I'M THINKING OF ENDING THINGS

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel by

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POV MONTAGE

1  INT FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

- A young man’s hand measures a spoonful of sugar into a
cup of coffee, stirs.
- As the coffee is sipped, a daytime TV talk show is
watched.

        TV HOST
    Ladies and gentlemen, Flash Dance’s
Jennifer Beal!
    
Applause

2  EXT RURAL ROAD - JANITOR’S TRUCK - DAY

- Pick-up truck: The man’s hands are on the steering wheel
as he drives along a rural road.

        AM RADIO VOICE 1
    So you’ve heard about this “gay
plague?”

        AM RADIO VOICE 2
    Just reading about it.

        AM RADIO VOICE 1
    Homosexuals, heroin addicts,
hemophiliacs, and Haitians.

        AM RADIO VOICE 2
    The 4H Club.

        AM RADIO VOICE 1 (CONT’D
    (laughing)
    Hey now!

        AM RADIO VOICE 2
    But seriously, this is --

3  EXT HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

- The man trudges from the crowded parking lot toward a
high school.

4  INT HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

- He walks down an empty, silent school hall. A sudden
loud burst of noise and activity as the bell rings and
students spill from classrooms.
SCENE OMITTED

INT HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY
- He mops a floor.

INT HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY
- He empties trash cans.

OMITTED

OMITTED

Night:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT
- He trudges from the school to the lone vehicle, his pick-up truck, in the parking lot.

INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT
- In the pick-up, his hands on the steering wheel, he drives along rural road.

AM VOICE 3
So these healing pyramids, can you tell us how they work?

AM VOICE 4
Well, of course we don’t really know the science at this point, but they appear to focus energy on the body through the Earth’s magnetism.

AM VOICE 3
Fascinating.

AM VOICE 4
The pyramid is, of course, in the shape of the carbon atom, the basis of all life --

INT. FARM HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT
- The man watches TV, sipping at glass of whiskey. On the screen: Creepy music as POV of someone walks toward a suburban house and peers through a window at a girl asleep in bed. She awakens sees him, screams.

13 INT. FARMHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

- From his bed, The man stares at the ceiling of a darkened bedroom.
- Black.

Day:

14 INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

On TV: talk show.

    TV HOST
    Mr. Alan Alda!

Applause.

A15 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL

Janitor mops floor in empty hallway.

15 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY

In truck:

    AM RADIO VOICE 1
    ... and the Soviets just shot it right out of the sky.

    AM RADIO VOICE 2
    269 people onboard. All dead.

    AM RADIO VOICE 1

    AM RADIO VOICE 2
    It’s payback time. That’s for sure.

16 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT

In truck:

    AM VOICE 3
    So what was it like?
AM VOICE 5
Well, I was awake, but I couldn’t
move and then this -- I don’t know
what to call it -- tractor beam
pulled me up into the ship and I
found myself naked on some sort of
examination table --

17 INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

On TV: Scene from film in which people at a dinner party
are laughing too long and hard.

18 INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

In bed, the man stares at the ceiling.

Day:

19 INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

On TV:

    TV HOST
    John Candy!

Applause.

20 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY

In Truck:

    AM RADIO VOICE 1
    You heard about this cannibal they
    arrested?

    AM RADIO VOICE 2
    Yeah. What is it with Russians and
cannibalism?

    AM RADIO VOICE 1
    52 people.

    AM RADIO VOICE 2
    He must’ve been really hungry!

A21 INT. HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY

Janitor is scrubbing a sink.

21 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT

In Truck:
AM VOICE 3
And what did the apparition say?
AM VOICE 6
That all life is interconnected,
and people, with their massive
egos, cannot see that --

22 INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

On TV: A young man stands outside and apartment and calls up
to window.

YOUNG MAN
Eleanor! I love you!

Day:

23 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY

In truck:

AM RADIO VOICE 1
So Aum Shinrikyo, am I pronouncing
that right?

AM RADIO VOICE 2
I read about this! Sarin gas!

AM RADIO VOICE 1
On the subway! 13 dead and over
5000 injured.

AM RADIO VOICE 1 (CONT'D)
Nutjobs. What is wrong with people?

A24 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Janitor is mopping alone.

24 INT/EXT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT

In truck:

AM VOICE 7
The angels are here. They are all
around us. And they're here to
help.

25 INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

On TV: A young woman looks at her ringing cellphone. She
seems terrified.

