl who had once been invisible was now at the center of Hunter's universe.

HUNTER'S CAMARO--LATER

Back lit by a low hanging MOON as it races down a coastal road.

Amy sits perched atop the HEAD REST, eyes closed and arms flanked to the side for balance as the wind whips through her hair.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Hunter and I were just two kids, foolishly and helplessly in love.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK. ROLLERCOASTER. DAY

Daniel and McKayla's car climbs towards its apex. They squirm with anticipation.

At the peak there is a moment of overwhelming calm. They look into eachother's eyes and hold the gaze--laughing as the rollercoaster catapults back down to earth.

DANIEL (V.O)
Being around her left me dizzy. Weak. Weightless.

EXT. MINI GOLD COURSE. NIGHT

Daniel stands behind McKalya, arms wrapped around her shoulders, teaching her how to putt.

LATER

They make out behind the WATER FALL on the 7th hole.

DANIEL (V.O)
It was the little things--the imperfections that made her so perfect. Like her pigeon toes or the soft patch of peach fuzz under her bottom lip.

EXT. MCKAYLA'S HOUSE. ROAD. NIGHT

Daniel's car comes to a stop same place it did last time--<u>100 yards short of the house.</u>

DANIEL
Why can't I get any closer?

MCKAYLA
You don't want to.

DANIEL
Why not?

MCKAYLA
Just trust me. Please.

She hops out, provocatively strutting away in the SPOTLIGHT of the cars' headlamps.

DANIEL (V.O)
Other imperfections were less visible.

INT. MCKAYLA'S HOUSE. NIGHT

She enters her bleak and lifeless home. The house is completely dark save for the overly loud TV which pumps out some tacky game show.

Her FATHER sits on the sofa. His back is turned but the glow from the TV silhouettes his figure. A few cans of cheap domestic beer sit next to an over flowing ash tray.

Without turning around, he GRUNTS. McKayla pauses.

FATHER
(slightly slurring)
Where've ya been?

MCKAYLA
Out.

She waits awhile for him to say more, but that was it.

ROOM

She shakes a few pellets of food into Oliver's FISH BOWL which sits on bureau next to a FRAMED PICTURE of a WOMAN. The woman has McKayla's eyes. Her smile.

MCKAYLA
(to picture)
I think you would've liked him.

She flops onto her bed and stares up at the glow in the dark stickers on her ceiling and smiles...something she hasn't done in a very long time.

EXT. SAND DUNES. NIGHT

They walk through a narrow path in the dunes that leads down to a secluded stretch of beach.

DANIEL (V.O)
There are few things as powerful as first love. Or as scary.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT

Waves gently ease ashore. A sensationally clear evening. They lay on their backs, staring up at the twinkling stars.

DANIEL (V.O)
It's the punch to the gut kind of feeling you only get to experience once in life;
(MORE)

DANIEL (V.O) (CONT'D)
and I would wake up afraid every morning that it had all been just a dream.

They look at each other.

DANIEL (V.O)
And if there really was such thing as ‘forever’ I wanted to live in it with her.

LATER

Hand in hand they sprint into the water while screaming at the top of their lungs.

DANIEL (V.O)
But as awesome and earth shattering as that feeling was I had found something that made me feel just as good.

INT. HUNTER’S HOUSE. BASEMENT. DAY

PAN across a table holding stack after stack of hard CASH.

DANIEL
I got Waltham. Half of Cambridge. My cousin out in Quincy. My guy out in Natick. Amherst. If Lawrence comes through that’s...

HUNTER
Thirty-five pounds a week.

HUNTER
Holy shit.

DANIEL
Holy shit.

DANIEL
What are you at?

Hunter’s excitement quickly softens, realizing what he has to say next...

HUNTER
(flat)
Fifteen.

An awkward silence. Neither boy knows what to say.

DANIEL
We’re killin’ it, dude.

HUNTER
Yeah...

DANIEL (V.O)
For the first time in my life I was good at something.

INT. AUNT BARB'S HOUSE. DANIEL'S ROOM. DAY

He stuffs cash into an empty CEREAL BOX and carries it to his closet. He opens the door, the small closet is packed to the gills--floor to ceiling with bulging cereal boxes. No room.

There's a knock, Aunt Barb sticks her head in the room-- Daniel freezes.

AUNT BARB
McKayla's on the phone.

DANIEL
I'll call her back.

AUNT BARB
Second time she's called.

DANIEL
I said I'll call her back.

EXT. AUNT BARB'S HOUSE. UNDERNEATH DECK. MOMENT'S LATER

On his back, in the cobb-webbed crawl space under the deck, Daniel duct tapes the cereal box to the wood paneling above.

DANIEL (V.O)
Really good.

EXT. CHEVY AUTO DEALERSHIP. DAY

Hunter and Daniel stand before a brand new '91 CHEVY CORVETTE. A 'SOLD' sticker stuck proudly on the windshield.

HUNTER
What are you gonna tell your mom?

DANIEL
(coolly)
Oops. Didn't think of that.

Hunter chuckles. Daniel joins him.

DANIEL (V.O)
Really, really good.

LATER

The car speeds out of the lot. Tires smoke and belch.

MONTAGE

HUNTER'S BASEMENT

Hunter stuffs several shrink wrapped brick sized parcels of marijuana into a duffle bag. Daniel takes the bag.

EMPTY PARKING LOT

Daniel hands the duffle bag to DEALER #1. Dealer #1 hands him a bulging brown paper bag.

SHOPPING MALL

Daniel hands a duffle bag to DEALER #2. Dealer #2 slips him a fat manila envelope.

HIGHWAY REST STOP

Daniel hands a duffle bag to his cousin Taylor. Taylor tosses Daniel a back pack.

TAYLOR
It wasn't enough.

DANIEL
What?

TAYLOR
I need more. Like, a whole fucking lot more.

HUNTER'S BACK DECK--NIGHT

POP!

Champagne spews into the air. Hunter douses a swarm of wild partying teenagers.

OCEAN

Daniel and Hunter race SKI-DO's along the coast. They hoot and holler and laugh uncontrollably.

DANIEL (V.O.)
And it was around this time that we both realized that life as it once was didn't always have to be.

INT. HUNTER'S CAMARO- STREET INTERSECTION. NIGHT

Hunter's making Amy laugh as they wait at a RED LIGHT when a CAR full of DRUNKEN COLLEGE BOYS pulls up next to them.

They begin to whistle at Amy. One of them flicks his tongue at her. The light turns GREEN and the car speeds out--kicking up exhaust and cutting Hunter off.

Hunter's jaw clenches tight. He JAMS the stick shift into gear--about to punch the gas when Amy puts her hand on top of his.

Their eyes meet. Her gaze is soft and sweet and for the first time in Hunter's life he decides to let it slide.

EXT. THE LOBSTER POT SEA FOOD SHACK. DAY

It's one of those outdoor shack's who's walls are decorated with fishing nets and lobster buoys. The kind that serves food on paper plates that you can smell from a mile out.

CLOSE ON a basket of bright red steaming hot CRABS as they're carried by a WAITRESS over to Daniel and Hunter.

She places the basket down next to a heaping mound of discarded crab shells and legs.

DANIEL
I thought no pair of tits were worth the trouble.

HUNTER
Neither did I but--I dunno, she's funny as hell, she has a righteous ass--her hair always smells killer. God damn! She's just so fuckin...-- I can't explain it. It's just one of those things, you know?

Daniel shrugs, picks at a crab leg. No eye contact.

DANIEL
Can't say I do.

Hunter holds his eyes on Daniel for just a beat too long. He finds something about Daniel's behavior just a tad peculiar.

HUNTER
I swear you and Amy are like the only people in my life who take me for what I am. You get me, you know?

DANIEL
Yeah.

Hunter's eye contact is severe. *Does he know something?*

HUNTER
That's all I ask. Don't lie to me and don't play me for a fool and we're all good. 'Don't see why so many people have a problem with that.

DANIEL
(looking down)
Yeah...

There's a long, uneasy pause. All that can be heard is sea breeze and cracking shellfish.

HUNTER
You hear about the fireworks?

Daniel nearly chokes.

DANIEL
What?

HUNTER
Word is some summer bird walked up to my baby sister at the fireworks and kissed her on the mouth.

The hair on Daniel's neck stands. He clears his throat.

DANIEL
Really?

HUNTER
Right in front of her pussy boyfriend. Crazy, right?

DANIEL
Yeah...
(then)
Why do you let her go out with that guy anyway?

There's a pause. Hunter shrugs then delivers the next line with a sense of hopelessness.

HUNTER
You know what happens to someone like me if I touch someone like him?

Daniel considers this.

HUNTER
(re: the crabs)
Common we gotta ways to go. Time to man up.

Hunter smiles and cracks open a claw. Daniel follows suit.

DANIEL (V.O)
We ate 36 pounds of crab that day and shattered the record which had been in place since 1972.

LATER

The MANAGER of the sea-food shack holds up the boys' arms by the wrist like a referee would the winning boxer of a fight.

They both look queasy, about to burst, but manage to smile as-

--SNAP the waitress takes a PHOTO.

