

THE DIAMOND AS BIG AS THE RITZ

written by

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based on the short story by f. scott fitzgerald

SHIMMERING TITLES: "THE DIAMOND AS BIG AS THE RITZ"

As JOHN speaks, the titles lose their sheen, and fade to unremarkable versions of themselves until they are an opaque and unforgiving black.

JOHN (V.O.)

Why are beautiful things so irresistible? So often they come from something not beautiful at all. Something completely and utterly *resistible*.

SUPER: "1924"

SMASH TO BLINDING WHITE LIGHT.

EXT. WOODS - ROCKY MOUNTAINS - MONTANA - 1924 - NIGHT

FLASH. Lightning illuminates the flooding sky. A downpour loosens the mud around tree roots. A towering pine crashes to the ground as thunder claps.

But we hear none of that.

Instead, we hear a glorious OPERA singer. A soprano. Scaling an aria up and down with a vibrato to kill for.

Snarling DOBERMANS drip spit from their chops as they sniff the air. Sniffing for the scent of...

A man (30s) - we will know him as **THE ITALIAN**. He carries a small bundle of cloth, running frantically through the woods to evade dogs and men.

A DOBERMAN closes in, sinking its teeth into the man's leg, bringing him to the ground.

The BUNDLE falls out of his hand and the cloth unwraps to reveal A MASSIVE ROCK. Bigger than a man's fist.

The dog pounces for the kill. The Italian kicks it square in the face, stunning it briefly.

Seizing his window of opportunity, the man crawls through the mud toward the ROCK. The dog recovers, and charges. It's going to rip the man apart when...

The man spins around, and CLUBS the dog over the head with the rock, beating it over and over as we are treated to the sweet delights of our soprano, our angel.

The Italian stops beating the dog, looks down at his hand, mesmerized by the weapon. And here, for the first time, we finally get a good look at this rock. Which we now see is a

MASSIVE DIAMOND. It's as if all the diamonds we've ever met Frankenstein'd themselves together to create a diamond hell-bent on bringing kings to their knees and nations into war.

This diamond sits there. In his hand. Streaks of blood washing away in the rain. We watch, transfixed, as our angel concludes her song and we are left with SILENCE.

A CRACK of thunder brings THE SOUND IN. Nearby shouts and flashlights break his trance, and The Italian escapes out of frame as his pursuers come into focus.

They are led by a towering WHITE-HAIRED MAN (60s), brandishing a pistol. If you were to look closely, you'd spot a chain around his neck with a CRUCIFIX and a SMALL KEY attached. He stares down at the dog, whimpering in a pool of its own blood. Without hesitation, he shoots the dog in the head, silencing its whimpers.

WHITE-HAIRED MAN
(shouting above the storm)
FIND HIM!

The search party is off.

The MOON glows in the sky, slowly morphing into

A SMALL PEARL EARRING

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - HADES, MISSOURI - DAY

SUPER: "9 MONTHS EARLIER"

JOHN (V.O.)
My mother wore her pearl earrings today. They're fake, but they're the nicest thing she owns.

Gradually we inch out from the Pearl, beginning to see the earlobe on which it rests.

JOHN (V.O.)
She bought them off a traveling salesman years ago. If it tells you anything, the guy was also selling snake oil and dream catchers.

We're further out, enough to see the earlobes belong to **BETTY UNGER** (45) - a provincial woman with a tank full of love and gallons to spare. Betty is speaking intensely and urgently but we only hear John.

JOHN (V.O.)

I think she thinks they're real,
but I've always been afraid to ask.
She only wears them on special
occasions. Like today. Today is
special. But we'll get to that.

Further out still, we see Betty is speaking to her husband **JAMES UNGER** (49) - distinguished, soon to feel his age.

JOHN (V.O.)

My father is here too. He took the morning off of work, because as I said, today is special. Although truthfully speaking, I'm sure he was just glad to find an excuse to see the sun. He works in the coal mines. Has for thirty years.

James argues back at Betty.

JOHN (V.O.)

Everyone here works in the coal mines. He doesn't really talk about it but I can tell he hates it. I asked Mother once why he never found a new job, but she just said people have obligations and I would understand when I was older.

JOHN UNGER (16) bounds onto the platform with train ticket in hand. We drink him in. He is ours. Quaintly, understatedly handsome with eyes hypnotic enough to coax out secrets, and a heart good enough to keep them. But no heart, despite how good, is immune to temptation.

JOHN (V.O.)

Well. I'm older now.

The SCREECH of a train whistle brings us into the scene.

JOHN

All set.
(farewell)
Betty. James.

BETTY

You may be a big, grown-up scholar now, but it's still "Mom" and "Dad" to you.

JOHN

Whatever you say, Betty.

A knowing smile. A rehearsed levity.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(noticing their tension)

What is it?

JAMES

Son, there's been a mix-up.

BETTY

It appears the transport coach from the station to the school requires payment... which is not covered by your scholarship.

JAMES

Now, I've spoken to the conductor and he insists it's no more than a five mile walk...

But we don't hear what else he discussed with the conductor because we're back in John's head.

JOHN (V.O.)

You can't pick your family. It might be the only thing in life that you truly have no say over. I love my parents. I do. I love them more than anything in this world. But it's moments like these - these small indignities in which they would rather explain away our lack of means than simply to acknowledge, *Son, we're poor and you're walking.* Moments like these that made me itch for my new life, just around the corner.

Another SCREECHING whistle brings us back. The final call. John is pulled toward the train, but not before his father holds him by the shoulders. The unfamiliarity of the act clear on John's face. John absorbs his father's words.

JAMES

Make us proud, John. Never forget who you are. An Unger. From Hades.

INT. TRAIN HALLWAY - DAY

John drags a trunk onto the train, where he finds... no one. Not another human soul wanders the corridor. He passes empty compartment after empty compartment.

JOHN (V.O.)

That wasn't a bug in your ear. You heard correctly. "Hades." As in "Hades, Missouri." I'll pay you twenty dollars if you've ever heard of it. Which is just as well, because you haven't heard of it and I don't have twenty dollars. Not yet, anyway.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

John sits alone.

JOHN (V.O.)

The thing about Hades is that no one comes and no one leaves. You are born in Hades, you work in the coal mines in Hades, you marry in Hades, you procreate in Hades, you grow old in Hades, you die in Hades and no one outside of Hades ever knows you existed.

A TICKET TAKER passes the compartment, not noticing John.

JOHN

Excuse me?

TICKET TAKER

I didn't see you there.

JOHN

I have a ticket.

TICKET TAKER

Don't mind that. I only start punching at the Springfield stop.

JOHN

(firm)

I'd like you to punch it now.

TICKET TAKER

Pardon?

JOHN

I worked three jobs last summer.

TICKET TAKER

You what?

JOHN

I built fences and tended livestock on the Dickerson ranch. I kept books in the accounting office of the Hades Mining Company, Incorporated. And I painted toys in the toy shop - little model trains just like the one we're on now, but smaller, toy-sized. I saved every penny I made from those three jobs so I could buy my one-way ticket from Hades, Missouri to Greenwich, Connecticut. A place no one has heard of to a place where millionaires live. And I did. I bought it. It's right here in my hand. A one-way from Hades to Greenwich. Not Springfield to Greenwich. I'm not leaving Springfield. I'm leaving Hades. So if it's all the same to you, I would very much appreciate it if you could punch my ticket during the short and only time for the remainder of my life on planet Earth that I remain here. In Hades.

The Ticket Taker is flummoxed. John adds:

JOHN (CONT'D)

Please.

Ticket Taker punches the ticket and goes, wondering the same thing we are. *What curious boy is this?*

John steels himself. The train starts to move. Out the window, his parents proudly wave goodbye. As John waves back:

JOHN (V.O.)

No one gets out of Hades. But like I said. Today is special.

TEARS pool in John's eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. IDYLLIC COUNTRY ROAD - CONNECTICUT - DAY

John drags his trunk through a muddy New England road, flanked by towering oaks. He looks up, stops, taking it in:

ST. MIDAS SCHOOL, a stately New England Hogwarts. A *new home*. Young men unload luggage from a row of black luxury vehicles.

PERKINS (O.S.) (PRELAP)
 If you are sitting in this room,
 then congratulations are in order.
 St. Midas' Preparatory Academy is
 the threshold of opportunity.

Another black car CLIPS past John. Too close for comfort.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - GREAT HALL - DAY

HEADMASTER PERKINS (55, wrinkles, philosophy) lectures a roomful of new students: sixteen year old boys at attention.

PERKINS
 Since the Great War, education has changed. The leaders of tomorrow must have more than intelligence. They must be equipped to handle the ethical and moral challenges that come with this brave new world.

As Perkins speaks, we catch glimpses of St. Midas' finest. One boy repeatedly flicks another's ear. Lads snicker over a pocket-sized porno of a naked bombshell.

PERKINS (CONT'D)
 Only the finest young gentlemen of your generation...

JOHN (V.O.)
 Wealthiest. Is what he means. Only the **wealthiest** young gentlemen.

PERKINS
 ...have been selected to learn, to grow and mature within these halls.

All the boys wear a uniform - dark BLAZERS with the St. Midas' crest on the chest. But that's just the starter kit. Many of them have accessorized expansion packs: Gold Rolexes. Designer luggage. Oxfords you could hock to pay tuition.

We finally land on JOHN - no expansion pack, no starter kit. He wears civilian Hades garb. Missed the memo.

PERKINS (CONT'D)
Each of you has something unique to offer.

JOHN (V.O.)
Money.

PERKINS
A purpose.

JOHN (V.O.)
Money.

PERKINS
Some reason why you're here...

JOHN (V.O.)
It's money.

CHARLES WRINGLEY (16) - a brutish lump of a trust fund sitting behind John - turns to his friend and mutters...

WRINGLEY
(snickering at John)
Charity by the looks of it.

John doesn't flinch. Perkins flags their chuckling.

PERKINS
Something funny?

Wrigley and friend hush. But Perkins steps away from his podium and strolls down the aisle toward John and the others.

PERKINS (CONT'D)
No, please. Here I am, welcoming you into the finest young men's preparatory academy in the world, but clearly you have something to say that supersedes all of that, so I implore you...

Silence hangs in the hall.

PERKINS (CONT'D)
I can assure you, Mr. Wrigley, it matters not who your parents are within these halls. You will be held to the same standards as the other students.

JOHN (V.O.)
It was a nice gesture of egalitarianism.
(MORE)

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But the truth is that Headmaster Perkins called him by name. Which means it **did** matter who his parents were. I had no clue of course, but everyone else seemed to, and that's what mattered.

WRINGLEY
 Apologies, Headmaster Perkins. I cannot seem to focus on your illustrious introduction when not everyone is dressed in accordance with the St. Midas code. Forgive me, I find it... disrespectful.

All eyes shift to John. A chorus of "What is he wearing?" and "Is it a joke?" ripples across the Blazers.

Perkins towers over John. Wringley sure he's off the hook as-

PERKINS
 My ass already hurts from you kissing it, Wringley. Let's not make it a habit.
 (then, as he turns to go)
 And whoever you are, find yourself a uniform. This isn't a public house.

More snickers around the hall. John goes red in the face.

JOHN (V.O.)
 It wasn't the lack of uniform that embarrassed me. I couldn't care less about the uniform. A navy blazer could be bought and worn and shed like a snake's skin. It was those three little words that reduced me to a faceless intruder in a sea of navy blazers: "**whoever you are.**"

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - DORMITORY COMMON ROOM - DAY

Boys drag their luggage up the stairs. An RA barks orders:

R.A.
 Room assignments have been made at random. There is no switching your assigned room. Any grievances may be taken up with the house master.

John climbs the stairs, pushing through boys greeting each other with a chorus of "how was summer on the Cape?" "London was dreadful," and other such reviews dripping in privilege.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - BEDROOM - DAY

THUNK. John's trunk lands at the foot of his bed. Alone for the first time, he surveys this new space. Home away from home. Or a new home entirely.

Running his hand along the metal frame of the bed. His bed.

FLASH: Somewhere far from here, a hand plunges into a PILE OF HAY. Stuffing the hay into a sack. Again and again.

WRINGLEY (O.S.)
Well this is a disaster isn't it.

Back in the BEDROOM, Wringley enters with two other BLAZERS - **THE LANCASTER TWINS** (think Winklevoss pedigree circa 1924).

WRINGLEY (CONT'D)
Tuition could feed a third world
country but they couldn't bother to
find a halfway decent mattress.

John begins to unpack. Wringley and Twins exchange glances.

WRINGLEY (CONT'D)
It's you. Look, I think we maybe
got off on the wrong foot. Charles-

JOHN
-Wringley, yes I know who you are.

WRINGLEY
You have me at a disadvantage then.

JOHN
I'm John.

WRINGLEY
(last name?)
John...?
(no answer)
Right. Well John, it seems there's
been a mix up. Me and my mates here
were supposed to bunk together. So
if you wouldn't mind switching with-

JOHN
Room assignments are random.

WRINGLEY

That's what they say, yes. But you see there's a family tradition between the Wringleys and Lancasters. We've known each other since we were in diapers.

John ignores him and returns to unpacking.

WRINGLEY (CONT'D)

Listen, John. You'll find this place can be uncomfortable for people like you.

JOHN

People like me?

WRINGLEY

Don't make me say it. It's rude to talk about money.

The Twins shove John aside, grab his trunk and dump its contents. Books and clothes are strewn everywhere.

WRINGLEY (CONT'D)

Let's get one thing clear. You KNOW nothing. You ARE no one. And you may be here because the scholarship fund is doing its share of community service, but you are not St. Midas material. So if you insist on sticking around despite everyone's wishes, the least you could do is fall your ass in line.

(then)

It's a mess in here. Be a lad and tidy up before I move in.

Off John - fuming. Unwilling or unable to fight back.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - BEDROOM #2

John angrily unpacks in his **new** room. He caved.

JOHN (V.O.)

Did you know that some people can't smell skunk? It's true. It's a genetic trait. Darwin's theory of natural selection tells us that beings with hereditary traits most suited to surviving in a certain environment will persist, while others will die out.

(MORE)

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That's why most people *can* smell skunk. From an evolutionary standpoint, it's helpful to know if something smells like a steaming pile of shit.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - DORMITORY COMMON ROOM - DAY

John descends the stairs. The rhythm of conversation halts as the boys find new topics to discuss. John moves on.

JOHN (V.O.)

My first day at St. Midas convinced me there's another uncommonly known genetic trait. One that those with wealth possess to sniff out those without it. It's helpful to know who can and can't afford to break the rules... from an evolutionary standpoint.

We REVOLVE around John, spinning out in this new element, the walls of privilege closing in on him. Spinning faster and faster, the Common Room transforms from DAY to NIGHT:

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - DORMITORY COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

A phonograph blasts a JAZZ HIP HOP BANGER - a Kendrick-Lamar-Meets-Flappers-and-Prohibition-Lose-Your-Mind-and-Make-Bad-Decisions Banger.

Boys hoot and holler and climb over furniture and dance around the roaring fireplace. Being young and drunk hasn't changed much in the last hundred years.

JOHN (V.O.)

That first night, one of the boys threw a party. It was against the rules of curfew...

COCAINE on a CALCULUS textbook disappears up a rolled up \$50 bill. Champagne waterfalls straight from the bottle, missing the boys' mouths, splashing at John's feet.

JOHN (V.O.)

...not to mention the rules of Prohibition. All the while, they spoke of money.

The Lancaster Twins hold court, passing around a cigar box.

LANCASTER 1
Fresh off the family farm in Cuba.

LANCASTER 2
Is it still called a farm if it's
over a thousand acres?

JOHN (V.O.)
Then I saw something I'll never
forget.

Click. The Twins procure a lighter, but it's out of fluid.

LANCASTER 1
I told you to fill it at home.

LANCASTER 2
Well that's just the bee's knees.

VOICE (O.C.)
I'll take one of those.

The circle parts to reveal a BOY (16 and POINTY), draped sideways over an armchair in the corner. He consumes space with a freedom, and quietly sips a tasteful volume of champagne from a glass. Like he wandered into the Moulin Rouge for a casual nightcap.

LANCASTER 1
And who are you?

POINTY
Tell you what, I'll even light it
for you.

LANCASTER 1
(glancing at his brother)
It'll cost ya. Five dollars.

Beat. (This scans to about \$50 in today's currency.) The Lancasters think they have him over a barrel. Then the Pointy Boy removes his wallet.

POINTY
Out of fives, gents.

LANCASTER 2
Piss off then.

POINTY
But I'm guessing this will do.

A **\$1000 BILL** emerges from the Pointy Boy's wallet.
(Roughly \$10k today for those of you keeping track at home.)

The circle falls silent, and the cigar box finds itself quickly to the Pointy Boy. He picks one, clips the end, wafts the tobacco, removes a lighter and clicks it on.

The flame dances near the end of the cigar, but he pauses before lighting it.

THEN-- He then raises the \$1000 bill to the flame.

TIME SLOWS

Boys gasp. Watching their profane idol Hard Cash burn.

We hot box inside our Flapper Kendrick Jazz Banger.

The Pointy Boy uses the flaming K note to light the cigar. Inhaling deeply. Eyes rolling back in nicotine euphoria.

Flapper Kendrick scratches to an end.

The PERFECTLY CIRCULAR VINYL spins to a stop as it morphs into a PERFECTLY CIRCULAR DILATED PUPIL of John's eye.

And we're back.

POINTY (CONT'D)

Well I'm tired.

(re: record player)

Someone going to flip that over?

He drops the lighter and the flaming \$1000 on the table and disappears up the stairs into the dorms above.

John and the boys are left mesmerized, watching in silence as the face of Alexander Hamilton goes up in flame.

INT. ST. MIDAS - VARIOUS

John snakes through the halls, on a mission. Heads turn.

JOHN (V.O.)

I didn't have the luxury of grand gesture to signal the others to leave me alone. I needed camouflage from their prying eyes and sharp noses that could sniff out poverty like it was excrement on their shoes. I had to get my hands on a blazer. It was more than just dress code. It was Darwinism. It was survival.

He finds his way into the

BOOKSTORE—

John stares at a BLAZER on a mannequin. The tag reads \$50.

FLASH: Cocaine sucked up the \$50 bill at last night's romp.

Sobering.

JOHN (V.O.)

It wouldn't be easy. But I was always good at doing the math, and the math said there was a way. First I'd need a job. The bookstore would do fine.

NOW flying through the HALLS, John wades through BLAZERS. Doing the math. *Drowning in navy.*

JOHN (V.O.)

A blazer cost \$50. With minimum wage at 25 cents an hour, that meant 200 hours of labor. Factoring in time for school and part time 10-hour work week, it would be a full semester before I would hit 200 hours. In the meantime...

IN THE CAFETERIA—

John stands in a line of Blazers waiting to be served food. Mind racing. Counting jackets like cards in a deck.

JOHN (V.O.)

There are 46 boys in my class. Most boys had two jackets because, again, most boys had money. So with nearly 80 blazers in play, half of which laying around any given time, I could borrow a different blazer every four days over a 22 week semester without borrowing the same one twice.

John sits with his food at a table. Alone.

JOHN (V.O.)

As long as I kept track of whose coat was whose, by January I would be the proud owner of my very own St. Midas Blazer.

He goes to take a bite WHEN--

A BLAZER lands on the table in front of him. Just like that.

PERCY

It's a 38 in the chest. Might be a bit loose in the shoulders, but you'll grow into it. Pass the salt.

PERCY WASHINGTON falls into the chair opposite John. We recognize him as the Pointy Boy by the way he drapes himself over the chair - limbs falling across it - making it his own. He has a way of doing this with the furniture in any room.

