

THE DARK

Written by

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INT. ADVANCED FIELD TECHNOLOGIES (AFT) - NIGHT

A glittering high-rise in midtown Manhattan. From somewhere inside, an ALARM...

INT. DAVID WEI'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

...wakes CEO DAVID WEI from a dead sleep at his desk. His eyes go WIDE.

INT. DAVID WEI'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

He loudly rushes from his office, nearly collides with his half-asleep daughter, ISABELLE (9), trudging out of her bedroom to check on the commotion.

ISABELLE

Daddy...?

Wei kisses her on the forehead rushing past.

DAVID WEI

It's okay, Isabelle. Daddy's just going upstairs to do some work. Go back to sleep.

Isabelle gives him a groggy thumbs up on her way back to bed.

INT. INFLATION REACTOR ROOM - NIGHT

Still wiping sleep from his eyes, Wei enters the advanced laboratory at a run.

DAVID WEI

Show me.

A crowd of stunned PHYSICISTS wordlessly step aside to let Wei see the computer screen they've been analyzing, showing:

DR. LAURA SNYDER (O.S.)

An algorithmic signal. Not a pulsar. Not a solar flare. And not us... Not *human*.

Rapt with discovery, Wei walks up to the glass housing enclosing the HUMMING, CYLINDRICAL reactor inside.

DAVID WEI

It's a message...

DR. LAURA SNYDER, fit, Black, eyes the reactor with concern.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
It's a warning...

DAVID WEI  
(walks back to computer)  
Bob, spin it up another 30%.

Worried by the order, BOB looks to Dr. Snyder.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
David, we don't know what--

Heedless, Wei reaches over Bob and dials the engine up over their objections.

The Reactor's dull hum CRESCENDOS to a ROAR. A beat, and then a pane in the glass housing loudly CRACKS.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
David--!

Wei holds up a hand to cut her off. Observes as the algorithm on the computer suddenly SPIKES in complexity.

DAVID WEI  
It's responding...!

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
We don't know what is responding!

DAVID WEI  
We won't find out if we don't--!

KA-BOOM! Snyder pulls up her hand to shield her eyes from the SEARING WHITE of a MASSIVE EXPLOSION!

BEAT.

Confused, Laura pulls her hand back to look at it: *Why is it - why am I - still here?*

She shares a bewildered look with Wei to her right, also somehow still alive. Also unsure how. They both look to:

THE INFLATION REACTOR going up in a HUGE PLUME OF WHITE FIRE... but for some reason, it's exploding in slow motion!

A VERY SLOWLY blooming conflagration overtaking the room INCH-BY-INCH...

Wei and Snyder test their own movements to confirm... they're moving at normal speed.

Even as they look up to see SHRAPNEL from the blast SLOWLY tumbling and twirling in their direction.

Bob isn't so lucky. He looks down: *everything below his chest caught in the explosion's leading edge.* Slowly coming apart.

What should have been an instantaneous death slowed to an excruciating crawl.

BOB  
What's happen--!

Bob's face is suddenly SHADOWED in DARKNESS. He goes instantly STILL.

Then... LIVING TENDRILS OF BLACKNESS writhing free from the center of the explosion!

Wei and Snyder watch as the Tendrils pull themselves out in all directions - blanketing the ceiling, the floor and the walls in INKY BLACKNESS. Crawling towards them...!

They turn and RUN. But the darkness PURSUES in REAL TIME. Racing past the slow-moving shrapnel... which goes MOTIONLESS in the darkness' wake...!

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Wei and Snyder flee in a desperate panic. Behind them, the tendrils pull themselves into the hall, spreading across every surface, hot on their heels.

DAVID WEI  
We have to purge the housing. End of the hall. We have to hit the --

Wei falls behind, and then just FALLS. Snyder looks back for a split second, sees --

The Tendrils of Blackness OVERTAKE David as he desperately scrambles UP. And he COLLAPSES to slow-motion and then goes TOTALLY MOTIONLESS halfway to his feet..! Locked in place.

Snyder kicks off her flats and breaks into a DEAD SPRINT. Looking ahead desperately to the PURGE CONTROLS at the end of the hall...

But the Tendrils are gaining. And as they do, Snyder SLOWS.

She knows it. *She feels it.* A nightmare come to life: the harder she tries to run, the slower she moves.

Until finally - the blackness BLASTS past her - and she FREEZES. Suspended in mid-leap. Arm desperately outstretched, stopping just short of a PURGE SWITCH only inches away.

CLOSE on her face. A tear FROZEN on her cheek. At first, it seems like nothing's happening. But we slowly notice that the image is DARKENING.

The blackness deepens and deepens, until we can't see her, until everything is black, until there's nothing left but:

**"THE DARK"**

...and then the opening of Kendrick Lamar's **Alright** as we:

BEGIN TITLES and FADE UP

**Super-close** on the panicked face of AMIR BALDWIN.

Fifteen. Black. RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE.

In SUPER SLOW MOTION. Is he being chased by The Dark?

WIDEN to reveal, no, he's being chased by a group of over-serious RENT-A-COPS in cheap uniforms.

(And as neither they nor Amir seem to notice they're running in slow motion, we gather that they really aren't.)

As the super-slow chase unfolds, we get a look at Amir. Malcolm X glasses. Anime shirt. Trendy kicks. Nerdcore hip.

He's being chased through a HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY.

His fear turns to a smirk as he LEAPS over a FRESHMAN bent down to tie his shoes.

The Rent-A-Cops try the same jump, and in comedic slow motion PINWHEEL over and CRASH down on the Freshman in a HEAP.

Recovering slowly, the Rent-A-Cops renew pursuit. Reach out for a RED BAG Amir has tucked under one arm like a football.

But as they near, Amir LIMBO SLIDES on his knees under a locker swinging open in his path.

A FAT Rent-A-Cop sees the locker opening too late. It SMASHES into his face, sending ripples of shock slowly unfolding up his chubby cheeks, EJECTING his glasses into the air!

The other Rent-A-Cops trip over him. Amir seems in the clear - until a hulking, 6'2 slab of granite in a football jersey steps deliberately into his path.

This is KALE. Is he going to punch Amir? Hold him for the cops? But no, at the last second, he smirks. Holds out his hand to offer Amir a pound.

Amir takes it, then grabs onto Kale's massive arm, using it to SLINGSHOT himself around a corner.

Kale "accidentally" stops in the Rent-A-Cops' path as they resume chase. They slowly SHATTER against his solid frame.

As Amir rounds the corner, he tosses the suspicious RED BAG to CHANCE, (a kid we'll come to know as a bit of a LOUDMOUTH, who tries to swag out his GOODWILL wardrobe as if it were a stylistic choice and not an economic necessity.)

Chance instantly stashes the bag in his locker, spins the lock and walks away a split second before...

The oblivious Rent-A-Cops round the corner, and FINALLY grab Amir! Ending the TITLES and SLAMMING us into normal motion...

INT. HAWKINS K12 SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

On closer inspection, the Rent-A-Cops wear uniforms marked Hawkins K12 School Security.

They rough up Amir as they press him against a bank of lockers and search him.

FAT RENT-A-COP  
Where is it?!

AMIR  
Officer Stephens. Officer Clark.  
Good evening to you both.

SKINNY RENT-A-COP  
Where's the stuff you stole?!

He empties Amir's pockets of various CELL PHONES, male and female JEWELRY, and other obviously stolen contraband.

AMIR  
Can you be more specific?

INT. MATH CLASS - DAY

An honors class. Everyone pays attention as a teacher works through a complicated CALCULUS problem on the board.

Except ONE GIRL in the back. Hood over her head to hide her earbuds. Bobbing to music only she can hear. Scribbling something seemingly unrelated in her notebook.

A nervous classmate has to tap her on the shoulder to warn her of MR. SIMON'S approach. She removes the hood, revealing:

SENECA BALDWIN. Fifteen. Black. Short haircut. No make-up. T-shirt and jeans.

She's stumbled onto a modern-day hood version of the 70s punk rock aura. Which her male classmates find weirdly hot, if kind of scary and unapproachable.

SENECA  
(removing buds; annoyed)  
What?

MR. SIMON  
I said, what did you get for  
problem sixteen?

But Seneca's attention is drawn to the commotion outside the classroom door, where she sees Amir getting jacked up.

SENECA  
Can I go to the bathroom?

MR. SIMON  
After you answer the question--

But Seneca bolts for the door.

SENECA  
Sorry. Emergency.

In her haste, Seneca knocks over her notebook. Mr. Simon picks it up to see Seneca's worked through the problem on the board six different ways, each leading to the right answer.

MR. SIMON  
Huh.

INT. HAWKINS K12 SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Seneca parts a growing crowd watching Amir get worked over.

SENECA  
Yo! What he do?

FAT RENT-A-COP  
What you think?

SENECA

You ain't gotta hurt him like that.

SKINNY RENT-A-COP

Perk of the job.

Seneca's eyes glass over at that crack. She grabs the plastic lid of a nearby trash can. SMASHES the Fat Rent-A-Cop over the head with it!

The other kids are STUNNED SILENT. Seneca stands defiant, looks at the Rent-A-Cops like: *Damn right, I did it.*

AMIR

Y'all met my sister?

WHAM! Seneca gets shoved up against a locker right next to Amir.

INT. SCIENCE CLASS - DAY

ISAAC BALDWIN, 9, sits in a room filled with other FOURTH GRADERS. Looks bored as MS. SANDERS lectures over a film featuring a familiar-looking piece of technology...

MS. SANDERS

... so, if Mr. Wei's Inflation Reactor works, we might achieve all this. And it's being built only a few miles from this classroom --

But Isaac's attention is puled to the growing crowd outside. He double-takes, seeing Seneca and Amir getting the business.

ISAAC

Ms. Sanders! I have a tummy-ache.

MS. SANDERS

Isaac, Mr. Smith lets the fourth-graders use this class upstairs because we all promised to be big boys and--

Isaac dramatically falls from his desk and doubles-over. Ms. Sanders rolls her eyes. Sighs.

INT. HAWKINS K12 SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Isaac stumbles into the hallway, still doubled over. Straightens as soon as he's out of Ms. Sanders' sight.

He looks to Seneca and Amir, getting knees and elbows in the gut up against the lockers. Looks around for a way to help.

Spots a LIGHTER sitting atop the pile of contraband emptied from Amir's pockets. Smiles.

Minutes later, the Rent-A-Cops look up at the sound of a FIRE ALARM. The hallway is DRENCHED as the SPRINKLERS come alive.

They drop Amir and Seneca and adopt innocent poses as the hallway fills with Teachers and other witnesses.

Including Ms. Sanders, who spots Isaac standing on top of a step ladder at the end of the hall.

Holding a lit lighter up to a sprinkler's sensor. He attempts an innocent smile. But Ms. Sanders ain't having it.

INT. HAWKINS K12 SCHOOL - ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - DAY

Soaking wet, Amir, Seneca, and Isaac sit in chairs across from the PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE.

Inside that office, a DOOZY of an argument is raging between the unseen PRINCIPAL and an unseen PARENT. Shouting. Curses.

As they nervously wait, the kids look up as the lights briefly FLICKER ON AND OFF. As if from the fury of the fight.

A second later, RENEE BALDWIN, their mother, emerges from her epic row with the Principal.

Late 30s. Still holding onto her youth, though clearly these little Negroes' antics are starting to take their toll.

She's not to be screwed with on a good day, and from the way she's staring down her children, it has **not** been a good day.

The Baldwin kids immediately straighten up at her blistering, pitiless glare. Brace themselves.

But Renee just side-eyes them marching past. The kids exchange worried looks with each other before working up the courage to rise and follow.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

The kids sit huddled together. Scared to breathe loud, much less speak, as they stare at Renee seated directly across.

She won't look at them. Just buries her head in her hands.

AMIR

You ain't gonna yell at us?

RENEE

(without looking up)

What would be the point?

The kids again exchange worried looks. They've never pushed her this far before.

ISAAC

We're sorry...

Isaac YELPS as Seneca elbows him over his use of *that word*.

But it's too late. Renee stares daggers at him.

SENECA

He means, we'll do better.

Renee's face disappears again behind her hands.

RENEE

Yeah? So, Amir, you're gonna stop thieving? Isaac, you're gonna stop running scams on your teachers? And Seneca, you're gonna stop fighting everybody who looks at you funny?

The kids squirm as they ponder these impossibilities.

AMIR

I mean.. you didn't ask if we were gonna stop lying, so.. Yeah...?

Amir smiles at his attempted joke. Renee's not amused.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - STAIRWELL - DAY

Renee leads her still bewildered children up to their apartment, only to find Chance and Kale waiting by the door.

Renee raises a "what the hell are you doing here?" eyebrow to them. Intimidated, they display some poorly wrapped gifts.

CHANCE

For the party?

SENECA

(glares at Amir)

I ain't want no party.

AMIR  
 (shrugs)  
 It's my birthday, too.

All eyes look to Renee for a final verdict. She's too tired to protest. Waves Chance and Kale out of the way.

RENEE  
 And it didn't occur to either of  
 you geniuses to call ahead? After  
 what went down today?

CHANCE  
 Sorry, Ms. B.

Panicked, Kale slaps the back of Chance's head. Renee looks at him as if he just cursed her to her face. *That word* again.

KALE  
 Uh... He means we'll try to... uh,  
 we'll never...

SENECA  
 They'll do better.

Renee goes inside. Kale and Chance hover back, not sure if they've been granted leave to enter.

They look to Amir, but he doesn't know either. They take a step in. Wait to be murdered. When they aren't, they enter.

INT. BALDWIN APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

The kids quietly arrange themselves on stools surrounding a birthday display on a kitchen island.

Watch apprehensively as Renee marches past to the fridge. Unceremoniously plops down a plastic-wrapped vanilla cake in front of Amir and a chocolate in front of Seneca.

Walks out without looking back or breaking stride.

RENEE  
 Happy goddamn birthday.

And she LOCKS herself inside her bedroom.

KALE  
 Damn.. What y'all do?

Seneca SWATS Chance's hand away as he reaches for her cake. Tucks it under her arm..

SENECA  
We got caught.

And Seneca disappears inside her bedroom, taking her cake. As soon as her door closes, Amir turns to Chance.

AMIR  
You got it?

Mouth full of cake, Chance searches through the world's most threadbare, raggedy, overstuffed, hand-me-down BOOKBAG.

Amir and Kale share an amused "what's wrong with this dude" look as Chance empties a bizarre set of items onto the table:  
A jar of MAYONNAISE. A Ziploc bag of UNDERWEAR. A SNOW GLOBE.  
And finally, Amir's mystery RED BAG.

CHANCE  
(off their looks)  
What?

Amir declines to comment. Grabs his bag and signals Isaac to follow him.

KALE  
We all know you live out that bag.

CHANCE  
(grabs more cake)  
Shut up.

INT. SENECA'S ROOM - DAY

Amir knocks and enters, with Isaac trailing.

SENECA  
What?

She gets annoyed when they sit next to her on her bed.

SENECA  
What?!

She stares blankly at the red bag when Amir offers it.

SENECA  
We gettin' each other presents now?

ISAAC  
Just open it.

She does. It's an advanced GRAPHICS TABLET. The \$1500 dollar kind. Seneca runs her hand over it; shocked.

Then, suspicious, she flips it over. Stenciled on the back: "PROPERTY OF HAWKINS K12."

SENECA  
Yo, are y'all stupid?!

ISAAC  
We can fix that--!

SENECA  
-- So a school tablet goes missing  
and I just show up with the same  
model the next day?

AMIR  
Isaac can change out the case --!

SENECA  
And you got him thieving with you  
now? He's nine!

AMIR  
(points to Isaac) ISAAC  
It was his idea! (points to himself)  
It was my idea!

SENECA  
Take it back.

Amir and Isaac share amused looks.

ISAAC  
Take it back...?

AMIR  
You don't want it, we can sell it --

SENECA  
Take it! Back!

Amir shoos Isaac out. Looks down at a BEEP on his phone.  
Disappointed to see the message. Lingers in the doorway.

AMIR  
He call you?

Seneca snorts, like: *stupid question.*

AMIR  
Maybe we should call him?

She stares daggers at him, like: *stupid and deeply insulting question.* Just then, Renee walks past behind him.

Amir and Seneca exchange looks. Follow her into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kids again assemble around the island. Not venturing to speak as Renee slaps pizzas from the fridge on the table.

Starts plating up slices and placing one in front of each kid. Notices them just staring at her as she works.

RENEE

*Eat!*

They JUMP and obey. More out of fear than hunger. Except for:

CHANCE

(reaching for more)

What's up with that chocolate cake,  
though?

SENECA

What's up with you eating all our  
food, though?

Kale offers Seneca his slice of Amir's cake.

KALE

Happy birthday, Seneca.

Seneca is always a little nervous around Kale.

SENECA

(flustered)

Thanks...

AMIR

Bruh, you bein' real generous with  
my cake...

The kids relax and start to enjoy themselves. But Renee is preoccupied by SHADOWS moving under the front door...

INT. OUTSIDE BALDWIN APARTMENT - DAY

SETH BALDWIN paces and hesitates outside their door. A birthday card in each hand.

Still clinging to his 30s, but with a lot of mileage on his face and a lot of loss in his eyes.

He almost uses a key. Then almost knocks. Then almost rings the doorbell. Instead, resumes walking in a circle.

Renee opens the door to find him pacing the wrong way.

RENEE  
Change your mind?

SETH  
No. Maybe. No. Almost. No.

RENEE  
(amused)  
You're scared to death.

SETH  
Yeah.

She stands aside to invite him in.

RENEE  
Good.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The carefree frivolity of the kids cuts to a HOSTILE SILENCE as Renee enters with Seth trailing behind.

Chance and Kale drop their heads and stare at their food, suddenly embarrassed.

But Seneca and Amir just stare. Stunned. Angry. Hurt.

Only Isaac runs over to greet him, the only Baldwin child happy to see their:

ISAAC  
Dad!

Seth lifts Isaac in a hug. But is preoccupied by the reactions of his older children.

SETH  
Amir. Seneca. Happy birthday.

He offers his cards, but they just stare. He drops them on the table.

SETH  
Uh. So. Y'all ready for a fun weekend with your old man?

Now Amir and Seneca shift their angry stare to their mother, who avoids their eyes.

SETH  
 (realizing)  
 Guess your mother wanted to  
 surprise you. But don't worry, I --

Seneca looks Seth in the eye as she puts in her buds and turns her music WAY UP in his face, while he's talking.

Stomps off, SLAMMING herself inside her room.

Giving his mom one last angry glare, Amir walks off and does the same.

SETH  
 (to Renee)  
 You didn't tell them I was coming?

RENEE  
 (walking off)  
 If I did, they wouldn't be here.

INT. SENECA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Renee enters to find Seneca suddenly sitting up on her bed and turning away, as if to hide tears.

Renee sits facing opposite. Not knowing what to say.

SENECA  
 (rips out earbuds)  
 Come on, Ma! We get sent to the  
 office one time and you call him?!

RENEE  
 One time? You mean this week? And  
 for the record, he called me. He  
 wanted to come.

SENECA  
 And you let him?

