

BOYHOOD

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EXT. OUTSIDE SCHOOL - DAY

MASON waits outside his elementary school, laying in the grass staring up at the clouds. In the distance, the school door opens and Mason's MOM, Olivia, walks toward him.

MOM

Hey, love bug. You ready?

He is quickly on his feet and they are walking toward the car.

MASON

Yeah. Hey, guess what, Mom?

MOM

What?

MASON

I figured out where wasps come from.

MOM

Oh, yeah? Where?

MASON

Well, I think it must be if you flick a rock into the air just right, it'll turn into a wasp.

MOM

Dang...

MASON

Yep.

MOM

That's cool.

INT. CAR - DAY

Driving...

MOM

So how was your day at school?

MASON

Fine.

MOM

Hey, I had a good meeting with Miss Butler this time. I kinda liked her.

MASON

What did she say?

MOM

Well... she said that you weren't turning in your homework assignments. And I told her, "I know he does them, 'cause I check them every night." She said she found a big chunk of them crumpled up at the bottom of your backpack.

MASON

She didn't ask for 'em.

MOM

Well, baby, she doesn't have to. You're supposed to turn them in. And she said you're still staring out the window all day.

MASON

Not all day.

MOM

And she said that you destroyed her pencil sharpener.

MASON

Not on purpose.

MOM

Wait, she said that you crammed a bunch of rocks in it.

MASON

I thought if it could sharpen pencils, maybe we could sharpen rocks.

MOM

(stifling laugh)

Well, what were you gonna do with a bunch of sharpened rocks?

MASON

I was trying to make arrowheads for my rock collection.

MOM

Hm.

She glances back at him, with an understanding sigh.

EXT. HOUSE/DITCH - DAY

Mason rides his bike across the front yard and heads down the street. Soon he and his friend TOMMY are riding down the embankment of a large drainage ditch.

EXT. DITCH - DAY

Mason runs up, as Tommy is spray-painting a drawing on the concrete wall of the drainage ditch.

MASON
Dude, when's my turn?

TOMMY
I don't know.

Tommy hands Mason the can of spray paint. Mason begins to spray-paint a letter on the wall.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
(calling out)
...Maaason.

TOMMY
Samantha!

SAMANTHA
Oh! Tommy! Is Mason down there?

TOMMY
Yeah.

SAMANTHA
Well, tell him he has to come home
for dinner.

TOMMY (O.S.)
Okay.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mason lays on the floor watching a cartoon.

There's a knock at the door, and Mom comes out to answer it.
It's TED.

MOM
Hey.

TED
Hey, sweetie. Why aren't you ready?
Hey, Mason.

MASON
Hey, Ted.

TED
Come on, come on, hurry up. Let's
go.

MOM
What time is it?

TED
It's nine. Let's go, let's go.

MOM
Okay, I meant to call you, 'cause Janice flaked out. I don't have a sitter.

TED
Why didn't you call somebody else?

MOM
Well, I can't get a baby-sitter now, it's nine o'clock. But you're welcome to hang out with us.

TED
Well, no. I mean we have plans. The guys are expecting me.

MOM
Well... you can go.

TED (O.S.)
All right. Yeah, well, I'll come back in a couple of hours. Is that okay?

MOM
Yeah. Yes.

TED
All right.

MOM
It's okay.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The kids lie on either side of Mom, as she reads a story aloud to them.

MOM
(Reading)
"Turn back! Turn back! I don't wanna talk to Moaning Myrtle." "Who?" said Harry as they backtracked quickly. "She haunts one of the toilets in the girls bathroom on the first floor," said Hermione. "She haunts a toilet?"
(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)

"Yes, it's been out of order all year because she keeps having tantrums and flooding the place."

"I never went in there anyway if I could avoid it. It's awful trying to have a pee with her wailing at you."

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Mason lies awake in bed listening to his mother argue with Ted.

TED (O.S.)

Why can't you just say that?

MOM (O.S.)

I'm sorry. I don't want to go with you.

TED (O.S.)

You're sorry, that's bullshit!

MOM (O.S.)

That's right, I wanna stay here with my kids. That's what I'd rather do.

TED (O.S.)

All right. Would you stop using your kids as an excuse?!

MOM (O.S.)

I'm not using my kids as an excuse! You don't even know--

TED (O.S.)

I know you have to stay here with your kids! You're acting--

MOM (O.S.)

You have this immature life--

TED (O.S.)

And why do I always-- Why--

MOM (O.S.)

You have no responsibility.

TED (O.S.)

I have an immature life! I have an immature life?

MOM (O.S.)

And I have responsibilities, okay,
you don't know what it's like to be
a parent.

TED (O.S.)

No, I don't! And why am I responsible
for your mistakes in life?

MOM (O.S.)

If you had any idea. You don't think
I wouldn't--

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mason peeks around the corner to watch as the argument
continues.

MOM

Don't call my kids mistakes! Don't!

TED

I'm not responsible for your life
choic-- I didn't call your kids--

MOM

You said, "Your respons-- your
mistakes in your life," pointing at
my kids.

TED

I know what I said, you know what,
and immediately you use your kids
again.

Mason peeks through the doorway.

MOM (O.S.)

This is the reality: I'm a parent!

TED (O.S.)

That's, that's hysterical.

MOM (O.S.)

That means responsibility.

TED (O.S.)

I know you're a parent.

MOM (O.S.)

I would love to have some time to
myself! I would love to just go to
a fuckin' movie! You don't think
I'd like that?

(MORE)

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Go have some dinner, go to a bar! I don't even know what that's like. I was someone's daughter, then I was somebody's fucking mother! Okay, I don't know what that's like.

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Mason is comfortably asleep. Samantha slowly pulls the pillow out from underneath his head and smacks him with it.

SAMANTHA
 (singing)
 "Oops, I did it again... I played with your heart. Got lost in the game. Oh baby, baby..."

Mason throws a stuffed animal at her that she deflects.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
 "Oops, you think I'm in love. I'm sent from above. I'm not that innocent."

Another stuffed animal. She continues to sing.

MASON (O.S.)
 Stop! Quit it!

SAMANTHA
 "You see my problem is this. I'm dreaming away. Wishing that heroes truly exist. I cry watching the day. Can't you see I'm a fool in so many ways..."

MASON
 Quit! Mom!

SAMANTHA
 "But to lose all my senses-- that is..."

He tries to drown out this last bit with a sustained scream. Soon the door flies open and Mom enters, angry.

MOM
 What the hell is going on in here?!

Samantha has instantaneously shifted from singing to crying.

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Do you guys know what time it is?

SAMANTHA
(through tears/sobs)
He's throwing things at me...

MOM
Mason! Do not throw things at your
sister!

MASON
She's faking, she hit me first!!

MOM
Listen, both of you! I am going
back to bed. I don't wanna hear
another peep out of here for an hour.
Go to sleep.

Mom slams the door behind her. Samantha is suddenly fine,
almost cheerful.

MASON
(to Samantha)
Faker!

MOM (O.S.)
Hey!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Mason swings on a large outdoor swing, while Tommy sits
thumbing through a catalog. Immediately after, we see Mason
and Tommy looking through the lingerie section of the catalog
together.

MASON
(laughs)
Ohh!

TOMMY
(pointing, giggling)
Look what I found in the street!

MASON
Dude!

TOMMY
I know, right?
(turns page)
Look at those.

MASON
Hm, look at those!

BOYS
 (giggling)
 Ohh!!

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Moments later we see Mason having an introspective moment as he gazes upon a deceased bird's carcass in the dirt.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mom, Samantha, and Mason eat lunch.

MOM
 So listen, guys, I wanna talk to you about something, and you might not like this idea at first but... we're moving to Houston.

MASON
 When?

MOM
 Well, soon. We should be out by the first, so we don't have to pay two rents next month.

SAMANTHA
 No, Mother, we're not moving. Nope, nope, sorry Mom. Nope. Nope.

Smack, smack, smack...

MOM
 Samantha, I have to go back to college so I can make us a better living.

Smack.

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 With this job I can't take care of us the way I'd like to. I can't keep going this way. And Grandma said she'd help us out... and it would be nice to be near her.

SAMANTHA
 Fine, Mother. You can do whatever you want but
 (shrugs)
 We're not moving.
 (Smacks)

Mason moves his fork around in his bowl.

MASON

What about our friends?

MOM

Oh, baby, we can e-mail them or write.
We can come back to visit. And guess
what?

She reaches out to touch Samantha's arm.

MOM (CONT'D)

This place that Grandma found us,
you'll each have your own room.
Right?

Samantha shrugs.

MOM (CONT'D)

And there's a pool.

Samantha shrugs again, clearly not sold on the idea.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mason and Mom are lying on his bed together.

MASON

Mom, do you still love Dad?

MOM

I still love your father... but that
doesn't mean it was healthy for us
to stay together.

MASON

What if after we move he's trying to
find us and he can't?

MOM

Oh, that won't be a problem. He can
call Grandma and she'll tell him or
he can call Information. We won't
be hard to find.

She pushes back his hair lovingly.

MASON

Is he still in Alaska?

MOM

Well, that's what your uncle says.

MASON

Probably taming polar bears or
something.

MOM

Yeah... well, I hope they're taming him.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The moving van drives off as mom puts another item in the pile of stuff to be left at the curb.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Mom and Mason are getting ready to paint in the empty bedroom. They're looking at the two lone murals, which look a little odd without the bunk bed in front of them.

MOM

Here, wanna help me out?

MASON

Sure.

MOM

Okay. Take this paint... very carefully... and paint any little smudge or mark or anything on the baseboard there, behind the door, and all around the doorways on the inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Meanwhile, Samantha is talking on the phone.

SAMANTHA

(on phone)

She says we're gonna come visit and I'm gonna write and call you. Oh, wait, hold on a second. I'm getting another call.

(Pushes Flash)

Hello? Sorry, Tommy, Mason can't come over today. We're moving. And I'm on the other line. Bye.

(Pushes Button)

Althea? I'm gonna be sending Sailor Scout instructions. Email, and write back telling me how the other scouts are doing. Well, because you're the leader now.

During the last bit of this conversation, Mason slowly paints over the "growth chart" lines on the bedroom door jamb.

EXT. OUTSIDE FRONT DOOR - DAY

Carrying their final belongings from inside the house, they slowly exit the front door and head over to the car.

MOM

Okay, let's go, 'cause I wanna get there before it gets dark.

SAMANTHA

Goodbye yard, goodbye crepe myrtle, goodbye mailbox. Goodbye box of stuff Mommy won't let us take with us but we don't wanna throw away. Goodbye house, I'll never like mommy as much for making us move.

MOM

Samantha! Why don't you say goodbye to that little horse shit attitude? Okay? 'Cause we're not taking that in the car.

Just before he gets in the car, Mason is looking out at the neighborhood.

MASON

Goodbye old lady who listens to rock music and rides a motorcycle.

Soon the car is pulling away. As they drive off, Mason notices out his side of the car, Tommy approaching on a bike in the distance, gesturing toward the car. Mason watches him out the window, but says nothing as Tommy recedes into the distance.

INT. CAR - DAY

Mason and Samantha are restless and energetic, letting their childish energy get the best of them as they wrestle, hit, and squeal at each other in the back seat of the car. It is all well-intentioned though, as the two share a laugh after Mom tells them to quiet down.

SAMANTHA

Eeeee! Don't!

MOM

Hey! Hey, what's happening back there? Stop, put the barrier up.

SAMANTHA

Ahh! Stop! No!

Mason punches the pillow barrier between himself and Samantha, while his Mom speaks.

MOM

Hey, put the pillow between you.
Make a barrier, come on. Stop.
We're gonna play a game called The
Game of Silence. Whoever can stay
quiet for the longest period of time
wins. You guys think you can do
that? Okay, go!

The family's car moves on toward the Houston skyline just as dusk arrives.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Mason appears grumpy, trying to shove what he needs for the day into his backpack quickly.

MOM (O.S.)

The bus'll be here in ten minutes.

MOM (CONT'D)

(steps into doorway)
Put that homework in your backpack!

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

Go eat! Baby, go eat!

MASON

I am!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Samantha places pancakes on their plates while talking to Mason in a cryptic language, reminiscent of pig latin.

SAMANTHA

...I affatay servay yoohay.

MASON

Speak English! Shut up. Mom! She's
speaking that stupid language again!

MOM

Samantha!

SAMANTHA

I was speaking perfectly clear
English, Mother. You know, he's a
little slow in the head. He did
officially flunk first grade.

MOM
Sit your butt down.

SAMANTHA
Yes sir, Mother sir!

She salutes.

MOM
All right, listen up guys. Grandma's gonna pick you up after school. Your dad is in town for the day so you're gonna spend the afternoon with him.

SAMANTHA
Hmm.

MASON
Is he moving back?

MOM
I don't know.

SAMANTHA
We haven't seen him in about eighty years.

MOM
Like... a year and a half.

MASON
(points to Samantha)
Ha-ha.

SAMANTHA
Oh please...

MOM
Can we please eat, here? The bus is coming. Who wants syrup?

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mason plays Oregon Trail on a classroom computer, while his TEACHER speaks in the background.

TEACHER (O.S.)
All right, nice cursive. Okay, Mason, when I check the mobiles, am I gonna find yours?

MASON
No.

TEACHER
And why not?

MASON
'Cause I didn't finish it.

TEACHER
Well, it's time to finish it.

MASON
Just a minute.

TEACHER
No, let's do Apple Quit.

Mason cuts a sheet of construction paper in the shape of the state of Texas, presumably to finish his mobile. He sits across from a female classmate, GIRL IN RED, who teases him.

GIRL IN RED
Time to finish your work, Mason.
"Apple Quit."

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LATER

Samantha sits with her GRANDMA, Catherine, showing off her good grades on various school reports. Mason sits in his own chair, playing with a Gameboy.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
So this is my history test...

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Mm-hm. A+, very good.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
And that's another history test.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Mm-hm, and another A.

SAMANTHA
Yeah, well, it doesn't have a plus
but... oh well.

GRANDMA
Oh.

Grandma strokes Samantha's hair proudly.

SAMANTHA
And then um, that's my report on
lizards...

GRANDMA
Oh, let me see your pictures.

SAMANTHA
And then, um... Oh yeah, these are my pictures.

GRANDMA
What is that?

SAMANTHA
Well, that's called a dewlap.

GRANDMA
A dewlap, okay.

SAMANTHA
Oh yeah, this is a math test.

GRANDMA
Oh, "A" again.

Mason reaches into candy dish on the table.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
Mase, that's the last candy, okay?

MASON
Okay.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Okay. We need to put this stuff up.

EXT. STREET/FRONT PORCH - DAY

A Pontiac GTO pulls up outside.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
That's him.

DAD gets out of the car and hurries to the door. Samantha squeals, as she runs out to greet him.

SAMANTHA
Daddy! Hi!

DAD
Oh my! Look at you, you're so big!

He hugs them both.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey, MJ! What's happening, buddy?
Are you guys ready to have some fun?

MASON AND SAMANTHA

Yeah!!

DAD

Yeah! Alright. Hey, Catherine, how are you?

GRANDMA

Mase. I'm good.

DAD

Good to see you.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Yeah.

DAD

What time should I have these rascals back?

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Oh, I don't know, around 7:30, I guess. I gotta get 'em home by 8:00.

DAD

Aw, you know what, why don't I take them over to their mom's?

A moment of tension passes between them.

GRANDMA

No, that's okay. She's expecting me.

DAD

Oh no, that's alright. You guys know where it is, don't you?

SAMANTHA

Mm. Yeah.

DAD

All right, I'll do it. It's no problem.

GRANDMA

I don't think that's such a good idea.

DAD

Look, it's no problem. Alright?

GRANDMA

(rolls her eyes)
Okay...

DAD
You guys ready to go?

MASON AND SAMANTHA
Yeah!

DAD
Let's do it, go!

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Whoa. Wait a minute, you gotta get
your stuff.

SAMANTHA
Oh yeah.

GRANDMA
You got backpacks, your purse.
Homework. Go to the bathroom.

DAD
Can't believe how big they are.

GRANDMA
Yeah. Time is goin' by.

DAD
Mm. Must be nice for you, having
'em here in Houston.

GRANDMA
I love it, yeah. I'm volunteering
at their school.

DAD
Oh yeah? What you doin' over there?

GRANDMA
I'm in the library. You know, reading
to the little ones.

DAD
Huh. Great.

GRANDMA
So -- Alaska, huh?

DAD
Yeah.

GRANDMA
Are you back?

DAD
We'll see. How's Liv?

GRANDMA

She's a busy girl. Yeah. She's back in school. But she's working, and single parenting... a lot to juggle.

DAD

You guys got everything, huh?

MASON AND SAMANTHA

Yeah.

DAD

Alright, say goodbye to your grandmother.

MASON (O.S.)

Bye!

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Bye grandma!

DAD

Alright, let's roll. Now wait a second. You're not the type of kids who like presents, are ya?

SAMANTHA

Yes!

DAD

Naw, you don't --

MASON

Yeah!

SAMANTHA

'Course we are!

DAD

Really? Let's do it!

MASON AND SAMANTHA

Yeah! Yay!

MASON

I call front seat!

SAMANTHA

I wanted the front seat, though.

DAD

Alright. Well, Mason gets it on the way there and Samantha gets it on the way back, huh? Hop in there.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Seat belts!

DAD
Seat belts. Alright.

He motions to Grandma that he's got it covered.

DAD (CONT'D)
Seat belts. Not like this car has
any seat belts.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - LATER

Samantha is bowling, her pink ball hurdling down the lane
toward the pins.

DAD (O.S.)
Nice... Nice... Nice...

Strike!

SAMANTHA
Yay!

DAD
Yeah! Alright!

Dad is clearly impressed and excited for Samantha, as he
stands to embrace her.

DAD (CONT'D)
Come here, come here, yes! That was
awesome! Get up there Mason, get up
there!

SAMANTHA
Daddy!

DAD
(to Samantha)
It was so good!
(to Mason)
Come on. Let 'em know who you are,
buddy. Let 'em know who you are.

Dad kisses Samantha. Mason throws his bowling ball.

DAD (CONT'D)
Yes! Yes! Yes! Alright, alright...

Gutter ball.

DAD (CONT'D)
Don't worry about it.

MASON
Wish we could use the bumpers.

DAD
Bumpers are for kids. You know, what're you, two years old? You don't want the bumpers. Life doesn't give you bumpers.

Mason tosses the ball again.

DAD (CONT'D)
There we, there we go, there we go!
We got something there! We got something!
We got something! Ooooh!

Another gutter ball.

MASON
Last time I went bowling we had bumpers and it was a lot more fun!

Dad gets up to bowl.

DAD
You don't want the bumpers, alright? You bowl a strike with the bumpers and it doesn't mean anything. Trust me. Just lay it out on the lane. One, two, three and...

Samantha mimes smoking, points to Dad, as if to say that he smells of cigarettes. It's Dad's turn to bowl.

DAD (CONT'D)
Ka-blam! Let's hear it for the father! Whoo!
(To Samantha)
Get up there, get in there...

SAMANTHA
Yay! Great job!

DAD
Get out there, girl, get out there!

Score-keeping screen flashes an animated alligator that reads:
STRIKE

EXT. Street as car burns (on TV screen)

TV NEWSMAN (V.O.)
Four Blackwater operatives have been viciously attacked in their cars in
(MORE)

TV NEWSMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Fallujah. The bodies and cars were
 set on fire, after insurgents started
 shooting, killing American citizens.

DAD (O.S.)
 Look at this. It's a disaster.

TV NEWSMAN (V.O.)
 But the ambush didn't end there.
 The bodies of the four men were
 savagely ripped apart...

INT. BOWLING ALLEY CAFE - EVENING

The family sits around a table enjoying their snacks, while
 Dad smokes a cigarette.

DAD (O.S.)
 Alright, let me tell you what's
 happening in Iraq, alright? Exactly
 what every thinking person in the
 world knew was gonna happen before
 they got started. Bush and his little
 numb-nut fanatics he's got around
 him, they don't give a rat's ass.

SAMANTHA
 That's a quarter.

DAD
 What's a quarter?

SAMANTHA
 You said a-s-s.

DAD
 Oh, sorry. My bad.

SAMANTHA
 And my teacher says it's a good war,
 because it's better to be safe than
 sorry.

DAD
 That's what they're teaching you in
 school? Alright, listen to me.
 Listen to your father, okay? That
 is the lie. That's the big lie.
 Iraq had nothing to do with what
 happened at the World Trade Center.
 You know that, right?

SAMANTHA
 I guess.

DAD

Alright. Who are you gonna vote for next fall, MJ?

MASON

I don't know.

SAMANTHA

He can't vote. He's not eighteen.

