

STOP HUNTINGDON ANIMAL CRUELTY

by

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BLACK SCREEN

A dog barks.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Watch him for a second. I'm gonna
put some gloves on.

The screen SHAKES and then ILLUMINATES, as though a video camera has suddenly turned on. The footage is shaky and poorly-focused.

We are in an animal testing laboratory. A MALE SCIENTIST in a lab coat puts on latex gloves. A DOG sits on the counter-top.

FEMALE NARRATOR (O.S.)
What you are about to see may
disturb you.

The scientist leans over and scratches the dog under the chin.

MALE SCIENTIST
Who's the cutest dog in the whole
wide world?

A title violently SLAMS onto the screen:

STOP HUNTINGDON ANIMAL CRUELTY

The scientist rubs the dogs tummy.

MALE SCIENTIST (CONT'D)
You are. You're the cutest.

NEMSER (O.S.)
I'll do it.

The footage FREEZES. We zoom out to reveal we are in

INT. THE VANGUARD NEWSPAPER - EDITORIAL ROOM - MORNING

The editorial room of a tabloid. Five bored REPORTERS look in the general direction of a TV in the corner. Editor-in-chief BRADLEY CHERKIN, 60, with impressive amounts of white hair on his face and head, holds the remote control.

CHERKIN
(stern)
Jesus, Nemser, will you watch the
thing first?

One of the reporters is PAUL NEMSER, referred to as Nemser by his friends, colleagues, family, and (eventually, if he ever has them) his children. He still has a boyish handsomeness but his paunch and bald spot indicate that he's on the wrong side of 40 and very much on the wrong side of 30.

NEMSER

(shrugs)

I'm just saying I'll do it.

A meek reporter, TIM, raises his hand.

TIM

I'm also happy to take this one.

CHERKIN

Oh, you're "happy" to write this article?

(barks)

I don't even know your name.

TIM

It's--

CHERKIN

I don't want to know your name. I just want you to know that I don't know it.

Tim looks shamed. Cherkin presses play.

ON THE TV SCREEN, the female narrator LYDIA SHERIDAN, late 20s, appears in front of a black background. She's beautiful and severe.

LYDIA

Huntingdon Lab is a for-profit animal-testing company which conducts tests on thousands of animals every year, from rats to primates. I spent six months undercover at Huntingdon with this hidden camera sewn into my lab coat.

Lydia holds out a tiny camera between her thumb and forefinger.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

I saw scenes of unimaginable cruelty. The scientists mocked the animals. They abused them. They played with them when they weren't in the mood for playing.

(MORE)

LYDIA (CONT'D)
It brings to mind what Paul McCartney once said: "If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be a vegetarian." We should listen to him, because Macca was the best Beatle. Much better than John.

Nemser tilts his head, amused.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
What follows is uncensored footage of this shocking brutality. If you have young children, now is the time for them to leave the room. If you have animals, now is the time to cherish them.

Shaky, grainy footage. A FEMALE SCIENTIST, hands on hips, stares down at a mouse in a cage.

FEMALE SCIENTIST
You're just a mouse! I'm a person.
You're tiny!

A male scientist injects a needle into a rat. The camera zooms in menacingly on a scientific paper beside the scientist. The title reads: "TOWARDS A CURE FOR CHILDHOOD LEUKEMIA." The camera quickly pans away from the document.

Another SCIENTIST stands with a small cup of juice.

LYDIA (O.S.)
(muffled)
What are you doing with that juice?

SCIENTIST
I'm giving it to the monkey.

LYDIA (O.S.)
(muffled)
Are you sure it's his favorite kind of juice?

SCIENTIST
No. I'm not sure.

He walks away. Lydia angles the hidden camera on her lab coat at her face:

LYDIA
(whispers)
Jesus Christ.

INT. THE VANGUARD - EDITORIAL ROOM - DAY

Cherkin clicks the remote and the video CUTS OUT.

CHERKIN

They sent this video out to every newspaper and TV station in the country. She's part of some group, the Liberation Front or something. Animal Liberation Front. There's gonna be protests, marches, the whole deal. Gonna be big. The public is gonna be on their side, and we are gonna be on the public's side. I need one of you to find this woman--

NEMSER

I'll do it.

CHERKIN

I'm not finished. I need one of you to find this woman, get close to her--

NEMSER

I'll do it.

CHERKIN

Christ, Nemser! I thought you were covering the Yawson murder.

NEMSER

Yawson was murdered.
("there you go")
Story covered.

CHERKIN

No. Someone else. You. Guy whose name I don't know.

TIM

(excited)
You want me to cover it?

CHERKIN

No, I'm just reminding you that I don't know your name. How little must I care about you?

Snickers. Cherkin points to MARK SAVRIN, 26, a young hot-shot reporter.

CHERKIN (CONT'D)
Savrin. Meet up with her.

Savrin nods. Nemser stares at him coldly. Savrin winks at Nemser and smiles.

MUSIC CUE: "All The Young Punks" by The Clash.

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

GEORGIE, 16, acned and greasy, sits alone eating fries. He's eaten a lot of fries in his young life. Georgie stares at the wall, bored.

He throws some of the fries at the wall. He enjoys this and throws some more.

RAJIV, 16, Indian and timid, comes over and sits next to him, throwing his backpack on the ground.

RAJIV
Throwing fries?

GEORGIE
Yeah.

Rajiv tries throwing some fries at the wall. He shrugs.

RAJIV
It's been two weeks. Not coming back, are you?

GEORGIE
Maybe next term. I dunno. What was I learning in school that I can't learn right here?

They stare at the french fries and half-eaten hamburger in front of Georgie.

RAJIV
You should come back, man.

GEORGIE
I'm an autodidact, Rajiv. Do you know what that means? It means I teach myself. Do you know how I know that word? I taught it to myself.

Rajiv shrugs again. He stands up.

RAJIV
Gonna go.

GEORGIE
We could do stuff.

RAJIV
Can't. Gotta work.

GEORGIE
(a little desperate)
Whatever you wanna do--

RAJIV
(firm)
I can't. I have homework.

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - DAY

Nemser is on the phone at his desk, annoyed. He's holding a notepad and pen and his legs are propped on the desk.

NEMSER
Ms. Yawson. Ms. Yawson. Miiissss
Yawwwwsonnnnn.

He looks at CECILE, a chubby 40some reporter whose desk faces his, and flaps his hand to indicate "she's going on and on and on." Cecile looks disgusted.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Ms. Yawson, I know this is a hard
time for you. I know exactly how
you feel.

He listens.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
(stammers, lying)
Yes, I've had a spouse murdered.
It's very difficult.

Cecile throws him another look.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
And I certainly don't want to
interrupt the grieving process.
Grieving is like making a cake. You
take your time, you have patience,
and at the end of it, you finally
have closure. Or a cake.
(beat, listens)
I just need one quote, that's all.
(MORE)

NEMSER (CONT'D)
How you feel, how this has affected
you -- something.

He listens.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Hmm. Can you give me a little more
pizzazz? "Sad" is such a mundane
word. How about..."distraught"?

He nods and writes on his notepad.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Good, great. Let me just read this
back to you:
(reads his notepad)
'I'm distraught,' shrieked
hysterical widow Eliza Yawson.
'I will personally track down his
killers and I will take vengeance
upon them.'
(looks up)
That last part's mine. Adds a bit
of zest.

Beat.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Ms. Yawson?

He shrugs and hangs up the phone. He takes a little flask out
of his desk and takes a nip.

CECILE
You're a horrible man. You have no
empathy. The only thing you're good
at is cutting people down and
making them feel bad about
themselves.

Nemser thinks.

NEMSER
(stammers)
You're a horrible man.

CECILE
Huh. Maybe there's nothing you're
good at.

EXT. STREETS - AFTERNOON

MUSIC CUE: "The World Is Full of Crashing Bores" by Morrissey

Georgie walks alone down working-class streets, kicking an empty bottle. He passes a graffiti-covered wall and stops to read some of the messages: "Fuck Bush!" "End the war!" "Abortion is murder!"

Georgie digs in his backpack and takes out a black marker. He finds a blank space on the wall and writes:

"STRONG OPINIONS SUCK"

He's working on the final "K" when he hears:

MAX (O.S.)

Look -- Georgie Porgie thinks he's
a rebel!

The music sputters to a STOP and Georgie grits his teeth and turns around. MAX and TRAVIS, two fierce-looking bullies, stare at him with dead eyes. Travis comes up and pins Georgie against the wall with his index finger.

TRAVIS

Georgie Porgie thinks he's God,
doesn't he? Thinks he can do
whatever he wants. Skip school,
write on city property. But there
are rules, Georgie Porgie. Rules we
all have to follow.

MAX

Do you read the Bible?

GEORGIE

I started it, but I don't like that
main guy, Moses. He's a downer.

(mocking)

*"Oh no, my people are enslaved in
the land of Egypt."* It's like, suck
it up, Moses.

Max slams him against the wall again. Georgie winces. Max puts his face an inch from Georgie's.

MAX

You need some rules in your life,
Georgie Porgie. You know the 10
Commandments, don't you?

Georgie struggles but can't escape.

TRAVIS

Like, "Honor Thy Mother And Thy
Father"?

MAX

But you don't have a father, so for you I guess it's just, "Honor Thy Mother And."

TRAVIS

"Honor Thy Mother And"? And what? That's an incomplete commandment!

Georgie manages to squirm free and runs off.

MAX

(calling)

Go run home to mommy and!

They high-five.

TRAVIS

Nice. We totally wounded his soul.

MAX

That'll teach him not to have a dead dad.

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - EVENING

The newsroom is empty except for Nemser, and dark except for his desk lamp.

He slumps in his chair, sipping from a flask, reading a FRAMED NEWSPAPER.

It's an issue of The Vanguard from March 25, 1965.

The banner headline reads: "Freedom March Arrives In Montgomery."

Sub-headline reads: "Activists Demand Protection Of Voting Rights"

There's a photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr. leading marchers.

CLOSE ON: The byline. The author of the article is LAWRENCE NEMSER, Paul's father.

CHERKIN (O.S.)

Come get a drink, Paul.

Nemser looks up. Cherkin is just leaving his office, a coat slung over his arm.

CHERKIN (CONT'D)
Everyone's at Barney's.

Nemser nods.

NEMSER
I'll meet up.

Cherkin leaves.

Nemser puts the framed newspaper back on the wall.

INT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

A dirty, cramped bedroom with a sloping ceiling. There are scattered soda cans, bowls of week-old pasta, and other paraphernalia of teenage life.

An old boombox pumps "Remote Control" by The Clash-- very loud.

Georgie lies on his bed, looking at a framed photograph.

CLOSE ON: PHOTOGRAPH

It's a black & white photograph of WILLIAM SHELDON, Georgie's father. He's in his twenties, passionate and fiery, wearing AVIATOR SUNGLASSES. He stands on a car addressing a crowd of young protestors, jabbing his fist in the air.

Georgie's mom, JANIE, yells faintly in the background.

JANIE (O.S.)
Georgie!

Georgie scrambles to put the photograph in a drawer.

He takes out an old laptop, opens it, and puts it on his stomach. He starts typing.

Janie continues yelling as she approaches his room. Georgie doesn't react.

JANIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Georgie!

The door swings open violently and Janie stands there, wiry and veiny, wearing a conservative black pantsuit, smoking a cigarette.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Georgie! I can barely hear
anything! Turn that goddamn music
up!

Georgie smiles and turns up the volume. Janie sings along for a few seconds, miming into an imaginary microphone. She knows every word.

She comes over and sits on his bed, turns down the volume, and rubs Georgie's hair. Georgie keeps typing as they talk.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Go to school today?

GEORGIE
No.

JANIE
Good. Fuck the state!

GEORGIE
You go to work?

JANIE
(nods)
And I did an extra shift for Dottie
so she could see her kid's ballet
recital.

GEORGIE
Yeah, fuck the state! *The Man's*
always trying to keep Dottie from
those ballet recitals!

Janie laughs and stands up.

JANIE
(sincere)
Go to school now and then, Georgie.

GEORGIE
Mom.

JANIE
I know! Listen, I know, and I agree
with you, and I think you're better
than that place, and I think you
could teach there, if you wanted
to. But let's keep up appearances,
shall we?

Georgie raises an eyebrow but says nothing.

Janie gestures towards the laptop.

JANIE (CONT'D)
What are you making?

GEORGIE
It's an application that let's
people transfer porn faster.

JANIE
I thought you already made that.

GEORGIE
This one's faster. Not by much, but
every little bit helps.

JANIE
What happened to that great history
website you made? With all that
Roman Empire stuff?

GEORGIE
It's still there. But I took down
most of the Roman Empire stuff and
replaced it with porn.

Beat.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)
I wouldn't really call it a history
website anymore.

Janie smirks -- a little sadly -- and walks to the door.

JANIE
Glad to see you're not letting your
talents go to waste.

Georgie turns up the music and Janie leaves the room, closing
the door behind her.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The staff of The Vanguard enjoys a night out at a local bar.
Everyone seems to be chatty and buzzed -- except for Nemser,
who is silent and drunk and sitting alone at the bar. His
bicycle helmet is on the counter next to his drink.

Savrin comes up behind Nemser and slaps him on the back,
hard.

SAVRIN
(caustic)
How's it going, buddy?

Nemser swivels in his chair and stares at Savrin.

NEMSER
(drunk)
How old are you? You're nothing old. You could be my son. I could build model rockets with you and I could take you to the park and we could have a great time with the rockets. That's how old you are.

SAVRIN
Is that right? Well then, pops, you'll never guess what I did today. Spent the whole day with that animal rights protestor. She's gorgeous, isn't she? And they're having a giant protest tomorrow, and I'm gonna cover it, and Cherkin already promised me the front page.

NEMSER
(outraged)
He what?

SAVRIN
Your little boy's all grown up.

Nemser staggers to his feet and pushes past Savrin. He's looking for Cherkin, but he has to go by Cecile first.

