

VERVE

Our Condolences

by

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INT. BROOKLYN APARTMENT. EVENING.

We hear the SHOWER as we MOVE through a warm, stylish apartment in some newly gentrified area of Brooklyn.

We PASS an artfully designed *Star Trek* poster in French...

JAMES (O.C.)

So, do you think we say something?!

Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves...hip vintage lamps...A *New Yorker*...

LIZ (O.C.)

About what?

A glass-framed poster of the movie *Vertigo*...a desk, laptop...
..a stack of DVD screeners.

JAMES (O.C.)

Tonight! I mean! Do we mention it
or just sort of...take their cue?!

An iPad charging next to an iPhone charging next to an iPod...

LIZ (O.C.)

Well, we have to say something! We
barely saw them at the funeral.

The SHOWER stops as we PASS an award from the National Critics Association to "James R. Roe" to land on —

JAMES ROE in the flesh, 40, entering from the bathroom in a towel. He's intelligent and likeable but insecure about both of those things. A sort of self-hating hipster.

JAMES

No, I know, it's just...maybe they
don't wanna talk about it.

LIZ ROE, 40, sharp and self-possessed with an approachable beauty and ironic smile, contemplates her outfit in the mirror.

LIZ

You're leaking.

James steps back into the bathroom to dry off.

JAMES

It's just — you and Christina
aren't really that close anymore.

We hear the automated voice of "ALEXA," their AMAZON ECHO.

ALEXA
"I'm sorry, I did not understand
the question --"

JAMES
-- Alexa! No!

LIZ
Well, we can't *not* mention it.
We'll just ask how they're doing,
say "we're here for you" and...you
know.

JAMES
Can I say that?

LIZ
What?

JAMES
"We're here for you." Can I use
that?

She looks at him, not sure if he's serious. He is.

LIZ
Sure.

Satisfied, he heads back into the bathroom.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN WINE STORE. LATER.

James and Liz exit the wine store with a bottle.

JAMES
I don't think I'd say that. "We're
here for you." I mean, it sounds
good when you say it but from me it
sounds forced.
(he tries it)
"We're here for you." "We're *here*
for you." "We are both here f --"

LIZ
Please stop doing that.

JAMES
Sorry. I'm just really bad at this
kinda thing. Always feels like I'm
talking to a celebrity.

LIZ
(chuckling)
What?

JAMES
You know, it's like they have this big important thing and I'm just a babbling idiot who doesn't get it.

LIZ
You were great when my Dad died.

JAMES
That's because my brother's wife died the year before. I still had "celebrity" status. But this? Losing a *child*? The way they did? I mean, Jesus, what do you say to that? "I know what you're feeling?" I don't know what they're feeling!

LIZ
No, you say..."we can't possibly understand what you're going through."

JAMES
That's good. Are you gonna use that?

She looks at him as if she's never seen this side of him.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM. LATER.

James and Liz sit waiting for the train. Eyes glued to their phones. A WOMAN sleeps beside them. A silent moment passes.

JAMES (CONT'D)
So, what are you gonna say?

LIZ
I don't know.

James looks back at his phone a moment. But then --

JAMES
Are you gonna bring it up right away or wait?

LIZ
I don't know!

JAMES

I think maybe we do it right away.
You know, just nip it in the bud.

LIZ

(sarcastic)

So, what, we walk in and
immediately say: "Hi guys, we can't
possibly know what you're going
through?!"

JAMES

I thought that was my line.

LIZ

Why are you being all Woody Alleny
about this?

JAMES

I'm not being Woody Alleny -- !

LIZ

Look, they called us. They
obviously need to reconnect with
old friends right now. So just --
be normal.

JAMES

(nods, then...)

Does my shirt smell weird?

LIZ

(sniffs)

No. Wait. Yes. What is that?

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY. LATER.

James and Liz stand on a crowded subway.

JAMES

How's that a comfort? "I can't
possibly understand what you're
going through?" You're basically
saying they're completely alone.

LIZ

People like to feel that their pain
is unique.

JAMES

I thought people like to feel like
you *understand*.

LIZ
They like to feel like you
understand that they're dealing
with something you can't possibly
relate to.

James nods, confused. Then sees a WEIRD GUY staring at him.

JAMES
Mike doesn't even like me.

LIZ
That's not true.

JAMES
No, because, remember? I made that
joke about Desert Storm and now he
thinks I'm like some liberal elite
prick.

LIZ
He was a Navy Seal. I promise he
doesn't think you're "elite" in any
way.

WEIRD GUY chuckles. James looks at him and he stops. Then --

JAMES
Have you read his book yet?

LIZ
No. Shit. Have *you*?

James gives a "*You're kidding, right?*" look.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY OF APARTMENT BUILDING. LATER.

James and Liz wait for the elevator in a fancy midtown
doorman apartment building.

JAMES
What if I say that we know someone
this happened to?

LIZ
Who?

DING. They get on the --

ELEVATOR. CONTINUOUS.

JAMES

No one. Just seems more comforting.

LIZ

You wanna lie to them!?

The doors close.

JAMES

Well, I need some footing here!
Everything I say is gonna sound
stupid! "Hey, you have Boggle,
that's cool." "Yeah, well, my
daughter was hit by a drunk driver
and died 2 days later! Now what do
you think of your fucking Boggle!?"

LIZ

Jesus, James, then talk about work!

JAMES

Great, why don't I ask Mike what it
was like to kill people in Iraq;
that should lighten the mood.

LIZ

Then talk about *your* work!

JAMES

Film reviews? They don't even go to
the movies!

LIZ

It's Mike and Christina for God sake
-- talk about your *dick*! Who cares!

Suddenly they both begin laughing like idiots. This is the
essence of them. This moment. And we can't help but like it.

JAMES

Fine; I'll talk about my dick, but
you bring it up this time.

Doors OPEN. They step into the --

HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS.

James gently grabs her arm to stop her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Seriously. What are you gonna say?

Liz sighs, relenting.

LIZ

I don't know, probably just...I'm sorry for your loss. And...I know we're not as close as we used to be but we still consider you our good friends. I wish I had the words to take this pain away but I don't. I know that what you're going through is difficult, I can't imagine how much, but I just wanna say, I'm here. To talk about it, or not talk about it or not talk about anything.

He stares at her, incredulously.

LIZ (CONT'D)

What?

JAMES

You totally fucked me

She chuckles as they walk to the door.

JAMES (CONT'D)

No wonder you want me to say my stupid thing about being "here for you."

Liz BUZZES the doorbell. They wait. And wait. They begin to wonder, *do we have the right place?* Suddenly --

The door opens! They smile. Their smiles die when they see --

MIKE KRILL, 39, black, ruggedly attractive and very sincere -- with a thin scar over his eye. He's panicked, streaming sweat; shirt unbuttoned.

MIKE

It's Chris! She's got a knife! I think she's gonna hurt herself!

He rushes back in and leaves the door open for them.

REVERSE ANGLE ON: James and Liz -- frozen stiff. Speechless.

INT. BEDROOM. SECONDS LATER.

Liz and James enter, nervously. It's a wreck. Clothes, a smashed vase, picture frames broken on the floor.

MIKE (O.C.)

Baby? Chris, please, Honey, open the door!

Mike sits on the floor speaking to his wife through the bathroom door. The tension is thick and real.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Open the door, baby. C'mon. It's me.
Please, honey.

Liz and James look totally uncomfortable.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Christina! Damnit, baby, talk to me!

Then, through the door we hear...

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
I... can't do this...

MIKE
Hey! Hey! Yes you can! You hear me?
And I'm right here. Okay? And I
know what you're feeling and I'm
not gonna let you do this alone.
You understand? Chris?
(silence, concern)
Christina?!

James musters some courage and leans toward the door --

JAMES
You can do it, Chris!

MIKE
'The fuck are you doing, man?!!

Mike glares at James, who recoils, terrified.

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
Who was that?!

MIKE
It was just James, Honey. James and
Liz are here, remember?

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
Oh, God! Oh God, they're here?

JAMES
(whispers to Mike)
I'm sorry --

MIKE
It's okay; they just wanna help!

JAMES
We just wanna help, Chris!

MIKE
Will you SHUT the FUCK UP!!

JAMES
(totally stressed)
Should we go? We should go.

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
Liz?! Liz are you there?

James and Mike turn to Liz who is still speechless; paralyzed.

JAMES
Hon?

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
(through tears)
Oh God, Liz, I want her back. I
want her back so bad...

Liz is paralyzed by the enormity of the pain in front of her.

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR) (CONT'D)
Liz? Are you there?

Panicked, James finally blurts out --

JAMES
She went to the bathroom!

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
She what?

MIKE
Listen, honey, whatever you're
thinking about doing...

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
...Did you say she went to the
bathroom?

MIKE
She'll be back --

JAMES
-- Yeah she just really had to go!

LIZ
(not thinking)
It was something she ate!

Mike and James shoot her a bewildered look.

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
Liz??

Liz suddenly realizes what she just did.

LIZ
Y-yes?

JAMES
(whispers to Mike)
Maybe we should call the police?

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
DON'T YOU FUCKING CALL THE FUCKING
COPS YOU SONOFABITCH!!

JAMES
(tense as hell)
She's got great hearing.

MIKE
Christina, baby, come out. Will
you? Please? Just -- come out.

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
Liz?

LIZ
(nervous)
I'm here.

CHRISTINA (THROUGH DOOR)
Why Katie? Why my little girl?

Liz looks at James and Mike, terrified to say the wrong thing.

LIZ
I don't know.
(awkward beat)
I...maybe...maybe sometimes there
are no answers.
(another)
Maybe sometimes we ask questions
and...we don't even know what we're
really asking. You know? Are we
asking...if there's a God?

James looks at her, concerned.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Or for someone to blame? Or, or --
to punish?
(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

And if we got an answer, some concrete...explanation -- would it even help? Or would it just trivialize the enormity of your loss? Some...idiotic reason up against all this real...stuff. Your pain is your own. And no one answer can satisfy that. There's only the knowledge that...you still have someone to share it with. Someone who loves you. And needs you.

Mike watches Liz, transfixed.

LIZ (CONT'D)

And every day that special, unique pain of yours will become duller. And the strength you've gained from each other...will be answer enough.

James watches his wife, impressed. Then we hear --

The door unlock. Mike stands. The door opens and CHRISTINA KRILL, 40, white, stands tear-streaked in her robe, knife at her side. She's small, compact with a young face and deeply sad eyes.

Mike slowly removes the knife from her grip. And hugs her.

They hold each other with everything they are. It's beautiful and sad and real and bigger than anything. And then --

CHRISTINA

Where's Liz?

James realizes he's standing alone. No Liz beside him.

JAMES

She went to the bathroom. Again.
(beat)
But she said to tell you..."we're here for you."

He smiles awkwardly. He knows he said it wrong.

CUT TO BLACK:

"Our Condolences"

SUPER: *"What is important pain?"*

INT. SUBWAY CAR. LATER THAT NIGHT.

James and Liz sit on the subway. Silent. Liz still shaken up.

JAMES
(Tries a joke)
Well, next time I think we should
have them over to our place.

She doesn't react. He considers trying again. But wisely passes.

INT. JAMES AND LIZ'S APARTMENT. LATER.

Liz enters and rushes into the bedroom. James follows.

JAMES
Hey -- wait -- Liz --?!

He follows her into the --

BEDROOM --

Where Liz, highly agitated, struggles to change her clothes.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Okay; I understand you're upset.
They're going through a tough...
you know! But you were *incredible*
tonight! All those things you said?
I mean, you saved the day!

She turns to him, tears in her eyes.

LIZ
I bullshitted!

JAMES
(confused beat)
You mean...? What do you mean?

LIZ
I mean, it was a lie! All of it. I
don't know what she's feeling; how
could I? I've never felt anything
like that!

JAMES
(still confused)
Okay.

LIZ

They lost their *child*, James! Do you understand? Their daughter is *dead*! And we're standing there with a stupid bottle of wine and she's got a *knife*! And she's hurting so much and it's so — *real*! And, and *big*! And I'm just a, a, a -- *dwarf* next to it!

JAMES

And a mute. For a while.
(Bad joke)
Sorry, that was --

She storms past him. He follows her back into the --

LIVING ROOM

JAMES (CONT'D)

Honey, I don't know what you're talking about. You've felt pain before.

LIZ

Not important pain!

JAMES

"Important pain --"?

LIZ

Important pain! Real pain, like that!

JAMES

What about when your Dad died? That was..."important."

LIZ

It was my Dad! Dad's die!

JAMES

Okay, well, what about your cousin? Sarah? That really fucked you up.

LIZ

Not really! I never even liked her!

James is totally stopped by this.

JAMES

But you seemed so upset.

ALEXA

"I heard you say, 'R. Kelly.' Is that corre -- ?"

JAMES

ALEXA! STOP!

LIZ

Point is, you were right! I'm just a babbling idiot who doesn't get it. And that's the thing with this! You know, we have these *jobs*, right? And our smart friends, and we read these, these...