The photo is tacked to the WALL under "CHAMPIONS".

DANIEL (V.O)
He was the best friend I ever had. Hell, he was the *only* friend I'd ever had.

PUSH IN on the photo and their smiling faces.

DANIEL (V.O)
And it was crushing me.

EXT. DRIVE-IN DINER. DUSK

Daniel's new CORVETTE is parked at the far end of the lot. Weed SMOKE curls up from the widows.

A recent storm has cleared, leaving the sky looking like a plate of melted plum sherbert. Crickets summon the looming twilight.

INT. DANIEL'S CORVETTE. DRIVE-IN DINER. SAME

They share a banana split. Extra whip cream.

MCKAYLA
I wish I had a grandma that bought me Corvettes for graduation.

DANIEL
Yeah, she's a pretty cool for an old lady.

MCKAYLA
She give you that lame-o haircut, too?

Daniel self-consciously runs a hand through his hair. We'll notice it's been cut in strikingly similar fashion to Hunter's.

DANIEL
(playfully nudges her)
Shut up.

She giggles. Then there's a comfortable, thoughtful silence.

MCKAYLA
I love how it gets after a storm. The air's so light. I feel like I could float.
(beat)
Maybe I'm just really stoned.

They giggle.

DANIEL
I could get more. A bunch more.

Her smile fades, the comment clearly made her uncomfortable.

DANIEL
What?

She dismisses it with a shake of her head.

DANIEL
No, tell me. What is it?

MCKAYLA
Just reminds me of someone I used to know.

DANIEL
Who?

A beat.

MCKAYLA
My brother.

Daniel's intrigue grows. He racks his brain for a follow up question.

DANIEL
You said 'used to know'?

MCKAYLA
I don't talk to him anymore. Haven't in a long time.

More silence.

MCKAYLA
You wanna ask what happened, don't you?

DANIEL
Yeah. But I won't.

She draws in a breath. Opening up isn't easy for her.

MCKAYLA
It was when my mom was really sick. She kept getting worse. And my brother, he was getting in trouble...selling drugs... Got kicked out of school and everything. My mom asked him to stop. Told him it'd mean the world to her if he did.
(beat)
But he didn't.
(beat)
And then she died.

Her eyes water. Daniel's eyes drop. She composes herself.

MCKAYLA
He still comes by sometimes.

FLASHBACK. EXT. MCKAYLA'S STREET. NIGHT

Pitch black save for a set of RED BREAK LIGHTS several hundred feet before us. The car idles alongside a mailbox.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
He leaves money. I know where it comes from...

The SHADOWY FIGURE places a bulky ENVELOPE in the mailbox then drives away, steam whirls from the exhaust pipe.

After the car is a safe distance, McKayla emerges onto the road. She stares longingly at the car lights as they fade into the night.

FLASHBACK. INT. MCKAYLA'S BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER

Balancing on her tip-toes atop a chair, she lifts a ceiling panel and slides the ENVELOPE up into the ATTIC.

ATTIC

From up here we see the DOZENS of ENVELOPES that have accumulated over time.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
I can’t use it. I just can’t.

BACK TO SCENE

DANIEL
I’m sorry.

MCKAYLA
(shrugs)
It is what it is.

They’re talking about two different things.

The conversation has darkened and they both feel it. She quickly lightens the mood by flicking a spoonful of whip cream onto his face. He flicks some back. They both laugh.

A WAITRESS skates up to the car window, CHECK in hand.

WAITRESS
So, how will you be settling the bill tonight?

Daniel opens his wallet, careful to hide the wad of dirty drug money within. He takes out a $5, and hands it over--at this point he’s completely crushed by the guilt.

DANIEL
Cash.

EXT. SPRAWLING OPEN MEADOW. LATE AFTERNOON

Half eaten deli sandwiches and cans of Cola strewn across a blanket.

Daniel and Mckayla lie on their backs under a willow tree. They stare up at dark THUNDERCLOUDS which threaten to break open.

DANIEL
If I could be anything? Oh, I dunno..Mick Jagger maybe.

MCKAYLA
You’d need lip injections first.

DANIEL
True.

MCKAYLA
What else?

DANIEL
(after a thoughtful pause)
My dad.
(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(beat)
Yeah. I'd be like my dad.

There's a lull where both teenagers reflect on their respective fathers. Good, bad or otherwise.

MCKAYLA
Deep.

DANIEL
I guess.
(beat)
What about you?

She shrugs as if she's concealing something.

MCKAYLA
I dunno.

DANIEL
Common, what is it?

MCKAYLA
It's stupid.

DANIEL
I promise I won't laugh.

McKayla takes a beat to decide if she trusts him.

MCKAYLA
A writer. Like poetry and stuff.

DANIEL
What?

MCKAYLA
Fuck you.

DANIEL
No, it's just...I thought you hated reading.

MCKAYLA
That's because I always hate the writing.

Daniel smiles, point taken. She takes the smile as mockery, gets embarrassed and quickly turns defensive.

MCKAYLA
Whatever, this game's dumb. I'm pretty sure I know how my story ends.

The comment throws him--Daniel sits up.

DANIEL
What’re you talking about?

MCKAYLA
I’ve never left before.

DANIEL
Left what?

MCKAYLA
This stupid fucking island. If it wasn’t for TV I couldn’t tell you what the world looked like on the other side of that bridge.

DANIEL
So?

MCKAYLA
So look around. Look where I’m from. People come into this town for the summer and then they leave and the ones who stay...well they don’t go anywhere. If you’re smart--or lucky--you hitch a ride out with one of those summer birds.

DANIEL
How could you say that? Don’t say that.

Daniel pulls her by the arm so she sits up. He looks her square in the eye.

DANIEL
Look at me. If you want to be a writer than that’s what you’ll be. I promise.
(smiles)
So you can go ahead and rewrite that sad ending of yours.

She smiles back. Transpierced.

A flash of LIGHTNING scatters across the sky. Thunder BOOMS. Mackayla screams. Daniel jumps to his feet and takes her by the hand.

Rain breaks from the sky. They dash through the meadow, hand in hand, shrieking and laughing hysterically.

They reach his car, frantically pull open the doors and crawl inside.

CORVETTE

The downpour, severe. The car, quiet. Only sound comes from the rain beating on the roof and their panting breath.

They start kissing. Tender at first but with building intensity. Wet clothes peel off wet skin. Windows fog.

DING... DING... DING... HAIL STONES pummel the roof, the hood, the windshield. Rapid. Violent. Ecstacy to the ears.

DANIEL (V.O)
She smelled like Marlbolo Light's and vanilla lotion.

DANIEL
I, um...I've never...before...

MCKAYLA
Me neither.

He didn't see that coming. LIGHTNING cracks--illuminating the goosebumps rippling across their skin.

She pulls back--

MCKAYLA
I mean...I've never *wanted* to...before...

Her vulnerability washes over him. His jaw slackens. She pulls him on top of her.

DANIEL (V.O)
But there were problems to come. One of which just so happened to be unfolding across town that very evening.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER. NIGHT

It's the same theater where Daniel and McKayla met.

Terminator II is on the screen and Hunter and Amy share a box of candy as they watch from his convertible.

CRACK!

A gigantic flash of LIGHTNING radiates across the sky. Everyone screams. Rain pours down into Hunter's car.

He cuts on the engine and slams on the gas.

EXT. AMY'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Hunter's Camaro is parked a few driveways down. The rain is still coming but the top's up. They make out feverishly.

HUNTER
(playfully fighting her off)
You gotta go.

AMY
No.

She kisses him again.

HUNTER
I don't want you gettin' in trouble, c'mon.

AMY
Okay, okay.

She opens the door.

HUNTER
Wait.

He grabs her arm, pulls her back and they kiss again.

HUNTER
Okay.

She begins to leave then turns back and kisses him.

HUNTER
Call ya when I get home.

AMY
You can't, remember?

He punches the steering wheel.

HUNTER
God, this is so stupid.

AMY
I know. How long's it take you to get home?

HUNTER
(shrugs)
Like fifteen.

AMY
'Kay. I'll call you in sixteen.

They kiss once more and she hops out of the car and into the storm.

INT. SHERIFF CALHOUN'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Calhoun and his WIFE sit on the couch watching T.V. Out the window Calhoun sees Hunter's CAMARO whip down the street.

Calhoun has a thought. A troubling one. He gets up from the sofa.

OUTSIDE

Amy dashes across her lawn. Through the hail. Past an old tire swing.

INSIDE

Calhoun stalks down the hall way. Past family portraits.

OUTSIDE

Amy scales the vine fence onto the roof of the garage. Opens her window.

INSIDE

Calhoun ascends the stairs, opens Amy's door to find--

AMY'S BEDROOM

--her laying in bed, in her pajamas, towel wrapped around her head to conceal wet hair. She's reading SEVENTEEN MAGAZINE.

AMY
Hey, Daddy.

He squints, shooting her a dubious glare.

AMY
Hearing things again?

CALHOUN
You been up here the whole night?

AMY
Where else would I be?

After a beat his glare softens.

CALHOUN
You should turn in soon. We have church in the morning.

