

I'M THINKING OF ENDING THINGS

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel by

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POV MONTAGE

1 INT FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 1

- A young man's hand measures a spoonful of sugar into a cup of coffee, stirs.

- As the coffee is sipped, a daytime TV talk show is watched.

TV HOST

Ladies and gentlemen, Flash Dance's
Jennifer Beal!

Applause

2 EXT RURAL ROAD - JANITOR'S TRUCK - DAY 2

- Pick-up truck: The man's hands are on the steering wheel as he drives along a rural road.

AM RADIO VOICE 1

So you've heard about this "gay
plague?"

AM RADIO VOICE 2

Just reading about it.

AM RADIO VOICE 1

Homosexuals, heroin addicts,
hemophiliacs, and Haitians.

AM RADIO VOICE 2

The 4H Club.

AM RADIO VOICE 1 (CONT'D

(laughing)

Hey now!

AM RADIO VOICE 2

But seriously, this is --

3 EXT HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY 3

- The man trudges from the crowded parking lot toward a high school.

4 INT HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY 4

- He walks down an empty, silent school hall. A sudden loud burst of noise and activity as the bell rings and students spill from classrooms.

5 SCENE OMITTED 5

6 INT HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY 6
- He mops a floor.

7 INT HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY 7
- He empties trash cans.

8 OMITTED 8

9 OMITTED 9

Night:

10 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT 10
- He trudges from the school to the lone vehicle, his
pick-up truck, in the parking lot.

11 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT 11
- In the pick-up, his hands on the steering wheel, he
drives along rural road.

AM VOICE 3
So these healing pyramids, can you
tell us how they work?

AM VOICE 4
Well, of course we don't really
know the science at this point, but
they appear to focus energy on the
body through the Earth's magnetism.

AM VOICE 3
Fascinating.

AM VOICE 4
The pyramid is, of course, in the
shape of the carbon atom, the basis
of all life --

12 INT. FARM HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 12

- The man watches TV, sipping at glass of whiskey. On the screen: Creepy music as POV of someone walks toward a suburban house and peers through a window at a girl asleep in bed. She awakens sees him, screams.

13 INT. FARMHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT 13

- From his bed, The man stares at the ceiling of a darkened bedroom.

- Black.

Day:

14 INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 14

On TV: talk show.

TV HOST
Mr. Alan Alda!

Applause.

A15 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL A15

Janitor mops floor in empty hallway.

15 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY 15

In truck:

AM RADIO VOICE 1
... and the Soviets just shot it
right out of the sky.

AM RADIO VOICE 2
269 people onboard. All dead.

AM RADIO VOICE 1
Korean Airline. A commercial
flight, folks. It's indefensible.

AM RADIO VOICE 2
It's payback time. That's for sure.

16 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK 16
- NIGHT

In truck:

AM VOICE 3
So what was it like?

AM VOICE 5

Well, I was awake, but I couldn't
move and then this -- I don't know
what to call it -- tractor beam
pulled me up into the ship and I
found myself naked on some sort of
examination table --

17 INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 17

On TV: Scene from film in which people at a dinner party
are laughing too long and hard.

18 INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 18

In bed, the man stares at the ceiling.

Day:

19 INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 19

On TV:

TV HOST

John Candy!

Applause.

20 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY 20

In Truck:

AM RADIO VOICE 1

You heard about this cannibal they
arrested?

AM RADIO VOICE 2

Yeah. What is it with Russians and
cannibalism?

AM RADIO VOICE 1

52 people.

AM RADIO VOICE 2

He must've been *really* hungry!

A21 INT. HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY A21

Janitor is scrubbing a sink.

21 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT 21 *

In Truck:

AM VOICE 3
And what did the apparition say?

AM VOICE 6

That all life is interconnected,
and people, with their massive
egos, cannot see that --

22 INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 22

On TV: A young man stands outside and apartment and calls up
to window.

YOUNG MAN

Eleanor! I love you!

Day:

23 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY 23

In truck:

AM RADIO VOICE 1

So Aum Shinrikyo, am I pronouncing
that right?

AM RADIO VOICE 2

I read about this! Sarin gas!

AM RADIO VOICE 1

On the subway! 13 dead and over
5000 injured.

AM RADIO VOICE 1 (CONT'D)

Nutjobs. What is wrong with people?

A24 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL - DAY A24

Janitor is mopping alone.

24 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT 24

In truck:

AM VOICE 7

The angels are here. They are all
around us. And they're here to
help.

25 INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 25

On TV: A young woman looks at her ringing cellphone. She
seems terrified.

2ND YOUNG WOMAN (O.C.)

What's wrong? Who is it?

YOUNG WOMAN
It's me. I'm calling.

A26 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (MONTAGE) A26

This day/night sequence repeats again and again, with only slight variations (mostly in the janitorial tasks). The big change comes in the hands, which over time, get old: liver spotted, wrinkled, arthritic, the occasional Band Aid on one or another of the fingers. The image itself, through his POV, degrades, as well, becoming softer, dimmer, less vibrant. The sound becomes less distinct and by a constant whispery hum.

(Note: Throughout the remainder of the film, there is a constant whisper under everything, sometimes the wind, sometimes a voice, sometimes both. On occasion, it will resolve into the Voice-Over of the Young Woman, then back to a vague, inarticulate whisper).

B26 INT/EXT. - RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY (MONTAGE) B26

-Janitor drives. AM Radio Montage.

C26 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL & BATHROOM - DAY (MONTAGE) C26

- Janitor walks hallway, Students pass by him.

D26 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - KITCHEN D26

- Janitor in silhouette works in kitchen.

E26 INT. PICK UP TRUCK & LIVING RM - NIGHT E26

As the montage speeds up, the radio and TV snippets get shorter and closer together, until they seem to form one thought.

AM RADIO VOICE 1
Hey, Listen to --

TV CHARACTER
...me... you. Aren't --

AM RADIO VOICE 2
Welcome! Here on --

AM VOICE 3
-- this planet --

TV NEWS ANCHOR
-- People, don't --

AM VOICE 4
-- want to --

AM RADIO VOICE 2
-- see. You --

AM RADIO VOICE 1

-- any --

ACTOR IN MOVIE

(looking into camera)

-- more --

F26/G26 INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING RM./BEDROOM - NIGHT (MONTAGE) F26/G26

- Janitor watches TV, Montage snippets

- Janitor stares at darkened ceiling

*

- Black.

27 INT. FARM HOUSE DINING ROOM - DAY

27

Everything is slower now. The Janitor's POV takes in the environment as it moves toward the table with a cup of coffee. The room is neat but old, slightly tattered, the drapes are heavy and oppressive. It feels airless, a place with endlessly wandering ghosts. The Janitor once again places the coffee on the dining room table, sits, scoops sugar from a bowl, dumps it in the coffee, stirs, turns on the small portable TV on the table. Snow on the screen. He switches the channel and a young couple appears, engaging, to a bouncy musical score, in a happy dating montage. The man sips at his coffee and watches for a long moment, checks his watch, stands, heads to the kitchen. The bouncy music continues but recedes as he walks away from the TV. The whispering builds.

28 INT. FARM HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

28

The Janitor brings the cup and spoon to the sink and washes them. He glances out the window above the sink at the world outside. It is a gray, windy winter day. Old, crusty snow on the ground. A rusted swing set sits in the yard, the swings creaking in the wind. He dries the dishes, puts them away, scans the kitchen for anything out of place. He refolds a poorly folded dishrag, hangs it from its hook, spends a moment to even it out. He exits the kitchen.

29 INT DINING ROOM - DAY

29

The Janitor passes the still turned-on TV, glances at it. The couple are in a field, on their backs and under a blanket, looking up at the night sky.

YOUNG TV MAN

How did we ever find each other in
all this vastness? Almost makes a
scientist like me believe in
destiny.

YOUNG WOMAN

Almost makes an artist like me
believe in scientists.

He laughs. They kiss. The Janitor has passed the TV and makes
his way upstairs.

30 INT. FARMHOUSE BATHROOM - DAY 30

The Janitor brushes his teeth, never looking at his
reflection in the mirror.

31 EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY 31

The Janitor exits the house, which is weathered. He carries
a paper lunch bag and thermos. The wind whistles. He climbs
into the pick-up truck, turns the ignition key.

32 INT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY 32

The Janitor drives the quiet rural road. The radio is on.

HOST 1

Better get those chains on, folks!

HOST 2

Storm of the century!

HOST 1

Global warming, my Ass-troturf!

An old fashioned *ah-ooga* car horn sound effect.

HOST 1 (CONT'D)

It's fricking freezing!

HOST 2

That's the thing about the libs.
They live in a fantasy world.

HOST 1

I'd say we could use some global
warming right about now. On the way
here, I nearly froze off my Dick-
taphone.

Ah-ooga!

33 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY 33

The Janitor, lunch bag and thermos in hand, crunches on the hard snow.

34 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY 34

The Janitor makes his way through the empty hall. The bell sounds, sudden and loud, and the hall is filled with raucous students. The Janitor is invisible to them as they carelessly maneuver their way around him. He watches their faces, their interactions, their youth, their romances, their enthusiasm. He spots the outliers: the lonely, the ugly, the desperately sad.

35 INT. CUSTODIAN'S ROOM - DAY 35

The Janitor opens his locker, places his lunch and thermos on the shelf, and removes his shirt, revealing a sagging, old man's torso. He changes into a dark work shirt emblazoned with the school's name. He closes the locker, organizes the supplies on his cart, rolls it to the door, and waits until the voices of the students peter out. Then he opens the door, wheels the cart into the mostly empty hall.

36 INT. HALL - DAY 36

There are only a few student stragglers. The Janitor pushes the cart, wheels it into the first classroom.

37 INT. CLASSROOM ONE - DAY 37

THE JANITOR EMPTIES THE ROOM'S TRASH CANS INTO THE LARGE ONE ON HIS CART. HE WIPES A DUST RAG ALONG THE TABLE TOPS AND THE WINDOW LEDGE. OUTSIDE SNOW HAS STARTED TO FALL. HE WATCHES THE SNOW, SEEMINGLY TRANSFIXED.

38 EXT. BROWNSTONE STREET - DAY 38

A Young Woman waits. She is dressed for the cold, her quirky, adorable outfit topped with a cheerily colorful wool beanie. She looks both ways down the street, waiting for someone. She notices the snowflakes, and playfully tries to catch a few on her tongue.

Suddenly, she feels self-conscious, glances around to see if she is being watched, peering into dark apartment windows. She spots a young man driving toward her. This is Jake. A fleeting look of worry passes across her face, then she smiles, waves enthusiastically. He smiles back, waves, pulls to a stop in front of her. She opens the door.

YOUNG WOMAN
It's snowing!

JAKE
Winter is icummen in.

YOUNG WOMAN
Goddamn!

They laugh. She climbs into the car. They kiss.

39 INT. CAR - DAY

39

They drive through a university town; it is oddly underpopulated. She looks out the window. Although her outfit is the same, the colors seem more subdued now. Jake watches the road. She glances over at him, takes in his face in profile. Feeling her eyes on him, he glances over. She smiles. He smiles self-consciously, looks back at the road. She flips down her sun visor, opens the mirror, the mirror is missing, she flips the visor back up. Her mood has turned somber. The whispering sound increases in volume. *

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I'm thinking of ending things.

Silence.

JAKE
Huh?

YOUNG WOMAN
What's that?

JAKE
Did you say something?

YOUNG WOMAN
(laughing)
No. I don't think so.

JAKE
Weird.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ha. Yeah.

Silence.

JAKE

Car ghosts.

YOUNG WOMAN

(playfully)

Spooooky.

JAKE

Ha. Yeah.

Silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Boo!

YOUNG WOMAN

Ha.

Silence. She looks out the window.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I'm thinking of ending things.

Jake glances over again. She doesn't make eye contact. He looks back to road.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

What's the point of carrying on like this? I know what it is, where it's going. Jake is a nice guy, but... It's not going anywhere. I've known this for a while now. Maybe it's human nature to keep going even in the face of this knowledge. The alternative requires too much energy, decisiveness. People stay in unhealthy relationships because it's easier. It's basic physics. An object in motion tends to stay in motion; people tend to stay in relationships past their expiration date. Newton's first law of emotion.

JAKE

Do you want to stop for a coffee or something? A snack? It's going to get pretty farmy pretty fast now.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh. No. I'm fine.

JAKE
You sure?

YOUNG WOMAN
I don't want to spoil my appetite!

JAKE
Ok.

Silence. She studies his hands on the steering wheel. He self-consciously takes the one closest to her from the wheel, and slips it into his jacket pocket.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Y'know, my mother hasn't been feeling well recently. So...

YOUNG WOMAN
I'm sorry.

JAKE
I'm just saying that there might not be much of a spread. She might not be up to a lot of cooking.
(beat)
She hasn't been well.

YOUNG WOMAN
I'm sorry to hear that. What's going on with --

JAKE
I'm just saying, if you want to stop for a snack, it would probably be fine. In terms of appetite spoiling. In terms of the amount of food she might have prepared. It might even be advisable.

YOUNG WOMAN
I'm fine.

JAKE
Ok.

Silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)
They really are looking forward to meeting you.
(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

I don't want to give you the wrong impression. I've told them a lot about you.

YOUNG WOMAN

(looking over at Jake)

That's nice to hear. I'm looking forward to meeting them, too.

She looks out the window.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

Maybe it's unfair of me to be going on this trip with Jake. When I'm so uncertain about our future. Our lack of it. After all, going to meet your boyfriend's parents is the proverbial next step, isn't it? The truth is, I haven't even told my parents I'm dating Jake. I've never mentioned him. And I don't think I ever will. I guess that says a lot about my intentions.

JAKE

It's just that she hasn't been feeling well. So...

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm sorry. Getting old ain't for sissies, as Bette Davis said.

JAKE

True. Although one might take issue with her use of the word sissy as a pejorative.

YOUNG WOMAN

Of course. Yes. A different time.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I guess it's curiosity. Jake is certainly hard to figure. Maybe it's like a window into his origins. The child being father of the man, and all.

JAKE

Oh, are you a fan of Wordsworth then, by chance?

YOUNG WOMAN
Wordsworth?

JAKE
William Wordsworth? The poet?

YOUNG WOMAN
I'm not familiar, really. Why do you ask?

JAKE
I was just thinking about him, for some reason. He popped into my head. His poem *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, to be specific.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jesus, that's the title? Seems like an entire poem.

JAKE
Ha. Yeah.

Silence. She silently counts syllables.

YOUNG WOMAN
I tried to make it into a haiku. Too many syllables. Damn.

JAKE
Ha. You get your words' worth with Wordsworth.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ha.

JAKE
(beat)
You want to hear how it starts?

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok. Sure.

As Jake recites, the young woman watches the passing bleak farmland.

JAKE

(reciting)

There was a time when meadow,
grove, and stream,/The earth, and
every common sight,/To me did
seem/Apparell'd in celestial
light,/The glory and the freshness
of a dream./It is not now as it
hath been of yore;—/Turn
wheresoe'er I may,/By night or
day,/The things which I have seen I
now can see no more.