RENEE  
 What the hell am I supposed to do,  
 Seneca? Y'all getting in all kinds  
 of trouble everywhere and I'm  
 working half the time. It's just  
 me! What am I supposed to do? I  
 don't know what to do...

Facing away, Seneca gets mortified as she realizes... Renee is crying. Seneca's never seen this, has no idea what to do.

SENECA  
Yo, Ma. Chill. Come on. Stop it.  
Don't be like...  
(angry, defeated)  
Alright, I'll go with him. Just,  
for real. Don't cry. Please?

Back still to her daughter, Renee dries her tears. Reaches back to touch Seneca's hand - a thank you. Then leaves.

INT. AMIR'S ROOM - DAY

Renee enters, is relieved to find Amir already packing.

RENEE  
You okay with all this?

AMIR  
Not really.

RENEE  
Wanna talk about it?

AMIR  
Not really.

RENEE  
I wouldn't let him come back to  
y'all if I wasn't sure he was  
serious this time.

AMIR  
He's serious every time, Ma. He  
just can't do it.

Renee watches him walk out. Turns as if to check on Isaac, only to find him bounding past, leaping into Seth's arms.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Everyone assembles again around a slightly mortified Seth.

SETH  
Don't be mad at your mother. This  
was my call. My fault.

He's distracted by the surrounding birthday paraphernalia.

SETH

Stupid to think I could miss so many of these and just show back up. All I can say is, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

*That word, from him, is like nails on a chalkboard to Amir, Renee, and especially Seneca.*

AMIR

(ignores Seth, to Renee)

Chance and Kale was supposed to spend the weekend.

RENEE

Bring 'em. Your daddy got room.

SETH

Actually, fellas, if you don't mind-

Renee clears her throat. Signals: *wrong move.*

SETH

Then I guess I don't either...

RENEE

Y'all need to get going if you don't wanna be late.

(off Seth's confusion)

You didn't get my text?

SETH

(checks phone)

"Museum?" What museum?

RENEE

It's the last night of the exhibit Isaac has to do a report on.

This launches a barrage of overlapping complaints:

AMIR

Seriously, Ma?! I got friends over!

ISAAC

I asked you to take me last week!

SENECA

Even on our birthday, we just get rolled over for this dude...

Renee pulls out a folder she got from the Principal; READS:

RENEE

"Isaac is falling behind in the difficult work because he's reluctant to ask his parents and siblings for help. He tells us that when he does, they, quote, 'yell at me.'" End quote.

This prompts a guilt that quiets the room. Momentarily. Then:

SENECA

(yelling)

We yell at you now?! You're telling your teachers we yell at you?!

AMIR

What are you, stupid! Ask for help if you need it, moron!

ISAAC

I asked yesterday and you said no!

Renee hides behind her hands again at the renewed hostilities. Seneca notices. Signals her brothers to stop.

SENECA

It's okay, Ma. It's okay. We'll go.

SETH

Yeah. It'll be fun. Something educational with dad and the kids. Then we'll do the birthday thing.

He reaches for Seneca but she pulls away. Not noticing, Renee starts packing up the birthday food.

RENEE

I'll put this up for y'all.

But Chance swoops ahead of her to gather his leftovers (and everybody else's) into a plastic container from his bag.

CHANCE

I got it, Ms. B.

RENEE

(astonished)

This little Negro brought Tupperware...

Kale drags Chance out as Renee hugs/kisses her kids goodbye.

RENEE  
 (mocking)  
 "Love you too, Ma. Thanks for the  
 cake, Ma."

The kids mumble their "sure's" and "whatever's" under their breath as they file out.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Only the sound of the train as the older kids and their friends hide from Seth/the situation behind their phones.

Seth foolishly tries to break the ice:

SETH  
 Man. Fifteen years old. Next thing  
 I know y'all be out the house.  
 (beat, no response)  
 Anything special y'all wanna do for  
 your birthday?

Amir and Seneca shrug, continue to text.

ISAAC  
 We never been to Coney Island.

SETH  
 (rubs Isaac's head)  
 Maybe when it's your birthday.

Seneca SNORTS derisively: *Yeah, right.*

SETH  
 How are you doing in school, girl?  
 Bet you're top of the class, smart  
 as you are.

Seneca stares daggers at him over her phone. Resumes texting.

SENECA  
 Something like that.

And she puts up her hood to avoid further discussion.

SETH  
 How about you, boy? Got a  
 girlfriend yet?

Amir just shrugs as he continues to text.

SETH

What you mean you don't know? Got  
your momma's mouth and your daddy's  
looks. Why ain't you got a girl?

AMIR

(glares at him)

I got abandonment issues.

Stung, Seth retreats. He ends up hiding behind his phone, too. Like everybody else on the train...

EXT. ROSE CENTER FOR EARTH AND SPACE - DAY

Formerly the Hayden Planetarium. The majestic, two-story tall model solar system capping the building GLEAMS in sunlight.

Yet even this spectacle isn't enough to pull our approaching clan from their cells (except to snap a few selfies).

They only emerge on approaching a strange sight on the Center's front steps: a man apparently FROZEN in mid-step.

A LIVING STATUE, so realistic the kids seem unsure whether it's a sculpture or performance art as they approach.

SETH

Homeboy killing the mannequin  
challenge, ain't he?

SENECA

(rolls eyes)

Nobody does that anymore.

Amir leans in close to investigate.

AMIR

Too good to be a statue.

Kale flinches at the statue as if he's going to hit it, trying to bait the person out if it's performance art.

KALE

If you're real and don't want to  
get slapped up, speak now or  
forever hold this L.

He waits a beat, then SLAPS the statue. Jumps back with his hands up. But the Living Statue doesn't move.

KALE

(sure of it)

Statue.

Seneca's not so sure. Knocks on the statue's cheek. It looks fleshy, but CLANKS like metal. Something's not right....

Taking out a WORKSHEET from his bookbag, Isaac runs past them up the stairs, to a poster featuring DAVID WEI, advertising:

ISAAC  
(reading)  
Inflation Reactor. Dad! This is it!

Seth lags behind, looks with concern to his RINGING PHONE.

SETH  
I'm sorry little man, but, Daddy's gotta take this.

Amir and Seneca roll their eyes: *here it comes...*

ISAAC  
(re: worksheet)  
But I'm supposed to fill this out with an adult...

SETH  
(kneeling)  
Buddy. Daddy... he used to have a problem. And now I help other people with this problem. So when they call, it's important...

This is news to Amir/Seneca. They're not sure they buy it.

ISAAC  
(re: worksheet)  
So who's gonna help me with this?

Staring bullets at Seth, Seneca puts a hand on Isaac's shoulder. Amir follows suit.

SENECA  
I got you, man. I'll help.

AMIR  
Somebody has to...

But Isaac angrily SHRUGS off their hands. Mopes upstairs.

SETH  
I'm sorry, Isaac. Guys, will you please tell him I'm sorry.

Amir/Seneca bristle at the word. Ignore Seth to pursue Isaac.

INT. ROSE CENTER FOR EARTH AND SPACE - LOBBY - DAY

CLOSE: on a BANNER featuring DAVID WEI standing proudly with the Inflation Reactor, reading: "**Where There's a Will, There's a WEI: David Wei and his Inflation Reactor!**"

PAN DOWN as Kale, Chance, Amir, and Seneca trail a sullen Isaac as he stomps his way up to a line for the exhibit.

AMIR

Yo. Slow up.

ISAAC

Y'all gotta talk to him like that?

AMIR

You gonna defend him now?

ISAAC

You ain't gotta be mean to him!

SENECA

You're just mad we're messing up  
your "cute little kid" hustle. Know  
you're scamming him into something.

ISAAC

I'm scamming him into *not* leaving!

Amir and Seneca share a conflicted look over this revelation.

LILY (O.S.)

Isaac! Cool! You're here!

Up runs LILY, Isaac's naive, nerdy, eight-year-old, Dominican, 4th grade classmate.

ISAAC

S'up, Lily.

With way too much enthusiasm for Isaac, Lily whips out her own WORKSHEET to compare notes with his.

LILY

Did you get number three yet?

PARKER (O.S.)

Yooooo....!!!!

Amir looks down at the voice, unusually flustered to find PARKER, Lily's fifteen-year-old sister, sitting against a nearby wall, drawing MANGA characters in a SKETCHBOOK.

An Otaku girl with PURPLE HAIR and RIPPED JEANS under a CHEERLEADER skirt. Also: she's super-cute and Amir loves her.

AMIR  
(waaay too eager)  
Oh! Hey! Parker! What's up!

Seneca has to bite her lip to stop from laughing in his face.

PARKER  
(standing)  
Forgot Isaac's in my sister's pain  
in the ass science class. Y'all on  
chaperone duty, too?

AMIR  
Uh, yeah. Pretty much.

PARKER  
Can you believe this crap? They got  
an exhibit downstairs on Kirby  
machines and I'm stuck up here with  
this midget.

LILY  
(offended; corrects)  
Little person. And I'm not--!

Chance speaks with his mouth somehow full of food.

CHANCE  
What's a Kirby machine?

AMIR  
It's from comic books. PARKER  
It's from comic books.

They laugh awkwardly/shyly.

KALE  
You two nerds? Of course it is.

PARKER  
(ignores Kale)  
It's the last night, too. Last  
chance to see it.

Amir looks like he's racking his brain to make an opportunity out of this. Kale figures it out first:

KALE  
Hey, Seneca can take Lily in!

SENECA  
I can?

AMIR  
 (catching on)  
 Yeah! Seneca's into all that math-science stuff. She won't mind!

SENECA  
 I won't?

PARKER  
 (to Lily)  
 How 'bout it, shrimp? Seneca'll take you. She's super-nice.

KALE, CHANCE, AMIR, ISAAC  
 She is?

Seneca stares daggers at them. Before relenting to Amir's pleading look. *Fine.*

SENECA  
 (to Lily)  
 It's cool, kid. Me, Kale and Chance'll look out for you.

CHANCE  
 I ain't going in there. Half hour of math homework in the dark?  
 That's my definition of hell.

KALE  
 And actually... I was gonna roll with Parker and Amir.

SENECA  
 (hurt)  
 Oh. Okay. Cool.

PARKER  
 Seneca my dude, I so owe you! I'll name my first three cats after you!

As the door to the Inflation Exhibit opens and Seneca starts moving with the line inside, she looks back sadly as the other older kids run off laughing with Parker.

INT. MUSEUM INFLATION EXHIBIT - DAY

Seneca, Lily, and Isaac enter a large, crowded auditorium, with pictures of Wei and the reactor lining the walls.

LILY  
 Ms. Seneca? Can I hold your hand?

SENECA

Uh, bruh? I don't think that's--

But as the lights dim, Lily CLAMPS onto Seneca's hand with what must be, from Seneca's face, a shockingly tight grip.

SENECA

Um. Okay. Ow.

Just before the auditorium goes completely dark, a HOLOGRAM of David Wei appears overhead.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM)

I missed the last three years of my first daughter's life.

This catches Seneca off guard. Takes her attention.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM)

She was dying in Indonesia while I was here, in medical school, searching for a cure for the disease that was killing her. I never found that cure and she died alone. That taught me something. That what matters isn't trying to prevent the suffering of the people we love. That's a fool's errand. What matters is being there for them. Being there with them. The real enemy isn't disease or even death. It's distance. I dropped out of medical school that day. And I dedicated my life to eradicating the distance that separates us.

Seneca gets uncomfortable. Takes out her phone.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM)

Okay, sermon over. We've covered the why. What about the how?

Wei disappears, replaced by a hologram of an EMPTY STAR FIELD. The return to talk of science draws Seneca back in.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM; V.O.)

Before Einstein, we thought space was just nothing. Just the stuff between the stuff that actually exists. But Einstein discovered that space has properties. A topography that can be altered. Warped. Shaped.

Now a model of a cross section of space, represented as a flat surface. On one side is a small ball labelled "Earth." On the other, a small ball labeled "Mars".

A graphic over top of them represents the distance (144 million miles) and the time to traverse it (250 days).

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM; V.O.)

My own humble contribution was the discovery that space can also be folded. In the presence of a mass field of sufficient power, two distant points in space can be brought together.

The flat cross section FOLDS UPWARD bringing Earth and Mars closer together. The graphic now reads the planets as only 1 million miles away, and the travel time reduced to two weeks.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM)

Admittedly, creating mass fields large enough to traverse points more than a single light year apart would require more energy than mankind has produced in history.

Now the hologram shifts to show DR. LAURA SNYDER working on the Foldspace Telescope.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM; V.O.)

But with our Foldspace Telescope we can create a series of very tiny folds, just large enough to send a few photons through. Allowing us to actually see the surface of planets in other solar systems *in real time*.

As David Wei's hologram returns, Lily is preoccupied enough with her worksheet to release Seneca.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM)

Such an endeavor is not without its dangers.

Freed, Seneca wanders to a window overlooking the LIVING STATUE on the steps below.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM)

Einstein's other discovery was that space and time are inseparable. To alter one is to alter the other.

(MORE)

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM) (CONT'D)  
 So it's very unlikely, but  
 technically possible, that people  
 near the Foldscape Telescope will  
 experience temporal anomalies. And  
 there's been talk about  
 electromagnetic effects knocking  
 out the power, but I don't think  
 that's very li --

No sooner than the worlds leave his mouth, Seneca looks up as the power GOES OFF, to frightened GASPS from the crowd.

A beat, and the lights return, along with a smirking hologram of David Wei.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM)  
 Sorry, folks. Little scientist  
 humor. But seriously, consider this  
 like the disclaimers on a bottle of  
 aspirin. I'm not saying this  
 because I believe it could happen,  
 I'm saying it so I don't get sued.

Seneca looks down from her window again, and JUMPS IN FRIGHT!

Down below, the Living Statue has MOVED! It has a TERRIFIED LOOK on its face... and it's staring STRAIGHT UP AT SENECA!

Seneca steps back from the window; panicked.

DAVID WEI (HOLOGRAM; V.O.)  
 I can assure you, Foldscape  
 technology is completely safe...

INT. KIRBY MUSEUM EXHIBIT - DAY

Amir and especially Parker are geeked as they take in sculptures of KIRBY MACHINES, based on the exotic tech drawn by Jack Kirby in early Marvel Comics.

PARKER  
 Yo, this is crazy! You see this?

As he trails her around the exhibit, Amir isn't exactly nervous, but for some reason seems hesitant to make a move.

AMIR  
 Uh, Yeah. Dope.

Parker kneels before a sculpture to take in the details. With her distracted, Kale mouths to Amir explicitly: **Get. Closer.**

PARKER

I never liked Kirby as a kid, but  
now? I mean look at this.

Amir waves Kale off as if he doesn't need the help. But he leans down next to Parker as she snaps a picture. Parker doesn't pull away, so Amir gets closer. Kissing close...

So close that Parker, not noticing him, BANGS her head against his as she backs away.

PARKER

Ow! Bro!

AMIR

Sorry! Sorry...

Amir glares back at Kale. *Thanks for the advice, idiot!*

INT. KIRBY MUSEUM EXHIBIT - LATER

Parker sits against a wall and sketches an exhibit. Steals hopeful glance as at Amir across the room.

Fed up with their half-stepping, Kale nonchalantly walks over to Amir and roughly SHOVES him in Parker's direction.

Parker feigns protecting her face as Amir stumbles over.

PARKER

Easy. Didn't bring my helmet.

AMIR

Funny.

(re: her sketch)

Can I see?

Parker shares; nervous for his reaction. Brightens seeing him impressed by her caricature of him firing a Kirby machine.

AMIR

That's mad good! Can I have it?

PARKER

(hand out)

Ten dollars.

Amir scoffs, snaps a quick pic of the sketch with his phone.

PARKER

Yoooo! I know you did not just  
copyright infringe me!

AMIR  
It's my face...

They laugh. But just when Amir was finally making some time:

MUSEUM LOUD SPEAKER  
Attention, patrons. The Rose Center  
for Air and Space is now closed.  
Please proceed to the nearest exit.

PARKER  
(packing up)  
Frick! We're late!

AMIR  
Just by a few minutes.

PARKER  
You don't know my sister...

INT. ROSE CENTER FOR EARTH AND SPACE - LOBBY - DAY

Sure enough, Lily is sobbing pathetically, holding on to Seneca's hand for dear life as Parker et al walk up.

PARKER  
For real?! I'm five minutes late  
and you're crying?!

LILY  
(wiping away tears)  
Am not!

Parker rolls her eyes, pries Seneca's hand free of Lily's.

PARKER  
Sorry, Sen.

SENECA  
No biggie.

But she has to rub/stretch her hand to get the blood flowing.

Parker tries to fall in step with Amir as they all exit. But gets annoyed with Lily's repeated attempts to hold her hand.

PARKER  
Lily! Would you chill! Jesus!

Lily's stung by the rebuke. But cheers up when Kale winks at her and offers his hand. (Though even he winces at her grip.)

EXT. ROSE CENTER FOR EARTH AND SPACE - DUSK

The clouds glow a luminous purple-pink as the sun sets over the city. Perfect romantic backdrop as Parker turns to Amir.

PARKER

So. What you getting into tonight?

Kale deliberately ushers Lily et al away to give them space.

AMIR

Uh... I'm supposed to hang with my dad or whatever. If he shows up.

PARKER

I'm going shopping. For a dress. For freshman prom or whatever.

AMIR

(laughs; surprised)

You're going to freshman prom?

PARKER

Oh, my bad. Forgot you're too cool for all that.

AMIR

Everybody is!

PARKER

Okay. Guess I'll hope somebody else asks to take me.

(off Amir's non-reaction)

Very big hint I just dropped there.

Parker's smile melts when Amir still can't bring himself to just walk through the wide opening she's left him.

AMIR

I would but... With all this stuff with my dad... I probably can't --

PARKER

(hurt; embarrassed)

Nah. It's cool. I get it. I'll just pick that hint back up and uh...

Anyway. See you guys at school.

She walks off in a huff. Throws Lily's hand off when Lily again tries to take it.

Amir takes a few steps after as if to pursue, but can't do it. Looks to his siblings/friends, who avoid his eyes.

EXT. ROSE CENTER FOR EARTH AND SPACE - NIGHT

Janitors sweep up outside. It's fully dark now and Seneca and the boys are still waiting on the curb with no sign of Seth.

Kale moves to a still sullen Amir and a still eating Chance.

KALE

I don't get it. She clearly wanted you to. Why you ain't just ask her?

AMIR

(snaps)

Why don't you just ask my sister?

Kale looks over nervously to make sure Seneca didn't hear.

KALE

Bruh! Chill! I was just asking...

AMIR

Parker's rich. Folks own a Brownstone. Dad's a lawyer. Mom's a Senator. She's a artist. Makes straight As.

(sighs; despairs)

And what the hell am I?

Kale and Chance share a concerned look over Amir's confession. Then, fed up waiting, Seneca stands; marches off.

SENECA

That's it. I'm out.

ISAAC

He's coming back, Seneca! He's just on the phone!

Seneca gestures up and down the street.

SENECA

On the phone where, Isaac? Queens?

Amir stands and joins her.