JOHN

I'm not taking that.

PERCY

Don't be ridiculous. Of course you are. Salt.

JOHN

I don't need your charity.

PERCY

Nor would I give it to you. But I had an extra.

John clocks the fresh price tag still on the jacket. Percy watches him with eye contact that frightens most teen boys.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Two jackets is... excessive, no? People always want more. They think more is better. But more means problems. Hassle. See, if I keep both jackets I'd feel pressure to wear both jackets, forcing me to keep track of which was clean, which was used, doubling my laundry load, and inconveniencing me such that I'd likely never wear the second blazer at all just to avoid the fuss. So really, me giving this to you is an entirely selfish act to keep my life from slipping into utter chaos. Pass the salt.

John considers. LAUGHTER erupts at an adjacent table and he sees they're looking at him - the butt of another joke.

PERCY (CONT'D)

(re: the other boys)

Most of them aren't like that.

JOHN

Is that so?

PERCY

No. Just wanted to cheer you up.
 Most of them are exactly like that.
 (grabs salt across table)
 You're really going to have to get
 better at making friends if you
 want to survive here.

Percy unfolds a NEWSPAPER. He talks without looking up. The headline reads "**COMMERCIAL AIR TRAVEL, FUTURE OF AVIATION.**"

JOHN

Are you?

PERCY

Am I what?

JOHN

Like that?

PERCY

Probably.

(quoting article)

"The Ford Air Transport Service anticipates commercial passenger flights will be available to the American public early next year."
 Christ, what'll they think of next?

Percy begins salting his potatoes. Still reading.

JOHN

I'm John.

PERCY

John who?

JOHN

Unger.

PERCY

Gesundheit.
 (then)
 Percy Washington.

JOHN

Washington.

(joking:)

Any relation to George?

PERCY

Wouldn't that be something.

JOHN
Why aren't you sitting with them?

PERCY
Perhaps you're right.

Percy stops salting, folds the paper, and stands up.

JOHN
I didn't mean... I just assumed you
were also-

PERCY
Simple?

JOHN
Rich.

Percy falls into the chair again.

PERCY
(royally fucking with him)
Wait? Unger! John Unger? Of the
Nantucket Ungers?!

John smiles: *I deserved that.* Percy returns a smirk.

PERCY (CONT'D)
Where from then?

JOHN
Hades.
(off Percy's look)
Missouri.

PERCY
Pretty hot down there?

JOHN
Never ask someone from the South if
"it's hot down there?"

PERCY
I see.

JOHN
It's hot.

PERCY
Yes I imagine so.

THWAP! A piece of bread hits John in the back of the head.
Snickers from the Blazers at another table.

PERCY (CONT'D)
 You know, you'll never win their
 respect if you let them walk all
 over you.

John considers this. He grabs the jacket and goes.

Percy tastes his over-salted potatoes. Dissatisfied, he pushes them away.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - BEDROOM

John wears the BLAZER. Studying himself in a mirror. Hands running over fabric, brass buttons. Foreign textures.

JOHN (V.O.)
 Even with the blazer, the first few weeks were brutal. Everyone knew everyone. They grew up playing in each others' sandboxes, which in this case were beach-front Hamptons homes. The only thing intriguing to them was the **unknown**. It was for this reason that I fully intended on keeping myself a mystery.

He drinks in the look. Becoming acquainted with his new self.

JOHN (V.O.)
 The blazer worked as camouflage.
 But what I really needed was armor.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - DORMITORY COMMON ROOM

John glides down the stairs, just starting to blend in. A group of boys crowds around Wringley, reading from a letter.

WRINGLEY
 "...the whole town of Hades misses you, my dear John. Just the other day, Mrs. Dickerson told me her arthritis makes it impossible to milk the goat - how she wishes you were here to help-

John snatches the letter from Wringley. Fuming.

WRINGLEY (CONT'D)
 There he is: the goat-milker himself. Tell us, John *Unger*, what else you do to the animal? Anything special? No need to be ashamed.

JOHN
Stay out of my mail.

As John leaves, Wrigley and the boys start BLEATING like goats. Animals that they are.

EXT. LAKE - CREW BOAT - DAY

COXSWAIN
Stroke... Stroke... St-

Percy and John share a racing shell crew boat. Surrounded by a dozen similar shells. They stroke in unison, directed by a COXSWAIN with a bullhorn. It's P.E. for the trust fund class.

PERCY
I have it on good authority that
you lost your virginity to a goat.
(John remains silent)
I just have one question: was it
her first time too?
(Nothing from John)
Or his. I don't judge. Perkins says
it's a brave new world.

COXSWAIN
Stroke... Stroke...

PERCY
Did you at least use protection?

John's oars go dead in the water. The boat comes to a stop.

JOHN
What are you playing at, Percy?

PERCY
What do you mean? I'm asking my
friend about his first *whoopee*.

JOHN
I wouldn't use that word.

PERCY
Woopee?

JOHN
Friend.

PERCY
Don't be absurd, John. Of course
we're friends.

JOHN

Why?

(no answer)

The first time I saw you, I watched you set fire to an amount of money that would feed my family - no, my whole town - for weeks. Without blinking an eye. What could you possibly want from someone like me other than to mock me? My town. My life. My name.

(then)

You see, a friend - where I'm from, all the way down South, where it is very, very hot - does not treat his friends like a joke. I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth, so forgive me as I learn to bear the taste of metal.

Beat.

PERCY

Have you ever seen a peacock, John?

JOHN

A peacock?

PERCY

The bird.

JOHN

I know what a peacock is.

PERCY

So you're familiar with the concept of peacocking. Showing a tail full of vibrant colors, thereby signaling to all the other peacocks that ONE: you are readily available to fuck, and TWO: that you are, under no circumstances, to be fucked with.

JOHN

Is this a parable?

PERCY

Given this is an all-boys school, I was less concerned with item ONE.

JOHN

Can you get to the point.

PERCY

It was fake. The bill was fake.

JOHN

You carry around fake money?

PERCY

You don't hear stories of *me* laying with barnyard animals do you.

(then)

You may be from down South where it is very, very hot. But the heat didn't cook your brain. You're smart. You don't need a silver spoon to understand that it's sink or swim out here and you're going to need to toughen up and hit back, or you may as well get out of the boat and drown now.

COXSWAIN

Stroke... Stroke...

(noticing John/Percy fallen behind)

You two! Front of the pack or it's an extra hour on the track.

Wrigley, the Twins and other boys BLEAT like goats up ahead.

OARS CUT through the water double time. John's fire is lit.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - BEDROOM - NIGHT

John lies awake, watching a SPIDER spin a web in a moonlit corner of his iron bed frame.

JOHN (V.O.)

Percy was right. I needed to fight. I was so eager to get out of Hades, I hadn't considered how to survive once I did. Again it was Darwinism: Mock or be mocked. Prank or be pranked. Kill or be killed. If I was going to wage war, I needed reinforcements. And if Percy said we were friends, I was not in a position to turn that down.

The spider connects a thread, completing another ring of the web. There is much work to be done. John leaps out of bed.

ELSEWHERE IN THE DORM— Percy is sleeping. A hand comes down over his mouth. He wakes with a start to find John, signaling to be quiet and follow him.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

John picks the lock to CLASSROOM 104. Percy appears carrying TWO PAINT CANS. They whisper urgently.

JOHN

Got 'em?

PERCY

They really shouldn't keep the medical wing unguarded.

(noticing John)

Are you picking the lock?

JOHN

My uncle is the Hades locksmith.

PERCY

Of course he is.

JOHN

He says there's no excuse to be without a way in.

CLICK! The lock opens along with the door.

PERCY

I think I like this new John Unger.

As John and Percy enter, we get a good look at those paint cans, and see they're marked "**PETROLEUM JELLY.**"

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - CLASSROOM 104 - THE NEXT MORNING

All is quiet. We hang in the empty classroom for a beat.

The bell rings. Blazers file in. The boys stand dutifully beside their desks. No banter. Not a word. Not in this class.

One of the Lancaster Twins FLIPS A PEN in his hand. His nervous habit becomes our steady metronome while we wait...

Flip. Flip.

John shoots an unsettling smile at Wrigley a few desks over.

Flip. Flip.

The PEN catches John's eye. A small DIAMOND inset in its cap catches the light as it flips. John forgets himself.

Flip. Flip.

Percy turns to find John's gaze, but instead catches John in a trance with the diamond on the pen. Clocking it.

Flip. Flip.

The teacher **MR. STENSON** (52, sharply adverse to tomfoolery) enters and stands beside his desk.

MR. STENSON

Today we continue our work in chapter three with momentum and friction coefficients. Sit.

In unison the entire class sits. Or tries to at least...

AN ELECTRIC GUITAR SONIC BOOM needle drop leads us into a gorgeous slow motion ballet of commotion:

- *Everyone SLIPS out of their chairs - covered in JELLY.*
- *Books and papers take flight. Little DOVES OF ACADEMIA.*
- *Stenson throws out his back, his VERTEBRAE CLICKING in time with the electric guitar.*
- *The Lancaster Twin lands on his pen, IMPALING his hand. Diamond protruding from flesh.*
- *Everyone learns a little more about friction coefficients than they had bargained for.*
- *Everyone... EXCEPT WRINGLEY, who remains sitting. Dumbfounded and sitting. His chair NOT jellied.*

Back in REAL TIME, everyone moans on the floor. Someone mentions needing to ring their chiropractor.

Mr. Stenson notices Wrigley as the only unaffected party.

MR. STENSON (CONT'D)
Wrigley! To the headmaster.

WRINGLEY
But, Sir, I have no idea-

MR. STENSON
NOW.

John, milking it on the floor, catches Wrigley's gaze.

WRINGLEY
 (under breath)
 You.
 (then to Stenson)
 Sir, I know who-

MR. STENSON
 OUT OF THIS CLASSROOM NOW!

Percy and John lock eyes.

JOHN (V.O.)
 It was on.

Our downright raucous ELECTRIC GUITAR kicks back in. Definitely "**KIDS**" by *Sleigh Bells*. And we launch into a...

PRANK MONTAGE SEQUENCE:

- WRINGLEY steps out of a BATHROOM STALL with a tray of DINING HALL GLASSES - filled with urine. The TWINS top off the piss mimosas with OJ.
- JOHN & PERCY sit at their regular table, drink from their "OJ," and spit everywhere. WRINGLEY and Co. cackle nearby.
- JOHN & PERCY steal BLEACH from a cleaning closet, pouring it into an open shampoo bottle.
- WRINGLEY steps out of the shower with BLEACHED HAIR. He wipes the steam off the mirror to witness the crime and yelps. When he raises his hands to his head, we see his UNDERARM HAIR BLEACHED TOO.
- It's snowing at St. Midas. WRINGLEY (hair grown out, only the tips bleached) passes a Christmas tree strung with lights. He pauses, an idea brewing.
- JOHN and PERCY wake up, unable to move. They've been tied to their beds by strands of Christmas tree lights.
- The boys rowing crew on the lake. WRINGLEY leads the pack when he starts taking on water. A number of small holes have been drilled in the bottom of the boat. As he Titanics, he sees PERCY, JOHN on the shore, a POWER DRILL in hand.

END MONTAGE.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - DORMITORY - NIGHT

John tugs on a TAUT ROPE into the common room. We don't see what's on the other end. Percy checks if the coast is clear.

PERCY
Where did you even find him?

John pulls the rope and in walks A GOAT.

JOHN
It took me all year to befriend the
livestock manager on the grounds.
And for the record, it's a "her."

Percy glances down at the goat's FOUR MASSIVE UTTERS.

PERCY
(to goat)
M'apologies, miss.

GOAT
BA-A-A-A-A

PERCY
SHH! Quick let's do this before she
wakes the whole damn house.

John yanks the Goat through the common room, narrowly
avoiding knocking over lamps and chairs on the way.

The Goat STOPS as they're halfway up the stairs. John tugs at
the rope. No dice.

JOHN
Come on. Move.
(then to Percy)
Well don't just stand there.

Percy reluctantly situates himself at the ass end of the Goat
and attempts to push her from behind.

PERCY
Go. Stupid beast. Ahh! Ew. What the-

Nature calls. The Goat takes a sizable DUMP on Percy's
slipper, and continues walking

UPSTAIRS—

John and Percy stop outside Wrigley's door.

JOHN
Who's the farm boy now, Wrigley?

They creak open the door to find HEADMASTER PERKINS standing
in the threshold, glaring, assuring them that they are in
deeper shit than the one currently drying on Percy's slipper.

INT. ST. MIDAS' SCHOOL - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

STEEL WOOL scrapes SCUM off a cast iron skillet.

John and Percy scrub a mountain of dishes in the early hours.

John struggles with a particularly nasty bit of grease.

PERCY

Eight months is a good run. We
should be proud.

John is quiet. Percy deals in cheer and silver linings.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Most pranksters were caught by the
New Year.

More silence.

PERCY (CONT'D)

You know, in 1818 Ralph Waldo Emerson was kicked out of Harvard for starting a food fight. He threw a piece of buttered toast at a classmate in jest. Before long, it graduated to an all out brawl. Students throwing tea cups, utensils, chairs, you name it! All from some buttered toast.

John attacks the grease.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Come now, John. We do a bit of scrubbing and we're in the clear. Suspension isn't an option for a first offense. They don't even phone your parents.

John throws the pan into the sink.

JOHN

I don't care if they phone my parents! Let them. In fact, I dare them to. I'd love to see Headmaster Perkins track down the one phone at which he could possibly reach James and Betty Unger. I'd love to see his face as he's met with the dismal greeting on the other end: "Hades Mining Company." Maybe he'd think it was a mistake.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I can see his smug face as he comes to terms with just how poor a student of his beloved St. Midas actually is. Maybe he'd hang up the phone out of pity. Let bygones be bygones. Be a shepherd to the poor, misguided sheep. Or maybe he's a wolf - maybe he'd lunge for the kill. *"This is precisely why St. Midas only accepts boys of a certain pedigree,"* he'd say. Be done with me then and there.

Beat. John starts scrubbing the pan again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's a nice story about Emerson. But there's a reason that we're down here scrubbing scum off of pans. It's the same reason as why Wrigley is upstairs, sound asleep. It's all just a matter of dollar signs and decimal points.

Percy reaches over and takes the pan from John, running it under SCALDING HOT WATER - steam rising through the slant of morning light before evaporating between them.

PERCY

It's odd, the way they say money can't buy happiness. Sometimes I think just the opposite is true. That the only way anyone can ever be truly happy is if they don't have to worry about money. But there are more important things than happiness, John. Happiness is a trick of the light. We enjoy it by squinting at it from a distance. Because if we ever got too close for things to come into focus, we'd realize happiness wasn't at all what we thought it would look like.

The scalding water peels away at the grease.

PERCY (CONT'D)

But *Resiliency*. The ability to put in elbow grease when the going gets tough. To be the sheep, alive in the jaws of the wolf, and carry on. Now that's a truly admirable skill.

(then)

(MORE)

PERCY (CONT'D)

I don't think Ralph Waldo Emerson
threw a piece of buttered toast.
Harvard expelled the whole
sophomore class that year for acts
of resistance. Ralphie probably had
nothing to do with the fight. But
it makes for a better story when I
tell it that way, don't you think?
Because Emerson would be Emerson
regardless of Harvard, regardless
of expulsion, regardless of
buttered toast. Emerson was Emerson
because he was **better**. He was
special. Dollar signs and decimal
points have nothing to do with it.

At that 'better' John glows. Seeing his future. A vision
unlocked by Percy's words - his Kryptonite.

The grease peels off.

PERCY (CONT'D)

There we go.

He raises the steaming cast iron skillet into the light,
where the coal black SHIMMERS. A beat. Then:

PERCY (CONT'D)

**John, have you given much thought
to how you'll summer? I've never
asked anyone before, but if you'd
like, I'd very much enjoy your
company out West with me and my
family.**

John - magnetized - deep in thought.

JOHN (V.O.)

How strange it tasted. The word
'summer' as a verb.

JOHN

I've never been out West before.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - MONTANA - DAY

THE ITALIAN (from the opening) bushwhacks his way through the
trees. Scraped, bruised, dragged through hell and back.

He fights exhaustion, clutching the DIAMOND BUNDLE - his only
salvation. Finally, stumbling upon a vista overlooking

THE PROVINCIAL TOWN OF **FISH, MONTANA**, marked by a prominent CLOCK TOWER at its center.

Upon spotting civilization, he weeps. Adrenaline amassing.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - FISH, MONTANA - TICKET WINDOW - DAY

The Italian appears in the ticket window.

THE ITALIAN
One-way to the capital.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GREAT DIVIDE - DAY

We soar over the GREAT PRAIRIE where it meets the ROCKY MOUNTAINS. The beautiful crux where the tectonic plates of our nation grind together as they do battle. As John fights a battle of his own...

JOHN (V.O.)
Dear Mother and Father,
I regret to inform you I will not
be returning to Hades this summer.

A GOLDEN EAGLE glides across periwinkle sky. Linen clouds draped over rolling hills as far as the eye can see.

JOHN (V.O.)
My absence speaks not as a reflection of you or of Hades, but rather as a testament to my hard work this year. For I have been afforded the opportunity to remain at St. Midas' to conduct laboratory research during these months.

A HERD OF BUFFALO sleeps in the tall grass. The wind whispers them a story during their afternoon nap.

JOHN (V.O.)
I shall write you frequently and do my best to visit before summer's end. In the meantime, I think of you fondly. Love, John.

A TRAIN BARRELS through the landscape, upsetting the Buffalo from their slumber.

JOHN (O.S.) (PRELAP)
I've never seen anything like it.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

John stares wide-eyed out the window, awed by the Rockies.

Percy sits opposite, decidedly less impressed. Fiddling with a FLASHY WRISTWATCH - a sizable DIAMOND set in its face.

PERCY

I can never remember. Is it an hour ahead in the springtime or back?

JOHN

Are you not seeing this?

PERCY

Though you may be the wrong person to ask. Are they even using the daylight saving time in Missouri? They're using back East, but not yet in Montana. I think forward, yes? Fall back. Spring forward.

JOHN

Percy, you're missing it.

PERCY

What? The bumps in the ground? You'll get used to them.

John pulls his attention from the landscape, and sees the DIAMOND WATCH. It casts a spell on him. Percy continues to fiddle with the time, never directly addressing John.

JOHN

What is that?

PERCY

Unless spring-to-fall is the daylight saving time, in which case maybe I don't change a thing. Are we saving daylight over summer?

JOHN

I've never seen you wear that.

PERCY

It's a family thing.

JOHN

Looks like it belongs to Wrigley or one of the others.

(no response)

I'm not suggesting you're like them. But can you imagine?

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)
 What it would be like to live that
 way?

(Percy ignores him)
 I was reading in the *World Almanac*
 that there's one man in America
 with an income of over five million
 a year. And another two with
 incomes of over three—

PERCY
 (a reflex)
 Catchpenny capitalists.

JOHN
 Sorry?

PERCY
 Financial small-fries.

Beat. Percy has never spoken to John this way before.

PERCY (CONT'D)
 (finishes setting watch)
 Minus one, two time zones brings us
 to six PM, Mountain Standard Time.

For the first time, Percy meets John's gaze.

PERCY (CONT'D)
 You like jewels, don't you?

JOHN
 I don't know—

PERCY
 What if I told you I have a diamond
 as big as the Ritz?

JOHN
 (comprehending nothing)
 As big as—?