YOUNG WOMAN

Huh. Well, that's heavy. Sad.

JAKE

It goes on like that. More or less.

YOUNG WOMAN

You recite it well. I like your
voice.

JAKE

I guess, there's hope in it, too.
But... I dunno, maybe they have to
do that, give people something.

YOUNG WOMAN

I confess, I haven't read a lot of
poetry. I guess, I mostly don't
understand it.

(joking)

I'm not a metaphorical-type gal.

JAKE

It's just that that one speaks to
me.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah.

JAKE

Incidentally, Wordsworth wrote a
series of poems to a woman named
Lucy.

YOUNG WOMAN

Like me!

JAKE

Exactly. A beautiful, idealized
woman who dies young.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yikes.

JAKE

Ha. Well, the comparison goes only
as far as your name.

YOUNG WOMAN

Phew.

JAKE

And that you are ideal, of course.

YOUNG WOMAN

(uneasily)

Aw. That's sweet.

She smiles at him. Silence.

A phone rings, loud, surprising. Urgently, the Young Woman
fishes in the bag by her feet, finds the phone, pulls it out,
checks the caller: Lucy. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE** *

JAKE

Who's that?

YOUNG WOMAN

Just a friend. I'm not going to
answer.

JAKE

You can. I don't mind. You should.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's ok.

JAKE

I don't mind.

She drops the phone back in her bag.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Mysterious.

YOUNG WOMAN

What's that?

JAKE

A friend.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ha. Not really. Someone from class.

She looks out the window at depressed and abandoned farms. She sees a collapsed farm house with a brand new swing set in the front yard. It's jarring.

 YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
That's odd.

 JAKE
What's that?

 YOUNG WOMAN
Did you see that swing set?

 JAKE
What swing set?

 YOUNG WOMAN
We just passed it.

 JAKE
Nope. Missed it.

 YOUNG WOMAN
It was weird. This beautiful new swing set in front of an abandoned house.

 JAKE
I didn't see it.

 YOUNG WOMAN
Why would that be there? Clearly no one has lived in that house for years. Decades.

 JAKE
I didn't see it.
(beat)
Maybe someone is moving in and they brought the swing set first?
That's all I can think of.

 YOUNG WOMAN
I suppose.
(beat)
That seems an unlikely sequence of events.

 JAKE
Well, I didn't see it.
(beat)
Like to have something to entertain the kids while the parents are getting the house ready?

YOUNG WOMAN

Huh. Yeah.
(beat)
Odd.

JAKE

Who knows?
(beat)
They're saying there might be a
fair amount of snow.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah?

JAKE

They're predicting it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Do you think we should maybe turn
back? I've got a fair amount -- a
lot actually -- of work to do
tomorrow. I need to be able to get
home tonight, so I can get to it
first thing.

JAKE

I think we'll be ok. I've got tire
chains in the trunk.

YOUNG WOMAN

(dubious)
Ok.

JAKE

What are you working on?

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, um, I have a paper due
Wednesday.

JAKE

Which one is this?

YOUNG WOMAN

Susceptibility to rabies infection
in the sensory dorsal root ganglia
neurons.

JAKE

Right. The trigeminal ganglia, as
well, right?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. Exactly.

JAKE

Point for me. Interested in and knowledgeable about my girlfriend's work.

She reacts to the "my girlfriend."

YOUNG WOMAN

Point for Jake.

JAKE

How's the paper going?

YOUNG WOMAN

It's nowhere, actually. I really do have to get back tonight. Deal with it first thing.

JAKE

I'll get you home. Chains.

YOUNG WOMAN

Chains.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I do like Jake. And he's educated. Our fields are different, but he's curious and keeps up. That's a good thing. That's in the pro column.

She smiles over at Jake. He smiles back, seemingly relieved.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

And he's cute. In his awkward way. We are interesting together, as well. People look at us when we're together. Who's that couple? I don't get looked at alone. Not much. And Jake doesn't either, he tells me. Maybe that's the way it is in general for guys. No one looks at them. But Jake has told me he feels it, feels invisible.

JAKE

Want to listen to something?

He has white crust in the corner of his mouth. She fixates on it.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm sorry, what?

He wipes away the crust, as if he knows she's seeing it.

JAKE

I asked if you want to listen to
some music.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh. Sure.

Jake switches on the radio, dials through the static.

JAKE

When you get out this far, there's
not much signal.

He finds a station playing *Many a New Day* from the musical *Oklahoma!* The reception is iffy, giving the music an almost underwater burble and, in addition, it sounds amateurish, performed by high school students.

SINGER

Many a new face will please my eye/
Many a new love will find me/Never
have I once looked back to sigh/
Over the romance behind me/Many a
new day will dawn/Before I do

YOUNG WOMAN

This is an odd song. Out here in
the middle of nothing.

JAKE

It's from *Oklahoma!* The musical.

YOUNG WOMAN

Apt.

JAKE

Indeed.

YOUNG WOMAN

I didn't realize you were a fan of
musical theater. You're full of
surprises.

JAKE

I'm not really. Into musicals, I
mean. I may be full of surprises
though. That's not for me to say.
Anyway, I just know a few musicals.
Oklahoma!, *Phantom*, *Carousel*, *South
Pacific*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Flower
Drum Song*, *Wicked*...

(beat)

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying...

(beat)

The Music Man, Pajama Game, Cabaret,...

(beat)

The Lion King, Grease, The King and I, The Sound of Music, Pal Joey, Charley's Aunt, On the Town...

(beat)

My Fair Lady. But I know Oklahoma! best, I guess. They do it every few years. For obvious reasons.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wait, who does it every few years?

JAKE

Sometimes I see kids who were in past productions, y'know, at the supermarket, working at stores in town. Older now.

40 INT HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

40

The Janitor sweeps between the seats, while on stage a rehearsal for *Oklahoma!* is in progress. High school girls dance around the girl playing Laurey, as she sings along with an inept orchestra. A high school-quality farm house set squats on the stage behind them. A teenage girl, dressed as an old lady, sits on a rocker on the porch.

SINGER

Many a light lad may kiss and fly/
A kiss gone by is bygone/Never have
I asked an August sky/Where has
last July gone?/Never have I
wandered through the rye/Wondering
where has some guy gone/Many a new
day will dawn/Before I do

41 INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

41

Jake and the Young Woman listen to the song.

SINGER

Never have I chased the honeybee/
Who carelessly cajoled me/Somebody
else just as sweet as he/Cheered
and then consoled me

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, this girl seems healthy
enough in her attitude. Good for
her.

JAKE

She's protesting too much, it turns
out. She misses Curly.

YOUNG WOMAN

(laughing)
Curly? From The Three Stooges?

JAKE

Different Curly.

YOUNG WOMAN

We've all been there.

JAKE

Where?

YOUNG WOMAN

Protesting too much about how ok
everything is.

JAKE

True.

Jake watches the road in silence. Then:

JAKE (CONT'D)

That's why I like road trips. It's
always good to remind yourself that
the world is larger than the inside
of your own head. Y'know?

YOUNG WOMAN

(tapping her temple)
Perspective.

JAKE

Perspective.

YOUNG WOMAN

It is pretty out here. In a
heartbroken, bleak kind of way.

The song continues. The young woman stares out the window. ** *
YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE *

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

What was the last road trip I took?
I should remember, but I don't.
Nothing is coming to mind.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's odd. I am foggy about so many things lately.

JAKE
So you like this type of landscape?

YOUNG WOMAN
It's beautiful, yes. Melancholy. I do like that.

JAKE
It's the poet in you.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ha. Yeah. I suppose so. Maybe.

JAKE
You been working on anything?

YOUNG WOMAN
I just finished one. I don't know.

JAKE
Can I hear it?

YOUNG WOMAN
You can read it.

JAKE
I like to hear them in your voice. You're so good at reciting them.

YOUNG WOMAN
Not really, but thanks.

JAKE
It'll go with the poetic scenery.

YOUNG WOMAN
I don't know, Jake. I don't much feel like performing right --

JAKE
C'mon. It'll pass the time.

YOUNG WOMAN
(laughing)
Ok. I don't want you to be bored.
(beat)
It's called *Bonedog*.

As she recites, the camera studies her face, drifts several times from her to the passing bleak landscape and back, each time seeing her slightly differently: lipstick where there had been none, a slightly different hairstyle, glasses, no glasses, different glasses. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE x4**

*
*

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Coming home is terrible./
Whether the dogs lick your/face or
not; whether you/have a wife or
just a wife-/shaped loneliness
waiting/for you, coming home/is
terribly lonely so/that you will
even think/of the oppressive
barometric/pressure back/where you
have just come/from with
fondness/because everything is
worse/once you're home./You will
think of the/vermin clinging to
the/grass stalks, long hours/on the
road, roadside/assistance and ice
creams/and the peculiar shapes/of
certain clouds/and silences/with
longing/because you did not want/to
return;/coming home is just/awful,
and the homestyle/silences and
clouds/contribute to nothing/but
the general/malaise. The
clouds,/such as they are,/are in
fact suspect/and made from a
different/material than those/you
left behind./You yourself are
cut/from a different/cloudy cloth,/
returned, remaindered,/ill-met by
moonlight,/unhappy to be
back,/slack in all the wrong/spots,
seamy suit/of clothes, dishrag-
/ratty, worn.

You return home/moonlanded,
foreign/the earth's
gravitational/pull an effort now
redoubled/dragging your
shoelaces/loose and your
shoulders,/etching deeper the/
stanza of worry/on your forehead,/
you return/home deepened,/a parched
well,/linked to tomorrow/by a frail
strand of/anyway:/you sigh/into the
onslaught/of identical days,
one/might as well/at a time.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Well, anyway, /you're back, /the sun/
goes up /and down like a /tired
whore, /the weather immobile /as a
broken limb /while you just keep /
getting older. /Nothing moves /but
the shifting tides /of salt in your
body. /Your vision blears. /You carry
your weather /with you, big /blue
whale, a /skeletal darkness; /you've
come back /with X-ray vision; /your
eyes have become /a hunger. /You come
home /with your mutant gifts /to a
house of bone.

Everything you see now. /All of it.
Bone.

Silence. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE**

*

JAKE

Wow.

YOUNG WOMAN

(laughing)

"Wow" is pretty much an all-purpose
exclamation, I just realized. It
could mean you loved it or that
there are no other words to
describe how rubbish it is.

JAKE

I love it. That's what it means.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah? I don't know.

JAKE

It's amazing. I feel like it's
about me. Like completely.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, thanks. I guess that's the
thing one hopes for when writing a
poem.

JAKE

What's that?

YOUNG WOMAN

Some universality in the specific?
I don't know.

JAKE

Yeah. A feeling of connection. It's like you wrote it about me. I don't know how you do it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Do what?

JAKE

Think in words without setting those thoughts in stone. Use language not to corral the world, but to set it free.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wow.

They both laugh at her use of the word "wow."

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Anyway, I don't know that I do all that, but thanks.

JAKE

You really do. It's a marvel.

YOUNG WOMAN

A marvel, no less! Well, thanks.

JAKE

Sure.

YOUNG WOMAN

You're very sweet.

The Young Woman looks out the window.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I'm thinking of ending things. Jake is really great. He's sensitive. He listens to me. He's smart. There's just something... ineffable? Profoundly, unutterably, unfixably wrong here. I almost wish he were horrible, some monster, that he beat me, that he was a drunk, that he ignored me. Then my decision would be clear.

She looks over at Jake. He glances back, fearful.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

But he's just not right. And no amount of *more time* will fix that.

JAKE

Is something wrong? I'm feeling --

YOUNG WOMAN

No.

JAKE

You seem sort of far away, is all.

YOUNG WOMAN

Just thinking.

JAKE

About what?

YOUNG WOMAN

(considering, stalling)

About what? Hmm. I don't know.

Just vague "in my head" stuff.

(beat)

I guess maybe I was thinking about time.

JAKE

Really?

YOUNG WOMAN

How it's in charge of us, like we're on a train and it takes us where it takes us. There's no veering off. No side trips. And like Mussolini's trains; it runs on time.

JAKE

I read that it's not really true about Mussolini and trains. The improvements in the railway system preceded him. He just took credit. And even so, they still didn't always run on time.

YOUNG WOMAN

Huh. I guess that's not really where I was going with that analogy. Not really about Mussolini.

JAKE

(beat)

Anyway, you can always jump off a train, right?

YOUNG WOMAN

In movies, maybe. In real life you will likely die jumping from a moving train.

JAKE

That's true, I suppose. I watch too many movies. That's very true.

YOUNG WOMAN

Everyone does. A societal malady.

JAKE

I fill my brain with lies to pass the time. And it does pass -- in the blink of an eye. An eye blink in excruciatingly slow motion.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's like the rabies virus attaching itself to our ganglia, then changing us into itself.

JAKE

Viruses are monstrous.

YOUNG WOMAN

Everything wants to live, Jake. Viruses are just one more example of everything.

JAKE

I suppose.

YOUNG WOMAN

Even crappy, fake movie ideas want to live. They grow in your brain, replacing your real ideas. That's what makes them dangerous.

JAKE

But did you know there are insects that blow themselves up? So there's that. Not everything wants to live.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. Certain ants, certain aphids.

JAKE

For the good of their communities.

YOUNG WOMAN

Suicide bombers.

JAKE

So not everything wants to live.

YOUNG WOMAN

True. Well, they want their communities to live, which is sort of like themselves writ large.

(beat)

And, also, we don't know if they really want anything. It's more likely just how they're programmed.

JAKE

Maybe we're all programmed. Right?

He looks at her for some kind of confirmation. The Young Woman glances over at him and makes a gesture and noise as if she's exploding. They laugh.

YOUNG WOMAN

Now we're both dead.

Silence.

JAKE

For the good of the community.

42 INT. HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - EVENING 42

Janitor cleans the bathroom sinks. There is a stage make-up book open to OLD AGE make-up techniques, some open make-up containers, and a white old lady wig.

43 OMITTED 43

44 OMITTED 44

45pt1,2 INT. JAKE'S CAR - EVENING 45pt1,2

Jake and the Young Woman pull off the road onto a dark, dirt driveway. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE**

*

JAKE

Ta-dah.

YOUNG WOMAN

This is it?

JAKE

You sound disappointed.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, no. It's just... there's nothing here.

JAKE

It's here. This is the driveway. The house is set a ways back.

The driveway is long and bumpy with potholes. They make their way to the house in silence, park. It is the farmhouse the Janitor lives in. She studies the house, illuminated by the headlights. Jake looks over at her, trying to gauge her reaction. The house is completely dark. There are no other cars in the driveway.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You hate it.

YOUNG WOMAN

No! It just looks like no one is home. Are you sure we have the right --

JAKE

Of course it's the right house. I mean, Jesus --

YOUNG WOMAN

I was going to say "night." Are you sure we have the right night? There are no lights on; there's no car.

45pt3 EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

45pt3 *

A few lights turn on inside, one illuminating an older American sedan that had been hidden in the shadows.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh.