AMIR

She's right. Let's go.

But Isaac's holding his ground.

ISAAC

You go. I'm staying.

SENECA  
Good luck with that.

ISAAC  
And I'm telling Ma y'all left me!

This stops Amir and Seneca in their tracks. Amir turns back to Isaac, determined. It's time to stop bullshitting the kid.

AMIR  
Look, Isaac. There's people you wait for, people you believe. And then there's people like Dad.

SETH (O.S.)  
What about people like me?

Amir looks over to see Seth returning, arms full of hot dogs and pizza from street vendors.

SETH  
Just thought since I pulled y'all from dinner... Eat up.

ISAAC  
Thanks, Dad!

Isaac grabs and stuffs his face with a hot-dog. But Amir and Seneca remain aloof. Upset.

AMIR  
Not hungry.

SENECA  
Me either.

They walk off to the subway entrance with Kale. Chance lingers by, eyes following Seth's food like a stray dog.

CHANCE  
I'm hungry...

And Seth absently hands him the remaining food.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

The phones are back out. As is the awkward silence and lack of eye-contact. Seth braves it, tentatively approaches Amir.

SETH  
She was pretty.

Amir glares at him; annoyed and confused.

SETH  
 Girl on the steps? One that got  
 away?

Amir keeps glaring at him, like: *what's your point?*

Seth risks taking a seat beside him.

SETH  
 Thing about some girls? You gotta --

AMIR  
 -- Bruh... stop. I only take advice  
 from people I know.

And Amir abruptly moves to the nearest empty seat, near Seneca and an upset Isaac.

Seth looks over his children. Angry. Sullen. Unreachable.

SETH  
 I just hate to see it. Y'all not  
 living up to your potential. You're  
 so smart, and beautiful and good. I  
 wish y'all could see yourselves the  
 way I see you.

AMIR  
 Infrequently?

SETH  
 Joke at me all you want. Go ahead.  
 I can take it. But I'm not going  
 anywhere. You can't run me off.

SENECA  
 (still texting)  
 He's right. We can't run him off.

Seth is momentarily relieved and surprised, but then Seneca continues, coldly, while still texting:

SENECA  
 I used to be like you, Isaac, Used  
 to think if I was good enough in  
 school or pretty enough or prayed  
 enough, I could get him to stay.  
 But then I learned: I can't do  
 nothing to change the fact that  
 running away is just who my father  
 is. Ain't no sense getting upset  
 about it, Amir. If we want him  
 gone, all we gotta do is wait.

This puts the whole subway in stunned silence. Chance, Kale, even STRANGERS are frozen in shock at Seneca's cold vitriol.

Seth can't fathom how to respond to his daughter's calm, seething hatred. The moment is broken when his phone rings.

SETH  
(looks at the number)  
We'll talk when I get back.

Seneca looks up to see Seth walk out into an adjacent, less populated subway car. Looking around at the others' reactions, even she looks worried she may have gone too far.

ISAAC  
Yo, why you gotta do that?!

SENECA  
Isaac, just... shut up.

As the argument intensifies, Kale and Chance look up as the subway lights BLINK ON AND OFF.

CHANCE  
Uh, guys...?

ISAAC  
(ignores him; to Seneca)  
He's trying! Why can't you try?

AMIR  
Shut up, Isaac. You don't understand.

The lights now flicker more intensely. Kale looks down at his phone: *it's flickering on and off in time with the lights!*

Freaked out, Kale stands from his seat, tries to show the Baldwin siblings his phone...

KALE  
Hey! For real! Guys!

Isaac simultaneously points at both his siblings.

ISAAC  
Y'all the reason he's never around!

SENECA  
Us? He lived with us before you were born! Maybe he left to get away from you!

The lights flicker faster. More ominously. Almost violently.

CHANCE  
Nah, but **for real** for real. Guys!

But the Baldwins can only see each other:

ISAAC  
(to Seneca)  
You're a bitch!

AMIR  
Yo! Watch your mouth!

Seneca rises and approaches Isaac with fire in her eyes.

SENECA  
Call me that again. Go ahead. I  
dare you.

ISAAC  
You're a --!!!

KA-THOOM! And now the lights go COMPLETELY BLACK. Our cast's familiar VOICES ring out from the darkness:

AMIR (O.S.)  
What the hell?

CHANCE (O.S.)  
Tried to tell your loud behinds--

KA-BOOM!

EMERGENCY LIGHTS FLICKER overhead. In FLASHES we see the subway car QUAKE VIOLENTLY, throwing everyone to the ground!

SHOWERS of SPARKS fly into the car as the subway car DERAILS and GRINDS against the edges of the tracks.

In the STROBING LIGHT in the car, Seneca sees Isaac thrown on his back; slide towards SPARKING, exposed electrical wires.

She desperately grabs and pulls him to her. Amir rushes over, spreads his jacket like a cape to protect them.

With a DEAFENING WHINE, the subway car finally skids to an abrupt STOP. Sending them all TUMBLING away from each other.

A long beat of unmoving silence. Then the sound of feet shuffling and glass crunching. Somebody survived...

A shaft of light pierces the blackness. In its reflected glow off a cracked window, we see it's Seneca. Using a flashlight app on her phone.

SENECA  
 Everybody okay?  
 (beat; no response)  
 Anybody okay?

ISAAC  
 (weak)  
 Seneca...?

Seneca finds and frantically pulls Isaac from a pile of debris and broken glass. Desperately looks him over.

ISAAC  
 I'm alright. Sen, I'm okay.

They turn to see Amir struggling under a collapsed subway seat. Run over to help, pull him to his feet.

SENECA  
 You hurt?

AMIR  
 Nah. You? Isaac?

ISAAC  
 We're cool.

Amir lights up his phone's flashlight. Searches...

AMIR  
 Chance? Kale?

His light finds them rising; shoving each other as they disentangle from the conjoined heap they fell into.

CHANCE  
 Present.

KALE  
 We're good.

They light up their own phones. Five shafts of light cleave through the darkness as they survey the damage.

Then, Isaac, remembering, PANICS.

ISAAC  
 Dad!

Before anyone can stop him, Isaac runs headlong into the adjoining subway car.

A few steps in, he and his phone's light DISAPPEAR.

SENECA  
Isaac..?!

Seneca's searching light can't find him. As if the darkness is so thick in the next car her light can't penetrate it.

An agonizingly long beat, then Isaac REAPPEARS, panicked.

ISAAC  
He's gone! Dad's gone!

SENECA  
Don't run off like that!

AMIR  
What do you mean, "gone?"

Panicked, Amir scans the car with the light of his own phone.

AMIR  
Dad...? Dad!  
(no response; shouts)  
DAAAAD!

The kids exchange fearful looks at the lack of the response. Realizing they might have to face this on their own...

ISAAC  
Somebody call 911!

KALE  
Been trying. Can't get a signal.

CHANCE  
(to Amir)  
What do we do! Amir, what do we do?

AMIR  
I don't know, man! I don't..!  
(beat; calms)  
First, we gotta get out of here.

ISAAC  
What about Dad? He might be hurt.

Seneca searches the car Seth disappeared into with her light.

SENECA  
He's not hurt. He ran off.

ISAAC  
In the middle of a subway crash?  
Come on! He wouldn't do that!

AMIR

Y'all. We can't stay down here  
talking about it --

SENECA

-- Ain't nothing to talk about! He  
ran off! Like always!

CHANCE

Everybody did.

SENECA

What?

Chance sweeps the car with his phone. There's no one else  
there. They're alone in the car.

CHANCE

Weren't there other people here?

KALE

Maybe they got off and we didn't  
notice?

SENECA

"Maybe?" What else could have  
happened to them?

ISAAC

Dad didn't get off!

He's got a point. They look around with growing panic.

AMIR

Okay... Okay, we have to go.

ISAAC

But--

Isaac's cut off by a weird sound. Is it... *crying*?

KALE

What is that? Is that a baby?

ISAAC

It could be Dad.

(off their looks)

He could be hurt!

(to Seneca)

You really wanna tell mom we didn't  
even try to look for him?

Seneca surprisingly needs no convincing. The first into the  
adjoining car, marching towards the sound.

SENECA  
 Y'all gonna stand around talking  
 about it forever? Let's go.

Amir hesitates. Then joins the others following her. Only Chance lags behind.

CHANCE  
 For real? We're going towards the weird, scary noise? We're gonna do just what White people would do?

KALE (O.S.)  
 Come on!

INT. SUBWAY - ADJOINING CAR - NIGHT

Huddled together, the kids endeavor deeper into the subway train. Their searching lights pick out dozens of abandoned bags, purses, briefcases. But no people. Not even bodies.

CHANCE  
 Seriously. Where is everybody?

KALE  
 Maybe they were evacuated? When we were knocked out?

Seneca's light finds Amir going through an abandoned purse.

SENECA  
 Now? Really?

AMIR  
 I'm looking for a working phone!

ISAAC  
 Anything?

AMIR  
 No.

Amir's phone's light FLICKERS and then GOES OFF.

AMIR  
 And now mine's dead.

SENECA  
 We gotta stick to one phone light.

This scares them. That will make it *really* dark down here.

SENECA

That or all our phones go dead at once, and we're stuck down here.

No arguing with that. All but Kale switch off. One thin shaft of light, giving about ten feet of visibility straight ahead.

A few terrifying steps into the dark, and then suddenly stop, as... THE CRYING starts again. Loud. Close.

Kale sweeps his phone ahead, SPOTLIGHTING a CHILD. Small, maybe 4 or 5. Hands clasped over their face. Looking away.

KALE

Hello?

(beat; no response)

You okay? You hurt?

Nothing. Just more crying. Chance pulls Kale away.

CHANCE

Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope.

KALE

You wanna leave a kid here? Alone?

CHANCE

Nah, fam. I seen this movie. That ain't no kid. That's a monster.

Kale hands off his phone to Amir. Walks towards the Child.

KALE

Kid. Would you please look at me?

The kid stops crying instantly. *Weirdly* instantly. A long beat, then he suddenly turns around and removes his hands.

Chance SCREAMS. Scared by Chance, the Child SCREAMS, and returns to his original position. Kale glares at Chance.

CHANCE

(shrugs)

My bad. Thought he was a monster. I was wrong. I can admit it.

KALE

Gimme a snack. Candy. Something...

Chance retrieves and hands Kale a Snickers. Kale approaches the Child, unwrapping it, kneeling.

KALE

Yo. You hungry?

The Child turns around. Lowers his hands. We now see it's a boy. White. Ghostly pale, with frightened eyes.

He takes the Snickers tentatively. Sniffs it, as if he's never seen one. Then takes a few nibbles. Rabbit-like. Cute.

KALE

What's your name?

The Child thinks for a second, then points to a name tag that seems to EMERGE from the folds of his clothing, reading:

KALE

Oscar? Where's your mom and Dad?

OSCAR (The Child) shrugs.

KALE

You hurt?

Oscar shakes his head "no."

KALE

Can you walk?

Oscar nods his head "yes."

CHANCE

Can he talk?

(off their looks)

What? Boy look a little off.

Oscar shakes his head "no." He can't talk.

CHANCE

See? Not a dumb question.

KALE

Wanna come with us? We'll help you find your parents.

Oscar looks them over. Frightened. Unsure.

KALE

I'll let you ride on my shoulders.

Oscar's eyes light up: "Really?" Kale smiles, nods, and Oscar shoots his hands out. International toddler for "Pick me up!"

Kale takes his hand, and INSTANTLY, shit gets weird.

The shadows at the back of the bus DEEPEN and DARKEN. Kale could swear he sees them UNDULATING. Slowly CHURNING.

Then, a TENDRIL pulls loose, WHIPS out towards him!

Kale falls back on his butt, and releases Oscar. And as soon as he does, the Tendril VANISHES.

AMIR  
What? What happened?!

KALE  
Gimme that light!

Amir does, and Kale sweeps the back of the car with it. Nothing. No moving shadows. No tendrils.

AMIR  
You see something...?

Looking back at the terrified looks on the others' faces, Kale makes a decision. Laughs.

KALE  
Nah. Just... trick of the light.

Kale stands, reaches again for Oscar. But Oscar is careful now to pull his hands inside his jacket as Kale lifts him.

CHANCE  
So, we just taking him? That's white baby trafficking!

KALE  
We're just gonna drop him off with the first cop we see.

CHANCE  
So the cop can shoot us for white baby trafficking?!

AMIR  
(walking off)  
Okay, we got him. We need to go.

SENECA  
Wait. I mean... he probably just ran off, but... what about Dad?

AMIR  
Sen, it's like you said. We keep looking for him until all our phones die and we're just stuck down here in the dark. We gotta go while we can. We'll send help back.  
(to a worried Isaac)  
Okay?

Isaac reluctantly nods his agreement. Follows Amir out. Seneca lingers, using her own phone to take one last look.

AMIR (O.S.)  
Seneca?

SENECA  
Yeah. Aight. Coming.

Chance shakes his head incredulously as he follows her out.

CHANCE  
We're doing it. We're stealing a white baby. Know how much white babies cost? A lot. That's why only white people have 'em.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Freezing. Scared. The kids shiver as they trek through the dark, labyrinthine subway tunnels, led by Amir's single light.

It comes to rest on the wreckage of their subway's LEAD CAR. PANCAKED against the rear car of another train.

CHANCE  
What happened?

SENECA  
No power, no brakes.

ISAAC  
Think they made it?

SENECA  
No blood. Or bodies.

As they look, the phone's light FLICKERS and DIES.

A panicked second of darkness, then Seneca's phone lights up the darkness.

KALE  
That's it. One last phone.

They huddle close to Seneca to check her phone's reserves. **29%**. They share a worried look. Keep moving.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - LATER

The power on Seneca's phone now reads 19% as the guys trudge on. Tired. Losing hope. Then:

ISAAC  
(points)  
There!

Ahead, a shaft of MOONLIGHT from a GRATE above reveals a SUBWAY PLATFORM leading to the surface. Isaac runs for it.

SENECA  
Hey! Wait!

EXT. MID-MANHATTAN - OUTSIDE SUBWAY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Isaac races to the top of the stairs ahead of the others. Cups his hands to his mouth; takes a deep breath to scream:

ISAAC  
DAA--

TERRIFIED FATHER  
(running past)  
-- DANIEL!! DANIEL!!

DISTRAUGHT SISTER  
(screaming past)  
MARIA!! MARIA!!

Isaac stumbles back in shock. The others emerge from the subway entrance behind him, and their eyes go WIDE, seeing:

CHAOS. Distant FIRES. Dozens of WRECKED CARS. People, frenzied with panic, running everywhere, shouting the names of missing loved ones.

And DARKNESS. The city lights are out. No power as far as the eye can see. Beyond the headlights from nearby cars, the city is enveloped in an almost sinister, MALEVOLENT darkness.

CHANCE  
Anybody else wanna go back in the tunnel?

They're considering it, when they hear a familiar voice:

PARKER (O.S.)  
Lily! LILL-LLLYYYY!

Amir is shocked to see a grief-stricken Parker running past, tears running down her face.

AMIR  
Parker...?

Seeing Amir, Parker runs over, eyes WILD.

PARKER  
Amir! Is Lily with you?! Have you seen her?! Please...!

AMIR  
Whoa, Park... calm down --

Amir is stunned as Parker collapses into his chest. Sobbing.

PARKER  
I turned my back for a second and she was just... gone! I can't find her anywhere! Please, you have to help me... Please...

Amir looks around, befuddled. All of the kids looking on, even Isaac, signal emphatically: "Hug her, you idiot!"

Amir awkwardly does, finds his bravery (or an ability to fake it) in the moment.

AMIR  
Yeah, Parker. Of course we'll help.

Parker suddenly realizes what she's doing. Pulls away.

PARKER  
Sorry! I'm sorry, I--!  
(calms; notices)  
Why does Kale have a baby?

CHANCE  
Why does he have a white baby...

SENECA  
No chance you seen our Dad? Late 30's? Dark-skinned? Lies a lot?

PARKER  
No. Sorry.

KALE  
(to Amir)  
What are we gonna do?

AMIR  
Why's everybody keep asking me?!

CHANCE

You wanna boss us all around when  
everything is safe! Then the world  
falls apart and you get all humble!

MOUNTED POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)

CLEAR THE STREETS! NOW!

Parker pulls Amir clear of a pair of MOUNTED POLICEMEN riding through the crowd like twin Paul Reveres, shouting:

MOUNTED POLICEMAN 2

CLEAR THE STREETS! 24 hour curfew  
is in effect! Temporary shelter is  
being set up in Central Park. Go  
there or go home, NOW!

The kids join crowds rushing them with questions/requests:

KALE

(holding up Oscar)

Mister, we found this kid --

PARKER

Sir, my sister --! I can't find --!

ISAAC

Our dad is missing --!

But the cop shoos them off. Rides ahead; yells back.

MOUNTED POLICEMAN 2

Central! Park! Now! If you're on  
the street in an hour, you'll be  
subject to arrest!

And with that he's gone.

PARKER

(to Amir)

An hour? What if we can't find her?

SENECA

(clears throat)

Yo. Amir. Don't you think...? If  
Lily's nearby, then...

Seneca nods towards the cops riding off in the distance.

AMIR

(catching on)

Yeah!

(MORE)

AMIR (CONT'D)

Hey Parker, if Lily's nearby, she probably just heard the same thing we did. She's probably on her way to Central Park right now.

PARKER

Right! That's right! Come on!

She grabs Amir's hand and drags him away. The others follow.

EXT. MANHATTAN - STREET - NIGHT

The crowd is less panicked and more orderly as everyone joins in the mass exodus to Central Park.

Seneca walks off slightly from the others, a hand to her ear, as she tries to make a phone call over the noise:

PHONE

Service is currently unavailable.  
At the beep, you can record a message locally to be forwarded when service is restored. BEEP!

SENECA

(pissed)

It's Seneca. Again. I don't expect you to take us with you wherever you are. I mean, why start now? But you could at least let us know you're okay, so we don't waste time looking for you.

She angrily hangs up. Touches another contact. Clicks through the same automated message.

SENECA

Hey, Ma. It's Sen. We're okay. Headed to some FEMA type situation in Central Park. I'll call you if something changes.

(beat; sotto)

And if you hear from Dad, can you call me?

Up ahead, Parker just now notices she's still holding Amir's hand. Drops it suddenly. Laughs; embarrassed.

PARKER

It's like I'm channeling her.

AMIR

I didn't mind.

They share an awkward look. Go quiet.

Meanwhile, as a disapproving Chance looks on, Kale pretends to be an airplane flying Oscar on through the crowd.

Oscar's infectious laughter cuts short when he sees something in an alley: A LIVING STATUE! Like the one at the museum!

A WOMAN. Terrified. Hands cupped to her mouth, SCREAMING. As if she froze while shouting the name of a missing child.

The rest of the crowd, preoccupied, doesn't notice. Strangely, Oscar doesn't seem scared by it. Or surprised...

CLOSE on a handwritten sign: "No you may NOT charge your phone! So DON'T ASK!"

It's set up on a tent, just inside of:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Amir and the others wait with a nervous Parker in a long line outside a hastily constructed tent check-in station.

