

THE WHALE

by

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Based on the play by Samuel D. Hunter

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Opening credits over black. Slowly, we begin to hear the sound of ocean waves in the distance, calmly lapping against the shore, slowly building in volume.

1 EXT. - ROAD JUST OUTSIDE OF TOWN - DAY 1

A barren road on the outskirts of a town in the Palouse region of northern Idaho.

Then, a bus appears coming down the road. It pulls over at a bus stop, letting out a single passenger. The camera stays wide as the person heads toward town.

CUT TO:

1A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM - DAY 1A

We see fifteen or so squares in a virtual classroom. The STUDENTS are all college-aged, most of them look distant and bored. A couple of them, on mute, are obviously having conversations with people outside of the shot.

The center square conspicuously has its video turned off. The name on the square reads "INSTRUCTOR."

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Like we discussed yesterday, I really want you all to focus on topic sentences more. Too many of you are rushing into examples in your body paragraphs. It'd be good for everyone to review the paragraph structure PDF I sent you a few weeks ago.

A few students shake their heads, clearly a bit overwhelmed.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I know these rules can feel constraining. But remember, the point of this course is to learn how to write clearly and persuasively. That's how you can effectively communicate your ideas.

A chat dialogue to the whole class comes up: "why can't he get his camera fixed".

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 (chuckles)
 Chris, I imagine that was supposed
 to be a private chat that you sent
 to the whole class, well done.

Everyone laughs vaguely. The shot begins to pull in to the instructor square.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 And yes, the camera on my laptop
 still doesn't work. Believe me,
 you're not missing much. Oh--and
 for those of you who still haven't
 given me paper three, I need it by
 Wednesday, *no exceptions*.

The shot is now pulled all the way in to the instructor square. In the background, we begin to hear the distant sound of ocean waves lapping against a shore.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 And remember: the more you revise
 these essays, the better. The more
 you change, chances are you'll
 express your thoughts and ideas
 more clearly and persuasively.
 Alright?

As he finishes talking, the shot is now fully black. The sound of the waves increases.

1B TITLE: THE WHALE 1B

After a moment, the title and the waves fade out.

We begin to hear the faint sounds of two men grunting and moaning, in the middle of performative sex.

1C TITLE: MONDAY 1C

CUT TO:

2 INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAY 2

A desolate two-bedroom apartment in a cheaply constructed building.

CHARLIE, a man in his late 40s weighing around 600 pounds, is on the couch, masturbating to gay porn playing on a laptop on a rolling desk.

He struggles to reach his penis, bending over awkwardly. His breathing becomes more shallow as he maneuvers his hand around his stomach.

Suddenly, he has a sharp pain in his chest. He doubles over.

He starts to reach for his phone, an old android with a broken screen, but he has another surge of pain. He accidentally knocks the phone to the floor, it bounces underneath the couch.

He leans back, struggling to calm himself down. The gay porn continues to play in the background.

In his panic, he reaches in between some couch cushions and takes out a folder. Inside the folder is a well-worn essay with a "C-" grade written on the cover page along with a few notes. The title of the essay is "Moby Dick." He looks at it.

CHARLIE

(reading)

"In the amazing book *Moby Dick* by the author Herman--"

Another wave of pain forces him to stop reading. A knock at the front door. Charlie looks. Just then, he's hit with a wave of pain. He clutches his chest, groaning loudly.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Liz?!

Another knock.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Just use your key, open the door, just--!

Another wave of pain. Charlie groans again. Finally, the front door opens and THOMAS, 19, appears. He wears a shirt and tie, holds a few books.

THOMAS

Oh my God.

Charlie looks at him, confused. It's obviously not who he was expecting to see.

CHARLIE

Who are--?

Charlie leans forward in pain again. Thomas comes further in.

THOMAS

Oh, gosh, are you--? Should I call an ambulance? I should call an ambulance--

Thomas notices the gay porn, still playing. Charlie reaches forward and shuts the laptop. Thomas takes out his phone, frantic. Charlie extends the essay to him.

CHARLIE

Read this to me.

THOMAS

My phone is dead, do you have--?

CHARLIE

PLEASE JUST READ IT TO ME!

Thomas grabs the essay from Charlie.

THOMAS

Okay, okay--!

(reading quickly)

"In the amazing book *Moby Dick* by the author Herman Melville, the author recounts his story of being at sea. In the first part of his book the author, calling himself Ishmael, is in a small seaside town and he is sharing a bed with a man named Queequeg--" What is this, why am I reading this?! I need to--

CHARLIE

Just read it, any of it!

THOMAS

(reads)

"And I felt saddest of all when I read the boring chapters that were only descriptions of whales, because I knew the author was just trying to save us from his own sad story, just for a little while."

Charlie's breathing begins to return to normal. The pain slowly subsides.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(reading)

"This book made me think about my own life, and then it made me feel glad for my..."

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(pause)

Did that--help?

Charlie takes a few deep breaths, lies back on the couch. He grabs a towel, wipes the sweat off his face.

CHARLIE

Yes. Yes, it--.

Pause.

THOMAS

My phone is dead, do you have a phone? I need to call an ambulance. You need help--

CHARLIE

I don't go to hospitals.

THOMAS

Look I can't help you, I don't--

CHARLIE

I don't go to hospitals.

(pause)

Sorry. You can go, I'm sorry. Thank you for reading that to me.

Charlie reaches for the essay, Thomas gives it to him. Thomas eyes the door, then turns back to Charlie.

THOMAS

Are you sure you're okay?

Charlie looks at him, a dawning realization that there is a stranger in his home.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, who are...?

Awkward silence. Finally:

THOMAS

(tentative)

Are you acquainted with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Pause.

CHARLIE

What?

THOMAS

I'm sharing Christ's message of love, and... Um.

CHARLIE

Oh.

(looking away)

Look, I should call my friend. She's a nurse, she--takes care of me.

Thomas nods anxiously, heading toward the front door.

THOMAS

Yeah, of course, I'll...

CHARLIE

Wait, my phone fell under there, can you--?

Charlie points under the couch. Thomas goes to the couch, bending down. He reaches under the couch, hesitating a bit. He finds the phone, gives it to Charlie, then moves toward the front door again. Just then, Charlie has another pain in his chest. Thomas hesitates, looking at him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Listen, I don't know what's gonna happen in the next few minutes, if you don't mind, could you...?

Pause. Thomas considers.

THOMAS

Yeah, of course.

CHARLIE

Thank you.

Charlie makes a call on his phone. Thomas closes the front door. Charlie's call goes to voicemail.

LIZ (V.O.)

It's Liz, I'm not around, please--

Charlie ends the call. He starts to compose a text. Pause.

THOMAS

What was--? That thing you had me read to you?

CHARLIE

It's an essay. It's my job. I teach online college courses.

THOMAS

But why did you have me read it to you?

CHARLIE

Because I thought I was dying. And I wanted to hear it one last time.

3 INT. - LIVING ROOM - SHORTLY LATER

3

Charlie sits on the couch as before. One sleeve of his shirt is rolled up, and LIZ, a nurse in her 40s, is taking his blood pressure with an oversized cuff. Thomas sits on a chair in a corner, trying not to look at Charlie.

LIZ

You should have called an ambulance.

CHARLIE

With no health insurance?

LIZ

Being in debt is better than being dead. What's wrong with you? Why is there a missionary here?

CHARLIE

(eyeing Liz)
Someone left the door unlocked.

LIZ

I left after you fell asleep earlier, I must've forgotten. Good thing, too! If I hadn't, you might have--

CHARLIE

Liz. I don't like it when you--

LIZ

Okay, okay. I just hate the thought of you being sealed up in this place when I'm not here. Now shut up, I'm trying to...

Charlie takes a deep breath, sweat pouring down his face. He grabs a towel, wipes his forehead.

Liz listens for his blood pressure. She reads the high number. Her eyes widen. Charlie looks at her.

CHARLIE
What?

LIZ
Sh.

Liz reads the lower number. She looks at Charlie, then takes off the cuff.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Tell me what you felt.

CHARLIE
Pain, in my chest. It was hard to breathe, I couldn't intake air.

LIZ
How are you sleeping?

CHARLIE
I'm not, really.

Liz takes out a stethoscope, threading it down the back of Charlie's shirt. Charlie bends forward as best as he can, Liz listens to his breathing.

LIZ
You're wheezing.

CHARLIE
I always wheeze, Liz.

LIZ
You're wheezing more. Deep breath.

Charlie takes a deep breath. He winces.

LIZ (CONT'D)
That hurt?

CHARLIE
What was my blood pressure?

Liz takes the stethoscope out of her ears, Charlie leans back onto the couch.

LIZ
238 over 134.

Pause.

CHARLIE
Oh.

LIZ

Yeah. Oh.

Another pause. Charlie tries to reach for his walker but is unable.

CHARLIE

Could you--? I haven't been to the bathroom all day, I'm ready to explode.

Liz hands Charlie his walker. She holds it to the floor, putting all her weight on it, allowing Charlie to brace himself on the walker and stand up. Liz heads to the bathroom to prepare it for Charlie.

3A INT. - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 3A

Liz makes her way into the bathroom, tidying things up for Charlie. She looks in the mirror and takes a deep breath, steeling herself.

She goes back into the living room.

3B INT. - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 3B

Charlie slowly starts making his way down the hallway toward the bathroom as Liz passes by him.

LIZ

You need help in there?

Thomas gets up tentatively, looking down the hallway.

CHARLIE

No, I'm fine, just--. Sorry.

LIZ

What are you sorry about?

CHARLIE

Sorry, I don't know. Just--sorry.

Charlie makes his way into the bathroom.

Liz goes to the couch, takes the bedsheet off of it.

Liz eyes Thomas suspiciously. Thomas forces a smile. Awkward pause.

THOMAS

I should go.

LIZ

Thank you. For helping him.

Thomas starts gathering his things, about to head toward the front door.

LIZ (CONT'D)

You must be from New Life.

Liz opens a closet, throws the dirty bedsheet into a hamper and grabs a clean one. Inside the closet is an entire universe of medical supplies: lotions, clean towels, deodorants, over-the-counter medications, ointments, etc.

Thomas nods, smiles slightly at her.

LIZ (CONT'D)

You know Doug, from the church council?

Liz spreads the clean bedsheet over the couch.

THOMAS

Oh, yeah, I think so? I mean I'm sort of new so I don't--

LIZ

He's my dad.

THOMAS

He's--?

LIZ

Doug and Cindy adopted me when I was a baby.

THOMAS

(brightening)

Oh that's--that's great, I've never seen you there but I'm sort of new to the area so--

LIZ

I fucking hate New Life.

THOMAS

Oh.

LIZ

My dad forced me to go when I was a kid. It was awful, growing up with all that end times bullshit...

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

You're young, why the hell would
you want to believe that the world
is about to end?

Liz finishes with the bedsheet. Thomas considers, wording his answer very carefully.

THOMAS

I believe that when Christ returns,
it's going to be--beautiful.

Liz goes to the kitchen, retrieving a pack of cigarettes and an ashtray from on top of the fridge. She then goes to a window, opens it. She pulls out a cigarette and lights one, blowing smoke out of the window.

LIZ

Look, you can go. I know Charlie
appreciates the help. But if you're
here to convert him--

THOMAS

We don't "convert" people, our
message is a message of hope for
people--

LIZ

--"people of all faiths," I know,
you're sweet. But believe me, he
doesn't want to hear about New
Life.

THOMAS

Why?

LIZ

Because it's caused him a lot of
pain.

THOMAS

How?

LIZ

It killed his boyfriend.

Pause. Thomas looks at her. The sound of a toilet flushing.

Liz looks away from Thomas. Liz puts out her cigarette and puts the ashtray and the pack of cigarettes back to their place on top of the fridge.

THOMAS

You're saying that the church--?

LIZ

Killed Charlie's boyfriend, yes.
And I should add that New Life has
caused *me* a lot of pain in *my* life.
So we don't need you coming over
here, especially not now, not this
week.

THOMAS

Why?

LIZ

Because he's probably not going to
be here next week.

THOMAS

Where is he going?

Charlie emerges from the hallway with his walker.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry you had to come over,
Liz.

Liz shuts the window.

LIZ

It's okay.

CHARLIE

And I'm sorry I always think I'm
dying.

Liz goes to Charlie, speaking to him as he heads back to the
couch.

LIZ

Charlie your blood pressure is 238
over 134.

Charlie arrives at the couch. Bracing himself on his walker
and the arm of the couch, he collapses down into a seated
position.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.

LIZ

Go to the hospital.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry--

LIZ

Stop saying you're sorry, go to the hospital.

(pause, then firmly:)

You have congestive heart failure. If you don't go to the hospital, you'll be dead by the weekend. You. Will. Die.

Silence.

CHARLIE

Then I should probably keep working, I have a lot of essays this week--

LIZ

Goddammit.

CHARLIE

I know, I'm an awful person. I know. I'm sorry.

Liz collapses onto the recliner, exasperated. Charlie looks at her. Thomas takes a step toward Charlie.

THOMAS

Did you still want to hear about Christ's message of love and--?

LIZ

NO. HE DOES NOT.

THOMAS

Okay, okay, I'll go, I...

Thomas backs away, heading toward the front door. He stops, turns to Charlie.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I still don't understand why you wanted me to read that essay to you.

CHARLIE

It's a really good essay.