She picks up a *New Yorker* magazine --

LIZ (CONT'D)

...*smart* things! "Oh, we're so smart!" And we talk about books and, and movies but we're just... selfish...idiots!

JAMES

Wait, why am I a selfish idiot?

LIZ

And -- *this!* See this!?

She points to the designer *Star Trek* poster.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Why do we have a *Star Trek* poster in French!? Do you speak French? I don't! It's supposed to seem clever or ironic but it's just *bullshit!*

JAMES

Okay; I think you're having a panic attack.

LIZ

Yes! Good! We should all be having panic attacks! *You* especially!

JAMES

Me!?

LIZ

Yes! You! With your whole neurotic Ben Stiller act!

JAMES

Ben Still -- ??! I thought I was Woody Allen.

LIZ

"Oh, I'm so bad at this, I feel like I'm talking to a celebrity!" It's all a fucking act!

JAMES

No, it's not; I'm actually that neurotic!

She gives up and turns to the bedroom --

JAMES (CONT'D)

Well, what do you want then!?!

She turns back to him, like a child; lost, confused.

LIZ

I wanna tell Christina "I don't understand."

JAMES

You *did*. You said her pain was unique. Like you said.

LIZ

Yeah, but I was just *saying* that!
(off his bewildered look)
I need her to know: I don't get it!
That we are less than them because we've never been where they are!

JAMES

We're not *less* than them.

LIZ

Yes we are!!

JAMES

Well, speak for yourself. I've *had* important pain.

LIZ

What!? When?

JAMES

(obviously)
Karen.

LIZ

Kar -- ? That doesn't count!

JAMES

What are you talking about?

LIZ

It's your brother's wife! It's *his* pain!

JAMES

So? I can't feel pain for my brother's wife??

LIZ

No! You can't!

JAMES

Look, just because you didn't give a shit about your dad -- !

LIZ

I gave a shit about my dad --!

JAMES

Well, obviously not as much as I did about Karen!

LIZ

I'm not even sure how much *Edward* cared about her!

JAMES

He wrote a book about her death!

LIZ

Yeah, a comedy! It was a four part comic essay! The *Times* called it the "funniest book ever written about bone cancer!"

JAMES

Well, that's how he deals with pain!

LIZ

THEN IT'S NOT THAT IMPORTANT!

JAMES

WELL, IT'S FUCKING IMPORTANT TO ME!

He turns away -- but then turns back to add --

JAMES (CONT'D)

And let me just say! I *like* our French *Star Trek* poster! Okay?!

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Because it says "I like *Star Trek*
 but I also like art and yet I have
 a sense of humor about it!!"

He goes into the bedroom -- slams the door!

ALEXA
 "Star Trek was a science Fiction TV
 Series in the 1960s --"

LIZ
 Alexa no!

JAMES (THROUGH DOOR)
 Shut the fuck up, Alexa!!

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR. MORNING.

CLOSE ON: Liz's face. Tense. Lips tight. Eyes focused. DING!
 Doors Open. She takes a nervous breath and enters the --

HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS.

She walks slowly down the same hallway from last night. Her
 lips move, almost imperceptibly, as if rehearsing.

She stops at the door. Breathes. BUZZES. Suddenly -- BAM!

LIZ
 Ah! *FUCK!*

Her focus is broken when a LITTLE BOY riding his BIG WHEEL,
 nails her in the shin!

LIZ (CONT'D)
 What the --? You little *shit!*

She grabs her leg in pain, as he speeds off down the hall,
 oblivious. Just then, the door opens --

-- *It's Mike*. Considerably more put together than last
 night. Nice shirt, jacket. He sees her grabbing her leg.

MIKE
 Liz?

Liz straightens up; a little discombobulated.

LIZ
 Oh, hey! Hi.

MIKE
 You okay?

LIZ
Yeah, I just...got clipped by the
kid from *The Shining*.

An awkward beat, as Mike doesn't catch the reference.

MIKE
Come on in.

She smiles, awkwardly, and follows him in.

INT. KITCHEN. MOMENTS LATER.

CLOSE ON: The book, "LEADER OF MEN - A Seal's Story" By
Michael Krill. An impressive photo of Mike on the cover in
his Navy Seal uniform.

CUT WIDE: to Liz staring guiltily at the book, as Mike makes
coffee. She's restless and the silence is uncomfortable.

MIKE
Don't think I've heard you curse
before.

LIZ
Curse? Did I? I'm sorry.

MIKE
Don't apologize.

LIZ
I do that.

MIKE
Apologize?

LIZ
Curse. I mean, it's bad. I should
probably stop. My Dad always said,
"women who curse..." Shit, I can't
remember.
(then)
Is Christina here?

Mike turns to her. He's a rock on the surface but there's a
sense he's stemming the floodgates by pure physical strength.

MIKE
No. She's uh...she's out right now.

LIZ
Oh. Well...I just came to...

MIKE

Actually, I'm glad you're here.
I...wanted to apologize for last
night.

LIZ

Apologize? No. God. Me! *I* came to
apologize.

MIKE

You? For what?

LIZ

(struggles)
I, I just --

MIKE

No, hey. What you said. The way
you...Honestly, I don't know what
woulda happened if you weren't here.

LIZ

I just said what you would have.

MIKE

No. No; you understood what she
needed to hear. And I didn't. I
haven't. For while.

Liz is discomfited by the praise.

LIZ

Well, I shouldn't've run off...

MIKE

No; please. It was my idea for her
to call you. It was obviously too
soon.

(Off her look)

You guys used to be so close. She
always talked about the two of you
in college, how much you used to
laugh, I thought...I don't know
what I thought.

This hangs in the air for a bit.

LIZ

Did something happen last night?
You know, to cause her to...?

MIKE

No. Sometimes she just...has "bad
nights."

Liz accepts this but can tell there's probably more to it.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Truth is, this wasn't the first
time. There've been a couple of
close calls over the last year.
Pills, mostly. One time was...

Mike stops; fighting back emotion.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Sorry, I didn't mean to put this on
you...

LIZ
...no, please...!

MIKE
...it's just...I feel like you
understand. You know?

Liz stares, awkwardly. *"I understand?"*

LIZ
Well, my dad died recently, so...

She offers a strained smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOVIE THEATER BOX OFFICE. DAY.

A PIMPLY-PFACED TEENAGER hands a ticket and 3-D glasses
through the box office glass to -- James, who takes them and
walks into --

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY. MOMENTS LATER.

James stands at concessions. He's done this many times.

JAMES
Medium popcorn, large water and
Peanut M&Ms. And no I don't want a
large for only 50 cents more.

INT. MOVIE THEATER. DAY.

James sits alone in his personal church: a dark, virtually
empty movie theater wearing 3-D glasses. It's a big budget
action movie. Loud music. Loud Sounds. Loud everything.

He ritualistically dumps his Peanut M&Ms into his popcorn, and mixes it up until it's perfect.

He then notices something a few rows up. *Wait, is that...?*

It's Christina! Two rows up watching the same bombastic spectacle. *Or is she?* Since she's the only one in the theater not wearing 3-D glasses.

James watches, curiously, as she stares off at seemingly nothing.

INT. MIKE AND CHRISTINA'S APARTMENT. DAY.

Liz sits on the couch, feeling a little out of her depth. Mike hands her a coffee and sits beside her.

MIKE

...If I'd been paying attention I woulda seen that she'd stopped taking her medication months ago. Anyway. That's where she is now. Her therapist.

LIZ

(A tried and true cliché)
"You can't blame yourself."

Discomfited by this comment, Mike changes the subject.

MIKE

So, Chris said you guys don't want kids -- is that right?

LIZ

(taken off guard)
Us? No! I mean. We're not really "kid people." Not that we don't like *other* peoples' kids, we just know we'd hate our own.

She laughs. But then stops when she sees that doesn't.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I should've called more. I should've done more after...

MIKE

There's nothing you could've done. Trust me. This is what she wants.

LIZ

What do you mean?

Mike takes a moment before answering.

MIKE

Ever since the accident, it's like
... she wants to be sad. You know?

Liz doesn't know.

MIKE (CONT'D)

She doesn't fight it. She doesn't
...*fight*.

(beat)

Those two days in the hospital,
while we waited to see if Katie was
gonna make it. After the second
surgery, Chris was so hopeful. The
moment the doctor told us she was
gone, I saw it in her face. It was
like...she just let it wash over
her. Like she was drinking it in.
And the worse she felt...the better
she felt.

Liz can't help but be struck by the vulnerability of this
strong, capable man. She puts her hand on his.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I've seen friends killed right in
front of me. Their blood in my
mouth. *Good friends. Family. You've*
read my book, you know.

LIZ

(lying)

Of course.

MIKE

But you have to move on. Bury it.
You have to finish the mission. You
can't quit just because...!

(he stops himself)

I didn't love our daughter any less
because I won't make her death my
identity.

Mike unconsciously grips her hand.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I haven't seen my wife in a year. I
haven't touched her in... I miss
her too. But now I feel like I've
lost them both.

She puts her other hand on his, as his eyes glass over.

LIZ
(more confident)
I understand.

He looks at her. His heart aching for something. Anything. He strokes her hand. She smiles. Then raises his hand to her cheek.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(startled, awkward)
Oh...

He touches her lips, as if involuntarily.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Oh, that's -- okay.

She pulls back, confused.

MIKE
I'm sorry.

LIZ
It's okay.

MIKE
I'm so sorry...

He leans in and kisses her on the lips. She pulls away...

LIZ
Mike...um...

MIKE
Please just....please.

He leans in and kisses her again. Gently. She lets him because she doesn't know what else to do. Frozen.

He closes his eyes and drinks it in like water in the desert. It's not about sex -- but intimacy. Feeling something that isn't pain. He strokes her hair. Liz lets him. And for a moment she feels it too. And it's nice. Then suddenly --

Liz pulls away -- CRASH! Her head hits a lamp, knocks it over --!

LIZ
Oh! Shit! Sorry!

She stands up --

MIKE
I'm sorry --

LIZ
(nervous rambling)
No, I'm sorry -- I broke your lamp!

She picks up the lamp.

MIKE
It's okay; leave it.

LIZ
I'll pay for this -- is this West
Elm -- ?? Seems like West Elm.

MIKE
Liz, please...

LIZ
Tell Chris I came -- or don't --!
or -- Okay! I have to go! I! okay!

She walks out of the apartment. Slams the door.

INT. HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS.

Liz stands outside the door, shaking. She turns, startled, to see -
The KID with the BIG WHEEL staring at her from the end of the
hall, ala "*The Shining*". Freaked out, she runs off.

INT. MOVIE THEATER. DAY.

As the end credits roll on screen, James watches Christina
get up from her seat, and turn up the aisle, rather quickly.

James pretends to reach for something so she won't see him.

INT. MOVIE LOBBY. MOMENTS LATER.

James exits the theater. He tosses his popcorn in the trash
and his 3-D glasses in the dispenser. Then looks up to see -

Christina! She looks anxious, almost panicked to run into him.

JAMES
(feigning surprise)
Oh! Hey!

CHRISTINA
James...?

JAMES
Are you --? Did you see this too?
That's so funny!
(awkward beat)
So, how are you?

James quickly realizes this is a dumbest question ever.

CHRISTINA
(anxiously)
I should go; you're probably
working.

JAMES
Work-- ? Oh. Yes. I mean, no,
actually. I trashed this movie two
weeks ago. It's a horrible piece of
shit but I'm sort of compelled by
it. (then) Don't tell anyone.

He chuckles. But stops when he sees the look on her face --

JAMES (CONT'D)
Chris? You okay?

She looks lost, desperate, on the verge.

CHRISTINA
I don't know what I'm doing!

JAMES
(panicked)
Oh. Okay, okay, uh...!
(beat, absurdly)
You wanna...see it again?

She looks at him like it's the dumbest... most perfect idea.

CHRISTINA
Okay...?

JAMES
Okay! Actually, there's an even
shittier Superhero movie playing
upstairs.

He puts a protective arm around her...

JAMES (CONT'D)
I eviscerated it last week. You'll
love it.

...and guides her upstairs.

INT. CAFE. EVENING.

James watches Christina stare into her coffee. She's calmer but still vulnerable. He wants to say something...*but what?*

JAMES

You know, my brother's wife died.

Christina looks up at him, blankly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Karen. Two years ago. Bone cancer.
It was pretty horrible.

(awkward beat)

She was in a lot of pain. For months. Doctors said they'd never seen someone in so much pain. It was like...non stop...pain.

Christina continues to stare, as if not sure how to react.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Edward was right beside her through the whole thing. It was very hard for him. For *all* of us. You know? To see her -- and him -- *both* of them! In so much.....*pain*. (then) I mean, obviously, it's nothing like what you're going through with, you know, but -- I guess I'm just saying if you wanna talk about it, I'm here. (Liz's line:) "To talk about it. Or not talk about it. Or not talk about anything."

