

THE PORTLAND CONDITION

by

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FIRST DRAFT

EXT. PORTLAND, OREGON - 5:59 AM

LIGHTNING zig-zags the ominous predawn sky. Then, a THUNDERCLAP.

INT. BEDROOM - 6:00 AM

An ALARM CLOCK BEEPS. CAMERA PUSHES IN ON: **JASPER AYLES**, 30, as he peels open his eyes. Weary and disheveled, we don't know if he's been sleeping for ten minutes or ten hours.

In a haze, Jasper puts a LIGHT THERAPY BOX on his chest. Blinding U.V. RAYS SHINE in his face. He just lies there.

"GLASS, CONCRETE & STONE" by David Byrne PLAYS OVER:

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Jasper picks his meds out of a 7-Day Pill Organizer. All the colors of the rainbow, downed in a handful of water.

He looks at himself. With any effort, he'd be handsome. But Jasper hasn't put much effort into anything lately.

INT. CLOSET - MORNING

Jasper stands in front of his closet. He stares at six hanging GRAY HOODIES. We can't tell them apart, he can't choose.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Jasper pours milk on his listless Grape Nuts, waits for them to come to life. He'll have to wait forever.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

PAN the loft. It's barely furnished, except for WALLS of BOOKS.

A BIRD CAGE is next to an open window. There is NO BIRD in the cage. Jasper sprinkles seed into the already filled bird feeder. He leaves the CAGE DOOR and the WINDOW OPEN.

EXT. PORTLAND, OREGON - STEEL BRIDGE - MORNING

A drizzle morphs to rain. Jasper flips up his hood and ambles across the bridge that spans the churning Willamette River. MOUNT ST. HELENS juts out of the foggy horizon.

INT. STUMPTOWN COFFEE - MORNING

Jasper waits in line for his jolt of caffeine. Technically, he's still asleep. KENNY, 20's, a barista for whom coffee is a religion, calls out to Jasper.

KENNY

Jack-attack! How you doin', my man?

JASPER

(turns upbeat)

Now that I got my Kenny-fix, a whole lot better.

Kenny hands Jasper a to-go cup with **"Jack"** written on it.

JASPER

See the new Esquire? We got #1 "Most Depressed City in America." #6 in suicide, but I think with a little elbow grease, we could pop that up to a 4 or a 5.

KENNY

(laughs)

Who'd they poll for that shit, 'cuz that ain't the Portland I know.

Jasper looks out the window at the dark, dreary day.

KENNY

Supposed to be sunny on Thursday.

JASPER

It's worse when it's sunny. You know it's not gonna last.

INT. THE "WILLAMETTE WEEK" - DAY

The offices of an alternative newsweekly. Jasper plays *"Words With Friends"* in his cubicle. Over his desk is a framed column:

"What's the Haps, Portland?" by Jasper Ayles, dated 2007.

PHIL, 40's, Jasper's boss, wearing a sweater vest tucked into jeans, comes by the cubicle.

PHIL

Lemme' ask you a question, Jasper.

JASPER

Shoot, Phil.

PHIL
You reviewed Bon Iver at the
Aladdin Theater last Friday?

JASPER
Great show. Gave'em 3 1/2 eyeballs.

PHIL
They never played the Aladdin.

JASPER
(thinks on his feet)
Did I put the Aladdin? My bad, this
was a secret show at Red Room. Just
a short set, then a couple of guys
from The Antlers did an encore with
them. *"Cinnamon Girl," I think.*

Phil is suspicious, but Jasper was so convincing, he lets it go.

PHIL
Your job is to tell us "what the
haps" are.

JASPER
(cringes)
Can we at least drop that phrase?

PHIL
What'd you do last night, Jasper?

JASPER
Dinner at this new tapas place and a
Rothko retrospective at the --

PHIL
Where are your receipts?

Jasper feigns looking through his drawer.

PHIL
We reimburse you for everything you
do, yet you haven't turned in a
receipt for months.

JASPER
I know the paper's struggling.

PHIL
Not as much as you are.

Phil walks away. TREVOR, 35, with a mountain of dandruff and an
enormous chip on his shoulder, peers over the cubicle.

TREVOR
You're a dick. You got the best job
here and all you do is make shit up.

JASPER
It would be a decent job, if we
lived in a decent city.

TREVOR
Then move already.

JASPER
Funny you say that, I am moving.

TREVOR
Where this time?

JASPER
Tampa. No...Phoenix.

Trevor descends back into his cubicle.

JASPER
Maybe Nashville. Just waiting to see
how their mayoral election pans out.

Jasper sits in his cubicle. We ONLY SEE the TOP OF THEIR HEADS.

JASPER (O.S.)
Or Columbus, it's all still up in
the air.

TREVOR (O.S.)
Please keep me posted.

INT. ROLAND'S OFFICE - EVENING

A TIGHT TWO SHOT - Jasper sits across from **DR. ROLAND HARVEY**,
late 40's, a psychiatrist who doesn't pull any punches.

JASPER
The light therapy isn't working.
Nothing is.

ROLAND
Well, I'm proud of you. You've
been single for about a month.

JASPER
33 days. I keep thinking about
Emily. Maybe we could've made it
work. I should have tried harder.

ROLAND
You held on for two years.

JASPER
What if she was the one?

ROLAND
But Sara was the one. And Natalie?
She was the one before the one.
(then)
No matter how many women you try
to rescue, your mother will still
be dead.

JASPER
Whoa, Dr. Dick!

ROLAND
Jasper, I'm just trying to get you
to see the pattern.

JASPER
(this rankles him)
Mind your own business.

ROLAND
Einstein said, *"Insanity is doing
the same thing over and over and
expecting a different result."*

JASPER
Please stop Einstein-ing me.

ROLAND
Who else would like to share?

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

Jasper is actually in GROUP THERAPY, held in a **BARBER SHOP**
("GUS CUTS") after closing. Everyone sits in barber chairs.

On a CHALK BOARD, written in bold:

"THE PORTLAND CONDITION"

"Seasonal Affective Disorder -- S.A.D."

We meet BRAD, 40's, pocky and meek.

BRAD
That was some rain last night.

ANDREA, heavy-set, looks like she always has a cold, chimes in.

ANDREA
It made me binge.

KEVIN, an angry teen with a penchant for drugs, pounces.

KEVIN
What doesn't make you binge?

ANDREA
The Summer. I always lose a few
l.b.'s in the Summer.

KEVIN
Do you really though, Andrea?

ANDREA
At least I don't smell like cocaine,
Kevin!

ROLAND
(interrupts)
It's April. You know what they say,
"April showers --

JASPER
And then it's November.

Roland holds up the Esquire: "*Portland - Most Depressed City?*"

ROLAND
I'm sure you've all seen the
"Esquire" article by now.

KEVIN
Finally the truth comes out!

ANDREA
Yeah. Do you know how long it took
me to get out of the house this
morning? I have to prepare for
light rain, heavy rain, sideways
rain, freezing rain, driving rain --

JASPER
Hail.

KEVIN
Sleet.

BRAD
The occasional flurry.

Their chatter continues to rise in decibels.

ROLAND

-- OK, I get it, ok! Let's move on to this week's assignment.

(gets everyone's attention)

We are all going to write a letter. To ourselves. Not to ourselves now. To ourselves TEN years ago.

(then)

Jasper -- you're 30. I want you to write a letter to Jasper at 20.

JASPER

What am I supposed to write?

ROLAND

Anything you want. List your regrets, give yourself advice. How would you live these past ten years differently?

BRAD

I wouldn't have become a tax attorney.

ROLAND

Perfect. Put that in the letter. Maybe we can shine a light on what's making you stuck.

JASPER

What do I do with it when I'm done?

ROLAND

You could put it in a bottle and float it out to sea, but you don't have to send it, that doesn't matter.

(for instance)

I've always had a fantasy of base-jumping off "Big Pink". I'll put that in my letter.

BRAD

Can I send it to my old address?

ROLAND

If you want, but that's really not --

BRAD

-- My old building got torn down.

ANDREA

Wait, I lie about my age. Should I write to me 10 years ago based on my real age or my fake age?

KEVIN

Do I have to type it or can I --

ROLAND

Just write it!

(takes a breath)

Everyone work on your letters. Next week, we'll share our experiences.

INT. GUS CUTS BARBER SHOP - LATER THAT NIGHT

Group has ended. Kevin guzzles the coffee, Andrea hoards donuts.

Jasper glances up at a BULLETIN BOARD -- Flyers for LOCAL BANDS. ROOMMATE WANTED. LOST CAT. His eyes drift to the bottom corner. *"SENSUAL MASSAGE. CALL ALEXIS!"*

EXT. SUNBURST MOTEL - PORTLAND - NIGHT

The rain falls in solid sheets. In the corridor of a seedy motel, Jasper pulls out a crumpled paper with "214" written on it. He finds Room 214, composes himself, then knocks.

JASPER

It's, uh...Jack. We spoke on the phone.

The door opens to reveal **ALEXIS**, 20's, in jean shorts and stilettos. Smoking a joint, she ushers him in.

INT. SUNBURST MOTEL - ROOM 214 - CONTINUOUS

Jasper enters the nondescript room. He's soaking wet.

JASPER

I never do this.

He attempts a clumsy hug, then shakes her hand instead.

ALEXIS

Why don't you put the "donation" on the table and get comfortable.

Jasper counts out his damp bills. He's nervous as hell.

JASPER

This isn't our normal Portland drizzle, you know, where it feels like they're spitting on you.

She unbuttons down to her bra, puts his hand on her breast.

ALEXIS
Has anyone ever said you look
like Johnny Depp?

They haven't, because he doesn't.

JASPER
Emily, my ex, used to say I looked
like Ben Kingsley.

ALEXIS
(no clue who that is)
I can see that. He's hot.

JASPER
The thought of starting over, dating,
calling, not calling, do I, should I,
I mean, Tweets? Ugh.
(then)
This is so much easier...we have no
connection, this can't end badly.
You know I'm not gonna call. Unless
you want me to call and check in,
because I can. I would.

Silence.

JASPER
It's just better this way, don't you
think?

Jasper quickly surveys the room.

ECU: A plastic bottle of POPOV VODKA and remnants of COKE LINES.

ECU: The edge of a torn TROJAN WRAPPER under the bed.

ECU: LUBE on a night table.

JASPER
Can I...use your bathroom?

ALEXIS
You asked for a 30 minute "blow-dry,"
I don't wanna cut into your time.

INT. BATHROOM - ROOM 212 - MOMENTS LATER

In the mirror, Jasper looks at himself with disappointment.

JASPER
You're really maximizing your
potential. I'm so proud of you.

Jasper kicks up the toilet seat with his shoe. As he pisses, he spots the dirty shower curtain. He stares at it for a long beat.

Finally, he yanks open the curtain TO REVEAL:

A MAN in THE SHOWER. CAMERA GETS FRENETIC.

Jasper SCREAMS. The Man SCREAMS. Jasper lets go of his penis, PISSES OUT OF CONTROL - All over the towels and the walls.

SWEATY MAN

It's ok, I'm her husband!

JASPER

I swear, I hardly ever do this!

SWEATY HUSBAND

I'm just here if something goes wrong!

Frantic, Jasper flies out of the bathroom.

ALEXIS

I keep telling him not to stay in there.

The Husband rushes into the room to quell the situation.

JASPER

I really have to go.

ALEXIS

But this is your party, Jack.

SWEATY HUSBAND

It's your time together, bro. She can roll a condom on with her mouth.

JASPER

(forces a smile)

That's...awesome.

SWEATY HUSBAND

I'm gonna go out for a couple cigs. Pretend I was never here. Honey, throw in a "DFK".

Jasper looks to Alexis, confused.

ALEXIS

Deep French Kiss.

JASPER
You know what? Keep the money, we'll
reschedule...I had a great time.

Jasper shakes their hands, can't get out fast enough, and we...

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - 6:00 AM

The ALARM CLOCK BEEPS. Hazy, Jasper puts the LIGHT THERAPY BOX on his chest. Blinding U.V. RAYS SHINE in his face.

INT. JASPER'S CLOSET - MORNING

Jasper stares at six identical GRAY HOODIES. He can't choose.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

CU the GRAPE NUTS, sulking in a bowl. Jasper takes out the milk, it's empty. He pours tap water on top of the cereal.

EXT. STREET - THURSDAY

A rare, perfect sunny day. Jasper grimaces. He steps into the crosswalk, just as -- A bevy of CYCLISTS FLY BY JASPER. They are overjoyed to be alive on a beautiful morning. A sea of spandex shorts on bikes.

JASPER
What are you guys so smiley about?
It's just gonna rain again tomorrow!

The BIKES KEEP BUZZING BY JASPER. He is CAUGHT in THEIR SWARM.

EXT. THE STEEL BRIDGE - DAY

Jasper walks across the Bridge into Downtown Portland.

JASPER'S VOICE
"Dear 20 year-old Jasper..."

INT. POWELL'S CITY OF BOOKS - DOWNTOWN - DAY

More than a million books fill a full city block. Jasper sits at a table, staring at his OPENING LINE. He adds one more line:

JASPER'S VOICE
*"There is no cure for the Portland
Condition..."*

Satisfied, Jasper stuffs it into an envelope, addresses it to:

**JASPER AYLES
REED COLLEGE - EAST DORMS
PORTLAND, OR 97202**

On his way out, he hands a *JOHN UPDIKE* novel to **GWEN MINER**, 23, behind the counter. A hipster who'd kill you if you called her a hipster, Gwen wears a tight "Sailor Moon" t-shirt, a patched-up cardigan and tortoise shell glasses.

GWEN
What'd you think?

JASPER
Updike's all over the place. I mean, pick a POV. And Middle-aged WASP's boning? Not for me.

She hands him an anthology of **CHEKHOV SHORT STORIES**.

GWEN
Sorry they weren't stuck in a dreary Chekhov malaise. *"Ooh, we're poor, we're Russian, we won't shut the fuck up about our Cherry Orchard."*

JASPER
Dreary? More like hilarious and realistic.

GWEN
Depressing, man.

JASPER
This book club isn't working for me.

GWEN
Is it really a book club with just the two of us?

JASPER
If a guy dies in an avalanche and no one's on the mountain to hear him scream, did he make a sound?

She can't help but laugh. A beat.

GWEN
I don't like your hair like that. It's too bushy.

JASPER
I don't like...your hair.

GWEN

Good one.

(holds up flyer)

Portland's 160th b-day. Clark Gable
marathon at "Flicks on the Bricks."
Me, Reg and Kiki are going. You in?

JASPER

Thanks, but I'll wait for the 200th
birthday.