JAKE

Well, shall we? *

They open the car door and exit. *

*

46 EXT. FARM HOUSE - EVENING

46

The snow falls hard. Jake looks at the house. A silhouetted woman watches them from an upstairs window. Jake waves. She waves back. The Young Woman waves shyly. The woman waves back. Jake waves again. The silhouetted woman waves again.

JAKE

So I'm not ready to go in. I need to stretch my legs. Long legs. Long drive.

YOUNG WOMAN

Is that rude? I mean, she clearly know we're here. We were all waving at each other for quite a while.

JAKE

Nah. They know I like to stretch my legs. C'mon, I'll show you around.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's cold and getting dark, Jake.

JAKE

I'll give you the abridged tour.

*

A47 INT/EXT BARN - EVENING

A47 *

Jake and Young Woman walk towards barn.

JAKE

I used to love to be outside here when I was a kid. The stars are amazing here when it's not cloudy. I would lie on my back and look at them for hours. I don't know when I stopped doing that. It's weird, there was a last time I did that and I didn't know at the time that it would be. Isn't that interesting? The last time you do something is often a secret from you at the time.

*

YOUNG WOMAN

It is interesting.

They park and walk towards the barn.

JAKE

Maybe we'll come back in the spring and we can lie out here and look up at the universe. Then whenever that was won't have been my last time. My last time will be with you.

YOUNG WOMAN

That sounds nice.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I do like that Jake once had this side to him. A child filled with wonder. He's so burdened now, which makes me sad, and is made all the more heartbreaking knowing that there is still an innocent child buried under all that.

They arrive at an old barn.

JAKE

The sheep are in here. I'd say we could feed them, but Dad probably gave them some grain --
(checks watch)
-- about an hour ago. So... But we can go in and say hi.

Jake enters the barn. The Young Woman follows.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Hi, sheep.

YOUNG WOMAN

Hi, sheep.

47 INT. BARN - EVENING

47

It's darker in here, but the sheep are visible in silhouette. There is the sound of rustling and breathing and chewing.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

There's something dreary and sad in here. And it smells. I wonder what it must be like to be a sheep, to spend one's entire life in this miserable, smelly place, doing nothing. Eating. Shitting. Sleeping. Over and over.

JAKE

They're always chewing like that. It's their cud.

YOUNG WOMAN

What's cud?

JAKE

Semi-digested food. They regurgitate it and chew it. Sheep gum.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yum. Sheep gum.

JAKE

(brightly)

Well, there you have it: the sheep.

*

Jake leads the way out.

48 INT. BARN - EVENING

48 *

They pass three stacked dead lambs. Jake walks right past, without acknowledging them. The Young Woman stops to look. She hurries to catch up.

YOUNG WOMAN
What will happen to the lambs?

JAKE
What?

YOUNG WOMAN
The lambs.

JAKE
Oh, those dead ones?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

Jake keeps walking, says nothing. She follows. *

JAKE
(impatient)
I don't know what you're asking.
They're already dead. What else can
happen to them?

YOUNG WOMAN
I mean, will they be buried?

JAKE
Probably be burned come spring.
But they're frozen solid for now.
So.. They're fine. No worries.
C'mon, I'll show you the old pen
where they used to keep the pigs.
They don't keep pigs anymore.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok.

JAKE
Because pigs are hard to keep.

They arrive at the empty pig pen. The young woman looks toward the house in the distance.

JAKE (CONT'D)
They had to put them down.

YOUNG WOMAN
Uh-huh. That's too bad.

JAKE
Rotten situation. The pigs. Life isn't always pretty on a farm. Something you should know.

*

Jake just waits.

YOUNG WOMAN
(feeling forced to ask)
So, what happened?

JAKE
To the pigs? Forget it. I don't think you'd like this story.

YOUNG WOMAN
You have to tell me now. You can't do that.

JAKE
Yeah?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes! Jesus.

JAKE
Ok. Well, my father hadn't been in to check on the pigs for a few days. My parents were busy. He'd just toss their food into the pen. But after a few days, he noticed they were just lying in the same corner all the time. So he went inside to check on them. They didn't look well. He decided he'd better try to move them. And they're heavy -- I mean, they're pigs, right? -- but he finally moved one and discovered that its entire underside was filled with maggots. Both pigs were being eaten alive. Life on a farm can be brutal. Should we go in? It's cold.

*

*

Jake walks; the Young Woman follows.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
One likes to think there is always
hope. It is a uniquely human
fantasy that things will get
better, born, perhaps, of the
uniquely human understanding that
things will not. There's no way to
know for certain, but I suspect
humans are the only animals that
know the inevitability of their own
death. Other animals live in the
present. Humans cannot. So they
invented hope.

Jake leads the way.

49 OMITTED

49

*
*
*
*
*

*

50 INT. STAIRWELL - EVENING 50

The Janitor mops up a pile of vomit.

51 INT. HOUSE - FOYER - EVENING 51

Jake and the Young Woman stand in the entrance in their
stocking feet. The room is neat, homey. No one is around.

JAKE

Hello?

No answer.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'm here! We're here!

No answer.

JAKE (CONT'D)

It's Jake!

Silence.

FATHER (O.S.)

We'll be down in a minute!

JAKE

Ok!

JAKE (CONT'D)

(to young woman)

Do you want slippers? Floors are cold here. Old houses.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah. Thanks.

Jake sifts through a wooden trunk of hats, scarves, gloves.

JAKE

They'll be big on you. They're my old ones. But they're warm.

YOUNG WOMAN

Sounds good.

Jake pulls out the same blue slippers the Janitor had been wearing.

JAKE

And *voila*.

YOUNG WOMAN

Great.

She puts them on. Jake closes the trunk.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Oh, none for you? You should take these. They're yours!

JAKE

What kind of gentleman would that
make me? My slippers are your
slippers.

YOUNG WOMAN

You sure?

JAKE

I am. Mis zapatillas son tus
zapatillas. Have a seat.

Jake gestures toward the couch.

JAKE (CONT'D)

They'll be right down.

She slides in the too-large slippers toward the couch, sits.
Jake remains standing, looking anxiously up the stairs.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Music?

YOUNG WOMAN

Sure.

Jake walks over to the phonograph, puts something on, and
music starts up, too quickly, slightly off. The music is some
sort of musical number on a scratchy album. It's hard to
tell what it is; it's far away and vague, more like a song
remembered than heard.

Cut to

A52 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - EVENING

A52

- Same music plays but more clearly, as Male & Female H.S.
Student practice the dream ballet from Oklahoma. The Janitor
wheels a trash can past them down the hall. *

52pt. 1 INT. FARM HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - EVENING

52pt. 1

He looks up the stairs again. Then:

JAKE

So the bedrooms are upstairs. Not
much else. My mom's sewing room. A
bathroom. Linen closet. I can show
you after we eat, if you like.
It's not fancy, as you can see. An
old place. Not much up there.

YOUNG WOMAN
It's nice. I like it.

JAKE
Yeah?

YOUNG WOMAN
Reminds me of the house I grew up
in.

JAKE
I suppose all farm houses are
alike.

YOUNG WOMAN
Like all happy families.

Jake nods.

JAKE
I'm not sure Tolstoy got that one
right.

Silence. Jake looks toward the stairs.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Happiness in a family is as nuanced
as unhappiness.

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, I think he was really talking
about marriage, in that --

JAKE
And here they come.

They don't.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I'll get a fire going in the
meantime.

Jake fiddles with the fire place for a moment and there is a
roaring fire, a little too quickly.

YOUNG WOMAN
Your parents knew we were coming,
right? I mean, they invited us.

JAKE
Invitation sounds a little too
formal for my family, but, yeah, of
course. We communicated.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok, cool.
(beat)
Fire feels good. Cozy.

Jake sits, but rigidly, as if ready to spring into action.
The young woman spots a scratched up, ragged, closed door.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

What's in there?

JAKE

The basement. *

YOUNG WOMAN

I see.

JAKE

We keep it closed off, mostly. Old houses tend to be drafty.

YOUNG WOMAN

Right.

JAKE

Anyway, the basement is unfinished.
A hole in the ground, really.

YOUNG WOMAN

A hole in the ground?

JAKE

Well... unfinished. Just the water heater. Washer and dryer. Stuff like that. We don't use it really for anything else. Never did. *

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok.

JAKE

More or less a waste of space.
(beat)
I hate the basement, if you want to know.

YOUNG WOMAN

You have intense feelings about it.

JAKE

(pulling back on reaction)
You know, when you're a kid, basements are scary.

YOUNG WOMAN

We didn't have one. Living in an apartment. But I've seen enough scary movies to get the idea.

(joking)

Don't look in the basement!

JAKE

(laughing)

Exactly. He's hiding down there!

YOUNG WOMAN

Ha.

(beat)

Who?

JAKE

What?

YOUNG WOMAN

What are the scratches on the door?

JAKE

Dog. From the dog. Mostly.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh! I love dogs! I didn't know your parents have one. I can usually tell when there's a dog in someone's house. Toys lying around.

JAKE

My folks are tidy.

YOUNG WOMAN

Where is it? What kind? What's its name?

JAKE

So many questions! Jimmy. He's a mutt. Probably outside. He always loved the snow.

Jimmy, covered in snow, galumphs in, pushing with his nose through the swinging kitchen door. He runs up to and jumps onto Jake, licks his face, then onto the young woman.

YOUNG WOMAN

(laughing)

Hi, Jimmy! Ew, he's all wet!

Jimmy shakes himself off, spraying Jake and the Young Woman. She laughs. His shaking goes on for an oddly long time. She stops laughing, watches puzzled.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

That's --

JAKE

And here they come!

52pt. 2 INT. FARM HOUSE - FOYER/SITTING ROOM - EVENING

52pt. 2 *

The parents are coming down the stairs. The Father is tall and rangy; he has a Band Aid on his forehead. The Mother small and birdlike.

MOTHER

Hi! Welcome!

FATHER

The drive ok?

JAKE

Yeah. Fine.

They pass the table, which is now laden with an extravagant meal of ham, potatoes, corn, salad, and various Jello mold concoctions. The Mother hugs the Young Woman.

MOTHER

So glad to meet you, Louisa! Jake has told us so much about you.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh! He's told me so much about both of you, too!

The Mother appears to have a permanent smile on her face.

MOTHER

Oh dear! And you came anyway?

The Mother laughs at her joke, and everyone else with the exception of Jake joins in. Jake seems tense.

FATHER

Let's eat already! Or the food will get as cold as a witch's tit in a brass brassiere!

52pt. 3 INT. FARM HOUSE DINING ROOM - EVENING

52pt. 3 *

The parents and Jake are somehow almost immediately seated. It takes the Young Woman a moment longer to arrive at her place -- sliding in her too-big slippers -- and sit, and even though the parents are still smiling, there is a strain of impatience on their faces. Jake looks down at his plate.

YOUNG WOMAN

It smells great.

MOTHER

I hope you're hungry. All homemade.
Everything you see on the table is
from the farm.

The Young Woman glances at the ham, then Jake. He is looking
down, shaking his head.

YOUNG WOMAN

Looks great.

Food is passed around and shoveled on plates. The Young
Woman notices that the mother's big toe has no nail.

MOTHER

So Jake tells us you're a painter?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. Jake tells you correctly.

FATHER

I don't really know much about art,
but I like pictures where you know
what you're looking at.

JAKE

(into his plate)
Dad. For Christ's sake.

FATHER

What do you call it -- abstract? --
I don't get that. I mean, I could
do abstract, smear paint on a, what
is it called -- a canvas? -- I
think it's a con job, if you ask
me. I like paintings that look like
a photograph. I couldn't do one of
those in a million years. That's
talent.

JAKE

Why not just take a photograph,
Dad, if you like photographs? It's
much quicker. And photographs look
exactly like photographs.

FATHER

I like photographs. Mostly sports
photographs.

MOTHER

(to young woman)
What kind of paintings do you make,
Lucy?

*

YOUNG WOMAN

Um, Well, I'm not an abstract painter! So that's in my favor.

FATHER

Good.

(to no one in particular)

See? That's exactly my point.

Good.

YOUNG WOMAN

I do mostly landscapes.

FATHER

Like outside paintings?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah. Plein Air. Which is outdoor painting. I try to capture the feel of the light and atmosphere.

MOTHER

That sounds lovely. Jake used to paint, too, of course.

JAKE

(into his plate)

Mom.

MOTHER

He worked really hard at it.

YOUNG WOMAN

I didn't know that! Jake!

Jake doesn't look up.

MOTHER

He was very good.

YOUNG WOMAN

I try to imbue my work with a kind of interiority.

FATHER

Interiority. So you paint insides? I thought --

YOUNG WOMAN

Inside my head. So a landscape would attempt to express how I'm feeling at the time: lonely, joyous, worried, sad.

MOTHER

That sounds very interesting. Like that painting of that girl sitting in a field looking at a house?

YOUNG WOMAN

Christina's World. Wyeth. Yes. Exactly. But without people.

FATHER

How can a picture of a field be sad without a sad person looking sad in the field?

YOUNG WOMAN

It's an interesting problem. That's what I struggle with. I have some pictures of my work, if you'd like to see.

MOTHER

Oh, yes.

FATHER

Yeah, sure.

The Young Woman pulls out her phone, sees that there have been several calls from Louisa. She ignores them, opens up her portfolio, crosses the table, places herself between the Mother and Father, and shows them her work. The painting are beautiful: expressionistic, vast, lonely wintry landscapes.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I mean, they're pretty, but I don't see how they're supposed to make me feel something if there's not a person in them feeling sad or joyous or whatever other emotion you said.

YOUNG WOMAN

Maybe think of yourself as the person, looking out at the scene.

FATHER

I'd have to see me in them.

YOUNG WOMAN

As if you're there. If you were there, you wouldn't see yourself, right?

FATHER

I would if I looked down. I'm not a ghost! Yet!

The Father and the Mother laugh.

MOTHER

I can attest to that! Especially in the bedroom!

JAKE

Jesus.

YOUNG WOMAN

Sure. But if you were just looking out at it, without looking down. You'd just see the scene and feel something. Anything an environment makes you feel is all about you and not the environment, right? None of the feeling is inherent to place.

FATHER

Well, that's over my head, I guess.

MOTHER

They are pretty though. You're very talented. I like the colors.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thank you.

MOTHER

Jake, you didn't tell us your girlfriend is so talented.

JAKE

(to his food)
I did, actually.

MOTHER

So Jake tells us you're studying
physics at the university.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes.

FATHER
That's unusual for a girl, isn't it?

JAKE
Dad.

FATHER
I'm just asking.

YOUNG WOMAN
It is, actually. But a little less so these days. Which is good, I think.

MOTHER
Well, after seventh grade, I could never understand what Jake was saying! So it's wonderful he has someone he can talk to about all his ideas!

FATHER
Jake tells us there have been a lot of famous husband and wife physicists.

JAKE
Jesus, Dad.

YOUNG WOMAN
I guess there have been some. Pierre and Marie Curie shared a Nobel Prize in Physics.

FATHER
Even I've heard of them. Well, her, anyway. Radiation.