He smiles, awkwardly. Suddenly Christina -- bursts out laughing!

James is totally thrown as she laughs harder and louder. Like a release. Streaming tears. James smiles, embarrassed, at all the people watching.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Did I say something funn -- ?

She snorts!

JAMES (CONT'D)

Oh - that's - okay.

CHRISTINA

(still laughing!)

My husband thinks you're ridiculous!

James is stunned. This was not what he expected.

JAMES

What?

CHRISTINA

(tears of laughter)

He calls you the "Liberal Elitist
Dick Fuck!"

JAMES

(offended)

A "dick fuck -- ?" That's... he
learn that in Fallujah?

CHRISTINA

(calming)

Oh, God. I'm sorry. I needed that.

JAMES

(getting up to leave)

Glad I could help.

CHRISTINA

Wait, you're going?

JAMES

Yeah; sorry, I have something
"ridiculous" to attend to.

CHRISTINA

Oh, don't go!

JAMES

Enjoy the coffee.

He walks irritably to the door.

CHRISTINA

I wanna hear more about your
brother's wife's cancer!

James exits to the sound of her laughter starting again...

EXT. STREET. CONTINUOUS.

James storms from the café. He stops. *"Should I go back and
say something?"* Instead he pulls out his phone. Dials.

MAN'S VOICE (ON PHONE)

"You've reached Edward Roe, leave a
message and we'll see what happens."

James hangs up. Looks back at the cafe. And then walks on.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

James and Liz silently get undressed for bed. Both struggling separately with their day's experiences. Finally --

JAMES
I saw Christina today.

Liz tenses at the name. But continues her nightly routine.

LIZ
Oh yeah? Where?

JAMES
We were at the same movie.

She turns, slightly at this.

LIZ
You saw Christina at the movies?
Today?

JAMES
I don't think she was actually
watching. She wasn't even wearing
the 3-D glasses.

LIZ
(cautiously)
Did you talk to her?

JAMES
Yeah, of course. I mean, I went
right up to her afterwards. She was
still sort of freaked out from last
night so I took her to see that new
Aaron Paul film to calm her down.

LIZ
The one you called a "Pooperhero
movie?"

JAMES
Because of how Hollywood shits them
out, not because it's shitty.
Actually. It's both. Anyway.
(takes off his pants)
After the movie I took her out for
coffee, to see if she wanted to
talk or whatever, and she told me
that Mike thinks I'm "ridiculous"
and a "liberal elitist dick fuck."

Liz turns to him fully for the first time.

LIZ

What?

JAMES

Yeah. Told you that guy hated me.

James slips into bed.

LIZ

She just *said* that? Like out of the blue? Why would she tell you that?

JAMES

Who knows. But now I kinda see why you stopped calling her.

LIZ

Jesus!

JAMES

What?

LIZ

You know, it might be nice if you just *tried* thinking about someone other than yourself for a change.

JAMES

What are you talking about? I took her out for a movie and coffee and she tells me I'm a "dick fuck!"

LIZ

Their child died, James!

JAMES

Honestly, honey, he probably called me a "dick fuck" before she died.

She stares at him, stunned by his callousness.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What?

She shakes her head and walks into the bathroom.

LIZ (O.C.)

We have to pick up a gift before we leave tomorrow!

JAMES

How do we still get invited to these things?

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)
 I thought part of the benefit of not
 having kids would be not having to go
 all of their birthday parties. Kinda
 feels like we're getting screwed.

No reaction. James then turns to see: "LEADER OF MEN" by
Michael Krill on Liz's bedside table. He bristles.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD. DAY.

KIDS running and screaming. It's sugar-fueled chaos. A sign
 hangs in the backyard of a Brownstone: "HAPPY BIRTHDAY!" as
 PARENTS mill about, talking to one another.

James and Liz are both in their own worlds, as they half-
 listen to a few parents chat: HALLIE, 38, healthy and bright,
 her husband, FIN, 40, holding a proud gut and WENDIE, 37,
 pregnant and loving it. PATCH, 3, dangles from FIN's leg.

FIN
 Just wait! You thought *one* was
 hard?

WENDIE
 Everyone says that!

HALLIE
 It's true! We look back at when we
 just had this one here and ...

FIN
 We had it sooooo good!

Everyone laughs. *Parent humor.* James and Liz force laughs.

FIN (CONT'D)
 Patch! Stop!

James looks at Patch, who doesn't stop. Liz's phone BUZZES.

HALLIE
 Do you have a name yet?

WENDIE
 Heath.

Liz looks at her cell to see: "*Mike Krill calling...*" -- and
 anxiously puts it away.

JAMES
 Heaf?? What's a Heaf?

WENDIE
Heath! With a T.H.

JAMES
You mean like the candy bar?

WENDIE
It's after my mother.

JAMES
Your mother's name was Heef?

WENDIE
(annoyed)
No, Hefer! I mean *Heather!*

HALLIE
(changing the subject)
So, Liz, you guys still anti-kids?

LIZ
(waking from her daze)
What? Oh, no! We're just not really
"kid people."

HALLIE
Well, no one is until they are!

SQUIRT! SQUIRT! Patch shoots his water gun in James' face!

FIN
Patch! No!

JAMES
(wiping face)
You don't say.

WENDIE
Liz, I heard you saw Christina and
Mike. How are they?

James watches Liz struggle for an answer.

LIZ
They're, you know, still going
through a tough time.

WENDIE
I've been thinking about her so
much lately.

HALLIE
God, I can't even imagine.

FIN

Holy shit! Have you read Mike's book? It's insane. What those Seal guys do? It's actually a really great read. I was impressed.

JAMES

Yeah, well, it's not like he wrote it.

Everyone turns to James, who realizes he said this out loud.

JAMES (CONT'D)

No; I'm just saying. Books like that are usually written by ghostwriters.

Liz glares at him, bothered by this comment.

FIN

Well, whatever. The stuff he did over there; it's pretty incredible.

WENDIE

And then to come home and lose your only child --

JAMES

Actually, kinda funny: Friend of mine told me the book's become like a bible for Wall Street douchebags.

HALLIE

(offended)

You know Fin works on Wall Street.

JAMES

Right, I just mean the douchebags.

LIZ

(annoyed)

What are you talking about?

JAMES

Check his website. Apparently, he gets like six figures just to speak to rich assholes about how to make more money. Using the skills of "leadership in battle."

HALLIE

Really?

LIZ

Well, I think he's earned it, don't you?

FIN

You know he got that scar from saving a kid in Iraq from a suicide bomb? Lost three of his own men!

JAMES

Three huh? Hell of a leader.

LIZ

(fed up)

I'm sorry, I forgot; how many Iraqi kids have you saved?

JAMES

How many Iraqi kids have I saved??

LIZ

Yes! How many Iraqi kids have you saved?!

Everyone tries to keep their smiles - but it's awkward.

JAMES

Uh. None. But then I haven't killed any innocent civilians either.

LIZ

What makes you think he's killed any innocent civilians?!

JAMES

Well, he wasn't just jumping on Iraqi kids all day! I mean, you're reading the book, you tell me. Did he kill innocent civilians?

LIZ

You know, he's right! You are a liberal elitist dick fuck!

FIN

Whoa! Okay!!

JAMES

Why?! Because I didn't train to kill people?

LIZ

Because everything's a joke to you!

HALLIE

Okay, why don't we --

JAMES

That's not true! I just don't see how *I'm* the elitist when he's the one getting rich training mini Madoffs!

LIZ

At least he did something! He sacrificed something! He doesn't just go to stupid movies all day!

JAMES

That's my *job*!

LIZ

Well, it's very admirable.

FIN

Hey, maybe it's time for the cake --

JAMES

Well, I'm sorry I didn't save enough Iraqi kids to earn your respect! Guess I should've joined the fucking army.

LIZ

They wouldn't let you *in* the fucking army?

JAMES

Why, too smart?

LIZ

Too gay!

JAMES

Ha! Read a headline! They let gays in the military now!!

Before they can acknowledge the stupidity of this, they realize --

Everyone's staring. PARENTS eyeing them angrily as they cover their KIDS' ears. *Definitely not "kid people."*

LIZ

(embarrassed)

Sorry.

JAMES

Sorry.

(awkward pause)

Patch, I hope you liked your gift.

HALLIE

It's not *his* birthday.

JAMES

Oh.

INT. CAB. MOMENTS LATER.

Liz and James sit in silence. Stewing. Finally...

JAMES

They're assholes.

LIZ

Why? Because they're grown ups?

JAMES

No; because they think they're better than us.

LIZ

Yeah, they're way off. Excuse me, could you pull over!

The DRIVER pulls the cab over.

JAMES

What are you doing?

LIZ

I need some air.

She gets out and slams the door!

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPER: ***"I have a hole where a hole should be"***

CLOSE ON --

TV MONITOR SHOWING A LIVE STREAM OF A GROCERY STORE. We see SHOPPERS casually shopping with numbers on their chests.

LIZ (O.C.)

There. See that? Number two?

MALE EXECUTIVE 1 (O.C.)
She walked past the aisle.

We GO WIDE to reveal that we are in --

INT. MONITOR ROOM. DAY.

MONITORS display different angles of the grocery store.

Liz watches with two MALE and one FEMALE EXECUTIVE from Crackles Potato Chips.

LIZ
She didn't just walk past it, she
avoided it. So did number six.

FEMALE EXECUTIVE
That's to be expected. Health
conscious shoppers.

LIZ
We're all health conscious. What we
need is permission to indulge.
You're not asking these people to
eat your potato chips, you're just
asking them to *buy* them. They're
not going to do that if they avoid
the aisle all together.

MALE EXECUTIVE 1
So, what are you suggesting?

LIZ
Potatoes are vegetables, right?

FEMALE EXECUTIVE
(chuckling)
You wanna put them in the vegetable
aisle?

LIZ
I want people to feel okay about
170 calories an ounce. And they'll
feel a lot better about it with a
head of lettuce and a few carrots
in the cart.

Two of the Executives exchange a look, considering.

MALE EXECUTIVE 2
It could be a nice compliment to
"The Big Chip."

LIZ
 "The Big Chip?"

FEMALE EXECUTIVE
 As part of our new campaign we're
 installing 80 ft Potato Chips in
 four major parks around the city!

MALE EXECUTIVE 2
 (no irony)
 They'll be the largest Potato Chips
 ever constructed.

Liz nods, letting the absurdity wash over her.

MALE EXECUTIVE 1
 (re: Liz's idea:)
 I like it. I think it aligns with
 the strategy.

FEMALE EXECUTIVE
 (pointing at monitor)
 Who's the beefcake?

Liz turns to the monitor to see -- Mike in the store!

CLOSE ON -- Liz's face. *Oh shit...*

LIZ
 I'll be right back.

INT. GROCERY STORE. MOMENT'S LATER.

Liz walks quickly through the store we saw on the monitors,
 past all the numbered Shoppers, until she sees --

Mike helping a WOMAN get something down from a high shelf.

LIZ
 Mike?

He turns to see Liz -- he smiles.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 (tense smile)
 What are you doing here?

MIKE
 You weren't answering my calls.

LIZ
 Sorry, I know, I've been...

She looks up at the camera, insecurely.

LIZ (CONT'D)
...why don't we go outside.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER.

Liz and Mike stand outside in front of the "store", which we now see is a warehouse. A fake "test store" used for market research.

LIZ
How did you know where I was?

MIKE
I'm sort of a Navy Seal.
(She stares blankly)
Your assistant told me.

LIZ
Oh. Ha!
(awkward pause)
Look, Mike --

MIKE
No, wait, before you say anything.
The other day --

LIZ
Please, really, it's fine, it was
an accident -- !

MIKE
-- No, it wasn't.
(beat, off her reaction)
Or it was but...I don't regret it.

Liz looks flustered. She wasn't expecting this. Suddenly --

A LARGE MAN wearing #16 appears with an open box of cookies.

LARGE MAN
We get to take the food home, right?

Liz looks at him, first distracted - and then concerned.

LIZ
It's not real.

LARGE MAN
Shit, really?

He looks at the box, nervously, and walks back into the "store."

MIKE

I need to see you again.

LIZ

(flustered)

Mike...I don't think --

MIKE

Tell me you didn't feel anything the other day. Tell me you kissed me back out of pity and I'll leave right now.

(before she can speak)

You know what? I don't care if it was pity --

LIZ

Mike --

MIKE

Liz. Being with you was the first time I've felt anything but grief in a year.

She sees the desperation in his eyes. He hands her a card.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Look: I'll be here until 2. I have a speaking engagement but after that we can go where ever you want. Just to talk. (then) Please.

Liz struggles with what to say. Then finally blurts:

LIZ

Okay, well! I have to get back to work! Sorry; I'm in the middle of a thing -- but we'll keep *talking!*

She grimaces at this stupid comment as she walks back in --

INT. GROCERY STORE. CONTINUOUS.