AMY
Okay, Daddy.

CALHOUN
G'night, sweetheart.

AMY
G'night.

He closes the door, she rolls onto her back, smirking blissfully towards the heavens. *Ah, young love.*

HALLWAY

Calhoun turns away. He's no fool and after twenty years of police work he's developed a sixth sense for bullshit.

PUSH IN on his dark, smoldering eyes.

DANIEL (V.O)
And as they say, trouble comes in bunches.

INT. ARCADE. NIGHT

It's a dark room with a sticky floor and the unmistakable stench of bubble gum and body odor. Daniel and McKayla play STREET FIGHTER II.

DANIEL
Wow. I'm kicking your ass. I thought you said you were good.

MCKAYLA
Shut up. You put codes in.

DANIEL
Did not.

She slaps the joy stick out of his hand. They both start LAUGHING.

DANIEL
You dirty cheater.

He puts the final touches on her fighter--knocking him out. The 20 second TICKER begins to count down to game over.

DANIEL
Go get more coins. Hurry!

She sprints around the corner leaving Daniel alone.

HUNTER (O.S.)
Danny boy!

Daniel spins to find Hunter and Amy, arm in arm, walking into the arcade. His eyes begin an immediate and frantic search for McKayla. She's nowhere to be found.

HUNTER
What are ya doin' here?

DANIEL
I'm just...what are *you* doing here?
(indicating Amy)
Is this, uh..

HUNTER
Danny, Amy, Amy, Danny.

AMY
Hi.

Daniel offers a back a weak smile.

HUNTER
(pinches Amy's chin)
Cute, isn't she?

Just then, McKayla rounds the corner and the oxygen is sucked from the room. She stops in her tracks.

She and Hunter exchange the uncomfortable glare that exists only between those with a fragile and complicated history.

HUNTER
What is this?

MCKAYLA
What is what?

At this point Daniel's brain has ceased to operate but McKayla poise is unrattled. She's yet to look Daniel's way.

HUNTER
You know each other?

McKayla looks slowly over at Daniel as if seeing him for the first time. Her eyes searching for recognition....

He stares back, not able to figure her out.

MCKAYLA
Mmmmm. Nope. Sorry have we met?

Daniel gently shakes his head, no. Mckayla turns her attention back to Hunter and shrugs, remaining both wary and defiant. Hunter squints.

HUNTER
Since when do you go to the arcade?

MCKAYLA
I don't. Okie was supposed to pick me up from the mall at six but never showed and I needed quarters to call her.

She rattles the QUARTERS in her palm. It’s terrifying just how convincing she is.

Poor Amy hasn’t said a word but the unnerving tension has left her anxiously twisting her french braid.

Hunter trades glances between Daniel and his sister and decides he’ll take her at her word.

HUNTER
How’s dad?

MCKAYLA
(shrugs)
He’s dad.

HUNTER
You been getting the mail?

McKayla shoots a self conscious glance at Daniel before gently nodding her head.

HUNTER
Good.

More heavy silence filled only by the arcade’s ambient sound.

HUNTER
Well, at least let me give you a lift home.

MCKAYLA
I’ll walk.

The level of tension reaches it’s pinnacle here as Daniel and Amy helplessly watch the heavyweight stare down.

After a beat McKayla brushes past Hunter on her way out of the arcade. As she exits she turns back around to Daniel...

MCKAYLA
Nice meeting you.

With that she’s gone, leaving Daniel, Hunter and Amy shell shocked on the arcade floor.

INT. DANIEL’S CORVETTE--MOVING. DUSK

Up ahead he sees McKayla walking alone on the side of the road. He slows and pulls up alongside her. She climbs in.

DANIEL
Why’d you do that back there?

There’s a long pause...

When she finally speaks her voice is nothing more than a hollow whisper but it's filled with worry.

MCKAYLA
How do you know my brother?

DANIEL
I don't really. Met him at a party once.

She goes quiet. Unsure if she believes him.

MCKAYLA
You know what he does?

DANIEL
No.

MCKAYLA
You know anything about him?

DANIEL
No, not really.

MCKAYLA
If you did you'd understand why I had to do that.

There's a very long and very uncomfortable silence in which each simply listens to the other's breath.

She SIGHS heavily, shakes her head, then says...

MCKAYLA
He's gonna kill you.

INT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. GARAGE. DAY.

Daniel enters hastily through the side door.

DANIEL
(hurried)
Is it packed up, 'cus I gotta--

He notices Hunter sitting on a work bench, his hands curled into fists. A perturbed scowl on his face.

DANIEL
...hit the road...

Daniel slows, then proceeds with caution.

DANIEL
You alright, man?

No response from Hunter. His eyes fixed on a HAMMER resting on the shelf. Then, finally, through gritted teeth:

HUNTER
Like she don't even know me.

He stands. Daniel's worried eye's follow him. Wary.

HUNTER
After all I've done for her. She looks at me like she don't even know who I am.
(he turns; locks eyes)
You know what that *feels* like?

Daniel swallows, shakes his head, no. There's a pause...

Then Hunter lets go a wretched primal SCREAM and PUNCHES a hole clear through the wall. Chunks of dry-wall crumble onto the ground. Daniel flinches. Never taking his eyes away.

HUNTER
It's getting dark.

And with that Hunter leaves the garage.

INT/EXT. DANIEL'S CORVETTE--MOVING--LAWRENCE STREETS. DUSK

Lawrence is an old mill town whose best years are two generations in the rearview and Daniel's shiny car and fair complexion are at odds with his surroundings.

He pops TWO CAFFEINE PILLS into his mouth and we notice the dark rings growing underneath his eyes.

He pulls outside a track of ROW HOMES.

DANIEL (V.O)
It was the last drop of the day. I hated going there but at ten pounds a week the ends justified the means.

Resting on the passenger seat is a BLACK DUFFLE BAG. He grabs the bag, but right before he opens the car door something snags his attention.

Parked on a perpendicular street is what appears to be an unmarked police cruiser. CROWN VIC. Tinted windows.

Daniel pauses. His eyes move between the Crown Vic and the ROW HOME. *A stake out? An ambush? Worse?*

Decision made. He starts the engine up and casually drives away. At the stop sign he nonchalantly glances at the Crown Vic then turns right, in the opposite direction.

HEADLIGHTS on the Crown Vic flicker on and it pulls out behind him.

DANIEL
Motherf....

Daniel turns onto a busier road. The crown vic follows. Calm and steady, two mph under the speed limit to be safe.

Ahead lies a MCDONALD'S. Daniel pulls into the parking lot and parks. The Crown Vic follows, parking at the lot's far end.

Daniel grabs the duffle bag, exits the car and marches evenly, head down, into the restaurant.

INSIDE

His pace quickens, fear betraying him. He knocks a customer out of the way, shoving open the BATHROOM DOOR.

BATHROOM

Kicks open a stall. From the duffle bag he pulls out a brick of marijuana, shrink wrapped in plastic. In a mad frenzy now, frantically trying to rip it open--fingers aren't strong enough--no nails.

DANIEL
Fuck!

He tears at it violently with his TEETH.

The bag finally gives and he dumps the contents into the toilet. Followed by another. Then another. And another.

DANIEL (V.O)
I flushed ten pounds or twelve thousand dollars worth of pot down that toilet.

MAIN RESTURANT--LATER

Daniel emerges from the bathroom looking worn. Empty duffle bag dangling limply from one hand. He approaches the front door, pauses and takes a deep breath. Ready to be tackled, pepper-sprayed--the whole nine.

He pushes the doors open and emerges into the--

PARKING LOT

Braces for impact...but nothing happens.

The Crown Vic is gone. He looks to his right, nothing. To his left, nothing. A sickening wave of dread crashes over him.

DANIEL (V.O)
And as Sheriff Calhoun had warned, the world felt like it was folding in.

EXT. STRIP MALL. PARKING LOT. DAY

Daniel and Hunter wait on the curb outside a hole in the wall Chinese restaurant. Daniel runs his fingers along his scalp, a pile of smoldering cigarette butts sit at Hunter's feet.

HUNTER
It *looked* like a cop or it *was* a cop?

DANIEL
I don't know.

HUNTER
What do you mean you don't know?

DANIEL
I don't know! I don't fuckin know, okay! How many times do I have to explain this to you?

HUNTER
I'm not the one you should be worried about explaining it to.

A grim silence. Neither boy can stand to look at the other.

HUNTER
You have the cash to cover it?

Daniel looks down, remains quiet.

HUNTER
You just had to get that fucking car, didn't you.

Just then Dex's Black Van pulls into the parking lot.

HUNTER
Let me do the talking.

The Van pulls dangerously close to them. Window rolls down.

HUNTER
Listen, this whole thing--

DEX
Shut your mouth.

Hunter goes quiet. Grits his teeth.

DEX
He wants to talk.

DANIEL
Who?

DEX
You know who.

A cold sweat breaks from Daniel's brow as this realization lands.

DANIEL
(to Hunter)
Okay...well I'm sure we can expl--

DEX
To you. Just you. Alone.

DANIEL
What?!