DAD

Yeah, oh -- alright, who would you vote for?

MASON

Kerry?

DAD

Anybody but Bush! Okay?

SAMANTHA

Are you gonna move back?

DAD

Uh... I'm plannin' on it. You know, I gotta find a job.

MASON

Are you and mom gonna get back together?

DAD

I don't know. That's not, uh... entirely up to me, you know?

SAMANTHA

I remember when I was six, you and mom were fighting like mad. You were yelling so loud and she was crying.

DAD

That's what you remember, huh?

SAMANTHA

Yep.

DAD

You don't remember the trips to Galveston, camping in Big Bend, all the fun we had?

SAMANTHA

Nope.

DAD
You ever get mad at your mother?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

DAD (O.S.)
You ever get mad at your brother?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

DAD
Yeah. You ever yell at him?

SAMANTHA
Oh yeah.

DAD
Yeah. Doesn't mean you don't love him, right?

SAMANTHA
Mmm...

DAD
Look, the same thing happens when you're grown up, alright? You... You know, you get mad at people. You know, it's not a big deal.

MASON
What'd you do in Alaska?

DAD
I worked on a boat for a while. Um, I tried to write some music.

MASON
Did you see any polar bears?

DAD (O.S.)
No, but I saw a Kodiak bear. It was fuckin' huge.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Dad! That's fifty cents for the F-word!

Dad reaches into his wallet.

DAD
I'm sorry. Here, take a dollar, alright? Keep the change.
(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

You guys are gonna be seein' a lot more of me. Okay? I missed you two real bad, while I was gone. Okay, I want you to know that. I just needed to take some time. You know, to... Just... Your mom and me, okay... Well, your mother, okay, is a piece of work. Alright, I think, I think you know that by now. Alright? And I'm just, I'm so happy to be with the two of you. Okay. And I'm sorry about that bumper business. Alright. I'm gonna get better at stuff like that, okay?

As a token of reconciliation, Dad high fives them both, smiling.

INT. MASON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mason shows Dad his collection of arrowheads and a long feather, all laid out on top of a skateboard. Mason describes each of the pieces to his Dad.

MASON

I got that one at Dripping Springs...

DAD (O.S.)

Mmhmm.

MASON

And um, my friend Rodney gave me that one.

DAD (O.S.)

Yeah?

MASON

And I bought that one.

DAD

You bought this one?

MASON

Yeah.

DAD

You found this at Dripping Springs?

MASON

Uh-huh!

DAD

Wow! What else do you got?

MASON

Well, um, these are snake vertebrae.

DAD

Snake vertebrae? That's disgusting.
Huh? Mason, I don't want you
collecting snake vertebrae anymore.

They both share a laugh.

DAD (CONT'D)

Is this the feather I sent you?

MASON

Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah, it is.

Samantha enters the room carrying photos and a stuffed animal.
She sits down next to Dad, interrupting Mason.

SAMANTHA

Oh, Dad! Um, I forgot to show you
these, um, these basketball pictures.

DAD

You're on a basketball team?

SAMANTHA

Yeah!

DAD

Wow! Check you out!

MASON

Yeah, and these are-- these are beaver
claws.

DAD

Beaver claws?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

I know. That's me.

DAD (O.S.)

What, you hunting beaver, huh?

MASON (O.S.)

(laughs)

No.

SAMANTHA

You see, that's McKinney, that's
Meg, and that Gem. They're all my
friends --

MASON
...And this is dried Canadian grass...

DAD
Uh-huh. What position do you play?

SAMANTHA
Um, guard.

MASON
This is dried Canadian grass... And,
and uh...

DAD
Uh-huh. Wait, you scoring any points?

SAMANTHA
Well, about eight or ten a game.

DAD
Eight or ten a game? That is awesome!

SAMANTHA
Yeah!

MASON
Once she didn't score any and she
cried!

DAD
You cried?

SAMANTHA
Well, only a little bit.

DAD
Awww.

Dad kisses Samantha's forehead.

INT. FRONT ENTRY - MOMENTS LATER

MOM
Hello!

SAMANTHA
Oh, Mason, Mom's home!

MASON
Mom's home!

Dad quickly shifts from playful to nervous.

DAD
Hey, Mom's home.

SAMANTHA

Mom, hi!

MOM

Hey.

SAMANTHA

Oh, look at this owl Daddy gave me!
Isn't it cool? See, its head spins!
And look at this bracelet! It was
made by Indians in Alaska.

MASON

And Mom, Daddy made this cool hand
carved grizzly bear and this tiki.

MOM

It's a totem. Wow.

SAMANTHA

And guess what else? We went bowling
and I made four strikes!

MASON

Yeah, and we got to ride around in
Dad's car!

MOM (O.S.)

Wow.

DAD

Hey, Liv.

MOM

Hey.

DAD

I know you wanted me to drop them
off at your mom's. I just thought
it'd be easier if I brought 'em over
here.

MOM

Well, it really screwed up my plans.

MASON

Well, we just wanted to show him our
rooms.

SAMANTHA

Yeah.

MOM

Did you guys eat anything?

SAMANTHA

Well, we had some french fries at the bowling alley.

MOM

Did you do your homework or...

MASON

No.

SAMANTHA

Not yet.

MOM

Okay. Can I talk to you outside for a second?

DAD

Yeah. Sure.

(as he exits)

They had more than french fries.

The children scramble to find a suitable spot for eavesdropping but their parents are inaudible.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha and Mason look out the window, down at their parents having an argument below.

MASON

Do you think he's gonna spend the night?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Doesn't look like it.

Mom walks away from Dad. He stands there for a beat, then saunters off. The kids are visibly disappointed.

EXT. COLLEGE - DAY

Mason and Mom walk across the campus lawn.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

A professor, BILL, lectures to the class. Mason and Mom are seated in the classroom audience.

BILL (V.O.)

Okay. An unconditioned stimulus, something that produces an unlearned, involuntary, unconditioned response.

(MORE)

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

Now in Pavlov's experiment, what was the stimulus, that he used? Come on now, people! Tough weekend? What's the deal, here? Meat. Right? Meat. Meat powder, actually. Whatever meat powder is, it worked on this dog. Okay. He put the meat powder in there and it produced an unconditioned response in the dog, which was? Salivation. Alright. Now, who can give me another example of an unconditioned stimulus-response pair that happens to you everyday. It's probably happening to some of you right now.

(pause)

How about sex? Sure, you know. You see an attractive member of the opposite gender, you have an automatic response. You don't have to think about it. Mick Jagger wrote a song about... Oh, when they call your name, I salivate like a Pavlov dog.

Class laughs.

BILL (CONT'D)

Thank you very much. Class dismissed.

Students leave, as Mason and Mom approach the professor.

MOM (O.S.)

Doctor Welbrock, this is my son Mason.

BILL

Ohh.

MOM

Mason, this is Dr. Welbrock.

BILL

Your son. Now see, I thought this was a boy genius who was taking my college course.

Mason laughs. He and Bill shake hands.

MOM

He wasn't feeling well today, so I thought I'd bring him with me.

Bill touches Mason's forehead.

BILL

Ah! No fever. It's a con job. I can tell because I have a nine year old son, he pulls this all the time. Same kind of deal. Hey, you play soccer?

MASON

Mm, no.

BILL

Neither does my boy. He hates soccer. He likes computers. My 11-year-old daughter, loves soccer. Who can figure? Hey, maybe we can get all you guys together sometime, huh?

MOM

Maybe, yeah. Well, you ready to go?

MASON

Yeah.

BILL

Nice to meet you, Mason.

MASON

Nice to meet you, too.

BILL

And thanks for coming to my class.

Mason walks ahead of them as Olivia and Bill speak a little more intimately. It's clear that they have more than just a professor-student relationship. Mason notices a bit of this and looks on, confused.

BILL (CONT'D)

Olivia.

MOM

Hm?

BILL

Nice kid.

MOM

Thanks.

BILL

So you think, uh, Grandma might be available for a little baby-sitting?

MOM (O.S.)
 (giggles)
 Maybe.

BILL
 Really? Well, great.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Mason and Samantha play an outdoor trampoline game with Randy and Mindy, their new stepbrother and stepsister. They are in the big backyard of their new home, where Dr. Welbrock and his children have lived.

GRANDMA
 Hey kids, they're here!

KIDS
 Oh, they're home, they're home!

GRANDMA
 Hurry! Hurry!

They all scramble inside and quickly assemble for a big welcome home ceremony in the front entryway. A sign reads, "Welcome Home Honeymooners, We Love You Mom & Dad". Olivia and Bill open the door to enter the house.

MOM
 Hey!

KIDS
 Mom! Daddy!

BILL
 Oh! We're here! Hey, we've returned!

Hugs all around. The family talks over one another. Bill notices the "Welcome Home" sign the kids made.

SAMANTHA AND MASON
 Hi Dad!

BILL
 Samantha, Mason, look -- Thank you.
 That's very nice.

MOM
 (to Randy and Mindy)
 Hey guys!

The group all speaks at once.

BILL
 (To Grandma)
 Hi, Mom. How are you?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
 Mom, Mom, Mom, Mom! Look at the
 sign we made!

BILL
 (To Grandma)
 They give you any trouble?

MINDY
 Samantha and I made it all ourselves.

BILL (O.S.)
 I know the boys helped you with that
 a lot.

MINDY
 No, not at all!

The group continues to speak at once.

BILL
 That's good... Oh, pass out the
 goodies.

Mom passes out a bag of presents to each of the kids.

MOM
 This is for the girls, this is for
 the girls...

BILL
 (to Grandma)
 Don't worry, we got you some absinthe
 or something.

GRANDMA
 Oh, let's pour it.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The family sits around the table, swapping fun stories and
 pictures from their time apart.

MOM
 You take this big elevator up, and
 when we got to the top, we flew a
 paper airplane off.

RANDY (O.S.)
 And what happened?

MOM (O.S.)

It flew!

BILL (O.S.)

It flew away. It went for miles.
Went onto the Arctic Trail.

They laugh.

SAMANTHA

Oh, did you guys kiss under the Bridge
of Sighs?

MOM

Yes.

BILL

Yes, we did.

Bill leans in to kiss Olivia.

MINDY

Hey, Mom, can we see your wedding
ring?

MOM (O.S.)

Oh, sure.

Mom hands over her wedding ring. The boys look at a 20
Questions game.

MINDY (O.S.)

(Eyeing the ring)

Wow.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

(Holding the ring)

Technically that's a fancy step cut
surrounded by miniature brilliant.

MASON

I wish we could've gone to Europe.

RANDY

Yeah.

BILL

Yeah, we'll go as a family next time.
But you didn't miss much, really.
We just stayed in the hotel room the
whole time playing video games.

Mom laughs.

MASON

Really?

BILL

And the hotels are really small and really old. Squeaky.

The WAITER comes over.

WAITER

Can I get you anything else? Would you like to see a dessert menu?

BILL

(To Randy)

Listen, I told you to put that away.

(To Mom)

Would you put that in your purse, please? Computer games at the table.

(To Waiter)

Yes, uh, please, another bottle of wine.

MASON

(to Waiter)

Um, Coke.

MOM

Um, you know what? Mason, you're okay with water. No more Cokes.

(to Waiter)

Thank you.

BILL (O.S.)

(To Randy)

Now how 'bout you? Did you finish your science project?

RANDY

Not quite yet.

BILL

Well, did you work on it? I mean, did you build anything, or plan anything, or..?

RANDY

A little.

BILL

(to Mindy)

Did he work on it at all, Mindy?

MINDY

No.

BILL
 (to Mindy)
 Did he sit around playing video games
 with Mason the whole time?

MINDY
 (laughs)
 Yeah.

BILL
 Mm. You were supposed to finish
 that by the time I got back.
 Remember? Hey.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Our gang of kids, plus two more (NEIGHBORHOOD BOY and
 NEIGHBORHOOD GIRL) walk home from school together. The boys
 walk in a pack slightly in front of the girls.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY
 Grievous is the best, man.

MASON
 Yoda! Yoda, man.

RANDY
 No, Yoda is!

MASON AND RANDY
 Yoda!

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY
 He has four arms.

MASON
 Yoda! Represent.

MINDY
 I hate Ms. Billingsly. Everybody's
 been saying she's lesbian.

NEIGHBORHOOD GIRL
 She is. She hit on Stacy.

MINDY
 Man, that's gross.

SAMANTHA
 Think it's true?

NEIGHBORHOOD GIRL
 She's always walking in the locker
 room.

RANDY
I think I still have a couple of
those--

PAUL, overly large/mentally impaired neighborhood teen they
seem familiar with, walks by awkwardly bouncing a basketball.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY (O.S.)
Hey, Paul. Tell us a joke.

PAUL
Damn. Fuck. Go to hell. Ass.

The kids look at him quizzically and keep walking.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Mason and Randy are playing a video game.

MASON
Uh! Blew you up.

RANDY
Aw heck, man. That was not fair.

MASON
No, actually it was. That's like
the fairest thing ever.

RANDY
Ugh.

MASON
Oh, once again I take you down.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Samantha and Mindy sit with Mom on the sofa, laughing, while
Mason and Randy sit opposite them. Bill is up first, as the
whole family plays charades.

MASON
Three Musketeers?

RANDY (O.S.)
First word.

MASON AND RANDY
Chicken? Bird?

Mom and the girls laugh.

BOYS
Second word.

RANDY
Um... hood?

MASON
Big hair? Uh. Robin Hood!

BILL
(tapping his nose)
Ah!

Mom applauds.

BILL (CONT'D)
Brilliant child!

Samantha stands to take her turn.

MOM AND MINDY (O.S.)
Second word.

MINDY (O.S.)
Blanket?

MASON
Hey, you can't use props!

Samantha turns to smack mason with the blanket.

BILL
Hey, hey, hey, hey. Cut it out.
Hey, uh-- Judges speak: No props.
No props. Can't use props. You can
do it without that. Think, think,
think.

MOM (O.S.)
Um, bunch!

MINDY (O.S.)
Folding? Is it like...

MOM
The gathered? Folded.

MINDY
Uh...

The boys laugh.

MINDY (CONT'D)
Messing around with a blanket...
Wrinkling it, uh...

MOM
Wrinkling clothes... A Wrinkle In
Time!

Mom and Mindy clap and cheer at their victory.

INT. BOOK RELEASE PARTY - NIGHT

Sign reads: "7-15: Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince. Magical Midnight Release Party 9PM." The kids are all present, dressed in Harry Potter costumes. They participate in a variety of Harry Potter festivities, beginning with a trivia contest.

BOOK TRIVIA JUDGE
What are the guards at Azkaban?

Samantha rings the bell first, as Mason fumbles for the correct answer.

SAMANTHA
Dementors!

Samantha got it right.

EMCEE
(into a microphone)
Front of the line, are you ready?

All four kids cheer.

EMCEE (CONT'D)
Count down with me, ladies and
gentleman!

The rest of the crowd joins in.

EMCEE AND GROUP
Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six!
Five! Four! Three! Two! One!

EMCEE
Let's go! Who!!

The kids each pass through the long line, all smiles as they receive their books.

MINDY
Thank you.

MAN
Next.

SAMANTHA
Thanks.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Mason, Randy, and Bill are practicing at a golf course. Bill is advising the boys on their stances and golf swings.

BILL

(to Randy)

Oh no, no, no, no. Back up and take a practice swing first, remember? Nice and easy. Sweep the floor. Sweep the floor. That's good. Don't swing too hard, Randy.

(to Mason)

He always swings too hard.

Randy takes a swing.

BILL (CONT'D)

Hey, alright! Very good.

It's Mason's turn to take a swing.

BILL (CONT'D)

(to Mason)

Back your feet up a little bit. Yeah, like that. Now you're gonna hit it straighter. Okay. Alright, go up and hit it. That's good. Nice slow swing is going to be better for you.

Mason swings.

BILL (CONT'D)

Alright!

Later, Randy putts the ball and misses.

BILL (CONT'D)

(to Randy)

I don't know man, you must've been... See, your feet are too open, Randy.

Mason sets up to take his putt.

BILL (CONT'D)

(to Mason)

Nice and natural.

Mason hits the ball into the hole. Bill high fives him.

BILL (CONT'D)

Yes! Go! Alright! Give me five. Good putt, son, good putt.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)
 Did you see that, Randy? That's the
 way to do it!
 (to self)
 Alright, birdie putt.

Bill misses the easy putt.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Goddamn it. Son of a bitch.
 (to Mason and Randy)
 Get my clubs, would you? Get the
 ball.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Bill and the boys drive up to the local liquor store.

BILL
 This is just in case we have guests
 this weekend.

Bill gets out of the car.

RANDY
 He always says that. But we never
 have guests.

The boys are chewing green bubble gum. Randy blows a big
 bubble and Mason pops it with his hand.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Bill pours a generous amount of vodka into a large, opaque
 cup. He then hides the vodka bottle behind some detergent
 in the laundry cupboard.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha and Mindy are busy loading the dishwasher. Bill
 enters the room, drink in hand.

BILL
 Samantha, I think I heard your dad
 pull up.

SAMANTHA
 Oh, alright.

BILL
 You guys finish your chores?

MINDY
 Not quite.

SAMANTHA

Just about.

BILL

How 'bout the dusting, Sam?

SAMANTHA

I haven't done that yet.

BILL

Well, I saw you working on your art project. You mean you had time to finish your little art project but you didn't have time to finish your chores? I thought we talked about that.

MINDY

Dad, it's fine. I can finish the dusting. I have all day here.

BILL

No, it's not fine, Mindy. You have your own chores to do and Sam has hers to do. Huh? It's simple! Poor choice there, Sam. Hurry up.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Mason is pulling weeds, while Randy rakes the lawn.

BILL

(yelling from the porch)

Mason! Your dad's here...

As the boys approach...

BILL (CONT'D)

You guys aren't settin' any speed records, are you? What'd you do, get about half done? Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. So did you finish?

MASON

No.

BILL

Is the job complete?

Mason shakes his head "No".

BILL (CONT'D)

So, what are you going to be doing tomorrow? Same thing, right?

MASON AND RANDY

Yeah.

BILL

Okay. Go.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mom is doing work at the kitchen table, as Samantha and Mason kiss her goodbye.

MASON

Bye, Mom.

MOM

(to Mason)

Bye, baby. I love you.

SAMANTHA

Bye, Mama.

MOM

(to Samantha)

Bye, honey. Have fun with your dad.

BILL (O.S.)

Just a minute, Mason.

(to Mom)

The boys didn't finish raking the leaves. Samantha did not finish dusting. So tomorrow, when they come home, instead of swimming and all the other little stuff that they want to do, they're gonna do their chores. Right?

MOM

Right! Okay, guys, you had this conversation, you understand?

The boys nod.

MOM (CONT'D)

Tomorrow?

The girls nod.

MOM (CONT'D)

Okay.

BILL

Thank you. I just wanted you to back me up on that so I'm not the only one yelling at them all the time.

MOM

Okay, I back you up. You guys got that?

Mason nods.

MOM (CONT'D)

We all agree, everybody agrees, right? Tomorrow, chores?

Samantha nods.

BILL

Well, they don't hear it, you know. It goes in one ear and out the other.

SAMANTHA

But Dad, I mean, dusting is pointless.

BILL

It's not pointless, you just don't like to do it.

SAMANTHA

But I mean, who dusts anymore?

BILL

You do when we ask you to! And don't -- Olivia, don't let her back-talk me in front of the other kids, please. Thank you.

MOM

Samantha, please...

SAMANTHA

Whatever!

Samantha turns to walk away from the conversation.

BILL (O.S.)

Bye-bye, have a wonderful weekend.

MOM (O.S.)

Mm. Okay. Bye, guys. Love you.

The other kids follow Samantha as she exits. Bill sits down at the table with Mom.

BILL

I'm sorry, but I thought we talked about it. You have to draw a line, you have to back it up.

MOM
 Okay. It's just... you have so many
 lines Bill. Everything's a line.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Dad is parked in the drive way. He gets out of the car to
 greet the kids.

DAD
 Hey, Randy!

RANDY
 Hey!

SAMANTHA AND MASON
 Bye.

RANDY AND MINDY
 Bye.

DAD
 Hey, you two. How you doin'? Oh.

MASON
 Shotgun.

DAD
 Here, let me get this bag here. You
 doin' okay, darlin'?

SAMANTHA
 Yeah.

DAD
 Yeah? Ah. What about you, cowboy?

MASON
 Pretty good.

Dad throws the kids' bags in the trunk.

DAD
 Yeah? Alright. Let's roll!

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

They drive down the street in Dad's car.

DAD
 You guys ready for the big game?

SAMANTHA
 Yeah.

DAD
Sam, who are the Astros playing
tonight?

