

IN

by

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FADE IN

New York City.

The machinery of the city is dirty, congested, chaotic:

Snarled traffic jams clog the streets. Crowds of bored commuters, bewildered tourists, and angry homeless people muddle through the daily grind.

They're on the way to work, riding the bus, *missing* the bus, cursing the world.

As we snake through this overwhelming, infuriating, urban labyrinth, we hear a woman's voice:

SARA (V.O.)

For every correct answer, you receive one point. For questions you omit, you receive no points. For a wrong answer to a multiple choice question, you lose a fraction of a point.

And suddenly, these rules apply to all these nameless New Yorkers, hustling, brain-dead through their routines.

SARA (V.O.)

For a wrong answer to a question that is not multiple choice, you do not lose any points. Carefully mark only one answer for each question...

As she talks, the sun goes down. Commuters return from work. Happy hour begins in neighborhood bars. The homeless wrap themselves in tattered blankets.

And somewhere in the concrete jungle, fluorescent lights flicker in a tiny window of an enormous office building.

We move through that window, arriving at:

INT. PREMIUM PREP OFFICES--NIGHT

A drab, dingy, nondescript space. A group of TWENTY-SOMETHINGS sits around a table littered with protein bar wrappers, cashews, vitamin waters. In front of each of them, a massive SAT manual. Behind them, a dry-erase board is marked up with high-school math problems.

And here's where that voice was coming from:

SARA JACOBS, twenty-sixish, pretty in a complex and soulful way, in spite of (or perhaps because of) her mussed hair, her pale skin, the dark circles under her distant, intelligent eyes.

She continues to read from her manual:

SARA

...Make sure each mark is dark and completely fills the oval. Do not make any stray marks on your answer sheet.

She looks up at the tired, bored faces, made slightly green by the fluorescent lights.

The head of tutor training, GRETCHEN (30ish, was artsy and experimental in college, now sports J-Crew cashmere and a tasteful engagement ring), nods her head.

GRETCHEN

Great, great. So guys, after you read that to them, you have to explain it to them like they're children. Which, let's face it, they are.

Gretchen looks at Sara, who's amusing herself by coloring in her thumbnail with a black Sharpie.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

Any of the more experienced tutors want to give advice on how to do that? Sar? You with me?

INT. SUBWAY--NIGHT

On her way home, Sara is crammed into a crowded subway with Adam, one of the group from tutor training. He's got the bright-eyed energy of a tutoring newbie.

As they talk, a HOMELESS GUY wanders through the car banging on a cup.

ADAM

The company charges the parents how much?

SARA

Two-fifty an hour.

ADAM
Two hundred and fifty dollars.

Sara nods as Adam's eyes go wide.

ADAM (CONT'D)
So, if we're making twenty an
hour...
(quick calculation)
We're getting eight percent.

Hw shakes his head in amused disbelief. She smiles, too tired to fully laugh.

SARA
Well, it's a lot better than
working at the Gap.

ADAM
Yeah, but I went to Princeton.

SARA
And?

ADAM
And...I'm a poet.

SARA
Really?

ADAM
Yeah.
(then)
I mean, not *just* a poet. I'm not
totally impractical. I write music
too.

SARA
(smiles)
So one day you could combine them
and...write an opera.

ADAM
(smiles back, then)
How 'bout you?

SARA
Well...I went to Harvard.

ADAM
And?

SARA

I write kind of. You know, I'm
still in transition really since I
only graduated five years ago.

He laughs as the train pulls into a station. He's about to say something when Sara looks up, cutting him off.

SARA (CONT'D)

Oh, this is my stop.

She gets off. Intrigued, he watches her go.

INT. SARA'S APT--NIGHT

A very small, disastrously messy studio, furnished in leftover college stuff: halogen lamps, futon, bean bag chairs.

Dishes overflow in the kitchenette sink, clothes are strewn everywhere. Sara throws her huge backpack down on her futon/bed, takes off her sweatshirt and lets it fall on the ground.

She goes to the fridge, looks in. It's empty, except for a half-drunk bottle of red wine and a bowl of something that is no longer recognizable. She opens the wine, sniffs it, and pours some into a mug that says, "You're the greatest!"

Sipping her wine, she walks the two steps to her desk, which is surrounded by stack of books, composition notebooks, SAT manuals, and a folded-up laptop computer.

On the desk, amid dirty coffee mugs and empty soda cans, is her old Underwood typewriter.

Tacked on the bulletin board above the desk are photos of younger Sara with her father and mother in a small, working class rural town, along with a few inspirational Post-Its:

"Confidence," or "Make of yourself a LIGHT unto the world!"

And, in the midst of all this detritus, a huge stack of typed pages: Her unfinished manuscript.

Sara takes the manuscript, sits back on her futon. Begins to thumb through it. It's awash in corrections and revisions.

She picks a heavily notated section, heads to her typewriter, puts in a fresh page and starts to type. No sooner has she typed a few sentences than she starts to mark up the new page with question marks.

SARA (PRELAP)

...So, if zero times anything else is always zero, and $2x$ equals an integer, can x equal zero?

INT. UPPER EAST SIDE TOWNHOUSE--DAY

Sara's tutoring ASHTYN, a very beautiful eleventh-grader with long, shiny, dark hair, glossy lips and glowy skin. They're at a massive, mahogany dining room table, strewn with SAT materials.

Ashtyn looks like she might cry.

SARA

Ashtyn? It's okay. Just--

ASHTYN

No, I'm just mad. I want to be in the school play, but Mom says I can't stay here for rehearsals over Christmas because we have to go back to stupid Bermuda.

Sara sighs in exasperation.

INT. PARK AVENUE PENTHOUSE--DAY

Sara stares at ZACH, a nerdy, tenth-grader with a light dusting of zits and a few, sad strands of dark hair on his upper lip.

They're working at a desk in his bedroom. Nearby, there's a huge, inflatable George W. Bush doll.

ZACH

...well, I hate France, because everybody knows that the French are cowardly, faithless bastards. We saved their ass in World War Two and this is how they repay us? Am I right?

SARA

Let's go back to the reading passage.

He stares at her expectantly. She glares back. A beat.

INT. CENTRAL PARK WEST DUPLEX--DAY

Spare and minimalist, with a killer view of the park. MARINA, a meaty girl jock in a school sweatshirt chews hungrily on a Powerbar as she sits with Sara at a beautiful, glass table in the living room.

SARA

Great, so looking at choice A, what do you think?

MARINA

(lots of attitude)

What do you think?

SARA

I think you should work out the answer for yourself.

Marin stares at her at beat, chewing. Then:

MARINA

(calls)

Mom.

As Marina stalks off to complain to her mother, Sara sighs and stares out the huge window, where storm clouds gather over the park. Catching a glimpse of herself in the glass, it almost seems like she might belong in this world...

Until Marina's MOTHER, a tall forbidding woman, appears in a doorway.

MARINA'S MOTHER

You can go.

INT. EAST VILLAGE DINER--EVENING

Sara runs in from the rain, to see her father, JOSEPH (sixty-ish, college-professor, an intellectual but very much NOT a New Yorker). He's sitting at a booth reading Proust as he waits.

SARA

Dad. Sorry I'm late--

He holds up one finger, keeps reading for a beat. Finally, he peers up at her over his reading glasses.

JOSEPH

Just had to get to the end of that paragraph.

He closes the book with reverence.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Mmm. Proust. Every time I read it, it gets better and better.

Sara half-smiles, used to this, as she sits, plunking her SAT manuals down on the table.

SARA

(re the manuals)

Wish I could say the same about these.

JOSEPH

Don't tell me we'll be doing word problems.

SARA

No, I've done enough for a lifetime. God, those little brats, and the parents--

JOSEPH

Hold on. I know just what you need.

He motions for the WAITRESS, who comes over.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

We'll have a bottle of that really cheap, practically undrinkable wine we had last time I was here.

Sara and the waitress share a smile.

WAITRESS

Hmmm. The cheap, disgusting, practically undrinkable wine would be the...Montepulciano.

Joseph nods as the waitress goes. A pause.

SARA

Happy Birthday.

JOSEPH

Don't remind me.

(A beat, then quoting)

(MORE)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

*I grow old, I grow old. I shall
wear the bottoms of my trousers
rolled.* T. S. Eliot--

SARA

The Wasteland, I know. But, Dad,
relax, you're only sixty-two--

JOSEPH

Shush. Not a day over fifty.
(then, smiling)
*Illusion is the first of all the
pleasures.*

She smiles at the same old riff.

SARA

Anyway, I'm sorry I couldn't come
up to you--

JOSEPH

Oh, I don't mind coming down to New
York. I like the noise, the
people. The house is so empty and
quiet now.

An awkward pause.

SARA

Well, thanks, it's just I've been
so busy with work--

JOSEPH

How is your work?

SARA

Oh, you know, lots of students,
same old same old.

JOSEPH

I meant your novel.

(holding up the Proust)

I'm almost through my third read of
this. I'll be looking for your
masterpiece next.

Sara stares at the huge volume, *In Search of Lost Time*.

SARA

Mine's not ready.

JOSEPH

So? I might have some useful
thoughts.

(MORE)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

You know, as a literature professor, I do know a thing or two about books.

SARA

I'm sure you'll have lots to say.

JOSEPH

I always read your mom's stuff, gave her notes...

He looks at her reassuringly.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

She thought I was a very astute critic. I know a good book when I read one, believe me.

SARA

Oh, I believe you.

That came out with a bit more edge than Sara intended.

JOSEPH

At the very least, I hope you're not still writing on your mom's old typewriter...

(off her)

You're trapped in the dark ages, sweetheart. No wonder you never get anything done--

SARA

(enough)

Dad. Please.

JOSEPH

Sorry.

She nods. Moving on, trying to be as upbeat as she can.

SARA

Anyway, I'm busy, you know, I'm taking my first student in Greenwich tomorrow. The company's expanding into Connecticut, so that should be...different.

JOSEPH

Yes.

The silence is broken by the waitress, who comes over and pours the wine. As she does, Joseph opens the Proust again. He and Sara clink and sip.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

*No sooner had it touched my palate
than a shudder ran through me and I
stopped, intent upon the
extraordinary thing that was
happening to me...*

As Sara sips her wine and listens, she stares out the diner window at the drenched New Yorkers, angrily struggling through the rain, umbrellas blowing open, hats blowing away.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

*An exquisite pleasure had invaded
my senses, with no suggestion of
its origin...*

INT. METRO NORTH TRAIN--DAY

And as Joseph's voice continues, Sara's now sitting in a half-empty car, by a window, moving forward through space.

In her lap is a composition notebook filled with her own writing, complete with her usual cross-outs, torn-out pages, Post-It's, question marks. The pages tell a tale of someone who spends a lot of time reworking familiar territory.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

*This new sensation had on me the
effect which love has-- filling me
with a precious essence; or rather
this essence was not in me it was
me....*

She stares at her notebook, trying to write. She makes a few corrections. Crosses out a paragraph. Sighs in frustration.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

*I had ceased now to feel mediocre,
contingent, mortal. Where did it
come from, this all-powerful joy?*

Sara slams her headphones on, her music drowning out Joseph's voice. She looks out the window, where the city has melted away and been replaced by...

A small, sweet town of clapboard houses. A still lake. A little league game. A bucolic field of cows, grazing.

And, as the train hurtles forward through space, everything dissolves into a darkly beautiful blur.

EXT. GREENWICH METRO NORTH STATION--DAY

Sara's standing on the platform as the dozen or so other arriving PASSENGERS walk by her. Her eyes scan a parking lot full of SUV's, Mercedes, BMW's. She watches people greet one another.

Finally, she lights on an idling gold BMW, with a license plate that reads: "F-U-N-N-N."

Next to it, car door still open, a very fit, adorable forty-something woman in a tight pink and tan jogging outfit also scans the station. If she's had "work" done (and she has), it's done beautifully. Her skin glows, hair shines; gold hoops dangle from her earlobes, catching the light.

This is PAMMIE.

She spots Sara and waves cheerfully.

PAMMIE
(calling)
Sara? Sara!
(points to herself)
Pammie Anders! Hello!

Sara puts her game face on and makes her way over to the car.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)
I'm so glad I found you! You know how when you're looking for someone with a ponytail, suddenly everyone has a ponytail!

Sara half-laughed politely, and touches her ponytail, pushing a lock of frizzy hair behind her ear.

SARA
I know. And I was looking for a--

PAMMIE
Green Lexus hybrid SUV, right?
That's my other car.

SARA
No, actually a gray--

PAMMIE
Audi? That's Jordy's car. Oh, God, did I get mixed up and say the Audi? I am so sorry. Anyway, you made it! Hop in!

Sara takes a deep breath, steeling herself, and gets in.

INT. GOLD BMW--CONTINUOUS

Pammie power locks the doors. The Black Eyed Peas rock out on the car stereo, her attempt at being hip. She lowers the volume.

PAMMIE

I would advise you to buckle up
because I am *the world's worst
driver.*

Pammie backs the car out. They lurch forward, barely missing a pedestrian.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

Sorry! Thought I was in reverse!

(laughs)

Oh, God, I'm a menace! Don't
worry, the car has air bags--

SARA

It's fine. I'm pretty bad myself.

PAMMIE

Are you? Oh *good*.

Sara suppresses a smile as they navigate dangerously through the parking lot, finally turning onto a sun-dappled street, lined with lovely, old trees.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

Well, Jordy would have picked you up himself, but he's at soccer practice, or lacrosse...One's fall, one's spring, I can't keep it straight. Anyway, he'd better be home when we get there. Otherwise, I'll have to turn into, you know, *bitch mom*. I'm terrible. I show up at his friends' houses with, like, a broomstick and just beat him.

Sara laughs obligingly.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

I'm serious. Don't have kids, Sara, unless you want to go *insane*.

SARA
I'll keep that in mind.

Pammie pulls the car to a screeching halt at a stop sign.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)
Anyway, I know he's very excited to work with you because he *really* wants to raise his score from the last time he took, the test. He's got his heart set on Harvard, which is great because he's a double legacy there, so he has more of a shot. I mean, there's Yale and Princeton of course, but what are we supposed to do, give a library?