Liz stands, moving toward Thomas. Thomas hurries outside, Liz shuts the door behind him. Liz turns to Charlie. Pause.

LIZ

You have to go to the hospital, Charlie, this has gone way too far--

CHARLIE

And rack up tens of thousands of dollars of hospital bills, that I'll never be able to pay back, ever--

LIZ

This affects me too, you know? You're my *friend*.

CHARLIE

I know. I'm sorry.

LIZ

You say you're sorry one more time I'm gonna shove a knife right into you, I swear to God--

CHARLIE

Go ahead, what's it gonna do? My internal organs are two feet in at least.

Liz smiles despite herself. Charlie laughs.

Pause. Liz relents, goes to the couch, sitting next to Charlie.

Silence.

LIZ

I've been telling you this would happen.

CHARLIE

I know.

LIZ

Haven't I been telling you--?

CHARLIE

You have.

She finds the television remote, turns on the television. She sits next to Charlie, putting her head on his shoulder. She flips through the channels absent-mindedly. She lands on a news channel playing coverage of the 2016 Idaho primaries.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Liz.

Silence apart from the television.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Liz.

More silence.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Please.

Liz pauses again, then relents. She gets up, goes to the kitchen. She opens up a shopping bag, takes out a large bucket of gas station fried chicken. She brings the bucket to Charlie and gives it to him without looking him in the eye.

She sits back down, starts to flip channels.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Thank you.

She flips another channel, lands on an familiar episode of a sitcom. Charlie starts to eat the chicken.

LIZ

Oh I've seen this one, it's good.

Charlie continues to eat the chicken, Liz watches television.

4 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT

4

Charlie is asleep in front of the television which plays a late-night program. The chicken bucket is full of bones.

Charlie wakes up with a start. He looks at the television, then at the bucket of chicken. He searches for a piece of chicken, but the bones are licked clean. Charlie grabs the remote, turning off the television.

He notices the *Moby Dick* essay from earlier on an arm of the couch, not in its proper folder. He wipes his fingers off with a rag, then takes the essay and reaches for its folder. He regards the essay for a moment, smiling, then gently puts it back into the folder.

CHARLIE

(softly, to himself)

In the first part of his book, the author, calling himself Ishmael, is in a small sea-side town and he is sharing a bed with a man named Queequeg.

He lifts his shirt up, pulling it off of his body. He folds the shirt neatly while he speaks.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

The author and Queequeg go to church and later set out on a ship captained by the pirate named Ahab who is missing a leg, and very much wants to kill the whale, which is named Moby Dick, and which is white.

Charlie reaches for his walker. Charlie braces himself on the walker and stands up.

5 INT. - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 5

Charlie, shirtless, moves down the hallway with his walker, breathing heavily.

CHARLIE

In the course of the book, the pirate Ahab encounters many hardships. His entire life is set around trying to kill a certain whale. I think this is sad because the whale doesn't have any emotions, and doesn't know how bad Ahab wants to kill him. He's just a poor big animal.

He opens his bedroom door.

6 INT. - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 6

A stained, uncovered king-sized mattress rests on top of a sheet of plywood laid over several cinder blocks in a room that feels more like a converted office than a bedroom. The mattress is surrounded by empty food containers and empty and half-full two liter soda bottles. Charlie moves toward the bed.

CHARLIE

And I feel bad for Ahab as well, because he thinks that his life will be better if he can kill this whale, but in reality it won't help him at all.

Bracing himself on the walker, Charlie manages to lower himself down onto the mattress slowly. His knees and chest ache as he descends.

He reaches for a bottle of soda on his nightstand. He opens it, takes a long drink.

Finally, he is able to lay flat on the mattress. He stares up to the ceiling, wheezing, taking a few deep breaths.

Charlie puts the soda bottle on the floor. He closes his eyes, listening to the sound of his heart beating, struggling to pump blood throughout his body.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

This book made me think about my own life. This book made me think about my own life. This book made me--

CUT TO:

6A	TITLE: TUESDAY	6A
7	OMITTED	7
8	INT. - KITCHEN - LATE MORNING	8

Charlie is in the kitchen, leaning up against the counter. His walker is within reach, he is reading through some essays on his laptop. He is just finishing up a small bowl of plain oatmeal. He takes one last bite, then puts the bowl and spoon down onto the counter.

Just then, he catches a glimpse of an old stash of candy bars hidden in the back of a half-open drawer. He opens the drawer, takes out one of the candy bars. He opens it up, looking at it.

After a moment, he quickly wraps the candy back up, puts it back into the drawer, and closes it.

He thinks for a moment, then goes to his laptop.

Charlie types "congestive heart failure" into a search engine.

He scans an article. His heart rate begins to increase.

He types in another search: "congestive heart failure obesity prognosis".

He scans a few more results. His pulse is faster still.

Finally, he types: "BP 238/134".

He scans a few results. They are even more dire than he expected. He glances at a few of them, then slams the computer shut, breathing in and out.

Charlie quickly opens up the candy drawer and grabs the candy bar from moments before. He eats the entire thing in three large, quick bites.

He hastily grabs a handful of candy bars, opening a few, eating them too quickly.

After a few moments, he hears a soft cooing coming from the window. He just barely gets a glimpse of a robin flying away from the window.

Charlie swallows what's in his mouth, taking a big breath. He sighs, then puts the uneaten candy bars back on the counter.

He thinks for a moment, then makes a decision. He pulls out his phone. He looks at it for a moment, then makes a call. He puts the phone to his ear as he smooths out his hair, anxious.

8A OMITTED 8A

9 INT. - BATHROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER 9

Charlie is in the shower. Water streams from the shower head, and Charlie uses a loofah to wash his body.

10 INT. - BATHROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER 10

Charlie, leaning on the sink for support with one arm, shaves with a disposable razor.

Charlie nicks himself slightly. He winces. He keeps going.

11 OMITTED 11

11A INT. - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 11A

Well-dressed and refreshed, Charlie is at the window where he saw the bird before. He opens it up. There is a plate sitting on the ledge. Charlie opens his hand, placing several small pieces of apple onto the plate. He shuts the window. It's obvious this has become a ritual for him.

Just then, a knock at the door. Charlie looks.

12 INT. - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

12

ELLIE, 17, holding a backpack, stands near the front door looking at Charlie, who is lowering himself onto the couch from his walker.

ELLIE

Does this mean I'm gonna get fat?

Pause.

CHARLIE

No, it doesn't. I was always big, but I just--let it get out of control.

Ellie scans the room.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Was your mom okay with you coming over here?

ELLIE

I didn't tell her.

Charlie shifts a little on the couch, uncomfortable. He takes a breath. Ellie watches him.

CHARLIE

It's really good to see you, you look--beautiful. How's school? You're a senior, right?

ELLIE

You actually care?

CHARLIE

Of course I care... I pester your mom for information as often as she'll give it to me.

(pause)

So why aren't...? Don't you have school?

ELLIE

Got suspended this morning.

CHARLIE

Oh. Why?

ELLIE

I posted something about my stupid bitch lab partner that the vice-principal said was "vaguely threatening."

Ellie moves inside a little more, eyeing the room. She keeps her distance from Charlie.

CHARLIE

You don't like school?

ELLIE

Only idiots like high school.

CHARLIE

But--you're on track to graduate, right?

ELLIE

Counselor says I might not. I'm not worried. I'm a smart person, I never forget anything. But high school is just bullshit.

CHARLIE

Ellie, it's important, if you don't graduate--

ELLIE

Are you actually trying to *parent* me right now?

CHARLIE

No, I... I'm sorry, I just...

Charlie looks at Ellie, mounting concern. Ellie wanders into the kitchen.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I thought we could spend some time with each other.

ELLIE

I'm not spending time with you. You're disgusting.

CHARLIE

I know I... I'm a lot bigger since the last time you saw me--

ELLIE

I'm not talking about what you look like.

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You'd be disgusting even if you weren't this fat, you'd still be that piece of shit dad who walked out on me when I was eight. All because he wanted to fuck one of his students. Can I have one of these?

Ellie points to a box of doughnuts in the kitchen. Pause. Charlie nods.

Ellie takes a doughnut. She comes out of the kitchen, nibbling on the doughnut.

Charlie looks at her, thinking. Pause.

CHARLIE

Look, it's been a long time. I just thought maybe we could--get to know each other.

Ellie chortles.

ELLIE

I don't even know why I'm here.

She moves toward the front door, about to leave.

CHARLIE

I can pay you.

She stops, turns and looks at him.

ELLIE

You want to *pay me* to spend time with you?

CHARLIE

And I can help you with your work. It's what I do for my job.

Charlie grabs his laptop, opens it up. His web browser is open to an online university message board for one of his courses. He shows it to Ellie.

Ellie glances at the screen.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I can help you pass your classes.

ELLIE

You teach online?

CHARLIE

Yes.

ELLIE

Your students know what you look like?

Charlie closes the laptop.

CHARLIE

I--keep the camera shut off.

ELLIE

That's probably a good idea.

Ellie considers for a moment, then opens up her backpack. She rummages through it, looking for something.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

If I show a lot of improvement in one subject, my counselor says I might be able to graduate. You can rewrite these essays for English. But they have to be really good.

Ellie takes a couple of essays out of her backpack, hands them to Charlie. Charlie takes them, looks at them.

CHARLIE

I don't know if I should write them for you, I can work with you on--

ELLIE

How much can you pay me?

Pause.

CHARLIE

Everything I have, all the money I have in the bank.

ELLIE

How much?

Ellie stares at him. Pause. Charlie relents.

CHARLIE

A hundred-and-twenty thousand? Something like that. I'd have to check.

Pause. Ellie looks doubtful.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I never go out, all I pay for is
food, internet, rent... And I work
all the time.

ELLIE
And you'd give all that to me? Not
to my mom, to me?

CHARLIE
Yes, just--. Don't tell your mom,
okay?
(pause)
And maybe you could do some
writing. Just for me.

ELLIE
Why?

CHARLIE
You're a smart person. I bet you're
a strong writer. Plus, I'm a
teacher, I wanna make sure you're
getting something out of this.

Pause.

ELLIE
I don't even understand you.

Ellie heads for the front door, opening it up. She stops,
thinking for a moment. Very faintly, we begin to hear the
sound of ocean waves in the background. She turns, facing
Charlie.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Stand up and walk over to me.

CHARLIE
What?

ELLIE
Come over here. Walk toward me.

Charlie pauses, then reaches for his walker.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Without that thing. Just stand up
and come over here.

CHARLIE
Ellie, I can't really--

ELLIE

Shut up. Come over here.

Pause. Charlie looks around, trying to find something to brace himself. Finally, he puts one hand on the arm of the couch. He struggles to roll forward so he can put his weight onto his legs. Ellie watches him silently.

The effort of bending forward is painful, but he doesn't stop. He is almost able to get on his feet, but a surge of pain brings him back to the couch.

He looks at Ellie. She stares back at him, motionless.

He grabs the edge of an end table, bracing himself. He puts all his effort into it, and manages to rise a few inches off the couch. He keeps his eyes locked on Ellie.

Just as it looks like he might be able to freely stand, the end table gives way, two of the legs cracking in half. It takes a lamp with it, along with a stack of papers.

Charlie falls back onto the couch. He rolls back, dizzy with pain and lack of oxygen.

Charlie breathes for a moment, managing to calm himself down. He opens his eyes, then looks back at Ellie as she rushes out the front door.

13

INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

13

Charlie stands with his walker by a bookcase near the dining table, one of Ellie's essays in his hand. He reaches up and takes out a well-loved copy of *Leaves of Grass*.

A knock at the door.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)

Gambino's.

Pause. He puts the book back on the shelf.

CHARLIE

Yeah, you can--. I put a twenty in the mail box?

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)

Sure.

CHARLIE

You can just leave it on the--

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)
 Yeah, I--. I remember.
 (pause)
 Everything okay in there?

Pause.

CHARLIE
 Yeah.

Pause.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)
 You sure?

CHARLIE
 Yeah, I'm fine.

Charlie starts moving toward the front door. He drops off Ellie's essay on the kitchen counter.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Thank you.

Pause. Charlie listens. Finally, we hear the sound of the mailbox opening and shutting. We see the silhouette of the DELIVERY BOY passing by the kitchen windows. Charlie waits for a moment, then moves toward the door with his walker.

14 INT. - FRONT DOORWAY - MOMENTS LATER 14

Charlie opens up the front door. We now see that his apartment is on the second floor of a cheaply constructed building, his front door opening to an exterior walkway and staircase that lead down to the parking lot.

There is a large pizza box sitting on a small outdoor table next to the door. We hear the sound of a car door shutting.

Charlie looks down to the parking lot, sees the delivery boy driving away. He watches the car leave the parking lot and disappear down the street.

15 INT. - LIVING ROOM - THAT EVENING 15

Charlie sits on the couch. Liz sits next to him, holding a small machine with some electrodes attached to it. As Charlie breathes in and out, we see that the electrodes are attached to Charlie's palm.

LIZ
 Breathe slowly, relax.

Liz watches the number on the machine. Silence. She breathes in and out, Charlie does as well.

LIZ (CONT'D)

It measures perspiration, it's an indicator of stress. It's about establishing a relationship between your brain and your body. If you know how to make yourself calm, then your blood pressure'll... Here.

Liz shows him the number on the machine, which is going down slowly.

CHARLIE

I don't need a little machine to tell me how to take a few deep breaths and stop sweating.