Jasper pulls a beaten-up CLASSIC out of his satchel, hands it to
her. She gives him a NOVEL in return.

GWEN

I sent my short story out.

JASPER

The one about the zebras? I loved
that.

GWEN

Fingers crossed. Hear another
Barnes & Noble closed?

JASPER

Serves'em right. Book bullies. I
gotta run, Rabbit.

GWEN

Run.

EXT. POWELL'S BOOKSTORE - DAY

Jasper exits Powell's, where a group of young Portlanders smoke.
A GIRL stands under a UMBRELLA shaped like a LADYBUG.

JASPER

Bum a light?

Jasper borrows a lighter. He holds up the ENVELOPE, lights it on
fire, then tosses it into the gutter and watches it burn. Just
as, the RAIN PICKS UP and dampens his bonfire.

JASPER

Can I borrow your ladybug?

Jasper takes her ladybug umbrella, holds it over the smoldering
envelope, makes sure the PAPER BURNS. The kids watch curiously.

EXT. PARK - DOWNTOWN PORTLAND - DAY

Jasper drinks from a Stumptown cup with "**Jack**" on it. He sits on a bench, lost in thought, watching KIDS play on a jungle gym.

CU ON ONE BOY. With tousled, curly hair.

MATCH CUT TO:

THE SCREEN BECOMES GRAINY...

CLOSE ON: 5 YEAR-OLD JASPER, wearing little boy shorts.

REVERSE ANGLE: At the end of a long hallway is a bedroom. Bright light from the room casts a glow in the corridor. Jasper walks slowly toward the bedroom. He is bathed in the light.

We see what Jasper sees... **MARY AYLES**, 30, pale and sickly, writhes on the bed in pain.

AUNT ROSE, 28, tends to Mary. She comes over to Jasper.

AUNT ROSE
(kisses his head)
You can go in, honey.

Jasper goes to his mother's side. Drenched in a feverish sweat, she reaches out for his hand, just as the Rain picks up outside. Jasper looks out at the Storm.

JASPER
Maybe it'll be sunny tomorrow, Mommy.

MARY
It's worse when it's sunny, baby.
You know it won't last.

The rain smacks against the window and we...

SMASH CUT TO:

THE PRESENT: AS BEFORE

Jasper snaps out of his memory, continues to watch the Kids play. He finishes his coffee, gets up and leaves the park.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE BITTER END PUB - NIGHT

Packed for happy hour. Jasper enters, finds Trevor at the bar. Jasper takes off his soaked hoodie.

TREVOR
Will you please get an umbrella?

JASPER
Why give 'em the satisfaction?

Jasper looks around the place. PAN THE FACES in the BAR.

JASPER
Same old crowd. Vancouver Bob...
Mustache Sally...and then there's...

His eyes land on **NICOLE PRICE**, 26, the bartender, a radiant breath of fresh air. She is absolutely stunning.

JASPER
...her.

Jasper skips a breath as Nicole approaches him. He scrambles to think of something witty to say. And then...

NICOLE
What's the haps?

Jasper deflates. Trevor busts up laughing, and Nicole instantly feels bad for saying it.

JASPER
He told you to say that, right?

NICOLE
You think I'd say something dumb
like that on my own?

Jasper can't help but laugh.

JASPER
You're new.

NICOLE
You're new to me, too. Let me
guess, Beer flight?

JASPER
You think I'd order something dumb
like that?

An instant attraction.

JASPER
Bourbon. Neat.

NICOLE
Kentucky or Tennessee?

JASPER
Is there really a difference?

NICOLE
People pretend there is.

JASPER
Those are the same people who are
full of empty promises.

NICOLE
(intrigued)
I knew I liked you.

CU JASPER: He is riveted as Nicole fetches the Maker's Mark,
pours two highballs and brings them both to him.

NICOLE
Happy Hour's 2-for-1.

JASPER
I'm only trying to have 1 ¹/₂ drinks
these days.

NICOLE
Why?

JASPER
They say three or more drinks makes
you an alcoholic. So, I decided, if
I cut that in half --

NICOLE
You're fine with being half an
alcoholic?

JASPER
I propose a toast to my self control.

He holds up his Bourbon. She takes the second highball. They
toast each other, then both take a drink.

JASPER
It'll probably take me about 3 weeks,
but I'm pretty sure I'm gonna get the
balls to ask you out. But knowing
me, it might take longer, so...

NICOLE
Then let's say tonight. We'll grab a
drink & a half, see where it goes.

JASPER
(somewhat surprised)
Wait, tonight?

NICOLE
I get off at 10. And don't change,
'cuz I can't.

JASPER
I would never. I hate change.

Nicole never takes her eyes off Jasper as she moves down the bar.

TREVOR
(filled with envy)
These drinks are on you.

OFF JASPER, watching Nicole in awe, we go to...

INT. CLOTHING BOUTIQUE - NIGHT

Jasper hurries in just as a SALESGIRL is about to lock the door.

JASPER
Wait wait wait -- I need a shirt.
A date shirt.

5 MINUTES LATER:

Now wearing a hideous shirt, Jasper checks himself in the mirror.

EXT. THE BITTER END PUB - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jasper is back in his HOODIE uniform, waiting on the street for Nicole. He checks the VOICEMAIL on his cell.

AUNT ROSE (V.O.)
It's Rose. Mariners are up 2-1 in
the third, ducks on the pond. I'll
meet you at the ferry on Saturday.

Nicole exits the bar, surprises Jasper with a kiss on the cheek.

NICOLE
Very cool you didn't change.

JASPER
Didn't even occur to me.

INT. DOUG FIR LOUNGE - NIGHT

OPEN TIGHT on JASPER & NICOLE at a candle-lit table in a 1920's dance hall. They drink cocktails and eat bar snacks.

JASPER

One of my readers tipped me off to this place a while back. It's like "Miss America." Evening gown, swimsuit, talent. We vote. Whoever wins goes to the Nationals, so please don't take this lightly.

NICOLE

I take this civic-duty shit seriously. I'm Canadian, though. Does my vote still count?

JASPER

(horrificed)

You're Canadian? We're done here!

Jasper storms out of the night club. Nicole thinks it's funny, but after a long beat, realizes he might not return.

Finally, Jasper returns, beaming. Nicole dies laughing.

NICOLE

You really sold that!

JASPER

Where in Canada are you from?

NICOLE

Toronto. Actually, just outside. Kitchener.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: A BANNER reads **"MISS OREGON DRAG QUEEN"**.

On STAGE, an EMCEE welcomes 20 DRAG QUEENS in evening gowns. They wear sashes with Oregon city names on them. Heavily made up, some of these guys aren't half bad.

The CROWD APPLAUDS wildly, the loudest of whom is Nicole.

INT. DOUG FIR LOUNGE - LATER IN THE NIGHT

"MISS CORVALLIS" twirls a baton in a leotard.

ON NICOLE & JASPER: Shot glasses and beers litter the table. They have a great time. Nicole lights up a cigarette.

NICOLE
I only smoke when I drink.
And...when I don't drink.

Jasper watches Nicole. She catches him staring. Her smile makes his heart pound. It's a charged moment.

NICOLE
My father goes to hookers.

Jasper almost spits his drink out.

NICOLE
That's why my parents got divorced.
(smiles)
That, and all the affairs he had.

JASPER
Your mom's a bit of a stickler, huh?

NICOLE
(laughs)
I know, right?

JASPER
Chekhov went to brothels. He had major intimacy issues.

NICOLE
Why would you know that?

JASPER
I started a PHD dissertation on his works. Never finished.

NICOLE
Why not?

JASPER
I got...stuck.

EMCEE (V.O.)
Ladies and gentlemen, I give you,
the swimsuit competition.

NICOLE
What do they do, tuck it, or just hang loose?

Her eyes widen as she finds out...

EXT. THE PEARL DISTRICT - PORTLAND - LATER THAT NIGHT

Both buzzed, Jasper and Nicole walk through the hip, artsy area filled with galleries and boutiques. The So-Ho of Portland.

NICOLE
Ok, family time, go! Brothers and sisters?

JASPER
No, none. You?

NICOLE
Just me, I'm an "only," too. How about your parents?

JASPER
My dad died during childbirth.

NICOLE
Seriously?

JASPER
No, he took off way before that.

NICOLE
And your mom?

JASPER
Actually dead. When I was 5, she got cancer.

Nicole stops, she feels bad for bringing it up.

NICOLE
I'm so sorry.

JASPER
I thought I could save her. I was a stupid little kid.

NICOLE
You were only 5.

JASPER
My Aunt Rose, her sister, raised me. I guess I was lucky.

NICOLE
That's a great way to look at it.

JASPER
She was 30, my mother. Now, I'm 30.

NICOLE
Is that weird for you?

JASPER
My therapist keeps telling me it
is. He calls it the "Death Age."
Little dramatic, no?

Nicole takes Jasper's hand and they keep walking. She stops in front of a tiny GALLERY filled with eclectic PHOTOGRAPHY.

NICOLE
What do you think of these pictures?

Jasper studies the strange photographs. Post-modern with DOUBLE and TRIPLE-EXPOSED NEGATIVES that are HAND COLORED.

JASPER
There's so much happening...I can't
decide where to start hating them.

NICOLE
I took them all.

JASPER
Did I say hate? I meant love. I
love them!

NICOLE
(laughs)
Tell me what you really think.

Jasper gives the photography a second look.

JASPER
If I stare at it long enough the
chaos turns into calm.

NICOLE
Now you're just trying to get me
in bed.

JASPER
I wish I was that smooth.

NICOLE
You're doing better than you think.

His pulse quickens.

NICOLE
My work's finally in a gallery, and
no one comes to see it. Story of
my life.

JASPER
You're still kind of famous.

They continue walking - WE PULL UP HIGH ABOVE THEM: Jasper and Nicole are so engrossed in each other, they don't notice NIGHT FLOOD INTO MORNING.

EXT. THE STEEL BRIDGE - DAWN

Jasper and Nicole stand on the bridge, drinking from a bottle of wine. Jasper moves in closer. Nicole ducks away at the last second, and she CLIMBS UP on the railing of the bridge.

JASPER
Um...what are you doing?!

Nicole spins around to face Jasper. She wraps her feet around the bars for support, then lets herself HANG OFF THE RAILING.

JASPER
This is a really bad idea.

NICOLE'S POV -- Of the Willamette River railing below.

NICOLE
You have to see the world this way.
It's all just water under the bridge.

After a long beat, Jasper gingerly climbs up on the railing. He takes a deep breath, and inhales some confidence. He wraps his feet around the bars, and lets himself HANG OFF THE RAILING.

CU JASPER: UPSIDE DOWN. For a moment, everything makes sense.

JASPER
Don't let me fall in love with you.

NICOLE
I can't promise anything.

Then, Nicole and Jasper come together for a fantastic kiss.
HOLD ON THEM: SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR

The CAMERA TRACKS AWAY. WE PULL BACK FURTHER & FURTHER:
The two dangling figures become blurry in the distance.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Jasper and Nicole make love. They aren't awkward or shy, it's like they've known each other forever. Their bodies move in perfect rhythm. It's emotional, it's hot, it's loud, finally they both climax at the same time.

They hold each other tightly.

NICOLE
(catches her breath)
That's never happened.

JASPER
Me neither. I've never...at the
same time with someone.

NICOLE
No, I mean, I've never had an
orgasm during sex before.

Jasper feels pretty amazing right now. He blissfully rolls
over on his back. Nicole puts her head on his chest.

ANGLE BIRDCAGE - BY THE WINDOW.

NICOLE
What's with the cage?

JASPER
I had a bird. Tony. He went out to
do something. I leave the window
open in case he comes back.

NICOLE
Can we maybe, close it a little?

Jasper gets up. Self conscious, he wraps the blanket around
himself and closes the window.

ON NICOLE. A naked vision, she takes his breath away. Ours too.
Jasper slides in next to her, they're back in each other's arms.

NICOLE
I feel safe with you.

Nicole closes her eyes and pulls in closer to an elated Jasper.

EXT. JASPER'S LOFT - NIGHT

THROUGH THE WINDOW: WE SEE Jasper and Nicole having uninhibited
sex. They can't get enough of each other.

EXT. PARK - DOWNTOWN PORTLAND - MORNING

Jasper and Nicole sit on his bench, watching the KIDS play.

JASPER

I love watching them. They should have spotters. Like in the Olympics. People who stand there to keep the kids from cracking their heads open.

She watches him watch the Kids play, taken by his tenderness.

JASPER

I know, kind of a poor man's Salinger, right?

NICOLE

(smiles at this)

I was adopted by a family a month after they lost a baby. Also a girl. I was a replacement child.

JASPER

That's a lot of pressure.

NICOLE

To be a good person, to live for two people, yeah, it is.

(beat)

When I can afford her, my therapist tells me I suffered trauma at 3 hours old, because my real mother never held me. Abandoned, she says. I don't know...maybe.

They go back to watching the children.

JASPER

I'd make the spotters wear uniforms and color coordinate. Each color would be responsible for one kid.

WE FLASH TO:

THE KIDS IN THE PARK. Every CHILD wears a different COLORED UNIFORM...RED, YELLOW, WHITE, BLUE...

Several ADULTS spot for them. Each wears a DIFFERENT COLOR.

CLOSE ON ONE KID: With tousled, curly hair, he's dressed all in GREEN. He climbs the jungle gym. He goes higher and higher. He reaches the top and celebrates, safe and out of harms way.

The Kid's SPOTTER, also in GREEN, watches, at the ready...

FLASH BACK TO:

JASPER & NICOLE: AS BEFORE

She is moved by his description. They share a look.

JASPER
It's too late.

NICOLE
For what?

JASPER
I'm already in love with you.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. JASPER'S STREET - EVENING

Jasper walks down the street. It's actually more of a swagger. He smiles from ear to ear. Life is good. Finally.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT ENTRANCEWAY - DAY

A UPS BOX is in the doorway. Jasper struggles with the box. At a row of mailboxes, Jasper gathers his mail. It drops out of his hand, scatters across the floor. Jasper picks it all up.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jasper is full of energy as he hammers a nail into the wall. The UPS BOX is at his feet. He has nails in his mouth as he talks on the phone. MUSIC PLAYS in B.G.

JASPER
I'm sorry I wasn't at the ferry,
Rose. I know, I got caught up...
(he pauses)
...a girl. Maybe five-foot-six,
that's a weird question.

Jasper holds a leveler and a tape measure. He makes sure the nails are lined up correctly.

JASPER
Yeah, it is great, but don't jinx it.
Next weekend might work, I'll let you
know. Ok, love you. Bye.

He turns up the MUSIC - CUE *OTIS REDDING'S "HAPPY SONG"*.