MOTHER
Radioactivity.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

FATHER
I never heard of him, though.

MOTHER
It's all so exciting. And I'm so glad Jake has found someone. Won't you please tell us the story of how you met? Jake has refused.

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I love romantic meeting stories.
Like in *Forget Paris?* Billy
Crystal?

FATHER

I didn't like that movie.

The Young Woman looks over at Jake. He stares down at his plate. She looks at the Mother, who waits, expectantly.

YOUNG WOMAN

Um, so, I went with a friend to a bar near campus. It turned out to be trivia night.

MOTHER

I love this so far. Jake is crazy about trivia. We used to play the genius edition of Trivial Pursuit and --

JAKE

Genus.

MOTHER

What?

JAKE

It's genius edition.

MOTHER

Really? I've always thought the word was genius. I've been saying it wrong all these years! It goes to show...

(punchline)

... I'm no genius!

She laughs. The Father laughs.

FATHER

That's a good one.

JAKE

No. Genus is not the same as genius. A genus is a category.

MOTHER

Oh. I always thought it was the genius edition. I told everybody you knew every answer in the genius edition. I was very proud of that.

(thought)

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Why didn't we get the genius edition?

JAKE

(yelling into his plate)
There is no genius edition!

The Young Woman looks at him, frightened by his anger.

MOTHER

Ok. I didn't understand. Ok.

Silence. Everyone eats. The Young Woman tries to lighten the mood. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGES**

*

YOUNG WOMAN

So Jake was with his trivia team and my friend and I found an empty table near them. I was watching him.

MOTHER

Because you thought he was cute!

YOUNG WOMAN

Ha. Yeah, I did. And very serious about the game, which I found -- I don't know -- charming. His team was called... what?

JAKE

Breznev's Eyebrows.

YOUNG WOMAN

Right. Brezhnev's Eyebrows. I asked him who Brezhnev was. Basically because I wanted to say something to him. He told me Brezhnev was a Soviet engineer, General...

JAKE

... Secretary of the Communist Party.

YOUNG WOMAN

During the Age of Starvation.

JAKE

Stagnation.

YOUNG WOMAN

Stagnation. Anyway, those kind of team names drive me nuts, usually. They all have them, those teams.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Show-offy. But, I don't know, it didn't bother me with Jake.

(to Mother)

Maybe I just didn't let it, because I thought he was cute.

MOTHER

Aw. He is cute, isn't he?

YOUNG WOMAN

He is. So I was trying to get up the nerve to talk to him, because even though he had looked over at me more than once, it was clear he was not going to say anything.

FATHER

Didn't you just say you talked about Brehznev?

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh. Yes. That's true. But then we didn't talk anymore after that, I guess, is what I meant.

FATHER

Oh.

YOUNG WOMAN

So I said something stupid like, you guys seem to be doing well. I had to yell it, practically; it was so noisy. He held up his beer and said, We're helpfully fortified. And I laughed and the ice was broken. I think he was egged on by my laughing, so he told me he is a cruci...

JAKE

...verbalist.

YOUNG WOMAN

I didn't know what it meant. But I didn't want to admit that, so I just said, cool. He was showing off again and poorly, but I guess I thought, ok, this guy is awkward. He doesn't have any game at all. There was something sort of appealing about that. But then it kept going. He said he had wanted the team name to be Ipseity.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

And I was like, ugh, now it's getting to be too much.

MOTHER

You didn't like him anymore?

Jake looks over at the Young Woman.

YOUNG WOMAN

No. I did. I just wanted that stuff to stop. So I said, I don't know that word and you know I don't know that word, so why don't you just cut the crap? He said something like, I'm an asshole. I'm not very good at talking to people, and ipseity is just another word for selfhood. Anyway, after that he just talked like a normal person and he was funny. And I could see he wanted to ask for my number but was shy. Then my friend wanted to go, and so I was getting up, and he just blurted out, could he have my number.

FATHER

Way to go, Jake! About time!

YOUNG WOMAN

And I was very glad he did. The rest is history. That was like, what, six weeks ago? I don't know. Feels longer. Feels like forever, in a way. I can't really remember how long ago it is. Feels like forever.

MOTHER

What a wonderful story! It could be in a movie!

(beat)

"Feels like forever." That's very romantic.

A53, B53, OMITTED

A53, B53,

C53 OMITTED

C53

53, V53 INT. ART CLASSROOM - NIGHT

53, V53

The Janitor watches a DVD on the TV in the classroom as he scrubs solvent onto paint stains on the art table.

On the TV, a young waitress is finishing up at a booth. The scene is punctuated by a cute score.

WAITRESS

Great! I'll be right back with your beverages!

She makes her way to the kitchen window. A young man on a mission enters the restaurant, spots her and hurries over.

YOUNG MAN

Yvonne!

YVONNE

What? What do you want?

YOUNG MAN

I just wanted to say hi.

YVONNE

Can't you see I'm working?

YOUNG MAN

I can. I'm sorry. I just had to talk to you.

YVONNE

I think it's abundantly clear that you and I have nothing --

*

She walks off; he follows. She enters kitchen & exits.

*

YVONNE (CONT'D)

-- more to say to each other.
Goodbye.

(arrives at new table)

Hello! Welcome to Harris Grill.
I'm Yvonne, I'll be taking care of you today.

CUSTOMER

There's a guy behind you.

Yvonne turns to look.

YVONNE

(to young man)

Really??

(to customer)

That's Nimrod. He's the idiot waiter in training trailing me.

YOUNG MAN
(to customer)
Hi, I'm Nimrod.

CUSTOMER
Hey.

YVONNE
So are you folks ready to order? Or
can I answer any questions about
the menu?

CUSTOMER
How's the Santa Fe burger? *

YVONNE
Very popular.

CUSTOMER
Ok, so which do you prefer, the
Santa Fe burger or the Natchez
burger.

YVONNE
Hmm. That's a tough one. They're
both really, really good.

CUSTOMER
You don't have a favorite?

YVONNE
Well, I guess I'd say --

YOUNG MAN
Look, man, she's a vegan.

YVONNE
What the hell are you doing?

YOUNG MAN
What you don't know about this
amazing woman before you is that
she is not a waitress --

YVONNE
Get out of here!

Yvonne pushes him to the door, but he keeps addressing the customer, raising his volume as the distance between them increases.

YOUNG MAN

-- Well, she is a waitress, but only to put herself through school so she can be an animal welfare lawyer. Not a crumb of meat or dairy has passed her amazing, beautiful lips since she was five years old and she learned that a hamburger is a ground-up cow. She has spent all her life since, trying to make the world a safer, kinder place for animals. And I love her! I love her! I love her because she is the sweetest, most caring, funniest, smartest --

*

He is pushed out the door. Yvonne closes it behind him. He just stands there, watching her through the glass. She turns away from him to see that everyone in the restaurant is watching, as well. The customers applaud. Her boss approaches.

BOSS

That was beautiful, Yvonne. You're fired.

V53 EXT. DINER - DAY (TV SHOW)

V53

On the street. Yvonne and the young man sit on the curb, both staring straight ahead. She's in street clothes now and holding her bag in her lap.

YVONNE

You are such an idiot.

YOUNG MAN

Agreed.

YVONNE

I needed that job, idiot.

YOUNG MAN

I know.

Silence. Still staring forward, she slugs him on the arm. Silence.

YVONNE

Did you say you love me?

YOUNG MAN

I did.

YVONNE

Idiot.

YOUNG MAN

Yes.

Both still staring ahead, Yvonne reaches for his hand and takes it.

54

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

54

They're all still at the dinner table. The Mother wears a slightly different dress now. She seems a bit older. Her nailless toe is now wrapped in a bandage. The Father's Band Aid is on the other side of his forehead. The Young Woman is in an outfit slightly different than earlier, slightly reminiscent of Yvonne's STREET CLOTHES **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE** She seems somewhat aware of the changes, but uncertain.

*
*

MOTHER

Jake was always a good boy. He was even awarded a diligence pin at school.

(to Jake)

You remember?

(to young woman)

Diligence. At eight. Can you believe that? It was quite a thing. His father and I never got awarded any such pin at eight.

FATHER

At any age.

MOTHER

True enough. At no age.

FATHER

I did have a bunch of sports trophies, but no diligence trophy. I don't imagine I even knew the word "diligence" at eight.

MOTHER

But Jake knew it.

(to Jake)

You knew.

FATHER

Jake knew.

(to Jake)

(MORE)

FATHER (CONT'D)

Remember how excited you were about
the diligence pin, kiddo?

JAKE

No.

MOTHER

He wore it to school.

JAKE

I didn't

MOTHER

He did. Every day.

(to Jake)

You did.

JAKE

I didn't. I was disappointed. I wanted the "Acumen" pin. "Diligence" is an also ran. "You there, you work very hard. You're not that bright, but we're impressed that you try anyway."

MOTHER

Don't be sour. It was a lovely pin.

(to Young Woman)

Dessert? I made Jake's favorite chocolate cake

YOUNG WOMAN

Lovely. Of course. I never turn down anything chocolate.

MOTHER

Lovely.

FATHER

(singing)

Wouldn't it be lovely?

(to Young Woman)

My Fair Lady.

The Mother shoots the father a look, gets up and makes her way to the kitchen, touching his shoulder on the way.

MOTHER

Help me, I'll serve dessert in the sitting room.

There's something in the way she says "help me" that isn't a casual plea for kitchen help. He nods, gets up and follows her out of the room.

The parents voices are raised in the other room, some sort of argument, interspersed with the father singing bits of "Wouldn't it be Lovely." Jake and the Young Woman sit in silence, Jake still looking down at his food.

A55

INT. FARM HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

A55

YOUNG WOMAN

You seem so quiet. You ok?

JAKE

(looking up at her)

Do you like them?

YOUNG WOMAN

They're very nice. Very nice parents. You chose well, my friend.

JAKE

Yeah?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes! Of course! They love you a lot. That's totally clear. That's of prime importance in parents.

JAKE

Yeah. I suppose. We've had our issues.

YOUNG WOMAN

Jesus. Everybody has issues with their parents!

She looks around, under the table.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Hey, what happened to Jimmy?

JAKE

I'm sure he's around. Maybe he went back out into the snow. He loved the snow.

The Young Woman spots Jimmy; he's in the corner, still shaking himself off.

YOUNG WOMAN

There he is.

She crosses to him, kneels down and pets him.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

(affectionately)

You stinky, wet monster.

He wags his tail.

JAKE

Sorry.

YOUNG WOMAN

About?

JAKE

His smell.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's fine, Jake. He's a dog.

She notices some photos on the wall and crosses to them. Jake is anxious. The photos are of the family: Jake as a teen, his parents. There are a couple of photos of his parents older than they are now, one in which they look elderly and feeble.

JAKE

Just some old family photos.

She looks over at him and nods. When she looks back, those photos of his parents older are gone. She searches for them. Her eyes come to rest on a photo of a young girl. The Young Woman is startled.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wait. Who is this?

JAKE

You can't tell?

YOUNG WOMAN

No.

JAKE

It's me.

And it is. It's Jake now in the same jeans and t-shirt the girl was wearing in the photo.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I'm certain that was a photograph of me as a kid a moment ago. How could that possibly be in Jake's --

The parents enter with dessert.

MOTHER

Sorry! Sorry for the delay!
Kitchen emergency, don't ya know.

The Mother carries some sort of large, rolled chocolate log cake. There is a garishness to it.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Jake's favorite. Chocolate Yule
Log. Mmmm.

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Even though it's well past Yule!

The Mother places the cake on the table, sits. The Father sits. The Young Woman sits back down.

FATHER

That reminds me, when Jake sucked his thumb --

MOTHER

Way past the age when he should've stopped.

FATHER

He'd say "yull, yull, yull, yull" as he sucked it.

MOTHER

Yull log. Kind of looks like a thumb.

YOUNG WOMAN

Mmmm. That looks great.

MOTHER

Thank you. Enjoy!

The Mother cuts a too-thick slice, plates it, and hands it to the young woman.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thank you. It really looks amazing.

MOTHER

Enjoy!

She continues to slice the cake and pass it out.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I've been having problems with my ears. Just in case anyone was wondering why I keep rubbing at my ears all night long.

She has not been, but she is now.

FATHER

You have more than a problem.

MOTHER

Tinnitus. It is what it is, as they say.

YOUNG WOMAN

What is tinnitus?

FATHER

Not very much fun, is what.

MOTHER

Not very much fun. But shit happens, as they say. I hear a buzzing in my ears, is what. Well, not a buzzing. More of a hiss. Well, more of a whisper.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh no. Always?

MOTHER

Yes. As if I'm constantly being whispered to. Psss psss psss psss.

(laughing a bit manically)

I wish I could tell what it's saying! Maybe it's sharing the secrets of the Universe with me!

(beat)

But I can't tell.

(beat, then laughing)

Maybe it's giving me stock market tips!

FATHER

Oh ho! We'd be rich!

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, I'm --

The Young Woman's phone rings. It's loud and startles her. She grabs for it reflexively, looks at the screen. "Yvonne" is calling.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Sorry. Sorry. I thought it was dead. Just my friend.

JAKE

Her friend calls a lot.

*

MOTHER

You can take it. You should take it. We won't think it rude.

YOUNG WOMAN

No, it's ok. It's not important.

FATHER

Well, you don't know. It might be.
It's a blizzard out there. Maybe
she's stranded.

YOUNG WOMAN

No, it's ok. Is it a blizzard now?
(looking at Jake)
We don't want to get stuck.

JAKE

It's fine. I've got the chains.

FATHER

Oh, you put the chains on?

YOUNG WOMAN

(to parents)
I have to work early tomorrow.

JAKE

(to Father)
Not yet. But I have them in the
bed.

FATHER

(to Young Woman)
The chains should make it fine.

MOTHER

What's that? I'm sorry.

She points to her ear.

FATHER

The chains.

MOTHER

Oh.
(beat, to young woman)
The Whispers, I call them.

FATHER

Night is the worst.

MOTHER

What is?

FATHER

Night.

MOTHER

Oh. Night is the worst. I don't
sleep much anymore.

YOUNG WOMAN
That sounds very difficult. I'm
sorry.

MOTHER
(not hearing)
I'm sorry?

YOUNG WOMAN
I just said, I'm sorry.

MOTHER
Oh.
(laughs)
We're both sorry!
(thought)
You should take your call, though.

FATHER
Could be an emergency.

YOUNG WOMAN
No. I know what she's calling
about. It's fine.

JAKE
(oddly pointed)
You should at least listen to the
message.

The Young Woman and Jake stare at each other for a long
moment.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok. Sure.

She puts the phone to her ear. Jake watches her closely.

MAN'S VOICE
There's only one question to
resolve. I'm scared. I feel a
little crazy. I'm not lucid. The
assumptions are right. I can feel
my fear growing. Now is the time
for the answer. Just one question.
One question to answer.

The message is over. She puts the phone back in her purse.

YOUNG WOMAN
She's fine.

FATHER
What'd she want?

YOUNG WOMAN
Just calling to say hi.