LIZ

Well apparently you fucking do. Take another deep breath.

Liz puts the machine in Charlie's lap and goes to the kitchen. She starts to unpack the groceries she just brought over.

LIZ (CONT'D)

We're just gonna try some different methods or whatever, if you refuse to go to the hospital then you--

Liz sees Ellie's essays sitting on the counter. She picks one up, notices Ellie's name at the top. She takes the essay and leaves the kitchen, showing it to Charlie.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Where did this come from?

Pause. Charlie looks away.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Was she *here*?

Charlie looks at Liz, apologetic.

LIZ (CONT'D)

No, I don't like this. This isn't a good idea.

Pause. Liz goes back to the kitchen. She continues to stock items.

LIZ (CONT'D)

You know you're not supposed to be around her. Does her mom know about this?

CHARLIE

I just want to see her, I've always just wanted to see her. Mary's kept her from me all this time--

LIZ

Why do you suddenly need to see her so bad, why now?

CHARLIE

Liz.

Charlie looks at her. Pause. Liz looks away.

LIZ

Why the hell do you have her homework, anyway?

Liz goes back to putting away groceries in the kitchen.

CHARLIE

Look, I wasn't planning on this, but she just--. She needs some help in school, so I'm just going to help her with some essays.

LIZ

You haven't seen this girl since she was eight years old, and you wanna reconnect with her by doing her *homework* for her?

CHARLIE

It's fine--

LIZ

It's not fine. She shouldn't be around you when you're like this. What if something happens, what if you need help?

Liz notices the number on the machine, which is slowly going back up.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Charlie, calm down!

Frustrated, Charlie takes the electrodes off, puts the machine on the couch next to him.

Liz glares at him, then grabs the machine and puts it in her bag.

CHARLIE
I'm worried about her.

LIZ
Why?

Charlie opens up his laptop, it's open to Ellie's Facebook page.

LIZ (CONT'D)
You're spying on her, now?

CHARLIE
It doesn't even look like she has friends, I don't think she's...

Liz joins him on the couch. He scrolls through her profile, landing on one black and white shot of a barren suburban street at night, several streetlights trailing off into the distance throwing pools of light onto the street. It's strikingly beautiful, if bleak. He continues to scroll, landing on a selfie. The photo has one comment: "dyke." Charlie stares at it.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'm worried she's forgotten what an amazing person she is.

Charlie and Liz look at the photo for a moment. Liz looks at Charlie, then shuts the laptop.

LIZ
She's just a teenager, everyone's insane when they're a teenager. When I was that age, when my dad would really piss me off? I'm just lucky I didn't get *arrested*, I'll say that much.

Liz goes back into the kitchen, putting the rest of the groceries away.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Point is, bringing her over here is a bad idea.

Liz grabs a meatball sub, brings it to Charlie. Charlie shuts the laptop. Liz looks straight into his eyes.

LIZ (CONT'D)
You've got enough to deal with
right now, you hear me? Do *not*
bring her over here again.

Charlie looks at the meatball sub in Liz's hand. Liz continues to stare at him.

CHARLIE
Okay.

Liz hands Charlie the meatball sub, then heads back into the kitchen. Charlie unwraps the sub and begins eating it, fairly quickly.

LIZ
It's not like she's alone, you
know. She has her mom.

Charlie takes a big bite of the sub, accidentally inhaling a large chunk of meat. His windpipe is blocked.

Liz has her back turned to him. She turns on the water, starts to wash dishes that have piled up in the sink. She sees the digital clock on the microwave.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Shit, I have to go soon... I hate
these night shifts. Just a steady
parade of dumb drunk college kids.

Charlie begins to panic. He reaches into his mouth, trying to pull out the piece of meat. It doesn't work.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Did I tell you about this girl from
a few nights ago? The puke was
bright purple, I swear. What *does*
that? Why can't these kids just
drink *beer*?

No response. Charlie continues to choke.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Charlie?

Liz finally turns around, sees Charlie. She goes to him.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Are you choking? Oh God, are you
choking?!

Liz, not knowing what to do, pushes Charlie forward. She hits his back a couple of times, it doesn't work.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Okay, okay--lean over the arm!

Liz helps Charlie move so that the base of his stomach is over the arm of the couch. She circles the couch, climbs on top of him. Putting all her weight into it, she attempts to give him the Heimlich Maneuver.

The first few attempts don't work, but finally on the third or fourth attempt Charlie spits out the chunk of meatball onto the carpet.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Shit. Oh shit, Charlie.

Charlie leans back on the couch, in an immense amount of pain. He takes a few deep breaths.

CHARLIE
I'm okay. I'm okay.

Silence. Charlie breathes. Liz stares at him. The water continues to run in the kitchen sink.

LIZ
GODDAMMIT CHARLIE, WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU? Chew your food like a normal human being! You could have just *died* right in front of me, you--
-!

CHARLIE
I'm sorry...

Silence. Liz looks away, struggles to calm down.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Liz.

Finally, she goes to the kitchen, grabs a wad of paper towels. She goes back to the couch, cleaning up the piece of meatball that Charlie coughed up.

Liz throws away the paper towels, then goes back to Charlie. She sees the partially eaten sub on the floor. She considers, then picks it up, looking at it.

LIZ
It's okay.

Liz brushes it off a bit, then extends it to Charlie. Charlie looks at it, then her. He takes the sub. Liz looks away, going into the kitchen. She turns off the water.

She pauses, taking a breath, gathering herself.

Charlie looks at the meatball sub.

CUT TO:

15A TITLE: WEDNESDAY 15A

16 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATE MORNING 16

Charlie, on the couch, is in front of his laptop with the virtual classroom on the screen, this time with a different group of STUDENTS. As before, his camera is not on.

CHARLIE

I read through some of the posts on the course discussion forum this morning. In particular a post about crafting a good thesis. Quote, "just pick a sentence from the reading and say it's good or some shit."

(pause, sighing)

Listen, at this point in the course, I've given you all I can in terms of structure, building a thesis, paragraph organization... But if all of that isn't built on your own original ideas and truthful analysis, it doesn't mean anything. So just--as you write and revise, focus on that. Focus on the truth of your argument. It may sound silly, but it's--important. I promise it's important.

17 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER 17

Leaning on his walker, Charlie is at a bookcase leafing through several old notebooks on the shelf. Most of them are old and well-worn.

Finally, he spots what he was looking for: a blank notebook with a purple cover. He grabs it, taking it off the shelf.

As he pulls it out, he notices something on the shelf nearby: an old framed photo wedged between a couple of books. He pulls the photo out, looking at it.

The photo is roughly six or seven years old, it's a picture of Charlie in his early 40s standing on a beach on the Oregon Coast, his arm around a slightly younger man. They both look young, healthy, and happy. Charlie is big, but not nearly as large as he is now.

Charlie stares at the photo, smiling a bit.

18 OMITTED 18

19 INT. - HALLWAY - SHORTLY LATER 19

Charlie stands with his walker at the closed door to the second bedroom. There is an old, dust-covered key laying flat on top of the doorframe.

Using his claw, Charlie tries to grab the key. He struggles to get the right angle, and lifting his arms this high proves difficult. Just as he's about to get hold of the key, it slips from the claw's grip and falls to the floor.

Charlie tries to use the claw to grab the key. He manages to grip the key momentarily, but as he's lifting it he loses his grip and the key falls back to the floor, bouncing underneath the washing machine in an adjacent closet.

He sighs, looking at the locked door.

20 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER 20

Ellie sits in a corner, typing on her phone. Charlie is on the couch reading an essay. He steals a few glances at Ellie.

CHARLIE

This is... You say here that Walt Whitman wrote "Song for Myself."

ELLIE

(not looking up)
Yeah?

CHARLIE

It's called "Song of Myself."

ELLIE

My title's better.

Pause.

CHARLIE

Yeah, well it... Okay, I'll just change it.

Charlie makes a note in the essay.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(reading)

"The poem 'Song of Myself' is in a book called 'Leaves of Grass.' It was written by Walt Whitman and was published in 1855. He paid for the first publication himself."

ELLIE

You don't have to read it out loud, just re-write it.

He looks at Ellie. She continues to type on her phone.

CHARLIE

But this... You're supposed to analyze the poem, this is just a list of facts.

ELLIE

Yup. Thank you, Wikipedia.

CHARLIE

It's actually an amazing poem, Whitman uses the metaphor of "I" not to refer to himself but to explode the entire definition of self in favor of this all-encompassing--

ELLIE

I really, really don't care.

Pause. Ellie continues to type, not looking at Charlie.

CHARLIE

You know, I think you might like it if you actually read it.

Ellie finally looks up from her phone, looks at Charlie.

ELLIE

You're just like my teachers, you think just because I'm not losing my shit over the poem, it's because I didn't read it. I *did* read it.

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)

It's overwritten and dumb and repetitive and even though he thinks his "metaphor of I" is deep, it's actually just bullshit and in reality he's just some worthless 19th century faggot.

Pause. Ellie stares at him for a moment.

CHARLIE

That's an interesting perspective. It would make for an interesting essay.

Ellie goes back to her phone.

ELLIE

Just write that thing about exploding the definition of self, my English teacher'll love it.

Charlie looks at the essay again, reads a few more sentences. His eyes drift back to Ellie.

Charlie puts his hand on the edge of the couch, nervously teasing a loose thread.

CHARLIE

How's your mom doing?

ELLIE

Oh my God.

Ellie grabs her backpack, stands up.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

If you're not gonna write these essays for me--

CHARLIE

Ellie, I don't need you here to write this for you. If you want to go, you can go. You can still have the money.

Pause.

ELLIE

I thought you wanted to get to know me.

CHARLIE

I do, but I don't want to force you to be here. It's up to you.

Pause. Ellie considers. After a moment, she puts her backpack down and sits.

ELLIE
She's fine. Mom. I guess.

Pause.

CHARLIE
Is she--happy?

ELLIE
When she drinks.

CHARLIE
Oh.
(pause)
You guys still live in that duplex
over on Orchard?

ELLIE
You don't even know where we live?
(short pause)
You don't stay in touch with mom?

CHARLIE
I check in as much as she lets me.
She really only tells me things
about you.

ELLIE
Why?

CHARLIE
Because that's all I ask about.

Pause. Ellie gets up, starts wandering around the room, examining things.

ELLIE
When I was eleven we moved to the
other side of town, near the
Walmart.

CHARLIE
Is your mother--with anyone right
now?

ELLIE
No. Why, you interested?

CHARLIE
Oh, no, I just...

Ellie looks at a bookshelf, spots the framed photo of Alan and Charlie from before. She turns it right side up, examining it.

ELLIE

Why did you gain all that weight?

Ellie takes the framed photo in her hands, studying it.

CHARLIE

Oh, I don't--

ELLIE

If you're gonna interrogate me I'm gonna do the same thing. Why did you gain all that weight?

Pause.

CHARLIE

Someone close to me passed away, and it--... It had an effect on me.

Ellie turns to Charlie, holds up the framed photo. Charlie looks at the photo, nodding slightly.

Charlie continues to play with the loose thread on the couch, his heartbeat rising a bit.

Ellie looks at the photo again.

ELLIE

Your boyfriend.

CHARLIE

My partner.

ELLIE

Your student.

CHARLIE

He wasn't that young, it was a night school course--

ELLIE

Oh, I remember him. You had him over for dinner once when mom was in Montana visiting grandma. You made steaks. The good kind. Better meal than you ever made me or mom. I remember hearing the two of you talking after I went to bed.

CHARLIE

How do you remember all that?

ELLIE

I told you. I never forget anything.

Pause. Ellie stares at Charlie.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

How did he die?

Pause.

CHARLIE

You know, I--. I'd really rather not talk about this right now, if that's alright.

Ellie rolls her eyes, puts the framed photo near the window where the bird had been, facing out. She goes back to her seat, takes out her phone again.

Charlie reaches behind the couch, takes out the purple notebook.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'll write these essays for you, but I'd like you to do some writing, just for me?

Charlie extends the notebook to Ellie. She looks up from her phone, doesn't take the notebook.

ELLIE

I hate writing essays.

CHARLIE

Just think about the poem for a while, and write something. Be honest, tell me what you really think.

ELLIE

You want me to write what I really think?

Charlie keeps the notebook extended toward Ellie. Ellie stares at him for a second, then grabs the notebook. She opens it up, grabs a pen, starts writing.

Charlie reaches for his walker.

CHARLIE

I'll be back in a minute. Just
write whatever you want.

Charlie manages to brace himself on the walker and stand up. He slowly heads down the hall toward the bathroom. Ellie continues to write in the notebook, watching him from the corner of her eye.

Charlie continues down the hall into the bathroom.

21 INT. - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 21

Charlie makes his way into the bathroom. He turns on the water.

Leaning on the sink, he fights a wave of tears.

The wave of tears comes back, nearly overtaking him. He stifles it as best he can.

ELLIE (O.S.)

Are you okay?

(short pause)

Unless you're dying, there's no way
I'm coming in there.

CHARLIE

No, it's... I'm fine.

Charlie breathes in and out, struggling to calm down.

22 INT. - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 22

Ellie is standing halfway down the hall, holding the notebook. She looks toward the bathroom silently.

Suddenly we hear the sound of flapping wings near the window, Ellie looks and sees the bird from before.

Ellie approaches the window, sees the plate with pieces of apple on it. Only a few slightly brown pieces remain.