DEX
Be here tomorrow. Same time. I'll take you up.

DANIEL
Wait! Wait a second. Take me up where?

Dex nods as if to say "you know where".

DANIEL
In person? Why does he need to see me in person?

Dex rolls up the Van window.

DANIEL
Hey! Why does he need to see me in person? What does he want?!

Dex glares at Daniel. Deep. Piercing. The steely and macabre glare reserved for assassins and war generals.

Daniel opens his mouth to respond but can't find the words. The Van screeches out, kicking dust into his face.

He looks at Hunter, desperate for some sort of calming reassurance.

HUNTER
You fucked it up. Now handle it.

Daniel pitches forward and VOMITS onto his shoes.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT

Bonfire on the beach. Steph, Okie and several other TEENAGERS laugh and drink around a boom box. Off to the side, just out of the flame's glow, sit Daniel and McKayla.

His worried eyes watch the fire. She looks at him, concerned.

MCKAYLA
Is there something you wanna tell me?

He shakes from his trance and lays his head down in her lap. He wants to tell her everything...

DANIEL
No.

MCKAYLA
You swear?

Fire crackles. Waves crash. Laughter in the distance.

DANIEL
I swear.

DANIEL (V.O.)
I remember thinking it could be the last time I ever saw her.

INT. DANIEL'S BED ROOM. NIGHT

He lays in bed. Wide awake. Tears flow down his cheeks.

DANIEL (V.O)
And for some reason, that night the grief from my father's death came crashing down and I cried harder than I ever had before.

TIME LAPSE: The moon falls, the sun rises and the tide of the dawn's light passes over his face. He hasn't slept a wink.

Alarm clock buzzes. Daniel slowly swings his legs out of bed.

INT. DEX'S BLACK VAN. DAY

Nobody speaks. From the back seat, Daniel watches as suburbia fades into countryside. Houses become barns. Lawns become fields. Cars into tractors and stores into corn stands.

An 'ENTERING NEW YORK' sign. But this isn't the New York we're used to. This is farm country.

LATER

The Van trudges down a painfully long dirt road at the end of which sits a lowly FARM HOUSE. It's quaint and homey--an antique from simpler times, but despite it's rustic charm a malevolent aura lurks.

On the PORCH sits a MAN (50's) swaying in a rocking chair.

Caught somewhere between a roughneck and an economics professor who's lost his way in life; he has a cerebral mind tucked under the rugged guise of a Sam Peckinpah protagonist.

He wears Chuck Taylors and has the sleeves of his Henley rolled just high enough to let the forearm tattoos breathe.

We'll never learn his name so for now BOSS MAN will have to do.

INSIDE THE VAN

Dex cranes his head towards the back seat to address Daniel.

DEX
He's going to ask you some questions. If you lie he'll be able to tell. If you don't know what the answer is don't bullshit, just say "I don't know how to answer that". Got it?

DANIEL
What's his name?

Dex looks at the Driver then back at Daniel.

DEX
Mind your fucking business. That's his name.

MOMENTS LATER

Daniel exits the Van and walks up the porch steps. Boss Man drinks him in through opaque eyes.

PORCH

BOSS MAN
Sit.

Daniel takes a seat on a wicker chair. Boss Man stares at him. Daniel tries to stare back but his eyes can't hold.

BOSS MAN
You have some sort of idea what you're doing here?

Daniel opens his mouth to answer.

BOSS MAN
No, you don't. You don't have the slightest cocksucking clue.

Boss Man pours himself a glass of ICE TEA from a nearby pitcher.

BOSS MAN
You know what it is that I do?

Again Daniel opens his mouth to answer.

BOSS MAN
No, you don't. Nobody does and it's why I'm still here.
(admires the glass of tea)
Drinking this lemony tea...

He hands the glass to Daniel.

BOSS MAN
Here. I made it myself.

Weary hands take the glass. Daniel studies it. The beading condensation. The floating lemon wedge. He takes a sip.

Winces. Had to have been bitter.

BOSS MAN
How is it?

Daniel swallows.

DANIEL
I don't know how to answer that.

Boss Man smiles. He likes him.

BOSS MAN
Let's take a walk.

PUMPKIN ORCHARD

They stroll through a secluded edge of the farm. Late day sunlight bleeds through the trees.

BOSS MAN
What you did out there in Lawrence was the right thing to do.

Boss Man approaches a nearby tractor and casually lifts a PUMP ACTION REMINGTON 870 off the seat. He cocks it. The blood leaves Daniel's face.

BOSS MAN
The ten pounds...
(shrugs)
(MORE)

BOSS MAN (CONT'D)
Cost of doing business. I can live without them. What I can't live with is you getting caught.

BANG! Boss Man blasts a PUMPKIN to smithereens.

Daniel flinches.

BOSS MAN
That, I can't live with.

Daniel looks around for Dex, the Van, anything, but he's all alone.

BOSS MAN
It's not for just anyone, this...line of work. Takes a certain kind of grit. A certain tenacity. Seems like you might just got it, would you agree?

DANIEL
Yessir. I think so.

BOSS MAN
You tell me right now that you want out and I'll think no less of you. But if you agree to be part of this then you'll be part of this. You understand?

Daniel nods.

BOSS MAN
So what's it going to be?

DANIEL
I want to be part of it.

Boss Man nods. Cocks the shotgun.

BOSS MAN
Good.

BANG. Another pumpkin. Another flinch.

BOSS MAN
The young man who's head was caved in down in Alston--he's been looking for you.

DANIEL
That wasn't--how'd you even...

BOSS MAN
Sooner or later he’s going to find you and he’s going to return the favor. Unless of course I see that he doesn’t. Would you like me to stop him?

DANIEL
How, uh...how do you stop--

BOSS MAN
It’s a simple question, son. Would you like me to stop him or not?

Daniel swallows.

DANIEL
Okay.

BOSS MAN
Very good. One last thing...

BANG. Another pumpkin. Another flinch.

BOSS MAN
That partner of yours...

DANIEL
Yes?

BOSS MAN
Get rid of him.

DANIEL
Get rid of him? Why?

BOSS MAN
You’re bringing in a considerable amount more than him, am I wrong?

Daniel considers. It’s true.

BOSS MAN
More than twice as much if I have my numbers right. If it wasn’t for you he’d still be slinging ten dollar bags to tourists. All you’ve gotten out of him is a target on your head.

DANIEL
I don’t know, sir... he’s...

BOSS MAN
A friend of yours?

DANIEL
Yeah. A good friend.

BOSS MAN
I had a friend once, too. I don't need to tell you what happened.

Boss Man stops walking, turns to Daniel and places a hand on his shoulder. Looks him square in the eye.

BOSS MAN
You gotta ask yourself...when the day comes that your life plays out before your eyes will you be proud of what you see?

On Daniel, deciding...

INT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. GARAGE. DAY

Hunter lays on a CREEPER which is rolled UNDERNEATH the body of his CAMARO. Daniel stands by his feet.

HENDRIX blares from a nearby stereo.

DANIEL
(straining over music)
So it's cool because you won't have to worry about anything anymore.

No response.

DANIEL
(louder)
I'll deal with all the heavy lifting and you're like the big boss behind the scenes.

Still no response. Daniel turns down the volume on the stereo.

DANIEL
Less customers, less risk, just like you wanted.

HUNTER
You mean just like *you* wanted.

A pang of guilt knocks Daniel's eyes to the floor. There's a stiff silence as Daniel racks his brain for something to say.

HUNTER
Hand me the toolbox on the shelf.

Daniel sighs, agitated with the direction of the conversation. He scans the utility shelves behind him for the tool box.

Once spotted, he goes to grab it but something else catches his eye...

Next to the tool box is a RAG which is draped over a PISTOL--the handle sticks out plainly. Almost blatantly.

Troubled eyes rest on the pistol for a moment, then Daniel pulls down the tool box and slides it to Hunter.

DANIEL
You're not going anywhere, man. We're still partners. It'll just be a little different.

Silence.

DANIEL
Hunt, what do ya say?

After a few moments...

DANIEL
Hunter?

HUNTER
Turn the music back up, would ya?

Daniel cringes. Sick inside.... BEEP. BEEP. Daniel looks down at his hip. His Beeper is going off.

He checks it, then turns the volume back up on the stereo and walks out of the garage.

Once alone, Hunter wheels out from under the car. There's a reason he was hidden under there--his face is a twisted knot of worry.

His eyes move towards the BEEPER on his hip. <u>The screen reads: 0 NEW MESSAGES.</u> He chucks it into a wall. It smashes into pieces.

INT. AUNT BARB'S HOUSE. DANIEL'S ROOM. DAY

Daniel lays on his bed, eyes on the ceiling, deep in thought.

LATER

Daniel scans through a PRINCETON REVIEW BOOK. He tallies up numbers on a piece of scrap paper.

DANIEL (V.O)
The average starting salary for a college graduate in 1991 was around 30,000 dollars. With the new deal I was clearing that in a week.

LATER

Daniel is now on the PHONE.

DANIEL (V.O)
Fifteen minutes after I did the math I called up Fitchburg State and withdrew my admission. Problem was the admin. office sent an official letter of withdrawal to my residence.

