

THIS IS GOING TO HURT

Written by  
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EXT. HOUSE - DAWN

First rays of daylight blanket suburban northern Virginia...

After a beat of silence, KIAN KEATING, 37, comes bounding out the front door of his modest single-level house-- carrying a LARGE HIKING BACKPACK and FOOD SUPPLIES.

He's loading his not-so-new JEEP CHEROKEE. We get the sense that although he's doing well enough, newer hiking gear and whatnot, he's struggling at the moment. The five o'clock shadow and heavy bags under his eyes are the giveaways.

KIAN  
(yelling back)  
Come on, Hanna!

HANNA KEATING, 13 years old, emo vibe, dry wit, appears in the doorway, in full protest, still in a t-shirt and boxers. She's barely awake-- and her lack of enthusiasm in this moment is undercut by a sense of rage that goes beyond simple teen angst-- although, to be clear, she's got that too.

HANNA  
Why are you yelling? You're gonna wake up the neighbors.

KIAN  
(whisper-yelling)  
Hurry up and I won't have to yell.

HANNA  
I told you, I'm not going.

KIAN  
I thought we were gonna have some father/daughter time this weekend?

HANNA  
That was before Maddy decided to have a pool party.

Kian COUGHS a bit, grabbing a TISSUE from his pocket and spitting in it.

KIAN  
You have a lifetime of pool parties ahead of you.

HANNA  
The fuck does that mean?

KIAN  
 Hey-- I don't mind you saying  
 "shit" from time to time, but no F-  
 word. Come on, grab your bag.

HANNA  
 You grab it.

KIAN  
 I don't want to force you to go on  
 this trip with me--

HANNA  
 -- Thank you.

KIAN  
 But that's what I'm gonna do. Be in  
 the car in 10 or you're grounded  
 til you're 20.

Hanna opens her mouth to rebut--

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE, DRIVING - MORNING

"Home" by Phillip Phillips blasts from the car's speakers.

Kian's devouring a DONUT while he drives. Hanna's in the  
 passenger seat, staring at him with disgust.

KIAN  
 You don't know what you're missing.

HANNA  
 An early heart attack?

KIAN  
 ... I mean, yes. But man, nothing  
 beats a glazed.  
 (beat)  
 Remember we used to dance around  
 the living room to this song? That  
 was fun, right?

HANNA  
 That was a long time ago.

KIAN  
 Doesn't mean it wasn't fun.

She shakes her head, embarrassed for him.

KIAN (CONT'D)

I didn't want to rush you out the door, it's not how I wanted to start this trip-- We just gotta get up there before sunset.

More silence from Hanna. Kian coughs again, spitting out the window.

HANNA

You gonna be able to make it?

KIAN

Yeah. Are you?

She just stares forward blankly, not answering.

KIAN (CONT'D)

I made this climb a million times with your grandpa.

HANNA

A million?

KIAN

... It was a lot. Maybe a hundred if we're in a literal mood.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - DUSK

1992.

Kian, now just TEN YEARS OLD, sits with his father, JERRY KEATING, who's 40 at the moment.

They're sharing a BOX OF DONUTS, sitting on a rock that juts out from the top of the mountain, providing 360 degree views of the surrounding Shenandoah Valley.

YOUNG JERRY

Can you see it, Kian?

YOUNG KIAN

See what?

YOUNG JERRY

The reason we came up here. The bigger picture. Can you see it?

Kian squints, not fully understanding what his dad is talking about--

INT. CAR, DRIVING - MORNING (BACK TO PRESENT)

2019.

Hanna looks back at the BAGS and GEAR Kian packed. Shakes her head.

KIAN

Sure you don't want a donut? We gotta save some for the top, but you can have one now if you want.

HANNA

They're full of carbs.

KIAN

Carbs are good.

HANNA

Carbs are fat.

KIAN

I mean, if you don't burn them off, they could turn into fat, but we're gonna burn it all off, trust me.

(beat)

Also, you're young. Don't worry about that stuff. You want a donut, eat a donut.

Kian reaches out to hold his daughter's hand. She ignores it.

He then turns down the radio, trying a different tactic:

KIAN (CONT'D)

(tune of "How sweet it is to be loved by you")

*How sweet it is to be loved by poo.*

HANNA

Please don't--

KIAN

*I needed the shelter of someone's poo... there you were...*

Hanna breaks, chuckling despite herself. Kian smiles, connecting with his daughter for a moment.

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL, TRAIL HEAD - MORNING

Kian and Hanna gear up. He's doing the heavy lifting, full hiking backpack and tent slung over his shoulders.

Hanna's just got on a regular backpack, like a school bookbag, which is half-full at best.

HANNA

Okay, we saw it, can we go home?

KIAN

It's not that hard. You can do it.

HANNA

I know I can. That's not why--

KIAN

It's not easy either. I remember the first time your grandpa took me--

HANNA

Seriously, can you stop?? Can you just turn it off??

Kian bends down, gets in close. On her level.

KIAN

I know you don't want to be here. But there's gonna be a day where we can't do this anymore...

She stares at him, relenting a hair. Breathing heavy. Angry still.

He nods, feeling like he got through to her just enough and starts his way up the mountain. She reluctantly follows.

They stride in silence for a few beats, just the crunch of their boots against the dirt trail.

Kian's trying to find the words. To get through to his daughter, who he can feel slipping away from him.

KIAN (CONT'D)

You know your grandpa Jerry lived in Japan for six years?

HANNA

Yeah, that's where you got the name Hanna.

KIAN

I know you know a lot about him, and love him, but there's one part I haven't told you... He got sick too. And I was there with him. To help him get better. It had a huge impact on my life. And yours...

INT. METRO CAR - DUSK

2005.

KIAN, **now 23 years old**, rides the METRO from Reagan National AIRPORT to the King Street Station in Alexandria, Virginia.

He leans against his MASSIVE SUITCASE for support. His mind heavy and racing. He's put together, but only because he wants you to think his life is going better than it is.

EXT. STREETS OF ALEXANDRIA - DUSK

Kian drags his suitcase over the brick sidewalks of Old Town Alexandria, surrounded by quaint colonial row houses and cobblestone streets. The wheels of his suitcase are being put to the test, click-clacking as he goes.

EXT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - DUSK

The front door to a modest ROW HOUSE swings open and Kian is met by his PERSIAN MOTHER, ZORA KEATING, 51.

ZORA

Kian jan...

(Note: "jan" means "dear" in Farsi)

She kisses him incessantly on both cheeks as Persians do.

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - DUSK

Zora scurries about the place, classic two bed/two bath layout, finishing setting it up for Kian--

ZORA

You can take the sofa out here and your father can have the guest bedroom. Or if you want, you can have the guest bed and he can sleep out here--

KIAN

No, he should have the bedroom.

ZORA

You need to be comfortable too. Do you want to sleep in my bed?

KIAN

What?

ZORA

Not with me in it. I can sleep on the sofa. I like the sofa.

KIAN

No, mom, the sofa's good for me.

ZORA

I know it's good, I love it. I can sleep on it. Please, take my bed.

KIAN

I'm not taking your bed.

ZORA

I don't mind.

KIAN

Mom, please.

ZORA

Are you hungry? You want some Kashkeh Bademjan?

KIAN

I just want to go to the hospital before it gets late. I flew here to be with him-- make sure he gets through this. You ready to go?

ZORA

Yeah. I just have to finish some work.

KIAN

It's Friday night.

ZORA

My job never stops. They're slave-drivers. They don't care if you're dead, you have to meet your quota.

KIAN

They're slave drivers at the Patent & Trademark Office?

ZORA

Yes. They'll fire you if you don't meet the quota. My friend Zora--

KIAN

You have a friend named Zora?



ZORA

Yeah, from work. I didn't tell you about her?

KIAN

No.

ZORA

Are you sure?

KIAN

Yes. I think I'd remember the friend who has the same Persian name as you.

ZORA

Well she had breast cancer and they fired her because she didn't meet her quota. And now she's dead.

KIAN

She's dead?

ZORA

Yeah. They fired because she took time off for chemo.

KIAN

Pretty sure that's illegal.

ZORA

She was stealing some stuff too, but she had cancer. They should've let her steal.

INT. CAR, DRIVING - EVENING

Kian drives with his mom in the passenger seat, heading up 95 North towards Baltimore. It's silent, both in thought...

INT. JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - EVENING

Kian and Zora wind through the halls of the Sydney Kimmel Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins. There's a clash of architecture-- colonial history mixed with modernity.

Zora spots someone up ahead, calls out to him:

ZORA

Dr. Gladstone! This is Jerry's son.

DR. GLADSTONE, mid-40s, balding, short, stout, deadly serious, barely nods before heading the other way.

ZORA (CONT'D)

He can be a bit difficult, but he's the best.

KIAN

He seems like a dick.

ZORA

He was named one of the top 10 oncologists on the East Coast... If he cures your father, who cares if he's a "dick" or whatever. Also, don't say that word. It's not a nice word.

They get to Jerry's door. Zora stops Kian before entering:

ZORA (CONT'D)

When we go in there, he might look a little frail, but we have to be strong. I don't want him freaking out about how he looks, so we have to seem happy and smile and say how great he looks, okay?

KIAN

Yeah, sure.

They walk into the room and find JERRY KEATING, **now 53**, having seen better days. But we can see he possesses some definition and muscle, as if he was in great shape before getting sick. He lights up when he sees his son.

JERRY

(western Virginia accent)

Holy shit, my boy! I can't believe you're really here...

KIAN

Of course I'm here. You look great. Doesn't he look great, mom?

Kian looks over to see his mom sobbing because of how frail Jerry looks.

KIAN (CONT'D)

(whisper to Zora)

What are you doing?

ZORA

(through the tears)

You look... great, Jer. So good...

She can barely get that out without crying harder.

ZORA (CONT'D)  
I'm going to get a soda... you guys  
want anything...?

They both shake their heads, "no."

ZORA (CONT'D)  
... I'll be right back...

Zora exits the room. After a beat, they hear her BAWLING  
UNCONTROLLABLY right outside the room, not getting a soda.

JERRY  
(acting oblivious)  
Why's she crying like that?

KIAN  
She's having a hard time at work.

JERRY  
I bet. That Patent Office is like a  
fuckin labor camp.  
(changing the subject)  
By the way, I've been listening to  
this really cool band called Maroon  
5. You know them?

KIAN  
Yeah, they're not new.

JERRY  
Oh and James Blunt-- he's new. He's  
cool. Know him?

KIAN  
Sure.

JERRY  
You gotta hear this one...

Jerry grabs his phone and starts playing "Goodbye My Lover"  
by James Blunt.

Kian listens while looking down at his father-- A shell of  
his former self. But in this moment, Jerry seems happy.

KIAN  
Dad, this song is super depressing.

JERRY  
Depends on how you look at it.

Just then, DR. GLADSTONE enters.

DR. GLADSTONE  
Good evening, Mr. Keating.

JERRY  
Hey, doc. This is my son.

DR. GLADSTONE  
We've met.

JERRY  
He's a writer. Movies and stuff. He knows Meg Ryan.

KIAN  
Barely. I met her once.

DR. GLADSTONE  
(nodding, unimpressed)  
Could you turn down that music?

Jerry lowers it.

JERRY  
It's James Blunt, you know him?

Dr. Gladstone nods, checking the last remaining IV bag of CHEMO that's going directly into Jerry's CHEST PORT.

DR. GLADSTONE  
This bag will be done shortly. You should be able to head home tonight. How's your pain?

JERRY  
Not so great. Might need a little kick of the 'phine.

KIAN  
"The 'phine?" Does that mean "morphine?" Is he on morphine???

DR. GLADSTONE  
That last podunk hospital in Winchester had him on a heavy drip while they were trying to figure out what was wrong with him. We've been tapering him off of it.

This is all news to Kian. He tries to refocus--

KIAN  
How's his treatment going?

DR. GLADSTONE  
I can't answer that.

KIAN  
Why not?

DR. GLADSTONE  
Your father has requested not to know anything about his prognosis.

JERRY  
That's true. I don't wanna know shit. Knowing my odds ain't gonna change them.

KIAN  
That's insane. You're not even remotely curious?

JERRY  
I don't see this as me fighting *against* cancer so much as *learning from* it. I have it. I can't change that. So I'm gonna learn as much as I can so it makes me stronger. *Ganbatte.*

KIAN  
*Ganbatte...*

Gladstone leaves with a nod, not saying goodbye. Kian follows him into the HALLWAY...

KIAN (CONT'D)  
Can you tell me how he's doing?

Gladstone doesn't slow down, forcing Kian to stay with him.

DR. GLADSTONE  
He has diffuse large B-cell lymphoma. Not follicular small-cell like he had in the 90s. He was in remission-- actually, from his old scans, he was cancer-free. But when it came back, it transformed into large B-cell.

KIAN  
Large B-cell? Is that bad?

DR. GLADSTONE  
It has a 70% cure rate.

KIAN  
That's pretty good.

DR. GLADSTONE  
It is.

KIAN  
And he doesn't know any of this?

DR. GLADSTONE  
No. I'm telling you because I think you should know. But we need to honor his wishes...

INT. JERRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

They're packing up Jerry's belongings. Zora has FOUR EMPTY SPRITE CANS beside her on the table.

Jerry gingerly slips on a pair of beaten up COWBOY BOOTS.

KIAN  
I talked to Dr. Gladstone. Do you want to know what he--

JERRY  
(plugging his ears)  
*Lalalalalalalalalala...*

While singing "lalala," Jerry glances up at his son, reading his face. He can tell by Kian's confident demeanor that he's going to be okay.

They share a smile, connecting.

EXT. STREETS OF BALTIMORE/INT. CAR - NIGHT

Kian drives with his mom in the passenger seat, eyes red from crying all day. Jerry's in the back, watching the city go by.

KIAN  
Dad, I can't believe I still have to tell you this, but can you please put on your seat belt?

Jerry does.

JERRY  
I usually do.

KIAN  
So you just forget when I'm in the car?

JERRY

Yeah.

KIAN

Every other time you remember?

JERRY

Yeah.

KIAN

That's hard to believe.

JERRY

You saying I'm lying???

KIAN

I'm saying it's super odd that you only forget to put on your seat belt when I'm in the car with you.

ZORA

Can you two not fight right now?  
It's been a long day.

They stay silent for a beat. Then, Kian's phone rings. He struggles to fit his headphones into his ears... Finally, he answers. His agent GRETA JACOBS, 40s, paces her Beverly Hills office. INTERCUT.

KIAN

(into phone)  
Hey Greta...

GRETA

Good news, they like your initial take on that rewrite for "Monster in the Mail" and want to hear your whole pitch.