A knock at the front door. Ellie looks toward the front door, then toward the bathroom, considering calling out for Charlie.

Another knock.

Finally, she goes to the front door, unlocking the two bolts and throwing it open. Thomas stands in the doorway.

THOMAS

Oh, uh. Hi.

Ellie doesn't respond, staring at him silently.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I was--looking for Charlie?

ELLIE

He's in the bathroom.

THOMAS

Oh. I can come back if--

Ellie beckons him inside.

Thomas pauses, then cautiously makes his way inside. Ellie shuts the door behind him, takes a seat, stares at him. Thomas awkwardly smiles at her.

Pause.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Are you his--friend?

ELLIE

I'm his daughter.

THOMAS

(taken aback)

Oh.

ELLIE

Are you surprised?

THOMAS

Well, yeah, I guess.

ELLIE

What's more surprising? That a gay guy has a daughter, or that someone found his penis?

Pause. Thomas makes a move toward the front door.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I'm kidding, Jesus.

Thomas stops, looks at her.

An awkward silence.

THOMAS

I, uh. Charlie was interested in hearing more about my church, I brought some literature and I thought that--

ELLIE

Are you like a Mormon?

THOMAS

No, I, uh--I'm from New Life?

ELLIE

Ohhh. That end times cult thing.

THOMAS

It's not a cult--

ELLIE

I'll tell you one thing I like about religion.

Thomas looks at her, unsure of how to respond. He gives her a slight smile, a slight shrug.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

What I like about religion is that it assumes everyone is an idiot and that they're incapable of saving themselves. I think they got something right with that.

THOMAS

Well I don't really--

ELLIE

But what I *don't* like about religion is that when people accept Jesus or whatever, they suddenly think they're better than everyone else. That by accepting the fact that they're stupid sinners they've somehow become better, and they turn into assholes.

Ellie stares at Thomas. Pause.

THOMAS

I--don't really know what to say, I have some pamphlets--

Ellie takes out her phone, snaps a picture of Thomas.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Why did you just do that?

ELLIE
Are you coming back tomorrow?

THOMAS
I'm not sure?

ELLIE
Come back tomorrow, I'll be here
around the same time.

THOMAS
I'm sorry, what's happening?

Charlie appears in the hallway, he sees Thomas.

CHARLIE
Oh.

THOMAS
Hi, um. I was just--

Ellie takes a picture of Charlie with her phone, then grabs her backpack, starts gathering her things. She leaves the notebook behind.

ELLIE
(to Charlie)
You'll have that one done by
tomorrow?

CHARLIE
Sure.

ELLIE
Five page minimum.

CHARLIE
It'll be good, I promise.

Ellie turns to Thomas.

ELLIE
I'm Ellie.

Pause.

THOMAS
Thomas.

Pause, Ellie studies him. Thomas smiles at her awkwardly. Finally, Ellie leaves.

Charlie notices the framed photo of himself and his partner on the shelf, looks at it briefly. He reaches up and turns it over, putting it face down.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

So!

Charlie turns to Thomas. Thomas looks back at him, smiling.

23

INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER

23

Charlie is on the couch, looking through some Bible tracts absent-mindedly. Thomas holds a Bible.

THOMAS

Christ's return has been promised for centuries. But there are a lot of clues in scripture that suggest it's imminent.

Charlie turns a page in the tract. There is an illustration of hundreds of people floating up to heaven from out of a hellish city landscape.

Charlie flips a page, the phrase "THE END IS COMING" appears in bold letters.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

So that means that we don't have time to deny the gospel, we don't have the luxury of--

CHARLIE

You really think the world is gonna end soon?

Pause. Thomas looks at Charlie.

THOMAS

I mean... The Bible says that no one shall know the day or the hour, but--yeah. I think we're probably living in end times.

CHARLIE

And that doesn't... Bother you?

Charlie flips another page in the pamphlet. There is an illustration of a thoroughly Caucasian Jesus, his arms open wide.

THOMAS

No, it--. I think it's amazing,
it's...

Charlie turns to Thomas. Thomas thinks, looking at his hands.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

The idea that there's a better
world coming to replace this one?
That all the terrible things about
this country, this planet, will
just get wiped clean, replaced with
something pure and holy and--

CHARLIE

Look, I--. I'm sorry, I don't mean
to be rude, but... I know all this.

THOMAS

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

I've probably read just about
everything written by New Life
Church, probably every pamphlet
they've ever published--

THOMAS

Oh--I mean that's great and
everything, but these tracts are
just the beginning, there's so much
in the Bible that--

CHARLIE

I've read the Bible.

Pause. Thomas looks at him, smiling.

THOMAS

Oh yeah?

CHARLIE

Sure. Couple times.

THOMAS

Did you... Like it?

Pause.

CHARLIE

I thought it was... Devastating.
God creates us, expels us from
paradise, then we wander around for
thousands of years killing each
other before he comes back to save
144,000 of us, meanwhile the other
seven and a half billion of us fall
into hell.

Pause. Thomas considers, thumbs through his Bible a bit.

THOMAS

Yeah, that's not really how I
interpret it, but...

Finally, Thomas sighs, puts down the Bible. He sits next to
Charlie.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Charlie, you have to understand--
God hasn't turned his back on you.
If you accept him, he's going to
release you from this, he's going
to take your soul out of this body
and give you a new body, one made
of pure light. Don't you want that?

Charlie sighs, looking away from him.

CHARLIE

I'm not interested in being saved.
I appreciate you helping me out the
other day, but you can go, this
doesn't--

THOMAS

Okay, look--I really think God sent
me here for a reason, there's a
reason I knocked on your door when
you needed someone the most.

(short pause)

Isn't there any way I can help?
That's why I became a missionary in
the first place, right?

Pause. Charlie looks at him.

CHARLIE

There is--something you can do.

Charlie looks at Thomas. Thomas suddenly grows uncomfortable,
moving away from Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What?

THOMAS

No, I just... I hope you know I wasn't talking about...

CHARLIE

What?
(finally realizing)
Oh my God.

THOMAS

It's just with the... What you were watching, the first time I came in here--

CHARLIE

I am not attracted to you. Please, understand me when I say that. *I am not attracted to you. You're a fetus.*

Thomas looks away, a little ashamed.

THOMAS

Sorry, I just...

CHARLIE

Thomas, tell me the truth. Do you find me disgusting?

Pause. Thomas looks Charlie straight in the eye.

THOMAS

No.
(pause)
I just want to help. Please, just let me help.

Charlie looks at him, thinking.

24

INT. - HALLWAY - A SHORT TIME LATER

24

Charlie and Thomas are in the hallway. Charlie is standing with his walker. Thomas is on his knees, searching for the key underneath the washing machine. He finds it, then stands up. He looks at the key for a moment, then puts it in the bedroom door, unlocking it.

Just as he's about to open the door Charlie reaches out and stops him, leaving the door open only a few inches. Thomas looks at Charlie. Charlie looks away.

Charlie starts making his way back to the living room.

CHARLIE
Thank you, that was--. That was helpful.

THOMAS
What happened to your...?

Charlie stops, looking at Thomas.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Sorry it's just--. Your friend, Liz, she said that your boyfriend... She said that he used to go to New Life?

Pause. Charlie looks at him.

The sound of a key in the front door, the door opening.

LIZ (O.S.)
Charlie?!

CHARLIE
(calling out)
Yeah.

Charlie makes his way down the hallway. Thomas watches him.

25 INT. - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

25

Charlie comes into the living room, followed by Thomas.

Liz is coming in through the front door, pulling a folded up wheelchair behind her.

LIZ
Alright, I got you this. I did some asking around and--

Liz sees Thomas.

LIZ (CONT'D)
What the fuck is he doing here?

CHARLIE
He was just helping me with something, Liz. Take it easy.

Liz glares at Thomas, then pulls the wheelchair the rest of the way through the doorway.

LIZ
Okay, well... You can go now.

CHARLIE
Liz.

LIZ
(to Thomas)
Go home.

Thomas grabs his backpack, moves toward the front door. He knocks over a floor lamp in his haste.

THOMAS
Crap, sorry--

LIZ
Leave it.

Thomas bends down, grabs the lamp.

LIZ (CONT'D)
I said leave it!

CHARLIE
Liz, would you *stop*?

Liz glares at Charlie. Thomas awkwardly puts the lamp right side up, then goes to the front door. He opens it, about to leave.

Liz goes to Thomas, blocking him. She shuts the front door, glaring at him.

LIZ
Actually, stay. We'll have a chat.

Liz locks the two bolts on the door, then brings the wheelchair to Charlie. Thomas stands near the front door, not knowing what to do.

CHARLIE
What is it?

LIZ
What the fuck does it look like?

Liz unfolds the wheelchair.

LIZ (CONT'D)
It's a fat guy wheelchair.

CHARLIE
Why do I need a wheelchair?

LIZ

I was talking with one of the E.R. doctors, he said that moderate activity would be a good idea. Sense of independence might help you out.

CHARLIE

How much did you pay for this thing?

LIZ

Nothing. We ordered it for a patient a few months ago, it's just been sitting around.

CHARLIE

What happened to the patient?

Liz doesn't respond.

LIZ

Try it out.

Liz braces the back of the wheelchair by putting all her weight onto it.

Charlie slowly backs toward the wheelchair.

LIZ (CONT'D)

(like a truck backing up)
Beep. Beep. Beep.

Charlie looks back at her. Liz smiles.

Charlie keeps moving backward, reaching the wheelchair. He collapses down into it. Thomas watches silently.

Liz unlocks the wheels of the wheelchair, moves some trash and other items out of his way.

Charlie wheels himself forward a little bit, using both his arms and his legs to help himself move. Charlie smiles a bit, unexpectedly pleased.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Good?

CHARLIE

Yeah, it--it's actually really nice.

LIZ

Lemme clear some space for you.

Liz starts moving some stuff around, making room for the wheelchair. She goes to one end of the coffee table, about to lift it. She pauses, looking at Thomas.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Hello?

Thomas quickly moves to the other side of the coffee table. He helps Liz move it to the side.

Charlie wheels himself a few more feet. He smiles wider.

CHARLIE

Thank you, Liz, this is really great...

LIZ

See? I told you.

THOMAS

I should probably go.

LIZ

Not before we have our little chat.

THOMAS

Oh, I--what?

Liz grabs her cigarettes and ashtray from on top of the fridge, then indicates the front door.

LIZ

C'mon.

CHARLIE

Liz--

LIZ

(to Charlie)

Just gimme a minute with him.

Liz unbolts both locks on the door, opens it and gestures for Thomas to meet her outside.

Thomas, unsure of what to do, moves outside as Liz has indicated. Liz follows him, giving Charlie a look as she does so. She shuts the apartment door.

Charlie is left alone. He slowly rolls himself toward the kitchen, looking through the shuttered windows.

26

EXT. - APARTMENT FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

26

Thomas awkwardly stands as Liz grabs a lawn chair and sits. She pulls out a cigarette and lights it. Liz signals for Thomas to sit on a nearby bench. A silence as she looks him over.

LIZ

Where you from?

THOMAS

What?

LIZ

You said you've only been here for a little while. Where you from?

THOMAS

Uh--Iowa? Town called Waterloo?

LIZ

You asking me?

THOMAS

No, I--. I'm from Waterloo.

LIZ

Your whole family move out here for New Life?

Pause. Thomas tenses up a bit.

THOMAS

No, I--. It's just me. I wanted to do some missionary work before school.

LIZ

You're from Iowa and you came to Idaho to do missionary work? Why aren't you in Africa or something?

THOMAS

Idaho needs the word just as much as anyone else.

Liz takes a long drag of her cigarette.

LIZ

Okay listen. I know this is fun for you. You get to travel around, act superior than everyone else, and eventually you go home, get some boring job, have too many kids.

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

It all sounds great, it's God's plan. But, there are other types of people. People like Charlie, for whom this amazing plan doesn't fit. So just *stay* away from him. He doesn't need this right now.

THOMAS

I disagree.

Liz looks at him. She stubs out her half-smoked cigarette on the sole of her shoe, putting it back in the pack.

LIZ

Excuse me?

THOMAS

Sorry, I just--. He's refusing to go to the hospital, he's dying. What he needs is spiritual guidance.

She moves toward Thomas.

LIZ

And you're gonna give him that?

THOMAS

No. God will.

LIZ

I see.

Pause. Liz stares at him.

LIZ (CONT'D)

My big brother did some missionary work for New Life. Went to South America.

THOMAS

Oh.

LIZ

Yeah. I was the black sheep, I refused to go to church ever since I was twelve. Dad knew I was a lost cause. But not my brother, he *loved* New Life.

(pause)

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

He wrote me a letter a few months after he left, told me he was tired and lonely, but he didn't want to come home because he didn't want to get married.

THOMAS

He didn't want to--?

LIZ

Dad had set it all up, pushed him into getting married to this girl from the church he barely knew. But when he came back--he met someone else. Fell in love, started a whole new life. And dad kicked him out of the church. And--the family.

Liz leans into Thomas, growing angry. Thomas grows more and more nervous.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I thought he was gonna be able to get over all that religious stuff, but it was like a cancer, he couldn't shake it. He just--caved in on himself, stopped sleeping, stopped eating. Lost a ton of weight. One night, Charlie came home, and he wasn't here. Couple weeks later, a guy was out jogging on a bike path near the river in Lewiston, saw something washed up on shore, and...