EXT. SAGAMORE BRIGE. DAY

Daniel's Corvette races across the brige towards the mainland.

DANIEL (V.O)
I drove home to Leominster every day for two weeks to intercept it.

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE. LEOMINSTER. DAY

Standing in front of the mailbox, Daniel sifts through a stack of envelopes. Bills. Coupons. CC statements.

He stuffs the letter in is pocket and flips the lid closed just as--

--his Mother pulls up in her car.

MOTHER
Daniel?

She parks and quickly hops out of her car.

MOTHER
Heavens, I didn't recognize you near that race car. Who's is that?

DANIEL
Just borrowing it from a friend.

MOTHER
Must be a good friend.

There's a beat of awkward silence.

MOTHER
Well you look just great.

DANIEL
Thanks, ma.

They hug.

MOTHER
Come in, let me fix you some supper.

DANIEL
I gotta go.

MOTHER
Don't be silly. Just for a bit. I haven't seen you in...what's it been--months?

DANIEL
I really gotta run. I got a date tonight with a girl. A real one.

She smiles, bittersweet.

MOTHER
Okay...

He kisses her on the cheek and climbs into his car. She watches him back away, a sadness around her. Then she remembers something.

MOTHER
(shouting after him)
Oh! Daniel. Daniel! There's--

Daniel shouts back through a rolled down window.

DANIEL
Ma, I really can't talk right now.

MOTHER
But there's--

DANIEL
I'll call you.

He reverses out of the drive way and pulls away. She watches him to the end of the street. Tears welling in her eyes.

MOTHER
(to herself; sad)
There's a storm heading your way...

Hold on her frail body standing in the drive way.

DANIEL (V.O)
It would be the last time I ever saw her.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN. ARIEL VIEW. DAY

Silence.

A breath taking view as we soar high above the sprawling expanse of a massive hurricane. Thick clouds ripple and spiral, forming peaks and canyons that roll on forever.

Sporadic flashes of lightening down below illuminate dark pockets. From up here they are nothing more than tiny muffled purple strobes.

We fly over mile after mile of the storm, feverishly building momentum until we reach its vortex--a depression sunk in a wall of towering thunderstorms--and all goes still.

Float there, gazing down into the eye of the beast, clear and calm--the ocean surface swells thousands of feet below--the simple beauty of it is beyond words.

INT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Hunter and Amy lay asleep in his bed. The soft glow from the TV flickers against their naked bodies.

The NEWS plays on TV.

GRAINY STOCK FOOTAGE:

A WEATHER MAN indicates a storm cell out over the Atlantic.

WEATHER MAN
...right now it's about 300 miles to the east, southeast of North Carolina and moving northward. Again, it appears from the satellite indication that we have a rapidly strengthening storm system on our hands...

Amy stirs then abruptly sits up, realizing she had accidentally fallen asleep. She checks a bed side clock.

AMY
Oh my Gosh! Hunter wake up--we gotta go!

EXT. OUTSIDE AMY'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Hunter's car screeches to a stop. Amy hops out--

LAWN

--and dashes across the lawn, past the old tire swing and--

CALHOUN (O.S.)
Why are you doing this, Amy?

Amy SCREAMS--nearly leaping out of her skin. She whips around to find Calhoun sitting in a chair on the back porch.

AMY
Daddy! My gosh, you scared me.

Her comment is met by stale silence. Calhoun stares back-- eyes darkened by the shadows.

AMY
You see Sarah's new car?

Long pause. Crickets and owls.

CALHOUN
Of all the boys in this town.

She's caught. The consummate Daddy's girl-- but tonight she's love drunk and at some point even the most obedient children must defy their parents.

AMY
He's not what everyone says he is.

CALHOUN
He's no good, sweetheart, and I won't have him around you.

AMY
You don't know him, Daddy.

CALHOUN
You're not to see the boy, you understand?

AMY
You can't do that!

CALHOUN
I can, Amy. And I'm going to.

AMY
I'm in love with him and there's nothing you can do about it!

She runs into the house and SLAMS the door, leaving Calhoun standing alone in the shadows. Silently brooding.

EXT. SUMMER COTTAGE. DAY

PUSH across the lawn and towards the front door of this picturesque vacation home.

DANIEL (V.O)
Theoretically speaking everything can be traced back to the beginning of time--but for the sake of this following case a nine year old boy is as far back as we'll go.

A BOY (9) busts out of the front door wielding a BASEBALL BAT and glove. He sprints down the driveway.

DANIEL (V.O)
His name was--

His MOTHER steps out from the front door.

MOTHER
Thomas William Scott, you're to be home at six o'clock and not a minute after!

FREEZE FRAME on his gap-toothed grin.

DANIEL (V.O)
Tommy's father had made a killing on Wall Street throughout the eighty's. Up to that point The Hampton's had been their go to vacation spot, but due to the recent recession belts had to be tightened and Cape Cod became the new summer nest.

Unfreeze. Tommy bolts down the street.

LATER-- FRIEND'S BACK YARD

TOMMY and a FRIEND (9) play baseball in the friend's BACKYARD. The friend winds up and chucks a fastball, Tommy swings and connects. CRACK!

The line drive tears across the street and slams into the TAIL LIGHT of a late model Mercedes. The light SHATTERS.

For a second the boy's stand there in shock, then Tommy drops the bat and high tails it home.

LATER--DRIVEWAY

We're in the driveway with the car, staring at it's broken tail light. In the background two FIGURES exit the house and approach the car.

It’s Blake and Myles, the preppy black teenagers we met earlier.

DANIEL (V.O)
Roughly twenty minutes later, Blake and Myles Abernathy climbed into their parents car, without noticing the light, and drove it onto the mainland.

The boys get in and drive off.

INT. MARTHA’S VINYARD FERRY. DAY

Track along the parked cars in the ferry’s underbelly until we stop on the Mercedes and it’s broken tail light.

DANIEL (V.O)
A place they never go. But it just so happened to be ‘All You Can Eat Night’ at The Lobster Pot. And it was enough to lure them away from the comforts of Martha’s Vineyard.

EXT. THE LOBSTER POT SEA FOOD SHACK. DAY

The late model Mercedes pulls into the lot--right past a parked POLICE CRUISER--and winds all the way to the back.

Meanwhile, Calhoun spits the last of a shrimp tail into a pile of discarded shells, throws a tip down on the table and gets up to leave.

He’s 90% of the way back to his cruiser when he just so happens to glance over at the Mercedes parked in the back of the lot.

He sees the broken tail light and squints suspiciously.

DANIEL (V.O)
It was the tail light that Tommy Scott had broken that got Calhoun’s attention.

Calhoun beings towards the Mercedes.

DANIEL (V.O)
And what started out as a routine violation ended up as more than anyone could have expected.

INT. MERCEDES. CONTINUOUS.

Blake and Myles are smoking a JOINT.

BLAKE
No, man, you only use one finger.

He makes a circular motion with his index finger.

BLAKE
Like this. It's like a little button, near the top. She'll go crazy.

MYLES
Wait--

BLAKE
Yeah, like out of her mind crazy.

MYLES
Wait, no, I'm saying--it's near the top?

BLAKE
Yeah, dude. Common.

MYLES
Shit. That makes sense now...

KNOCK KNOCK.

They startle, then snap around to find Sheriff Calhoun outside the car, his badge gleaming in the sunlight.

CALHOUN
You boys can go to jail or you can go home. It's up to you.

Gulp.

LATER

Calhoun interrogates the two terrified boys outside of his cruiser which is parked near the front of the Lobster Pot. Rubber neckers gawk from nearby picnic tables.

DANIEL (V.O)
Sheriff Calhoun did what he does best--he scared the living snot out of those boys--but they had nothing to give.

CALHOUN
Mom and Dad know of your whereabouts?

BLAKE
Yessir.

Calhoun holds up a small baggie of weed.

CALHOUN
I’m bettin’ they don’t know about this, now do they?

MYLES
(barley audible)
No sir.

CALHOUN
Say it again.

MYLES
(louder)
No sir.

CALHOUN
And I’ll give you one chance to keep it that way.

BLAKE
I told you, sir, we don’t know their names.

MYLES
They never told us.

BLAKE
We swear.

Calhoun stares angrily at the boys--sees he’s getting nowhere--and dramatically pulls a pair of handcuffs from his belt.

CALHOUN
Well then, looks like you’re shit out of luck.

Myles starts to cry. They turn around--hands behind their backs--waiting to be arrested.

BLAKE
Please, God. Help us.

Just then Myles’ crying subdues then stops all together. Blake looks to his brother and sees his teary eyes fixated on something ahead. He follows his gaze--sees what he sees...

The PHOTO of Daniel and Hunter tacked to the exterior wall of the Lobster Pot. Arm in arm, their smiles beaming.

MYLES
Sir...

BLAKE
You’re never going to believe this.

At this point Calhoun has also seen the picture and now has a sinister little grin stretched across his face.

CALHOUN
Oh, I believe I will.