CECILE
(flat)
Breaking news. Nemser's drunk again.

NEMSER
You-- you are just-- middle-aged.

He pushes by her. He spots Cherkin, not even tipsy, holding a glass of unsipped scotch and speaking to a small group of OLDER EDITORS.

Nemser grabs him around the shoulders.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
I gotta talk to you.

CHERKIN

Oh, Jesus, Nemser. Alright. Someone hold my glass for a minute.

The editors hold out their hands to take the glass but Nemser swoops in and grabs it.

NEMSER

I'll hold it.

He finishes off the scotch in one gulp.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

Actually, one of you needs to hold this.

He shoves the empty glass into an editor's hand and drags Cherkin by the arm to

EXT. BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The sidewalk.

NEMSER

Fifteen years I've been at this fucking rag! I'm married to this paper, Brad. It's my wife. And you're taking her away from me and I don't know why.

CHERKIN

I'm not taking anything from you.

NEMSER

Yes, you are! Last week, the veterans march. I wanted it, and you gave it to Savrin. Today, this animal rights thing. I wanted it. You gave it to Savrin. And you're putting it front page! This paper is my wife, Brad. When you give Savrin a front page story, it's like you're letting him write on my wife's face.

CHERKIN

Those are inspirational stories! Uplifting shit! That's never been your thing. You're a hatchet man. You write dark, angry, sarcastic stuff, and it's wonderful. Readers love it.

NEMSER

(faintly)

I can do inspirational.

CHERKIN

Come on, Nemser. Savrin's young. He's naive. He still thinks a journalist can change the world, same as your father. It's silly. But if a kid beats cancer or a dog saves his owner, he's my guy. Give him 300 words and he'll make your heart swell. But if it looks like a famous actress is fatter than usual? That's all you! You're my man on that!

Nemser looks unconsoled. Cherkin puts his hand on Nemser's shoulder.

CHERKIN (CONT'D)

You can make people angry, and you can make them horny. Often at the same time. That's a special gift and most men who have it are in jail.

Beat.

NEMSER

(quietly)

I turn 45 next month. My dad was 45 when he won his Pulitzer--

CHERKIN

(laughing)

--Ah! That's what this is! You Freudian fuck! Listen to me. Your father was a fine journalist. And he gave you the best gift a father can give a son.

NEMSER

A Jeep? He never gave me a Je--

CHERKIN

--His death, Nemser! He's dead. Has been for several years. So put on some sunscreen and crawl out from his fat fucking shadow.

Cherkin walks inside, leaving Nemser swaying on the sidewalk.

INT. NEMSER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small, dark, disheveled studio.

There's a mattress on the ground. No sheets.

A key jiggles in the lock.

The door swings open and Nemser staggers in, absolutely smashed, humming "I Am The Walrus." He flips on the light.

He flops onto the mattress. After a few moments, he lifts his head up and sees, on the windowsill, a RED SCRUNCHIE and a GOLD MEDALLION.

INT. NEMSER'S APARTMENT - LATER

Nemser sits on his mattress, still drunk, playing with the scrunchie and medallion as though they're two action figures.

NEMSER

(female voice)

I love you, Paul's Dad's Pulitzer Prize for Journalism!

(deep male voice)

I love you, Paul's ex-girlfriend's scrunchie that she left here when she walked out on him without even saying goodbye!

He pushes the scrunchie and the medal together, as though they're making out. Then he takes them apart.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

(male voice)

You know who sucks?

(female voice)

Paul?

(male voice)

Yeah. He's a disappointment.

(female voice)

As a son or as a person?

(male voice)

Both.

(female voice)

I never actually loved him. Don't tell Paul!

(male voice)

At least he was good at sex, though, right?

(female voice)

Nope.

Nemser chucks the scrunchie and medallion against the wall. He covers his face with his hand.

After a few moments, Nemser staggers to his feet. He retrieves the scrunchie and medallion and carefully places them back on the windowsill.

INT. HUMAN MOUTH

CLOSE ON: French fries entering the mouth. The mouth chews on the fries. The teeth tear open a ketchup packet. The ketchup is squirted into the mouth.

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

Georgie eats fries at McDonald's. Bored. He's reading John Locke's "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding."

GEORGIE

(mutters)

No, John. God hath not furnished
man with such faculties. Idiot.

He tears out a page in the book, crumples it up, and throws it against the wall. There are already many crumpled pieces of paper on the ground. Some fries suddenly bounce off the wall and land on top of them.

We hear RETCHING.

EXT. MCDONALD'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A WOMAN waits outside of an occupied bathroom. There is more retching, and then a splash. Someone's vomiting. More retching, another splash. This goes on for a while.

Suddenly, the door swings open and Nemser walks out, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He's wearing the same clothing as last night and looks like shit.

Nemser looks at the woman in line, then looks inside the bathroom he's just walked out of.

NEMSER

It was the guy before me.

He walks to the front entrance and is about to open the door when he spots Georgie tearing another page out of his book. Nemser strides over and snatches the book.

GEORGIE
What the fuck?

Nemser peers at him and then at the front cover.

NEMSER
This guy practically invented
political philosophy. He gave us
our rights. What have you ever
done?

GEORGIE
Your mom.

NEMSER
My mom. Yes, I see how you did
that. Very clever. You're a clever
guy. Guess that means you're clever
enough to rip pages out of John
Locke.

GEORGIE
Guess it does.

Nemser glares at him for a beat.

NEMSER
I did your mom. How about that? I
did your mom.

He flings the book back towards Georgie and walks out.

Georgie shakes his head (as in, "what a weirdo") and goes
back to reading.

Just then, a CROWD begins chanting in the distance.

CROWD (O.S.)
A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy! A
rat is a pig is a dog is a boy!

Intrigued, Georgie wanders out of the McDonald's and into

INT. SHOPPING MALL - CONTINUOUS

He walks out of the mall.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - CONTINUOUS

The mall faces a large field. On the other side of the field
is the Huntingdon Lab. Thousands of protestors have packed
into the field, facing a stage set up next to the lab.

The protestors chant and wave placards reading: "Meat is Murder," "Fur is Murder," "Vivisection is Murder," etc.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - CONTINUOUS

The crowd continues the same chant in the background.

By the stage, Savrin chats with Lydia and CHE, an extremely tall and extremely thin man wearing a ski-mask. Lydia's preparing to go on. A group of POLICEMEN guard the stage.

SAVRIN

And you know -- off the record -- I really admire what you're doing. All of us at The Vanguard do.

LYDIA

Thanks, Mark.

CHE

Thanks, man.

SAVRIN

(to Lydia, flirtatious)

And if there's anyway I can help out--

LYDIA

You're already helping out, just by covering us. It's so important. We have to be press sluts in this business.

SAVRIN

But I mean -- if there's something more direct. I'd love to get my hands dirty.

Che and Lydia glance at each other. Che lowers his voice conspiratorially.

CHE

Let me ask you a question. How much do you like animals?

SAVRIN

A lot.

Che leans over to Lydia.

CHE

(whispers)

That's a really good answer.

LYDIA
(to Savrin)
Also, who's your favorite Beatle?

Before he can answer, Savrin spots Nemser swimming through the crowd towards them. A look of fury crosses Savrin's face, but he quickly contains himself.

SAVRIN
Hey! Nemser! Come meet the
wonderful folks responsible for all
this.

He walks over to Nemser to lead him over.

SAVRIN (CONT'D)
(whispers)
What the fuck are you doing here?

NEMSER
(whispers)
Little freelancing. I'm writing my
own inspirational article. Gonna
inspire the shit out of people.
(normal voice)
Lydia! Hey. Hi. Great to meet you,
finally. I saw you in that video.
You were wonderful.

LYDIA
Thank you, but it -- it wasn't
really about me.

NEMSER
Oh, and the animals! They were just
terrific, of course. You could
really feel their pain.

LYDIA
(perturbed)
Yes.

Savrin barely controls his anger.

SAVRIN
(introducing)
This is--

NEMSER
--Paul Nemser. I work with Mark
here on The Vanguard. Isn't Mark
just a fantastic journalist? Did
you read his wonderful piece about
that pedophile last year?
(MORE)

NEMSER (CONT'D)

So moving. Just unbelievable how Mark was able to understand that guy. I wouldn't have any idea how to get into the mindset of a sociopathic pedophile, but Mark just did it so easily. Seamlessly, really.

SAVRIN

You've probably heard of Paul's father, Lawrence Nemser. What a courageous journalist -- he won a Pulitzer for his coverage of the civil rights marches out of Selma. No Pulitzers yet for Paul, but only because there's no category for articles which include the phrase "Ms. Lohan later vomited on the bathroom floor." But I'm sure his dad would be very proud of him, if he were still here. That's how kind his dad was.

NEMSER

Mark has one ball.

SAVRIN

That's just not true.

LYDIA

Your name is Paul?

NEMSER

Yeah.

LYDIA

That's the best male name ever.
That's the number one male name.

NEMSER

Um. Thank you.

LYDIA

You're welcome, Paul. Paul McCartney's first name is Paul.

NEMSER

Yes.

Nemser extends his arm to Che.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

(to Che)

We haven't met yet. Paul.

CHE

Che. Nice to meet you, man.

NEMSER

I love the ski mask.

CHE

(modest)

Oh this? This is just something simple I threw on.

NEMSER

Can I ask why?

CHE

Oh, I was helping--

LYDIA

--We don't discuss internal operations. Suffice it to say, Che was assisting in the liberation of animals and his identity was compromised.

NEMSER

(bemused)

Liberation?

LYDIA

(cold)

We're an abolitionist movement.

NEMSER

Uh...huh.

Nemser takes out a notepad. Seeing this, Savrin angrily takes out his as well.

LYDIA

(cold)

I'm not going to call you Paul anymore. You are now "Mr. Nemser."

NEMSER

That's fine. Listen, I was looking at some of these signs.

He gestures to the crowd.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

It seems like a lot of things are murder. Meat--

LYDIA
Meat is murder, of course.

NEMSER
Vivisection is murder.

LYDIA
Yes.

NEMSER
Fur?

LYDIA
Definitely.

NEMSER
(joking)
I guess killing a person is murder,
too.

LYDIA
(serious)
Sometimes.

An ASSISTANT comes up to them and points at her watch.

ASSISTANT
(to Lydia)
Time.

LYDIA
OK.
(to Nemser)
I have to get up there. It was very
nice--

NEMSER
--One more thing. This chant. A rat
is a pig is a dog is a boy. I think
some people might argue that a rat
is not a boy.

Lydia starts heading up the stairs by the side of the stage.

LYDIA
Great question! That's actually
something I address in my speech.

Savrin glares at Nemser, jealous.

Lydia reaches the stage and takes the mic. She loudly joins
in the chant.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
 (with crowd)
 A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy! A
 rat is a pig is a dog is a boy!
 (quiets the crowd)
 Thank you! Thank you!

The crowd hushes.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
 I want to start with a question I
 hear a lot. Some people wonder, how
 is a rat like a boy? They look
 different. They have different DNA.
 They have very different
 intellectual capabilities. To these
 people, I reply:
 (angry)
 Shame! Shame! Shame!

She looks directly at Nemser and wags her finger. The crowd
 joins in the chant.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
 (along with crowd)
 Shame! Shame! Shame!

Savrin, ecstatic, looks at Nemser and wags his finger, too.

SAVRIN
 (along with crowd)
 Shame! Shame! Shame!

Nemser looks bemused once again.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - LATER

Lydia is still speaking. Savrin is enraptured, following her
 every word, furiously taking notes. Nemser looks like he
 can't believe what he's hearing.

LYDIA
 And Jonas Salk used those results
 to develop a polio vaccine that has
 saved millions of lives. And so to
 Jonas Salk, we say: Shame!
 (crowd and Savrin join in)
 Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame!

She silences the crowd.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

And to the rhesus monkeys he tested
on, we say: Sorry about that,
rhesus monkeys!

(everyone joins in, but
it's disjointed)

Sorry about that, rhesus monkeys!
Sorry about that, rhesus monkeys!

CLOSE ON: Nemser, baffled. Everyone's chanting except him.

CLOSE ON: Georgie, baffled. He's standing in the back of the
crowd. Everyone's chanting except him.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - LATER

LYDIA

Is it worth it to kill a single dog
if by doing so we can develop a
drug that saves 100 children? That
is a very tough philosophical
question. I don't have the answer
to it. But I know someone who
might.

She crouches by the side of the stage and Che hands her an
ADORABLE PUPPY. She goes back to the mic and holds up the
puppy.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

This puppy!

The crowd swoons. Lydia hands the puppy back to Che.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

A new day has dawned for Huntingdon
Lab. There is a genocide happening
in this building, and the Animal
Liberation Front will not rest
until it is stopped. That's what
Paul McCartney would want. We will
maintain a constant vigil here
until this place of torture and
murder is shuttered for good--

Lydia continues speaking but we only hear it in the
background. Nemser shakes his head.

NEMSER

(to himself)

She's a demagogue.

SAVRIN

(sotto)

No, she's passionate, but you probably don't even know what that means.

(enamored)

Plus, she's beautiful.

Nemser glances at Savrin, who's staring at Lydia with puppy-dog eyes.

NEMSER

(sotto)

Well, you can have her. I don't sleep with demagogues.

SAVRIN

(sotto)

That doesn't even scratch the surface of who you don't sleep with.

There's a hubbub near the back of the crowd. Everyone turns to watch and Lydia stops speaking mid-sentence.

Georgie has stripped to the waist and written "PRO-TEST" across his chest. He's holding up a sign on which he's scrawled "PRO ANIMAL TESTING." And he's standing on a picnic table, chanting.

GEORGIE

(chanting)

Meat is delicious! Fur is fine!
What does vivisection mean? Meat is
delicious! Fur is fine! What does
vivisection mean?

The protestors near him approach the table and shout back angrily. Lydia nods to the policemen standing near the stage.

LYDIA

(off-mic)

Security.