Liz closes the door, breathing anxiously. She looks out to see Mike leave. Then at the card he gave her. Suddenly --

LARGE MAN

The chips aren't fake though, right?

Liz looks at him, existentially, as he eats from a CRACKLES bag.

INT. JAMES AND LIZ'S APARTMENT. DAY.

James tries to fix ALEXA. Thinking he's got it, he plugs it in the wall behind the bookshelf and -- MUSIC BLARES!

JAMES
Alexa stop! Stop Alexa! No! Bad
Alexa!

It sounds just like: "*No, Patch! Patch, no!*" He unplugs it. Then notices something on the bookshelf...

"CYSTYPHEAN MYTHS" by Edward Roe. He pulls it out. The blurb reads: "*Funniest book ever written about bone cancer.*" -- NY Times

He then sees *"LEADER OF MEN"* by Michael Krill. He pulls it out. The blurb reads: "*A brilliant meditation on courage under pressure.*" -- Boston Globe

James chuckles, dismissively. Then, a look of defiance.

He grabs his keys and rushes out of the apartment!

EXT. MIDTOWN STREET. LATER.

James marches down the street, on a mission. *To do what? Talk to Mike? Christina?* He stops abruptly when he sees --

Christina exiting her building wearing big, dark sunglasses, a head scarf and her collar turned up. *A disguise?* She carries a large bag. She looks around, cautiously, as if making sure no one sees her. And then heads toward the subway.

Curiosity taking the place of umbrage...James follows her.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR. DAY.

An ad stretches the length of the car with the line:
"CRACKLES POTATO CHIPS: "BIG CRUNCH. BIGGER FLAVOR."

Below the ad, James stealthily watches Christina from the far side of the train. She checks her watch, anxiously. She turns to toward James -- and he quickly hides behind --

A LARGE MALE PASSENGER! The PASSENGER looks down at James like he's a fucking weirdo. James smiles, apologetically.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST VILLAGE STREET. DAY.

Christina walks briskly down the street. We PAN BACK to see...

James following from a safe distance. He stops when he sees --

Christina stop across the street from a plain looking building. She looks back toward James -- and he quickly ducks into --

A BOOKSTORE!

James continues to watch Christina through the store window. She sits on a bench and watches the building, closely.

An OLDER MAN with a French Bulldog and a thick NY accent approaches James in the store.

OLDER MAN

Hey, you the movie guy from the paper?

JAMES

(still watching)

Uh, yeah. One of them. Sorry, I'm sorta in the middle of --

OLDER MAN

Why didn't you like *Sully*?

JAMES

Excuse me?

OLDER MAN

Sully. With Tom Hanks. Why didn't you like it?

James sees a few PEOPLE exit the building Christina's watching. A MAN in a Red Sox Cap, A GUY WITH GLASSES and a Captain America T-shirt and a TEENAGE GIRL with a lip ring.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)

I was telling my wife we should rent *Sully* and she remembered you didn't like it. But we watched it and I thought it was really good. Strong performances. Hanks is always good. But the other guy was good too we thought.

The three PEOPLE walk off together, chatting. Christina stands up and follows them.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)
 You know it was directed by Clint
 Eastwood --

JAMES
 I didn't review *Sully*. That was
 someone else.

James quickly moves past the OLDER MAN and exits the store --

EXT. STREET. CONTINUOUS.

James looks around for her. He sees the MAN in the RED SOX
 CAP and the TEENAGE GIRL -- but no Christina.

Wait, there she is!

She's walking about ten feet back from the GUY WITH GLASSES.
Is she following him?

James' phone BUZZES. He look to see: "*Eddie Calling...*" He
 hits "Dismiss". And follows Christina.

MIKE (O.C.)
Fear.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE SEMINAR ROOM. DAY.

Liz enters quietly and sits in the back of a packed seminar,
 as we continue to hear Mike's voice:

MIKE (O.C.)
 Okay, of what? Failure?
 Humiliation? Rejection? *Death?*

We see Mike speaking confidently to an audience of YOUNG
 BUSINESS ASSOCIATES. A poster of his book in the corner.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 Let's close your eyes and *think*
 about *fear*. Go on.

Everyone, in rapt attention, closes their eyes.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 That's it. Feel it. Taste it.
 Good. Now, say *goodbye* to it.
 Because that feeling has no place
 on the battlefield. *Fear* is what
 gets you killed.
 (MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

It's a bullet in the head. An IED in the middle of your unit. Because the moment your team sees it, the moment the *enemy* sees it, the moment *you* see it -- it's over.

Liz can see a hint of shame in Mike's eyes. *Is he faking it?*

MIKE (CONT'D)

Now, you're gonna say, what, fear is a survival instinct. Keeps you sharp. And for housewives and couch potatoes, that's probably true. But when you willingly put yourself in *front* of the *front* lines -- you've already *contradicted* that instinct. You're a different animal. Instinct doesn't even *apply* to you. Because this isn't about *survival* -- it's about being the best. Doing what the other guy won't -- and *can't*. It's about leading a team into battle and saying: "Fear? Fuck fear. I *chose* this. This is who I *am*."

Liz squirms in a sea of pumped-up business dudes. Mike sees her. A tiny smile crosses his lips.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK BAR. AFTERNOON.

Liz and Mike sit in the back of a dark bar. Liz wears sunglasses.

MIKE

Thanks for coming. I know you're nervous to be seen with me.

LIZ

I'm not nervous. Why, do I look nervous?

MIKE

No. But. We're in a gay bar.

WE GO WIDE: to reveal an unapologetically gay bar. ONLY MEN hanging out. A Corona ad on the wall of two naked dudes on a beach. A clock with Penis second hand.

LIZ

Look, Mike: what happened the other day...I think we were both just feeling emotional.

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

And with everything you're going through, what you've experienced over the last year -- I mean, God, I can't even imagine. And I think what happened was you were talking, you know, about all of that stuff, and I was, you know, listening...

MIKE

(re: her rambling)

Liz...

LIZ

My point is, I think what you're feeling for me -- and I'm not saying you are feeling something -- but if you are, you know, feeling something -- I think that's more about -- *probably* -- what it's about.

MIKE

I agree.

LIZ

(thrown)

You do?

MIKE

Liz: my 6 year old daughter was killed by a drunk driver and I can't mourn her because if I do my wife will go to pieces. Meanwhile, the book I wrote about my experience in the war has been appropriated as a tool for one percent wannabees. And now I get paid to give M.B.A. pre-pubes spank material about the perils of fear, where I make the battlefield a metaphor for the trading floor. And they have no idea it's all bullshit. That I'm terrified. Of who I am. What I've become. What my wife has become. So, yeah. I think it's possible my feelings for you might have something to do with that.

LIZ

(awkward beat)

Good. Well. As long as we've established that's what it is.

Mike reaches into his bag. He comes back with some opened letters, still in their envelopes.

MIKE

You asked me if something happened
that night to upset Chris.

(hesitates a moment)

Guess you could say it was him.

He hands her the letters. She looks at them.

LIZ

Ryan Caster? Who is that?

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST VILLAGE STREET. DAY.

James hides behind the steps of a brownstone watching
Christina standing on street corner watching --

The GUY WITH GLASSES in the window of a cafe, drinking a
coffee and reading, *Twilight*. He's slight, about 32, but
looks younger. Sweet faced. He seems restless, as he keeps
looking at his phone for the time.

TWO KIDS make silly faces at James from the ground floor
window of the brownstone. He smiles, awkwardly. Then sees --

Christina crossing the street, trance-like, toward the café.

Oh shit! There's a CAR headed straight for her!

He runs over to her and pulls her back on to the curb --
HOOOONK!!

Did she do that on purpose?

The GUY WITH GLASSES looks out the window -- but sees only James.

Christina, disoriented, turns around to see --

CHRISTINA

James!? What are you doing here?

JAMES

(panting)

You're welcome.

CHRISTINA

(nervously)

Have you've been following me?

JAMES

What? No! I mean. Yes. A little.

CHRISTINA
Did Mike ask you to do that?

JAMES
Mike?

CHRISTINA
Does he know I'm here?!

JAMES
No! I mean, I don't know --

CHRISTINA
What are you doing here?

JAMES
Okay look: I went over to your place because I wanted to talk about our conversation the other day. Or, not really "conversation," more just you laughing at me and my brother's wife's horrible cancer...

She turns back to the GUY WITH GLASSES as James talks.

JAMES (CONT'D)
...but then I see you dressed like Greta Garbo and you're following some hipster Marvel fan.

She turns back to James...*"oh God, you know?"*

JAMES (CONT'D)
Who is he?

CHRISTINA
(beat)
No one.

She turns and walks away. James follows.

JAMES
Look, I'm not gonna tell Mike! Is he like an office crush?

CHRISTINA
Please, stop --

JAMES
An ex boyfriend? A *current* boyfriend? Is he *Mike's* boyfriend?!

She stops, abruptly.

CHRISTINA
He killed my daughter!!

James goes completely white.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)
(desperate)
Please don't tell Mike.

He looks toward the café, realizing...*it's the drunk driver!*

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)
It's not what you think. I'm just. I
wanted to see, I wanted to...please don't
tell Mike -

JAMES
-- He's leaving.

CHRISTINA
What?

James points to the GUY WITH GLASSES exiting the cafe.

JAMES
C'mon, we're gonna lose him.

Christina looks thrown, as James grabs her hand -- and they
follow him!

CUT TO:

INT. DARK BAR. AFTERNOON.

Liz finishes reading the letters. She doesn't know what to say.

LIZ
Chris has read these?

MIKE
No.

LIZ
No? I mean, don't you think she --

MIKE
Why? So she can forgive him? See
that he's "sorry"? That he's just
a, a normal guy? Her rage is the
only thing keeping her alive; I'm
not gonna take that away. No.
Those letters are *my* burden.

LIZ
Why are you showing them to me?

MIKE
(beat)
I don't know.

THE BARTENDER, muscle bound, appears at the table wearing a Diana Ross T-shirt that says: "Original Diva."

BARTENDER
One Bud light and one happy hour
cocktail.

He hands Liz a PENIS SHAPED drink. She's confused at first but then, getting the joke...

LIZ
It's a "cock" tail.

She smiles awkwardly as she sips from the straw.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND. DAY.

FROM A DISTANCE we see the GUY WITH GLASSES, aka RYAN CASTER, playing with his son, NILES, 5, as his MOTHER watches on.

James and Christina watch from across the street, silently. Neither know what to say to the other. Finally --

JAMES
What's his name?

CHRISTINA
(Pause)
Ryan. Ryan Caster.

James struggles to think of something else to say.

JAMES
That's his kid?

CHRISTINA
Niles. He should be five by now.
He's been seeing him once a day.

James takes this in. He's about to try something else when --

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)
You think I'm crazy, don't you?
(before he can answer)
(MORE)

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)
It's okay. Mike does. He thinks I'm weak. Which, for Mike, is worse. He knew he'd been released from prison for weeks and didn't even tell me. Guess he was scared of how I'd react.

JAMES
Yeah, what was he thinking?

James smiles, but then immediately regrets the joke.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm sure he's just trying to... protect you.

CHRISTINA
(bitterly)
"Protect" me. He won't talk about Katie. Won't say her name or even visit her grave. All because he's protecting me.
(beat)
I found out about his release the night you two came over.

James realizes...*that's what happened that night!*

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)
He was only in for nine months. Nine. Seems appropriate, I guess. Considering what he took from me.

They watch RYAN plead with the MOTHER for more time with NILES.

JAMES
(discovery)
He was at the movie the other day. That's why you were there.

CHRISTINA
He goes to A.A. every day as a condition of his release. So I stand outside and wait for him to come out. I don't know why. Maybe just to...see him. Maybe I think I'll get the courage to say something or...maybe I am crazy.
(beat, anger)
But someone has to remember. Someone has to say her name.

James watches Christina stare darkly at RYAN, as he waves goodbye to NILES, who walks off with his MOTHER.

JAMES

What would you say to him?

We CLOSE IN on Christina as she stares at her mark.

CHRISTINA

I'd tell him about how I still see her. How I hear her playing in her room sometimes when the apartment is quiet. About that sudden rush of exhilaration I feel when I do and that...*sickness* when I remember. I'd tell him that I have the same dream every night. Reaching into the car; trying to save her. Struggling to unhook her seat belt. How I try to talk to her, keep her calm as I stretch my hands out as far as they can go through the broken windshield. But it's never far enough.

James is transfixed. *Humbled, perhaps?*

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

I'd tell him how my husband and I don't talk to each other anymore because there's only one thing to talk about. And we don't know how.

He turns to RYAN who sits alone in the park, sad.

JAMES

I don't think you're crazy. Or weak.

She might be touched by this but doesn't know how to show it.

CHRISTINA

Please don't tell Liz about...

JAMES

No. Of course not. (then) Frankly, I don't think she'd understand.

OTS of James and Christina watching Ryan like a movie. James offers her gum. She takes a stick.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK BAR. AFTERNOON.