EXT. LONG POND. NIGHT

A full moon hangs amid the clouds--draping a soft curtain of light over the land below. The water is still and calm. Reflecting the galaxy of twinkling stars above.

Hanging over the pond is a haze of floating lights. FIREFLIES.Dimming in and out as they dance in the summer air.

It’s one of those sights that if experienced would be seared into your memory forever.

Daniel and McKayla sit on the edge of a dock. Their feet dangle above the water. OLDIES leak out of a nearby STEREO.

DANIEL
How’d you find this place?

She shrugs.

MCKAYLA
Sometimes you just find things.
(beat)
I used to catch them, you know.

DANIEL
Catch what?

She nods towards the FIREFLIES. He follows her gaze.

MCKAYLA
When I was a little kid I’d put them in a glass jar and they’d light up my room at night.

DANIEL
Why’d you stop?

MCKAYLA
Because they’d always die, like, within a day.

DANIEL
You always tell me to enjoy something for what it is. Even if it’s only for a moment.

MCKAYLA
That’s different.

DANIEL
Not really.

MCKAYLA
I just don't think there's anything worth holding on to.

Daniel's chest starts to tighten.

DANIEL
Why not?

MCKAYLA
Because everything dies--everything goes to shit in the end.

DANIEL
It doesn't have to be that way.

MCKAYLA
Yes it does.

Daniel shifts his body towards hers, his eyes; two black saucers of vulnerability.

DANIEL
What about us?

MCKAYLA
(shrugs)
What *about* us?

More silence.

DANIEL
I think some things are worth holding on to...

MCKAYLA
Then I hope you're good at being hurt.

His heart explodes and whatever's left drops into his stomach.

There's a long stretch in which nothing is said. The silky love song on the radio plays as an ironic juxtaposition to the crushing blow.

It's unclear if she realizes exactly what she said but the damage has been done.

DANIEL
There's something I've been wanting to talk to you about.

MCKAYLA
Can it wait?

DANIEL
Wait for what?

A sultry grin crawls across her face as she stands up.

DANIEL
What are you doing?

She unzips her pants, pushes them down and flings them off.

MCKAYLA
I wanna try something.

She turns her back and unhinges her bra, letting it slip off onto the dock. She smiles over her shoulder then leaps into the water.

MCKAYLA
Common!

Daniel stands up and strips down to his boxers.

MCKAYLA
Everything.

He blushes, then awkwardly slides his boxers down and kicks them aside. Then he jumps in.

LAKE

She takes him by the hand and they sink beneath the water.

UNDER WATER

Beams of moonlight penetrate the surface, lighting their skin against the dark abyss. She pulls him close. They kiss for a few seconds then break into laughter letting loose a flurry of bubbles from their mouths.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR--OUTSIDE HUNTER'S HOUSE. NIGHT

His hair still damp, Daniel watches the yellow light glowing inside Hunter's garage. Worry in his eyes. The RADIO plays.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Every Friday night we'd count our take from the week. There was a time when I looked forward to these moments.

RADIO DJ
...and yes folks it's gonna be a big one so go out this weekend and stock up on water, batteries, canned goods--Hurricane Bob is knocking on the door--

Click. Daniel cuts off the radio and gets out of the car.

INT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. GARAGE. NIGHT

Hunter sorts CASH by denomination on a work table. In the corner, a RED SOX game plays on a small T.V.

There's a knock on the garage window, Hunter looks up to find Daniel on the other side. He clicks the remote and the garage door slides open.

Backpack slung over one shoulder, Daniel stands with the sheepish posture of someone riddled with apprehension.

DANIEL
You ready?

INT. SHOWER. MCKAYLA'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Beads of water pour over her stoic face. Her eyes are distant and sad. Her mind wrestling with an ocean of troubled thoughts. What exactly they are we will never know.

INT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. GARAGE. SAME

The boys work efficiently and silently. No eye contact. No words. The room choked with tension. The only SOUND is provided by the baseball game on the tube and the mechanical flutter of the CASH COUNTING MACHINE.

The game cuts away to commercial. It's a LOCAL NEWS BREAK.

TV ANCHOR
Tonight at 11-- more on this developing story as state police have now confirmed that the body of the man found dead in the Lynn marshland yesterday is that of 22 year old Spencer Cheaney.

Both their eyes move towards the T.V. On screen is the face of PONYTAIL (a.k.a Spencer Cheaney). The caption reads: BODY FOUND.

TV ANCHOR
Cheaney was reported missing three days ago near his home in Alston. Boston City Police are urging anyone with information to come forward. We'll bring you the latest after the game.

Their eyes move off the screen and towards one another. Stomach's sinking with this sobering realization.

DANIEL (V.O.)
And that night I had to face the consequence of my actions.

INT. MCKAYLA'S ROOM. NIGHT

She flops onto her bed--

DANIEL (V.O)
And she had to face hers.

--when her eyes tilt up to the ceiling they catch on something...

The PANEL DOOR leading to the attic.

INT. MCKAYLA'S ATTIC. MOMENTS LATER

Its dark. But only for a moment, then the panel slides away, light pours in and McKayla's head pops up from below. She switches on a FLASHLIGHT and illuminates the dozens of ENVELOPES. Conflict on her face. Resolve in her eyes.

It's time.

INT. HUNTER'S HOUSE. GARAGE. SAME

Daniel adds the last stack of CASH into a large duffle bag and zips it closed. Nothing has been said in a long time.

HUNTER
(reaching for bag)
Where am I meeting him?

Daniel clutches the bag.

DANIEL
I'll take it up.

HUNTER
Thought it was my shift.

DANIEL
Don't worry. I got it.

A gut wrenching stare down. Hunter's glare is lethal, chilling--but Daniel doesn't look away.

HUNTER
You wanna be straight with me?

DANIEL
I don't know what you're talking about.

Palpable tension. The air smells of frayed nerves and adrenaline.

On T.V. the CROWD reacts to a play. Their eyes don't part.

Hunter gently releases his grip on the bag, and Daniel slowly takes it, slings it over his shoulder.

DANIEL
I'm gonna put this in the car.

Hunter's stare remains fixed as Daniel moves over to the garage door. He clicks it open, the door slides up revealing--

--McKayla--standing in the driveway--TWO TENT BAGS in her hand. She's silhouetted by the glaring HEADLIGHTS of OKIE'S CAR.

There's a brief moment where none of the parties can believe what's happening. Three sets of confused eyes jump back and forth as the ground falls out from beneath them.

McKayla looks to Daniel who's literally caught in the headlights--both of them holding bags of dirty money.

His face tells the whole story. She drops the bags and PUNCHES Daniel in MOUTH. Hard. At least as hard as a 16 year old girl can. SCREAMS. Then walks away, shaking her wrist.

Bleeding--paralyzed by shock, all Daniel can muster is--

DANIEL
Wait.

But she doesn't. She gets into the passenger seat of OKIE'S CAR which then reverses out and speeds away.

Daniel looks back at Hunter--freaks--then dashes into his car and speeds off down the street in the opposite direction.

Through all of this Hunter has remained oddly still. Numb.

He bends to a knee, unzips one of the TENT BAGS McKayla left. Bundles of ENVELOPES stare back up at him. Years worth.

Hunched under the bitter garage light, those vacant eyes come back. Distant and filled with despair. The wind HOWLS.

INT. DANIEL'S BED ROOM. DAY

His head pressed up against the window, stuck in a perpetual state of gloom as he watches the wind expose the Oak leaves' pale under bellies.

A RED CAR drives down the street. *Is it Hunter?* Daniel's eyes widen and he slowly moves his head back away from the window.

But it's not Hunter, just some old man.

DANIEL (V.O)
I didn't leave my house for 2 days.

LATER

Daniel stares hard at the phone. Chewing his nails, biting his lip. Deliberating. He picks up dials. Ring.

INT. MCKAYLA'S ROOM. SAME

DANIEL (V.O)
And neither did she.

She sits on her bed in a towel. Her hair wet and her eyes swollen from crying. She lets the phone ring...

When its done, her gaze moves over to OLIVER THE FISH who is floating belly up, DEAD in his little bowl.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM. SAME

He hangs up. Dejected. He cranks his stereo all the way up. *April Come She Will* by Simon and Garfunkel comes on.

Then he flops back onto his bed and buries his face in the pillow.

MONTAGE

The song plays over various images as the town of Hyannis preps for the big storm. The sweet and soft spoken music gives an eerie sense of calm before the impending mayhem.

I. An ELDERLY COUPLE boards up the front window of the Cushman Pharmacy.

II. The GROUNDS CREW pulls a tarp over the baseball diamond.

III. Pan across empty shelf after empty shelf in a aunt Barb's store. Batteries. Flashlights. Gallon water jugs. All gone.

IV. Sand bags are stacked along Buzzards Bay.

V. A line of CARS bottlenecked at the Sagamore Bridge. Crane up to see that the line stretches back for 11 miles.

INT. DANIEL'S BED ROOM. MORNING

He lays asleep in bed, fully dressed. The PHONE rings and he immediately jolts awake. Picks up.

DANIEL
Mckayla?

DEX
(through phone)
You’re late.

Daniel’s shoulders drop, a little hope lost.