(on-mic)

A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy.

The crowd cheers. The policemen run towards Georgie. Georgie points towards Lydia.

GEORGIE

(chanting)

A terrorist is a terrorist is a
terrorist is kinda hot but she's a
terrorist!

Nemser laughs. The policeman surround the picnic table and take Georgie off it. He's struggling.

Nemser gestures to Lydia.

NEMSER
(to Savrin)
You can have this story. I just
found a better one.

He sprints off towards Georgie, who's now surrounded by a ring of policemen. They're simultaneously trying to drag him towards a squad car and fight off the protestors lunging at him.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Hey, what's your name?

Georgie is thrown into a squad car and the car peels away.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Fuck.

Nemser watches, crestfallen, as his story is driven away. Lydia begins speaking again, but it's in the background and unintelligible.

Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, Nemser spots something on the picnic table. He runs over. It's the torn-up John Locke book. He flips to the inside cover.

CLOSE ON: inside cover. "Georgie Sheldon" is scrawled in the upper corner.

Nemser smiles and pockets the book.

EXT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Nemser bikes through a working-class neighborhood, squinting at the street numbers. He screeches to a stop in front of Georgie's small, one-floor house.

He locks his bike to a street sign, double-checks the address on a slip of paper, and walks up to the door.

He knocks. The door opens and Georgie stares at him. He's eating a bowl of Ramen.

NEMSER
You probably don't remember me, but
I--

GEORGIE
(calling)
Mom! This guy claims he did you!

NEMSER
What? No!

Janie, in a staid ladysuit, strolls over from the kitchen.

JANIE
(to Nemser)
I'll take your word for it. I've
led quite the life.

NEMSER
No! No, it was a joke!

JANIE
(casual)
OK, then I guess we didn't. I mean,
I defer to you. You're the
authority on this.

Georgie's still eating Ramen.

GEORGIE
(mouth full)
My mom's had many sexual partners.

NEMSER
So I gathered.
(awkward beat)
You know, and that's fine. I've had
many myself.

GEORGIE
I don't think you mean "many" in
the sense that I mean "many."

Janie nods.

NEMSER
(awkward)
I see. It occurs to me that I've
learned a lot about you very
quickly, Ms. Sheldon.

JANIE
(very fast)
Lycroft, actually. Janie. Sheldon
was Georgie's father. This was in
the early 90s. We were living in a
boarding house, doing a lot of H,
engaging in a lot of risky sex.
(MORE)

JANIE (CONT'D)

Have you seen Trainspotting? It was kind of like Trainspotting, but more dramatic. Lots of partners, sometimes for money, sometimes for drugs, sometimes for neither, not a lot of protection. When Georgie was nine his dad died of an overdose. That helped me kick drugs, but then I got ovarian cancer at 32, which is nearly unheard of. But I kicked the cancer -- though it's left a few lingering issues, gynecologically-speaking -- then I kicked the drugs, and here we are.

Incredibly awkward beat.

NEMSER

(slow, awkward)

I see. Thank you for sharing so much. You shared a lot of information. Thank you.

Beat.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

Would you like to know who I am and why I'm in your house?

INT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

A cramped, cluttered kitchen. Janie, Georgie, and Nemser sip tea at the table.

GEORGIE

No.

JANIE

No. No article.

Nemser is taken aback.

NEMSER

Don't you want recognition for what you did?

JANIE

What he did? He took off his shirt and wrote on his belly with a magic marker.

NEMSER
(grasping)
And don't you want recognition for
it?

GEORGIE
Listen, Nemser--

NEMSER
--Oh, please, call me whatever the
fuck you want. Don't be restrained
by societal conventions.

GEORGIE
Mister Nemser--

JANIE
Don't talk to my son like that. And
I've raised him to question
societal conventions, thank you
very much. Georgie, let's show him
our pockets.

GEORGIE
Mom...

JANIE
(stern)
Let's show him our pockets.

Georgie reluctantly raises his shirt a few inches and shows
Nemser his pockets. Janie does the same. All of their pockets
have been sewn up.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Sewed 'em up.

NEMSER
Bravo.

JANIE
Do you want to know why?

GEORGIE
Mom...

JANIE
(to Georgie)
No, I'm removing his blinders. This
is the greatest day of his life.
(to Nemser)
Pockets, Mr. Nemser, are for
storing the instruments of
capitalist exploitation.

GEORGIE
(apologetic)
Mom's a Marxist...

NEMSER
How do you hold things while you're walking?

JANIE
Things! Society and it's love affair with things!

NEMSER
What if you have a pack of gum?

JANIE
Oh, well for gum, I added this.

She reveals a little pocket she's sewn on to the side of her pants.

NEMSER
A pocket...

JANIE
(angry but wry)
It's a gum pouch, Mr. Nemser. You know, I can't save you from the system if you are the system.

She walks out.

NEMSER
What does she do?

GEORGIE
She's an administrative assistant at Pepsi.

NEMSER
(disbelief)
And she's a Marxist...

GEORGIE
Uh huh.

NEMSER
...Who works at one of the largest multinational corporations in the world.

GEORGIE
Yeah.

NEMSER

(announcer-style)

Coming soon: The proletariat takes
on the bourgeoisie! Brought to you
by Pepsi.

GEORGIE

(defensive)

She had to feed us. After my dad--

NEMSER

(commercial-style)

Tired after a long day of
overthrowing your capitalist
overlords and securing the means of
production? Reach for a refreshing
Mountain Dew!

GEORGIE

Hey, fuck you! She was a radical.

(pointing to a photo on
the wall)

Seattle, '99. WTO protest. She
spent three days in jail.

The photo shows Janie dressed in black leather with a black
bandana covering her face.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

When my dad died, she had to take
care of me. She's not hypocritical.
She's just a mom.

Nemser looks at his feet repentantly.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

Activism is selfish.

NEMSER

Well, I dunno if it's--

GEORGIE

(suddenly emotional)

Yes it is! It's extremely fucking
selfish! Activism is all about the
fucking activist!

Georgie trembles and tries to regain his cool.

Nemser is taken aback by the outburst. He clears his throat
and changes the subject.

NEMSER

Listen, Georgie, I think you did something very brave today. This animal testing thing is an important issue and we desperately need a voice on the other side of it. That's why I want to write this article.

GEORGIE

Not because you're a tabloid reporter and you're looking for a good polemical article?

NEMSER

(caught, stammers)

Of course not. That's very cynical.

(changes the topic)

And what are you, 16? You deserve to get beaten up for knowing a word like "polemical." When I was 16, I got beaten up for knowing the word "perpendicular." And everyone knows that word.

GEORGIE

Maybe that's not why you were beaten up.

NEMSER

(indignant)

Of course it is. Otherwise, I was extremely popular.

Georgie sighs.

GEORGIE

Mr. Nemser--

NEMSER

Just "Nemser" is fine.

GEORGIE

I didn't do anything brave today. I wasn't starting any movement. I just thought that woman was annoying--

NEMSER

--A demagogue!

GEORGIE

Yeah. I didn't like how she made her case. But maybe she's right.

(MORE)

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

My mom thinks so. She thinks that place should be shut down. I don't know the first thing about animal rights or animal testing or anything. I actually think fur is wrong. I don't even think meat's delicious! Beef is pretty good but chicken is boring as shit.

Nemser deflates.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

It wasn't a big deal. I was bored, I had a magic marker, and I like writing things on my stomach. I mean, look.

He pulls up his shirt. On his stomach, in the same black marker, it reads: "Ramen Rulez!"

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

Now are you gonna write a story about how much I like Ramen?

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: "At The Zoo" by Simon and Garfunkel.

Nemser bikes through the dark. A headlight on the handlebars provides a narrow swathe of light.

He looks to his left and sees a dog on a leash peeing on a building.

He looks to his right and sees a dog-walker picking up his dog's crap with a plastic baggie.

Now that he's noticing it, Nemser looks around and sees dozens of people walking behind their dogs and picking up their crap in little baggies. It's a national pastime.

EXT. THE VANGUARD - NIGHT

Nemser locks up his bike and trudges into the building.

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nemser walks to his desk. He passes Cecile at her desk. She looks up at him, positively overjoyed. Grinning ear to ear.

NEMSER

Are you having a stroke?

She shakes her head. Nemser sits down at his desk. Cecile keeps watching him, still smiling broadly.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

Huh. Well, it can't be good news about your husband or children, because that would require a husband or children. I give up. What do you have in your life that you could possibly be happy about?

CECILE

(squealing happily)

Cherkin's furious that you went off on your own assignment. I think he might fire you!

She claps her hands together happily.

CECILE (CONT'D)

Oh joyous day!

NEMSER

(to himself, scared)

Fuck.

He frantically punches his keyboard to wake up his computer and then takes a very long swig from his flask.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Sorry, Georgie.

He flexes his fingers and starts typing.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

(mumbles to himself as he types)

"A local high-school dropout launched a fiery counter-protest at Huntingdon Lab today, charging the Animal Liberation Front with fear-mongering and demagoguery..."

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - LATER

Nemser, in a sweat, punches a button on his keyboard and the article begins printing. He grabs the page from the printer and sprints towards Cherkin's office, but he immediately--

Bumps into Cherkin.

CHERKIN
I need to speak to you.

NEMSER
You want uplifting? Here's
uplifting.

He holds out the page. Cherkin takes it without breaking eye contact with Nemser.

INT. CHERKIN'S OFFICE - LATER

Cherkin sits at his desk, reading silently. Nemser, nervous and drunk, sits across from him.

Cherkin reads the last line out loud.

CHERKIN
(reading)
"Sheldon could not be reached for
comment, but then again, neither
could Helen Keller. Some heroes
don't need to comment."
(looks up)
This is really moving, Paul.
Really.

Nemser breathes a sigh of relief.

CHERKIN (CONT'D)
If I were a woman or a weak man,
I'd be crying right now. But I
haven't cried since my wife died.
(beat)
And that was just 'cause I had
something in my eye.

NEMSER
Brad, I've seen you cry dozens of
times. You cried at my dad's
funeral.

CHERKIN
Not louder than you.
(mocking)
"I'm gonna miss you, dad! I love
you!"
(back to normal)
That was embarrassing.

NEMSER
That was not embarrassing.

CHERKIN
Well, everyone could hear you.

NEMSER
It was a eulogy!

CHERKIN
(moving on)
Listen, I'm gonna put this on the front page, right next to Savrin's piece. Have you fact-checked? Is this ready to go?

Beat. A brief moral dilemma plays out in Nemser's eyes, but it passes.

NEMSER
Yeah. Put it in.

INT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

BLACK SCREEN.

PROTESTORS (O.S.)
A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy! A
rat is a pig is a dog is a boy!

CLOSE ON: Eyes BLINK open.

Georgie sits up with a start and looks around in terror.

He runs over the window. A handful of PROTESTORS chant on the sidewalk, waving signs. A CRY goes up when they see him.

PROTESTORS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Meat is Murder! Kill Georgie
Sheldon! Meat is Murder! Kill
Georgie Sheldon!

Georgie frantically pulls on pants.

INT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The chanting continues in the background.

Georgie runs in. Janie sits at the table reading The Vanguard, shaken.

GEORGIE
What's going on?

Janie holds up the newspaper. Georgie's photo is on the front page, next to Nemser's article.

JANIE
(distraught)
I can't believe we let a capitalist
into our house. I let him take
advantage of you.

GEORGIE
Did you call the police?

JANIE
Yes.

GEORGIE
When are they coming?

JANIE
They're already here.

She points out the window. THREE POLICEMEN stand with the other protestors, waving signs.

THREE POLICEMEN
Kill Georgie Sheldon! Kill Georgie
Sheldon!

Janie gestures towards the protestors.

JANIE
Ten years ago I would've been out
there with them. I'm not the enemy.

GEORGIE
(determined)
I'm gonna go explain what happened.
They'll be reasonable if we just
talk to them.

Janie nods through tears.

Georgie walks to the front door and begins opening it.

PROTESTOR 1
He's opening the door!

PROTESTOR 2
He's starting a dialogue!

PROTESTOR 3
Let's throw rocks at his face!

The other protestors CHEER in agreement. Georgie closes the door.

Janie stands up, furious.

JANIE
I'm gonna find that goddamn
reporter. He needs to write a
retraction.

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - DAY

CHERKIN
You need to write more stories on
this Sheldon kid.

Cherkin stands at Nemser's desk, jubilant. He's holding a huge sack of letters. Cherkin drops it on the desk.

CHERKIN (CONT'D)
This is the most hate mail we've
received since you wrote that piece
about racial inequality.

INSERT: Front page of The Vanguard. It's grid of headshots of people of different races. The headline reads, "What's the best race? Answer on page 5!"

CHERKIN (CONT'D)
It's just fantastic. Try to get
some quotes from the kid next time.

In the background, Savrin sits at his desk, watching and seething with jealousy.

NEMSER
You know, I think he might be
finished with his counter-protest.
I think it was a one-shot deal.

CHERKIN
No. Unacceptable. People are eating
this kid up. They hate him. We need
more.

NEMSER
But if he doesn't want--

CHERKIN

Then convince him. Wring another article out of this. Your dad knew how to do that. I'm sure you can, too.

Cherkin reaches into his pocket and hands Nemser some envelopes.

CHERKIN (CONT'D)

Oh, and these are for you. Death threats.

(proud)

You deserve them.

Savrin seethes some more.

INT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Chanting continues in the background.

Georgie and Janie stand by the back door to their house. Janie's putting on a bike helmet.

GEORGIE

Be careful, mom.

Janie kisses him on the forehead.

JANIE

Don't leave. Keep the doors locked.

She leaves. Georgie walks into

INT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

He looks out the front window nervously. Suddenly, his mom comes barreling around the corner on her bicycle. The protestors barely make it out of the way.

PROTESTOR 1

Hey! Be careful!

PROTESTOR 2

You could really hurt someone!

They immediately return to chanting.