As Pammie babbles, Sara half-listens and begins to take in the lavish world of Greenwich for the very first time:

It's perfect: Rolling green hills, manicured lawns, big white mansions, beautiful ponds in which pairs of swans float peacefully. This is the good life. The American Dream.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)
I just hate the whole system. But what can you do? The competition, these kids with their extracurriculars and their biracial, bi-curious, native, indigenous peoples backgrounds... I mean, there is a kid in his class, Ryan Baxter, who plays polo and speaks Yiddish. Can you beat that?

The car wings around a bend, past a golf course.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)
The truth is, if you're just a regular kid like Jordy it's much harder.

Each mansion they pass is larger than the last, all tastefully set back from the road. Sara catches glimpses of them behind hedges, through trees, past fences and old cobblestone walls.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)
Oh, I should tell you. He's dyslexic. We had him tested by two doctors in Greenwich and a few in New York. Plus, he has mild ADD.
(MORE)

PAMMIE (cont'd)

Do you have experience? Working
with dyslexia?

SARA

Yeah. It's not that unusual.

PAMMIE

Great. And you went to Harvard.

SARA

I did, yes, and I did work-study
filing in the admissions office
while I was there, so I've seen it
all up close--

Pammie turns sharply, running over a curb.

PAMMIE

Oops. That thing jumped out at me!
Anyway, tell me more. I've been
babbling. Since Harvard, you've
been...

SARA

Tutoring, mostly.

PAMMIE

Yes, but what else? That can't be
what you want to do. My life
coach, well, *therapist* really, says
Pammie, ask yourself "what do I
want?"

Sara shrugs self-consciously.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

What?

SARA

No, it's just, parents don't
normally ask...

Suddenly, a JOLT, as Pammie slams on the brakes in the middle
of the road. Sara goes flying forward in her seat.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

Okay, Sara. I'm not moving this
car until you come up with
something.

As Sara catches her breath, a car pulls up behind them. Then
another. They're too polite to honk. But still, holding up
traffic makes Sara nervous.

SARA

Okay, okay, I just, I have this novel. It's nothing. It's just, I've only been working on it for, like five years, so--

PAMMIE

Sara! That's fantastic! You're a writer!

SARA

Well, not yet.

Pammie starts the car back up with a lurch. Waves, "Sorry!" to the people in the car behind her, who wave back.

PAMMIE

You know my *best friend* is Marianne Lewis. The top editor at Knopf? If you give me some of your work I'd be happy to pass it on to her.

SARA

Oh, thanks. It's really not ready, I mean, I haven't shown it to anyone, but when I do--

PAMMIE

Sara, I'm telling you, she's my *best friend*. I insist.

They pull up a steep driveway in front of a massive, white, columned mansion. From the driveway, Sara can already see a swimming pool and golf course.

PAMMIE

Here we are! Home sweet home!

Pammie parks between four other cars. Three enormous, beautiful, shiny DOGS bound out of the house, barking furiously.

PAMMIE

(to the dogs)

Peter! Calm down. Theo! Stop!

(then)

And I see Jordy's car. He must be home! It's a miracle!

INT. ANDERS MANSION FOYER--MOMENTS LATER

Sara stands in cavernous, marble foyer, as the dogs circle her, sniffing. Several Greek statues decorate the hall. A fountain cascades down a wall.

Pammie throws down her bag and car keys. Sara flinches as the dogs surround her.

PAMMIE
(to the dogs)
Peter! Theo! Come on. Leave her alone.

The cacophony of the dogs is compounded by a ringing phone. It's chaos. Pammie finds it, looks at caller ID.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)
Okay, that's going to voice mail,
and--
(rolls her eyes to Sara,
then, to dogs)
Peter, stop that! Seriously!
(then, after the dogs
relax)
Okay, phew, I'll grab Jordy. What
can I get you? Water?

SARA
Sure.

PAMMIE
Sparkling or flat?

SARA
Flat is fine.

PAMMIE
Bottled or tap?

SARA
Um, tap?

PAMMIE
With ice or without?

SARA
Um... ice.

PAMMIE
Life is so full of *choices*, isn't it?
(MORE)

PAMMIE (cont'd)
(calling)
Jordy?
(hi-pitched)
Jordy! Jordan!!!

Sara flinches at the sound of Pammie's shrieks, as Pammie goes off.

Alone now, Sara has the look of someone who's just been through a tornado. Dazed but curious, she wanders into...

INT. ANDERS MANSION LIVING ROOM--CONTINUOUS

Sara surveys the plush white sofas, thick beige rugs, beautiful antique furniture. A wall of windows looks out onto the golf course. Orchids planted in antique china vases complete the feeling of lush abundance.

This is a level of luxury above and beyond anything she's ever seen as a tutor in New York. It's magnificent.

Sara leans close to a vase, making sure not to bump it, and sniffs a rare, flesh-colored orchid.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
They look good, but they don't
smell like much.

Startled, she spins, to see JORDY standing in the doorway. As she turns, the orchid teeters. She grabs it, holds it steady.

Jordy smiles an easy smile, his relaxed demeanor in stark contrast to her awkwardness.

JORDY
Whoa. Careful there.

He's seventeen and beautiful, still sweaty and dirty from practice, with the face of a boy, but the build of a man. He holds Sara's ice water.

SARA
(rattled)
God, I almost...The vase...

Jordy takes a few steps toward her.

JORDY
Chill. They have, like, a million
of those.

Slowly, Sara moves from the vase, takes her hair out of the ponytail, runs her hands through it, smoothing it.

JORDY (CONT'D)

I'm Jordy.

SARA

Yeah. I know, I mean, your mom said. So.

(polite conversation)
You... play lacrosse?

JORDY

I was at soccer.

SARA

Oh. I don't really know much about soccer. Or lacrosse, for that matter--

JORDY

It's not that complicated.

She stares at him a beat. He smiles, hands her the water. She puts it on an antique wood table.

JORDY (CONT'D)

You should probably use a coaster.

SARA

Right. Sorry. I hope I didn't damage it--

JORDY

It's just that my parents are, like, coaster obsessed.

SARA

It's a beautiful table.

JORDY

It's not even original finish.

She shoots him a look, as she puts her water down on a coaster.

SARA

So, your mom tells me you want to go to Harvard.

JORDY

She thinks I can get in because I'm a legacy. I'm not really that into school.

SARA

What's your favorite subject?

JORDY

I don't know. Lunch?

A beat.

JORDY (CONT'D)

I'm kidding.

SARA

(not laughing)

I got it.

Another beat, as they face off.

INT. ANDERS MANSION LIVING ROOM--LATER

Sara and Jordy are installed at a corner table, by the windows. They look like they've been there a while. Strewn between them are SAT manuals, notebooks, etc.

She reads from a practice test, as Jordy doodles in the margins.

SARA

Although some think the terms "bug" and "insect" are BLANK, the former term actually refers to a BLANK group of insects.

(then)

*So, the trick is, before we even look at the answer choices, to think about what *might* fill in these blanks--*

Sara looks over at him, notices he's not listening.

SARA (CONT'D)

Actually, the first thing you probably want to do is pay attention.

Jordy puts down his pencil. Sara tries again.

SARA (CONT'D)

So. What do you think of this question?

JORDY

(reading it, slowly)

Although some think the terms "bug" and "insect" are BLANK.

(pause)

Well, I hate bugs and insects so I would just say...gross.

SARA

(exasperated)

Okay, but let's look at the second half of the sentence. "Although some think the terms are BLANK, the former term actually refers to a BLANK group--"

JORDY

Wow.

SARA

Wow. What?

JORDY

I have, like, this really long arm hair. See it?

And we realize he's been staring at his arm this entire time. Sara sighs, annoyed.

SARA

Jordy--

JORDY

I never noticed it because it's, like, white blond. How does that happen? All the other hairs knew to stop at a certain length and this one was just like, no.

SARA

Well, it's just a group of, you know, rogue cells. I have something like that on my...chest area--

JORDY

Rogue cells? Is that like cancer? Be gone, cancer hair!

(MORE)

JORDY (cont'd)
(rips it out)
Ow! Can I go get a band-aid?

Sara exhales in frustration. Jordy smiles at her.

JORDY (CONT'D)
Kidding.

SARA
Got it.

She takes a deep breath, trying again.

SARA (CONT'D)
Let's go back to the question.
Some think that the terms "bug" and "insect" are BLANK.

JORDY
We have ants. They drive my mom, like, completely crazy. Of course, she's crazy anyway, so it's like, which came first, the ants or the crazy--

SARA
Jordy. Focus.

JORDY
Do you like art?

This is a clearly losing battle. Reluctantly, she decides to humor him.

SARA
Do I -- Sure. Why? Are you taking an art class in school?

JORDY
Nah, I was just wondering if you wanted a tour of our collection.

Not what she was expecting. She looks at him.

SARA
Kidding?

He smiles. Shakes his head.

INT. ANDERS MANSION HALLWAY--MOMENTS LATER

The house seems to go on forever, each room more opulent than the last.

Jordy and Sara walk down a long, marble hallway, windows on each side. They see a Latina maid, ANA, cleaning the glass.

JORDY

'Sup Ana.
(quickly, in passing)
This is Sara. She's helping me
deal with the SAT and college
stuff. Hey, how's Maria?

ANA

Very good. Also doing SAT studies.
Muy dificil.

Sara smiles at Ana, who smiles back. They walk on.

JORDY

(sotto, to Sara)
Ana's got a daughter, like, my age--

SARA

Jordy, this is not what I'm here
for. Do you want to work, or--

JORDY

(ignoring her protests)
The good stuff's all through here,
in this wing. I'm not gonna show
you the antiquities, because I'm
like, antiquities, whatever.

She sighs, as her eye is caught by the sight of several
GARDENERS tending the hedges outside.

Beyond them, on the tennis courts, an eleven year old GIRL
hits balls with a MAN. The girl GRUNTS as she slams a killer
serve.

JORDY (CONT'D)

(noticing Sara watching)
That's my sister.

SARA

Is that your dad with her?

JORDY

Nah, he's at work in the city.

Another, even louder GRUNT from Lauren. Sara stifles a
laugh, as Jordy smiles at her.

JORDY (CONT'D)

(explaining)
She's tennis obsessed.
(MORE)

JORDY (cont'd)

(thinks)

Or, actually, I don't even know if she's that into it. She's, just like, crazy competitive? My mom made us each pick something we were supposed to be amazing at--

SARA

What'd you pick?

He shrugs.

JORDY

I'm just gonna do business.

SARA

What kind of business?

JORDY

Just something like what my dad does. Something with companies.

Sara takes note of this as Jordy walks ahead in silence.

Finally, they arrive at:

INT. ANDERS MANSION, EAST WING--CONTINUOUS

This is the modern wing of the property. Airy, light, minimal. More informal.

SARA

(entering)

All right, ten minutes, seriously, Jordy, because we still have to--

But Sara stops cold when she notices the very large and very important works of modern art adorning the walls. The beauty and the color take her breath away. Jordy looks at her.

JORDY

I know, right?

He points out a huge Jackson Pollock.

JORDY (CONT'D)

This is a Pollock, um, obviously, that one over there's a Rothko, we have a couple of those, and over there you can see the Licht--Licht--

SARA
(recognizing it)
Lichtenstein.

He looks at her, surprised and impressed.

JORDY
Wow. You know everything, huh?

SARA
Not everything. Just, you know, most things.

They share a smile.

JORDY
(continuing the tour)
David Hockney, Rauschenberg, Schnabel.

As he talks, Sara walks on, taking in one masterpiece after another. A painting a few feet away catches her eye. She walks over and stands in front of it, captivated by its beauty.

Jordy comes up behind her.

JORDY (CONT'D)
Yeah. The Picasso.

It's stunning. A late painting from the artist's surreal period. Deep, rich colors depict bodies and faces, all distorted and fragmented.

A beat, as they both look.

JORDY (CONT'D)
It's actually kind of ugly.

She turns to him, not expecting that.

JORDY (CONT'D)
But I think that might be why I like it. It's not perfect.

Sara turns back to the painting, listening.

JORDY (CONT'D)
I mean, look at that woman type thing, where is she looking? And then you have that other one with that weird, like, butt face and she's not even noticing her.

SARA
(laughing)
Is that the back of his head or the
front?

JORDY
Exactly. It's so messed up.
They're all so messed up but so
completely, totally...real and so
alive. I mean, here I am, like,
breathing, and somehow this *thing*
is a million times more alive.

Sara looks at Jordy, as if seeing him for the first time.

JORDY (CONT'D)
So when I see it I just want to
know it. I want that.
(a whisper)
I just want to *feel* that. To go
inside.

For an instant, their shoulders touch.

INT. METRO NORTH TRAIN--EVENING

Sara stares at her misshapen reflection among the other passengers, in the window. The distorted faces are reminiscent of the Picasso. Only instead of being beautiful and vibrant, they're garish and sad.

She glances back into the car. Next to her, a young inner city GIRL is looking through a massive SAT manual. Sara watches her struggle with a question, before resorting to checking the answers in the back of the book.

The girl notices Sara staring.

GIRL
What?

Sara shakes her head, "nothing." She goes back to looking out the window, as the rolling hills are replaced by concrete housing projects.

INT. CAFE--AFTERNOON

Sara sits at a corner table nursing a cold coffee, her notebooks and her typewritten manuscript spread out in front of her. She crosses out a paragraph. Rewrites it in the margin. Sighs in frustration.

She's distracted by a group of TWENTY SOMETHINGS, laughing and chatting at a nearby table. Their togetherness is in stark contrast to her solitude.

EXT. ANDERS GROUNDS--DAY

It's a perfect day of Indian Summer. Sara and Jordy are sprawled out in the generous shade of a huge tree.

Nearby, on the tennis courts, Lauren and her tennis pro are slamming balls back and forth. Lauren's GRUNTS pierce the quiet afternoon.

Sara's correcting a practice test; Jordy's reading her his answers as she checks them.

SARA

5 C?

JORDY

That's not right?

SARA

Just keep going.

JORDY

6 D, 7 C, 8 B, 9 E, 10 A, 11 D--

SARA

11 D?

JORDY

It's not?