(pause)

That was Alan. The love of Charlie's life, and my brother.

Pause. Thomas finally realizes.

THOMAS

Oh.

LIZ

Yeah. Oh.

(pause)

To this day my dad won't admit it. Told the whole congregation Alan's death was an "unfortunate accident." Denying him to the end.

Pause. Thomas takes this in.

THOMAS

I just... I know you don't trust me, and I haven't known him for very long. But I really think God has brought me here, right when Charlie needs it most. I just want him to be *saved*, that's all--

This triggers something in Liz. She bears down on him.

LIZ

You listen to me. He doesn't need "saving." In a few days he's probably going to be dead, so what he needs is for you to *leave him alone*. I am the only one who can help him, you understand me?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Liz.

Liz turns around. Charlie is behind her in his wheelchair, in the open doorway, staring at her.

Thomas quickly leaves.

27

INT. - LIVING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

27

Liz cleans in the kitchen, preoccupied. Charlie is in the living room in his wheelchair, facing away from her.

Liz comes into the living room, picks up the remote. She turns on the television, flips through a few channels.

LIZ

You wanna watch some Maury? That sounds good, right?

Liz finds the right channel, puts the remote down. She watches the television for a few moments, still standing. Charlie remains motionless. Liz doesn't look at him.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Actually, I got another night shift tonight. I better, uh.

(pause)

You good for the night?

Pause. Charlie nods slightly, Liz still doesn't look at him.

After a moment, Liz grabs her stuff and leaves, locking both of the locks behind her. Charlie stares forward vacantly.

28 INT. - HALLWAY - THAT NIGHT 28

Charlie, in his wheelchair, is in front of the slightly opened door to the second bedroom.

Taking a breath, he pushes the door completely open and looks inside the darkened room. He reaches up and flips the light switch. Nothing happens. He flips it a few more times. He moves inside the room just slightly, unable to go through the door fully.

29 INT. - SECOND BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 29

Charlie looks around the room, the room is only barely lit from the light spilling from the hallway. It's obvious he hasn't been in here for quite some time.

Charlie looks around the room. He leans in, taking a big breath through his nose, taking in the smell of the room. He closes his eyes. He takes another big breath in, smiling.

Charlie opens his eyes, looking around the room. Near the door, there is a bookcase with a few different books on it. He spots a simple, well-worn, hard-bound NIV translation of the Bible with the number "72" written in marker on the fore edge. His smile disappears.

Charlie breathes in and out, becoming upset. Sweat starts to stream down his face. His pulse quickens.

After a moment, he quickly moves out of the room, shutting the door behind him.

30 OMITTED 30

31 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT 31

Charlie is in his wheelchair, scanning through a book of poetry, reading to himself.

A knock at the front door.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)
Gambino's.

CHARLIE
Hi, yeah. You can--

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)
 Money in the mailbox, leave it on
 the bench?

Pause.

CHARLIE
 Yeah. Thank you.

Charlie pauses, waiting for the delivery boy to take the money and leave the pizza. He doesn't hear anything. Another moment passes.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)
 I'm Dan.

CHARLIE
 What?

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)
 I just--. My name, it's Dan.
 (pause)
 I've been coming here for a while
 now. Just thought you'd wanna know
 my name.

Pause.

CHARLIE
 Charlie.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)
 Hey, Charlie.

We hear the sound of the mailbox opening and shutting.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Have a good night, okay?

We hear the sound of the delivery boy going down the stairs. Charlie looks at the front door.

32 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER

32

Charlie is in his wheelchair, in front of the television, watching 2016 primary election coverage. A pizza box sits on the couch with one piece uneaten and a few crusts here and there. Charlie is finishing the next-to-last slice when he notices Ellie's notebook sitting on the other side of the couch. With his reaching claw, he picks up Ellie's notebook.

He takes the remote, turns off the television. He opens the notebook to the first page.

Written in the notebook are three separate lines: "This apartment smells. This notebook is retarded. I hate everyone."

Charlie looks at it for a moment, then smiles broadly.

CHARLIE
 (reading softly, to himself)
 "This apartment smells. This notebook is retarded. I hate everyone."

Charlie thinks for a moment. He reads it again, counting out the syllables on his fingers.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 (counting to five)
 This apartment smells...
 (counting to seven)
 This notebook is retarded...
 (counting to five)
 I hate everyone.

Charlie smiles wider. He begins to laugh a little. The laughter grows and soon it causes a sudden pain in his chest, the most severe he's had so far. He grabs his chest, speaking softly to himself.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 I felt saddest of all when I read the boring chapters that were only descriptions of whales because I knew that the author was just trying to save us from his own sad story, just for a little while. This apartment smells.

The pain starts to subside. He takes a few deep breaths, starts to smile again.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 This apartment smells. I hate everyone. The author was just trying to save us from his own sad story. I hate everyone. I hate everyone.

CUT TO:

33 OMITTED 33

33A OMITTED 33A

34 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER 34

Charlie is at the door on his wheelchair. He opens it up. Ellie stands outside, holding her backpack. Short pause.

ELLIE
You have it?

CHARLIE
It's almost done. You can wait
while I finish it up, print it?

Ellie looks at the door, annoyed. Finally, she relents, comes inside and sits on the recliner. She pulls out her phone.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
While you're here, maybe you could
write a little more in your
notebook?

Charlie pulls out Ellie's notebook, extends it to her.

ELLIE
Oh my God.

CHARLIE
You've only written a couple
sentences so far, can you write
more?

ELLIE
I kind of hate you.

CHARLIE
Yeah, but you hate everyone.

Charlie smiles broadly at her, Ellie looks away.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Look just keep going, forget the
poem, just write whatever you want,
whatever you're thinking--

ELLIE
Be quiet, just--.

Ellie fumes, then grabs the notebook out of Charlie's hand. She finds a pen, plops down into a chair and opens it up. She stares at the blank page. Finally, she starts to write a little.

Charlie looks at her lovingly. Pause. After a moment he wheels himself a little closer to her, speaking tentatively.

CHARLIE

You know, I... I was in a strange place in my life when I married your mom--

ELLIE

Did I fucking ask?

CHARLIE

Sorry, I just... I'm sorry.

(pause)

I understand that you're angry. But you don't need to be angry at the whole world, just be angry at me--

ELLIE

You know what?! You can't throw me away like a piece of garbage and then suddenly want to be my dad eight years later. You left me for your boyfriend, it's really that simple. And if you've been telling yourself anything different, then you've been lying to yourself.

This stings. Charlie is at a loss.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

But you know what? I'm *glad*, because you taught me something very important: people are *assholes*. Most people learn that way too late, you taught me that when I was eight. Thank you for that.

Ellie takes the notebook, starts writing again. Silence.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You know you could've...

CHARLIE

What?

Pause.

ELLIE

You could've been sending us money.
If you have all that money and
wanted to be a part of my life so
bad, you could have been sending
money to my mom.

CHARLIE

I did.

ELLIE

I mean more than just child
support.

Pause. Ellie continues to write in the notebook. Charlie
moves toward her in the wheelchair. He reaches out, puts a
hand on the notebook. Ellie stops writing.

CHARLIE

I did.

(pause)

When I left your mom... She didn't
want me around you. I hoped she'd
eventually change her mind, but
she...

Pause. Ellie stares down, not looking at him.

ELLIE

You could have just fucking *called*
me. All this time. You could have
been part of my life.

Pause.

CHARLIE

Ellie, look at me. Who would want
me to be a part of their life?

Charlie looks at her, Ellie stares back at him. It's the
closest they've been to one another yet. Ellie is starting to
crack a bit.

But just as quickly as the moment came, Ellie ends it,
looking away.

Pause.

ELLIE

I'm hungry.

Pause.

CHARLIE

There's stuff for sandwiches in the fridge.

Ellie gets up, goes to the kitchen without looking at Charlie. She opens up the fridge, takes out cold cuts, mustard, bread. She looks back at Charlie.

ELLIE

I'll make you one, but it's going to be small. And I'm only using turkey or chicken and no mayonnaise.

She opens a jar of mustard, finds a breadknife. Charlie looks at her, smiling. Ellie looks at him, stops, clearly annoyed.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

What?

CHARLIE

No, it's just--.

(pause)

You're an amazing person, Ellie. I hope you know what an amazing person you are. I couldn't ask for a more incredible daughter.

Silence. Charlie smiles broadly at her, Ellie stares back at him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'll print it out for you now.

Charlie opens his laptop, pulling up a document. He hits print, and a printer in a corner comes to life. Charlie watches the printer, thinking.

We hear the sound of flapping wings. Ellie looks at the window in the living room, sees the robin from before eating freshly cut pieces of apple off the plate. She stares at it.

She looks down at the breadknife in her hand, her knuckles growing white. She silently digs the knife into the kitchen counter, gouging the surface.

35 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER

35

Charlie is asleep in the wheelchair with a mostly eaten sandwich in his lap. Ellie sits on the couch, a plate with a half-eaten sandwich sits on the coffee table in front of her.

Ellie stares at Charlie, who is snoring lightly.

Ellie lifts her hands to her mouth. She's holding a small marijuana pipe and a lighter. She takes a hit, blowing it in Charlie's direction. She thinks for a moment, looking around.

36 INT. - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

36

Ellie makes her way down the hallway, still holding the pipe and lighter. She glances inside Charlie's bedroom, sees the stained mattress. She recoils.

She looks at the closed door to the second bedroom. She goes to it, opening it. For the first time, we get a good look at the room. The bedroom, in stark contrast to the rest of the apartment, is perfectly organized and well-kept. There is no trash, nothing is stained. The bed is made, framed pictures of Charlie and Alan on the dresser are perfectly arranged. But everything looks like it's been untouched for several years, giving everything a muted quality, like the resin that browns pigments on medieval paintings.

She looks inside at the clean and orderly room, curious and a little shocked. She sees the photos of Alan and Charlie on the dresser. She looks at the bed. For a brief moment, we see a hint of compassion on her face.

Just then--a knock at the front door. Ellie freezes, not knowing what to do.

Another knock. Ellie returns to the living room.

37 INT. - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

37

Ellie frantically puts the pot pipe and lighter into Charlie's hand. He remains asleep.

ELLIE

Yeah?!

THOMAS

(calling out)

I, uh... Hello?

Ellie pauses, recognizing the voice. She grabs the pot pipe and lighter.

She moves to the door, unlocking it and swinging it open. Thomas stands in the doorway.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Oh, hi.

Thomas sees the pipe in Ellie's hand.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Are you--?

ELLIE
Come inside.

Thomas cautiously makes his way inside, Ellie shuts the door behind him without locking it. Thomas sees Charlie.

THOMAS
Is he--?

Thomas goes to Charlie, looking at him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Is he okay?

ELLIE
I don't know. I ground up some Ambien and put it in his sandwich.

THOMAS
Wait, what?

ELLIE
I only gave him a couple, he's fine. I can take like three at a time.

Ellie moves to the couch, sits down.

THOMAS
You have--? Where did you get Ambien?

ELLIE
I had sex with a pharmacist.

Thomas stares at her.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Just kidding, gross. My mom pops them like Tic Tacs.

THOMAS
I don't know if he should be taking...

Ellie takes a hit from the pipe. Thomas watches her.

ELLIE
(exhaling)
Does this make you nervous?

Thomas looks away.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

It's just pot. It's not like I'm smoking meth or anything.

THOMAS

I know--. I know what pot is.

ELLIE

You only think you know what pot is because your parents told you a bunch of lies about it.

THOMAS

Don't--. I know what drugs are, I've smoked pot before.

ELLIE

Oo, I'm so impressed.

THOMAS

I'm not trying to impress you--

ELLIE

You have *not* smoked pot.

THOMAS

Yes, I have, it was... Kind of a problem.

ELLIE

That is the stupidest fucking thing I've ever heard in my entire life.

THOMAS

I was smoking every day. I had a problem.

ELLIE

You were a stoner. You had a hobby.

Ellie takes another hit, blowing it at Thomas. Thomas gets up, moving to the door.

THOMAS

Okay, look just tell him I was here and I'll--

ELLIE

If you leave I'll feed him the rest of the pills I have in the bottle.

Thomas stops, turns to Ellie.

THOMAS

What?

Ellie grabs her backpack, reaches inside, pulls out a bottle of prescription pills. She examines the bottle.

ELLIE

There's like twenty or thirty more, I'll crush them up and put them in some water and pour it down his throat.

Thomas goes to Ellie.

THOMAS

You wouldn't actually do that, would you?

ELLIE

Sit down.

Thomas looks at her for a moment, then sits down, maintaining his distance.

Ellie looks at him, Thomas looks away.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Why do you keep coming back here?

THOMAS

He needs help. He needs God in his life right now.

ELLIE

That's a stupid reason. Do you think he wants to have sex with you? That's so gross, oh my God, take a hit.

Ellie extends the pipe to Thomas.

THOMAS

I don't want--!

ELLIE

If you don't take a hit I'm gonna call the police and tell them you tried to rape me. Take a hit.

Thomas stares at her, incredulous.

THOMAS

I don't understand you at all.

ELLIE

Oh my God.

They stare at each other for a moment. Finally, Thomas relents and takes the pipe.

THOMAS

Is there a carb on this?

ELLIE

Oo, I'm so impressed.

THOMAS

I wasn't trying to--

ELLIE

There isn't a carb.