PERCY
 The Ritz. John. The Ritz Carlton.
 It's a hotel. What if I told you my
 father is the richest man in the
 world and our family owns a diamond
 as big as the Ritz Carlton Hotel?

The air is sucked from the compartment. Things have taken a
 turn for the weird. John is utterly lost. A beat, then—

HAHAHA! Percy bursts. John, never more relieved for anything
 in his life, laughs too because it was obviously a joke.

PERCY (CONT'D)
 Look at you! If you could see
 yourself.

JOHN
 You almost had me.

PERCY
 Almost. Just a good show, eh Unger?
 You should get some sleep.

John tucks himself into the corner, gazing out the window as the prairie sweeps past him, lulling him to sleep.

On Percy's WATCH -- we TIME LAPSE forward. The hands go round and round. The world outside grows darker. As night falls, **the hands of the watch begin to GLOW NEON GREEN.**

LATER—

Percy's reflection in the window. Where we left him hours ago, though it's clear he hasn't slept a wink.

He stares **intently, unblinkingly, eerily** at a sleeping John.

Ding. A bell sounds throughout the train, waking John. Percy quickly shuts his eyes, then feigns waking.

John sees PERCY'S WATCH - puzzled by the shade of green. But before he can say anything-

LOUDSPEAKER
 Next stop: Fish, Montana.

PERCY
 That's us.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - FISH, MONTANA - DUSK

There are TWO TRAINS at the station, facing opposite ways. A FOOTBRIDGE arcs over the tracks, allowing passengers to cross from one platform to the other.

John and Percy walk down the platform, luggage in hand, and start over the footbridge as an announcement sounds:

LOUDSPEAKER
 Train eastbound departs in one
 minute from platform B.

WHEN-- A MAN BARRELS PAST THEM, colliding with John. They both go down. The man looks up and we see it's **THE ITALIAN** - **still clutching the BUNDLE of treasure-wrapped cloth.**

THE ITALIAN
Mi scusa!

PERCY
Christ, watch where you're going!

The train whistles. The Italian limps away...

John stares after him a moment, clocking the limp, the foreign language, the disheveled mess. But before he can think twice about it, the man is gone.

EXT. FISH, MONTANA - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

The two boys exit the platform into the dust-trap, ho-dunk, nothing town of Fish, Montana.

JOHN (V.O.)
If it weren't for the last bits of light peeking over the mountains, I could have tricked myself into thinking we got off the train in Hades. And unimpressive though Percy's town was, I felt an odd kinship with him because of it. That by some divine kismet, we were fated to become friends.

A DRIVER stands aside a HORSE & BUGGY, awaiting the boys.

JOHN
(joking)
A horse and buggy?! Percy Washington, I expected a diamond encrusted Model T.

PERCY
I'll see what I can do. Come on.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - NIGHT - LATER

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

- The buggy exits town. The clock tower of Fish fading away.

JOHN (O.S.)
We're leaving town?

- The buggy winds up a mountainside trail. The town gone.

PERCY (O.S.)
You didn't think we were spending
all summer *there* did you?

- A GIANT CLIFF with a SHIMMERING WATERFALL. The buggy rides on cliff-side path that winds behind the waterfall.

PERCY (CONT'D)
Where we're going is far more
magical.

- John peers out the window to see DOZENS OF FISH FALLING IN THE WATERFALL. RAINBOW SCALES FLASH SILVER in the moonlight.

PERCY (CONT'D)
There's a group of trout living in the headwaters of these mountains. Every year after they're born, they must learn to fight the river's current and find refuge in the still water or else they're carried down stream forever.

(re: the cascading fish)
Those are the ones that couldn't make it.

- The buggy emerges from behind the waterfall, and continues on. But we linger on the FALLING FISH - gorgeous rainbow prisms. Beautiful little failures, falling, doomed.

INT. BUGGY - NIGHT - LATER

The buggy comes to an unexpected stop.

JOHN
Are we here?

PERCY
Nearly. This way.

Percy exits the buggy. John follows him to see

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - THE WALL - CONTINUOUS

A MASSIVE ROCK WALL - an 80 foot high natural cliff face - towers over them. The road simply dead ends into it.

John gapes up. Unable to put his finger on exactly what it is about the monolith blockade that makes him feel ill.

At the top of the wall sit two industrial CRANE DEVICES. Thick cables dangle from them down to the bottom of the wall-

Where there sits THE MOST LUXURIOUS AUTOMOBILE that John - or any of us, for that matter - has ever seen.

DIAMOND gems cover its headlights. GOLD trim frames its long obsidian body. A limo that won the lottery and then some.

PERCY

It's not ALL made of diamond, but
then again, it's no Model T either.
Shall we?

A team of SIX MEN are stationed around the crane apparatus, ready to operate what comes next. Percy leads John into the

INT. LIMO - NIGHT - (INTERCUT)

The door swings shut on an interior more elegant still. Silk-upholstered chairs. Gold fringe carpet. Pillows embroidered in rare gems.

John keeps his hands in his lap, as if his touch might stain every surface.

CLANK! They feel a lurch on the car.

JOHN

What's going on?

PERCY

They're just hooking us in.

JOHN

Hooking us in? To what? Who are those men?

PERCY

You ask a great deal of questions,
John Unger.

OUTSIDE, the men attach the car to the crane cables. One man flips a switch, and the cables pull taut until

THE LIMO IS HOISTED VERTICALLY INTO THE AIR.

John gapes out the window at the rock wall, seemingly falling downward as they ascend. Finally, the limo peeks over the top of the wall to reveal

A MASSIVE VALLEY, BURSTING WITH LIGHT AND COLOR.

Soft glowing lamps line a long road that winds through the valley, ending in a MASSIVE CHATEAU - light radiating from every window. A SHIMMERING JEWEL BOX under puffy clouds.
The stuff of dreams.

PERCY (CONT'D)
This is where the United States
ends. You are now on the five
uncharted square miles of America.

John stares out the window, reflecting The Jewel Box Valley.

JOHN
(awestruck)
Did they miss it?

INT/EXT. LIMO / EL DORADO VALLEY - (INTERCUT)

The limo winds down the road approaching the MASSIVE CHATEAU.

PERCY (O.S.)
The first time the government tried
to chart the land, my grandfather
corrupted a State survey department
to stop it. The second time, he had
official U.S. maps tinkered with.
It bought them fifteen more years.

A ways behind the chateau sits the outline of a MOUNTAIN -
the only prominent hill inside the valley. For all the light
around the house, the Mountain remains shrouded in darkness.

John continues gawking. Percy revels in impressing him.

PERCY (CONT'D)
The third time was tricky. Father
fixed the valley into the strongest
magnetic field ever constructed, so
that surveyors' compasses would
break upon nearing the land.

JOHN
And that worked?

PERCY
Bought another ten years. But
technology is getting better.
Transportation more streamlined.
There's only one thing that poses a
real threat to discovering us now.

JOHN (O.S.)
What's that?

PERCY
The future.
(a beat. the car stops)
Welcome to El Dorado, John.

The limo sits in front of the CHATEAU - dazzling at arm's length. A modest Versailles dropped in the Rocky Mountains.

Percy, John climb the front steps. The doors open, revealing

MRS. WASHINGTON - you could guess her age, but you'd be wrong. It may be 1925, but money still buys a decade off the face. She balances a tender warmth with a Stepfordy quality that we'll never quite shake. *Never an eyelash out of place.*

MRS. WASHINGTON
Welcome home, Percy darling!

PERCY
Mother.

Percy steps inside to greet Mother like a good prodigal son.

John follows him in and...

INT. FOYER - CHATEAU - CONTINUOUS

Boom.

"SWEET LIFE" by Frank Ocean serves us that delicious, buttery chorus because that's how it fucking feels inside this foyer.

A CRYSTAL CHANDELIER showers the white marble floors in a shimmering warmth. A disco ball for the one percent.

A GRAND STAIRCASE straight ahead is flanked by TWO MASSIVE IVORY TUSKS. Decor to kill for.

JOHN is overcome with the sensation of bathing in liquid gold. But only for a moment, because we snap back for intros.

PERCY
Mother, this is John Unger.

Mrs. Washington notices John for the first time. She misses a breath - it's almost nothing. She resets her smile instantly.

MRS. WASHINGTON
John Unger. You must be quite special if Percy's brought you to El Dorado.

As she embraces John, she shoots Percy a weighted look.

JOHN
(half-joking)
Percy did tell you I was coming,
didn't he?

MRS. WASHINGTON

Of course, dear. I've simply had
thing after thing to do, and only
just remembered to make up your
room. How inhospitable of me.

(to the nearest servant)

See that the Amethyst room is
prepared for John Unger.

(back to the boys)

Come. Let's have a refreshment in
the parlor before supper. Your
father and I must hear all about
your year...

As they pass through the DINING ROOM in pursuit of beverages,
WE LINGER to watch two servants discreetly fetch another
chair and place setting for the table.

The sounds of expensive cutlery PRELAP...

INT. DINING ROOM - CHATEAU - LATER

A PORTRAIT OF GEORGE WASHINGTON gazes down at a steaming
QUAIL for a beat.

MAN'S DEEP VOICE (O.S.)

Bless us, Oh Lord, and these Thy
gifts which we are about to receive
from Thy bounty through Christ, our
Lord. Amen.

On *amen*, GOLDEN UTENSILS pierce the bird. John calibrates
himself to the fancy fork and fowl.

MAN'S DEEP VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Do you hunt, John?

PERCY

Father, we've only just arrived.

MAN'S DEEP VOICE (O.S.)

Well that quail you're eating isn't
going to kill itself.

ANGLE ON: **A KEY and A CRUCIFIX**, hanging around the man's
neck. His face remains hidden.

MRS. WASHINGTON

Oh Braddock, let them settle in.

JOHN

I'm afraid I won't be much help.

BRADDOCK
Never shot a gun before?

And with that we get our first angle on Percy's father. **BRADDOCK WASHINGTON** (55) holds fire in his chest and brimstone on his tongue. Yet, somehow exudes a coziness.

But perhaps we don't feel cozy, because we recognize **Braddock as the WHITE HAIR**ED **MAN** from the teaser. The one who shot a dog in the head. Perhaps instead, we think... Fuck.

JOHN
No, sir. Never even held one.

BRADDOCK
Then you must learn. It's a right of passage in a young man's life.

MRS. WASHINGTON
Let's dispense with talk of firearms at the table.

PERCY
Mother despises violence.

Just then, **KISMINE** (16) - Percy's younger sister - whirls into the dining room. *Bursting with thought.*

MRS. WASHINGTON
You're late. Didn't you hear the dinner bell?

KISMINE
I don't respond well to bells. In any case, I was dreadfully lost in my new book. It's called *Mrs. Dalloway* by some Virginia woman everyone's talking about.

(self-correcting)
Sorry. 'About which everyone is talking.' My, that sounds stuffy.

(back to business)
Mind you, I was convinced it would be a bore, but everyone who thinks they're anyone in New York says it's divine. Of course I wouldn't know because you hardly let me-

AHHEM. Mrs. Washington breaks her off. Kismine's eyes land on John. She panics. Like if a human could glitch. Then resets:

KISMINE (CONT'D)
Percy it's so good having you home.
(to John)
I'm Kismine.

JOHN
John Unger.

KISMINE
Pleasure to make your acquaintance.
(to Percy)
I hadn't any idea you were bringing
a friend this summer.

PERCY
We were just telling John he needs
to learn to shoot before the fall.

KISMINE
I could show you.

MRS. WASHINGTON
You'll be helping me in the
gardens.

KISMINE
It's 1925, Mother. Girls can be
hunters AND gatherers now.

MRS. WASHINGTON
Oh, my darling girl. What *ideas*
have these Flappers danced into
your head?

A phone rings from within the house.

KISMINE
Where did you say you were from,
John?

JOHN
Hades. Missouri.

KISMINE
My! Is it hot enough down there?

John and Percy share a smile. Kismine clocks it.

KISMINE (CONT'D)
What? What is it? Have I said
something?

PERCY
Too much, I'm afraid.

A servant named GYGSUM (60s) enters the room. He holds greater authority than other staff. He whispers to Braddock.

BRADDOCK
You all must excuse me. I need to take this.

Braddock rises from the table and strides out.

KISMINE
It's settled then, John Unger from Hades. I'll teach you to shoot.

MRS. WASHINGTON
Percy's been hunting a decade. He's more than qualified. And *no more talk of shooting at my table.*

KISMINE
Mother simply *abhors* violence.

JOHN
So I've heard.

From the other room, we hear Braddock shouting on the phone.

BRADDOCK (O.S.)
NO MORE EXCUSES. FIND HIM.

Everyone at the table pretends as if they've heard nothing.

MRS. WASHINGTON
You know, they're saying this will be the rainiest summer we've seen. Storms almost every day.

PERCY
We need not bore John with weather.

JOHN
The meal's lovely, Mrs. Washington.

MRS. WASHINGTON
Braddock's hunt from this morning.

KISMINE
Didn't you just say *no more talk of shooting?*

John lets out a chuckle. *Who is this girl, catching adults in their paradoxes?* No one else laughs. John feels self conscious. Kismine feels seen.

MRS. WASHINGTON
 We're discussing cuisine, dear.
 Perhaps we'll be eating *your* quail
 by summer's end, John.

Braddock reenters, taking his seat. A tense silence.

In this moment John regards the WATCHES on the wrists of all the Washingtons. Strange and unique, each of them. Not matching, but clearly part of a set. It's a family thing.

JOHN
 You must love coming out here. So
 quiet. Percy mentioned the land has
 never been surveyed.

BRADDOCK
 Oh he did?

PERCY
 I was telling him all the creative
 ways our family has managed to keep
 things private.

BRADDOCK
 Things are so fast today. So loud
 and free wheeling. The telephone,
 the aeroplane. Jazz clubs and
 motion pictures, my goodness.
 Privacy is an old man's game. A
 slow man's game. I fear privacy is
 an endangered species.

(beat)
 But we pray. We try and live in the
 light. It's all anyone can do.

KISMINE
 Oh, Papa. It breaks my heart when
 you wax poetic.

PERCY
 You sap.

KISMINE
 Am not!

Kismine throws a roll at him.

BRADDOCK
 Alright! I'm turning in before this
 table becomes a true Gomorrah.
 Gentlemen, see you in the morning
 for the hunt. Kismine my dear,
 goodnight.

(MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
 (kissing her on the head,
 then whispering:)
 There's nothing wrong with being a
 sap.

Mrs. Washington melts, watching him love his children.
 Braddock sends his wife a private wink. Then he's gone.

MRS. WASHINGTON
 Dessert anyone? Gygsum, the port.
 John has had a long journey.

Her hospitality unnerves. But John hasn't a moment to consider it because the room begins to SPIN with cinnamon swirls, aromatic coffees, and ruby ports.

JOHN (V.O.)
 Perhaps it was the wine talking,
 but I had long dreamt of a family
 like Percy's. Where capital and
 common decency weren't mutually
 exclusive.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - CHATEAU - LATER

The SPINNING continues as John is dwarfed by a room dipped in soft purples. Consumed by high ceilings and cascading drapes.

A MONOLITHIC FOUR POSTER BED - the centerpiece of the room.
John runs his hand along the bed. A motion we've seen before upon his arrival at St. Midas.

JOHN (V.O.)
 ...Where it was possible to grow up
 with everything in the world, and
 not wind up like one of the St.
 Midas' meatheads.

FLASH: The stack of hay, again. Again, a hand plunging in, grabbing a fistful, and stuffing it in a sack. Again. Again.

A dizzy, tipsy John falls back onto the bed. Respite at last.

JOHN (V.O.)
 I had another thought then for the
 first time since meeting Percy...

A KNOCK at the door and Percy peeks his head in just to say:

PERCY
 We begin the hunt at eight.

JOHN
 The bill wasn't fake.
 (off Percy's look)
 I just realized. The night I first
 saw you. When you lit the cigar.
 The bill wasn't fake like you said.

Percy remains silent. Eyeing John calmly.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 I still don't see a diamond as big
 as the Ritz.

Beat.

PERCY
 Eight A.M.

Percy smiles as we hear the BANG OF A GUNSHOT.

EXT. WOODS - EL DORADO - THE NEXT DAY

A QUAIL falls from the sky. The smoke of gunpowder lingers in the morning air.

PERCY
 Capital shot, father.

BRADDOCK
 (to John)
 You're up, m'boy.

JOHN
 I really can't-

BRADDOCK
 Did Percy tell you the story of how
 the Washingtons came to El Dorado?

JOHN
 No, sir.

BRADDOCK
 In the wake of the Revolution, my
 great, great granddaddy George
 started a family.

JOHN
 (as in...?)
 George?

FLASH: The Portrait of GEORGE WASHINGTON stares down upon the dinner table as a fork pierces a quail.

John looks at Percy. This must be some kind of joke. Except Percy isn't laughing, and it most certainly is not a joke.

BRADDOCK

What the history books won't tell you is that after the war, the Washingtons fell into obscurity. Worse than obscurity... poverty. On the brink of ruin, my grandfather Fitz-Norman Washington was forced to head West in search of gold. Eventually he separated from his scouting party and lost himself in these woods. For two days he wandered this valley, growing hungrier by the hour. Unable to find a single living thing. As if something in the land told all God's creatures to stay away. On the third day, Granddaddy Fitz-Norman came upon this mountain.

He gestures up at the nearby MOUNTAIN. We hang on it.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

By then he lost all will to go on and collapsed. Ready to die and let the Washington name forever extinguish. Only when he fell, it wasn't onto a bed of soft leaves as expected, but instead on hard rock. Clearing away the leaves, he discovered something else entirely... Diamonds. As big as your fist. A rock bed full of them. You know what he did next? Starving Granddaddy Fitz-Norman on the brink of collapse picked himself up, stuffed every pocket full of stones and started walking. In the blink of an eye, he completely forgot his appetite and became a millionaire.

Beat. A small flock of QUAIL bursts from the nearby bushes.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

Sometimes it's not that we *can't* do something. So much as we haven't been provided the right *incentive*.

Braddock raises his shotgun directly at John's heart.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

Shoot the bird.

John is petrified.

JOHN
What? I—

BRADDOCK
(eerie calm)
Shoot the bird, or I'll shoot you.

JOHN
Percy!

Percy stares back, silently.
Not knowing what else to do, John raises the gun.
Birds darting in every direction. Winged blips of chaos.

PERCY
(re: the gun position)
Higher. Against your shoulder.

The flock begins clearing out.

BRADDOCK
Hurry John, before they're gone.

John struggles to lock in on one. There are so many.

PERCY
Pick one. Make one the target.

Flapping. Squawking.

BRADDOCK
Three... Two...

Braddock COCKS the shotgun.

PERCY
John.

John spots one, locks in, and narrows his gaze.

BRADDOCK
One.

BAM! A shotgun fires as we FLASH TO:

RAINBOW TROUT SPILLING OVER THE WATERFALL.
We linger here for some time, and then we're BACK with a

PLOP. A quail falls in a patch of trees ahead of them.

Braddock nods approvingly, patting John lovingly on the back. His touch puts John ill at ease. Yet John beams with pride, exhilarated by the rush. Hands trembling.

JOHN
That felt... good.

BRADDOCK
Of course it did, lad. And for the record, I hadn't any shells in the chamber. Go claim your catch. We'll see you back up at the house.

John heads into the woods toward the bird. When he's gone...

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
I like this one.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

John searches for his kill.

JOHN (V.O.)
It scared me. Braddock pointing a gun at my beating heart. But I'd be lying if I said it didn't make me feel more alive. To discover in a moment what I was truly capable of.