Jasper is euphoric. He sifts through the pile of mail, comes to:

AN ENVELOPE. It's addressed to him, at his CURRENT RESIDENCE.

He opens the envelope -- It's a letter written on specialty stationery. "**JASPER AYLES**" is *embossed* on the LETTERHEAD.

CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON JASPER, and we...

FADE OUT.

INT. GUS CUTS BARBER SHOP - EVENING

Kevin spins around and around in his barber chair.

KEVIN

What was I supposed to tell myself
at 7? "Don't let that counselor
touch your dick at Camp Wildwood?"

Roland tries not to react to this.

ANDREA

I thought it was really therapeutic.
I wrote a lot of helpful, intimate
things. I told the truth.

ROLAND

Jasper, what about you? Do you want
to share your experience?

WE COME TO JASPER - He is frozen.

ROLAND

Jasper?

A long beat, then Jasper holds up **THE LETTER**.

JASPER

Did...anyone else get a letter back?

ROLAND

You sent it and it got returned?

JASPER

No, I got a letter from myself at 40.

ROLAND

(humors him)

Why don't you share what you wrote
to the group?

JASPER

I didn't write it. But it came on
stationery with my letterhead.

(struggles)

It's a suicide letter.

KEVIN
Nice. Read it to us!

JASPER
If someone here is fucking with me...

ROLAND
It's ok, Jasper. You can read it.

Jasper steadies himself, then starts to read out loud.

JASPER
"Dear 30 year-old Jasper. I've just turned 40 and I'm going to kill myself."

Jasper looks around the room. EVERYONE IS RAPT.

ROLAND
Maybe you misunderstood the exercise. I asked you to write a letter to yourself ten years ago.

JASPER
I did. Then I burned it in a gutter. This came in the mail.

KEVIN
Get back to it, you were about to kill yourself, dude.

JASPER
(back to letter)
"There's so many things that you, that we, have done wrong. Enough regrets to fill a book. Or, a pretentious dissertation, which you'll never finish. And if you did, it would be amateurish and horribly received."

INSERT - **THE LETTER.** Written in rambling cursive.

JASPER
"I'd tell you to leave Portland. But that'll never happen. I'd tell you to quit your job, but don't worry, they fold within a year."
(continues reading)
"There is no cure for the Portland Condition. And your Group disbands when Roland dies suddenly."

Jasper looks up at Roland, who is a bit taken aback.

JASPER

"Oh, and Mount St. Helens, she's not done erupting. Grab your popcorn, it's a show worth seeing."

Jasper struggles to read a sentence that is smeared.

JASPER

"Just for shits and giggles...here are the lottery numbers from yesterday's paper, November 5, 2021."
(to the Group)
Then there are six numbers.

Jasper takes a deep breath, keeps reading.

JASPER

"DON'T MARRY HANNAH. She's a lying, pathetic drunk. You can't save her, just like you couldn't save Mary. Stop being a fucking life raft."

BRAD

Wait, who's Hannah?

JASPER

No idea.

Jasper goes back to the letter.

JASPER

"And speaking of Mary, what kind of mother does that? To lie to a child for that long...that kind of betrayal? She should burn in Hell."
(to Group)
What lie? That's just...so harsh.

Jasper stops cold on the last sentence.

JASPER

"I have a gun in my mouth right now. Chekhov was right. 'When you show a gun, you have to fire it.'"

The rest of the letter is illegible.

JASPER

This looks like a scotch stain. Or blood. I can't read this part here. The rest is just jibberish.

Jasper looks to Roland. Dead silence all around.

ROLAND
First of all, very well written.

JASPER
I didn't write this! But it's in my
handwriting. Look, I signed it.
This is my "J"!

ROLAND
You're taking this a little too far.

JASPER
Has anyone ever seen a \$2 dollar
stamp?

INSERT - **A FIRST CLASS \$2 DOLLAR US STAMP.** With a hologram and
multiple seals, it is futuristic and dead real.

INT. GUS CUTS BARBER SHOP - LATER THAT NIGHT

Now it's just Jasper and Roland in the barber shop.

JASPER
Did you write this to me? Maybe as
a motivational tool?

ROLAND
How does my death motivate you?

The wheels are spinning in Jasper's head.

ROLAND
You had a few drinks, took the Ambien
and sent the letter to yourself.

JASPER
I wrote the letter I was supposed to
write as a fucking joke, and
addressed it to myself at 20! To my
old college address. And instead of
sending it, I burned it.

ROLAND
Jasper, you don't seriously think you
got a letter from the future, do you?
You wrote the letter in your sleep.

JASPER
In my sleep? Honestly Roland, go
fuck yourself.

ROLAND

I have patients on Ambien who write crazy emails, drive to "7-11" and order slurpees. I have a man who painted his front door black and had no memory of it.

JASPER

Fascinating, really, it is. Except I haven't taken Ambien for months.

Roland is perplexed, and a little unsettled.

ROLAND

Just out of curiosity...did it say how I died?

JASPER

No, it didn't.
(exhales loudly)
Should I tell Nicole about this?

ROLAND

Who's Nicole?

JASPER

(braces himself)
I'm in love.

ROLAND

(exhales)
Seriously, Jasper?

JASPER

I am!

ROLAND

How damaged is she? I mean, on a scale of "*well adjusted*" to "*so fucked up, Jasper's head-over-heels.*"

JASPER

She's not fucked up at all.

ROLAND

If that was the case, you wouldn't be interested.

(baiting him)
And what about the sex?

JASPER

I can't even explain how incredible.

ROLAND

Let me guess, the best you've ever had, right?

JASPER

Are you mocking me?

ROLAND

I'm just glad you found the Perfect Storm.

JASPER

Yep, that's mocking me!

Jasper grabs his stuff and storms out of the Barber Shop.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - DAYS LATER

Jasper hasn't slept for days, and it shows. He's uncomfortable in his own skin.

INT. THE BITTER END PUB - EVENING

Jasper enters the bar in a fog. Nicole sets up. She is happy to see him, but doesn't want to give too much away.

NICOLE

Did you not call because I was too easy, too quick? I know there weren't that many costume changes, but you didn't let me go home.

Even in his addled state, Jasper sees humor in this.

JASPER

I would have called, I should have. I got blind-sided...with work.

NICOLE

Get this -- someone bought all my pictures. I just got a check for \$6,500 bucks. We need to celebrate!

Jasper tries to put up a good face.

JASPER

A celebration? Um, yeah...

NICOLE

I heard about a Clark Gable marathon tomorrow night. Did you know he was a Portland native?

JASPER

I did.

NICOLE

"Flicks on the Bricks." Let's do a picnic, I'll set it up. You could meet me there.

Jasper numbly nods. She leans over the bar and gives him a kiss.

NICOLE

Promise you'll call me later.

JASPER

I promise.

Nicole comes out from behind the bar. Another quick kiss turns into more. He forgets everything, kisses her with all he's got.

NICOLE

Never stop kissing me.

The feeling is mutual.

NICOLE

We don't open for another 8 minutes.

She grabs Jasper by the belt and pulls him into the bathroom.

CAMERA FOLLOWS THEM...

INT. BATHROOM - THE BITTER END PUB - CONTINUOUS

It's hot & heavy. He puts her up on the sink, they go at each other. The bathroom door CLOSES ON THE CAMERA.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. REED COLLEGE - LABORATORY - DAY

Jasper is in a lab with **BERT**, 30, a ghostly hobbit who looks like he's never seen the Sun.

The LETTER is beamed up on an OVERHEAD PROJECTOR.

BERT

So what do you hear from old AJ Brass?

JASPER

Not much. I think he lives in Houston.

BERT
What about Jimmy Park?

JASPER
Probably still in finance, I don't know.

BERT
(high-fives Jasper)
Right on! How 'bout Zambetti?

JASPER
Bert, I'd love to catch up, but can we get to the letter?

BERT
Who's this Hannah?

JASPER
Bert --

BERT
Ok, handwriting analysis is almost as exact a science as fingerprinting.

JASPER
That's my "J".

BERT
Yeah, it's your "J". You wrote this. I put the letter through an elemental dispersive spectro-copy.

Jasper is dizzy as Bert holds up the LETTER.

BERT
This paper is ten years old.

JASPER
It was made in 2001?

BERT
I didn't say that. All I'm saying is, the paper has aged ten years.

JASPER
Then it really is from the future?

BERT
I didn't say that either.

JASPER
I've never had my own stationery. Not now, not ten years ago.

Bert holds up the ENVELOPE. CU STAMP.

BERT
Whoever did this work...it's
flawless. From the seals, the silk
threads, to the watermarks. Look at
this hologram, that's crazy. My only
question, why make a \$2 dollar stamp
when you can't use it?

JASPER
(exasperated)
Someone can use it. It was used!

EXT. JASPER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Jasper intercepts his **MAIL CARRIER**, a gaunt woman with a
Breath-Right on her nose. He shows her the ENVELOPE.

JASPER
Do you remember delivering this?

MAIL CARRIER
Of course.

JASPER
You do?

MAIL CARRIER
I remember every envelope I've ever
delivered. For the past 15 years.
We're talkin' thirty, forty thousand
envelopes a year. That's around half
a million envelopes, so, yeah...how
could I forget delivering that
incredibly ordinary one?

Jasper now feels stupid for asking.

JASPER
I was just hoping...you remembered
something about it.

MAIL CARRIER
Kid, I don't remember the shoes
I'm wearing right now.

Jasper puts the envelope in her face.

JASPER
Ever see something like this?

The Mail Carrier takes a closer look, and we MATCH CUT TO...

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

THE STAMP - MAGNIFIED IN SIZE

Through the MONOCLE of a **POSTAL SUPERVISOR**.

Jasper wants answers. So does the Postal Supervisor. The Mail Carrier stands there, arms folded, angry at Jasper.

POSTAL SUPERVISOR
Sir, where did you get this stamp?

JASPER
I told you, in the mail.

POSTAL SUPERVISOR
From whom?

JASPER
Technically from me, but --

POSTAL SUPERVISOR
Sir, as an employee of the Federal Government, the US Postal Service, and a civil servant of Oregon, I'm going to ask you one more time. Where did you get this stamp?

JASPER
(indignant)
I made it in my stamp printing machine that I keep in my bath tub. I love to counterfeit stamps for fun and mail shit to myself.

POSTAL SUPERVISOR
I'll need that envelope.

Jasper surreptitiously takes the letter out, hands the ENVELOPE to the Postal Supervisor and exits the Post Office.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PORTLAND - DAY

Out of sorts, Jasper hurries down the street. At a crosswalk, he pushes the button for the "Walk" sign. He is oblivious to the fact that he's in front of Powell's City of Books.

INT. POWELL'S CITY OF BOOKS - SAME TIME

Gwen watches Jasper through the window. The street light turns to "Walk," Jasper is so lost he doesn't even notice.

INT. POWELL'S CITY OF BOOKS - MOMENTS LATER

Gwen comes out onto the street.

GWEN
Yo, space cowboy?

Jasper looks up, startled.

GWEN
What are you doing?

JASPER
I'm...just a little frazzled.

GWEN
I got a lot goin' on too, guy.
Doesn't mean I can't stop in and
say hey to a buddy.

Jasper considers spilling his guts, then decides against it.

JASPER
I...like your hair today.

Gwen just stares at him. His hair is all over the place, she doesn't return the compliment.

A beat, and they go their separate ways.

SINT. JASPER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - DAY

Jasper huffs and puffs up the stairs. He sees his front door is ajar. He cautiously opens it to find:

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The apartment has been ransacked. Jasper's belongings are everywhere. An FBI AGENT sits on the couch, watching TV.

JASPER
What the fuck...?

FBI AGENT
Looks like your bird got out.

He flashes an FBI BADGE. Alarms go off in Jasper's brain.

Then, the Agent holds up the **ENVELOPE with the \$2 DOLLAR STAMP.**

FBI AGENT
Who are you with?

JASPER

I'm not with anybody.

FBI AGENT

I don't get it. If you were gonna counterfeit stamps, why wouldn't you make a 44 cent? You make a stamp that doesn't exist?

JASPER

I didn't make the stamp!

The Agent looks at all of Nicole's BLACK & WHITES on the walls.
(*Jasper was the one who bought all her art*).

FBI AGENT

You some kind of artist?

JASPER

No.

FBI AGENT

I get it. Some faggot art school grad. That don't pay the bills.

JASPER

I didn't go to art school. I'm not a counterfeiter. This is a misunderstanding.

FBI AGENT

We know it's your handwriting. That was confirmed by your friend Bertie, right?

JASPER

I didn't write it!

FBI AGENT

From faggot art school to prison. Easy transition, 'cuz somebody's gonna get plain butt-fucked.

JASPER

(full of panic)

Nobody's getting butt-fucked! Some people like it, I have nothing against the "butt-fuckers," but I'm --

FBI AGENT

We'll lean on your mother if we have to.

JASPER
(confused)
Rose?

The FBI Agent checks his notes.

FBI AGENT
Mary.

JASPER
(long beat)
Mary's been dead 25 years.

FBI AGENT
Not if your mother is Mary Whitehead.
Alive and well in Boise, Idaho.
8916 Braxton Avenue.

Jasper tries to comprehend what is being said.

JASPER
Mary Whitehead?

FBI AGENT
Maiden name's Ayles. Social Security
number 209-83-4636.

Jasper is struck dumb. Then, he overloads.

JASPER
(loses it)
All this, what everyone's doing to
me...It's not ok!

The Agent takes a **.45 COLT REVOLVER** out of Jasper's desk.

FBI AGENT
What's this all about?

JASPER
My Aunt got it for me. For
protection, but I'd never use it.

FBI AGENT
Don't fuck with the mail again.

The FBI Agent hands the Gun to Jasper and walks out the door.
Terrified of the gun, Jasper gingerly puts it back in his desk.
He surveys the mess in his apartment.

ECU: A little **STUFFED LION** is on the floor.

It's the only thing Jasper picks up and puts back on the shelf.
Jasper checks his watch, realizes how late he is.

INT. JASPER'S NISSAN - EVENING

About to have a breakdown, Jasper weaves in and out of traffic. His knuckles are white from gripping the wheel.

He makes a phone call on his cell. He gets VOICEMAIL.

AUNT ROSE (V.O.)

It's Rose. Leave me a message.

Jasper HANGS UP on ROSE's VOICEMAIL, almost side-swipes a parked car. He guns the Nissan through downtown Portland.

Scattered, Jasper makes another CALL.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

City and state, please?

JASPER

Boise, Idaho, do you have the number for a Mary Whitehead?

A long, pregnant pause.

OPERATOR

I'll connect you.