KIAN

But I already gave them my whole pitch.

GRETA

That's not what they said. They said you just give them a nugget. They want the whole meal.

KIAN

Okay. I'm back east with my dad--

GRETA

Awesome! Work on it there. I'll set a time for you to go in and pitch your full take. I gotta jump!

Greta hangs up before Kian can get another word in.

ZORA

What'd she say?

KIAN

I may have a little work to do on this monster rewrite thing while I'm here.

JERRY

You should be focusing on your own shit. You're too talented to go up for jobs rewriting garbage--

KIAN

No one currently pays me to write my stuff. This is the only way I can make a little money.

JERRY

You should be writing novels. You've got talent. You've got a voice. You should be pursuing that, not trying to rewrite monster movies--

KIAN

It's not a "monster movie." It's a charming film about a monster who comes in the mail and brings a family together. Like "Down and Out in Beverly Hills," but with a monster instead of a homeless guy.

JERRY

What?

ZORA

Yeah Kian, I'm not following that.

KIAN

Whatever. I didn't come here to get lectured. If you don't want my help, I'll just leave--

JERRY

I didn't say that--



KIAN

Then let me handle things my way.

Jerry nods. They all sit in silence for a bit. And then Jerry lets out a fart. And it's bad. They all roll down the windows. Zora can't help but laugh. Neither can Kian.

JERRY

Chemo farts man, they're deadly...

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - MORNING

2019.

Kian and Hanna begin the climb. Hanna puts on her headphones.

KIAN

Hey, no, come on, no headphones.  
Listen to nature.

She shakes her head, "I can't hear you."

KIAN (CONT'D)

Can you please take them off?

She continues to shake her head. He grabs for the headphones, but she takes a step back, pulling them off.

HANNA

What the hell???

KIAN

Do you have to listen to music  
right now?

HANNA

I'm barely fucking here--

KIAN

Stop with the F--

HANNA

-- IT'S JUST A WORD!

KIAN

Yeah! And words have MEANING!

HANNA

Says the "writer."

KIAN

Why'd you air quote that?

HANNA

What?

KIAN

You air-quoted "writer." I am a writer.

HANNA

Yeah? What's the last thing you wrote?

KIAN

I'm taking a break--

HANNA

And who forced that break? Your friends Jack Daniel and Jim Beam?

KIAN

... It's "Daniels" not "Daniel."

HANNA

You're teaching me how to properly say the name of the alcohol?

KIAN

No, I just-- Look, I got help.

HANNA

Yeah. Lotta good that's gonna do.

KIAN

Can you chill? Come on, breathe in that fresh mountain air.

Kian takes a deep breath in. Hanna reluctantly does the same:

HANNA

Smells like shit.

KIAN

Yeah, the horse trail is just up on the right.

HANNA

Look, I get what you're doing, and I appreciate it. I really do. You want bonding time. What if we did it another weekend?

KIAN

We've been saying that for weeks. We're here.

(MORE)

KIAN (CONT'D)

And sure, it smells like shit in this specific moment, but the climb is really amazing.

He can tell she's softening, but isn't fully sold.

KIAN (CONT'D)

I know I haven't been perfect, but I don't have control over everything, Hanna.

HANNA

You haven't had control over anything, dad.

KIAN

It can feel that way sometimes...

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

2005.

Kian helps his father into bed. They're in Zora's GUEST BEDROOM. Jerry finishes taking down some PILLS with water.

Kian spots a framed picture of the SERENITY PRAYER hanging on the wall:

**God grant me the serenity to accept  
the things I cannot change;  
the courage to change the things I can;  
and the wisdom to know the difference.**

JERRY

It keeps me grounded. Focused.

KIAN

That's cool.

JERRY

When I beat this thing, we gotta take our trip to Japan. No more putting it off.

KIAN

You got it.

JERRY

Promise?

KIAN

For sure.  
(beat)  
You need anything else?

JERRY  
Coke with ice.

KIAN  
Before bed? You're not gonna be  
able to sleep.

JERRY  
Caffeine knocks me out.

KIAN  
That's not how caffeine works.

JERRY  
Plus, I'm still coming off the  
morphine, so I'll be fine.

Kian's not going to fight that logic. As he turns to exit:

JERRY (CONT'D)  
You upset your mom and I aren't  
together anymore?

KIAN  
(turning back)  
What?

JERRY  
You upset that I'm in here and not  
in her room?

KIAN  
I don't really think about it. I  
was 8 when you guys got divorced.  
You're friends. Best friends. I  
have it good compared to most kids.

JERRY  
I'd get back together with her in a  
heartbeat if she wanted to.

KIAN  
I know.

JERRY  
You do?

KIAN  
Everyone knows.

JERRY  
What?? Are you kidding?

KIAN  
It's kinda obvious.

JERRY  
Fuck. Are you serious?

KIAN  
Yeah.

JERRY  
Does she know?

KIAN  
Probably. You gave her earrings  
from Tiffany's for her birthday.

JERRY  
So? They were nice.

KIAN  
Friends don't get friends presents  
like that.

JERRY  
Sure they do.

KIAN  
She got you a Starbucks gift card.

JERRY  
I love Starbucks. That was a  
thoughtful gift.

KIAN  
It was for twenty-bucks.

JERRY  
Exactly. That's a week's worth of  
coffee. Man, she's too good to me.

KIAN  
I won't argue with that.

Kian smiles. But Jerry doesn't, in his head, reliving a  
painful memory.

JERRY  
This is my payback for the  
drinking. Being in this bed instead  
of in hers. Having my son take care  
of me. Drinking or cancer, you've  
always had to worry about me.

Kian looks down at his Dad, at this crumpled up version of the man he used to be...

KIAN

Don't do that. People get cancer because... who knows. It's a car accident inside your body. We just gotta get you fixed up. And we will. I promise.

Jerry smiles at Kian, his only kid, so glad to have him here.

Kian exits the bedroom... heading into the KITCHEN, pouring a glass of Coke with ice for his dad, swirling the ice...

... He takes a deep breath, suddenly overwhelmed--

QUICK FLASH TO: A FIVE-YEAR OLD KIAN watching a rerun of "Night Court" with his Dad. He glances over to see his dad pour some more RUM into his Coke, swirling the ice. Jerry's eyes are getting heavy, head swaying a bit-- young Kian's expression turns to worry...

BACK TO 2005: Kian takes a couple more calming breaths before heading back towards the guest bedroom...

... Only to find Jerry's fallen sleep. Kian sets the Coke on the bedside table.

He glances down, spotting SWEAT BEADS starting to form on Jerry's face. He's having NIGHT SWEATS.

INT. ZORA'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Kian's on the couch, on his computer, researching NIGHT SWEATS. Reading: *they're common for people with lymphoma where the disease is PROGRESSING...*

He clicks out of it, moving over to a Word Document to work on his rewrite for the "Monster in the Mail" movie.

But he just stares at the screen, no idea what to write...

EXT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - MORNING

Kian and Jerry head out the door at a slow pace. Jerry's breathing is labored.

KIAN

You sound like you just ran a marathon.

JERRY  
Just out of breath... we'll ask  
Gladstone about it...

Zora's neighbor, SHELLY, 40s, super chipper, comes out of her house at the same time, heading for her car. She sees Kian and Jerry and heads over to them--

SHELLY  
Kian! Jerry!

JERRY  
Oh, hi, Shelly...

SHELLY  
Zora told me you were sick.

JERRY  
Yeah, I've got AIDS, unfortunately.

SHELLY  
What?? Oh dear--

KIAN  
He has lymphoma--

SHELLY  
Oh, that's awful.

JERRY  
And AIDS. I have both. It sucks.

KIAN  
He'll be fine. We're just headed to  
the doctor.

Kian and Jerry reach their car, but Shelly is still standing close, LEANING against the driver's side door.

SHELLY  
My ex-husband's sister had cancer.  
Didn't make it.

Kian's trying to figure out how to open the car door with Shelly leaning against it.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
You know what's crazy, her cat also  
had cancer. Actually, I think the  
cat got it first. I didn't think  
cancer could be transferred from  
cats to humans, but maybe it can?  
(beat)  
Wanna see a picture?

KIAN

Oh that's okay, we're running late--

She pulls out a PICTURE on her phone of her bald, cancer-stricken ex-husband's sister holding an equally sick cat.

Kian and Jerry take in the picture, so desperate to get out of this conversation.

SHELLY

His sister and I didn't get along, and the cat never really liked me, but I was still sad when they died.

KIAN

Sure, sure. We just need to get--

SHELLY

Funny huh? You can think someone's a real bitch, but then they get sick and you just forgive them for everything--

Jerry suddenly starts FAKE COUGHING VIOLENTLY in Shelly's direction. She backs up enough for Kian to open the car door.

KIAN

Good seeing you, Shelly. Take care!

Kian jumps in while Jerry quickly moves around to the passenger side, getting in as well.

SHELLY

Keep your chin up! Take lots of probiotics!

Kian waves, pulling away in a hurry. As they're driving:

KIAN

That was brilliant.

JERRY

Who says cancer doesn't have its advantages?

KIAN

Everybody.

They share a laugh. Kian glances at his dad, smiling...

INT. JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL, EXAM ROOM - DAY

Jerry sits on the exam table, nervous, but swinging his legs in an attempt to keep it casual. Dr. Gladstone enters...



He's looking down at his clipboard, no handshake, no cordiality. No nod to Kian.

DR. GLADSTONE

Mr. Keating... looks like your red blood cell count is down, which is completely normal. I want you to get some blood before you leave.

KIAN

That why he's been out of breath?

DR. GLADSTONE

Yeah. Probably.

KIAN

Probably? Could it be something else?

DR. GLADSTONE

If it's spread to his lungs.

KIAN

Has it?

JERRY

I don't want to hear this shit.

KIAN

Well plug your ears, cause we need to know.

JERRY

Don't talk to me like I'm a child.

KIAN

If you're gonna act like a child, I'm gonna treat you like one.

DR. GLADSTONE

No need for anyone to plug their ears. I don't think it's spread to your lungs. I think we're going to get you some blood and you'll be breathing a lot better. If you're not, we'll run some scans.

(beat)

Other than that, all your markers look good. Seems like the chemo is doing its job--

JERRY  
 (covering his ears)  
*Lalalalalalalala-- I don't want to  
 know anything-- lalalalalalala...*

KIAN  
 Oh Jesus-- He's just saying things  
 are looking good.

Jerry's still not listening, but knows things are positive  
 and is milking it for all it's worth...

INT. ONCOLOGY WARD - LATER

Jerry's in a recliner, getting a BAG OF BLOOD transfused.

KIAN  
 Breathing better?

He nods, sending Kian a Hawaiian "shaka" sign, feeling good.

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kian, Jerry and Zora sit around the dining table, eating  
 spaghetti. Jerry's scarfing down his food.

Jerry's playing Maroon 5's "This Love" from an iPod.

Kian's sending a text to someone named "Mal": *Hey, I'm in  
 town for a bit... you around?*

JERRY  
 (singing)  
*"... her heart is breaking in  
 froooont of me..."*

ZORA  
 Someone's in a good mood.

JERRY  
 I got blood.

ZORA  
 What???

KIAN  
 Yeah, they gave him a blood  
 transfusion.

ZORA  
 And you didn't call me???

KIAN  
 Why would we call you?

ZORA  
Because people get diseases from  
blood transfusions.

KIAN  
He has cancer.

ZORA  
Different diseases.

KIAN  
Well if you were there--

ZORA  
-- I have to work!

JERRY  
*"... she said goodbye too many  
times befooooooore..."*

ZORA  
Turn that off!

JERRY  
Why, I--

Zora slams her utensils down. Gets up, grabbing her plate, storming into the kitchen. But we can still see her from the dining room because it's open-concept. She's trying hard not to break down right there over the sink.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Z? What's wrong?

She doesn't answer, instead striding away for her bedroom.

KIAN  
Probably just stressed with work.

JERRY  
Yeah, that place is fuckin brutal.

INT. ZORA'S LIVING ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Kian tosses and turns on the couch, unable to sleep. He hears his dad get up and go to the bathroom.

He sneaks into his Dad's room, checking to see if there's a sweat spot in his dad's bed. There isn't. He smiles...

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - DAY

Jerry relaxes on the couch, watching HGTV. He looks up to see Kian fixing his hair in a hallway mirror, looking polished.

JERRY  
Who you trying to impress?

KIAN  
Everyone.

JERRY  
In this specific moment?

KIAN  
Just you, pop.

He kisses his dad on top of his head on his way out.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
I'll be back in a couple hours,  
call me if you need anything.

JERRY  
There's a House Hunters marathon  
on, so I'll be good for a while.

EXT. O'CONNELL'S PUB - DAY

An Irish pub on King Street in Old Town, Alexandria.

Kian sits across from MALLORY LAIDLER, 24, casual but conservative. She's trying to look put together, but is out of practice. There's an ease to their conversation, the type that old friends possess...

MALLORY  
... Remember when you got me a  
thong for my birthday junior year?

KIAN  
Was it your birthday?

MALLORY  
Wait, shit, was it Valentine's Day?

KIAN  
It was. Sadly.

MALLORY  
I remember being like, 'ookkaay,  
is this a joke?'

KIAN  
When you said that, I just went  
with it.

MALLORY

So you gave me a thong for  
Valentine's Day in earnest?

KIAN

I have no idea what I was thinking.

MALLORY

You liked me. If you asked me out,  
I probably would've said yes.

KIAN

Probably?? I'll take that. Man.  
Too bad I was a massive pussy in  
high school.

MALLORY

Pussies are tough. You were a  
delicate set of balls.

KIAN

That's a really good point. I was a  
pair of fragile baby balls.

They share a laugh. There's a beat between them. Kian notices  
her spinning her WEDDING RING around her finger.

KIAN (CONT'D)

... How are you doing with Clayton?

She shrugs, not really answering.

KIAN (CONT'D)

Been getting any better?

MALLORY

Yeah. For sure.

Kian waits for more. But she doesn't offer anything else.

KIAN

Sorry, I won't press it.

After a beat...

KIAN (CONT'D)

Wow, I feel like I really killed  
the mood here. Did I kill the mood?

MALLORY

No, not at all.

KIAN

I didn't mean to strike a nerve.

MALLORY

You didn't. Don't worry about it.  
(beat)  
What color was that thong?

KIAN

Don't act like you forgot.

MALLORY

I really did. Blue?

KIAN

Blue??? Shit, I actually don't remember. Pink?

MALLORY

I think it was! Pink lace. Holy shit, you were a creep in high school.

They're both laughing, but we can tell Mallory's still in her head about her husband, Clayton. Kian reads this too. So:

KIAN

Chug!