MOTHER
Well, that's nice. Friends are important. Jake never really had a lot of them growing up. Or even after. Remember your fiftieth birthday --

JAKE
Twentieth.

MOTHER
What'd I say?

YOUNG WOMAN
Fiftieth.

MOTHER
Oh goodness. Where is my brain? Anyway. Friends are helpful, I've always found. Life can be difficult. On a farm.

FATHER
It doesn't get easier as it trudges along, I'll say that.

MOTHER
What's that?

FATHER
It doesn't get easier.

MOTHER
What doesn't?

FATHER
Life.

MOTHER
Oh. No. It doesn't. It's basically a fast train to Hell.

JAKE
For God's sake, Mom.

MOTHER
That's overstating it; I agree.
(laughing)
It's a fast train to Heck!

The Father laughs.

FATHER

Your mom was always funny. That's what I loved about her. I think it's what I first fell in love with. It kind of faded a bit as she got older.

MOTHER

That's true. You get worn down, I guess. It's not so funny anymore.

FATHER

I miss her terribly.

JAKE

So, Lucia is studying gerontology.

MOTHER

Oh, really? How fascinating.

YOUNG WOMAN

I've always been interested in problems associated with aging. I think our society has an almost repulsed relationship to the aged, which is eminently foolish, because it's a natural and inevitable part of the life cycle of all living things. Not to mention, it's terribly unkind.

MOTHER

Well, how interesting. And compassionate! You've got a keeper here, Jake. How kind she is.

The Young Woman is looking out the window now. The snow is coming down hard and the wind is fierce.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh boy. It looks pretty bad. Jake, I think we should probably --
(turns to room)
-- go.

B55

INT. FARM HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

B55

The room is empty. The table has been cleared and is set with a vase overflowing with lush tropical flowers. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE**

*
*

YOUNG WOMAN

Jake?

No answer.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (calling)
 Jake?

No answer.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (calling, panicked)
 Jake??

JAKE (O.S.)
 (very far away)
 What?

YOUNG WOMAN
 (calling)
 I think we should go! It's looking
 pretty bad!

JAKE (O.S.)
 I have chains!

Jimmy is in the corner shaking snow off himself.

YOUNG WOMAN
 (calling)
 Where are you?

JAKE
 Upstairs.

YOUNG WOMAN
 (calling)
 Ok.

She starts up the stairs, which are steep and narrow. She looks anxiously around as she climbs, feeling as if she is being watched.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
 I'm coming up! Just letting you
 know!

No response.

55 INT. FARM HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

55

At the top of the stairs she finds that the hallway, going off at an odd angle, is much longer than one would expect. Many doorways.

YOUNG WOMAN
 Jake? Where are you?

There is no response. She steps into the hall. The first room on the left features a sign that reads "Jake's Childhood Bedroom." She peeks inside. It's a young boy's room, empty, but the lights are on. She looks back down the hall.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Jake?

No response. She enters the bedroom.

56

INT. JAKE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

56

It is crammed with stuff: piles and piles of DVDs and VHS tapes of movies, but also tapes labeled things like "Humiliations," and "The Ways People Have Looked at Me," and "Recurring Dreams of Failure." There are childhood games, used bandages, porn magazines, a cremation urn labeled "Jimmy." There are books on the shelves: Wordsworth, Anna Karenina, Virology, a collection of Pauline Kael film reviews, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again* by David Foster Wallace, *Theory of Colors* by Goethe. There's a collection of poems by Eva H.D. open on the night table. She picks it up and sees the it is open to the poem *Bonedog*. A hand touches her shoulder, she turns with a start. The Father is behind her. He is conspicuously older now, feeble. *

FATHER

Hi.

YOUNG WOMAN

You scared me. Sorry.

FATHER

Sorry. This is Jake's childhood bedroom.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. I saw the sign on the door --

FATHER

Oh, that.

(beat)

I can explain that. My memory is going. Early signs of...

He struggles for the word.

YOUNG WOMAN

Dementia? Alzheimer's? Lewy Bodies -

-

FATHER

I think that's it. So we have taken to labeling things around the home. You'll see labels all over the house.

YOUNG WOMAN

I haven't noticed.

FATHER

You will notice.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, I'm certainly very sorry to hear --

FATHER

It's ok. The truth is I'm looking forward to when it gets very bad so I don't have to remember that I can't remember.

He laughs and the Mother (O.S.) laughs somewhere far away.

FATHER (CONT'D)

It seems like that will be a better way to...
(struggling for word)
... thing.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes.

FATHER

They say, every cloud has a...

YOUNG WOMAN

Silver --

FATHER

(jumping in)
Silver. Exactly. That's what they say. Every cloud has a silver. I believe it to be true.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes.

FATHER

This was Jake's room. You two can stay in here tonight. His mother and I aren't old fashioned about those things. Fucking and what not.

The word is jarring coming from this man's mouth.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, I do need to get home. I have work in the morning, so --

FATHER

I know this bed is a little small for two...

(searches for word)

... grown-ups. It's a child's bed, after all. And not even for twin children, just for one child. But I think for a single night you could make do.

*

YOUNG WOMAN

That's very generous of you --

FATHER

I mean you won't be doing any fucking on this bed, I imagine. It's not made for fucking. It's a child's bed. And just for one child. Not two.

YOUNG WOMAN

Right.

The Father nods, turns, and limps from the room.

FATHER

I think I can find one of my wife's old... *things* for you to wear for tonight. I have to dig through some trunks, but I'm pretty sure I can find one of my wife's old things for you to wear for tonight.

He is gone. The Young Woman, shaking, waits for several beats.

57

INT. HALL - NIGHT

57

The Young Woman makes her way quietly down the hall.

YOUNG WOMAN

(whisper)

Jake?

She sees a room marked "Mom's Room (After Dad Died)." She peeks in. Jake is feeding his mother, ancient and frail, now in a nightgown and wheelchair bound.

MOTHER
Oh, it's the girlfriend.

Jake turns.

JAKE
(to Young Woman)
I'll be down in a minute.

The Young Woman enters, startled by the age of the mother.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jake. The snow. I need to leave.

MOTHER
I've told him over and over, it's
time for him to leave.

JAKE
Mom, you need to eat.
(to Young Woman)
I'll be down in a minute.

The Mother turns her head away as Jake is about to stick the spoon in her mouth. The baby food, smears her cheek, spills on her nightgown. Jake is annoyed.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Mom!

MOTHER
Jake was always a good boy.

JAKE
Mom.

MOTHER
Diligent. He won a pin. Maybe not
as naturally talented as some of
the other students. But he worked
so hard. And that's even more
impressive. Being a genius is like
being beautiful.

JAKE
Genius

MOTHER
Genius. The luck of the draw,
really, the genetic lottery, as
they say. But to do as well as Jake
did with no special talent or
abilities, that's much more
impressive.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes.

(to Jake)

Maybe you should put the chains on?

JAKE

(curt)

Soon!

The Young Woman reacts to Jake's tone, backing away slightly.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok.

JAKE

(conciliatory)

We'll leave soon. Let me just finish up here.

58 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

58

The storm is brutal. The Janitor, mumbling, empties trash into a dumpster. He turns and watches the storm.

59 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

59

The Young Woman kisses Jake on the forehead. Her attitude has shifted. She looks at him with affection. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE - WARMER**

*
*

YOUNG WOMAN

-- I'm impressed with your attentiveness to your mom. It's rare. We tend to warehouse our elderly. It's really special how devoted a son you are.

JAKE

Thanks. I'm glad to hear you say that. It makes me feel a bit better. Sometimes it feels like no one sees the good things you do. Like you're just alone.

YOUNG WOMAN

I see. I'll wait downstairs. Give you some privacy.

The Young Woman turns.

60pt.1 INT. HALL - NIGHT

60pt.1

She heads back to the stairs. Her expression shifts slowly to something harder, resolved, as she walks.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I should end this. Just end it. I
Just make a clean break. No
lingering. No waiting for things to
get better. You can only wait so
long.

She's descending the stairs now, which seem longer than on
the way up. **YOUNG WOMAN _ MULTI APPEARANCE CHANGES**

*

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I don't know who I am in this whole
thing anymore, where I stop and
Jake starts. I'm a pinball. My
emotional state is bouncing all
over the place. Jake sees me ...
needs to see me as someone who sees
him. He needs to be seen and he
needs to be seen with approval.
Like that's my purpose in all this,
in life. To approve of Jake. To
keep him going. *And* he needs to
see me as someone whose approval of
him is validated because I'm
approved of by others. Look at my
girlfriend. Look at what I won.
She's smart. She's talented. She's

*

She's sensitive. She can do this. She
knows about that. She made this.
She cares about that.
(beat)
I need to end it.

60pt.2 INT. FARM HOUSE - BASE OF STAIRS - NIGHT

60pt.2

*

She arrives at the base of the stairs. Jake is slowly walking
by, his arm looped with his now feeble father.

JAKE

Let me just take him to the
bathroom, then we'll go.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok.

FATHER

Is that the girl?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes, Dad. Louisa.

FATHER

Good. I got your mom's...

He holds up a nightgown. It has a post-it with the word "nightgown" on it.

FATHER (CONT'D)

(reading)

... nightgown for her.

The Father, with a Parkinsonian tremor, holds out the nightgown the Mother had just been wearing. The Young Woman takes it, her hand touching some still-wet spilled baby food. She tries to hide her revulsion, but Jake sees it, reacts.

YOUNG WOMAN

That's very kind. But I'm going to have to head home tonight. Soon.

FATHER

I don't understand.

(to Jake)

What does she mean?

JAKE

I don't know, Dad. I can't tell exactly. It's not exactly clear.

YOUNG WOMAN

I have my shift tomorrow.

JAKE

She's a waitress. We met when she was serving me. It's a sweet story. I asked her what she thought of the Santa Fe burger --

FATHER

I'm feeling confused.

JAKE

(to Father)

Let's just get you to the bathroom. We don't want another accident. Remember last night?

FATHER

No.

Jake leads his father off. The Young Woman drapes the nightgown over the stairway banister and looks out the window at the storm.

MOTHER (O.C.)

What's this old thing doing here?

The Young Woman turns to see the Mother holding the nightgown. This is a very young version of the Mother (1950s look).

*
*
*

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm not sure.

MOTHER

Oh my goodness. It's filthy! It's got Jake's baby food on it! What's it doing here? I tell you, I would misplace my own head if it wasn't screwed onto my shoulders.

(laughs)

Would you be a sweetheart and toss this in the washer. I just started a load. My hands are full picking up all these darn toys.

She laughs. Children's toys are scattered around the room.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Jake would leave his head on the floor if it wasn't screwed onto his shoulders.

YOUNG WOMAN

Sure. Where is it?

MOTHER

In the basement.

She nods toward the scratched-up door.

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't think Jake wants me down there.

MOTHER

Jake Jake Jake. Jake can be controlling. You can't allow him to control you. I think that's the other side of his type of personality, of this diligence thing. He needs to control everything. There are so many, many things that make him nervous that he just keeps closing more and more of the world off.

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

And the few people left in his life
have to follow all sorts of rules.
It's a problem.

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm sure I'm to blame, but then all that guilt just causes me to feel obligated to bend over backwards to accommodate his every little whim. It's a vicious cycle.

The Young Woman and the Mother watch each other for a long moment.

YOUNG WOMAN

So, what exactly are you saying to me.

MOTHER

(beat)

I'm saying, take the damn nightgown to the basement. Live dangerously.

The Mother laughs again. The Young Woman nods, opens the basement door. The stairs are rickety and it's dark. There is a bare bulb at the bottom of the stairs. She heads down.

61 INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

61

The Young Woman makes her way slowly down the dark, makeshift staircase, the noise of a washer thumping angrily through an unbalanced load fills the space.

JAKE (O.S.)

You sent her down?

MOTHER (O.S.)

To the washer.

JAKE (O.C.)

Mom, it's really --
(calling)
Lucy?

She looks up the stairs and sees Jake silhouetted in the doorway.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You don't have to do laundry for my mother! You're a guest! We'll get you a clean nightgown for tonight.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'll just toss it in! I don't mind!

JAKE

Well, we should get on the road!

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes! I'll be up in the minute!

JAKE

I could use some help with the chains!

YOUNG WOMAN

Right! I'll be up!

62

INT. FARMHOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

62

At the bottom, she looks back up; Jake is no longer in the doorway, which now seems to lead directly outside to the storm. Snow blows down the stairs. She turns to the room. Dirt floors. Scarred concrete walls. An old washing machine is bouncing and chugging. She opens the lid, watches the dark, sloshing water come to a stop, the room turning silent, aside from the howling wind. She stares down into the black water. After a moment, she plunges her arm (sleeve and all) into it, fishes around, and pulls out several dark green work shirts featuring the name of a high school stitched above the breast pocket, one after another. She puts them back, throws in the nightgown, closes the lid. The agitator resumes. She looks around the room. A small easel is set up in the corner with a crude landscape painting on it. Taped to the wall behind it are prints of the landscape paintings the Young Woman had on her phone. Printing on the bottom of the white borders indicate these are 19th century paintings by Isaac Levitan. The painting on the easel is a terrible attempt to copy one of the prints, unskilled, lifeless. She sees a pile of paintings and flips through them; they are all miserable attempts at copies. They are all signed "Jake." She tries to bring up her own paintings on her phone. They are gone. Her phone rings again. It is from Louisa. She answers it.

MAN'S VOICE

There's only one question to resolve. I'm scared. I feel a little crazy. I'm not lucid. The assumptions are right. I can feel my fear growing. Now is the time for the answer. Just one question. One question to answer

She hurries up the stairs.

63

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

63

The Young Woman, out of breath, emerges from the basement to see Jake standing mournfully over his ancient mother, clearly dead, lying on a hospital bed in the middle of the room.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh my God, Jake. Is your --

JAKE
Shh. She's asleep.

YOUNG WOMAN
She's -- ?

JAKE
We should go. It's getting
treacherous.

YOUNG WOMAN
Are you certain she's all right?

JAKE
Out like a light. A good time to
go.

YOUNG WOMAN
What about your Dad?

JAKE
He's... puttering somewhere.

YOUNG WOMAN
Should we say goodbye?

The Father emerges from the kitchen, younger, holding a
spanner and an elbow joint.

FATHER
Disposal's out again. It was sure
great to meet you though.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh! Thank you. It was great to meet
you. Thank you so much for your
hospitality.

FATHER
You're always welcome here.

YOUNG WOMAN
That's --

FATHER
Jake's a good boy. Yes?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

FATHER

A good man, I should say. You agree?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes.

He hugs her.

FATHER

Ok, then. Be safe.

64 EXT. FARM HOUSE - CAR - NIGHT

64

Jake is laying out the chains while the Young Woman watches. It's windy and snowing hard.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm impressed you know how to do such things.

JAKE

It's no big deal.

YOUNG WOMAN

I guess I'm just not very mechanically inclined.

JAKE

Everyone has their talent. You're more of an art --

He stops himself, looks up at her.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. That's true.

65pt.1 INT. CAR - NIGHT

65pt.1

Jake drives through the storm. She looks out at the night.

JAKE

So?