SAMANTHA
I don't know.

DAD
Milwaukee Brewers. Alright, get to
know 'em, get to hate 'em. Mase!
How you been, huh? How was your
week?

MASON
Pretty good.

DAD
Yeah? What you been up to?

MASON
Not much.

DAD (O.S.)
No? You still hangin' with that kid
Joe?

MASON
Yeah.

DAD
Yeah, he's still your best friend?

MASON
Yeah, I guess.

DAD
Okay.
(To Samantha)
How 'bout you? How was your week?

SAMANTHA
Fine.

DAD (O.S.)
What you been up to?

SAMANTHA
Nothin' really.

DAD
You um, you still working on that
sculpture project?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Yeah.

DAD (O.S.)

Yeah?

SAMANTHA

Almost finished.

DAD (O.S.)

What's it of?

SAMANTHA

Nothing.

Dad pulls the car over and parks.

DAD

Alright, no-no-no-no-no. Nope, that is not how we're going to talk to one another. Alright? Now, I will not be that guy. You can not put me in that category, alright? The biological father who I spend every other week with and I make polite conversation, you know, while he drives me places and buys me shit. No! Talk to me.

He turns to Samantha in the passenger seat.

DAD (CONT'D)

Samantha, how was your week? Uh, I don't know Dad, it was kind of tough. Billy and Ellen broke up, and Ellen's kind of mad at me because she saw me talking to Billy in the cafeteria. And you remember that sculpture I was working on? Well, it was a unicorn and the horn broke off. So, now it's zebra. Okay? But I still think I'm going to get an 'A'. Alright?

Dad turns around to address Mason in the back seat.

DAD (CONT'D)

Mason, uh, how was your week? Well Dad, you know it was kind of tough. Joe, he's kind of a jerk, actually. He stole some cigarettes from his mom and he wanted me to smoke 'em. But I said no, cause I knew what a hard time you had quittin' smokin', Dad. How 'bout that? Is that so hard?

SAMANTHA

Dad, these questions are kind of hard to answer.

DAD

What is so hard to answer about what sculpture are you making?

SAMANTHA

It's abstract.

DAD

Okay. Okay, that's good. See, that's, I didn't know that. I didn't know you were even interested in abstract art.

SAMANTHA

I'm not. They make us do it.

MASON

But Dad, I mean why is it all on us though? You know, what about you? How was your week? You know, who do hang out with? Do you have a girlfriend? What have you been up to?

DAD

I see your point.

Mason smiles.

DAD (CONT'D)

So we should just let it happen more natural, right? That's what you're sayin', right?

Mason nods.

DAD (CONT'D)

Okay. That's what we'll do. Starting now.

EXT. BUTTERFLY MUSEUM - DAY

Dad, Samantha, and Mason are pointing out different butterflies they find, using a nature chart. A butterfly lands on Mason's shoulder.

MASON

Hey, check this out.

SAMANTHA

That would be a... That would be a
Magnificent Owl. Caligo Atreus.

DAD

What's that one? Look at this.

Dad opens his hands and shows them a butterfly in his palms.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Whoa.

DAD

What kind is that?

SAMANTHA

That looks like a Zebra Longwing.

DAD

Alright.

SAMANTHA

Cool.

DAD

This one's incredible. That's the
owl one, right?

SAMANTHA

Yeah. Magnificent Owl.

DAD

I think he went pee-pee on you, bud.

Dad laughs.

EXT. SCULPTURE GARDEN - DAY

Dad, Samantha, and Mason play tag around a large outdoor
sculpture.

MASON

One, two, three, four, five...

Soon they are running in circles around it.

DAD

Ahaa! Ahh! Get away from me! Get
away from me! Get your sister --
Ahh!

EXT. PARK - DAY

Dad is tossing a football with Mason and Samantha.

DAD

Yo, Mase, look at me here. Make a diamond with your hands, alright? Fingers and thumbs. Keep your hands soft. Hey, Sam.

Samantha throws the football to Dad.

DAD (CONT'D)

Very nice. That's how you want to catch it, just like that. Even when you're runnin', that's what you're thinkin' about, that diamond. That diamond, and soft hands.

Dad throws the ball to Mason.

DAD (CONT'D)

There it is.

Mason throws the ball back to Samantha.

EXT. PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Dad, Samantha, and Mason crouch down into starting line positions.

DAD

Down! Set! Hut! Ahhhh!

Dad releases the ball down the hill and the three of them chase after it.

DAD (CONT'D)

No no no no no!

The ball kicks up and into Samantha's hands. They are now chasing after her.

SAMANTHA

Yes!

DAD

Don't let her get -- No no no no no!

INT. BASEBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

Dad, Samantha, and Mason watch a live baseball game.

DAD (O.S.)

Let's go, Roger!

The crowd reacts to the game.

DAD (CONT'D)

Guy's incredible. He's unhittable this year! Now just so you know, what we're watching here, is history. Now you see this guy out here? This dude is like forty-three years old and he's strikin' out guys half his age. This guy's ERA is 1.47, alright, can you believe that? Now if the Astros could just get a few runs maybe we'd win a game.

MASON

Dad, do you have a job?

DAD

Ha! Why would you ask me that?

MASON

I don't know. Mom wanted to know and I didn't know what the answer was.

DAD

Mom wanted to know. Alright. Well, you can tell mom that I just happen to have passed my second actuarial exam, alright? So... you tell her that. How's she doing?

SAMANTHA

Great.

DAD

She finishing school?

SAMANTHA

Yep, all 'A's.

DAD

All 'A's huh? Like mother, like daughter, right?

The kids leave to get hot dogs, etc. Mason puts mustard on his.

They return to the game. A clutch Astros home run and the crowd is cheering. Our guys celebrate with high fives, etc.

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

You got this! That's outta here!
That's out-- Oh! Oh!

Fireworks go off. The crowd stands to their feet.

DAD (CONT'D)
Yeah!! Fuckin' A!

INT. DAD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The TV is playing the horror film HOSTEL. JIMMY sits on the couch watching the movie, as Dad and the kids enter.

SAMANTHA
Hi, Jimmy.

JIMMY
Hey, Samantha!

MASON
Hey, what's up, Jimmy?

JIMMY
What's goin' on, Mason, man?

Mason and Jimmy fist bump.

MASON
Astros won.

JIMMY
You went to the game?

Dad enters the room.

DAD
What, I'm the only one with any arms around here? Nobody else can carry anything, huh? Help their old man out?

MASON
What you watching?

Jimmy gestures for silence.

DAD
Aw, come on Jimmy, man! You knew the kids were comin' this weekend.

Dad clears dirty dishes and paraphernalia from the table.

DAD (CONT'D)
Can't you just help me out a little bit, just --

JIMMY
I'm sorry, muffin.

DAD
 Yeah, don't "muffin" me, alright?
 Don't put me in that position.
 Alright, I'm not your fuckin' Tony
 Randall.

SAMANTHA
 Dad, it's always a mess.

DAD
 It was not a mess this morning.
 Okay?

JIMMY
 I mowed the lawn.

DAD
 Oh yeah, great.

Dad stretches out beside Samantha on the couch.

DAD (CONT'D)
 Oh, come on man! Turn this shit
 off. Come on, give me that thing.

Dad takes the remote control away from Jimmy.

DAD (CONT'D)
 Did you watch the game?

JIMMY
 (laughs)
 No.

DAD (O.S.)
 Lane won it with a three-run homer.
 It was beautiful, wasn't it?

Samantha shrugs.

DAD (CONT'D)
 Sam lost her mind! She's a huge
 Astros fan.

SAMANTHA
 Sure.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - LATER

Dad plays the piano and sings, while Jimmy plays guitar.
 The kids sit at the kitchen table, listening intently.

DAD

"Well Saturday night was a lunar eclipse, I sang 'em a song, went somethin' like this: Well go to sleep, my weary babies, Let the sounds roll on by, Tonight we're safe here in Houston, With this, your daddy's lullaby. Your mother's got a new husband now, He seems alright, I wonder if he's readin' them stories, And kissin' them goodnight? Well babysitters say they miss me, I know I shouldn't hope it's true, The teacher says my son paints pictures of a family all in blue, She says she caught him whispering to the window, Will Daddy please come home? I know I could call him up, but what if his mother answers the phone?"

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Samantha is lying in her bed, listening to her iPod.

DAD

You brush your teeth?

She removes her ear buds.

SAMANTHA

What?

DAD (O.S.)

Did you brush your teeth?

SAMANTHA

Oh. Yeah. Yeah.

DAD

You gonna fall asleep with those things in your head?

SAMANTHA

Maybe.

DAD

Yeah well, try not to, alright?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Okay.

DAD

You want me to turn off the light?

SAMANTHA

Sure.

DAD

Okay, goodnight Sam.

SAMANTHA

'Night, dad.

JIMMY

(leaning in doorway)

Goodnight, Sam.

SAMANTHA

Goodnight, Jimmy.

DAD

Hey... that was a fun day, right?

SAMANTHA

Yeah it was. Sorry.

DAD

Why?

SAMANTHA

That Mason had to be there, you know.

DAD

(laughs)

Goodnight.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mason is lying on the couch in the dark, trying to sleep.
Dad is lying on the other couch, reading a book.

MASON

Dad? There's no like... real magic
in the world, right?

DAD

What do you mean?

MASON

You know, like elves and stuff.
People just made that up.

DAD

Well, I don't know. I mean what makes
you think that, that elves are any
more magical than something like...
like a whale?

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

You know, I mean, what if I told you a story about how underneath the ocean, there was this giant sea mammal that used sonar, and sang songs, and it was so big that its heart was the size of a car? And you could crawl through the arteries? I mean, you'd think that's pretty magical, right?

MASON

Yeah. But like... right this second, there's like no... elves in the world, right?

DAD

No. Technically no elves.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Dad, Samantha, and Mason pull up in the GTO. They sit in Mom's driveway, saying their goodbyes.

DAD

Love you guys.

MASON

See you, Dad.

DAD

Alright. Be well. Okay. Have a great week. Sam, I'll see you next weekend?

SAMANTHA

Alright. Oh yeah, that's right.

DAD

What?

SAMANTHA

Susie has a birthday party next Saturday.

DAD

A sleepover?

SAMANTHA

Yeah.

DAD

Alright. I'll talk to your mom about it.

SAMANTHA

Bye, dad.

DAD

Don't worry about it, okay? Have a great week.

SAMANTHA

Had a great time.

DAD

Okay.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Mason, Randy, and the Neighborhood Boy sit around a computer screen. They appear to be looking at something illicit.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY

Aw, man. How do you guys not know how to do this? I'll make you some bookmarks. Just a second. Shit, guys.

A knock on the door interrupts them. They close the laptop immediately and turn around, trying not to look guilty.

MINDY

Randy, and Mason, Dad wants you guys downstairs.

RANDY

Why?

MINDY

You're getting haircuts.

The boys stand to exit.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Mason sits for his haircut, while Randy and Bill wait to the side. Mason is clearly distressed as the barber glides an electric razor over his head.

BILL

This is gonna look so much better. You're gonna look like a man instead of like a little girl. You're takin' the eyebrows off next, right, Byron?

Bill nudges Randy, and laughs. Mason does not find it funny.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MORNING

The kids wander down the hallway, filing into Mason's bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Randy, Samantha, and Mindy enter one at a time, to let Mason know they are leaving for school.

RANDY
Mason, we're leavin'.

SAMANTHA
You're not sick.

Mindy is the last to leave the room, shaking her head in disbelief.

INT. FRONT ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

The kids file down the stairs. Mom is getting ready to go.

MOM
Bye, guys.

KIDS
Bye, mom.

MOM
Where is Mason?

RANDY
He doesn't feel too good. I don't think he's going to school.

SAMANTHA
He's totally faking it.

MOM
Bye.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mom knocks on Mason's door, then enters the room.

MOM
Mason, what's goin' on?

MASON
I don't feel good.

MOM
Yeah? Well your head feels fine. So get your ass out of bed.

(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna drive you to school, you got five minutes and don't make me late.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mom is dropping Mason off at school.

MASON

I mean, he didn't even ask! He just cut it. I mean, it's my hair!

MOM

Well, no wonder you were angry. I'd be angry too.

MASON

I look like a martian now.

MOM

Honey, you know what? I'm gonna talk to him about it later, okay?

MASON

Yeah, I tried to call you but you didn't answer your phone.

MOM

I'm so sorry. I've been so busy with school... Hey.

She touches his hair, lovingly.

MOM (CONT'D)

For what it's worth, it's hair and it will grow back. Now I can see your pretty eyes and your foxy face.

MASON

Why'd you even marry him? He's such a jerk.

MOM

Well, Bill has his good qualities. You know, nobody's perfect. And now we have a family.

MASON

We already had a family.

With this, Mason turns and exits the car.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Mason walks down the hall, towards his classroom door.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mason enters the classroom, just as his class begins reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

STUDENTS

I pledge allegiance to the flag of
the United States of America, and to
the Republic for which it stands,
one nation, under God, indivisible,
with liberty and justice for all.

Students snicker at Mason's new haircut.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Please join me in the Texas pledge.

STUDENTS

Honor the Texas flag, I pledge
allegiance to thee, Texas, one and
indivisible.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Thank you. You may be seated.

The students continue laughing at Mason.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Alright! Alright class, as you know,
we've been working on our mythology
projects. And we're going to be
writing papers about gods and
goddesses. We've listed those gods
and goddesses here on the board. We
added a couple of monsters, for some
of you who might be interested in
that. And you're going to write
your essay about your god or goddess,
and to make sure that you cover
everything, let's make sure that we
do all of these things right here...

Mason is handed a note from across the room.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

First of all, we need to name your
god or goddess, and you need to
include who, what, when, where, why,
and how...

The note reads: Mason, I think your hair looks kewl! - Nicole

TEACHER (CONT'D)

So make sure that you cover all those things when writing your essay.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Mason and Randy ride their bikes, while the Neighborhood Boy skateboards alongside them.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY

There's a bump right there.

Neighborhood Boy skates off in a different direction.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY (CONT'D)

Alright, I'll see y'all later, guys.

RANDY

Yeah.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Mason and Randy pull up to a half open garage and drop their bikes outside. Mom can be seen laying on the floor of the garage, crying.

MASON

Mom, are you okay?

RANDY

What happened?

MOM

No -- Go in the house! Go! Go in the house! Go in the house!

BILL

Your mother had a little accident. Now she's being dramatic.

Mom is still crying as the boys exit. Bill enters the garage with a drink in his hand.

BILL (CONT'D)

Get off the fucking floor Olivia, for Christ's sake!

Mom continues to cry.

INT. DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Bill walks in angrily, carrying a bottle. He loudly bangs things on the table, and pours himself a drink.

BILL
I'm having a drink with my dinner.
Anybody else have a problem with
that? Hm? Samantha?

The family is seated at the dinner table, practically frozen.

SAMANTHA
No.

BILL
Mindy?

MINDY
No.

BILL
I didn't think so.

He drinks the entire glass, and slowly zeros in on Mason.

BILL (CONT'D)
You don't like me much, do you Mason?
That's okay, I don't like me either.
Think that's funny, huh? You think
that's fuckin' funny?

Bill throws his empty glass at Mason's plate, shattering it.

MOM
Oh!

BILL (O.S.)
(to Randy)
What's the matter, you feeling a
little left out?

Bill throws the empty whiskey bottle past Randy. It shatters
on the floor.

MOM
Oh!

BILL
Clean it up, goddamnit! Clean it
up!

MOM
Bill! Bill!

BILL
Clean it up, goddamnit! I hate
squash!

Bill walks away, leaving the shocked family at the table.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mason watches THE LANDLORD web video on his laptop. The other kids lounge about the room, listening to the audio.

SAMANTHA

How many times can you watch that, Mason?

MASON

It's funny.

A moment passes as Mason watches his video.

MASON (CONT'D)

Has he ever gotten this bad before?

RANDY

No, but he's yelled a lot.

MINDY

Yeah, but he hasn't thrown and broken stuff.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bill sits on the coffee table, facing all four kids in a row on the sofa.

BILL

Give me your cell phones. So nobody talked to her, huh?

The girls shake their heads no. Bill is checking their phone call histories.

BILL (CONT'D)

Mason?

MASON

No.

BILL

Mindy?

MINDY

No.

BILL

I'll believe you... Samantha?

SAMANTHA

No.

Bill holds her phone screen out, as if to prove her wrong.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I didn't talk to her. She left a message.

BILL

What'd she say?

SAMANTHA

Nothing much.

BILL

What did she say?

SAMANTHA

She said she'd be back later.

BILL

And that's all? "I'll be back later," click?

SAMANTHA

She said, "Stay in your rooms. I'll be back later."

BILL (O.S.)

I'll be back later, stay in your rooms. And that's all? Hm?

SAMANTHA

Yeah.

BILL

Where is she?

SAMANTHA

I don't know.

BILL

Where is she?

SAMANTHA

She didn't say!

BILL

Alright, everybody get in the car. Hurry up! Get in the car!

EXT. LIQUOR STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Mindy stands at the ATM. The screen first reads: PLEASE TAKE YOUR RECEIPT. Then: INSUFFICIENT FUNDS. She walks over to Bill's car window.

MINDY

It's still not working.

BILL
Ohh, bullshit. She took it all.

INT. DRIVER'S SEAT - CONTINUOUS

Bill sloppily writes out a check. It's obvious that he has been drinking.

BILL
Alright, Randy, go cash this. Uh...
Tell him I'm not feeling well or
something. I don't know. Mason, go
with him. Here. Here's my ID.

Mindy gets back into the car, as Mason and Randy exit.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Mason and Randy enter the liquor store.

CLERK
Hi, good afternoon, fellas. What
can I do for you today?

Randy lays the check and driver's license down on the counter,
for the Clerk to examine.

CLERK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Now what's this? Can't read this.
Hey! This isn't you, who is this?

RANDY
(pointing outside)
It's our... dad.

Bill waves from the car.

RANDY (CONT'D)
He's not feeling well.

CLERK
Oh! Hey! Yeah, I know him. Okay,
here we go. Five hundred bucks.
One, two, three, four... Five hundred
bucks. Alright? Don't forget your
dad's ID.

The boys leave the store, while the Clerk calls after them.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Alright, take care of your dad now,
son. You've only got the one.

INT. CAR - DAY

Bill is impatiently stuck behind a slow-moving car.

BILL
 Damn it. Get outta the way! Jesus
 Christ. God!

The children SCREAM as Bill weaves in and out of traffic trying to pass the car.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Calm down!

MASON
 What the hell?!

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Mom walks into the front entry, but stops there. She has a friend, CAROL, waiting behind her.

MOM
 (shouting)
 Samantha! Mason! Samantha!

Samantha is at the top of the stairs observing the scene. Bill approaches the front entry.

BILL
 Where the hell have you been?

MOM
 I'm leaving you, Bill. We're moving out.

BILL
 I doubt that.

MOM
 Samantha and Mason! Come down!

BILL
 No, mm-mm, don't think so. Oh, who's this?

CAROL
 I'm not here for you!

BILL
 Oh, really? Oh, I know, you're here to protect my wife from me. Well, thank you so much, you two.

He reaches towards her.

MOM
Okay, stay back! Now behave!

BILL
Why don't you come inside here, huh?
Come inside here.

(To Samantha and Mason)
Where the hell are you goin'? Get
your ass upstairs, you're not goin'
anywhere.

MOM
Stop!
(to Samantha and Mason)
Come on!

BILL
Where the hell do you think you're
going?

Bill notices Randy and Mindy listening.

BILL (CONT'D)
Get upstairs! What the hell--

MOM
Hey!

BILL
Nobody's going anywhere, goddamnit.

MOM
Stop it!

BILL
No, goddamnit!

Bill moves to block them from leaving the house with his
arm.

MOM
Don't touch my kids!

BILL
Alright, take 'em. Go on, go on.

MOM
Don't touch them!

BILL
Take 'em!

CAROL
Come on. It's okay, it's okay, it's
okay.

BILL
Well take 'em then, just take 'em!
Go!

Bill turns back to Mindy and Randy.

BILL (CONT'D)
(to Randy and Mindy)
Get upstairs!
(calling down the
street)
Olivia!

MOM
Seat belts! Put your seat belts on.

The car backs out of the driveway and leaves.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

SAMANTHA
Where are we going?

MOM
We're going to stay with Carol and
her family for a while.

Samantha and Mason look around.

MOM (CONT'D)
Don't look back.

CAROL (O.S.)
It's gonna be okay.

INT. CAROL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mason and Carol's son, LEE, play a boxing game on Nintendo Wii, while her daughter, ABBY, sings in the background. Mom brings the boys a snack.