PROTESTORS

Kill Georgie Sheldon! Kill Georgie Sheldon!

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - DAY

Animal rights activists continue to protest outside Huntingdon Lab. The crowd is smaller than the first day but still substantial -- in the hundreds. Tents are set up to one side -- it's clear they're in it for the long haul.

PROTESTORS

Meat is murder! Fur is murder!
Vivisection's murder!

On the opposite side of the field, nearer the mall, a very small group of COUNTER-PROTESTORS stand together, chanting. Mainly old fusty academic-looking types. They're chanting Georgie's chant.

COUNTER-PROTESTORS

Meat is delicious! Fur is fine!
What does vivisection mean?

Savrin walks by them, glaring at them as he does so. He sees Lydia speaking to a couple Animal Liberation Front leaders off to the side of the main group of protestors.

Lydia sees him coming and walks over.

SAVRIN

Lydia!

LYDIA

This is a closed-door meeting,
Mark. No press.

Savrin looks a little hurt.

SAVRIN

I'm not coming as press. I'm coming
as an animal-lover.

She checks her watch.

LYDIA

(a little annoyed)

What is it? You know, your friend
Nemser didn't do us any favors.

She gestures to the small counter-protest.

SAVRIN

That's what I came to talk about.
He's not my friend. And he's gonna
write more articles. I think you
should send him a message.

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - DAY

Nemser sits on the edge of his desk, sipping coffee. We see Janie tearing through the office behind him.

Janie grabs Nemser by the neck and shoves him against the wall. The coffee mug shatters on the floor.

Cecile casually takes out a Polaroid camera and takes a picture. She opens a drawer and puts the photo in it.

CLOSE ON: The drawer. There are dozens of photos of various people holding Nemser against the same wall and choking him. He's angered a lot of people in his career.

Janie puts her face close to Nemser's. He's struggling to escape, but can't.

JANIE

(hissing)

How dare you! You lied to my son,
you put him in danger, and for
what? I've already lost a husband.
God help you if--

NEMSER

--Animal rights is a sensitive
issue. Just like civil rights.
Georgie and I knew it'd be
dangerous to get involved.

She slams him against the wall again and pins him tighter.

JANIE

(near hysterical)

Get involved? Look around you! You
haven't gotten involved! A
journalist trying to get involved
in a movement is like a guy with a
rubber trying to get me pregnant:
it can't happen. And the one time
it does happen, it got an abortion.
You're protected, Nemser! You're
press. Georgie isn't. And you put
him in danger just to get some--
some fiction in the paper!

NEMSER

On the front page.

JANIE

(quiet, shocked)

You don't care about anyone. You
have no empathy.

NEMSER
I've heard that before, yeah.

CECILE
(polite, helpful)
You might want to try slapping his
face really hard.

Janie slaps Nemser.

NEMSER
I'm sorry.

CECILE
(polite, helpful)
And again.

Janie slaps him again.

NEMSER
(sincere)
I'm really sorry. I am.

He struggles again but he still can't escape her grasp.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
How are you so strong?

JANIE
I'm not. I'm actually pretty weak.

NEMSER
Oh. Then this is embarrassing.

A pimply-faced INTERN runs up to them.

INTERN
Mr. Nemser, there are some guys
outside attacking your bike. I just
called the police.

Janie loosens her grasp and Nemser runs over to the window.
Janie comes over to look too.

There are two bikes on a bike rack. Three men in ski-masks
stand around one of them, smashing it with baseball bats.

NEMSER
Jesus.

JANIE
Wait, that's my bike!

NEMSER

Oh, thank god.

Just then, one of the three men takes a photograph out of his pocket, looks at it, and then points at the other bike. The men move to the other bike and start smashing it.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

Damn it.

He watches in agony as they totally demolish his bike. The men begin to walk away.

JANIE

You know, I think mine's still rideable.

Just then, one of the three men sticks his thumb back in the direction of Janie's bike. The other two shrug (as in, "why not?"). They go back and begin smashing her bike again.

JANIE (CONT'D)

Damn.

NEMSER

Wait, look! The police are coming!

Two mounted police officers gallop over at top speed. They pull up next to the masked men and raise their nightsticks threateningly.

The masked men begin petting the horses, hugging them, feeding them sugar cubes they happen to keep in their pockets, and generally loving them.

The policemen look at each other, shrug, and lower their nightsticks.

Nemser and Janie look at each other.

Janie looks back at her bike.

CLOSE ON: Janie's bike. Utterly demolished.

JANIE

(realizes)

I left Georgie alone with these people.

INT. TAXI CAB - MOMENTS LATER

Nemser holds Janie's hand, trying to reassure her. She's barely keeping it together. He's also on edge, taking sips from his flask.

NEMSER

(firm)

He'll be fine. He's resourceful.

JANIE

He's just a kid!

NEMSER

He reads John Locke. On purpose. He develops complicated computer programs. He is not just a kid. He's more like-- a strange little man.

Janie looks at him, wild-eyed.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm not good at comforting people. I'm better at being comforted. It's just, ever since my wife died...

Janie puts her hand on his arm.

JANIE

Oh, I'm so sorry. Your wife died?

NEMSER

No, no. Never married. You see, I'm just better at being comforted.

Janie cracks a brief smile, which was Nemser's intent. He puts his hand on her hand on his arm, trying to calm her.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

I was close, though, once. Lillian. She was an advertising executive for Office Depot. She really got inside my head.

JANIE

Not a pretty place to be.

NEMSER

No. It should have police tape around it. She always knew what I was thinking.

(MORE)

NEMSER (CONT'D)

She could predict what I was about to say and yell at me before I said it. It was a very efficient relationship. And I loved her. Very much. Like, whenever I saw her, if I had a tail, it would've wagged.

(then)

Why am I telling you this? It's not the time.

JANIE

(gently, with a smile)

No. Please continue. It's really nice to hear about something bad that happened to you.

Nemser smirks.

NEMSER

It's not too interesting. Same old story. She could tell I wasn't gonna propose -- too scared to pull the trigger, too much I wanted to get done first. You know, I just wanted a little recognition of my work. Maybe not a Pulitzer Prize, but maybe a George Polk Award, or a Nieman Fellowship, or a Sidney Hillman, or a Loeb, or a National Press--

(stops himself)

Just some sign from someone that I was doing something right. So while I waited for that, she left me. A few years ago, now. But at least when she left she forgot one of her scrunchies in my apartment, so I

(off Janie's weirded-out look)

threw it out immediately. No reason to keep that around for years.

EXT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - LATER

The cab pulls up in front of the house. As Nemser pays, Janie staggers out of the car.

The protestors are gone. And her kitchen window is shattered.

JANIE

Oh god.

She covers her mouth with her hands. On the brink of hysterics.

Nemser swallows hard. He puts his arm around her shoulder.

NEMSER

Come on.

INT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The doors creaks open.

JANIE

Georgie!

Silence.

JANIE (CONT'D)

Georgie!

Silence. Janie bursts into tears. They wander into

INT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Glass all over the floor.

JANIE

Oh god.

NEMSER

Georgie!

Silence. Janie turns towards Nemser and he hugs her tightly.

JANIE

What do you--?

NEMSER

--I don't know. Where's your phone?

She points and again bursts into tears. He picks up the phone and begins dialing.

Just then, they hear LAUGHTER and CHATTER. Georgie and Rajiv walk into the house.

Nemser hangs up. Janie screams and runs to hug Georgie. She grabs him by the shoulders and shakes him, relieved but angry.

JANIE

Where were you!

GEORGIE

I was hanging out with Rajiv.

RAJIV

(exceedingly polite)

Hi Ms. Lycroft. How are you?

She's trembling hysterically. She has tears and mucus running down her face. She decides she's not sure how to answer Rajiv's question.

She turns back to Georgie.

JANIE

I told you not to go anywhere,
Georgie!

GEORGIE

I know! I locked the doors, I put
on the chains. I'm not stupid, mom.
There was absolutely no way I was
gonna leave this house, for
anything. No way.

(beat)

But then Rajiv asked if I wanted to
hang out, so I was like, "yeah,
whatever."

NEMSER

(to himself)

Huh. Maybe he is just a kid.

Georgie notices Nemser for the first time.

GEORGIE

(icy)

What are you doing here?

JANIE

He came to make sure you were
alright.

GEORGIE

(dripping with sarcasm)

Well, I'm sorry to break it to you,
but I'm fine. I'd probably make a
better story if I were dead, right?

NEMSER

It's not like that, Georgie. We're
a weekly. You still have plenty of
time to die.

He smiles, trying to win Georgie over. But his joke is met with silence and his smile fades.

Georgie turns back to Janie.

GEORGIE

Anyway, I only left after the protestors had already gone. They all left at once.

JANIE

Well, they must have come back while you were gone. The kitchen window's smashed.

GEORGIE

Oh, yeah, sorry about that. We were playing window baseball.

JANIE

You did that? What the hell's window baseball?

GEORGIE

It's basically just window softball but with a baseball. I'm sorry.

Janie sighs.

JANIE

Jesus, come here. I thought I'd finally lost you, too.

She hugs him again.

Nemser steels himself.

NEMSER

(stammering)

Georgie, I think you should continue your protest--

JANIE

(still hugging Georgie)

Please leave, Nemser.

EXT. STREETS - EVENING

Nemser walks through Georgie's neighborhood, heading home, his shoulders slumped.

He sees a billboard for Office Depot. It simply reads, "Office Depot: A Depot For Office Stuff."

NEMSER
 (to himself, wistful)
 God, she was brilliant.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - EVENING

Lydia, clad in army fatigues and looking more militaristic than ever, speaks to a large and cheering crowd. Savrin cheers among them.

There's still a very small group of Georgie's "followers" counter-protesting in the background.

LYDIA
 Our purpose is clear. Our will is strong. The time for talk is over. And the time for action -- direct action -- has arrived. Thinkers may prepare revolutions, but bandits must carry them out.

INT. GEORGIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Georgie and Rajiv watch the rally on TV.

RAJIV
 I'd do her. The more angry a woman is, the better she fucks.

GEORGIE
 I dunno. I've seen porn where the woman was really sad, and she did it good, too.

RAJIV
 Yeah, sad's OK. Or scared. As long as she's not happy and normal.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - CONTINUOUS

LYDIA
 We must act forcefully.

The crowd CHEERS.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
 We must act violently.

The crowd CHEERS.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
And we must act sensibly.

The crowd BOOS.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
But also violently!

The crowd CHEERS.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
The so-called scientists of
Huntingdon Lab have not yielded to
our demands. They continue to
conduct their cruel experiments.

INT. GEORGIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ON SCREEN:

LYDIA
They think they're God. They think
they can do whatever they want. But
they don't make the rules!

These lines stir a memory in Georgie. It dawns on him.

GEORGIE
(to himself)
She's just a bully.

EXT. SHOP WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Nemser watches Lydia's speech on a TV in a storefront window.

ON SCREEN:

LYDIA
We make the rules! We the people
make the rules!

Nemser smiles sadly.

NEMSER
(to himself)
"Any fool can make a rule, and any
fool will mind it."

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - CONTINUOUS

LYDIA
Who are these so-called scientists?
Who are these wardens of the camp?
It's time to raise the curtain.
It's time to name names.

She holds up a photograph of an elderly white-haired man.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Peter Bergstrom!

She holds up a photograph of a nerdy young man.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Panos Petrakos!

She holds up a photograph of a nerdy young Asian woman.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Alice Kim!

EXT. SHOP WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: Nemser, shocked at these tactics.

ON SCREEN:

LYDIA
There are more names to come. Now
let it be known: if you are one of
these murderers -- or you live with
them or you support them -- we will
come for you and we will destroy
the things you care about. You are
no longer safe.

The crowd CHEERS.

MUSIC CUE: "Janie Jones" by The Clash.

EXT. STREETS - LATER

Nemser rushes through the streets, angry and energized.

A car careens recklessly down the street and pulls up beside him. Rajiv's driving. Georgie's in the passenger seat. He rolls down his window.

GEORGIE

In your article, you wrote that they're using "Gestapo tactics." Did you really mean that or were you just trying to sell papers?

NEMSER

I meant it and I was trying to sell papers. And I was drunk. And I use the phrase "Gestapo tactics" in almost every article I write.

INSERT: A newspaper clipping. Headline reads: "7-Eleven Opens On Derby Ave." Sub-headline reads "No Gestapo Tactics Used."

GEORGIE

Good enough. Get in.

Georgie climbs into the backseat. Rajiv gestures to the passenger seat.

Nemser hesitates.

NEMSER

I sit in front?

RAJIV

I only have my learner's permit. An adult needs to sit in front.

NEMSER

More people die in the passenger seat than any other seat. It's called the "Death Seat."

GEORGIE

Rajiv is a terrible driver. These are all death seats.

Nemser nods and gets in the car. The car staggers off down the street.

INT. ALF MEETING ROOM - LATER

A dark, windowless room. Lydia presides at the head of a long narrow table. The rest of the seats are taken by various ALF leaders, including Che (who is already ski-masked). Savrin sits in the seat to Lydia's right.

Lydia's tosses ski masks around the table as she talks. As people catch them, they put them on.

LYDIA
 Let's be quick and stick together.
 And what's the most important
 thing?

ALL
 (in semi-unison)
 Have fun out there!

LYDIA
 (shaking her head "no")
Don't get caught. And if you do get
 caught, what do you do? Bryson,
 what do you do?

BRYSON, a very fat activist, pipes up.

BRYSON
 Try to kill myself.

LYDIA
 Right. The rest of you, what do you
 do?

ALL EXCEPT BRYSON
 (in unison)
 Try to run away.

Lydia nods.

LYDIA
 And if you can't escape, call a
 lawyer. But do not mention the
 Animal Liberation Front. You're on
 your own at that point.

She's handed out all the ski-masks except two: hers and
 Savrin's. She turns to Savrin.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
 You sure you're ready?

Savrin snatches a mask from her.

SAVRIN
 Does a bear shit in the woods?