JASPER

NO NO NO!!! I just wanted to see --

The CALL IS ALREADY CONNECTED. The PHONE IS RINGING...

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hello?

HOLD ON JASPER. Filled with fear.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hello?...

(beat)

Hello?

Finally, the WOMAN HANGS UP.

Jasper is too rattled to make the left turn against a wall of oncoming traffic. CARS HONK. The light changes - He is paralyzed. More HORNS. The light changes again, and...

Jasper GUNS IT and is BROAD-SIDED by an SUV. He fish-tails, then careens into the curb. The AIRBAG EXPLODES in his face.

EXT. STREET - PIONEER COURTHOUSE SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Bruised and bleeding, covered in debris, Jasper gets out of his mangled Nissan. Woozy, he looks off into the Courthouse Square to see CLARK GABLE's FACE glowing 60-feet high on a MOVIE SCREEN.

EXT. PIONEER COURTHOUSE SQUARE - NIGHT

Thousands pack the Town Square, which has been transformed into an outdoor movie theater. "FLICKS ON THE BRICKS."

Jasper finds Nicole on a picnic blanket on the outskirts of the Square, watching "**IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT.**"

Nicole has already polished off a bottle of wine. She's loaded.

NICOLE
(like a 30's movie star)
Where you been hidin' my whole
life, Buster?

JASPER
I...was in a car accident.

Nicole sees the gash on his forehead and her demeanor changes.

NICOLE
Oh my God, are you ok?

Jasper sits down. Nicole kisses him.

NICOLE
You have dust in your hair.

She dusts Jasper off, takes him into her arms. He holds on for dear life.

NICOLE
All your buttons are screwy, baby.

Nicole fixes the buttons on his gray sweater. He shivers. She wraps her scarf around him, opens another bottle of wine.

JASPER
If I told you lightning was gonna
strike right there in two seconds.
Would you move?

NICOLE
Of course I would.

Jasper's mind is racing.

JASPER

Do you believe you can change your fate?

NICOLE

Are you concussed?

Jasper pours himself a glass of wine and downs it.

NICOLE

How about this for fate? The day after I sell all my pictures, I get a call from the gallery. They're going out of business. They were the ones sponsoring me, my Visa runs out in 27 days. I have to go back to Canada.

JASPER

(tries to process this)
You're leaving?

NICOLE

(laughs ironically)
Unless you wanna marry me?

Jasper's eyes widen. Nicole clinks his glass, downs her wine.

JASPER

Do you have a middle name?

NICOLE

Michelle.

JASPER

Nicole Michelle Price?

NICOLE

Yeah, why?

JASPER

I'm sorry, I got this letter, and...it was bizarre, I can't explain it.

NICOLE

Who was it from?

JASPER

(falters)
I don't...know.

NICOLE

What did it say?

Jasper doesn't even know where to begin.

After a beat, Nicole touches the gash on his head.

NICOLE
You're acting strange...but you
look so sweet.

She starts to kiss Jasper's neck.

NICOLE
(whispers in his ear)
I need you.

She keeps kissing him.

CU JASPER: He looks around, self conscious. Nobody notices.

They start to kiss passionately. Jasper pushes Nicole back on the blanket, gets on top of her.

NICOLE
Hold me down.

He takes pause.

NICOLE
Like this.

Nicole clasps his hands around her wrists. He pushes her to the ground. She likes it. Now, he's charged up. Filled with reckless abandon, they have sex in public.

No one pays them any attention, everyone watches CLARK GABLE and CLAUDETTE COLBERT banter on the screen.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jasper helps a staggering drunk Nicole into the apartment. She can barely walk. He turns on the lights. Nicole sees all her PHOTOGRAPHS hanging on his wall.

She tries to focus. Jasper has a smug sense of satisfaction.

JASPER
They grew on me.

NICOLE
(overcome with emotion)
That's the nicest...no one's ever
done anything like that for me.

JASPER

Don't they look great on the wall?

Then, Nicole changes on a dime.

NICOLE

Am I some kind of charity case to you?

JASPER

No, I --

NICOLE

I am not a fucking charity case!

JASPER

I never thought you were.

NICOLE

I'm gonna be sick.

Nicole pushes Jasper out of her way as she runs to the bathroom. Jasper backs into the wall - knocking one of the PHOTOGRAPHS to the floor. The GLASS SHATTERS.

Jasper bends down to pick up the pieces.

INSERT PHOTO - Signed by "**HANNAH PRICE**".

ON JASPER'S FACE: His eyes light up with abject fear.

FLASH TO ECU of EVERY PICTURE. They're all signed by "**HANNAH**".
It's like the photos are screaming at him.

INT. JASPER'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nicole hugs the toilet. Jasper enters with trepidation. He sits on the edge of the bathtub. She is a crying, self-pitying mess.

NICOLE

Please take care of me.

These words dig into Jasper's soul. His ultimate weakness.

NICOLE

I love you.

He wants to say it back, but the words don't come.

NICOLE

I do. I'm in love with you.

Jasper is powerless to stop feeling the way he feels.

NICOLE
I don't deserve you.

All he can do is hold her as she drunkenly sobs.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jasper wakes up, alone in bed.

INT. JASPER'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Jasper enters the kitchen to find Nicole making breakfast.

NICOLE
I'm a shitty cook, but I feel
terrible about last night.
(then)
I can't believe you bought my
pictures.

Nicole kisses Jasper's cheek. He is filled with dread.

JASPER
Why do all your photos say "Hannah"?

NICOLE
It's kind of my nom de plume, I use
it for my art. It's fun to be
someone else.

Jasper can't believe what he's hearing.

NICOLE
I love palindromes. Perfect
symmetry, an "H" to get things
started, an "H" to finish the story.

JASPER
(dazed)
Sometimes I go by Jack.

NICOLE
Who doesn't like a Jack?

Just as, the SMOKE ALARM GOES OFF.

NICOLE
That would be the toast.

The toaster is billowing with smoke. Nicole pulls the plug. The ALARM keeps SOUNDING. She jumps, swatting at the ALARM.

Jasper grabs a broom and knocks it out of the ceiling, pulling plaster down with it. It SQUAWKS one more time, then stops.

EXT. SEATTLE FERRY - DAY

As the Ferry knifes through the fog, we FIND JASPER on the bow. The SEATTLE SKYLINE is behind him.

Jasper tries to escape by playing "*Words with Friends*". The Game abruptly clicks off for an INCOMING PHONE CALL.

INSERT RINGING PHONE - "WORK". Jasper presses IGNORE.

INT. WILLAMETTE WEEK - SAME TIME

Trevor sits at Jasper's desk, leaves him a message.

TREVOR

What the shit, man? We're running
this issue without your column.
If you're not dead or moved to
Tuscon, you better call me pronto.

EXT. FERRY - SAME TIME

BACK TO JASPER - On the bow of the ferry.

INSERT iPHONE - "*WORDS WITH FRIENDS*"

Jasper compulsively scrolls to a game vs "*AndersonPA*." He texts his opponent ... *Jasper: "It's your move."*

After a beat, he texts angrily ... *Jasper: "Make a word."*

Jasper grows more and more impatient, like the world depends on this guy making a word. Finally...

AndersonPA: "Having dinner with my family. Can't play now."

Jasper: "Get your priorities in order."

After another beat ... *Jasper: "Your fucking move!"*

EXT. BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, WASHINGTON - DAY

A quaint island town, surrounded by Puget Sound.

EXT. AUNT ROSE'S HOUSE - BAINBRIDGE ISLAND - DAY

Jasper walks up the steps of an old colonial house. The wind hisses off the water, chilling him to the bone. Jasper rings the doorbell. He waits, no answer.

He lifts a planter, finds the house key, and opens the door.

JASPER
(calls out)
Rose?

INT. AUNT ROSE'S HOUSE - BAINBRIDGE ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

Jasper takes off his shoes, walks through the home.

We see PICTURES of Jasper as a BOY. Jasper with his Aunt Rose at the Seattle Space Needle. Jasper's high school graduation photo.

QUICK CUTS:

-- Jasper opens a filing cabinet, pulls out stacks of papers.

-- He pores over Rose's long distance phone bills. From his satchel, he pulls out the Boise area code (208), looks for a match on the phone bill. No match.

-- Jasper leafs through the drawers of Rose's desk.

-- He goes through a pile of personal items on top of the desk.

Jasper's eyes land on something.

INSERT: A burgundy BOX OF STATIONERY, with "JASPER AYLES" stenciled on the letterhead.

THE PACKAGE IS SEALED.

It is the same stationery the letter was written on. Jasper turns over the box.

INSERT: The STATIONERY BOX is copyrighted, "2011".

INT. THE RUSTY SKUPPER BAR - BAINBRIDGE ISLAND - DAY

Jasper finds **ROSE AYLES**, 50's, a kind face that's seen some miles, with a klatch of LOCALS watching a Mariner game on tv.

AUNT ROSE
A-Rod's an A-Hole if he doesn't go
into the Hall as a Mariner.

All her comrades agree. Rose looks up and sees Jasper.

AUNT ROSE
Jazzy, I didn't know you were coming.

JASPER
Can I talk to you outside?
(to Group)
Hey guys.

The entire table greets Jasper with a chorus of "JAZZY".

AUNT ROSE
It's the eighth inning. Here's some
quarters, go play the pop-a-shot.

LOCAL
Your high score's still up there.

ANGLE POP-A-SHOT: "JAZZY" 38,190 points

Jasper walks out of the bar.

EXT. RUSTY SKUPPER - DAY

LATER: Rose comes outside to find Jasper pacing on the gravel.

AUNT ROSE
We gave up two in the bottom of the
ninth. Shitty road trip.

Rose sparks up a cigarette.

JASPER
Did you write me that letter?

AUNT ROSE
What letter?

From his satchel, Jasper takes out the SEALED BOX of STATIONERY.

AUNT ROSE
I guess I don't need to wrap it now.
That was your birthday present.

JASPER
Is my mother alive?

Rose takes a long pause.

AUNT ROSE
Did she contact you?

His mouth agape, Jasper just got his answer.

He is flooded with emotion. Rose tries to console him. Jasper pulls away from her, stalks off down the hill.

EXT. PUGET SOUND - MOMENTS LATER

Rose catches up to Jasper at the shoreline. The WAVES CRASH against a retaining wall.

JASPER

Why did you tell me she was dead?

AUNT ROSE

She was. To you. To you and me.

JASPER

But she's not dead!!!

AUNT ROSE

You were 5. She put you in my arms, went to get cigarettes, and never came back.

Jasper is rendered mute.

AUNT ROSE

Mary couldn't be your mother anymore. She didn't want to be. She was so fucked up.

JASPER

She had cancer.

AUNT ROSE

It's easier to tell a kid his mother has cancer, than she's a junkie.

JASPER

But she was sick, I remember.

AUNT ROSE

That was her trying to detox.

JASPER

Why? Why would you lie to me?

AUNT ROSE

Better she be dead, then just up and leave her son.

Jasper is devastated.

JASPER
She lives in Idaho.

Rose smokes the cigarette all the way down in one drag.

JASPER
When's the last time you talked to
her?

AUNT ROSE
You were 9.

JASPER
What did she say?

Rose doesn't want to answer.

JASPER
What's the difference now?

AUNT ROSE
She wanted money. She said she was
clean, but I didn't believe it, so I
hung up on her. I told her she was
dead, and made her agree to it.

Jasper is a passenger in his own life right now.

AUNT ROSE
I'm sorry, Jazzy. I tried to do
what was best for you.

Rose tries to go to Jasper, but he shrugs her off.

AUNT ROSE
Are you spending the night? The
last ferry --

JASPER
I'll be on it.

Rose is consumed with guilt and grief.

ROSE
(grasping at straws)
Did your bird come back yet?

JASPER
Nope, Rose. Just my mom.

All we hear is the CRUNCHING of GRAVEL as Jasper trudges uphill.

EXT. DOCK - PORT OF ASTORIA - NIGHT

A bundled up Nicole waits for Jasper as he gets off the ferry. A Carnival is disassembled in the port. Nicole excitedly holds up a bag of guppies and funnel cake.

Jasper is happier to see Nicole than he wants to be. She jumps into his arms, kisses him like he just returned from the war.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jasper changes his t-shirt, puts on a different gray hoodie. Nicole descends the spiral staircase into the bedroom.

NICOLE

You don't have a big enough bowl,
so I put the fish in the sink.

JASPER

Have you ever wanted to find your
birth parents?

NICOLE

(caught off guard)
When I was a kid, yeah. I wrote a
letter to my mother.

JASPER

What kind of letter?

NICOLE

In crayon. "Atomic tangerine,"
that was the color.

JASPER

Then what? Did you send it?

NICOLE

I put it under my pillow. When I
woke up, it was gone. Like the
tooth fairy, but no dollar bill. I
pretended I sent it, never got a
response, obviously. But I wasn't
mad.

(then)

I had this fantasy she was some
kind of a saint who carried me for
nine months, she sacrificed
everything. I wanted to keep her
that way. My sisters used to tease
me all the time about it.

A beat, she laughs.

NICOLE
What made you ask that?

JASPER
She's still alive. Mary. My mother.

NICOLE
What?

JASPER
She lives in Idaho. 25 years.
That's how long she's been dead.
And now, she's just...not dead.
I called, heard her voice.

WE HEAR, then SEE, WATER POURING down the spiral staircase.

ECU GOLDFISH: As they come bouncing down the steps in the FLOOD.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

WATER BILLOWS over the sink, through the kitchen, across the hard wood floor, down the staircase. Nicole turns off the sink.

JASPER
You said you were an only child.
Now you have sisters?

NICOLE
Half sisters. From my Dad's first marriage. Amanda and Beth.

JASPER
Which one's older?

NICOLE
Amanda, by two years.
(switches gears)
You just found out your mother is alive. Why are we talking about this?

JASPER
I need to know everything about you.

NICOLE
Ask me anything. I'm an open book.

Jasper studies the lines of her face, and we go to...

INT. JASPER'S LOFT - NIGHT

Nicole sleeps alone in Jasper's bed.

PAN THE DIMLY LIT ROOM TO: Jasper's face, illuminated by the screen of his LAPTOP.

ANGLE COMPUTER: **GOOGLE EARTH**

He taps away at the keyboard.

"8916 BROXTON AVENUE, BOISE, IDAHO, 83711"

We watch the SCREEN as it zooms in on the MAP. A satellite takes us closer and closer until we come to a HOUSE on a suburban cul-de-sac. ZOOM CLOSER, we see a living room window.

A CURSOR takes us left, then right, all over the HOUSE. The mailbox. The street. The surrounding homes.