MOM
Hey, Lee and Mason. Take a break.
Here's a snack.

Abby continues to sing. The room is tense.

CAROL
Hey, Abby, why don't you come help
me with this, huh?

SAMANTHA
Why couldn't Randy and Mindy come
with us?

MOM

I'm not their legal guardian, honey.
That would be kidnapping. I can't
just...

SAMANTHA

Well, what's gonna happen to them?
What happens when their legal guardian
is dangerous and abusive?

MOM

You know, I don't know honey. I
called their mom. I called the Child
Protective Services. You know, I
have you and your brother. We were
in a dangerous situation. You're my
responsibility.

SAMANTHA

Are we ever gonna see them again?

MOM

I don't know. And I hope so.

SAMANTHA

How much longer are we gonna be here?

Mom fights back tears.

MOM

Not long. We're...
(starts crying)
Oh, I don't -- I don't know. I don't
have the answer to everything.

CAROL

Hey, listen. We are happy to have
you here as long as you want. As
long as you need. This is fun for
us, isn't it?

ABBY

Mm-hmm.

CAROL

Yeah, it's like having a big sister?
Like having a brother.

MOM

We're gonna help out, right? You're
not even gonna know we're here.

CAROL

Okay.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mom pulls up to drop Samantha off at the front doors of her new Junior High School.

SAMANTHA

Mom, this is awful. You're dumping me in some parking lot of this school where I don't even know anyone! I'm leaving all my friends and I didn't even get to say goodbye! I don't know where to go!

MOM

Okay, Samantha. You go right through that door. The office is right there. They're expecting you, they're gonna give you your schedule. Here's your lunch money. I will pick you up right here at 3:30.

SAMANTHA

I'm wearing dirty clothes! Because you wouldn't even let us get our stuff! We don't even have a place to live! This sucks!

Samantha gets out of the car, slamming the door behind her. Mom screams out of the window as she walks away.

MOM

Samantha... I'm doing the best I can! And you're right, it sucks! But it doesn't suck half as much as having a drunk fool slam your head against a wall! So cut your horseshit attitude.

Mom turns to Mason in the back as he climbs toward the front seat.

MOM (CONT'D)

Put your seat belt on!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Mom is walking Mason to his class.

MOM

You know if you need anything I'm in room 112, right?

Mason nods.

MOM (CONT'D)

Okay. This is Mrs. Darby's room.
Oh, honey, it's gonna be okay. Okay?

Mom leans in to kiss him.

MASON

Mom...

Mason walks away, embarrassed at her public affection.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The students all make small talk as they wait for class to begin. Mason enters and looks to MRS. DARBY for instruction.

MRS. DARBY

Hi! Are you Mason?

MASON

Yeah.

MRS. DARBY

Hi. I'm Mrs. Darby. I'm glad to meet you. Why don't you sit here?
(to Kenny)
Kenny! Off!

Kenny climbs down from on top of his desk and takes his seat.

KENNY

Yes ma'am.

MRS. DARBY

Kenny. This is Mason and I want you to show him around today, okay?

KENNY

Got it.

MRS. DARBY

Okay.

KENNY

Hey dude. Welcome to the suck.

The boys trade a casual low five and exchange a smile.

MRS. DARBY (O.S.)

Everybody, listen up. We have a new student joining us today. His name is Mason, he's sitting in the back row.

(MORE)

MRS. DARBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Kenny's gonna be his buddy, but I
 want each one of you to take the time
 today, to introduce yourselves, and
 welcome him to school. Okay?
 Alright? Let's get started.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Mason pushes an Obama/Biden campaign sign into the ground,
 before he and Samantha walk across the street. Samantha
 waits in the street with more signs, while Mason knocks on
 the RESIDENT's front door.

RESIDENT (O.S.)
 What?

The white-haired Resident is standing to Mason's right,
 beneath his carport.

MASON
 Oh, hi. Can I put an Obama sign in
 your yard?

RESIDENT
 Do I look like a Barack Hussein Obama
 supporter?

Mason shrugs.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)
 No.

Mason turns to leave.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)
 This is private property. Get off.
 I could shoot you!

He rejoins Samantha at the street.

MASON
 What a dick.

SAMANTHA
 He had a Confederate flag on his
 house.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha is now talking to a young, BLONDE HOUSEWIFE.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE
 I love it!
 (MORE)

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)

Young Obama supporters out on the trail. This is great! Are you doing this through your school?

SAMANTHA

Um. Our dad's a big supporter.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE

Oh, that's great. I mean, we've just got to pull together to get this win, right?

SAMANTHA

Yeah.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE

Oh, I just love him so much. I mean I have these dreams where I'm just kissing him because I just love him so much! He's so cute, isn't he?

SAMANTHA

(laughs)

Yeah.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE

Do you know, I made these t-shirts for my kids. "My Momma's for Obama!" Do you like it? It's good, right? Yeah.

Samantha turns to walk towards the street.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Thanks for the sign!

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

No problem.

Dad pulls up in his car, arriving to pick them up.

DAD

Hey, alright! Looks good! How many you got left, two? Alright, alright, we're done. Let's get out of here. Come on, Sam.

Dad spots a McCain sign in the front yard across the street.

DAD (CONT'D)

(to Mason)

Go get that McCain sign, would you?

MASON
 (hesitating)
 What?

DAD
 Get the McCain sign! Go rip it up,
 come on! Get it, get it, get it...
 Go! Go! Go!

Mason runs across the street to grab the sign.

DAD (CONT'D)
 Good job, buddy. Yeah. Proud of
 you, son.

Dad closes the stolen sign into the trunk of his car, before
 the three of them drive off down the street.

SAMANTHA
 You guys are gonna get us arrested.

DAD
 Hey, look. I'm a patriot, alright?
 Sometimes in this life, you gotta
 fight.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY CAFE - EVENING

They sit around a table talking.

DAD (O.S.)
 And what is it that you do at these
 parties?

SAMANTHA
 I don't know... talk, dance, listen
 to music.

DAD
 Uh-huh. And that's more fun to you
 than going camping with your brother
 and your father who love you?

SAMANTHA
 Yes. Sorry.

DAD
 Wow. Is there gonna be alcohol there?

SAMANTHA
 Probably not. Maybe some of the
 seniors.

DAD

Mm-hmm. I know what this party is. The parents are out of town, right? Somebody's uh, scored a keg, right... You guys are gonna have a good time, trash the whole house... Right? Am I right?

SAMANTHA

No.

DAD (O.S.)

No? No?

SAMANTHA

No, Dad. Amy's really responsible.

DAD

Mm-hmm. Who's gonna be there?

SAMANTHA

Marie, Christine, Amy... Everyone.

DAD

Is uh, is that guy on your Facebook page, is he gonna be there? Hm?

SAMANTHA

Who?

DAD

Come on, the guy that has got his arm wrapped around you with his hair over his eyes and --

SAMANTHA

Garrett?

DAD

Garrett, is that his name? Alright, is Garrett gonna be there?

SAMANTHA

Probably?

DAD

Probably.

(to Mason)

Uh-huh, you see? I learn more about her from her Facebook page than I do from our scintillating conversation.

(to Samantha)

Is he your boyfriend?

SAMANTHA

Kind of.

Dad turns to Mason for further information.

DAD

Have you met him? Has he been around the house?

MASON

Sometimes.

DAD

Sometime-zz? Zzz?

Dad turns his attention back to Samantha.

DAD (CONT'D)

You have a boyfriend... Wow. Have you heard of Sarah Palin?

SAMANTHA

Yes.

DAD

What's the one thing that you know about Sarah Palin's seventeen year old daughter?

SAMANTHA

She's pregnant?

DAD

That's right. And what is the one thing that you are not going to be in a couple of years when you turn seventeen?

SAMANTHA

Pregnant?

DAD

That's right! Alright, now what are the, the two ways that you can achieve that goal? The first is... not have any sex. Okay? That's the first way. Okay? Just not engage in that. That did not work out very well for your mother and me. And what's the second way?

Mason stands to leave the table.

DAD (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

MASON

Bathroom.

DAD

You don't have to go to the bathroom. Sit down, Mason. Just... Just sit down. What's the second way? Alright? Has your mother talked to you guys about this stuff?

SAMANTHA

Oh, Dad. Dad.

DAD

No, come on. Has she talked to you about... contraception?

The kids are visibly uncomfortable with the conversation.

DAD (CONT'D)

Huh? What has she -- condoms? Has she talked about that?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Oh, Dad. Please!

DAD

What? What?

SAMANTHA

That's enough.

DAD

Well. Does Garret have a condom?

SAMANTHA

Ohh! God! Dad!

DAD

What? What, come on Sam. We have to be able to talk about this. Alright? Come on, we do. We can do it. We can do it. Just stay with me here. Alright? It's as hard for me as it is for you. But, seriously though, alright, I read an article in the paper the other day... that said that although U.S. teenagers are not the most sexually active, we have the highest rate of teenage pregnancy. Okay?

A woman, TAMMY, walks up to the table, interrupting their conversation.

TAMMY
Hey. What's goin' on?

DAD
Oh, hey. Hey, Tammy. How you doin'?

Dad stands to greet Tammy.

TAMMY
Nice to see you.

DAD
Wow, yeah, good to see you. Um,
Tammy, this is my daughter Samantha.

TAMMY
Hey.

DAD
And this is Mason Junior right here.
Tammy.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Mason Junior.

DAD (O.S.)
Say hi.

MASON
Hi.

TAMMY
Hi, Mason. Nice to meet you. Heard
a lot about you guys.

DAD
Yeah, yeah. What're you doin' here?
You uh...

TAMMY
Oh, I'm just here with some friends.

DAD
Oh, well, uh....

TAMMY
Yeah. What are you guys up to?

Dad sits back down at the table.

DAD
Um, we're going camping. Well no,
this one is not going camping. This
one is going to a party.

TAMMY
 (to Samantha)
 Ohh... Fun.

DAD
 We, the men, are going camping.

TAMMY
 Boys are going camping. Alright,
 very nice. Well uh, we still on for
 tomorrow or...?

DAD (O.S.)
 Yeah --

TAMMY
 Yeah?

DAD
 Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I'll drop him
 off at seven and then I'll just call
 you, alright?

TAMMY
 Okay. Great. It was really nice
 meeting you both. Take care.

DAD
 I'll see you.

TAMMY
 Talk to you soon. Bye.

Tammy walks away. Mason smirks at his dad.

DAD
 Don't -- don't, don't look at me
 like that, alright? I just -- look,
 just to finish the point -- okay? I
 was twenty-three when your mom had
 you, alright? So was she, alright?
 And we didn't put ourselves in the
 best position to be great parents,
 and I wish that -- I wish I were a
 better parent to you guys. Alright?
 And I, I hope that you can learn
 from my mistakes. Okay? So, wear a
 condom. Or get Garrett to -- I don't
 know. Whatever.

Samantha cringes, as Dad laughs. Mason can't help but smile.

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

Dad and Mason are driving along the open road, listening to a song by Wilco.

DAD

Now... listen to this song, alright?

Sings along:

DAD (CONT'D)

"I try to stay busy" It's just straight up, the lyrics... it's a straight up old school country song.

SONG

"I do the dishes, I mow the lawn..."

DAD

Listen to the production of this. Production's like uh, like "Abbey Road" or something.

SONG

"I try to keep myself occupied"

Dad sings along.

DAD

"Even though I know you're not comin' home." You know, his old woman's gone... straight up. Nothin' fancy.

DAD AND SONG

"I try to keep the house nice and neat. Make my bed. I change the sheets."

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

Mason and Dad walk along the rocks, mid-conversation. They sit down near the water and begin taking off socks and shoes.

MASON

Yeah, I think she's about to get her master's degree.

DAD

Well, then she's gonna start applying for teaching jobs?

MASON

I think she already has.

DAD
Really? Where?

MASON
(shrugs)
All over.

DAD
All over Texas?

MASON
Yeah.

DAD
Well, if you gotta move, you gotta move, you know? It's no big deal. We can handle that. I'll still come get you every other weekend. I mean, unless she moves 500 miles away or something, it'll just be a little more car time. No big deal.

MASON
I'm just kinda sick of moving.

DAD
Well, I bet you are. But you know, you never know. I mean, I might have to move, right? I'm working for this insurance company now. These places get bought and sold all the time. You know? We'll just roll with it.

They take off pants, walk up to the water in boxer shorts.

MASON
I thought you were a musician?

DAD
I am but... life is expensive, you know. Guy's got to be responsible. What do you think?

Mason pushes his Dad into the water, then dives in himself.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey, hey, you bast -- Oh you, punk kid! You got no respect!

Dad splashes his son and they both begin to swim.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Mason and Dad are now hiking through the woods.

MASON

You know that redhead at the bowling alley?

DAD

Sure. What about her?

MASON

Do you know her well?

DAD

Ahhh, you know, we've hung out a little bit.

MASON

Is she your girlfriend?

DAD

How do you mean?

MASON

Like... have you kissed her?

DAD

Um... Yeah. Yeah. I've kissed her. What about you? You got a girlfriend?

MASON

Sort of.

DAD

Really. Have you uh, have you kissed her?

MASON

Not really.

DAD

Yeah. Well, what have you done?

MASON

Well, we talked on the phone.

DAD

Oh yeah? How'd that go?

MASON

Pretty terrible.

DAD

Oh yeah?

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

(Laughs)
Why?

MASON

Well, when we're at school, we got plenty to talk about, but when we're alone or on the phone, it's like we have nothing in common.

DAD

Nothing?

MASON

Uh, she's not interested in music or video games or... the three best movies this summer...

DAD

All right. What?

MASON

Tropic Thunder, Dark Knight and Pineapple Express.

DAD

Yeah, what about 'em?

MASON

She said they all sucked.

DAD

Okay, well what's she interested in?

MASON

I don't know. Goin' to the mall with her stupid friends.

DAD

Alright. Well, is she cute? Watch your step there.

MASON

Yeah.

DAD

Yeah? Alright. Well, here's what you do. Alright. First off, you gotta ask her a lot of questions. Then you have to listen to the answers, alright, actually be interested in her. Alright, if you can do those things, you're gonna be light years ahead of all the other guys.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Dad and Mason sit around the campfire, making s'mores.

DAD

Okay, this is the best s'more I ever made in my life, alright.

MASON

Dad...

DAD

This is absolute peak. Look at this.

MASON

Ah, that's just perfect.

DAD

Honey brown, no burn... look at that, huh?

Mason laughs.

DAD (CONT'D)

Sell that in the store. Mmm.

MASON

That's like advertisement worthy.

DAD

Mm-hm. Advertisement quality.

MASON

Yeah.

Dad laughs.

DAD

You think they ever will make another "Star Wars"?

MASON

I don't know. I mean, I think if they were to make another one that the period where the game is set is where it would have to be, 'cause there's nothin' after, really. At the end --

DAD

Yeah, no, "Return of the Jedi" it's over. There's nothin' --

MASON

Yeah, there's nothing else to do there. But --

DAD

You know, you can turn Han Solo into a Sith lord. I mean --

MASON

Yeah, what are you gonna do?

They share a laugh.

EXT. CAMPSITE - LATER

Dad is singing and playing guitar -- "L.A. Freeway." -- from inside the tent.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Dad is standing over the campfire, peeing on it. Mason steps out of the tent.

DAD

Good mornin'.

MASON

Mornin'.

DAD

You gotta pee?

MASON

Sure.

DAD

Ah. Hit the campfire. Ancient, uh, Native American custom. You're gonna give back to the Earth what you take from it and you don't burn the forest down.

Mason pees onto the fire.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mom pulls up to drop the kids off at school.

MOM

Okay guys, you have a good day. Mason, don't forget, I have to teach late today. Sam's gonna pick you up. Right, Sam?

SAMANTHA

Yeah.

MASON

Alright.

MOM

Okay. Bye, guys.

MASON

See ya.

Mason exits the car and walks toward the school building.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mason walks down the hall with his classmate TONY.

TONY

Hey. That's who I was talking to you about.

MASON

Yeah. Good luck with that.

TONY

See you, man.

Mason stops to get new books out of his locker.

INT. REST ROOM - DAY

Mason fixes his hair in the mirror. Two BULLIES are vandalizing the walls. Bully #1 turns and wanders over to Mason, suddenly bumping into him.

BULLY #1

Don't bump into me! Little bitch!

MASON

I didn't!

BULLY #1

You callin' me a liar?

MASON

No.

BULLY #1

Don't act like you're tough shit, motherfucker.

Bully #2 walks over to join the altercation.

BULLY #2

I don't think pretty boy's hair's
good enough.

Bully #2 tries to mess with Mason's hair. Mason blocks his
hand.

BULLY #2 (CONT'D)

Hey! Don't touch me, faggot!

Another student enters. The two bullies start to walk away.
Bully #1 shoves Mason and flips him off, as they exit.

BULLY #1

You're a fuckin' asshole.

EXT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Mason leans against the wall of the school, waiting for
Samantha to pick him up. When he realizes she isn't coming,
he starts to walk away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN MARCOS - MOMENTS LATER

Mason is now passing through an alley with JILL, who walks
her bike alongside him.

JILL (O.S.)

Hey, Mason!

MASON

Hi Jill.

JILL

So, where are you going?

MASON

Over to the college.

JILL

What's going on there?

MASON

My mom's a teacher.

JILL

Oh, cool! What does she teach?

MASON

Psychology... I think. What are you
up to?

JILL

Oh, my mom owns Needleworks.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

The arts and crafts store over there?
So I'm just kind of hanging out.
But I'm supposed to be going to the
hospital soon.

MASON

How come?

JILL

You know Courtney? Girl with the
dyed black hair and the nose ring?
Wears Hot Topic every day?

MASON

I... think so.

JILL

We used to be best friends growing
up, but we've kinda grown apart.
She sorta got all emo. She thinks
I'm a prep. But, I still consider
her a friend! Anyway, she cut one
of her wrists. I don't know how
bad, but I think I should go visit.

Jill glances down at the book in Mason's hand.

JILL (CONT'D)

So what are you reading?

MASON

Oh, it's uh, "Breakfast of Champions".
Kurt Vonnegut.

JILL

I think my older brother likes him.
I'm reading "To Kill a Mockingbird"
for the third time. My friends make
fun of me. I think I'm the only
girl in the whole school who doesn't
like the "Twilight" books. Have you
read them?

MASON

Sure haven't.

JILL

I tried... but it was so cheesy! So
how do you like San Marcos?

MASON

I like it alright. It's a lot smaller
than Houston, but it seems pretty
cool. Have you always lived here?

JILL

Yeah. If you want the big city around here, you have to drive to San Antonio or Austin. Have you been there yet?

MASON

I went to San Antonio for a day, but... I haven't been to Austin yet.

JILL

That's where all the high school kids go, on weekends, for shows and stuff.

MASON

That's what I've heard.

JILL

So are you going to Shauna's party next weekend?

MASON

Um... I think I heard about it. I'm not really sure, though.

JILL

Well you should!

MASON

Why's that?

JILL

Well -- LeeAnn has a big crush on you and I know she was hoping you would go. You don't have a girlfriend, do you?

MASON

Not currently.

JILL

Well then, you should come. I'll tell Chase to make sure you're there.

MASON

Okay.

JILL

But don't tell LeeAnn I told you that. She'd kill me.

MASON

I won't.

JILL

Well, I better get going. See you later.

MASON

Bye.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Mason walks into his mother's classroom. He takes a seat to observe from the back, while she lectures.

MOM (O.S.)

His cognitive series, his interviews with orphans, Ethology theorists' work... And then he in turn was supported strongly by Harry Harlow's rhesus monkey study. Now you guys, you gotta think, this is the 1950's, this was radical! This flew in the face of traditional learning theory, of B.F. Skinner's classical and instrumental conditioning. Now, Bowlby is going to argue that human survival depends on us falling in love. It depends on me falling in love with my mother, and my mother falling in love with me. And if that doesn't happen, we're pretty much doomed. Now think about it. A tiger chases our tribe out of a cave. Now an ideal mother goes, "Huh! My baby! I love you! I'll protect you!" Or... "Well you, why am I going to pick you up? You're going to slow me down. You... are... tiger kibble!"

The class laughs.

MOM (CONT'D)

So next week we are gonna get into Bowlby's four stages of attachment -- oh oh, uh, Professor Douglas and I -- some of you might have classes with Elena -- she and I are hosting a little pre-Thanksgiving get-together at my place, so if anyone wants to come, please stop by.

(pause)

I'm not the greatest cook...

The class laughs again.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Mason opens the door as he and his mother enter the house.

MOM

Thanks.

Mom drops her purse on the table and then walks down the hallway to Samantha's bedroom. She knocks on the door before walking inside.