He stumbles into a CLEARING. The quail lies a few paces ahead twitching in the grass. But John barely sees the bird because

TWO MASSIVE ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS stand in the middle of the clearing. A small military bunker attached to them.

JOHN (V.O.)
It was the next bit that really made my heart explode.

Slowly he inches toward it. He reaches out to touch the gun. Just as he's about to, A HAND REACHES FOR HIS NECK and—

KISMINE
Bang!

John jumps. Kismine laughs. She's snuck up behind him.

JOHN
Jeeze. Gave me a heart attack.

KISMINE
That would be a waste of a heart.

Chills. John grins a stupid schoolboy grin. And for a moment he forgets the gun and forgets this place and loses himself in her smile. *Young love happens hard and all at once.*

KISMINE (CONT'D)
(re: the gun)
It's just a precaution, you know.

JOHN
That's an awfully big precaution.

KISMINE
There are awfully big things to
protect.

JOHN
You mean the mountain?

Her face shifts. Something haunted.

KISMINE
So you know?

JOHN
It's a mine. Right? Percy and your
father keep talking about diamonds-

She relaxes slightly but John is thrown.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Are you alright?

PERCY (O.S.)
(off in the woods)
John? You over here?

KISMINE
(suddenly frantic)
Meet me tomorrow night in the grove
beyond the gardens.

She runs in the opposite direction and disappears, leaving John alone in the clearing. The QUAIL twitches nearby, fluttering between this life and the next.

PERCY
You found our security system.

John jumps. Percy has emerged into the clearing.

JOHN
It's for the aeroplanes, isn't it?

PERCY

Ever since the Great War, they've been coming further and further west. Still, we've only had to use them once or twice.

Percy spots the twitching quail. He picks it up.

PERCY (CONT'D)

The world is changing, John. And we have to protect ourselves.

CRACK. He wrings the bird's neck, tossing it at John's feet.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Shall we?

(walking away)

I'm sure you'll make it a clean kill next time.

Off John staring down at the QUAIL'S DEAD EYES. *Lucky him.*

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

The crystal chandelier hangs in silence, keeping watch over the sleeping foyer.

John appears from the wing of bedrooms, and softly descends the grand staircase.

JOHN (V.O.)

Sneaking out wasn't hard. I'd long grown accustomed to moving in a way that went unnoticed. Nothing here was different. On my way out, it struck me how unremarkable the gold bannisters and ivory tusks and even the crystal chandelier seemed. All the things that dazzled upon my noisy arrival. They were all muted in the moonlight. I guess luxury isn't really built for the quiet.

He takes extra care to noiselessly click the front door closed behind him on his way out. But as we pull focus to the adjacent lounge, we find **Gygsum watching from an armchair.**

EXT. GARDENS - CONTINUOUS

A FULL MOON peeks out from behind a satin cloud. John moves swiftly past rows upon rows of BLOOD RED ROSES. We linger on a rose as John's shadow passes over its thorns.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

John emerges in a clearing.

JOHN
(whispering)
Kismine? Kismine?

JOHN (V.O.)
It occurred to me then that she may
be toying with me. Perhaps she
wouldn't come at all, and I would
wait in this field all night. But
it was the first time a girl had
asked to meet me anywhere, so I was
willing to risk the loneliness.

Kismine appears. She awes in the midnight hour. Immediately John gravitates to her necklace: a chain with a single PEARL.

KISMINE
I thought you might not come.

JOHN (V.O.)
She was toying with me. I liked it.

JOHN
No you didn't.

KISMINE
No. I didn't. I just imagined
that's the sort of thing people
say. Isn't it?

JOHN
I don't know. I find people say a
lot of things they wouldn't back in
Hades.

KISMINE
Oh yes. Mother was a little
startled when she heard that you
were from... where you're from.

JOHN (V.O.)
She can't even say the name.

KISMINE
(re: the mountain)
Shall we climb it?

EXT. MOUNTAIN - TRAIL - NIGHT

They hike a gradual slope. There are no animals around. No sounds of nature. Like perhaps we're in a vacuum.

KISMINE

Percy and I come here every summer, but I'm going to school out east in the fall. Miss Bulge's School for Girls, do you know it? I hear it's most strict. I hope I fit in.

JOHN

I don't imagine there's a room you can't charm your way through.

Kismine struggles to take a compliment.

KISMINE

Of course, I may only have a year or so at school anyway. You see, I'm coming out in London next fall where I'll be presented at court.

JOHN

(dispirited)

Oh.

KISMINE

Don't be like that. It's a dreadful bore of a tradition. Not to mention entirely antiquated. Almost nothing ever comes of it, romantically. I've been to a million of them and the only thing you can count on is washing your hands for hours after all those strangers have kissed them.

(beat)

Goodness, I've made things worse haven't I?

John finds comfort in a topic change.

JOHN

I like your necklace.

KISMINE

Pearl!

JOHN

My mother has earrings like it.

KISMINE

Oh! How delightful.

JOHN (V.O.)

I could hear her doing the math.
Pearls and Hades didn't add up.

JOHN

They're not real.

KISMINE

Well that doesn't matter. A *real* pearl is just *spit*. Truly. I read it in a marine biology text. When a parasite latches to the inside of an oyster, the oyster secretes a substance that encases the intruder. So it goes, layer upon layer until one day, all those layers have created a pearl. Yet every year at court, ladies scoff at each other... trying to pick the fake pearls out of the crowd, insisting all along theirs are the *real* thing. I always chuckle to myself at how passionately they defend the fact that they're just dripping in parasites and oyster spit.

John stares at her. A girl not quite what she seems.

KISMINE (CONT'D)

(off his look)

What?

JOHN

You're much more sophisticated than I thought you were.

KISMINE

(an affected childishness)

Am not! I wouldn't DREAM of being.

Kismine runs ahead. John gives chase. Clouds grow thicker, ENSHROUDING THE MOON.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - SUMMIT - CONTINUOUS

Kismine approaches the SUMMIT, giggling. John and his schoolboy crush in tow. A LARGE CLUMP OF FOLIAGE covering a MOUND sits in the center of the summit. John chases her around it. She coyly avoids him with her playground antics.

JOHN

I didn't realize you called me here
to play a game of tag.

KISMINE

(lingering defensiveness)

Sophisticated people are so
terribly common, don't you think? I
mean, take Mother and Father, and
Percy and this whole dreadfully
sophisticated place. Just because
we share genetics doesn't mean-

JOHN

I think you have the **spirit** for it.

KISMINE

I mean, I wouldn't mind it if I
were but I'm not. I'm very innocent
and girlish. I never even smoke, or
drink. I think sophisticated is the
last thing you can say about me.

John ducks out of sight on the other side of the shrubs.

KISMINE (CONT'D)

Oh no fair! I call foul!

Kismine reverses direction, runs, and SMACKS into John. She yelps as they collide. The two fall to the ground, laughing.

The first time they've been this close. The gravity stronger now that they're caught in each other's orbit.

JOHN

I'd never think you sophisticated
for smoking, or drinking, or any
other treacherous fraternity habit.

KISMINE

What is it then? You just met
me.

You think I'm sophisticated
because I read?

Literacy is a dismally low
bar.

You simply must raise your
standards, Mr. Unger.

Well what is it?!

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well- it's like- the night I
arrived. You were talking
about your book.

No, I wasn't saying-

There's no bar-

My standards are perfectly-

JOHN (CONT'D)
You **see** things.

She stops. Listening now.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You see things. And not the version
of things that's dressed up for
appearances. You see things for
what they're trying to hide. You
see proper grammar as stuffy, and
polished pearls as oyster spit. I
just never imagined someone like
you existed.

Something lands in Kismine's eyes. An expectation subverted.
Here. Lying on the ground on the top of a mountain with a boy
she only just met. She can't find the words to respond, and
instead, stands and gazes out over the valley in silence.

JOHN (V.O.)
Had I offended her? I wasn't sure.
I was about to apologize, when...

The MOON emerges from the clouds and illuminates the valley.
There in the dirt, where Kismine had lain,

A SPARKLE catches John's eye. He sweeps away a thin layer of
dirt, revealing a **SHIMMERING SLAB**.

JOHN (V.O.)
It couldn't be...

Thunder RUMBLES in the distance. Rain starts to fall.

Kismine turns to find John looking at the shimmering earth.
She grabs him, kicking dirt over the uncovered patch.

KISMINE
We should be getting back. It's not
safe to be up this high.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Rain is POUNDING now. John and Kismine stumble in, dripping.
John starts to climb the stairs.

KISMINE
Wait. You haven't even asked me to
kiss you once. I thought boys
nowadays always did that.

John's taken by her frankness.

JOHN (V.O.)

Boys nowadays did. But I had been so distracted by what I saw... or what I thought I saw on the mountain, that all I could muster was the embarrassing truth.

JOHN

There's not a lot of that sort of thing in Hades.

Kismine melts, then offers her own confession.

KISMINE

I've never been allowed to see boys alone. Promise me you won't spend all your time here with Percy.

JOHN

I shouldn't get you in trouble.
(her face falls)
But now it's all I want to do.

His eyes find hers. Each moment, building confidence to break the rules. To lean in. To close his eyes. Slowly. Tenderly. Innocently. Awkwardly. Beautifully.

The distance between their lips vanishes. And again appears.

As they part, Kismine looks over John's shoulder, where **PERCY STANDS SILENTLY IN THE SHADOW OF THE STAIRCASE.**

She gasps, but covers well.

KISMINE

I just realized Gygsum will be making the rounds. You should go.

A cloud-nine John disappears up the stairs.
Kismine lingers - ready to accept Percy's chastising.

PERCY

Did you give him the "innocent and girlish" line?

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT - (INTERCUT)

John falls onto the bed, swooning with post-date jitters.

Through the veiled French doors, he sees a FLASH of light. Perhaps lightning. But the clap of thunder never comes. Instead he sees another flash, and our needle drops to

Kanye West's "ULTRALIGHT BEAM." Building soft, slow. Poetry.

FOYER—

Kismine transforms from a doe-eyed child into a cultivated adult. She's been playing us, or John, or both for fools.

KISMINE
I don't need a lecture, Percy.

PERCY
Don't get too attached.

KISMINE
It's just a bit of fun.

PERCY
For whom?

JOHN'S ROOM—

John reaches the window and falls dumbstruck. Light grows stronger on his face, dancing across his features.

Kanye: "Deliver us serenity / Deliver us peace / Deliver us loving / We know we need it"

JOHN
Oh my god.

FOYER—

KISMINE
Don't act like this is my fault.
This was your mistake.

PERCY
You haven't the slightest clue what
his life was like.

JOHN'S ROOM—

John's silhouette against the doors - light grows around him.

Kanye: "I'm tryna keep my faith / But I'm looking for more / Somewhere I can feel safe / And end my holy war"

John closes his eyes. Then opens them. It can't be real.

FOYER—

Kismine's eyes well with tears. Voice shaking.

KISMINE

Why did you have to bring him!? He could've been happy.

PERCY

He *is* happy. Or didn't you pay attention on your midnight tryst?

She SLAPS him, surprising both of them. She storms upstairs.

JOHN'S ROOM/BALCONY—

The doors swing open. Rain showers John as he steps out onto the balcony. Finally we rotate to see what John sees:

Muddy earth landslides down the mountain, revealing the treasure that's been buried beneath:

A DIAMOND AS BIG AS THE MOTHERF\$\$KING RITZ CARLTON HOTEL.

Kanye: "We on an ultralight beam / We on an ultralight beam / This is a God dream / This is a God dream / This is everything"

If we could hear the wind howling it would be deafening. But by now a CHOIR of a hundred voices takes us to church as the moon, the lightning, and seemingly every last spectacle of light refracts throughout the massive diamond and across every raindrop suspended in the air. Tiny prisms casting tiny auroras, and we live inside this kaleidoscope.

John laughs, amazed.

100 Voice Choir: "...Faith / ...More / ...Safe / ...War"

INT. ATRIUM – THE NEXT MORNING

A floor-to-ceiling GLASS ATRIUM attached to the kitchen.

The Washington family and John sit in silence over breakfast.

Braddock reads a newspaper. If anyone looks closely, the headline reads "U.S. POSTAL SERVICE TO PROVIDE MAIL BY AIR."

But neither John nor we are looking, because outside the atrium windows stands THE ENTIRETY OF THE DIAMOND MOUNTAIN glistening in the sober light of morning.

WORKERS shovel dirt over the treasure, exposed by the storm.

Kismine sips coffee. Mrs. Washington butters her toast. Percy scoops cereal with a golden spoon. Just another day.

MRS. WASHINGTON
John, can you pass the marmalade?

John doesn't hear her. He watches the workers. Shoveling dirt over diamond. Camouflaging the impossible.

PERCY
(getting his attention)
John. The marmalade.

John snaps out. Percy cracks a grin.

The SCREECH of a TRAIN WHISTLE PRELAPS...

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

The Italian sits by a sleeping passenger with a NEWSBOY CAP.

A **MUSTACHED MAN** enters at the front of the compartment, scans the crowd, locks eyes with The Italian. They stare at each other. Just long enough to sense mischief afoot.

Mustache walks slowly down the aisle and sits a few rows behind The Italian.

The Italian panics. His eyes land on the sleeping man's CAP.

LOUDSPEAKER
We'll be arriving in Chicago in ten minutes. Connections to New York and Washington DC on platform six.

INT./EXT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT/STATION - PLATFORM 5 - CHICAGO

The same train pulls into the station. Passengers unload.

The Italian stands to exit, wearing the NEWSBOY CAP. He walks away from the Mustached Man, who follows ominously.

INT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM 5 - CONTINUOUS

The Italian moves briskly down the platform. Mustache hot on his trail, watching the NEWSBOY CAP bob through the crowd.

Mustache pulls a KNIFE from his sleeve. Closing in. The Italian about to be mincemeat.

SHANK! Mustache plunges the knife into the man's back. People bustle by, distracted as people tend to be.

They notice nothing. Mustache embraces the man, as if to help him, to mask his public death.

As he does, the man's newsboy cap falls to the ground to reveal he's NOT THE ITALIAN, instead an innocent bystander. Mustache whips around, searching, abandoning the corpse.

A woman SCREAMS. The body now drawing eyes.

ELSEWHERE ON PLATFORM 5—

The Italian walks away from the crowd. He has REMOVED the newsboy cap, trashing it before boarding another train.

BANG!

SMASH TO:

EXT. EL DORADO - VARIOUS - DAY

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

— **THE WOODS:** John holds a smoking shotgun as a quail drops. Braddock, and Percy look on approvingly. A clean shot.

JOHN (V.O.)
A month with the Washingtons and I
was beginning to develop quite a
knack for their hobbies.

— **ROOFTOP DECK:** Percy, John, Kismine bask in the sun, reading. Skin everywhere. Mrs. Washington lathers sunblock on Percy's back. Her diamond rings swirling with greasy lotion.

JOHN (V.O.)
We spent the days apricating. Which
was, incidentally, a new word I
learned during my time with the
Washingtons. *Apricate*. Meaning 'to
bask in the sun.' A word I
previously had no use for.

— **THE GARDENS:** The trio plays CROQUET. John strikes the ball. It collides with Percy's ball, which goes flying. As Percy runs off to chase it, John and Kismine steal a brief smooch.

JOHN (V.O.)
And then there was Kismine. We
stole our moments as they came.

— **THE PATIO:** Lemonade lands in a crystal goblet. Mrs. Washington pours a round as they all play cards.

JOHN (V.O.)
 Which was hardly ever, because the
 Washingtons spent nearly every hour
 together as a family.

John and Kismine lock eyes. Their feet inch toward each other under the table. Braddock and Percy preoccupied with cards. John's foot reaches for hers. RIGHT as they touch-

BRADDOCK
 (tossing down his cards)
 Alright enough games. Senator Roach arrives soon. Clean yourselves up.

PERCY
 John can borrow a sport jacket.

John, stiff upper lip, equal parts grateful and undermined.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

John soaks amid bubbles in a massive jacuzzi tub, expertly navigating an array of perfumes and soaps around him. A spread that would've left him overwhelmed mere weeks ago.

JOHN (V.O.)
 It wasn't just their hunting and lawn sports I had adapted to so easily. It was their way of life. Of all the tastes in the world, I thought, luxury is perhaps the easiest to acquire.

FLASH: John standing before the mirror in his dingy dorm room at St. Midas, dumbfounded by his newly acquired blazer.

Out of the tub, a towel-wrapped John combs his hair in the gold-framed mirror. He wields the jewel-encrusted comb masterfully, noticing nothing out of place in his reflection.

JOHN (V.O.)
 Braddock had invited a Senator from the capital. I wasn't told why, but it was obviously important. Best behavior was expected. It wouldn't have been an issue for John Unger from Hades.

Out the window, John observes THE SENATOR stepping out of the diamond limo, Braddock greeting him out front.

INT. FOYER - DAY

John - suit, tie, best behavior - descends the staircase, stopping when he hears Braddock's voice in the next room.

BRADDOCK (O.S.)
I can't thank you enough for your
work on the State Survey
department.

INT. BRADDOCK'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS (INTERCUT)

Close on Two Large Diamonds. THEN golden scotch rains down on them, they crack, and we realize they're just two ice cubes.

Gygsum hands a whiskey to **SENATOR CLAUDIUS ROACH** (54) - round, stubby, a Napoleon's Napoleon. He examines the office:

A wall of cabinets displaying shotguns. Taxidermied hunting trophies cover every surface, eavesdropping over them.

CLAUDIUS
It wasn't easy, Mr. Washington, but
Uncle Sam should be out of your
britches as long as Coolidge holds
office.

BRADDOCK
I am ever grateful, Claudio.

CLAUDIUS
Be grateful today, but fearful of
tomorrow, Mr. Washington. Hiding
from the map is becoming quite
impossible. The administration
insists you have a contingency.

BRADDOCK
The administration? Or the senator
drinking my Macallan single malt?

CLAUDIUS
In this instance, there is no
difference between the two.

BRADDOCK
I should hope this will ease *the*
administration's trouble.

Braddock opens a DRAWSTRING POUCH sitting on the desk. Claudio softens at the shiny contents of the bag.

CLAUDIUS
Jove! I'll drink to that.

John creeps closer to the study.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)
And as for the more pressing matter-

Claudius waits for Gygsum to leave. He does not.

BRADDOCK
Gygsum it appears our guest is more
comfortable speaking privately.

GYGSUM
Anything for the guest's comfort.

As Gygsum leaves the office, a flash of movement stops him...

BEHIND A PILLAR in the foyer, John holds his breath, doing
his best to be invisible. Sweating through his suit.

Gygsum moves on.

BACK IN THE OFFICE—

BRADDOCK
There's been an escape.

CLAUDIUS
I imagined my first visit to the
property wouldn't be a social call.

BRADDOCK
I couldn't phone or telegram. Eyes
and ears are everywhere.

CLAUDIUS
Precisely why I was unsure if we
could speak in front of the staff.

BRADDOCK
We have a unique understanding with
each member under our employment.

CLAUDIUS
The escape wasn't an employee?

BRADDOCK
A hiker from Boise on vacation.
Took him two years ago.

Angle on John. Took him? Two years? What the fuck's going on?

CLAUDIUS

And now you think he'll talk.

BRADDOCK

It wasn't a particularly warm stay.

CLAUDIUS

Who's to believe him?

BRADDOCK

He may have absconded with some...
evidence.

FOYER—

John creeps toward the office. A HAND GRABS HIM. It's Percy.

PERCY

(re: suit)

I barely recognized you.

Percy ushers John into the STUDY, where Cladius swiftly pockets the pouch. Percy towers over Cladius.