Thomas pauses, then tentatively lights the pipe and takes a hit. Before he's done inhaling, Ellie takes out her phone and takes a picture of him.

Thomas coughs violently, almost drops the pipe.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Calm down.

THOMAS

What are you gonna do with that picture?!

ELLIE

I'm gonna masturbate to it. Is that what you want me to say? You're a pervert, take another hit.

Thomas stares at her. Pause. Ellie sighs, buries her face in her hands.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Look, I'm just fucking with you, alright? I'm not gonna kill anyone, I'm not gonna tell anyone you raped me.

Pause.

THOMAS

You're not going to give him more Ambien?

Ellie shakes her head.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Why do you keep coming back here?

ELLIE
I don't know.

THOMAS
Seriously, if you hate him so much--

ELLIE
I'm done answering questions now.

Pause. Thomas looks at the pipe in his hand for a moment.

THOMAS
Can I take a hit?

ELLIE
It goes against your religion and
that makes you a hypocrite. Go
ahead.

Thomas considers for a moment, then takes another hit--a larger one than before. He exhales.

Ellie takes another photo of him with her phone.

THOMAS
I really wish you wouldn't do that--

ELLIE
Yeah I heard you the first time. Do
you find me attractive?

Pause. Thomas looks at her, caught off guard.

THOMAS
I--

ELLIE
Because I'm not attracted to you at
all, just to let you know. I'm not
trying to be mean or anything, I
just don't think you're good
looking. Or interesting. Or
intelligent.

Pause. Ellie looks at Thomas, who is a little hurt. She rolls her eyes, gets up, goes into the kitchen, looking for food.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Oh my God grow up, maybe someone
else finds you attractive. Maybe my
dad finds you attractive.

THOMAS

I really wish you wouldn't--

ELLIE

It's so easy to make you
uncomfortable, it's a little sad.
You can cash that out.

Pause. Thomas takes another large hit. He's pretty high by this point. Ellie finds a bag of potato chips, comes back into the living room. She eats the chips as she talks.

THOMAS

If my parents knew that I was
getting high, that I was getting
high while I was out witnessing for
the church--

ELLIE

You're not from New Life.

Pause.

THOMAS

What?

Pause. Ellie continues to eat potato chips, moves back to the couch and sits next to Thomas.

ELLIE

There's a kid a grade below me who
goes there. He said they stopped
doing door-to-door stuff last year
when a lady was out preaching or
whatever and a guy answered his
door with no clothes on.

Pause. Thomas stares at Ellie for a second, then starts to stand up.

THOMAS

I need to go.

Thomas gathers his things, shaky on his feet. He goes to the door.

ELLIE

Who are you, really?

Thomas heads to the door, Ellie jumps up from the couch, getting between Thomas and the door.

Thomas turns around, dazed and panicked. He looks around the room, looks at the window, then heads down the hall. Ellie follows him.

Thomas, panicked and unsure of what to do, goes into the second bedroom and shuts the door on Ellie.

Ellie tries the door, Thomas has locked it.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
C'mon, tell me!

THOMAS (O.S.)
Why do you care?!

ELLIE
Because I think we have a blossoming friendship.

Pause.

38 INTERCUT - SECOND BEDROOM/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

38

Thomas sits down on the ground, leaning his back against the door. He pauses.

THOMAS
You're just messing with me.

ELLIE
No I'm not.

Pause. Thomas exhales looks around the room, regarding the untouched bed, the photos on the dresser.

THOMAS
You won't tell anyone?

ELLIE
Who am I gonna tell?

Pause. Ellie sits down on the ground, listening.

THOMAS
I was on a mission. With a group from my church, back in Waterloo, my hometown in Iowa. When my dad caught me smoking pot, he thought a mission would be a good idea. Truth is he was probably just embarrassed by me and wanted me gone for a while.

(pause)

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Anyway. I just--left. I couldn't do it anymore.

ELLIE

Why?

THOMAS

The mission leader, this guy Jerry-- all he had us doing was standing on corners, handing out pamphlets. At the end of each day he'd be like, "look how many people we're helping!" I tried to talk to him about different ways to minister, different ways to actually *help* people... But you could tell, he wouldn't've cared. He didn't need to earn or prove his faith *at all*. So after a while I was like--wait, am I actually like, *helping* anybody?

ELLIE

No. You were not.

THOMAS

I started to feel that way, too.

ELLIE

I don't *feel* that way, I *know* you weren't helping people. It doesn't help people to tell them to believe in God. Why would that help people?

THOMAS

I just--I want to believe it. All my family, my friends, they're so--happy. I just want to be like that.

ELLIE

But why did you leave then?

Thomas stands up, moving across the room. He looks at the photos on the dresser, picking one up. It leaves an imprint of itself on the dresser, exposing the accumulated dust.
Pause.

THOMAS

I was--worried that I might get arrested.

ELLIE

For smoking pot?

THOMAS

For stealing from the mission.

Ellie thinks for a moment, then pulls out her phone. She opens up a voice memo app. She presses record, placing her phone at the base of the door.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

One day, I finally just--ditched the pamphlets. Went door to door, started actually engaging with people. Finally felt like I was *doing something*. Helping people, maybe.

(pause)

That night at the mission meeting, I told everyone what I did that day, and Jerry was like, "that's not what we do, buddy!" and I was like "well why not?!" and we ended up having this huge argument in front of everyone, and... So that night, I decided to leave. And when everyone was asleep, I--took the petty cash.

ELLIE

How much?

Pause.

THOMAS

Two-thousand, four-hundred and thirty-six dollars.

ELLIE

Oh.

THOMAS

Yeah. Oh.

(pause)

And I just--got on a bus. Jerry and my parents were calling me over and over, eventually I just tossed my phone. After a while I ended up here.

(pause)

I thought I could use this money for my own mission, see my faith save just *one person*... And now I'm almost out of money. I can't go home, my parents probably wanna disown me. I don't know what to do.

Thomas sees the old Bible sitting on the bookshelf that Charlie was staring at before. He goes to it.

ELLIE

You're more interesting to me, now.

THOMAS

Thanks.

Thomas takes the Bible, opening it up. There is a stamp on the first page that reads "Property of New Life Church" and a hand-written name in the corner: "Alan Grant."

Thomas flips through the Bible, which has obviously been meticulously studied--nearly every page has highlights, notes, or underlines. He smiles slightly, touching the pages.

He lands on one particular page in Romans, sees a couple of verses that have been heavily highlighted, underlined, circled--more than any other verse.

39 INT. - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 39

Ellie stands at the door, looking down at her phone, which is still recording.

ELLIE

So that's why you wanna save my dad.

The bedroom door unlocks, Ellie quickly grabs her phone, shuts off the recording. She puts it in her pocket.

The door slowly opens, Thomas stands looking at her, holding the Bible. Silence.

Ellie takes her phone out and takes a picture of Thomas. She smiles at him.

Suddenly, the sound of the front door opening.

Ellie rushes into the living room, followed by Thomas.

40 INT. - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 40

Just as Ellie and Thomas come into the room, the front door opens and Liz enters, followed by MARY, a harried woman in her 40s.

Ellie sees Mary, she goes to her.

ELLIE
 (to Mary)
 Mom--

MARY
 Shut up.

Liz looks at Thomas and Ellie. Thomas quickly grabs his things and hurries to the door, the Bible still in his hand. Liz glares at him.

Thomas quickly leaves. Liz turns and sees Charlie, still asleep in his wheelchair.

LIZ
 Charlie? *Charlie.*

Liz goes to Charlie. Mary turns and finally gets a look at Charlie. She freezes for a moment, shocked.

Liz shakes Charlie a bit, trying to wake him up. She checks his breathing.

Mary goes to Charlie as he wheezes loudly in his sleep. She looks at him closely.

MARY
 Charlie...

Mary gets closer, examining his body in disbelief. She looks him up and down as Ellie moves into the living room.

Mary looks away, upset. Liz continues to shake Charlie.

Pause. Mary and Liz both look at Ellie. Ellie stares back at them, defiant.

41 INT. - LIVING ROOM - SHORTLY LATER

41

Liz is hooking Charlie up to an oxygen tank, threading a plastic tube over his ears and under his nose. Charlie is noticeably weaker than before, and he is wheezing more heavily.

Ellie sits at the dining table. Mary sits with her, nervously fiddling in her coat pockets. She takes out a pack of cigarettes along with a lighter. Liz notices.

LIZ
 Not with the oxygen tank.

MARY
 I'll stand by the window.

Liz stares daggers at Mary. Annoyed, Mary puts her cigarettes and lighter away. Charlie looks at Mary. He smiles a little.

CHARLIE

(to Mary)

Ellie told you that she was coming over here?

LIZ

No, I did. And just in time, looks like. You having more pain?

Charlie nods.

LIZ (CONT'D)

How easy is it to move?

CHARLIE

Not very.

LIZ

Any confusion? Have you felt disoriented, forgotten where you are or what you're doing?

Charlie shakes his head. Liz finishes hooking him up to the oxygen tank, looks at him.

CHARLIE

Am I--okay?

LIZ

No, you're not okay. But as far as the sleeping pills, you're fine. I don't think she gave you much.

ELLIE

Yeah, that's what I told you.

Liz goes to Ellie, standing over her.

LIZ

You know I was a very angry, very stupid little girl once too, but if you would have given him more pills than that--

ELLIE

Yeah except I didn't give him more than that, I gave him *two pills*.

MARY

Ellie, how much money did he offer you?

Charlie looks at Mary, pleading.

MARY (CONT'D)
All of it?

ELLIE
 How do you know about--?

MARY
 (to Ellie)
 You think I'm an idiot? You think I
 would believe that you were coming
 over here out of the kindness of
 your heart?

LIZ
 Charlie doesn't have any money.

Mary looks at Liz. Liz goes back to Charlie, attaching the oxygen tank to the back of his wheelchair.

MARY
 (to Charlie)
 She doesn't know?

CHARLIE
 Mary--

MARY
 (to Liz)
 Where do you think all the money
 from his teaching has been going?
 The account for Ellie, by now it
 has to be huge.
 (to Charlie)
 Over a hundred thousand at least,
 right?

Liz circles the wheelchair, faces Charlie.

LIZ
 That's not true, is it?

Charlie looks away from Liz. Silence.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 Charlie, we could have gotten you
 anything you needed. Special beds,
 physical therapists, *fucking health*
insurance.
 (pause)
 Last winter when my pickup broke
 down and I had to walk through the
 snow to get your groceries--

CHARLIE

I offered to get your truck fixed--

LIZ

Yeah and I refused because I thought you had *seven hundred dollars* in your bank account.

Liz looks at him, deeply hurt. Charlie reaches out to her, trying to take her hand, she backs away from him.

CHARLIE

That money's for Ellie. It's *always* been for Ellie.

(pause)

If there was ever any type of emergency, I would have given you the money--

LIZ

Would you?

Pause. Liz stares at him for a moment, then looks away. She fights the instinct to cry. Finally, she looks around the room, then grabs her bag and heads to the front door.

CHARLIE

Wait--

Liz leaves, slamming the door behind her. Mary stares at Charlie. Silence.

ELLIE

Mom, you're not getting any of my money.

MARY

Oh shut up, Ellie.

Mary stands up. She looks at Ellie.

MARY (CONT'D)

Leave, right now.

Ellie glares at Mary, then angrily grabs her bag and heads toward the door.

CHARLIE

Wait--

Charlie struggles to wheel himself toward Ellie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Ellie, I know you didn't mean to
 hurt me, I *know* you--

ELLIE
 Okay, you know what? Listen to me.

Ellie goes to Charlie, leans down to him, looking him
 straight in the eye.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I don't care about you. Try to get
 that through your fucking skull.

Charlie looks at her, pleading. He reaches out toward her.

CHARLIE
 Ellie, please--

Ellie swats his hand away.

ELLIE
 Just fucking die already.

MARY
Enough.

Ellie stares at Charlie for a moment longer, then goes to the
 door, opening it. Just before she leaves:

CHARLIE
 Ellie, your--. Your essay.

Ellie stops. Charlie moves to the printer, taking the pages
 out. He puts the pages in a manila folder, extends it to
 Ellie. Ellie doesn't look at him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 It's a really good essay.

Ellie pauses for a moment, then grabs the folder out of
 Charlie's hand without looking at him. Ellie leaves, Charlie
 watches her go.

41A INT. - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

41A

Mary looks at Charlie. Silence apart from Charlie's wheezing.

Mary stands. Very slowly, she approaches him, circles his
 wheelchair, looking at him from all sides.

MARY
 Jesus, Charlie.

She finally stops, looks at him in the eyes. Charlie looks away, ashamed.

Mary turns away from him, sighing, rubbing her face with her hands.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do you--have anything?

Charlie looks at her, unsure of what she means. Mary continues to look at him. Charlie realizes.

CHARLIE

Above the sink. Kitchen counter, on the left.

Mary goes into the kitchen, opening a cabinet above the sink. She finds an aging half-empty bottle of vodka. She takes the bottle, then opens other cabinets, looking for a glass.

MARY

Our deal was we wait until she was out of the house to give her the money.

CHARLIE

What's the difference?

MARY

The difference is she's seventeen and in high school. She's gonna spend it on ponies or face tattoos or something.

Mary finds a glass, pours herself a drink.

CHARLIE

I think she's a little smarter than that.

Mary drinks, taking a deep breath. She relaxes a bit.