SARA

Keep going, we'll go over it later.

JORDY

Is it wrong? Let me see--

SARA

Just--here. Give me your test.

I'll grade it myself.

He passes it over to her and watches closely as she looks at it, making a bunch of marks.

A moment of quiet, but for the POCK of tennis balls, the SQUEAK of tennis shoes, and Lauren's primal GRUNTS. Sara looks up from the test paper.

SARA (CONT'D)
Jordy, it's okay--

JORDY
Is it *any* better?

SARA
(no)
It will be. Just be patient.

JORDY
Shit. Sorry.

SARA
We'll keep working.

Jordy takes a shaky breath.

JORDY
No, you don't understand. I've had
tutors my whole life for, like,
everything. They don't make any
difference.

SARA
Well, you've never had me.

JORDY
No offense, I'm sure you're really
special and all, but I really
really *can't do this*, I'm just not
smart enough or whatever, and my
whole life is falling apart--

SARA
Really? Your whole life is falling
apart?

She looks around pointedly at the manicured lawns, the
mansion, the tennis courts.

JORDY
I know you think I'm a dumb spoiled
brat, okay. I know that.

SARA
I don't think you're dumb.

Jordy gives her a pointed look.

JORDY
Thanks.

Sara smiles at him. He smiles back. They both start to laugh.

Sara's about to say something, but is stopped by the sight of Pammie approaching from the house, carrying a tray of prosciutto sandwiches. Jordy and Sara share a look.

PAMMIE

Hey guys, don't mean to interrupt,
I just thought you might need some sustenance.

(setting down the tray)
Oooh, SAT word. Jord, what's sustenance?

JORDY

I'm guessing sandwiches.

Pammie hesitates, looking to Sara for a definitive answer.

SARA

(smiles)

Close enough.

Jordy looks over what his mom brought.

JORDY

I'm getting a Coke.

He runs back into the house as Pammie pops a stray piece of prosciutto into her mouth.

PAMMIE

So. How's it going?

SARA

He's making progress.

PAMMIE

I actually meant *you*. How are you?
Where's the novel?

SARA

The...

PAMMIE

Your novel. For Marianne. I'm having lunch with her next week, and I'm going to mention you, so you'd better have it for me *pronto*.

Pammie starts off, as from the tennis courts, Lauren GRUNTS and slams another ACE.

PAMMIE
(calling to her daughter)
Hey, looking good, kiddo!

Lauren completely ignores her mom and plays on. Pammie keeps cheering, and makes her way up towards the house.

Sara, alone, grabs a sandwich and takes a bite. Through the leaves of a nearby hedge, she notices Ana, sitting on a bench, taking a break.

Sara smiles to herself, grabs a folder out of her back pack, and quickly goes around the hedge, into...

EXT. ROSE GARDEN--DAY

Ana has her shoes off, enjoying a moment of peace. When she sees Sara, she freezes for a moment, caught.

SARA
Sorry, I just--

ANA
(explaining)
Sometime I need little break. Only
poquito momento, then I go back.
Please don't tell--

Sara holds out the folder.

SARA
Some SAT study materials. Practice
tests, techniques, explanations.
For your daughter.
(off Ana's hesitation)
Take it. A gift. From me.

Ana smiles gratefully, taking the folder.

Suddenly, Jordy comes up behind Sara, holding his Coke, as Ana quickly slips the folder behind her back.

JORDY
(to Sara)
Back to work?

Ana and Sara share a look of silent complicity, as Jordy chugs his soda. Sara follows him back to their spot under the tree.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK--DAY

Sara and Gretchen, lattes in hand, stroll around the reservoir.

GRETCHEN

...you know, I'm glad that business is expanding but with planning the wedding on top of it all, my life is just out of control.

(then)

You're my rock, Sara. I seriously couldn't do it without you. Which is why I got you a raise. Twenty-two fifty an hour. How much do you love me?

But Sara's staring at a musician, in the park, playing the violin.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

You okay?

SARA

I was just thinking about, back in college, when you used to do that.

GRETCHEN

Play my violin in the square?

(laughing)

Yeah, don't remind me.

Sara smiles.

SARA

You ever play anymore?

GRETCHEN

I'm busy.

SARA

You played beautifully.

Gretchen shakes her head, shrugs.

GRETCHEN

I was never that gifted.

Sara turns to her friend.

INT. SARA'S APARTMENT--NIGHT

Sara sits at her typewriter, re-typing a page full of detailed changes and annotations.

It's slow going on the typewriter's old keys. She bangs on the "Q" several times to force it to drop, then lifts it back up manually to re-set it.

She reads over what she's typed. Shakes her head. Finally, pulls the page out, crumples it, throws it away.

She puts a new page in. Starts over.

EXT. ANDERS POOL HOUSE--DAY

The light is blue, watery. Sara and Jordy sit across from each other at a glass table, staring into each other's eyes.

SARA

Handshake?

JORDY

This is retarded.

SARA

Jordy. The interview is one of the most important parts of this thing. You're going up there this weekend and I don't want you to screw it up.

(then)

Now, I need to make sure your handshake is--

He takes her hand. She's suddenly flustered.

SARA (CONT'D)

Okay, wow, it's good.

(recovering)

So. Let's imagine that I'm the admissions officer.

JORDY

Oh God, we're not going to role play are we?

SARA

This is good practice. Now come on, imagine I'm the--

JORDY

I'll role play under one condition:
I get to be the admissions guy and
you have to be the student.

SARA

Jordan, that defeats the entire
purpose of the exercise.

JORDY

No it doesn't. You can show me how
to do this, and I can "watch, ask
questions and learn." Take it or
leave it.

Sara sighs, realizes she's fighting a losing battle.

SARA

Fine.

JORDY

Good. Now. Stand up.
(she does)
Hello young lady. Welcome to my
office.

He takes her measure, head to toe, pulls out a notebook,
starts to "take notes."

SARA

What are you writing? Jordy.

Long pause. He keeps writing. She's very uncomfortable.

SARA (CONT'D)

Can I sit?

JORDY

In a minute.
(he writes some more)
Okay. Have a seat, Miss...

SARA

Jacobs. Thank you.

She sits.

JORDY

Jacobs. Hmm.
(he writes something)
Tell me about yourself.

SARA

Well, I'm a senior at Xavier High
School in Greenwich. I play soccer-

JORDY

That's me. Tell me about you.

She rolls her eyes, no. He consults his "notes." Writes something.

JORDY (CONT'D)

Hmmm. I see you're in chess club?

She gives him a look.

SARA

Jordy, I was never in chess club.

He makes another note, as she squirms.

JORDY

And model U.N. Very impressive.

SARA

Jordy. We didn't even have--

JORDY

Oooh, look at this.

(writing something)

Captain of the math team.

A beat.

SARA

I was never captain.

Jordy half-stifles a victorious little smile. He writes something else.

JORDY

And what do you want to do when you grow up?

This questions makes Sara uncomfortable.

SARA

I'm not sure.

JORDY

You must have some kind of dreams for yourself. Maybe something like...SAT tutor?

She glares at him, a bit hurt.

SARA
Nobody wants to be an SAT tutor.

A beat. He looks at her.

JORDY
They why are you one?

SARA
I don't know. It's...
(trying to cover)
Rewarding to help kids learn and,
and give them strategies to
achieve...

JORDY
Wow. You're really full of shit.

SARA
What?

JORDY
Tell me the *truth*.

SARA
What truth?

JORDY
I don't know. You must have real
feelings *somewhere* in there.

SARA
(getting pissed)
I have real feelings.

JORDY
Are you sure?
SARA JORDY
Jesus, Jordy-- Tell me the truth--

SARA
You want to know how I feel?
SARA JORDY
You want to know how I really No, I'd rather hear bullshit--
feel?

SARA
(erupting)
Okay, fine. Fine.
(MORE)

SARA (cont'd)

The truth is, I... hate this. I think what I do is not only excruciatingly boring, but also morally corrupt, completely unethical, heartbreakingly spirit-crushingly soul-killing and just basically awful and evil.

Pause.

JORDY

You hate me.

SARA

No, not you. It's just -- I think hard work should be what's rewarded, not people who can afford two hundred and fifty bucks an hour to learn how to beat the system. But that's how it is, and the rich just keep getting more and more and everything's handed to them, and the worst part is, I'm part of it, I'm participating, which makes me feel like, just this horrible, horrible, person. It just makes me -- hate -- me.

(then)

Forget it. I'm sorry, I should just--

She starts to go. Jordy gets up. Grabs her arm. Stops her.

JORDY

Wait.

He puts a hand on her shoulder.

JORDY (CONT'D)

I'll let you in.

SARA

In where?

A long, tense beat.

JORDY

Our school.

She exhales. He smiles, reassuring.

JORDY (CONT'D)

Now. I'm going to get you a glass of water.

(MORE)

JORDY (cont'd)
 (then, a mocking gleam in
 his eye)
 Sparkling or flat?

SARA
 Um, flat?

JORDY
 Bottled or tap?

SARA
 (smiling, getting it)
 Tap.

JORDY
 (he smiles back)
 With ice or without?

SARA
 Jordy. Ice. Please.

He winks and starts to go. Points back to his notebook, which is laying on the table.

JORDY
 That's for you.

He goes off. She walks to the notebook, turns it over and sees what he was "writing." It's beautiful, slightly abstract line drawing of her, standing in the pool house. It takes her breath away.

She takes it. Slips it in between the pages of her SAT book.

EXT. SARA'S APT--NIGHT

Sara, coming home from a long day, dumps her backpack on her bed and presses PLAY on the answering machine. Beep.

GRETCHEN (V.O.)
 ...Sar, good news. Adam, that
 really cute new tutor wants your
 number, so I--

She presses a button.

MACHINE (V.O.)
 Message skipped. Next message.

ADAM (V.O.)
 Sara. It's Adam. The, um, tutor
 guy? From the subway? And
 Princeton?
 (MORE)

ADAM (cont'd)

Look, I got your number from
Gretchen. I just had a quick
question about teaching the
quantitative comparisons and
Gretchen said to call you, maybe we
could meet up and talk about it,
why not...

Only half-listening to the message, Sara reaches into her
backpack, pulls out Jordy's drawing.

Tacks it up on her bulletin board.

She sits, contemplating it, losing herself in it.

INT. ANDERS LIVING ROOM--DAY

Sara sits at a table grading a practice test as Jordy paces
nervously.

JORDY

I think the math went okay, even
though I skipped one or two, but
there were some words I didn't
know. Like, *intransigent*. Is that
a bad thing, because it sounds--

SARA

Jordy, this is good.

JORDY

It's a good thing? *Intransigent*?

SARA

No, the test, it's--Hand me that
calculator.

He does. She quickly calculates the score.

JORDY

What?

SARA

(beaming)

1520.

Jordy stares at her a beat, stunned.

JORDY

No.

She nods, smiling, showing him the calculator.

SARA

Yes.

It starts to sink in. He laughs in thrilled disbelief.

JORDY

No.

SARA

(laughing with him,
overjoyed)

Yes.

She spontaneously, awkwardly hugs him, just as ARTHUR, Jordy's father (a fifty-ish, fit, tan, good looking and fun alpha-male), comes in from outside, carrying his golf clubs.

ARTHUR

Looks like things are going well in
here.

He gives Jordy a little wink and extends his hand to Sara.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Arthur Anders, Jordy's father.

They shake.

SARA

(explaining)

Jordy just scored really high on a
practice test. Over three hundred
points higher than he ever did
before.

ARTHUR

Hey, that's great news.

(to Sara)

You must be some kind of genius.

Sara looks over to Jordy, whose face tightens ever so slightly.

SARA

Jordy did all the work--

ARTHUR

Stay for a celebratory drink?

SARA

Thanks, but, I should--

JORDY
I'll drive you to the train.

Jordy grabs his jacket and car keys, as Sara gathers her stuff.

ARTHUR
Okay, kids. That's right. Ignore the old man. Run along. I'll be fine.

And he watches as they go.

INT. JORDY'S CAR--DAY

Jordy cranks the stereo, blasting something reckless. Sara looks over to him, concerned.

SARA
You worked hard. It's your score.
Don't let him--

JORDY
It's just, why can't he see that, you know? It's always, just, never good enough, he's just...

Sara understands. Jordy shakes it off, recovering.

JORDY (CONT'D)
But there's one thing he *is* right about.

SARA
What?

He shoots her a smile.

JORDY
We should celebrate.

They come to the train station. He drives right by.

SARA
Jordy, wait. Where are you--
(off him, not responding)
Jordy, come on. I have to go back--

JORDY
And do what?

Sara doesn't have an answer.

JORDY (CONT'D)
You can take a later train. They
run every hour. Don't worry. I
promise, I won't bite.

He turns the stereo up even louder to cover her protests, makes an "I can't hear you" sign, and rolls the windows down. She can't help smiling, enjoying the feeling of speed, the wind in her face.

EXT. MALL/ARCADE--DAY

Jordy's car screeches into the parking lot.

INT. PIZZA JOINT--DAY

Music plays, HIGH SCHOOLERS hang out. Sara and Jordy share a pie at a table in back.

JORDY
(thinking it through)
If I got that score, I could
actually get in. To Harvard.

SARA
Maybe. If that's what you want.

Jordy looks unsettled.

JORDY
Well. It's what my parents want,
and it's where my dad went, and
it's where you went.

SARA
Yeah, but what about you?

Jordy takes this in.

JORDY
I don't know. I--

Suddenly, WATTS and COOPER, two stoned soccer teammates, bound up to the table. Watts thinks he's black; Cooper's neck is as thick as his head.

COOPER
'Sup, Jo-Jo.

WATTS
Yo J-man.

JORDY
Guys.

But they've noticed Sara and are now just staring, silently. Jordy takes the cue.

JORDY (CONT'D)
This is Sara. Sara, this is Cooper
and Watts.

They look her over, very impressed.

WATTS
J-man, you rock my world.

Sara smiles in spite of herself.

COOPER
Dude, we'll see you at Campbell's
later? We got, like ten cases of
Veuve, tons of food. It's gonna be
sick.

JORDY
Yeah, sure. We'll be there.