CLAUDIUS

(embracing Percy)

A sycamore! A sycamore, I say. My,
you've sprouted. How are you m'boy?

PERCY

Healthy and happy, Senator Roach.

JOHN

John Unger. Pleased to meet you,
Senator.

John extends a hand to shake. Cladius skips a beat, shooting a skeptical look Braddock's way. Braddock doesn't flinch.

JOHN (V.O.)

And there it was. I noticed that
look when I first arrived at El
Dorado. I figured at some point
over the summer it would go away.

BRADDOCK

Percy's friend, here for summer.

CLAUDIUS

(shaking hands)

Oh. It's a— Well it's most, most
wonderful to meet you, John Unger.
Claudius. Cladius Roach.

EXT. GARDENS - LATER THAT DAY

Braddock and Percy give Claudius a tour. John follows behind.

JOHN (V.O.)

The look stung the same way it did
the first day at St. Midas when
Headmaster Perkins spewed out that
wretched phrase "**whoever you are.**"
What did he know - Senator Roach?
Nothing, that's what. Was Senator
Roach hunting quail every morning?
Was Senator Roach eating cereal
with a golden spoon, and taking
baths in exotic oils, and hiking
under the light of the moon on a
mountain made entirely of diamond?

Braddock, Claudius, Percy stop ahead. Admiring the *mountain*.

CLAUDIUS

And what about you John?

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

(off John's look)

What do you think?

(re: the mountain)

I was just saying what an oddly
shaped hill it is. Don't you agree?

JOHN (V.O.)

For the first time in my life I was
beginning to shed the scent of
Hades. I wasn't about to let
Senator Roach lather it back on.

John sparks. Those sparks turn to flames. Hubris ablaze.

JOHN

*"No, Senator, the shape of the
mountain doesn't appear odd to me.
That's just the cut of the diamond
I suppose."*

Beat. Holy shit. That was supposed to be in his head.
But John is changing.

PERCY

(horrified)

I think what John means to say is-

BRADDOCK

EVERYONE, QUIET.

Braddock stares at John. Unsettlingly. We wait for his retribution for John's outburst.

But then his gaze SHIFTS over John's shoulder, staring directly in to the woods - at what we don't yet know. But it's fucking terrifying.

PERCY
Father-

Braddock CLAPS his hand over Percy's mouth, and continues to stare at something faceless in the woods about to break free.

HUMMM. And then we understand Braddock isn't staring. He's listening. A distant hum grows louder, and though John may not be familiar with the sound, the rest of us sure are.

A **SINGLE PROPELLER PLANE** breaks through the clouds. For a moment, John is in awe of the spectacle. *The future in the heavens above. Man among the gods.*

BOOM BOOM. The bellow of an ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN rocks the scene and suddenly smoke trails from the plane, now descending to El Dorado. Braddock and the others head in its direction.

EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

As Braddock and the others emerge from the woods, the PILOT drags himself from smoking rubble, coughing, bleeding.

BRADDOCK
Who are you? Who sent you?
(the Pilot groans)
Speak, man!

Gygsum and two Servants appear, and drag the man to his feet.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
(shaking him)
Tell me who sent you here!

He passes out. Braddock releases him, then spots something in the burning wreckage that stops his breath.

There in the flames, painted on the airplane's tail are RED and WHITE STRIPES. A US government plane.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
Gygsum, see this man is given the attention he needs. Send Kismine and Mrs. Washington to the bunker.

Gygsum and servants drag the man away.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

Senator, I find it mighty
convenient that on the day of your
arrival we're graced with visitors
from a government air fleet.

CLAUDIUS

I assure you, sir, I have nothing-

BRADDOCK

Your assurances don't concern me.
We'll know in time. Quickly now...

EXT. DIAMOND MOUNTAIN - BASE - DUSK

Braddock leads them to the base of the Mountain, where he removes a veil of camouflage, revealing an IRON DOOR.

CLAUDIUS

Mr. Washington! Where are you
taking us?

BRADDOCK

The contingency plan.

INT. BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

Braddock, Cladius, Percy, John pour inside a spectacular room. Plush couches, beds, and a small kitchenette complete with just enough appliances to ride out a small apocalypse.

A LARGE FISH TANK along one end of the wall.

But hardly anyone notices the appliances or the fish because the entire room is bathed in a **NEON GREEN GLOW**. Lining the walls are translucent cylinders filled with liquid radiating that hue of green belonging to the future.

CLAUDIUS

What is this?

BRADDOCK

Radium.

CLAUDIUS

What on Earth-

BRADDOCK

A French chemist won the Nobel
Prize at the turn of the century
for isolating the element from
uranium.

(MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
 The first synthetic radioactive element. Immediately we saw potential for cancer treatment.

John face to face with the radium. Features ripple with neon.

FLASH: The same NEON GREEN John saw on Percy's WATCH.

JOHN
 It emits the light on its own?

BRADDOCK
 There was a brief moment when we thought we could give Edison a run for his money.

JOHN
 What happened?

PERCY
 You may want to back up.

BRADDOCK
 We've identified the most stable isotope and taken precautions with storage methods, but the element is by design... hazardous.

JOHN
 (lost)
 It's beautiful.

PERCY
 There's a reason it cures cancer. Radium deposits in your bones, your teeth, your marrow. It sits there and eats you from the inside out. *It saves you by killing you.*

CLAUDIUS
 Suicide? How on EARTH is this a contingency plan?

BRADDOCK
 Don't be absurd, Cladius.

Braddock holds up the **KEY** hanging around his neck, gesturing to a **PANEL IN THE WALL** alongside the radium cylinders.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
 Should the situation become... *unsalvageable*, the kill switch is activated by this key.
 (MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

The radium would compromise the structural integrity of the diamond. The mountain would cease to exist as we know it.

(then)

The bunker's equipped with enough food, water, and bare necessities until the damage is contained.

Claudius gazes over the room, landing on the FISH TANK.

CLAUDIUS

A bit more than the "bare necessities," don't you think.

BRADDOCK

It's important to have something to care for, Claudio. Otherwise life quickly becomes quite meaningless.

The bunker door opens and an unraveling Mrs. Washington spills in, sneering at the room. She beelines to the bar cart. Kismine in tow.

MRS. WASHINGTON

This green is ghastly. It upsets my nerves.

(then)

Are they coming for us, Braddock?

BRADDOCK

We don't know...

PERCY

Christ, will someone tell me what's going on?

The Washingtons and Claudio dive into argument, but we lose them and stay with John - mesmerized by the green, the room.

A delicious needle drop. Something like molasses. A sweet, molasses lullaby. Ella Fitzgerald's "ROUND MIDNIGHT" will do.

JOHN (V.O.)

So this is where billionaires spend the end of the world.

Washington WRISTWATCHES glow green in unison. A family thing.

Distorted reflections dance over steel appliances. Fish swim in neon. A GLOBE sits on a bookshelf - John spins the world around. He stares at an AMBER PAPER WEIGHT beside it.

JOHN (V.O.)
 At St. Midas' I took a geology
 course where we learned about
amber. How sometimes bugs got stuck
 in the resin, which then hardened
 and set forever.

Kismine fans herself. At first a vaudevillian act, playing the damsel in distress. But locking eyes with John, her guard drops. Her fan slows. Something real locks in. Genuine fear.

JOHN (V.O.)
 That's suddenly how it felt. Like
 we were bugs trapped in resin.
 Watching the beauty around us
 harden into something enchanting.
 Something petrified.

Tensions build under Ella's molasses lullaby. John observes them all. A fly on the (resin) wall. Watching father and son shouting. Mother drinking. Daughter wilting.

Jarringly, suddenly, the music cuts out and we DROP into the argument. Like whiplash. And now we're floating through the Washingtons in crisis mode. *The cracks beginning to show.*

PERCY
 An escape!?

KISMINE
 What's happened? Did they find him?

MRS. WASHINGTON
 We have men on him. They will soon.

PERCY
 How'd he escape the pit?

BRADDOCK
 (biting, patronizing)
 Yes how did he escape the pit?

Mrs. Washington responds with an icy stare. Then to Percy...

MRS. WASHINGTON
 One of the men spoke Italian.

PERCY
 (that's not a fucking
 explanation)
 And...?

MRS. WASHINGTON
 Kismine wanted to learn.

KISMINE
Surely you're not blaming me.

MRS. WASHINGTON
No one's blaming anyone, dear,
don't be dramatic.

KISMINE
Well it feels as though-

MRS. WASHINGTON
So we arranged lessons, and let him
out now and again.

BRADDOCK
You. You arranged lessons.

MRS. WASHINGTON
(to Kismine)
Dear, I misspoke, it appears we are
blaming-

BRADDOCK
You think this is funny?

MRS. WASHINGTON
For God sakes. The girl has a
coming out party next year. How do
you think it reflects on us if she
hasn't the slightest ounce of
culture?

BRADDOCK
Culture? Look where culture got us.

JOHN
Surely you can't blame her for
wanting to learn?

A quick beat. Kismine glows - grateful for John coming to her defense. But quickly backpedals to calm Braddock's temper.

KISMINE
Father's right, I've made a mess.

PERCY
Why wouldn't you tell me!?

BRADDOCK
You know we can't risk public
communication.

PERCY
A courier then. Something?

BRADDOCK

No need to trouble you at school.

MRS. WASHINGTON

What would you have done, darling?

JOHN

We saw him.

BRADDOCK

You what?

PERCY

John, don't be ridiculous. You
don't know what you're saying.

JOHN

We saw him! At the train station in
Fish. We ran into a man who was
frantic and bloody. He said
something in a different language.
Italian maybe.

Beat. That marinates. Braddock stews - both impressed by
John's attention to detail, and infuriated by his words.

BRADDOCK

(looking for verification)

Percy?

PERCY

(small, reluctant)

Well we did see a man-

BRADDOCK

(fury simmering)

You didn't think to stop him!?

PERCY

How should I have known!?

Gygsum enters the bunker.

GYGSUM

Sir-

BRADDOCK

Not now, Gygsum.

GYGSUM

But sir, it's-

BRADDOCK
(to Percy)
Where was he going?

PERCY
He didn't exactly stop to chat.

CLAUDIUS
East or West? Which direction?

JOHN
He boarded an eastbound train.

GYGSUM
Sir-

Braddock ROARS, grabbing the nearest object, which in this case happens to be a **MEAT FORK** on the kitchen counter, and HURLS it at Gygsum, skewering his shoulder.

Gygsum pauses. THEN-- like the impeccably trained butler he is, calmly removes the meat fork from his bleeding shoulder.

GYGSUM (CONT'D)
No new aeroplanes inbound. None expected. It appears our new guest belongs to the U.S. Postal Service - delivery routes by sky, I'm afraid.

The others freeze, overcome by an overwhelming, slack-jawed sense of *what the fuck?* Braddock eerily recalibrates himself.

BRADDOCK
Apologies, Gygsum. I forgot myself.
My temper got the best of me.

GYGSUM
(re: bloody meat fork)
I'll have this rinsed and sanitized by morning. In the meantime I'll replace it with the bronze one from the guest wing.

He turns and is gone.

BRADDOCK
(calm, cool, cautionary)
Senator. You've seen your contingency. I think it's time you return to the capital. See that we find no more aviators in our midst.

Claudius nods, eager to keep his shoulder free of meat forks.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

Come with me.
(Percy starts after)
Not you. **John**.

John, terrified but thrilled, follows Braddock out of the bunker. Percy lingers, seething with bitterness.

EXT. THE PIT - EL DORADO - DUSK

Braddock and John trek through darkness by the light of a lantern. The dim glow of the chateau fades into the distance. Uneasiness brews as we melt further away from humanity.

They stop. An EXPANSIVE DIRT STRETCH lies ahead where servants stand guard in a circle, armed with shotguns.

BRADDOCK

God blesses each of us with talents, John. Wouldn't you say it's our responsibility to use those talents to help others?

JOHN

I should think so.

BRADDOCK

(fatherly)
You're a bright young man. From what Percy tells me, you were quite cunning at school. I'm having a problem. I'm hoping you can help.

JOHN

I'll do anything I can, sir.

BRADDOCK

Good. Do that. Go on then.
(re: guards)
Don't mind them. Only a precaution.

John walks toward the guards, fueled by Braddock's trust.

JOHN (V.O.)

It was the first time I felt *seen*. Not just by Braddock. But by any adult. On one hand, I had just watched the man skewer his employee like a kebab. But I couldn't help feel that I was different. Special. An answer to a problem.

As he advances, John sees the guards are standing around a **MASSIVE PIT** the circumference of a merry-go-round. Iron bars covering the top of it. Beneath them is blackness.

Braddock steps on a button in the ground and instantly the pit bakes under SHARP FLUORESCENT LIGHT.

John's stomach *churns* at the sight.

JOHN
Oh my god.

TWO DOZEN MEN OCCUPY THE PIT. Most of them dressed in aviator garb. Unshaven, reeking souls reduced to caged animals. They shout up at John: desperate voices, piling over one another.

AVIATORS
Hey kid, throw us a rope.../
How's the air up there.../
Come down to hell, boy.../

Braddock joins John at the edge of the pit.

BRADDOCK
These are some of the adventurous mariners who had the misfortune to discover El Dorado over the years.
(then, to the men below:)
How's our new guest?

Our Pilot trembles in silence. As the shock wears off, it's replaced by this new nightmare.

AVIATORS
Misfortune my ass.../
A prison you're running here...

BRADDOCK
As you can see, they're a raucous bunch. It's figuring out what to do with them that's getting me.

JOHN
I don't understand why you need me.

AVIATORS
To slit your throat.../
He'll take you too...

BRADDOCK
(to Aviators)
That's quite enough, lads. Now I've told you the situation. I don't want you here.
(MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

I wish to heaven I'd never seen you. That you'd never seen our crown jewel. But your own curiosity got you here. Any time that you can think of a way out which protects me and my interests, I'll be glad to consider it.

One of the aviators, MARCUS (30s), moves forward.

MARCUS

Let me ask you a question. You pretend to be a fair-minded man?

BRADDOCK

How could a man in my position possibly be fair-minded toward you?

MARCUS

Fine then. We've argued this out before, and you're not fair-minded-

Marcus begins to crack. Hysteria and despair oozing out.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

But you are *human*. You must be able to put yourself in our place long enough to see how- how- unnecessary-

BRADDOCK

Not to me.

MARCUS

How *cruel* then.

BRADDOCK

Cruelty doesn't exist where self-preservation is involved. You're a soldier. You know that.

MARCUS

Fine, then how stupid-

BRADDOCK

There. I grant you that. But try to think of an alternative. I'd have any of you painlessly executed if you wish. I've offered to have your wives, sweethearts, children, and mothers kidnapped and brought here. I'll enlarge your pit and feed and clothe you the rest of your lives.

(MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

If there were some method of inducing permanent amnesia I'd have all of you operated on and released immediately. But that's as far as my ideas go. So tell me, gentlemen, what am I supposed to do?

Marcus on the verge of tears, pleading for his life back.

MARCUS

Trust us. We won't rat.

A beat. For a moment, we think he might consider this option.

BRADDOCK

You don't proffer that suggestion seriously. I *did* trust you. I took one of you out to teach my daughter Italian, and last month he got away. Ran the moment he could.

A burst of whoops and hollers from the men below.

AVIATORS

Thank God.../
We're saved.../
I'll teach your daughter Chinese.

BRADDOCK

Such a shame that he was stabbed dead in the Chicago train station.

The whooping dies. Marcus climbs the ladder on the side of the pit till he reaches the bars at the top.

MARCUS

(his final plea)

She's eight years old. June 25th. I've been counting the days. Today's June 25, yes? That's when my little girl turns eight. She hasn't seen her father in nine months. Can you fathom it? Not holding your baby girl for nine months? Please. Please. Let me go.

Braddock crouches by the bars. His face shifts. Real empathy.

BRADDOCK

What's her name?

MARCUS

Janie.

BRADDOCK

Janie.

MARCUS

(you understand)

Yes.

BRADDOCK

(leaning in, whispering)

If you worried so much about caring
for Janie back home, you'd never
have left her to take up aviation.

(standing to leave)

June 25th was a week ago.

Braddock turns to John.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

As you can see, we have quite the
conundrum on our hands. Think on
it, will you, boy?

The Aviators' shouts and curses chase Braddock, walking away.
Gygsum joins him to deliver news:

GYGSUM

Sir, our man failed at the train
station. Hit a civilian instead.

BRADDOCK

Double the sentry watch. Load the
guns. We must be prepared.

Braddock notices Gygsum still bleeding from the shoulder.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

And get that looked at.

John lingers at the edge of the pit. Frozen. Staring down. He
locks eyes with Marcus - finally drained of hope.

QUICK FLASH: HUNDREDS OF FISH POURING OVER THE WATERFALL

QUICK FLASH: GEORGE WASHINGTON'S PORTRAIT LOOMING IN DARKNESS

EXT. CHATEAU - FRONT STEPS - LATER

JOHN'S EYES replace GW's eyes. He staggers through the night.
The reality of what he saw sinking in. He collapses on the
steps, nauseous, fighting to breathe. Insides revolting.

JOHN (V.O.)

Every year on Christmas, my mother made a pork roast. She baked it on low heat over hours to make it extra soft. *Fall-off-the-bone tender*, she called it. I couldn't stop thinking about the men. Baking slowly under the fluorescents like a pork loin until they were soft enough to just...fall off the bone.

SHARP FLASH: Fluorescent lights. Iron bars. Agony.

INT. KISMINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

THEN-- Candlelight. Smooth skin. Tranquility.

Kismine sits at her vanity, removing makeup. Something saddens her, but she refuses to cry.

She adjusts the mirror, revealing John standing at her door.

JOHN

Did you know?

KISMINE

John, thank God! Did he hurt you?

JOHN

Did you know?

KISMINE

What are you talking about?

JOHN

Did you know that, while you're daydreaming in fields and playing croquet and sipping lemonade on the terrace, half a mile away a dozen men are rotting in the ground?

(no response)

They're people, Kismine! They're people with families. With lives. How can you be a part of that?

KISMINE

It's more complicated than that.

JOHN

Why? Because of a diamond? A rock?

KISMINE

Because I don't have a choice!

Beat.

KISMINE (CONT'D)

You see how they look at me. How they treat me. How they dismiss and condescend my every thought. As a daydream. A fantasy. I'm a daughter of Washingtons. I'm expected to dress in pretty dresses, drape myself in pretty jewels, speak in pretty tones, smile pretty smiles, think pretty thoughts, dream pretty dreams, and bite my pretty little tongue. And a year from now, when they present me at court, I'll be expected to make a pretty match to preserve the stability of the sterling Washington name. I am a show pony trapped in a pretty stable. So don't scold me for being "a part of" anything. The only thing I'm guilty of is being the only Washington with a conscience.

Holy shit. John softens. Her guard is still up. A soldier.

JOHN

I had no idea you felt that way.

KISMINE

It's why I lose myself in fiction. In anything that transports me even the tiniest distance from this place. Why I lost myself in you. All summer, you've been trying so hard to fit in here. And the thing that makes you so wonderful, John, is that you don't. You never will.

John wilts inside. The life drained from his heart.

Kismine returns to her vanity. Removing the rest of her makeup. John goes. When she sees he's gone, then she cries.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John lies in bed awake, staring up. Staring for an eternity.

JOHN (V.O.)

You can't pick your family. It was as true for her as it was for me. For the first time, I thought of Hades.

(MORE)

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I thought of Hades with some
fondness. I thought of it the way
people think about *home*.

John BOLTS up and across the room to a desk, where pen and blank paper sit. Shaming him. He begins to write.