MARY

So, how has it been? Getting to know her.

CHARLIE

She's... Amazing.

Mary chuckles.

MARY

You still do that.

CHARLIE

What?

MARY

That positivity. It's so annoying.

CHARLIE

Well you're a complete cynic, I was just trying to balance us out.

Mary smiles a bit.

MARY

Well, I guess I do miss that. That one thing.

CHARLIE

Just that?

MARY

That and the cooking. Last month I tried to make a stir-fry thing, almost set the entire apartment building on fire.

Charlie laughs a little, which quickly results in a coughing fit. Mary looks at him. She takes her drink and finds a place to sit.

MARY (CONT'D)

I never knew you were doing this to yourself.

CHARLIE

Well you never asked how I was doing.

Mary looks at him, annoyed.

MARY

Well you never asked how I was doing either. Every month it's just, "how much money do you need?", and "how's Ellie?"

CHARLIE

You didn't tell me she was flunking out of school.

MARY

I guess I just didn't need the lecture about my involvement in her education.

CHARLIE
That's not what I...

Charlie exhales. He looks at her. Silence.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
How're you doing, Mary?

Pause. Mary doesn't look at him. She drinks.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I know I'm not supposed to be
around her. You could probably call
the police if you really wanted to--

MARY
Christ, you really think I'd do
that?

CHARLIE
You fought me pretty hard for full
custody. And I don't blame you for
keeping her from me, I--

MARY
Charlie, need I remind you: *you*
left *us*.

CHARLIE
I know...

MARY
And I was left raising our kid and
explaining to people that my
husband left me for a man.

CHARLIE
But you didn't have to cut me out
of her life like that--

MARY
Oh please, you were more than happy
to forget about us for a while. You
know that.

This stings. Charlie looks away. Pause.

CHARLIE
I've made--a lot of mistakes. I
know that. But I just wanted to see
her, Mary. I've *always* just wanted
to see her.

MARY

It's all about you even now, huh?

(pause)

Well, now you know why I kept you from her.

Mary grabs her glass, heads back into the kitchen and pours another glass of vodka.

CHARLIE

(confused)

What?

Pause.

MARY

She's... Awful. Isn't she?

Charlie looks at her, confused.

MARY (CONT'D)

She's a terror. And you think it's my fault.

Pause.

CHARLIE

Wait, is that why you've been keeping her from me all this time? Because you thought I'd think you were a bad mother?

MARY

At first. But later, when she was fifteen, sixteen... I was worried she would hurt you.

CHARLIE

Hurt me? That's ridiculous--

MARY

I don't take any pleasure in admitting it, I'm her mother for Christ's sake. I spent way too much time telling myself, she's just rebellious, she's just difficult. Charlie, she's evil.

CHARLIE

She is not evil.

Mary looks at him for a moment, then goes to the couch. She opens Charlie's laptop.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
What're you doing?

Mary opens a web browser, starts typing.

MARY
You think it's just me?

Mary shows Charlie the laptop, which is open to Ellie's Facebook page. Displayed prominently is the photo of Charlie that Ellie took before. Charlie examines the photo.

Charlie scrolls down a bit, revealing the photo's caption.

CHARLIE
(reading)
"There'll be a grease fire in hell
when he starts to burn."

Pause. Mary shuts the laptop, putting it back on the computer desk.

MARY
Don't feel bad, I've made quite a
few appearances on that thing.

Mary sits down with her glass, taking a long drink.

Charlie is silent, staring forward.

Pause.

CHARLIE
She's a strong writer.

Mary slams down the glass of vodka.

MARY
That's your response?

CHARLIE
This isn't evil, this is honesty.
Do you know how much bullshit I've
read in my life?

MARY
My God. I don't understand you,
Charlie!

CHARLIE
Every time I would call and ask you
how she was doing, you said she was
fine, if she's so evil then why--

MARY

What was I supposed to tell you?!
That she was off making her
classmates cry or slashing her
teachers' tires? You didn't want to
hear about that stuff!

CHARLIE

I could have helped her!

MARY

*She doesn't want your help! She
doesn't want anyone!*

Mary, a little drunk by this point, starts wandering
aimlessly.

MARY (CONT'D)

You think I didn't want her to have
a dad? She *adored* you. The only
reason you married me in the first
place was to have a kid, I know
that.

CHARLIE

Mary. Please.

Mary stops. Silence.

Finally, she relents and goes into the kitchen. She pours the
remainder of her drink into the sink.

MARY

Well this brings back memories,
doesn't it?

Mary comes back into the main room, sits back down on the
couch near Charlie. Charlie smiles at her.

MARY (CONT'D)

Listen, I... I never got to say
that I was sorry.

CHARLIE

What would you have to be sorry
about?

MARY

That's not what I mean, I mean
about... Your friend.

CHARLIE

Oh.

(pause)

His name was Alan.

MARY

I know his fucking name, Charlie.

(pause)

I saw him once, in the Walmart parking lot. He wasn't looking too good, I think it wasn't long before he... Anyway I had all these things I wanted to say to him, hurl at him like bricks, but I... Asked him if he wanted some help. He let me carry a couple of bags to his car for him, he said thank you, and I left. I never even told him who I was.

They look at one another. Charlie struggles for breath, his wheezing particularly noticeable now that they are close.

MARY (CONT'D)

You're wheezing.

CHARLIE

Yeah, it's gotten worse.

MARY

Should I call someone?

CHARLIE

No, I...

MARY

Let me hear.

Charlie looks at her. Pause. Then Charlie leans back in his wheelchair, putting one arm in the air.

Mary gets up and goes to Charlie. She bends down, putting her ear on his chest. She listens for a moment.

CHARLIE

How do I sound?

Mary doesn't respond, she puts a hand on Charlie's chest and closes her eyes.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That was the first time we've all been together in almost nine years, you realize that?

Mary buries her face in Charlie's chest, struggling to maintain herself. Pause.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

When Ellie was little, when we did that trip to the Oregon Coast together... We laid on the beach, Ellie played in the sand, later I went swimming in the ocean... Last time I ever went swimming, actually.

Very slowly, we begin to hear the sound of ocean waves in the background.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I kept cutting my legs on the rocks, and the water was so cold, and you were so mad that my legs bled and stained the seats in the minivan.

Charlie laughs a little, Mary laughs as well. Her laughs quickly turn into heavy, silent sobs. She continues to bury her face in his chest.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

And you said for days after that I smelled like seawater. You remember that?

Charlie lowers his arm, putting it on Mary's back. They hold one another for a moment as the sound of waves subsides.

MARY

You sound awful.

CHARLIE

I'm dying, Mary.

Mary remains for a moment longer before pushing herself off of him, holding back tears.

MARY

Fuck you.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.

MARY

Fuck you.

Mary backs away, not looking at Charlie. Pause.

MARY (CONT'D)

For sure?

CHARLIE

Yeah. For sure.

Charlie wheels himself over to Mary.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Listen to me. I need to make certain that she's going to be okay. We can't give up on her.

Pause. Mary looks at Charlie, her anger growing.

MARY

You *already* gave up on her. You gave up on her when she was eight years old!

CHARLIE

I wish I would have been a part of her life, Mary, both of your lives--

MARY

Go to the hospital! You have money, go to the hospital!

CHARLIE

We both know that money is for Ellie. But beyond that, I have to make sure that she's going to be alright, that she's going to have a decent life, where people care for her and she cares for other people... She doesn't have anyone else, Mary.

MARY

I need to--. I have to go.

Mary grabs her purse, heading toward the front door.

CHARLIE

(desperate)

I need to know I did *one thing* right in my life.

Mary stops at the door. She waits for a moment, not looking at Charlie.

MARY

We both did our parts. I raised
her, you're giving her the money.
It's the best we could do.

Mary stands at the door, unmoving, still not looking at
Charlie. Charlie is at a loss.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do you need anything before I
leave?

(pause)

Water, or something?

Charlie doesn't respond. Mary waits for a beat, then leaves.

Charlie is left alone, wheezing. He closes his eyes, leaning
his head up.

42 INT. - LIVING ROOM - THAT NIGHT

42

Hours later, Charlie is dozing in his wheelchair, his phone
on his chest. His wheezing is heavy, he's only partially able
to sleep. Suddenly, he wakes up with a start. He looks
around, momentarily confused. Just then, the phone resting on
his chest falls to the floor, bouncing toward the window
where the bird had been.

Charlie notices that the window is slightly open. He slowly
wheels himself toward the window. He looks outside, sees that
the plate with the pieces of apple on it has been smashed to
bits.

A knock at the door. Charlie

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)

Gambino's.

Pause. Charlie stares for a moment longer, then finally snaps
out of it.

CHARLIE

Yeah...

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)

Charlie? You okay?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

(pause)

Money's in the, uh.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)

Sure.

The sound of a mail box opening and shutting.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You sure you're doing okay?

Pause.

CHARLIE

Yeah, Dan.

(pause)

Thanks.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)

Have a good night, okay?

Charlie listens for a moment, we hear the sound of the delivery boy walking away.

Charlie waits one more moment, then starts wheeling himself over to the front door, the reaching claw in his lap.

42A EXT. - APARTMENT FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

42A

Charlie maneuvers the claw toward the pizza boxes, trying to grab an edge of the box.

As he's struggling to get a grip on the pizza boxes, he glances up. The delivery boy is standing in the stairwell, having only descended a step or two, staring at Charlie.

Charlie stops. He slowly lifts his head up, looking back at him. There is a very long silence as they look at one another in silence.

Finally:

DELIVERY BOY

Jesus...

The delivery boy averts his eyes, staring at the floor. Charlie continues to stare at him as the delivery boy finally descends the stairway.

Charlie remains in the doorway for a moment, motionless.

43 OMITTED

43

44	OMITTED	44
45	OMITTED	45
46	OMITTED	46
47	INT. - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER	47

Charlie is ravenously eating the pizza, chewing and swallowing dangerously fast. Sweat pours down his face.

Still eating the pizza, Charlie opens up his laptop. He logs on to his teaching software, then begins to write a post to all of his students in all of his classes.

We see only bits and pieces of what he's writing: "fuck these ridiculous essays," "fuck the readings," and most notably, "JUST WRITE SOMETHING FUCKING HONEST."

He slams his laptop shut.

He searches around the kitchen, finds a few more bits of food: some cereal bars, potato chips, various junk food.

He has a pain in his chest, he doubles over. Just after the pain hits, he is overcome with a wave of nausea. He reaches under the sink, grabbing a trash can. He holds the can up to his head, vomiting into it.

Finally, he begins to calm down. His breathing slowly returns to normal. He puts the trash can down on the floor.

He looks around the apartment, holding back tears.

Just then, a loud knock at the front door.

CHARLIE

Liz?!

THOMAS (O.S.)

Can I come inside?!

Charlie grabs some paper towels off the counter, cleaning off his face a bit.

48 INT. - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

48

Charlie barely manages to wheel himself out of the kitchen and into the living room, moving toward the door. A dog in a nearby apartment starts barking.

CHARLIE
It's not locked!

Thomas comes bounding inside, full of evangelical fervor.

THOMAS
Thank you, hi--!

Thomas makes his way inside, shutting the door behind him. Charlie pivots, facing Thomas.

CHARLIE
What's wrong?

THOMAS
Listen, I'm not--. I'm not exactly who I said I was. I'm not from New Life.

Pause.

CHARLIE
I don't--

THOMAS
I've been in a pretty bad place recently, I sort of stole some money and ran away a few months ago? And your daughter, she took these pictures of me smoking pot, and she made a recording or something and she found my church back in Waterloo somehow and sent it to them and they sent it to my parents--

CHARLIE
Wait--

THOMAS
And you know what they said? It's just money. They forgive me. They love me, and they want me to come home.

(pause)
How awful is that?!

Charlie looks at Thomas. Pause.

CHARLIE

Ellie, she--? She did all that?

THOMAS

And I can't really tell if she was trying to help me or hurt me, do you ever get that feeling with her?

Charlie smiles a little, looks up. He lets out a little laugh.

CHARLIE

(smiling)

How did she even--? She found your church, tracked down your parents? She really did all that?

THOMAS

Yeah. I'm going home tomorrow. But Charlie, before I leave...

Charlie doesn't listen to Thomas, smiles wider, letting out a big laugh. The laughter causes Charlie pain, he grabs his chest. Thomas goes to him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

CHARLIE

Nothing, it just--. It just hurts.

THOMAS

Charlie, I want to help you. I know I can help you.

CHARLIE

I'm not going to the hospital--

THOMAS

I know. I won't make you go, but I can help you.

Charlie looks at Thomas, sees that he's holding something. He squints, slowly starting to realize that he's holding Alan's Bible.

Thomas opens the Bible, flips a few pages.

CHARLIE

What are you--?

THOMAS

(reading)

"Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation--but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."

Thomas looks at Charlie. He gives Charlie the Bible, pointing to the verse from before that has been especially highlighted, underlined, circled.

CHARLIE

I don't. Understand.

THOMAS

When I read this, I finally got it. I finally understood why God brought me here, to you. So I could help you understand what happened to Alan, so it won't happen to you, too.

Pause. Charlie looks at the Bible, then at Thomas.

CHARLIE

How did you get this?

THOMAS

Charlie--Alan tried to escape God's will. He chose his life with you over God. But this is why he was obsessed with this verse, he *knew* he was living in the flesh, not in the Spirit. He never prayed for salvation--but it's not too late for you. Through the Spirit, you can put to death the misdeeds of the body and you will *live*.