HOLD ON JASPER, looking at his MOTHER'S HOUSE, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JASPER'S LOFT - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

HOURS LATER: Jasper is still transfixed by Google Earth.

The water glass on his desk begins to RATTLE. The bedroom starts to SHAKE. The entire apartment is moving. Nicole vaults out of bed. PEOPLE SCREAM OUTSIDE. CAR ALARMS GO OFF.

Then, a DEAFENING SOUND unlike anything we've ever heard.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. JASPER'S BALCONY - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Jasper and Nicole step out on the balcony to see **MOUNT ST. HELENS ERUPTING**. It is truly a spectacle.

ECU JASPER: He watches the Volcano with awed fear.

ANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD - PEOPLE stand in their windows and roof tops. A front row seat to a once in a lifetime event.

The Volcano ILLUMINATES THE MIDNIGHT SKY. A barrage of bursts. Vibrant colors and a BLAST of SOUNDS as plumes of smoke and lava.

IN SLOW MOTION: Jasper looks over at Nicole. She glows in the spotlight. The lights dance in her eyes. It is magical.

INT. GUS CUTS BARBER SHOP - DAY

All eyes are on Jasper. He wipes his sweaty hands on his pants.

KEVIN
Fuckin' Nostradamus over here.

JASPER
I didn't predict anything.

BRAD
But they came true. You foretold these events. Your mother is alive. A volcano erupted. This girl is Hannah.

KEVIN
Roland, should we say our good-byes now?

Jasper looks over at Roland, who is anxious and shaken.

ANDREA
Do I age well, Jasper?

JASPER
I'm not from the future.

KEVIN
You age fat, Andrea. Duh.

JASPER
Roland, do you wanna chime in here?

ROLAND
I'd like to hear the part about me again if I could.

JASPER
It just said "*Roland dies suddenly.*" I'm sorry.

ROLAND
(boils over)
You're sorry? This wasn't part of the exercise!

JASPER
I fucking wind up suicidal, Roland!

ROLAND
And I wind up fucking dead!

Stunned silence all around. Then...

BRAD

You better break up with this girl,
Jasper.

JASPER

What if I can't?

ANDREA

What do you mean, you can't?

JASPER

I just...can't let go.

ROLAND

Even if it kills you?

The air clears. Everyone stares at Jasper.

EXT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Conflicted, Jasper pauses outside her door. Filled with anxiety, he tries to pull himself together a little bit, then knocks.

Nicole opens the door. Jasper looks at her and gets lost.

JASPER

Why are you so beautiful?

Her eyes sparkle, she kisses him. Then, she excitedly whips out two THEATER TICKETS.

NICOLE

"The Cherry Orchard!"

JASPER

I've read it so many times, it's
his only play I haven't seen.

She grabs a bottle of vodka, makes drinks in two plastic cups.

NICOLE

We should take "roadies." Aren't
all Chekhov's characters drunks?

JASPER

Bring the bottle.

INT. PORTLAND PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

Chekhov's "THE CHERRY ORCHARD" is in full swing.

ON STAGE: The ACTORS swill their vodka in the midst of a SCENE.

PAN THE AUDIENCE: Everyone is stoic, serious.

We Continue to hear the ACTORS in B.G.

FIND JASPER & NICOLE: Nicole chuckles at a line. She laughs out loud at another.

She turns to see Jasper, just staring at her.

NICOLE

Oh my God, no one else is laughing.
It's not supposed to be funny, is it?

JASPER

It's a comedy. No one ever seems to
get that. But you did.

Jasper takes Nicole's hand. Then he swigs Vodka from the bottle.

EXT. THEATER DISTRICT - PORTLAND

Jasper and Nicole walk out of the theater. It starts to rain.

Without missing a beat, Nicole starts to dance around him like Gene Kelly in "*Singing in the Rain.*"

And Jasper falls in love all over again.

JASPER

Chekhov shows us the value of
opening oneself up to the beauty of
the world and the love of others,
and the blatant foolishness of
this in the face of the inevitable
destruction of beauty and love.

Nicole just looks at him, impressed.

NICOLE

Your dissertation?

JASPER

Pretentious, I know.

NICOLE

I think it's brilliant. Why didn't
you finish?

JASPER
I guess...because I didn't know
what I would do when I finished.
So, I just didn't...

NICOLE
You will some day.
(then)
I think I finish things quickly
just to be finished with them.

They walk through the rain, two lovers in hoodies.

INT. NICOLE'S BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Jasper and Nicole have passionate sex. She arches her back, digs her fingers into the sheets.

NICOLE
Call me Hannah, it turns me on.

Jasper tries to keep going, but his mind gets the best of him.

JASPER
I can't.

Jasper rolls off Nicole. He looks freaked out.

NICOLE
What's wrong?

JASPER
I don't want to call you Hannah.

NICOLE
Then don't. But that's not it,
what's wrong?

He tries to talk but his voice trails off.

NICOLE
Is it me?

JASPER
No.

NICOLE
I don't believe you.
(beat)
When you said you were in love
with me, did you mean it?

Jasper doesn't say a word.

NICOLE
That's not the answer I wanted to hear.

JASPER
Yes, I meant it. But maybe we're moving too quick.

NICOLE
There's no such thing. You move how you move.

A terminally long beat.

NICOLE
What's the difference? I'm leaving the country anyway. And nobody cares.

JASPER
I CARE!

NICOLE
You don't love me. You never did.

JASPER
That's not true!

NICOLE
(an ironic laugh)
"Beauty and love will inevitably be destroyed." You're the one who said it, Jasper. Clearly, you were right.

Jasper has no comeback for his own words.

NICOLE
I need you to leave.

JASPER
Nicole --

NICOLE
Just go. Please.

Jasper starts putting on his clothes.

JASPER
I wish I could explain.

As he puts on his shoes, she pushes him to the front door.

NICOLE
Why didn't I trust myself? You're
just like the rest of them.

JASPER
(enraged)
Don't tell me I'm like someone else!

Nicole forces Jasper out, SLAMS THE DOOR in his face.

EXT. NICOLE'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jasper is about to BANG on the door, then stops himself.
He fumes down the corridor and plows through the EMERGENCY EXIT.

EXT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - EARLY AM

Jasper arrives to find Roland pacing in front of the apartment.
Roland's just had his third coffee. He's wound up, ready to pop.

ASH from MOUNT ST. HELENS wafts down on them like filthy snow.

ROLAND
Why the hell is your cell phone off?

JASPER
I didn't charge it.

ROLAND
Who doesn't charge their fucking
phone?!

JASPER
Jesus, settle down.

Roland sees Jasper's cup with "**Jack**" written on it.

ROLAND
"Jack." So obvious with your
textbook escapism, self loathing
bullshit.

JASPER
What are you doing here?

ROLAND
I feel like there's someone inside
my head, jack-hammering my brain.

JASPER
I wish I could help you, but I'm
leaving for Idaho. I have to get
to the train.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. AMTRAK TRAIN - DAY

The "CASCADE CORRIDOR" EXPLODES INTO FRAME, speeding across the
Northwest Trail.

INT. THE CASCADE CORRIDOR TRAIN - DAY

Jasper looks out the window, stoically watches the spectacular
landscape flying by. HOLD ON JASPER FOR A LONG BEAT.

JASPER
I find it really odd that you're
here.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: ROLAND is sitting next to Jasper.

ROLAND
Who else can I talk about this with?

JASPER
Your own therapist?

ROLAND
They would take away my license.

Roland tries to find his breath.

ROLAND
I have a fever. Feel my head.

Jasper reluctantly touches Roland's head.

JASPER
No fever. You just feel gross.

ROLAND
I gotta get my blood pumping.

Roland stands and starts to stretch vigorously in the aisle.

JASPER
We've pinned all of my issues on
the fact that my mother died.
Except now, she never died.

ROLAND

She did what she did. There's nothing you can do about it. All you can control is what you do now. You need to end your relationship with Hannah.

JASPER

Nicole.

ROLAND

You were never able to let go of her. That's why you wrote the letter.

JASPER

That fucking letter! Seriously Roland, how could this happen?

ROLAND

Einstein said, "*All time is now.*"

JASPER

What does that even mean!? If you're gonna answer me like that, then don't answer at all!

(beat)

What if I can change fate?

ROLAND

You have a gun in your mouth and I'm dead, so I hope you can.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE CASCADE CORRIDOR TRAIN - DAY

Jasper paces the train. He sits down next to an out-cold Roland. He rests his head against the window. He takes out a fifth of Vodka and guzzles it down.

OVER THIS, WE HEAR JASPER'S VOICEMAIL BEEP.

NICOLE (V.O.)

I've never missed anyone like this. I'm trying not to, but I can't help it. I hope you're ok, baby.

ANGLE WINDOW: We see the snow-capped Rocky Mountains. Sideways rain smacks against the train.

Jasper closes his eyes, and we...

FLASH CUT TO:

The SCREEN BECOMES GRAINY...

CLOSE ON: 5 YEAR-OLD JASPER, walking through a CEMETERY, trailing behind AUNT ROSE, 35. Young Jasper holds flowers.

*5 YEAR-OLD JASPER
Where is she buried?*

*AUNT ROSE
Right here.*

They come to an UNMARKED PLAQUE in the ground.

*AUNT ROSE
Give Mommy the flowers. I'll wait
over at the gate.*

Young Jasper lays the flowers down on the unmarked grave.

*5 YEAR-OLD JASPER
When I have money some day, I'll
put your name on there.*

Young Jasper runs his hand over the smooth plaque.

*5 YEAR-OLD JASPER
Wait for me, Aunt Rosie...*

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT: BOISE, IDAHO

An ordinary suburban neighborhood in Boise.

INT. TAXI - DAY

OPEN on a shaky Jasper, now wearing his corduroy blazer over the gray hoodie outfit. In the backseat of a cab, he stares at the pelican mailbox of a home surrounded by a white picket fence.

8916 Broxton Avenue "The Whiteheads"

The driveway and both sides of the street are packed with cars.

*ROLAND
I would have waited to talk to her.*

*JASPER
I got her once and hung up. Every
time since, I keep getting the
machine. So I just said, "fuck it."*

ROLAND
Make sure you know what you want to say.

JASPER
First up, I'd like to let her know she destroyed my life.

ROLAND
She might slam the door in your face.

JASPER
Then I'll just have to break the door down, won't I?

A beat.

ROLAND
I'm still confused by the champagne.

Roland gestures to the bottle of Veuve Cliquot in Jasper's hand.

JASPER
I figured it'd be a good ice-breaker. You can't go wrong with champagne.

CAB DRIVER
Gives me migraines.

JASPER
Leave the meter running.

EXT. MARY'S HOME - BOISE, IDAHO - DAY

MOMENTS LATER: Jasper walks slowly up the driveway.

He can't feel his legs as he climbs the porch steps. A MAN in a black suit comes outside to smoke a cigarette.

JASPER
Excuse me, is this Mary's house?

MAN
Yeah. Go on in.
(beat)
Champagne?

He holds the door open for Jasper. It's a crowded house.

INT. MARY'S HOME - BOISE, IDAHO - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper moves through his mother's house in a daze. Everyone is in suits and dresses, eating finger sandwiches, talking quietly.

HOLD ON JASPER, adrift at the party, holding his Veuve Cliquot.

He sees **PICTURES of MARY** from various stages in her life.

Finally, Jasper finds ROBERT, 50's, kind faced, and stops him.

JASPER

Do you know where Mary is?

ROBERT

We...just came from the cemetery.

JASPER

(it dawns on him)

This is a funeral?

ROBERT

Mary's funeral. I'm her cousin,
Robert.

Robert shakes Jasper's hand. Jasper is dazed.

An attractive WOMAN, early 20's, looking particularly overwhelmed (**LINDSEY**) comes over to Robert.

ROBERT

I'm so sorry, Linds.

LINDSEY

(hugs Robert)

Thank you so much for coming.

Jasper just stares at Lindsey, frozen. She notices him.

LINDSEY

Hi, I'm Lindsey Whitehead. Did
you...know my mother?

JASPER

(long beat)

How did she die?

LINDSEY

(thinks this is odd)

Cancer.

JASPER

That's rather ironic.

LINDSEY
I'm sorry, can I ask who you are?

JASPER
Did you see her body?

ROBERT
What kind of question is that?

JASPER
I'm surprised she wasn't cremated.
Destroy all the evidence.

LINDSEY
Who are you!?

JASPER
(beat)
Mary was my mother, too.

Dumbfounded, Lindsey just stares at Jasper.

LINDSEY
What are you talking about?

JASPER
I'm Jasper. She left when I was 5.

Lindsey starts to cry.

LINDSEY
I want you to leave.

A little boy, **ETHAN**, 3, runs into her arms. Robert grabs Jasper by the arm, starts to pull him away.

JASPER
She was already dead once! Why do
you believe her now?

Jasper's VOICE KEEPS RISING, he CAUSES a SCENE.

Robert and a few Guests force the hysterical Jasper to the door.

JASPER
Where is she buried?!

HOLD ON LINDSEY, watching Jasper in horror...

EXT. MARY'S HOME - BOISE, IDAHO - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper passes Roland, who does jumping jacks on the driveway.

JASPER
(incredulous)
I brought champagne to a funeral.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BOISE CEMETERY - DAY

Jasper pours out the bottle of champagne over MARY's GRAVE.

"MARY WHITEHEAD 1954-2011. Beloved Mother, Grandmother, Wife"

JASPER
Was I really that bad a kid?

Jasper steals the flowers off her grave and trudges back to Roland, watching from a distance.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Jasper and Roland ride the Cascade Corridor in silence.

ROLAND
I'm gonna have some gum. You?

JASPER
Sure.

The gum exchange takes place. Silence for the next 400 miles.

OVER THIS, WE HEAR JASPER'S VOICEMAIL BEEP.

NICOLE'S VOICE
Ok, now I'm worried. I've called
three times.

INTERCUT WITH:

TIGHT ON NICOLE: LEAVING JASPER A MESSAGE.

NICOLE
I just want to see you.

WIDEN TO REVEAL...

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

NICOLE IS IN JASPER'S APARTMENT. She is sitting on his couch,
surrounding by the "Hannah" PHOTOGRAPHS.

NICOLE
I love you, Jasper.

BACK TO:

JASPER ON THE TRAIN: AS BEFORE

As the Passenger's CONVERSATIONS get LOUDER and LOUDER, we PUSH IN ON JASPER'S FACE...

EXT. PORTLAND CEMETERY - DAY

Jasper still holds the stolen flowers. He stands before the UNMARKED GRAVE where he always thought his mother was buried.

JASPER
I'll find out your real name, I will.
(lays down the flowers)
When I have the money, I promise I'll
put your name on there this time.