JOHN (V.O.)
Dear Mother and Father,
I'm ashamed to inform you I have
not been at St. Midas' this summer-

A slow fade to black - watching John write in a very small corner of a very large room.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - MORNING

A soft HISS brings us back and we fade in on
Percy's face, softer than we've ever seen it. He studies
something off screen for some time. Languish in his eyes,
Watching John asleep at the desk across the room.

The HISS continues. Percy grins. And finally we see why...

A SPARK climbs down the wick of a SMALL STICK OF DYNAMITE,
sitting mere feet from John. About to blow him apart. The
spark reaches the end of the wick and SNAP, CRACKLE, POP! We
realize the dynamite was only a FIREWORK.

John startles awake, falling out of his chair, and scurrying
away from the attack. Percy giggles. It's the simple things.

PERCY
Good, you're up.

JOHN
Jesus!

PERCY
Jolly Independence Day.

Percy's smile fades as he regards JOHN'S LETTER on the desk.

JOHN
I wasn't going to say anything
about- here. About the- ... I only
wanted to let them know I'm okay.
(then)
And about last night, I didn't mean
to undermine you with your father.

Beat. A rare tenderness from Percy.

PERCY

You asked so many questions. You never asked why I brought you here.

(then)

Sometimes I forget the weight of this place is hard to bear. It's not really fair that I thrust that on you without asking, is it. If it's too heavy I won't take offense if you'd like to leave. We can pick up in the fall back at St. Midas.

A cloud of gunpowder hangs in the air between them.

John hesitates. Kismine's words last night echo in his head: *You've been trying so hard to fit in here... You never will.* He looks as though he's about to accept Percy's offer.

PERCY (CONT'D)

But before you decide, you should know... it's a rare thing when you recognize your own kind. I brought you here because you know what it is to sacrifice. To give up a part of yourself for something higher. You have perspective, John Unger from Hades. Perspective is scarce.

(then)

If you do go, take a little of El Dorado with you.

Percy removes his WATCH, placing it in front of John.

PERCY (CONT'D)

It's a family thing.

Percy starts to leave. John stares at the watch.

JOHN (V.O.)

Percy was right. This brave new world was full of color. Trying to see it in black and white was short sighted. And not how great men become great.

At the threshold, Percy's stopped by the SOUND OF PAPER RIPPING. Turning to find John - TEARING UP THE LETTER, leaving it in the trash.

PERCY

(glowing)

Let's remember how to have some fun-

EXT. LAWN - AFTERNOON

A DRUM thumps. A HORN SECTION blares. Something festive, though we don't recognize it yet...

We live in a PATRIOTIC PASTEL KALEIDOSCOPE. Muted reds, whites, and blues swirl together. Willy Wonka spends the Fourth here with the Easter Bunny.

A HEAVILY JEWELLED hand hovers over the colors - or what we now see is a crystal bowl full of SALTWATER TAFFY.

The hand of Mrs. Washington, sitting aside Braddock, reclined on lawn chairs, dressed head-to-toe in chic Americana.

A beat on these American Royals. They fucking apricate in their empire. Servants on the HORNS and DRUM behind them.

THEN-- the taffy bowl begins to VIBRATE, just as we recognize the festive ditty as

**"BAD BLOOD" by that All-American Disciple Taylor Swift.
No lyrics. All horns and snare drum, baby. Oh yeah.**

Those vibrations turn into an earsplitting-

EXT. FIELDS / LIMO CAR - SAME TIME - (INTERCUT)

VROOM, VROOM!

TWO DIAMOND-ENCRUSTED LIMO CARS tear through the fields of El Dorado. American flags affixed to both. Ah, patriotism!

John at the wheel of one, wearing his new WASHINGTON WATCH. Percy driving the other with Kismine riding shotgun.

A 1920s BILLIONAIRE NASCAR FIASCO: the cars launch over a hill. Swerving dangerously. Testosterone fun and games.

John cuts Percy off.

PERCY
That all you got, John Unger?

INTERCUT WITH BRADDOCK & MRS. WASHINGTON—

Their conversation interrupted by SHARP FLASHES to the race.

BRADDOCK
He's certainly controllable.

Percy FLOORS the gas from behind John. His limo BUMPING the rear end of John's. A love tap. Kismine grows uneasy.

MRS. WASHINGTON
And what of his pedigree?

John lurches forward, bumped HARDER from behind.

BRADDOCK
People don't know who they don't
know. We can give him a story.

Percy RAMS his car again into John's. This game of Nascar suddenly feeling more Mad Max.

KISMINE
That's enough, Percy.

John stomps pedal to the metal to put distance between them.

PERCY
What's a matter? Not like the
ending to your love stories?

John, hauling bonafide ass now, spots a SHARP CURVE up ahead. Beyond it, ROCKS. He needs to slow down, but there's no time.

The Horns and Drum thumping.

MRS. WASHINGTON
Very well. Let's proceed.

John races around the CURVE. His car TILTS onto two wheels.

Percy LOCKS IN. Full speed ahead. He's going to ram the exposed underbelly of John's car, WHEN--

Kismine YANKS the steering wheel, forcing Percy to SLAM on the brakes, as they SPIN OUT.

John leans hard into the turn to LAND on all four wheels. The two cars come to a stop. Kismine rushes to John's car.

KISMINE
John! Are you okay? Are you hurt?

John emerges, shaken but fine. Kismine wraps him in her arms.

KISMINE (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, John. I'm sorry, I-

JOHN
I'm alright. It's okay.

As she holds him, it's clear she's not just talking about the cars.

That her apologies extend to her comments the night before, and more troublingly, what lies ahead. That, for better or worse, she now cares deeply for John.

PERCY
 (cheery, psycho)
 Capital racing, John! A worthy competitor any time.
 (re: cars)
 Come now, let's get these old horses back to the stable.

INT. FOYER - CHATEAU - EVENING

John, Percy, Kismine slink in after their day. Percy and Kismine start up the stairs. John lingers, drained, WHEN--

BRADDOCK (O.S.)
 John.

He stops. Chilled by the voice. Kismine, Percy have disappeared upstairs. His buffers gone. John inches toward-

INT. BRADDOCK'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Braddock gazes into the fire, glass in hand. Shadows and scotch sedate him. When John appears behind him, he hardly breaks his gaze from the flames.

JOHN
 Mr. Washington?

BRADDOCK
 Braddock. It's Braddock by now.
 You've been here long enough,
 wouldn't you say?

JOHN
 Braddock.

BRADDOCK
 You a religious man, John?

JOHN
 We went to church.

BRADDOCK
 Do you know why God's disciples sacrificed animals?
 (John doesn't respond)
 Most people think it was to cleanse their sins, but that's not it.
 (MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
They did it because they had to.
For Him to save them - as only He
could - it was worth the most
precious gift given in His honor -
life.

(beat)
You know I must protect them.

John remains skeptical. Which *them*?

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
The diamonds. You know it all must
remain a secret.

JOHN
I'm not sure it's my place to say.

Braddock finally turns, meeting John's gaze.

BRADDOCK
What you saw last night. What you
see every day here in El Dorado. I
think you'd agree it's a unique
place. And a unique place requires
unique rules. Rules that, if
necessary, break the laws of men.

BRADDOCK'S MONOLOGUE CONTINUES UNDER AS WE INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. WASHINGTON DC - DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE - DUSK (INTERCUT)

THE ITALIAN - ruined by his trek across the nation - stumbles
up the steps of a building labeled "DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE."

He pauses to absorb the majesty of the MALL. Fireworks
EXPLODE overhead, showering the sky in patriotic hues.

BRADDOCK (O.S.)
But here, we cannot be men, John.
Because men are weak. Men succumb
to power. Greed. Emotion. And so we
have no choice. We must not be men
here, but **patriots**.

The Italian holds the BUNDLE close and barges inside.

INT. D.C. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A door reading "US ATTORNEY GENERAL" opens to reveal the MAN
at his desk. The Italian stumbles in - begging for help.

BRADDOCK (O.S.)

By God's will, we built this country. God chose the Washingtons to birth this nation. He chose us again with El Dorado.

A bothered Attorney General calls for his guards, who drag the Italian toward the door.

BRADDOCK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And with the help of God, we have been able to protect it from its own undoing. To carry the burden on the shoulders of the Washington family of the secret that would change the world.

As he's being dragged out, The Italian drops the BUNDLE from his grasp, and the FIST-SIZED DIAMOND rolls out.

BRADDOCK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If the government discovers El Dorado, John... it is the end.

JOHN (O.S.)

Of what?

The AG and Guards see the diamond, gaping in disbelief...

SLAM BACK TO:

INT. BRADDOCK'S STUDY

Braddock gazes at John across the fire-lit study. Duty, Prestige, Glory ignite in his eyes. A man consumed by legacy.

BRADDOCK

Everything. They will seize it all. Repossess the land to prevent a mad rush from the east.

JOHN

And if they fail?

BRADDOCK

WHEN they fail... There isn't enough gold in the world to offset the value of El Dorado. The market will collapse. Economies will disintegrate. Society will crumble.

JOHN

You can't let them go. Those men.

Braddock nods. The weight of his burden slightly lighter.

BRADDOCK

We have a deal with God, John. God forgives all sins. Even the ones we can't forgive in ourselves. Which is why we must sacrifice even the most precious of our ideals to protect what He has given us. If we are to live in a society where all men are free, then some of us cannot be. *That is patriotism.*

John feels the burden now. Processing. Making peace with it.

Braddock closes his eyes, gripping his CRUCIFIX. His other hand TIGHTENS around the scotch. His lips begin to TWITCH.

JOHN (V.O.)

At first, I thought he meant the men in the pit - those unable to be free. But as he sat there...

No. Not twitching. PRAYING. Conversing with their maker.

JOHN (V.O.)

...it became clear that he meant he himself - *Braddock* - was not free. That the whole Washington family was held captive by their secret.

Braddock's GRIP on the glass tightens. Ice cubes vibrating.

JOHN (V.O.)

...and that the cost of keeping it was taking its toll.

THE GLASS SHATTERS in Braddock's hands, drawing blood.

BRADDOCK

Damn clumsy old man!

JOHN

Here, let me help.

John begins picking up glass. Braddock eases in:

BRADDOCK

Kismine is coming of age next fall. As is customary for young people in our circles, she's to be presented at court. But as I see it, coming out parties are a noisy business. Fanfare, press.

(MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
And even when it's all said and done, a proper pairing is rarely achieved. You never really know who you can trust.

At that 'trust' - the hairs on John's neck stand on end. He suddenly feels his proximity to a beast.

JOHN
(diffusing)
She's very outgoing, I'm sure she'll excel.

BRADDOCK
All the same, I should think it cleaner if the whole thing were orchestrated *out of the public eye.*
(then)
You and Kismine have become quite close over the past few months.

BEAT. John holds a handful of glass shards. Braddock's blood drips onto the floor.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
You might consider the *future* of that closeness... if you really want to help.

JOHN
(re: blood)
I should get a bandage for that.

BRADDOCK
(on John's way out)
I knew you'd understand, John.

EXT. GARDENS - NIGHT

SPARKLERS dance through the rose gardens. Trails of light ghost across petals and thorns. Kismine and Percy chase each other with the flaming wands - children once again. John halfheartedly joins, lost in thought.

JOHN (V.O.)
A week ago, I would've felt flattered if Braddock offered me a spot in the family. But now I knew it wasn't an offer. It was a trap.

A SPARKLER flashes before John's eyes. Little flickers of freedom - John's freedom - spark, fade, and die in moments.

JOHN (V.O.)

Braddock knew that Kismine wouldn't stand to be a prize up for auction. Which meant I had to lie. If she ever knew about this conversation, she'd want nothing to do with me. And I would become expendable.

Mrs. Washington and Braddock - hand now bandaged - emerge to watch their children play. Braddock locks eyes with John.

JOHN (V.O.)

I was an animal. Trapped in paradise.

John feigns a smile back - his best defense.

EXT. ROOFTOP - ANOTHER DAY

Mrs. Washington *apricates* on the roof. Ornate, bejeweled sun glasses consume her face. Like some expensive big-eyed bug.

A MOSQUITO lands on her arm. It begins to suck her blood.

JOHN (V.O.)

I was always good at doing the math. But this time the math wasn't hard. Anything less than full cooperation with the Washingtons and I'd end up in that pit.

Braddock stands at the railing of the roof, staring down at the lawn below where Percy and John play croquet.

JOHN (V.O.)

I needed a way out. I needed to run. The problem was...

The MOSQUITO continues to suck her blood, WHEN-- Mrs. Washington flexes her bicep, TRAPPING the mosquito's stinger in her muscle. Blood continues to flow, unable to pull away, the mosquito balloons with blood until it POPS on Mrs. Washington's arm. She smiles, satisfied.

ON THE LAWN BELOW—

John steals a glance at the roof. Braddock stares back.

JOHN (V.O.)

...they were always watching.

EXT. THE GROVE - ANOTHER MORNING

John, Kismine lay in the grass exchanging kisses. Kismine lost in a daydream. John floats a world away with each kiss.

JOHN

Last night I had a dream. It's our wedding day. Everyone we know is there. Even my parents, all the way from Hades. The string quartet begins to play, and the pastor begins to read, and everyone begins to weep. Even your father. Then I notice neither of us is actually there. I've never had a dream I don't appear in. But here I am, watching a church full of folks who turned up for us and we're nowhere to be found. And the strangest thing is, no one seems to notice. The quartet just keeps playing, the pastor keeps reading, the guests keep weeping...

A beat.

KISMINE

I don't think I would care if we disappeared. So long as we did it together.

(then)

I think I'm sure I love you.

JOHN

Let's go.

(off her look)

I'm serious. Let's do it. Let's go.

KISMINE

It was only a dream, John.

She is quiet.

JOHN

I *am* sure, Kismine. I *do* love you. And I hate seeing you like this.

KISMINE

I can't leave them.

JOHN

The other night you said you feel trapped. This is a chance to escape all of that. Don't you want that?

KISMINE

Family is not something I want to
escape, John.

JOHN

So instead you're just going to sit
here while they turn you into one
of them? You're just going to do
nothing?

KISMINE

(loaded)

You don't know what I've done.

JOHN

From the diamonds around your neck,
I'm guessing it wasn't so radical.

That stings. She lashes out, quick and hard.

KISMINE

I won't apologize for loving them.
Though I wouldn't expect *you* to
understand. GOD, WHY CAN'T YOU BE
MORE LIKE THE **OTHERS**!?

She tries to swallow the words, but it's too late. They're
out - hanging in the air. Phantoms. Omens.

JOHN (V.O.)

**I suppose there's a moment when it
all catches up to you.**

JOHN

Others? You've had others here?

JOHN (V.O.)

**When the shiny new toy loses its
luster and you have to ask yourself
was it worth it...**

JOHN

Isn't your father worried they'd
talk outside? Kismine?

(no answer)

If you love me, tell me the truth.

JOHN (V.O.)

What you sacrificed along the way.

KISMINE

(tears streaming)

Father doesn't take any chances.

JOHN

But no one our age was in the pit-

FLASH: Fluorescent lights and iron bars

FLASH: Fish cascading over the waterfall

FLASH: Anti Aircraft Guns and Twitching Half-Dead Quail

FLASH: George Washington's portrait and Prisoners in the Pit

FLASHES consume John, walls closing in, finally understanding

HE'S NOT MAKING IT OUT OF EL DORADO ALIVE.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You killed them? Your friends?!

KISMINE

They were going to run.

JOHN

(shaking)

You kept bringing them!?

KISMINE

I didn't. I never did. It was
always Percy. He needed them.

JOHN

You asked me to spend time with
you. To kiss you. When all the
while you knew what I was.

KISMINE

They came and had such a good time.
They'd never been so happy. You
should've seen them.

JOHN

A corpse. A CORPSE. HOW DOES IT
FEEL TO LOVE A CORPSE.

Kismine GRABS him by the jaw to silence him. It's as
unfamiliar to her as it is shocking to us.

KISMINE

You need to stop. Listen to me. If
you panic, I can't help you. If you
run, I can't help you. If you do
anything other than carry on as if
you know nothing, I cannot help
you. But if you trust me. If you do
what I say... I will get you out of
here alive.

JOHN (V.O.)

I should've run.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE WASHINGTON - somehow tired, less brilliant - gazes down from his portrait. John sits with the Washingtons at a silent dinner. Blood pounding in his ears. Losing it.

PERCY
Capital steak, mother.

Braddock notices John isn't touching his food.

BRADDOCK
Apparently not everyone thinks so.
Not hungry, son?

JOHN (V.O.)
"Son"

JOHN
The steak's very good, Mrs.
Washington. Just feeling a bit ill.
I think I'll turn in.

MRS. WASHINGTON
Poor dear! I'll have Gygsum send up
some ginger ale.

He folds his napkin and rises to leave, but is stopped when:

BRADDOCK
Unless you're feeling too like a
corpse.

Fuck. John's blood freezes. He finds Kismine's gaze. Did she say something? Percy won't make eye contact. FUCK FUCK FUCK.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
I was on my morning hunt and heard
the strangest shouting in the
woods. *Corpse* this and *corpse* that.

With each "corpse," Braddock SKEWERS a piece of his steak.
John grows dizzy. Kismine attempts to rescue him:

KISMINE
Oh, that silly game? I used to play
with my tutors. Shouting ridiculous
things at the top of your lungs
trying not to draw attention. I was
teaching John. It works better in
public, I suppose.

BRADDOCK
Sounds like a dangerous game.

MRS. WASHINGTON

(to John)

Dear, you look positively faint. Go lie down and rest.

As Braddock PUNCTURES another piece of meat, we follow John.

INTO THE FOYER—

John, head spinning, the walls of luxury closing in. Stumbles up the stairs. Losing feeling. His head and body grow NUMB.

INTO HIS ROOM—

His legs give out. He collapses onto the bed. He lies there, petrified, staring up at the canopy.

We watch him panic. Then calm himself down. Then relax. THEN--

CLAP! A CHLOROFORM CLOTH COMES DOWN OVER HIS MOUTH. JOHN THRASHES AND FLOUNDERS.

FLASH: TROUT FIGHTING THE CURRENT OF A RIVER, THRASHING, THEN ULTIMATELY SPILLING OVER THE WATERFALL

JOHN EXHALES INTO DARKNESS.

EXT. CHATEAU - NIGHT

The chateau sits beneath a starry Montana-sized sky.

SILENCE draped across every inch of the house.

The Atrium. The Front Steps. The Rooftop. The Gardens.

Mute stillness everywhere.

We sit in this for a while.

INT. MRS. WASHINGTON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Washington sits surrounded by MIRRORS - a vanity's vanity. Dripping in diamonds. She takes them off one by one in the silence and stillness of the night. Until

ACROSS EL DORADO, SIRENS BEGIN TO BLARE.

She breathes deeply, knowing this day would come.

She starts putting all of the diamonds back on. Never one to under-dress for an occasion.

INT. CHATEAU - VARIOUS - SAME TIMEKISMINES ROOM—

KISMINES wakes in a fright. Senses firing in overdrive, instinct kicking in. She bolts out of bed, and beelines to

JOHN'S ROOM—

KISMINES

John, wake up, we have to-

His bed is empty. Her mind racing. No way he could've left.

KISMINES (CONT'D)

(hopeless)

John.

HALLWAY—

She barrels down halls, panicked, calling for John, WHEN--

A DISTANT BUZZ overtakes the sirens. Coming from overhead. She needs to know what's happening...