MOM (CONT'D)

Samantha!

Samantha is sitting on her bed, listening to music with a friend, GABY.

SAMANTHA

Okay! Mom...

MOM

Why in the hell didn't you pick up your brother like you said you would?

SAMANTHA

Mom, I know what you're gonna say. She was running late and we couldn't turn around.

MOM

No, no! No excuses! The bottom line is you didn't do what you said you were gonna do. You stranded your brother!

SAMANTHA

It's embarrassing to ask my friend to turn around and go get some kid at the middle school.

MOM

What do you mean "some kid"? He's your brother! And you know what? We've helped Janie out before. I mean, she lives right around the corner. It's no big deal.

SAMANTHA

Sorry.

MOM

You know what, Samantha? You need to start thinking long and hard about who you want to be.

(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)

Do you want to be a cooperative person, who is compassionate and helps people out? Or do you want to be a self-centered narcissist?

SAMANTHA

You know what? You're right. I am this horrible person... But honestly, he's not a baby anymore. You don't have to treat him like one. He's in eighth grade and he can find his way home if he wants to.

MOM

You know what? When Gaby leaves, you and me are gonna have a chat.

Mom leaves the room.

SAMANTHA

(to Gaby)
Awkward...

Gaby and Samantha laugh together.

GABY

Dude, that sucks.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

CHASE approaches Mason's front door and knocks. Mason answers the door.

MASON

Hey man. What's up?

CHASE

Hey, we're going camping tonight. You in?

MASON

Uh, who's goin'?

CHASE

My brother, one of his friends, and Tony... Maybe.

MASON

Yeah, let me check with my mom.

INT. MOM'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mom is sitting on her bed grading papers.

MASON

Hey, Mom. Can I go camping with Chase tonight?

MOM

Camping? Where?

MASON

Uh, at that house that his family's building. It's pretty much finished.

MOM

Well, will any adults be there?

MASON

(shrugs)

His brother's a senior.

MOM

You have your cell phone?

MASON

Yeah.

MOM (O.S.)

Is it charged?

MASON

Mm-hmm.

MOM

Okay, do me a favor. Leave his parents' number and the address on the counter.

MASON

Okay.

INT. CAMPING HOUSE - NIGHT

Mason, Chase, and Tony are now with two older guys, CHARLIE (Chase's older brother) and his friend (SENIOR GUY). The boys are drinking beer and breaking wooden boards with their feet.

SENIOR GUY

Yeah! That's what I'm talkin' about!

The boys murmur indistinctly.

SENIOR GUY (CONT'D)

You ready? Check this shit out. That was alright, but this is gonna be badass.

CHARLIE

Alright, let me see, let me see what you can do.

SENIOR GUY

Alright. This -- is your face. I'm about to break his face, right here...

Senior Guy kicks through the wooden board.

BOYS

Ohh shit, alright. Nice.

CHARLIE

Alright, alright.

CHASE

Alright, alright. Now check this out. You might want to move.

Chase picks up a circular saw blade and throws it into a large piece of sheet-rock with the outline of a body on it.

CHASE (CONT'D)

Oww, that'd be painful. That's like the liver, stomach, something --

TONY

That's like the belly button --

MASON

Check this out, man.

Mason also heaves the blade into the human outline.

TONY

Whoa! Pancreas!

MASON

That shit's lethal.

CHASE

Yeah, that would be painful.

CHARLIE

(To Mason)

Man, have a beer, man. That was awesome. Here.

Mason takes the beer and opens it, winning the boys' approval.

SENIOR GUY

It's beer-30, children.

CHASE

Nice.

Chase offers a beer to Tony.

TONY

Aw, no thanks.

CHASE

Come on, man.

CHARLIE

What, are you a pussy?

TONY

No, I just don't feel like drinking a beer right now.

CHARLIE

Man, if you're too chicken shit to even have a beer, I know for a fact that you have never gotten any pussy.

TONY

Like you guys have.

CHASE

Sure have.

TONY

When?

CHASE

Last summer.

MASON

With who?

CHARLIE

It was awesome. Chase went down easy street and fucked this whore Nancy. At least that's what he said.

CHASE

I did. Would I lie?

SENIOR GUY

Bullshit. Quick, where were you?

CHASE

At Tobler's house. And, she fucked a couple other guys, too.

CHARLIE

Oh man, his first piece of ass was sloppy seconds.

The boys all laugh.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What about you, Mason? You ever got any?

SENIOR GUY

Yeah, you ever made her, uh, howl into the night?

MASON

A few times.

TONY

(skeptical)

Really?

SENIOR GUY

Yeah, right. What was her name, Lucky?

MASON

Nooo. Jennifer. She doesn't live here, though. She's back in Houston.

CHARLIE

You're fucking lying.

MASON

I don't care if you assholes believe me or not.

SENIOR GUY

Let me guess -- you were pulling all kinds of ass back home, but once you got down here... lefty.

Senior Guy motions with his left hand.

MASON

Hey, fuck you. I would, but none of the girls here want to.

CHARLIE

Dude, it's not what they want, man. It's what you want.

SENIOR GUY

True dat.

Senior Guy toasts, as Mason rolls his eyes.

CHARLIE

You know what you should do? Join a band. That's all it takes, man.

MASON

Oh yeah?

CHARLIE

Fuck yeah, dude. You don't even have to play that well. I mean, you start playing your instrument, and they line up to give you blow jobs.

(Points to Tony)

Except for you. It doesn't impress the ladies so much when you play flute for the marching band.

TONY

I'm not in the fucking marching band.

SENIOR GUY

Ah dude, you sure? I heard you play the skin flute.

TONY

Alright, I got a question for you guys. If you think you're so cool, why are you hanging out with a bunch of eighth graders on a Friday night?

SENIOR GUY

Hey, fuck you, you little penis wrinkle. You know, you're lucky to even be here. This is our camp out. The only reason you little cum gums are here is because fucking Charlie's mom made him bring his little asshole brother, and then he drags along you little dice dangles. Fucking fuzz nut, talking shit!

Senior Guy throws a beer just past Tony.

CHARLIE

It's all good, man. These little fuzz nuts are going to get their chance soon enough. We got some whores coming by later.

CHASE

Yeah?

SENIOR GUY

Hell yeah!

CHARLIE

Now, I know Chase will fuck anything. I mean, I've seen this kid mount boulders before. But what about you guys? You in?

MASON

Whatever.

CHARLIE

Alright.

SENIOR GUY

Alright, good man. What about you, Peter Puffer?

TONY

I don't know. Maybe.

SENIOR GUY

Dude, it's okay to be gay. We understand. Just, you know, sleep over there.

TONY

I'm not gay.

CHARLIE

Give it some time, man. You'll realize.

TONY

Fuck y'all.

CHARLIE

See, that's exactly my point, man. Nah, but we don't have whores coming over, we were just fucking with you to see what you'd say.

SENIOR GUY

Yeah, and you just earned your Vag Badge.

CHARLIE

Put it next to your bitch card.

SENIOR GUY

Yeah, 'cause you know, you're a bitch. Now hold this, like the bitch you are, bitch.

The boys return to breaking boards.

SENIOR GUY (CONT'D)
 Alright, this shit is called the
 Death Punch.

Senior Guy breaks the board in half with one direct punch.

BOYS
 Ohh! Jesus!

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Mom is hosting a pre-Thanksgiving get-together with 10-15
 people all drinking wine and talking

MOM
 (to Mason and Samantha)
 Hey, you guys made it! Good.

Mom places a cheese plate on the living room table.

MOM (CONT'D)
 Oh, there you are.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS hands Olivia a glass of wine.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
 And here you go, hostess.

MOM
 Oh, thank you. Hey, can I get you a
 bite?

INT. MASON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mason sits on his bed, chatting with a COLLEGE GIRL, who
 looks around his room. There is a large graffiti mural on
 the wall behind him.

COLLEGE GIRL
 (points to the mural)
 Oh, that's cool.

MASON
 Thanks.

COLLEGE GIRL
 You did that?

MASON
 Yeah.

COLLEGE GIRL
 Wow. How long have you been doing
 that for?

MASON

Not very long. Um, I went to this camp thing just this past summer.

COLLEGE GIRL

They have a camp for graffiti?

MASON

Well, they call it "urban art".

COLLEGE GIRL

Oh.

MASON

So it sounds, you know, less illegal, but... it was really just a way to get free spray paint.

COLLEGE GIRL

Cool. So is this your tag? Is that -- do they still call it...?

MASON

Yeah, but you know, it's just letters that I'm good at writing.

COLLEGE GIRL

Oh. K...

MASON

E.

COLLEGE GIRL

E. Z. J. O. Kezjo. That's cool.

MASON

It doesn't really mean anything, though.

The College Girl notices a picture of Mason and his Dad leaning against the GTO.

COLLEGE GIRL

Is that your dad?

MASON

Yeah.

COLLEGE GIRL

Where's he live?

MASON

In Houston.

COLLEGE GIRL

Get to see him much?

MASON

Yeah, yeah. Some weekends, and over the summer.

COLLEGE GIRL

Cool.

MASON

So you're a student of my mom's, right?

COLLEGE GIRL

Mm-hm. Yeah, she's uh, I got one class with her. Yeah, she's cool.

MASON

How's she doing? You know, is she -- is she a good teacher and everything?

COLLEGE GIRL

Yeah! She's great. She's super smart and she cares, you know, she makes it interesting. She's probably even my favorite teacher.

Mason nods.

INT. DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

One of Mom's students, JIM, tells a story while the group sits around the table eating.

JIM

...So anyway, we figured out a way to rig up our iPods to the external speakers on the ASV. So every time we come rolling into town, you knew the 456 was there, 'cause we were bumping House of Pain. It was like, "Jump around, Jump around." And the whole family's coming outside, and you got the kids and the mom and the dad, and they're all bouncing up and down. We're throwing out candies for the kids, and soccer balls, and Beanie Babies, and Frisbees... Um, like, smokes for the adults. And they loved, they absolutely loved, Gatorade. But for some reason, you know, they hated the lemon-lime flavor. I don't know what it was. Yeah. Couldn't give it away.

The group laughs.

MOM

How long were you over there?

JIM

Uhh... I did two tours in Iraq and one in Bosnia.

MOM

Wow.

MASON

Did you enlist?

JIM

Mm-hmm. Yeah. I was, um, Army National Guard. And, uh, you know coming straight out of high school. Needed money for college. Seemed like a decent paying job. And, uh, did my tour. And whenever I got done, I told them if there's, you know, a world-changing event, I'll come back. And, uh, 3 months later 9/11 happened. And I was back 9/12. And I'm proud to say the 456, the whole time we were there, we never lost a guy. Not one casualty.

MOM

But is that odd? Is that unusual?

JIM

Yeah. Almost impossible. Like the guys that came along after us and replaced us, they didn't listen to any of our advice. They, you know, did basically the polar opposite of what we did, and they lost seven guys in the first month.

MOM

Wow. What did you guys do differently?

JIM

Well, I'd like to think it's just a matter of mutual respect, you know. I mean, all the time we spent over there building trust, I mean these guys basically destroyed it in three days.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
So, what did the locals think about
why we were there?

JIM
Oil. Plain and simple.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The College Girl is now playing guitar and singing "Wish You Were Here" along with others in the living room. At some point, Mason notices Mom talking with Jim outside on the porch.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

A station wagon pulls up in front of Mason's house. The teenagers inside are listening to music, about to drop Mason off at home.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Mason is in the far back of the station wagon, making out with a BLONDE GIRL.

CHASE
Hey, Mason.
(hands Mason a joint)
One last hit.

Mason takes a hit of the joint.

CHARLIE
(in the driver's seat)
Hey! Mickey Mouse Club. Get the
fuck out of my car. Just crawl out
the back window or something, man.

Mason climbs out the back window of the station wagon.

BLONDE GIRL
I'm gonna miss you.

MASON
I'll see you on Sunday night.

BLONDE GIRL
Alright. You better text me.

MASON
Mm. Do you have any gum?

BLONDE GIRL
Um... yeah, I do, actually. Here
you go.

MASON

Thanks. See ya.

Mason kisses her good-night.

INT. JIM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mom is hosting a small get-together, and is currently talking with Professor Douglas.

MOM

...And they're buying this party line that they're supposed to feel bad and trade off their own pension, as if that's what's corrupting this nation.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS

Yeah, because those who hear Fox, in my opinion, are being lied to.

MOM

Yeah, thank God for Wisconsin. I mean, we have to follow that example.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS

You're right.

Mason enters the front door.

JIM

Hey, Mason. What time is it?

MASON

Uh, like 12:15.

JIM

Happy birthday.

Mason smiles.

MOM

Huh! Happy birthday!

Mom kisses Mason. Professor Douglas walks over to join them, taking an interest.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS

Mason, it's your birthday?

MASON

Uh, just now, I guess.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS

Yeah, how old are you?

MASON

Fifteen.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS

Fifteen! Give me a hug.

Professor Douglas hugs Mason.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Happy birthday. Oh my goodness!

Professor Douglas rejoins the party.

MOM

(to Mason)

Have you been drinking?

MASON

Have you?

MOM

Yeah, a little. Have you?

MASON

A little bit.

MOM

Have you been...?

Mom mimes smoking reefer.

MASON

A little bit.

MOM

Oh... okay.

MASON

I'm gonna go to sleep.

MOM

Talk in the morning, huh?

EXT. JIM'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Dad and Jim stand around in front of the house. ANNIE opens the doors to the new mini-van, so the kids can load their overnight bags.

SAMANTHA

Hey, Dad!

DAD

Hey! How you doing?

Dad kisses Samantha on the cheek.

SAMANTHA
Good! Whose car is that?

DAD
That's our car. Hop on in there.

SAMANTHA
(to Annie)
Hey!

ANNIE
Hey, sweetie.

Annie give Samantha a hug. Samantha peeks in the side door of the mini-van, finding baby COOPER in a car seat.

SAMANTHA
Hey Cooper! Hey, how's it goin'?
Hello little brother!
(to Annie)
He's so cute.

EXT. JIM'S SIDE YARD - CONTINUOUS

Mom talks with two workers about an exposed pipe in the yard.

MOM
Can we just replace that part of the pipe?

WORKER
No, no it's no good. Everything is no good.

MOM
(attempting Spanish)
Todo... Total?

WORKER
Everything, yes... Mira.

He shows the broken pipe with his shovel. He asks the other worker to demonstrate the strength of the replacement pipe by standing on it.

WORKER (CONT'D)
See this one is...

MOM
Gusto... it's stronger?

WORKER
Yes. It's better. Yes, yes, yes.

EXT. JIM'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

DAD

(to Jim)

Hey listen, uh, thanks for that camera you got Mason.

JIM

Oh, yeah... Mason's --

DAD

He's loving that thing.

JIM

He's all into the photography thing right now.

DAD

Yeah, I know.

JIM

He's actually talking about turning his, uh, his closet into a dark room. The red light and developing, the whole nine...

DAD

Yeah? You alright with that?

JIM

I probably won't see him for a week...

DAD

Yeah... Right... Well...

JIM

But, you know. He's having a good time.

DAD

At least he's focusing on something.

JIM

Yeah, yeah.

DAD

You know? That's what I like.

JIM

Yeah, he's all about it.

EXT. JIM'S SIDE YARD - CONTINUOUS

MOM
(pointing to the pipe)
Okay... Let's go grande.

WORKER
It's good?

MOM
It's good.

WORKER
It's good. It's better. Yes.

He instructs the other worker on how to get started. Mom turns to join the others in front yard.

MOM
Hey, you know, you're smart. You should be in school.

WORKER
I like school, I need school, but it's hard. I work all day...

MOM
Go to night school. At community college. It's -- It's pretty affordable.

EXT. JIM'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

DAD
You're doing a nice job with the house though, it's looking great... really great.

JIM
Thanks. Yeah, you know, some fix-its here and there, you know. We got a good deal on the foreclosure... So, now I'm finding out why. You know?

DAD
(laughs)
Yeah. Right?

Mason walks outside, carrying a duffel bag.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey bud! Hey, Happy Birthday!

The mini-van catches Mason's attention.

MASON
What's that?

DAD
What's that? That's our new car!
Get in it.

Dad gives Mason a hug. Jim shakes Mason's hand.

JIM
Alright, have a good weekend.

Mom arrives at the front yard and greets Dad with a hug.

MOM
Hi.

DAD
Hey, how you doing? Good to see
you.

MOM
You too.
(to Annie)
Hey!

ANNIE
Hey, how are you?

Mom gives Annie a hug.

MOM
You look great.

ANNIE
Oh, thanks.

MOM
Aww, look at him! Ooh. He's got
Mason's nose.

SAMANTHA
Yeah, isn't he cute?

MOM
Yeah.

Dad gets into the van, as the family closes all the doors.

DAD
Alright!

MASON
Love you guys.

DAD
We got a big drive ahead of us.

MOM
Bye, Sam.

JIM
You guys drive safe.

DAD
Alright. Well, we'll be back tomorrow night.

MOM
Bye, honey. I'm so glad you were born!

Dad, Annie, and the kids drive off for Houston. Mom and Jim are left standing in the front yard, as they watch the van drive away.

INT. MINI-VAN - DAY

MASON
So, this is like Annie's car and... and you drive the GTO? I guess you can't really put a baby seat in that thing.

DAD
Yeah, no... But I had to sell that anyway.

MASON
You what?

DAD
Yeah, I had to sell that.

MASON
So... so it's gone?

DAD
Yeah, some sucker collector from California paid twenty-two grand for it, which is great 'cause I basically got to pay for this in cash. I only paid eighty-five hundred for that thing way back when. I mean, you know, cars are generally a terrible investment. You know? Soon as you drive them off the lot you got a used car on your hands, and the value's only dropping from there.

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

But... if you take care of it, you know, and you get lucky and it's a classic, you know, the value starts going up again. I mean shit, you got guys paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for some Shelby Cobra.

After a long silence, Dad notices Mason is unusually quiet.

DAD (CONT'D)

What?

MASON

You don't remember?

DAD

Remember what?

MASON

Really? You said that was going to be my car when I turned sixteen.

DAD

(laughs)

What? No, I didn't. I never said that.

MASON

I remember. I was in third grade and you were taking me over to Anthony Nagar's house for his birthday... and we were there early, so we gave him a ride around the block. And he was talking about how much he loved your car and so you were all like "Oh. This is going to be Mason's when he turns 16."

DAD

What are you..? Alright, first off, I have no memory of that, alright? Second of all, I would never say that. Never.

MASON

Yeah. You did though.

DAD

What? Mason. Come on, what about your sister? I'm just gonna forget about her? Come on, how's that fair? Huh? Anthony Nagar, what the?

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Are you...? Oh, come on! I mean, you're not... Ughh. Look, you can sit there like there's a death in the family, alright, but bottom line is that was my car. Alright? I paid for it, I took care of it, and I can do whatever I want with it. Alright? I'm sorry if you had other ideas about it but when you get older you can save up and buy a car of your own. And be cool like I used to be. Or... you can get a mini-van.

Annie and Samantha watch a Lady Gaga music video on Samantha's cell phone in the back seat.

ANNIE

Does your mom actually let you watch this?

SAMANTHA

Yeah. She likes it too.

ANNIE

(laughing)

Oh, my god... Okay, well.

SAMANTHA

Yeah.

ANNIE

Have you ever seen her in concert?

SAMANTHA

No. But she's coming to Houston in April.

ANNIE

She's coming to Houston?

SAMANTHA

Mm-hmm.

ANNIE

Oh you know, your dad and I could get you tickets, and you could stay with us.

SAMANTHA

That'd be great.

ANNIE

Yeah.

DAD

Hey, hey, Annie? Will you get me the, the little birthday present for Mason?

ANNIE

Yeah, babe.

Annie hands a small wrapped present to Dad. Mason unwraps the gift to reveal a CD set.

DAD

Alright. This one, this one needs a little explanation, okay? Open it up. I call that "The Beatles' Black Album". Alright, what it is, is the best of John, Paul, George, and Ringo solo, post-break up.

MASON

Thanks.

DAD

Yeah, basically, I put the band back together for you.

Annie Laughs.

DAD (CONT'D)

You know, whenever you listen to too much of the solo stuff, it kind of becomes a drag, you know? But you put 'em next to each other, alright, and they start to elevate each other... and then you can hear it. Huh! It's The Beatles. You know?

MASON

I don't know. I think I always just liked Paul the best.

DAD

It doesn't matter, you know, you're missing the point. There is no favorite Beatle! That's what I'm saying. It's in the balance. That's what made them the greatest fucking rock band in the world. Okay? You know, and there's this decade of music out there that's been scattered. Alright?

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

And now it has been carefully found, arranged, and ordered for you, by your loving father.