Haggard CITY WORKERS sit under floodlights powered by gas generators, checking people in on laptops as cops look on.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK ENTRANCE - CHECK-IN TENT - LATER

Seneca and Isaac are being checked in. Await word from a City Worker typing in their missing person request.

CITY WORKER 1  
(checks laptop)  
No Seth Baldwin has checked in yet.  
But we'll register your search.

Isaac deflates. Is surprised to see Seneca looks worried, too. When she notices him noticing, she goes all aloof.

SENECA  
(shrugs)  
Figures.

Meanwhile, at another check-in station, Parker pleads with another City Worker.

PARKER  
No. No, that's wrong. Check again.

CITY WORKER 2  
I'm sorry. You can come back if --

PARKER

NO! She's here. She's gotta be.  
Check again!

AMIR

(gently pulling her away)  
Parker...

But Parker angrily throws off his hands. Marches for the exit, pushing against the flow of traffic. Amir follows.

AMIR

Hey! Where are you going?

PARKER

She's out there. I gotta find her.

AMIR

Parker, there's a curfew. We can't leave. It's not safe!

She spins on him, incensed.

PARKER

Leave me alone! You don't even care! About Lily, and definitely not about me! So stop acting like you do!

And she tries to storm off again. But Amir, fed up, GRABS her hand and pulls her back.

AMIR

No. You're not going out there.

PARKER

Who do you think you're talking to?

AMIR

You! This ain't about safe, it's about smart. What if she comes here looking for you and you're not here? Last thing Lily needs is for you to be wandering around in the dark getting yourself hurt!

The others, walking over, are waiting for her to bite his head off in response, but....

PARKER

(beat; relents)

Okay...

AMIR

Okay?

She walks past him back into the park, towards the shelters.

PARKER

Okay.

Amir looks to the others, looking as impressed with him as he currently is with himself.

AMIR

(pops collar; cocky)

Okay!

And he TRIPS over his feet running to catch up to Parker. Leaps up to play it off. Looks back to see Kale FACEPALMING.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NURSERY TENT - NIGHT

Holding Oscar, Kale trails an EXHAUSTED NURSE around a tent full of crying, displaced CHILDREN.

EXHAUSTED NURSE

No last name?

KALE

I'm not sure he can talk. Name tag just says Oscar.

EXHAUSTED NURSE

(checks clipboard)

Nobody's come by looking for an Oscar. You can just leave him here.

Kale looks around. The place is a smelly cacophony of bawling children, annoyed NURSES, and scary COPS taking statements.

KALE

Here?

Oscar looks terrified at the prospect of being left here. Looks to Kale with pleading eyes.

KALE

It's okay, bud. It looks scary but those nice nurses and cops will...

Oscar tears up and Kale can't continue. He walks over to the others waiting nearby with pleading eyes of his own.

CHANCE

No.

KALE  
Just for the night!

CHANCE  
No! Lucky we got him passed this  
many cops without getting shot!

KALE  
(hands Oscar to Chance)  
Okay, so you turn him in.

CHANCE  
Think I won't? Watch.

But Chance's determination wilts when he sees the misery  
inside the tent. Looks down at Oscar crying in his arms.

A PASSING COP double-takes, seeing black teenagers holding a  
white toddler.

PASSING COP  
He with you guys?

CHANCE  
Yeah. He's our brother.

INT. CENTRAL PARK - BIKE TRAILS - NIGHT

The kids walk with a big crowd, following signs that point to  
"Food, Shelter, Water." Deeper into the park.

Isaac hustles to catch up to his siblings.

ISAAC  
I gotta ask y'all something. And  
you can't laugh.

AMIR  
Should be easy. You ain't funny.

ISAAC  
Is Dad a Christian?

Seneca and Amir share a look, then CRACK UP laughing.

AMIR  
I take it back! You're hilarious!

ISAAC  
Y'all suck...

SENECA  
Man, why would you ask that?

ISAAC

Heard some kids saying this is the Rapture. That's why people disappeared.

AMIR

I promise you, wherever Dad is, it ain't heaven.

ISAAC

Okay, so if not the Rapture, then what?

Nearby people overhearing chime in with their opinions:

ELDERLY BUSINESSMAN

Terrorist attack. Heard Al Jazeera blew up Con-Ed.

SENECA

Al-Qaeda?

ELDERLY BUSINESSMAN

Exactly!

ASIAN POTHEAD

It was Russians. Hacked the grid. Then KGB'd people in the dark.

HOMELESS WOMAN

I'm Russian, you racist! It wasn't us. It was that telescope thingy upstate run by that Oriental.

Hearing "telescope," Isaac has a thought. Pulls his WORKSHEET from his bookbag.

ISAAC

Hey, hold up. I think she's --

POP! POP! POP-POP-POP!

GUNFIRE. From just up ahead. The crowd slows. Listens.

Another VOLLEY of fire. Then, SCREAMS. The crowd backpedals as panic sets in...

Our kids watch as PANDEMONIUM breaks out somewhere ahead of them. Scores of people further up the line have turned and started running back towards them. TERRIFIED. SCREAMING.

Even cops come flooding back, frantically motioning for everyone to:

FLEEING COP  
RUN! RUN!

The kids don't need to be told twice. They turn back toward the entrance and TAKE OFF.

As they run, they hear more GUNFIRE and more SCREAMING behind them. They steal glances back over their shoulders, but can't make out what caused the panic.

When Seneca stops to pick up a tripped-up Isaac before he can be CRUSHED by the STAMPEDE... she sees it.

A LIVING STATUE. Frozen in mid-run. Scared out of his mind.

Seneca barely has time to register her fear of the sight before Isaac drags her along. She runs in breathless panic, but keeps stealing glances into the crowd.

Everywhere she turns, she sees them. Men. Women, Children. All turned LIVING STATUES. Statues that were definitely not there on their way in!

Then, Seneca freezes! In shock, seeing, directly in front of her a LIVING STATUE of the Asian Pothead she just spoke to!

AMIR (O.S.)  
SENECA! COME ON!

Seneca looks around for him, but she's fallen too far behind. Can't spot Amir or any of the others in the fleeing crowd.

SENECA  
AMIR? ISAAC?

She runs forward blindly, scanning the crowd. But she's lost everyone. She's alone.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - STREET ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Seneca stumbles back out the entrance, passed the now overturned/overrun check-in station.

MOUNTED POLICEMEN ride in, try to corral the crowd. But the riot has SPOOKED the horses. One of them REARS UP on its hind legs in front of Seneca! And she falls back on her butt!

Lands right in the path of an oncoming STAMPEDE of people too scared of whatever they're running from to notice her!

She scrambles up desperately, about to be trampled, when she's abruptly SNATCHED UP by a strong pair of hands.

INT. PARKED VAN - CONTINUOUS

The hands pull Seneca inside. Freaked out, she instinctively PUNCHES the person lifting her.

KALE (O.S.)

Ow!

Seneca gets her bearings. Sees her brothers and friends all huddled inside. Flashes with anger and SMACKS Kale again!

SENECA

Don't grab me like that!!

KALE

Ow! Fine! Next time I'll let you get trampled!

AMIR

SHHHHH! Unless you want whatever they're running from to find us!

They go quiet; stay low. The van is rocked by people running past for a long, scary beat. Then, silence. *Eerie* silence.

Amir peeks up to find the streets suddenly and mysteriously deserted. He climbs over the others rising to look, making his way to the driver's seat.

CHANCE

Anybody see anything?

They all indicate that, no, they did not. Except Seneca, who is spooked silent.

PARKER

It's out there with Lily, whatever it is. We gotta keep looking now, right?

She looks for Amir for support, to find him tearing the housing off the van's steering column.

PARKER

What are you doing?

AMIR

Borrowing this van.

PARKER

You mean stealing it? We can't do that!

(watches him; thinks)

How do you know how to do that?!

AMIR  
 (caught)  
 Um... youtube?

PARKER  
 Bruh, you steal cars now?!

ISAAC  
 (laughs)  
 "Now," she says...

PARKER  
 Whatever, just... get it started so  
 we can find Lily.

But Amir can't get a spark out of the wires he's exposed.

AMIR  
 Sorry. Battery must be...

He notices: the electronic speedometer is on, glowing green.  
 And according to it, the car is going 55 MPH.

AMIR  
 Huh. Guess the computer is fried.

PARKER  
 (stepping out)  
 Okay. Then we look for her on foot.

The others don't follow her out.

SENECA  
 Park... it's a hundred o'clock in  
 the morning. My dogs are barking.

PARKER  
 So you're giving up!

AMIR  
 Holing up. Just for the night. Eat.  
 Rest. Keep looking in the morning.

KALE  
 Hole up where?

The others exit the van, look over the darkness now hovering  
 over Central Park.

CHANCE  
 Not there.

ISAAC  
 How about there?

Isaac points at a large CATHOLIC CHURCH across the street. The sign out front says, foolishly: "VISITORS WELCOME!"

CHANCE  
Don't mind if I do.

He walks past Parker and goes inside. As do all the others, apologetically, one by one, until it's just Parker and Amir.

AMIR  
Please?

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Parker looks on, unhappy, as Kale settles Oscar into the pews. Isaac circles the church; lights candles with matches.

Chance goes around the room, pulling the largest branches from potted trees. Seneca paces away from them, on her phone.

SENECA  
Me again, Ma. Just checking in.  
Still no word from Dad. Big surprise. But if you hear from him, you know... call me...

They all look up at Amir walking over, his arms full with blankets and canned food.

AMIR  
Check what I found in the pantry!

PARKER  
Wasn't that door locked?

AMIR  
Huh? Uh... no?

Chance burns through several matches unsuccessfully trying to start a fire with the twigs he's dumped into a large collection plate.

SENECA  
Wait. You got any hand sanitizer?

CHANCE  
Scented or unscented?

SENECA  
(deadpan)  
Surprise me.

Chance finds some in his bag and hands it over. And Seneca immediately squirts it all over the wood in the plate.

CHANCE  
You're getting it wet!

SENECA  
With alcohol, moron. Hand sanitizer is mostly alcohol.

She takes a match from him. Tosses it in the pan, and it GOES UP in blue flame. Then settles into a warm orange fire.

The other kids look at Seneca like she just shot the fire from her eyes.

SENECA  
(shrugs)  
Saw it on youtube...

Parker eyes Amir and Seneca skeptically.

PARKER  
Thief. Pyro.  
(to Isaac)  
Lemme guess: con man?

ISAAC  
Con artist.

Chance produces a small pot and a can opener from his bag. Starts preparing the food.

PARKER  
What are you, homeless? Why do you carry all that around?

Awkward silence. Parker was joking, but seeing the other's reaction, her smile melts.

PARKER  
I didn't mean... I was just...

AMIR  
Nah, my dad was supposed to take us camping. That's all.

PARKER  
(laughs)  
Y'all almost got me.

The others awkwardly join in on the laughter. Chance shoots Amir a look of thanks for bailing him out...

Isaac notices Seneca brooding by herself in a corner.

ISAAC  
What's up with you?

SENECA  
When we were running from the park... I saw something. A statue. Just like the one we saw at the museum. A bunch of 'em.

CHANCE  
So?

SENECA  
So, they weren't there on our way in!

The others exchange a skeptical look. Worried about her.

AMIR  
Sen... it was dark out there--

SENECA  
-- I know what I saw!

PARKER  
So, what? Something's out there paralyzing people?

SENECA  
What if there is? What if that's what everybody was running from?

The others scoff, but Isaac takes out his worksheet. Reads.

ISAAC  
Somebody heard it was the Foldspace Telescope, right? Listen to this: "Possible dangers... power outages, temporal anom... anato..."

SENECA  
Anomalies.  
(explains)  
Means time gets jacked up. Like, people freezing in time jacked up.

AMIR  
(snatches the sheet)  
Y'all are bugging! Look, it says right here: "99% of scientists believe the reactor is safe!"

SENECA

So? 400 years ago, 99% of  
scientists thought the sun rotated  
around the Earth.

CHANCE

Wait. It doesn't?

SENECA

I'm just saying --

AMIR

Well, stop saying! Dad's missing.  
Lily's missing. We got enough to  
worry about. Let's just eat and get  
some sleep. Tomorrow, we go back to  
looking for 'em. Okay?

Seeing the worry on everyone's face, Seneca swallows her pride. Shrugs it off. And everyone settles back down to eat.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - HOURS LATER

Everyone's asleep in the pews. Chance is the first to wake. He tiptoes past the others to check on conditions outside.

He cracks the front door, and his eyes go WIDE. He slams it shut. Rubs his eyes. Checks the time on a wristwatch. 8 AM.

He peeks outside again... **and SCREAMS!** In a SHOCKINGLY high-pitched voice.

The others START awake to find Chance running around like a crazy person.

KALE

What, fool? What's going on?!

Chance is too scared to use his words. Just does a pee-pee dance and points at the door.

Kale grabs a hymnal stand as a weapon. Amir follows suit. They creep up on the door. Seneca joins them, puts out a hand to hold them up a second.

She peeks out of a window, but doesn't see anything. She looks questioningly back to Chance, but he just keeps pee-pee dancing and pointing outside.

PARKER

(rolls her eyes)

This is ridiculous...

AMIR  
Parker, wait...!

She ignores him and walks out, unarmed, into the street!

Kale and Amir run out after her, brandishing their weapons, screaming warrior screams, only to be confronted by...

Nothing. No crowds. No cops. No monsters. Nothing. They look to Chance for an explanation.

AMIR  
What?

CHANCE  
"What?" *Where's the freakin' sun?!*

AMIR  
It ain't up yet! Go back to sleep!

Chance shows Amir the time on his watch.

CHANCE  
Bruh, it's 8 o'clock! Sun shoulda  
been up!

AMIR  
Can't be. You're watch is wrong.

ISAAC  
"Temporal anomalies..."

AMIR  
Don't start with that!

SENECA  
(looking up)  
He's right! Look, the stars didn't  
even move!  
(explains)  
Stars rise and set every night like  
the sun. These ain't moved since  
the lights went out.

CHANCE  
Come on! Some telescope in  
Chinatown stopped the STARS from  
moving?!

SENECA  
Just the light from the stars. It  
takes the light a while to get --

AMIR

-- Seneca! With all the frickin' science?! Can you not right now!?

KALE

If everything's frozen, why ain't we?

PARKER

If everything's fine, where's the sun?

ISAAC

(reads from worksheet)

The Foldspace Telescope could cause power outages, temporal anomalies, and even open doorways to other --

AMIR

(snatches it away)

Stop it!

But Amir can't help reading over it himself.

PARKER

Does it say how to fix it?

CHANCE

Does it say if it *can* be fixed?

Amir paces away, stunned. Turns back to see them all looking at him expectantly. Like he has all the answers.

AMIR

Why y'all keep looking at like I'm Captain Save-A-World?! I don't know what to do about this!

The others, particularly Parker, lose hope at Amir's declaration. Amir rolls his eyes. Sighs. *Goddamnit. Fine.*

AMIR

Okay. Wanna know what I think? I think, so what? So the world stopped? Who cares? Doesn't mean we stop. I'm not gonna just sit in the church and look at y'all ugly faces. Plan ain't changed. Dad's still out there. Lily's still out there. We gotta find 'em.

CHANCE

In the dark? How?

SENECA

Chance, you got a map?

KALE

Why y'all ask like he might not?

Sure enough, Chance pulls a city map from his bag. Seneca spreads it on the hood of a car.

SENECA

We last saw Dad and Lily at the museum here. There's gotta be other camps set up around the city.

PARKER

There's a Y on 43rd. And on 72nd.

AMIR

So we'll look there first. There's probably still a curfew so we take back streets. Avoid cops. Cool?

They nod. Distracted from their fear now they've got a goal, they retrieve their things from the church.

Amir looks over to find Parker grinning at him.

AMIR

What?

Parker shrugs knowingly. *Nothing.*

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

The kids walk through an eerily empty, silent, and powerless Times Square. Look up at dark billboards looming overhead.

Seneca takes in Oscar giggling as Kale teases him.

SENECA

You're good with him.

KALE

My sister got two-year-old triplets. One five-year-old is easy.

(beat)

How you know all that back there?

SENECA

I told you. Saw it on youtube.

KALE  
 You can't just admit you're smart!  
 (off her non-response)  
 Too bad. I like smart girls.

The two make brief, awkward eye-contact over this remark.

EXT. MID-MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Amir holds out a hand to stop the others, spotting something up ahead. They huddle behind a corner, peer out at:

A GUARD STATION blocking their path. Under FLOODLIGHTS two barricades block off the road. Two seated RIOT COPS look out over the road. But they're weirdly MOTIONLESS... or frozen?

Seneca shoots Amir a knowing, chastising look: *Told you.*

AMIR  
 They could just be asleep.

CHANCE  
 They could just be dead.

KALE  
 Maybe they'll help us?

AMIR  
 Curfew's still in effect. Can't risk it. We'll have to go around.

CHANCE  
 (points)  
 Tell your girl!

Amir looks to see Parker is already sneaking ahead towards the guard station, darting between/behind stalled cars.

Amir catches her attention. Frantically signals for her to come back! But Parker ignores him. Sneaks further ahead.

Amir unthinkingly pursues. Stays low; taking her path. Keeps desperately signaling for Parker to COME! BACK!

Parker now points behind Amir. Amir looks behind him to see the others have mindlessly followed HIM. Now they're ALL hiding behind cars in the street, under floodlights, in line of sight of the cops!

A silent movie comedy ensues, with Amir signaling the others to "GO BACK!" While Parker signals for them to "FOLLOW ME!" The others sometimes listening to one, then the other.

But ultimately Parker is dragging them closer and closer to the mysteriously unmoving Riot Cops. Who seem to be looking RIGHT AT THEM, but haven't reacted... yet.

Finally, Parker reaches the LAST CAR between her and the Riot Cops. No other cover: if she runs from her position, and the cops are awake/alive, she's toast.

She and Amir both seem to know this as she takes one desperate look back into Amir's pleading eyes.

She BOLTS FORWARD. Staying low. Amir keeps an eye on the cops as Parker walks right into the glare of the floodlights.

They don't move AN INCH. Even as Parker creeps IN BETWEEN THEM, and SLIPS under the barricade to the other side.

She looks back, motions for the others to follow her. Amir reluctantly waves the others on, and they follow her path.

One by one, they slowly slip IN BETWEEN and past the guards. Until only Chance, with his heavy pack, remains.

He tries ducking under the barricade, but his pack CLIPS IT, and he LOUDLY STUMBLES right in front of the Riot Cops!

An AGONIZINGLY long beat as everyone looks to the cops, expecting them to wake. But they remain unmoving.

Chance slowly rises, waves his hand in front of their faces. No reaction. Despite the others' protest, Chance speaks:

CHANCE  
(whispers)  
Seneca's right. I think they're--

Just then, the Riot Cops LOUDLY SNORE and adjust position! NOT FROZEN! Just asleep!

Chance is terrified. The others frantically signal for him to come on. He silently WEEPS in fear as he crawls on his belly under the barricade, his backpack JUST fitting underneath.