EXT. ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Kismine bursts onto the roof, where she halts in her tracks - FEAR splashing across her face, as we rotate to see

A DOZEN PLANES descending on El Dorado. A Washington D-Day.

Kismine steels herself. Meanwhile...

INT. BRADDOCK'S STUDY - NIGHT

Percy bounds into the study where Braddock, Gygsum, Mrs. Washington, and a TEAM OF HOUSE STAFF remove guns from the cabinets. Loading them. Preparing for battle.

PERCY

How many?

GYGSUM

A dozen aeroplanes, two passengers each. Armed. Government issue.

BRADDOCK

Percy, take your mother and sister to the bunker. Gygsum, I'll meet you at the guns to launch the counter-offensive.

PERCY
I can fight, father.

MRS. WASHINGTON
(cocking shotgun)
We can all fight, Percy darling.
That's not the point.

Braddock checks to ensure Gygsum and staff are gone.

BRADDOCK
(hushed)
There must be a Washington in the
bunker at all times. Once we've
established a position against the
invaders, I'll join you and we'll
wait until the staff takes care of
the rest. Claudius will handle
things from the government end. All
will be fine.

Braddock removes the KEY hanging around his neck, handing it to Percy. Before he does, he separates the CRUCIFIX and drops it in his shirt front pocket. Not one to forsake God.

PERCY
(concerned by the gesture)
Father-

BRADDOCK
If I don't make it to the bunker.
If things take an unexpected turn.
We cannot let Her fall into the
wrong hands. You know what to do.

MRS. WASHINGTON
We will weather the storm. The
Washingtons have seen worse.

BRADDOCK
Quickly now. Collect your sister.

PERCY
(only now noticing)
Where's John?

BRADDOCK
John Unger is no Washington.

A sadness falls over Percy's face. Then sadness turns slowly to understanding. A whole mourning process in a matter of seconds. Something he's mastered by now. He exhales as-

EXT. THE PIT - NIGHT

A SHARP INHALE brings **JOHN** back to life. Adrenaline-pumping, pupil-dilating life. He quickly realizes he's in the pit. Which also means he's not alone...

Aviators spread out, craning their necks to see the action.

AVIATORS

Guards have abandoned their posts./
Probably to reinforce the defense./
Look! The kid's awake./

A frightened John backs into a wall. Men circle around him.

JOHN

HELP! SOMEBODY! GET ME OUT OF HERE!
I'M A GUEST. I'M PERCY'S-

The men chuckle. Marcus advances toward John.

MARCUS

Save your breath, kid.

JOHN

Stay back. I- I'm warning you. I'll-

MARCUS

No you won't. Who are you?

John is sucker punched by the question.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Because unless your last name is Washington, you're nothing. Blood is everything with those people.

(then, a softer approach)

Listen, kid. You're the only one who knows what's going on up there. We got one shot to bust outta here. If we fail, that madman is gonna start popping off every one of us. So we need to know if now's our chance. You may not trust me or any of these men, but we're the best chance you got. So start talking.

John is silent - weighing his options. As this happens, the SIRENS and AEROPLANES grow louder and louder and...

EXT. PROP PLANE - HIGH IN THE SKY - NIGHT

Now DEAFENING, as we fly high. The Italian rides shotgun to a PILOT CAPTAIN and identifies the El Dorado property below.

PILOT CAPTAIN (OVER RADIO)
Target identified. Circle in for a closer look. Approach with caution.

BOOM! The plane next to theirs EXPLODES, going down in flame. The Pilots open fire. It's GAME FUCKING ON for attack mode.

EXT. BATTLE GROUND/DEFENSE COMPOUND

BRADDOCK
FIRE!

BOOM BOOM! The A-Air guns roar. The Staff - now Soldiers - loading shells, firing upon their invaders. Braddock moves among them. To lead. To inspire.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
El Dorado is our home. All of ours.
Now these strangers come to rip apart our family, and ransack our lives. Are we going to let them?!

The Staff BELLOWS "NO!"

TK TK TK TK! The planes buzz the compound, spraying bullets. Bodies drop. The Staff getting their first taste of combat.

Braddock looks to Gygsum, sensing doubt in the ranks - perhaps not ready to die for El Dorado. Pulling him aside...

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
Gygsum. Gygsum, you've always been so much more than our steward. You are family. As good a Washington as I've ever known. And when we sit around our victory table, raising a glass, it'll be because our **brother** Gygsum led us to triumph. These brave souls look to you now.

GYGSUM
You're leaving, sir?

BRADDOCK
Loose ends need tying. We can't take any more chances.

Gygsum nods - reinvigorated by duty and blind hope.

GYGSUM
FIRE!

INT. CHATEAU

PERCY
KISMINE! KISMINE, WHERE ARE YOU?

Percy combs the halls of the chateau, tossing doors open left and right. He throws open the door to

JOHN'S ROOM—

No one inside. A pang as Percy stares at John's empty bed.

MRS. WASHINGTON (O.S.)
(from below)
PERCY!

Whatever feelings he may have, he buries them. Running to the
FOYER—

Shuffling downstairs to Mrs. Washington - shotgun on hip.

PERCY
She's nowhere.

TK TK TK. Machine gunfire shatters the foyer windows. Percy ducks beneath the marble bannister as glass rains down.

MRS. WASHINGTON
She knows the protocol. We'll meet
at the bunker. We can't stay here.

EXT. THE SKY

Shots COLLIDE with a fighter's tail, igniting in flames.

The PILOT abandons ship, barreling out of the open cockpit.

We follow him over the edge, off the wing, and into freefall.
Falling with him. Plummeting toward paradise.

His PARACHUTE OPENS, but he's flailing. Winds whipping him in every direction. Stabilizing the chute just as he reaches the

CHATEAU—

Where Mrs. Washington and Percy burst out the front doors, and spot the Pilot fast incoming.

In one swift movement, Mrs. Washington SWINGS the shotgun to her shoulder, plants herself, and FIRES!

RED brain splatters on WHITE parachute against BLUE sky.

A beat. Percy gapes at his mother. The Pilot's corpse falls.

MRS. WASHINGTON
I abhor violence. Really I do.

She treads on. *We never really know our parents.*

EXT. THE PIT

The men frantically pry dirt from the pit wall. John working with them, seeing their slow progress, and doing the math...

JOHN
We're not going to make it.

MARCUS
Hang in there kid. We gotta keep-

BAM! MARCUS' HEAD EXPLODES. John lets out a cry and falls to the ground, looking for cover.

Braddock stands at the top of the pit, smoking shotgun in hand, picking off the men below. Fish in a barrel.

With each bang, a new corpse.

BRADDOCK
I tried to be merciful. (BANG)
Compassionate. (BANG) I offered to give you everything you possibly need. Each. Of. You. (BANG, BANG, BANG) And this is how you thank me.

JOHN
Braddock, stop!

BRADDOCK
John Unger from Hades. How you like it down there? Remind you of home?

JOHN
Braddock, I didn't do any of this. These men. They aren't to blame.

BRADDOCK
Oh, but they are. Don't you see, John?

(MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
 One man's right to life, liberty
 and the pursuit of happiness is not
 worth the collapse of a nation.
 (BANG) The death of independence.
 (BANG)

JOHN
 Please stop! Stop it, Braddock.

BRADDOCK
 Okay, John. I'll make it stop.

He turns the gun on John, who backs into the dirt wall.
 There's no running. John tries one final plea...

JOHN
 You were ready to make me your son.

BRADDOCK
 (soft, almost tender)
 Oh my dear boy. You really have no
 idea how the world works. I would
 never give my blessing to a nothing
 son-of-a-coal-miner who's let
 himself be fucked again and again
 by the world. I told you what you
 needed to hear. But rest assured,
 you'll leave this world the same
 way you came in... *insignificant*.

He takes aim. This is the end. Braddock squeezes the trigger
 Off the BANG of the gunshot, the SOUND DROPS OUT and
A haunting rendition of "AMAZING GRACE" serenades us.
A boy's choir. A hundred cherubs coo in falsetto over a

MONTAGE OF APOCALYPSE:

- **WHACK!** A CROQUET MALLET SLAMS INTO **BRADDOCK'S SKULL** the moment the gun goes off. He falls, unconscious.
- **Mrs. Washington** and **Percy** enter the BUNKER. The room lit by warm Edison bulbs. Mrs. Washington catches her reflection in a mirror. **Blood** splattered on her DIAMOND EARRING.
- **John** collapses to the ground, shot.
- An A-Air gun FIRES a shot. We fly with the SHELL into the sky where it BLOWS THE WING CLEAN OFF A FIGHTER PLANE.
- The wing plummets to the ground, landing on POWER LINES in a burst of sparks. The valley goes DARK IN A **BLACKOUT**.

- *In the chateau FOYER, the CRYSTAL CHANDELIER extinguishes, plunging the house into darkness.*

- *In the BUNKER, **Mrs. Washington** meticulously wipes the blood off her earring. As she does, the LIGHTS GO OUT, and they're left in the alien NEON GREEN GLOW of RADIUM.*

- *We hover over the **Diamond Mountain**. Strobes of LIGHTNING pulse ever closer. A storm rolling in.*

As the SONG ENDS we're back at

THE PIT—

Kismine stands over an unconscious **Braddock**.

BLOODY CROQUET MALLET in her hand.

John finds her eyes and, for a moment, lands safely there. For the first time, it's clear. Kismine has chosen a side. She's chosen John.

But as the adrenaline fades, it's replaced by SHOOTING PAIN.

KISMINE
JOHN! JOHN, YOUR ARM!

HIS ARM BLEEDING - he clutches it to staunch the flow.

Kismine unlocks the cage over the pit and helps him out.

JOHN
(fighting through)
I'll be okay.

KISMINE
That doesn't look okay.

JOHN
We need to get out of here.

KISMINE
We need to go back to the house.

JOHN
Are you crazy?!

KISMINE
Listen to me. We can't go to the train station. They'll be waiting for us. Our only chance is to head north. The border isn't far.

(MORE)

KISMINE (CONT'D)

But we need food and water enough
for three days. And unless you want
to die of infection in that time,
you need disinfectant for that arm.

John nods - impressed, convinced. They head for the chateau.

INT. BUNKER

Darkness surrounds Mrs. Washington and Percy - frantically flipping switches on a breaker.

PERCY
Come on. Come ON!

MRS. WASHINGTON
We need to switch on the generator.

PERCY
The generator is back at the house.
Father said-

MRS. WASHINGTON
The kill switch runs on
electricity. If god forbid we need
to use it, then we need power.
(grabbing shotgun)
Stay here. I'm going back.

PERCY
It's not safe. I'll come with you.

MRS. WASHINGTON
NO. It's not safe. Which is why you
must stay here. There must always
be a Washington in the bunker.

She puts her hand over the **KEY** around Percy's neck. He nods.
It's perhaps the closest they come to saying *I Love You*.

EXT. DEFENSE COMPOUND / BATTLEGROUND

RAIN and WIND. The storm picks up.

Gygsum roars orders at the Staff, invigorated by the tempest.

Fighters BUZZ the compound again, more bodies drop. THEN--

Gygsum PAUSES in the chaos. Surveying the scene around him:
Morale dropping. Bloodshed spreading. Considering bringing an
end to the suffering. WHEN--

He looks to the MOUNTAIN - earth beginning to slide away.

Braddock's words echo in his mind, drooling over the treasure of El Dorado. He's so close. He can fucking taste it and frankly, it doesn't matter who has to die to get him there.

Galvanized by the promise of wealth and power and loyalty to all things Washington, he COMMANDS THEM ONWARD.

GYGSUM
FIRE!

INT. CHATEAU

atrium

RAIN POUNDS down on the atrium. The kitchen below swimming in distorted moonlight. As though suspended underwater.

John, Kismine pull food from shelves. Stocking a duffel bag.

John groans, bleeding more intensely from the arm.

KISMINE
There's a first aid kit in my room
under the vanity! I'll finish this.

John nods, takes off through the house...

(INTERCUTTING AS NECESSARY)

FOYER

...and up the grand staircase.

Stray bullets shower in HARD. John takes cover behind the ELEPHANT TUSKS which splinter, crack. Ivory casualties.

KISMINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
JOHN!

JOHN
I'M FINE. GET THE FOOD!

He bounds down the hall upstairs and into...

KISMINE'S ROOM

John rips apart her vanity, searching for the first aid kit. Tearing through drawers, lavish jewels flying everywhere.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Where are you?

KITCHEN—

Kismine frantically pulls food. Filling canisters of water.

The fighters BUZZ the house again.

The ATRIUM SHATTERS. Glass showers down over Kismine.

KISMINE

JOHN!

BACK IN KISMINE'S ROOM—

JOHN
I'M COMING!

He yanks open a drawer to find the FIRST AID KIT! Finally.

He's about to take off WHEN-- he's PARALYZED by the KALEIDOSCOPE OF GEMS scattered across the vanity.

He zeroes in on the PEARL NECKLACE rolling on the vanity.

FLASH: The PEARL EARRING on his mother's ear. His Mother, smiling at him. On the Hades train platform. The last time he saw her. The last time he might EVER see her.

Something landing in him. And as John stares at the pearl, we see something else in the REFLECTION OF THE VANITY MIRROR:

OUTSIDE - A SMOKING FIGHTER PLANE BARRELS TOWARD THE CHATEAU.

Closer... Closer... Collision imminent. John SPOTS it. He grabs the PEARL and FIRST AID KIT, and runs back into the

FOYER—

Just as John reaches the top of the stairs

THE FIGHTER PLANE CRASHES THROUGH THE FOYER.

SMASHING INTO THE STAIRCASE, WHICH FUCKING COLLAPSES.

Leaving John stuck upstairs.

Rubble flies, severing part of the cord suspending the CHANDELIER. It hangs precariously over the foyer.

JOHN (CONT'D)
KISMINE! Shit. KISMINE!

Kismine appears with the duffel bag. Climbing over rubble.

KISMINE

JOHN!

(beat, mind racing)

Give me the first aid kit, and go back to my room. Use the drain pipe outside my balcony to scale down the side of the building. It's how I snuck out at night.

JOHN

(re: his bleeding arm)

Sounds like you had two working arms for that.

KISMINE

It's either that, or you can jump and risk the legs too.

(then)

Come on. I'll meet you out back.

Out of options, he tosses her the first aid and disappears.

Kismine turns for the door WHEN-- THE LIGHTS COME ON. The generator turned on. Which means...

MRS. WASHINGTON appears. She clocks the duffel bag.

MRS. WASHINGTON

Going somewhere, Kismine darling?

Off Kismine, stuck.

EXT. THE PIT

Close on a CRUCIFIX in the mud. Braddock unconscious by it.

He stirs. Clutching his wounded head. As his vision comes into focus, he sees the CORPSES in the pit - *his* victims.

His eyes then fall on the crucifix, retrieving it with his blood-stained hand. *Blood and Mud and Jesus.*

He crosses himself, begging forgiveness.

EXT. THE SKY

Wind WHIPS the fighters. Little toy planes in a downpour.

PILOT CAPTAIN (RADIO)

Everyone, wheels down. That's an order.

CLOSE ON his goggles. As lightning flashes, we see the reflection of the **SHIMMERING MASS** we've come to know so well.

PILOT CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Oh. My. God.

INT./EXT. KISMINE'S ROOM/BALCONY

John charges through her room and onto the balcony where the Diamond Mountain stands now fully revealed. *Dazzling monster.*

He spots the DRAIN PIPE hanging off the side of the building, loosened by stray gunfire.

JOHN
Shit.

He backs up into the room, giving himself a runway. Then SPRINTS. Angling sharply toward the pipe.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(running)
Shit shit shit shit shit...

HE LEAPS thorough the air and CATCHES the drain pipe. The BOLTS fastening the pipe to the chateau loosen. His weight dragging them down. Grip slipping.

John hangs from the pipe.
The Diamond Mountain looms behind him.
Lightning hits the prism. Rays BURST from every angle.
THEN-- he falls.

INT. BUNKER

Percy alone in the bunker. Pacing in that radium green glow. For all the madness outside, there is a stillness here. And Percy loves it. Relishes it.

A PICTURE FRAME on a shelf catches his eye. He picks it up. It's a photo of the Washington family. A younger, livelier Braddock, Mrs. Washington, Kismine, and Percy gaze back.

Percy positions his hands over the photo in a way we can't quite make out until-

The LIGHTS COME ON - the generator back to life.

And we see that Percy has covered up the faces of his family. All except a Younger Percy - smiling back at him.

ON PERCY - legacy, birthright, hubris colliding within him.

INT. CHATEAU - FOYER

The CHANDELIER swings precariously, battered by the storm.
A ten thousand dollar wind chime.

Kismine and Mrs. Washington argue below.

MRS. WASHINGTON
Don't be absurd! You're coming to
the bunker with your brother.

KISMINE
Father tried to kill him.

MRS. WASHINGTON
Braddock is doing his duty. To
protect us.

KISMINE
(*look around*)
Protect us!? It's over.

MRS. WASHINGTON
(*knee jerk*)
It's over because some spoiled brat
couldn't go without learning
Italian.

Daggers to Kismine's heart.

MRS. WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
(*softer*)
We'll be okay. Come now. Be a good
girl and do as you're told.

Oh fuck no. Not anymore.

KISMINE
**Did any of you ever wonder how the
Italian escaped? Did you ever even
imagine that someone let him go.**

Jesus. Mrs. Washington shakes. Seethes. Boils. Furious.

MRS. WASHINGTON
You. You stupid fucking girl.
You've doomed us all.

KISMINE
No, Mother. I freed us.
(grabbing her bag)
And now I'm freeing myself.

Mrs. Washington grabs the other end of the bag.

MRS. WASHINGTON
 We're going to the bunker. And you
 will answer for your treason.

With surprising strength, she tugs Kismine her way WHEN--

CRACK! Thunder roars simultaneously with lightning. The strike SHAKES the house.

A SINGLE CRYSTAL FALLS on Kismine's head. They both look up.

THE CHANDELIER rocks violently. The storm prying it loose-

THE CABLE SNAPS. Plummeting toward the floor. Toward *Kismine*.

She sees her life FLASH before her eyes, refracted in a million little crystals. JUST AS--

MRS. WASHINGTON SHOVES HER DAUGHTER OUT OF THE WAY, AND IS CRUSHED UNDER THE CHANDELIER.

Kismine SHRIEKS, tries and fails to pry the chandelier off.

KISMINE
 MOTHER!

It's no use. As the light fades from Mrs. Washington's eyes, she extends a hand to her daughter's cheek.

MRS. WASHINGTON
 John... is not your *family*.
 Promise me... there will always be
 a Washington... at El Dorado.

She passes. Adrenaline courses in Kismine. Antidote to grief.

OFF A FLASH OF LIGHTNING WE

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOHN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - HADES, MISSOURI (FLASHBACK)

STRAW. A SCRATCHY TEXTURE. Antithesis of brilliant diamond.

A Younger John STUFFS HAY into a LARGE SACK. Over and over. An image we've seen before and now will find out why.

John's parents BETTY & JAMES round the corner.

BETTY
How's it going back here?

JAMES

*Bet you're regretting that growth
spurt about now. You might still
fit on your old one.*

JOHN

(under breath)

*Just regretting bargain-basement
parents.*

JAMES

What did you say?!

JOHN

*Why can't we just buy a mattress
from Rudy's dad's general store?
Rudy will give us a discount.*

JAMES

*We don't need the charity of Rudy's
family. I made my mattress, your
mother made hers, and you can make
yours or sleep on the ground.*

JOHN

Father, I didn't mean-

But James Unger is gone. Betty approaches her son warmly.