Liz SLURPS her PENIS SHAPED drink. An empty one next to her.

LIZ
These are actually delicious.

MIKE
You haven't answered my question.

LIZ
Mike...Christina is --

MIKE
Christina hasn't been in love with
me since Katie died.

LIZ
You don't know that.

MIKE
Did you feel something or not?

LIZ
I'm married.

MIKE
To a ridiculous man.

LIZ
He's not...*that* ridiculous.

She slurps again.

MIKE
He mocks people like us because he's
scared to put himself on the line.

LIZ
(flattered)
"People like us?"

He grabs her hand.

MIKE
I watched you the other night. What
you said to Chris, how you handled
the situation...

Liz then shakes from her flattery, and removes her hand.

LIZ
Look, Mike, if you knew my life; I
mean, compared to yours...?

MIKE
That's not true...

LIZ

Do you know what I do all day? I predict how and why people will buy things they don't need. That's my job! My biggest clients are installing 80 foot potato chips all over the city. I have a membership to the MoMA and the Whitney and I've never been to either. We order in three times a week because we don't like cooking. I have a subscription to *US Weekly* -- and I read it! And the deepest conversation James and I had in the last 6 months was about the season finale of *Game of Thrones*.

(beat)

The things you've seen and done... what you and Chris have been through?

(coming clean)

I can't understand it.

MIKE

(smiling)

I know.

LIZ

(offended)

What?

MIKE

(confused)

What?

LIZ

Well, I mean...the other day you said that I *did* understand.

MIKE

You *do*. You understand how to not let it all in. How to move on with your life. Shut your ears to it all.

LIZ

I don't shut my ears...

MIKE

It's okay; it's survival.

LIZ

(defensive)

You don't even know me.

MIKE

I know the deepest conversation you had in the last year was about *Game of Thrones*.

LIZ

You can't use that example; that's my example! You know what? I -- I have to go.

She stands up to leave --

MIKE

Wait, Liz --!

She trips over a chair!

LIZ

Ow! Shit!

She exits, as Mike stuffs the letters in his bag and follows her into the --

EXT. STREET. CONTINUOUS.

Mike chases Liz as she shouts back --

LIZ

My dad died okay?! And my cousin, Sarah? You don't know this -- but it really fucked me up!

He grabs her by the arm. She avoids eye contact.

MIKE

Look, I'm sorry! I didn't mean to offend you! I just meant that when I look at you I don't see...*scars!* Or pain or *death*. I see -- *life!* I see strength and courage and passion. I don't want *pain* anymore. I'm *sick* of pain.

LIZ

You think I'm ridiculous.

MIKE

I think kissing you the other day was the first time I've been alive in over a year. I think you're strong. I think you're fearless and smart. I think you're the least ridiculous person I've ever known.

This gets her. Their eyes lock. She's hypnotized by the moment, the weight, honesty. *We wonder, will the kiss...?*

YOUNG MAN' VOICE (O.C.)
Dude! Look who it is!

The spell is broken as a group of MALE ASSOCIATES from the seminar approach -- drunk.

ASSOCIATE 1
Hey! Seal guy! Get a drink with us!

ASSOCIATE 2
Your speech was fucking dope, man.
I was pumped!

LIZ
(spell broken)
I should go...

MIKE
Wait...

ASSOCIATE 2
Did you really know the guys from
Seal Team six?

MIKE
(irritated)
I'm with someone right now.

She begins to walk away.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Liz...

ASSOCIATE 3
Hastings, leave him alone!

ASSOCIATE 1
Holy shit, yeah! Did you see Bin
Laden's body? C'mon man, one drink!

Associate 1 puts his hand on Mike's shoulder and -- WAP!!
Mike hits him -- hard! He goes down!

ALL ASSOCIATES
Whoa! / hey! / Shit!

Liz turns back around --

LIZ
Oh my God!

Mike jumps on top of him. Hits him again!

MIKE
Touch me again!

And again!

MIKE (CONT'D)
Touch me again you ivy league
motherfucker! PLEASE!

BAM!

ALL ASSOCIATES
Hey! /Stop! / You're gonna kill em!

He cocks his arm back again --

LIZ
MIKE!!

Mike stops, as if waking from a dream. *My God, what have I done?*
He gets up; lost. The Associates run to their friend.

ASSOCIATE 3
Dude, what the fuck!

He turns to Liz, shaken. He grabs his bag and walks away.

ASSOCIATE 3 (CONT'D)
Dude! Lady! The fuck's his problem?!

ASSOCIATE 2
Yeah! Tim went to Ohio State!

Liz watches Mike walk off, a look of profound sympathy; her heart aching for him. She then sees --

The letters from Ryan Caster on the ground. She picks them up. We CLOSE IN on Liz' conflicted expression.

MATCH CUT TO:

Liz's face. Same expression. Except now she's --

IN BED.

Staring at the ceiling. Wide awake. She turns over to see --
James' face.

Dead asleep. Mouth breathing. Drooling. *A ridiculous man?*

She closes his mouth. But it pops back open. She tries again. It pops back open. Then she pulls his lip, curiously, like it's rubber. Moving it around. Repelled and fascinated by its elasticity. Its inhumanity.

She hears SOMETHING in the other room and turns to the door --

JAMES
What are you *doing*?

She turns back to see that she's still holding his lip. She lets go.

LIZ
(whispers)
I think there's someone in the
apartment?

Another SOUND! James heard that one. *What the...??*

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. MOMENT'S LATER.

A MAN rummages through the fridge. He closes the door and --

MAN
(Startled)
Jesus!

James and Liz stand holding "weapons", James wields scissors and Liz a hole puncher.

JAMES
Edward?

Meet EDWARD ROE, 44, with dark, tired eyes, an unkempt beard and a cast on his left hand. There's something about Edward that makes it never quite clear if he's joking or not.

EDWARD
You scared the hell out of me.

LIZ
We scared *you*?

EDWARD
Is that a hole puncher?

Liz looks at her weapon, embarrassed.

JAMES

What are you are you doing? How did you get in here?

EDWARD

(holds up a key)

I used this key you gave me.

JAMES

I never gave you a key.

EDWARD

Oh. Weird. Is this milk still good?

CUT TO:

KITCHEN TABLE. MOMENTS LATER

James watches Edward eat cereal at his kitchen table. His cast, his tired eyes, scraggly beard.

JAMES

So is everything okay, or..?

EDWARD

Yeah, why?

JAMES

I don't know; you break into my apartment at 2 am, you have a cast on your hand and you look like Jeff Bridges.

EDWARD

Which movie?

JAMES

His last five. What's going on?

EDWARD

Nothing. You called me.

JAMES

So, you break in to my apartment?

EDWARD

Well, you never call, so.

Before James can respond to this, Liz comes in with blankets.

LIZ

Here you go, Eddie. Let me know if you need anything else.

EDWARD
Thanks, Liz.

LIZ
What happened to your hand?

EDWARD
Which one?

She stares at him, blankly. *I'm too tired for this.*

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Cool poster.

They both look at the *Star Trek* poster he's referring to.

LIZ
I'm going to bed.

EDWARD
Good night!

Liz shuffles off the bedroom.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
You guys fighting?

JAMES
No. Wait. Why?

EDWARD
I think she hates me.

JAMES
She doesn't hate you.

EDWARD
Feel like she hates me.

JAMES
It's not you. (then) We're fighting.

EDWARD
What about?

JAMES
I have no idea. What happened to your hand?

EDWARD
Actually, it's a funny story...

CUT TO:

EXT. WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE. NIGHT.

Edward is walking the Williamsburg Bridge, innocently.

EDWARD (V.O.)
So, I'm walking across the
Williamsburg Bridge. And I think I
hear someone down below.

Edward stops, hearing something, and climbs the railing.

EDWARD (V.O.)
So I climb the railing to look
down. Just then I hear something
behind me. I look over and there's
this little Asian girl taking a
selfie with me in the background.

We see a 25 YEAR OLD GIRL taking a selfie with her phone.

EDWARD (V.O.)
And I realize, holy shit, she
thinks I'm gonna jump and wants to
like Tweet it or some shit! So I'm
like:

Edward mouths his own V.O.:

EDWARD (V.O.)
"Hey! Are you taking a selfie of my
fucking suicide?" And she's like --

The Girl mouths:

EDWARD (V.O.)
"Fuck you, mother fucker." And she
just - bolts!

The Girl runs!

EDWARD (V.O.)
I'm like, "Hey! Hey! Come back
here!" So I chase her, and --

He chases her off camera until we hear a HONK! SCREECH! BANG!

CUT BACK TO:

INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS.

James stares blankly, not sure if this is a real story or not.

EDWARD
So, why did you call?

JAMES
What?

EDWARD
The other day. You didn't leave a message.

JAMES
Oh. Uh...actually... I was thinking about Karen.

EDWARD
You know she's dead right?

JAMES
(annoyed)
Yeah, I think I remember.
(beat)
Some friends of ours lost their daughter last year to a drunk driver. The mother's going through a really tough time and I'm sort of helping her through it.

Edward laughs. James looks offended. *More laughing?*

JAMES (CONT'D)
Why is that funny?

EDWARD
Because other peoples' suffering makes you uncomfortable.

JAMES
This from the guy who wrote a comedy about his wife's death.

EDWARD
Dark comedy.

Edward gets up to get more cereal, as James considers this.

JAMES
Well. I mean. I was helpful to you?
Wasn't I? With Karen?

Edward pours more cereal in his bowl.

EDWARD
Uh. Yeah. Sure.

JAMES
(dubious)
You went high.

EDWARD
I didn't go high.

JAMES
You went high.

EDWARD
You were great, you know. I mean,
sure, what do you mean?

He sits back at the table.

JAMES
Wait, so...what, you're saying I
wasn't there for you?

EDWARD
(mouth full)
Define "there for me?"

JAMES
I -- what do you mean? I came to
the hospital, I *called*, I...that
night after the funeral, I stayed
at your place, remember? We *talked*.

EDWARD
Yeah. That was nice.

James looks stunned.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Look, it's not a big deal. I didn't
expect you to like drop everything
and call me every day. Or come over
once week with soup and a movie. I
mean, I don't even like soup. Why
do people think soup is good for
people who are grieving?

JAMES
It's warm and comforting.

EDWARD
Mom made me gazpacho. It was
freezing. Do you have any juice?

Edward gets up and goes into the fridge.

JAMES

Well, Jesus, Eddie. Why didn't you say anything?

EDWARD

Because other peoples' suffering makes you uncomfortable. What's this?

He holds a Orange Pellegrino.

JAMES

It's like bubbly orange juice. You'll like it.

Edward opens it and drinks, as James continues to stew.

EDWARD

Look, don't get upset. I still love you.

JAMES

I just...I feel bad. I wish you would of said something, that's all.

EDWARD

I'm sorry. Next time I totally will.

James nods. And then realizes...*wait a second?*

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. MORNING.

Liz sits at the kitchen table staring at the Ryan Caster letters. Conflicted. She then slips them into a larger envelope, and seals it. She writes: **"To Christina Krill"** .

EDWARD (O.C.)

You're out of cereal.

LIZ

(startled)

Ah! Jesus!

Edward stands in his boxers, hair standing up.

EDWARD

And milk.

LIZ

Thought you were asleep.

EDWARD

I don't really sleep that much.
Speaking of which, I hope I didn't
keep you guys up last night. I can
be kind of loud.

LIZ

Doing what?

EDWARD

Oh. Nothing. Forget it then.

She looks wierded out. She puts the envelope in her bag.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

James said you guys are in fight.

LIZ

He said that?

EDWARD

No.

LIZ

We're not "in a fight."

EDWARD

Good.

She looks at him, as if trying to interpret.

LIZ

I have to go work. I'll pick up
some cereal on the way home.

EDWARD

Oh, don't worry about it. But
something with oats in it.

Liz walks to the door and then stops. There's something on
her mind. Finally, she turns to Edward --

LIZ

Why a comedy? The book about
Karen's illness? Why did you make
it a comedy?

EDWARD

(beat)

I don't know. It was just so...
horrible.

She looks even more confounded.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 How do you accept something so horrible? So much pain. False hope. Every day? With the Chemo and the vomiting, the tubes and wires and weight loss. The constant assault on your humanity. You just can't. It's absurd. It's just not possible to...not laugh.

He says this not laughing. Liz has no response.

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPER: *"Grief has been done to death"*

INT. NEW YORK TIMES OFFICES. DAY.

James sits at his desk clicking through something on his computer. On the screen we see --

Photos of: 1. James, Liz, Edward (clean shaven) and KAREN who looks healthy, lovely, silly. 2. Edward and Karen in the hospital, early in her illness. She's laughing, as he lifts her hospital gown to look at her ass. 3. Karen bald and sick, as Edward wears a Santa hat and a stethoscope, both smiling.

James closes out to reveal his desktop is a big photo of --

James and Liz smiling happily on a rooftop in New York.

CUT TO:

INT. BREAK ROOM. DAY.