2ND YOUNG WOMAN (O.C.)
What's wrong? Who is it?
YOUNG WOMAN
It’s me. I’m calling.
A26  INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (MONTAGE)

This day/night sequence repeats again and again, with only slight variations (mostly in the janitorial tasks). The big change comes in the hands, which over time, get old: liver spotted, wrinkled, arthritic, the occasional Band Aid on one or another of the fingers. The image itself, through his POV, degrades, as well, becoming softer, dimmer, less vibrant. The sound becomes less distinct and by a constant whispy hum.
(Note: Throughout the remainder of the film, there is a constant whisper under everything, sometimes the wind, sometimes a voice, sometimes both. On occasion, it will resolve into the Voice-Over of the Young Woman, then back to a vague, inarticulate whisper).

B26  INT/EXT. - RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY (MONTAGE)

-Janitor drives. AM Radio Montage.

C26  INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL & BATHROOM - DAY (MONTAGE)

- Janitor walks hallway, Students pass by him.

D26  INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - KITCHEN

- Janitor in silhouette works in kitchen.

E26  INT. PICK UP TRUCK & LIVING RM - NIGHT

As the montage speeds up, the radio and TV snippets get shorter and closer together, until they seem to form one thought.

AM RADIO VOICE 1

Hey, Listen to --

TV CHARACTER

...me... you. Aren’t --

AM RADIO VOICE 2

Welcome! Here on --

AM VOICE 3

-- this planet --

TV NEWS ANCHOR

-- People, don’t --

AM VOICE 4

-- want to --
AM RADIO VOICE 2
-- see. You --
AM RADIO VOICE 1
-- any --

ACTOR IN MOVIE
(looking into camera)
-- more --

F26/G26 INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING RM./BEDROOM - NIGHT (MONTAGE)
- Janitor watches TV, Montage snippets
- Janitor stares at darkened ceiling
- Black.

27 INT. FARM HOUSE DINING ROOM - DAY

Everything is slower now. The Janitor’s POV takes in the environment as it moves toward the table with a cup of coffee. The room is neat but old, slightly tattered, the drapes are heavy and oppressive. It feels airless, a place with endlessly wandering ghosts. The Janitor once again places the coffee on the dining room table, sits, scoops sugar from a bowl, dumps it in the coffee, stirs, turns on the small portable TV on the table. Snow on the screen. He switches the channel and a young couple appears, engaging, to a bouncy musical score, in a happy dating montage. The man sips at his coffee and watches for a long moment, checks his watch, stands, heads to the kitchen. The bouncy music continues but recedes as he walks away from the TV. The whispering builds.

28 INT. FARM HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

The Janitor brings the cup and spoon to the sink and washes them. He glances out the window above the sink at the world outside. It is a gray, windy winter day. Old, crusty snow on the ground. A rusted swing set sits in the yard, the swings creaking in the wind. He dries the dishes, puts them away, scans the kitchen for anything out of place. He refolds a poorly folded dishrag, hangs it from its hook, spends a moment to even it out. He exits the kitchen.

29 INT DINING ROOM - DAY

The Janitor passes the still turned-on TV, glances at it. The couple are in a field, on their backs and under a blanket, looking up at the night sky.
YOUNG TV MAN
How did we ever find each other in all this vastness? Almost makes a scientist like me believe in destiny.

YOUNG WOMAN
Almost makes an artist like me believe in scientists.

He laughs. They kiss. The Janitor has passed the TV and makes his way upstairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE BATHROOM - DAY

The Janitor brushes his teeth, never looking at his reflection in the mirror.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The Janitor exits the house, which is weathered. He carries a paper lunch bag and thermos. The wind whistles. He climbs into the pick-up truck, turns the ignition key.

INT. RURAL ROAD - PICK UP TRUCK - DAY

The Janitor drives the quiet rural road. The radio is on.

HOST 1
Better get those chains on, folks!

HOST 2
Storm of the century!

HOST 1
Global warming, my Ass-troturf!

An old fashioned ah-ooga car horn sound effect.

HOST 1 (CONT'D)
It’s fricking freezing!

HOST 2
That’s the thing about the libs. They live in a fantasy world.

HOST 1
I’d say we could use some global warming right about now. On the way here, I nearly froze off my Dick-taphone.
Ah-ooga!

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL – DAY
The Janitor, lunch bag and thermos in hand, crunches on the hard snow.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY – DAY
The Janitor makes his way through the empty hall. The bell sounds, sudden and loud, and the hall is filled with raucous students. The Janitor is invisible to them as they carelessly maneuver their way around him. He watches their faces, their interactions, their youth, their romances, their enthusiasm. He spots the outliers: the lonely, the ugly, the desperately sad.