INT. ROLAND'S CAR - EVENING

Roland pulls up in front of Jasper's building. They sit in the car for a long beat, both afraid to go back into the world.

JASPER
Is it unethical to have your
therapist be your best friend?

The VOLCANIC ASH rains down around them. It looks like the Apocalypse is near.

ROLAND
Considering the circumstances, I
think it's apropos.

A beat.

JASPER
What are you gonna do now?

ROLAND
Probably stop by the market, make
some calls, then...get ready to die.

Jasper says good-bye to Roland and gets out of the car.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT ENTRANCEWAY - NIGHT

Jasper opens his mailbox, pulls out a stack of mail, shuffles through it, then stuffs it all back in the box.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The ALARM CLOCK BLARES. In a haze, Jasper puts the LIGHT THERAPY BOX on his chest. Blinding U.V. RAYS SHINE in his face. Jasper just lies there.

INT. JASPER'S CLOSET - MORNING

Jasper puts on one of his GRAY HOODIES.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Jasper sprinkles seed into the bird feeder. He leaves the CAGE DOOR and the WINDOW OPEN.

EXT. THE STEEL BRIDGE - EVENING

Jasper stands alone on the bridge. His PHONE RINGS.

INSERT PHONE - "NICOLE"

He hesitates for a beat, then answers the phone.

JASPER

Hi.

INTERCUT WITH NICOLE

EXT. RESTAURANT - SAME TIME

She stands outside a restaurant, talks to Jasper on her cell.

NICOLE

I feel sick without you. I don't know what to do.

CONTINUE TO INTERCUT BETWEEN THEM

JASPER

Neither do I.

NICOLE
I want to make this work. Tell me
what to do, I'll do it.

Jasper is so conflicted, but he doesn't say a word.

NICOLE
(long silence)
I'll let you go. Good-bye, Jasper.

She puts her phone away and enters the restaurant.

HOLD ON JASPER, still holding his phone.

JASPER
Don't go.

INT. RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

A handsome MAN (BRIAN), late 30's, spots Nicole and waves his hand. She goes over to him. They kiss.

NICOLE
Sorry, I was on the phone with my
landlord.

Nicole sits across from Brian. She drinks from his wine glass.

NICOLE
He won't let me renew my lease. I
don't know what I'm gonna do. I
can't afford to pay "first & last"
somewhere else.

BRIAN
It's too soon for us to be living
together. Four months seems like
we're rushing.

NICOLE
According to you. I knew this was
gonna happen. Typical, just typical.

BRIAN
Don't be so theatrical, Hannah.

Just as, a WAITER comes to the table.

NICOLE
Can I get a Bourbon, neat?

INT. THE "WILLAMETTE WEEK" OFFICES - DAY

Jasper enters the office to zero fanfare. He is looking more and more unkempt. Everyone is puzzled to see him, especially Phil.

PHIL

Jasper? What are you doing here?

JASPER

Just coming to work.

PHIL

You don't work here anymore.

JASPER

(tries to keep it together)

Phil. I'm sorry, I've had a really bad...

PHIL

You haven't shown up in weeks. You haven't returned, I don't know, a dozen phone calls?

JASPER

I don't think that's true.

PHIL

What's true is, you're fired. Your stuff is in a box at security.

Phil walks away, leaves Jasper standing there.

ANGLE TREVOR: Peering over his cubicle. Trevor now has Jasper's old "Entertainment Director" plaque.

TREVOR

No hard feelings, right buddy?

JASPER

Look Trevor, this place is gonna fold within a year, so you should start --

TREVOR

There's some sour grapes.

JASPER

I don't care about the job. You've always wanted it, I'm happy for you.

TREVOR

This guy! Gunning for his old position back.

JASPER
Just...never mind. Good luck, Trev.

Jasper turns and heads out of the office.

TREVOR
(calls out)
Happy Hour later? On me.

And Jasper leaves Willamette Week forever.

EXT. PORTLAND STREET - EVENING

Jasper steps into the crosswalk -- Just as, the bevy of CYCLISTS BUZZ BY. Now, they sound like evil hornets. Their NOISE IS DEAFENING as they PASS HIM in all directions.

JASPER
(yells out)
Shorts are for little boys!

Jasper continues walking. A drizzle morphs to a shower. It is a black rain as the drops mix with the ASH.

INT. POWELL'S BOOKSTORE - DAY

Jasper carries a large, heavy box of books up to Gwen.

GWEN
When we entered into this, we made a pact, a book a week. You can't just disappear. We're 3 books behind.

Jasper starts to unload his books onto the counter. It's his entire collection of RUSSIAN LITERATURE.

GWEN
Hell no. I'm not reading any more of this. *Nyet!*

JASPER
I'm here to sell everything.
Actually, you guys can have it for free.

GWEN
I just want to thank you again for making me realize how much I hate Russian literature.

JASPER
That's what I do. Spread joy
everywhere I go.

GWEN
Check this out. My short story is
getting published in The Atlantic.

JASPER
(lets this register)
Wow. That's...huge.

GWEN
I couldn't have done it without you.
Thanks for the notes.

Jasper looks lost for a moment.

JASPER
What's it like to get what you want?

GWEN
Jasper, are you ok?

JASPER
No, not particularly.

GWEN
Should I be worried about you?

Without another word, Jasper is out the door.

INT. GUS CUTS BARBER SHOP - EVENING

Jasper shows up halfway through Group. He is greeted like the prodigal son.

KEVIN
Jasper!

ANDREA
I'm so happy you're back. Do you
know how hard it is to sit here with
a broken circle?

BRAD
I was gonna have my housekeeper come,
make her sit in your spot.

KEVIN
Yeah bro, you can't just leave
without notice.

ANDREA
Then we wonder --

BRAD
Did he kill himself?

KEVIN
I had \$20 bucks on "yes".

Kevin hands Andrea a \$20 bill.

Jasper looks around the Barber Shop. No Roland.

JASPER
Where's Roland?

INT. ROLAND'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jasper rings the doorbell, knocks several times. He hears LOUD MUSIC coming from inside. He tries the door, it's ajar.

INT. ROLAND'S APARTMENT - EVENING

"CHAINS OF LOVE" by ERASURE reverberates through the place.

Jasper finds Roland, dancing in his bedroom as he gets dressed. He is manic, like he just inhaled a mountain of coke.

JASPER
Your door's open.

ROLAND
(hopped up)
I don't lock it anymore, I don't
worry about that stuff.

Roland passes Jasper with a burst of energy. He bounces from room to room, putting on his shoes, jacket, and a backpack.

JASPER
Jesus, how much coffee have you had?

ROLAND
Not a drip.

JASPER
You missed Group today.

Roland never stops moving.

ROLAND
Is it Wednesday? I don't really
keep "days" anymore.

JASPER
What the hell does that mean?

Roland finally stops moving. He turns to Jasper.

ROLAND
I hermitted myself. I've been
hiding out, terrified to leave the
house. I stopped seeing my patients,
avoided all human contact. I would
order food and leave the money
outside so I didn't have to see the
guy. Then it got to the point where
I couldn't eat the food, I didn't
trust that either. I thought I'd
never be able to leave here. I
waited to die.

Roland opens a closet. Wall to wall TOILET PAPER.

ROLAND
But it all changed in a split second.
Come on, walk and talk!

Roland puts on a backpack, and he's rushing out the door.

INT. ROLAND'S PRIUS - DAY

Jasper and Roland head Downtown. Roland drives with purpose, but
all of his fear is gone.

ROLAND
I was taking a bath, just sitting
there, stewing in my own filth. I
kept propping myself up because I
didn't want to drown. When I got
out, I didn't have a towel. I
reached for the lamp, not noticing
the switch had fallen out. I was
soaking wet and stuck my hand right
into an open socket. I couldn't pull
my hand away. My heart was jumping
out of my body. I thought, this is
it. Finally, I fell to the floor.
(long beat)
Then, it hit me. I'M NOT DEAD.
(then)
But, I can die anywhere. ANY TIME.
Forget fear. Conquer that!

Roland double-parks and hops out of the car. They are in front of a PINK SKYSCRAPER, the biggest building in Portland.

EXT. "BIG PINK" (THE US BANCORP BUILDING) - CONTINUOUS

Roland bee-lines for the front doors of the building. Jasper gets out, stares up at the skyscraper.

JASPER
Why are we at Big Pink?

INT. ELEVATOR - BIG PINK - DAY

Jasper and Roland take the elevator up to the 42nd Floor.

JASPER
Wanna tell me what we're doing here?

ROLAND
Everyone's future has one thing in
common --

EXT. ROOF - BIG PINK - CONTINUOUS

Jasper tries to keep up with Roland. It's cold and windy on the roof, we can see all of Portland.

ROLAND
Maybe mine will be today, tomorrow,
or sometime in the next 10 years.
It almost happened last night. At
least I'm gonna die not being afraid
to die. On my own terms.

Roland keeps walking towards the edge of the roof. He opens his backpack and never stops.

JASPER
Slow down, Roland!

ROLAND
By the way, I'm bisexual, but I
lean heavily towards men.

Roland goes into a quick run...

ROLAND
TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS!

He never stops running, JUMPS OFF THE BUILDING.

JASPER
Roland!!!

Jasper rushes to the edge.

JASPER'S VANTAGE POINT:

Roland FREE-FALLS for 5 seconds, then TOSSES A PARACHUTE out of his bag and FLOATS TO THE GROUND.

He just base-jumped off Big Pink!

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper frantically presses the elevator button over and over.

INT. STAIRWELL - BIG PINK - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper sprints down 40 flights of stairs.

EXT. BIG PINK - STREET - DAY

Jasper runs out of Big Pink to find an elated Roland being escorted away by two SECURITY GUARDS. He looks like Superman, the parachute is his cape.

A POLICE CAR pulls up. COPS jump out, cuff Roland and stuff him in the back of their squad car.

Jasper just stands there, stunned.

ROLAND
Jasper, maybe we can change our fate.

The Cop Car pulls away. HOLD ON JASPER...

INT. WALGREEN'S - DAY

Nicole pushes a cart down an aisle. From the shelf, she grabs Gift Wrapping Paper, Scotch Tape. Then another aisle. Soap. Toilet Paper. And an EPT HOME PREGNANCY KIT.

EXT. JASPER'S APARTMENT ENTRANCEWAY - NIGHT

Jasper arrives to find a WRAPPED GIFT leaned against his door.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jasper opens the wrapping, takes out a frame.

INSERT PHOTOGRAPH:

A hand colored BLACK & WHITE of **THE KIDS PLAYING IN THE PARK.**

The PICTURE COMES TO LIFE, re-enacting Jasper's fantasy.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nicole opens the door and gives Jasper a warm embrace.

JASPER

I always wanted to take a picture of them. I guess I was just afraid I'd get arrested.

She kisses him.

Jasper looks around the apartment - Packed boxes are everywhere. He fills with panic.

JASPER

I'm not letting you leave.

NICOLE

I have to go.

JASPER

I'll go with you. Toronto...
Kitchener. It sounds perfect.

NICOLE

Yeah, maybe to you. I'm not going back there. You don't know what I went through.

JASPER

No, I don't. Tell me, let me help you.

Her wounds bleed through him.

NICOLE

(tears in her eyes)
I can't go back.

CLOSE ON JASPER: His mind is hurtling a million miles an hour.

ECU: Packed boxes.

ECU: The furniture is gone.

ECU: Bubble wrap everywhere.

JASPER
(reeling)
Marry me.

NICOLE
(taken aback)
You don't have to say that.

JASPER
I want to marry you. I know we can
create a different future.

Nicole is moved, troubled. A jumbled mix.

NICOLE
I can't stay. I didn't renew my
lease.

JASPER
People who are married usually live
together.

NICOLE
I sold my car.

JASPER
You can have mine. I'm not that
strong a driver anyway.

Jasper takes her in his arms. She breaks the hug.

NICOLE
Jasper, I'm pregnant.

These words rattle around in Jasper's brain.

NICOLE
I wasn't sure if I would tell you
or not. You were gone, and...

He tries to catch his breath.

NICOLE
I don't know what to do.

A long beat.

JASPER

I mean, this is...having a child,
it's the biggest...oh my God...

(pulls the trigger)

I want you to keep it! We should
keep it!

NICOLE

You want to have a baby with me?

JASPER

Marry me. Have a baby with me!
Yes, This, all of it.

Now, she's crying. They kiss. It's emotional and electric.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

OPEN TIGHT ON NICOLE. Sleeping. WIDEN TO REVEAL: Jasper is sitting in a chair next to the bed, watching her sleep. He is pensive, having an inner debate. The LETTER is in his hand.

JASPER

I got a letter from myself in the
future. It told me not to be with
you.

(beat)

But I can't help myself.

She doesn't stir. He just sits there, watching her.

EXT. BALCONY - JASPER'S LOFT - MOMENTS LATER

ECU: THE LETTER is ON FIRE.

As the flames get down to his fingertips, Jasper lets go. The letter has disappeared. A trial by fire. No turning back now.

INT. JASPER'S LOFT - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper slides back into bed next to Nicole, and we...

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. WOMEN'S CLINIC - DAY

Jasper and Nicole stand on the street, outside the clinic.

NICOLE

I don't have insurance.

JASPER

I'm paying. Are you sure you don't want me to come in with you?

NICOLE

It's nothing. Just some blood work. I'll be in and out in a half hour.

JASPER

By the way, you never said "yes" or "no."

NICOLE

It's yes! That should go without saying, I love you.

JASPER

(giddy)

Let's give him a cool middle name, like Mac. Good for a boy, or a girl. Or George...that's probably better for a boy.

Nicole sweetly kisses Jasper, then disappears into the Clinic.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Jasper sits in the park, beaming as he watches the kids play.

He gets a beep on his phone. *"WORDS WITH FRIENDS"*

INSERT: *"WORDS WITH FRIENDS."*

Overjoyed, he texts his opponent... **Jasper:** *"I'm having a baby!"*

After a beat, his opponent texts back. **MaShure248:** *"Your move."*

EXT. WOMEN'S CLINIC - DAY

Jasper paces on the street. He checks his watch. Finally, he can't take it anymore.

As he's about to barge through the doors, a NURSE wheels Nicole out in a wheelchair. She is groggy and ashen.

NURSE

Sir, are you her ride?

JASPER

Why are you in a wheelchair?

NURSE
It's just procedure. Sign this,
please.

The Nurse sticks a clipboard and release form in Jasper's face. Everything is happening so fast. He signs. The Nurse disappears back into the clinic.

JASPER
What happened?

NICOLE
(starts to cry)
I lost the baby.