Thomas grabs Charlie's hand. Charlie stares at him.

CHARLIE

You think Alan died--because he chose to be with me? You think God turned his back on him because he and I were in love?

Pause. Thomas considers carefully. Finally:

THOMAS

Yes.

They stare at one another in silence.

CHARLIE

You know, I wasn't always this big.

Pause.

THOMAS

Yeah, I know...

CHARLIE

I mean I was never the best looking guy in the room, but Alan loved me. He thought I was beautiful.

THOMAS

Okay--

Thomas lets go of Charlie's hand, moving away from him.

CHARLIE

Halfway through the semester he started meeting me during my office hours. We were both crazy about one another, but we waited until the course was over before...

THOMAS

This isn't--

CHARLIE

It was just after classes had ended for the year, it was a perfect temperature outside. We went for a walk in the arboretum, and we kissed--

THOMAS

Charlie, stop.

Thomas turns, moves away from Charlie. Charlie follows him in his wheelchair.

CHARLIE

We would spend entire nights lying together, naked. We would make love.

Thomas looks away from him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
*We would make love. Do you find
 that disgusting?*

THOMAS
 Charlie, God is ready to help you--

CHARLIE
I hope there isn't a God.

Charlie continues to build in volume, growing to a shout.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 I hope there isn't a God because I
 hate thinking that there's an
 afterlife, that Alan can see what
 I've done to myself.

THOMAS
 Charlie--

CHARLIE
 That he can see my swollen feet,
 the sores on my skin, the patches
 of mold in between the flaps--

Thomas recoils, turning away from Charlie.

THOMAS
 Okay, stop!

CHARLIE
 --the infected ulcers on my ass,
 the sack of fat on my back that
 turned brown last year--

THOMAS
 Stop!

CHARLIE
 This is disgusting?!

THOMAS
 Yes!

CHARLIE!
 I'M DISGUSTING?!

Thomas turns to Charlie aggressively, shouting at him.

THOMAS
 YES YOU'RE DISGUSTING, YOU'RE--!

Thomas stops himself, moving away in shame. They are left together in silence.

Charlie looks at the Bible in his hands.

CHARLIE
(not speaking to Thomas)
I'm sorry...

THOMAS
What?

Pause. Charlie extends the Bible to Thomas.

CHARLIE
Go home to your family.

Thomas looks at Charlie for a moment. He goes to Charlie, tentatively taking the Bible from him. He slowly makes his way to the front door and leaves.

Charlie tries to calm himself down. After a few moments, he begins to wheel himself down the hallway.

CUT TO:

48A TITLE: FRIDAY 48A

49 INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAWN 49

Charlie--exhausted, and in constant pain--is in front of the framed photo of himself and Alan on the Oregon Coast, still turned face down. He reaches up to the photo and slowly turns it right-side up. He leans back.

He stares at the photo, unblinking. Morning light barely begins to creep in through the window.

50 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT MORNING 50

Charlie, tired and dazed, sweat pouring down his face, is sitting on the couch in front of his laptop. The virtual classroom from before is visible. The oxygen tank sits next to him.

CHARLIE
Well, your complaints have been heard.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I've been replaced by someone who will no doubt have you rewrite and rewrite and rewrite, be more objective, less authentic, less you with every draft...

(pause)

But... Some of you saw what I posted. Asking you to write something honest. And the things some of you wrote...

Charlie smiles through the pain. He pulls out a few printed pieces of paper, looking at them.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Kristy, you wrote: "My parents want me to be a radiologist, but I don't even know what that is."

(pulling up another)

Julian, you wrote "I'm sick of people telling me that I have promise."

(pulling up another)

Adam you wrote, "I think I need to accept that my life isn't going to be very exciting."

Charlie leans back, breathing. He smiles wide.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You all wrote these... *Amazing*, honest things, I just...

(pause)

I want to be honest with you now. Now you've been so honest with me, I just...

Charlie pauses, then tentatively moves the cursor toward the button to turn on his video. He hesitates for a moment, taking a breath, then turns on his camera.

For the first time, the "INSTRUCTOR" square reveals Charlie. He smiles at them, giving a little wave. His students all look on, silently stunned.

Charlie moves the laptop away from his body, filming more of himself. He tilts the laptop down, filming his entire body. After a moment he tilts the camera back up to his face. He smiles gently.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

These assignments--they don't matter. This course doesn't matter. College doesn't matter.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

These amazing, honest things you wrote--they matter.

Charlie pauses for a second, then in one motion throws the laptop across the room. It crashes against the fridge.

51 INT. - LIVING ROOM - LATER

51

Liz stands in the front doorway, staring at the broken computer, holding a bag. Charlie is in the same position as before. Liz closes the door and comes further in. She retrieves the stethoscope from the medical cabinet, then approaches Charlie, listening to his breathing.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.

LIZ

Don't.

Liz listens for a moment longer, then takes off the stethoscope and moves away from Charlie. Pause.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I really hate you for putting me through this again, you know that?
(pause)

Those last few months before Alan... I'd come over here, scream at him, shake him, just trying to get him to fucking eat something. God, that was awful.

CHARLIE

It was awful for me, too.

LIZ

Yeah, well you weren't the one who had to identify his body. All bloated--

CHARLIE

They wouldn't let me.
(pause)
I wasn't. Family.

Pause. Liz stands for a moment, then goes to her bag. She takes out a plastic bag filled with two sub sandwiches. She drops the sandwiches onto the couch, looking at Charlie, defeated.

LIZ

I got you two meatball subs. Extra cheese. I don't know what I'm doing.

Liz goes to Charlie, bending down to him, looking directly at him. Charlie's breath begins to grow more shallow.

CHARLIE

I'm not. Going to the hospital.

Liz looks at him.

LIZ

I'm not asking you to.

(pause)

I can't do this anymore.

Charlie's breathing is increasingly shallow, sweat pours down his face.

CHARLIE

I thought I could save him, Liz,
I...

(pause)

I thought if I loved him enough, he wouldn't need anything else. I told him he didn't need God, he didn't need anything but *me*.

Liz goes to him, looking him straight in the eye.

LIZ

Charlie, all I know is that you gave Alan the best years of his life. If it weren't for you, he would have jumped off that bridge years earlier. Nobody could've saved him. Believe me, I spent years trying.

(pause)

I don't think I believe anyone can save anyone.

Very softly, we begin to hear the sound of waves. Charlie smiles, joy radiating from underneath immense pain, his eyes glazing over.

CHARLIE

She saved him.

Pause. Liz looks at him, confused.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
She wasn't trying to hurt him. She
was trying to help him.

LIZ
Who are you talking about?

CHARLIE
He's going home. She did that.

Liz goes to Charlie, putting her hands on his head.

LIZ
Charlie?

CHARLIE
She didn't do it to hurt him, she
did it to send him home.

LIZ
Do you feel light-headed? Charlie,
look at me.

CHARLIE
She was trying to help him.

LIZ
Who?

CHARLIE
Ellie. She was trying to help him,
she just wanted him to go home.

Charlie looks at Liz lovingly. He takes her hands, smiling at her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Do you ever get the feeling. That
people. Are incapable. Of not
caring? People. Are. Amazing.

Suddenly, the front door opens and Ellie charges inside,
holding the essay from before.

ELLIE
(raging)
What the fuck did you--?!

She advances on Charlie, but then stops when she sees the
state he's in.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
What's wrong with him?

LIZ
He's dying.

Pause.

ELLIE
So call someone.

CHARLIE
No.

ELLIE
Call a fucking ambulance!

CHARLIE
Liz.

Liz looks at Charlie, Charlie looks back at her.

ELLIE
I need to talk to him.

LIZ
I'm not leaving you alone with him.

ELLIE
I need to talk to him alone.

CHARLIE
Liz. Please.

Charlie and Liz continue to look at one another, silently. Finally, Liz smiles at him, nodding.

Pause.

LIZ
Okay.

Liz wraps her arms around Charlie, giving him a kiss on the forehead. She slowly stands back up.

LIZ (CONT'D)
I'll call someone.

She heads to the front door, about to open it. She gives Charlie one last look.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Charlie.
(pause)
I'll wait downstairs.

Charlie smiles at her. Liz gives him one last look then finally leaves.

52 OMITTED 52

53 INT. - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 53

Ellie stares at Charlie, struggling to maintain herself.

ELLIE
Why did you do that?!

CHARLIE
What?

Ellie holds up the essay from before.

ELLIE
I failed.

CHARLIE
It's. A really good essay.

The waves continue to increase in volume.

Ellie advances on Charlie, yelling at him, desperately trying to keep herself together.

ELLIE
Are you just trying to screw me over one last time? I don't care that you're dying, I don't care about you! Do you want me to fail out of high school, is that why you did this?

CHARLIE
I didn't. Write it.

ELLIE
This is the essay you gave me yesterday.

CHARLIE
You didn't. Read it.

ELLIE
I don't need to read it--!

CHARLIE
Read it.

Pause. Finally, Ellie flips the cover page on the essay and reads the opening.

She recognizes it immediately.

ELLIE

This is... I know what this is.

Charlie smiles at her.

CHARLIE

I knew you would.

Ellie looks at him.

ELLIE

I wrote this.

CHARLIE

You never. Forget anything.

ELLIE

I wrote this in eighth grade for English, why do you--?

CHARLIE

And I felt saddest of all. When I read the boring chapters. That were only descriptions of whales. Because I knew. That the author was just trying to save us. From his own sad story. Just for a little while.

Pause.

ELLIE

Why do you have this?

CHARLIE

Your mother. She sent it to me. Four years ago. I wanted to know how you were doing in school. So she sent it. And it's the best essay. I've ever read.

Ellie is struggling to hold on to her anger, she looks away from Charlie.

ELLIE

Why are you fucking with me like this?

CHARLIE

I'm not.

(pause)

I'm sorry for leaving you. I was in love. And I left you behind. You didn't. Deserve that.

Ellie looks away.

ELLIE

I don't...

CHARLIE

I don't know. How I could have done that. You're so beautiful. You're amazing.

ELLIE

Stop.

CHARLIE

You're *amazing*. This essay. Is amazing. This essay. Is *you*.

ELLIE

Stop saying that.

CHARLIE

This essay. Is you.

ELLIE

Stop saying that!

CHARLIE

You're the best thing. I've ever done.

Charlie has a severe pain in his chest, he doubles over. Ellie is frantic, doesn't know what to do. She moves a little closer to him.

ELLIE

What's the matter?!

CHARLIE

Ellie.

ELLIE

I can't be here right now, I have to go, I can't--

Ellie goes to the door.

CHARLIE
You're perfect. You'll be happy.
You'll care for people.

Ellie stops, unable to bring herself to leave.

ELLIE
The ambulance is coming, they'll
help you.

CHARLIE
No. They won't.

Pause.

ELLIE
You're going to the hospital.

CHARLIE
No.

ELLIE
You just need surgery or something!

CHARLIE
Read it to me.

ELLIE
What?!

CHARLIE
If you want to help. Read it to me.
You can help me. If you read it.

Ellie is holding back tears at this point.

ELLIE
You asshole. You fat fucking
asshole!

CHARLIE
You'll help. If you read it.

Ellie turns back to the door.

ELLIE
Fuck you.

CHARLIE
Please.

ELLIE
Fuck you!

CHARLIE

Ellie!

Just as Ellie swings the front door open, she can no longer hold her emotions back. She nearly collapses into tears.

ELLIE

Dad, *please*.

Ellie looks at Charlie, pleading. Ellie and Charlie are in the same position as they were at the end of their first scene together. The sound of waves continues to grow louder and louder.

Ellie looks at the essay. She begins to read.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

(reading)

"In the amazing book *Moby Dick* by the author Herman Melville, the author recounts his story of being at sea. In the first part of his book, the author, calling himself Ishmael, is in a small sea-side town and he is sharing a bed with a man named Queequeg."

Charlie looks at Ellie with joy, listening to her read. He reaches up and takes the oxygen tube out of his nose. Ellie continues to read.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

"The author and Queequeg go to church and later set out on a ship captained by the pirate named Ahab, who is missing a leg, and very much wants to kill the whale which is named Moby Dick, and which is white."

Charlie braces himself on the couch.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

"In the course of the book, the pirate Ahab encounters many hardships. His entire life is set around trying to kill a certain whale."

Wheezing heavily and with a huge amount of effort and pain, Charlie attempts to stand up.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

"I think this is sad because this whale doesn't have any emotions, and doesn't know how bad Ahab wants to kill him."

Charlie, continues to rise. For the first time, he is standing fully erect on his own. The waves increase in volume. Charlie beams.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

"He's just a poor big animal. And I feel bad for Ahab as well, because he thinks that his life will be better if he can kill this whale, but in reality it won't help him at all."

Charlie takes a step toward Ellie, his eyes on hers the entire time.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

"I was very saddened by this book, and I felt many emotions for the characters."

Charlie takes another step.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

"And I felt saddest of all when I read the boring chapters that were only descriptions of whales, because I knew that the author was just trying to save us from his own sad story, just for a little while."

Charlie takes one last step. The waves reach their loudest level.

For the first time, Ellie smiles at Charlie.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

"This book made me think about my own life, and then it made me feel glad for my--"

Charlie looks up. The waves cut off.

A sharp intake of breath. The shot cuts out.

Then:

END CREDITS