LYDIA
 (very serious)
 Actually, many bears are losing
 their traditional woodland shitting-
 grounds.

Awkward beat. Savrin aggressively pulls on the ski-mask.

SAVRIN
Well, I'm ready.

Lydia pulls on her mask last.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - NIGHT

Nemser and Georgie stand on the sidewalk as Rajiv's car screeches away. They're at the back of the lab. The chanting and ruckus going on at the front of the lab is just audible in the background.

Nemser nods at Georgie and they walk quietly towards the building.

Suddenly, a few animal rights PROTESTORS walk by and see Nemser and Georgie skulking around in the dark. The protestors look at them suspiciously.

Nemser thinks fast. He starts marching.

NEMSER
(chanting)
Everything is wrong! Don't do
anything!

Georgie joins in, marching behind him.

NEMSER AND GEORGIE
(chanting)
Everything is wrong! Don't do
anything!

One of the protestors turns to the others.

PROTESTOR 1
It's just some of those anti-
everything protestors.

PROTESTOR 2
Those guys are fanatical. But they
do such good work.

The protestors continue on and turn the corner. Nemser and Georgie stop chanting and breathe a sigh of relief.

They reach a chain-link fence surrounding the lab. The gate's locked. There's barbed-wire along the top of the fence.

Nemser looks discouraged, but Georgie casually takes off his jacket and swings it over the barbed wire, covering it.

GEORGIE

Go ahead.

NEMSER

(impressed)

Where'd you learn that?

Georgie shrugs.

GEORGIE

My dad showed me when I was a kid.
The last thing he ever said to me,
just before he went to Oregon, was
(imitating his father)
"Georgie, if it doesn't have barbed
wire around it, it's not worth
breaking into."

NEMSER

(suspicious)

What do you mean, before he went to
Oregon?

Beat.

GEORGIE

(stammers)

Before he died, I mean. It's a
saying. Like,
(for example)
"Oh no, I have all this cancer. I
think I'm going to Oregon."

Georgie quickly climbs over. Nemser watches him, a touch
bewildered, and then climbs over himself.

They creep up to a back door of the lab.

Nemser knocks. Almost immediately, a MAN inside barks in
reply.

MAN (O.S.)

Disperse! I'm telephoning the
police!

NEMSER

We're not protestors! I'm a
journalist with The Vanguard. Paul
Nemser. I'm here with Georgie
Sheldon.

They see an eye go the peep-hole.

MAN (O.S.)
The Georgie Sheldon?

Nemser and Georgie look at each other, surprised. Nemser nudges Georgie.

GEORGIE
Uh, yeah, the Georgie Sheldon.

The door swings open. The man is PETER BERGSTROM, the elderly and dignified head scientist whose photo Lydia had held up at the rally. His portrait would look right at home next to Isaac Newton's.

Bergstrom ushers them inside and quickly closes the door.

INT. HUNTINGDON LAB - CONTINUOUS

It's a cluttered, well-worn laboratory -- the lab from the hidden camera footage.

There are mice, rats, rabbits, pigs, dogs, and primates, all in spacious cages. There are also microscopes and plenty of high-tech machines -- the kind of complicated machines that no one knows what they're called or what they do, but which seem appropriate for a lab.

Several SCIENTISTS run around, frantically packing things into boxes.

Bergstrom beholds Georgie and then hugs him tightly.

BERGSTROM
Thank you! Thank you, thank you!

Georgie glances at Nemser, who shrugs.

GEORGIE
I didn't do anything.

BERGSTROM
(to Georgie)
Yes, you have. Your movement. We all read about it. It's small, perhaps, but it means the world to us if even a few people understand what we're doing. That we're not sheer evil.
(chokes up)
Thank you for your courage.
(to Nemser)
And you're Paul Nemser?

Nemser nods proudly. Bergstrom shakes his hand.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)

Thank you! Thank you so much. If not for your article, I never would have known about that new 7-Eleven on Derby. They have impressively large sodas. Thank you for your courage.

NEMSER

(embarrassed)

I also-- I wrote the article about Georgie.

BERGSTROM

Ah! Wonderful.

Bergstrom sweeps his hand across the scene.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)

Well, here it is. Our "concentration camp," as they call it. It's just a normal lab, as you can see. Or, rather, it was just a normal lab.

GEORGIE

What do you mean, "was"?

BERGSTROM

Did you not see the rally today? They threatened us! Can you believe it? Such violent tactics!

(nostalgic)

Whatever happened to the days when people protested by committing suicide? Like that monk who set himself on fire during the Vietnam War. What a wonderful way to protest!

NEMSER

You're closing the lab?

BERGSTROM

We must.

GEORGIE

(crestfallen)

You're giving in to them?

INT. HUNTINGDON LAB - LATER

Bergstrom takes Georgie and Nemser on a tour through the lab. Everywhere they go, scientists and ASSISTANTS are packing things into boxes, preparing to leave.

BERGSTROM

(walking and talking)

Here we were developing a drug to treat Alzheimer's...This was a rat experiment for a novel Parkinson's treatment...This was a comprehensive monkey trial of a new multiple sclerosis vaccine.

He opens a cage and a MONKEY grabs hold of him.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)

And this little fellow is named Mr. Gibbs. He's been with us for nearly a decade, and he's one of our favorite pals around here. He and I have become very, very close.

(to the monkey)

Say hi, Mr. Gibbs!

An ASSISTANT looks up from his desk a few feet away.

ASSISTANT

Mr. Gibbs died during an experiment yesterday. That's Boris.

Bergstrom doesn't bat an eye.

BERGSTROM

Say hi, Boris!

ASSISTANT

Wait, Boris died this morning. That's Specimen 947XK.

BERGSTROM

Say hi, Specimen 947XK! You know, we've just met, but I think you and I have become very, very close.

Bergstrom puts the monkey back in its cage

GEORGIE

(a little angry)

How many animals have you killed here?

BERGSTROM

We don't like to use the term
"killed." That word makes it sound
like it's somehow intentional or
purposeful.

A passing RESEARCHER comes up to Bergstrom and shows him some
data on a clipboard.

RESEARCHER 1

We finished the Parkinson's trial.
About one-third of the rats were
oopsy-daisied.

BERGSTROM

(glancing at the data)
Good. Wrap it up.

The researcher moves on.

Nemser puts his hand on Georgie's shoulder.

NEMSER

We knew this stuff happened,
Georgie.

Georgie shrugs Nemser's hand off his shoulder.

Bergstrom begins walking again.

BERGSTROM

It's a sacrifice we have to make if
we want to develop these drugs. You
know, even Lydia said -- the one
reasonable thing she said is that
it's a difficult philosophical
question, whether or not it's worth
it.

They walk into

INT. HUNTINGDON LAB - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ALICE KIM and PANOS PETRAKOS -- whose pictures Lydia held up
at the rally -- stand and sip coffee. There's a little card
table and a refrigerator.

BERGSTROM

I happen to think it is worth it.
She doesn't. But it's open for
debate.

(then)

(MORE)

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)
By the way, this is Alice and
Panos. They were my lead
researchers.

Everyone shakes hands except Georgie, who's still trying to
work this out.

GEORGIE
I mean, if it's open for debate--

BERGSTROM
(suddenly indignant)
But I respect their beliefs! They
don't respect mine. They're
bullies, Georgie! Have you ever
tried reasoning with a bully?

EXT. STREETS - FLASHBACK

Georgie lies on the sidewalk. Travis, bully extraordinaire,
sits on his chest.

A handful of STUDENTS watch and snicker.

Beat.

GEORGIE
I can't breathe.

Travis gets up.

TRAVIS
Better?

Georgie coughs and starts sitting up.

GEORGIE
Yes, thank y--

Travis sits back down on his chest.

TRAVIS
Worse?

GEORGIE
(sighs)
Yes.

INT. HUNTINGDON LAB - BREAK ROOM - PRESENT

GEORGIE
I understand.

NEMSER

You know what? If you got them to debate, you'd destroy them! Make it a public thing, Georgie could raise a ruckus, get people to turn out--

GEORGIE

(smarmy)

--You'd get a great article out of it.

NEMSER

But that's what we need! Press! It's all about massaging the message and getting it on the front page. That's how public opinion works. Take the Titanic. That was really, really sad, right? Not at first.

INSERT: Front page of old-timey newspaper. Big photo of the Titanic sinking, with the headline: "COOL!"

NEMSER (CONT'D)

Then the survivors got a publicist, worked the press a bit, and now we mourn it as a national tragedy. We gotta take hold of this thing. Work the press ourselves. You should challenge them to a debate or something.

Bergstrom shakes his head.

BERGSTROM

We mustn't. We're not capable communicators. Alice, for example, constantly makes terrible science jokes that only she seems to get.

ALICE

(jokey)

That hypothesis is not falsifiable, Mr. Popper!

Alice laughs uproariously. Everyone else is silent.

BERGSTROM

Panos speaks only in numbers.

PANOS

(casual, "what's up?")

82.

BERGSTROM
 And I tend to lose my composure
 whenever I address groups larger
 than...

He trails off and counts heads with his index finger.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)
 (muttering to himself)
 One, two, three, f--

He puts his hands to his temple, closes his eyes, and rocks
 intensely back and forth.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)
Oh no. Oh no. Oh no. Oh no.

Panos gestures (like, "I got it") and leaves the room. As
 soon as he does so, Bergstrom instantly returns to normal.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)
 That's the concern.

NEMSER
 Leave the communicating to us. I
 communicate for a living. And
 Georgie here--

Nemser lifts up Georgie's t-shirt.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
 We can write stuff on his stomach.

BERGSTROM
 But they wish to harm us...

Nemser gestures across Georgie's stomach.

NEMSER
 Like, "Dr. Bergstrom"

BERGSTROM
 It's not so simple--

NEMSER
 "Rocks"

BERGSTROM
 (suddenly excited)
 Yes! Yes! Then everyone will know!

There's a loud BANG.

SHOUTING and SCREAMING.

Everyone rushes into

INT. HUNTINDGON LAB - HALLWAY

Nearly a dozen ALF ACTIVISTS in ski masks, wearing backpacks, have broken down a door and invaded the lab.

All the researchers cower together against the wall. Nemser, Georgie, and Bergstrom are huddled in the back of the group.

The activists stand facing the researchers.

They open their backpacks. Some of them take out BIG CANVAS BAGS. Others take out LARGE GUNS.

RESEARCHER 2

Oh my god, they have bags!

Assorted shrieking.

RESEARCHER 3

Take anything you want, just don't hurt us!

RESEARCHER 2

Kill everyone except me!

Che, holding a pistol, and Lydia step forward.

LYDIA

Shut up!

Lydia takes out a small boombox, puts it on the floor, and presses play. It plays "Blackbird" by The Beatles.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

(to activists)

Alright, go liberate them.

The activists holding bags scatter. They open cages and lift the animals into their sacks.

Others pick up computers and smash them on the ground. All to the gentle strumming of "Blackbird."

The gun-toting activists keep their weapons trained on the researchers.

CHE

Where's the head of this gulag?
Peter Bergstrom!

Bergstrom, huddled in back with Nemser and Georgie, sighs and hangs his head.

BERGSTROM
(whispers to Nemser)
Please, Paul, I want you to do
something for me.

NEMSER
(whispers)
Anything.

BERGSTROM
(whispers)
Find my wife, tell her I loved her,
and then hold her for me. Just hold
her.

NEMSER
(whispers)
How old is she?

BERGSTROM
(whispers)
74.

Beat.

NEMSER
(whispers)
Well, I'll find her, at least.

BERGSTROM
(whispers)
Good man.

LYDIA (O.S.)
Peter Bergstrom!

BERGSTROM
Yes. I am coming.

Bergstrom emerges from the huddle and walks, head held high, towards Lydia and Che.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)
The funny this is, you were a good
scientist, Lydia. We're still using
the methodology you developed for
acute slice electrophysiology of
the rat brain. One, hug the rat.

LYDIA
Stop, Peter.

BERGSTROM

(continuing)

Two, sedate using isoflurane.
Three, hug the rat very lovingly.
Four, decapitate the rat using--

LYDIA

--Shut up!

BERGSTROM

(thoughtfully)

You know, I just realized the
hugging steps are probably
unnecessary.

LYDIA

(angry)

I had to do what I had to do,
Bergstrom. Every moment I was in
your little den here, I wanted to
tear off my own skin, I felt so
disgusting. But you gotta break a
few eggs. Even Paul McCartney had
to wear leather when he was young
so he could become a rich and
famous rock star and then use that
influence to help the animal rights
movement. And even though he wore
leather, no one can claim that he's
anything less than a perfect human
being.

(to Che)

Alright. Do it.

CHE

On your knees.

Bergstrom slowly drops to his knees.

GEORGIE

(whispers)

We have to do something.

NEMSER

(whispers)

Don't get involved.

Georgie throws him a look and then quickly squeezes through
the crowd.

GEORGIE

(shouting at Che)

You're gonna hurt an old man?

(MORE)

GEORGIE (CONT'D)
 Why don't you pick on someone your
 own size!

Everyone, including Che, immediately turns to look at an
 EXTREMELY TALL AND EXTREMELY THIN RESEARCHER who is exactly
 as tall and thin as Che. They look like identical twins.

The tall thin researcher frantically waves his arms to
 indicate "no!"

GEORGIE (CONT'D)
 Not him.

LYDIA
 (noticing)
 Wait a second. You're little
 Georgie Sheldon, aren't you!

She turns to the other activists.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
 It's the little boy who started
 that great big movement!

They snicker.

GEORGIE
 It's that woman with awesome
 breasts who started that terrorist
 group.
 (then)
 That just slipped out. But,
 actually, now that I mention it,
 it's really a shame that someone so
 evil and heartless has such great
 breasts, while a smart, kind,
 dedicated woman like Dr. Kim...

He trails off, realizing he should stop. Everyone looks at
 Alice Kim, who is FLAT-CHESTED. She looks embarrassed.