INT. CUSTODIAN’S ROOM – DAY
The Janitor opens his locker, places his lunch and thermos on the shelf, and removes his shirt, revealing a sagging, old man’s torso. He changes into a dark work shirt emblazoned with the school’s name. He closes the locker, organizes the supplies on his cart, rolls it to the door, and waits until the voices of the students peter out. Then he opens the door, wheels the cart into the mostly empty hall.

INT. HALL – DAY
There are only a few student stragglers. The Janitor pushes the cart, wheels it into the first classroom.

INT. CLASSROOM ONE – DAY

THE JANITOR EMPTIES THE ROOM’S TRASH CANS INTO THE LARGE ONE ON HIS CART. HE WIPES A DUST RAG ALONG THE TABLE TOPS AND THE WINDOW LEDGE. OUTSIDE SNOW HAS STARTED TO FALL. HE WATCHES THE SNOW, SEEMINGLY TRANSFIXED.

EXT. BROWNSTONE STREET – DAY
A Young Woman waits. She is dressed for the cold, her quirky, adorable outfit topped with a cheerily colorful wool beanie. She looks both ways down the street, waiting for someone. She notices the snowflakes, and playfully tries to catch a few on her tongue.
Suddenly, she feels self-conscious, glances around to see if she is being watched, peering into dark apartment windows. She spots a young man driving toward her. This is Jake. A fleeting look of worry passes across her face, then she smiles, waves enthusiastically. He smiles back, waves, pulls to a stop in front of her. She opens the door.

YOUNG WOMAN

It’s snowing!

JAKE

Winter is icumen in.

YOUNG WOMAN

Goddamn!

They laugh. She climbs into the car. They kiss.

INT. CAR – DAY

They drive through a university town; it is oddly underpopulated. She looks out the window. Although her outfit is the same, the colors seem more subdued now. Jake watches the road. She glances over at him, takes in his face in profile. Feeling her eyes on him, he glances over. She smiles. He smiles self-consciously, looks back at the road. She flips down her sun visor, opens the mirror, the mirror is * missing, she flips the visor back up. Her mood has turned * somber. The whispering sound increases in volume.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I’m thinking of ending things.

Silence.

JAKE

Huh?

YOUNG WOMAN

What’s that?

JAKE

Did you say something?

YOUNG WOMAN

(laughing)

No. I don’t think so.

JAKE

Weird.
YOUNG WOMAN
Ha. Yeah.

Silence.

JAKE
Car ghosts.

YOUNG WOMAN
(playfully)
Spooooky.

JAKE
Ha. Yeah.

Silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Boo!

YOUNG WOMAN
Ha.

Silence. She looks out the window.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I’m thinking of ending things.

Jake glances over again. She doesn’t make eye contact. He looks back to road.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
What’s the point of carrying on like this? I know what it is, where it’s going. Jake is a nice guy, but... It’s not going anywhere. I’ve known this for a while now. Maybe it’s human nature to keep going even in the face of this knowledge. The alternative requires too much energy, decisiveness. People stay in unhealthy relationships because it’s easier. It’s basic physics. An object in motion tends to stay in motion; people tend to stay in relationships past their expiration date. Newton’s first law of emotion.

JAKE
Do you want to stop for a coffee or something? A snack? It’s going to get pretty farmy pretty fast now.
YOUNG WOMAN
Oh. No. I’m fine.

JAKE
You sure?

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t want to spoil my appetite!

JAKE
Ok.

Silence. She studies his hands on the steering wheel. He self-consciously takes the one closest to her from the wheel, and slips it into his jacket pocket.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Y’know, my mother hasn’t been feeling well recently. So...

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m sorry.

JAKE
I’m just saying that there might not be much of a spread. She might not be up to a lot of cooking.

(beat)
She hasn’t been well.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m sorry to hear that. What’s going on with --

JAKE
I’m just saying, if you want to stop for a snack, it would probably be fine. In terms of appetite spoiling. In terms of the amount of food she might have prepared. It might even be advisable.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m fine.

JAKE
Ok.

Silence.

JAKE (CONT’D)
They really are looking forward to meeting you.

(MORE)
JAKE (CONT'D)
I don’t want to give you the wrong impression. I’ve told them a lot about you.

YOUNG WOMAN
(looking over at Jake)
That’s nice to hear. I’m looking forward to meeting them, too.

She looks out the window.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
Maybe it’s unfair of me to be going on this trip with Jake. When I’m so uncertain about our future. Our lack of it. After all, going to meet your boyfriend’s parents is the proverbial next step, isn’t it? The truth is, I haven’t even told my parents I’m dating Jake. I’ve never mentioned him. And I don’t think I ever will. I guess that says a lot about my intentions.

JAKE
It’s just that she hasn’t been feeling well. So...