Sara shoots Jordy a look as Cooper and Watts go, looking back to check her out.

JORDY (CONT'D)
You ready?

What? SARA

Jordy stuffs the last crust of pizza into his mouth.

JORDY
Well. I think that you. Are about
to seriously. Go down.

INT. ARCADE--LATER

A jukebox cranks out tunes, as Sara and Jordy play a vicious match at an old foosball table in the corner. They are completely into it, grunting and sweating, fiercely passionate and very intense.

Sara performs a complicated set of moves, as Jordy slams into the table, trying desperately to block.

Goal! SARA No, no, no! JORDY

She does a little victory dance.

JORDY
(agonizing)
How can you be so good at this?

SARA
I actually majored in it at
Harvard.

JORDY
It's not fair--

SARA
All's fair in foosball.

JORDY
I want a rematch.

Sara laughs and goes to the jukebox, picking some songs, as Jordy re-sets the foosball players.

She comes back, smiling.

SARA
Don't be a sore loser.

JORDY
Oh, I don't lose. It's best of
three. And we're switching teams
because your players are obviously
better--

One of Sara's songs starts to play on the jukebox. Jordy notices the music.

JORDY (CONT'D)
Did you put this on?

Sara nods. It's an amazing song, one Jordy's never heard before.

JORDY (CONT'D)
(listening)
It's pretty good.

They both listen, transported.

INT. CAMPBELL'S HOUSE--DUSK

Jordy leads Sara by hand through a cavernous house, full of dark woods and rich fabrics.

Sara, suddenly nervous, grabs him.

SARA

Jordy--I don't know about this.

JORDY

I think you can handle a bunch of
drunk high schoolers--

SARA

I know, but I'm--

JORDY

Relax, nerd. You'll be fine.

She looks dubious.

JORDY (CONT'D)

(off her)

Didn't the math team ever go to
parties in high school?

She smiles at him, busted.

EXT. BACK PATIO--CONTINUOUS

The French doors swing open...

This is where the cool kids are.

BOYS pass around overflowing bottles of Veuve Cliquot; GIRLS drape themselves lazily on lounge chairs. Music THUMPS from hidden outdoor speakers: the riffs of Kanye.

Nearby, a few nubile GIRLS IN BIKINIS, defying the chill of fall, dangle their feet in a perfectly pale blue heated swimming pool. A COUPLE makes out hungrily in an adjacent hot tub.

As Jordy and Sara appear, a few guys nod to him. Sara looks a bit overwhelmed.

JORDY

(off her)

Drink?

They make their way over to the grill area, where a tall, skinny redhead, LEO, is cooking a new batch of burgers on a stainless steel built in grill as he chows from a bag of Funyuns.

LEO

(re the burgers)

Kobe beef, bitches!

Jordy roots through a cooler of beers, bottles of Veuve Clicquot and Red Bulls.

LEO (CONT'D)
No no no, Dude, rock the *punch*.

A huge silver bowl has been dragged out onto the patio, surrounded by cut crystal hi-ball glasses. As Jordy goes to it, Sara pulls him aside.

SARA
Jordy, I mean, not to be lame and all, but do you know how much trouble I could get in if something happened here? I'm the only legal adult--

JORDY
Nah, Campbell's parents are totally upstairs. It's their house, they're responsible. Sara. We've been doing this since, like, the eighth grade.

He ladles some dark brown punch into a glass, hands it to her. She smells it, giggles.

SARA
What *is* that?

He laughs.

JORDY
I don't know. Try it.

EXT. CAMPBELL'S HOUSE, POOLSIDE--LATER

Sara, now relaxed, lounges with Jordy, Cooper, Watts, Leo, CAMPBELL (the host) and a few girls: TAYLOR, a tawny beauty, RACHEL, a late-bloomer still waiting for puberty, and BEVIN, a preppy ice-queen.

They're passing around a joint and a couple bottles of Veuve, talking smack.

COOPER
...British Airways, *definitely*. You get, like, a full-on bed, that's like, that Swedish foam shit, you get cashmere socks, and they give you hot cookies.

CAMPBELL

Dude, no way, have you flown first in Lufthansa? You get a whole cashmere blanket. You get fuckin' Bose headphones for your TV, plus the stewardesses give you free foot massages.

WATTS

Yeah, well, on Singapore Air the stewardesses give you blow jobs.

They all crack up, ad-libbing "Dude, no way," "Yeah, right."

WATTS (CONT'D)

I swear.

The girls giggle. One of them lights a cigarette. Jordy puts his arm around Sara. Taylor looks over at Jordy and stalks off into the house.

CAMPBELL

(to Jordy, re Taylor)
Dude.

JORDY

Whatever.

Bevin inspects Sara, the new object of Jordy's attention.

BEVIN

I love your nails. Is that Black Diamond by Chanel?

Sara looks down at her hands; her nails are indeed black.

SARA

Oh, no. It's just, um, a Sharpie?

BEVIN

Wow. That's hot.

SARA

I get bored sometimes and I just color them in.

RACHEL

That's really hot.

Sara leans back, enjoying her high, enjoying the moment, enjoying the utterly foreign and seductive feeling of being the coolest girl in school.

BEVIN (CONT'D)
(looking at the empty
champagne bottles)
Whoa, we're out.

CAMPBELL
(half-passed out)
There's tons in the house--

SARA
I got it.

She gets up, in control and at ease.

CAMPBELL
(smiles at her)
Nice.

INT. CAMPBELL'S HOUSE, KITCHEN--LATE AFTERNOON

Sara opens the sub-zero refrigerator, surveys the cartons of prepared foods, and grabs two bottles of champagne.

She turns to see Taylor, watching her.

SARA
Hey.

Taylor sizes her up, not impressed.

TAYLOR
(re Sara's nails)
Black Diamond?

SARA
Sharpie.

TAYLOR
That's so sad.

Sara half-smiles to herself, slightly enjoying being a threat. She brushes past Taylor and goes back outside.

EXT. CAMPBELL'S HOUSE PATIO--EVENING

The sky is just starting to take on a pinkish cast, giving everything a rosy glow. Sara lays back, a bit apart from rest of the party, watching the stars come out.

Jordy comes over and lays down next to her. A silence.

SARA
Prevaricate.

JORDY
To depart from the truth.

SARA
Naive.

JORDY
Dumb.

SARA
(correcting him)
Unsophisticated.
(then)
Okay, *Intransigent.*

JORDY
I always forget this.

SARA
Refusing to agree or compromise.

She glances over at him.

SARA (CONT'D)
Um...*Tangible.*

He thinks. She stares back up at the sky. He turns to her.

JORDY
Real. Can be touched.

She keeps looking up, feeling his gaze.

SARA
I should go.

EXT. METRO NORTH TRAIN STATION PLATFORM--NIGHT

Sara and Jordy sit on a bench, waiting for her train back to the city and sharing a cigarette. It's gotten cold and she's wrapped in Jordy's jacket, shivering.

A silence.

JORDY
You never said thank you. For the drawing.

She looks at him.

SARA

It's beautiful. I love it. You're so talented, Jordy. You're different from--

JORDY

My friends? Yeah, let's hope so.

Pause. He's looking right through her. The connection between them is dangerous and undeniable.

SARA (CONT'D)

Jordy, I...

He takes her hand, looks at it, running his fingers over hers. Around her wrist is an old piece of string. He touches it.

JORDY

What's that?

SARA

Oh that's... It's my lucky string.

(then)

You can have it... if you want.

He slips it off her, holds out his arm. She ties it around his wrist, as the train ROARS into the station.

JORDY

Okay, did this used to be white because it's like gray.

SARA

Just hold still. Nerd.

He grabs her hand. Squeezes it. He pulls her closer to him, when, suddenly:

A CONDUCTOR leans out of the train, yells to Sara.

CONDUCTOR

Train's leaving, young lady.

Embarrassed, she breaks free, runs onto the train.

Jordy watches it go.

INT. METRO NORTH TRAIN--NIGHT

Sara leans back, closes her eyes, letting the feel of the train overtake her. She wraps Jordy's jacket around her tighter.

INT. SARA'S APARTMENT--MORNING

Sara, still covered in Jordy's jacket, is asleep on her bed. The phone RINGS. And RINGS. And RINGS.

Finally, the machine picks up.

PAMMIE (ON MACHINE)

Sara. Pamela Anders. I need to speak with you as soon as possible. It's... regarding Jordy. So. Give me a call.

Sara opens her eyes, a feeling of dread.

Her cell phone RINGS. And RINGS. And RINGS.

She grabs it, checks it. It's Gretchen. She sends the call to voicemail. Paces for a few moments. Checks the message.

GRETCHEN (ON VOICEMAIL)

Hey, Sar. It's Gretchen. Just spoke with Pammie Anders. I was hoping you could give me a call when you get this, there's something very important I need to talk with you about--

Sara clicks off the phone. Panic is setting in. She stares at Jordy's jacket.

SARA

(whispers)

Oh God.

Her cell rings again. It's Pammie, now calling on the cell phone. She takes a quick breath. Answers.

SARA

Hello?

Intercut with Pammie, standing by the tennis courts watching Lauren hit balls.

PAMMIE

Oh, God, Sara I hope I'm not
disturbing you.

SARA

Um...

PAMMIE

It's about Jordy, well, obviously--

SARA

Yes?

PAMMIE

I just don't think he's ready.

SARA

For...

PAMMIE

The SAT.

Sara exhales, listens.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

Now, you're going to say I'm being
one of those crazy neurotic parents
but the test is in a week and a
half, and we're going to be on
Martha's Vineyard this week for
Thanksgiving, you know, and we were
just *hoping* you could come out for
a few days and just drill questions
with him. I would hate for his
brain to go *soft*, and I've already
worked out the money with Gretchen
at your company and the money's
substantial, I promise, and the
weather's supposed to be gorgeous
and Ana makes a mean turkey and
this amazing stuffing, I have *no*
idea what she puts in it, heroin
probably, but...please, Sara. Say
you'll come.

INT. SARA'S APARTMENT--NIGHT

Sara's packing as she talks on the phone. She tries on
several dresses, deciding which looks best.

SARA

No, Dad...
(she pulls a dress over
her head)
It's just that it's a bunch of
money and I can't afford not to
take it...

She stands in front of the mirror, checking out her reflection, her figure, in the dress.

SARA (CONT'D)

We'll celebrate it the week after,
as soon as I'm back. I promise.
Of course I'll miss you. I love
you too...

EXT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD--DAY

Sara stares out over the bow of a sleek motorboat as it speeds towards a small island off the coast.

Behind her, sitting in the boat, are Jordy, Pammie and Lauren.

Arthur steers, his eyes wandering to the pale backs of Sara's legs under her skirt, which whips in the breeze.

INT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD HOUSE, SARA'S ROOM--DAY

Sara stands in an enormous, sunshine-filled bedroom decorated in lime green and lavender. She explores.

Through one door: an ivory marble bathroom. Through the huge, clean windows: views of the sparkling, azure ocean. On the night stand: another beautiful, exotic orchid.

A quick KNOCK on the door.

Sara opens it. Ana is there with fresh towels.

ANA

For you.

Sara smiles, reaches in her bag and hands Ana another folder of practice problems.

SARA

For your daughter.

Ana smiles in thanks, hides the folder in her cardigan, and goes.

Sara starts to unpack her bag. She takes out a few SAT books, her composition notebooks. Then, finally...

A Xerox copy of her manuscript.

INT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD MANSION, DINING ROOM--EVENING

Arthur, Pammie, Sara, Jordy and another couple: BRUCE and SUSAN sit around a beautifully set table, as Ana serves wild salmon filets.

ARTHUR

...Forget Taiwan, forget Hong Kong, Singapore, screw 'em. Shanghai is where the big money is right now. Eighth largest city in the world now, in ten years, it's gonna be bigger than all of South Korea. They are going to buy and sell our asses--

PAMMIE

Well, they're not going to buy and sell *my* ass.

ARTHUR

No, sweetheart, only *I* get to do that.

BRUCE

I hope you get a good price!

They all laugh. Another SERVANT refills their wine glasses.

ARTHUR

Seriously, I'm telling you, pretty soon China is going to own us all. By the time you have kids, Jord, they'll be trading in their PB&J for General Tso's Chicken!

Everyone laughs again. Lauren bops up to the table, still in her cute tennis clothes, a bit sweaty from practice. She sits and chugs her water.

PAMMIE

Have you ever traveled to the Far East?

It takes Sara a moment to realize Pammie's addressing her.

SARA

No, um, you know, I actually studied Chinese in college for about three years and I took a Chinese history course, but I never made it over there.

ARTHUR

Now that's smart, learning Chinese.

As they chatter and eat, Lauren subtly gestures to her own mouth, letting Sara know she's got something stuck in her teeth. Sara immediately runs her tongue over them. Lauren gestures a few more times until finally...

LAUREN

(sotto)

Got it.

The conversation continues about China, as Sara smiles gratefully to Lauren.

SARA

(sotto)

Thanks.

(then, making conversation)

How's practice going?

LAUREN

You know. Intense. But cool. Do you play?

SARA

Oh, I used to a little but not--

LAUREN

Awesome, let's hit some balls tomorrow.

Sara looks dubious. Lauren giggles.

EXT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD, TENNIS COURTS--DAY

A deep, primal, BELLOW emerges from Lauren, as she slams a killer serve that almost takes Sara's head off.

LAUREN

Ace!
(then, off her)
You okay?

SARA

Yeah, sure, I'm fine.

With another massive GRUNT, she slams yet another ace, and another, as Sara flinches out of the way.

LAUREN

Come on! Don't duck! It's not dodgeball!

Lauren GRUNTS and serves again, as Sara lunges to return... And hits a weird, off-balance shot that Lauren can't get to.

A beat.

They both stand there, dumbfounded. Finally, Lauren brushes it off.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Lucky shot.

Sara recovers her balance, a bit proud of herself. Buoyed by the small victory, she starts to dig deeper, bouncing from side to side on her toes, anticipating Lauren's next shot.

And now Sara starts to win a few points. Her face scrunches as she gasps for breath, her body awkward but surprisingly effective.