Jasper is jolted.

NICOLE
Something...went wrong.

The wind is sucked out of him.

JASPER
Are you sure there's nothing they
can --

NICOLE
It's over, Jasper.

Crushed, they hold each other.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jasper tucks Nicole into bed. He gets in with her.

NICOLE
I just want to stay in bed forever.
She is vulnerable, he is protective, and we...

FADE OUT.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Jasper and Nicole sit at the kitchen table.

NICOLE
What if we went away somewhere? It
was Prague, you said...right? What
if we went to Prague?

JASPER
Now's not a good time for Prague.

Jasper has his laptop out, scrolls through "JOBS" on Craigslist.

NICOLE
We could try to sell the pictures?

ANGLE NICOLE'S PHOTOGRAPHS: Her pictures are everywhere. There isn't an empty space of wall.

CLOSE IN ON: *"The Kids in the Park."*

JASPER
All of them, but that one.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JASPER'S LOFT - NIGHT

Filled with people, Nicole's photo expo is in full swing. GUESTS have wine and cheese. An eclectic crowd, mixed with everyone from Jasper's Group.

CU PHOTOGRAPHS: *"HANNAH PRICE"* is signed on every one of them.

ANGLE KEVIN & ANDREA - Standing in front of a PHOTO.

ANDREA
I like this. I'm gonna buy it.

KEVIN
It's a better investment than all those fluffer-nutters you throw down.

ANDREA
(takes a calming breath)
Kevin, there's a possibility I could lose weight. I hope I will. But you, you'll never, ever be able to change your stupid, ugly, smug little face. I've been taking your shit since you were 15. I'm done!

Kevin is silenced. Andrea is triumphant.

FIND JASPER & NICOLE, joined at the hip, talking to their GUESTS.

NICOLE
You have so many friends.

JASPER
If you don't know someone's last
name, "friend" should be used
loosely.

Roland approaches, holding hands with **GUS**, stocky, 50's.

JASPER
Roland, this is...

Jasper looks at Nicole, unsure how to introduce her.

NICOLE
Nicole.

JASPER
Call her Hannah.

Ad-lib introductions and hellos.

ROLAND
And this is Gus.

JASPER
Gus of Gus Cuts?

GUS
One and the same.

JASPER
I'm thinking about putting a barber
chair in here. So comfortable.

GUS
(smiles)
Hannah, I love your work. I had a
question about that one over there.

Nicole takes Gus over to look at a PHOTO. Roland and Jasper are
left alone. They share a smile.

JASPER
I guess you got paroled.

ROLAND
(scoffs)
They charged me with trespassing
and reckless endangerment.

Roland is a different person. Jasper is impressed.

ROLAND
You're throwing caution to the wind
with her.

JASPER
I can't let my life be dictated by
some crazy suicidal drunk...even if
that angry drunk is me.

ROLAND
(a wry smile)
Gus and I are leaping off the Space
Needle next week if you want in.

JASPER
Tempting, but I'm gonna pass.

SLOWLY, ALL THE ART DISAPPEARS OFF THE WALL, and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Jasper and Nicole drink their coffee. His to-go cup says "**Jack**,"
hers says "**Hannah**."

They count the checks from the ART SHOW.

JASPER
We should set up a joint account.

NICOLE
This is like playing house, except
we're really playing house.
(kisses him)
I'm gonna go pick up the forms for
the marriage license.

JASPER
I bought you an umbrella.

Jasper hands her a new UMBRELLA.

NICOLE
(touched)
Coming from you...that's a beautiful
gesture.

JASPER
It went against everything I believe
in...but at least you'll be dry.

She accepts the umbrella with a smile and leaves the apartment.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT ENTRANCEWAY - DAY

Jasper opens the mailbox. One ENVELOPE. Jasper takes it out and stares at it for a long beat.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jasper opens the ENVELOPE. It's a BILL from the WOMEN'S CLINIC:

INSERT BILL: Totalling \$2,600. It's itemized, with the biggest charge being for "D & E".

QUICK CUT TO: MOMENTS LATER. Jasper is on the phone.

JASPER

Hi, I'm calling regarding a bill.
Patient Number #4711, Nicole Price.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

How can I help you, sir?

JASPER

I just want to clarify a charge for
a "D & E," for \$1,600. What exactly
is a "D & E?"

INT. JASPER'S LOFT - EVENING

Jasper sits in the dark. Nicole enters, armed with groceries.

NICOLE

Don't worry, this meal is very
minimal labor required. I hope you
like truffle oil.

Nicole goes over to Jasper, kisses him on the cheek.

JASPER

I just got the bill from the clinic.

NICOLE

Oh no, was it really expensive?

JASPER

Why didn't you just tell me?

NICOLE

Tell you what?

JASPER

Oh, I don't know...that you had an
abortion?

She deliberates for a long beat.

NICOLE
The baby wasn't yours.

Nicole sits down next to Jasper. She tries to take his hand.

NICOLE
It was before we met, a mistake. I
didn't know, I was 12 weeks...
(breaks down)
I should have told you. But I
didn't know how.

JASPER
(incredulous)
You didn't know how? You just do
it, you tell me, that's how!

NICOLE
If it had been yours, I would've kept
it. I want to have a real baby with
you. A real family. You can't even
comprehend how much I love you.

In a stupor, Jasper walks out of the room. Nicole starts to cry.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Jasper sits on the spiral staircase, watching Nicole sleep.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jasper gets dressed in the mirror. He can't tie his tie.
Nicole comes down the steps.

JASPER
Are you sure there's no one you want
to call, someone to invite?

ANGLE TIE - Jasper keeps missing the knot.

NICOLE
No, what about you?

JASPER
Maybe we should...I mean, Rose would
want to be there.

NICOLE

We can wait...or, do it now and throw
a party in a few weeks. I mean...
what if one of us gets cold feet?

She laughs. He misses the knot again, and we go to...

INT. PORTLAND CITY HALL - DAY

Filled with COUPLES waiting to be married. Some are in costume. At the front of the room, a JUDGE administers vows to a FILIPINO COUPLE in a wedding gown and blue tuxedo.

Jasper and Nicole wait their turn in the audience. Jasper wears a tie, Nicole in a dress. She looks beautiful, holds his hand.

ECU JASPER: He is lost in thought.

NICOLE

Why don't we go up and see your
Aunt Rose tomorrow? We can say our
vows again. We won't tell her we
already did it.

JASPER

You weren't adopted.

NICOLE

(laughs)
What?

Jasper is calm and calculated.

JASPER

You. Were not. Adopted.

NICOLE

Why would I make something like that
up? That's -- I mean, who would
ever do that? I love you, Jasper.

JASPER

Trauma at 3 hours old?

NICOLE

I didn't say that, it was my
therapist! I said she was a saint,
remember? I love you.

JASPER

Stop saying that.

NICOLE

(raging)

Don't tell me what to do! Don't tell me what to say! You don't know me. I would never make something like this up.

JASPER

But you did.

Jasper stays stone-faced.

In the front of the Room, the Filipino Couple both says "I DO". A few people CHEER.

CLERK

Mr. Ayles. Ms. Price.

NICOLE

It's our turn.

Nicole stands. She grabs his hand.

JASPER

If you were really adopted, thought life was a gift and your mother was a saint, I don't think there's any way you could have done what you did, the way you did it. Without thinking, a snap, impulsive decision.

NICOLE

Fuck you! Who are you to judge?

JASPER

To have a "real baby" some day?

NICOLE

You knew what I meant.

JASPER

A real baby???

NICOLE

You're really sick. Such a fucking loser.

JASPER

My aunt wasn't my real mother but I was a real kid.

CLERK (O.S.)

Mr. Ayles. Ms. Price.

A silence between them. Nicole sits back down with Jasper.

NICOLE
(starts to cry)
I made it up. I wanted you to love
me.

The air is vacuumed out of Jasper's lungs.

JASPER
Did you ever love me?

NICOLE
I DO love you. I do.

JASPER
Was all this just for a green card?

NICOLE
No. I love you.

JASPER
Stop. Saying. That.
(then)
Does your Visa really expire in
three days?

Nicole takes a long beat.

NICOLE
I'm not from Canada.

Jasper laughs in disbelief. Resigned, he stands up.

NICOLE
Do you know how many other men
want me?

Jasper walks out of City Hall. Nicole fills with sadness.

NICOLE
(barely audible)
Don't leave me.

EXT. PORTLAND STREETS - NIGHT

Jasper walks all night with nowhere to go.

EXT. PARK - DOWNTOWN PORTLAND - MORNING

Jasper sits on a bench, watches the KIDS play on a jungle gym.

PUSH IN ON JASPER: He's lost in thought as he watches them.

FLASH CUT TO:

THE KIDS IN THE PARK

Every CHILD wears a different COLORED UNIFORM...RED, YELLOW, WHITE, BLUE...

Several ADULTS spot for them. Each wears a DIFFERENT COLOR.

CU KID: With tousled, curly hair. Dressed all in GREEN. He climbs the jungle gym. He goes higher and higher.

When the Kid reaches the top, he celebrates, safe and out of harms way. Suddenly, he loses his footing and falls.

CU JASPER: The SPOTTER. He too wears GREEN. Jasper leaps to his feet, runs toward the Boy with outstretched arms. He can't move fast enough, his feet are in quicksand.

Jasper dives for the boy, tries to catch him and comes up short.

The Boy CRASHES TO THE GROUND.

FLASH BACK TO:

CU JASPER: AS BEFORE

Paralyzed in fear. His eyes are red rimmed and wild.

BACK TO THE KIDS: They safely continue to play.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PORTLAND PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

FIND JASPER in the audience of "THE CHERRY ORCHARD." It's so quiet you can hear a pin drop.

ON STAGE:

ACTOR (TROFIMOV)
"Remember, human beings are constantly progressing. And their powers keep growing. That seems impossible to us nowadays, when all we see are problems."

Jasper looks around in disgust; a pressure cooker ready to blow.

JASPER
(yells out)
Why is nobody laughing?!

Jasper gets up and pushes his way to the aisle. The Actors continue the scene as he approaches the stage.

JASPER
This is a comedy! How does nobody understand that?

Jasper CLIMBS UP ONTO THE STAGE -- He walks right INTO THE SCENE. The ACTORS all stop as Jasper snags a bottle of Vodka from the dinner table. GASPS in the AUDIENCE.

JASPER
This is water! That's your problem right there.

Jasper is pulled away by several STAGEHANDS.

INT. JASPER'S LOFT - EVENING

Jasper enters his loft. ALL OF NICOLE'S STUFF IS NOW GONE. There is no sign that she was ever here, except for the PICTURE OF THE KIDS IN THE PARK.

Jasper punches his fist through the frame. His hand is cut apart, starts bleeding.

ECU: "HANNAH" on the picture, covered in broken glass.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The ALARM BLARES Jasper awake. Hazy, he puts the LIGHT THERAPY BOX on his chest. Blinding U.V. RAYS SHINE in his face.

CUT TO:

VARI-SPEED FLUTTERING IMAGES

Of JASPER'S ROUTINE. Days? Weeks? Months pass?

SLOW FADE TO:

INT. WHOLE FOODS - DAY

Jasper is an absolute disaster. His hair is matted under his hoodie, it looks like he hasn't bathed in a while.

We FIND HIM in the LIQUOR AISLE, analyzing VODKAS. He chooses a bottle, opens it, and takes a very large swig.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: A **COUPLE** is in the produce section, arguing over the ripeness of fruit.

MAN (O.S.)

We need to stop at the co-op. They
have better mangoes and flaxseed.

Jasper takes another swig of the Vodka, just as --

WOMAN (O.S.)

Jack?

Jasper turns - The Couple is very happy to see him. Jasper doesn't recognize them, but we do.

It's ALEXIS the HOOKER and her HUSBAND.

HUSBAND

Alexis and Mark from the Sunburst
Motel!

ALEXIS

I don't think we ever told him our
names.

MARK

Mark, bro!

Jasper just stands there, feeling the effects of the Vodka.

JASPER

What's the haps?

ALEXIS

Guess who's certified now?

MARK

In massage. You should definitely
book an appointment.

ALEXIS

It's totally legit. But not totally.
(winks)
I still owe you, so we can make it a
little sexy.

MARK

A lot sexy, chicken-bear!

JASPER

How about right here, right now?

They both laugh, somewhat uneasy. Mark hands Jasper a business card that reads "*Heavenly Hands.*"

MARK

Heavenly Hands! I came up with that.

Jasper takes another huge swig of Vodka.

JASPER

How 'bout a shot?

ALEXIS

I would, but I'm...

Alexis rubs her belly to show she's pregnant.

JASPER

Gonna keep it?

ALEXIS

Actually, I'm just carrying.

MARK

And then we're gonna give him up for adoption. This rich lady already gave us \$20 grand.

JASPER

You might be a saint.
(holds up Vodka)
To life!

Jasper hands the Vodka to Mark - He takes a swig. Jasper puts the half empty bottle back on the shelf, then takes a new one.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jasper stands on the balcony. The only remnant of his LETTER is the fire stained patio.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper catches a reflection of himself in the television. He is wearing the same gray hoodie he has worn the whole movie.

JASPER

(full of self loathing)
Look at you. You and your fucking
gray hoodie.

Jasper loses it. He wrestles to rip the hoodie off his body.

JASPER

You're a fucking gray hoodie!!!

He tears it from the neck down. The fabric is in shreds and he tosses it away in disgust. Then he rips off his shirt.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - DAY

LATER: Still shirtless, Jasper puts a needle on a record.

"FEELIN' GROOVY" by SIMON & GARFUNKEL.

Jasper sits at his desk. His box of stationery is OPEN. A pen is in his hand, he tries to write, but nothing comes to him.

Finally, he opens the drawer, takes out the GUN. He checks the chamber, it's empty.

INT. JASPER'S CLOSET - DAY

MOMENTS LATER: **MUSIC CONTINUES.** Jasper rifles through his closet. There is stuff packed in from his feet to his head.

Jasper reaches up on a shelf, reaches for something, and is avalanched by his hoodies.

In the debris, Jasper finds the BOX OF BULLETS.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jasper puts a bullet in each chamber. He thinks about this, pours out all the bullets on the kitchen table. He puts one bullet in the chamber, clicks it into place.

Jasper puts the gun in his mouth. He tries it at several different angles, then bites down on the muzzle. He takes a swig from a bottle of Vodka.

Continue to HEAR *"FEELIN' GROOVY"*.

Jasper places the gun against his temple then his forehead. Holding it there, he starts to cry.

JASPER
 (laughs through tears)
 If you show a gun, you have to
 fire it.