LYDIA
 Quite the orator, aren't you?

GEORGIE
 Look, why are you terrorizing these
 people? Do you even understand what
 they're trying to do? They're
 trying to help people! What if you
 had Parkinson's? You'd want help.
 It's a horrible disease, to shake
 uncontrollably like that.

(MORE)

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

And the few times you actually want
to shake, you don't get credit:

"Oh, that's just the Parkinson's."

(gestures to the
researchers)

You make these people out to be
monsters, but they're not. They're
just normal people.

RESEARCHER 1

Some of us are autistic.

GEORGIE

OK, yeah, but they're all human.
They all experience human emotions,
just like everyone else.

RESEARCHER 3

I unfortunately do not experience
human emotions.

Georgie sighs and then steels himself.

GEORGIE

(firm)

Just leave the animals and go.

Lydia approaches Georgie menacingly.

BERGSTROM

(whispers to Georgie)

Don't do this, son. You have your
whole life ahead of you.

GEORGIE

No.

(gestures to researchers)

Either all of us walk out of here,
or none of us do.

RESEARCHER 2

Yeah! Or just one of us does!

Researcher 2 gestures to himself and mouths "Me! Me!"

LYDIA

(re: Georgie)

Isn't he just the most adorable
thing you've ever seen?

She pinches Georgie's cheek.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
(baby voice)
Aren't you, Georgie Porgie?

CHE
(baby voice)
Does Georgie Porgie want to play
Ghandi? Does Georgie Porgie have a
dream?

In back of the huddle of researchers, Nemser writes furiously on his notepad.

GEORGIE (O.S.)
Nemser! I can't breathe! Help me,
Nemser!

The crowd parts around Nemser, but he's too busy writing to notice.

Georgie is lying on the ground. Lydia is sitting on his chest, exactly as Travis once did.

The other activists snicker.

Georgie can now see Nemser taking notes, but Nemser doesn't realize it.

NEMSER
(to himself, as he writes)
"Help me, Nemser! Help me, Nemser!"
Mr. Sheldon cried bravely. But
there was no help to be found.

He looks up from his pad to see Georgie staring at him sadly.

Lydia grabs Georgie's arms and uses them to hit himself.

LYDIA
Why are you hitting yourself? Why
are you hitting yourself?

CHE
(squealing with delight)
It's because he's so dumb!

The activists laugh at Georgie. Even some of the scientists join in.

Nemser gulps hard, takes a swig from his flask, and staggers towards them.

NEMSER
Hey! Stop!

Lydia doesn't stop.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Let him go!

She still ignores him.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Uh...Lennon was better than
McCartney.

Everything SCREECHES to a halt. Lydia looks at Nemser, murder
in her eyes. She remains seated on Georgie.

LYDIA
(poisonously)
That is the stupidest thing I have
ever heard. What did John Lennon
ever do for animal rights?

NEMSER
Well, he was killed before it
became--

LYDIA
Nothing, is what! And his lyrics
were crap. "Imagine all the people
living for today"? What does that
even mean?

NEMSER
It's no worse than "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-
Da".

LYDIA
(frantic)
I'm gonna kill him. I'm gonna shoot
his head!

Lydia raises her gun. Nemser puts his hands in front of his
face.

NEMSER
No! I'm just as a journalist.
Remember me? I'm just doing a
story. That's all. Not helping
these people. Let me actually -- uh
-- double-check a quote with you.

He flips open his notepad.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
(pretend reading)
"Why are you hitting yourself? Why
are you hitting yourself?"

Lydia lowers her gun.

LYDIA
That's correct. And here's another
quote for you: "Georgie Porgie
fights like a dainty little
schoolgirl."

Everyone laughs. Nemser scribbles nervously.

NEMSER
(as he writes)
"Dainty...little...schoolgirl." Got
it.
(pained)
Uh, Mr. Sheldon? Do you have any
comment on the issue of whether or
not you fight like a dainty little
schoolgirl?

Georgie, still lying under Lydia, looks at him sadly.

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - DAY

Nemser, bedraggled and drunk, walks in and throws his stuff
by his desk.

He sits.

Cecile comes over and dumps a stack of envelopes on his desk.

CECILE
You got some more death threats
yesterday. The first one's from me.

She flashes a smile. She sniffs the air.

CECILE (CONT'D)
Let me guess: you had gin for
breakfast again?

Nemser glances at her stomach.

NEMSER
(drunk)
Let me guess: you had food for
breakfast again?

She storms away.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

(drunk)

Oh, c'mon, Cecile! Listen to me, Cecile, we fight, we bicker, but listen to me, Cecile -- if I were ten years younger and you were 30 years younger and you had a different face and personality -- I would marry you. We'd have a little boy named Petey and we'd live in a little house and we'd eat food all the time, just like you like. OK? IHOP or Waffle House, your choice.

Nemser leans back in his chair and is promptly asleep.

Cherkin strides over.

CHERKIN

Need that article by 5.

Nemser rouses. Cherkin slaps him on the back.

CHERKIN (CONT'D)

What a fucking scoop, huh? From inside the lab. Gimme gossip, gimme action, yeah?

NEMSER

(drowsy)

Yeah.

Cherkin stares hard at him.

CHERKIN

(more gently)

Nemser, what's your home life like?

Nemser takes a deep breath.

NEMSER

Well, you know, to be honest--

CHERKIN

--Because we're doing that series of first-person narratives, you know, "Life As A..." blank, and I'm looking for someone to write one on life as a functional alcoholic.

(MORE)

CHERKIN (CONT'D)

You know, someone who's middle-aged, an alcoholic, no family, few friends, lives alone, and yet somehow manages to hold a job and make over 50,000 a year. Interested?

NEMSER

I don't make 50,000 a year.

CHERKIN

Really? Wow. OK, I'll keep looking.

Cherkin leaves.

Nemser takes a swig from his flask and starts typing.

NEMSER

(mumbling while typing)

"Masked members of the Animal Liberation Front stormed Huntingdon Lab yesterday and stole dozens of lab animals from the testing facility--"

SAVRIN (O.S.)

(kindly, nervous)

Hey, buddy!

Nemser looks up. Savrin stands over him, nervously tapping his fingers on the desk.

SAVRIN (CONT'D)

Heard about what happened. Guess Lydia was more radical than we realized, huh?

(then, very quick and nervous)

So, listen, did you happen to see any of the people that did this? Like, let's say you were -- hypothetically -- in a court of law, could you identify any of them? I only ask because I love asking totally random things!

NEMSER

(groggy)

Well, uh, Lydia was there, and Che--

SAVRIN

--And?

NEMSER

Didn't recognize anyone else.

Savrin's already backing away.

SAVRIN

Oh, cool. Cool answer. Normal answer. Guess that's what I get for asking such a normal question! Normal question, normal answer. Cool. Hey, you know what? This animal rights stuff is BORING! Let's both stop investigating it! Cool? Cool.

He turns and walks away quickly.

Nemser looks bemused, but he just shakes his head and takes another swig.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HISTORY CLASSROOM - DAY

A packed public school classroom with thirty bored-out-of-their-mind STUDENTS. Georgie and Rajiv sit at adjacent desks in the back row.

Their history teacher, MS. KAUFMAN, lectures at the front of the room.

KAUFMAN

I hope everyone did the assigned reading on the Huguenots.

CLASS

(grumbles)

Yes, Ms. Kaufman.

KAUFMAN

OK, then, who can tell me the name of a group of French Protestants which formed in the 16th century? Molly?

MOLLY

The Huguenots.

KAUFMAN

Excellent. The Huguenots. They were basically French Calvinists, and they were known as the Huguen...Derek?

DEREK

"ots."

KAUFMAN

Exactly, the Huguenots.

Georgie leans over to Rajiv.

GEORGIE

(whispers)

Every time I come back this school
is a little bit dumber.

KAUFMAN

In 1561, the Edict of Orléans made
it illegal to persecute
the...Rajiv?

RAJIV

Huguenots.

KAUFMAN

Perfect answer. The Huguenots. But
just one year after the Edict,
there was a massacre in which
Catholics killed dozens of
Huguenots. This started a war
between the Catholics and
the...Georgie?

GEORGIE

Not The Huguenots.

KAUFMAN

Ooh, close. Very close. But the
answer is the Huguenots. Are you
sure you did the reading?

She goes over to her desk and pencils something into her
grading book.

Rajiv leans over to Georgie.

RAJIV

(whispers)

Don't fuck around.

GEORGIE

(whispers)

Whatever, I don't care.

KAUFMAN

Here's a chance to redeem yourself,
Georgie.

(MORE)

KAUFMAN (CONT'D)
The Edict of Nantes, in 1574,
finally granted full rights to
the...

GEORGIE
Navajo.

KAUFMAN
Ooh, very close. The answer is the
Huguenots. But you're on the right
track, because both the Navajo and
the Huguenots were groups
of...Lila?

LILA
People.

KAUFMAN
Exactly, groups of people.
Excellent.

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - LATER

Nemser, still drunk, continues writing his article.

NEMSER
(mumbling as he types)
"Mr. Sheldon proceeded to hit
himself over and over with his own
fists. ALF leader Lydia Sheridan
asked him why he was doing so, but
Mr. Sheldon had no comment..."

Nemser sits back in his chair. He looks upset. He takes a
swig, and then returns to typing.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
(mumbling as he types)
"Despite the tension, the
scientists and activists found
common ground as they joined
together in pointing and laughing
at..."

He trails off.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Fuck.

MUSIC CUE: "Hate & War" by The Clash.

He picks up his keyboard, slams it on the desk, grabs his
jacket, and runs out of the office.

EXT. GEORGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Nemser sprints up the steps.

He pounds on the door. No answer.

EXT. PEPSI OFFICES - DAY

Nemser double-checks the street address and sprints inside.

INT. PEPSI OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

A cavernous corporate foyer. There is a receptionist sitting in the middle of the foyer, like the smallest cog in the largest machine.

It's Janie. She's spitting bland corporate-speak into a headset.

JANIE

(pleasant)

He's in a meeting at the moment,
but I will certainly pass on the
message...

She notices Nemser approaching her and her plastered-on smile fades. She rips off her headset, embarrassed to have it on.

JANIE (CONT'D)

What are you--

NEMSER

(urgent)

--Where's Georgie?

JANIE

(cold)

He's at school.

NEMSER

You made him go back?

JANIE

I raised him to make his own
choices. What are you doing here?

NEMSER

I want to see him.

Janie sighs.

JANIE

You know, he's a cynical kid, so
for him to get involved in this,
and involved with you...

She gets a little choked up.

JANIE (CONT'D)

Georgie keeps to himself, you know?
I think that's why he watches all
that

(lowers her voice)
pornography -- he's just so hungry
for social interaction.

NEMSER

(trying to play along)
That must be why.

JANIE

I saw him watching this video of
ten naked young women all having
sex with each other, and I just
realized -- he's not watching this
because he enjoys it.

NEMSER

Uh huh.

JANIE

He's watching it because he's in
pain.

NEMSER

Right. Of course.

JANIE

So when you came, I thought, maybe
this is good. A male figure in his
life. Not to get psychological,
but, you know, sort of a father
figure.

NEMSER

I know. When I found out his dad
was gone, I knew that dynamic was
gonna be there. You can't avoid it.
Like, I'm sure you saw me as a sort
of husband figure.

JANIE

(lying)
Yeah...
(suddenly angry, loud)
(MORE)

JANIE (CONT'D)
And then you pull this shit! Again!
(tries to keep her voice
down)
And he sees what you really care
about. His dad's drug was heroin.
Your only drug is yourself.

The phone rings.

NEMSER
What about alcohol?

Janie puts on her headset, puts on her plastered-on smile,
and answers the phone.

JANIE
(pleasant)
Hello, PepsiCo.

Nemser pounds on the desk.

NEMSER
(loud)
I wanna talk to him!

Janie ignores him. Nemser walks out.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - DAY

Nemser walks by the lab.

The lawn -- the site of the protest -- is vacant, forlorn.

Fliers and trash drift in the wind.

Nemser sees Bergstrom nervously walking away from the lab, a
large briefcase under each arm.

Nemser rushes up to him.

NEMSER
Dr. Bergstrom!

Bergstrom stops.

BERGSTROM
Hello, Paul.

NEMSER
Where are you going?

BERGSTROM
Florida. Boca Raton.

NEMSER

What about the lab?

BERGSTROM

Kaput. No animals, no lab.

(sighs)

One day I'm a scientist, the next day I'm just an old man. I've led a good life, Paul, but now it's time for me to go to Boca. I hear they have the most fantastic places for sitting there -- benches, as far as the eye can see.

NEMSER

We can fight this.

BERGSTROM

(shaking his head)

I've heard that before, Paul. From you.

(then)

I hear in Boca, there are chairs so sturdy that you can sit in them for hours, just gazing into space, trying to remember your wife's name.

Bergstrom picks up his briefcases and shuffles off.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)

Take care, Paul.

Nemser wanders over to the lab.

He shakes the locked gate.

He notices a SIGN:

"NOTICE OF DEMOLITION: THIS BUILDING IS SCHEDULED TO BE DEMOLISHED ON MAY 5."

Nemser is taken aback. He checks his watch.

May 2.

Nemser looks at Bergstrom in the distance, sadly walking away.

INT. THE VANGUARD - NEWSROOM - LATE AT NIGHT

Nemser's alone in the newsroom. A light is still on in Cherkin's office.

CLOSE ON: Nemser's computer screen. He's on Google.com.

He begins typing in the search box: William Sheld--

CHERKIN (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Nemser looks up. Cherkin is walking toward him, coming around to his side of his desk to check out what Nemser's working on.

Nemser frantically deletes what he's typed in the search box and in its place types "Asian butts."

NEMSER
Oh, just browsing for porn.

Cherkin nods.

CHERKIN
Keep up the good work. You might want to try searching the word "breasts." That often turns out very well for me.

NEMSER
Will do, Brad.