DANIEL
Yeah...I’ve been...don’t worry I’ll get it to you.

DEX
By sun down.

DANIEL
There’s a God damn hurricane headed this way. You can’t be serious.

Click.

DANIEL
Hello?

Daniel looks at the phone. Dial tone taunting him.

LATER

He pulls a DUFFLE BAG out from under his bed.

DANIEL (V.O.)
I had five hours to drive fifty-thousand dollars to upstate New York. On any other day that wouldn’t have been a problem. On any other day.

Out the window he see’s a row of cars, bumper to bumper, crawling down the street.

LATER

He steps out of his room. Aunt Barb is cleaning the dishes.

DANIEL
Where’s everyone going?

AUNT BARBERA
Somewhere far away from here.

A sudden realization hits Daniel and he turns and runs out the front door. Aunt Barb shakes her head and goes back to scrubbing pots.

MOMENTS LATER

He comes barreling out the front door, BACK PACK around his shoulder--but then something comes over him, he slows then stops all together.

He looks around, taking in the atmosphere. The wind ruffles his clothes and tousles his hair. The air smells of rain and panic.

DANIEL (V.O)
When I woke up that morning I knew it would take a miracle to get out of the mess I had made. I also knew that I was running out of time.

He tilts his head up towards the darkening sky. It's a forboding medley of green, purple and black--like that of some disturbed toddler's water painting.

DANIEL (V.O)
What I didn't know is that that day would be the day that I died.

A singe RAIN DROP falls and lands on his forehead. He blinks.

EXT. LUCY'S 24 HOUR DINER. DAY

Steph and Okie are standing outside the front door in their tacky waitress uniforms.

Okie flips the door sign around-- 'CLOSED FOR THE STORM'-- then pulls the door shut and locks it. Steph stands nearby, shivering in the cold, sucking down a cigarette.

Daniel's car comes flying around the corner, skidding to a stop. In a frenzy, he hops out without putting the gear into park, the car rolls, he hops back in throws it in park then stumbles back out.

The girls stare at him like he's some mental patient.

He runs up to Steph.

DANIEL
I need your help. Where's Mcka-- nevermind.

He turns to Okie.

DANIEL
Okie. Please.

OKIE
You fucked up, kid.

DANIEL
I know. I know I did.

OKIE
She doesn’t wanna see you.

DANIEL
Just tell me where she’s going--can you do that?

OKIE
What do you mean?

DANIEL
For the storm--where’s she going? The summer’s ending I don’t know if I’ll ever...Okie, please.

OKIE
You’re really not from around here, huh?

He stares back blankly.

OKIE
Only the birds run for cover. We just dig our heels in and pray.

DANIEL
Thanks, Okie.

Daniel runs back to his car and speeds away. They watch as he swerves wildly down the road.

OKIE
That boy’s crazy.

STEPH
No, he’s just in love.

INT. DANIEL’S CAR. MOVING. DAY

The rain’s coming down now and windshield wipers struggle to keep pace.

He turns onto McKayla’s street-- racing towards her HOUSE. When he reaches the street lamp 100 yards out he hits the breaks. Skidding to a stop.

He stares at the house. It’s daunting. What would he even say at this point?

He checks the dash board CLOCK and then the DUFFLE BAG resting in the passenger seat. Fuck. Can’t bring himself to do it.

He punches the gas and jets out of there, hating himself as he watches the house fall further and further away in the rearview.

INT. BARNSTABLE POLICE STATION. DAY

Calhoun stands before a group of officers. We can't hear what he saying but we get the idea he's giving the run down.

Pictures are pinned to the cork board behind him. Dex. The Driver. Spencer Cheaney with a BULLET in his head. Daniel and Hunter from the lobster pot. Their cars. License plates, etc.

VARIOUS SHOTS

I. Kevlar vests are pulled on.

II. Police belts are secured.

III. Guns are shoved into holsters.

IV. Cruisers pull out of the lot.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR. MOVING. LATE AFTERNOON

He's now far outside the Cape, approaching farmland. It's still raining but the severity has drastically declined.

Up ahead, to the side of the road, stands a gigantic WHITE SIGN with a picture of a huge STRAWBERRY painted on it.

It's an advertisement for a strawberry farm.

The sign reads: STRAWBERRIES U-PICK.

Daniel blinks. Not believing what he's seeing.

DANIEL (V.O)
Coincidence? A cosmic sign from the Universe? Fate?

DANIEL
You've got to be kidding.

He looks over at the DUFFLE BAG--grimaces--gotta make a choice---then cuts the wheel hard to the left--spinning the car around into the opposite direction. Horns flare.

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT

Nightfall. I-6 Westbound. Break lights for miles. Every Tom, Dick and Harry is headed for the hills. Except for one crazy bastard.

Driving headfirst into the storm's mouth is a '91 Chevy Corvette. It blows past us, leaving behind a trail of light in the fog.

We're back where we began.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR. MOVING. SAME

Jittery eyes scan around. Checking mirrors--front, side, left, right.

DANIEL (V.O)
There come's a point in every boy's life when he must become a man. When he must choose what he stands for.

Ahead lies an intersection. Yellow light. Daniel guns it.

DANIEL (V.O)
When he must--

BAM!

CUT TO WHITE

Silence.

A flutter of images flash before us.

Rapid. Fleeting. Holding only a moment before burning away.

Birthday candles. Scraped elbows. Coloring books. Snowmen. Pillow fights. Water slides. A Red Sox game. A broken arm. Tree forts. A loose tooth. Sun burns. Christmas lights. Calvin and Hobbs. The ocean. Fireworks. Fireflies. McKayla.

Black.

From within the darkness we see a distant point of light. Blinding and magnificent. It appears to be at the end of a tunnel, moving towards us...

An otherworldly sound. Gentle yet haunting. Imagine the hush of an angel's whisper or a giant sea-shell pressed to the ear.

The light moves closer. Growing larger and brighter. Burning with splendid intensity.

Behind the frayed edges we can make out a FACE staring at us.

Dad?

God?

INT. HOSPITAL. MORNING

Nope. Just the RESIDENT PHYSICIAN checking Daniel's pupils. Daniel lays in a hospital bed, dressed in a HOSPITAL GOWN. Heavy eyelids flicker. He stirs awake.

RESIDENT PHYSICIAN
Ah, there he is. Welcome back, Daniel.

The Physician plucks his gloves off and smiles.

RESIDENT PHYSICIAN
So, you have a mild concussion a dislocated shoulder and that wicked lump there above your eye, but all in all you're doing surprisingly well.

He clicks open a pen and jots something on his clipboard.

RESIDENT PHYSICIAN
Must have someone watching over you.

Daniel mumbles something inaudible from cracked lips.

RESIDENT PHYSICIAN
I'm sorry what was that?

DANIEL
My bag. Where is it?

The Physician smiles warmly.

RESIDENT PHYSICIAN
Well there's a nice police man who would like to speak with you about that.

The Physician then leaves the room.

HOSPITAL ENTRANCE

Automatic doors slide open and Calhoun marches in from the storm. Water drips from the brim of his trooper hat. He approaches the SECRETARY who points towards URGENT CARE.

HALLWAY--MOMENTS LATER

Calhoun stalks down the empty hallway. His wet boots squeak and moan, leaving an ominous string of FOOTPRINTS dotting the linoleum title.

Arrives at the door with a name plate that reads: MIDDLETON.

He enters--

HOSPITAL ROOM

Nothing. Ruffled sheets and a flat lining heart monitor. His brow lowers and his jaw clenches.

ANOTHER HALLWAY

Stark and quiet but only for a moment.

First we hear the hollering, then the footsteps, then Daniel comes wheeling around the corner--charging full speed ahead--his hospital gown barely clinging on--a hospital bag swinging in his hand.

Two MALE NURSES and a SECURITY GAURD give chase.

OUTSIDE--MOMENTS LATER

Daniel flys through the automatic doors and gets slammed by a tidal wave of wind and rain.

He fights forward, dashing across the parking lot. Untied shoelaces and his naked ass flapping in the wind.

STREET

Daniel scrambles across. Horns. Lights. Rain. Oncoming traffic swerves, narrowly avoiding him.

The security guard and two nurses pull up short of the street, unwilling to go any further.

Calhoun steps out behind them and together they watch Daniel disappear.

ON DANIEL

Running as if it was his last day on Earth. Muscles stiffen, lungs burn. The desperate stride of someone riding on nothing but intestinal fortitude.

A horrific bolt of LIGHTNING spiderwebs overhead.

Hail stones dent car hoods. Electrical transformers snap off telephone poles--EXPLODING into FIREBALLS in the sky.

Daniel doesn’t flinch.

INT. DEX’S BLACK VAN. MOVING. MORNING

The Van glides through the hurricane ravaged neighborhood. Tree limbs. Mailboxes. Rooftops--tumbling across the street.

Driver and Dex sit in blood chilling silence. Eyes scanning.

In Dex's lap rests a WALTHER P-22 PISTOL equipped with a silencer. It's a murder weapon. Plain and simple.