They start chugging, something they clearly did back in the day. She slams her glass down right before he does.

MALLORY

Have you ever beaten me?

KIAN

One of these days, my friend.

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kian creeps into the house, making his way over to his dad's room. He peaks through the crack in the door to check on him, catching him sleeping peacefully. He smiles, looking at his pop. But his smile starts to fade as we--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ZORA'S OLD HOUSE - DAY

1997.

A worried TEENAGE KIAN knocks on a locked GUEST BEDROOM door--

CUT TO: Kian pops the lock with a BOBBY PIN, opening the door, finding his father passed out drunk on the floor, a nearly empty bottle of VODKA by his side.

He runs to his dad, trying to wake him up... fumbling for the phone to call 911...

EXT. ZORA'S OLD HOUSE - DAY

Kian watches an AMBULANCE take Jerry away...

INT. ALEXANDRIA HOSPITAL, DETOX CENTER - NIGHT

Kian wears a worried expression as he stares down at his dad who sleeps in a hospital bed, shivering from withdrawals.

A DOCTOR talks to a younger Zora a few feet away.

DOCTOR

(to Zora)

This is his 5th time here. We can't admit him again. He's either gotta get clean or go somewhere else...

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - DAY

2019.

Kian stares at triple fork in the trail. He pulls out a map, studying it.

HANNA

You lost?

KIAN

No. No... just double checking something.

HANNA

"Million times" huh?

KIAN

Hundreds, yeah. Or tens. Definitely tens of times. I just-- I always get tripped up here. Your grandpa knew it by heart, so I just went with it.

He looks at the map some more.

KIAN (CONT'D)

It's just... only one of them will get us there by sunset.

Kian coughs a bit while looking at the map. He takes a load off, resting on a rock.

Hanna shows some concern, sitting next to him.

HANNA  
You good?

KIAN  
... Yeah.

Kian takes a long pull from his CANTEEN.

HANNA  
Mind if I check that?

KIAN  
Check what?

HANNA  
Your bottle.

KIAN  
Why?

Hanna shots him a look.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
You don't have to worry about me.  
That's not your job.

HANNA  
It's been my job my whole life.

It pains Kian to hear that. He hands her the canteen. She unscrews the top, smelling it, confirming it's just water, no alcohol. Hands it back to him.

KIAN  
You really think I'd do that on our trip?

HANNA  
I don't know. You've done some pretty messed up things.

KIAN  
That's an exaggeration.

HANNA  
Like fuck it is.

KIAN  
Come on! Please. Can we not fight? I know you love your mom more than me. You've always got along better with her-- But can you just give me this weekend? Please...



Kian stands up, ready to hit the trail, asking her to follow him. She reluctantly stands up, following...

HANNA

You know the difference between you and mom? Mom would never make me go on a trip like this...

INT. ROCK IT GRILL - NIGHT

2005.

Kian and Mallory play pool at this local dive bar. She's sinking shots left and right.

KIAN

Hold up, are you some kind of pool shark? I don't remember you being good at pool.

MALLORY

I come here a lot now.

KIAN

Fuck. We could make bank. I can be the person that beats you to make you look bad and then you can bet someone else and take them to the fucking cleaners.

MALLORY

You just got really into this.

KIAN

I'm unemployed at the moment.

They cheer to that, an energy building between them.

MALLORY

Is it hard being a writer?

KIAN

The writing part comes easy to me. The hard part is the uncertainty. You never know where your next job is coming from. If what you write will resonate with anyone.

MALLORY

*Uncertainty is the only certainty there is--* I didn't come up with that... but I like it.

KIAN

Yeah, but most people are smart enough to set up some type of stability or constant.

(beat)

Like, you're a lawyer.

MALLORY

Barely.

KIAN

That job's not going anywhere. People aren't gonna suddenly stop suing people. You'll be fine forever.

Suddenly, Kian's cell rings. It's his MOM... He ignores it. But it rings again...

KIAN (CONT'D)

Just gonna grab this, feel free to sink the rest and finish me off.

Kian steps OUTSIDE, taking the call. INTERCUT...

KIAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hey mom--

ZORA

Your father's complaining about pain in his back.

KIAN

Did he take some Motrin?

ZORA

Yeah, but it's not working...

Jerry paces by in the background like a pregnant woman going into labor.

KIAN

Okay, I'll be right there.

INT. ZORA'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Middle of the night. Jerry paces. Kian by his side...

JERRY

It's bad. I need something.

KIAN

Like what?

JERRY  
Maybe... Dilaudid?

KIAN  
I thought you didn't want to take  
any narcotics?

JERRY  
I need something.

KIAN  
Wanna go to the hospital?

JERRY  
And get some shit ass emergency  
room doctor? Fuck that. I'll wait  
til the morning and see Gladstone.  
I just need something to get me  
through the night. Come on, son.  
Help me out.

Kian's torn, hating to see his father in this much pain. He  
heads upstairs to his MOM'S BEDROOM...

... Zora's in bed, wide awake, concerned.

KIAN  
He wants Dilaudid.

ZORA  
He told us to not give him any.

KIAN  
I know, but he says he needs it.

Zora glances over to a DRAWER in her dresser. Kian opens it,  
spotting some BOTTLES of harder PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
What do you think we should do?

ZORA  
I can't decide that.

KIAN  
So it's on me?

ZORA  
I have a lot of work tomorrow. I  
need to get some sleep.

KIAN  
What does that mean?? I need help,  
mom. I don't have anyone else.

ZORA  
I... just can't.

Zora slumps back down in bed. Not wanting to take this on.

KIAN  
Fine. I'll decide whether or not to  
give my addict father narcotic pain  
killers.  
(beat)  
You're unbelievable.

Frustrated, Kian heads back downstairs to the LIVING ROOM.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
What do you think's going on?

JERRY  
Don't know. It's just so painful.

Kian debates a bit longer... then finally decides to hand him the Dilaudid. Jerry pops a pill. Immediately relaxing, even though it hasn't taken effect yet.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Thanks, son. I don't know what I'd  
do without you...

INT. JERRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

1992.

Jerry's with some FRIENDS in the den, getting drunk, listening to music. A 10 year-old Kian peeks out of his room and watches his dad, unable to sleep due to the noise.

Jerry grabs a BOTTLE OF DILAUDID off the table, pops some pills, sharing them with his friends.

He then glances over and spots Kian watching him. So he gets up and closes the den door...

INT. JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL, EXAM ROOM - DAY

2005.

Kian and Zora watch as Dr. Gladstone taps various points on Jerry's lower back.

Jerry winces when he taps a specific point. Gladstone nods knowingly.

DR. GLADSTONE  
You pulled a muscle.

JERRY  
What? For real?

KIAN  
He's in a lot of pain.

DR. GLADSTONE  
Throwing your back out can be  
painful. We'll do a scan to be  
sure, but I'm not worried about it.

Jerry breathes a huge sigh of relief.

INT. CT SCAN - DAY

A TECH loads Jerry into the CT MACHINE.

INT. JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL, OPEN EXAM AREA - EVENING

A large OPEN AREA with many PATIENTS on beds or recliners,  
getting chemo, blood, or waiting to be seen.

Kian, Jerry and Zora have been here all day. They're  
exhausted. Jerry is on an exam bed, still in a bit of pain.

Dr. Gladstone enters with a young RESIDENT, DR. KIM REISS-  
BINDER, hair pulled back, kind eyes, but serious demeanor.

DR. GLADSTONE  
Mr. Keating, this is Dr. Reiss-  
Binder, she's a resident who will  
be helping us out.

JERRY  
Okay. Hi...

She sends him a warm smile. Much warmer than Gladstone. This  
job hasn't beaten her down yet.

DR. GLADSTONE  
I've got to head into surgery, so  
she'll go over next steps with you.

ZORA  
Did you say she's a resident? No  
offense, but is she a doctor?

DR. GLADSTONE  
A resident is a doctor. She'll be  
taking care of you while I'm  
unavailable.

As Gladstone turns to leave--

KIAN  
Was it a pulled muscle?

DR. GLADSTONE  
Pardon me?

KIAN  
Was it a pulled muscle in his back?

DR. GLADSTONE  
... No.

That's it. Gladstone turns and is gone. Everyone looks at 26 year-old Kim Reiss-Binder.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
So um, I know this is not the news you were hoping for, but it seems your lymph nodes have grown.

JERRY  
What? I thought the treatment was working? I was feeling better til this back thing popped up.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
Yes well, sadly, we were wrong. In fact, the biopsy came back-- We had to double check it-- seems you actually have T-Cell lymphoma, not B-Cell like we first thought.

ZORA  
Are you sure you're not mixing him up with another patient? His name is Jerry Keating. Can we have Dr. Gladstone back?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
I know I'm dropping a lot on you right now, but I assure you, if Dr. Gladstone were here, he'd be saying the same thing.

Jerry has gone into a bit of a catatonic state, utter shock.

KIAN  
Is having T-Cell better or worse?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
It's... rarer. And therefore tougher. There are less treatment options from what I understand.

ZORA  
*From what you understand???*

KIAN  
 Easy, mom.

ZORA  
 Where's Gladstone?

JERRY  
 I felt better. It's just a back thing. A pulled muscle...

ZORA  
 Gladstone is his doctor.

JERRY  
 What are my chances now?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
 I have a note here to not discuss that with you.

JERRY  
 I changed my mind. I wanna know. Just hit me.

KIAN  
 Dad--

JERRY  
 Hit me. I don't fuckin care. I want to know!

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
 ... Probably 10-20%.

JERRY  
 Oh God. I shouldn't have asked...

KIAN  
 That can't be right. Gladstone said it was 70%, he said--

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
 Diffuse large B-Cell lymphoma is more treatable than peripheral T-Cell. T-cell is usually quite aggressive...

Jerry breathes heavy, weathering a panic attack. Kian looks at his Dad, his hero, and hugs him.

The other patients in the area are taking notice. There's no privacy during the delivery of this brutal news.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER (CONT'D)

We've seen people have success with the ICE treatment you'd receive next.

JERRY

No. I'm done. No more chemo.

KIAN

You can't give up, dad. Not yet.

JERRY

You know what it feels like? It's like fuckin lava running through your veins. I hate it. I'm done.

KIAN

I'll be right here with you. Doing whatever I can to make sure you beat this. Come on, pop. I know you can do it. *Ganbatte...*

Jerry stares at his son... debating... softening.

JERRY

What's ICE? What's that mean?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER

It's a type of chemo combination. I um... I honestly don't remember what the letters stand for. The "E" is Etoposide. I think the "C" is Carboplatin... I can't remember the "I." But I'll find out and get back to you.

ZORA

Unbelievable. So you're just Jerry's doctor now and you don't know what the letters stand for??? That's good. That's encouraging.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER

Dr. Gladstone will still be administering the treatment if you decide to go forward with it.

Jerry's head is in his hands, not wanting to live in this reality.



Reiss-Binder rubs Jerry's back. This is the most compassion he's received from anyone at this hospital.

INT. CAR, DRIVING - LATER THAT NIGHT

Kian rides with his mom in the passenger seat. Both in silence. After a beat, Zora SCREAMS. Releasing everything she's kept in throughout the day.

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kian stares at his computer, trying to work on his pitch for the Monster movie rewrite. His mind races, unable to focus.

Suddenly, his phone rings. He sees it's his agent, Greta. He hesitantly answers. She's in her office. INTERCUT.

KIAN  
(into phone)  
Hey, Greta.

GRETA  
Hey! Guess what? They want to do your pitch on that monster movie tomorrow before Peter flies out for Sundance.

KIAN  
Tomorrow? I'm still back east. My dad's not... fully better yet.

GRETA  
Back east? Did you tell me this?

KIAN  
Yes.

GRETA  
Hmmm. Okay. Let me see what they can do. Hang tight.

INT. JERRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Kian sits at his father's side. Dr. Reiss-Binder checks the bag of CHEMO running into Jerry's port. Gladstone observes, making sure she's doing everything correctly.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
Last bag. Once this is done, we'll do a quick check and you should be good to go home.

JERRY  
Thanks, Dr. Reiss-Binder--

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
 Hey, look at that, most people  
 don't get my name right.

JERRY  
 (winking playfully)  
 I've been doing my homework.

Reiss-Binder smiles as she exits. Gladstone goes with her,  
 not smiling. Kian rushes out after them, into the HALLWAY.

KIAN  
 How's he looking?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
 It's early, but his markers are  
 good. The ICE seems to be working.

DR. GLADSTONE  
 The PET scan next week will be the  
 real test.

Gladstone heads off without saying goodbye. Reiss-Binder  
 hangs back with Kian:

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
 So far so good. He may end up in  
 that 10-20%...

They share a connective smile...

INT. ZORA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

All the lights are off. Everyone's asleep except for Kian,  
 who's on his LAPTOP, researching peripheral T-cell lymphoma.  
 Looking at various prognosis odds and risk factors. Doing  
 anything he can to help his dad.

He hears Jerry get out of bed, entering the bathroom. Kian  
 creeps into the bedroom and checks the sheets. No night sweat  
 stains.

He creeps out before his dad sees him, heading back to the  
 living room. He closes his laptop, laying down on the couch,  
 staring up at the ceiling...

INT. CAR, DRIVING - DAY

1997.

A YOUNGER JERRY drives through WINCHESTER VIRGINIA, on the  
 phone with a TEENAGE KIAN, who's in his room. INTERCUT.

JERRY  
 (into phone)  
 Your mom's too good to me, paying  
 for rehab and shit.

KIAN  
 She just wants you to get better.  
 We all do.

Jerry slows to turn into the parking lot for EDGEHILL  
 RECOVERY CENTER, but instead drives right past it...

JERRY  
 I'll call you once I'm checked in.

KIAN  
 Okay pop. Love you as big as the  
 Universe.

JERRY  
 Love you too-- As big as the  
 Universe.

Jerry hangs up, pulling into a different PARKING LOT. Across  
 from him is a mini-strip mall, containing a LIQUOR STORE and  
 a BARBERSHOP. He takes out his WALLET... \$60 to his name.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Jerry grabs some VODKA. Cheap stuff. Big jug of it. He takes  
 a deep breath, debating...

CUT TO:

INT. CAR, PARKING LOT - LATER

Jerry gets back in his car, sporting a new HAIRCUT. No bottle  
 of vodka. He puts the car in gear... heading back up the  
 hill, pulling into the lot for EDGEHILL...

EXT. OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA - DAY

*Back to 2005.*

Kian, Jerry and Zora walk the cobblestone streets, ice cream  
 in hand. Jerry's savoring every bite.

KIAN  
 How's your mojo?

JERRY  
 I don't want to jinx it, but...