YOUNG WOMAN

What?

JAKE

Did you like them?

YOUNG WOMAN

They're very nice.

JAKE

Really?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes!

JAKE

They can be a little pushy. But they're basically decent people.

YOUNG WOMAN

That was eminently clear.

JAKE

Good.

(beat)

They loved you, by the way.

YOUNG WOMAN

Good. I'm glad.

JAKE

So smart, my mother said.

YOUNG WOMAN

Did she?

JAKE

Well, not to you. That would have made you uncomfortable. When I was helping her with the dishes.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh.

She stares out at the storm.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I don't remember Jake helping his mother with the dishes. I feel uncertain about a lot of what happened tonight. It seems as if everything was slightly --

JAKE

When you and Dad were discussing -- What was it?

YOUNG WOMAN

(suddenly recalling)

Tariffs.

JAKE

Right, tariffs.

YOUNG WOMAN
I remember now. I'm a little fuzzy.

JAKE
You had a lot of wine. He was
thrilled to have someone who knew --

YOUNG WOMAN
Did I?

JAKE
You did. I don't think you noticed,
because Dad kept topping you off.

YOUNG WOMAN
Did he?

JAKE
Oh, yes.

YOUNG WOMAN
Right. I did notice that. Tricky.

JAKE
Makes it hard to keep count.

YOUNG WOMAN
It does.

JAKE
But all in all, I think it was a
successful visit.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

JAKE
Everyone got to know each other.

YOUNG WOMAN
It's true. They're very nice.

JAKE
You liked them?

YOUNG WOMAN
I did. Yes.

JAKE
Good. They both liked you. I think
that's a good sign.

YOUNG WOMAN
Sign?

JAKE

Sign is perhaps not the right word.
Thing. A good thing.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh.

JAKE

It's good when people you like like
each other.

Jake looks over at her for confirmation. She nods without
back at him, watches the snow in the headlights.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

People think of themselves as
points moving through time, but I
think it's probably the opposite,
we're stationary and time passes
through us, blowing like cold wind,
stealing our heat, leaving us
chapped and frozen and -- I don't
know -- dead. I feel like I was
that wind tonight, blowing through
Jake's parents, seeing them as they
were, seeing them as they will be.
Seeing them after they're gone,
when only I'm left. Only the wind.

JAKE

What are you thinking?

YOUNG WOMAN

Not much.

JAKE

Really?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah. I'm tired, Jake. The wine, I
guess.

JAKE

You did have a lot.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes.

JAKE

Alcohol is a depressant, as you
know. So --

YOUNG WOMAN

Of course I know.

JAKE

I think a person needs to keep that in mind before making decisions under its influence.

YOUNG WOMAN

(chuckling)

A woman under the influence.

JAKE

Amazing film.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm not sure I agree. I've been watching it over and over for my essay due Wednesday.

JAKE

I mean, I felt a kinship with Mabel, I guess. She's such a powerful and horribly wronged character.

YOUNG WOMAN

Is she? Hmm. I think --

(beat)

Mabel Longhetti is bombed out because she has always wanted to please everyone, so she can be considered one more victim-heroine for "women's liberation" -- but only by women's liberationists who are willing to accept textbook spinoffs as art. The Junoesque Gena Rowlands (Mrs. Cassavetes) is a prodigious actress, and she never lets go of the character.

JAKE

I agree. I thought she was great in the role. It seemed to me she encompassed this character as a kind of spectrum of --

YOUNG WOMAN

Now, at an indeterminate age when her beauty has deepened beyond ingénue roles, Rowlands can look old or young, and shades of expression transform Mabel Longhetti from a radiantly flirtatious beauty into a sad, sagging neighborhood drunk.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Rowlands externalizes schizophrenic dissolution. Mabel fragments before our eyes: a three-ring circus might be taking place in her face. Rowlands' performance is enough for half a dozen tours de force, a whole row of Oscars - it's exhausting. Conceivably, she's a great actress, but nothing she does is memorable, because she does so much.

(beat)

It's the most transient big performance I've ever seen.

JAKE

I guess, I'm unclear what you mean by 'transient.'

The young woman considers this, then:

YOUNG WOMAN

Mabel tries to slash her wrist, and Nick puts a Band-Aid on the cut: the idiot symbolism may make you want to hoot, but this two-hour-and-thirty-five-minute film leaves you too groggy to do more than moan. Details that are meant to establish the pathological nature of the people around Mabel, and so show her isolation, become instead limp, false moments. We often can't tell whether the characters are meant to be unconscious of what they're doing or whether it's Cassavetes who's unconscious. Mabel's children keep murmuring that they love her, and there are no clues to how to decipher this refrain. Are the children coddling her-reversing roles and treating her like a child in need of reassurance? Or are they meant to be as unashamedly loving as she is? And what are we to make of Nick the pulper's constant assertions --

JAKE

Is assertions even a word? I thought it was assertions.

YOUNG WOMAN

It is. They're both words. Look it up.

(continuing)

And what are we to make of Nick the pulper's assertions of love? The movie is entirely tendentious; it's all planned, yet it isn't thought out.

Jake seems embarrassed. How could he have liked this film?

JAKE

I do see what you're saying. And you're certainly the expert on things cinematic.

The Young Woman seems blurry, confused, somewhat startled by her long-winded assessment of the movie.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah. That I am.

JAKE

I guess I was just taken in by the sympathy Cassavetes showed for her. I feel like maybe our society lacks a certain kindness, a willingness to take in the vulnerabilities and struggles of others... struggling with issues caused by...

YOUNG WOMAN

An alienating society?

JAKE

I don't know. I guess, yeah. It seems hopeless.

YOUNG WOMAN

What does?

JAKE

Everything? It's like, feeling old, like, your body is going, your hearing, your sight. You can't see and you're invisible, and you made so many wrong turns. The lie of it all.

YOUNG WOMAN

What's the lie of it all?

JAKE

I don't know. That things are going to get better. That it's never too late. That good things come to those who wait. That God has a plan for you. That age is just a number. That it's always darkest before the dawn. That every cloud has a silver lining.

(beat)

That there's someone for everyone.

YOUNG WOMAN

Platitudes, all.

Silence.

JAKE

That God never gives us more than we can bear.

YOUNG WOMAN

God's a good egg that way.

Silence.

JAKE

Hey, do you feel like something sweet?

YOUNG WOMAN

What do you mean?

JAKE

Something sweet. Dessert.

YOUNG WOMAN

Didn't we have dessert at your mom's? I feel like there was some huge cake-thing she brought out and

--

JAKE

True. I guess I'm a sugar junkie. I don't know. It might help me stay awake.

YOUNG WOMAN

Then definitely. We need Jake awake for a bit. This is all so treacherous.

JAKE

Good. There's a Tulsey Town just at the turn-off up ahead.

YOUNG WOMAN

(laughing)

A Tulsey Town! Open now? In this? It's freezing.

JAKE

(chuckling)

It is. Perfect weather for a BURR, don't you think?

YOUNG WOMAN

Ha. I guess it is.

JAKE

(singing)

In the land of Tulsey Town we are here to soft serve. *

YOUNG WOMAN

The land of Tulsey Town. Jesus. I never thought about that before. What is the land of Tulsey Town, do you suppose?

JAKE

Based on the clown, it's a circus town. Maybe like that place where the sideshow folks go during the off-season.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ooh. Ruled by the clown lady?

JAKE

Well, yes she wears a crown.

YOUNG WOMAN

A clown crown. *

JAKE

A benevolent and tolerant ice cream clown queen made entirely of lactose.

YOUNG WOMAN

She's lactose tolerant!

JAKE

Ha. Yes. She's sweet but cold.

YOUNG WOMAN

Like your mom.

JAKE

What do you mean?

YOUNG WOMAN

Nothing. I don't know why I said that. Just kind of came out.

JAKE

Did you think of my mother as cold?

YOUNG WOMAN

No! She was lovely. She really was.

JAKE

Yeah. I don't subscribe to that "the mother is cause of all psychological problems" crap.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's misogynistic claptrap. Freudian bullshit.

JAKE

Yeah. It's tempting to have someone to pin it on, though.

YOUNG WOMAN

Pin what on?

JAKE

All of it. I don't know. Why you feel a certain way, why you are a certain way.

YOUNG WOMAN

But it's misogynistic claptrap. Freudian bullshit. A person, an adult, has to, at some point, take responsibility for who they are, what they've become. Don't you think?

JAKE

(beat)

I do.

YOUNG WOMAN

Mothers are just people with their own pain, their own histories of neglect and abuse.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Yet at one time or another in the 20th century every fucking childhood trait was blamed on them: schizophrenia, autism, narcissism, homosexuality.

JAKE

Not that homosexuality is akin to any of those other things.

YOUNG WOMAN

Of course not.

JAKE

Saying that a mother is "to blame" for her child's homosexuality is to imply that homosexuality is somehow negative.

YOUNG WOMAN

Of course. And I didn't mean that. But when homosexuality was considered a pathology, in the DSM, before 1973, a coddling mother was often seen as the culprit.

JAKE

Right. It's despicable how we label people, categorize them, dismiss them. I look at the kids I see at school every day. I see the ones who are ostracized. They're different, out of step. I see the lives they'll have because of it. Sometimes I see them years later, in town or at the supermarket. I can tell they still carry that stuff around with them. Like a black aura. A mill stone. An oozing wound.

The Young Woman, watches him, taking it in. Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

Jake, I'm thinking of --

JAKE

Here. Ta-dah!

65pt.2 EXT. TULSEY TOWN - NIGHT

65pt.2 *

She looks over to see that they have arrived at an old and somewhat decrepit Tulsey Town.

It sits isolated, open and glowing, in the middle of the snow storm, surrounded by blackness.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh, Wow. The land of Tulsey Town...

66 EXT. TULSEY TOWN - JAKE'S CAR - NIGHT

66

The wind howls and the snow swirls as Jake and the Young Woman emerge from the car.

YOUNG WOMAN
Man. It's brutal.

JAKE
Brutal place, the land of Tulsey Town. Climate change here, too. You ever read the novel *Ice*?

YOUNG WOMAN
I don't think so.

JAKE
By Anna Kavan?

YOUNG WOMAN
I don't think so.

JAKE
1967. It's a fable of sorts about --

YOUNG WOMAN
I don't think so. Let's get the ice cream and go. I'm freezing.

Jake peers into the Tulsey Town window. The store seems empty.

JAKE
In a minute. I want to see who's on tonight first?

YOUNG WOMAN
On?

JAKE
Working.

YOUNG WOMAN
You know the people who work here?

JAKE
Some of them. I stop sometimes after visiting my parents. I don't like some of the girls who work here so I want to make sure...

YOUNG WOMAN
What's wrong with them?

JAKE
Nothing. I don't know. People can
be cold to me.

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, let's do this or I'm waiting
in the car.

She heads back to the car.

JAKE
No!

She looks at him.

JAKE (CONT'D)
(more softly)
Let's stay.

Jake knocks on the window --

There are no employees visible.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Say hello. They won't come if they
know it's me.

She eyes him, then:

YOUNG WOMAN
(calling)
Hello? Anybody here?

GIRL (O.S.)
In a minute.

JAKE
So *Ice* takes place during an
environmental cataclysm that's
caused the world to become a frozen
wasteland and --

Two girls, who were seen among the high school students in
the play earlier, emerge from the back. They wear T.T. hats
and shirts, still in their stage make-up. They see the Young
Woman first, then Jake, who stands off to the side, looking
sheepish.

T.T. GIRL 1
Oh.

The two employees side-eye each other.

T.T. GIRL 2
(mockingly polite)
Can we help you, sir?

Jake doesn't say anything. The Young Woman looks over at him, sees he is unable to speak. The girls snicker.

YOUNG WOMAN
Um...
(looks at menu)
I'll have a... medium Chocolate
Chip Cookie Dough B-r-r-r and he'll
have...

She looks at Jake. The Tulsey Town girls watch him.

JAKE
(quietly)
Same.

YOUNG WOMAN
Two of those, please.

The Tulsey Town girls eye each other and giggle.

T.T. GIRL 2
Two "sames."

The Tulsey Town girls just stand there, whispering to each other and giggling as they side-eye Jake. The Young Woman watches them, waiting, confused.

YOUNG WOMAN
So..., um, sorry, we need to get
back on the road, so can we get
those --

Another uniformed girl emerges from the back and goes about making the B-r-r-r's. She is small and haunted. Jake looks down at his shoes.

T.T. GIRL 3
Sorry for the smell; they're doing
some varnishing in the back.

YOUNG WOMAN
Varnishing?

T.T. GIRL 3
Shelves.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh. Ok. No problem.

The Young Woman glances over at Jake. He's looking at the haunted girl's exposed arms, which are covered with an eczema-type rash. The Young Woman follows his look and sees the rash, too. The girl scratches mercilessly at her rash as she makes the B-r-r-r's.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I know this girl. I've seen her somewhere. I've seen her before. Her face. Her rash. I know her. It's on the tip of my tongue. The tip of my brain, as Jake says. She's someone. She's from somewhere. I'm certain of it.

The girl turns from her task to the young woman.

T.T. GIRL 3

(meekly)

It's a fucking blizzard out there. *

The Young Woman is surprised by the girl's choice of words. She takes a moment to formulate a response.

YOUNG WOMAN

It is. I was surprised you were even open on a night like --

T.T. GIRL 3

Fucking blizzard out there, fucking B-r-r-r's in here. *

T.T. Girl 3 smiles apologetically for her attempt at a joke.

YOUNG WOMAN

(supportively)

I was thinking the very same thing.

T.T. GIRL 3

You're kind. Not like them.

(indicating other girls)

You're not like them. Vapid and mean and pretty.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ha. Thanks a lot.

T.T. GIRL 3

(on the verge of tears)

I didn't mean it like that.

(MORE)

T.T. GIRL 3 (CONT'D)

I love the way you look. You have a kindness. And of course you're very attractive. I didn't mean it like that.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's ok. I understand.

T.T. GIRL 3

I didn't mean it like that. It's just that there seems to be a certain... hardness that comes with a certain kind of pretty. You don't have that. Maybe they suffer, too, the pretty ones. I don't know. Maybe their prettiness causes them suffering. I'm not a psychiatrist.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

What an odd thing to say. Of course she's not a psychiatrist. She can't be more than fifteen.

T.T. GIRL 3 holds the piled-high B-r-r-r's upside down, then places them right side up on the counter.

T.T. GIRL 3

I made them extra high. Because you're so nice.

(beat)

That'll be eight dollars, please.

Jake hands her a ten. The Young Woman notices that Jake has a similar rash on his hand. Tulseys Town Girl 3, puts the money in the register and gives the change to the Young Woman.

YOUNG WOMAN

You keep the change.

T.T. GIRL 3

(to Young Woman)

Thank you.

YOUNG WOMAN

You're welcome. Thank you.

T.T. GIRL 3

I'm worried.

The Young Woman looks around, confused. No one else is paying attention. The other girls are giggling. Jake is at the door, looking at the storm.

YOUNG WOMAN

Excuse me?