Now Lauren intensifies as well, stepping up her game. Her GRUNTS get deeper and even more primal, as teeth clenched, eyes ablaze, she gives it her all.

This is war.

GRUNT. GRUNT. GRUNT.

Deuce. Then, Advantage Sara. And then...

Finally, on one particularly excruciating, thrilling point, Sara wins a game.

SARA

(exhilarated)

I can't believe I broke your serve!

Sara comes up to the net, ready to switch sides, but Lauren's just standing still, watching Sara, stunned.

SARA (CONT'D)

Lauren? Hey, can you believe I won
a game?

Suddenly, Lauren smashes her racket down on the ground,
cracking it. She stomps on it a few times, furious.

Sara stifles a smile as Lauren storms off, muttering to
herself.

LAUREN

Stupid fucking tennis.

EXT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD HOUSE, FRONT LAWN--SUNSET

Sara, still sweaty and a bit sore from the game, sits out
enjoying a few last rays as she grades one of Jordy's vocab
drills.

Suddenly a male form emerges from running on the beach,
backlit.

SARA

Jordy?

He comes closer. It's Arthur.

ARTHUR

Just me. I'm flattered, though,
that you could mix an old guy up
with a high school kid.

He takes off his shirt and uses it to wipe the sweat from his
brow. He's in beautiful shape.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Come for a swim.

SARA

No thanks, it's way too cold for me
this time of year--

ARTHUR

It's refreshing. Come on. You
look like you could use a cool
down.

SARA

No, really, I--I don't even have a
suit--

ARTHUR

There's extras in the pool house.

Sara shakes her head.

SARA

I really can't, you know, honestly
the ocean has never been my thing.
There's sea creatures and
monsters...

ARTHUR

(he chuckles, then)
Don't worry. I'll protect you.

Sara takes a breath. No way out of this.

INT. POOL HOUSE--MOMENTS LATER

The pool house is outfitted with hair brushes, dryers, towels, sunscreens, a soda machine, everything.

Sara chooses a blue bikini from a rack of spare suits. She puts it on, checking herself out in the mirror. Despite her pale skin, and the fact that it gaps a bit in places, she looks pretty great.

EXT. OCEAN--SUNSET

Arthur swims with strong strokes. Sara is a bit slower but still keeps up, despite the waves hitting her in the face.

She swims underwater for a moment, opening her eyes to the deep green. It's very quiet. A bit eerie.

When she resurfaces, Arthur's nowhere to be found. Finally, she spots him, climbing up onto a nearby buoy. She swims over to join him and he helps her up.

ARTHUR

Not too bad. For a writer.

She can't tell if he's talking about her swimming...or her body.

SARA

Oh. Thanks.

He leans back, relaxing.

ARTHUR
Of course, personally, I don't
trust books

SARA
Don't *trust* them?

ARTHUR
Full of lies.

SARA
I think they're full of truths.

ARTHUR
Ha. Even worse.

Sara laughs in spite of herself.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
You spend all your time sitting
around reading, suddenly, life just
passes you by. You end up with
nothing but missed opportunities...

He looks over to her.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Life's a war. You have to fight
for your moment. That's why when I
see something I want...I take it.

Arthur's eyes wander down to the deep neckline of her
swimsuit. She folds her arms over her chest.

SARA
That's...quite a philosophy.

Suddenly Arthur grabs her arm, not hard but not lightly.

ARTHUR
Sara..

SARA
Look, I don't, um, I--

ARTHUR
Don't screw with my son.

She's completely thrown, which is just where Arthur wants
her.

SARA
What? How would I...

ARTHUR
Just get him in.

Arthur smiles, ice cold and terrifying. He dives off the buoy and starts a brisk crawl towards shore. Sara shivers under the darkening sky.

EXT. BEACH--AFTER DUSK

Sara, lips blue, comes out of the ocean and grabs a towel. She wraps herself in it, as she looks back out to the water and shakes her head in disbelief at what just happened.

She starts up to the house.

EXT. FRONT TERRACE--CONTINUOUS

Sara passes by the family, sitting out enjoying cocktail hour. Arthur, already dressed for dinner with his wet hair slicked back, mixes drinks. He looks over to Sara, still in her suit and towel. She quickly averts her eyes.

Pammie notices, sips her vodka gimlet.

INT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD HOUSE, LIVING ROOM--DAY

Sara and Jordy work at a desk. Sara looks a bit worn out from the "family vacation," but Jordy's intensely focused.

SARA
Okay. Break time.

JORDY
One more drill?

She looks at him wearily.

JORDY (CONT'D)
You okay?

SARA
Yeah, it's just...

JORDY
My family?
(off her)
Now you see what I'm dealing with.

SARA

I can see that...you're nothing like them. You're so different, Jordy, you know, you're deeper, you love art, and you draw and you're--

Pammie pokes her head in.

PAMMIE

How's it going in here?

SARA

Good. Good. He's about to do another practice math drill--

PAMMIE

Great idea. So...

(to Sara)

Can I steal you for a bit? Please?

EXT. DRIVING RANGE--DAY

Pammie, in a Burberry jacket and Hermes scarf, hits balls under the bright November sun while Sara watches.

PAMMIE

Can you believe this weather? I hate to admit it, but sometimes I just love global warming.

Pammie laughs and takes a swing. It's terrible. She rolls her eyes and hands Sara the golf club.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

Oh God, I'm awful. Now Sara, give it a try. Just let it happen.

Don't think about your arms. Don't think about your back, your hips, just let go and...

Sara gives it a shot. It's even worse. They both laugh.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

Oh, for God's sake, we need a *daiquiri*.

INT. CLUB HOUSE--DAY

They sit at a large pebbled glass table, sucking down frothy banana daiquiris. Pammie's sneaking a cigarette, enjoying the girl time.

PAMMIE

(re the smoke)

Don't tell my family. I'll get the
biggest lecture, but sometimes I
just *need* one.

Pammie blows smoke rings.

SARA

Your secret's safe with me.

PAMMIE

You're so good to be here. I hope
your father isn't furious with me,
taking you on the holiday. I just
worry about Jordy. Ugh. How did I
get this neurotic? I was a hippie,
you know. I was at *Woodstock*. I
mean, I *inhaled*.

She takes a long, satisfying drag. Sara sucks on her daiquiri.

SARA

And then?

PAMMIE

You know, I met Arthur.

(sighs, then)

Tell me he behaved himself. During
your little swim?

SARA

Oh. Yeah, that was just--we were
talking about Jordy--

PAMMIE

Sara. I'm not a fool. I know my
husband. I just hope he didn't
upset you.

SARA

It was nothing. Really.

Pammie looks down, suddenly vulnerable.

PAMMIE

I know what you must think of me.
If I were your age and saw a
woman...accepting that, I would
think, well, I would think she was
so...

SARA

I don't--

PAMMIE

But I'm not like you, Sara. I'm not smart. I don't have any talent for anything except just... being myself. And, well, Arthur is willing to compensate me for that.

(then, with a laugh)

Or he *was*, anyway... Who knows what the future holds. Who know what happens if I gain five pounds, or rock the boat, or Jordy doesn't get in.

Pammie, puts her hands to her face, as her sunny facade gives way to heartbreakng desperation.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

You have no idea how jealous I am of you. You have a book. A voice. I'd give anything for that.

SARA

You have a lot. Your children, your beautiful homes, you have...Jordy.

PAMMIE

Come on. You're smarter than that. You know that none of that stuff is really, truly mine.

Pammie takes a sip of daiquiri, recovering. She squeezes Sara's arm. A bond.

INT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD, DINING ROOM--NIGHT

The whole Anders family including GRANDPARENTS, an AUNT, an UNCLE, and several COUSINS, sit gathered at a Thanksgiving table.

Ana serves, giving an extra little smile to Sara, as if to say, "Thank you." Sara smiles back. Everyone clasps hands.

Lauren, for the first time in normal (non-tennis) clothes, says grace.

LAUREN

Thank you God for providing food, and shelter and each other.

Jordy, next to Sara, squeezes her hand hard.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
And thank you for our good fortune.
Amen.

Lauren looks up, and everyone begins to eat, Sara's voice blending with the voices of the family, until she is truly, completely one of the group.

EXT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD DOCK--CONTINUOUS

Pammie stands on the dock as Sara gets into a waiting boat, about to spirit her off.

PAMMIE
...and you'll be met by a car at the main dock, which will take you home.

SARA
Don't worry about Jordy. He's ready. Just make sure he keeps looking at that vocab--

A DECK HAND grabs Sara's duffel bag and throws it in the boat. He's about to take her backpack, when she stops him.

SARA (CONT'D)
(to the Deck Hand)
Wait. Hold on.
(to Pammie)
Here it is. As promised.

She opens her backpack, pulls out the manuscript and hands it to Pammie.

PAMMIE
Your novel. Sara. This is a big step.

She looks at the title page.

PAMMIE
(reading the title)
Small World. I like that.
(then, full of maternal love)
I'm so proud of you.

They hug warmly.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)
I can't wait to give this to
Marianne.

SARA
Thank you. For everything.

Sara climbs in the boat and it speeds off, over the clear, blue sea. From the lawn, Jordy watches her go.

EXT. JACOBS HOUSE--DAY

The front door of a modest house in very rural Massachusetts swings open to reveal Joseph, in a ratty tweed jacket and jeans.

Sara stands on the doorstep with her backpack, an overnight bag, and several shopping bags of things she's picked up along the way.

SARA
Happy Thanksgiving, Dad.

JOSEPH
Well, well, well. Better late than never, I suppose.

He gives her a little kiss on the head, and she comes inside.

INT. JACOBS HOUSE--EVENING

Joseph, wearing an apron, has attempted a full Thanksgiving dinner in the cramped, dingy little kitchen. Dirty dishes fill the sink. Books are everywhere, stacked in piles, on shelves, on chairs, on the table.

JOSEPH
The nice thing about celebrating so late is that the turkey was half-price.

SARA
I'm sorry, Dad. It's just, like I said, the money was--

JOSEPH
Sure, of course. I understand.

A pause. Sara can tell her father's hurt.

SARA

I have something for you.

She opens one of her large bags, starts to rummage through it, pulling out a few sheaves of papers, folders, stacks of notebooks. Her father's eyes light up in anticipation.

Finally, she pulls out a large box. She opens it to reveal a beautiful pink orchid, wrapped in colored plastic paper. It's exactly the same as the ones in the Anders houses.

If Joseph is disappointed, he covers it well.

JOSEPH

An orchid. Sara, this was expensive.

SARA

I just thought it was cool.

He looks closer, appreciating its strange beauty.

JOSEPH

To see the world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower.

SARA

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour.

(she smiles)

Blake.

He nods, proud of his smart daughter.

JOSEPH

You know "orchid" is from the Greek, "orkheos," meaning testicle.

SARA

(embarrassed)

Really? Oh, God, I--

JOSEPH

No, it's perfect. Who couldn't use more balls?

Sara laughs, as Joseph smiles at her: she's forgiven.

INT. JACOBS HOUSE--NIGHT

Sara and Joseph sit at the kitchen table. Joseph unwraps a bottle of Veuve Cliquot.

JOSEPH

I have been saving this for almost
a year. And...
(pops the cork)
Now is the moment.

He pours, and holds up his glass.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

A toast. To health and happiness.
To hard work. To enlightening young
minds of future generations. To
you finishing your novel.
(then, some advice,
quoting)
*Trust thyself. Every heart
vibrates to that iron string.*
That's--

SARA

Emerson. I know.

They clink glasses, and sip.

INT. JACOBS HOUSE, SARA'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Nothing has changed in here since Sara was in high school:
Math Team trophies, French Club prizes, and old stuffed
animals gather dust.

On the walls are photographs of Sara and her parents, Sara
and her mother at graduation, her mother as a young woman, in
front of Sara's same Underwood typewriter.

Sara lays in bed, covered by a graying pink Hello Kitty
bedspread, staring at the ceiling. An alarm clock on the
bedside table says it's 3 a.m.

A vibrating noise comes from her phone, also on the table.
She reaches for it, answers.

SARA

Hello?

It's Jordy.

Intercut with:

INT. ANDERS MANSION, JORDY'S BEDROOM

The room is enormous, and includes an indoor putting tee, a pool table, and a huge flat screen TV with a Playstation system attached. Jordy is in a plush, overstuffed bed, shirtless under a Frette sheet, his cell phone to his ear.

JORDY
I'm freaking out.

SARA
Jordy? Do you know what time--

JORDY
What's the area of a cylinder?

SARA
They'll give you that formula on
the--

JORDY
What's the difference between mean,
median and mode?

SARA
You know this. I know you know it.
Get some sleep.

Pause.

JORDY
Sara?

A long pause. Both of them breathe together on the phone.

Sara kicks off her blanket. Her tank top is bunched up around her shoulders, exposing her body in the moonlight. She lays her hand on her belly, gently, rising and falling.

JORDY (CONT'D)
I just feel, like, this huge huge
weight crushing me all the time.
And I think it might be...my
future.

Pause. He might be crying.

SARA
I feel that way too.

JORDY

No, you don't.

SARA

Really--

JORDY

You're better than anyone in
Greenwich... Anyone I've ever met.

SARA

Well, there's a wide world out
there.

JORDY

Mmmmmmm.

A silence. Jordy's starting to get sleepy.

SARA

Jordy?

He wakes up for a moment. Then starts to fall asleep as he talks.

JORDY

I would like to, you know, keep
traveling, just go everywhere and
just maybe meet people and, like,
draw pictures of everything I see.
And paintings. Make paintings.
And make people and things into
beautiful art, you know,
colors...and...
shapes...and...beautiful, amazing
things...

SARA

Jordan. Good night. Good luck
tomorrow.

Sara waits on the phone for him to hang up. He doesn't. He's asleep. She lays her head on the pillow, listening to his breathing get deep and heavy. She stays that way for a very long time.

EXT. CEMETERY--DAY

Sara stands with Joseph at her mother's grave. It is carved with her mother's name, and with the Buddha's last words:

"Make of yourself a light unto the world"

Next to Sara, Joseph is on his knees, silently weeping.

JOSEPH
(quietly, to the
gravestone)
*My North, my South, my East, my
West. My working week, my Sunday
rest...*

Sara watches, feeling for him--and with him. After a moment, he gets up, ready to go.