He sends him a "shaka" sign. Feeling good. He puts his arm around Kian, letting Zora walk ahead of them...

JERRY (CONT'D)

Do you think your mom would come to Japan with us?

KIAN

I dunno. Maybe.

JERRY

I was thinking of asking her. We could all go, the three of us. I want to show her how great I can be. How great we can be again...

Kian smiles at the thought of that. Zora turns back, shooting them a look, wondering what they're conspiring about.

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - LATE DAY

2019.

Kian and Hanna have hit a sharp incline. There are a set of boulders blocking their way.

KIAN

I don't remember this.

Hanna pulls out her phone, looking for a signal, not finding one.

HANNA

We're gonna die. This is how we--

KIAN

-- Relax. Give me a minute.

Kian studies the map, looking at it from different angles.

KIAN (CONT'D)

I think we took the wrong folk.

HANNA

Then it's safe to say we've hit the end of the line.

KIAN

I don't think we can make it down the mountain or to the top by sundown.

HANNA

What are you saying?

KIAN  
Might be best if we find a spot to  
camp for the night.

HANNA  
No. No way. Fuck no.

KIAN  
Hey! Can you just rela--

HANNA  
Stop telling me to relax! You took  
me here against my will! You  
kidnapped me!

KIAN  
I'm your dad! I can't kidnap you!

HANNA  
Uh... Parents kidnap their kids all  
the time!

KIAN  
Well that's what not what I'm  
doing! We hit a snag. Doesn't mean  
we can't hunker down, regroup in  
the morning. We just have to go  
back to the fork and pick the left  
path. I see where we went wrong.

HANNA  
I'm not doing it.

KIAN  
You don't have a choice.

He takes a beat, softening.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
You gotta be able to roll with  
things, Hanna. You gotta be able to  
adapt. See the bigger picture.

Hanna's breathing heavy, annoyed as fuck. She takes some deep  
breaths, trying to calm herself.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
Come on, help me with this tent...

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - THAT NIGHT

The TENT is set up. A small CAMPFIRE flickers nearby.

Hanna sits by the fire, staring at it, or more so through it, deep in thought. Kian lays in the tent, eating some food.

KIAN

You should eat something.

She shakes her head. They suddenly hear a loud HOWL.

HANNA

What was that?

KIAN

Coyote. Or maybe a lion. Or a bear. Or a pack of lions and bears that are traveling together. You should get in here before they eat you.

HANNA

I can't tell if you think you're being funny or not.

KIAN

I do think I'm being funny, yes. But seriously, that didn't sound too far away, you should get in here. Like, for real.

Hanna gets up, heeding her father's advice, getting in the tent with him.

KIAN (CONT'D)

This is nice, right? Just the two of us. Hanging out. Camping again.

She shrugs. It's silent for a beat. Then he FARTS.

HANNA

Dad!

KIAN

That wasn't me! There must be a frog in here. We gotta get it!

HANNA

That's nasty! It's burning my eyes! I can't breathe! I'm gonna die!

KIAN

It's a farting frog! We gotta catch it before it kills us all!

Kian makes a big show of it, throwing everything around in an attempt to catch the "frog."

Hanna can't help but laugh at her dad's theatrics...

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

2005.

Kian fixes his hair in the mirror. Fidgets with his shirt. Checks his teeth. Breath. Decides to mouthwash...

INT. BLACKWALL HITCH - DUSK

An upscale seafood restaurant on the Potomac River. Kian sits across from Mallory, having just ordered.

KIAN

His treatment seems to be working.

MALLORY

That's so great.

KIAN

He's excited about going to Japan. Him and my mom are getting closer.

MALLORY

Your dad's so strong. I always felt a connection with him.

KIAN

You did?

MALLORY

Yeah but I feel like that's what everyone says. He has that effect on people.

KIAN

He does...

MALLORY

He taught me how to make the best steak.

KIAN

He gave you his marinade recipe? He doesn't hand that out casually.

MALLORY

We were tight.

KIAN

Apparently.

A WOMAN sides up to their table selling ROSES.

WOMAN

A rose for the lady?

KIAN

Oh, no thanks. We're just friends.  
(leans into whisper)  
Also... she's not a lady.

He winks at the rose saleswoman, who heads off confused.

MALLORY

Charming.

KIAN

Thank you.

MALLORY

Even without the rose, this is the  
fanciest restaurant I've been to in  
a while.

KIAN

Oh yeah?

MALLORY

Clayton and I used to go out a lot.  
Now it's more about staying in,  
getting Taco Bell--

KIAN

Taco Bell is so good. I don't care  
if their meat isn't meat.

MALLORY

Oh I'm not complaining. It might be  
the best food on the planet.

KIAN

Shit, if I knew you still loved  
Taco Bell, I wouldn't have  
suggested this place.

MALLORY

You implying you're paying for  
dinner?

KIAN

Fuck no. I'm just saying, even my  
half is gonna be like 50 bucks.  
Which would equal a feast fit for a  
king and queen at Taco Bell.



MALLORY  
Should we just bail and go get a  
fuckton of Fourth Meal?

KIAN  
Can we do that? Isn't that rude?

MALLORY  
Yeah, but who gives a shit?

KIAN  
That's a really good point.

EXT. STREETS OF OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA - NIGHT

Kian and Mallory stroll the sidewalk, going to town on some  
TACO BELL, savoring every bite.

KIAN  
I'd say we could continue the party  
at my place, but my mom's sleeping  
and my dad has cancer, so...

MALLORY  
I'm only a couple metro stops away.

INT. METRO CAR - NIGHT

Kian and Mallory ride the crowded metro to Mallory's place,  
sitting side-by-side... bag of Taco Bell on their laps.

INT. MALLORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Music blasts. They dance in her living room. Taking sips from  
DRINKS, bites from more Taco Bell...

MALLORY  
What sauce do you put on yours?

KIAN  
Mild.

MALLORY  
Pathetic.

KIAN  
What do you do?

MALLORY  
Medium, son!

KIAN  
There's like barely a difference  
between mild and medium.

MALLORY

You know not what you speak of.

They're getting closer... Faces inches from each other as they dance...

MALLORY (CONT'D)

You have Taco Bell breath.

KIAN

So do you...

But they don't pull apart, lips flirting with one another...

... Until she lets go and kisses him...

... dancing and kissing, bodies pressed against together... moving for the BEDROOM--

KIAN (CONT'D)

Is Clayton coming home soon?

MALLORY

No.

She kisses him again. Passionately. Just full on hands through the hair, heavy teenage make-out kissing...

... Fumbling into bed... clothes start coming off...

She rips off his boxers, and starts going down on him like she hasn't done this in a long time...

... She then jumps on top of him... Riding him... His eyes widen... this escalated rapidly--

They're catching a rhythm, something that's been building inside of them since Kian's been in town, and probably even before that, all the way back to high school...

... But suddenly she seems to be getting in her head, slowing down. Kian can feel it.

He opens his mouth to say something, ask if she's okay:

MALLORY (CONT'D)

Don't say anything. Don't stop.

She needs this. He does too. They continue, passions rising--

MINUTES LATER-- Kian and Mallory lay there, post-coital bliss. The build up of so much tension being released for both of them...

But her euphoria starts to fade as she sobers to what they've just done. He can read it on her face--

KIAN

Oh God, I'm on his side of the bed,  
aren't I?

She shakes her head, "no." Kian puzzles...

MALLORY

Year and a half ago, I got pregnant. We'd been trying crazy hard for a while, seeing specialists and shit, so when it finally happened, we were so excited. We started a name list and Pinterested baby room shit-- and then one day, a couple months in, I started bleeding. Like, a lot. Went to the doctor and they said it happens-- don't worry-- doesn't mean we lost the baby... but then they did an ultrasound and couldn't find a heartbeat. We just sat there, waiting for it-- Trying to find it. But they couldn't. We lost the baby, and it just-- I guess it just broke him.

Kian sits there in shock...

KIAN

Fuck. I-- I'm so sorry. I--

MALLORY

I came home from work one day and Clay was gone. Like, GONE. No trace of a single thing of his. I called him and he didn't answer. I emailed him, texted-- nothing.

KIAN

Holy shit. I knew you guys were having some trouble, but-- Why didn't you tell me any of this??

MALLORY

I've hardly told anyone! I just shut down. It's so much easier to act like it didn't happen.

KIAN

This is such a mountain of a secret to just be carrying around!

MALLORY

It gets worse...

KIAN

How???

MALLORY

A few months ago, my emails to him started bouncing back. And he changed his number. He's not on Facebook anymore. I just want to talk to him. Know what happened...

(beat)

I've tried moving on... Like, I tried taking this ring off, but I can't-- I mean, I literally can't, I think it's stuck. But also, not sure I'm ready to... I feel like he could still come back.

He comforts her as she buries her head in his chest, letting her guard down. Letting him in a little.

INT. MALLORY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Kian's dressed in last night's clothes, standing in the doorway. Mallory is in her pajamas.

They stare at each other for a beat, unsure how to leave it, the sobriety of the moment sinking in.

MALLORY

No pressure on this?

KIAN

Yeah. Of course.

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - MORNING

Kian enters to find his Dad laying on the couch in the living room, rubbing his temples.

KIAN

Hey pop, what's up? You okay?

JERRY

Just exhausted. Couldn't sleep last night.

KIAN

Why?

JERRY

I was worried. You didn't call.

KIAN  
You were worried about me? I'm an  
adult.

Kian sits down next to his Dad, rubbing his hands through  
what's left of his hair.

JERRY  
You're my boy. I'm always gonna  
worry about you.

KIAN  
You have enough to think about.

Kian notices his dad rubbing his temples.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
You got a headache?

JERRY  
Yeah.

KIAN  
I'll get you some Tylenol.

JERRY  
Thanks. I'm gonna get some rest. We  
got that PET scan tomorrow, right?

KIAN  
Yeah...

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Kian's phone alarm goes off. He gets up from the couch,  
heading for his Dad's room, finding him sitting on the edge  
of the bed, slumped, looking tired.

JERRY  
I'm up.

Jerry shuffles into the bathroom to take a shower. Kian  
checks the bed, finding a LARGE SWEAT SPOT.

INT. EDGEHILL, JERRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

1998.

A younger Jerry packs up his room in the rehab center, phone  
to his ear, talking to a 16 YEAR-OLD KIAN, who's driving to a  
soccer game with his mom. INTERCUT.

JERRY

(into phone)

-- I got along so well with everyone over the past 30 days, they're offering me a job here. Receptionist, but hey, it's a start. Maybe I can work my way up.

(beat)

I know I've said it before, but I'm gonna make it stick this time...

Silence from Kian... he nods, cautious with his optimism.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE ROOM - MORNING

2005.

Kian, Jerry and Zora sit across from COURTNEY, an ADMINISTRATOR at the hospital, and in general, a real bitch of a human being. Dr. Gladstone sits beside her.

COURTNEY

Mr. Keating, unfortunately, we won't be able to administer your PET scan today. You have an outstanding debt--

JERRY

Debt?

COURTNEY

For your treatments thus far. You currently owe \$10,438.

KIAN

We haven't been coming here that long. The bills are probably being sent to his house in Winchester.

COURTNEY

You're over a month behind.

JERRY

But we're here for the PET scan today. We need it done. There's a timeline--

COURTNEY

Dr. Gladstone has explained that you're potentially headed for a bone marrow transplant depending on your PET results and that your insurance only covers 80% of that. You don't have secondary coverage.

(MORE)

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

It's a \$400,000 procedure, so you'd need to cover the remaining 20% up front, which is \$80,000... on top of the bills that are owed.

JERRY

Can we discuss this after the scan? We're here now. I'm ready to do this thing.

COURTNEY

Mr. Keating, you won't be getting a PET scan today.

JERRY

You gotta be fuckin kidding me. You gotta be FUCKIN--

ZORA

Dr. Gladstone, can you talk to them? We can figure out a way to pay, we just didn't know.

DR. GLADSTONE

I'm actually on the board, that's why I'm here. We've had to take a serious stance with payments because so many people were getting treatment but not surviving. The families don't usually pay once their loved one doesn't make it.

Jerry puts his head down, burying it in his arms, taking deep breaths. This is not how he wanted this important day go to.

Kian sees this and steps up for him...

KIAN

We need to get the scan today. We'll figure out how to pay his bills.

DR. GLADSTONE

I think it's important for you to consider that there are much cheaper hospitals than ours. You may want to look into those so you don't go into serious debt.

KIAN

We can't start over at a new hospital. It'll take time to transfer all the files, get an appointment.

(MORE)

KIAN (CONT'D)

They'll have to do their own tests and biopsies. We can't that. We're here today. Please...

He motions to his Dad, who's head is still down on the desk, "*look at what this is doing to him.*"

Gladstone shares a look with Courtney...

COURTNEY

If you pay the full balance today, we can go forward with the PET. But I think what Dr. Gladstone is saying is it may not be worth going into debt over.

KIAN

What's not worth it???? His *life*???

DR. GLADSTONE

There's no guarantee any of this will work.

Everyone can hear Jerry silently sobbing into his sleeves.

KIAN

What's wrong with you?? Can we stop talking about money???

Zora pulls out a FEW CREDIT CARDS, handing them over.

ZORA

Here. Run these. But I'm surprised at both of you. Washingtonian Magazine said you were a top 10 oncologist, Dr. Gladstone. And it said Hopkins was number three in the country. You're not acting like it. You should be ashamed.

DR. GLADSTONE

(unmoved)

We'll see what we get from the PET and go from there. But if we move to bone marrow transplant, you'll need to pay up front.

KIAN

Are you a hospital or a fucking bank???



JERRY  
 (picking up his head)  
 Kian, let it go. Look at the bigger  
 picture...

QUICK FLASHBACK-- 1994. Jerry stands with a 12 year-old Kian atop the mountain, out of breath, looking out. He hands him a donut...

JERRY (CONT'D)  
 See it, Kian? See the bigger  
 picture?

Kian's trying so hard, but still doesn't know what he should be looking for. He shakes his head, feeling embarrassed.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
 It's okay, son. You will.

INT. JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL, HALLWAY - MORNING (BACK TO 2005)

Kian and Zora walk Jerry down the hallway towards the PET scan room. Jerry's in a hospital gown, going slow, feeling weak. None of them wear hopeful expressions.

KIAN  
 Hey, pop... *Ganbatte.*

Jerry nods, absorbing that...

INT. PET SCAN MACHINE - MORNING

Jerry's loaded into the machine...

INT. DR. GLADSTONE'S OFFICE - DAY

The three of them wait outside Gladstone's personal office, post-scan.