James pours himself a coffee. Another reporter, NICHOLAS, 30s, black, intellectual, walks in.

NICHOLAS
 Hey.

JAMES
 Nicholas. How it's going?

NICHOLAS
 Oh, you know.

He refills his coffee.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

What are you working on these days?

JAMES

Wong Kar-Wai's latest and *Mission Impossible 8*.

NICHOLAS

And?

JAMES

See the first, rent the second.
What about you?

NICHOLAS

I just got back from Aleppo. Doing
this cheery piece on how ISIS uses
children as human shields.

JAMES

(floored)
Jesus.

NICHOLAS

Yeah. Another day, another dollar.
Right? See ya later.

Nick pats him on the shoulder and exits with his coffee.

JAMES

Later.

James looks deflated. Then an idea! He looks at his watch.

HARD CUT TO:

HIS DESK.

James searches through drawers until he finds -- aha! --
Binoculars! He heads toward the door, swipes a Knicks hat and
sunglasses off a random desk -- and exits!

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. DAY.

Liz stands outside of Mike and Christina's door. She leans
down to slip the envelope under the door when --

The door opens!

Startled, Liz stands with the envelope as Christina comes out, wearing her dark glasses, head scarf.

LIZ
Hey! Chris!

CHRISTINA
(off guard)
Liz. Hi. How are you?

Christina takes off her sunglasses.

LIZ
Sorry, did I catch you at bad time?

CHRISTINA
No, I was just...headed to work.

LIZ
I can come back!

CHRISTINA
No, it's -- did you want something?

LIZ
Yeah, I just, I...

Liz grips the envelope. It's time to come clean.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Actually, I came by to --

Suddenly, the KID ON THE BIG WHEEL whizzes by again! Before Liz can even react --

CHRISTINA
Hey! Hey!! Come back here!!

Christina goes after him -- and grabs the handle bars!

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)
What did I tell you about riding that thing in the hall!? Huh? You could hurt someone!! This is not a playground! There are other people in this world!! NOT JUST YOU! Do you understand that!?

Liz is taken aback. *Was this the "rage" Mike referred to?*

MOTHER (O.C.)
Hey! What are you doing??

She turns to see the Kid's MOTHER in her door.

CHRISTINA

Your son almost hit my friend with his bike!

LIZ

No, I'm fine, really!

MOTHER

You have a problem, you come to me, you don't talk my son like that!

CHRISTINA

Well, someone has to! He's been riding that goddamn thing up and down the halls! He's gonna hurt someone!

The Mother wants to say more but stops when she realizes the situation... a grieving mother.

MOTHER

Nathan come inside. Now.

NATHAN walks in, dragging the Big Wheel. Door closes.

CHRISTINA

Sorry about that.

LIZ

(awkward)

No, God, that kid totally sucks!

CHRISTINA

What did you want to talk about?

Changing her mind, Liz hides the envelope behind her back.

LIZ

Oh, I just wanted to tell you...

(her line:)

..."how sorry I am. For everything you're going through. I know we're not as close as we used to be but I still consider you a close friend. And I wish I knew the words to take your pain away but I don't. All I can say is: I'm here. To talk about it, or not talk about it or not talk about anything."

Hearing this last part again, Christina offers a plastic smile that could maim.

CHRISTINA
Well. I have to go --

LIZ
-- Yeah, no --

CHRISTINA
What's that?

Liz realizes she's referring to the envelope in her hand.

LIZ
(flustered)
Oh! It's -- it was outside your
door. I saw it and...here.

She hands it to Christina.

CHRISTINA
Thanks.

Liz watches nervously as Christina puts it in her purse.

LIZ
Sure. Well. It was good to see you.

Liz turns and walks awkwardly ahead of her down the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE. DAY.

A WOMAN with a #8 on her chest pushes a shopping cart slowly through the vegetable aisle. She grabs some cucumbers. Tomatoes. Lettuce. Then, awkwardly shoe-horned between all the vegetables is a big blue display of:

CRACKLES: "BIG CRUNCH. BIGGER FLAVOR."

The WOMAN pauses -- but only for a moment -- then takes a bag.

MALE EXECUTIVE 1 (O.C.)
Yes!

INT. MONITOR ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

The same three Crackles EXECS watch the monitor.

FEMALE EXECUTIVE
She did it!

MALE EXECUTIVE 2
That's three shoppers we didn't
have yesterday.

MALE EXECUTIVE 1
Incredible.

FEMALE EXECUTIVE
Well, now I know how to get my son
to eat his vegetables.

Everyone laughs, except Liz, who sits in the corner, still
shaken up from her run in with Christina.

MALE EXECUTIVE 3
Great work, Liz; really. It's
little freaky how well you
understand human nature.

CLOSE IN on Liz as she considers this.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. MOMENTS LATER.

Liz stands in front of a Newsstand talking on her cell.

LIZ
Hi. It's me. I think I did
something really stupid and I kinda
need to talk to you.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM. DAY.

A large CRACKLES AD: "**BIG CRUNCH. BIGGER FLAVOR.**"

In front of the ad sits -- James, wearing dark sunglasses, a
Knicks cap and binoculars around his neck. He looks down the
platform to see....

Mike! He's sitting 20 feet away, staring off, pensively.

James' first instinct is to avoid him but then...*fuck it*.

He walks over. But Mike doesn't notice.

JAMES
Hey, Mike!

Mike looks up. Takes a moment to process.

MIKE

James.

JAMES

How's it going?

MIKE

Okay. You?

JAMES

Good; yeah.

Mike sees the binoculars.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How's the book doing?

MIKE

It's okay. How's your, uh.....?

James lets him struggle a moment.

JAMES

Film reviews. I'm a critic for the
New York Times...

MIKE

Right.

JAMES

...I also teach at NYU and
Columbia. And I'm a member of the
New York and Los Angeles Film
Societies.

MIKE

Sorry...

JAMES

(then humble)

No, it's, whatever; it's all kinda
ridiculous, right?An awkward pause. *Did he get the "ridiculous" reference?*

JAMES (CONT'D)

How's Christina doing?

MIKE

(taken aback)

Christina?

JAMES

Yeah. I've been thinking about her
a lot since the other night.

MIKE

Right. Sorry about that. She's
good. Thanks.

JAMES

Really?

MIKE

(defensive)

Yeah. Why?

JAMES

No, she just didn't seem so "good"
the other night, I'm surprised --

MIKE

(stopping him cold)

She's fine.

JAMES

Great. Well, you would know. I'm
just glad she has you. You know?
That you're so...in sync.

MIKE

(pointed)

You mean like you and Liz?

James looks thrown. *What's that supposed to mean?* The subway
arrives. It's very loud.

MIKE (CONT'D)

YOU TAKING THIS?

JAMES

NO, LOCAL.

Mike gets on and James watches him, a bit shaken.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. DAY.

Liz walks anxiously down the street until she sees...

Mike standing at a gate, gazing into the park.

She walks over and stands beside him. They stare out
together. No words. Sounds of the park. Then --

LIZ

Yeah. It's a potato chip.

REVERSE ANGLE: reveals that what they've been staring at is a crane lifting a gigantic 80 FOOT POTATO CHIP! It looks like a giant post modern art installation.

MIKE

I thought you were kidding.

LIZ

(Self loathing)

Nope. No, I was not.

They continue to watch the giant POTATO CHIP being installed, as TOURISTS and NATIVES alike point and snap photos. The line: "**CRACKLES: BIG CRUNCH. BIGGER FLAVOR.**" is slowly revealed on the front of this monumental absurdity.

MIKE

I'm sorry about yesterday. I guess
I sorta lost control.

LIZ

No, it's -- understandable.

MIKE

Is it?

LIZ

(nervous beat)

Mike, I need to tell you something.
I...I gave Christina the letters.
From Ryan Caster? You dropped them
and I took them; I shouldn't have
done it. It's none of my business
and I guess I thought --

Mike kisses her! It's emotional and passionate and sweet --
and she doesn't stop it. In the background we hear:

BULLHORN VOICE (O.C.)

*Please, for your own safety, stand
away from the potato chip!*

Mike pulls away. *Holy shit.* Liz looks around, self-consciously, realizing they're in public.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. MIKE AND CHRISTINA'S APARTMENT. DAY.

Mike and Liz enter, kissing, groping like teenagers; bumping into furniture! It's not about sex but something they both need from the other.

They kiss against the kitchen counter! The fridge! The wall!

LIZ
(out of breath)
Wait! Wait!
(then curiously)
Did you use a ghostwriter for your
book?

MIKE
What? Hell no!

She kisses him again! He lifts her up and moves her to the other side of the room. She grabs a door handle, turns it, and leads them both into --

A BEDROOM.

They shuffle in, still kissing. Until Liz realizes he's gone cold. She opens her eyes.

WE CUT WIDE to reveal that we are in:

KATIE'S BEDROOM.

Pink and perfectly preserved, like a time capsule. Stuffed animals on the bed, clothes in the closet, a poster of Rey from *Star Wars*. A colorful drawing on the wall of Christina, Mike and herself all holding hands.

A gut punch.

Liz turns back to Mike -- but he's already left the room. She stands alone, shaking...*what the hell am I doing?*

EXT. STREET. DAY.

Christina sits on a bench staring intensely at the plain looking building from before. Next to her is her large bag, the envelope sticking out, unopened.

JAMES (O.C.)
Coffee?

Christina looks up to see James holding two coffees.

CHRISTINA
(Flustered)
James?! What are you doing here?

JAMES
What do you mean? We're on
stakeout, aren't we?

She forces a smile but she clearly doesn't want him there.

CHRISTINA
You really don't have to do this.

JAMES
I know. But we're partners. Here.

He hands her a coffee and sits beside her.

CHRISTINA
James, really, I appreciate it but--

JAMES
I even brought these.
(The binoculars)
Huh? And these.
(Some Peanut M&Ms)
That might just be my thing.

CHRISTINA
James --

JAMES
Look, Chris, the thing is...I don't
know what you're going through. I
can't know. But...I know it can't be
any worse than doing it alone.

Christina is moved by the sentiment, but still --

JAMES (CONT'D)
There he is.

Ryan exits the building with a few OTHER PEOPLE.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Should we roll?

He holds out his hand. Christina reluctantly takes it.

CUT TO:

MIKE AND CHRISTINA'S APARTMENT. CONTINUOUS.

Liz enters from Katie's room, her hands shaking. She sees Mike facing the wall, his back to her. *What is there to say?*

LIZ
I should go.

SMASH! Mike SLAMS his fist into the wall! Liz jumps, startled.

MIKE
(pause)
You know what it was? What really sent Christina into the bathroom with a knife that night?
(turns to her)
She asked me to kill him. Ryan Caster.
(beat)
"You can murder men half way around the world that you've never met but you won't lift a finger to avenge your own daughter?"
(beat)
She's right.

Liz wants to speak, but has no words. Then suddenly --

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! More fists into the wall! Liz cringes in fear and helplessness.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK. DAY.

POV THROUGH BINOCULARS --

A close up of RYAN CASTER on a park bench, reading Twilight.

JAMES (O.C.)
You think he's Team Jacob?

REVERSE ANGLE reveals James and Christina watching from a distance. Her eyes focused on Ryan as James watches through the binoculars.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(seeing something)
What the...?

POV THROUGH BINOCULARS --

A close up view of An 80 ft POTATO CHIP! People taking photos, kids playing near it. But before James can say anything --

CHRISTINA (O.C.)

You know what no one tells you
about grief?

James puts down the binoculars, and turns to her.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

(eyes focused on Ryan)

There's nothing original about it.
And I don't just mean people who
don't know what to say and so they
all say the same stupid things. I
mean, even me. It's like... every
thought or feeling I have seems
somehow... cliché. Like I saw it
in a movie once. Or a TV show.
Sometimes I'll even catch myself
wondering if it's real. Are these
even my feelings? Is this my
anger? My self pity? Or did I
steal it from a magazine?

James watches her, laser focused on Ryan. In her own world.

JAMES

What was it Liz said to you that
night? That made you come out?

CHRISTINA

(beat)

I just remember wanting her to stop
talking.

Suddenly, SOMEONE accidentally BUMPS into Christina --
knocking her bag down!

JAMES

Hey! Asshole!
(to Christina)
Jesus, you okay.

He bends down to help her gather her things --

CHRISTINA

I got it! I GOT IT!!

James backs off, as she anxiously put things back in her bag.
Just then James catches a glimpse of -- a gun inside!

Holy shit. Was that what I thought it was?

She gets back up, tense, wondering if James saw what he saw.

James' mind races. Putting it all together. He looks back at Ryan just as the MOTHER arrives with Niles. *Oh shit...*

JAMES

You know, hey! I'm hungry! Are you hungry? Let's go get a nice lunch. My treat!

CHRISTINA

I'm fine. But you should go.

Christina takes off as Ryan and Niles leave the park together. And James runs to catch up.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE AND CHRISTINA'S APARTMENT. CONTINUOUS.