BETTY

*That's very nice for Rudy to offer.
But what if Rudy's mattress is too
hard? Perhaps you will toss and
turn all night, and get no rest.*

JOHN

*I'll make sure it's soft enough
before I take it home.*

BETTY

*Ah, but what if it's too soft and
doesn't support you? You won't know
until it's too late and you've
already spent the money. Perhaps
you'll sink into it and wake with
terrible pain in your back.*

Betty stuffs a handful of hay inside the sack.

BETTY (CONT'D)

*You are responsible for building
your own life, my wonderful boy.
There's dignity in creating
something for yourself.*

(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)
 A dignity you can't buy at Rudy's
 dad's general store.

She tousles his hair and leaves him to it.

Reinvigorated, John PLUNGES his hand into hay and STUFFS. Again and again. Quick cuts. Sweat dripping. Working hard. Before we know it, John stares down at his COMPLETED MATTRESS. He falls onto it.

HIS HEAD - resting on a sack stuffed with straw. Fulfilled.

MATCH TO:

EXT. SIDE OF THE CHATEAU

JOHN'S HEAD - resting on wet, muddy Earth.

Kismine shakes him awake. *Something has changed in her.*

KISMINE
 John! John, let's go. We need to
 get out of here.

JOHN
 We have to go to the bunker.

KISMINE
 We can't go to the bunker, John.

JOHN
 We have to get to the kill switch.
 We have to destroy it.

KISMINE
 John, we can't. I can't go-

JOHN
 Your father is wrong about the
 mountain, Kismine. Look what it did
 to him. Imprisoning men, killing
 them, like a monster. Right now,
 just a few people know it exists.
 But the world's getting smaller,
 and when the government takes
 control, the fighting will get
 worse. It's not our responsibility
 to hide it from the world. We need
 to destroy it before it begins. And
 I can't do it alone.

The words rattle around the shell of her mind - worlds away.

EXT. THE PIT

Aviators pile out of planes. Gygsum appears with a row of Soldiers. Everyone draws. A standoff. A powder keg.

PILOT CAPTAIN
Where is he?

Gygsum is silent. The Pilot Captain pulls back the hammer on his pistol. The others follow. A massacre waiting to happen.

THEN-- the Pilot Captain looks at THE PIT - now flooding. Bodies of aviators rising to the top. Corpse buoys.

He softens. Lowering his weapon. A sign of good faith.

PILOT CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
The United States Government is
only concerned with the affairs of
Braddock T. Washington. Please.
Where is he?

Off Gygsum, unreadable.

INT. BUNKER

A soaked John and Kismine burst through the bunker door. John moves to the PANEL IN THE WALL alongside the radium.

JOHN
Where's the key? It should be here!

PERCY
It's good to see you, John.

Percy splayed out over an armchair, waves a PISTOL in the air. Apocalyptic nonchalance. The **KEY** dangles on his neck.

JOHN
Percy, you need-

PERCY
Tell you what. The only thing
anyone needs to do is shut up and
wait. We'll sort this whole thing
out when mother and father return.

OFF Kismine - Unable to correct him.

EXT. DIAMOND MOUNTAIN - SUMMIT

P U L S A T I N G B E A T S begin to thump. At first soft and low. They will become thunderous and furious. These babies will bring us home. The STROBES of lighting. The GLITTER of the mountain. Rain and SWEAT. You could blink and mistake these Rocky Mountains for a Berlin nightclub.

Braddock climbs the mountain. Beating against the storm. He reaches the summit where the LARGE PILE OF FOLIAGE sits and begins pulling branches away, uncovering what lies beneath...

INT. BUNKER

Percy's by the FISH TANK. Gun in hand. Increasingly unhinged.

PERCY

What do you think of 'Ferdinand'? Ferdinand is a good name for a fish. Ferdinand the Fish! I think I'll call this one Ferdinand.

(then)

Of course Archduke Ferdinand was shot in the neck and died... But oh how they remember him.

John and Kismine sit on the couch. Quietly unnerved.

PERCY (CONT'D)

The generators are running. She should be back by now.

John catches Kismine's eyes. Hollow. Shock setting in. She shakes her head - ever so slightly - No. John understands.

JOHN (V.O.)

Except Mrs. Washington wasn't coming back. And it would be best to keep that thought from entering Percy's head.

JOHN

Is it easy to pick who dies?

PERCY

Don't do this, John.

JOHN

Why me? You could've picked anyone at St. Midas.

PERCY

It wasn't like that.

JOHN

But you knew what it meant to bring someone here. To your godforsaken El Dorado.

A death sentence. Is what it was. And you did it ANYWAY. Did it get easier? Every time you did it? Was it easier to sit across from me in the cafeteria and wave a blazer in my face? Easier than the last Tom, Dick, and Harry you brought to their deaths? WHY? WHY SHOULD I?

PERCY (CONT'D)

You don't know what you're talking about.

I haven't killed anyone.

Stop talking, John.
Stop TALKING.
STOP IT.
SHUT YOUR MOUTH.
SHUT THE FUCK UP!

BECAUSE YOU WERE MY FRIEND!

Beat. It catches both boys by surprise. Percy's eyes mist.

JOHN (V.O.)

It was the first time I saw Percy for what he truly was. *Lonely*.

JOHN

(walking on eggshells)

You could... give it up?

As soon as the words are out there, Percy steels. Back in it.

PERCY

The difference between you and me, John Unger, is that I won't abandon my family. My legacy.

THEN-- Percy spots the DUFFEL BAG. Gears turning.

PERCY (CONT'D)

What's in the bag?

JOHN

Your legacy is greed.

PERCY

What. Is in. The bag?

JOHN

Your legacy is corruption.

PERCY

(raising the gun)
I won't ask again.

JOHN

Your legacy is *MURDER*.

KISMINE

I'm sorry, John. I can't do this.

Kismine walks over to her brother. Choosing family.
She opens the duffel bag and food, supplies spill out.

Off John, stung.

EXT. DIAMOND MOUNTAIN - SUMMIT

Our BERLIN BEAT drumming considerably louder now.

Braddock removes the last of the branches, revealing

A GIANT SLAB OF DIAMOND, RAISED ABOVE GROUND. **AN ALTAR.** A Stone Table of Narnia if Aslan himself had chiseled it from solid diamond. A monolithic offering block. Ripe for blood.

Braddock stands upon it. Gazing over the VALLEY OF EL DORADO. His life's work, his purpose of being, crumbling around him. Time for a Hail Mary.

BRADDOCK

You out there!
 I know You can hear me.

INT. BUNKER

Percy stands over the bag. Fuming.

PERCY

(to Kismine)

And you were a part of this? You would run off with *him*? Abandon your family.

KISMINE

It doesn't matter. I'm here now.

PERCY

(turning the gun on her)

If I can't trust you-

KISMINE

(moving toward him)

You're not going to shoot me.

BANG! He fires a warning shot over her shoulder. It hits the GLOBE on the bookcase behind her which falls to the ground.

PERCY

What changed? How do I know you're
not plotting with him?

KISMINE

I'm a Washington.

PERCY

Bullshit, you've always been a
Washington. That didn't matter when
you packed this bag. WHAT. CHANGED?

KISMINE

What changed is I watched Mother be
flattened by a chandelier.

The air is sucked out of the room. Percy is petrified.

KISMINE (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, Percy. I was standing
under the chandelier, she pushed me-

PERCY

IT'S YOUR FAULT SHE'S DEAD. YOU
KILLED HER. YOU KILLED ALL OF US.
YOU BROUGHT THESE DEVILS TO OUR
DOORSTEP BECAUSE OF YOUR
SELFISHNESS.

JOHN

That's enough!

PERCY

THIS DOESN'T CONCERN YOU JOHN.

JOHN

Kismine, it's alright. Listen to me-

Percy ROARS. He HURLS THE PICTURE FRAME at John. It misses,
hits the wall, and CRACKS the Washington family portrait.

IN THAT MOMENT--

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Kismine)

NOW!

As Percy's distracted, Kismine lunges for the KEY. She RIPS
it from his neck just as he SWATS her hand.

The KEY flies through the air and lands IN THE FISH TANK.

PERCY BACKHANDS HER HARD. She stumbles back, hits her head on
the bookshelf, and falls unconscious to the ground.

JOHN (CONT'D)
KISMINE!

Percy raises his PISTOL as John LUNGES at him. **BANG!**

EXT. DIAMOND MOUNTAIN - BASE

The Pilot Captain and his Aviators gather at the base of the Diamond Mountain. The BUNKER DOOR ahead of them.

PILOT CAPTAIN
This is it. Weapons at the ready.

GYGSUM APPEARS. Bruised, beaten, broken by the Aviators.

GYGSUM
The self-destruct controls are in there, but he won't be. Not until he's played all his cards.

He points to the peak of the mountain. The others look up: Braddock stands atop the altar at the mountain's summit. Macbeth at Dunsinane. Hands to the sky. Afire with hubris.

PILOT CAPTAIN
What's he doing?

GYGSUM
Negotiating.

EXT. DIAMOND MOUNTAIN - SUMMIT

Braddock bribes God.

BRADDOCK
Even You have a price. You made man in Your image and every *man* has a price. Men built You cathedrals. Slaughtered beasts and fellow man and civilizations in Your name. Crusaded for Your glory across the globe. All to buy the Divine Alleviation of Your Wrath. But no man could give You what I do now:

He offers the mountain to God.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
Take it. As Your own. All I ask is that You take these men away. Swallow them into the abyss. Do we have a deal?

Braddock gazes at the heavens. Listening for an answer. Willing it to be favorable.

But the rain refuses to relent. Braddock's hair grows whiter. His offer rebuked. A darkness consumes him.

As LIGHTNING FLASHES, we see the Pilot Captain hovering behind Braddock, gun in hand, using Gygsum as a human shield.

INT. BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

THE KEY sinks in the tank as fish dart around it.

John and Percy fight. Grappling over control of the GUN. It's scrappy. Elbows and teeth scrappy. At last, John gains enough control to point the gun at the FISH TANK.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! John empties the gun into it.

Glass shatters. The tank's contents spill to the floor. Fish flopping everywhere, gasping for breath. Shards of glass sprinkled around, twinkling in the NEON GREEN RADIUM GLOW. The KEY lands in the center of it all.

THEN-- BANGING on the door. The Aviators are outside.

Percy and John dive into the broken glass after the key.

PERCY PLUNGES A SHARD OF GLASS INTO JOHN'S HAND.

John recoils, HOWLS in pain. Percy grabs the KEY.

EXT. DIAMOND MOUNTAIN - SUMMIT

The Pilot Captain and his shield (Gygsum) stand on the Diamond Altar behind Braddock.

The BERLIN BEAT now hammering away.

PILOT CAPTAIN
Give it up, Washington. We have you surrounded.

GYGSUM
I tried to stop them, sir.

BRADDOCK
Very disappointing, Gygsum.

PILOT CAPTAIN
If you come quietly, no one else needs to suffer. Haven't your men sacrificed enough?

BRADDOCK
(considered, to himself)
Sacrifice.

PILOT CAPTAIN
The only way you're getting out of
here alive is by taking the deal
I'm about to offer yo—

BAM! Braddock turns and **BLOWS A HOLE STRAIGHT THROUGH GYGSUM.**

THE PILOT CAPTAIN FALLS — bleeding, coughing, sputtering.
Braddock places his foot on the man's throat.

BRADDOCK
I already tried to make one deal
tonight and that was with the
Almighty Himself. Now if He told me
'no,' then what the fuck do you
think I'm going to tell you?

Braddock steps down on his neck. The *CRACK* perfectly in time
with the hammering *BEAT*.

INT. BUNKER

John bleeds on the floor. Hand pierced with glass.
Kismine is passed out. She twitches.
Percy holds the KEY. Manic with victory.

PERCY
The Washingtons built an empire.
The greatest nation on Earth. Now
it's my duty — *my birthright* — to
take my proper place at the head of
it. And I'll be damned if I let
some Hades swine John Unger ruin it
for me.

Percy SWALLOWS the key.

JOHN
PERCY, NO!

Kismine's eyes flutter open.

PERCY
It's people like John Unger that
are everything wrong with this
country. You think this nation is
built on dreams, on goodwill, on
love.

JOHN
What have you done?

PERCY
But this country is built on sweat.
On sacrifice. On *blood*. Someone has
to **bleed** for this nation, John.
Today, that someone is *you*.

He stands over John, brandishing a shard of glass. As he
brings it down over John's head

**BAM! THE GLOBE cracks across Percy's skull, SNAPPING his
neck, and he falls DEAD to the ground, revealing**

KISMIN standing behind him, weeping. She drops the GLOBE:

A STREAK OF WASHINGTON BLOOD SMEARED ACROSS THE U.S. OF A.

Kismine finds John's eyes. Her heart breaking. For the family
she's lost. For the new family she's chosen in John.

BANGING on the door intensifies.

JOHN
Kismine. We need that key.

He eyes Percy's body - sickened by what he must do next.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't look.

As John grabs a SHARD OF GLASS and moves to dissect his
friend, we find...

Our FISH - Ferdinand - twitching quietly on the floor. In a
puddle of water. Surrounded by shimmering glass. Or diamonds.
We hardly know the difference anymore.

EXT. DIAMOND MOUNTAIN - SUMMIT

BLOOD POOLS ACROSS DIAMOND. Swirling as the rain falls.

The trail of blood ends in Braddock - having dragged the
bodies to the center of the Altar.

He casts his gaze heavenward. HIS WHITE HAIR STAINED CRIMSON.

BRADDOCK
God Almighty, hear my prayer.
Hear me from this Garden of Eden.

EXT. BUNKER

The Aviators hoist a fallen tree, which they now use as a THUMPING BATTERING RAM AGAINST THE BUNKER DOOR.

BRADDOCK (O.S.)
 For if not, we gather here today to
 mourn the death of a great nation.
 If not, let this be Her Eulogy...

THUMPING.

A pulse to the eulogy in sync with a *THUNDEROUS BERLIN BEAT*. Everything in harmony. Everything part of the rhythm. A symphony of chaos.

INT. BUNKER

Kismine watches RADIUM course through the tubes in the wall.

JOHN (V.O.)
 The human body is softer than I
 imagined it to be. Unfortunately, I
 know that now.

A blood-soaked John emerges from PERCY'S CORPSE - splayed open like a frog dissected in science class.

He holds the **KEY**, dripping in blood and bile.

THUMP.

John moves to the panel by the RADIUM WALL. He inserts the key, looking to Kismine for reassurance. Looking for her to okay the destruction of her legacy.

She stares, vacant, transfixed by the noxious neon green. Barely there. She nods. Or flinches. Hard to say which.

JOHN (V.O.)
 But I suppose that was always the case. That we've always been soft clay that can be shaped and sculpted in any image. Good or Evil. Wicked or Benevolent.

John turns the key. THE MOUNTAIN BEGINS TO VIBRATE.

EXT. DIAMOND MOUNTAIN - SUMMIT

From the heavens we look down on Braddock flanked by corpses.

BRADDOCK

We are impure. We have failed you.
 But do not forsake us, O Lord.
*"Indeed according to the law all is
 purified by blood, and sins are
 forgiven if only blood is poured
 out."* Let this blood forgive us.

WHEN-- VIBRATIONS from within the mountain.

The sounds of the storm fall away.

The *throbbing Berlin Beat* now distant, muffled.

Braddock thinks he's been heard. Been saved. Been seen by the Almighty, Himself.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

Yes. Yes, Lord thank you. Take
 them. Swallow them up, Lord. But
 spare your humble servants.

THEN-- **SICKLY NEON GREEN THREADS** spread in all directions from underneath his feet. A radium dye injected into the heart of the mountain, it disperses throughout.

Hairline green radium roots taking hold in the diamond.
 Expanding beneath pools of blood swirling with rain.
 Mirroring off every prismatic angle.

THE BEAT DIES AND WE FREEZE. IN SILENCE. A VACUUM:

**RAIN SUSPENDED IN AIR. LITTLE ATOMIC CRYSTALS.
 NEON GREENS, BLOOD REDS, MOONLIGHT SILVERS CONVERGE.
 AN APOCALYPTIC DISCO.**

JOHN (V.O.)

And perhaps it is our *softness* that
 makes us human. That makes us the
 very opposite from the *hardest*
 substance in all the world.

THE WORLD UNFREEZES.

The surface of the diamond begins to **HEAT**.

Realization splashes across Braddock's face. His battle fought. His hand played out. The dominoes are falling now and he'll die here along with his legacy.

BRADDOCK

So it is.

The **SIZZLING** of flesh. Cooking in radiation.

The light leaves his eyes.

As the mountain MELTS DOWN, we fly into the heavens.

Past earth. Past the moon. And the sun. And star after star and galaxy beyond galaxy. We continue soaring out until they are but a million tiny gems strewn across the universe.

At some point the CONSTELLATIONS OF GALAXIES become SHARDS OF GLASS and we're back inside the

INT. BUNKER - LATER

We are a ghost. A spectre. A witness to what remains.

We're floating across the floor of shattered glass and come upon a white sheet, being pulled over Percy's flayed corpse. A modicum of decency. As the sheet falls over the body, it stains instantly with blood. Washington blood.

John finishes covering his friend. He looks around.

JOHN (V.O.)
So this is where billionaires spend
the end of the world.

Floating further, we find Kismine - petrified, resolute, steadfast - the shadow of her past girlish demeanor banished.

KISMINE
How long do we wait?

JOHN
The thumping stopped hours ago.

KISMINE
Do you think there's any thing
left?

JOHN
Anyone?

Beat. That's not what she said. But is it what she *meant*? John marinates in uncertainty. Ever-guessing at her resolve. She chose a side, but was it freely, or out of necessity?

JOHN (CONT'D)
I don't know what we'll find when
we open the door. If there will be
anyone or anything for us. But I
know this. It doesn't matter. Even
if there's nothing.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

No house or limo or gold spoons or diamonds - I could never see another diamond so long as I live - and it wouldn't matter because you are more brilliant than all of them. We could go back and live the rest of our lives in Hades. I wouldn't care. I can introduce you to my parents. You've no idea how much they'd love you. I don't care what happens now so long as we grow old and fat together with little Johns and Kismines - little **Ungers** - running around tugging at our shoestrings. And they'll be *good*. Caring and kind. Just like their mother.

As John narrates the rest of their lives, Kismine stares at the WATCH on John's wrist. *Percy's watch.*

We may never know where her head lives. But she smiles.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I managed to save this.

John reaches into his pocket and removes the **PEARL NECKLACE** that he took from Kismine's vanity, placing it in her hand.

If Kismine has a thought, she keeps it locked within.

KISMINE

May I have a moment alone with him?

John studies her face. He's warm with empathy.

JOHN (V.O.)

There's a time to be tender. A time to let ourselves be the *softest* creatures in the world.

He disappears.

Kismine waits until she can no longer feel, or see, or smell John.

With sturdy hands she pulls back the sheet, revealing Percy's face. A trail of dried blood snakes from his mouth.

Kismine rests a hand against his cheek. A final gesture of love. THEN-- her hand hovers over his mouth for a moment and we are left only with his piercing eyes. And we follow as-

Kismine stands and walks to the other side of the room.

To John.

To the door.

To the world or whatever's left of it outside.

As she moves in one direction, we peel off in the other and look down again at PERCY'S FACE.

The PEARL NECKLACE rests upon his mouth.

At home upon the crest of his lips.

Right where she left it.

Shattered glass or diamonds or both strewn around his head.

Like a crown.

Like a halo.

"ROYALS" by LORDE sings us home.

"I've never seen a diamond in the flesh..." "

THE END.