Jerry takes down some Tylenol. He looks at the clock on his phone, 5:46pm. He exhales, growing impatient.

JERRY  
 We've been here all day. If it was  
 good news, they would've told us.

KIAN  
 Maybe they're just busy.

JERRY  
 Yeah but if they knew it was  
 nothing, they'd come out and say,  
 "you're all good, go home!"

Kian and Zora can't argue with that. Kian can tell his dad is spiraling, fear starting to get the best of him...

KIAN  
(lying through his teeth)  
I've been writing a novel.

JERRY  
What? Since when?

KIAN  
... Since I've been back. Something real. In my voice. It's going well.

JERRY  
Why didn't you tell me?

KIAN  
I didn't want to get your hopes up--

JERRY  
I'm just proud of the pursuit. Can I read it?

KIAN  
Yeah. Soon.

Kian can tell his dad is happy to hear this. It's almost as if a weight is slightly lifted from Jerry's chest-- his son is heading in the right direction, or so he thinks...

Finally-- Gladstone and Reiss-Binder enter:

DR. GLADSTONE  
Mr. Keating, let's head back.

INT. GLADSTONE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Jerry, Zora and Kian sit on pins and needles across from Gladstone and Reiss-Binder.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER  
Sorry for the delay, but we wanted to confirm with our colleagues what we were seeing on your scan.

JERRY  
Okay...

DR. GLADSTONE  
Mr. Keating... your tumors have shrunk 30-50%.

JERRY

*Shrunk?*

DR. GLADSTONE

All of them. Across the board.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER

It's incredible.

DR. GLADSTONE

If we continue in this direction, you'll be getting that bone marrow transplant, which is the only realistic "cure" in your scenario.

Jerry smiles, obviously happy to hear this. But he's also so drained and weak that he can barely muster the strength to show it. Kian picks up on this.

KIAN

We're obviously thrilled about the news, but do you know why he's been feeling weaker recently?

DR. GLADSTONE

Could be lasting effects of the chemo. We did notice some bright spots in his brain, that's partly why we took so long, but we don't think it's spread.

KIAN

You don't?

DR. GLADSTONE

PETs light up in the brain and give false positives all the time. We go off the size of the tumors. And they're all down--

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER

It's amazing.

DR. GLADSTONE

So we can get you in here next week to do a scan of your brain, but I wouldn't worry about it.

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - NEXT MORNING

2019

Sunrise. Kian and Hanna pack up their tent, heading back the way they came, towards the fork they were at before...

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - DAY

Kian consults the map, picking the far left fork this time.

KIAN

This is the right way, we're good now. *Ganbatte*.

Kian puts his hand out for her to grab, but she doesn't accept it.

HANNA

What's it mean? We always say it, but I don't know what it literally means. I think I've just filled in the blank with my own shit.

KIAN

Depends on the context. It's Japanese for "good luck," or "do your best." Or "be your best." Or, in this case, "let's go for it."

She thinks about that, then stops, sitting down on a large boulder, looking down the mountain, down the way they came. Kian turns to her.

HANNA

Can we just take a sec and talk as adults?

KIAN

As *adults*??

HANNA

If we head back down now, we can easily get to the car before dark.

KIAN

But if we keep going, we'll make it to the top by sunset. Trust me, you're gonna love the next part. We're almost there, kinda....

INT. EDGEHILL RECOVERY CENTER, GROUP ROOM - DAY

2001.

Kian, 19, sits in the back of a large meeting room with about 30 recovering addicts.

Jerry, 49, lords over the room-- having worked his way up to HEAD COUNSELOR-- the clients hanging onto his every word. He's handsome, vibrant and in top shape...

JERRY

Why do we relapse? There's a list of reasons there in your workbook. I want you to circle the ones that resonate with you. Everyone's different. For me, it was being ungrateful. I had so much in my life, but I was pissing it away cause I wanted more. Ignoring the good right in front of me...

Jerry locks eyes with his son for a beat.

JERRY (CONT'D)

If you're here, you still got a shot. You just gotta hunker down. Cause I can tell you, as someone who was sitting right where you are-- as someone who has come out the other side-- there's no drug on the planet as potent as the feeling you get when you know you're living your best life.

Kian smiles at his dad, so proud of him for turning it all around, and now helping others...

EXT. ZORA HOUSE - NIGHT

2005.

The three of them get out of the car, walking up to the house. Kian notices his father swaying a bit as he walks.

KIAN

You okay, pop?

JERRY

Yeah. A little wobbly. Just tired.

ZORA

He's been up since 5:30 in the morning. Who wouldn't be tired?

They get to the front door, entering...

ZORA (CONT'D)

You just need a nice dinner. Want me to make some Kebab?

JERRY

That sounds good, Z. But I think I'm just gonna head to bed.

Kian watches his dad head towards his guest bedroom--

KIAN  
It's good news, dad. It was a good  
day.

Jerry smiles, then heads into his room, closing his door.

INT. MALLORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kian and Mallory lay in bed, once again basking in a post-coital glow--

MALLORY  
We're getting better at that.

KIAN  
You saying it wasn't good before?

MALLORY  
No, I'm saying it was even better.  
You insecure or something?

KIAN  
Every guy is to an extent.

MALLORY  
Where's it come from?

KIAN  
My ex said I lasted too long.

MALLORY  
Whaaaat?

KIAN  
I know!

MALLORY  
I don't think you last too long. If  
anything--

KIAN  
-- Don't.  
(beat)  
I guess she was over us, so even a  
moderate amount of time felt long.

MALLORY  
Clayton and I had such good  
chemistry in bed.

KIAN  
Oh cool--

MALLORY  
 (laughing)  
 Sorry.

KIAN  
 No, I love thinking about that.  
 That's fun. How big was he?-- I'm  
 kidding, don't answer that.

She smiles at a memory. He can tell she's thinking about her husband. And this is accentuated by the smile's fade, into a deeper thought.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
 I was just joking. We can talk  
 about it if you want. It's probably  
 good to. Catharsis and shit.

MALLORY  
 No... It's better like this-- just  
 having fun.  
 (beat)  
 Which is why it's so hard for me to  
 say... I gotta go to bed.

She gets up, starts putting on her pajamas.

MALLORY (CONT'D)  
 I start a new case tomorrow, gotta  
 get a full eight.

KIAN  
 Oh sure, totally. Wanna practice  
 your oral arguments on me?

MALLORY  
 Was that a sexual joke?

KIAN  
 It wasn't. But we can make it one.

She smiles, letting her guard down for a moment. But she's still distant. He can read it. She's not good at hiding it.

MALLORY  
 I gotta get ready for tomorrow.

Kian nods, getting it, grabbing his pants and shirt to leave.

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - MORNING

Kian sits at the dining room table, on his laptop, researching "dizziness associated with lymphoma." Jerry stands over the sink, eating a pastry.

KIAN  
Still feeling dizzy?

Jerry walks into the dining room area, testing his balance.

JERRY  
A little, yeah. Nothing crazy. I'm  
gonna take a nap.

KIAN  
You just woke up.

JERRY  
(not seeing his screen)  
You working on your novel?

KIAN  
Uh, yeah. Yup.

Jerry smiles, heading away.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
Oscars are on tonight. We watching?

JERRY  
... You bet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kian, Jerry and Zora watch the Oscars. Zora half-watches while working from the dining table. Kian sits on the end of the couch with Jerry laying across it, feet on Kian's lap.

JERRY  
(point at the TV)  
Who's that?

KIAN  
Jake Gyllenhaal.

JERRY  
*Who?*

ZORA  
He was the Bubble Boy.

KIAN  
He's been in other things too.

ZORA  
I never saw him in anything but the  
Bubble Boy.



JERRY  
He any good?

KIAN  
Yeah, not bad.

ZORA  
I thought he was excellent as the  
bubble boy.

JERRY  
When I'm better, I'm gonna come  
visit you in LA and you gotta take  
me to some Hollywood parties.

KIAN  
You got it.

ZORA  
And mama is coming too!

JERRY  
Three peas in a little fucked up  
pod together in LA. Maybe I'll  
become friends with the bubble boy.  
Live the Hollywood party life.

Jerry starts bobbing his shoulders, trying to look like  
someone he thinks is cool. It's hard to tell what he's doing.  
Kind of swaying like a rapper would in a music video, but  
looking like a white guy with no hair battling cancer.

KIAN  
You look really cool there, pop.

JERRY  
I'm cool like Adam Levine.

KIAN  
Who?

JERRY  
Are you kidding???

ZORA  
Kian jan, how have you not heard of  
Adam Levine? He's very cool.

JERRY  
The lead singer of Maroon 5!

KIAN  
Oh, yeah. You just had to say that.  
I didn't really know his name.

JERRY

He's so good. You gotta hear this--

Jerry walks over and presses play on the home stereo (remember, it's 2005). It starts playing "Harder to Breathe" by Maroon 5... Jerry's bobbing his head, getting into it.

KIAN

This song is so old.

JERRY

This is my jam. This is my shit.

Jerry starts dancing, slapping his knee to the beat. He loses his balance, but plays it off. He meant to do that.

The three of them dance around the living room to the Maroon 5 song... a happy little family...

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - DAY

2019.

Kian pulls himself up over a set of boulders. You don't need to be an expert to do this, but it isn't easy either. He's breathing heavy, completely exhausted.

He then reaches down for Hanna's hand, but she doesn't take it, pulling herself up with her own strength.

They both turn and look upon a beautiful set of WATERFALLS.

After a beat, Kian launches into a coughing fit.

Hanna hands him some water. He smiles down at his daughter, thanking her, too out of breath to verbalize it.

They both catch their breath, taking in the beauty of it all. Side by side. Father and daughter.

He shoots her a look, "not bad, right?" She nods, letting her guard down a bit more...

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - MORNING

2005.

Kian has his laptop set up in the living room, SKYPING a studio exec, PETER, 30s.

Kian's in the middle of his pitch for "Monster in the Mail"--

KIAN

... so at the end of the second act, the family has bonded with the monster, but the dad doesn't want it around because he thinks its been ruining his life--

PETER (ON SKYPE)

Hold up, where does this happen?

KIAN

At the end of the second act.

PETER (ON SKYPE)

The dad doesn't want the monster to live with them anymore at the end of the *second* act?

KIAN

Yeah. Um... so he calls the FBI anonymously, but...

Suddenly, JERRY comes out of his bedroom, zigzagging, staggering, using nearby furniture for support. Kian notices--

KIAN (CONT'D)

Dad?

JERRY

I can't catch my balance.

KIAN

(to Peter)

Hey man-- I gotta go. Sorry--

PETER

Everything okay?

Kian closes his laptop, ending the skype call abruptly. He jumps up to help his dad, stabilizing him. But as he does, Jerry THROWS UP on the carpet.

JERRY

I threw up in the bathroom too. Everything's spinning.

Kian looks into his father's eyes. Jerry's scared...

INT. JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Kian and Zora kiss Jerry as he's wheeled off to get an MRI. Kian watches him go, then turns down the hallway... breaking down, no idea what's wrong with his dad.

He glances around at all the other people in the WAITING AREA, worried about their loved ones.

He finds a quiet corner, slumps onto the floor. He's a small man in this moment. A boy. Terrified of losing his father.

He suddenly gets a call from Mallory. She's at her place, pacing in the living room. INTERCUT.

KIAN

Hey...

MALLORY

Hey, I have something to tell you.  
I'm just going to say it--  
(hearing sounds in the  
background)  
Wait, where are you?

KIAN

The hospital. My dad couldn't walk straight this morning. He was throwing up.

MALLORY

Do they know what's going on???

KIAN

He's getting an MRI now.

MALLORY

Maybe he ate something bad?

KIAN

Yeah... maybe. Probably, yeah.

MALLORY

Well... I wanted to call because...  
I don't know how to say this and  
would obviously rather do it in  
person, but um, I didn't know how  
you'd take it. So I felt like over  
the phone was the best option...

KIAN

... Okay.

MALLORY

I was feeling off-- And... I missed  
my period. So I took a pregnancy  
test and it was... not negative.

They sit in heavy silence for a beat...

KIAN  
... Are you sure it was accurate?

MALLORY  
I've taken six more.

KIAN  
Oh fuck. Wow. Okay, you're definitely pregnant. Unless they were 99 Cent Store brand or--

MALLORY  
They were the fancy \$10 kind.

KIAN  
Okay. Yeah. That confirms it. And... it's mine?

MALLORY  
No, I'm just calling to let you know I've been fucking a bunch of other dudes, so it's probably one of theirs.

KIAN  
... Uh, what?

MALLORY  
YES. Kian. It's yours. 100%.

KIAN  
So that's... good, right?

MALLORY  
I-- I never pictured having a kid with anyone but Clayton. Plus, last time this happened, it didn't go...

She can't finish, on the verge of breaking down.

MALLORY (CONT'D)  
-- And what if, like, Clayton comes back and sees me pregnant and that scares him off?

KIAN  
Mal--

MALLORY  
What if he wants to get back together but realizes I've moved on--

KIAN  
Mal--

MALLORY

What if he--

KIAN

Mal! He's... not coming back.

MALLORY

The fuck did you just say?

KIAN

He changed his number. His email.  
He doesn't want to be found... He's  
not coming back.

MALLORY

Why would you say something shitty  
like that???

KIAN

I'm saying, maybe this is a good  
thing. We can make this work. I'm  
gonna be a dad. My dad's gonna be a  
grandpa. That's gonna make him so  
happy. Maybe we should try to see  
the positive in this.

They sit there in heavy silence. Mallory is trying to keep it together. Trying to let go... But she can't. Wiping the tears. Putting on a strong face.

MALLORY

Sorry about your dad. I know you're  
going through a lot. I hesitated  
calling you--

KIAN

I'm glad you called me.

MALLORY

I gotta go. I'll let you know what  
I'm thinking...

KIAN

Mal, wait--

Mallory hangs up before he can continue, leaving Kian there, frustrated with himself for pushing so hard.

INT. ER, PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Kian, Jerry and Zora anxiously wait for the MRI results.  
Jerry's rubbing his forehead like he has a headache.

JERRY

... They kept me in that damn MRI tunnel forever. Listening to that jackhammer with a headache. Fuckin nightmare, man.

KIAN

That's brutal, dad. Hopefully we'll know more soon.

JERRY

I can't take more of this shit. The pain, the tests, the fuckin chemo.

Jerry looks beat-- like he's lost hope. Kian reads this--

KIAN

I know something that might cheer you up... Mallory's pregnant.

It just hangs there for a beat...

JERRY

Who?

KIAN

Mallory. My friend from high school. We were like best friends.

JERRY

Oh yeah. She was sweet. You were obsessed with her.