Liz stares at Mike's bloody hand as he paces.

LIZ

Mike?

She walks to him, cautiously.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Mike, it's not your fault.

MIKE

(explodes)

What the are you even *talking* about?! Huh?! Do you even *know*?! Why the fuck are you even *here*!

Liz is completely taken aback.

LIZ

What do you...? I wanted to help, to, to understand --

MIKE

Why?! What exactly is it you want to understand?!

He approaches her, menacingly. She backs away.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Hm? What are you hoping to *see*!?

LIZ

Nothing, I...

MIKE

I mean, is this some charity box
you're checking off? Or are you
just rubbernecking!?

LIZ

No! No, I was just --

MIKE

Did you know I was driving the car?
Hm? That it's my fault she's dead!
Do you understand *that?*!

LIZ

No, Mike, he was drunk --

MIKE

WRONG!! I wasn't paying attention!
I *always* pay attention! I always
know my surroundings. I was trained
for it! But this time I was...
distracted!

(beat)

I was thinking about my book.

(beat)

I was driving and...I was thinking
about my fucking book.

(beat)

Next thing I know, we're upside
down, and there's glass everywhere,
and Katie's hanging from her seat
belt, and she's bleeding from her
neck. And she's looking at me and
she's so scared. She's in shock and
she's so... *scared*.

Mike's breath begins to catch in his throat.

MIKE (CONT'D)

He was.. drunk but...it was my
fault. It was...my...fault.
Oh...God. My *chest*, it's...!
(Grabbing his chest!)
I can't breath, I...I can't...

Liz goes to him!

LIZ

Okay! It's okay. Just calm down...

MIKE

(frightened)

I can't...! What's wrong with me?

He goes to his knees. She gets down with him.

LIZ
Shhh. Just breathe. Okay? You're
having a panic attack!

MIKE
I can't...

LIZ
Yes you can! Slow. That's it.
In...out. Good. *Breathe*. Slow.

He begins to get his breath.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Good, that's it.

Mike begins weeping. Lightly at first but then more.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Shhh. It's okay.

He wraps his arms around her and begins sobbing in her arms.
The floodgates bursting open; everything he's held back.

LIZ (CONT'D)
It's okay. I'm here. It's okay.

She hold him, strong, like a mother to a son.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. DAY.

Christina walks quickly, as James tries to keep up, staring
nervously at her bag.

JAMES
You know, the new *Transformers*
movie is out! It's a colossal piece
of shit. We should go check it out!
(nothing)
Actually, you know, we should call
Mike! He's a Navy Seal, this is
right up his alley --

She quickly turns to him, eyes aflame.

CHRISTINA
Don't you fucking call him! Do you
understand me?

James is frightened into silence. In the distance they see Ryan and Niles walk into a movie theater. Christina follows. And James follows Christina.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER. DAY.

Ryan and Niles sit in the 3rd row staring up at the screen with 3-D glasses. It's a loud blockbuster and Niles is spellbound.

The auditorium is sparsely attended, a few others in 3-D glasses behind them. Five rows back we see --

James and Christina. Not wearing the 3-D glasses.

Christina is focused on Ryan. James is focused on her bag, which sits on the seat beside her.

A GUNSHOT FIRES on screen! James jumps, startled. Christina stands up.

JAMES

Whoa, wait! Where you going??

CHRISTINA

The restroom.

She takes her bag and heads up the aisle. James watches her exit the theater.

He then gets up and walks down the middle aisle, making his way down to the front of the theater. We wonder, *is he leaving?* Until he stops and bends down next to --

Ryan Caster, who sits on the aisle beside Niles. James taps him on the arm. Ryan turns to him, confused.

JAMES

Hi, sorry. This gonna sound strange but I think you should probably --

RYAN

(can't hear)

Huh?

JAMES

I think you should probably leave!

RYAN

What??

JAMES
I can't really explain it right now
but you and your son need to leave
the theater.

RYAN
The hell are you talking about,
man?! We haven't done anything!

Ryan turns back to the movie.

JAMES
No, I know -- I don't work here.
Look: your life might be in danger.

He turns back to James, his 3-D glasses over his actual ones.

RYAN
What?

JAMES
There's someone here who may want
to hurt you and I think you should
leave.

Ryan looks over at Niles, protectively.

RYAN
What are you talking about?

AUDIENCE MEMBER
Hey, shut the fuck up down there!

JAMES
It's hard to explain but...

James checks to see if Christina's returned.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It has to do with -- the accident.

RYAN
What accident?

JAMES
Katie Krill?

Ryan's face turns to stone.

RYAN
What did you say?

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER BATHROOM STALL. CONTINUOUS.

Christina sits in the bathroom stall. She staring at the gun in her lap as if trying to muster the courage to use it – or the courage not to.

She then catches a glimpse of the envelope sticking out of her bag. Looking for any distraction, she takes it out.

She opens it. Pull out the letters.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER. CONTINUOUS.

Ryan, still in his 3-D glasses, gets up from his seat --

RYAN

Who the fuck are you?!

He pushes James!

JAMES

No one! I'm just trying to help!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Hey! C'mon! Sit down!

RYAN

I'm with my son, man! You come here and threaten me --

JAMES

No, I'm not --

RYAN

I'm with my *son*!

He pushes him again!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3

I'm with my son too, asshole!

NILES

Dad?!

JAMES

I'm trying to help you --

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4

Sit the fuck down, yo!

RYAN

I paid my dues, man, okay?! I did my time! You got something to say, you come to me! Not when I'm with my kid!!

He pushes him again! James reacts by pushing him back! Ryan pushes harder! And James swings blindly -- !

WAP! Right in the face!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4

Whoa, fuck, man!

James is shocked. Did not expect that blow to land.

JAMES

Oh, shit, I'm sorry, I --

Ryan swings -- WAP!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5

Boom, motherfucker!

James flies back -- hard -- against one of seats! Ryan goes after him. Wailing on him! James grabs him by the waist --

JAMES

ARRRGG!!!

He pushes him back with all of his might. They fly awkwardly --
-- into the seats of the theater!

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

Whoa! / Shit! / DUDE! / White boys!

James WAILS back on him, on the ground!

JAMES

(hitting him!)

I'M TRYING TO *HELP* YOU! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?! I'M FUCKING *HELPING* YOU!

Suddenly -- he's YANKED off by two LARGER AUDIENCE MEMBERS!

LARGE AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

Alright, man, it's over! Chill!

James, panting, pulls himself away.

LARGE AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Dude, is he alright?

James looks down at Ryan. It's dark, he can't see. But he's not moving. *Oh no...*

JAMES

Hey. Hey, shit, are you alright?

James goes down to him. He hears something.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hey, you okay -- ?

He stops when he realizes that what he hears is...

Ryan crying softly on the floor. His actual glasses broken.

He then looks up to see --

Niles watching his father, still in his 3-D glasses.

RYAN

(tears, to himself)

I'm sorry... I didn't mean to...I
didn't mean to hit her...I'm so
sorry...I didn't...

A look of profound shame on James' face as he watches tears stream down his Ryan's pitiful cheeks.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM STALL. CONTINUOUS.

Christina sits reading Ryan's letters of contrition. Tears in her eyes. She finishes. Puts them down. Wipes her tears.

INT. BATHROOM. CONTINUOUS.

She steps out of the stall. Stops to look at herself in the mirror a moment. *Perhaps she sees someone she recognizes?*

She turns and exits. As she does, we can see in the reflection...
...the gun sitting on the toilet seat.

INT. LOBBY. CONTINUOUS.

A TEENAGE THEATER MANAGER passes by the restroom with two POLICE OFFICERS, one OLDER, one YOUNGER.

THEATER MANAGER
Yeah, they're in the theater 4.
They just started like *fighting!*

The POLICE OFFICERS rush toward the theater, as --

Christina steps out of the bathroom, missing them completely.
Or not noticing them? She turns the opposite direction...and
walks calmly out of the theater.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER. CONTINUOUS.

James watches guiltily as Ryan is helped off the floor by a
Large Audience Member.

JAMES
I'm sorry, I...I didn't mean to --

The OLDER OFFICER grabs James by the arm.

OLDER OFFICER
Alright, buddy, let's go.

JAMES
Officer, it was my fault.

OLDER OFFICER
Alright, that's fine, c'mon.

The OLDER OFFICER leads James up the aisle. He looks back to
see Niles hugging his Dad, who talks to the YOUNGER OFFICER.

As James and the OLDER OFFICER pass by his original seat, he
notices that Christina never came back.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOVIE THEATER. MOMENTS LATER.

The TWO POLICE OFFICERS escort him out.

OLDER OFFICER
Alright Mr. Roe, maybe don't come
back here.

JAMES
Wait. That's it?

OLDER OFFICER
Well, he's not pressing charges.
Did you want to?

JAMES
No.

OLDER OFFICER
Then get the hell out of here.

James turns to go home, dazed.

YOUNGER OFFICER
Hey!

James turns back to the Younger Officer.

YOUNGER OFFICER (CONT'D)
Why'd you hate on the last *Fast and the Furious* movie? I thought that
shit was dope!

JAMES
I know. I saw it three times.

The YOUNGER OFFICER looks confused, as James walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE AND CHRISTINA'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Liz gently washes the blood from Mike's hand in the sink. He
watches as it swirls into the drain.

She then dries it with a towel. And wraps it with a bandage.

LIZ
You need to talk to Christina.
She needs to know she's not alone.

MIKE
I know.
(beat)
Part of me wonders if maybe I
showed you those letters because...
(beat)
Look, Liz, I'm sorry for --

LIZ
No. You were right. I don't know
what the hell I'm doing.

MIKE
(beat)
Makes two of us.

Liz smiles as she finishes wrapping his hand. A tender moment passes between them. Then Liz turns to see --

LIZ
Chris!

Christina stands surveying the situation as Mike and Liz instinctively move away from each other.

MIKE
Baby. I didn't hear you come in.

CHRISTINA
What's going on?

MIKE
Nothing. Liz came by to see you and --

CHRISTINA
What happened to your hand?

MIKE
Oh. I just...hit it on a stupid --

LIZ
I should probably go.

Christina pulls out the envelope.

CHRISTINA
(to Liz)
Where did you get these?

Liz stops, frozen, like that first night. Finally, Mike steps in --

MIKE
From me. She got 'em from me.

Christina turns to Mike, a look of confusion; betrayal.

CHRISTINA
What?

LIZ
No, it's my fault. I just, the other night, you were hurting so much and I just -- I wanted to help.

Chris looks at her, icily.

CHRISTINA
You wanted to help.

LIZ
Yes.

CHRISTINA
(pointed)
And did she help you, Mike?

MIKE
Chris --

LIZ
No, it's not like that --

CHRISTINA
No, what was it like? *Helping* my
husband?

MIKE
Honey --

CHRISTINA
No! Liz? I'd like to know. Because,
see, he doesn't talk to me. He
doesn't think he can. Did he tell
you that? While you were "helping"
him? How weak and sad and broken
his wife is? I mean, it's a good
thing he has you.

LIZ
Chris...

We CLOSE IN on Liz, as she stops herself, not sure what to
say. We wonder, *will she freeze again?* But then, a look
comes over her, as if she knows exactly what she needs to do.

LIZ (CONT'D)
The truth is, after that night, I
was ashamed. And I wanted to do
something. Something good.
Something to...I thought if I
could, in some way, make Mike open
up. About Katie. To listen.
Understand what he was going
through. That it would help the two
of you. That *I* would help the two
of you. And it would feel *good* to
help. Like I did something.
(re: his hand)
But he made it very clear that I
only came here to help myself.
(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

(then)

And that you're the only person who
could ever possibly understand him.

This hits Christina hard. She looks at Mike. This is all she
ever wanted to hear.

Liz, seeing her self-sacrifice take effect, turns to leave.

CHRISTINA

You selfish cunt.

Liz stops; her back to Christina, who looks stronger than ever.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

(calm, plain)

You'll never know what it is to
lose something you love. Because
you'll never love anything more
than yourself.

Liz nods, accepting her punishment. Then continues to the
door. Just before she leaves, turns back to see...

Christina and Mike talking, quietly, close together. He hugs
her. Lovingly.

INT. HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS.

We follow Liz as she walks slowly down the hallway. She
stops at the elevator. Calmly pushes the button. And waits.

DING!

The doors open. She gets on the --

ELEVATOR. CONTINUOUS.

Doors close.

And she crumbles to the ground; sobbing uncontrollably.

CUT TO:

INT. JAMES AND LIZ'S APARTMENT. DAY.

James walks in. Back eye. Limping. He looks like shit and
feels worse. He shuffles into --

THE KITCHEN

He reaches into the freezer and pulls out some frozen shrimp and places it on his face.

He walks over to the infamous *Star Trek* poster. Stares at his reflection in it. Behind him he sees --

The couch. Blankets all folded up. Edward gone. Except...

...his lap top. James sighs. Pulls out his phone, and texts:

"You left your laptop here."