T.T. GIRL 3

I shouldn't be saying this. I know what happens. It's not good.

YOUNG WOMAN

(looking at other girls)

Are you ok? Do you need me to call for help?

T.T. GIRL 3

It's not varnish. That's not why it smells. You should know that.

YOUNG WOMAN

What do you mean?

T.T. GIRL 3

You don't have to go.

The other two employees are whispering and giggling.

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't have to go where?

T.T. GIRL 3

Forward. In time. You don't have to. You can stay here.

(beat)

I'm very scared.

YOUNG WOMAN

Of what? What are you scared of?

T.T. GIRL 3

I'm scared for you.

Jake looks over. T.T. Girl 3 changes her tone.

T.T. GIRL 3 (CONT'D)

Have a good night. Be careful out there. The roads are treacherous.

67pt.1 INT. CAR - NIGHT

67pt.1

Jake drives. They pick at their B-r-r-r's..

JAKE

Any good?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah. It's fine. It's good.

They eat in silence.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Did you notice that girl's arms?

JAKE
Which girl?

YOUNG WOMAN
At the Tulsey Town.

JAKE
(containing impatience)
Which girl. There were several.

YOUNG WOMAN
Several? There were three.

JAKE
(beat)
Several is anything more than two.

YOUNG WOMAN
Really?

JAKE
Look it up.

YOUNG WOMAN
Look it up? Now? Will you stop
saying that? Anyway, the skinny
one.

JAKE
Weren't they all skinny?

YOUNG WOMAN
You are being willfully obtuse.

JAKE
Not my intention.

YOUNG WOMAN
(mockingly)
Not my intention.
(angry)
The one with the rash all over her
arms!

JAKE
(beat)
I didn't notice.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok. Anyway...

Silence.

JAKE
How's the Burr? Too sweet?

YOUNG WOMAN
It's sweet, yes. But it's good.

Jake has placed his B-r-r-r in the cup holder. It's melting.

JAKE
I always forget how sweet these
are. A little goes a long way. I
don't think I can eat any more of
mine.

YOUNG WOMAN
You barely touched it.

JAKE
It's very sweet.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN
It is a lot.

She turns up the heat.

JAKE
Cold?

YOUNG WOMAN
Probably the ice cream.

JAKE
And we're in a snowstorm. Whose
idea was it to go to Tulsey Town in
the middle of this, anyway?

She looks over at him.

YOUNG WOMAN
I'm not saying a word.

They both laugh. She looks out at the storm, which has an otherworldly quality to it.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

How odd. This is probably the last time I'll ever be in a car with Jake. Soon this will all be a distant memory. We'll both be in different places, remembering this moment, this shared laugh. And maybe there'll be regret. Maybe time will soften the harder edges and we'll both think, that was sort of nice. Why did it have to end? And there's no way back at that point. There's never a way back. Maybe it doesn't need to end. Why am I putting so much pressure on this to be some bullshit out of a movie? Maybe I will eventually fall in love with Jake. Maybe it will get better. Relationships take effort. Anyone in a successful relationship will always tell you --

JAKE

You got quiet all of a sudden. Penny?

YOUNG WOMAN

Just watching the storm.

JAKE

Huh.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

But if you can't even tell the other person what you're thinking, that doesn't bode well.

Jake looks back and forth several times from the road to the Young Woman, trying to read her mood. She stares straight ahead, watching the storm in the headlights.

JAKE

Looks like you're done with it.

YOUNG WOMAN

(looking at him)

What do you mean?

He gestures to the two B-r-r-r's sitting in the cup holders and melting down their sides.

JAKE

Me, too.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm a little cold, I guess.

JAKE

A bit of a wasted stop.

YOUNG WOMAN

At least I can say I've been to a Tulsey Town in the middle of nowhere in the middle of the night in the middle of a snowstorm.

JAKE

(singing)

I'm your favorite clown/from Tulsey Town/where ice cream grows on trees/So have no fear/come and join me here/and eat as much as you please/I will turn your frown/fully upside down/when you take your very first bite/of vanilla, chocolate, or strawberry/We're open day and night!

YOUNG WOMAN

(chuckles)

And it's something I'll never do again.

JAKE

A Supposedly Fun Thing You'll Never Do Again.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. Exactly.

JAKE

Have you read that?

YOUNG WOMAN

Read what?

JAKE

It's a book of essays by David Foster Wallace.

YOUNG WOMAN

I have not.

JAKE

A book of essays.

YOUNG WOMAN

Uh-huh. No. I haven't read it.

JAKE

We should find a place to dump these. They're going to melt and get the cup holders all sticky.

YOUNG WOMAN

Um. Ok.

JAKE

He's got an essay in it about television. "One of the things that makes the people on TV fit to stand the mega-gaze is that they are, by human standards, really pretty. I suspect that this, like most television conventions, is set up with motive no more sinister than to appeal to the largest possible Audience. Pretty people tend to be more pleasing to look at than non-pretty people. But when we're talking about television, the combination of sheer Audience size and quiet psychic intercourse between images and ogglers starts a cycle that both enhances pretty images' appeal and erodes us viewers' own security in the face of gazes. Because of the way humans relate to narrative, we tend to identify with those characters we find appealing. We try to see ourselves in them. The same I.D.-relation, however, also means that we try to see them in ourselves. When everybody we seek to identify with for six hours a day is pretty, it naturally becomes more important for us to be pretty, to be viewed as pretty."

(beat)

That's from the essay.

YOUNG WOMAN

Huh.

JAKE

There's a lot more, but I won't bore you.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's interesting. Kinda long-winded.

JAKE

He killed himself.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. I think I knew that.

JAKE

Everybody knows it. Even people who know nothing else about David Foster Wallace, have never read a word of his writing. Suicide becomes the story. The mythology. The cautionary tale. It's obnoxious. Other people's suffering turned into stories. They made a movie about him. Based on a bestselling book, published two years after he killed himself.

YOUNG WOMAN

Huh.

JAKE

Neither of which would have existed had he not killed himself.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah.

JAKE

I don't think we know how to be human anymore.

YOUNG WOMAN

Who doesn't?

JAKE

Our society. Our culture. People. Whatever all this is. Any of us.

YOUNG WOMAN

Have you ever read any Guy DeBord? The Society of the Spectacle?

JAKE

Exactly! Yes! Of course!

YOUNG WOMAN

DeBord says, "The society cannot be understood as a mere visual deception produced by mass-media technologies. It is a worldview that has actually been materialized."

JAKE

Exactly. We watch the world through this glass, pre-interpreted for us. It infects our brains. We become it.

YOUNG WOMAN

A virus.

Silence.

JAKE

Listen, these melting things are driving me crazy. It's going to get everything all sticky.

YOUNG WOMAN

Do you have a plastic bag I can put them in? Some napkins, maybe?

JAKE

No. Nothing like that. I want to find some place to dump them.

YOUNG WOMAN

There doesn't seem to be anything around here.

JAKE

There's a small road up ahead I know of. There'll be a garbage can.

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't know. Maybe we should just head home.

JAKE

(confused)
To the farm?

YOUNG WOMAN

What? No. To the city. I'm worried about getting stuck out here. If we turn off the main road and get stuck, no one will find us.

JAKE

Yeah. True.

Silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'm just not going to feel right if I don't get rid of these. It'll prey on my mind. Shit. I should've brought napkins. And a plastic bag. Like you said. That was really stupid. A plastic bag would've solved everything.

YOUNG WOMAN

Not everything.

Jake pounds at the steering wheel. The Young Woman watches.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

It's not a big deal. Really.

JAKE

Yes. I know that, Ames.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

Ames? Is that short for Amy? That doesn't sound right. That doesn't seem like my name. Or my nickname.

JAKE

Just let's go here real quick.

Jake turns off onto a narrow dirt road -- almost a path -- bordered by tall dark trees.

JAKE (CONT'D)

And I'll get to show you my high school.

YOUNG WOMAN

This goes to a high school?

JAKE

Yes. My high school. Where I went every tortured day for so long. So goddamn long.

(beat)

I did not like high school.

YOUNG WOMAN

(worried)

No one did, really.

JAKE

That's what they tell me. I am told that.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's true.

JAKE

I see people who seem to thrive there.

YOUNG WOMAN

This road goes to a high school?

JAKE

Yeah. Why?

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't know. It seems so -- It doesn't seem like a road at all.

JAKE

What does it seem like?

YOUNG WOMAN

Hmm. A path? A trail?
The road less travelled?

JAKE

Well, it is a bit Frosty out.

YOUNG WOMAN

(chuckling)
Fired.

JAKE

Just trying to lighten the mood.

YOUNG WOMAN

And that has made all the difference.

JAKE

(chuckling)
Now who's fired?

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN

I do feel uneasy, Jake. I think we should turn back. It doesn't feel right.

JAKE

It's just a high school.

YOUNG WOMAN

It feels wrong.

JAKE

Anyway, I can't turn around. The road's too narrow. I'll just get to the school, dump the cups, and we'll leave.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok.

JAKE

Good.

YOUNG WOMAN

I just don't really get this. This road makes no sense to me. How do school buses get down here?

JAKE

It's a rural high school.

YOUNG WOMAN

Jake, I grew up on a farm. I went to a rural high school. We had a normal entrance with a paved road.

JAKE

It's fine. It'll be fine. Everything is tinged. That's the thing you have to realize.

YOUNG WOMAN

Tinged?

JAKE

Colored. By mood. By emotion. By past experience. There is no objective reality. You know there is no color in the universe, right? Only in our brains. Just electromagnetic frequencies. The brain tinges them.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm a physicist. I know what color is.

JAKE

Yes. You are. You do.

YOUNG WOMAN

(beat)

Colors are the deeds of light, its
deeds and suffering.

JAKE

That's beautiful. Not physicist
talk, but eminently poetic.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, I am a poet, after all.

JAKE

Yes, you are. It's beautiful.

YOUNG WOMAN

This road seems excessively long.

JAKE

Seems. That's the operative word.
Time, another thing that exists
only in the brain.

YOUNG WOMAN

And yet we get older.

JAKE

Older and older. Or so it seems.
Sometimes I feel I am much younger
than I actually am. Like still a
kid inside. Until I pass a mirror.

YOUNG WOMAN

Is younger better?

JAKE

(quickly, confidently)

Yes.

(beat)

I think so. It's admirable.

YOUNG WOMAN

Youth is admirable? How can you
admire a person for their age?
It'd be like admiring a specific
point in a stream.

JAKE

It's healthier, brighter... more
fun. More attractive. Hopeful.

YOUNG WOMAN

Like a Coca Cola commercial!

JAKE

Almost all ground-breaking work in science, in the arts, is done by young people. Old people are the ash heap of youth.

YOUNG WOMAN

Listen, Jake, I'm thinking we need to end --

JAKE

Tah-dah.

67pt.2 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

67pt.2 *

The road has opened up to reveal a large high school. It is the high school in which the Janitor works.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wow. I wasn't expecting anything so enormous.

JAKE

130 classroom, a gymnasium, 2 locker rooms -- boys, girls -- auditorium, 10 bathrooms, 6 administrative offices, teacher lounge, counseling center, nurse's office. It's regional, so 11 towns feed into it.

YOUNG WOMAN

You certainly know your high school.

JAKE

Like the back of my hand.

68 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

68

Jake pulls into the parking lot. It's empty, except for the Janitor's truck.

YOUNG WOMAN

There's someone here. That's weird.

JAKE

School maintenance? Janitor. Something.
(looking)
There!

YOUNG WOMAN

What?

JAKE

Trash can. I knew it.
 (grabbing cups)
 I'll be right back.

He opens his door, exits the car, slams the door. The Young Woman starts at the violence of the slam. She watches Jake as he trudges, struggling against the wind, toward the receptacle. It's slow going. Snow falls on the windshield, obscuring Jake. Then he is revealed again by the scraping windshield wipers. Obscured, revealed, obscured revealed. He arrives at the bin, opens the lid and just stands there, peering in.

YOUNG WOMAN

What is he doing? Jake, c'mon,
 let's go.

She glances over at the pick-up truck. Jake places the lid back on; he's still holding the cups.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?? Argh!

He looks toward the car, holds one finger up to indicate "one minute," and trudges off, disappearing behind the school.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

What?? Jesus, Jake.

She reaches over to the driver's side and locks the car doors, looks behind her into the blackness. She glances at the truck, somehow made sinister by the lot's sodium vapor lamps.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Ugh.

For a long while, she watches the corner around which Jake has disappeared. She seems to be willing him to reappear. Eventually he does.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Yes! Let's go let's go let's go
 let's go...

He waves and trudges toward the car: obscured, revealed, obscured, revealed. He arrives at the car, opens the door.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Where were you?!

Jake gets in, closes the door. He is covered in snow, out of breath.

JAKE

Sorry. Sorry. That bin was filled with road salt. For the ice. I remembered there was a dumpster on the other side, near the loading dock. So... mission accomplished.

YOUNG WOMAN

Good. Let's go.

JAKE

It's humid in here.

His glasses are fogged. He turns the ignition key; the engine stops.

JAKE (CONT'D)

There.

(beat)

Kind of peaceful, no?

YOUNG WOMAN

More creepy than peaceful, I'd say.

JAKE

I don't agree.

YOUNG WOMAN

I want to go.

JAKE

What's the rush all of a sudden?

YOUNG WOMAN

All of a sudden? All night I've been a broken record about getting home. I've given you, like, forty reasons I need to get home tonight.

JAKE

I guess that's true.

YOUNG WOMAN

You guess?

JAKE

I just thought, you know, since it's peaceful and quiet here and, Baby, it's cold outside --

YOUNG WOMAN

Really? You're going to quote a rape song at me to convince me to --

JAKE

It's not a rape song.

YOUNG WOMAN

She keeps saying she wants to leave. He keeps ignoring her. What would you call that?

JAKE

She wants to stay. She's just afraid of what people will think.

YOUNG WOMAN

She asks him "What did you put in my damn drink?"

*
*

JAKE

Jesus, the song was written in 1936. It's not about roofies.

YOUNG WOMAN

Roofies or not, he's trying to break down her defenses with strong liquor. And, anyway, I'm sorry, but they had mickeys in the thirties. It's a song about coercion.

JAKE

Why are you getting so angry?

YOUNG WOMAN

(beat)

I just want to go home.

JAKE

To the farmhouse?

YOUNG WOMAN

No! Not to the fucking farmhouse. To *my* house, Jake! To *my* house!

JAKE

Ok, ok.

He turns the ignition key. The car starts. He waits for the wipers to clear the snow from the windshield.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thank you.

(beat)

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Y'know, he says, "What's the point
of hurting my pride?" Like it's
her job to make this guy feel
sexually attractive.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Regardless of her own desires.
That's not her responsibility.

JAKE
I see that. You've convinced me.
I'm sorry.

He leans over to give her a conciliatory kiss, which she accepts. The kiss turns a bit romantic. Jake suddenly pulls away.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Jesus!

YOUNG WOMAN
What??

JAKE
In the window!

YOUNG WOMAN
(looking toward school)
What??

JAKE
There was someone watching us.