As they walk back to the car, Sara nervously glances at her watch. The minute hand ticks to exactly nine a.m.

INT. GREENWICH HIGH SCHOOL--DAY

A clock on the wall ticks to exactly nine a.m.

Jordy sits in a long row of nervous-looking high school KIDS, tugging on his lucky string. A TEACHER addresses the students.

TEACHER
Please open your test booklet to
page one. And begin...now.

INT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR--DAY

It's a chilly, gray day. Sara walks along the perimeter, deep in thought.

She turns to see Adam jogging over to her.

ADAM
Hey! Wow. What a crazy
coincidence, bumping into you like
this. You come here a lot?

SARA
Um, not that much, no--

ADAM
Oh. Really? Gretchen said you do--

A beat. Adam realizes he's busted. Sara smiles as he looks around sheepishly.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Whew, it's freezing. Coffee?

INT. CAFE--AFTERNOON

Sara and Adam sit on an overstuffed sofa, as jazz plays in the background. She warms her hands on a large mug of coffee.

ADAM

So. Hey, I took your suggestion, and I started working on turning some of my poems and music into this whole rock opera.

Sara sips her coffee, trying to remember.

SARA

I suggested that?

ADAM

Yeah, it's kind of about love and the search for humanity in this post apocalyptic wasteland.

(then)

That sounded lame.

SARA

(laughs)

No, it's sounds good.

ADAM

Anyway, thank you.

A little pause.

ADAM (CONT'D)

So...Gretchen said you're a great writer.

SARA

She's never seen any of my writing.

ADAM

(undaunted)

You know I'd love to read some of your stuff sometime, maybe. If you ever wanted to show me anything.

SARA

Maybe.

He looks at her.

ADAM

You want to see what I'm reading right now? These really beautiful poems...

He reaches in his bag and pulls out a book of poetry, flips to a page, and reads.

ADAM (CONT'D)

....they catch the moon in cup-shaped bowls/And they raise it's floating light/ To their lips, burning with desire to see/ Into the gullet of night, each one/dips and drinks and dips and drinks,/ Until there is only dark water,/ Until there is only the dark.

A pause. He looks up.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I mean, how *good* is that?

She looks at him knowingly.

SARA

Yeah. It's...my mom's.

ADAM

Really?

His face breaks into a sly smile: Clearly, he knew. She smiles back, getting it. He looks at her for a beat, thinking.

ADAM (CONT'D)

It kind of makes you never want to write another word, because what would be the point?

Sara nods, understanding all too well. He opens to the dedication page.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I love this, she dedicates it to...
(reading)

My North, my South, my East, my West. My working week, my Sunday rest.

(then, to Sara)

Your parents must have had an amazing relationship.

She finishes the last sips of her coffee. Smiles at him.

SARA
Thank you.

She starts to put on her jacket.

ADAM
You're going? Wait, here, take my
number.

He scribbles his number on a napkin. She takes it, folds it and puts it in her bag.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Call me...anytime.

She nods, and goes.

INT. SUBWAY--NIGHT

Sara sits among the other PASSENGERS, pale under the flickering fluorescent light. Over the loudspeakers, an unintelligible announcement plays. Nobody reacts.

INT. SARA'S APT--NIGHT

Sara curls up on her bed, staring at Jordy's drawing, still tacked up on her wall.

The lines blur, slowly...slowly...

FADE TO BLACK

CRASH!

INT. ANDERS MANSION, KITCHEN--DAY, SEVERAL WEEKS LATER

Pammie, in the kitchen (which is now impeccably decorated for Christmas), has just SMASHED an antique vase against the wall. Cut flowers and broken porcelain are everywhere.

JORDY
Mom, what the--Jesus Christ. What
are you--

He sees, on the marble counter top, his opened SAT score report. He picks it up, looks at it.

JORDY (CONT'D)

Oh.

(then, off her)

Mom, calm down. God. Nobody died.

PAMMIE

It's twenty points lower than you did last time around. It's three hundred and fifty lower than your practice test--

JORDY

I can see that.

(then)

I just choked, okay? I had a bad day. And maybe, maybe, have you considered that maybe I'm just not smart enough for this shit? I have dyslexia and ADD-

PAMMIE

Oh, *grow up*, Jordan.

JORDY

What? The doctor-

PAMMIE

Do you know why the doctor said that? Because we paid him a lot of money. I mean, have you ever wondered why eighty percent of kids in Greenwich have some damned learning disability? Do you think there's something in the water here? There's an idea! Call Erin Brockovich!

JORDY

God, Mom, why do you have to be such a bitch about this--

PAMMIE

(very nasty)

I don't know, why do you have to be such a fucking-baby-idiot.

(then)

I'm sorry. It's just...your father is not going to like this.

Long, painful pause. Jordy tries to make it better.

JORDY

I still think I can get in.

PAMMIE

I don't know. Your father may know someone on the board.

JORDY

I think I can do it. If I write a really strong application...

Pammie slowly brightens at this ray of hope.

PAMMIE

You're right. That's the right attitude. Good, I know you can do this sweetheart.

(then)

Now, your father and I are leaving in a week, for Aspen, a business ski thing. Lauren's going to stay with the Ellises, but you won't be alone, we'll get someone great to help you. The Friedmans had this Chinese guy for Bennett. Yao or Yen? Anyway, he went over the whole application, the essays--

JORDY

Sara.

Beat.

PAMMIE

What?

JORDY

Sara or nobody. Sara or I won't apply at all.

PAMMIE

Jordan. She lowered your score.

JORDY

That wasn't her fault. Besides. I won't work with anyone else.

PAMMIE

(carefully)

This is self-sabotage Jordan. It's when you're attracted to things that are not good for you. Believe me, I know the drill--

JORDY

She knows how to get people in.
She's gotten a ton of results in
the past. Haven't you ever heard
of second chances?

INT. UPPER EAST SIDE CAFE--DAY

A favorite hang out of the ladies who lunch, decorated with aggressively pink floral tablecloths, serving tea sandwiches galore. A beautiful, Christmas tree sparkles in the corner.

Pammie and Sara sit at a table by the window, the score report in between them.

SARA

I don't know what happened. His
last practice test was--

Pammie has her game face on.

PAMMIE

Oh, you know, it is what it is.
And, as Jordy says, nobody died.
God, high school is hard enough
without all this pressure. I
should know. I was the fat girl.

SARA

Really.

PAMMIE

They used to call me Fat Pam. It
was, "There goes Fat Pam!" "Think
fast, Fat Pam!"

SARA

You look amazing now.

PAMMIE

Well, that's just willpower.
Willpower and strength. The kind
of strength it's going to take to
get Jordy into Harvard.

Pammie's eyes narrow, fierce blue laser beams.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

Can you handle that?

SARA

Yes.

PAMMIE

I love Jordy.

SARA

Of course.

PAMMIE

Quite frankly, after what happened
I wanted to try another tutor. But
he said he'll only work with you.

SARA

Wow. I'm flattered.

PAMMIE

Don't be. He's young.

A very tense pause.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

I called more of your references.
It seems you do have a very good
track record, you went to Harvard,
you did work-study in admissions--

SARA

I got six in last year.

PAMMIE

Well, Jordy wants you. And here's
a little surprise for you:
Whatever Jordy wants, Jordy gets.

Pammie laughs, breaking the tension, and starts to gather her things.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)

So, you'll be up on Sunday then.
(an afterthought)
And, by the way, I haven't
forgotten about your novel.
Marianne's in Paris this week, but
as soon as she gets back, I will
personally hand it to her. How
does that sound? Do we have a
deal?

Pammie puts out her hand; Sara takes it.

SARA

Deal.

EXT. METRO NORTH STATION--DAY

Sara scans the parking lot, looking for Pammie or Jordy's car. Nobody's there to pick her up.

EXT. ANDERS HOUSE--DAY

Sara walks up the drive, rings the bell. She knocks on the massive door. No answer.

She walks around the perimeter of the house, peeks in a few windows. Through one window she notices Jordy, asleep, on the sofa. She taps on the window. Harder. He doesn't wake up.

Finally, she spots a half-open window, goes to it, opens it all the way and climbs in.

AN EAR-PIERCINGLY LOUD ALARM SYSTEM GOES OFF.

INT. ANDERS LIVING ROOM--CONTINUOUS

Jordy, groggy and not in good shape, wakes up to see, Sara coming through the window. They shout over the sound of the alarm.

SARA
Fuck! Fuck! Jordy, turn off the fucking alarm!

JORDY
Sara? What the fuck? Are you robbing us?

SARA
No, I'm not robbing you!
Turn off the fucking alarm!

JORDY
What the fuck are you doing?
You climb in our window, fuck!

SARA
I could see you in here. We have a session. Nobody came to pick me up. I wanted to wake you up.

JORDY
Are you insane? Have you lost your mind? A session, what day is it? I'm awake, Jesus, fuck!

The alarm suddenly stops. Silence. Sara looks around the living room. It is in a complete state of disarray, thoroughly trashed.

SARA
What happened in here?

She sees a few empty bottles of booze.

SARA (CONT'D)
Where are your parents?

JORDY
Aspen. It's a business ski thing.

SARA
I'm calling them.

JORDY
No--

She grabs for her phone. Jordy knocks it out of her hand, stumbles and falls to the floor.

SARA
You should go lie down.

JORDY
(from the floor)
I am lying down. Flat.
Horizontal. Reclining.
Recombinating. Supine. How's my vocabulary?

SARA
You're drunk.

JORDY
Inebriated. I am an inebriated calamitous fiasco--

SARA
Jordy, you're *fine*.

He sits up.

JORDY
Fine? My score went down.

SARA
I don't know what happened. On the practice tests, you did great--

JORDY
I cheated on those.

SARA
What? How? I ripped the answers out of the book--

JORDY

I bought another copy at Barnes and Noble. It's not rocket science.

SARA

Why? That's so stupid. Why would you lie--

JORDY

I don't know. Maybe, have you considered that maybe for one moment I wanted to know what it would feel like...to do well.

He puts his head in his hands.

JORDY (CONT'D)

Forget it. Drunken confession. Shit.

SARA

It's going to be okay. We'll just... we'll get to work. But...first things first...

INT. ANDERS KITCHEN--DAY

Through the window, it's starting to snow. Sara is at a beautiful marble counter, cracking eggs into a porcelain bowl. She whisks them together, pours the mixture into a pan, cooks.

SARA

(as she cooks)

Okay, great, so for the personal statement, let's just brainstorm. There's soccer, of course, and lacrosse. And your Mom said something about building toilets in Botswana for Habitat for Humanity?

JORDY

Guatemala and that was the worst two weeks of my life. The only reason anybody does that shit is to get into college.

She serves the omelette onto a plate.

SARA

Okay, fine, then. What's important to you.

He looks at her. Smiles.

SARA (CONT'D)
Jordy.

JORDY
What?

SARA
Stop that.

JORDY
Stop what?

SARA
Stop looking at me like that.

JORDY
Like what?

He keeps staring straight at her. Then, trying to recover, she hands him the plate and a fork.

SARA
Okay, why don't you just...go start. Just write for a bit, anything you want, stream of consciousness, get the thoughts flowing.

He nods, takes a bite of the omelette.

JORDY
Mmm. This is delicious.

And, taking his food, he's off.

INT. ANDERS HOUSE--DAY

Sara walks down the hallways of the quiet, empty house, thrilling at the silence, the feeling of trespassing. She moves past beautiful art work, rare books, family photos in Tiffany frames.

The house is still beautiful, but it's no longer so overwhelming. It now feels personal, specific.

She peers into:

ARTHUR AND PAMMIE'S BEDROOM, a large, beautiful room with an enormous, plush king-sized bed. Two walk in closets house tons of beautiful, barely worn clothes.

PAMMIE'S BATHROOM is just off the bedroom and has a huge marble tub and cabinets full of Pammie's expensive lotions and creams. She dabs some on her hands, enjoying the feel of it.

ARTHUR'S BATHROOM is still luxe, but obviously not much used. Sara sniffs a bit of cologne.

Walking further through the house, she finds herself in:

INT. SUN ROOM--DAY

A room with glass walls. As the snow falls harder and harder outside, it's like she's in a life-sized snow globe.

She sits watching the snow as slowly the day turns to dusk.

INT. JORDY'S BEDROOM--EVENING

Sara peers into Jordy's bedroom where he is stretched out on his bed, staring at a sheet of paper. Crumpled up pages are all around him, along with a few loose drawings. Several drawings are also tacked up on the wall, near his desk.

SARA

How's it going?

JORDY

I suck at this.

He covers up what he was writing.

SARA

Let me see what you got?

JORDY

No.

She reaches for his paper.

SARA

Jordy, come on. Show it to me.

JORDY

It's bad.

SARA

We have to start somewhere.

She holds out her hand for him to give her the paper. He hesitates.

SARA (CONT'D)

Fine. Then read it to me.

(off him)

Jordy, it's just me. It's okay.
It doesn't have to be perfect.

He looks at her. Finally, he unfolds his paper, relenting.

JORDY

Sit down?

She sits on the bed next to him.

JORDY (CONT'D)

It's really dumb. Okay.

(a deep breath, reads)

I'm sorry I'm not black.

I'm not Latino or part Cherokee. I have no affiliation with any of the Native tribes. In fact, I've never even been to a reservation. I don't speak Swahili or Yiddish or Farsi or know American Sign Language or Braille or even Morse code. I've never won a Nobel Prize. I've never won a free coke from my bottle cap. When I call into the radio station, I'm never the twelfth caller. I've never invented anything, like soda that doesn't explode when you open it no matter how shook up it gets or a robot that brings you snacks in front of the TV.

He takes a deep breath, his voice starting to break.

JORDY (CONT'D)

I wasn't born in a leap year. I don't have a twin. I don't have a pet who does tricks. I don't want to be president. I haven't overcome great obstacles only to realize the meaning of true strength and then write a book about it. My life will not be made into a movie, made for TV or regular. I've never had major surgery. I've never had a near-death experience -- or died on the operating table and then come back after seeing a white light and my dead grandma.