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m sorry. Getting old ain’t for sissies, as Bette Davis said.

JAKE
True. Although one might take issue with her use of the word sissy as a pejorative.

YOUNG WOMAN
Of course. Yes. A different time.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I guess it’s curiosity. Jake is certainly hard to figure. Maybe it’s like a window into his origins. The child being father of the man, and all.

JAKE
Oh, are you a fan of Wordsworth then, by chance?
YOUNG WOMAN
Wordsworth?

JAKE
William Wordsworth? The poet?

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m not familiar, really. Why do you ask?

JAKE
I was just thinking about him, for some reason. He popped into my head. His poem *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, to be specific.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jesus, that’s the title? Seems like an entire poem.

JAKE
Ha. Yeah.

Silence. She silently counts syllables.

YOUNG WOMAN
I tried to make it into a haiku. Too many syllables. Damn.

JAKE
Ha. You get your words’ worth with Wordsworth.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ha.

JAKE
(beat)
You want to hear how it starts?

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok. Sure.

As Jake recites, the young woman watches the passing bleak farmland.
JAKE
(reciting)
There was a time when meadow,
grove, and stream,/The earth, and
every common sight,/To me did
seem/Apparell'd in celestial
light,/The glory and the freshness
of a dream./It is not now as it
hath been of yore;—/Turn
wheresoe'er I may,/By night or
day,/The things which I have seen I
now can see no more.

YOUNG WOMAN
Huh. Well, that’s heavy. Sad.

JAKE
It goes on like that. More or less.

YOUNG WOMAN
You recite it well. I like your
voice.

JAKE
I guess, there’s hope in it, too.
But... I dunno, maybe they have to
do that, give people something.

YOUNG WOMAN
I confess, I haven’t read a lot of
poetry. I guess, I mostly don’t
understand it.
 (joking)
I’m not a metaphorical-type gal.

JAKE
It’s just that that one speaks to
me.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah.

JAKE
Incidentally, Wordsworth wrote a
series of poems to a woman named
Lucy.

YOUNG WOMAN
Like me!

JAKE
Exactly. A beautiful, idealized
woman who dies young.
YOUNG WOMAN

Yikes.

JAKE

Ha. Well, the comparison goes only as far as your name.

YOUNG WOMAN

Phew.

JAKE

And that you are ideal, of course.

YOUNG WOMAN

(uneasily)

Aw. That’s sweet.

She smiles at him. Silence.

A phone rings, loud, surprising. Urgently, the Young Woman fishes in the bag by her feet, finds the phone, pulls it out, checks the caller: Lucy. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE**

JAKE

Who’s that?

YOUNG WOMAN

Just a friend. I’m not going to answer.

JAKE

You can. I don’t mind. You should.

YOUNG WOMAN

It’s ok.

JAKE

I don’t mind.

She drops the phone back in her bag.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Mysterious.

YOUNG WOMAN

What’s that?

JAKE

A friend.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ha. Not really. Someone from class.
She looks out the window at depressed and abandoned farms. She sees a collapsed farm house with a brand new swing set in the front yard. It’s jarring.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
That’s odd.

JAKE
What’s that?

YOUNG WOMAN
Did you see that swing set?

JAKE
What swing set?

YOUNG WOMAN
We just passed it.

JAKE
Nope. Missed it.

YOUNG WOMAN
It was weird. This beautiful new swing set in front of an abandoned house.

JAKE
I didn’t see it.

YOUNG WOMAN
Why would that be there? Clearly no one has lived in that house for years. Decades.

JAKE
I didn’t see it.
    (beat)
Maybe someone is moving in and they brought the swing set first?
That’s all I can think of.

YOUNG WOMAN
I suppose.
    (beat)
That seems an unlikely sequence of events.

JAKE
Well, I didn’t see it.
    (beat)
Like to have something to entertain the kids while the parents are getting the house ready?
YOUNG WOMAN
Huh. Yeah.
(beat)
Odd.

JAKE
Who knows?
(beat)
They’re saying there might be a fair amount of snow.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah?

JAKE
They’re predicting it.

YOUNG WOMAN
Do you think we should maybe turn back? I’ve got a fair amount -- a lot actually -- of work to do tomorrow. I need to be able to get home tonight, so I can get to it first thing.

JAKE
I think we’ll be ok. I’ve got tire chains in the trunk.

YOUNG WOMAN
(dubious)
Ok.

JAKE
What are you working on?

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh, um, I have a paper due Wednesday.

JAKE
Which one is this?

YOUNG WOMAN
Susceptibility to rabies infection in the sensory dorsal root ganglia neurons.