KIAN

Don't know if I'd say "obsessed," but yes, that's the same person.

JERRY

You were so obsessed.  
(beat)  
Wait, so what's going on with her?

KIAN

Well... like I just said, she's pregnant.

JERRY

Oh, good for her.

KIAN

Good for us, dad. She's pregnant with my kid.

JERRY

Wait, what? I'm confused. You guys together or something?

KIAN

Since I've been out here, we've been--

ZORA

Isn't she married, Kian?

KIAN

She was, yeah. But he left her.

ZORA

Oh God, that's awful. When???

KIAN

Not super recently. Over a year ago. Doesn't matter.

ZORA

Are you sure it's yours?

KIAN

Yes. Yes. Look, I think we're focusing on the wrong things here-- Mallory is having the baby and I'm going to be a dad.

These last words land with Jerry and Zora. They light up.

JERRY

Come here.

Jerry puts out his arms, hugging Kian. Zora joins in.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(overjoyed)

I'm gonna be a grandpa!

ZORA

I'm too young to be a grandma, so I'll just say she's my niece.

INT. ER, PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT

It's later that night and the three of them are still waiting. Jerry's trying to get some rest.

Kian is on the floor, staring up at the ceiling.

ZORA

Kian jan, don't lay on the floor.



KIAN

Why?

ZORA

It's filthy. You could get sick.

KIAN

Good thing we're in a hospital.

ZORA

Don't be difficult.

Suddenly, Dr. Kim Reiss-Binder pops in..

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER

Hey, everyone--

(to Kian)

You really shouldn't lay on the floor like that.

Kian listens, getting up.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER (CONT'D)

I looked at your MRI and didn't see anything in your brain. So it hasn't spread there at least.

ZORA

Thank God.

KIAN

So what's going on with him?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER

We're still figuring that out. Obviously, our oncology radiologist has to take a look. I think he's going to do that this evening. But so far, so good. Hopefully it's just an inner-ear infection throwing off your balance and we can get it taken care of and send you home in the morning.

Everyone smiles, this is the best possible scenario.

Dr. Reiss-Binder exits. Kian gives his dad a kiss on the forehead, happy he's going to be okay.

JERRY

You guys should head home. They're just gonna clean out my ears. I'll see you in the morning.

INT. CAR, DRIVING - NIGHT

Kian and Zora head down 95 South. They listen to some Maroon 5, jamming out, feeling good...

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Kian brushes his teeth in the mirror, closing his eyes, exhausted.

He comes out of the guest bathroom to see his father's empty bed. He lays down on it...

Pulls out his phone and calls Mallory. It just rings and rings before going to voicemail.

He hangs up before leaving a message, opting to text her: *You up? Can we talk?*

He puts his phone down beside him on the bed, waiting for her to respond, closing his eyes...

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - DUSK

2019.

The sun's getting low again. In the distance, they can see the summit...

HANNA

Okay, there's the top. We see it.  
We're good.

KIAN

Almost there... Just gotta push  
through.

HANNA

What's the point?

KIAN

(pointing at the summit)  
That. That is the point. Getting to  
the top. Looking out on everything.

HANNA

Come on, can we please turn around?

KIAN

Are you hungry? Is that it?

HANNA

Yeah! And tired! And all fuckin  
sweaty!

KIAN

Look, I've given in on the F-bombs. I've lost that fight. But let's get there. It's just a little further.

HANNA

Farther.

KIAN

What?

HANNA

It's farther. Not further.

KIAN

Some parents would get annoyed at being corrected by their teenage daughter, but I love that you're smarter than me.

Kian smiles and keeps going, but Hanna doesn't. She digs in.

HANNA

I'm done, dad.

She's not saying this as defiantly as the past times. She's saying it calmly. Truly done.

He turns around, goes back to her.

KIAN

You're so much like your mom-- Have a snack, you'll feel better.

HANNA

If you want to keep going, you can. But I'm heading back down.

KIAN

Not alone. It's not safe.

HANNA

Then come with me! You can just come with me, dad. You don't have to force this...

She turns, starts heading down the mountain.

Kian's so frustrated. But he hides it. He takes a deep breath and sits down. Giving in. Letting go.

She turns back, spotting him sitting there.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Come on, don't guilt me. That's not fair. This trip was for you!

KIAN

No it wasn't. It was for you.

(beat)

Okay, and me. It was for us.

She comes back and sits down next to him, seeing how important this is to him.

KIAN (CONT'D)

I had this whole trip worked out. But things don't always go according to plan.

(beat)

Actually, they hardly ever do...

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

2005.

Kian sleeps in his dad's bed. He's suddenly awoken by his cell RINGING. He fumbles for it. Doesn't recognize the number, but notices that it's a Baltimore area code.

KIAN

(answering, half-asleep)

Yeah?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER (O.S.)

Hi, Kian? It's Dr. Reiss-Binder--

Kian sits up a bit, gaining his bearings.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER (CONT'D)

The radiologist saw a tiny something in your dad's spine on the MRI so we're going to perform a lumbar puncture to figure out what it is.

KIAN

I thought you said his MRI was clean?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER (O.S.)

His brain is clear. I personally didn't see the thing in his spine, but our radiologist did. It might just be something he's had his whole life. But we need to double-check the fluid to be sure.

KIAN

Uh, okay. Have you talked to him?

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER (O.S.)

Yeah. He's fine with it. It won't hurt. Super easy procedure. We do it all the time.

KIAN

So you think he'll be okay?

There's a long pause.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER (O.S.)

I think there's a chance it's nothing. I also-- I'm-- Let's see what it is and go from there.

This is not as reassuring as Kian was hoping for...

INT. CAR, DRIVING - MORNING

Sitting in traffic on 95 North. Kian is trying to remain as calm as possible, kind of rocking back and forth, as if attempting to will the traffic to part ways.

Suddenly, his phone rings. He answers--

KIAN

Hello?

GRETA

Yo, it's Greta. Just heard that monster movie's not going your way. I spoke to Peter. He said you hung up on him? What happened???

Kian opens his mouth to respond, but instead just hangs up on her, continuing to breathe, rocking, about to lose it...

INT. JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL - MORNING

Kian and Zora enter Jerry's room to find a NURSE cleaning LARGE AMOUNTS OF BLOOD off the floor.

Jerry's laying on his side, eyes closed.

KIAN

What the hell happened in here???

NURSE

(nonchalant)

It's just some blood from the lumbar puncture.

KIAN

What???

NURSE

They had trouble pinpointing it. A few failed attempts.

JERRY

Six. Six failed attempts.

KIAN

What the fuck???

ZORA

This hospital is the worst.  
 (looking at all the blood)  
 Plus, Kian remember when I said the floor's not clean and you gave me a hard time?

Kian looks at his dad's back, seeing it's been BANDAGED.

KIAN

These motherfuckers, man.

JERRY

It's okay, Kian. Let it go. Let it flow through you.

Kian tries to breathe through it.

Just then, Dr. Gladstone and Dr. Kim Reiss-Binder enter.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER

Mr. Keating... How are you feeling?

JERRY

Back's sore. Kinda got a headache. But okay, I guess...

Gladstone and Reiss-Binder share a look-- Gladstone takes the reigns.

DR. GLADSTONE

The results of your lumbar puncture came back... it seems your lymphoma has spread to your spinal fluid. The proliferation of cancer in your spine has caused your meninges to become inflamed, which is why you're getting the headaches and dizziness.

JERRY

Oh, okay... so... what's that mean?

DR. GLADSTONE

We just sat down with the entire oncology team here and came to the conclusion that there's nothing else we can do, unfortunately--

JERRY

You mean, like... ever?

DR. GLADSTONE

That's correct.

KIAN

Wait, what about Methotrexate? I Googled that you could put a port in his skull and--

DR. GLADSTONE

We discussed it. It's too risky and there's no real upside. There's no beating this, unfortunately--

KIAN

Of course there's a way to beat it. We'd like to discuss all options--

DR. GLADSTONE

There are no more options for him at this hospital. Or any hospital, I'd imagine.

KIAN

That's not true, I read--

DR. GLADSTONE

You might be able to extend his life by an extra few weeks, maybe a month or two with some highly invasive procedures, but his quality of life would be so low, it wouldn't be worth it...

To put this conversation to bed, Dr. Gladstone turns away from Kian and towards Jerry, looking right at him:

DR. GLADSTONE (CONT'D)

Mr. Keating, you are going to die.

This completely sucks out whatever air was left in the room.

Jerry attempts to process what Gladstone just said, putting on a brave face.

JERRY

We all gotta go. How much time do I got?... A year?

DR. GLADSTONE

... I'd say days to weeks.

Jerry was not prepared for this. He's frozen. Catatonic.

Kian looks up at Gladstone, who wears a blank, cold expression on his face--

KIAN

You're a fucking asshole.

DR. GLADSTONE

I understand this isn't easy--

KIAN

That has nothing to do with it, I just think you're a FUCKING ASSHOLE!

Kian rushes Gladstone, about to take a swing at him, but Jerry reaches up, grabbing his arm, pleading for him not to.

Begging him to see "the bigger picture."

Kian takes a breath, relenting, at a loss.

Gladstone turns and exits, without shaking Jerry's hand.

Dr. Kim Reiss-Binder bends down to Jerry's level-- this helpless man in a hospital bed.

DR. KIM REISS-BINDER

You're a brave man, Mr. Keating. But embedding a port into your cerebrospinal space to administer chemo would be brutal. And it wouldn't treat the rest of your body, which would still have cancer. We just ran out of options. It's about the quality time you have left now. Spend it with your family. Not with us.

Jerry puts his hand out to thank her. She gets in close and hugs him instead.



DR. KIM REISS-BINDER (CONT'D)  
 We'll move to a more comfortable  
 room. Get you talking to Dr. Smith,  
 our director of Palliative Care.  
 Make sure you're taken care of.

Jerry nods. Dr. Reiss-Binder gets up, somberly shaking Kian and Zora's hands before exiting.

Once she's gone, Kian hugs his dad, emotions gushing forth.

KIAN  
 I'm so sorry, dad. I--

JERRY  
 You didn't do anything wrong.

KIAN  
 You're the best father a kid could  
 ask for...

JERRY  
 I know.

They smile through the tears...

JERRY (CONT'D)  
 But I have a feeling you're gonna  
 be better... if you're not, I'll  
 kick your ass.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATE DAY

A NURSE is wheeling Jerry to his new room. His mind is racing. Kian and Zora flank him.

INT. JERRY'S NEW HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

This room is a bit bigger, but it's not "nicer." It's the type of drab and dated room they give someone who they don't want to spend much more money on.

DR. SMITH, short, older, kind of has the vibe of a gentle garden gnome, stands with them, holding various FORMS.

DR. SMITH  
 Kian, since your father doesn't  
 have an Advanced Directive or Will,  
 I'm going to leave this paperwork  
 with you. It's important to get  
 everything in order before it's,  
 you know, too late.

Dr. Smith hands the forms to Kian, who's overwhelmed.

DR. SMITH (CONT'D)  
 Mr. Keating, I know this isn't the  
 outcome you were hoping for, but  
 with the right palliative care  
 plan, you can really enjoy the  
 remaining months of your life.

JERRY  
 Gladstone said I had days to weeks.

DR. SMITH  
 Oh. Yes. Well...

Dr. Smith smiles and exits before putting his foot in his  
 mouth again.

Kian leafs through the forms. He reads a section on "BURIAL  
 PLANS" and it really starts to hit him.

KIAN  
 (trying to be casual)  
 Dad, um, I don't know if you've  
 ever mentioned it, but... do you  
 have a preference as far as...  
 like, um, burials and stuff?

JERRY  
 (beat)  
 ... My parents were cremated. That  
 sounds better than being buried.

Kian starts to make a note of that--

JERRY (CONT'D)  
 But, being burned is kinda scary.

ZORA  
 I don't want to be burned or  
 buried.

KIAN  
 Those are the only options, mom.

ZORA  
 I want to be put in a tomb above  
 the ground.

KIAN  
 A tomb?

ZORA  
 A mausoleum. I want a mausoleum.

JERRY

That's too flashy and expensive for me.

ZORA

I don't mind the expense. Kian, promise you'll put me in a mausoleum.

KIAN

Sure thing, mom.

JERRY

I'm gonna get some sleep. You guys should head home.

KIAN

No, we're staying here with you.

JERRY

Here? Where? I'm in the only bed. You'll just keep me up. Go home. Get some rest. Come back in the morning and get me.

Kian shares a glance with his mom who agrees.

KIAN

We're gonna do what we can to fight this, dad.

JERRY

Let's do what we can to learn from it instead, okay?

Kian and Zora hug Jerry before heading for the door. Before getting there, Kian turns back.

KIAN

Love you, Dad. Big as the Universe.

JERRY

(distant)  
Love you too.

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kian beats the shit out of the couch pillows, letting out all the emotion that he was trying to hold in at the hospital. Zora rubs his back in an attempt to calm him.

ZORA

Yes, do that, Kian jan. That's good. That will help...

Kian runs out of steam, panting, exhausted.

KIAN  
I'm gonna go for a walk.

Kian gets up and exits. After he's gone, Zora starts BEATING THE SHIT out of the pillows as well.

EXT. STREETS OF ALEXANDRIA - NIGHT

Kian paces the sidewalks with an anger about him. On the verge of breaking down.

EXT. MALLORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kian buzzes Mallory's apartment repeatedly. Finally, her voice comes through the call box.

MALLORY (O.S.)  
Kian what are you doing???

KIAN  
How'd you know it was me?

MALLORY (O.S.)  
There's a camera.

KIAN  
Oh shit. I didn't see that.

MALLORY (O.S.)  
It's so late, man. Can we--

KIAN  
-- We can't. I can't wait. Please come down so I don't have to yell up at your window.

MALLORY (O.S.)  
Yeah, definitely don't do that. I'll be down in a sec.

Kian paces, trying to take deep breaths, calm himself. But he's losing the battle.

After a few beats, Mallory opens the main front door. Kian notices she's still wearing her WEDDING RING.

She can tell he's been crying, on the verge of losing it again, so she lets him in.

INT. MALLORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They sit on the floor, leaning against the foot of her bed. Kian struggles to find the words...

KIAN

My dad... He's not... everything's slipping through my fingers...

(beat)

I can't lose him and you at the same time... I can't. Can I stay here tonight? I'm not saying we have to make any big decisions, I just want to be with you.

She hesitates, debating. After a few, she nods, hugging him.

INT. CAR, DRIVING - NEXT MORNING

Kian and Zora drive up 95 North, back towards Hopkins for what feels like the fucking millionth time. They're both drained, nothing left in the tank.