ANNIE

Very arranged and very organized, over and over again by your loving father.

DAD

Yes, yes, yes. So, I mean, look at that-- look at that, uh, top of Volume II, first four tracks... You've got "Band on the Run" into "My Sweet Lord", into "Jealous Guy", into "Photograph". I mean, come on. It's like the perfect segue. You got Paul, who takes you to the party, George who talks to you about God, John who says no, it's about love and pain, and then Ringo who just says hey, can't we enjoy what we have while we have it? It's a good record. I shit you not.

MASON

Cool.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

The mini-van drives along a dirt road lined with trees and parks outside of a small ranch home. GRANDPA CLIFF and NANA come outside to greet their guests.

DAD

Hey there, Cliff.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Hey, how you doin'?

DAD

Oh, good. How you doin'?

NANA

(to Mason)

Oh, hi, birthday boy! It's good to see you.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Good. Good to see you.

DAD

Ah, it's great to see you.

GRANDPA CLIFF
You made it alright, huh?

DAD
Yeah, we sure did. We sure did.

GRANDPA CLIFF
(to Annie)
How are you, darling?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Annie and Nana quietly light the candles on Mason's birthday cake.

DAD
Alright, we ready?

ANNIE
Yeah, yeah, get started --

NANA
Wait, wait, wait...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

DAD
Hey, Sam.

He subtly indicates for her to get off her laptop and join the family. They take their seats in the living room.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey, still sleeping here?

GRANDPA CLIFF
Oh, yeah, sawin' logs.

DAD
You ready?

The family sings happy birthday to Mason. Nana brings in the birthday cake, complete with lit candles.

ALL
(singing)
Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday
to you. Happy birthday, dear Mason...
Happy birthday to you!

DAD
Make a wish, make a wish.

Mason blows out the candles. The family cheers.

NANA

Real good! Presents! Wait, wait, wait. Here, sweetie.

Nana hands Mason a wrapped gift.

DAD

Hey Sam, would you get us a knife so we can cut this up? Hey? Alright.

Sam walks into the kitchen to grab a knife.

NANA

I hope you like it. I heard you didn't have one, so.

He unwraps the gift.

NANA (CONT'D)

It's a Bible. Is this your first Bible? Look, there's your name...

MASON

Wow.

NANA

...In gold. And wait-wait-wait-wait. Look at this. It's a Red Letter edition, and that means that everything Jesus said is in red.

MASON

Thank you.

NANA

Like it? Alright. I love you, sweetie. Happy Birthday.

ANNIE

And this one's from us.

Annie hands Mason a large gift box.

DAD

It's not going to make all your dreams come true, here, you know. Just keep your expectations low. No, no, no, no, you need it. It's...

Dad pulls a blue dress shirt, blazer, and tie out of the box.

DAD (CONT'D)

It's -- hey! Come, on right? You gotta have it. You need this.

NANA

Wow!

DAD

You've got life ahead of you. You know --

ANNIE

And the shirt is blue, and I know you like blue.

DAD

You've got dances --

NANA

It's beautiful!

DAD

-- And job interviews. Here, I'm going to get it all wrinkled here.

Grandpa comes out of the kitchen with a covered gun.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Mason?

DAD

(whispers)

The Black Album was from me.

NANA

Uh-oh.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Come here, son. Pull that off.

Mason walks over and pulls the case off to reveal a shotgun.

GRANDPA CLIFF (CONT'D)

There's a 20 gauge shotgun.

MASON

Wow.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Yeah. My dad gave it to me when I was a little younger than you, and his dad gave it to him, and well, you're fifteen and I'd like for you to have it. Alright? Here, you hold it. Yeah.

MASON

(taking the gun)

Thank you.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Congratulations, son. I'll teach you how to clean it, teach you how to fire it. I'll teach you a little bit of safety.

The family laughs, as Mason holds the gun pointing precariously across the room.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Samantha holds a pistol, ready to shoot. Dad is helping her aim. There are bottles and cans lined up as targets.

DAD

Now cock it. Alright, there you go. Now, what you want to do is line up the front sight with the back sight, here, you see this little V right here --

SAMANTHA

Mm-hm.

DAD

Now which one you aiming at?

SAMANTHA

Ah, the middle can.

DAD

The middle can? Alright, alright. Now fire at will, alright?

SAMANTHA

Okay.

Samantha shoots the can.

DAD

Ho. Whoa!

Dad claps as Samantha lowers the pistol.

SAMANTHA

Yeah!

GRANDPA CLIFF

Howdy!

DAD

Alright, watch out, watch out. Whoa. Be careful. Alright.

Mason holds the shotgun, taking aim.
Grandpa Cliff throws a chunk of wood up into the air as a target.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Ready? Pull!

Mason misses the first shot.

GRANDPA CLIFF (CONT'D)

You uh, you uh, hit a little low.
Wait until it gets up high and then shoot. Alright? Cause then it's a better aim coming down. Remember, second trigger.

MASON

Mm-hm.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Ready?

MASON

Mm-hm.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Pull!

Grandpa Cliff throws another piece of wood into the air.
This time, Mason hits it.

GRANDPA CLIFF (CONT'D)

Hah! Hah! Look what you did! Well, you nailed it, didn't you? How's that feel?

MASON

Felt good.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Yeah, it felt good. Good.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

The family sits out on the porch in a circle. Dad plays guitar as the family sings along.

DAD

(singing)

Well, I want for us to be together forever.

ANNIE

(singing)

But to wander wherever I may.

DAD
 (singing)
 I want you to be easy and casual.

ANNIE
 (singing)
 But still demand I stay.

SAMANTHA
 (singing)
 I want for you to know me completely,
 but still remain mysterious.

MASON
 (singing)
 Consider everything deeply, but still
 remain fearless.

DAD AND ANNIE
 (singing)
 Climb to the top, look over the ledge.
 Dance barefoot on a razor's edge.
 Reach for the stars, grab the tiger
 by the tail.

MASON
 (singing)
 If I don't try, I'll never fail.

DAD
 Good!

DAD AND ANNIE
 (singing)
 If you go home, you're rolling the
 dice. Can't step in the same river
 twice. If you love too much it'll
 turn to hate. If you never leave
 home you'll never be late. If you
 eat too much, you're gonna get fat.
 If you buy a dog, you'll piss off
 your cat.

Grandpa Cliff and Nana both laugh.

DAD AND ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Take a deep breath, and enjoy the
 ride. Cause arrivals and departures
 run side by side...

Annie's parents cheer as the song concludes.

DAD (O.S.)

Alright, you're our first audience, you know? Mason demanded we work on it the whole drive.

GRANDPA CLIFF

It was really wonderful. That's sweet. Sweet.

NANA

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

GRANDPA CLIFF

Impressive.

DAD

It's a work in progress.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A small country church.

PREACHER (O.S.)

A week later -- we don't know why Thomas wasn't there the first time -- but a week later, Thomas comes back and joins the other disciples. They say, "Hey, the Lord's alive, we saw him!"

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The preacher stands at the front of the church holding an open bible. The family sits among the congregation. Mason is wearing his new suit.

PREACHER

"I won't believe it until I put my finger into his side and I'm gonna see those nail prints in his hands." Poof! About that time, here comes Jesus, standing right next to him. Okay? And he turns to Thomas. Don't you know Thomas felt some shame? And he turns to Thomas and says, "Thomas, here, stick your finger in my side. Look at these nail prints. It's me." And Thomas says, "My Lord, and my God, I believe."

Annie's parents nod in agreement.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

And Jesus said, "Well, that's good.
(MORE)

PREACHER (CONT'D)

But blessed are those who can believe without seeing." It's a lot easier when you can see, and feel, and touch. But like us, we haven't seen him in the flesh. We haven't felt him in the flesh. But we have experienced him in the spirit. At least I have, and I hope y'all have too.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The family walks through the woods. Annie holds Cooper to her chest in a cloth carrier. Mason has his camera in hand. Dad chews on a piece of straw.

ANNIE

The pond's right up here. Ooh, it's low.

DAD

Yeah.

ANNIE

You know, my dad could take you fishing next time you're here if you want.

MASON

Nice.

ANNIE

(to Cooper)

Hi, baby. What's goin' on?

Mason and Samantha walk down to the pond. Annie sits on a picnic bench with Cooper.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

You know, I think we're just gonna hang out here for a minute.

DAD

Want me to stay with you?

ANNIE

No, it's okay.

DAD

You sure?

ANNIE

Yeah, thanks.

Samantha pushes a stick into the mud. Mason photographs pond.

SAMANTHA

Mason, why are you such a stick-in-the-mud?

MASON

What are you even talking about?

DAD

Hey, you guys don't mind coming back here on the 20th, do you, for Cooper's baptism?

MASON

No, it's fine.

DAD

Sam?

SAMANTHA

Okay.

DAD

I appreciate it. It means a lot to Annie and her folks, you know.

MASON

Were we baptized?

They share a look and laugh.

DAD

I wasn't the least bit concerned with the state of your soul. We can do it now, though, if you want.

MASON

No, nah, I think I'm alright.

DAD

You and Cooper together, you know. Dunk your heads.

SAMANTHA

You're not becoming one of those God people, are you, Dad?

DAD

And what's that supposed to mean, hm?

ANNIE

I can hear you!

DAD

Well, I think that shotgun should live at my house, huh. I don't think your mom would love that.

Dad picks up a rock.

DAD (CONT'D)

Hey, look out, Sam. Let me show you how it's done.

Dad skips the rock across the pond. Mason photographs it.

SAMANTHA

Nice, Dad.

She laughs.

DAD

Still got the goods, hmm?

INT. DARKROOM - DAY

Mason is developing a picture in the darkroom. His teacher, MR. TURLINGTON, wanders in.

TURLINGTON

How long you been in here, Mason?

MASON

I'm not sure.

TURLINGTON

I'm sure. All class. Did you complete your image diary?

MASON

Not yet.

TURLINGTON

Completed your, uh, digital contact sheet?

MASON

Not quite, but... I mean, it's not gonna take me long.

TURLINGTON

Not yet. Not quite. Darkroom time is extra-curricular. I mean technically, you don't ever have to be in here these days, and certainly not until you've completed your assignments. That's the deal.

MASON

Sorry.

TURLINGTON

I'm worried about you, Mason.

MASON

Why is that?

TURLINGTON

I'll tell you why. The images you're turning in, they're cool. You're looking at things in a really unique way. Got a lot of natural talent.

MASON

Thanks.

TURLINGTON

Yeah, but, that and fifty cents will just get you a cup of coffee in this old world. I've met a lot of talented people over the years. How many of them made it professionally without discipline, commitment, and a really good work ethic?

Mason shrugs and shakes his head, unsure.

TURLINGTON (CONT'D)

I can tell you. I can count it on two fingers. Zero. It's not gonna happen for you, Mason. The world is too competitive. There are too many talented people who are willing to work hard. And a butt-load of morons who are untalented, who are more than willing to surpass you. As a matter of fact, a lot of them are sitting in that classroom out there right now. Hm? You know what they're doing? They're doing their assignments, which is what you're supposed to be doing, but you're not. You're in here. Why is that? Are you special, Mason?

MASON

No, but I mean the things you're talking about, like work ethic or whatever, I feel like I do work pretty hard. I spend the whole weekend taking pictures a lot of times.

TURLINGTON

You like football, Mason?

MASON

Not really.

TURLINGTON

Yeah, I know you don't. That's why I've just assigned you to shoot the football game tonight. Okay? It starts at 7:30. I want you to get there early. I want you to shoot a full card, three hundred images, and I want 'em downloaded, I want 'em sorted, and I want to see them very first thing Monday. Okay? You want to know why I'm doing this?

MASON

I guess.

TURLINGTON

Who do you want to be, Mason? What do you want to do?

MASON

I want to take pictures. Make art.

TURLINGTON

Any dip-shit can take pictures, Mason. Art, that's special. What can you bring to it that nobody else can?

MASON

That's what I'm trying to find out.

TURLINGTON

Try harder. Hey, maybe in twenty years you can call old Mr. Turlington and you can say, "Thank you, sir, for that terrific dark room chat we had that day."

(walking away)

Get back to class and do your work.

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mason walks back to his computer. NICK sits at the neighboring computer.

NICK

Hey man. You're walkin' a little funny.

MASON

Fuck you.

NICK

I'm just saying, you guys were in there for a long time. Just hope he bought you dinner first.

Mason playfully jabs Nick in the arm.

INT. JIM'S HOUSE - DAY

Jim sits at the kitchen table, opening a beer. Mom and Samantha prepare dinner in the kitchen. Mom walks over to the stairs to call up to Mason.

MOM

Mason! Honey, come down for dinner.

On her way back to the kitchen, Mom notices the screen on an open laptop.

MOM (CONT'D)

Samantha! You didn't post these pictures and their descriptions? Come on, this auction is going to end on Sunday, honey. You've got to get those posted.

SAMANTHA

Why are we even doing this? It's like an online junk shop. I thought you had a good job?

MOM

I do. We're what you call house poor. Everyone's got to do their part. Your brother took the pictures. You have to help.

SAMANTHA

Who even buys this shit?

JIM

Hey, Sam, watch your mouth, alright? Don't disrespect your mother. You like a roof over your head, don't you?

MOM

Yeah, and you like having electricity so that you can charge your cell phone?

SAMANTHA

I'm not even gonna be here next year.
I'm a senior. I should be having
fun.

Mason enters. He sits down at the table. He has blue nail
polish on his fingernails.

JIM

Nice nails.

MASON

Yeah, some girl did that in sixth
period.

JIM

You planning on keeping them?

MASON

Until it comes off, I guess.

JIM

Last summer it was the earrings, and
now the nails. You got a, uh, you
got a purse to go with all that?

SAMANTHA

A lot of guys do that. He's just
trying to be cool.

JIM

When I was in high school, having a
job, being responsible, being able
to afford a car, that was cool.

MOM

Mason, honey, why don't you get you
and your sister some water.

Mason gets up to help set the table.

EXT. FOOTBALL GAME - NIGHT

An announcer comments on the game over the loud speaker.
The crowd cheers and the band plays. Mason is on the
sidelines, photographing details he finds interesting. He
scrolls through the images on his camera.

NICK

Hey man, Turlington says to cut the
artsy crap and shoot the game. So
take your lens and point it that
way.

MASON
Jesus Christ.

NICK
Also, we got a ride tonight.

CHASE
McCormick gonna take us to the party.
We're gonna head out after the game.
You're goin', okay?

MASON
Okay.

NICK
Shoot the game.

A player catches the ball and is tackled.

EXT. PARTY - NIGHT

"She's Long Gone" by the Black Keys plays over the party.
Mason fills a cup at the keg. Samantha takes a shot with a
boy. Kids play beer bong.

BEER PONG GUY
Kobe...

It goes in - guests react.

GABY
Oh! First one. What was that?
What was that? What is up?

Nick plays drums with teen band. Mason approaches SHEENA.
He nudges her shoulder.

SHEENA
Hey, what's up?

MASON
Hey. How's it goin'?

SHEENA
Pretty good. How long have you been
here?

MASON
I don't know. Awhile, I guess.

SHEENA
Awhile? Yeah.

EXT. QUIET SPOT - MOMENTS LATER

Mason and Sheena sit and talk.

MASON

I just feel like there are so many things that I could be doing and probably want to be doing that I'm just not.

SHEENA

Why aren't you?

MASON

I mean, I guess it's... just being afraid of what people would think. You know, judgment.

SHEENA

Yeah. I guess it's really easy to say, like, I don't care what anyone else thinks, but, everyone does, you know? Deep down.

MASON

Exactly. I find myself so furious at all these people that I'm in contact with just for controlling me or whatever, but you know, they're not even aware they're doing it.

SHEENA

Yeah. So... in this perfect world where no one's controlling you, what's different? What changes?

MASON

Everything. I mean, I just wanna be able to do anything I want, because it makes me feel alive. As opposed to giving me the appearance of normality.

SHEENA

Whatever that means.

MASON

I don't think it means much.

SHEENA

You're kinda weird, you know that?

MASON

Yeah?

(MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)

(Laughing)

Is that a compliment?

SHEENA

I don't know. Do you wanna be weird?

MASON

I mean, I don't want to like... scare kids at the park, or anything like that.

Sheena laughs.

MASON (CONT'D)

I really like talking with you. I don't usually even try to like vocalize my thoughts or feelings or anything. Just, I don't know, it just never sounds right. Words are stupid.

SHEENA

So, why're you trying with me?

MASON

I don't know. I guess I feel comfortable.

SHEENA

I'm glad.

EXT. JIM'S HOUSE - LATER

Mason comes home late. Jim sits outside on a chair surrounded by empty beer cans and one in hand.

MASON

Hey, Jim. I'm sorry I'm so late.

JIM

What time were you supposed to be home?

MASON

I don't know. Awhile ago.

JIM

Awhile ago like, thirty minutes ago, an hour ago? Cause, truthfully, nobody even knew where you were until your sister told us. She's been home for awhile.

MASON

I'm sorry.

JIM

Yeah, been hearin' a lot of that lately. See, but you don't actually care. You just kinda... kinda come and go as you please and you don't care if your mom's upset or what time you gotta be home... Is that what's up?

MASON

I don't know what to tell you.

JIM

Stop mumbling! You know, speak up! I can't understand a word comin' outta your mouth. It's just like, "uh uhh nuhh" and I ask you questions and you just--

MASON

Man, can I just have one day where everyone isn't all over my ass!?

Jim gets up abruptly and advances on Mason.

JIM

I'm up your ass? This is my house. Now, if you wanna live in my house then you get home when you say you're gonna be home.

MASON

You know, Jim, you're not my dad.

JIM

No, I'm not your dad! You know how I know that? Cause I'm actually here. I'm the guy with the job, paying the bills, taking care of you, your mom, your sister... Huh?! Huh?!

Mason goes inside.

JIM (CONT'D)

I'm that guy...

Jim sits down.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Mom sits at the kitchen table surrounded by bills and papers.
Mason comes down the stairs.

MASON

Morning.

MOM

Morning. Hey, which one of you guys used the downstairs bathroom last night?

MASON

I don't know. I didn't.

MOM

That tall guy, what's his name?

MASON

Phillip?

MOM

Yeah, Phillip. He did it. Can Phillip read? I mean, there's a big sign on the door, it says, "Do not use this bathroom, it's broken." I mean, how difficult is that?

MASON

I don't know. I'm sorry.

Mason prepares cereal.

MOM

I think I'm gonna put the house on the market.

MASON

Why?

MOM

This house is too big for us. I mean, you're going to school eventually... It's too expensive. I'm done.

MASON

Well why did you even buy it in the first place, then?

MOM

Because I really enjoy making poor life decisions, keeping us on the
(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)

brink of poverty. I mean, I've spent the first half of my life acquiring all this crap and now I'm gonna spend the second half of my life getting rid of all this stuff.

MASON

Really? Like what?

MOM

Like - Well, I got rid of a couple husbands, now I'm gonna get rid of a mortgage, some maintenance, the tchotchkes, the, the homeowner's insurance, the property tax, the plumbing... Ahhh. You know what? From now on I am gonna be Mommy Monk. Simple. Celibate.

MASON

Don't be gross, Mom.

MOM

Fine. I'll be a poor whore with a big house.

(Laughs)

Is that better?

MASON

Okay.

Mason starts to walk away.

MOM

Mason -- Mason, please, don't leave me that dirty dish to wash.

MASON

I do dishes all day.

MOM

Well, great honey, then you're a professional. Come on, you could do one or two more for you poor old mom.

Mason walks over to the sink.

MASON

Okay.

MOM

Thank you.

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE

Mason gets in truck, drives away.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN

Music plays in the background. Mason is in uniform, he carries in a bus tub of dirty dishes, one with uneaten battered shrimp on it. He sticks one in his mouth and flirts with APRIL, a waitress.

MASON
You want one?

APRIL
Ugh. God --

MASON
(Laughing)
She didn't even touch them, seriously.
I watched her the whole time.

April takes one.

APRIL
Yeah, I bet you did watch her, you
little pervert.
(Laughing)
It's like we're on a date. Cheers.

They clink battered shrimp.

MASON
It's a night of romance.

APRIL
Yeah, except I'm not gonna kiss you.

She heads back out to the restaurant floor.

APRIL (CONT'D)
I will blow you, though.

Mason brings the dishes over to the industrial washers. His boss, MR. WOOD, storms in.

MR. WOOD
Mason! We are in the weeds out here!

MASON
I'm goin' as fast as I can.

MR. WOOD
Oh!
(MORE)

MR. WOOD (CONT'D)

Then I must be confused then, cause I just saw you chattin it up with April when I gotta salad bar that needs a refill, I gotta six top, two four tops I can't use, because they haven't been bused.