Cherkin nods, puts on his coat, and leaves the newsroom.

Nemser erases "Asian butts" and types in "William Sheldon AND Oregon." He presses "search."

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - MATH CLASSROOM - DAY

A different packed classroom. Georgie and Rajiv sit at adjacent tables in the pack.

Travis and Max, the bullies, sit in the front row.

The math teacher, MR. BOYD, sits on the edge of his desk. He's one of those unfortunate teachers who still wants to be hip and popular.

There's an equation written on the chalkboard:

$$D/DX \tan (X) = D/DX \sin(X)/\cos(X) = ?$$

A sea of blank faces.

BOYD
(trying to be hip)
Come on, dudes and dames, we can
figure this out. Look, most
teachers wanna make math all
abstract and boring. But I'm not
most teachers!
(gestures to the board)
This problem is about your everyday
lives, partying and chilling out!

Georgie rolls his eyes.

GEORGIE
(sarcastic)
It is?

BOYD
Well, maybe not your life, nerd.

Mr. Boyd high-fives Travis and Max.

BOYD (CONT'D)
Look, dudes, let's imagine "d/dx"
is beer, "sine" is pot, and
"cosine" is sex.

Travis raises his hand excitedly.

TRAVIS
The answer is secant squared of x!

BOYD
Bravo, bro!

Mr. Boyd high-fives Travis again.

Georgie gathers his stuff.

GEORGIE
(whispers to Rajiv)
I can't do this.

He grabs his stuff and walks out of the classroom. Travis and
Max murmur to each other.

He walks into

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY

Nemser stands outside the classroom, waiting for him.

They stare at each other.

NEMSER
They're gonna demolish the lab.

GEORGIE
(icy, quiet)
So?

NEMSER
Bergstrom's moving to a retirement
community.

GEORGIE
And?

NEMSER
And I thought we could try to do
something about it.

GEORGIE
(blows up)
Do something about it? We were
doing something about it! Why do
you think we went to the fucking
lab? To write an article?

NEMSER
To prepare to do something about
it.

GEORGIE
Your whole life is preparing,
Nemser. Always preparing, never
doing. My dad had a saying about
people like you--

NEMSER
--You're giving me advice from a
junkie?

GEORGIE
(angry)
He wasn't just a junkie. He was a
really smart guy.

NEMSER
I'm sorry. You're right, I'm sorry.
What was his saying?

GEORGIE
"You can't just put the heroin in
the needle. You gotta put the
needle in the arm."

NEMSER

Uh huh. You know, Georgie,
sometimes it's not so easy.

GEORGIE

Well, he had a saying, "Can't put
it in the arm? Put it in the neck."

Georgie turns and starts walking away. Nemser runs up, puts
an arm on his shoulder, and spins him around.

NEMSER

Georgie. They had guns. What did
you want me to do?

GEORGIE

I wanted you to kick, or punch, or
yell, or run. I don't know. I
wanted you to do something.

Georgie walks away.

Nemser pulls a sheet of paper out of his pocket and holds it
towards Georgie.

NEMSER

What is this?

Georgie, annoyed, turns back to look.

He stares at the paper but says nothing. His eyes glisten.

CLOSE ON: The paper. It's a printout of a newspaper article.
The headline reads: "Activist Chains Himself To Douglas Fir."
There's a photo of William Sheldon (wearing his aviator
sunglasses) chained to a tree.

Nemser begins to read the article.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

(reading)

William Sheldon, a longtime social
and environmental activist,
traveled to Oregon on Saturday to
protect a Douglas Fir from a
scheduled logging operation.
Sheldon pledged to remain chained
to the tree for as long as it takes
to save it.

Nemser looks up and shakes the page.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

This is from 2001.

GEORGIE

(murmurs)

It can take forever to save something.

Nemser scans down to the middle of the article.

NEMSER

(reading)

"We're all part of the same earthly organism," Sheldon said. "I have as much of an obligation to this fir tree as I do to my own son. A son is a tree is a bush is a wife."

GEORGIE

(explodes)

Are you just trying to hurt me? I know all this! What's my mom supposed to tell people? "Oh, my husband -- the father of my son -- abandoned us to go save some tree somewhere"? Do you know how shameful that is? So we made up some respectable lie -- he died of a drug overdose. And he did do a lot of drugs. Everything about him was selfish.

NEMSER

(gently)

Look, I know what it's like to have a selfish father. My dad won the Pulitzer Prize.

Beat.

GEORGIE

And then he abandoned you?

NEMSER

No, he loved us very much. He used the prize money to buy me toys.

Georgie looks at him bug-eyed.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

But do you have any idea how miserable it is to live with that over your head? To be the son of someone who really helped people and made a difference?

Georgie shakes his head in disbelief and walks away.

GEORGIE
You have a strange definition of
selfishness.

NEMSER
(shouting after him)
Well, so do you!

Nemser, deflated, watches him go. He walks away in the other direction.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Nemser walks out the front door.

As he shuffles down the sidewalk in front of the school, he happens to glance at one of the first floor windows.

INSIDE, in the hallway, Travis and Max have pressed Georgie against the lockers and are mocking him, as usual.

From Nemser's perspective, we ZOOM IN on Georgie.

Georgie is totally defeated. He doesn't struggle. He doesn't kick, punch, yell, or run. He doesn't do anything.

Nemser watches. He looks angry.

MUSIC CUE: "London Calling" by The Clash.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - THAT EVENING

Nemser trudges across the vacant field towards the lab. He's carrying a DUFFEL BAG.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lydia and Savrin make love to Paul McCartney's "Maybe I'm Amazed."

A DOG sits by the bed, watching.

They're grunting and getting more and more intense.

LYDIA
I'm gonna come! I'm gonna come! I'm
gonna come!
(climaxing)
Ahhh....I come in the name of
equality for all animals!

Savrin rolls off her. He sighs. It's clear this happens a lot.

Lydia goes over to the dog and rubs his tummy.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

(cooing)

Was that good for you? Was that
good for you? Yes it was! Yes it
was!

INT. SAFE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lydia and Mark walk out of the bedroom.

The small house is completely packed with the animals taken from Huntingdon Lab. Cats, dogs, rats, rabbits, and monkeys roam free. It looks and smells like a zoo.

A few activists hang out, playing cards and keeping an eye on the animals.

LYDIA

(beams)

Can you believe they kept these
majestic animals locked up?

ACTIVIST

(without looking up from
his cards)

One of the monkeys took a shit and
threw it at another monkey, and
then that monkey took a shit and
threw it back at the first monkey,
and then all the monkeys starting
throwing their shit at each other
and eating the shit.

Lydia puts her arm around Savrin's waist and gazes at the animals.

LYDIA

Freedom is a wonderful thing.

Savrin seems unconvinced. So do the other activists.

CHE

(to Lydia)

Have you, uh, found a farm for them
yet?

LYDIA
(stern)
I'm working on it.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - NIGHT

Nemser removes some chains from his duffel bag and walks a few steps to the lab's front gate.

He HANDCUFFS himself, arms out Jesus-like, to the gate.

He stands upright, triumphant.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - NIGHT

Nemser slumps against his chains, bored.

He looks down and notices his flask in his pocket. He can't get to it.

He sees a BUM pushing a shopping cart along the sidewalk.

NEMSER
Hey! I got a business opportunity
for you!

BUM
(calling)
You got cans?

NEMSER
I got a dollar for you.

BUM
You tellin' me you got a 20-can
note?

NEMSER
Yeah.

The bum comes over.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
There's a flask in my pocket. Just
give me a swig of it.

BUM
Money first.

NEMSER
My wallet's in the other pocket.

The bum fishes out Nemser's wallet. He opens it. There's a single 100 dollar bill.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
So just go ahead and take that and
put in 99 dollars change.

The bum looks at him. He pockets the \$100 and begins walking away.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Hey! Hey!

The bum comes back, takes Nemser's flask, and walks away again.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
Hey! Well, now I see why you're
homeless: you're not nice! Nice
people sleep indoors. Only dicks
and veterans sleep under bridges!
(to himself)
Fuck.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - MORNING

Nemser sleeps standing up. He looks like a mess.

A wild-haired old HIPPIE approaches, holding a tent bag.

HIPPIE
Hey, man, are you a protestor?

Nemser rouses.

NEMSER
Uh, yeah. I guess I am.

HIPPIE
Can I join you?

NEMSER
(surprised)
Please.

The hippie lights up a joint and begins assembling his tent.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
So, if you wanna know what this is
about--

HIPPIE
 (interrupts)
 Nah, I'm good.

Beat.

NEMSER
 A few days ago, this group stole--

HIPPIE
 Hey! Hey! I don't need a fucking
 lecture. I'm just here for the
 protest.

An idealistic TEENAGER comes up to them, also holding a tent bag.

TEENAGER
 Hey, are you guys protestors?

NEMSER
 Yeah. They're planning on
 demolishing this lab tomorrow and I
 want to--

TEENAGER
 Woah! Woah, dude! Information
 overload. I just wanna fuckin'
 protest.

The teenager begins setting up his tent.

HIPPIE
 Yeah, this guy loves to talk about
 what he's protesting and why.
 (mocking)
"It all started back when..."
 (back to normal)
 It's a little weird, but I've
 gotten used to it. I've actually
 come to like the guy.

NEMSER
 You've known me for 30 seconds.

HIPPIE
 (stoned)
 Maybe, but I knew you in other
 lifetimes. It starts to add up.

An OUTDOORSY-GUY, a Nalgene water bottle hanging off a carabiner on his belt, comes up to them, holding a tent bag.

OUTDOORSY-GUY
Hey, are you guys camping
enthusiasts?

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - LATER

A small crowd of followers has built around Nemser, who remains chained to the gates.

A TV REPORTER and CAMERAMAN film a report.

TV REPORTER
Just days after Huntingdon Lab
closed its doors, protestors have
again gathered in front of the now-
abandoned lab.

INT. PEPSI OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Janie, at her receptionist's desk, chats into her headset.

A small portable TV on the side of the table plays the news story, muted.

INT. GEORGIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Georgie lies on his bed, holding up the framed photograph of his father. He outlines his father's face with his fingertip.

His TV plays the news story at low volume in the background.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - CONTINUOUS

TV REPORTER
It is unclear what the group is
protesting, but we have been able
to identify its leader as
journalist Paul Nemser.

INT. PEPSI OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Janie, still on the phone, glances at her TV screen.

ON SCREEN, Nemser stands chained to the gate.

Janie's mouth drops.

JANIE

I'm going to put you on hold just
for one moment, OK?

She tears off her headset and raises the volume on the TV.

INT. GEORGIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Georgie, equally shocked, raises the volume on his TV.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - CONTINUOUS

The TV reporter and cameraman go over to Nemser.

TV REPORTER

Mr. Nemser, tell us why exactly
you're protesting.

Nemser smiles.

NEMSER

No comment.

TV REPORTER

(laughs, scoffs)

Mr. Nemser, as a journalist, I'm
sure you understand the importance
of media coverage--

NEMSER

No comment.

TV REPORTER

(a little indignant)

Thousands of people are watching.
We can help further your cause.

NEMSER

You don't want to further my cause.
You want to exploit my cause so
your little media outfit--

INT. PEPSI OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Janie watches, dumbstruck.

NEMSER (ON TV)

--can profit from it. Well, I'm not
interested in being exploited. No
comment.

Janie smiles.

JANIE
(to herself)
Good for you, Paul. You finally
found a bit of self-respect.

NEMSER (ON TV)
One comment, actually. If any of
you at home have any alcohol,
please bring it down. We, uh, need
it for the protest.

JANIE
(to herself)
A tiny, tiny little bit of self-
respect.

INT. GEORGIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

NEMSER (ON TV)
Even rubbing alcohol, whatever.

Georgie laughs. He glances at his father's photo.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

The activists watch the TV report about the new protest.

CHE
Is this bad?

LYDIA
(shakes her head)
No animals, no lab. Simple as that.

Savrin walks in from the kitchen.

SAVRIN
Has anyone seen my Italian sub?

LYDIA
I fed it to the dogs.

SAVRIN
(annoyed)
Dogs don't eat subs.

LYDIA
So? Dogs don't have diabetes, but
that doesn't mean I didn't give
them Bryson's insulin.

BRYSON
(disbelief)
You gave them my insulin?

LYDIA
Guys! Guys! Remember our purpose
here. Our job is to protect these
animals. You'd lay down your lives
for them, wouldn't you?

ACTIVISTS
(unconvincing)
Yes.

LYDIA
(louder)
Wouldn't you?

ACTIVISTS
(unconvincing)
Yes.

INT. PEPSI OFFICES - DAY

A FACELESS CORPORATE DRONE drops an enormous stack of files
on Janie's desk.

FACELESS CORPORATE DRONE
I need you to alphabetize these,
then mix them up again, and then
alphabetize them again.

He walks off.

Janie ponders the stack of files. Suddenly, she SHOVES them
onto the floor.

She stands up, puts on her jacket, and walks out.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - DAY

Cherkin makes a beeline for Nemser, still chained to the
gate.

NEMSER

(anxious)

Brad, Brad, I'm sorry, I just had to--

CHERKIN

Hush. This is fantastic. Brilliant idea for an article.

(envisioning)

With nothing else to live for, an over-the-hill journalist turns to civil disobedience. He was old, he was lonely, he was an alcoholic -- but now he's also chained to a building.

(back to normal)

Beautiful. Stick around here for another few hours, then head to the office and write me up 800 words by midnight. We'll put this puppy on the front page.

NEMSER

No.

CHERKIN

What do you mean, "no"?

NEMSER

I'm not gonna write the article. And I'm staying right here until tomorrow, when they bring the bulldozers.

CHERKIN

I don't get it. What are you doing this for?

NEMSER

I'm doing it for a boy.

CHERKIN

A boy, huh?

(envisioning)

With nothing else to live for, an unmarried, over-the-hill journalist lusts after an innocent young boy.