YOUNG WOMAN
(scanning windows)
I don't see anyone.

JAKE
He was there. Watching us. Like a
goddamn pervert.

YOUNG WOMAN
Let's go. Maybe he was just looking
out the window, wondering what our
car was doing here in the middle of
the night.

JAKE
Believe me, I am very familiar with
that particular look.

YOUNG WOMAN
What does that mean?

JAKE
I'm going to give him a piece of my
mind is what it means. That is not
acceptable.

YOUNG WOMAN

Jake, really, let's just --

Jake turns off the car, opens the door and exits car.

JAKE

I'll be right back. This is not acceptable.

YOUNG WOMAN

Jake!

JAKE

At all!

He slams the door and is gone, running toward the school. The Young Woman shivers, looks at the ignition. The key is missing.

YOUNG WOMAN

Crap.

She sits there, shivering, watching Jake recede. Soon he is around the corner and gone. The Young Woman watches the school, turns and looks back at the road, settles back into her seat, puts her hands in her pockets and waits.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

This was a mistake. I shouldn't have come. I knew things between Jake and me were not going to work out. I think, if I'm honest, I knew from our very first conversation. There was something. Something needling. In the back of my brain. Some little voice whispering, this isn't right. This isn't for you. Turn back. But it's hard to say no. I was never taught that. It's easier to say ok. It's smoother. Feathers don't get ruffled. People don't get hurt. And, anyway, sometimes you're caught off-guard. The request comes, can I have your number. And the easiest way out is to say yes. And that yes leads to the next yes and then more yes, yes, yes, yes, yes and then you find yourself in a relationship. And it's too late to say no, or at least it has become much harder. Because you don't have a good reason. He's not a monster. He doesn't beat you.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He's a nice guy and now you need a reason. But you fantasize about being rid of it, the whole thing. And none of it is fair to him, this constant unspoken pulling away. And you should've just said no thank you in the first place. But he's a nice guy and I imagine we've had some fun. I'm sure we have. I'm certain we've laughed. I'm certain the sex has been good, at least some of the time. It has to have been, although right now I have very little actual memory of it. Right now the whole thing seems vague. All this time together and I can't feel it. Where did it go?

(trying to see through
windshield)

Where did Jake go?

The windshield is obscured; she opens the door, pokes her head out, looks into the distance, searching for his figure amidst the swirling snow. She gets back in, closes the door, locks it.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I'm so cold. Where is he? And how long does it take to get hypothermia? Maybe it's not a bad way to go, if you have to go. Numbness has its advantages. Sometimes it's the only way to get through. Just turn it all off, all the damn signals to the brain, all the noise, all the time.

(beat)

Slow it down.

(beat)

Slow it, slow it, until it all just stops.

The Young Woman sits there in silence, shivering, staring at the quiet school.

YOUNG WOMAN

Jesus, Jake. C'mon.

She sighs, opens the car door, exits, closes the door, immediately realizes, tries the door, it's locked behind her.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Shit. Shit.

She tries all the other doors. All locked.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Shit shit shit.

She looks at the school, heads toward it. As she walks, she stares up at the school's darkened windows, she looks behind her, she looks at the pick-up truck in the parking lot. She feels she's being watched through every black rectangle. She becomes self-conscious, and, incongruously, as she walks through the snow and wind, she attempts to fix her blowing hair. She rounds the corner and sees the dumpster Jake had mentioned. She approaches it, opens the lid. It is filled with hundreds of half-eaten B-r-r-r's. The Young Woman is startled, jumps back, the lid slams closed with a metal clang that echoes off the building. She makes her way to the school's glass front doors, peers in: a long, dim, empty hallway. She doesn't know what to do, she's scared to go in; she's too cold to stay outside. She rests her forehead against the glass of the door for a long moment. *

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Jake. Please.

She girds herself, enters the building.

69

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

69

The Young Woman walks cautiously down the hall. The shot mirrors the initial shot of the Janitor walking the same hall.

YOUNG WOMAN
(quietly)
Jake?

The Janitor appears in the distance at the end of the hall where it intersects with another. He is mopping, seems unaware of her. She gasps and hides in a doorway. Breathing hard, she peeks back down the hall; the Janitor is gone.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Jake, I want to go. Please.

She steps back out into the hall. The Janitor appears again in the intersecting hall, now mopping in the other direction. Again, the Young Woman jumps back into the doorway.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

What am I doing here? This entire night makes no sense. I've lost myself in all of this, in this relationship, in this world of Jake. How is it one always finds oneself in a foreign country in relationships. In the land of Jake. We treat you right.

(looking toward entrance)

Maybe he's back out in the car? Can he have passed without me seeing him? I don't think so. He has to be in here somewhere. And even if he is out there, he wouldn't leave without me. He'd come looking for me. I'll wait, in the warmth, out of sight. Watching. For Jake. Is it possible that the janitor guy has done something to him? Hurt him somehow? If he's hurt Jake -- killed him, even -- what chance is there for me? I'll just wait. Till morning, if I have to. Till the school opens.

(beat)

Unless it's a snow day. It's going to be a snow day tomorrow, isn't it? Of course it is. It's going to be a snow day tomorrow and nobody is coming. Shit. Jake. Ok. Still. In daylight I can walk to the road. There'll be somebody. A snowplow. A cop. I'll just sit tight. Unseen.

She peeks down the hall.

The hall is now seen from the Janitor's POV. He has spotted the Young Woman's head poking out. She sees him, pulls out of sight. He mops toward her, slow, methodically, deliberately, mumbling to himself. The mumbling, for the first time can partially be made out.

JANITOR

Don't... Don't... You can't...

The Janitor continues toward her, drawn like a magnet.

JANITOR (CONT'D)

Don't... No... Mustn't...

He arrives at the doorway in which she hides. He stops, seemingly unable to make the final step to see her. Her breathing is audible.

Finally, he pokes his head around the locker. She is looking at him (at us), no recognition on her face.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh. Hello. I'm sorry. My boyfriend... I think he came in here. I think he went to school here. A while back. So maybe you know him. I don't know if you were here when he was a student. How would I know? Anyway, I'm locked out of his car. So I came in looking for him -- I hope that's ok -- But I didn't see him. So I'm waiting here, but I can go if that's not all right. You haven't seen anyone in here, by any chance, have you? I'm a little worried. You haven't seen him, have you?

Silence. Then:

JANITOR

What does your boyfriend look like?

YOUNG WOMAN

Um, It's so hard to describe people. Anyway, it's so long ago. I barely remember. We never even talked, is the truth. I'm not sure I even registered him. There were a lot of people. I was there with my girlfriend. She and I were celebrating our anniversary. Stopped in for a drink and this guy kept looking over at me. It's a nuisance. The occupational hazard of being female. You can't even go out for a drink. Always being looked at. A creeper, you know. I remember thinking, I wish my boyfriend were here, which is sort of sad, that if you're a woman, guys don't leave you alone unless you're with another guy, like you've been claimed, like you're property. Even then, not always. Anyway, I can't remember what he looked like. Why would I? Nothing happened. He was just one of thousands of such non-interactions in my life.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

It's like asking me if I can describe the mosquito that bit me on a certain evening forty years ago.

(beat)

So have you seen someone fitting that description.

JANITOR

I haven't seen anyone.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok.

JANITOR

I mean, other than you. I see you.

YOUNG WOMAN

(beat)

I'm worried about him.

JANITOR

I'm sure there's no need. He's safe if he's here. It's safe in here. Quiet.

YOUNG WOMAN

(studies his face)

Ok.

(beat)

Is it ok, if I look around for him?

JANITOR

Maybe take your wet shoes off. I've just cleaned the floors.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thanks.

The Young Woman takes off her shoes. The Janitor watches, her feet now in the big blue slippers. She smiles back at him briefly, sadly.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Bye.

JANITOR

Yeah. Bye.

The Young Woman pads silently down the hall, her voice receding.

YOUNG WOMAN

Jake? Jake? Jake?

The Janitor mops up the small puddles left by the Young Woman's shoes.

70

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY INTERSECTION - NIGHT

70

The Young Woman arrives at the hall intersection, stands still and looks down it. Jake is in the distance looking at her. A Second Young Woman, dressed identically to the Young Woman, emerges from another classroom doorway and stands behind her. A Young Man dressed as Jake emerges and stands behind Jake. The real Jake and Young Woman back away leaving only their replacements. Eerie, burbling orchestral music begins, vague and poorly remembered. The two replacements wave and hurry toward each other in a balletic run. They meet in the middle of the hall and embrace. "Jake" spins "Young Woman" around, lifts her, and the two perform a *pas de deux* expressing their love. The real Jake watches, profoundly moved, and the real Young Woman looks perplexed and anxious. The dance continues as a wedding ceremony is performed and the "Young Woman" walks down the school hall towards "Jake" and a "Minister." The Janitor appears, intercepts the "Young Woman" and pulls her away from the ceremony. She escapes down a surreal, dark hall, and ends up "outside" in a stylized version of the school exterior, struggling against the snow and wind, the Janitor in pursuit. He grabs her and she fights to disengage. "Jake" appears in the storm, and the Janitor and "Jake" engage in a balletic fight, ending when the Janitor pulls out a knife and stabs "Jake," leaving him to die on the ground, with bright red silk scarves spilling out around him on the snow. The Janitor grabs the "Young Woman" and carries her away, leaving the actual Young Woman, Jake, and dying "Jake." Jake and the Young Woman look at each other with resignation and walk off into the storm in opposite directions, soon becoming obscured by the blowing snow.

The Janitor's POV, through which all this has been experienced: He wheels his cart toward the body of "Jake," lifts it, places it and the red scarves in the trash receptacle on the cart, and wheels it off.

71

INT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

71

Various shot of the Janitor cleaning, now in silence, punctuated by the occasional distant call of "Jake?" These become fewer and farther between, and even more distant. Eventually the calls cease.

72

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - NIGHT

72

The Janitor, changes his shirt, collects his thermos, puts on his jacket.

73 EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

73

The Janitor trudges toward his truck in the empty parking lot. The truck is covered with snow. He glances over to where Jake's car had been parked; it is gone. He unlocks the truck's door, dumps his stuff on the passenger seat, pulls out a scraper, brushes the snow off his windows, gets in the truck, closes the door.

74 INT TRUCK - NIGHT

74

The Janitor pulls his ignition key from his pocket, brings it to the ignition, hesitates, doesn't insert it, puts it back in his pocket, watches the snow fall. Gradually, it begins to fall in a sort of time-lapse loop, otherworldly. The windshield gets covered with a thin layer of snow, still allowing the light from the parking lot through, casting the inside of the cab into yellow dimness. The Janitor shivers. The cab gets darker as more snow accumulates. His shivering becomes more violent, turns into a jerky timelapse. He rips off his gloves, his hat, wipes his brow. With thick, now clumsy hands, struggles to unbutton his shirt, succeeds, tears it off. Pulls off his boots, his socks, his pants, his underwear. He is now naked in the ever dimming cab. The snow-covered windshield begins to sizzle and percolate like TV screen "snow." This jitteriness turns to maggots, which fall away to reveal a suffering pig, who turns his head and acknowledges the Janitor with sorrowful eyes. The pig turns away and walks slowly toward the school. He looks back at the Janitor, urging him to follow. The Janitor gets out of the truck and walks, naked, behind the pig. His body shakes with cold.

75 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

75

The Janitor follows the pig, who, on occasion, looks back as he walks. The pig talks to the Janitor.

PIG

It's not bad. Once you stop feeling sorry for yourself because you're just a pig, or, even worse, a pig infested with maggots. Someone has to be a pig infested with maggots, right? It might as well be you. It's the luck of the draw. You play the hand you're dealt. You make lemonade. You move on. You don't worry about a thing.

*

JANITOR

That song has always made me cry.

PIG

I've always loved it. There is kindness in the world, y'know? You have to search for it, but it's there.

JANITOR

You're kind.

PIG

Eh. I'm just evolving. Even now, even as a ghost, as a memory, as dust. As you will.

JANITOR

We're the same?

PIG

Everything is the same. When you look close enough. As a physicist, you would know that. You, me, ideas. We're all one thing. Let's get you dressed.

JANITOR

But I'm so hot.

PIG

Heat, cold. Variations on a theme. It's not important.

The pig leads the Janitor, now dressed in tails into the auditorium, a Nobel medallion around his neck..

76

INT. AUDITORIUM STAGE - NIGHT

76

The Janitor steps onto the stage. The *Oklahoma!* set is there, looking very much like Jake's farmhouse. His mother, the young version, dressed like Aunt Eller, in grease paint old age make-up, sits in a rocking chair on the porch of the house. She smiles at him. The Janitor looks from her to the audience, which is filled with high school students, now dressed in tuxes and gowns. They applaud enthusiastically. The Young Woman, also in old age grease paint, is in the audience, too, smiling up lovingly at him. His Father, the Tulsey Town girls, Jake, all there.

JANITOR

Thank you. My acceptance speech:
(clears throat)
(MORE)

JANITOR (CONT'D)

I accept. I accept it all. I gratefully accept your acknowledgement, this award. I accept all that it entails. That this award comes near the end of a long, fruitful life in acknowledgement for the work I did decades ago. My quest has taken me through the physical --

In the audience young Jake mouths along with this.

JANITOR (CONT'D)

-- the metaphysical, the delusional -- and back. And I have made the most important discovery of my life: It is only in the mysterious equations of love --

In the audience, the Young Woman watches adoringly.

JANITOR (CONT'D)

-- that any logic or reasons can be found. I am only here tonight because of you. You are the reason I am. You are all my reasons. Thank you.

The Young Woman is moved to tears. The Janitor sings, now dressed like a farmer. A stage set of a shack interior is rolled in behind him. It bears a striking resemblance to Jake's bedroom.

JANITOR (CONT'D)

The floor creaks,/the door
squeaks,/there's a field mouse a-
nibblin on a broom/And I sit by
myself/Like a cobweb on a shelf/By
myself in a lonely room/But when
there's a moon in my winder/And it
slants down a beam crost my
bed/Then the shadder of a
tree/starts a-dancin on the
wall/And a dream starts a dancin in
my head/And all the things I wish
fer/Turn out like I wanted them to
be/And all the things I wish
fer/Turn out like I want them to
be/And I'm better'n that smart
aleck cowhand/Who thinks he's
better'n me!/And The girl that I
want/Ain't afraid of my arms/And
her own soft arms keep me warm/And
her long tangled hair falls a-crost
my face,/Jist like the rain in a
storm!/The Floor creaks, the door
squeaks/And the field mouse starts
a-nibblin on the broom/And the sun
flicks my eyes/It was all a pack of
lies!/I'm awake in a lonely room/I
ain't gonna dream about her no
more!/I Ain't gonna leave her
alone/Goin' outside,/Git myself a
bride/Git me a woman to call my
own.

The Janitor finishes and is met with passionate, extended
applause. He stands there for an uncomfortably long time,
taking it in.

77

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

77

The storm has stopped. Silence. The sun is shining. The
ground is covered in drifts of snow. In the empty parking
lot, sits the Janitor's pick-up, a white truck-shaped lump of
snow.

END