He made it! Stands to his feet, all smiles. Triumphant. When he looks to his right and his smile MELTS.

He's staring right at SIX OTHER RIOT COPS. Hidden from sight in adjacent alley. Who were watching the whole thing.

RIOT COP 1  
What are you idiots doing?

Amir glares at a sheepish Parker as the guys all raise their hands in surrender.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANATTAN - NIGHT

Hands still raised, the kids are marched down the street by a dozen cops for some reason holding the kids at GUNPOINT.

Seneca looks the cops over. They're ON EDGE. Barely suppressing PANIC. They've been SPOOKED by something.

AMIR  
Are the guns really necessary?

FATTEST RIOT COP  
(shoves him)  
Shut up! And tell your little brother to stop crying!

ISAAC  
It's not me!

CHANCE  
(blubbering)  
We didn't mean to take the white baby, sir... we'll put him back where we found him...

AMIR  
You want him to stop crying, put your guns away!

Seneca's seen that look on her brother's face before. He's not going to back down. And if the cops won't either...

SENECA  
Amir! Chill!

FATTEST RIOT COP  
(shoves him again)  
Listen to your girlfriend, Slick.

ISAAC  
Sister. Not girlfriend.

Now the Fattest Riot Cop shoves Isaac! Who STUMBLES!

FATTEST RIOT COP  
Nobody asked you!

*That's it.* Amir stops. His hands drop. Ball into fists.

Too mad to hear the others shouting him down as he turns on the Fattest Riot Cop. Walks up right into his face.

AMIR  
Yo, you know what..!

Amir eyeballs him. Huffing and puffing. Fuming for a fight.

But the Fattest Riot Cop doesn't back down. Or look away. Or BREATHE. Or move AT ALL.

Amir takes a bewildered step back. As do all the other kids. The Fattest Riot Cop, and half the other cops, are now FROZEN IN MID STEP! Suddenly turned LIVING STATUES in the street!

TERRIFIED RIOT COP  
TAKE COVER!!!

The Riot Cops forget the kids, hunker down behind the stalled cars in the street. TREMBLING with complete PANIC.

The kids are too confused/scared to move. SILENCE. Then. A set of floodlights at the end of the street SWITCH OFF.

Then another, nearer set. Then another, even nearer set. Like some UNSEEN THING is shutting them off as it APPROACHES.

The kids look up as even the MOON and STARLIGHT overhead dim! Now, the street they just came down is COMPLETELY BLACK.

Crazily, Oscar is not only UNAFRAID of this, he GIGGLES as he walks towards it. Hands out, reaching for the Darkness!

This snaps Kale and the others out of their terror. He runs to grab Oscar, and he and the others take cover behind cars.

They cover their ears at the TRUMP of a DEAFENING HUM. Like a 10,000 decibel microphone was just turned on.

Unable to contain her curiosity, Seneca peeks around the car just in time to see...

The PITCH BLACK at the end of the street MOVES. UNDULATES. TENDRILS WRITHE out from its center. Then TRANSFORM.

Connecting/coalescing/folding into HUMANOID SHAPES! A half dozen of them! Each easily 12 feet tall. Jet black, but somehow still LUMINOUS. Like SHIMMERING SHADOWS...!

TERRIFIED RIOT COP  
INCOMING!!!

The cops UNLOAD a LUDICROUS amount of ammo, but the Shimmering Shadows aren't just unaffected. They don't NOTICE.

They ignore the cops as they seem to survey the block. Looking through second-story windows, bending down to look inside stalled cars.

Seneca can't turn away until one of the Shimmering Shadows seems to crane its GIANT head and look DIRECTLY AT HER!

She gasps and drops back down. Meanwhile, Kale holds onto Oscar for dear life as the kid is FLIPPING OUT! Like he's trying to squirm out of Kale's hands!

Finished with their Survey, the Shimmering Shadows gather in the street. Then, one of them points at one of the LIVING STATUE cops. And the cop just VANISHES! Reduced to NOTHING.

Then the Shadow points at another, living cop. And he vanishes! Rinse. Repeat. Completely random, ignoring cops firing at him to take a cop cowering, or frozen, one by one the Shadow DISINTEGRATES half the cops on the street!

From their position, the kids SEE ALL OF THIS. They're literally in SHOCK. So much so, that Kale loosens his grip on Oscar for a split second...

And BOOM. Oscar BOLTS. Not AWAY from the Shimmering Shadows, but TOWARDS THEM...!

Without thinking, Kale and Isaac run after him! Which draws out Amir, Parker, and Seneca! (But definitely NOT Chance!)

Kale manages to grab Oscar... but now he and the others are COMPLETELY EXPOSED. And the SHADOWS have noticed!

One of them APPROACHES. Leans down from its massive TWO-STORY height to look DIRECTLY at Oscar in Kale's arms.

It's like being stared down by a Tyrannosaurus. Or a Blue Whale. The kids TREMBLE as the Shadow just STARES for what seems like an eternity.

Then... the Shadow stands upright and WALKS AWAY. Joins its brothers/sisters in refolding/re-entering/re-integrating itself into the DARKNESS at the end of the block. Then...

POOF! They're gone. Like they were never there. The floodlights lining the street suddenly reignite. The moon and stars brighten overhead.

The stunned cops look on, defeated. Shocked. They amble away, leaving the kids forgotten behind.

The kids stand motionless in the middle of the street. Huffing and puffing. Stunned. Seneca looks to Amir:

SENECA  
Believe me now?

INT. ABANDONED BODEGA - NIGHT

The kids have taken shelter inside. Cowering underneath the counter. Still in shock.

AMIR  
Everybody okay?

They nod blankly. Then Kale, remembering, suddenly grabs Oscar. Holds him sternly at arms' length.

KALE  
What's your problem, kid? Are you stupid? Do you want to die?  
(off his tears; softens)  
Don't run away like that again, you hear? You stay with me. Okay?

Oscar nods through his tears. Kale hugs him, calms him.

AMIR  
What were those things?

They all look to Seneca for an answer, but Seneca seems unusually distant. More in shock than the others.

ISAAC  
What are we gonna do now?

Amir stands. Paces. Turns to Parker.

AMIR  
Parker. We can't keep looking.

PARKER  
... Okay.

AMIR  
It's just too dangerous to --

PARKER  
I said okay! I get it! Shut up!

AMIR  
We gotta get somewhere safe.  
Seneca, you think --

But Amir looks over to find Seneca CRYING. Hard. She's covering her head to hide it, but her body WRACKS with tears.

AMIR  
(approaching)  
Sen...? Sen, come on. We made it.  
We're okay. Don't...

Seneca throws off his offered hand.

SENECA  
Leave me alone!

He backs off, exchanges looks with the others. They've never seen her like this. Don't know what to do.

KALE  
(recovering)  
Where's safe?

AMIR  
(to Oscar)  
Kid. Where do you live? Close?

CHANCE  
You're asking him?

AMIR  
Worth a shot.

KALE  
Come on buddy. Tell us where you live.

Oscar brightens, suddenly seeming to understand the question. He runs to a window, points to a HIGH RISE across the street.

KALE  
No, man. Where do you live?

Oscar points more adamantly now up at the high rise.

CHANCE  
Bruh. Come on. We walk halfway across the city and just happen to end up on his stoop?

AMIR  
You got somewhere else to be? It's inside and off the street. Can't hurt to look. Let's go.

The others wearily rise. Except for Seneca.

AMIR  
Sen...?

Wiping her tears and avoiding their eyes, she finally rises. Wordlessly walks past them outside.

INT. HIGH RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

The kids stay low and creep inside. Look the place over. Except for the light from the door, it's PITCH BLACK inside.

AMIR

Chance. You got a flashlight in that bag?

CHANCE

I used to use my phone. And I'm outta matches, too...

The all falter at the prospect of ascending a few floors in complete darkness. Consider falling back, when:

SENECA

You got a stick of gum? And a battery?

Seneca reaches for Chance's bag. He obliges, happy to see her snap out of her funk. Seneca searches it, pulls out:

A T-shirt. Rubber bands. Hand sanitizer. A battery and gum.

Drenches the shirt in sanitizer. Rubber-bands it to a broken mop handle from nearby. Touches the tin foil wrapper from the gum to the poles of the battery, causing the wrapper to IGNITE. Uses that to light the shirt. VOILA! A working TORCH!

The other kids look on; freaking ASTOUNDED.

KALE

You're like... a GENIUS!

Her sullen mood returns as she hands Amir the torch.

SENECA

What difference does it make...

Amir worries over his sister's remark, but no time to deal with it now. He presses ahead with the torch. Gets a few steps and then STOPS.

Up ahead, DARK FIGURES block his path. Ominous silhouettes. Human sized and shaped. But packed tight. Blocking the way.

He stretches out the torch to confirm. They're people. But their expressions are terrified, and terrifying.

A STAMPEDE obviously frozen while fleeing the building.

AMIR

They're just people. If they can't move, they can't hurt us.

CHANCE

Yeah. If.

Amir swallows. Walks ahead. The others follow. Looking at the frozen, terrified faces in flickering red torchlight. Like walking through a HELL filled with sinners LOCKED in torment.

The Living Statues are so close together, they have to turn and squeeze by in spots. And Kale, carrying Oscar, TRIPS...!

Oscar holds out a hand to break his fall, and in so doing TOUCHES one of the living statues... and it COMES TO LIFE!

Only for a split second, until Oscar, realizing, quickly withdraws his hand. But Kale saw it! Freaks out!

KALE

Holy crap!

PARKER

What?

KALE

It moved! One of them moved!

ISAAC

It's your imagination!

KALE

Dude, I'm telling you --!

Chance, mortified, backpedals as he does his pee-pants dance. Backs into a statue that seems to be REACHING OUT to him.

He SCREAMS his HIGH-PITCHED SCREAM. Kale takes off running! Chance runs after him! And the others follow!

They take the maze of frozen bodies at FULL SPEED. Vaulting over/ limboing under bodies, until they clear them and reach the staircase at the other end.

They collapse, huffing and puffing, bracing themselves. Then:

KALE

(to Chance)

What? What did you see?

CHANCE

I was going to ask you!

KALE  
I ran 'cuz you ran!

CHANCE  
I ran 'cuz you ran!

Parker bangs the back of her head against the wall.

PARKER  
You. Morons!

AMIR  
(to Oscar)  
Where to, kid?

Oscar points up. The kids rise and continue their trek.

INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT - STAIRWELL 10TH FLOOR - NIGHT

A sign informs the kids they're on the 10th floor as they wearily summit the last few steps.

AMIR  
(to Oscar)  
Here?

But Oscar shakes his head "no." Points up. The kids sigh wearily. Continue their hike upwards.

CHANCE  
Can't hurt to look, he says...

INT. HIGH RISE APARTMENT - STAIRWELL - 20TH FLOOR - NIGHT

The kids COLLAPSE as they reach the top floor of the building. After they finally catch their breath:

AMIR  
Okay, kid. Which apartment?

But Oscar just continues to point up.

CHANCE  
"Up" ain't no apartment!

But again, Oscar just insistently points up. Prompting the kids to GROAN in frustration/realization.

PARKER  
Dude has no idea where he lives!

CHANCE  
20 flights! For nothing!

Seneca rises, heads for a door marked ROOF ACCESS.

AMIR  
Where you going?

SENECA  
We're here now. Might as well take  
a look from the roof. See what we  
can see.

EXT. HIGH RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF - NIGHT

The guys follow Seneca out onto the roof, overlooking most of the city. It's dark everywhere, except for GIANT floodlights circling the city, blocking out further visibility.

Oscar walks up to Kale, pulls on his pants leg. Emphatically continues to point up.

KALE  
Oscar. Fam. *Where are you pointing?*

CHANCE  
(looking at night sky)  
For real. Ain't nothing over our  
head but...

He and Kale share a look. Have the same realization.

CHANCE  
No way...

ISAAC  
(catching on)  
It would explain a lot. Like why  
weird stuff keeps happening around  
him. Why he ain't scared of the  
shadows...

KALE  
Be for real, y'all. Kid's a little  
weird, maybe a little slow. But  
he's not a... no way he's one of --

PARKER (O.S.)  
-- Hey! Over here!

They rush to Parker at the opposite end of the roof. She points to a MASSIVE area around Chinatown that's TENTED IN.

A series of massive tarps, several stories high/wide, strung together creating a giant CAMP around ten city blocks.

PARKER

FEMA camp! Gotta be! I bet that's where everybody from the Park ended up! That's where Lily is!

ISAAC

Maybe Dad, too!

PARKER

Let's go!

She makes for the stairs, looks back to see the others unmoving.

PARKER

Y'all? Come on. Let's go.

AMIR

Parker. It's late... I think. And we're all exhausted. Let's camp up here, hope those things can't fly, and figure it out in the morning.

PARKER

What's to figure out? It's only like ten blocks away.

CHANCE

Ten blocks through those things!

PARKER

So you're just giving up? On Lily? On your dad?

SENECA

HE'S DEAD! Our dad is DEAD, okay! He's DEAD!

They look over; shocked. Seneca collapses to a seat. Cries.

ISAAC

No, he's not! Why are you saying that?

SENECA

I'm sorry, man, but... Dad's gone.

AMIR

How do you know?

SENECA

You saw what those things did!  
Pointed at those cops and then...  
they were just GONE. No blood. No  
bodies. Sound familiar?

Amir sits now. Stunned. Reeling. Realizing.

AMIR

The subway...

SENECA

It's all my fault. Everybody on our  
car lived. Everybody on the car he  
went into...

Amir comes over to comfort her as tears overwhelm her.

AMIR

Sen... come on...

SENECA

That's the last thing I'm ever  
going to say to him...

PARKER

You don't know that! You don't!  
They could just be missing!

SENECA

Park... I'm sorry, but...

PARKER

No, shut up! You don't know  
everything! They could be fine!

SENECA

We can't keep looking for people  
who are already gone --

PARKER

JUST BECAUSE YOUR DAD IS DEAD, THAT  
DOESN'T MEAN LILY IS!

She's mortified as soon as the words leave her mouth.

PARKER

(to Amir)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean...

AMIR

We're all tired. We eat. Sleep.  
Figure it out in the morning.

Distraught, they drift away. To separate ends of the roof.

EXT. HIGH RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF - LATER

The kids eat cold canned food in silence. Surrounding the torch, propped up in a hole cut in a plastic trash can lid.

They're all worried sick, but none more than Amir. The others watch as he BROODS intensely. Then... A TEAR escapes his eye!

This freaks them out. They look away. Pretend not to notice. But Amir gets sick of the pretense.

AMIR

Don't know what I'm crying about.  
Barely knew the dude.

PARKER

He didn't live with you?

AMIR

Off and on. Then, wake up one morning? Gone. For months. Years.

CHANCE

Jail?

AMIR

Couldn't stop hustling. That's why I picked it up. Figured if I could thieve like him, he might take me with him.

PARKER

(jokes)

So... you didn't learn to steal cars on youtube?

Amir laughs through his tears, shakes his head "no." Then:

AMIR

Wanted to be like him. Till I knew what he was. By then, it was too late. I was already...

(recovers; then)

Kind of screws you up. When your own dad don't want you. It's like if he don't, who will?

PARKER

You're bugging. People love you.

AMIR

They say they do. But so did he.  
So, how are you supposed to know?

They mull this over in silence. Then, suddenly:

SENECA

I won this spelling bee in third grade? Supposed to go compete in this big one. Against kids from white schools, Asian schools. I was gonna let the runner-up go 'cuz I was scared. Dad was around that weekend. Told me I was the smartest girl in the world. Told me he'd be there. Told me if I got scared, to look for him. So I did. He wasn't there. Made me so sad, so mad, I messed up the first word. "Beagle." I could hear the kids laughing at me when I walked off. I always thought I was smart because he told me I was. But he said he'd show up too, and that was a lie.

AMIR

You never told me that.

SENECA

Never told nobody.

Another round of contemplative silence. Then:

CHANCE

My mom disappears for weeks, too. And it's just me and her. That's why I hoard stuff. If I don't, there's nothing in the house. When she's gone, I'm always like, is this it? Is this the time she never comes back? Sometimes I hope it is. So I can stop worrying all the time. So it can just be over.

KALE

My dad kicked me out. My folks are like... SUPER Muslim. Told him I wasn't sure I believed in God. He said not to come back to his house until I was sure. Been living with my sister off and on ever since.

AMIR

That's why you been sleeping over  
so much?

Kale shrugs an admission.

AMIR

(to Parker)

You fell in with a bunch of hood  
kids. You and Lily are lucky.

PARKER

(offended)

Lucky? You know what it's like  
being a politician's kid? To get  
shoved into a dress some publicist  
picked out, forced into some fake,  
"perfect family" photo? Then to get  
shipped off to relatives or nannies  
or boarding school? My folks don't  
even really live with us. Got some  
house in DC I've never even seen. I  
don't think they even wanted kids.  
We just look good on their resume.

This is particularly eye-opening for Amir.

AMIR

Guess all parents suck.

ISAAC

Maybe. I still wish mine were here.

They all seem to silently agree.

EXT. HIGH RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF - HOURS LATER

Amir wakes to find... still no sun. He leans up, locks eyes  
with Parker. Fully dressed. Halfway out the roof-access door.  
About to sneak off on her own.

PARKER

(caught; explains)

Lily wouldn't give up on me.

SENECA (O.S.)

Wait up.

They look over to see Seneca rising, packing.

SENECA

We're not giving up on her, either.

The others fall in behind her. Nod their agreement.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHINATOWN - NIGHT

The patchwork of giant tarps blocks visibility to the camp up ahead. A massively well-guarded security checkpoint, complete with machine gun embankments, blocks the way forward.

The kids watch from hiding as the RIOT COPS at the checkpoint chase away an approaching family at GUN POINT.

KALE

They're turning people away?

ISAAC

Maybe there's too many people  
already inside?

PARKER

So we sneak in. We need one of them  
things? From the movies?

SENECA

A distraction?

PARKER

Yep! One of those!

Chance takes out some chewing gum and a battery from his bag.

CHANCE

I got one. Get ready to run.

EXT. CHINATOWN CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

The guards COME ALIVE at the sound of nearby GUNFIRE. They pick up their guns. Run off in the sound's direction

They round a corner. Then slow to a stop. One of them picks up a string of SPENT FIREWORKS.

Behind them, our heroes SNEAK BY. Slip under a tarp..

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

The kids emerge from under a tarp into the midst of tented-off Chinatown. Shield their eyes from the DOZENS of generator-powered FLOODLIGHTS inside.

Way more than in the rest of the city. It's lit up like mid-day in here. Amir's vision clears in time for him to see Parker run off ahead. Shares an annoyed look with Seneca.

SENECA  
This chick...

The others join them in running to catch up to her.

AMIR  
Park, we have to stick together...

But as they approach Parker's back, she doesn't move. Or speak. Or respond in any way.

Amir and Seneca share a look, fearing the worst. Amir approaches Parker cautiously, pokes her shoulder to check.

She absently brushes his hand off. Not literally frozen. Just frozen in shock, seeing:

THE ENTIRETY OF CHINATOWN IS LITERALLY FROZEN IN TIME!

Not just the people. EVERYTHING. They walk around, exploring:

Birds frozen in mid-flight. Motion-blurred CARS frozen as they speed down the road. Helicopters frozen in mid-flight.

A dog and cat, mid-chase, frozen mid-leap, suspended in the air. But most ominously of all...

Overhead, A CRASHING PLANE is frozen just as it COLLIDES with a building. A fiery, unmoving MASS of debris ominously looms just above their heads.

They spin, agawk. Taking it all in. Transfixed.

They mindlessly spread out in fascination. Explore this new world. Seneca reaches out to touch a frozen bird. Amir touches WATER being tossed out of a bucket by a frozen JANITOR. Liquid, but unmoving. Solid, but not cold.

Chance FLEXES at a frozen TRAFFIC COP as if he were about to punch him. Meanwhile, Kale notices a PENCIL being thrown between two shop-keepers, floating in mid-air.

He tries to move it, but it won't budge. Strains. Nothing. Hangs from it, all his weight on it. Still nothing.

At Oscar's insistence, Parker picks him up, puts him on a frozen dog, which Oscar rides like a horse.

She smiles, until she looks across the street. And her smile melts to horror. Seeing:

PARKER

Lily...?

It is. It's LILY. FROZEN in place across the street!

Tears streaming from her face, Parker SPRINTS over and locks her sister in a heartbreakingly unreciprocated embrace.

PARKER

Lily! Lily, it's me! It's Parker!  
Come on, wake up! Wake up!

Parker looks over to the others. *Why aren't they helping me?*

But they're preoccupied, looking up in grim consternation at something. She follows their eyes up, sees:

THE CRASHING AIRPLANE. The crashing airplane is JUST OVER LILY'S HEAD. Debris from it threatening to CRUSH HER the INSTANT time is restored.

Parker now PULLS on Lily with pleading desperation.

PARKER

Help me!

The others rush over, join her in the fool's errand of trying to pull Lily to safety. But the looks they exchange reveal they know: If Kale can't even move a pencil, then...

But Parker doesn't give up. SCREAMS with the effort of pulling with all her might. Until Amir has to approach:

AMIR

Parker. Parker, there's nothing we can do...

PARKER

(ignores him; pulls)  
I'll stay here and keep trying! You guys go get help.

CHANCE

Help from who?

Exhausted, Parker steps back. Looks frantically to Seneca.

PARKER

Think of something! You're smart!  
How do we save her? Come on!

SENECA

Parker, I can't... I'm not...

Parker collapses at Lily's feet. Embracing her.

PARKER  
No. No! Come on, please God, no...

AMIR  
Parker. There might be patrols in here. We have to keep moving.

PARKER  
I'm not leaving her!!

The others, distracted by the debate, don't notice: Oscar approaches Lily with a profoundly sad look on his face.

He stares at her for a long time, as if wrestling with a decision...

AMIR  
At least she's not scared. Or suffering.

PARKER  
How do you know? Maybe she can see and hear us! Maybe she knows she's trapped! Maybe she's trying to move right now, and she can't, and she's terrified! And you just want to leave her here --

As Parker unloads, unnoticed by the others, Oscar pushes his hands out of his sleeves. Reaches out as if to touch Lily with a grim, resigned look on his face...

And for a SPLIT SECOND, we'd swear his hand GLOWS --!

RIOT SERGEANT (O.S.)  
WHO'S THERE?!

Hearing the voice, Parker and the others go silent. Oscar immediately pulls his hands back into his shirt.

A split-second later, and a half dozen RIOT COPS flood around the corner, guns drawn.

Panicked, the kids SCRAMBLE.

The cops split up and pursue, and the kids use the FROZEN OBJECTS in the world to escape!

As an astonished Cop looks on, Amir runs up a swirl of papers suspended in mid air, taking them like a flight of stairs!

Parker LIMBOS under LIQUID WATER suspended in mid air, being tossed out a shop by a frozen JANITOR.

A pursuing Cop RAMS into the free-floating water and DROPS like he just hit a brick wall!

Chance, Seneca, Kale, even Oscar all creatively use time-stopped objects to escape, while the Cops, not trusting their eyes, are hesitant to pursue.

It's going well, until Isaac, trapped, tries using BIRDS frozen in mid-air to MONKEY BAR his way between two buildings! But he loses his grip and FALLS!

SGT. LAWSON (female, late 40s) is on him in a flash, takes him firmly by the arm.

SGT. LAWSON

Okay! We got your little brother.  
You don't want anything to happen  
to him, come out now.

The kids, skeptical, refuse to emerge from hiding.

PARKER

You can't hurt him! You're a cop!

CHANCE

Pfft. Don't know what cops she's talking about...

ISAAC

Maybe watch the news, Parker.

SGT. LAWSON

(offended)

Of course I'm not gonna shoot him.  
But I will arrest him. There's no power at the station, so he'll be in a dark cell by himself. You want that? But if you come out now, we'll keep you kids together and take you to a nearby shelter. Deal?

The kids exchange skeptical glances. Then, give in. One by one, they emerge from their hiding places, hands up.

Sgt. Lawson points the kids to take a seat on a nearby set of benches like a scolding teacher.

SGT. LAWSON

Lucky I don't run all of you in for breaking curfew. Just sit down over here and keep quiet.

As the kids mope to their seats, the other cops return from checking nearby buildings, give Lawson the all-clear signal.

SGT. LAWSON  
 (to returning cop)  
 Get these kids some water. Check  
 they're not hurt.  
 (calls out)  
 Okay, Doc! You're up!

No response. Sgt. Lawson walks around a corner to several exhausted, dispirited SCIENTIST-types huddled together.

At her approach, they part to give us a view of a haggard, exhausted man sitting on a curb, head buried in his hands.

SGT. LAWSON  
 Doc?

The haggard man looks up with confused eyes... it's DAVID WEI! He's unshaven; looks like he hasn't slept in days. But he's alive and unfrozen! As is Dr. Snyder, who rouses him.

DAVID WEI  
 What?

SGT. LAWSON  
 Area's secure. Your team can get  
 back to work.

He rises wearily, signals the scientists ahead. Like Wei and Snyder, they're all wearing NYC issued BULLETPROOF VESTS as a precaution...

DAVID WEI  
 Same deal. Scan everything. Flag  
 any T-wave anomalies.

The Scientists fan out, start scanning all the frozen animals/objects with high-tech hand-held devices.

Wei joins them. Catches Isaac's eye walking past. Isaac nudges Seneca, who also recognizes Wei immediately.

SENECA  
 Hey...! You're him... You're that  
 scientist guy... The one that built  
 the Telescope.

Wei says nothing; seems ashamed to be recognized.

PARKER  
 (furious; still crying)  
 So this whole thing is your fault?

SGT. LAWSON  
Hey! Is that nice?

DAVID WEI  
No. But it's true.

He looks over the ruined city with mournful, defeated eyes. Surveying the damage he's caused, he seems a broken man.

DAVID WEI  
Yes. This is all my fault.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
(walking over)  
Our fault. We all did this.

AMIR  
Did what? What the heck is all this? What did you do?

DAVID WEI  
(with difficulty)  
About 8 hours ago, there was an explosion at our facility.

ISAAC  
8 hours? It's been, like, 3 days!

DAVID WEI  
That very much depends on who you ask. To you, it's been 3 days.  
(points to frozen people)  
To them, it's only been a few seconds. To us, it's been about 8 hours. The explosion wreaked havoc on the flow of time.

He trails off, distraught. Snyder comes to his aid.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
Near as we can tell, the incident locked Manhattan in sort of a... space time loop.  
(off their confused looks)  
Basically, we're trapped in kind of a temporal snow globe. We can't contact anything outside of the globe. And inside the globe, the laws of time have gone a little... haywire.

PARKER  
And that's why my sister is frozen in time?!

DAVID WEI  
(sad; distant)  
That's why she *appears* to be stuck  
in time. Relative to your reference  
frame.

SGT. LAWSON  
Can you dumb that down any more?

DAVID WEI  
I could, but you probably don't  
want me to.

SENECA  
(figuring it out)  
Wait, so... you mean, to us, it  
looks like we're moving normal, and  
they're frozen...  
(points to frozen people)  
But to them, it might look like  
they're moving normal, and we're...  
what, like moving super-fast?

DAVID WEI  
(looks to her, impressed)  
Precisely. Very well-put.

Chance checks the speed of the movement of his limbs.

CHANCE  
So... which one of us is right?

SENECA  
That's like asking, which time zone  
has the right time? All of 'em do  
for the people there. That's like  
Einstein or something, right?

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
(also impressed)  
Relativity theory, yes. Very good.  
Time works differently depending on-

PARKER  
- Who cares! *Can! You! Fix! It?!*

All eyes look to Wei, who seems burdened by the question. On  
the verge of tears himself, he kneels down to Parker.

DAVID WEI  
(scary intense)  
This is my fault. And I promise you  
I will do everything I can.  
Anything I have to. To fix it.

Everyone is as weirded out as Parker at Wei's almost crazed sincerity. Dr. Snyder clears her throat, continues:

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
 Everywhere else, the effect shifts.  
 People... unfreeze. We unfroze. But  
 here, everything's been like this  
 since the explosion. If there's a  
 way to fix this, it's here.

At this, Oscar hops down from his seat beside Kale and runs up to David Wei. Starts gesturing wildly.

SGT. LAWSON  
 Honey, no. Let the man work.

She tries to gently guide him back, but Oscar pulls away from her and pursues Wei, who doesn't know what to make of him.

KALE  
 Oscar! Get back here!

Kale grabs Oscar, but Oscar, desperate and defiant, wriggles free of Kale's grasp and runs over to Wei.

He reaches his hands out of his shirt, grabs Wei's hand...!

And Wei drops to his knees! Twitches as if having a seizure. Sgt. Lawson coming forward is stunned by the sight.

It only lasts a split second, and then Oscar releases him. Wei turns and looks on Oscar with wild eyes.

SGT. LAWSON  
 What? What he do?

Wei grabs a hand-held scanner from Dr. Snyder and runs it over Oscar. His eyes go WIDE. As do Dr. Snyder's when she checks the readings.

DAVID WEI  
 Who is that boy?! Where did you  
 find him?!

Kale comes forward to pick Oscar up.

KALE  
 On the subway. He lost his parents  
 in the blackout.

DAVID WEI  
 Sergeant, I need to take that boy  
 back to my lab!

KALE

Whoa. Slow up. You're not taking him anywhere.

SGT. LAWSON

Doc, he's a minor.

DAVID WEI

I assure you, he is not. According to these readings, he's not even human.

ISAAC

(to Chance)

Told you...

SGT. LAWSON

What are you talking about?

DAVID WEI

I don't have time to explain. But this child is giving off an identical energy signature to that of the... entities that emerged from the reactor. If I can study him --

SGT. LAWSON

Hey, slow down. There's protocol. We have to find his parents, they have to grant permission...

DAVID WEI

You're not listening to me!

Sgt. Lawson ignores him, kneels down to address Oscar.

SGT. LAWSON

Son, where do your folks live? Can you draw us a map...

DAVID WEI

We don't have time for this--!!

As he says it, he notices.. Sgt. Lawson's GUN dangling in her holster just in front of him.

Unthinkingly, he grabs it. Points it at Kale still holding Oscar. Everything goes QUIET.

DAVID WEI

Give him to me.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
David...! No!

Kale puts Oscar down behind him. The other kids stand and join him in forming a wall in front of Oscar.

KALE  
You want him, you're gonna have to shoot us.

DAVID WEI  
(cocks pistol)  
I will. I don't want to but I will.

SGT. LAWSON  
*Nobody's shooting anybody! Doc, you're gonna hand me back that gun, slowly, and we're gonna...*

But David's not listening. Just mumbles through tears:

DAVID WEI  
I'm sorry. I have to fix it. I have to...

And as the kids/Dr. Snyder SCREAM, Wei FIRES SIX QUICK SHOTS, one at each child!

But when he tearfully lowers his gun, he finds to his shock... the kids are still on their feet. Unhurt. And UNMOVING.

Wei looks down to see Oscar peeking out from behind them, a determined look on his face, his hands SHIMMERING BLACK!

A split second later, and the kids UNFREEZE, screaming, looking for bullet wounds. In disbelief.

Wei moves again to grab Oscar, but he gets TACKLED by Sgt. Lawson and the surrounding police.

Taking advantage of the chaos, Kale picks up Oscar and RUNS. The other kids take off after him, racing for a SUBWAY ENTRANCE just behind the benches they were seated on.

But it's BLOCKED! A falling BUSINESSMAN has TOSSED UP a swirl of papers in front of the narrow street entrance. They sit suspended in time blocking access to the stairs.

With Wei subdued, a few Riot Cops take off after the kids, who are trapped now in front of the blocked off subway entrance.

Police closing in, Oscar SQUIRMS from Kale's grasp. Touches the swirl of papers blocking their path.

AND THEY FALL in REAL TIME, suddenly clearing the entrance!

Stunned, the kids just stare at Oscar and the papers for a beat. But at Oscar's frantic insistence, they rush down into the subway entrance.

The pursuing cops, and even Sgt. Lawson and the others subduing Wei, are so stunned by Oscar's feat that they just stand and gawk.

That's all the opening Wei needs. He breaks from their grasp, grabs a nearby gun and fires off a shot towards Oscar!

DR. LAURA SNYDER

No!

Dr. Snyder leaps in front of the gun, and is GUT-SHOT! Her eyes glass over, and she tumbles down the stairs into the subway entrance.

DAVID WEI  
Laura...? Laura!!

Oscar glares at David Wei, before touching the swirl of papers again, and they REWIND IN TIME back to their original position, blocking off the entrance again.

The cops again fall on David Wei. Get rough with him this time as they cuff him.

SGT. LAWSON  
Okay. Science expedition is over!  
You're under arrest!

DAVID WEI  
The mayor authorized me to fix -

SGT. LAWSON  
You shot your partner! You tried to murder those kids!

DAVID WEI  
Kids who are holding the only thing in the world that can save the human race! You want to arrest me when this is over, fine! If you want such a day to ever come, we need that child!

Sgt. Lawson looks to a few of the other SCIENTISTS who nod their agreement with Wei's words.

She sighs, walks over to the blocked off subway entrance.

SGT. LAWSON  
Pick him up. But the cuffs stay on.

She pushes against the swirl of papers blocking the entrance. Leans her weight on them. It's like pushing a brick wall.

SGT. LAWSON  
Radio down to the checkpoint, see if anybody has a jackhammer.

DAVID WEI  
Unless your jackhammer can travel through time, don't bother. Blunt force apparently can't penetrate a temporal barrier.

RIOT SERGEANT  
Then what?

DAVID WEI  
If that child is what I think it is, I know where they're headed. Even if they don't yet.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

The floodlights from the street filter down through grates above, spotlighting Oscar.

The other kids maintain their distance, staring at him with a new apprehension. Afraid to approach him.

CHANCE  
Okay. Scientist guy is right. Kid's definitely an alien.

ISAAC  
Scientist guy? I said it first!

KALE  
That's why he tried to run to them. He wanted them to take him home.

AMIR  
Why doesn't he look like them?  
(to Seneca)  
Camouflage?

SENECA  
How the heck would I know? I like to read, I'm not an alien expert!

But while the others look at Oscar in awe/fear, Parker is shooting him a look of seething anger.

PARKER  
You knew... You knew!

Parker walks Oscar down threateningly.

PARKER  
You knew what was happening this whole time and you didn't say anything!?

KALE  
(pulls her back)  
He couldn't say anything. He can't talk! He's just a kid!

Parker wrenches free of Kale's grasp, stares him down.

PARKER  
You don't know what he is! He could have been helping those people all along! He could...

A sudden realization hits Parker. She grabs Oscar roughly.

KALE  
Hey!

PARKER  
We have to go back up! He can save Lily! He can unfreeze her!

Kale pulls Parker's hand off of Oscar.

KALE  
Stop! You're hurting him!

PARKER  
Stop babying him! He's got alien super-powers! He'll be fine --

She looks down as Oscar suddenly goes WOOZY. Kale rushes ahead to catch him just as he FAINTS.

He lays him down as the others crowd around. Oscar starts VOMITING INKY-BLACK FLUID. Patches of his skin SHIFT from pale white to SHIMMERING BLACK.

PARKER  
I didn't grab him that hard... I -  
I didn't mean to...

AMIR  
What's wrong with him?!

DR. LAURA SNYDER (O.S.)  
He's dying...

Dr. Snyder limps towards them, clutching at her stomach, moaning in pain.

CHANCE  
Zombie! Go for a headshot!

Dr. Snyder laughs as she sits down on the stairs. Peels off her BULLET PROOF VEST. Shows the kids: it caught the bullet! She's bruised from the impact, but not bleeding.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
I'm not quite dead yet.

She tries to come over to them, but SCREAMS. Sits nursing a badly TWISTED ANKLE.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
But I won't be running any marathons anytime soon...

KALE  
What do you mean, he's dying? How do you know?

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
We don't know how his people manipulate time. But we know it takes a LOT of energy. What he just did could power a city block for a week. That kind of energy expenditure is likely fatal. I'm sorry.

KALE  
How can we help him? How can we save him?

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
Kid, I'm a physicist... I don't know anything about human biology, much less alien...

SENECA  
We could take him to his people.

AMIR  
What? No. They'll kill us.

KALE

Maybe. But they'll save him.

ISAAC

(to Dr. Snyder)

How would we find them?

DR. LAURA SNYDER

We have no idea. Their movements are entirely random. Their targets are entirely random. They show up, take some people, leave others, with no discernible pattern.

SENECA

(realizes; lights up)

Dad's alive! They're all alive!

CHANCE

How do you get that from --

SENECA

(to Dr. Snyder)

What if there is a pattern? What if the randomness is the pattern? If you found a new species, and wanted to check what they were about, what would you do?

DR. LAURA SNYDER

(realizing)

Take a random sampling...

(high fives her; winces)

Girl, that's brilliant. Ow.

CHANCE

Hello? Non-sciencey dummies over here awaiting explanation.

SENECA

They're not killing them! They're collecting them! That's why it looks random. It is! It's the most scientific way to study us! Pick specimens at random. Think about it! When they vanish people, there's no bullet, no laser. Their targets just vanish, just like they do! Because they're teleporting!

AMIR

Or, they have fancy guns that don't need bullets or lasers to kill you!

(MORE)

AMIR (CONT'D)

Or they're teleporting people to  
their ships, then killing them!  
They're aliens! We don't know what  
they're up to! And we're not  
getting close enough to find out!  
We're not! Doing it!

DR. LAURA SNYDER

You have to. They're relatively  
peaceful now, but what if they're  
here for him? What if they believe  
we killed him? Or let him die?

AMIR

Okay, so you take him to them! Or  
the cops. This can't be on us! This  
is some Navy Seal ish! We're just  
some kids from Brooklyn! I ain't  
even been to Coney Island, and now  
I'm supposed to... I can't do this.  
I mean, who the heck am I?

PARKER

You're the guy who kept us together  
through this whole thing. Who kept  
us moving. Who wouldn't let us  
quit.

AMIR

I was just trying to hold it  
together! Long enough to get y'all  
home! Long enough so I can stop  
pretending to be... brave or strong  
or whatever the heck you all think  
I am....

PARKER

You weren't pretending. You stopped  
pretending. To be the bad dude you  
think you have to be. Because of  
where you're from or who your  
father is. Amir, you're not your  
neighborhood. You're not your dad.  
You're who you choose to be. Who do  
you want to be?

The others look to Amir. Wrestling with the weight. Feeling  
unworthy of it. But then he straightens up. Smiles. *Screw it.*

AMIR

I wanna be the dude sitting at home  
playing Playstation. But screw it.  
Somebody gotta save the world.  
Might as well be us, right?

(MORE)

AMIR (CONT'D)  
 I didn't want to go to school  
 Monday anyway.

ISAAC  
 But you said we couldn't find them?

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
 Well... there might be one way...

MONTAGE - as the kids arm themselves with items from Chance's bookbag. Seneca takes an extending baton. Amir takes a hammer. Isaac, a can of mace. Parker, brass knuckles.

DR. LAURA SNYDER (O.S.)  
 The biggest power signature ever  
 recorded, like *on Earth*, is on the  
 other side of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Kale declines to take a weapon. Points to his fists as all he needs. Chance, meanwhile finds an abandoned LIGHTER on the subway platform. Smiles mischievously.

DR. LAURA SNYDER (O.S.)  
 If his people have a mothership,  
 that's where it is. But, be  
 careful. It might be heavily  
 guarded.

As Chance looks on, sad, Kale empties his bag. Gently places the sickly Oscar in it. Uses it as a makeshift Baby Bjorn.

Packed and ready to go, the kids linger over Dr. Snyder, limping heavily back over to the subway stairs.

SENECA  
 Anything we can do for you?

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
 Send somebody back with a  
 wheelchair. And some food.

CHANCE  
 (hands her some snacks)  
 I got you.

They turn to leave. Seneca lingers.

DR. LAURA SNYDER  
 Seneca, right? If you do save the  
 world, come look me up. We could  
 use you down at the lab.

SENECA  
 Oh, I'm not... I'm just...

DR. LAURA SNYDER

Stop. You're smart enough to pull this off. But you can't help your friends, or the world, or you, if you doubt yourself. So don't. Ever.

Seneca walks off with a new determination. Joins the others marching out.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Led by the light of another make-shift torch, the kids walk with grim but silent purpose through the tunnels.

Parker falls in with Kale in the shuffle. Looks over Oscar.

PARKER

I'm sorry. About earlier. I like the kid, it's just... Lily... it's my fault. She just wanted to hold my hand. Crowds scare her and she just wanted to hold my hand. And I didn't let her. I was sick of her and I was mad about... I left her behind on purpose. To scare her. To teach her a lesson. But really, just to be mean. And now she's...

KALE

You didn't know there were gonna be time-stopping aliens. It's not your fault. And anyway, we're gonna save Lily. We're gonna save everybody. But first we gotta save Oscar.

EXT. CANAL STREET SUBWAY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The kids take a few cautious steps out of the entrance. Hide behind cars as they survey their surroundings.

Through the glare of EXTREMELY large flood lights set up along the East Side Highway, they can just make out the Brooklyn Bridge in the distance. Strangely, it's unguarded.

AMIR

Where's the cops? The army?

SENECA

You'd rather there be like a couple of tanks waiting for us?

AMIR

Kinda, yeah. Then maybe I could talk myself outta this.

They climb out of the subway entrance and forge ahead.

EXT. EDGE OF BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

The kids crouch low; weave between jam-packed cars as they approach. Amir holds them back, scans for security.

But he can't see past the BLINDING LIGHT of the 20-foot-tall FLOODLIGHTS set up right in front of the bridge.

AMIR

We might be walking into a trap.

Kale looks over Oscar, who looks to be deteriorating fast.

KALE

If we are, then we are. No time for a detour.

They shield their eyes and push up. Still can't make out the bridge as they walk into and then past the massive lights.

They stop moving for a second and wait for their vision to return. And it does with a shock.

THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE IS CAUGHT IN AN EXPLOSION.

A massive, fiery one right at its center. SCORES of cars, trucks, and buses are being FLUNG VIOLENTLY into the air.

Upside-down, end-over-end. One on top of the other. Huge chunks of rebar and debris flung in every direction.

**ALL FROZEN IN TIME!** A still life of death and destruction, forming an impenetrable barrier right in their path!

CHANCE

(stunned)

If it ain't one fricking thing,  
it's another...

The kids are unmoving in their shock for a long beat. Seneca snaps out of it first. Takes out Chance's paper map.

SENECA

We gotta find another route. Subway track goes under the bridge. If we--

PARKER

(scans horizon)

-- Wait. That's not Brooklyn.

CHANCE

Fam, that's the Brooklyn Bridge. So  
that's kinda gotta be --

PARKER

(points)

-- Then why am I looking at the  
Empire State building?

Sure enough, the distinctive spire of the Empire State  
building in front of them rises over what *should be* Brooklyn.

CHANCE

(points opposite)

No, that's the Empire State  
building back... there....

Sure enough again, the distinctive spire of the Empire State  
building ALSO rises directly behind them...

In what they now realize looks like a MIRROR IMAGE of the  
cityscape directly in front of them... *What is going on...?*

CHANCE

Um... why are there two Empire  
State buildings...?

DAVID WEI (O.S.)

There aren't.

The kids look back startled to see Wei, hands cuffed in front  
of him, and Sgt. Lawson lead a BATTALION of Riot Cops onto  
the bridge, blocking the kids path back out.

The kids look around. Fiery explosion ahead, East River to  
either side. They're good and trapped. No where to run.

AMIR

Dude tries to kill us, and you just  
walk him back over to try again?

SGT. LAWSON

He's cuffed. He's in my custody.  
You're safe. Just hear him out.

David Wei displays his cuffed hands to assure the kids as he  
approaches. Sgt Lawson holds him back from getting too close.

DAVID WEI

Laura... Dr. Snyder... is she...?

AMIR  
Like you care.

SENECA  
She's alive. You got her in the vest.  
(to Sgt. Lawson)  
Her ankle's twisted. She needs help!

SGT. LAWSON  
We'll radio it in.

DAVID WEI  
I'm sorry I hurt her. I'm sorry I tried to hurt you. But I need you to understand what we're facing.

As wary as she is of Wei, Seneca is distracted by the mystery of dual Empire State buildings.

SENECA  
You said there aren't two Empire State buildings? How? I'm looking at them.

DAVID WEI  
Look again.

She does. Back and forth between the two Empire State buildings rising over two identical but opposite skylines.

SENECA  
(realizing)  
It's the same one...

ISAAC  
How?

Seneca backs up as Wei approaches and signals for her map. Lawson pulls him back. Transfers the map from Seneca to him.

DAVID WEI  
Imagine some impossibly powerful force created a fold in space and time so massive, it effectively folded the city in on itself.

Wei folds the map into a loop, so that half of Manhattan connects back with the other, Brooklyn Bridge at the center.

DAVID WEI  
Space time loop.  
(points down road)  
(MORE)

DAVID WEI (CONT'D)  
 We've sent a dozen men that way...  
 (points the opposite way)  
 Only to see them come back that way  
 swearing they never changed  
 direction. If you had a telescope  
 powerful enough and pointed it down  
 any street in the city, you could  
 see the back of your own head.

The kids look around in despair as Wei continues, just now  
 realizing the scope of their predicament.

DAVID WEI  
 Same for light, radio waves, wifi  
 signals. Everything we try to send  
 out comes back the other way. We've  
 been cut off from the rest of the  
 world since this started. We're  
 trapped.

David's eyes well up with tears as he continues.

DAVID WEI  
 Two million people. Trapped. We'll  
 be out of food in 48 hours. Out of  
 water in 36. In 72? Aliens or no  
 aliens, people are going to start  
 dying. By the tens of thousands.  
 From thirst, lack of medicine...

The kids are stunned silent by this revelation.

DAVID WEI  
 But I can stop it. I can save those  
 lives. I just need that child.

KALE  
 Dude, look at him! He's dying! He  
 can't help anybody!

DAVID WEI  
 His death won't slow my work. In  
 fact, it might speed it along.

SENECA  
 You're sick!

DAVID WEI  
 No, he's sick! And he doesn't look  
 like he has long. Give him to me  
 and he won't suffer. His death will  
 serve a purpose.

(MORE)

DAVID WEI (CONT'D)  
 If I can figure out how his people  
 fold space, I can build something  
 that can unfold it! I can save  
 everyone!

KALE  
 You think.

DAVID WEI  
 Okay, since you're here, I suppose  
 Laura told you her energy  
 signature/ mothership hypothesis?  
 She may have neglected to tell you  
 that the source of that energy is  
 directly in the heart of that  
 explosion. Want to take that kid to  
 his people? You'll literally have  
 to walk through fire.

This discourages the others, but Kale is defiant.

KALE  
 We're not giving him up.

SGT. LAWSON  
 Okay. I wanted to do this nice. I  
 know you've been looking out for  
 the kid, but it's not your say. I  
 promise, we'll give the kid  
 whatever medical attention we can.  
 But if the Doc's right --!

SENECA  
 -- He's not! If we do what he says,  
 we all die!

SGT. LAWSON  
 No offense, honey. But between your  
 plan, and the guy with three PhDs?  
 We're going with him.

Kale raises his fists. Shelters Oscar away. The others  
 defiantly assume defensive positions around him.

KALE  
 Y'all deaf? We're not giving him  
 up!

Sgt. Lawson eases her hand over her gun in its holster.

SGT. LAWSON  
 Stop this! You can come with us.  
 You can be there with him. But we  
 have to let the Doc study him.

AMIR

Not gonna happen. So I guess you're  
just gonna have to shoot us.

Sgt. Lawson unholsters her weapon. Levels it at the kids.

SGT. LAWSON

Come on, kid. Don't do this to me.

A tense stand off. No one backs down. No one moves. Except, Isaac notices, for Chance. Who is doing something behind his back. Something only Isaac, from his low vantage, can see.

Isaac smirks to himself, then winks at Chance. Then, he drops to his knees! Clutches his stomach!

ISAAC

Ow! OWIE! My tummy! IT HURTS!

SGT. LAWSON

Son, gimme a break --

Distracted, the cops don't notice when Chance THROWS SOMETHING behind them. Then points after it, SCREAMS:

CHANCE

GUN!!!

POP! POP! POPOPOP! Sgt. Lawson and the other cops DIVE for cover at the sound of gunfire behind them!

When Sgt. Lawson looks up from her prone position on the concrete, she sees FIRECRACKERS exploding in front of her!

SGT. LAWSON

(stands; points)

Bring them back here!

Rising, Sgt. Lawson pushes down the barrel of one of her cops who was aiming his gun at the kids running ahead.

SGT. LAWSON

No! They're trapped on the bridge!  
Just go catch them, you lazy saps!

The Riot Cops reluctantly holster their weapons and chase the kids who already SPRINTING towards the explosion!

AMIR

We're not really going through that fire, are we?

SENECA

Just close to it. I hope.

With the cops on their heels, they JUMP UP and CLIMB OVER the swirling melee of frozen flying vehicles caught in the blast!

They scramble up floating staircases of DEBRIS! Leap from frozen mid-air car to frozen mid-air car!

They get split up in the chase. Seneca has to slink through the open window of an upturned SUV. Pauses at the STARTLED, FROZEN FACES of the passengers caught in the explosion.

The other kids notice it, too. PEOPLE in the cars. Closing their eyes. Holding their kids. Crying. Praying. Frozen in their last moments. A heartbreaking sight...

Then, a cop GRABS Seneca; snaps her out of it. She WHIP-EXTENDS her baton and WHACKS the cop's hand, freeing herself.

The cop DROPS to the ground, hitting the pavement HARD. Groaning in pain.

Amir is pursued to the back edge of an UPSIDE DOWN truck. Looks around. No car close enough to jump onto. Trapped.

As the cops near, Amir LEAPS off, seemingly to his death! But he catches the back of his hammer between the wooden slats lining the bed of an upturned PRODUCE truck below! Climbs up the slats as the cops look on, not daring to follow.

In his stumbling advance, Chance FALLS into the open pen of a LIVESTOCK truck full of LIVE CHICKENS!

Their pens are thrown around in a jumble, beaks hilariously wide open-mid scream, frozen feathers flying everywhere!

Chance scrambles under all this on his belly. The cops come forward on their feet, but can't pursue when the frozen feathers CUT their faces when they try to walk through them!

But the other cops don't relent in their pursuit of Isaac and Parker and the others, forcing the kids dangerously higher and higher up the chaotic, fiery tempest of crashing cars!

Sgt. Lawson and most of her men focus on Kale, less mobile with Oscar in tow. They've chased him on top of a flying SEMI-TRUCK, all the way to the back edge. Nowhere to run.

SGT. LAWSON  
(cautiously approaches)  
Think you're doing that kid any favors, running with him like that?

KALE  
If you give Oscar to him, he'll kill him. You know he will.

SGT. LAWSON

All I know is, a lot of people are gonna die if we don't. There's nowhere to go. Just hand him over.

Kale backs up, until his heels hang off the back edge. Out of places to run. Out of time....

SENECA (O.S.)

Kale!

He looks down to see Seneca standing on the hood of a SEDAN just below, reaching up to him.

SENECA

Hand him down!

Before the rushing cops can prevent it, Kale drops to his belly, carefully lowers Oscar in the bag and drops him.

Seneca catches him as gently as he can, but the drop still makes him COUGH UP more inky black stuff. He looks BAD...

SENECA

Hold on, kid.

The drop off worked like a draw play in football. Most of the cops went after Kale, so nobody's there to pursue Seneca.

She has an open path of floating cars to leap across towards the center of the bridge, and she opens up a wide lead.

Only David Wei, left behind on the ground, has an easy line of pursuit. He takes off after her with still cuffed hands.

Clutching a weakening Oscar desperately to her chest, Seneca runs ahead of the pack. Going over and through cars.

Looks behind her to see as her friends, one by one, are caught and dragged to the ground by the cops.

But she can't think about that now. Can't stop now. She keeps running. Keeps leaping...

Meanwhile, Wei keeps pursuing. He pauses by the cop who dropped to the ground in pursuit of Seneca. The cop writhes in pain, barely conscious. Wei stares at the GUN loose in his holster...

Seneca at last reaches the proverbial event horizon. The last reachable car before the fiery center of the explosion.

She walks to the car's edge; reaches out to touch the edge of the explosion's fire plume. SNAPS her hand back and waves it as if she touched a hot stove.

She realizes: the blast is stuck in time, but it's still HOT. Way too hot to walk through.

She tears up as she calls out to the heart of the blast.

SENECA

Hello? If you're here, if you can hear me, we have your kid. He needs you. I think he's dying. Please.

DAVID WEI (O.S.)

It's no use...

Seneca looks back to see David Wei using his cuffed hands to climb onto the back end of the car.

She sees the sad, desperate look in his eyes. And the GUN in his hands...!

DAVID WEI

Look around you. Look at these people trapped in these cars. If I can't find a way to save them, they're all going to die. And that will be my fault. But if you're wrong... if you throw away my only chance to save them... then it'll also be your fault. You don't want that burden. I don't want you to have it. For your sake, please. Give him to me!

SENECA

Listen, Dr. Snyder and me, we figured it out! We can save them! Everybody! But only if we give him back to his people!

DAVID WEI

I have a daughter. Did you know that? You remind me of her a bit. I'll do anything to save her, but that's because I'm human. Oscar is not! You have no idea if his species even cares for its young! If they do, where are they? Why haven't they come to save him?

SENECA

(strangely emotional)

I don't know! But just because  
they're not here now doesn't mean  
they don't care. Doesn't mean they  
gave up. So I'm not either.

Wei now reluctantly, tearfully raises his gun.

DAVID WEI

I'm sorry... I don't want to... but  
I have to save her. I have to.

SENECA

You can't. But I will.

Seneca turns. And starts WALKING TOWARDS THE FIRE. As if  
she's going to walk into it!

Wei tries to follow, but stumbles back at the heat. Stares  
dumbly as Seneca braves it, sweating as she nears the flame!

She shields Oscar away from it. Doesn't stop, even as her  
CLOTHES ignite from the flames! But then, the flames SUDDENLY  
BLOW OUT as --

A DEAFENING HUM rings out across the bridge.

A half-dozen SHIMMERING SHADOWS step from the heart of the  
explosion. Go walking right past a stunned Wei and Seneca.

SENECA

(holds up Oscar, pursues)

Hey... Wait! Here!

One of the Shadows looks back in her direction. Points its  
finger. AND DAVID WEI DISAPPEARS. Gone in an INSTANT.

Seneca watches, confused, as the Shadows continue to march up  
the bridge, ignoring her and Oscar. Was she wrong?

The other kids, forced to their knees by the Riot Cops, look  
up in horror as the Shadows advance. The Riot Cops are too  
terrified to raise their weapons as the Shadows approach.

A long moment of silence as the Shadows look them over from  
their massive height. Then, the Shadows begin to POINT.

VROOM. VROOM. VROOM. One after the other, the Riot Cops  
VANISH into thin air. Teleported? Or disintegrated?

The remaining cops don't stick around to debate it, and  
neither do the kids. They all run, screaming. Some cops only  
get a step or two before VROOM! They're just gone.

Seeing this, Seneca scrambles down from her car, runs after them, holding out Oscar. But she can't get their attention.

SENECA  
Wait! Wait!

The kids huddle together behind an overturned car level with the street. Look on from their hiding spot in horror as cop after cop gets turned to NOTHING right in front of them.

We see it on their terrified faces as they look on: Seneca's theory sounded good, but it sure looks like they're witnessing a plain, old-fashioned MASSACRE.

In her scrambling to reach them, even Seneca is driven back by the Shadows GIGANTIC footfalls. One almost CRUSHES her.

She panics, dives for cover behind the same car as all the others.

They share horrified looks as more and more Shadows advance, and more and more cops disappear. Soon, the Shadows will move past their position. They'll see them.

AMIR  
We have to run. We have to get out of here.

Seneca puts out a hand to stop him. Gives him a firm, determined look.

SENECA  
No. I'm right. I know I am.

Amir hesitates. He looks over his friends and siblings. Conflicted. His eyes settle on Parker. Makes a decision.

He leans over and KISSES her. With the intensity of a kid who might not ever kiss anyone again.

Kale looks hesitantly to Seneca. *Should I kiss her?* Seneca answers for him - Yes, *idiot!* - by pulling him into a kiss.

Then, they help each other to their feet. Leave their cover.

All the kids fall in with each other. Side by side. Walking directly towards the Shimmering Shadows. Heads held high. Together.

There are no more cops now. They've all been vanished. It's just the kids and the 12 foot high monsters. Facing off.

Seneca still has Oscar. She holds him up as gently as she can towards the Shadows as they approach.

Like before, the Shadows LEAN DOWN from their massive heights. Their ENORMOUS heads seem to look over Oscar.

Oscar COUGHS UP more INKY BLACK stuff. His skin SHIMMERS identically to the shimmer of the Shadows.