INT. JERRY'S NEW HOSPITAL ROOM, HOPKINS - MORNING

Kian and Zora sit with Jerry as he laughs at a rerun of "Seinfeld."

As Kian pulls out the Advanced Directive from his bag:

JERRY

-- I'm hungry. Can you grab me some food?

KIAN

Oh, sure. What do you feel like?

JERRY

Soup.

KIAN

Okay. Any specific kind?

JERRY

Chicken noodle or something. But not fuckin clam chowder. I'm puking enough as is.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Kian stares at the soups. There are an array of options, but oddly, no chicken noodle... He debates.

INT. JERRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, Jerry mutes the TV, turning to Zora.

JERRY

I'm sorry, Z. I wish I was going to be around to help raise our boy.

ZORA

Our boy is a man now.

JERRY

Yeah, but he's still a boy. He still needs a father. I never taught him how to tie a bow tie. Or change the oil.

ZORA

That's because you don't know how to do those things.

They both smile.

JERRY

I'm sorry I'm not going to be there to watch him grow up. Get married. Meet that baby. I would've been one hell of a grandpa.

Zora gets up and hugs him, sitting in close now.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You gotta be strong, Z. You gotta be enough parent for the two of us.

ZORA

There's no way I can do that.

JERRY

Sure you can. You're stronger than you give yourself credit for.

(beat)

I never thought I wouldn't be around for all the years you two have ahead together.

(beat)

I was hoping to beat this so I could show you how great I could be. How great we could be again...

Zora's emotions get the best of her. Jerry's attempting to hold back, but it's no use.

Just then, Kian enters, walking in on his parents clutching each other.

KIAN  
What's... going on?

They both straighten up.

ZORA  
Nothing. Just chit-chatting.

JERRY  
What kind of soup did you get me?

KIAN  
... All of them.

We see that the tray Kian's holding does in fact have 6 DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOUP on it. Jerry smiles at his boy, sharing a moment with him.

INT. JERRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Jerry has taken bites from all the soups, but didn't finish any of them.

He looks up at the clock on the wall. 4:34pm. He struggles out of bed, growing agitated.

JERRY  
What the fuck is taking so long??

ZORA  
Maybe they realized they were wrong and have some options for you?

KIAN  
Mom--

JERRY  
We're gonna hit fuckin traffic now.

Suddenly, a NURSE comes in to check vitals.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Excuse me, do you know when I'm getting discharged?

NURSE  
Shouldn't be too long.

KIAN  
Doesn't he still need to get his line cleaned out and removed?

NURSE

Nah, they can clean it next time.  
They ain't gonna remove it til he's  
done with his chemo. When's your  
next appointment?

They all share glances, clearly this nurse has not been informed that Jerry's not getting any more treatment.

JERRY

Um... I don't know. Kian?

Jerry throws it to Kian, not wanting to tell her himself.

KIAN

Um... we... there probably won't be  
any more appointments.

NURSE

What do you mean? Like, ever?

Kian pleads with his eyes for her to understand him. After a beat, she finally gets it.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Ohhh. I'm so sorry. I'm new.

The nurse hurries out the door, embarrassed.

This exchange has added to Jerry's pain. He's getting worked up. Pacing. He wants to be heard. Seen. He's still alive. Still kicking.

He drags his IV out the door and down the HALLWAY:

JERRY

FUCKING HELLO??? ANYONE AT THIS  
HOSPITAL HAVE HALF A FUCKIN BRAIN??  
CAN SOMEONE GET THIS FUCKING LINE  
OUT OF ME SO I CAN GO HOME?? WE'RE  
GOING TO HIT RUSH HOUR NOW!!

Jerry starts ripping at the port in his chest.

KIAN

Dad, stop!

A DOCTOR making rounds rushes over to him.

DOCTOR

Sir, please. We'll get it out ASAP.



JERRY

They told me I've got "days to weeks" to live and I'm stuck in this fuckhole!

(beat, exhausted)

I just wanna go home, man.

This doctor, who has never met him, looks into his eyes with a profound sense of empathy.

DOCTOR

I know. I would too. I'm going to personally take out your line now so you can get out of here and spend some time with your family.

JERRY

What if it's like 3 days and I just spent one of them in here?

DOCTOR

I can't even imagine what you're feeling right now. How bout you lay down and I'll take care of you?...

JUMP TO:

This kind doctor takes out Jerry's line permanently. He won't be getting treatment ever again. He knows it. Everyone in the room knows it...

INT. CAR, DRIVING - LATE DAY

Kian drives. Zora in the passenger seat. Jerry in the back. All look defeated.

Kian reaches back for his dad's hand. Jerry grabs it and holds it tight. Tighter than he's ever held it before.

Kian steals glances at Jerry in the rearview mirror. He can tell his dad's scared. Not wanting to let go...

INT. ZORA'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Everyone's asleep. Kian's in the living room on his laptop, WRITING SOMETHING.

KIAN (V.O.)

(hearing what he's typing)

... *This is by far the hardest thing I've ever had to write...*

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER - DAY

Kian, Jerry and Zora sit on a bench looking out at the Potomac River. It's a cold, gray day.

Jerry's looking weak. Wearing a puffy winter jacket and sunglasses, even though it's not sunny.

KIAN

I was doing some research and I read about this thing called the "Abscopal Effect." I emailed Reiss-Binder about it last night and she wrote me back. It's basically this theory--

JERRY

-- Theory? Nope.

KIAN

-- If you get local irradiation of a tumor in one spot, it could lead to cancer cells dying in other parts of the body.

ZORA

This really happens? It's not some Dr. Oz shit?

KIAN

No it's not Dr. Oz shit. It really happens. Rarely-- It's a Hail Mary, but... Reiss-Binder said they could see you a week from today for the irradiation session. Thursday.

JERRY

Will I even be alive then?

KIAN

Yeah. I-- of course.

JERRY

... I'm not going back to that place. I'm done.

KIAN

Can you not let your emotions get in the way right now?

JERRY

I can do whatever the fuck I want!!

ZORA

It's worth a shot, Jerry jan.  
Maybe just try it.

JERRY

Okay. Sure.

KIAN

Wait, just like that? I'm begging  
you and you give me nothing. She  
says one sentence and you're like,  
"Okay sure."

ZORA

I have the golden touch.

KIAN

If you don't want me busting my ass  
to figure this stuff out for you,  
just tell me.

ZORA

Kian jan--

KIAN

No, let him talk. You don't have to  
answer for him.

JERRY

Watch your tone with your mother.

KIAN

I'm literally trying to find ways  
to save your life and you're asking  
me to watch my fucking tone?!

JERRY

Kian--

KIAN

I'm sick of taking care of you!  
Worrying about you. I've been doing  
it my whole fucking life! The  
drinking... the never wearing a  
seat belt... the fucking cancer!

Kian storms off. Jerry musters some energy to follow him.

JERRY

(calling after him)

Kian! You know I can't chase you.  
Come on. Please.

Kian turns back, storming up to him.

KIAN

I have no brothers or sisters. I have no one. I'm doing all of this on my own!

JERRY

I know you've hated worrying about me. I wish you didn't have to. I wish I had my shit together. But I appreciate all you've done for me.

(beat)

You won't have to worry much more, son. Just stick with me a little longer and then you'll never have to worry about me again. You have this whole beautiful life ahead of you. One with a child of your own. And the only solace I take in dying now is knowing that I'll give you one less thing to worry about.

Kian hates the thought of this, shaking his head, not wanting to think about a life without his dad...

EXT. ZORA'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Kian opens the door to find Mallory holding GROCERIES and FROYO.

MALLORY

You're not losing me and your dad at the same time...

He smiles, kissing her. He then glances down noticing she's no longer wearing her wedding ring, showing she's ready to move forward. He grabs her hand, holding it.

He then bends down and rubs her stomach, speaking into it:

KIAN

Hey baby, this is your papa.  
(up to Mallory)  
Can it hear me? Does it have ears yet?

MALLORY

I don't know. I doubt it.

INT. ZORA'S HOUSE - DAY

Kian, Zora and Mallory go through OLD PHOTOS with Jerry. They're all eating FROYO. Listening to Maroon 5. It's a party atmosphere. Zora keeps rubbing Mallory's belly.

ZORA

Are you taking prenatal vitamins?

MALLORY

Uh, not yet. I just--

ZORA

You have to get the kind that's high in folic acid, otherwise the baby's brain won't form properly.

MALLORY

Oh, okay... good idea.  
(holding up a PHOTO to  
change the subject)  
Where was this one taken?

JERRY

That was in Tokyo, where I taught before Kian was born.

MALLORY

So handsome.

ZORA

Hey, don't get any ideas.

JERRY

You had your chance, Z. I'm single. Do they have dating sites for people in hospice? Hey, that's a good idea! One final hook up before you go. Call it "Ho-Spice."

They're laughing.

MALLORY

How long did you live in Japan?

JERRY

Went for one year, stayed for six.

KIAN

What were your favorite spots?

Jerry knows what Kian's doing, making up for lost time and questions unasked. He obliges.

JERRY

I taught at the International School of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo. It's such a beautiful country. Everyone's so kind.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

Meiji Shrine was my favorite place  
in Tokyo. Great place to relax and  
recharge. Also Todai-ji Temple in  
Nara. Man, I miss it.

(beat)

Wish I could've shown you guys...

INT. JERRY'S GUEST BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jerry lies in bed with Kian by his side. Jerry's looking  
through a STACK OF LETTERS-- hundreds of them that have been  
sent to him from all around the country.

KIAN

What do they say?

JERRY

People just wishing me well.  
Thanking me for helping them get  
sober. Telling me I'm going to beat  
cancer...

Jerry pauses, thinking about what he just said.

JERRY (CONT'D)

... Guess the joke's on them.

Kian notices a slight SLURRING in Jerry's speech when he  
speaks, but he doesn't say anything about it.

JERRY (CONT'D)

In 100 years, no one's gonna know  
my name.

KIAN

That's not true. I'm gonna make  
sure people know it. Your grandkid  
will know it...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kian's the only one awake, WRITING:

KIAN (V.O.)

(while typing)

*Some of the things I will always  
remember and cherish... our trips  
up the mountain...*

QUICK FLASH-- A young Kian and Jerry looking out on the  
spectacular view at the top of the mountain, both eating a  
DONUT--

KIAN (V.O.)  
*... Hanging out at Gravelly Point,  
 watching the planes...*

QUICK FLASH-- Young Kian and Jerry watch the planes take off and land at National Airport, just outside DC...

KIAN (V.O.)  
*... You picking me up after my  
 first day of pre-school...*

QUICK FLASH-- A three year-old Kian BAWLS his eyes out, not wanting to be at this pre-school. Then, out of the corner of his eye, he sees his dad, his hero, walking across the field towards him. He immediately bolts in his direction.

Jerry picks up his boy, hugging him tight.

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - DUSK

2019.

Kian sits in the same spot we left him. Hanna's beside him, looking at her dad, this crumpled up man--

EXT. HANNA'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

2016.

-- A 10 year-old Hanna cradles her father's head as Kian half-hangs out of his CAR, passed out DRUNK, his car parked diagonally across the front lawn--

YOUNG HANNA  
 Dad! DAD!!!

MALLORY rushes out of the house, frantically dialing 911 on a cordless phone--

INT. HOSPITAL, DETOX CENTER - DAY

Kian shivers, going through heavy withdrawals. Mallory is right by his side, holding a wet cloth to his head, running her hands through his hair.

Hanna pretends to play a game on her mom's phone, but keeps peaking up at her dad, worried for him--

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - DUSK

2019.

Hanna runs her hand through her father's sweaty hair like we just saw Mallory do.

HANNA

Let's go, dad. Let's get to the top.

KIAN

No. It's okay. We don't have to. This is good enough.

HANNA

... No it's not.

Hanna looks at her father, determined. The same look he's had throughout. Although she's a lot like her mom, she's also her father's daughter...

Kian coughs a few times, taking some breaths, reaching down deep for some strength.

They get up together, ready to finish the climb...

INT. ZORA'S GUEST BEDROOM - MORNING

2005.

Jerry lays in his bed. Kian, Zora, Mallory and a HOSPICE NURSE named BARB sit by his side. She's calm and professional, in her 50s.

JERRY

(slurred)

I'm having trouble forming words. You can hear it, right?

HOSPICE NURSE BARB

Yeah. I can see about upping your Prednisone. And if you want something stronger for the pain--

JERRY

No narcotics. I'm in recovery-- I intend on seeing it out to the end.

HOSPICE NURSE BARB

That's admirable, but it may get pretty bad.

JERRY

I don't want them, just something for my head and the slurring.

HOSPICE NURSE BARB

Of course. I'll talk to the doctor.



INT. JERRY'S GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kian watches his father sleep as he TYPES on his laptop:

KIAN (V.O.)  
*... I'll never forget you taking me  
 to Redskins games. Orioles games.  
 Wizards games. Caps games!*

QUICK FLASH of them cheering at various games.

KIAN (V.O.)  
*Letting me steer the car while  
 sitting in your lap.*

QUICK FLASH OF YOUNG KIAN DRIVING FROM JERRY'S LAP--

KIAN (V.O.)  
*The nights of you rocking me to  
 sleep as a little kid. Reading  
 Berenstain Bears...*

QUICK FLASH OF JERRY READING TO HIS SON--

KIAN (V.O.)  
*The day you brought home Pepper,  
 you picked me up and showed her to  
 me through the kitchen window--*

A young Jerry holds up a five year-old Kian so he can peek through the kitchen window to see a cute Beagle puppy (Pepper) sleeping on a doggy bed.

INT. JERRY'S GUEST BEDROOM - MORNING

Jerry has no sense of balance. He's trying to walk to the bathroom. Kian is spotting him.

JERRY  
 (stubborn, slurred)  
 I can do it!

KIAN  
 The nurse said I need to spot you.

Jerry reaches the door and tries to slam it on Kian, but Kian holds it open, attempting to come in.

JERRY  
 Get the fuck out!

KIAN  
 I'm not gonna look, I just need to  
 get you to the toilet.

Jerry starts to physically push Kian out of the bathroom.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
How are you so strong????

With some freakish strength, Jerry pushes Kian out of the bathroom and slams the door on him.

A beat later, Kian hears Jerry FALL, HITTING HIS HEAD on the TILE FLOOR.

Kian flings the door open to find his father knocked out cold, eyes open, staring through Kian, up at the ceiling.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
Dad! DAD!!!

Zora and Mallory rush in--

ZORA  
What happened?  
(seeing Jerry)  
Oh God!

Mallory calls 911. We stay with Kian and Jerry-- his eyes rolling back in his head.

KIAN  
Come on, Dad... come on...