(MORE)

JORDY (cont'd)

*I've never been in a car wreck.
I've never had stitches. I don't
have any scars. So that's me.
Jordan Russell Anders.
Exceptionally mediocre in every
way. That's me.*

Sara looks at him, moved.

SARA

Not bad. Not bad at all.

A beat. Suddenly, the tension is thick. She stands up.

SARA (CONT'D)

*That's all for tonight. I should,
um, try to get back...*

She looks out the window, where the snow is coming down harder.

SARA (CONT'D)

Somehow.

JORDY

*I doubt the trains are running
anymore.*

SARA

I know.

She stares out the window, not sure what to do.

JORDY

Why don't you just stay here?

SARA

Where?

JORDY

Stay here.

SARA

Here?

A charged beat.

JORDY

Lauren's room. Right down the hall.

She looks at him for a moment, hesitating, and goes.

INT. LAUREN'S ROOM--NIGHT

Sara curls up on a frilly, pink bed under a huge picture of an adorable (and somehow slightly evil) kitten.

She nestles her head in the fat, down pillows. Soon she's fast asleep.

INT. ANDERS FRONT PORCH--MORNING

Sara emerges from the house, just waking up. She finds Jordy on the steps, wrapped in a blanket, shivering. He looks over at her.

JORDY
Sleep well?

SARA
I should go--

JORDY
You have plans later?

SARA
No, Jordy, it's just, it's, I can't stay here another--

JORDY
What about my application?

She takes a breath, caves.

SARA
(gently)
The thing you wrote. You--can't send that in.

JORDY
I know.

SARA
So, what are you going to write about? The essay question is, "Tell us something we won't learn about--"

JORDY
You're making me cold.

He moves over to share the blanket with her, gestures for her to sit next to him. She does.

SARA

Jordy. Tell us something we won't learn about you from the rest of your application. Come on, think. Surprise me.

Pause. Jordy looks out at the snow covered trees.

JORDY

I read your book.

SARA

What?

She looks down. Her manuscript is next to him, half-hidden under the blanket. He picks it up, holding it close.

JORDY

Last night. My mom had it on her desk and I took it and I read the whole thing, I couldn't stop...

She looks at him.

SARA

(carefully)

What did you think?

JORDY

I loved it. I mean I really loved it.

Sara takes this in.

SARA

Why?

He opens to a dog-eared page.

JORDY

She's looking at the painting.

Here.

(reads)

*We stood in front of it breathing,
our hearts beating. My heart
slammed into the walls of my chest,
my blood, red as paint. I
whispered, softly, to the half-
ghost at my side, "God, I wish we
could go inside there. Don't you
wish we could go inside?"*

He looks at her.

JORDY

That's exactly what I said to you,
in front of the Picasso.

SARA

I know.

And it hits them both. The connection is undeniable, very
seductive and very dangerous.

SARA (CONT'D)

I should go.

She starts to get up. He grabs her arm.

JORDY

Sara, no, please...

SARA

(carefully)

Please...what?

JORDY

Help me. Sara. It's me. It's my
future. It's my life.

He leans in, about to devour her. She backs away, her last
resort.

SARA

Okay. Okay.

INT. METRO NORTH--DAY

Sara stares out the window at the passing, snow-covered
countryside. She pulls out a legal pad and writes:

Personal Statement. By Jordan Russell Anders.

And she begins to fill the page with words:

The hot Guatemalan sun beat down on the back of my neck...

INT. SARA'S APARTMENT--NIGHT

Sara spreads the pages of the hand written essay on her desk. She grabs her laptop, considers it for a second, and then moves it aside. A beat. She feeds a blank piece of paper into her typewriter.

She begins to type the essay, with great care.

INT. ANDERS LIVING ROOM--DAY

In an ALCOVE, by the door:

Sara hands Jordy a stack of envelopes with the essay in each. The Harvard envelope is at the top of the stack, bearing its insignia: *Veritas*.

SARA
(quietly)
Here you go--

Further into the room, Pammie's arranging cut flowers in a vase by Arthur, who lays on the sofa, elevating a sprained ankle and reading the *Economist*.

PAMMIE
(calling over to her)
Tell me this nightmare is over,
Sara. Is he finally done?

SARA
(calling back)
I think he's in good shape.

Sara turns back to Jordy.

SARA (CONT'D)
So you just put this in with your
recommendations, your transcripts,
your scores, everything else, okay?

He nods, deeply appreciative.

JORDY
Thank you.

A pause. Sara doesn't want to leave, but has no more reason to stay.

JORDY (CONT'D)
(softly)
No matter what happens, I won't
live here anymore, starting in the
Fall...Just a few more months.

SARA
I know.

They share a last smile. She goes. Pammie and Arthur watch her leave.

INT. PREMIUM PREP OFFICES--DAY, A FEW WEEKS LATER

The same bedraggled group of tutors, including Adam, sits around the table, listening to Gretchen.

GRETCHEN

...so now we have AP's to look forward to of course, and then a new crop of Juniors will start SAT prep soon. Sara, will you take the Ward's younger child? You did such a great job on Elizabeth.

Sara is coloring in her nails again, not listening. She's wearing Jordy's jacket.

Adam looks over at her, making eye contact. She smiles, then goes back to her nails.

INT. UPPER EAST SIDE MANSION--DAY

Sara sits with Cole, a new student, in a bright, sunny room.

COLE

(reading from the manual)

Although some think the terms "bug" and "insect" are BLANK, the former term actually refers to a BLANK group of insects.

It's the same question Sara first did with Jordy. One of his doodles is still in the margin of her manual.

Cole looks up at her expectantly.

COLE (CONT'D)

Um...are you going to help me with this or what?

But she's somewhere else.

INT. SARA'S APT--NIGHT

Sara stares at her telephone. Finally, she picks it up, dials. The voice mail picks up.

PAMMIE (V.O.)

Hi, you've reached the Anders family. Sorry we're not home right now to take your call.

(MORE)

PAMMIE (cont'd)

Please leave a message and we'll
call you back as soon as possible.
Thanks!

BEEP. Sara pauses. Tries to sound cheerful.

SARA

Hey guys. It's Sara...Jacobs. Um,
so just wanted to check in, say hi.
It's been a little while. You
probably haven't heard from schools
yet, but hope you guys are good...

(pause, an afterthought)

Also, hey, you know, I was just
curious about my manuscript.
Anyway, no worries, I know these
things take time, so... Yeah. Call
me whenever and we'll catch up.

She stays on the line. A woman's voice comes on.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

If you are satisfied with your
message, press one. To re-record,
press two--

Sara presses two. Tries again.

SARA

Hey guys! Sara here. Just saying
hey. Wondering how it's going up
in Greenwich. Hope everything's
okay. Happy New Year. Well, I
guess that was like over a month
ago, two maybe, whatever,
but...Anyway, just checking in...

As she talks, Jordy's drawing catches her eye. She
straightens it.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK--DAY

It's the first warm-ish day in a long time. Here and there,
crocuses peek through the hard ground. Sara and Gretchen
walk around the reservoir, drinking iced lattes.

Gretchen is pregnant, just starting to show.

GRETCHEN

...David wants to redo all the
cabinetry in the kitchen, you know,
and I'm just like, *cabinets?*
(MORE)

GRETCHEN (cont'd)

Really? Are you kidding? With
the baby coming and, everything--

But Sara's not listening. She's staring at the surface of
the water.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

I know, how boring am I? I'm
talking about cabinets, God--

SARA

No, it's just...Have you heard from
the Anders?

GRETCHEN

(thinking)

The Anders, yeah, the National
Science Prize kid? Oh, no, wait,
that's the *Sanders*. Yeah, *Jordy*
Anders? The dumb jock in
Greenwich? He got in.

Sara is stunned.

SARA

To Harvard?

GRETCHEN

Miraculous, right? The Mom called
last week. That's right, you
worked with him. Sorry, I
should've called you. You know, I
have so many students right now,
and with the renovation, and being
pregnant my brain is like soup.

Sara sits on a bench. She can barely breathe.

INT. MACY'S--AFTERNOON

Sara walks past sheet and towel sets, laundry hampers, mugs
and tea kettles.

She examines a sweatshirt. Considers a bean bag chair.
Checks the price tags.

Trying to select the right gift.

INT. MACY'S CAFE--EVENING

Sara sits at a table, a small, one-cup coffee maker next to
her.

She puts the coffee maker in a gift bag, and ties a sweet bow around the top. She unties the bow and re-ties it. Making it perfect.

EXT. ANDERS LIVING ROOM--DAY

Sara stands awkwardly in front of Lauren, who sits at a brand new grand piano plunking out a joyless Fur Elise.

LAUREN

(not looking up)

Oh, he's not here. I think he has lacrosse camp for, like, two more weeks before he *finally* gets out of here and goes to Harvard.

SARA

Is your mom around?

LAUREN

Nope, she's--

Lauren hits a wrong note. Bangs on the keys furiously.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Goddammit!

Sara stares at her a beat, turns, and goes.

EXT. LACROSSE FIELD--DAY

Bodies of boys slam into each other with ferocious abandon, spraying sweat and blood.

Sara approaches slowly, holding the wrapped coffee maker, until she's standing near the sidelines, slightly hidden behind a tree.

Her eyes find Jordy among the players. She watches him make a glorious, game-winning play.

He rips off his helmet. Sara's about to go to him, when he's mobbed by his friends, many of whom she recognizes from her night out with him.

Not wanting to interrupt, she just watches him go.

INT. UPS STORE--EVENING

Sara puts the coffee maker in a mailing box. She picks out a card and struggles to think of what write in it.

She starts to write: *Congratulations on Harvard! I am so happy to--*

She changes her mind, crosses out what she was writing, crumples the card and picks a new one.

She stares at the new, blank card. No idea what to say.

Finally giving up, she crumples the new card and takes the coffee maker back out of its mailer, starting to go.

An angry, heavily pierced and tattooed CLERK calls after her:

CLERK
Hey. You're gonna have to pay for
that stuff.

INT. SARA'S APARTMENT--NIGHT

Sara lays back on her bed, staring at the ceiling. The coffee maker, still wrapped, is on her desk. She listens to music, blasting the same great SONG that she and Jordy heard in the arcade.

INT. AMTRAK TRAIN--DAY

Sara is a bit dressed up, wearing make-up. She stares out the window of the train at the passing landscape, catching a glimpse of her reflection.

EXT. HARVARD SQUARE--DAY

Sara emerges from the T station into the chaos of college life. She walks through the throngs of STUDENTS, making her way towards Harvard Yard.

A huge sign over the front gate reads:

WELCOME HARVARD CLASS OF 2011!

EXT. HOLWORTHY DORM--DAY

Sara stands outside of the freshman dorm. Through an open window, she can just make out Jordy.

She checks in her backpack for the wrapped coffee maker, nestled among her composition notebooks, and takes a deep breath.

INT. HOLWORTHY DORM--DAY

Sara steels herself and knocks on a door that has Jordy's name on it, along with a mini dry-erase board and the name of his roommate: ERIC CHEN.

From inside, Jordy's voice.

JORDY (O.S.)
It's open!

Sara opens the door to see Jordy and Eric drinking beer and shooting a Nerf basketball into a hoop mounted on the wall.

Jordy freezes at the sight of her.

JORDY
Sara.

Eric tosses the ball to Jordy, who still doesn't move, letting it drop to the floor.

ERIC
Hey, what the--

JORDY
(softly, to Sara)
What are you doing here?

SARA
I know this is unexpected. I just
thought maybe we could...

Eric looks to Jordy. Then to Sara. He takes his cue.

ERIC
I'll take off, man. No problem.
Just, hey...remember our deal?

Eric holds out his hand.

JORDY
Our deal?

ERIC
You know, you copy my Econ notes, I
get the keys to your Beemer.

Jordy nods, casts an embarrassed glance to Sara, and starts rooting through a drawer for his car keys.

ERIC (CON'T)
(to Sara, re Jordy)
This guy's the best.

Jordy finds his keys and tosses them to Eric, then looks over to Sara nervously.

JORDY
You know, the thing is, Sara, I
kind of have class--

Eric snorts with laughter. Jordy shoots him a warning look.

Eric shrugs, "whatever," grabs his jacket from a hook, and goes, the door slamming behind him.

Alone together, Jordy and Sara stare at each other, neither one knowing exactly what to say. She notices his wrist: The "lucky string."

Jordy shifts, self consciously.

JORDY
It's just that...it's still
shopping period, you know, when we
pick classes--

SARA
Yeah, I remember.

JORDY
So I should probably go check this
one out.

SARA
What are you thinking of taking?

JORDY
Just, like, Econ 101, Statistics,
Macroeconomic Theory, and, um,
something about markets.

SARA
Does any of that interest you?

He looks at her, no response.

SARA (CONT'D)
Jordy.
(then, quietly,
truthfully)
What are you doing?

He can hardly look at her. Finally, he turns away, grabbing his jacket and backpack, heading for the door...

JORDY
It's not that easy.

He leaves, the door swinging shut behind him. Alone, Sara looks around the dorm room.

On Jordy's desk, amid empty beer bottles and packets of Ramen noodles, the Harvard Course Catalogue is still in its shrink wrap.

She opens her bag, pulls out the wrapped coffee maker, hesitates for a moment, wondering what to do with it. Finally, she puts it on the bed.

Next to it, on the bed, she notices a SKETCHBOOK. She flips it open. All of the pages are blank.

She closes the sketchbook, and goes.

EXT. HARVARD YARD--AFTERNOON

Sara walks past STUDENTS, scurrying to and from class.

She gazes up the imposing stone staircase of Widener Library, as an elderly PROFESSOR laden with a stack of books carefully makes his way down.

Walking on, past Lamont Library, she catches her warped reflection in the shiny bronze, abstract Henry Moore sculpture of a reclining woman.

She walks through Emerson Hall, glancing in at a couple of classrooms where class is in session.

On her way out, she pauses in front of the large, seated statue of Emerson, stately and serene.

She walks on.

EXT. ADMISSIONS OFFICE--DUSK

Sara stands in front of the old, red brick building. A large, brass plaque by the front gate carries the Harvard seal, with its motto in large, stern capitals:

VERITAS

Sara stares at it.