DING! James see Edwards' cell on the floor. *He left that too?*

He flips open the lap top. It's flooded with pictures --

-- of Karen. Some with Edward, some without. Some when she's sick, some healthy.

James limps over to the bookshelf. Picks up: CYSTYPHEAN MYTHS by Edward Roe. Opens it. And begins reading.

He sits on the couch and continues reading, curiously, as though he had never read it before...

CUT TO:

INT. MONITOR ROOM. DAY.

The Three Crackles EXECS stand talking by the monitors.

FEMALE EXECUTIVE

...I think we start rolling this out next week in major markets..

MALE EXECUTIVE 2

Right, we can loop the Chicago office in in the morning...

In the background we see -- Liz on the monitor tearing apart the CRACKLES DISPLAY in the store.

MALE EXECUTIVE 1

I'd love for Liz to be on that call if possible...

MALE EXECUTIVE 2

Definitely, I think she has to be.

FEMALE EXECUTIVE

Also, we might want to consider if there's a way to connect this more directly with the big chip.

MALE EXECUTIVE 2

Hey - what the -- what is that?

They all turn to see, Liz -- tearing apart the display on screen!

INT. GROCERY STORE. CONTINUOUS.

The Shoppers watch, riveted, as Liz wildly takes apart the Crackle display!

FEMALE EXECUTIVE

Liz! What are you doing?

LIZ

This is fucking stupid! You don't put shitty snack food next to produce! It doesn't make sense!

MALE EXECUTIVE 2

It was *your* idea!

LIZ

Well, I was wrong! It's *stupid* and it's *dumb*!

MALE EXECUTIVE 2

But - it's working.

LIZ

How do you know? Huh? We're in a fake store! This is all fake! These oranges?! They're plastic! This lettuce? I don't even know it's made of! It tells us nothing about how people act when you surround them with rubber fucking potatoes!!

She throws a potato! It bounces!

MALE EXECUTIVE 1

Liz, calm down -

STORE ENTRANCE. CONTINUOUS.

James walks into the "store" looking for Liz. He hears the commotion. And walks over to see the Shoppers watching --

Liz holding the line "**BIG CRUNCH**" over her head!

JAMES

Liz?

Liz turns to James. Lost, child-like.

CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE, CEREAL AISLE. MOMENTS LATER.

James holds Liz's hands to calm her down.

JAMES

You okay?

LIZ

No. I'm not okay. I don't like myself lately and I don't like us and --

JAMES

No, you're right. I've been an asshole. And you were right about me--

LIZ

No, you were right!

JAMES

And I got insecure and I started looking for something I thought I needed and then I realized I don't need to look because it's --

LIZ

-- I kissed Mike.

James' expression freezes on his face. For, like, a while.

JAMES

What?

LIZ

I kissed him. It was an accident.

JAMES

I don't understand.

LIZ

After that night, I went back to see Christina. But Mike was there. And he was in so much pain and --

JAMES
So, sorry -- you *kissed* him?

LIZ
Well, no! Actually. He kissed *me*.

JAMES
He kissed *you*?

LIZ
Yes. I mean, I stopped him!
Obviously. But then he did it again
and I...sort of *let* him. (Then) But
just for a little --!

JAMES
Wait, wait --

LIZ
-- Like *ten* seconds!

JAMES
Ten - ?! You kissed Mike for *ten* --

LIZ
-- He kissed *me* for ten seconds! I
let him for like *four*.

JAMES
(cold, beat)
What were you doing for the other
six?

LIZ
It was stupid and I'm so sorry.
James takes a moment to let this sink in.

JAMES
So, what, that was it?

LIZ
Yes! And then I left!
James looks relieved.

LIZ (CONT'D)
But then...
He tenses again.

LIZ (CONT'D)
He kissed me again. More. Later.
And I let him. More.

James stands speechless against a sea of fake cereal boxes.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I wanted to tell you. I was just -- so *confused*. All the different emotions, and then seeing him in so much pain! If you had been there, if you had seen him...

JAMES

...I would have kissed him too?

LIZ

No, I mean --! He was -- *crying*!

JAMES

Crying, huh?

LIZ

And I didn't know what to do, I, I -
- I mean, his daughter had *died*!

JAMES

And what does he get if Christina dies? A rim job?

Liz suddenly goes from guilt to anger.

LIZ

Fuck you!

JAMES

Fu - ? Fuck *me*? Why fuck *me*?

The LARGE MAN from before mows on potato chips as he watches this with a few other Shoppers -- like it's a movie.

LIZ

Because you understand and you're pretending not to!

JAMES

No, you're wrong! I *don't* understand!

LIZ

Yes you do! But all you hear is, is, is - *sex*! When it wasn't even about that!

JAMES

No? What was it? His book review?

A SHOPPER laughs. Then looks embarrassed.

LIZ

I didn't have to tell you!

JAMES

Yeah, I agree! Why the fuck *are* you telling me?!

LIZ

Because! What do you mean? We tell each other everything! That's our thing!

JAMES

That's not our thing! Our thing is that we don't let work get in the way of our relationship!

LIZ

We have more than one fucking thing!

JAMES

Well, I don't remember your thing! I think you're telling me because you feel guilty! Because you fucking enjoyed it!

LIZ

Yes! Yes! Okay! I did fucking enjoy it! Because I felt fucking important! Like I mattered! Like this was a real situation with real human emotions and it wasn't a joke or ridiculous or, or -- ironic! And I don't know if I feel like that ever!

James feels the sting of this one.

JAMES

Well. I'm sorry our marriage has been such a "joke" to you.

He turns to leave —

LIZ

James, don't!

JAMES

(confused)
Don't *what*?

LIZ

Don't go and fight him.

JAMES
 (incredulous)
*Fight him?!? Is that what --? He's
 a fucking Navy Seal, Liz! I'm not
 gonna fucking fight him! Who do you
 think I -- ?*

The Crackles EXECS rush into the aisle, excitedly.

MALE EXECUTIVE 2
 Liz! Liz!

LIZ
 WHAT!??!

MALE EXECUTIVE 1
 You're a genius! Why didn't you
 tell us?

LIZ
 Tell you what?

MALE EXECUTIVE 1
 Your brother-in-law? The comedy
 writer?

JAMES
 (concerned)
 What about him?

FEMALE EXECUTIVE
 He's standing on top of one of our
 chips in Tomkins Square!

We CLOSE IN on James' face. *Holy shit.*

MALE EXECUTIVE 2
 Press is there, people taking
 pictures – it's *brilliant!*

James looks at Liz – they both realize. James runs out!

MALE EXECUTIVE 2 (CONT'D)
 What's wrong?

LIZ
 He's gonna kill himself.

The Crackles EXECS look at each other.

FEMALE EXECUTIVE
 That would not be good.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOMKINS SQUARE PARK. DAY.

James pushes through a crowd of PEOPLE looking up at the 80 Foot Potato Chip. Pointing, taking pictures. James follows their gaze to see...

Edward sitting on the top. Just above the infamous tag line.

JAMES
Jesus Christ.

He runs over to the base of the giant snack food. In the back are two light alloy support structures that run up the sides.

He takes a deep breath. And begins to climb.

Meanwhile, a few feet over...

Liz and the Crackles EXECS make their way through the crowd of GAWKERS, staring up at Edward.

LIZ
Oh my God.

EXT. THE TOP OF THE CHIP. CONTINUOUS.

Edward sits on the highest point of the chip, which is about three feet wide. He eats Peanut M&Ms and drinks an Orange Pellegrino. He looks down at all the PEOPLE taking photos.

JAMES (O.C.)
Ah, God...!

He turns to see -- James struggling to reach the top.

EDWARD
You see this? With the selfies?

James struggles to lift his leg over the lip of the Chip.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I'm killing myself and they wanna Instagram it.

James finally reaches the top, exhausted.

JAMES
(panting)
Yeah, well...you are on a giant...
fucking potato chip.

EDWARD
Here.

Edward hands him the Pellegrino. James takes it.

JAMES
(re: the climb)
Jesus, that sucked.

EDWARD
Yeah. Ruffles would've been easier.

James looks down, nervously, a few feet from Edward.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
What happened to your face?

JAMES
Edward, what are you doing up here?

Eddie looks down at the crowd below, existentially.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Eddie -- ?

EDWARD
You know what pain is? It's like an early warning system. To keep us alive. "Hey, that's hot, stop touching it." Right? And we listen. We stop touching it, we learn and we live longer. But what happens when you *ignore* the warning? You call its bluff and you *keep* touching it. And you *don't die*? Then what? I mean, you felt more agony than you thought possible and you're still here so what's the point of pain?

James watches his brother vulnerable for the first time.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
So one day you go numb. You don't feel pain, you don't feel anything. And it's *terrifying*. And it becomes clear to you that the only way to fix what's broken is to honor the original agreement yourself. To do what your body failed to do...

JAMES
Eddie --

EDWARD

So you go to the Williamsburg Bridge.
Look down like George Bailey and
think "okay, this seems alright."
But then something stops you.

JAMES

The girl taking the selfie.

EDWARD

No. *You*.

JAMES

Me?

EDWARD

You called me. And, well, you don't
call much, so. And suddenly it
just felt silly. Jumping off a
bridge? I mean, it's just so...

JAMES

(Christina's line:)
Cliche.

Edward turns to him, *yes, exactly*.

EDWARD

But then I realized, that's because
my death isn't enough to make it
right.

JAMES

Make what right? What are you
talking about?

Edward looks at him, a tear escapes his eye.

EDWARD

I turned her into joke, Jimmy.

JAMES

No...

EDWARD

All of her suffering and her pain
and her fight and I turned it into
the "funniest book ever written
about bone cancer."

JAMES

Eddie --

EDWARD

But then I'm walking down Avenue A
and there it is. The answer. A
colossal fucking potato chip. Truly
the dumbest, most absurd thing I've
ever seen. And it's perfect.
Because now I can be the joke.

Edward leans over, as if drawn by the distance below.

JAMES

Eddie...I read it again today. Your
book? And...I didn't understand it
before but now...I think it's the
most beautiful thing I've ever read.

Edward turns to him, stopped by this.

JAMES (CONT'D)

But then I know how you used to
talk to each other. All those weird
little inside jokes, that twisted,
dark sense of humor she had? That's
the book. It's hilarious. But it's
not a joke. It's a love letter to
that strange...indecipherable
language you guys shared. And I
didn't understand until today how
much you loved her.

(beat, realizing)

Or how lucky I am.

Edward is struck by this admission. So is James. They both
look out at the city.

EDWARD

I miss her, Jimmy.

JAMES

I know.

(beat)

Why don't you come and stay with us
for a while? Just until you...until
you want to leave.

EDWARD

I don't wanna get in the way of
your life or --

JAMES

Jesus, Eddie. You're my big
brother. You're part of my life.

Edward is sincerely moved.

EDWARD
You are lucky. You know that.

JAMES
I do now. Yeah.

LIZ (O.C.)
Help...!

They turn to see -- Liz climbing up to the lip of the chip!

EDWARD
(like it's normal)
Hey, Liz.

JAMES
Jesus, what are you doing?!

James goes to help her. He pulls her up on the lip.

LIZ
(panting)
Oh my God...that was harder than it
looked.

EDWARD
Yeah, they should make their chips
with ridges?

LIZ
(still panting)
They can't. They're Kettle cooked.

James stares at Liz, warmly. He can't believe she came up.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Whoa...it's beautiful up here.

JAMES
(smiling at her)
It is.

Liz looks at James, who's still staring at her, lovingly.

No words needed. Forgiveness, understanding, stupidity,
embarrassment - all in one wordless moment.

He takes her hand. And they look at view together.

LIZ
Hey, you can see the Queensboro
Bridge! God, it's so...

JAMES

Ugly.

LIZ

It's so ugly.

REVERSE ANGLE from behind all of them, as they stare out at New York City. The song "KEEP ON SMILING" by Wet Willie plays softly.

EDWARD

Liz, what did you think of my book?

LIZ

Your book? Oh. Um. It was....

EDWARD

Wait, you read it, right?

LIZ

(admission)

I'm like half way through.

EDWARD

You're shitting me.

CUT TO A WIDE SHOT: of the three of them on top of the potato chip with the sign: "**BIG CRUNCH. BIGGER FLAVOR.**"

JAMES

She's been really busy.

EDWARD

It's about the death of my wife!

LIZ

I know, I'm so sorry.

EDWARD

Well, maybe you'll finish it now
that we're living together.

The song continues as we pull back wider seeing the park,
People taking pictures...the Press...

LIZ

What?

JAMES

Yeah, hope it's okay. Eddie's gonna
sorta stay with us for a while.

LIZ

(why not?)

Okay.

EDWARD

Which reminds me...did you pick up
any cereal?

LIZ

(sardonic)

Yeah, Eddie, I brought it up here
with me.

...then wider...the neighborhood...the city...

JAMES

Jesus. This thing is really fucking
ridiculous.

FADE TO BLACK: