

CAROUSEL

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Written by

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SPRING.

1 EXT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - EAST CLEVELAND - BLUE MORNING 1

From a distance, the home awakes. Lights flick on upstairs then downstairs in haphazard mosaic. Shadows through windows.

A GIRL, fourteen, lets a dog out the front door to pee.

From within, a FATHER calls out for his daughter to close the front door. She shoots back a retort before obediently shooing the dog inside.

Some more shadows within. Maybe a light or two goes off.

Leaves stroll along the sidewalk with the wind.

The door flies open and out comes the Girl, followed eagerly by her Father, and the dog sprinting out with vigor.

The Father holds his Daughter's coat out like a toreador. She snatches it. He hands her the key. She beeps open the SUV while he hurries the dog back inside of the house. Lights go off inside, saving electricity, and Father closes the door. Mid-shuffle to the car, he holds up, attention caught by something tucked behind the back tires.

A worm was drawn to the cement during the rains last night. It is struggling to find earth. The Father leans in and gingerly picks up the worm and places it in their yard.

The Father hastens for the driver's side, but then holds. He returns to the grass to check the worm has indeed found its way into the dirt. Satisfied, he wipes his hands as he hops into the vehicle, pulling away at a neighborhood speed.

2 INT. CAR - MORNING 2

NOAH, the father, and MAYA, the daughter, drive in silence. He's a very cautious driver. She stares out her window, unimpressed. He looks at her now and then.

NOAH

Huh?

MAYA

What.

NOAH

Did you

Say something?

She shakes her head, "No."

Okay.

He wants to say something to her. But to be completely honest, he's scared to. What if it's the wrong thing?

3 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

3

Car pile up in the drop-off lane means they're crawling.

NOAH  
You cool to walk?

She grabs her backpack. Fine.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I have an 8 o'clock.

MAYA  
(genuine)  
I know.

She unbuckles, gathers her things. Then turns to the back.

Suddenly, she dips further into the backseat, searching.

FATHER  
What is it?

Noah sees he needs to pull forward in line. Nervous she will fall, he puts an arm around her legs while the car pulls forward. Maya continues rummaging.

NOAH  
Maya?

She flips around and fwomps down hard into the passenger seat. She is distressed, breath caught in her chest. Gasping. It's shocking to see a child so placid become immediately so beset with worry.

FATHER  
Head down. Breathe.

She puts her head to her knees.

He is being waved on by the crossing guard. He puts an arm on her back. He breathes with her as he pulls forward.

She abruptly sits up, her face flushed. She could be crying.

NOAH  
You're scaring me, alright?

MAYA  
I left my flag project at home on  
the island I

NOAH  
The -

Hazards on. He waves the pushy car behind him to go around.

MAYA  
It's like half our social studies  
grade I'm gonna fail it's --

She clamps her hands hard on her head, angry at herself.

NOAH  
Hey - don't

MAYA  
So stooooPid.

NOAH  
When is class?

MAYA  
Doesn't matter.

NOAH  
When is class.

MAYA  
*Sixth period.*

NOAH  
When is that?

MAYA  
After lunch.

NOAH  
Okay.

He thinks, doing math.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Yeah okay yeah, I can bring it.  
Okay?

She's pressing her fingers into her skull, making them  
whiten.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Hey. Stop. Stop that.

MAYA  
You promise you'll bring it.

NOAH  
Yes, I promise.

MAYA  
Okay.

NOAH  
Okay?

MAYA  
Yeah okay.

NOAH  
Will you stop now?

She looks at him, betrayed by his annoyance with her.

MAYA  
Yeah. I'll stop.

And she's out of the car. That all happened too fast for him to save it. He watches her go. Reluctantly, he drives off.

4 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - EAST CLEVELAND - MORNING 4

Noah enters his family's local independent physician's office. A demure sign out front reads: Abrams Family Medical. There was no need to change it when Noah's father died because, technically, the Abrams family still run the office: he and his uncle, SAM, and his sister, ABBY, a registered nurse. His mother, DONNA, used to work at the front desk, but she's since retired. Now, she mostly attends classes at the botanical gardens and volunteers at the Jewish Center.

Noah carries a worn out Nalgene and packed lunch into his office. He removes his salt-stained puffer coat, places it on the appointed hook, and slides on his white lab coat. He plucks his common use tools: stethoscope and whatnot.

Abby, mid-thirties, is in the hall with a patient chart.

NOAH  
(checking his click pens  
work)  
He's all set for me?

ABBY  
 (feigning ignorance)  
 Oh. Was I supposed to do something?

NOAH  
 God, what an asshole. I asked a  
 question.

She's walking away, waving him off with a 'yeah yeah.'  
 There's comfort in the playful friction.

5 INT. EXAM ROOM - MORNING

5

Noah enters. BEN, nine, has a hefty bandage wrapped around his hand. BEN'S DAD sits next to him. He's still in uniform from working third shift. Noah's doctor demeanor is intentionally breezy. He learned it from his dad.

NOAH  
 So you smashed your hand, huh?

Ben flicks a crooked, almost-smile.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 (sliding close in his  
 chair)  
 Alrighty. Let's have a look, hm?

He patiently and softly removes the homemade bandage.

BEN'S DAD  
 We weren't sure, you know, how to.

NOAH  
 You did great.

He tosses the bandages away. He inspects the hand. The ring and pinky finger look crooked, swollen, and red. Ben grimaces. Noah squeezes his forearm tenderly.

BEN  
 I was running.

A flash of guilt on his face.

NOAH  
 You know. Sometimes... I run into  
 stuff. Cabinets, walls. Trees.

Ben enjoys the image of Noah running into walls and trees.

BEN'S DAD  
 Is it broken?

NOAH

Nope. Bruised pretty bad. But we'll wrap it up so you won't use them for awhile. Keep it safe. Okay? You write with that hand?

Ben shakes his head 'no.'

NOAH (CONT'D)

Awesome. You'll take it easy.  
(to the dad)  
Elevate. Ice compresses. And:  
(to the boy)  
tell your friends you ran into... a bear. And it came to blows.

BEN

A moose!

NOAH

Sure!

Noah slides back towards a cabinet.

NOAH (CONT'D)

We have some kid slings.

BEN'S DAD

Will he need to come back in?

NOAH

Uh, let's give it a few days? But yeah, I'll want to see how it's healing. Check his grip.

Ben's Dad nods, hiding something. Noah knows that look.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Text me.

He jots his number on a prescription pad and hands it to him.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I'll get you in. Quick check-up.

They share a look. Ben's Dad understands he won't get charged. Noah quickly covers the moment, putting his attention back to the cabinet to find that sling.

BEN

It hurts.

NOAH

Yep. Hurting is no fun. Things go weird colors and feel bad to tell us: be careful. Isn't that cool? The body does that? Pretty smart.

Dad gently slides the prescription slip into his wallet.

6

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - MIDDAY

6

Noah lets RUFUS, the dog, out, then drops keys and mail on the island.

He sorts bills, ads, letters into neat piles. The Ads pile is thrown out. The Bills pile is clipped in a noticeable location for later. There are a couple Letters. One has his name and he opens it: a notice about his car insurance. The other letter is addressed to: Sarah Abrams. He opens it. He takes a picture of it and texts it to Sarah. Then, he puts the letter back in its envelope and places it in a drawer. This drawer has other opened pieces of mail with Sarah's name on it.

He locates Maya's flag project. He nervously taps his fingers on the island. He checks his phone for a response to his text. Nothing.

Noah slides the door open for the dog and checks his paws.

He checks his phone. Still no texts. He collects the flag project, keys, tests for unlocked doors. Then, he looks at Rufus slumped into a nap. He envies him, then leaves.

7

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - ENTRANCE / AUDITORIUM - DAY

7

Noah, flag project tucked under his arm, rushes into the school. A few squeaky steps in and the sound of a choir halts him. There's a heavenly quality, with the empty halls and sunshine on linoleum. He wanders to the auditorium.

Through a thin window in the door, he can see the choir practice. And there's Maya. She's in choir? She appears peaceful. He hasn't seen his daughter look this way in some time. They come to the final cadence. Noah looks away, bashful, and leaves before she sees him.

8

INT. NOAH'S CAR / EXT. METRO PARK - AFTERNOON

8

Noah eats a burrito in his car. It's the kind of place people go to think. There's water, trees. He eats ugly-fast.

There's no music or radio. He likes the quiet. Now and then he watches people.

An OLD MAN, his hatchback piled so high with cut logs the rear window is blocked, exits his car, pulls down his sweater past his hips, looks around suspiciously, and walks.

A TRACKSUITED WOMAN carries her old French bulldog like a sack of potatoes while she walks. Their outfits match.

Then, Noah notices a WOMAN in a car parked two spaces to his left. The windows are dirty. She takes a sip from a ceramic coffee mug. From home, he imagines. She takes a final slurp and cavalierly throws it in the backseat. She starts her car.

Huh. Interesting. Noah checks the time. He rolls the burrito wrapper into a ball and sprays some lavender hand sanitizer.

9 INT. / EXT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICINE - RECEPTION - DUSK 9

Noah's changed into his going home attire, but he's sliding away some final files. Abby's left for the day. She keeps a clean front desk. He hears Sam leading out his last patient for the day, EVELYN SHAPIRO. He watches them chat and spat.

SAMUEL

Alright, Evelyn. Next Friday. It's a date. Don't tell Ed...

She rolls her eyes and waves him off "oh hush." He holds open the door for her. She moves slow, in some pain. Sam gently guides her with a touch to her forearm and elbow. A flicker of joy says: she sees her someone waiting up ahead. Sam waits by the door, presumably to see she gets in the car okay. He raises a hand as a goodbye then turns to Noah. There's a kind of backstage energy to the room now, performance time over. \*

NOAH

You better hit it if you wanna make dinner.

Samuel looks at him: "oh, is it?"

SAMUEL

(removing lab coat)

Will you be gracing us?

NOAH

Why rob Mom of an excuse to bring me leftovers?

Samuel nods, hiding amusement.

SAMUEL

She will never be without excuses,  
your mother.

Sam rushes off to grab his things. Noah waits.

NOAH

Will Paula be there?

Sam re-enters, putting on his coat.

SAMUEL

(a verbal groan)

Why, yes.

NOAH

Playing hard to get, huh?

SAMUEL

(a rebuttal)

She asked me out. I said no.  
Politely. It's your mother. She  
keeps stoking it.

NOAH

She worries about you.

SAMUEL

If she worries, then save me this  
drama.

They hustle out the door, Noah locks up. Once outside, they stand in mutual silence for a beat.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

If you need company this weekend...

NOAH

I'm fine.

An uncomfortable beat. Sam wants to pry but he won't.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Want a ride?

SAMUEL

I prefer to walk.

Noah grins: no use arguing, let him walk. Noah slides into his car, taking longer than he needs to get going so he can watch Sam walk for a bit. Noah wants to make sure he's okay. \*

9A	EXT. TOWN STREET - CONTINUOUS	9A	*
	The sky is saying goodnight to the day and Sam walks home. If he were to be stricken blind suddenly, he'd still know the way. And yet, he keeps his gaze up. He's unwilling to miss a chance encounter or some brilliant slant of light cutting through town. To anyone passing by, or looking out from a coffee shop window, his figure - that gait, that coat, that face would all be as comforting and reliable a fixture to come across in their town as, say, their local post office, church, or square.		*
	Sam stops in front of a building. It has papered up windows and the watermark of a recently removed sign above its doorframe. Something lived here that is now gone, and its going came without notice or ceremony. Sam studies the watermark, the building. When did this happen? Why did no one say anything? He contemplates what else might be going. He contemplates what else in his life is vulnerable to time. Then, he continues walking.		*
10	INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - FRIDAY NIGHT	10	
	Cavs game is on. Noah's eating on the couch. He drips cheese and oil from his pizza slice onto himself. Fuck. He looks around for a towel. Nothing. He wolfs down the rest of the slice - hot hot. He looks to the kitchen. His shirt. Then the TV. He relaxes and wipes his hands on his shirt. Who cares.		
11	INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - HOME "OFFICE" - MORNING	11	
	Craned back, Noah squeezes drops in his eyes and blinks away the sting while fumbling around his keyboard to log on to his telehealth system. Ba-doop. A PATIENT stares back at him.		
	NOAH Mrs. Patterson, hello. So. Yeast infection won't quit.		
12	INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY	12	
	He stands to eat flour tortillas that he folds and dips in salsa while scrolling instagram, tallboy Bubly to his right. He can hear the neighbor kids playing next door.		
13	INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY	13	
	Noah shops. For what, he isn't sure. He picks things up, walks an aisle or two, then puts the items back.		

Standing amidst the fruit, he sees dragonfruit. Dragonfruit. He's never had a dragonfruit. He takes out his phone and taps out a text. He looks at his phone, anticipating a quick response. Nothing. Nothing. Okay, he puts the phone in his pocket. He selects three or four dragonfruit.

14

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - EVENING

14

Noah is taking a selfie video. He brings a wedge of dragonfruit to his mouth:

NOAH

Okay. I, Noah Abrams, will now taste test: dragonfruit.

He consumes the wedge. He chews. He thinks.

NOAH (CONT'D)

It's..... Wet. And, sweet? Results indeterminate. Gonna need you to taste test when you're home... okay, hope you're having fun with Mom! Love you.

He presses 'stop' and then sends the video. He looks around his empty house and decides to get the mail.

He exits and returns with mail and sorts it. Ad. Ad. Insurance bill. A Letter. There's an official seal. From the Police Department.

The Letter is addressed to Sarah Abrams. He checks through the light to see what it could be. He opens it.

He stares at the letter for awhile. Re-reads. Heart racing.

He doesn't take a picture this time. Instead, he opens up an old laptop over on the junk table. He refers to the letter and types in a web address, biting his lip. Then, he retrieves his wallet. He types in his credit card info. A few more clicks. He waits. Then, his greedy eyes scan over the information. He closes the laptop with a snap.

He stands in silence for a beat. As if to reassure himself.

15

INT. SPORTS BAR - EAST CLEVELAND - NIGHT

15

A legacy bar. TVs are dialed to: hockey, basketball, baseball. It is understood you do not ask to change stations. Noah sits facing a basketball screen. Cavs. He eats chicken wings, thumbs and index fingers clotted with syrupy sauce.

He shoots the shit with SEAN, the bartender. They talk about whatever topics allow them to feel connected to another man without doing any emotional labor.

Noah finishes his wings. He belches. He hates himself for a second. He looks at his hands. Shit, no napkins.

NOAH  
Napkins back there?

SEAN cranes around to see no napkins were put out. Shit.

SEAN  
Fuck, sorry, man.

Noah shrugs "it's alright." Sean hands over some bar naps.

NOAH  
(wiping his hands)  
I'll do another hazy.

Sean nods, 'you got it' and grabs a pint glass. Noah "looks at his phone," but is really scanning the room.

There's a WOMAN sitting in a booth. She turns to put something in her handbag. The gesture, the reach. It connects in Noah's head: she's that Coffee Mug Woman. Before he can get a better look, her SERVER arrives, obscuring his view.

Sean drops the beer and gives a disapproving shake of his head towards the tv, pulling Noah's focus.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
(in re: game on TV)  
Brutal.

16

INT. SPORTS BAR - FURTHER INTO THE NIGHT

16

Sports fans have been replaced by Saturday Night Rowdies. Sean bitches about their lack of a hockey team. Noah's drunk.

SEAN  
I mean fuck, Nashville has a team.  
It's stupid. Cleveland is fucking  
cold as shit. Hockey, dude. Hockey.

NOAH  
New stadium.

SEAN  
Jobs.

NOAH

Sure. Yep.

(dry laugh to himself)

It's so fucked.

People don't ... pay attention.

They don't pay any attention. You know? Right there in front of your face and they don't do shit.

Sean does his best to listen to what he can tell is a fresh drunk rant brewing, but customers do need refills.

NOAH (CONT'D)

People just do ... whatever. They want. Whatever they want. Because there's someone there. There's someone right there. And I'm so tired, man. Hey, what do you have to do to get your license revoked?

Sean wasn't listening, he's signaling "one second" so he can take an order.

Noah turns to his NEIGHBOR.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Do you know?

Neighbor shakes his head and touches his ear - can't hear.

NOAH (CONT'D)

(louder)

Why would they revoke a license? A driver's license? A DUI, right? That'll do it?

Neighbor shrugs and moves to another seat. Right, okay. Noah nods - I'd leave me, too.

Noah looks over at that Coffee Mug Woman. What's she doing? She's tipping out ice chips from her empty water glass into her hands, using them to clean away sticky chicken wing sauce. She looks around, as if she's doing something criminal, and lets the ice chips drop to the floor.

Something registers in Noah. A weight drops from his chest to his lower intestine. A kind of vertigo upon seeing a ghost.

Shyness envelops him suddenly. He returns to the TV.

SEAN

Another?

Noah shakes his head. He struggles to speak. Air caught.

NOAH

Close out.

Sean nods. As the receipt prints out, Noah takes out his phone. He types up a text. He thinks. Sean drops his bill and Noah quickly taps send and shoves his phone away.

SEAN

Last one's on me.

Noah puts down his card. Sean snaps it up.

Noah lets his eyes drift over to the Coffee Mug Woman.

Her phone's lit up. She looks at it. Then, as if shocked by static, puts it back down.

Sean drops the bill and card. Noah takes his time signing. He watches her intently.

The Woman, thinking, decides to pick the phone back up. She taps out a response, then lays it back down.

Noah snaps the check holder shut. Then eagerly pulls out his phone. He waits. There it is. He opens a text conversation:

**Noah: Hey Rebecca. Was thinking about you. Stopped by school today. Still in DC? Let me know next time you're home.**

**Rebecca: Hey! Yep. Still there. Bet that was funny being back at school haha. And will do!**

Noah thinks. He types out: **Glad to hear. Yeah it was wei**

The cursor pulses. He closes the phone. A grimace.

He looks at her. She's ordering another drink from the Server. A little overeager and oblivious. Of course she is.

He thinks about leaving. He looks over at Sean.

REBECCA, the Coffee Mug Woman, runs her hands through her hair. She's agitated. Her Server brings her a shot and a beer. She quickly downs the shot.

Rebecca raises a hand for Server's attention then gestures: "the bill, please?" She takes a long swig of beer, wanting to get the most out of it before she leaves.

Server returns.

SERVER

It's on him.

Huh? Rebecca follows the Server's eyes. There's Noah.

Her first instinct is to smile and wave, but halfway through the gesture she remembers she just lied to him. He returns a limp, sad wave. Should she go over there? He puts his wallet in his pocket and leaves.

17 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

17

Rebecca enters the silent, dark home. She drops keys. She doesn't bother turning on lights. She listens to the Canadian geese honking out by the lake. To others the sound would be circus-like. For her, it is home.

18 EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME / INT. REBECCA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

18

Rebecca lays in her childhood bed. She is awake but not moving. She checks the time on her phone. She shouldn't, but opens her emails. She sees an email that makes her temperature rise. She starts typing feverishly. Then she places a call. Forgoing pleasantries:

REBECCA

Yeah just saw your email. Tell  
Porter's office: the language on  
the spending bill is closed.

19 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - MORNING

19

In the light of day, all the boxes and remaining antique furniture indicate this home is in transition.

Rebecca stands in the kitchen, near the sink, while she eats her breakfast: a tub of yogurt she periodically spoons jam into. She has earbuds in her ears, but the earbuds with the lanyard because she loses things easily.

Her Mom is calling. She eats throughout this conversation.

REBECCA

Hi...Yes. I am eating...Yogurt.  
Some jam... Uh, Raspberry. I need  
to pack up the last bits and then I  
was gonna head over?... I'll use  
Dad's SUV, it's fine.

Rebecca leans towards the window, scanning the lake and yard.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Uh huh well there's two next door?  
 ...One is walking and eating,  
 yes... Okay well it's a literal  
 impossibility for me to know if  
 they're 'your geese,' so can we...  
 Okay, Mom. Mom. If we don't hang up  
 then I can't get over there, okay?  
 Love you bye.

She hangs up. Eats another big scoop of yogurt. Then looks over at the geese one more time.

20 EXT. MAPLE RUN SENIOR LIVING - DAY

20

Rebecca struggles with some boxes out of her dad's SUV. Alley - ooop -

21 INT. MAPLE SENIOR LIVING - CONDO - DAY

21

MICHAEL, Rebecca's dad, in his late seventies, and JOAN, her mother also in her seventies, unpack light tchotckes while Rebecca handles the kitchen. Her mother was a social worker at women's shelters. Her dad was a federal public defender.

REBECCA

(a remonstration)

Ah-ah. I'll get that.

Joan stands caught, attempting to lift a kitchen appliance.

JOAN

What do I do then?

REBECCA

Bedclothes?

JOAN

I need to run them in the dryer.

REBECCA

Okay then.

Rebecca reflexively reaches for her mug of coffee and sips.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

What do you want for lunch? You guys should eat.

JOAN

I could make tuna fish.

REBECCA  
 I'm not done with the kitchen yet.  
 I was thinking we order.

MICHAEL  
 Pizza?

Joan and Rebecca wait for the other to answer first.

JOAN  
 Fine by me.

Michael waits out for any objections from opposing counsel.

REBECCA  
 ...Sure.

MICHAEL  
 (to Rebecca)  
 Is that what you want?

REBECCA  
 Sure.  
 (a beat.)  
 Here, I'll order. Antonio's?

JOAN  
 Is that the one with the crust?

MICHAEL  
 Yeah. Yeah?

JOAN  
 Yeah.

Rebecca pulls out her phone.

22 INT. MICHAEL'S SUV / EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT - LATER 22

Rebecca, crunched in the front seat, drains coffee from a mug she stole from her parents' condo. She's watching a Senator's CNN appearance and holding her head in shock or disgust. Her phone buzzes: order's ready. She tosses the empty mug in the back and walks up the pizza joint. Sun bakes the pavement.

23 EXT. DC MALL / EXT. SENATE OFFICE - MORNING 23

Rebecca cuts through throngs of tourists clumped on sidewalks with purpose, noisily dragging a carry-on behind her. She's late. She reaches her senate office and flashes her credentials to a GUARD.

24

INT. SENATOR EINHOLT'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

24

Rebecca drops her bag at her desk on her way to her boss's office. ERICA EINHOLT, her boss, wears suits pharmaceutical companies pay for. She is on a call. Rebecca waits, buzzing. Finished, Erica folds her hands, anticipating wrath.

REBECCA

We made promises. To real people.  
We had the votes.

ERICA

Compromise brings the unexpected.

REBECCA

God, you're fucking deluded.

Excuse me? Rebecca's back at her before Erica can speak:

REBECCA (CONT'D)

You lost the primary, Erica. There is nothing else to lose by doing the right thing today. Nothing.

ERICA

When it's your turn behind the desk, you can decide what is right or wrong. Until then, do your job or someone else will.

25

INT. OLD EBBITT GRILL - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

25

Rebecca has lunch with her best friend SOPHIA, late thirties. Sophia talks faster than a mosquito can draw blood. Sophia does pure barre everyday at 5am and keeps an excel spreadsheet of every person she's had sex with. Sophia is a Senate Legislative Assistant specializing in missile systems.

SOPHIA

I'm like: "just go out in the day and shit wherever it may land!" Our whole day revolves around his *shit*. We can't leave the fucking house until he drops one. It's *exhausting*. I'll shit anywhere - the woods! The street!

REBECCA

(raising her right hand)  
I stand as witness.

Sophia cracks up, mid-bite. She has no self-consciousness.

SOPHIA

Oh fuck that's right.

REBECCA

Election night. In *heels*.

SOPHIA

We ran out of gas! What was I  
supposed to do.

Rebecca smirks. Sophia senses she's preoccupied and down.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Okay. SO. There's shake ups over at  
Gershel's office, spots are open.

REBECCA

It's a dick clique over there.

SOPHIA

Oh! Well. Sad fuckboi Brad  
MUSKOVICH leaked a bitchy staffer  
thread. Some REAL dirt. Now boo-hoo  
he and his pals are bye-bye. I know  
Gershel's gross, but he's on good  
committees. Did you call your  
friend at State?

REBECCA

Not yet.

SOPHIA

Becca.

REBECCA

I'll do it. I'll do it.

Rebecca stabs her salad. Sophia tries some diplomacy:

SOPHIA

Listen. Erica wants a cushy spot in  
a boardroom somewhere. She sold her  
vote. Do not let her get to you.

Rebecca chooses not to respond. Sophia shifts subjects.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

How was home?

REBECCA

Oh. Uh. Fine?... They refuse to  
discuss selling the house. They  
just circle the drain with  
nonsense. About the Sonos speakers.  
(MORE)

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
 About the Zigman's shopper. About  
 the fucking geese. And it's like:  
 what are we doing? ...

SOPHIA  
 (gently diplomatic)  
 Have you voiced your concerns?

REBECCA  
 Why bother. With any of it.

SOPHIA  
 Because you obviously care.

REBECCA  
 I just have too much time to think.  
 You're right: focus on a new job. I  
 mean we aren't campaigning this  
 Summer. I get time to be choosy.  
 Right? I have choices this time.

SOPHIA  
 You've always had choices, Rebecca.

This catches Rebecca off guard.

26 INT. MEETING ROOM - DIRKSEN OFFICE BUILDING - AFTERNOON 26

Rebecca sits behind Erica at a markup session. BIRCHOLDER, a senior senator from Iowa, is in the middle of a story explaining his budget position. He runs on a folksy persona, even though he owns a yacht.

BIRCHOLDER  
 ...So you and your kid, walking  
 along, see a man is drowning,  
 right? This man needs help.  
 But, before you launch into the  
 choppy water you gotta think.  
 You gotta think about *risk*.  
 Cuz you could get hurt. And then  
 what? I know we want to take care  
 of everybody but we've got to make  
 sure we're *smart* and *safe* and -

REBECCA  
 He's drowning.

Silence. You don't interrupt a senator in an official committee meeting. But, instead of shame, Rebecca exhibits the euphoria and confusion often felt once a migraine breaks.

BIRCHOLDER  
 (clearing his throat)  
 Right and so: our fiscal policy-

REBECCA  
 He's drowning.  
 You jump in because he's drowning.  
 You jump in because he's a goddamn  
 human being.

A beat.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
 We're human beings.  
 We're human beings.

She looks at Bircholder. She gets up. She thinks about saying something. Instead, she starts to laugh. Then walks out.

27 INT. HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - AFTERNOON 27

Rebecca strides through the hive of a busy Senate office. She approaches her desk. Some colleagues rubberneck: Aren't you supposed to be at Dirkson?

She goes through her drawers. She suddenly stops and looks over everything. She realizes: I don't want any of this. She exits the way she came.

28 EXT. GAS STATION / INT. REBECCA'S CAR - I-80 - NIGHT 28

A nighttime gas station, ghostly and illuminated. Rebecca eats powdered Donettes. Far off gaze. Click - gas tank full.

29 INT. / EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - MORNING 29

Rebecca drops her bag in the foyer and looks around. There's less stuff in here now. She listens for the geese.

30 INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT 30

Rebecca sits in a booth. She feels overly full. An empty basket of chicken wings confronts her. She looks at hands: gross. She tips out ice chips from her glass to clean her sticky hands and lets them clink to the floor. Then: Her phone buzzes. A text. She retrieves it.

***Noah: Hey Rebecca. Was thinking about you. Stopped by school today. You still in DC? Let me know if you ever travel home.***

Her stomach drops. A ghost. She pops off a quick message back, saving face. Should she leave? She hails a Server.

REBECCA

Hey, can I get a shot and a beer?

She checks her phone quickly. Noah. Noah. There's his name. Why is he texting her? The typing bubble appears. He's typing. Happiness tugs the corner of her mouth into a grin.

SUMMER.

31

INT. NOAH'S CAR / EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

31

Noah waits for Maya outside the school. He watches the underclassmen congregate with baggy teenage indifference around their bikes. He sees three GIRLS casually stride to a car. One of them spins in response to something called out from a boy across the lot:

GIRL

We're going to Taco Bell!

Girl laughs with her friends and they hurry up to their car.

Then, he sees Maya walking towards the car. She walks alone. But he catches her watching the other kids from her periphery. What is she thinking? Then: she hops in.

NOAH

How was it?

MAYA

Summer school.

Noah attempts a supportive grin but she's already looking out the window. He drives on.

32

EXT. / INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

32

Noah and Maya enter. His mom, Donna, is in the house preparing some food - she pops her head around the corner.

DONNA

Hey you want a snack, sweetheart?

Maya shakes her head and makes for the stairs.

NOAH

I'll run you to Mom's around six.

Maya keeps going up the stairs.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Maya? Six?

MAYA  
(calling back)  
Yes okay six.

Noah bites at the corner of his mouth.

DONNA  
I didn't know about this with  
Summer school. Is she okay she  
doesn't look okay.

NOAH  
It's the absences, first semester.

DONNA  
That's not a full answer.

NOAH  
Well, it's all I've got. She  
doesn't...  
(looking at his phone)  
I have to go, Sam said something's  
up I dunno.

DONNA  
"Up"? He didn't tell me. No one is  
telling me things!

NOAH  
Yes, it's a conspiracy.

He's leaving.

DONNA  
Let me make you something.

NOAH  
I don't have time.

DONNA  
Cheese! I'll slice some, take it  
with you.

NOAH  
Mom, I'm fine.

DONNA  
One second, Noah.

NOAH  
I don't have one second. Not one.

Beat.

DONNA  
(an apology)  
I'll leave it in the fridge.

NOAH  
(another apology)  
Okay.

He's out. Donna takes a dispirited bite of baby carrot.

33 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - AFTERNOON

33

Sam and Noah sit in Sam's messy office. Two paper cups and a bottle of Amaro that Sam keeps in his desk sit between them. They've been sitting in silence for awhile.

NOAH  
Does Abby know?

Sam shakes his head. Noah nods then takes a drink.

SAM  
I wish I could stay on. I want to.  
But I think I'm costing more than  
helping. And... I want to do some  
things. While I still can.

NOAH  
When you thinking will be your last  
day?

SAM  
What would you prefer?

NOAH  
Never.

Sam smirks and takes a sip. Noah does deep calculus about how he is going to keep this place going.

SAM  
I've decided to sell the house.  
Scale down. I have plenty saved. So  
I want to take a chunk from the  
sale and pay down the mortgage  
here. Your dad and I had to re-  
finance in 2008. We had to. But I  
can't leave it around your neck.

Noah nods.

NOAH  
That helps.

Noah suddenly looks like a teenager, scared and unsure. He scratches an itch in his scalp that isn't there.

SAM  
How else can I help?

Noah thinks: "Don't leave." But he'll save Sam the worry.

NOAH  
It's alright. I'll be fine.

34 EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - EVENING

34

Noah drops Maya at Sarah's house. He can see Sarah in silhouette at the door. A hand waves. He notices a large truck in the driveway. Then, drives off.

35 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - OFFICE/KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

35

Noah speaks to a PATIENT via telehealth.

NOAH  
Keep sitting on the donut and  
please resist the urge to pick up  
your cat.

The Patient nods and waves. Ba-doop. Video closes.

He goes to the fridge to graze. He smells some things. He throws out old stuff. He becomes consumed suddenly with cleaning out everything from the fridge and re-organizing when he feels his phone buzz. It's Maya. Inner alarm bells.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Hey! What's -

Wrong?

NOAH (CONT'D)  
No no it's fine no more patients  
you need me to come get you? .. Oh.  
Right, uh. Okay see you in a bit.

36

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - EVENING

36

Pasta boils. Noah keeps checking his watch. It's Summer in Northeast Ohio, so light stays in the sky for a long time. The clouds appear, at this hour, to be tea-stained.

He sees headlights approach. He smooths his hair. He takes the pasta off the burner and turns off the gas. He tries to test a spaghetti but realizes he should do one thing at a time and abandons it, but he still burns his fingers a bit.

Just as he opens the door, Maya enters the house in a rush. Sarah's in the passenger seat of a large truck in the drive. The driver is a MAN he doesn't know.

Rufus runs out and attacks the truck with excitement for Sarah. Noah's about to run for the dog when Sarah emerges from the truck to give Rufus some attention. Oh, Noah wasn't expecting her to do that. He halts, unsure. Sarah looks at him pleadingly: "Can you help me with him?"

Noah takes the dog by the collar.

NOAH  
Come on, boy.

SARAH  
I'm sorry.

NOAH  
He misses you.

They share a look.

SARAH  
I have to go to work.

NOAH  
I yeah Maya said.

SARAH  
I'm sorry.

NOAH  
Yeah you know.

SARAH  
It's, I wish I didn't. Uh.

She looks back into the truck at the Man at the steering wheel. Noah doesn't acknowledge him.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Oh.

She goes to her purse and pulls out her wallet. Noah pets Rufus nervously. Sarah returns with an envelope.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
 (holding it out to him)  
 For the ticket. I know you paid it  
 and I. You know. I'm so sorry.

NOAH  
 It's fine.

SARAH  
 No, it's not.

NOAH  
 It's over, just. I'm fine.

SARAH  
 Please I feel.

NOAH  
 Sarah.

The dog tugs away from his grasp or barks.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Sorry, he's.  
 (in re: money)  
 I really don't, you know,

Care.

SARAH  
 But I do and I just please.

Fine. He takes the envelope.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
 (on her breath)  
 Thank you.

She gets back in the truck and they pull away. He and Rufus watch her leave.

37

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - MOMENTS LATER

37

Rufus runs on ahead as Noah enters the kitchen. There's a pot of water full of over-saturated pasta.

He'll have to start over again.

He looks at the envelope and quietly puts it in a drawer.

38

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

38

Noah's eating pizza on the couch alone. He checks his phone. He texted Maya a bit ago:

**Noah: Pizza's here!! Half veggie lovers half meat loveers**

**Noah: You want me to wait?**

**Noah: I put pizza in oven to stay warm :)**

No response from her still. It's hard to eat with much gusto. He gets up and cleans off his plate. Then, he carefully piles the remaining pizza slices onto a sheet of reusable beeswax paper, wraps them, and puts them in the fridge.

39

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

39

Her door is closed and the light is still on. Noah knocks.

NOAH

Can I come in?

A pregnant beat.

MAYA

Fine.

He enters. She is slumped at her computer. Obviously tired.

NOAH

There's pizza.

She's shaking her head.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Maya?

He wonders if she's upset about Sarah, too.

MAYA

(indicating her homework)

I have to get this.

NOAH

Hey, you can finish tomorrow? A new day. Let's get some food, take a break, that's good for the mind.

MAYA

Stop with the doctor voice.

NOAH  
 (frustrated)  
 Alright then please come eat.

MAYA  
 No No I have to it's our first  
 debate and it's like a third of our  
 grade and I can't suck I can't.

Her fingers are threaded through her hair at this point. Noah  
 has no idea what to say.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
 I think about it and I see good  
 arguments and then I just stare at  
 it and I can't get it out and if I  
 can't get something out today then  
 what about tomorrow and then what  
 what if I have nothing?

She looks at him. God. He wishes he could make it all better.

NOAH  
 I think you just have to... do it.  
 Just write it.

What advice is that?

MAYA  
 Okay.

Noah can see the ground being lost by the second.

NOAH  
 I wonder if, you know, you're...

He wants to offer a reason for what's really going on. And  
 maybe help her talk about it. But is scared to.

She looks at him: "What?"

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Are you upset about Mom?

MAYA  
 Are you upset about Mom?

Check mate silence.

NOAH  
 (a realization)  
 You're angry.

MAYA  
 Yeah well it's not so easy for  
 everybody else.

Easy? Before he can even fathom a response she severs it:

MAYA (CONT'D)  
 I really need to do this now.

She's typing. He's watching. She halts for a beat, a signal  
 he needs to leave. So he does, closing the door behind him.

39A INT. SAM'S OFFICE - ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL

39A \*

Sam, with the patience of an archivist, makes neat piles of  
 items, letters, mementos on his desk. Much like Noah does  
 with his mail. Sam is packing up his office and deciding the  
 fate of his possessions. Quietly and in his own time, he  
 determines what is worthy of being saved and what he wishes  
 to leave behind. He is only able to begin this process. At  
 some point, the enormity of the task gives him pause.

40 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - SUMMER EVENING

40

Lingering sunlight. Some other evening. Noah and Maya quietly  
 eat. She's not having much.

NOAH  
 You don't like it?

She shrugs.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 I got some man-go-steens to try?  
 They look weird.

She shrugs. He chews. Quiet. He gets up to collect plates and  
 clean up. Her finally speaking makes him jump a little.

MAYA  
 Do we have a farmer's market here?

NOAH  
 (a little over eager)  
 Yeah why you wanna go?

MAYA  
 Where is it?

NOAH  
 The square. Saturdays.

Saturdays. Maya suddenly remembers something:

MAYA

Oh uh yeah so can you run me to  
school on Saturday actually?

NOAH

It's your mom's weekend.

MAYA

I called her she said it was okay.

NOAH

What's okay?

MAYA

I'm doing a thing at school.

NOAH

Okay.

MAYA

But it's at noon or whatever so we  
could do farmer's market before?

NOAH

What's the thing.

MAYA

Like a team thing.

NOAH

(amused)

Okay.

Maya sheepishly looks out a window.

MAYA

I'm on debate team or I will be  
maybe but tournaments begin before  
school even starts? So we're  
like... practicing.

Noah clamps a smile and nods. Maya immediately hides away  
excitement for safe keeping.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Yeah we'll see. I... really like  
it. I like the teacher.

Noah could stand and clap for joy to see her like something.

41

EXT. FARMERS MARKET - SATURDAY MORNING - WEEKS LATER

41

Within weeks, the farmers market has become an Abrams family affair. Sam, Donna, Noah, and Maya - oh my.

NOAH

Look at these, huh? Make a good,  
uh, dish, like Italian maybe?

Maya raises her eyebrows and nods "maybe, yeah."

The Abrams are minor town celebrities. Everyone knows them. Hellos from passers-by, even stall vendors know them. Sam loves it. He absolutely loves it. Noah is shy about it.

A FLOWER VENDOR offers Sam some free sunflowers.

SAMUEL

Oh. Look at these they're just  
terrific. Alright, Kate, tell your  
dad - he's due in! You tell him:

Donna is pulling on his sleeve: we're moving.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

You tell him: I know where he  
lives!

He and Kate share a parting laugh. Samuel presents his treasure to Donna, who accepts graciously.

BEN RICHARDSON, a local farm stall owner and former classmate, calls out:

BEN RICHARDSON

Noah! -- NOAH, hey!

Noah turns.

Rebecca, standing at the other end of the stall, turns. She watches Noah approach Ben to talk. She catches a few tells from Noah that he doesn't really want to yuck it up. She lets herself enjoy that for a single second before making her quick getaway.

MAYA (O.S.)

Ms. Szabo!

Rebecca turns, reluctant, but smiling nonetheless. She waves a polite hello to Maya. Her eyes drift to catch Noah, stupefied and stalling with Ben.

Maya is coming her way. Shit.

Rebecca tries to wipe sweat from her lip clandestinely with her t-shirt collar. She can feel her underarms are sweaty without touching them. She wants to die.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Hi!

REBECCA

Hey there!

Rebecca speaks to Maya in a professional cadence. It's a careful way of speaking. It's evident Maya worships her.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

I should have guessed I'd see you here.

MAYA

(with pride)

The class on H2-A really hit me. So we come here like every week now.

REBECCA

That's great, Maya. Truly.

MAYA

(back to Noah)

Dad!

(to Rebecca)

My whole family's here.

REBECCA

(uh oh)

Oh! That's. So nice.

SAMUEL

(to Maya, suddenly nearby)

Hey Kid - me and Nana are gonna investigate the bread.

Rebecca succumbs to politeness.

REBECCA

Presti's has a stall here.

SAMUEL

Frequent flyer.

REBECCA

Wish they had punch cards.

SAMUEL

I've been saying this, haven't I been saying this?

MAYA  
This is my teacher.

Sam's eyes light up.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
She's coaching debate team she  
worked in DC.

Rebecca smiles, "Yep! That's me!" while sneaking a look over at Noah who is paying Ben for his purchases with haste. She calculates how quickly she can escape this conversation.

SAMUEL  
Noah did debate.

MAYA  
Dad did debate?

REBECCA  
It's true.

Samuel narrows his eyes on Rebecca, a flash of recognition.

SAMUEL  
(a penny dropping)  
Fiddler on the Roof! Yes! You were  
Yente!

REBECCA  
Oh, Anatevka.

She laughs and clears her throat as Noah walks their way.

Sam excitedly turns to find Donna to share, but she's at the bread stall. Maya is completely lost but loving it.

SAMUEL  
Donna!

Donna waves him off.

Suddenly, Noah's slotted in next to Rebecca. Her gut drops.

REBECCA  
Well, I should -  
(to Maya)  
I'll see you later?

NOAH  
Hi.

REBECCA  
Oh hi yeah.

SAMUEL  
(to Noah)  
You remember - Fiddler! Yente! You  
were -

Who again?

NOAH  
Motel.

SAMUEL  
Wonder of wonder -

# REBECCA

## Miracle of miracles.

She laughs but nervously flicks her eyes to Noah. She isn't sure if it's okay she's sharing laughs with his uncle. She isn't sure how to act at all.

MAYA

REBECCA  
Yep.

NOAH

Maya is putting it together.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
(to Noah)  
You saw Ben?

NOAH  
(to Maya, indicating the  
stall)  
The farmer guy.

REBECCA  
He's doing good, huh?

NOAH  
Yeah.  
(to Maya)  
We all went to

REBECCA  
Yeah. It's. You never know who's -

MAYA  
Did you know I'm his -

REBECCA  
I wasn't sure and like who asks and  
you know

NOAH  
Yep, yeah.

SAMUEL  
Hey, Donna!

She indicates "I can't hear you."

SAMUEL (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna  
(he indicates go to Donna)  
You'll come to dinner -  
(to Noah)  
Invite her.  
(to Rebecca)  
We always do a thing for the  
fireworks.

He walks off. Rebecca runs a hand through her hair. Noah can smell her shampoo.

REBECCA  
That's tonight?

MAYA  
Yeah very eager to celebrate a  
bogus document.

Rebecca smirks agreement.

REBECCA  
(a confession)  
I do like the fireworks.

MAYA  
Yeah I mean propaganda *works*.

REBECCA  
It *really* does, though.

They share a conspiratorial smile. Rebecca self-consciously looks at Noah, apologetic.

His heart beats in his throat making a response difficult.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
I should go  
(airy laugh)  
have to -

She holds up her shopping bags.

MAYA  
Come by if uh you don't have plans -

REBECCA

- right. You know I, my parents -  
we always do a dinner and stuff.

She can feel Noah's warmth from his arms radiate against her own. If she leaned further on her right foot his skin would touch hers. It makes her stomach lurch.

MAYA

They could come, too? Your parents.

REBECCA

Oh uh. No. They - we have that view  
with the lake and they love it so -

She uses her hands to mime out "a view" and "a lake".

NOAH

It's a perfect view.

REBECCA

Of the. Yep.

MAYA

Okay. Well see you at practice!

REBECCA

Yes!

NOAH

You're the debate coach.

REBECCA

Yes.

NOAH

Oh.

REBECCA

Yes.

She looks at Maya.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

So good to see you, you know: Out.  
(to Noah)  
Bye, Noah.

She nerve-laughed and waves and leaves. Noah raises a hand to say goodbye. Maya looks proudly up to Noah.

MAYA

Isn't she great?

42

INT. REBECCA'S PARENTS' CONDO - LATE AFTERNOON

42

Rebecca's picking up dishes and putting them in the washer.

JOAN  
I'm impressed.

REBECCA  
(ignoring the compliment)  
You want to save this? There's a  
lunch here.

JOAN  
You want me to do it?

REBECCA  
I'm offering. I just offered.

MICHAEL  
(in re: the meal)  
You get that off the Times app?

Rebecca nods as she scrapes out the leftovers.

JOAN  
You use that app a lot in your, you  
know, life?

REBECCA  
Sure, yeah.

MICHAEL  
Do you grow your own herbs?

REBECCA  
No.

JOAN  
Well, you can take any of what's  
growing on the side of the house.

MICHAEL  
Oh you'd like that holy basil!

REBECCA  
Does this mean we get to talk about  
the house?

Joan looks at Michael, "What?"

MICHAEL  
(to Joan)  
She means the sale.

JOAN

Oh. Well, that's up to you.

REBECCA

Why is it on me to decide this?

JOAN

We didn't know if you wanted it?

REBECCA

It's your house.

JOAN

It's the family's house.

REBECCA

(a rebuttal)

I haven't spent more than a week in  
that place for *seventeen* years.

Rebecca knows that disavowal hurt her mother's feelings. She bites her lip and busies herself with the cleaning up.

JOAN

Did you put the netting on before  
you left?

REBECCA

Yes, I think so.

JOAN

Oh well you have to put that on  
before you go out of the evening.

MICHAEL

The deer eating on those apples?

REBECCA

Every night, yeah.

MICHAEL

(satisfied)

I'm glad we kept that apple tree.

JOAN

It's bent all the way to the  
ground, Michael.

Michael shrugs a "so what." A silent beat.

MICHAEL

How about Catan?

REBECCA

Oh, uh, I'm gonna go over to a friend's to watch the fireworks.

MICHAEL

That's tonight?

JOAN

Which friend?

REBECCA

You wouldn't know her. From work.

JOAN

The teaching work?

MICHAEL

How's that going? Good?

REBECCA

Yeah.

She looks at them. She wants to not feel this chill in the room with them. But she has no idea how to change it. She turns the dishwasher on.

43

INT. / EXT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - EVENING

43

Donna slices open strawberries over a mixing bowl. They've stained her fingers a macabre red.

DONNA

He pushes himself when he does this.

Noah, leaning on the island, looks at her: who?

She indicates the window: Samuel, Maya, Abby, and SANDRA, Abby's girlfriend, play bocce in the backyard. Samuel, sweating, plays ringleader of the game. Rufus stands by, a good lieutenant. Noah looks at her and nods, deciding not to engage in a conflict of her own making.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Maya seems.

Good.

DONNA (CONT'D)

That Rebecca was always a very smart girl.

Noah eats some berries as Donna keeps cutting them up.

NOAH

Yeah. She's doing.. really. Well.

DONNA

Seeing our kids fall back in love  
with life is a blessed event.

She looks at Noah pointedly.

Samuel enters, sweaty, and gets himself a glass of water.

DONNA (CONT'D)

You need to check your heart rate.

He waves her off and slurps down water, some drops hitting  
his chest. Then, he dips fingers into the strawberry bowl.  
Donna makes a face.

DONNA (CONT'D)

You've got dog all over your hands.

Samuel throws a coy look-back as he opens the oven to check  
the brisket. He pokes it with his grill fork. \*SAM  
It's gonna dry out. \*Donna indicates "fine let's eat." Donna heads out to call in  
the troops. Sam sneaks more berries. He chews and thinks. \*SAM (CONT'D)  
(to Noah)  
What I don't get is: why does it  
take some holiday, you know? We  
shoulda done this every weekend. \*That hits Noah Samuel heads off to help Sandra arrange the  
patio chairs to watch fireworks later. Donna fusses with Abby  
over setting out the food. Maya puts some food out for Rufus.  
Noah watches them all. \*

44

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

44

Noah watches them all sit there and eat and talk. He looks at  
his dog. He looks outside. Indigo sky. Soft as velvet out  
there.A pop of firework from afar. It's starting! There's a sudden  
rush of energy. It's happening! Fireworks time!

Noah's family rushes out the back door.

Noah gets up and walks out the front door.

45

EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

45

Rebecca sits on an inflatable raft, tied off and tottering on the lake in the backyard. Sprays of fireworks reflect in the algae-laden lake, creating mallows of color on its surface.

REBECCA  
(talking to herself)  
No deer tonight. Too loud, huh?

She makes a face like "poor guys" and takes a sip of her beer. She looks over at the apple tree. Its crown is fully bent to the earth. It's absurd. She grins. She's glad they kept the apple tree, too.

Shit. Fruit.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
Fuck, the netting.

She gets up, nearly falling out of the raft, and tipsy-charges up towards the garden. She unravels a knotty pile of netting, cursing herself: "idiot, idiot, idiot."

She wants to make her mistake go away as fast as possible, but in her haste she rips her hand across raspberry thorns and it tears a wound straight into her.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
Fuck! Fuck.

She sucks on her wound. She's bleeding. Defeated and upset.

NOAH  
You okay?

She looks up. And there, standing right there in her backyard, is Noah. He is the last person she wants in that moment. And he is the only person she'd ever want.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Here, let me.

She's reluctant. He may reach a hand or merely take a step.

She offers her hand. He inspects it. She can feel his breath.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
It needs a bandage. It could get infected.

REBECCA  
Okay.

Neither of them move. They stay where they are. He looks at her hand. After all this time, there's her skin touching his.

Emotion stops his throat from speaking. He can only exhale through clenched lips and grin apologetically.

NOAH

Does it hurt?

REBECCA

Yes.

Rebecca touches him - face, lips, sternum, whatever tender portion feels right - but just with her fingertips. As if checking he is, in fact, real.

His eyes give permission. With ache and relief, they kiss.

46

INT. BEDROOM - REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - LATER

46

They are sitting on the bed. Noah has a small first aid kit open next to him, it's old and underused. He is bandaging up the small cut on her hand. He does so with care.

They could be in underwear. A shirt. Nothing. Whatever Noah and Rebecca feel is right.

She likes watching him concentrate on his work.

There's a few looks here and there between them. The flying between lust and casual lethargy without preamble speaks to their comfort with each other.

Snip, zip, all done. Then, he looks at Rebecca very seriously.

NOAH

That will be seven hundred dollars.

REBECCA

But, Mister, I have this insurance card that costs eight hundred a month? Does that do anything?

NOAH

Oh, that's worthless.

REBECCA

Oh dear.

She climbs into his lap. They are very good at playing games like this together.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

I have no money. How about some sort of... transaction?

NOAH

That would be unethical. But, I know an organ dealer? Pays top dollar, very clean.

REBECCA

You know, I was thinking the other day: I've got too many kidneys.

He feels and squeezes her saddle, the way you might estimate the price of a steer.

NOAH

Oh yeah. These are some juicy kidneys. But. Let me just do one more... test.

He kiss-bites her saddle. She shudders and runs her hand through his hair. They start to get carried away, hands running over flesh when Noah pulls back, a playground grin.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Mmmtempting.

His personality starts to zip back up. He reaches for his phone, certain there will be messages hounding him to leave.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Shit, yeah. I. Have to leave. They're all still there, I didn't say. Maya. They'll all be...

Worried. Confused. Something, probably.

REBECCA

It's okay.

NOAH

Yeah?

She nods. Then, watches him dress for awhile.

REBECCA

I knew Maya was your daughter and I didn't say anything and I'm sorry.

A beat. He finishes with his shirt.

NOAH

Okay.

Why didn't you.

She shrugs. Unwilling to say it loud. He looks out her window. He can see branches moving in a choreographed wave, even in the dark.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I've thought about you.  
Even when I tried not to.

He looks at her.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Sometimes... I've hated you. I've hated you so much I couldn't sleep.

REBECCA

I have legal arguments saved in my computer detailing all the ways you're an asshole.

NOAH

I've called you awful names in my head. A few of them out loud.

REBECCA

Like what?

NOAH

(with struggle)

Like... cunt.

Rebecca laughs, she loves it when he says or does something "he shouldn't." It causes him physical pain.

REBECCA

Anytime I see a happy couple I want to send you hate mail.

NOAH

What kinds of things would go in this hate mail?

REBECCA

I'd call you an emotional terrorist and wish various gangrenous death scenarios on you.

NOAH

I wish you'd sent them.

REBECCA

Why?

NOAH

Then I would have heard from you.

A long beat.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Why did I never hear from you.

REBECCA

You know why.

NOAH

I really don't.

REBECCA

Too painful.

Beat.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

You were married and happy and I  
wasn't and I felt.

Beat.

NOAH

Then why did you leave.

REBECCA

My life wasn't here.

NOAH

I was.

REBECCA

Then why didn't you come with me. I  
told you what I was going to do and  
you never said a word.

NOAH

You never asked.

You don't invite yourself along to  
someone else's life.

A heavy beat. She doesn't want to lose him all over again, so  
she kisses some soft and often hid part of his body. A rib, a  
collar. Something vulnerable.

REBECCA

Go. You're worried. I'll be here.

A thought flashes, "Will she?" He decides, for now, she will.

He cradles her face in his hand and runs his thumb over her lips.

All of a sudden, more dressed, he's bashful and hesitates to give her a kiss goodbye, wanting some kind of permission.

She sees it and takes the initiative to be the one to kiss him goodbye. One quick look-back over the threshold and he's gone.

47 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - OFFICE - DAY

47

Noah sits in his chair. Wearing his doctor things. Thinking.

He looks at the stethoscope wound up in his hands. He rubs his thumb over the familiar tubing and metal.

He places the cold disk to his chest and listens to his own heartbeat.

48 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - EXAM ROOM - DAY

48

A WOMAN sits before Noah, lamenting about her eye.

WOMAN

It just keeps pulsing. I don't know. Like a twitch. The whole lid. Flaps. Is it a spasm of the nerves? I mean I had to pull over the CAR for God's sake and if it rains? No chance. No chance. And even when I feel it go away for a minute, it goes away one day MAYBE? But it's like when your hiccups first go away and there's that feeling you get of just WAITING for 'em to come back, yaknow? Dread.

NOAH

Mhm. How much coffee you do drink?

Woman clucks her tongue and rolls her eyes, one of the eyes twitches a little when she does that.

WOMAN

Here we go take away my one pleasure whydon'tcha.

49

INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - SUMMER EVENING

49

Rebecca has set up an old iPad to sit precariously against a stack of some dishes so she can see Sophia. She is editing a press release for her. Wallpaper has been removed from the walls. Real estate cards litter a corner of the table.

Rebecca eats a dinner of boiled pasta, butter, salt and pepper direct from the small saucepan it was cooked in. Rebecca scoops, eats, and thinks. She reads her edits under breath. Consider. Wincs. Types. It's calisthenic for her.

REBECCA

Alright read it and tell me.

Sophia reads while Rebecca shovels more pasta from the pan.

SOPHIA

GOD thank you. I hate this fucking Philip he's clueless I swear but he's someone's kid so it's like GREAT I can't say SHIT.

Rebecca smirks, she misses Sophia.

REBECCA

Alright, that'll be seven hundred dollars.

Rebecca enjoys her private in-joke.

SOPHIA

You could charge more.

REBECCA

I'm not actually. You know.  
*Charging you.*

SOPHIA

Maybe you should maybe this is your next move? How many idiots do we know on the hill who can't write for shit--

(to her dog off screen)  
HEIDI NO! BAD! Hold on while I -

She dips off screen to deal with her dog. Rebecca scrolls on her phone while she waits. She looks at Noah's instagram. She sees images of him and Maya. Him and his sister, Abby.

She comes across one of him with Sarah from some time ago. There it is. They look so happy.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
 Hey can I call you back in a second  
 I need to crate her.

Rebecca waves her off, they say some "love yous" and hang up.

Rebecca looks at this picture some more. She accidentally 'likes' it and then yelps and quickly un-likes it. Fuck fuck fuck. Can he see that? She starts to text Sophia:

**Rebecca: omgomgomgomgogmgomgomg can people see when you've like something if you unlike it on inst -**

Noah is calling.

Rebecca stands up, startled. She quickly dumps the pan of pasta in the sink and runs water over it, as if hiding evidence. She thinks. It keeps ringing. Ringing. She answers.

REBECCA

Hi.

50 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - LATER

50

Rebecca stands patiently by the front door. Her head bowed. Nervous. Buzzy. But somehow absolutely still. As if anticipating the sacrament.

She hears his car. Okay. Okay. Knock knock.

She opens the door and just as instantly they kiss. In a confusion of impulses, they become crumpled on the steps.

REBECCA  
 What took you so long.

NOAH  
 I'm sorry.

He scoops a hand under her ass to pull her closer.

51 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

51

Rebecca teaches her Summer school debate class. Maya sits, absorbed. Two kids are mid-debate. Rebecca has stopped them.

REBECCA  
 Alright. Your opponent is steamrolling you with "By valuing safety and security we achieve blah-dy-blah freedom." Which, Ben. If you use the word Freedom?  
 (MORE)

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Define it. It's not a slogan.  
 Anyway. Wait for them to finish.  
 Then, ask: How? Push them to  
 explain how the idea becomes  
 reality. Often their argument gets  
 a little

She gives a clownish "uh oh" face. They respond. She's good.

52

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - GRASSY AREA - AFTERNOON

52

Rebecca eats lunch with her colleague and old classmate, JENNIFER. Jennifer has three boys. She was the first of Rebecca's friends to get a driver's license and once gave the man who is now her ex-husband a blow job behind the gym bleachers. The weather has already started to turn. Fall is coming.

JENNIFER

He has six kids. Six kids. And  
 they're all in Australia. But here  
 he is on a Tinder date with me  
 asking what I'm 'into' like like

REBECCA

Like he doesn't have six kids in  
 Australia.

JENNIFER

Yes.

They chew.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Which apps do you use?

REBECCA

Hm?

JENNIFER

The apps. I mean, you're, sorry I  
 just assumed you're single.

REBECCA

Yeah, you know. Yeah. I haven't..  
 uh, I haven't been on an actual,  
 you know, when a person says "I  
 want to take you out in public" and  
 then I go to the place at the time?  
 I haven't had one in... three  
 years? Yeah so.

They chew.

JENNIFER  
That surprises me.

Rebecca grins or nods, something, to bring the conversation to a close.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
Are you liking it here?

REBECCA  
(a realization)  
Yeah. I am.

Jennifer is hopeful.

JENNIFER  
Mr. Santos is for sure not coming back for Fall. We're basically hiring kids on their smoke breaks at Arby's to teach. If you wanted it...

Jennifer shrugs. Rebecca grins, scheming.

REBECCA  
Then you'd be my boss.

Jennifer laughs.

JENNIFER  
All the dirt you got on me? You could get away with murder here.

Rebecca thinks about some of that dirt.

REBECCA  
You ever go behind the bleachers to... reminisce? About ollllll'  
what's-is-name?

Jennifer is 'scandalized.'

53

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

53

Rebecca exits. She sees from afar Maya hop into Noah's car. They exchange waves. Noah gives a tight, polite grin.

Rebecca tries very hard not to watch them drive away.

54

INT. NOAH'S CAR / EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

54

Maya and Noah sit in his car, waiting. He has his phone to his ear. Sarah's voicemail. He re-dials. Rings. She picks up.

NOAH  
Hey we're waiting here... No, I...

He looks at Maya, he communicates an apology, and steps out.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I won't let her go into an empty house. That's not the deal... How far out?

He does some mental math.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Okay twenty minutes, then... What? I'm not being anything - we signed things. There was a gavel. She can't be left unattended... Okay yeah I get it but...

(anger pop)  
If you wanted a different situation with your kid, you would have done the work to have it, Sarah.

He regrets saying that.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry I. Focus on the road. I didn't know you were driving again I thought - I'm sorry okay bye.

He hangs up. Collects himself. Maya lowers the driver's side window to get the news.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Mom's got some traffic, but she's on her way. Wanna do a quick McDonald's run?

MAYA  
No.

NOAH  
Yeah gross.

55 EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - EVENING 55

Mid-knock the door opens. Rebecca has on a white doctor's lab coat and a slip. Another game she's enjoying playing. Noah has the desire to cover her and the desire to applaud.

REBECCA  
You're late, Mr. Abrams.

NOAH  
(in re: the lab coat)  
Is that mine?

She pulls him by the wrist inside and shuts the door.

56 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT 56

Noah's about to climax, he looks away. Rebecca gently pushes his chin back towards her. She shakes her head, 'Don't look away.'

The intimacy is almost too overwhelming. But it's a turn on, in spite of that. He locks eyes with her. Breath for breath. This is not salacious or gratuitous. It's tender, real.

57 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - EARLY MORNING 57

Noah lies in bed, apprehensive. He hears the geese honking outside. He gets up to look out the window.

REBECCA (O.S.)  
It's odd.  
(Noah turns to her)  
They should have flown South by  
now.

He thinks about that. When is she gonna fly South?

58 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - OFFICE - AFTERNOON 58

He's going over finances for the office. Bank statements. Loan applications. A McDonald's fries to his right. Now and then he stretches out a tight neck. A text pops through:

**Rebecca: Hey - you have dinner plans?**

He puts the phone off to some distance on his desk.

He tries to go back to work. Unable to focus, he calls up Instagram. He finds Rebecca. He scrolls through her feed. All these photos of her in far away places with important people.

She lived this whole, big life. He closes the window and spins to look at his simple office.

59 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - EVENING

59

He watches the Cavs play with some Doritos.

He does some laundry.

60 EXT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME / INT. NOAH'S CAR - NIGHT

60

Noah sits in his driveway. Engine off. He looks at Rebecca's text for a beat or two then calls her. He rests his forehead on the steering wheel. She picks up. His forehead remains on the wheel.

NOAH

Hey - you free for dinner?

61 EXT. NIGHT MARKET AND BIERGARTEN - SLAVIC VILLAGE - NIGHT 61

Rebecca leads the way through this cornucopia of Eastern European food stalls and large biergarten. Colors and lights. Garlands of flowers strewn. Steam clouds off the grills.

They've found a spot to sit down with their sausages and pierogi and beers. They eat with gusto. Noah watches all the life around him.

Eventually, live music up ahead on a homemade stage. TWO BANDURA PLAYERS, father and son, play an old Ukrainian folk song like Red Poppies. Everyone listens to their plaintive, dream-like song.

Rebecca reaches an arm down, either under the table or merely drops it between her and Noah's chairs. She intertwines her fingers with his. She looks at him: "Is this okay?"

He thinks. He looks around. Yes. He takes her hand and holds it tight. He rubs his thumb over her skin. The prickling sound of the instrument tugs at his gut. He looks at Rebecca's neck.

62 INT. MAPLE SENIOR LIVING - CONDO - DAY

62

Rebecca flips through photos on her laptop for her parents. The photos are of contractor renderings of house renovations.

JOAN

This seems very elaborate.

This is Joan saying 'no.' Rebecca barrels on anyway:

REBECCA

There are about five bids. Everyone said the plumbing has to be redone, though, no matter what.

Joan looks at Michael.

MICHAEL

We haven't had the plumbing changed since we moved in, Joan.

Joan nods, thinking. Michael and Rebecca make eye contact.

JOAN

Why do I feel like I'm being sold a used car right now?

Rebecca bites at the inside of her cheek.

REBECCA

I don't know, Mom.

MICHAEL

Can you email those to us?

She sits down to do so. A little time passes in silence.

REBECCA

(diplomatic; work voice)

If you'd feel more confident in handling these conversations yourself, I can coordinate that. All I care about is that decisions are made so work can proceed. Emails sent.

She closes her laptop.

JOAN

We know you have a life in DC to get back to.

A beat.

REBECCA

I've decided to take the teaching job, actually.

Beat.

JOAN

That will make you happy?

REBECCA  
Yes, Mother.

Michael squeezes Rebecca's arm and grins, supportive.

JOAN  
Will there be any issues with your  
lease in DC?

REBECCA  
I'll have to figure that out, yeah.

63 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

63

Rebecca's zooming with Sophia, who, standing up in frame to talk to her fiance, CATON, shows her early pregnancy bump. Sophia settles into her seat as Caton walks off.

SOPHIA  
(turning on her mic)  
Hey! Sorry - oh wait -  
(calling back to Caton)  
We need trash bags! Love you bye!  
(back)  
Okay I'm back.

Rebecca moves things on her plate.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
WHAT is making you look like Emily  
Dickinson right now.

Rebecca puts her fork down.

REBECCA  
... I love him. Or could. I know it's only a couple months, this time, but then it's like all the years behind that right? Of growing up and feelings. I mean it's funny I started to think recently that, you know, if I met someone now, even if we ended up together or something, they would never have known me when I was young. And that made me... sad. But. Maybe this, I mean maybe it was always this?

Sophia chews aggressively. Rebecca continues blissfully on:

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
And normally, you know, I'd be  
figuring someone out.  
(MORE)

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Their *deal*, you know? And MY deal with them. And analyzing the thing to death. But this is so easy I don't have to even THINK because I know him.

SOPHIA

(as if releasing a pressured valve)

No you don't.

This is not the response Rebecca anticipated.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

You have no context with each other. There's no day to day reality to make this more than a treehouse game. No 'coming home from work' energy. No morning routines. You can't even go in the fucking guy's HOUSE.

REBECCA

It's sensitive! With Maya and.

SOPHIA

He sets the rules, you follow them. What a relationship.

REBECCA

This is important to me!

SOPHIA

I know! And that scares me.

REBECCA

You tell me to make choices, and here I am. This is my choice. Or do you know best for me, after all?

SOPHIA

Maybe not 'best' but I know YOU. And your patterns. And this is all VERy troubling.

REBECCA

Your smugness is nauseating.

SOPHIA

Becca.

REBECCA

Oh shut up.

Whoa.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

You sit there. Pregnant. And engaged. To entry number 42 on your spreadsheet of everyone you've ever fucked. So fat and sassy in all the affection your body's gotten for years and now I finally have something and I have to worry if it's good enough. You're worse than my mother! God!

SOPHIA

Are you this honest with him?

REBECCA

Yeah.

SOPHIA

Bullshit. Have you told him about the teaching job?

REBECCA

Not yet.

SOPHIA

And why's that?

REBECCA

Because I'm here zooming with you!

SOPHIA

This is Ian all over again. He builds the maze, you run through it, hoping there's an "I love you" at the end.

REBECCA

No, NO, it's different.

SOPHIA

How?

REBECCA

He has a kid. It affects, you know. How we do this. How I do it.

SOPHIA

I could GIVE a fuck. You're as much a human being as he is.

A beat.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Look I love you. So I'll take your shit and your anger and your whole... you. Right? But will he? Putting on this performance of perfect compliance may win him. But it will never answer that question. And that's the only question that matters when you're gonna put your life in someone else's hands.

64 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - SAM'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON 64 \*

Sam sits in his waiting room. There are some boxes near the door. Noah enters holding a box under his arm and that bottle of secret desk-drawer Amaro. He jiggles it: "Lookee." \*

NOAH

You almost forgot this.

Sam gestures: bring it here. Noah drops his box by the door and fishes out some paper cups from a nearby cabinet or drawer. He brings the cups and Sam pours. They sit and enjoy the beverage that tastes of memories that are unique to each man. After some time, Noah's phone buzzes.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Sorry. I asked Maya to safety text and I just wanna, one sec.

Noah texts back and then puts his phone face down. He takes a drink. Then folds his hands. He searches the wall for answers. None are there. He scratches a phantom itch.

NOAH (CONT'D)

(sincere, after a beat)

Do you. Do you honestly think I can do this?

(before Sam can answer)

And don't do the "yeah kid! Head down and you'll save the Building and Loan." That's not

Helpful.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I'm too...

(a realization)

I'm no George Bailey.

SAM

(a correction)

You're tired.

NOAH  
Isn't everybody? That's no excuse.

Noah thinks.

SAM  
You could bring in a partner.

NOAH  
Like who?

Sam shrugs.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I don't even know what I'd be...  
what so like we share overhead  
but... would we share patients?

SAM  
Yeah.

Noah doesn't like that. But maybe he should?

SAM (CONT'D)  
Look into the townships. Find  
someone in our position.  
Or find an eager graduate? Remember  
how you were?

NOAH  
No.

Noah finishes his drink. Sam indicates: "More?" Noah shakes his head, "No." Sam consults his cup.

SAM  
You can sell.  
Cleveland Clinic is always buying.

NOAH  
I don't... like that. You can't  
possibly like that.

SAM  
It's not my choice to make anymore.

Noah really doesn't like that.

NOAH  
But you worked so ... I know what  
you had to do. After Dad.  
What you had to do to.. to keep  
this the way we've always been.

Sam nods.

\*

SAM

I'm glad, real glad, my work and my effort has meant something to you. That you've seen it. That it's.. influenced what you think is right and good in this work. In this life, even. I guess I didn't know until right now that I ... needed to hear that? Yeah. Huh. I guess I did. But. Okay? But. If you only get as far as I ever got... then. It all stops right here. And that...

\* \* \* \* \*

They sit in a rich silence for a bit.

\*

## NOAH

I don't know what I'm doing.

Sam nods. He knows better than to talk.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I can't even buy groceries.  
I knew which bananas to buy because  
I knew Sarah liked them green.  
Easy, done. I don't know what I  
prefer. I have no idea... I don't  
even know what Maya likes anymore.  
She wouldn't tell if I asked. So  
what do I? How do I know what's  
right?

A beat. Noah stares at the wall some more. Noah shakes his head and pours some amaro. He finishes his drink in one gulp. Sam watches him.

SAM

Grief is a dirty business. Very unfair trades.

Noah grins as if realizing the answer to a riddle.

## NOAH

Oh so this is when we talk about my dad?

SAM

We can.

## NOAH

No.

Noah pours more amaro. Sam decides to stop drinking.

NOAH (CONT'D)

This whole thing... with Sarah... with Dad... has been like... Waking up and: there's no sun. One day, it simply didn't rise. How are you supposed to live, knowing that at any moment, something that is not supposed to happen... can. How do you ... have any faith?

Sam thinks.

SAM

Have you talked to Rebecca about this?

Noah's fingers suddenly feel numb. How did he know? What was his tell? He is overcome with worry.

SAM (CONT'D)

You should talk to her.

A beat.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you love her?

NOAH

I don't know.

SAM

Yes you do.

NOAH

It doesn't matter.

SAM

Of course it does.

NOAH

No it doesn't.

What I feel. Who cares. Everyone is so interested in their *feelings*.

Feelings don't do shit. They're flimsy.

\*

Beat.

\*

SAM

Even as the body fails, it feels.  
 Sometimes what a person feels is  
 all that keeps their heart pumping  
 for as long as it does.

Do you love her?

This is painful:

NOAH

Yes.

AUTUMN.

65

INT. AUDITORIUM - WOOSTER COLLEGE - DAY

65

Maya stands at a podium. This is a small, old liberal arts college. Most rooms wood-paneled. Out the windows, trees scream autumn. At debate matches, spectators remain quiet.

MAYA

My opponent's case relies entirely on the supposition that the value of safety and security can only be protected with a single class of weaponry: guns. Being able to dissolve the false binary of his argument with both logical reasoning and the provision of available real world evidence, vis a vis global correlatives, it is indisputable that disparate alternatives to this single weapon as the sole tool of societal protection readily exist.

Therefore, the negative case must stand.

And yet, I feel I must offer one more contention to close. The second amendment outlines the right to bear arms as "being necessary" for the "maintenance of a Free State." Okay.

Freedom. Let's not throw that word around. Let's define it. The Oxford English Dictionary states Freedom is: the ability to act without hindrance. Okay.

To use my opponent's own words from his argument: *fear* is a justifiable hindrance to freedom. I agree.

(MORE)

## MAYA (CONT'D)

In this country, fear has proven a hindrance to: Jogging alone in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Wearing a hoodie on your way back from buying candy at the store. Showing up to school in the morning. Something I have to do on Monday.

This hindrance I speak of is, of course, the fear of being shot while merely living your life. And as long as that fear remains, in short as long as guns are proliferate, this is not a Free State. Clearly, we must negate the resolution.

Maya sits down. It's clear to her opponent that she's won. Sam and Donna had no idea she could talk that much. They sit in delighted awe. Maya shares a knowing grin with Rebecca.

Noah watches them from afar in the audience as Rebecca and Maya mouth private words to each other. Words he will never know. Noah adjusts in his seat, uncomfortable. Then, he peers over at Sarah, who sits with her boyfriend. She is proud.

66

INT. WOOSTER COLLEGE - LOBBY - DAY

66

Rebecca instructs Maya, trophy in hand, and her teammates to pose for the professional PHOTOGRAPHER tasked with memorializing their win. Families also stand in a clump around the kids taking photos with their phones.

## REBECCA

I get it you're teenagers so it's not cool to smile but do it?

They crack some grins.

Donna waves at Maya to look at Sam's phone. Rebecca meets eyes with Donna, they share a smile of pride for Maya.

## DONNA

(stage whisper)

It's good to see her like this.

A look and nod from Sam carries concurrence.

Rebecca registers that. Like what? Happy? Hm. Interesting.

Some flashes from the pro camera. Rebecca looks over to Noah. He's nervously speaking with Sarah. Schoolboy nervous.

The Photographer stands to let the blood drain back into his arm. He looks at Rebecca like "We're done, right?"

REBECCA  
Alright, your families want to hug  
you - go.

The kids disperse. Sam and Donna walk toward Maya all smiles.

Rebecca grabs her tote bag and water bottle.

Noah's meandered over, exuding pride for Maya. Maya looks around for her mother.

NOAH  
Mom left something in the car.

He meets eyes with Rebecca.

SAM  
(to Maya)  
You were terrific.  
(to Rebecca)  
Just terrific.

Rebecca grins, appreciative.

NOAH  
(reaching for the trophy)  
Here let me see.

He inspects it with intense Dad energy.

SAM  
Alright people let's celebrate,  
Maxi's?

DONNA  
Italian?

Again?

SAM  
(a counterargument)  
Oh you love it there.

MAYA  
(to Rebecca)  
Have you been there before?

Rebecca looks to Noah, about to ask, "Am I invited?"

NOAH  
You have.

SARAH  
 (out of breath, she ran)  
 So sorry I left these -

In the car. My boyfriend's car. Who is standing by, but at a respectful distance.

Sarah presents a large bouquet of flowers to Maya, who accepts them with a hug and kiss and buzzy words of praise.

Noah is biting his lip and smiling simultaneously.

Rebecca zips up her coat.

SAM  
 We should probably head if we want  
 to

DONNA  
 (concurring)  
 The drive.

Noah nods.

Maya touches Sarah's arm.

MAYA  
 We're going to Maxi's?

NOAH  
 Oh.

Noah looks at Sarah, a flash of apology.

SARAH  
 Oh. Honey I.

Maya hides her disappointment.

NOAH  
 Mom asked for a special night just  
 you two. How's that?

Sarah gives him a look of gratitude for the save.

Noah tightly grins a 'you're welcome.'

Sarah looks over her shoulder, noticing her boyfriend's creped closer. Noah hates him. But tamps it.

Rebecca feels uncomfortable. She slides on her tote bag.

REBECCA  
 Welp.

A polite smile. The Midwestern signal for "I'm leaving."

Noah takes Rebecca's hand. He might as well have turned on the fire alarms.

NOAH  
(to Rebecca, familiar)  
Ready?

Sarah notices. So does Maya. They have different reactions.

SARAH  
(to Rebecca, stumbling)  
Thank you, you uh - such a good job.

REBECCA  
Maya did all the work.

Maya makes an 'eh' shrug but beams to the praise.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
It's true.

SARAH  
She could always out-work anybody.

MAYA  
Mom's a lawyer.

REBECCA  
(to Sarah)  
Oh, no kidding.

NOAH  
Becca worked on the hill.

SARAH  
(sharp, to Noah)  
I remember.  
(tone shift, to Maya)  
Think on where to get that dinner,  
okay? Your choice.

Sarah gives her goodbyes and walks away.

Rebecca and Maya share a look.

Maya receives another trophy, holds it aloft. Many pictures.

68 INT. NOAH'S CAR - DAY

68

Noah, Rebecca, and Maya drive home from the tournament. Noah checks Maya in the rearview, wondering if this is all kosher for her, being together. She appears placid, happy even, trophy tucked next to her. Okay. I guess it's alright.

69 EXT. WEST SIDE MARKET - MORNING

69

This storied institution of Cleveland is a menagerie of ethnic cuisine and legacy food stalls the size of multiple city blocks. There's pierogi, kimchee, paczki, salted and cured fish, kraut, sausages served on hard homemade rolls with krauts. Noah, Rebecca, and Maya browse and sample.

70 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - DAY

70

Noah stands outside an exam room, a mask tucked under his chin, about to go in but checking texts first:

**Maya: hey getting a ride with Rebecca after school.**

**Rebecca: We're picking up at MariachisYou want the loaded nachos?**

This is good. Right? He has time. No rushing around. Right?

71 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - MAYA'S ROOM - NIGHT

71

Noah enters the house. Maya and Rebecca are seated somewhere with a snack out and working on schoolwork. Noah kicks off shoes, passes them with a wave and grin on the way to his office. He drops some things and holds them. Silent. Eventually, he decides, or is able to decide, to join them.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

73 EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

73

\*  
\*

Rebecca inspects the garden. Things have decayed. She's clearing some leaves. Her phone buzzes. She answers.

REBECCA  
Hey yeah on my way, traffic.

\*  
\*

She looks at the house. It has blue workman's tarp over it and other signs of construction and renovation.

\*  
\*

74

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

74

Rebecca finishes the dishes quietly. Noah is asleep on the couch. Maya is upstairs. Finished, Becca turns off lights as she progresses from kitchen to living room. Until she and Noah are the only things lit in the house.

She looks at him. She looks around the house. She thinks about living her life here. Then she immediately buries the thought. Idiot. Enjoy it while you have it.

She slides onto the couch. Noah immediately rouses and reaches for his phone.

NOAH

What time is it?

She nuzzles. He scrolls.

\*

He looks down at her. For a moment, they see one another. A kind of flash of a possible future. And while Noah might grin and eventually kiss her. And while Rebecca may smile and pull him closer. Underneath, they both feel a tidal seasickness.

75

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - DAY

75

Rebecca vigorously blends peanut butter fudge while simultaneously watching over a double boiler of chocolate. She is making buckeyes for the Ohio St v Michigan game. The house is decked out in Buckeye gear - a boiling crimson. This is a critical event in every Ohio calendar in November.

Okay Rebecca is ready to form the buckeyes. Maya watches on, learning. Rebecca sets up three or four baking trays lined with parchment paper with pre-marked spots for the placement of each buckeye. With precision, she forms a ball of peanut butter fudge, always checking Maya can see what she's doing.

Ding! Something's done in the oven. Rebecca nods to Maya to take it out.

REBECCA

Ah-ah.

Maya obediently slides on oven mitts. Then: out come warm and perfectly baked rugelach. Maya places this batch on top of the stove to cool. Then puts a new tray of them in there.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

One tray at a time gives an even  
bake on top.

Maya nods and sets the timer.

Rebecca all the while has been making the buckeyes. There's half a tray now. She dips a new ball of peanut butter fudge into the warm bowl of chocolate, leaving a small dot of peanut butter showing through. Then places the dipped bon bon on its appropriate spot on the parchment paper. Once the trays are full, they will go in the fridge to harden and cool. These are buckeyes. They are delicious.

Rebecca continues on. She offers a toothpick to Maya to help her dip and place. Maya nervously takes on the job and executes perfectly.

Rebecca nods to the fridge, Maya opens it. It's already pretty full of dips and mayo'd "salads." It's a jenga pull to find space. But Rebecca thought ahead: there is one shelf that is free for trays.

Rebecca shows Maya how to stack the trays so they don't touch. Maya nods, taking it in.

Ding! Maya does her bit with the oven.

MAYA  
Nana's bringing the wings.

REBECCA  
Oh okay. Do we have Ranch?

MAYA  
Are your parents coming?

REBECCA  
(caught off guard)  
Oh I... don't know. They had plans.

MAYA  
Has my Dad met them before?

REBECCA  
He has, yeah.

MAYA  
Back in the day.

REBECCA  
Oh yeah. Waaaaay on back.

MAYA  
I can't imagine him.

REBECCA  
Who? Your dad? Or my

MAYA

Yeah, Dad.

REBECCA

Oh like young you mean.

MAYA

Yeah.

REBECCA

He was... I always knew he'd be a great doctor and a great dad and you know, all that he is.

MAYA

Figures.

Rebecca can feel a buried sense of inadequacy in the remark.

REBECCA

But he was dumb and silly too you know. He was a kid.

Maya contemplates this. Unsure if she buys it.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

(a concession)

He came to school dressed as Robin Hood - green tights and all - and performed "Men in Tights" as his Medieval Europe final. He'll say to get a laugh. I think it was to provoke people.

Rebecca enjoys this dumb memory. It was probably one of the moments that secured her heart to him.

MAYA

Tights? Like tights tights?

REBECCA

Oh yeah.

Maya likes having this resource of news...

MAYA

How was he at debate?

REBECCA

He was good.

Rebecca smirks.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
But not good enough.

MAYA  
Ohhhhhh so you won a lot.

Rebecca's coy expression answers in the affirmative.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
Bet he didn't like that.

REBECCA  
Oooohhhh no.

Maya takes a beat of satisfaction.

MAYA  
Is this tray ready for the fridge?

REBECCA  
Yeah.

Rebecca lines up a fresh tray for buckeyes. Fridge opens.

**Crash.** Trays plummet, a glass dish splats.

Rebecca is immediately fearful of the glass cutting Maya. But before she can do anything or say anything, Maya is reacting in explosive anger - sputtering epithets against herself and manically closing and opening the door of the fridge to punctuate her words. It's a shocking moment of self hatred.

MAYA  
STOOPID STOOPID FUCKING IDIOT  
FUCKING IDIOT YOU GODDAMN FUcKing

Rebecca touches Maya's shoulder.

SNAP. The fridge closes on Maya's finger.

A dry scream of pain. Rebecca comforts Maya. Rufus is going a bit berserk.

REBECCA  
Hey, it's okay. It's okay.

Rebecca takes the dog to the other room and closes the gate. Then, gets Maya to calm down gently.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
Let me see.

She looks at the finger. It doesn't look good.

MAYA

We don't have to call him.

REBECCA

I think we do.

MAYA

NO we don't nO we Don't.

REBECCA

Okay. Okay.

Beat. Then, a gentle reminder:

REBECCA (CONT'D)

He'll see you hurt yourself.

MAYA

We clean up first say say it was an accident.

REBECCA

But it was.

MAYA

No nono. The mess and the what if it's bad and then no game.

REBECCA

Fuck the game.

MAYA

But it was supposed to be this whole thing and everyone happy and you there and it would work Dad will be so upset he can't be upset.

Rebecca understands what she means. She thinks. Maya looks very scared.

76

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

76

Noah and Abby are caught mid-fight loading up the trunk with too much beer from a strip mall liquor store.

ABBY

I'm an asshole?

NOAH

Or betrayer. Or whatever the word. There's *some* word and you're IT.

ABBY

Cool.

NOAH

You would actually *like* selling out  
and working in some some linoleum,  
sterile death hole?

ABBY

Hospitals are fine, yeah.

NOAH

God.

ABBY

Why make all this harder on  
yourself?

NOAH

Because.

Because I love it. That's the cost.

Beat. Abby's phone is blowing up. Noah indicates "get it."

ABBY

Sam's got beer cheese but not the  
right brand. Mom wants to know if  
we care which rugelach flavors.

NOAH

Becca has that.

ABBY

(ignoring him, typing)  
I'm saying get the flavor pack,  
right?

Something's amiss. He nods yes anyway and closes the trunk.

77

EXT. / INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - DAY

77

Noah pulls up. Everyone's already here. It makes him anxious.

Abby hops out to help Sandra, who shows off the cigars she picked up. Noah nods a lukewarm "oh cool" to her as he unloads cases of Great Lakes Christmas Ale, the single best winter beer on the planet.

Noah enters a busy house. Rufus excitedly greets Sandra, his secret best friend. Abby heads to the food. Donna arranges trays with Rebecca, who calculatedly checks for when Noah realizes Maya has a bandage on her hand.

Which he does almost immediately. Before he can react, Sam is taking the case of beer.

NOAH  
Here be careful.

Sam takes the case anyway.

SAM  
We got Christmas Ale everybody!

Sam pats Noah on his shoulder as a kind of invitation to relax and join the party. Noah doesn't respond.

Cutting through chatter and business, Noah eventually corners Maya. Sam cranes a look over but doesn't say anything.

NOAH  
What happened what's going on

MAYA  
Dad it's fine

NOAH  
Is it a cut I should look -

MAYA  
I'm fine!

She's self-conscious. Rebecca's there.

REBECCA  
(a hushed explanation)  
Closed it in a drawer.

NOAH  
You saw this?

MAYA  
It's fine.

NOAH  
I need to check it.

REBECCA  
Sam was here he looked

Noah looks over at Sam - what?

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
Bruises it's fine.

NOAH  
Look I think you

MAYA  
Don't freak out.

NOAH  
Freak out?

REBECCA  
Why don't

NOAH  
(to Rebecca, a dismissal)  
*Please.*

MAYA  
Dad.

A whistle from the TV - game starting -

SAM  
Here comes the snap!

78

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

78

Donna and Rebecca put food away in tupperwares for people to take home. This is the duty of the Midwestern host.

ABBY  
(to Noah)  
You care if I take the cheese?

Noah gestures "take it" as he drains another Christmas Ale. He's had a lot of them.

Sam brings Rufus in from his nighttime bathroom jaunt. There's remonstrations about tidyng up. Noah remains inert on the couch.

Sam's handed out coats and kissed Maya and Sandra's marched all the bags to the cars and Donna's taken stock of everything and Abby's snuck a couple extra beers in her coat and "Good night! Drive safe! Text me when you get home!" And everyone is out.

Quiet.

Noah goes to the freezer and takes out the ice bin, a bowl, a ziploc bag, and a couple towels. He quietly fills the ziploc with ice. Rebecca isn't sure what to do or what's happening.

Bag filled, towel on shoulder, and bowl in hand. He speaks with the tired detachment of an emergency room nurse.

NOAH  
 (to Maya)  
 Let's put a compress on it before  
 bed.

A stand off with Maya.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Maya come on.

She doesn't budge. She looks at Rebecca.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Maya. Count of three.

MAYA  
 I'm not five.

NOAH  
 Then act like it.

MAYA  
 Fuck you.

NOAH  
 What?

He isn't mad. He's hurt.

Maya is buzzing, silent, the way a person feels when they realize they've hit something with their car.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 What did you say.

She bolts up to her room. She can't face him.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Hey.

He runs after her.

Rebecca remains still.

They're up the stairs, but she's too quick. Door slams. He is out of breath. Upset. Sad. Hating himself. How are we here?

He dump-throws the ice and the bowl and towel at her door. He walks away in a huff. Then immediately returns.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Keep your hand elevated!

He heads back downstairs.

79

INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

79

Rebecca waits. Nervous. Fight or flight feelings.

Noah comes downstairs and heads straight to the kitchen to retrieve a beer from the fridge. He shoots a critical look at Rebecca as he takes a swig.

He stays in the kitchen. She stays in the living room.

It's awhile.

REBECCA  
(an offer made out of  
kindness)  
I'll go.

Noah gestures "go ahead." She goes to the closet, almost on tip toe, to get her coat.

NOAH  
There she is. Right on time.

What?

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Come in. Do your thing. And leave.

REBECCA  
I don't have to go.

NOAH  
But you want to.

REBECCA  
No. I just feel -

NOAH  
You don't know what you're doing.  
You think you know, of course you  
do, you always think you know  
everything, but you don't.

REBECCA  
What is it that I think I know?

He wishes he were taking a shower right now. He wants to say "you aren't a parent."

NOAH  
I don't know.

He does know.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
She's hurt, you call me. End.

REBECCA  
I called Sam he's a doctor.

NOAH  
I'm her *father*.

REBECCA  
She didn't want me to call you.

NOAH  
You're the adult.

REBECCA  
Okay yes I made a mistake - you're  
so perfect?

He fishes something out of his pocket.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
Why do you think she doesn't want  
me to call you? Hm?

NOAH  
Oh whaddya know here's that cigar I  
haven't smoked yet.

He goes to the door. He wants this over.

REBECCA  
Maya needs a professional.

NOAH  
There was a divorce. She's upset.  
We all are.

REBECCA  
She isn't well. She needs help.

NOAH  
When did you get your phd?

REBECCA  
This is experience talking.

Noah nods and smiles and swigs, "Oh I see."

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
I'm serious. It's bad. How long has  
she had rage issues?

NOAH

Wow lots of diagnoses flying  
around!

REBECCA

So you're saying she's never  
volatile or broken something or ..  
slammed her finger in a door?

NOAH

So it was a door.

REBECCA

Door, yes, not, whatever - one  
thing went wrong and it was  
immediate rage and it was ugly and  
it will get worse.

NOAH

Noted.

REBECCA

Is it?

NOAH

Yes. I am aware that things are  
hard for her I am aware of it all I  
am so aware you could plug me in  
and I'd light the place up.

REBECCA

(dialing it down)

Okay. Okay.

All I'm saying is-

NOAH

(a stab)

She isn't you.

He drains his beer and starts to the stairs.

REBECCA

What's happening.

NOAH

I'm going to bed.

REBECCA

No.

NOAH

No?

REBECCA

We're not going to our corners to  
be angry I won't do that.

NOAH

I can't go ten rounds with you  
about how you know my daughter  
better than me. It won't .. I don't  
want to do it.

REBECCA

That's not what I'm arguing - not  
*arguing* - wrong word.

NOAH

Of course you're arguing. Always  
arguing. Always winning. The thing  
is: to keep winning, you need new  
games to play.

REBECCA

What are you even talking about?

NOAH

I'm asking you to stand down.

REBECCA

You're talking to me like I'm  
outside with a tank ready to bring  
this place to the ground.

NOAH

Well, you could be.

Quiet.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Where are your parents tonight?  
What did you say... they were out  
with friends? You and I both know  
that's not true.

REBECCA

You had your protections when we  
started. I can have mine.

Noah won't buy it.

NOAH

You're a *liar*, Becca. You lie.  
Because lying is the perfect escape  
hatch.  
Proof! You love proof:  
(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

How did I know you weren't watching fireworks with your parents?  
 I knew: She's at that fucking house on her own doing exactly what SHE wants to do. And there you were! Ding ding ding! What does he win.

REBECCA

All I've had is myself for a long time, Noah. A long fucking time.

NOAH

But am I wrong? Am I.

REBECCA

You're driving this all at me so you don't have to talk about Maya.

Noah thinks, "Are you fucking kidding?"

NOAH

**All** of this is talking about Maya. When you're trusted with someone's child, how you behave matters.

REBECCA

I am always honest with her.

NOAH

Jesus, Becca. Wake up. You're here, right? Celebrating with us and doing school and cooking the food and rah-rah and all that? And that's nice. Real nice.

(the punchline)

You still have a lease in DC. You pay it every month and think nothing of it. You got here in April. We're nearly through November. I mean: You're actively renovating the house you currently live in so you can sell it. And then what? I don't know. How could I ever know anything about you? We only get the parts of the story you want us to hear. There's this whole other reality you keep to yourself. And that reality is where your decisions get made. And I'm not, we're not, a part of that. And now you're standing here scandalized that I don't trust you. It's absurd.

REBECCA  
(quiet, sincere)  
Why do you think I'm here, with  
you?

NOAH  
I don't know.

REBECCA  
You can't imagine that it's because  
I love you?

NOAH  
I can imagine it. And I've...  
enjoyed feeling it.  
But I...  
(a realization)  
can't believe it.

REBECCA  
Can't believe *me*.

Noah tries to answer. He can only shake his head, 'no.'

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
Oh.

A long beat for Noah to discover the real problem:

NOAH  
Maya, though. She believes you.

REBECCA  
And that's bad.

NOAH  
Of course.  
When you've convinced someone it's  
safe for them to love you, you have  
immense power. You can hurt people  
you could hurt me. And then what  
have I allowed my daughter to learn  
about love? We've already been  
through the ringer with Sarah. I  
don't... there's too much at stake.

Rebecca sees how scared Noah is. She sees she is the source  
of that fear. And it's heartbreaking.

REBECCA  
Okay.

Rebecca retrieves her coat, quietly. She approaches Noah, delicate steps. She brushes a piece of his hair back off his face. They both want to kiss each other. Even still.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

She leaves. Noah waits. She doesn't return. He plops on the couch, the victor bathing in defeat.

80 INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - MORNING

80

Maya and Rebecca sit alone amongst a fleet of formica tables in an empty cafeteria. They wait in silence. Maya is dejected. Rebecca is stoic but worried.

Rebecca looks over to Maya until Maya returns the gaze. Rebecca gives a supportive grin. "Everything will be okay."

Then, a TEACHER wearing a lanyard walks their way. He takes a seat across from them. He has paperwork.

TEACHER  
The judging committee has talked it over. And... I'm so sorry we can't allow Maya to continue on today.

Rebecca holds down anger and nods, "thank you." It's obvious the Teacher is sympathetic. Maya looks off, fighting emotion.

81 INT. CHAIN DINER - DAY

81

Noah shoves four layers of syrup drenched pancakes into his mouth in one massive bite. He sits back, chewing, the way someone sits back from doing a line of cocaine.

Maya hasn't touched her food. They meet eyes. He wants to tell her to eat. But he thinks better of it. But she knows that's what he wants, so she obliges him with a bite or two.

MAYA  
Why did I have to talk?

NOAH  
You were upset.

MAYA  
It's like it all went red.

NOAH  
Yeah.

A beat. He knows. That happens to him when he gets mad.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
He was picking on you. You're up on  
that stage. Pressure. You reacted.

Maya isn't assuaged. Noah's phone rings. MOM. He puts it away. But Maya saw it.

MAYA  
Is Grandma mad?

He's struck by the question. Of course not.

NOAH  
No.

She nods.

MAYA  
Are you mad?

Oh honey. No. No no no no. Never.

NOAH  
No.

He thinks.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Are you mad?  
(beat.)  
It's okay, if you are.  
Mad at me?

She thinks.

MAYA  
At everything.

This strikes Noah. She means it.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
I've ruined it all.

NOAH  
No. No you haven't.

He thinks.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Maybe this isn't the right thing to  
say but he sounded like a  
motherfucking nazi prick to me too.

That isn't enough. She's talking about more than today.

MAYA

Why bother. Why bother with any of it? If it'll just...

...go away. She shakes her head, resolved to a new code:

MAYA (CONT'D)

Get up. Eat. Work. Go to bed.

(a shrug)

That's easier. Safer. I think.

Oh god. This is what he's taught her? Worry seizes Noah.

82

INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - MORNING

82

Rebecca and Joan sort through the freezer in the garage. Joan counts out the gallons of frozen apples they have, sliced. Peaches, sliced. Blackberries.

JOAN

Those are the good ones we got at that place this Summer.

REBECCA

Oh right.

Rebecca is keeping the log.

JOAN

We won't be able to fit all this. It's going to waste.

Rebecca looks at everything.

JOAN (CONT'D)

We could do a cooking today? Jam jars are in the storage unit.

REBECCA

I don't know how.

JOAN

I can teach you.

REBECCA

You tried once. Didn't go well.

They remember. Joan grimaces.

JOAN

I should have tried again.

REBECCA  
 (deflating her worry)  
 Well. CouldaWouldaShoulda, ya know?

JOAN  
 (an apology)  
 I should have tried again.

The words strike Rebecca. And she thinks about Maya.

83 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - DAY

83

Thanksgiving READY in here. Noah enters the waiting room.

NOAH  
 Mrs. Shapiro! How are you?

EVELYN  
 Where's your uncle?

NOAH  
 He moved on.

EVELYN  
 He died?!

NOAH  
 No, no. He retired.

EVELYN  
 Oh. Okay. You'll do.

She gets out of her chair just as Rebecca enters, her face is chapped from cold. Noah looks like he's seen a ghost.

EVELYN (CONT'D)  
 Hello? Are we going?

Noah nods to Evelyn and motions to Rebecca to give him a minute. Rebecca looks over at Abby who gives a small wave.

84 INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

84

Rebecca, Noah, and Maya sit at a table in a quaint, local coffee shop. Rebecca shows Maya print-outs that feature Stanford insignia. Noah anxiously fidgets with his hands.

REBECCA  
 So it's six weeks. And you're on campus taking classes. All kinds. And you stay in a dorm. With a roommate.  
 (MORE)

REBECCA (CONT'D)

And there's excursions the RAs lead. And .. yeah. I think this will be great for you.

Maya gingerly drags some papers towards herself.

MAYA

But I still have to apply?

Rebecca smugly smirks.

REBECCA

Yes. But. I know someone. And while you could absolutely get in on your own... it's been a tough year. So. If I can make this one thing a little easier why not?

Maya looks at Noah.

NOAH

Yeah her friend said it's

He looks at Rebecca.

NOAH (CONT'D)

all set, right?

REBECCA

Yep.

Maya thinks.

MAYA

I can take any classes I want?

REBECCA

Yep.

Maya likes that.

MAYA

And it's like the real dorms?

Rebecca nods. Maya likes that. Noah is relieved to see her looking forward to something.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(to Noah)

And you're... it's okay?

God no. But his fear for Maya's growing despair is great enough he's willing to take this chance.

NOAH

Yes! Of course. I'm jealous.

REBECCA

Yeah, I mean: Summer in California.

She looks at Noah, "Good job."

Noah returns with a look of "Thanks."

85

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

85

It's bitter cold. Rebecca hugs Maya, who is reluctant to let go. Noah looks into Rebecca's car. There's a pile of coffee mugs back there. He misses her.

REBECCA

(to Maya)

I'm so excited for you.

NOAH

(To Rebecca)

Thank you.

Rebecca grins. They aren't sure what to do. A few nods. Maya demurely waves to Rebecca as she hops into their car, Noah lingers a little at his opened door.

Rebecca touches his arm.

REBECCA

(sotto voce)

It'll be okay.

He acknowledges that. He needed to hear it. And she knows it.

Snap. Rebecca's in her car. Snap. Snap. Noah and Maya are in their car.

He waits for Rebecca to drive off before leaving, too.

He checks Maya is buckled in and then drives off.

\*

SPRING.

\*

87A

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

87A

\*

Sam patiently doles out seed into the birdhouses that pepper his yard. Each birdhouse is designed, and seeded, to attract and serve particular species.

\*

\*

\*

He has metal cones on the posts holding up the birdhouses, so  
that chipmunks and squirrels can't climb up and feed on the  
birds' supper. To protect the bluebird feeder from rain,  
since they prefer plates to houses, Sam has rigged a plastic  
dome to hover over the plate on fishing line. \*

He looks up to see, through his glass backdoor, Noah enter  
his house and come join him in the backyard. Sam smacks away  
birdseed dust from his hands. Noah appreciates the yard. \*

NOAH  
It's so nice back here. I forgot. \*

Sam grins and thinks about his wife, then looks at Noah with  
a kind of "what were we talking about?" expression. Right! \*

SAM  
The suitcase. \*

Sam walks towards the house, suddenly all business. \*

88A INT. SAM'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

88A \*

Noah stands in the entryway, looking at some family photos.  
There aren't a ton, just a few tasteful memories arranged for  
Sam to see when he leaves or enters his home. Clomps of feet  
from off, possibly the garage, signal Sam's imminent arrival. \*

NOAH  
(calling out)  
Got it okay? \*

SAM (O.S.)  
Yeah. \*

Noah puts his hands in his pockets. He won't override Sam's  
veto for help. \*

Sam emerges with a hardcase rollerboard. The color and design  
of it was made to appeal to a woman. He rolls it towards  
Noah, proud. Found it! Noah nods a thank you. Sam realizes he  
should remove his wife's leather embossed name and address  
tag from the handle. Noah, overcome with a feeling of  
intruding on a private act, looks at the photos again. Sam  
slips the tag into his pocket. He'll keep it in his  
nightstand drawer. \*

NOAH  
(in re: photo)  
I haven't seen this one. \*

SAM

Yeah I found that, going through  
some things.

NOAH

I didn't know grandpa fought.

SAM

Yeah. Air force. His chin -  
(he mimics his father's  
tipped chin in the  
portrait)

NOAH

Hm, yeah. Like Dad.

A beat.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I wish I'd known him.

SAM

Me too.

A beat.

SAM (CONT'D)

My father played the violin. And I  
never knew that. We were cleaning  
out the house. After he passed.  
Just a random weekend. And back  
behind some old raincoats in his  
closet was this... violin.  
What's this? Oh, your father's. My  
father's?  
I wish I knew what songs he liked  
to play. I do listen very  
differently to violins now.

He looks at Noah with warmth. Noah doesn't find comfort in  
this story, though. But he's good at hiding it.

NOAH

Yeah.

SAM

It's funny what we don't say. What  
we don't know. Time. What a thief.

Sam looks at the photos, his eyes dance over each face.

SAM (CONT'D)

Whole lives. Hm? That have come and  
gone. And I've seen them. Come.  
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

And then go. I've even helped some  
come and go.

There have been final words spoken  
aloud that only I heard.

And: who am I? You know? Who is  
anyone, I guess?

(a beat)

We're the hours we spend:

Who they're spent with. And what  
we've done with them.

Sam offers a satisfied shrug: "simple as that." Then, he puts  
his hand on the hardcase roller and test drives the wheels a  
little, as if he's selling it in a showroom.

SAM (CONT'D)

Still like new. TSA locks. 360  
wheels.

NOAH

Thank you. She'll take good care.

SAM

Ah, keep it.

NOAH

Oh that's - don't you - it's  
your wife's?

SAM

You tell Maya: I want her to have  
this. It's my insurance policy on  
her having plenty of adventures.

Noah shows gratitude for that thought but inside feels  
something else.

Noah drives Maya to the airport. They ride in silence. She is  
anticipating adventure. He is anticipating everything else.

He looks at her. Her hands are folded in her lap, the way she  
did as a little girl. He re-focuses on the road. He wishes  
Rebecca were there. She'd know what to say.

MAYA

Hm?

NOAH

Huh?

MAYA

Did you -

Say something?

NOAH

Me? No.

MAYA

Oh.

NOAH

S'alright.

She consults her window. The endless farmland buttressing Ohio State Road 94 lies fallow. Maya will remember this morning some years later and it will move her as it does now.

90

INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT PARKING LOT - MORNING

90

They park in the short term lot. Ba-doop, Noah locks it and takes the handle of her rollerboard suitcase.

In a few steps, Maya reaches for the suitcase, placing her hand on top of his - a silent gesture encouraging him to release the handle to her control. He does.

91

INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT - MORNING

91

A scrum has formed around the self check-in stands. The human circus in all its glory.

Noah lines up the sticky ends of a baggage label with concentration, hoping to avoid weird folds or bubbles in the strip. He does a pretty good job. Satisfied, he shows Maya where to drop the bag. They watch it ride the conveyor.

Noah affixes the square luggage sticker to the back of her paper ticket.

NOAH

That way you don't lose it.

She accepts the ticket and the reassurance.

MAYA

I think that's my security gate.

She gives a nod up ahead. Noah squints.

NOAH

Yep.

They arrive at the maze of security line barricades, that area where the goodbyes happen. Time to go. Maya tempers her eagerness for his sake.

He sighs, pulling his lips into a kind of grim grin. He wants to say something, do something. But what? Okay. You're the dad. Give her certainty. Give her the certainty that she is on the right path and you have faith in her. Yes.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Call me when you get in, okay?

MAYA  
I will.

NOAH  
And when you get into housing and everything, you know, let me know how it is.

MAYA  
Okay, yeah.

NOAH  
Okay.  
Okay.

MAYA  
I'll be fine.

NOAH  
I know.

She is aware that is a lie.

MAYA  
I love you.

NOAH  
I love you so much.

They hug. Then, she turns and joins the security line.

Noah remains in place, smiling or waving periodically, without self-consciousness.

Maya realizes her father will stand there until she's literally out of sight. So she gives him occasional grins and waves when not busyng herself with her phone or her ticket until her ID is checked and she's waved on. She begins to pile her shoes and belongings in the grey tubs.

Noah continues to watch her.

She strikes the jumping jack pose in the scanner. Free to go. She grabs her things, grazes Noah with a grin and she's gone. Noah remains still for a beat.

He takes a step back and looks up to the Arrivals/Departures board. His eyes dance until he finds her flight. He mouths the flight number to himself. He checks the time. He does some mental math.

Okay, there's about an hour until take off.

He looks around. He sees a Starbucks or something like it.

He'll get a cup of coffee. Yeah. Make sure she takes off on time. It could get delayed. Or canceled. It's worth the parking fee to know she took off alright. He joins the line.

92 INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT - LATER

92

He gnaws on the lip of his paper coffee cup. All done.

He checks the departures. Take off is: right now. Okay.

He watches planes take off through a far window. It could have been one of those. That could have been her.

Okay. Well. Alright. He is glad to have breached that barrier. She's either now in the air or about to be.

He thinks.

He opens his phone browser. He taps in the flight number and the search function takes him to a flight tracker site. It gives him constant status updates until arrival which is in: five and a half hours. Okay.

93 INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT - LATER

93

Noah stands dumb and penitent before a Sbarro, or something similar, in the ticketing area of the airport.

SBARRO KID, elbow on the counter, slyly scrolls on his phone.

NOAH

Uh, yeah uh how are those  
strombolis?

Sbarro Kid's eyes drift... "Dude, I dunno."

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Right sorry uh yeah let's just do a  
 Sicilian pepperoni. Slice.

Sbarro Kid moves with zero hustle to get that slice.

94

INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

94

On the periphery of the Sbarro stall, with passengers coming and going about him, Noah Abrams houses an entire slice of Sbarro pizza. It is a certainty that he burns the roof of his mouth. But he greedily slurps it down regardless.

He cuts the line and gets some napkins to wipe the hot oil off his face and hands. He throws away the napkins and pizza slice box. He avoids eye contact with people around him.

He checks the time. Four hours until she's in California.

A hollow-voiced announcement plays over the PA.

He could use a water. But he can't face the kids working the counters at the two establishments he's already visited.

Noah has explored all that the ticketing area has to offer. He thinks. He turns his attention to the ticketing counter.

95

INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT - SECURITY GATE - MOMENTS LATER 95

Noah strikes the jumping jack pose in the security scanner, a paper ticket in his hand. Free to go. He takes his keys and some change from the small bowl thing.

96

INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT - TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER 96

Noah goes on a walk. There's a newsstand. Some old posters for the Rock Hall. This is more like it! New things to read.

He looks through the magazines at the newsstand. He laughs to himself that some of these titles are in print. Who is the guy buying Cigar Aficionado at the Cleveland Airport? He selects a couple magazines, as well as an enormous bottle of water and peanut m&m's.

97

INT. THE CLEVELAND AIRPORT - GATE - LATER 97

He sits at a gate. He finishes reading one of his magazines and takes pulls off the water bottle now and then.

He glances at his watch then self-consciously scratches at his scalp even though there is no itch.

98

INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT - THE LONDON PUB - LATER

98

There exists, tucked within this airport, a perfectly accurate recreation of an old English pub. There is absolutely no reason for it to be there. And yet, it is.

Noah sits at the walnut bar, two pints in. Warm, but not toast. He's listening to a man who gels his thinning hair.

GEL HAIR

But bro no listen to me Haslam's  
got the Browns -

He sticks his left arm out and makes a fist, shaking it as if to say "here's where he's got 'em."

GEL HAIR (CONT'D)

And then the Preds.

He sticks his right arm out. Noah is taking this seriously.

GEL HAIR (CONT'D)

What's he gonna do let some - some  
other guy come in and build  
competition in one of you know, his  
own uh uh - towns? No way.

Gel Hair punctuates his point with a swig of beer.

NOAH

But can't the city just do whatever  
we have the weather and the fans we  
could do hockey I mean Haslam  
doesn't own the damn city.

GEL HAIR

(don't be dumb)

Bro - he owns the Browns.

Noah acknowledges that the man has a point.

He checks his phone. No messages. He checks the flight status. Still on track. Two more hours until landing.

He watches Gel Hair drum his fingers on the bar as he mulls.

GEL HAIR (CONT'D)

(indicating Noah's glass)

What you doin'?

Noah thinks.

NOAH  
That Great Lakes they got.

99 INT. CLEVELAND AIRPORT - THE LONDON PUB - LATER 99

Noah's fully in the bag and concentrating on a MAN IN A COWBOY HAT from Nashville who calls his girlfriend "NOTRE DAME" and who is in the process of letting Noah in on the ground floor:

COWBOY HAT  
The patent is interNAtional, k?  
Blocks all credit card hackers -

He snaps his fingers.

COWBOY HAT (CONT'D)  
- and it's gonna find all the information on you in three minutes. Dark web, Russian web, all of it.

NOAH  
Why?

Cowboy Hat laughs so hard he nearly chokes, Notre Dame pats his back and leans to keep talking to Noah.

"NOTRE DAME"  
He just comes up with this stuff.  
He got me this.

She shows off her purse. Noah gives a good "impressed" nod.

COWBOY HAT  
Oh boy I worry about ya, son. Worry about ya with questions like that.

"NOTRE DAME"  
"Remove the questions?"

She looks to Cowboy Hat. This is a common mantra for them.

COWBOY HAT  
"And you're free."

"NOTRE DAME"  
Freeeeee.

She kisses Cowboy Hat. Noah thinks.

NOAH  
Free.

COWBOY HAT  
You wanna be free?

NOAH  
(very sincere)  
Yes.

COWBOY HAT  
(to bartender)  
Line 'em up!

"Notre Dame" claps.

NOTRE DAME  
Mm-mm, I want something gold, baby.

COWBOY HAT  
Hey you got Jack Daniel's Honey?

Noah fumbles for his phone with sudden conviction only the drunk have. Oh shit wow. Maya landed twenty minutes ago.

He composes: **hey yuo get in ? love you.**

He waits for an answer.

He watches Cowboy Hat rub his hand on Notre Dame's haunch while ordering their drinks.

Buzz. A text.

**Maya: Yep Sorry!! Waiting ofr the shuttle I'll call when I'm dorms!**

Should he text back? No. She said she'd call later.

He could go. She's there. She's landed.

By the time his attention is back up - there's the pretty little shots all in a row.

He clinks glasses with his new friends and drinks it down. Notre Dame claps again.

NOTRE DAME  
Mmm don't that taste just like  
Cheerios?

He checks his phone again. Then:

NOAH  
(determined)  
Line 'em up.

Cowboy Hat howls, Notre Dame claps.

COWBOY HAT  
Come alooooooong, son.

100 INT. NASHVILLE AIRPORT - GATE - MORNING

100

Noah startles awake at Gate 6 in the Nashville Airport while a busker sat nearby rattles out "The Race is On" by George Jones as the day's rooster call.

Noah looks frightened and alarmed. He touches his face to make sure it's there. He has absolutely no idea where he is or how he got there and his entire body is in pain.

The sounds of the singing and the movement of the people nearly make him vomit. He stands. Shouldn't have done that. Blinding pain. His underarms are damp.

He braces somewhere. Is he gonna be sick? No. Yes? No.

Another hand digs out his phone. Jesus. No battery. A dark, rectangular void. Shit shit shit.

Reflexively he checks for his wallet and keys. They're there.

His gut churns. He can feel how pale his skin is.

Maya was gonna call. And the telehealth appointments. What time is it? Oh Jesus.

He needs the time. What's the fucking time.

There's too many things to solve at once. Too many things.

101 INT. TERMINAL - MORNING

101

Noah sees nothing but empty sockets and yearns for a power cord. Do bartenders keep them behind the bar? He has a vague memory of seeing that once.

He asks one place opening up, but the bartender points at some vending machine thing plunked next to a garbage can.

Noah surveys the vending machine thing - power cords are in there but under lock and key. Where's the guy working this?

NOAH  
 (to an airport worker)  
 Hey would a newsstand have phone  
 chargers?

The WORKER shrugs. Noah understands.

102 EXT. TENNESSEE TRADING POST NEWSSTAND - TERMINAL - MORNING 102

The only thing about this store that conveys 'trading post' is the folksy font in which the sign itself is written.

Noah looks at the phone chargers, and tries to marry the pictures of them to the port in his phone. Is this the one?

Noah waits for the CLERK to open up his check-out computer.

NOAH  
 These work with iphones?

He shows off his choice. The Clerk shrugs. Okay. He places it down for purchase and hopes.

103 EXT. Tootsie's AIRPORT BAR - MORNING

103

Noah welcomes a seat, his body hurts.

NOAH  
 Ice water and some fries? You do  
 food?

BARTENDER  
 Yessir.

NOAH  
 Okay yeah and uh can you charge my  
 phone back there -

Noah fumbles with the tape on the charger's packaging.

BARTENDER  
 Sorry, buddy.

Bartender shows off a packed power outlet full of multi-colored phone chargers and the service station ipad power cords. No dice. Shit.

104

EXT. TERMINAL - LATER

104

Noah sits on the scratchy-carpeted floor of the terminal, babysitting his phone plugged into the wall. He eats those fries he ordered out of a styrofoam to-go box.

The phone springs to life. He sets his fries down, attempting to lick some grease off his fingers before picking up the phone but he's too eager to bother very much. He messes up the passcode a couple times.

He looks at his messages. No new texts.

Voicemails. None.

**Emails: Target - Layers for Less: Bedding Edition, Warby Parker - These Look Good on You, Verizon - Your Latest Statement.**

That's it.

He scrolls his texts again. His emails. His voicemails. Maybe it took a minute for them to load? But, no. Nothing.

He thinks. Maybe Maya called but didn't know to leave a voicemail. And he wasn't there. Did she worry? He calls her.

Ring Ring. Ring Ring. He wipes his greasy fingers on his pants and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

MAYA  
(over the phone)  
... Dad?

NOAH  
Hi! Hey. How are you I'm so sorry.

MAYA  
About what?

NOAH  
I was... my phone died, you're alright? You sound

MAYA  
Yeah I

NOAH  
The dorms are fine? Did you get everything you need is there something I need to send?

MAYA  
Dad yeah it's five AM.

Oh.

NOAH  
Oh God right. I'm sorry. I was...

MAYA  
Are you okay?

He thinks.

NOAH  
Yeah.

MAYA  
(confessional glee)  
I won debate scrimmage last night.

He laughs, releasing some tension.

NOAH  
Of course you did.

MAYA  
I'm having a really good time.

NOAH  
That's.

Relief. And joy.

MAYA  
Dad?

NOAH  
Yeah.

A pause.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry you get some sleep.

MAYA  
Okay. I'll call you?

NOAH  
Yes. Or - if you want. We'll talk.

MAYA  
Yeah... Love you.

NOAH  
Love you too.

Hang up. He lets himself savor that for one second before remembering the telehealth appointments.

He tries to sign into the system over his phone but he can't remember his password. Fuck. He calls Abby. She picks up after one ring.

ABBY

Hey.

NOAH

I missed the telehealth -

ABBY

What's wrong are you sick?

NOAH

What? No?

ABBY

What's wrong?

NOAH

Nothing. Phone died.

ABBY

Oh - you don't plug it in at night?

NOAH

No, I do, usually I.

Knowing he's out of danger, she's ready to talk business:

ABBY

Alright so Mrs. Gold called when you didn't show and I just logged in and I've been handling them so far I mean we probably should have been tag-teaming this for years because most of the virtuals are like "I have this rash" or whatever.

NOAH

So it's all okay?

ABBY

Yeah I mean it was a wonky start but yeah: everything's fine. The system works, ya know? Just do your day or whatever and plug in your fucking phone.

NOAH

Yeah.

ABBY

K I gotta go Mr. Spelling is in the waiting room thingy and if it's his foot again so help me.

NOAH

Okay. Uh. Thanks, Abby.

ABBY

(duh)

Yeah.

She hangs up.

He contemplates that nothing bad happened as a result of his lack of being there to make sure everything turned out okay.

Nothing bad happened.

A busker's song drifts through the terminal. It's something like Townes Van Zandt's "If I Needed You."

Noah locates him - diagonal across walkway. He listens.

And maybe it's the relief. Maybe it's being so tired. Maybe it's wishing someone was with him. Maybe it's merely this really great singer in this really shitty room singing something really true. But he feels a swell of emotion.

Noah thinks about Rebecca.

He looks at his phone. Yeah. Yes. That's what he'll do.

He opens his text messages and clicks on his 'Rebecca' thread.

His stomach drops. He slumps a little against the wall.

He must have sent Rebecca texts yesterday. When he was blotto. Because there they sit. Blue. And unanswered:

**Noah: ??????**

**Noah: Cool.**

He is nearly amused by his own brash idiocy. You did that, huh? You did. You goddamn piece of shit. Well. That's it, then. Door closed.

He watches people in the airport. They pass to and fro. Eagerly pursuing the living of their lives.

He looks at feet moving over carpet.

The song being played has turned sour on him.

Noah stands up and throws away his garbage. He unfurls some money and puts all he has into the singer's tip jar. Then, he walks away.

105 INT. NASHVILLE AIRPORT - TICKETING COUNTER - MORNING 105

Noah approaches a TICKETING AGENT.

NOAH

Hi uh,  
(a shrug)  
I need a ticket.

The Ticketing Agent is caught off guard a little, it's an unusual request to get these days.

TICKETING AGENT

Sure. Where are you traveling to today?

Noah thinks. He could say anything. He could go anywhere.

NOAH

Cleveland.

106 INT. NOAH'S CAR / EXT. NOAH'S HOME - NIGHT 106

Noah drives down his sleepy street. He's unshaven and looks like hell. It's taking some effort to stay focused, but he's managing. He pulls into his driveway.

It's taken him all day, waiting on standby, to get back to Cleveland, his car, and his home. He turns off the engine and looks at that home.

107 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT 107

Standing at the island, eating tortillas that he's dipping in cold queso, he texts his Mom:

**Noah: Home.**

He scrolls his emails.

He scrolls Instagram.

He calls up his texts and stares at his text chain with Rebecca. He chokes down his self-disgust, bites his lip, and starts to compose a text:

**Noah: Hey Rebecca. First, I'm sorry. I was not in a good place last night and I let that come out in dumb texts like that. You don't deserve that. You didn't deserve any of it. You deserve**

He stops. He deletes **You deserve**

He composes more to the paragraph:

**Noah: Hey Rebecca. First, I'm sorry. I was not in a good place last night and I let that come out in dumb texts like that. You don't deserve that. You didn't deserve any of it. I think you'r**

He thinks. He deletes. Then types. Then sends:

**Noah: Hey Rebecca. I'm sorry. For everything.**

A phone screen lights up on the counter across from him.

What? He walks over to the phone. His text message to Rebecca lights up the home screen.

108 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - DAY

108

HEATHER, the real estate agent handling the sale of Joan and Michael's house, stages finishing touches with her TEAM.

The house looks absolutely nothing like it once did. The floors are new hardwood. Cabinets replaced. The staging furniture looks rigid and soulless. Rebecca doesn't like it. But. This is what she was told needed to be done to sell it.

HEATHER  
(approaching Rebecca)  
I think we're about ready to kick  
this off!

Rebecca nods.

HEATHER (CONT'D)  
So: I love when I have sellers like  
you who are SO invested. But, I do  
find that it's best? To have a kind  
of distance? You know, I'll steer,  
guide, sell  
(dry laugh)  
And I think you should see your  
role as: Hey!  
(MORE)

HEATHER (CONT'D)  
 Questions about neighborhood and  
 stuff? All you.  
 And maybe hanging back in this zone

She indicates Brochure and Business Card Alley.

HEATHER (CONT'D)  
 - I'll know where to find you!

Rebecca gets it: Heather wants her out of the way.

REBECCA  
 Gotcha.

HEATHER  
 Great! You need a coffee or a water  
 before we open the doors? GRACE!

REBECCA  
 I'm good.

Grace rushes in.

HEATHER  
 Where's the Keurig?  
 It should really be in here.

109 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

109

Rebecca watches prospective buyers mill about the house.

It's weird to see the bed in the wrong place in her bedroom.

110 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - LATER

110

She overhears buyers criticizing the floors, windows, layout.  
 Rebecca tries to ignore the stings.

111 EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - LATER

111

Rebecca's outside to get some air. She sips on one of the Keurig coffees. She sees one family looking at the herbs and raspberries bushes. She is uneasy with how rough the kids are being with the plants.

She sees a couple up ahead admiring the bent over apple tree. She sees the MAN touching the bough lovingly. Are they The Ones? They must be if they're drawn to the tree!

As she approaches them, she overhears:

MAN  
You cut this tree down and the  
bushes and it's a perfect view.

Rebecca stands near him, critical.

MAN (CONT'D)  
Oh, uh. Hello?

REBECCA  
Yeah.

MAN  
Can I help you?

REBECCA  
Nope.

Man looks to his WIFE, "What a nut."

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
You need to leave.

MAN  
What?

REBECCA  
You heard me. And you!

She screams to the kids at the raspberries.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
Can you tell your kids to respect  
other peoples' things for God's  
sake! This is a home not a  
playground! Someone planted those!  
This was a home!

112 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 112

Heather can see Rebecca short-circuiting outside. Shit. Her  
sale! No! Heather races out, "if you'll excuse me."

113 EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS 113

Heather is outside now. Where is Rebecca?

HEATHER  
I'm so sorry, why don't you come  
inside it's a very emotional day.  
We have some snacks and coffees

VRRRRRRMMMMMM Rebecca emerges with a chainsaw from the garage. People run, scared.

HEATHER (CONT'D)  
What are you DOING?!

Rebecca ignores her and proceeds to saw down the apple tree.

114 EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - EVENING 114

Rebecca stares at the tree. What has she done? What will she tell her parents? Why did she do this? She thinks. She rages with herself for a minute. She could leave. She could lie.

115 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - GARAGE - EVENING 115

She's rummaging. She checks her phone, she's looking at a youtube tutorial, we can hear the dulcet tones of the host. She stops it, puts it on a shelf somewhere and then goes rummaging more. She finds a small saw. I guess this works.

116 EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - EVENING 116

She hacks at the tree limbs. She seems to have an idea of what she's doing. The bark chaps and cuts her hands. It's so much harder than she thought it would be. Fuck.

117 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - NIGHT 117

She washes amputated tree branches in the sink. She's getting dirt all over the brand new tile and counters. It's a mess. She finds some towels or drop cloths and uses them to bind the cut joints of the limb. That's what the YouTube video said to do. She'll save it. She has to.

118 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT 118

She is tired. It's late. She washes out the blood and dirt from her hands. She attempts to clean and bind them up herself. It's hard. She's no good at it.

119 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - 5AM 119

She wakes up. Sleep is a struggle. Her hands itch.

She hears the geese outside. She goes to the window. Her instinct is to text her mom or take a picture and send to her. But where's her phone? Shit.

120 INT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - WHOLE HOUSE - 5AM 120

She dervishes through the house to find that fucking phone.

She intones to herself "idiot idiot idiot." She stops. Garage.

She goes to the garage and finds it. There's texts. From Noah. And Maya. Oh no. Is everything okay? She taps Noah's thread.

**Noah: ????????**

**Noah: Cool.**

Huh? Did something happen? She checks Maya's message for intel. Oh God did something bad happen???

**Maya: I'm here! (The Sound of Music gif with Maria running through the mountains singing)**

Rebecca could cry with relief. She's okay. She's happy! Okay.

But then. What was Noah texting about? Is he okay? Maybe he's not okay. She thinks. She tries out a few texts. It's tough because her hands are bandaged.

**Rebecca: Hey youokay**

Delete.

**Rebecca: Hey I don't understand**

Delete.

She calls Noah.

Straight to voicemail. She listens to his voice until it beeps. She misses him. She calls him again right away. In order to listen to his voice mail.

She thinks awhile. She makes another call. It rings.

REBECCA

Hi... hi. Sorry it's early... yeah,  
can you come over?

121 EXT. REBECCA'S FAMILY HOME - MORNING 121

Rebecca, Michael, and Joan stare at the tree. Joan inspects it. Then she looks at the trimmings Rebecca cut off and wrapped in wet cloths. They've laid a lot of them out on the lawn to match where from the tree they were taken.

REBECCA

Can it be saved?

MICHAEL

Sure. If there's life in 'em.

He inspects the cut ends of a few.

JOAN

You really gave it hell, huh?

REBECCA

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I ruined it. I ruined the whole thing.

JOAN

No no, you wrapped them well, see?

MICHAEL

It'll take some time but.

JOAN

You acted quick.

MICHAEL

(touching some limbs)  
We can save these.

JOAN

And look now you can have a cutting, and we can have a cutting. So then we each have a tree.

MICHAEL

Wow, yeah. That's even better.

Joan's overcome. It takes Rebecca by surprise. Joan, too.

JOAN

I'd already moved on. You know? Pretended I didn't care. Thinking "we can't keep the damn tree so why make it harder by caring" but now... we can. Funny how that works. Nothing's a straight line.

122

INT. MICHAEL'S CAR / EXT. ABRAMS FAMILY MEDICAL - AFTERNOON 2

She and her family drive by. No cars parked. Where is he?

JOAN

I was thinking chili for dinner.

Joan looks in the rearview: that okay? Rebecca nods.

123 INT. MAPLE RUN CONDO - EVENING

123

Joan stirs chili. Michael watches a game. Rebecca sits, re-reading her text thread with Noah. She checks his instagram. No posts. She checks Maya's instagram. She checks Abby's. No sign of him. What could have happened? She can't let it go.

REBECCA

I'm gonna go for a quick walk.

MICHAEL

Oh?

JOAN

It's dark.

REBECCA

Not quite. I'm antsy.

Michael looks at Joan: leave her be. Rebecca's zips up her winter coat.

124 EXT. / INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOME - EVENING/NIGHT

124

Rebecca slowly walks up the drive. No cars. She feels like a criminal. She snoops in the windows. She knocks. Rufus, the dog, barks and barks. She looks in through a front window.

Rufus looks upset, desperate. Is that pee on the floor? She knows where they keep the key. Should she use it?

She decides to fish the key out from under a dead porch plant and opens the door. Rufus is all over here.

REBECCA

Come on, boy.

She races him out the back door. He zooms out into the yard. Good. She grabs paper towels and mops up the pee.

With that task over, she can take stock of how still it is in here. It makes her feel weird. Like something isn't right.

She checks her phone. She re-reads her text thread with Noah obsessively. Rufus barks incessantly. She puts the phone on the counter and runs out. But Rufus is barking at air. Then, he races around, wanting to play.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
 Oh so this was a ploy all along,  
 huh?

She watches him. Okay fine she plays a bit. She smells the air. Summer is coming. There's sounds of families next door.

Then she stops. She senses something.

A light goes on inside the house, spraying golden rectangles over the yard. There's Noah. He doesn't see her yet. She watches him eat some gruesome snack while standing at the island. She watches him scroll. She's so happy to see him. She watches him text. He looks... upset. Serious. He bites his lip. Whatever he's writing obviously means a lot to him.

125 INT. ABRAMS FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

125

He types, then sends:

**Noah: Hey Rebecca. I'm sorry. For everything.**

A screen lights up on the counter across from him.

What? He walks over to the phone. His message to Rebecca lights up the home screen.

Rufus barks. He's outside? He looks up. And standing in a mosaic of window light is Rebecca.

In tandem. They move towards the door.

He opens it. But steps back. Unsure whether she wants to come inside or leave.

She calls Rufus back to the house. He races in and greets Noah.

Rebecca stands at the threshold. Neither knows what to say.

REBECCA  
 He hasn't eaten.

NOAH  
 Oh.

He calls Rufus to his food and water bowl in the mud room. He refills his food bowl and water bowl. That occupies him.

Noah walks toward the kitchen. As he does, he instinctively looks around for pee.

REBECCA  
I cleaned it up.

NOAH  
Oh. Thank you.

They are so relieved the other is there. But they are so scared to be the one to be the first to presume the other feels the same way.

When they feel ready they will begin this conversation. The actors should feel it fine to make the other laugh in places. The punctuation can be followed or not followed. Words can be repeated if they want. Pauses can be used wherever they want to try them. Stage directions aren't written but actions or gestures are welcome, if they feel right to use them:

I wanted to know you were okay. Are you okay?

Yes. I think so. Are you?

I don't know.

Me too.

Oh yeah?

Yeah.

Oh, yeah. Okay.

Your hand. You hurt your hand again.

I cut down a tree.

Here I'll look at it.

Oh, it's okay it's fine. My dad said just scratches.

Oh. Okay good. Is he okay?

Yeah. Is Maya okay? She got in okay and the rest of it.

Yeah. We spoke. She sounded happy.

Oh that's. So good.

Yeah. Thank you. That was such a good idea.

You're welcome.

Where's the tree?

I don't know.

Oh.

Yeah.

I'm sure the hand is fine.

You want to? (look anyway)

Nah, it'll be fine. Yeah. It will. It'll be fine.

Okay. Okay. That's good.

Yeah. You look tired.

I am.

And you're okay? Really?

Yeah. Yeah. I got lost there for a bit. But now I'm.

Good. Are you hungry? (I don't want to go)

Yeah. (Please don't go)

I can call us something. Or. (I've missed you)

Okay. (I missed you)

Okay. (I'm sorry)

Okay. (I'm sorry too)

I want to stay here with you. Can I? Is that okay?

Yes. Yes.

Okay. (I love you.)

Okay. (I love you, too.)

Cut to black.

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