MASON

Enrique is not here. I'm tryin'.

MR. WOOD

Well, while you're tryin', we're dyin'! What am I supposed to tell my customers? "Oh, I'm sorry that your table's got dirty plates on it, but Mason's tryin'. Least that's what he told me, after he was flirtin' with April and eatin' your leftover shrimp." Now it is a challenge out there today, I know, but I wanna share somethin' with you, I got you pegged for fry cook this summer, now that's a lot more responsibility. It's also more money. How's that sound?

MASON

Good.

MR. WOOD

I know you can handle that money... but can you take the responsibility? I think you can, because I believe in you. But I need you on the floor. Now leave the dishes. Giddyup. Right, come on, don't let me down!

Mason exits.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Mason sits on the stairs video chatting with Dad on his phone.

DAD

Well, so it's -- it's runnin' okay? That alternator's not messin' up anymore?

MASON

(Holding Phone)

No, it's fine. It's up for the trip.

DAD

(Laughing)

Well, you gonna see your sister when you guys are in Austin?

MASON

Yeah, she said I can stay at her dorm, which is cool, and I guess her roommate's out of town so it's no big deal.

DAD

Alright, well, did you apply there yet? Did you get that application in to UT?

MASON

Not yet, but Sheena's pretty much in, though.

DAD

Yeah, right. Well, if you know that's where you wanna go, you should probably do that early acceptance thing. You know? I mean seriously, let 'em know you're a man who knows what he wants.

MASON

Yeah.

DAD

A bit of decisiveness goes a long way in this life, alright?

MASON

Yeah.

DAD

Great. And uh, what about work? How's that goin'?

MASON

Uh, I don't know. It's, it's alright. Today kind of sucked, this guy didn't show up. But it's definitely an interesting perspective on the world. People are slobs.

DAD

(Laughing)

Well, when people ask me about you I say, "Oh, Mason, he's doing great. He's got a job, he's really cleanin' up."

Mason laughs.

DAD (CONT'D)
 (From Phone)
 Alright, hey, hey, say hi to Annie
 and Cooper, will you?

Dad pans the phone to Annie and baby.

ANNIE
 Say hi to your big brother. Hey,
 big brother.

MASON
 Hey, Annie. Hey, kiddo.

ANNIE
 Can you say bye-bye?

BABY
 Bye-buh!

ANNIE
 (Laughs)
 We'll see you soon.

DAD
 (From phone)
 Alright, alright, well, be careful
 when you're driving, alright? Don't
 be texting, don't be doing any of
 that. Alright? Just, you're Obi
 Wan. You're centered, patient, right?
 You watch three cars ahead, two
 behind. It takes two bad drivers to
 have an accident okay?

MASON
 Okay.

DAD
 (From phone)
 Right, and listen, tell your sister
 to pick up her phone or call me back
 or something.

Mom comes down the stairs and drops a bag at Mason's feet.

MASON
 Okay.

DAD
 Alright, buddy! You have a good
 one.

MASON

Bye, Dad.

MOM

(Motioning to the bag)

Hey, honey, take this to your sister.
Throw it in the truck, okay?

MASON

Okay, I will.

MOM

So where is Sheena staying?

MASON

At her friend Emily's.

MOM

Is Emily a real person?

MASON

(Laughing)

Yeah. Yeah, she's a sophomore. She
has an apartment.

MOM

(Holding out money)

Okay, this is in case of emergency.
Don't spend it. I want it back.

MASON

Okay. Thanks.

MOM

Did you do your homework?

MASON

Most of it, but... I can finish
tomorrow night.

MOM

Honey! Eleventh grade is really
important for college. Don't blow
it.

MASON

I know! I know. I mean, we're going
to UT and everything.

MOM

I know, and don't you want me to
come? Come on, Sheena, road trip
with Mom! I'll pay for gas.

MASON

Umm...

MOM

I'm just kidding. I have work.

She kisses his forehead.

MOM (CONT'D)

Call me when you get there.

MASON

I will.

MOM

Have fun!

Mason exits.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY/ INT. TRUCK

"Suburban Wars" plays. Mason drives, Sheena is in the passenger seat.

SHEENA

... That sounds to me like just another extreme Mason view of everything.

MASON

Not at all! I finally figured it out. It's like when they realized it was gonna be too expensive to actually build cyborgs and robots... I mean, the costs of that were impossible. They decided to just let humans turn themselves into robots. That's what's going on right now.

SHEENA

Oh, right now?

MASON

Yeah! I mean, why not? There are billions of us just laying around, not really doing anything. We don't cost anything. I mean we're even pretty good at self-maintenance and reproducing constantly. And as it turns out, we're already biologically programmed for our little cyborg upgrades.

SHEENA

How?

MASON

Seriously. I read this thing other day about how, like, when you hear that ding on your inbox you get a, like a dopamine rush in your brain. It's like we're being chemically rewarded for allowing ourselves to be brainwashed. How evil is that? We're fucked.

SHEENA

So you deleting your Facebook page is gonna change all that? Remember when Trevor deleted his Facebook page last year and everyone just hated him? You made more fun of him than anyone.

MASON

I still make fun of Trevor, though.

SHEENA

But it looked like he was so pathetically desperate for attention. Or to be different, or something.

MASON

That's just 'cause they did that lame story about it in the school paper.

SHEENA

And then he had to make a big announcement about it when he came back a month later.

MASON

That's the thing though, I'm not doing it for attention. I just want to try and not live my life through a screen. I want, like, some kind of actual interaction. A real person, not just the profile they put up.

Sheena's looking at her phone.

SHEENA

Oh, I'm sorry. Were you saying something?

She laughs.

MASON

Yeah, okay, I know you're joking, but, I mean, it's kinda true you have been, you know, checking your phone this whole time, and so what are you really doing? You don't care what your friends are up to on Saturday afternoon but you're also obviously not fully experiencing my profound bitching so... it's like everyone's just stuck in, like, an in-between state. Not really experiencing anything.

SHEENA

It's not an experience, it's just information. Look, for example, I just got the address of the club where we're meeting them later, so we won't be wandering the streets of Austin lost for an hour tonight. Thank you very much, Facebook. And I just texted my mom back.

MASON

Oh, that's -- that's groundbreaking. She hasn't seen you in, like, 55 minutes?

SHEENA

Oh! Oh my god, most importantly, Meg's family just got a miniature pet pig.

Sheena hands him the phone.

MASON

(looks at phone photo)

Hm!

(Laughs)

Okay, you're right. That is a --

SHEENA

Right?

MASON

That is a really cute, tiny pig. Our lives can go on.

SHEENA

I want one.

INT. POOL HALL

Gotye's "Somebody That I Used To Know" plays. Patrons chatter. Mason plays pool with Samantha's BOYFRIEND. Samantha and Sheena sit and talk.

BOYFRIEND

Nice shot.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, just give the lady at the front y'all's I.D.s and, uh, she should let you in.

SHEENA

I see. Cool.

SAMANTHA

Yeah.

SHEENA

It's room 2-0-6, right?

SAMANTHA

Mm-hm.

SHEENA

Awesome. It's not like weird that we're staying there?

SAMANTHA

No, it's fine. Have fun.
(Laughs)

SHEENA (O.S.)

Thank you. So how long have you guys been dating?

SAMANTHA

About three months. Yeah, we met at a party and it's been, ya know, chill.

SHEENA

Yeah, he seems cool.

SAMANTHA

Yeah. He is.

The guys are shooting pool.

SHEENA (O.S.)

Does he go to UT too?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Yeah.

SHEENA

Cool. What is he studying?

SAMANTHA

He's studying history and uh, Italian, I think?

The girls laugh.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

His minor, yeah.

SHEENA

Does he wanna... does he wanna teach?

SAMANTHA

I don't know, I think, I think he's still figuring stuff out. Yeah, he'll figure it out, he's smart, he's smart. So where are you thinking about living when you come here?

SHEENA

Um, I'm not really sure yet. We're gonna look at apartments tomorrow, um, but I know my parents sorta were expecting me to live in a dorm.

SAMANTHA

Yeah.

SHEENA

Yeah. But I mean, I'm paying my way through college, so it doesn't really matter that much.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, you don't have to listen to your parents after you turn eighteen. I mean, especially if they're not helping you financially.

They laugh.

SHEENA

That's what I figured.

SAMANTHA

But I mean, living in a dorm isn't so bad.

SHEENA

Yeah.

SAMANTHA

I mean especially if it's a coed dorm. I mean, I've never been around like, so many cute guys at once. Like, college is really fun.

They laugh.

SHEENA

I'm excited.

SAMANTHA

It's great, yeah.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The sidewalk is populated with college students. The teens walk together in couples and pass a street musician and a woman hoola-hooping.

BOYFRIEND

Watch out.

SAMANTHA

Oh!

They laugh.

INT. CONTINENTAL CLUB - NIGHT

A four man band plays as our guys watch from the audience.

MUSICIANS

(singing)

"On the day that I was born I started growin' old. No one told you life would be so lonesome and cold. I had a grey hair by the age of 23, this hard-luck livin's gonna be the end of me. The old black crow leaving tracks all across my face, and everywhere I go I seem to be in the same damn place. Hard livin's gonna be the end of me."

EXT. CONTINENTAL CLUB - NIGHT

Sheena and Mason wander out of the club and walk up the street.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Sheena and Mason are seated at a table at a late-night diner, full of a variety of people.

MAN ALONE IN BOOTH

The last death at the Hoover Dam construction site was his son, Patrick Tierny, who died on December 20th, 1935, exactly thirteen years to the day.

Sheena notices a table of sorority girls and practically whispers to Mason.

SHEENA

See those sorority girls over there? I've just decided, if you delete your Facebook page, I'm pledging.

MASON

Yeah, in just a few years that's you
(Indicates Girls)
And that's gonna be me.

He subtly indicates the Man Alone guy, still sitting at his booth, giving a lecture of some kind, with data, etc.

MAN ALONE IN BOOTH

...Also inlaid into the terrazzo floors was a star map, a celestial map of heavenly bodies so accurately displayed that one could chart the procession of the Pole Star fourteen thousand years into the future, such that future generations upon...

(Continuing Indistinct
Under)

SHEENA (O.S.)

I wonder what his deal is. I mean, he obviously has money to eat here.

MASON (O.S.)

He just said. He's a UT professor, tenure and everything.

SHEENA

Look at all these people. What are they even doing here at 3:00 in the morning?

MASON

What are WE even doing here at 3:00 in the morning?

SHEENA

We know what we're doing here.

She dips a chip into a bowl of queso.

SHEENA (CONT'D)
Queso. We have a purpose.

MASON
Hell yeah.

SHEENA
HELL yeah.

MASON
You know, by, like, next summer
this'll just be our lives.

SHEENA
Mm-hm.

MASON
Stayin' out all night and goin' to
shows... whatever we want.

SHEENA
We ever gonna go to class?

MASON
Sometimes.

SHEENA
When it feels right. When the
inspiration hits.

MASON
Only then.

A WAITRESS comes by their table.

WAITRESS
Anything else?

SHEENA
Uhhh... more queso?

MASON
(nodding)
Yeah.

WAITRESS
Mm-hm.

She leaves, and Mason just takes it all in.

MASON
Ah, Jesus.

SHEENA
What?

MASON

I don't know, doesn't it all seem a little overwhelming? I mean, college? I mean, I like the idea of being away from home and gaining skills and getting better at photography. I just, I don't know, I'm not counting on it being some big transformative experience.

SHEENA

I don't think it's that transformative. I just see it as the next step.

MASON

But it's like a pre-ordained slot that's already got your name and number on it. I don't think it's the key to my future. Cause, like, I mean, look at my mom. She got her degree, and got a pretty good job, she can pay her bills...

SHEENA

Well, I like your mom.

MASON

Well, I like my mom, too. I just mean, basically, she's still just as fucking confused as I am.

Waitress drops off more queso.

SHEENA

(to Waitress)

Thank you.

MASON

Thanks.

Mason and Sheena dip chips into the bowl of queso.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Mason and Sheena walk on the sidewalk.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - SUNRISE

Mason and Sheena walk across a parking garage rooftop.

They watch the sunrise. Mason stands behind her and wraps his arms around her. She turns to him and they kiss.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Mason and Sheena lie in bed under the sheets. Sam's roommate comes in.

ROOMMATE

Hello?

MASON

Hey. Um, did uh, did Sam tell you we were gonna stay here?

ROOMMATE

(laughs)

Uh -- no.

MASON

(laughs)

Sorry. Um, she uh, she said you were out of town for the weekend.

ROOMMATE

Yeah, I was. I just got back. Are you her... brother?

MASON

Yeah, I'm, I'm Mason.

Awkward laugh.

ROOMMATE

Right.

MASON

Um, this is Sheena.

ROOMMATE

Hello. Uh, great. Alright. I'm... gonna leave my stuff here, if it's okay, and get something to eat and...

MASON

Okay.

ROOMMATE

... I'll just come back in a little bit...

MASON

Yeah, yeah we have to, we have to get outta here soon anyway, so...

ROOMMATE

Alright. It's nice meeting you.

She turns to go.

MASON
Yeah. You, too.

SHEENA
(under sheet)
Sorry!

The roommate exits. Sheena and Mason hide under the sheets.

MASON
That was so awkward.

INT. SCHOOL PHOTO EXHIBIT - DAY

There is an exhibit of various art works set up. Mason enters and walks over to a series of photographs he took of Sheena. He starts to take them down. One of the school's teachers comes over.

TEACHER
Mason... silver medal winner.
Congratulations!

MASON
Thank you.

TEACHER
Heard you got a scholarship.

MASON
Yeah. Yeah, every little bit helps,
you know.

TEACHER
Yeah. When you gonna go out there?

MASON
End of the summer I think. You know,
work some more before then, try to
save up some money, at least.

TEACHER
Yeah, before you have to fend for
yourself.

MASON
Yeah, yeah, that's the idea.

TEACHER
Yeah. Well how're feeling about it?

MASON

Excited, you know. But kind of half-excited, half-terrified.

TEACHER

Yeah, kind of that voluptuous panic.

MASON

Yeah. Exactly.

TEACHER

Well, it's gonna be good. It's gonna be crazy good. I liked college a lot better than high school. You kinda find your people in college, you know?

MASON

Exactly.

TEACHER

Well you'll be fine, you've got a good heart. Just follow your heart, yeah?

MASON

Thanks.

TEACHER

Good luck. Don't forget to floss.

Mason's phone dings. He takes it out.

Cell phone text message graphic:

Mason - Can't, I'll just see you tomorrow. Sheena - What's your deal? Meet me at the tree.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Sheena and Mason are sitting on bleachers outside the school, under a tree overlooking a practice field. They are in mid-argument.

SHEENA

I just don't get why you're being so fucking childish.

MASON

I'm not being childish. You're the one who made it into this big thing by telling everyone.

SHEENA

I haven't told anyone.

MASON

So Cynthia just magically knows you're going to the prom with this loser even though you're not dating him anymore?

SHEENA

She's my best friend.

MASON

Well, your best friend has a big fucking mouth.

SHEENA

Take it up with her, then.

MASON

Why don't you just tell Miss Fuckin' Rubber Jaws she can keep on talking as long as she includes the truth, which is that we wouldn't be having this conversation if your college boyfriend weren't out of town this weekend.

SHEENA

You had already bought the tickets. It's just prom, it's not like it matters. I'm just tryin' to be friends with you.

MASON

Now it's just humiliating. I can't... I can't do that.

SHEENA

Mister I-Don't-Care-What-Anyone-Else-Thinks-Of-Me.

MASON

Fuck anyone else. I care what I think of me. Which isn't much right now. King of the Pity Prom.

SHEENA

Fine. We're not going.

MASON

Great.

A long pause.

SHEENA

Why are we even... I mean, we both knew this was coming. I'm just the one who did something about it.

MASON

Yeah, fucking some college guy...

SHEENA

Oh, fuck you!
(a beat)
I don't regret anything.

MASON

(Bitter Laugh)
Of course you don't.

SHEENA

You know, it's actually kind of a relief not to have to be around someone who's so gloomy all the time. The world's not so horrible. Not everything's some big conspiracy against humanity.

MASON (O.S.)

It's great that you can think that way. And you know, I'm sure dating a jock really helps to clear the mind.

SHEENA

He's not a jock, okay? He just happens to be on the lacrosse team. We're all going to other schools next year anyway, it's not some super serious relationship.

MASON

Great. I feel so much better now.

SHEENA

We're just having fun.

MASON

I bet he's having fun.

SHEENA

Grow up, Mason.

MASON

It's not like I haven't been with anyone else.

SHEENA
Who?

MASON
What do you care?

SHEENA
Who?

MASON
Does it matter?

SHEENA
You're the one who brought it up.

A pause.

SHEENA (CONT'D)
This is pointless.

She gets up and starts to walk away.

SHEENA (CONT'D)
Now you're just trying to be an
asshole.

EXT./INT. NICK'S CAR

Nick drives Mason home from graduation.

NICK
Holy Crap, I would rather have my
balls clawed off than ever sit through
anything like that ever again!

MASON
Well, we never, ever have to.

NICK
Oh my god, thank you.

MASON
Gimme that.

Nick hands him a flask.

NICK
Dude, it's all you. Drink up. So
you coming out with me tonight,
brother? Should be some pretty
awesome stuff happening.

MASON

Naw, dude, I'm goin' to this like, show with my dad in Austin. His friend's playing.

NICK

Gosh, have fun with that, I guess.

Nick pulls into Mason's driveway and parks.

MASON

Fuck, there's so many cars here. I don't wanna go in there.

NICK

(sarcastic)

Dude, you will have so much fun. Your family loves you. You'll have a swell time.

MASON

Fuck you. You're coming in with me.

NICK

Oh, no. Shit no. No.

MASON

Yes! Yes, you are. My mom loves you. You have to say hi.

NICK

Just --

MASON

Do you want to hurt her feelings?

NICK

Mm-mm.

(Shakes head slightly)

MASON

Well then, let's go get 'em.

NICK

Just for a second. Just a second, seriously.

Nick "tests" his breath in his hand. They get out of the car.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - GRADUATION PARTY - DAY

Family and friends chit chat throughout the house. Mom prepares snacks, while Dad and Annie talk with UNCLE STEVE.

UNCLE STEVE
 You know you're in sort of in enemy
 territory here.

DAD
 (laughing)
 We're aware.

INT. KITCHEN - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

Cake graphic: "Congratulations Mason!"

Olivia and Carol prep food. Nick and Mason come in the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

DAD
 Uh, look who's here!

ALL
 (cheer, applause)
 ...Whooo!

MOM
 Hey!

She hugs Mason.

UNCLE STEVE
 Get a job!

Mason takes off his graduation cap.

MOM
 No-no-no-no, wait. We're gonna take
 pictures. Put it back on.
 (To Carol)
 Hey, can you get a camera?
 (To Nick)
 Hey Nick!

Grandma comes over and hugs Mason.

GRANDMA
 Oh! Back on. Oh... Congratulations,
 baby.
 (to Nick)
 I don't know you, but congratulations!

She hugs him too.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
 Oh, pictures, pictures, Carol.

MOM (O.S.)
Quick, put your hat on.

CAROL
Alright, look here...

They pose and Carol takes the picture with a phone.

MOM
Smile.

CAROL
Here we go. Oh, that's a good one.
And... good! Got it.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Oh, we need -- Sam, where are you?
Samantha!

MOM
Sam!

GRANDMA
And where's Mason senior? I'm feeling
generous.
(to Dad)
Come here.

Another picture is taken.

CAROL
Great. And... beautiful! I'll email
these to everyone.

Uncle Steve stands up and points his finger at Dad.

DAD
(to Uncle Steve)
No, don't even start, don't start,
don't start.

INT. LIVING ROOM - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

The guests help themselves to the array of dishes and appetizers on the table. Buffet style. Mason drifts into a conversation with Carol and her daughter Abbey.

MASON
Can't believe you guys came all this
way. It means a lot to me.

CAROL
We wouldn't have missed it for
anything! I'm so proud of you.
(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)
Congratulations. I'm really sorry
that Lee couldn't be here. He's on
his Senior Trip.

MASON
No, no. Tell him I said hi.

CAROL
I will.

SAMANTHA
Abby, I didn't even recognize you.
How old are you now?

ABBY
I'm thirteen.

SAMANTHA
Wow.

Mason's boss, Mr. Wood, enters.

INT. KITCHEN - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

Across the room, Professor Douglas has her ever-present wine
glass.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
(Pouring wine)
Alright, let's top her off. You
want some, doll?

WOMAN AT PARTY
Um... Sure, whatever. Yeah, totally.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Yeah, sure why not.