EXT. BUS STOP. DAY

Under the shelter of the bus stop Daniel yanks his clothes out from the hospital bag. He pulls them on. They're wet and bloody but they're clothes.

A POLICE CRUISER turns down the street, his SPOTLIGHT scanning. Daniel sinks down, trying to look inconspicuous then decides it'd be better to run. Sirens belt out.

EXT. DEX'S BLACK VAN. MOVING. SAME.

Rounding the corner. Up ahead they spot Daniel running down the street--police cruiser closing ground.

Dex taps The Driver on his shoulder, indicating for him to fall back. The Driver breaks then turns down an adjacent street.

ON DANIEL

Cutting through adjoining BACK YARDS--knocking over trash barrels, under swing sets, around swimming pools.

MCKAYLA'S STREET--MOMENTS LATER

He's approaching that spot, 100 yards from the house, and when gets there he....blows past it without a second thought.

MCKAYLA'S HOUSE--MOMENTS LATER

He scurries up to the front door and starts banging away.

DANIEL
McKayla!

He knocks harder. Faster.

DANIEL
McKayla!

More knocking.

DANIEL
I know you're in there!
(softer)
Please.

INSIDE

McKayla is hidden behind a curtain, teary eyes watching out the window.

OUTSIDE

He stops knocking, realizing that door will never be opened. He slowly backs away and centers himself on the front lawn. Gale force winds rock his frail body. Rain stings his face. He doesn't give a fuck.

He SHOUTS over the deafening roar of the wind.

DANIEL
I understand if you never want to see me again. I just need you to know...I love you. I'm fucking in love with you, okay. And I know that scares the shit out of you but I don't give a fuck. I've been in love with you since the moment I saw you and I always will be. I've never been more sure of anything in my entire life. I'm sorry. I'm sorry for lying to you and I'm sorry about how it came out. But I'm not sorry for what I did because, honestly, if I hadn't done it I don't think I would've ever been with you.

INSIDE

On McKayla as a lone tear rolls down her cheek.

OUTSIDE

DANIEL
(his voice begins to give out)
You're the best thing that could have ever happened to me. You gave me a purpose in this fucked up world. You saved my life. You were my God damn view.
(throws his arms up)
Okay. That's it. That's everything.

The howl of the wind dies and is replaced with an eerie nothingness. A disturbing silence that's as bleak as it is soothing. This is the eye of the storm.

Overhead, clouds give way to blue skies and the sun pours down with all it's splendor. Daniel tilts his head up and greets the warm and wonderful glow with an enlightened grin.

The CREAK from the front door opening brings his eyes back down.

HUNTER steps out from the house, a PISTOL by his side.

Their eyes meet.

Hunter raises the gun. Daniel’s smile holds.

BANG!

The bullet catches Daniel square between the eyes, his legs buckle and he drops into a PUDDLE.

ON MCKAYLA

As she wipes the tear from her cheek and composes herself with a deep breath. Pull back further to see she’s not inside the house. She never was. She’s somewhere else. Far away.

OUTSIDE

Hunter approaches the body and crooks his neck so he can look into Daniel’s lifeless eyes. There’s an odd peacefulness in them.

ANGLE FROM BELOW

Hunter stands over us. Staring down into our eyes. He aims the gun right into frame.

BANG.

Black.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
Daniel Middleton died on August 19th, 1991. It was a Monday.

FADE IN:

ANGLE FROM BELOW

Same angle, but instead of Hunter standing over us it is now Calhoun. His head backlit by the sun, shadowing his face just like when we first met him.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
Because of the storm they didn’t find his body for three days.

Calhoun grimaces at what must be a truly unpleasant sight. Those eyes have seen a lot but never anything like this.

MONTAGE

I. A roofless house.

II. An upside down school bus.

III. A sailboat stuck in a tree.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
At the time, Hurricane Bob was the second costliest hurricane in American history with damages well surpassing a billion dollars.

IV. A cereal box floats down a flooded street. Several soggy dollar bills drift out.

V. The DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER leveled. A half century of memories reduced to rubble.

EXT. DANIEL'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. DAY

Calhoun knocks. Daniel's Mother answers. This is the worst part of the job. He removes his hat. Sorrow in his eyes. No words need to be said.

MCKAYLA(V.O.)
Much was lost in that storm.

EXT. HOUSE (UNDER CONSTRUCTION). DAY

A team of VOLUNTEERS tack up new dry wall.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
But life moves onward.

NEXT SUMMER

I. Two TEENAGE GIRLS dash through a sprinkler while their father flips burgers on the grill.

II. Hundreds of people stretched along an overcrowded beach.

III. Follow ICE CREAM SUNDAE'S from a kitchen out to the table of this wealthy family.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
And those who are gone will be replaced.

IV. A family of SUMMER BIRDS arrive outside their cottage. One of them, an innocent 14 year old BOY.

V. From a distance that same kid watches a group of “COOL KIDS” smoking cigarettes and setting off FIRE CRACKERS.

EXT. FARM HOUSE. DAY

Dex’s Black Van pulls up and a TWENTY YEAR OLD KID walks up the front steps to meet Boss Man. Ice tea at the ready.

EXT. GRAVE YARD. DAY

A bleak afternoon hangs over a funeral procession as it winds through the cemetery's cast iron gates.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
Daniel Middleton replaced Ricky Orwell as the new dead boy in town.

FLASHBACK. EXT. LONG POND. DAY

Rain pounds the surface of the same pond where Daniel and McKayla went skinny dipping just a few nights before.

Hunter stands on the dock, holding the PISTOL in his trembling hands. Rain rolling down his face. He brings the barrel to his temple...grimaces...moves it into his mouth...closes his eyes, tasting the steel on his tongue...

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
He had become the villain that people always wanted him to be. There are those who say he ended up somewhere in Idaho or Nevada in some lost little town on the fringes of some forgotten little city.

He’s too afraid to die. Too afraid for what awaits him. He yanks the gun from his mouth and hurls it out into the water.

His chin quivers. He wobbles--drops to his knees--cradling his skull between his hands. And then it comes, an avalanche of raw, unadulterated emotion. The turmoil. The regret. The pain. The pain. The pain.

Pain that’s been 19 years in the making.

FLASHBACK. EXT. AMY CALHOUN’S HOUSE. DAY

Hunter dashes across the lawn--through the rain--past the old tire swing, up the vine fence and starts pounding on Amy’s window. She opens it. He’s sopping wet. His eyes, teary and swollen.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
Other's will tell you he left the country all together.

He starts desperately explaining something to her that we can't hear. She shakes her head and breaks into tears.

AMY
You can't!

HUNTER
This is only for now.

He cups his hands around her face.

HUNTER
Look at me. Only for now.

She nods. Wanting her damndest to believe him. He kisses her passionately on the forehead then turns and runs away.

STREET LEVEL--LATER

Pulling away from us, the RED BREAK LIGHTS of his CAMARO disappear into the fog.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
But as far as the town of Hyannis was concerned that was the end of Hunter Strawberry. He was never seen again.

EXT. BACK YARD COOKOUT. DAY

Two COUPLES chat over cocktails.

WIFE
I heard he was a drug dealer.

HUSBAND
A major one.

INT. TEENAGERS BEDROOM. NIGHT

Two TEENAGE GIRLS lie next to each other in sleeping bags.

GIRL
A murderer.

EXT. WOODS. NIGHT

A group of BOYS huddled around a CAMPFIRE, eyes glued to the speaker.

SPEAKING BOY
...and poof! He just...vanished.

The rest of the boys gasp.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
But his legend lived on.

<u>FLASHBACK.</u> INT. MCKAYLA'S BEDROOM. DAY

She sits on her bed in a towel. Her hair wet and her eyes swollen from crying. The phone is ringing (it was Daniel). She doesn't pick up...

When its done her gaze moves over to OLIVER THE FISH who is floating belly up, DEAD in his little bowl.

CLOSE ON: A bag being stuffed with clothes.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
First there was Kirby Wells, then
the Boston college football player,
then there was Daniel Middleton.

LIVING ROOM--MOMENTS LATER

With bag in tow, McKayla sneaks past her drunken FATHER on the couch.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
Coincidence or something else?

<u>FLASHBACK.</u> EXT. BUS STOP. DAY

She boards a departing bus.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
I'll let you decide.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT (YEARS LATER)

The teenage girl Daniel once loved has grown into a beautiful young woman.

<u>She sits at a desk writing in a NOTE BOOK.</u>

MCKAYLA(V.O.)
And as life carries on I'll laugh
and dance and have my heart broken
and new memories will replace the
old.

Once finished adding her final thought she flips the cover closed.

It reads: HOT SUMMER NIGHTS

LATER

Laying in bed, her eyes rest on a mantle which holds a GLASS JAR of FIREFLIES. They dim and glow. Dim and glow.

She let’s go a faint and wistful smile.

MCKAYLA (V.O.)
But those who are gone can live only in the moments when they are remembered. And their whispers will echo for eternity, crying out to be heard.

One last firefly flickers then fades out, casting us into...

Darkness.

CHYRON: Daniel Middleton is buried in Pine Grove Cemetery in Leominster, Massachusetts.