He downs another shot of Vodka. As the song ENDS, he cocks the hammer, readies to blow his brains out the window.

CU JASPER: His eyes close.

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK. We wait for the GUN SHOT. A long silence...

The DOOR BELL RINGS.

After a beat, there is a KNOCK at the door. Jasper takes the gun away from his temple.

Jasper goes to the door with the gun still in his hand. He opens the door to the chain-link, puts the gun behind his back.

JASPER
 (through the chain)
 Hello?

WOMAN
 It's Lindsey Whitehead.
 (beat)
 ...Mary's daughter.

Jasper can make out Lindsey through the chain-link. He looks down and sees the shoes of a LITTLE KID.

Jasper drops the gun in a potted plant.

He composes himself, takes a deep breath and opens the door to REVEAL:

LINDSEY, and ETHAN, a 3 year-old with full locks of curly hair.
(NOTE: Ethan will be played by the same actor as the kid from the jungle gym in Jasper's fantasy).

Jasper is in disbelief. *How the hell is she here?* Almost surreal. An awkward beat, he ushers them in.

She sees he's not wearing a shirt, how out of sorts he is.

LINDSEY
 Are we interrupting something?

JASPER
 No. Sorry about my outfit. I
 was...meditating.

A long beat.

LINDSEY

Ethan, this is your Uncle Jasper.

Jasper bends down to Ethan's level. He shakes the boy's tiny hand. He has no idea what to say to a kid.

JASPER

Hi.

ETHAN

You have funny ears.

JASPER

I've always thought that, too.

Lindsey laughs. Then, a long, tense silence.

LINDSEY

I found this.

From her purse, Lindsey hands him an old, beat-up photo.

It's a **PICTURE OF JASPER**, at 2, held by a happy **MARY**.

LINDSEY

You look about two years old. It says 1984 on the back.

Jasper is mesmerized by the picture.

ZOOM IN ON THE PHOTO: Young Jasper is beaming. There is a stuffed animal in his hand. It's a LION.

Jasper looks across the apartment.

ECU: The same stuffed LION is on Jasper's book shelf.

LINDSEY

Maybe we can let Ethan watch some tv.

Jasper puts on the TV. Lindsey plops Ethan down on the couch, then turns to Jasper.

LINDSEY

I owe you...such an apology.

JASPER

No, you don't. I was so out of line.

LINDSEY

I just had no idea. She never, ever mentioned anything to me.

(MORE)

LINDSEY (CONT'D)
Or my father. How could she...do
that?
She should be ashamed. I'm ashamed.

JASPER
You didn't do anything to be ashamed
of.

Lindsey takes a long pause.

LINDSEY
She was a good mother...to me. But
now I just don't think I can ever --

JASPER
Let her be the way she was then.

LINDSEY
You must hate me. Why did I...get
the good Mary?

JASPER
I don't hate you. And I don't...want
to hate her.

Lindsey smiles at Ethan.

LINDSEY
She was an amazing grandmother.

Jasper looks over at Ethan, who is peeling off self-adhesive
stamps and sticking them to Jasper's furniture.

LINDSEY
I'm sorry, he's wasting your stamps.

JASPER
It's ok, I hate stamps.

Jasper looks at Lindsey with amazement and gratitude.

JASPER
Did you come here to rescue me?

LINDSEY
I want to know you, Jasper.

JASPER
And that's all I want.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Jasper has showered and changed. He and Lindsey watch Ethan on the jungle gym with the other kids.

JASPER
How long are you in town?

LINDSEY
I don't go back to school for a few weeks. We're staying with a friend of mine who just moved here.

JASPER
You're welcome to stay with me.

LINDSEY
Thanks. Maybe we'll split it up.

JASPER
I think you should meet Rose.

LINDSEY
My Aunt. Does she still live in Australia?

Jasper starts to laugh. Lindsey realizes why and laughs too.

ANGLE ETHAN: He triumphantly reaches the top of the jungle gym.

Nobody is falling or cracking their skull.

Jasper is filled with happy tears.

JASPER
(smiles at them)
We have so much time to make up for.

EXT. FERRY - DAY

Jasper, Lindsey and Ethan stand on the bow. Jasper holds Ethan, points out at Puget Sound.

Calm comes over Jasper as the wind whips through their hair.

EXT. AUNT ROSE'S HOUSE - BAINBRIDGE ISLAND - DAY

Rose greets them out on the porch. Hugs all around. She looks at Lindsey with a wistful nostalgia.

AUNT ROSE
You look just like her.

LINDSEY
She used to say I looked like you.

AUNT ROSE
I wish. Where did she tell you I was?

LINDSEY
Australia.

This is hard even for Rose to believe.

LINDSEY
I've come to realize she was a little bit of a liar.

JASPER
I have an Achilles heel for women who lie.

Rose kneels down to properly meet Ethan. She hands him \$20 in quarters, which is more money than the kid's ever seen.

AUNT ROSE
I'm your Auntie Rose, and I'm gonna spoil you stupid.

INT. RUSTY SKUPPER BAR - BAINBRIDGE ISLAND - DAY

Ethan sits on Jasper's shoulders. He hands Ethan the ball, the kid shoot baskets on the pop-a-shot. They cheer on every shot.

Rose and Lindsey drink beers at the bar. The Mariners play the White Sox on TV.

AUNT ROSE
So...is there a Mr. Lindsey?

LINDSEY
Zack. He forgot to pull out.

AUNT ROSE
I love that, when they "forget".
It's not like you didn't remind him 12 times during.

LINDSEY
(laughs)
I know, right?

Rose laughs, then takes Lindsey's hand.

AUNT ROSE
I loved your mother. But, she
couldn't be in my life. Not after
him.

They both look over at Jasper playing with Ethan.

AUNT ROSE
...then, after all those years, it
was too late for us. You were what
she needed and she was finally ready.

LINDSEY
I can't believe she never told my
dad.

AUNT ROSE
She had to hide from it.

Lindsey starts to tear up. So does Rose.

LINDSEY
I wish you knew the Mary I knew.

AUNT ROSE
I knew that Mary...

Her voice trails off. Rose won't let herself go there. She
quickly puts up her guard.

AUNT ROSE
(looks up at the tv)
Mother-fucker! How the hell do they
strand 1st and 3rd with no outs?

EXT. DOCK - BAINBRIDGE - DAY

A FOGHORN in the distance as Rose kisses them each good-bye.

AUNT ROSE
Next time you guys come, I'll make
my famous gumbo.

ETHAN
I'm glad you're back from Australia.

AUNT ROSE
(a wry smile)
Me too.

Lindsey picks Ethan up, gives Rose a moment alone with Jasper.

AUNT ROSE
I'm sorry, Jazzy, I thought I was --

JASPER
You did what you had to do.

AUNT ROSE
And you became the most important
thing in my life.

Rose hugs Jasper with everything she has.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK, WE HEAR...

JASPER'S VOICE
"If you always do what you've always
done, you'll always get what you've
always gotten."

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The ALARM CLOCK BEEPS. Jasper grabs his LIGHT THERAPY BOX. He tears it out of the wall and buries it in the trash.

INT. CLOSET - MORNING

Jasper chooses a DIFFERENT OUTFIT to wear. The hoodies are gone.

INT. JASPER'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Jasper discards the Grape Nuts.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Jasper CLOSES THE BIRD CAGE DOOR and the WINDOW.

EXT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - DAY

It is a perfect Sunny day. Jasper takes a step into the street. Just as, the bevy of CYCLISTS FLY BY HIM.

CU JASPER: He breathes it in as they PASS HIM ON ALL SIDES.

EXT. STEEL BRIDGE - DAY

In shorts, Jasper rides his bike in tandem with the other CYCLISTS, over the Steel Bridge, continues on through the city, enjoying the sunshine.

PUSH IN ON JASPER: He is all smiles, full of life.

EXT. GUS CUTS BARBER SHOP - EVENING

Jasper rolls up on his bike. He opens the door to the barber shop. They are in the middle of Group.

JASPER

I'm sorry, I don't mean to break up the circle, but I need to take a little sabbatical. Beautiful day, gotta get to it.

Jasper rides off, filled with purpose. Roland is proud of him. The rest of the Group is too, if a bit envious of his freedom.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PORTLAND STREET - EVENING

Jasper walks with an air of confidence.

CU JASPER: He is finding his mojo. In a nice blue shirt, he is giving it some effort and looks good. He is vibrant.

INSERT - He holds the "KIDS IN THE PARK" picture. The frame is still broken.

Jasper looks across the street - sees **The Bitter End Pub**.

INT. THE BITTER END PUB - EVENING

OPEN TIGHT ON NICOLE

Flirting with a GUY at the bar.

NICOLE

Me too, I grew up in Chicago!
Youngest of 5 brothers and sisters.

MAN

Wow, big family.

NICOLE

So, here's the deal. I think it'll probably take me about three weeks, but I'm pretty sure you're gonna ask me out. But who knows if I'll still be here in three weeks, so...let's just say tonight.

CUT OUTSIDE TO:

EXT. THE BITTER END PUB - SAME TIME

Jasper, watching Nicole through the window. He hasn't heard her words. He doesn't need to. Her light, carefree smile and seductive flirtation tells it all.

Jasper sets the PHOTOGRAPH down in the doorway of the Bitter End.

CU JASPER: The relieved smile of a man who has just dodged a bullet. He picks up the pace with a new lease on life.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Jasper trots up the steps of a little craftsman house in the Goose Hollow neighborhood of Portland.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Lindsey opens the door. Ethan comes like a bat out of hell at Jasper, over the moon to see his uncle. Jasper matadors out of the little devil's path, saving his own balls at the last moment.

LINDSEY

Agile.

JASPER

I'm a little bit of an athlete.

She laughs, escorts him in.

JASPER

I like this place.

LINDSEY

My friend's letting us stay for the summer. I may take a few classes at Reed.

Lindsey escorts Jasper outside into the backyard.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Ethan charges past them, chasing around a fat French bulldog.

LINDSEY

He's obsessed with that dog.

Jasper and Lindsey sit down on deck chairs. She hands him a beer from a cooler.

JASPER

You know, I was thinking, some day,
maybe you could put me as Ethan's
emergency contact.

LINDSEY

I'd love to, but --

JASPER

But what?

LINDSEY

You're not supposed to put a family
member as your contact.

Lindsey kisses him on the cheek. Jasper is finally at peace.
He's found HOME.

INT. GUS CUTS BARBER SHOP - MORNING

Gus finishes cutting Jasper's hair. He turns him around to look at himself in the mirror. Jasper likes what he sees. He reaches for his wallet.

GUS

The first one's on the house.

JASPER

I insist. I'm fairly certain I'm
gonna win the lottery in a few years.

INT. POWELL'S BOOKSTORE - DAY

Jasper appears in front of Gwen at the counter. He is in full cyclist gear, and he's owning it.

GWEN

I thought the club was over. Wait --
Why are you tan and what are you
wearing?

Jasper looks down at his farmer tan and outfit.

JASPER
I'm kind of a cyclist now.
(swigs from his water bottle)
Can I have my books back?

GWEN
You should probably wait until they
go on sale.

JASPER
What?

GWEN
You kept them in such good condition,
we're selling it all at full price.

JASPER
They're my books.

GWEN
They were. Now they're ours.

JASPER
I'll buy everything back.

Gwen bends down, picks up the BOX of Jasper's BOOKS and puts them
on the counter.

JASPER
They're not even on display.

GWEN
Want'em or not?

A beat.

JASPER
That's just criminal.

GWEN
So are your shorts.

Finally, Gwen laughs and hands over the RUSSIAN LITERATURE.

Jasper peers into the box. He takes a pause.

JASPER
You know what...sell them.

GWEN
Seriously?

JASPER
It's time to melt the snow.

Gwen smiles at this. Jasper stares at her for a long beat.

JASPER
You wanna...maybe get coffee with
me sometime?

GWEN
I've had coffee with you before.

JASPER
No, like "coffee" coffee.

She regards him curiously.

They both just stand there, smiling at each other.

JASPER
How about now?

GWEN
Easy, bro. Some of us have jobs.

JASPER
What time do you get off?

GWEN
6.

JASPER
Stumptown Coffee, 6:08.

GWEN
At 6:12, I leave. You got a four
minute window.

She playfully shoos him away, and we go to...

INT. STUMPTOWN COFFEE - NIGHT

Jasper and Gwen wait for their coffee.

GWEN
Your hair looks better.

JASPER
I'm not saying shit about yours.

GWEN
Still moving away?

JASPER
That's kind of on hold right now.

GWEN

Wherever you go, you still gotta be you.

Jasper takes this in.

JASPER

I'm restarting my dissertation.

GWEN

Is this one gonna be pretentious and long winded?

JASPER

Probably. All I need now is a new topic.

Kenny, the barista, calls out to Jasper.

KENNY

"Jasper?" That's a good name for you.

JASPER

Let's try it for a while, Kenny.

Jasper and Gwen get two cups with "*Jasper*" written on them and exit Stumptown Coffee.

EXT. STUMPTOWN COFFEE - CONTINUOUS

A slab of wet cement has just been laid down on the sidewalk. Gwen takes off her shoes, hands them to Jasper.

ANGLE GWEN: She steps barefoot in the wet cement.

GWEN

You gotta make your mark wherever you can.

Jasper loves this. He takes off his shoes and socks and plants his feet into the wet cement. Then, they each sign their names next to their prints.

They clean off their feet, start to put their shoes back on. Gwen ties Jasper's shoes. He finds it endearing.

Jasper & Gwen walk off together, with nothing but potential ahead of them.

FADE OUT.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jasper enters. He hears a SOUND and glances at the bird cage.

CU PRETTY WHITE BIRD: Sitting on his perch inside.

Jasper isn't surprised to see the bird. Actually, it's kind of obvious to him.

JASPER

Hey, Tony.

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jasper sits down at his desk. He takes out his LETTERHEAD STATIONERY and begins to write.

JASPER'S VOICE

"Dear 20 year-old Jasper...Your mother is still alive. Go find her. Maybe she doesn't deserve a second chance, but you do. She will lead you home. Your life depends on it..."

He keeps writing, the words flow out of him, and we...

FADE OUT.

PITCH BLACK.

Then, a LIGHT at the end of the TUNNEL.

POV - FROM THE INSIDE OF A MAILBOX

The mailbox opens, and we see **20 YEAR-OLD JASPER.**

He reaches in and pulls out the same ENVELOPE we just saw.

PUSH IN ON 20 YEAR-OLD JASPER: Bright eyed and full of innocence.

He opens the envelope and takes out the LETTER.

HOLD ON 20 YEAR-OLD JASPER'S FACE as he reads, and we...

FADE OUT.

THE END