MR. WOOD
(To Mason)
I got you something.

MASON
What is it?

MR. WOOD
That is a savings bond. That is
worth something. It's better than
money - you'd just spend that.

MASON
Yeah.

MR. WOOD
God - is that your mom?

MASON
Yeah, yeah. That's her.

MR. WOOD
Wow.

One of the little cousins drops fruit.

UNCLE STEVE
It'll be -- three second rule. Put
it on your plate.

WOMAN AT PARTY
(laughing)
Such a good dad. Really.

UNCLE STEVE
I know, I'm trying to help.

MOM (O.S.)
Come here, you guys. I want to make
a little toast to Mason.

She holds up her glass of wine.

GUESTS
(reacting)
Whoo! Yeah! Alright!

MOM
Now Mason, I know you really didn't
want to have a party today but... we
did.

Laughter.

MOM (CONT'D)
And you only graduate high school
once in your life... So I want to
celebrate you and this next phase.
And you're going to learn so much in
college. You're going to have so
much fun. You're going to have
inspiring teachers. You're going to
learn more about your art. I love
you babe. I'm so proud of you... To
Mason.

ALL
To Mason!
(MORE)

ALL (CONT'D)
(indistinguishable
chatter)
Hear! Hear!

UNCLE STEVE
(to Dad)
Alright, you're up, kid.

DAD
Oh, uh... Alright, uh, well... Mason,
I'll make a toast to the future. To
your future. You know, it's been a
little sketchy this... end of the
school year here, trying to figure
out what school to go to. Mason
told me that, uh, he wanted...to get
as far away from home as possible.
But still honor our agreement that
we pay in-state tuition, which I do
appreciate. He's a prudent man, and
uh, he's going to have a great future.
So, here's to you buddy.

GUESTS
(reacting)
Whoo! Future!

DAD
Congratulations.

UNCLE STEVE
Mason Junior! High school graduate,
eighteen and straight! Ha-ha-ha!

Dad subtly puts his hand over his brother's mouth and pats
his chest.

DAD
Alright, that's enough. Just ignore
him. My brother needs to learn to
pace himself.

MR. WOOD
Well, I've not known you as long as
everybody here, but uh, since I have
known you, you've grown a lot. And
uh, I don't know, I'm proud of you.
So if this photography thing doesn't
work out, you know you always got a
job. Lose that earring. But, uh,
you know, maybe I can get you in
front of house. Alright, to you
buddy!

MOM
Sam, say something!

DAD (O.S.)
Come on, Samantha.

GRANDMA
Come on, darlin'.

SAMANTHA
(hesitating)
Good luck?

Mom and Mason embrace. A little later, Professor Douglas has Mason cornered.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
So you broke up with your girlfriend?

MASON
Yeah, yeah, just recently.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
What was her name?

MASON
Sheena.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Sheena. She's... gonna go to college with you?

MASON
No.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
No, oh.

MASON
She's staying in this part of Texas.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Oh, okay. You need a ride to college?

INT. LIVING ROOM - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

Dad and Annie talk to Grandma.

GRANDMA
I just wanted to say hello before you got out of here. I haven't gotten a chance --

DAD
You guys met before, haven't you?
Annie, Catherine...

ANNIE
Yeah, yeah, we met at uh--

GRANDMA
Sam's graduation.

DAD
Oh yeah.

ANNIE
Yes, that's right.

GRANDMA
And with your little one. Where is
he?

ANNIE
Oh, he's at home.

DAD
Yeah, yeah. Remember, he was such a
pain at Sam's thing that, you know...

GRANDMA
Oh, I would love to see him.

ANNIE
Well, we have a special weekend this
weekend, so...

GRANDMA
I'm so glad you found her. I really
am.
(to Annie)
You, you've got him at a good time,
I think.

ANNIE
I think so, too.

GRANDMA
Yeah. It's good to see you two.

DAD
Nice to see you, too, Catherine.

GRANDMA
I'm so proud of your boy.

DAD
Yeah, yeah we all are.

Grandma walks off. Dad whispers to Annie.

DAD (CONT'D)

If you think she's a bitch now, you should have seen her fucking twenty years ago.

They laugh.

INT. DEN - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

Later, Uncle Steve, Dad, and Mason have a manly discussion.

UNCLE STEVE

You got to remember, you're going to college, though, alright? And if you're anything like me or your old man, you're gonna be pulling down some serious wool. You're gonna be tapping some masterful gap.

DAD

Steven...

UNCLE STEVE

You're gonna be doing some good work out there. Think about it, awful lot of flowers in that bouquet. But, you gotta do me a favor. You're going to be vulnerable this summer, alright. Remember to use protection during breakup sex.

He puts his hand on Dad.

UNCLE STEVE (CONT'D)

This guy knows exactly of which I speak. Look what happened to him. Viola'.

Uncle Steve gestures to Mason.

DAD

Steven...

UNCLE STEVE

(laughing)
Cheers.

DAD

It's not that simple.

UNCLE STEVE

(chanting)

Four more years. Four more years.
I'm just saying.

INT. KITCHEN - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

Later Dad enters the kitchen where Mom happens to be.

DAD

Do y'all recycle? Should I --

MOM

I have one started there.

DAD

Oh, yeah, right. Okay, great. Okay.
Am I, uh, am I your only ex at this
party?

MOM

Yes, but I'm not your only wife here,
though.

DAD

Yeah.

MOM

Can you believe they're both out of
high school?

DAD

No. No, I can't.

(a beat)

You did a great job with both of
them, by the way.

MOM

Thanks for saying that. I never
thought I'd hear you say that.

DAD

Well, it's true. Thank you.

MOM

And you're doing it all over again,
huh?

DAD

I know, I know, right? It's gonna be
uh, fifteen years till I have an
empty nest. But hey, I'd love to
pitch in, help with this, if I could.

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

I mean, it's so great that you did this. I was just going to give you a little. I'd appreciate it if I could.

He pulls out his wallet.

MOM

Sure. Yeah.

DAD

Yeah. But I don't have any cash. It's in Annie's purse. I'll be right back.

INT. ANTONE'S - EVENING

Mason and Dad are wandering through the green room area while the band is doing a sound check.

DAD

...So it sucks. I mean, the guy's a college lacrosse player. I mean, what are you gonna do?

MASON

She didn't even like sports.

An iced-down bucket of drinks beckons.

DAD

You want a beer?

MASON

No, that's alright.

DAD

You can have one.

MASON

It's okay.

They continue their conversation out of the green room to a little area overlooking the stage.

DAD

Yeah, well, for what it's worth, we've all been through the exact same thing, at one point or another.

MASON

It's not the same, though. I mean, you never got to know her.

DAD
No, I know, I know. It's not the same.

MASON
I just don't know what I did wrong.

At this point Dad yells down to Jimmy, his roommate from years before, briefly interrupting the sound check.

DAD
Hey, Jimmy. Hey, man. Hey --

JIMMY
Hey, Mason.

DAD
We're up here raiding the green room. Hope that's okay.

JIMMY
That's totally cool.

DAD
Alright.

JIMMY
Wow! Is that M.J.?

DAD
Uh-huh. Right?

JIMMY
Unbelievable.

DAD
Well, we just decided to come a little early, check you out.

JIMMY
That's cool man, let me finish up, I'll be up in a minute.

DAD
Alright, alright.

He and Mason slowly start to drift around the venue.

DAD (CONT'D)
(back to Mason)
I guarantee you, you didn't do anything wrong. These high school love things, they never work out. Here, come here.
(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

I mean, everyone's just changing so much. The odds of two young people staying on the same wavelength are...

MASON

Yeah, but still --

DAD

Look, and I also guarantee you that every day of your life that you spend crying over some silly girl is a complete waste of time.

MASON

She wasn't a silly girl, though. I mean, she's a serious person. I really thought we were --

DAD

What?

MASON

I don't know.

DAD

Here's the truth. Women are never satisfied. Ok? They're always looking to potentially trade up and that's, I'm sorry to say, what I think has happened to you my fine feathered friend.

MASON

What does that even mean?

DAD

It means don't hand over the controls to your self-esteem to Sheila.

MASON

Sheena.

DAD

Alright. It means you are responsible for you, not your girlfriend, not your mom, not me. You. And if you truly take care of you, you will be amazed at how much girls like Sheena start lining up at your front door.

MASON

Great.

DAD

Yeah, you know, you just gotta separate yourself from the pack in some way. Excel at something, you know, and then you have your pick of the litter when them front-running hussies start sniffing around.

MASON

So what you're saying is, I should take up lacrosse.

DAD

Exactly. Or you could, you know, start a band. Worked for me a long time ago. I think it's still working for Jimmy. Or you just keep taking pictures.

MASON

She hated the pictures I took of her.

DAD

Alright. I'm sick to death of her, okay? I only met her a few times and yes she was cute, alright. But, truth be told I always thought she was a little bit, you know, a little bit too square for you. Y'know, not quite the same vibe.

MASON

You really thought that?

DAD

On some subtle, lower level. I mean, uh, I wasn't surprised when it turned out she was interested in some knucklehead lacrosse player, okay? I mean, bottom line is, it's all timing with these things. Y'know. I mean, uh, take your mom and me. Y'know I think I probably turned into the boring castrated guy she wanted me to be fifteen or twenty years ago, y'know? And man I'm not saying she was wrong to be pissed. I'm not, I'm just saying that, y'know, she could have been a little more patient... a little more forgiving.

MASON

Would've saved me that parade of drunken assholes.

Dad gestures zipping his lip, saying nothing.

MASON (CONT'D)

So what's the point?

DAD

Of what?

MASON

I don't know, any of this.
Everything.

DAD

Everything? What's the point? I mean I sure as shit don't know. I mean, but, neither does anybody else. Okay, we're all just winging it, you know? I mean the good news is you're feeling stuff. You know? And you got to hold onto that. You do. I mean you get older and you don't feel as much. You're skin gets tougher. The point is those pictures you took. Thousands of submissions from all over the state and you won.

MASON

Well, I got silver. And nine other people did, too.

DAD

I'm gonna kill you. I'm tryin' to tell you that I believe in you, Mason. I think you're really special, and if some girl doesn't see that, then fuck her, y'know?

Jimmy's at the mic.

JIMMY (O.S.)

Hey, this next one goes out to a young man in the house --

DAD

Woo-oho!

JIMMY

Known him since he was just a small boy, now he's all graduated from high school, making me feel old. Happy high school graduation, Mason.

He plays his guitar, and the band kicks in... sounding pretty great.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Mom, Mason and Samantha sit down at a table. A waitress places menus.

MOM

Thank you. Okay guys, let's be clear. I'm going to break this into four categories. One. Anything you wanna keep from your childhood and your taking with you. Two. Throwing away. Three. Donating. Four. Whatever you wanna try to sell at the garage sell next weekend, whatever we don't sell, we're donating.

MASON

Doesn't the apartment have like an attic, or storage or something?

MOM

No. You're missing the point. We're not going to drag a bunch of crap to mom's tiny apartment.

SAMANTHA

Can't believe we're moving again.

MOM

No, I'm moving! You moved two years ago. You have an apartment in Austin. Mason is moving the fall. I'm done. This will be great for me. I'll have all these options. I could take a sabbatical. I could get some writing done and try to get published.

MASON

What about Christmas, though? What are we gonna do?

SAMANTHA

I'm not sharing a room with him.

MOM

One of you will sleep on the couch, and we'll use that blow-up mattress.

SAMANTHA

How am I supposed to do my laundry?

MOM

Sam, I'm gently pushing you out of the nest.

(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)

And on your way down you may magically find some quarters that you use to do laundry in your own apartment. Come on! You guys are adults. You need to take some responsibility! And what do you want?

Mom puts her glasses on.

MASON

I'm gonna get the veggie burger.

SAMANTHA

I'm not having anything, not hungry.

Mom takes her glasses off.

MOM

What's wrong with you?

SAMANTHA

I'm sick.

MOM

What is it, your head? Do you have a fever?

MASON

She's pregnant.

SAMANTHA

(weak laugh)

No. To be honest, I drank way too much last night.

MOM

You weren't driving, were you?

SAMANTHA

No. No. Carrie's back home, too, and we just hung out. You know, peach Smirnoffs, they just go down so easy.

MOM

No, no. Hey - that's not an excuse. You can still pack boxes. These people want to move in as soon as possible.

The assistant restaurant manager, who'll we'll come to know as ERNESTO, approaches the table.

ERNESTO

Hi guys. I'm Ernesto, how are you?

(to Mom)

Uh, you probably don't remember me, but I worked on your septic line years ago.

MOM

Oh, yeah.

ERNESTO

Believe it or not, you changed my life. Yeah, you told me that day that I was smart and that I should go to school. I took your advice! I signed up for English classes and then a year later I went to community college and I got my associates degree. And I'm working on my bachelors now at Texas State. And I'm also one of the managers here.

MOM

That's great.

ERNESTO

Uh, it's good to see you. Because I really wanted a chance to thank you for that. Gracias. It really meant a lot to me. Don't worry about lunch. It's on me. It's the least I can do.

MOM

Thanks.

ERNESTO

You guys should listen to her. She's a smart lady.

MOM

Thank you.

Ernesto walks back toward the kitchen, leaving the three seated at the table.

EXT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Mason, now with a scruffy beard, is wedging a duffel bag and bin into the bed of his truck. He walks back toward Mom's new apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Mason is packing a box, in mid-conversation with Mom, who is seated in another room.

MASON

...Isn't that kind of crazy though, that a computer knows who you are from just twenty questions off a form? I guess there are really only like eight types of people in the world.

Mom goes to the kitchen and pours coffee into a mug.

MASON (CONT'D)

I mean there are subsets, like male and female, but apparently we're not as unique as we want to think we are.

MOM

Have you even talked to this guy yet?

MASON

No, but we've been trading emails. He seems pretty cool. He's studying literature, and uh, anthropology, and he's way into Bright Eyes... so that's not so bad. But anyways, he was telling me about how the system they use for assigning roommates is kind of spooky. Like, the Freshmen satisfaction rate for new roommates used to be like 60%, and now it's 100%. Just cause of the computer.

MOM

Well. Sounds like he'll be a good roommate, then.

MASON

Yeah. But we've pretty much decided that soon they won't even need a questionnaire. Because they'll just let the NSA scan your digital ghost, and they'll tell you who your roommate is, based on everything you've ever said, written, or clicked.

Mason walks back into the living room, carrying a box. He holds up a framed picture.

MASON (CONT'D)
Did you -- Did you put this in here
again?

Mom laughs.

MASON (CONT'D)
I don't want it.

MOM
Come on, it's the first picture you
ever took.

MASON
Well, I mean, all the more reason to
leave it behind, right?

Mason goes to put the picture back in his room, while Mom
suddenly breaks into quiet sobs.

He comes back out, wearing a backpack, and notices Mom crying.

MASON (CONT'D)
What?

MOM
(crying)
Nothing.

MASON
No, what is it?

MOM
Nothing!

MASON
Mom...

MOM
This is the worst day of my life.

MASON
What are you talking about?

MOM
I knew this day was coming. I just --
I didn't know you were gonna be so
fuckin' happy to be leaving.

MASON
I mean, it's not that I'm that happy.
What do you, what do you expect?

MOM

You know what I'm realizing? My life is just gonna go, like that! This series of milestones. Getting married, having kids, getting divorced, the time that we thought you were dyslexic, when I taught you how to ride a bike, getting divorced AGAIN, getting my masters degree, finally getting the job I wanted, sending Samantha off to college, sending YOU off the college... You know what's next? Huh? It's my fuckin' funeral!

A beat.

MOM (CONT'D)

Just go, and leave my picture!

Stunned, Mason doesn't know what to say.

MASON

Aren't you jumping ahead by like, forty years or something?

MOM

I just thought there would be more.

Mom sits at the table crying. Mason does not know how to comfort her.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Mason drives his pick-up truck through the open roads and mountains of West Texas.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Mason stops at a gas station to fill up. While he waits, he takes pictures.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

Mason pulls into the parking lot of his University and parks.

INT. DORM - AFTERNOON

Mason walks through a hallway area and finds his dorm room. He enters to find it half decorated with music going. He throws his bag up on the available bed and starts to unpack and get situated. DALTON enters.

DALTON

Hey, you must be Mason.

MASON
Yeah. Dalton, right?

DALTON
Yeah, man, it's nice to finally meet you.

MASON
Definitely.

DALTON
Are you cool with this side of the room?

MASON
Yeah.

DALTON
Got in this morning, just moved my shit in, man.

MASON
(laughs)
Well, yeah. I don't- I don't care. No worries.

He unzips his bag, but keeps the conversation going.

DALTON
Cool. Can I help with anything, man? Any bags? Any last stuff you need brought in?

MASON
I just got like one... box left, I packed pretty light. But I appreciate it.

DALTON
My pleasure, man. Of course.

MASON
Um, are you goin' to the orientation mixer thing?

DALTON
Orientation mixer thing? Fuck no, man! I'm not goin' to that and neither are you, by the way. We got way better stuff to be doin', dude.

BARB, Dalton's girlfriend, drifts into the room.

BARB
You ready?

DALTON
Yeah. Hey, Barb, this' my roommate
Mason. Mason, Barb.

They shake.

MASON
Hi.

BARB
Hey. You comin' with us?

MASON
Where're you going?

BARB
Hiking.

DALTON
Yeah, man, you should come. If we
leave now we can catch the late
afternoon at Big Bend. You ever
been before, man?

MASON
Yeah. But not since I was really
little.

DALTON
Oh, well then all the more reason to
come now, man. That's why we're
here, dude.

Barb's roommate, NICOLE, is now hanging out by the door.

DALTON (CONT'D)
Oh, Mason. This is Nicole, Barb's
roommate.

NICOLE
Hey, what's up?

MASON
Hi.

Barb is reaching in her bag for something.

DALTON
Mason, Nicole.

BARB
(to Mason)
So, you game?

MASON

Sure.

She has produced a chunk of brownie that she hands to Mason.

BARB

Here. Have the rest of this. Got it timed perfectly. It'll kick in when we get to the mountains.

Mason takes it, a little amused, looks at the others (confirmation), then starts to consume.

MASON

Awesome.

DALTON (O.S.)

Let's go.

They roll out of there.

EXT. BIG BEND - LATE AFTERNOON

Mason, Nicole, Dalton and Barb hike through a BIG canyon. Nicole talks to Mason about teaching dance.

MASON

Do they let you major in that here?

NICOLE

Well, it's not that serious here, so I kinda like train outside the university, but I'm taking all my basics like History of Dance and all that.

MASON

Nice.

NICOLE

Yeah.

MASON

What do you teach?

NICOLE

Oh, gosh. Ballet, tap, jazz, lyrical, hip-hop...

MASON

Wow. Which one's your favorite?

NICOLE

Tap.

MASON
Yeah?

NICOLE
Yeah. You can make up all your own sounds and there's no rules.

MASON
Right...

NICOLE
Just, like, creative freedom.

MASON
That's great.

NICOLE
Yeah.

MASON
Right.

NICOLE
... So to be a part of bringing it back to the kids...

MASON
Right, keep it going.

NICOLE
... Is really rewarding. Yeah.

MASON
How old are they?

NICOLE
Six to eight.

MASON
(laughs)
Wow.

NICOLE
(laughing)
Yeah. They have like no fear, and they're not self-conscious at all.

MASON
They haven't reached the awkward years yet.

NICOLE
Yeah, not yet. It's coming.

The group continues walking over a ridge as the sun is setting.

EXT. HIKE - LATER

As Barb and Dalton coyote call on the rocks, Mason joins Nicole sitting on a rock overlooking the river and sunset.

NICOLE

Hey.

Dalton and Barb continue like coyotes, much to Nicole and Mason's amusement.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Dalton can be crazy sometimes.

MASON

He seems cool, though.

NICOLE

Yeah. Yeah, they're both really cool. How are you feeling?

They both laugh.

MASON

Great. Really great, to be honest.

NICOLE

Good. I'm really happy that you're hangin' out with us.

MASON

Yeah. Me too.

Meanwhile, over on a big rock, the coyotes are now yelling words.

DALTON (O.S.)

This moment's having a multiple orgasm! It's like as if all of time has unfolded before us so we can stand here and look out and scream - Fuck yea!! Wooo!

Back with Nicole and Mason laughing.

NICOLE

You know how everyone's always saying, "Seize the moment"?

Mason nods yes.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I don't know, I'm kinda thinkin'
it's the other way around. You know,
like, the moment seizes us.

MASON

Yeah. Yeah, I know. It's constant,
the moments, it's just... it's like
always right now, you know?

NICOLE

Yeah.

They trade smiles.

FADE OUT