(back to normal)

I love it. Get me 800 words by--

NEMSER

No, Brad.

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - EVENING

The crowd in the field has continued to grow. It's a motley crew of hippies, teens, camping enthusiasts, etc. They're all having a good time.

Nemser stands alone at the gate. He's dirty and unkempt, but determined.

A figure comes up to him out of the darkness.

It's Janie, but she looks utterly different: she's shed her corporate black pantsuit and put on her old activist garb. She's wearing black leather and a black bandana covers her mouth.

She pulls her bandana down around her neck.

NEMSER

Janie!

JANIE

I brought you something.

She holds up a bowl and spoon.

NEMSER

Whiskey in a bowl!

(very moved)

Thank you so much, Janie.

JANIE

It's soup.

NEMSER

(disappointed)

Oh. Thank you.

Nemser opens his mouth and Janie begins ladling the soup into it, tenderly.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

(re: her clothes)

Looking good.

JANIE

(laughs)

I haven't worn this stuff in years.

NEMSER

(smiles, mouth full)

Still fits.

JANIE
 (re: his chains)
 So I guess Georgie told you about
 his dad.

NEMSER
 I did some research.

Janie nods. A dramatic beat.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
 (gently)
 Look-- there's no accounting for
 priorities. Everyone has a
 different list.

JANIE
 (anger bubbles up)
 No. Not when you have a wife and
 kid. If you have a wife and kid, it
 goes, one, kid, two, wife. Then
 three four five six can be whatever
 the hell you want -- trees, whales,
 the goddamn manatees -- go nuts.
 But one and two...

She trails off, upset. Nemser ponders briefly, and then nods.

NEMSER
 You're right. You're right.

Another beat. Nemser smiles.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
 If it's any consolation, he's been
 chained to a tree for seven years.

Janie laughs and then suddenly -- to Nemser's surprise --
 hugs him. He strains against his chains to reciprocate the
 hug, but can't. He settles for gently tapping the back of her
 leg with one of his heels.

NEMSER (CONT'D)
 On the other hand, I hear the
 Pacific Northwest is beautiful this
 time of year.

Janie laughs into his chest.

JANIE
 Shut up.

Nemser spots Georgie emerging from the protestors. He's
 wearing AVIATOR SUNGLASSES, like his dad.

NEMSER
(whispers to Janie)
It's Georgie.

Janie releases her grasp and turns around. She beams. She didn't expect him to come.

GEORGIE
Hi.

Nemser smiles.

NEMSER
Thanks for coming.

GEORGIE
Yeah.

They stare at each other awkwardly for a beat.

To diffuse the tension, Georgie awkwardly high-fives one of Nemser's chained-up hands.

Bergstrom approaches the trio.

NEMSER
Dr. Bergstrom! I thought you were going to Florida!

BERGSTROM
I was, but when I saw you on the news, I turned to my wife and said, "What's your name, wife?" And she said, "It's Clara." And I said, "Clara, I need to go speak to him."

He sighs.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)
It's too expensive to replace the animals, Paul. And without them, we have no choice but to proceed with the demolition tomorrow.

GEORGIE
Well, then we've got tonight.

BERGSTROM
(breaks into off-key song)
Who needs tomorrow? We've got tonight, babe! Why don't you stay?

NEMSER

You can remember Bob Seger lyrics
but you can't remember your wife's
name?

BERGSTROM

I am not proud of it.

Janie claps once, loud, to get their attention.

JANIE

Focus. So, if we get the animals
back tonight, that's enough? You
keep the lab?

Bergstrom shakes his head.

BERGSTROM

Dayenu. It would be enough. But
there's no way. They bring the
animals to a safe house and guard
them heavily.

GEORGIE

Alright, hold on.

Georgie climbs into the gate and address the crowd.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

Hello! Everyone, listen up!

The crowd HUSHES.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

We've just learned that the
demolition will go forward as
planned tomorrow unless--

The crowd begins murmuring and shouting.

CROWD

(different people yelling)
Why is he so boring? What does this
have to with protesting? Fewer
words, more swear words!

NEMSER

(whispers to Georgie)
Georgie.

Georgie comes over to Nemser. Nemser whispers in his ear.
Georgie nods and climbs back onto the gate.

GEORGIE

Who here wants to fucking protest!

The crowd screams in affirmation.

Janie beams at him. She leans in towards Nemser.

JANIE

(whispers, proudly)

He looks like his dad.

He does, in fact. He's a spitting image of his father from the black and white photograph.

GEORGIE

Let's protest the shit out of stuff. I am so angry! Are you guys angry?

The crowd screams in affirmation.

A CROWDMEMBER

Let's figure out who we're protesting and then kill them!

GEORGIE

Alright, here's what we need to do! We need animals. Rats, cats, rabbits, monkeys, dogs--

MUSIC CUE: "White Riot" by The Clash

MONTAGE

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

A protestor crawls into a dog house and pulls out a dog.

EXT. ZOO - NIGHT

A protestor jumps into an enclosure, grabs a monkey, and jumps out.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A protestor comforts his young daughter as he opens her mouse cage and takes out two little white mice.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A protestor looks both ways and then reaches into one of those aquariums they have in Chinese restaurants. He grabs two brightly-colored fish.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A blind man walks with his seeing-eye dog. A protestor grabs the dog's collar and begins leading him.

END MONTAGE

END MUSIC

EXT. HUNTINGDON LAB - MORNING

It's a small zoo.

In front of Nemser, there are dogs, monkeys, rats, cats, fish flopping on the ground, and a seeing-eye dog attached to a very confused blind man.

The protestors mill around happily. Two of them high-five.

PROTESTOR 1

That's how you fucking protest!

PROTESTOR 2

We made a difference! Shit yeah!

Georgie, Nemser, and Janie look proud but worried. Bergstrom stands with them.

GEORGIE

Is it enough?

BERGSTROM

I don't know. These are not our typical test animals. The dogs in sweaters -- we'd almost certainly have to remove their sweaters.

He takes Georgie's hand and Nemser's chained-up hand.

BERGSTROM (CONT'D)

But thank you for trying.

A truck screeches up to them. Several ski-masked activists jump out.

GEORGIE

Oh god.

He runs around to the back of the truck and opens the door.
All the "liberated" animals pour out of it.

Bryson walks up to Nemser.

BRYSON

Here. Take 'em. I love animals, but
they're disgusting. And they're not
even embarrassed about it. They'll
shit on the ground and then they'll
look right at you, like
(tough guy accent)
"Yeah, what of it?"

BERGSTROM

Thank you, sir.

He calls from the background.

CHE

Let's get out of here!

Bryson signals "one second."

BRYSON

(conspiratorial)
I don't like what you do, but you
just can't reason with a woman who
values a dog more than a person.
It's fine for her to feed all our
pizza to the dogs, but eat just a
tiny bit of dog food because you're
a little curious, and she's all
(imitating)
"Bryson, that's gross!"
(back to normal)
She's a lunatic.

He runs back to the truck, jumps in, and the truck peels
away.

NEMSER

There they are.

Bergstrom and Georgie follow Nemser's gaze across the field.

A line of bulldozers has arrived. They hum towards the lab,
each manned by a CONSTRUCTION WORKER.

The first bulldozer in the line stops 30 feet from Nemser.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Uh, sir? I think you accidentally
chained yourself to the thing we
need to demolish.

A car speeds onto the field and screeches to a halt near
Nemser. Lydia and Savrin gets out. She looks crazed. He looks
embarrassed.

NEMSER

(to himself, shocked)
Savrin?

LYDIA

(shouting)
OK, go! Knock it down! Let's go!

Bergstrom steps into the middle of the fray.

BERGSTROM

(triumphant)
Wait. We have our animals. We can
keep the lab.

The crowd cheers.

The construction worker shrugs.

Lydia jumps on her car and addresses the crowd.

LYDIA

Listen! I know you're angry! That's
why you're here. There's no better
feeling in the world than being
part of an angry mob. But you have
to ask yourself: who are you angry
at? Are you angry at people who
torture and kill innocent animals?

The crowd screams as one.

CROWD

YEAH!

Georgie jumps up on the gate and addresses the crowd.

GEORGIE

Or are you angry at terrorists who
bully and scare us into doing
whatever they want?

CROWD

YEAH!

Lydia and Georgie glare at each other.

Then Lydia smiles. She has a trump card.

LYDIA

Or...

She opens up her jacket and pulls out a TINY, ADORABLE PUPPY that she'd kept hidden there.

She holds up the puppy.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

...do you agree with this puppy,
who doesn't like being tortured and
tested on?

The crowd screams louder than ever.

CROWD

YEAH! I agree with the puppy!

LYDIA

The puppy wants you to knock down
the gate!

CROWD

OK!

The crowd advances on Nemser menacingly.

The construction worker starts up the bulldozer and begins driving towards Nemser.

GEORGIE

Wait!

The mob stops and turns to look at him. He swallows hard.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

My father had a saying: don't bite
the hand that feeds you drugs. But
that's exactly what you're doing.
Dr. Bergstrom is trying to help
you. He wants to help you live
longer lives, free from pain and
disease.

The crowd murmurs.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

You know, there are many kinds of
activism.

(MORE)

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

If you're trying to save a rat or a tree, you can count me out. But some things are worth saving, because they mean something to people you care about.

(points to Lydia)

She's not into saving anything -- she's all about destruction, and she'll bully you and scare you until she gets her way. But you don't have to listen to her. You can think for yourselves.

The crowd shrugs. They're confused.

Lydia holds up the puppy again.

LYDIA

The puppy says destroy the lab!

The crowd screams in agreement and begins advancing on Nemser again.

Georgie looks panicked.

Janie yells to him.

JANIE

Georgie!

She points to a TINY, ADORABLE KITTEN sitting amidst the animals.

JANIE (CONT'D)

Use the kitten!

Georgie jumps off the gate, scoops up the kitten, and jumps back on the gate.

The angry mob and the bulldozer are now just feet from Nemser.

GEORGIE

This kitten says save the lab!

Beat. The crowd is silent.

Tense.

Then:

A CROWDMEMBER

That kitten is cuter than that puppy!

The mob screams in agreement. Nemser breathes a sigh of relief.

Lydia looks horrified.

The crowd goes over to the first construction worker, pulls him out of the bulldozer, and begins beating him up.

NEMSER
(calls to Georgie)
Thanks for doing something.

Georgie smiles at him.

JANIE
Look out!

Nemser and Georgie turn to look.

Lydia has climbed into the bulldozer and is driving it directly at Nemser, a maniacal look on her face.

Georgie thinks fast. He TOSSES the kitten in front of the bulldozer.

IN SLOW-MOTION, the kitten flies through the air.

The kitten lands between the bulldozer and Nemser.

CLOSE ON: The kitten's adorable face.

KITTEN
Meow.

Lydia screams and pulls the emergency break. The bulldozer screeches to a halt just inches from the kitten.

Lydia jumps out of the bulldozer, falls to her knees, and showers the kitten with kisses and tears.

COP CARS, sirens wailing, pull onto the grass and surround Lydia.

BLACK SCREEN

CLOSE ON: The front page of the Vanguard.

The giant banner headline reads: "I BANGED AN ACTIVIST! By Mark Savrin"

NEMSER (O.S.)
(sarcastic)
Inspirational.

We zoom in on a tiny headline in the bottom right corner:
"Alcoholic Saves Lab."

INT. NEMSER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Nemser laughs and throws the newspaper on the counter.

He walks to the windowsill where Lillian's scrunchie and his father's Pulitzer medal preside over the room.

Nemser picks up the scrunchie, hesitates, and then pitches it into the trash.

He picks up the Pulitzer medal, weighs it in his hand for a moment, and then carefully puts it away in a drawer. In its place on the windowsill, he puts a piece of paper reading:

A PULITZER PRIZE
From: Georgie and Janie
For: Awesomeness in Journalism

It's handwritten and there are gold stars all over the page.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - WEEKS LATER

Nemser sits on the stairs, waiting for school to let out. He looks happy and sober.

The front doors open and students begin pouring out.

Nemser sees Georgie coming out, and stands up. They walk towards Georgie's house together.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

NEMSER
How was school?

GEORGIE
Pretty good. Mr. Boyd explained
hyperbolic functions in terms of
huffing paint.

NEMSER
That guy is really hip.

GEORGIE
(laughs)
So in touch with today's youth.

NEMSER

Oh. Got you a book.

He reaches into his bag and hands Georgie John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*. Georgie flips through the pages.

GEORGIE

Cool. Thanks.

NEMSER

I paid 17.99 for that, so try not to rip out all the pages at once.

Georgie smirks and Nemser ruffles his hair.

GEORGIE

(still reading)

What's for dinner, do you know?

NEMSER

I think your mom's making her specialty: put a bag of ramen on the table and tell us to cook it.

GEORGIE

Great.

TRAVIS (O.S.)

Georgie Porgie!

MAX (O.S.)

Hey there, Georgie Porgie!

Georgie and Nemser sigh and turn around.

TRAVIS

Hmm. So is it, "Honor Thy Mother and That Dude"?

NEMSER

(sotto, to Georgie)

Enough's enough.

Nemser approaches Travis threateningly.

NEMSER (CONT'D)

Listen. I understand that you wanna get your kicks in now, because it's gonna be tough for you to kick ass with your left hand while pumping gas with your right hand. But if you ever -- ever talk down to Georgie again, I'm gonna stick
(gestures to Max)

(MORE)

NEMSER (CONT'D)
his head up
(gestures to Travis)
your ass. And maybe that sounds
pleasant to you, but look at the
size of his head. It will not be
pleasant.

Beat. Travis and Max look at each other.

EXT. STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Nemser and Georgie are lying on the street, side-by-side.
Travis is sitting on Nemser's chest and Max is sitting on
Georgie's chest.

Nemser turns his head to look at Georgie.

NEMSER
It's nice to do this together.

GEORGIE
I can't breathe.

NEMSER
Me neither.

FADE OUT.