Kian cradles his dad's head--

EXT. STREETS OF ALEXANDRIA - MORNING

It's SNOWING. Kian, Zora and Mallory are driving, following an AMBULANCE to the hospital...

INT. ALEXANDRIA HOSPITAL - MORNING

It's chaos. Jerry's screaming on a hospital bed in a NECK BRACE. He's unable to verbally communicate to them...

ALEXANDRIA HOSPITAL NURSE  
We need to sedate him.

ZORA  
He's trying to say something!

ALEXANDRIA HOSPITAL NURSE  
Doesn't matter. He can't be yelling like that.

More unintelligible screaming from Jerry.

MALLORY  
Can you just wait a minute?

ALEXANDRIA HOSPITAL NURSE  
Mr. Keating, last chance...

More screaming. Kian realizes something--

KIAN  
Wait-- his neck brace is pinching  
him.

The nurse loosens the brace, and Jerry calms down.

ZORA  
(to nurse, condescending)  
Good job. Really good job there.

DR. STEIN, too old to be working in an ER, comes up to them.

DR. STEIN  
Hi, I'm Dr. Stein, I understand  
he's in hospice care.

KIAN  
Yeah.

DR. STEIN  
Can I see his Advanced Directive?

KIAN  
He doesn't have one.

DR. STEIN  
Really recommend he get one for  
moments like this.

KIAN  
Well, too late.

DR. STEIN  
Makes moments like this a lot  
easier.

KIAN  
Train's left the station, buddy.  
What's the plan??

DR. STEIN  
We'll get him some food, send you  
guys home. How's that sound?

KIAN

Super.

JUMP TO:

Jerry's in a hospital bed, going to town on some YOGURT.

ZORA

Good job, Jerry. Keep eating. Get your strength back up.

Kian grabs his father's hand. Jerry grips it tight and looks into his son's eyes in a moment of lucidity.

He "boops" Kian's nose. Kisses his cheek. Showing him more affection than he has since he was told he wasn't going to make it.

He points to his eye, his heart, and then at Kian... "I love you."

INT. ZORA'S CAR - DAY

It's still snowing. Jerry is pointing the way home, WHISTLING when they make each turn-- his way of communicating now.

INT. ZORA KEATING'S HOUSE - DAY

Kian and Mallory carry Jerry from his wheelchair to his bed. He's unable to stand up on his own anymore.

Kian kisses his father's forehead. Jerry just rolls over, not acknowledging him, running hot and cold minute-to-minute...

INT. JERRY'S GUEST BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

... Kian and Mallory attempt to put a DIAPER on Jerry, who fights it with everything he's got, moaning and swinging while unable to actually sit up or speak on his own. He's taken a turn for the worse from just earlier in the day...

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Kian, Zora and Mallory attempt to sit Jerry up and put him in his wheelchair. Jerry has a confused look on his face, like he has no idea why he can't sit up on his own.

KIAN

Come on, Dad. You can do this. We're gonna take you to Hopkins so you can get some radiation. It might even help the cancer throughout your body.

(MORE)

KIAN (CONT'D)

The Abscopal Effect I told you about... Come on, pop. Use your legs.

Kian is determined, desperately trying to get him up and into his wheelchair.

Jerry looks at his son, pleading for him to stop.

Jerry guides Kian's eyes over to the framed picture of the Serenity Prayer hanging on the wall...

**God grant me the serenity to accept  
the things I cannot change;  
the courage to change the things I can;  
and the wisdom to know the difference.**

Kian nods, getting what his dad's trying to tell him. He finally gives in. Letting go. Accepting that nothing will save his dad...

INT. JERRY'S GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

... Jerry's breathing is starting to have a bit of a RATTLE to it. Kian sits with his dad, holding his hand.

KIAN

I'm not leaving your side, pop...

LATER THAT NIGHT:

Kian has made a bed on the couch in Jerry's room. He lies down, watching his dad sleep, rattled breathing getting more pronounced.

He absorbs the seconds, watching his Dad for as long as he can, knowing he won't be able to do this ever again...

He sits up, leaning in to whisper:

KIAN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna learn from this like you would want me to. I'm letting go so you can too. When you're ready. I'll be okay. I'll look for the bigger picture...

INT. JERRY'S GUEST BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

... Kian wakes up and looks at his father. He gets up, sits in close...

... and Jerry takes a breath in. It's a short breath. Shallow. With a long exhale. Then another long pause, short breath in... long exhale.

Mallory comes into the room, hugging Kian, rubbing his back.

She opens the blinds, letting the SUNLIGHT pour in. It's been gray for a few days in a row, but today it's sunny.

The sun hits Jerry's face. And he soaks it up, slightly smiling as he absorbs every ray.

Zora enters and her emotions overflow, wearing the TIFFANY'S EARRINGS Jerry got her...

ZORA

Oh Jerry... I love you. I've always loved you... I will always love you... I hope you can hear me... my sweet Jerry.

KIAN

Hear that, pop? Your plan of faking getting cancer so she'd fall back in love with you worked! You can wake up now!

They all laugh through the forming tears.

Kian grabs his father's hand, gripping it tightly...

And they just sit with him. Watching him breathe. Absorbing as many seconds as they can...

... And as the seconds tick away, Jerry's breathing gets more and more shallow... longer pauses between the breaths...

... Kian runs his hand through Jerry's remaining hair... gliding it across the scruff of his cheeks...

And in this moment, something miraculous happens.

Jerry's eyes shoot WIDE OPEN.

Kian stands up, looking down at his Dad.

Jerry takes in as much air as he can and summons his last bit of strength to mouth these words up to his boy...

JERRY

(barely audible)

I love you, son... as big as the Universe.

Jerry's eyes connect with his son's, then widen further, looking past Kian... at something beyond...

And then Jerry Keating takes his last breath on this Earth.

He's gone.

And his family, the ones he loves more than anyone, are right by his side. He is not alone.

There's pain. Heartbreak. And there's also a slight sense of relief. Of relief in knowing he doesn't have to suffer anymore. None of them have to.

Even though the fight has been lost, they will go forward and learn from this, as Jerry would've wanted. They will find ways to become better versions of themselves. They don't know it yet, but they will.

Right now though, they grieve. They bawl. They hug him and kiss him and hold him.

They struggle to breathe themselves, but they find a way.

MALLORY

I'll call Barb...

Mallory heads out of the room to make the call.

Zora bends down and kisses Jerry's forehead, before following Mallory.

Kian stays with his Dad, still holding his hand. He puts his head on his father's chest... looking at him...

KIAN

You will live on through me.  
Through your grandkid...

EXT. ZORA'S HOUSE - DAY

Kian walks outside with TWO FUNERAL PARLOR WORKERS, who wheel Jerry on a stretcher, covered by a sheet.

Shelly, Zora's neighbor from earlier, is exiting her house at the same time. She spots them--

SHELLY

Oh no, is that...? Did your dad...?  
Oh God no... no... no...

Shelly breaks down, weeping right there in her front yard.

Kian ignores her, watching as his dad is loaded into a funeral home VAN.

FUNERAL HOME WORKER

Sorry for your loss.

(beat)

Here's our card if you want to make a referral. You get a discount next time if you do...

INT. ZORA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kian stands in his dad's bedroom... The bed is still there. So is all the medical equipment. And his clothes. Shoes. Pills. Toiletries in his bathroom. His razor. Toothbrush.

Kian closes his eyes, wishing he could roll back time-- Back to when his dad wasn't sick.

JUMP TO:

Kian sits on his father's bed, typing on his laptop:

KIAN (V.O.)

*I regret not answering your calls more often. Sometimes I wouldn't answer, or would only talk for a minute. Now I can't get those calls. I'm going to learn from this... I'm so honored I got to be your son. I wish I got married. I wish you got to meet your grandchild. He or she will know your name. I promise I'll teach my kid all about you...*

INT. CUNNINGHAM FUNERAL HOME, DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

It's calm and creepy in this place. Like each pattern was selected with specific colors because they had been tested as the most calming combination.

Kian, Zora and Mallory sit across from EVELYN, the funeral home director. She's in her 40s, just a super sweet, kind-faced individual.

An URN rests on her desk between them.

EVELYN

... I think the urn is perfect. It's very Japanese-looking.

ZORA

Do you know if it's authentic?



EVELYN  
It's made from a top quality.

ZORA  
But is it authentically from Japan?

EVELYN  
I don't think any of our urns are  
"from Japan" per se, but this one  
definitely has that energy.

Everyone nods, good enough for them. Evelyn goes over the  
final paperwork.

EVELYN (CONT'D)  
Looks like we have everything here.  
We just need someone to identify  
the body.

KIAN  
What?

EVELYN  
To make sure we're cremating the  
right person. We're very careful  
about that for obvious reasons...  
Just need one of you.

Kian takes a breath, debating what he'd like to do...

KIAN  
... Can we all go?

EVELYN  
Oh yeah, for sure. Great idea.

Evelyn stands up, PULLING BACK AN ACCORDION WALL DIVIDER that  
just seemed like a regular wall until this moment. And right  
there on the other side is JERRY.

KIAN  
Oh God. He's just been there the  
whole time?

EVELYN  
Yeah.

Jerry's arms are crossed along his chest, wearing an outfit  
they picked for him.

They walk into the room, which is a chapel of sorts. There  
are pews and Jerry's at the front of the room.

KIAN

Oh, pop... I'm so sorry. I'm sorry  
I didn't make sure you got better.

MALLORY

You never had control over that.  
But you were there for him, and  
that's what he needed most.

KIAN

He was a good person. Why did this  
happen to him??

MALLORY

So much of life makes no sense. And  
it never will... Our lives are so  
annoyingly out of our control.

These words carry heavy significance for Mallory. Kian takes  
a breath. They continue to mourn and hold each other tightly.

Evelyn awkwardly waits by their side.

EVELYN

So if you could confirm that's him?

Kian shoots her a *"are you fucking kidding me?"*

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Okay, seems like it's him. Thanks.  
I'll just leave you to visit.

Evelyn walks back over to her office, closing the accordion  
divider wall.

Kian leans in close, whispering to his dad:

KIAN

I told you I was writing something  
new to take your mind off the  
cancer and make you proud of me.  
Well, I was lying. But I'm writing  
a novel for real now. And it starts  
with a letter from me to you. This  
is that letter. I love you, pop...

Kian tucks the letter between his father's hands, knowing  
this will be the last time he sees him...

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL - DUSK

2019.

Kian and Hanna reach the summit just as the sun is setting... and fuck is it beautiful. 360 degree views of the Shenandoah Valley as far as they can see, the sun's final rays smacking them in the face.

They're out of breath, exhausted, drained-- physically and emotionally--

They take it all in. Kian coughs a bit more, trying to catch his breath...

KIAN

Do you see it, Hanna? Can you see the bigger picture?

She absolutely breaks down here, tears streaming down her face, nodding "yes."

He looks down at his daughter and loses it as well, wrapping an arm around her...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Kian stands at a podium, wearing a black suit, looking out at a large group of people who are in deep mourning. He addresses the crowd, emotions raw:

KIAN

I'm 37 and I feel like I've given too many of these damn eulogies...

We pull out revealing an URN resting next to a picture of MALLORY.

Hanna sits in the front row with her grandma Zora, who is now 65. They're both sobbing.

INT. EDGEHILL RECOVERY CENTER, GROUP ROOM - DAY

2005.

Kian's standing at a different podium, giving the eulogy for his father... Mallory is in the front row, pregnant with Hanna, sitting next to Zora, who has lost her best friend.

EXT. STRICKLER KNOB TRAIL, SUMMIT - DUSK

2019.

Kian reaches into his large BACKPACK and pulls out an URN containing MALLORY'S ASHES.

HANNA

No. Stop... please. I can't do this. I don't want to do this.

Now we know why Hanna didn't want to go on this trip. Why she didn't want to face the finality of getting to the top...

Kian bends down to her level.

KIAN

My sweet girl, she's not gone. You know how I know? Because I'm looking right at her-- I see her in you...

QUICK FLASHBACK-- To Kian standing with Mallory in the same spot on the mountain. She's got the same eyes as Hanna. Same shape. Same color. Same look.

BACK TO PRESENT--

KIAN (CONT'D)

She's a part of you. And she always will be. She'll always be with us because of that. Because of you.

(beat)

I'll be around for a while. I quit smoking-- I know I still got the cough, but it'll go away. Stopped drinking. You don't have to worry about me-- That's not your job anymore. I'm gonna be here. You and I gotta stick together. We only got each other.

HANNA

What about grandma?

KIAN

Yeah and her too. She'll probably never die.

Hanna lets out a slight smile. Kian stands up, walking to the edge with Mallory's ashes, Hanna right by his side.

QUICK FLASH-- Kian, Mallory and Zora toss Jerry's ashes off the same cliff--

BACK TO PRESENT--

Kian and Hanna hold Mallory's urn together...

KIAN (CONT'D)

Ready?

Hanna hesitates... then finally nods.

KIAN (CONT'D)  
1... 2... 3...

They reach back and toss the ashes out over the cliff, but in the process, lose their grip on the urn and it goes flying--

KIAN (CONT'D)  
OH FUCK--

HANNA  
MOM!

They both peer over the edge, watching Mallory's ashes fly and spread across the Valley, while the urn itself tumbles all the way down...

KIAN  
... We'll get it on the way back  
down tomorrow.

HANNA  
Okay yeah.  
(beat)  
You said "fuck."

Kian laughs through the tears. Hanna does too, laughing, crying, allowing herself to feel the range of emotions...

They step back, taking some calming breaths...

... as the sun finally dips over the horizon...

KIAN  
We can come here whenever you want.  
Whenever you want to connect with  
your mom...  
(beat)  
Any time you need help seeing the  
bigger picture.

Hanna smiles, looks up at her dad--

QUICK FLASHES--

Hanna as a little kid being pushed on the swings by  
Mallory...

Playing soccer in the living room with her mom...

Laying in bed next to her mom while she reads her a book...

Cheering on the Caps at a hockey game with her...

And as we continue with these memories, we notice something... KIAN is also there with them. The more we go through these flashes, the more we notice Kian right there, with Hanna, with his family...

And we see Kian and Mallory racing down the street against their daughter...

And jumping on a trampoline with her...

And making faces with food stuck in their teeth...

And dancing together...

And singing...

And laughing... so much laughing... the three of them...

FLASH BACK TO PRESENT--

Hanna and Kian stand there, looking out, facing the uncertainty that lies ahead, each eating a DONUT.

HANNA

Love you mom, as big as the  
Universe...

Hanna reaches for her father's hand, holding it tight.

Finally.

CUT TO BLACK

"Home" by Phillip Phillips plays...