She walks up the pathway, rings the bell. The Dean of Admissions, DEAN STEWART, a kind older man, answers.

DEAN STEWART
(smiles, glad to see her)
Sara Jacobs?

INT. ADMISSIONS OFFICE--DAY

Sara sits with the Dean, her heart racing.

DEAN STEWART
So, you're sure. He didn't write any of it?

SARA
(hard to say)
I don't even think he read it.
(then)
Talk to him.

He takes this in. Bad news. For him and for her.

ADMISSIONS OFFICER
Why are you telling me this now?

SARA
Because. It's the truth.

EXT. HARVARD YARD--DUSK

Sara walks, in a daze, back through the darkening campus. Lights have started to go on in dorm rooms, where students can be seen laughing, studying, talking on the phone, going about their lives.

Sara glances up at them a moment.

INT. PREMIUM PREP OFFICES--DAY

Sara stands in front of Gretchen, red-faced and furious.

GRETCHEN
The truth? Are you kidding me?
Sara, how could you?

SARA
I--

GRETCHEN

This job is my livelihood. It's my life. I thought you were my friend. Where's the truth in that?

EXT. PREMIUM PREP OFFICES--MOMENTS LATER

Leaving, Sara bumps into Adam, who's just arriving, his arms full of new SAT manuals.

ADAM

Sara. Wait up--
(off her)
You okay?

SARA

Actually, I just got fired.

ADAM

Fired? From this job?
(a thought)
Hold on, don't go anywhere.

He runs off. She stands, a bit confused. Finally, he reappears, a big smile on his face.

SARA

What?

ADAM

I just quit.

SARA

What? Why?

ADAM

Well, if you're gone, that job loses pretty much all of its charm.
(then)

So...now that we're both free, a little celebration is in order, don't you think?

INT. WINE BAR--EVENING

Adam and Sara sit at a corner table, a candle flickering between them, as Sara drinks a large, lovely glass of red.

SARA

What are you going to do?

ADAM
Um...I don't know. Any ideas?

Sara smiles.

SARA
I wish.

ADAM
I actually finished that rock opera
thing I was working on--

SARA
About love and the search for
humanity in a post-apocalyptic
wasteland?

ADAM
(flattered)
You remembered.

He looks at her.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Well, um, there's going to be a
little mini production thing
downtown at the Flea in a few weeks-

SARA
Hey, congratulations--

ADAM
Thanks, so, if you wanted to...come
check it out--
(then, nervous)
Just, don't judge because it's
really, totally new--

Sara smiles, nods a little, "I get it."

ADAM (CONT'D)
But, I play in the band, on-stage,
so if you did come, I'd definitely
be there in person embarrassing
myself.

A nice moment.

ADAM (CONT'D)
What about you? What are you going
to do?

Sara shrugs. He leans in a bit closer to her.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Can I make a suggestion? If it's
not too presumptuous of me...

She braces herself for him to ask her out.

SARA
Sure. Go ahead.

A beat.

ADAM
Send out your novel.

She looks at him, taking that in.

INT. SARA'S APT--NIGHT

Sara gathers up all her SAT materials, collecting them in a pile. She puts them in a corner.

She looks up on the bulletin board above her desk. Her eye is caught by Jordy's drawing.

She stares at it a moment. She dials Jordy's cell. The call goes right to voice mail.

JORDY(V.O.)
Hey, it's Jordan. Leave a message.

BEEP.

SARA
Jordy. It's Sara. I just wanted to say, I hope that you understand. If not now, then someday. And...
(a breath, thinking)
Goodbye.

She hangs up, resolved. Takes Jordy's drawing off her bulletin board, puts it away.

MONTAGE

We see SARA:

--Browsing Barnes and Noble in the "How to Sell Your Novel," section.

--Going through How-To books, book reviews, magazines, making lists of editors.

--Tacking her lists up on her bulletin board.

--Typing up query letters on her laptop, filling in one address after the next.

--Addressing envelopes to publishers, putting stamps on them, taking them to the mailbox.

--Checking her mailbox for responses.

--Taking her PREMIUM PREP manuals, boxing them up, dropping them off at GOODWILL. She smiles at a YOUNG INNER CITY GIRL who seems interested in them.

INT. JACOBS HOUSE--EVENING

Sara sings the last line of "Happy Birthday" to her father, his face lit by the glow of the candles in his misshapen, very homemade cake. He looks at the cake, thinking.

JOSEPH

(quoting)

*Do not go gentle into that good
night/Old age should burn and rave
at close of day--*

SARA

(amused)

Dad, you're only sixty three--

He shoots her a smile.

JOSEPH

*Do not go gentle into that good
night...*

She obliges him, smiling back.

SARA

*Rage, rage, against the dying of
the light.*

He blows out his candles. Licks some icing off his finger.

JOSEPH

Mmm. Delicious.

He takes another lick, as she grabs a wrapped box, hands it to him.

SARA

This is for you.

JOSEPH

Sara, this had better not be
something expensive.

SARA

Just open it.

He unwraps the gift to reveal a Xerox copy of Sara's
manuscript, *Small World*. His eyes light up.

JOSEPH

Sweetheart...

He stares at the title page, at his daughter's name.
Finally, he looks up, very moved.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Thank you.

He looks back to the manuscript for a moment.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I'll read this right away to give
you my thoughts.

She nods, appreciating him.

SARA

That would be great.

He opens the manuscript to the first page. He puts on his
glasses, peers down at it, reads for a beat.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Hmmm. Good opening.

SARA

Dad, just don't--not now--

JOSEPH

What, I like it--

SARA

(embarrassed)

Don't read it in front of me--

JOSEPH

Sorry, sorry.

Joseph looks over at her, cradling her novel in his lap.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I'm so proud of you.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK--DAY, WEEKS LATER

Sara, looking rested and refreshed, comes home with a bag of groceries. Her cell rings. The number: UNKNOWN.

Sara hesitates. Answers.

SARA

Hello?

FEMALE VOICE

Sara? Amy Mickelson. I'm an editor at FSG. I received your query letter regarding *Small World*, your novel...

Sara drops her groceries in shock. Oranges roll into the gutter. She barely notices, smiles wide, enjoying this moment.

INT. FSG OFFICES--DAY

Sara, nicely dressed, waits in the reception area. Her manuscript is on her lap.

A beautifully put-together woman, AMY, pokes her head out from behind a door.

INT. AMY'S OFFICE--MOMENTS LATER

It's very sleek and modern. Amy is obviously type AAA, very successful, very kind.

AMY

I was interested at first because I think I was in your class at Harvard.

SARA

You're kidding.

AMY

So our paths must have just gone...

She makes a gesture with her hands of two lines almost crossing, then not.

SARA

And now they're...

Sara crosses her hands. Amy laughs. This is going well.

AMY

And, then, you know, the strangest thing happened because I mentioned you to a few friends in the publishing world...

Sara listens intently, very excited.

AMY (CONT'D)

And I described your story, which you outlined in your letter, and a few of them said it sounded very similar to a book that Knopf just bought. Also called *Small World*. By Pamela Anders.

Beat. It takes a moment for this to sink in.

AMY (CONT'D)

She's a forty-something new writer, but everyone's calling her a hot young voice. So then I called her editor, Marianne Lewis, who's also a mentor of mine, and Marianne asked her about it, and apparently you used to work for them?

Amy looks at Sara, full of pity.

AMY (CONT'D)

Look, I don't want you to get in any kind of trouble. You're obviously...and this is such a tough business...I was hoping I could just...head this off before you get caught.

Sara's too stunned to speak.

EXT. FSG OFFICES--DAY

Sara walks outside, in a state of shock. Harried NEW YORKERS bump into her, as they rush past.

A beat. Her breath quickens. She starts to move, making her way more and more quickly down the crowded street...

INT. SUBWAY--DAY

Sara stands on the express train, hanging onto a pole. She watches the stations pass. Finally, she arrives at Grand Central...

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION--DAY

Sara rushes through the station, under the magnificent, blue dome, the canopy of illuminated stars. She glances up at the constellations that seem to swirl above her...

INT. METRO NORTH TRAIN--DAY

Sara sits by the window, willing the train to go faster. Trees, lakes, houses blur outside the window...

EXT. METRO NORTH TRAIN STATION--DAY

She bolts out of the train, past the other arriving passengers, the idling cars picking up friends and family.

She runs to the taxi stand, flags down a cab.

SARA
(getting in, to the
cabbie)
16 Deer Park Road...

INT. TAXI CAB, GREENWICH--CONTINUOUS

The cab speeds through the quiet streets. Sara's, in the back seat, windows open, mind racing.

EXT. ANDERS MANSION--CONTINUOUS

The cab pulls up and Sara gets out. She takes a breath, as she stares up at the enormous entrance.

She goes up to the door, pushes hard on the doorbell. She bangs on the huge, gold door knocker. Over and over and over. The dogs go crazy inside.

Finally, from the other side of the door, Pammie's voice:

PAMMIE (O.S.)
(to the dogs)
Peter! Peter, stop that! Theo,
down! Shush! For God's sake--

The door opens. Pammie goes pale.

PAMMIE
Sara.

SARA
Tell me it's not true.

PAMMIE
What are you--

SARA
My book. *My book.*

PAMMIE
Your book? Oh. Well. Not
anymore, is it.

Sara's hit with the full horror of the truth.

SARA
Oh my god. How *could* you--

PAMMIE
Sara, you need to calm down--

Sara goes right for the jugular, hurt and furious.

SARA
Just because you have *nothing*,
doesn't make it right to--

PAMMIE
When are you going to realize,
Sara, it's not about right and
wrong. Life's not a test. It's a
war.

Sara's too stunned to respond.

PAMMIE (CONT'D)
Besides. I've always wanted to be
a writer.

SARA

You're insane to think you'll get away with this. I wrote that book, all I have to do is...

PAMMIE

What? What *proof* do you have, really?

For Sara, a light bulb.

SARA

Jordy.

PAMMIE

What could Jordy do? He's eighteen years old and instead of starting college with his friends he's upstairs in his room playing *video games*--

SARA

He's here?

A charged beat. Sara breaks into the house, past Pammie, who lets her go.

INT. ANDERS HOUSE--CONTINUOUS

She runs down the hallway, up the stairs, to Jordy's bedroom, throws open the door...

INT. JORDY'S BEDROOM--CONTINUOUS

Jordy's laying in bed, doodling on the back of an old Sports Illustrated. Seeing Sara, he bolts upright. He sits very still, looking at her, stunned.

She takes him in. His face is different, older, wearier, pale and unshaven. No longer boyish, he finally looks like a man.

SARA

Jordy...

He stares at her, not saying a word, impossible to read. A long silence, thick with the weight of everything that's happened between them.

SARA (CONT'D)

I had to do it. That life you were leading, cheating on everything, lying, doing *exactly* what your parents wanted you to, that's not you. You're an artist, Jordy. You could never be happy living a lie. You deserve to live your own life, to create beautiful, amazing things, to live in a world that's honest and unique and completely, utterly *yours*. I want that for you.

He listens, does not move.

SARA (CONT'D)

You're the only person in the world who knows about my book. Who knows that I gave it to your mom, who read it before anyone else, who knows everything that happened. And so I'm asking you, please, I need you to vouch for me, to tell the truth. It's a chance for you to do the right thing. Please. Help me.

A long beat. He slowly stands.

He moves to her.

Very close now, he puts his hands on her shoulders. The touch is electric. He looks deeply into her eyes...

And finally, gently, he pulls her into him, enveloping her in his arms.

At long last:

They kiss.

Passionately, hungrily, devouring each other. Jordy's hands roam her body, as all the long months of pent-up tension finally release.

JORDY
(whispering)
Sara...

She breaks away for a moment, breathless, losing herself in his eyes. A long beat. He takes her in.

JORDY (CONT'D)
Don't be so fucking naive.

He backs away from her, leaving her standing alone.

SARA
But--

JORDY
Grow up.

His face is hard, his eyes pure ice. She can't speak, the wind completely knocked out of her. She looks at him. He doesn't give a millimeter.

Finally, she turns, slowly walks towards the door...

And leaves, closing the door behind her.

INT. ANDERS HOUSE--DAY

Sara, eyes focused straight ahead, walks down the hall, and descends the long staircase. At the bottom of the stairs stands Pammie, silently victorious.

Sara looks at Pammie for a beat.

And walks right by.

Past the:

LIVING ROOM, where Ana is polishing an antique wood table. Sara and Ana's eyes meet for a moment, and Ana gives Sara a small, appreciative smile.

With Pammie behind her, Sara makes her way to the front hall. The dogs silently watch her go.

She heaves open the heavy, front door, and emerges into the bright day.

Pammie closes the door behind her.

EXT. ANDERS DRIVEWAY--DAY

Sara stands in the bright light, on the doorstep. She walks slowly down the driveway through the iron front gates.

EXT. GREENWICH--DAY

She walks on, down the long shady roads, past the mansions, the golf courses, the hedges, the ponds...

Slowly, the late afternoon turns to dusk...

And the world of Greenwich begins to recede into long, deep shadows.

EXT. GREENWICH TRAIN STATION--EVENING

Sara sits on a bench, the same bench where she once sat with Jordy. A few lonely COMMUTERS join her on the platform, waiting. The day has dissolved into darkness.

The train ROARS into the station and the commuters board it. Sara does not move. A CONDUCTOR leans out of the train.

CONDUCTOR

Ma'am? Train's leaving.

She nods to him, gets up, slowly, deliberately. She looks around Greenwich one last time, and gets on the train.

INT. METRO NORTH TRAIN--NIGHT

Sara gazes at her reflection in the glass as the train hurtles forward through space, leaving behind all she's lost.

As the train moves through small dark towns at night, closer and closer to the city, she reaches into her backpack.

She rifles through her stack of composition notebooks, all of them filled with her old writings, torn out pages, added pages, and Post-Its. Wedged in between them is the napkin with Adam's phone number on it.

She searches through a few more filled notebooks, finally finding one that is new, completely blank.

She takes it out of her backpack, along with a pen.

Inspired, she opens to the first, pristine, white page.

And begins.

THE END