After an excruciatingly long, immobilizingly terrifying beat, the Shadows stand again to their full, ominous height.

And then one points at Parker... and she DISAPPEARS!

AMIR  
Parker!

And then one points at Chance. And he disappears. And then one points at Kale. And he disappears.

ISAAC  
(terrified)  
Seneca...

She holds his hand. Looks him in the eye. Sure of herself.

SENECA  
It'll be alright. Trust me.

And then VROOM. *Isaac's gone too!* Just Amir and Seneca now, holding Oscar.

AMIR  
It better be...

He says, as Amir, too, DISAPPEARS from the world.

Now it's just Seneca. Alone. Looking up all the Shadows by herself. She closes her eyes and looks away as ALL of them point down to her, and with a SUDDEN VROOM, we:

CUT TO BLACK:

And it STAYS black. For an uncomfortably long, "is the movie over," amount of time.

Then, slowly, gradually, we realize the image is brightening...

And the outline of a HUMAN FACE gradually becomes distinguishable from the darkness.

As the image brightens we see... IT'S SENECA!

## INT. BLACK VOID

She suddenly wakes. Looks herself over; laughs as she realizes: *I'm alive!* Then she looks around. *Or am I?*

She finds herself alone in an EMPTY VOID of nothing but BLACKNESS in every direction. Is this heaven? Hell?

But then she spots the back of someone's head up ahead of her. She runs towards them.

SENECA

Hey! Hello! Over here!

It runs away as soon as she runs towards it. Every time she stops, it stops. She thinks. Waves her hand over her head.

The person in front of her waves its hand identically; simultaneously. Seneca looks behind her. Another identical figure waves. The back of its head looks a lot like hers.

SENECA

(smiles; realizing)

Space time loop!

(thinks; worried)

How do you get out of space time loops...?

She stretches out her hands. Trying to find an edge to this endless space. A door; a window. A way out.

Just when she was about to panic, she spots a PINPOINT of WHITE LIGHT up ahead. Takes a step towards it. Then another.

It doesn't recede from her. It gets wider. Bigger. She runs for it as it opens up before her, growing bigger and brighter until she has to shield her eyes from the glare, until she runs into:

## INT. WHITE VOID

And she sees NOTHING BUT WHITE as her vision clears. Until, slowly, human figures distinguish themselves from the endless white void...

It's Parker! And Chance! And Kale! And Amir and Isaac!

Their vision clears up enough to see each other at the same time, and they all LEAP into a laughing, twirling, embracing hug and kiss circle in the middle of the room!

AMIR  
 (kissing Seneca's cheek)  
 Wooooo! You were right!

SENECA  
 Told you! I wouldn't risk my  
 brothers' lives if I wasn't sure.  
 (beat; winks)  
 I mean, you know. 90% sure.

Chance looks around at the empty void, nothing but  
 featureless WHITENESS in every direction.

CHANCE  
 And are you 90% sure this isn't  
 heaven?

KALE  
 I'm 100% sure. You're here.

ISAAC  
 Where's here? Their spaceship?

PARKER  
 Or, like, their version of a  
 lobster tank at a seafood joint...

KALE  
 Wait. Where's Oscar?!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
 He is safe.

The kids start and look over. A beautiful woman in a LUMINOUS  
 WHITE DRESS has just APPEARED in the room.

Recovering from the shock they realize: IT'S RENEE! It's  
 their mother, standing right before them!

ISAAC  
 Mom!

Amir, Seneca, and Isaac rush over to her. Hold her in a long,  
 grateful hug. A hug which Renee(?) strangely does not return.

She just looks down on them with a graceful but distant  
 serenity, hands behind her back. Smiling pleasantly.

A long beat, and the kids back away. Look over this strangely  
 benevolent being wearing their mother's face. Realize:

ISAAC  
 Hold up. Not mom?

MATRIARCH (RENEE)  
 Our people can take many shapes.  
 But we thought this one would be  
 most comfortable for you.

AMIR  
 Who are you?

MATRIARCH  
 We are the Matriarch. We speak for  
 our people. Who speaks for you?

The other kids, even Amir, look to Seneca.

SENECA  
 I guess... we speak for ourselves.

MATRIARCH  
 And yet they all look to you.

SENECA  
 Well... I'm the oldest.

AMIR  
 (under his breath)  
 By like three minutes...

KALE  
 Is Oscar okay?

MATRIARCH  
 Our son is alive. And for this, we  
 honor you.

ISAAC  
 He's your son? So, is he, like a  
 prince? And is there a reward?

MATRIARCH  
 Here, a child to one is a child to  
 all. All children are our children.

KALE  
 Can we see him?

MATRIARCH  
 You would not be able to,  
 currently. To explain, your realm  
 and its inhabitants are of four  
 dimensions. Our realm is of twelve.  
 To heal, the one you call Oscar  
 must remain in his twelve-  
 dimensional form, in which you  
 could not perceive him.

A moment of blank silence. Then Chance leans over to Seneca.

CHANCE  
You'll explain that to us later?

SENECA  
Yep. I got you.

AMIR  
Okay, but... what are you? Where  
are you from?

The Matriarch smiles. And seemingly in response, the WHITE VOID falls away. Replaced by a vision onto an ALIEN PLANET.

Three suns. A beautiful yellow sky. Buildings GLIMMERING with the same sheen of the Shimmering Shadows. But beautiful.

It's populated by barely perceptible luminous SHAPES. So complicated the kids can't quite make them out.

A slight tilt of the Matriarch's head, and the shapes FOLD/BEND/COALESCE into roughly human shapes. Allowing the kids to make out what they're looking at.

It's not like watching it on a screen. It's like being there.

MATRIARCH  
We are called many names. But we  
call ourselves the Keepers of the  
Roads.

CHANCE  
Roads?

MATRIARCH  
The closest translation in your  
language would be wormholes.  
Although we find this quite  
insulting. The Roads are our homes.  
Our very bodies.  
(with a smile)  
We do not like to think of  
ourselves as worms.

SENECA  
So, you can bend space and time?

MATRIARCH  
To us, this is as easy as folding  
paper is to you. It is how we  
travel, how I have assumed this  
form.

(MORE)

## Matriarch (CONT'D)

We have traveled the Roads the longest, but sooner or later, all species stumble upon them. We have been entrusted to insure that those that discover the Roads are worthy to travel them.

## PARKER

(angry)

That's why you blew up our city? Why you've been terrorizing and kidnapping people? Why you froze my sister in time? To test us?!

## Matriarch

We have kidnapped no one. We have been **evacuating** your people, because **your** scientists blew up your city and froze your sister. That was not our doing.

A nod of her head, and the kids are transported to the middle of the Inflation Reactor Room as it EXPLODES.

## Matriarch

(points at David Wei)

This one built his own Road. But he did so hastily. Clumsily. Roads built this way are dangerous. The misshapen Road led to our world, where the one you call Oscar fell into it. We followed him here, and have since been trying to help.

## AMIR

Well... can you fix it?

A slight nod of her head, and the White Void returns.

## Matriarch

Please understand. For my people, taking on only four dimensions is like wearing a child's costume. Yet such is our gratitude, that we lower ourselves to honor you.

## CHANCE

Uh... thanks?

## Matriarch

And so, we will also honor you with the truth. Our people *can* fix your world. But we have not yet decided if we *should*.

PARKER  
 (indignant)  
 Whether you should?

MATRIARCH  
 The Roads connect all the species  
 who walk them. Among those who  
 travel them, the concept of  
 distance fades from memory. The  
 universe becomes a neighborhood,  
 its inhabitants, neighbors.

AMIR  
 And you don't think we'd make good  
 neighbors?

Another nod, and the void is replaced by images of previous scenes. Of the school security guards roughing up Seneca and Amir. Of the scared Riot Cops holding them at gunpoint. Of David Wei shooting at them. Adults being evil to kids.

MATRIARCH  
 Almost every species, even the non-sentient ones, protect their young.  
 But your people...

Another nod, and now the kids see THEIR OWN PARENTS. From their OWN HOMES:

We look in as Kale's FATHER kicks him out of the house. He leaves with one bag. Alone. In the cold.

We see Chance return home to find his mother gone. Prepares a meal from his backpack alone in an empty apartment.

Parker tries showing her parents one of her drawings, but they ignore her. Shoo her out. Buried in their work.

Seneca looks out, as a section of the void is replaced by an image of Seth's empty seat from her childhood spelling bee.

Amir sees Seth sneaking off in the middle of the night, despite his younger self crying, begging him to stay.

Isaac sees an empty chair at his 5th birthday party. A placard on the back reading simply "DAD."

MATRIARCH  
 We expect our neighbors to treat our children as their own. But look how your adults treat you. How your own parents treat you.

The kids go sad and quiet, seeing their own parents prove the Matriarch's point.

MATRIARCH

If we fix your world, your adults would find the Roads again. And they would travel them, and spread their cruelty throughout the universe.

PARKER

If you don't fix them, my sister will die! Isn't that just as cruel?

MATRIARCH

The thing is not yet done. Our decision is not yet made. But know that for your people to be saved, someone must speak for them. For your adults. So far... none have.

Silence. Then, Seneca steps forward.

SENECA

I will.  
(off Matriarch's look)  
I mean, if I can. Can I?

MATRIARCH

Are you sure you want to? We have seen your father --

SENECA

My father made me and my brothers. He gave us what he could. And that was enough for us to save your son. And, no he ain't perfect. But... he tries.

Seneca doesn't notice, but the others do, that the void now disappears, slowly replaced by an overlooking assembly of SHIMMERING SHADOWS.

SENECA

We sometimes... I sometimes don't make it easy for him. But he never gives up. He's always trying to be better. He used to be a bad person. But he tries not to be. And yeah, dude fails sometimes, we all do. But he never gives up. And me and my brothers, we got that from him. That's why we didn't give up on Oscar.

(MORE)

## SENECA (CONT'D)

Our people, our adults, they ain't perfect. Not even close. But how can they get better, how can anything get better, if we just give up on each other?

And now Seneca notices, she seems to be surrounded by an assembly, or a Senate, of Shimmering Shadows looking on.

It's terrifying at first. But then, after a long silence, one of the Shadows FOLDS itself down into human shape.

Then another. Then another. Until one by one, every Shadow overlooking has transformed into a human.

## SENECA

What was that?

The Matriarch turns to Seneca with a smile.

## MATRIARCH

That was a vote.

## SENECA

Oh. Who won?

The Matriarch's smile broadens.

INT. VOID TUNNEL - DAY

The Matriarch walks them through a long, mostly translucent tunnel. With windows showing a view onto her home planet.

## MATRIARCH

We will fix your world. But not without cost. We will alter your memories, to delay the discovery of the Roads until you are more ready. You may not remember some of your time here, or everything that's befallen you in the past few days. This will take time. But you are welcome to stay on our planet until the work is done.

## CHANCE

Planet? You mean your ship.

## MATRIARCH

We are the Keepers of the Roads, Chance. We do not need "ships."

She nods, and the edges of the tunnels PEEL AWAY. The kids hair and clothes blow in the breeze of the alien world. It takes a second to hit them... they're actually there!

SENECA

(realizes)

In the room... those weren't videos! She took us there. She brought us back in time and space!

MATRIARCH

And now I've brought you here. Welcome to our world.

The kids look around in a wide, sweeping vista of a gorgeous, unimaginably advanced and vast alien world.

ISAAC

Better than Coney Island...

INT. VOID ROOM - LATER

The kids are back in the original White room. Looking out on the Matriarch's world. When suddenly, who should run in but:

KALE

Oscar!

Oscar jumps up into his arms, and the kids surround him and hug him. He giggles. He seems healthy.

MATRIARCH

He insisted on saying goodbye in person.

AMIR

We're going home now?

MATRIARCH

To a time before your troubles. We have repaired the damage to your world. We will keep an eye on you all. With great hope.

ISAAC

Thank you!

SENECA

He means we... the people of Earth... we thank you.

MATRIARCH

Earth? No, children...

The Matriarch looks over each of them in turn:

MATRIARCH  
 Chance. Kale. Parker. Isaac. Amir.  
 Seneca. We have not done this for  
 Earth. We have done this for you.

The kids take a moment to be surprised by that. And then, looking to each other, proud of it.

The Matriarch signals for them to assemble together.

MATRIARCH  
 Whenever you are ready.

The kids follow her lead. The Matriarch notices a forlorn look on Amir's face.

MATRIARCH  
 Something troubles you?

AMIR  
 You said we might forget some of  
 the things that happened to us.

The Matriarch notices Amir staring at Parker.

MATRIARCH  
 Are there things you'd like not to  
 forget?

AMIR  
 One.

The Matriarch smiles. Nods her head. And the whiteness in the room brightens and brightens until it's almost blinding.

MATRIARCH  
 Then don't.

And the screen goes COMPLETELY WHITE. Then, suddenly:

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Seneca, Isaac, Amir, Chance, and Kale INSTANTLY find themselves back on the subway.

They look disoriented for a second, as if they can't remember where they are or why they're there.

Then, Seneca notices other subway passengers staring at her in shock. Just like they were right after...

Suddenly remembering, she leaps from her seat and runs into the adjacent subway car. Tears the door open to find:

Her father. Seth Baldwin. Alive. Turning around to see her. Moments after she first told him off on the subway. Surprised to see her pursuing him. Perplexed by the look on her face.

SETH

Sen...? What's --

She LEAPS into his arms. Hugs him with all her might. Tears streaming down her face.

SENECA

I'm sorry, Daddy! I'm so sorry. I didn't mean it! I didn't mean any of it. I love you so much. I'm so sorry.

Seth is taken aback. After a moment of being too overwhelmed to react, he hugs her back, shushes her.

SETH

Baby. Baby, it's okay. It's okay, honey. Don't cry.

He looks up to see Isaac and Amir staring at him with tears in their eyes. Like they thought they'd never see him again.

SETH

Boys? What's --

And they CRASH into him with emotional hugs, too. Crying. Seth is completely flummoxed by the emotional outpouring.

SETH

Guys, it's okay. I love you guys, okay? It's okay...

Seth's confusion doesn't lessen when he sees Chance and Amir, also crying, talking to their parents on their phones.

KALE

I love you guys... I just want you to know that, Dad...

CHANCE

I don't want nothing. I just wanted to hear your voice, Ma.

At Chance's mention of his mother, the Baldwin kids suddenly release their father and realize:

ISAAC  
Mom! Dad, you gotta take us home!

SETH  
But --

AMIR  
You asked us where we want to go!  
We want to go home! With you and  
Ma, everybody together...

SENECA  
Please, dad...!

Off Seth's confused, but yielding face...

INT. NYC STREET - NIGHT

Parker suddenly finds herself standing at a bus stop in the middle of the city. Looks around disoriented, then:

A FLASH OF RECOGNITION as she realizes where she is! She turns and looks frantically, screaming:

PARKER  
Lily! LILY! LII-LLY!

LILY  
(barely audible)  
Parker...? Over here...!

Parker looks through the gaps in the crowd. Can just make out Lily waving for her up the block.

Parker pushes her way through the crowd rushing by to get onto the arriving bus. Shoves people aside. Uncaring.

Lily sheepishly holds out her hand, hoping Parker will take it. But Parker instead scoops Lily up into her arms.

Lily is completely taken aback as Parker hugs her with all her might, tears streaming down her face.

LILY  
Parker...? What's wrong?

Parker just kisses her sister repeatedly through her tears.

PARKER

Nothing's wrong, kiddo. I got my sister. Nothing's wrong anymore.

LILY

I'm sorry for falling behind.

PARKER

No. I'm sorry. For being a crappy big sister. But that's gonna change.

LILY

Okay, but... we missed our bus!

Parker finally drops her sister on the street. Places Lily's hand in hers and holds it tight.

PARKER

Doesn't matter. We're not going home yet anyway. Only thing that does matters is we're together. And you can hold my hand whenever you want. Cool?

LILY

(blank stare)

Is this a trick?

Parker laughs, hugs Lily again, making Lily more suspicious.

INT. BALDWIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Renee peeks out her peephole at somebody knocking on her door like the goddamn police. Is surprised a what she sees.

RENEE

(opening the door)

Y'all forget something...?

As soon as the door is cracked, the kids BUM RUSH through the door. ASSAULT their mother with smothering hugs and kisses.

RENEE

What in the world? Y'all act like you ain't seen me in days?!

AMIR

I love you, Ma!

SENECA

Me too!

At this, she shoots a suspicious look to Seth.

RENEE  
What did you do to my babies?!

SETH  
Nothing! They just got like this  
all of a sudden!

Chance and Kale hang back at the door. Until Kale, remembering, shouts.

KALE  
Hey! Lily!

The Baldwins, realizing, suddenly release Renee. Scramble for the door as quickly as they stormed in!

AMIR  
Mom! Dad! Don't leave!

SETH  
But --!

SENECA  
We want to have our birthday here.  
With all of us. And both of you.

RENEE  
But --!

ISAAC  
We'll be right back!

And they're gone. Renee narrows her eyes at Seth; suspicious.

RENEE  
Did you drug them?!

SETH  
What?! No!

EXT. BROOKLYN - NIGHT

The kids come crashing down out of their building, only to see Parker, dragging a confused Lily behind her by the hand at a run.

Seeing Lily, the other kids shout her name and run over to her, startling her. Then start passing her around for hugs!

LILY  
 (being passed overhead)  
 Um... I think this is weird? I'm  
 pretty sure this is weird...

Parker just looks on smiling as Kale sets down a thoroughly uncomfortable Lily in front of Isaac.

LILY  
 Why are they acting like --

And Isaac hugs Lily for dear life. Her eyes open wide like saucers. She hugs him back. This she doesn't mind so much...

Amir approaches Parker with a little trepidation.

AMIR  
 So... do you remember...?

Parker waits for him to finish. Then gives him a genuinely confused look.

PARKER  
 Remember what?

AMIR  
 Oh, uh. Just...

PARKER  
 Oh, you mean this?

And Parker pulls Amir in and plants a good kiss on him.

Kale and Seneca look on nervously. Stare at Amir and Parker to keep from looking at each other.

KALE  
 I mean... that's a little much.

SENECA  
 Right?

KALE  
 Because like we kissed. Remember?

SENECA  
 Vaguely... I mean, yeah.

KALE  
 But we ain't acting all like...

SENECA  
 For real. Why they gotta be all...?

They finally look at each other. Go in simultaneously for an awkward but heart-felt kiss.

Part, feeling embarrassed. Without looking at each other.

SENECA  
Wanna be my boyfri --

KALE  
-- Yes!

And, without looking, they find and hold each other's hands.

Looking over the happy couples, Chance then turns to Isaac and Lily, who are uncomfortable with all the affection.

CHANCE  
What about you two?

Isaac and Lily blush (as much as possible) and turn facing away from each other.

ISAAC  
Bruh... just... no!

LILY  
That's nasty! You're nasty!

INT. BALDWIN APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

All the kids, including Parker and Lily, join the Baldwins and their parents around a half-vanilla, half-chocolate birthday cake (Amir and Seneca's cakes squished together.)

As Seneca and Amir blow out their candles, we:

FADE TO BLACK.