JAKE
Right. The trigeminal ganglia, as well, right?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes. Exactly.
JAKE
Point for me. Interested in and knowledgeable about my girlfriend’s work.

She reacts to the “my girlfriend.”

YOUNG WOMAN
Point for Jake.

JAKE
How’s the paper going?

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s nowhere, actually. I really do have to get back tonight. Deal with it first thing.

JAKE
I’ll get you home. Chains.

YOUNG WOMAN
Chains.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I do like Jake. And he’s educated. Our fields are different, but he’s curious and keeps up. That’s a good thing. That’s in the pro column.

She smiles over at Jake. He smiles back, seemingly relieved.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
And he’s cute. In his awkward way. We are interesting together, as well. People look at us when we’re together. Who’s that couple? I don’t get looked at alone. Not much. And Jake doesn’t either, he tells me. Maybe that’s the way it is in general for guys. No one looks at them. But Jake has told me he feels it, feels invisible.

JAKE
Want to listen to something?

He has white crust in the corner of his mouth. She fixates on it.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m sorry, what?
He wipes away the crust, as if he knows she’s seeing it.

JAKE
I asked if you want to listen to some music.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh. Sure.

Jake switches on the radio, dials through the static.

JAKE
When you get out this far, there’s not much signal.

He finds a station playing *Many a New Day* from the musical *Oklahoma!* The reception is iffy, giving the music an almost underwater burble and, in addition, it sounds amateurish, performed by high school students.

SINGER
Many a new face will please my eye/
Many a new love will find me/Never have I once looked back to sigh/
Over the romance behind me/Many a new day will dawn/Before I do

YOUNG WOMAN
This is an odd song. Out here in the middle of nothing.

JAKE
It’s from Oklahoma! The musical.

YOUNG WOMAN
Apt.

JAKE
Indeed.

YOUNG WOMAN
I didn’t realize you were a fan of musical theater. You’re full of surprises.

JAKE
I’m not really. Into musicals, I mean. I may be full of surprises though. That’s not for me to say. Anyway, I just know a few musicals. Oklahoma!, Phantom, Carousel, South Pacific, Guys and Dolls, Flower Drum Song, Wicked...

(MORE)
JAKE (CONT'D)
How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying...
(beat)
The Music Man, Pajama Game, Cabaret,...
(beat)
The Lion King, Grease, The King and I, The Sound of Music, Pal Joey, Charley's Aunt, On the Town...
(beat)
My Fair Lady. But I know Oklahoma! best, I guess. They do it every few years. For obvious reasons.

YOUNG WOMAN
Wait, who does it every few years?

JAKE
Sometimes I see kids who were in past productions, y'know, at the supermarket, working at stores in town. Older now.

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

Jake and the Young Woman listen to the song.

SINGER
Never have I chased the honeybee/
Who carelessly cajoled me/Somebody else just as sweet as he/Cheered and then consoled me
YOUNG WOMAN
Well, this girl seems healthy enough in her attitude. Good for her.

JAKE
She’s protesting too much, it turns out. She misses Curly.

YOUNG WOMAN
(laughing)
Curly? From The Three Stooges?

JAKE
Different Curly.

YOUNG WOMAN
We’ve all been there.

JAKE
Where?

YOUNG WOMAN
Protesting too much about how ok everything is.

JAKE
True.

Jake watches the road in silence. Then:

JAKE (CONT'D)
That’s why I like road trips. It’s always good to remind yourself that the world is larger than the inside of your own head. Y’know?

YOUNG WOMAN
(tapping her temple)
Perspective.

JAKE
Perspective.

YOUNG WOMAN
It is pretty out here. In a heartbroken, bleak kind of way.

The song continues. The young woman stares out the window. ** *
YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE *
YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
What was the last road trip I took?
I should remember, but I don’t.
Nothing is coming to mind.
(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It’s odd. I am foggy about so many things lately.

JAKE
So you like this type of landscape?

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s beautiful, yes. Melancholy. I do like that.

JAKE
It’s the poet in you.

YOUNG WOMAN

JAKE
You been working on anything?

YOUNG WOMAN
I just finished one. I don’t know.

JAKE
Can I hear it?

YOUNG WOMAN
You can read it.

JAKE
I like to hear them in your voice. You’re so good at reciting them.

YOUNG WOMAN
Not really, but thanks.

JAKE
It’ll go with the poetic scenery.

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t know, Jake. I don’t much feel like performing right --

JAKE
C’mon. It’ll pass the time.

YOUNG WOMAN
(laughing)
Ok. I don’t want you to be bored.

(beat)
It’s called Bonedog.
As she recites, the camera studies her face, drifts several times from her to the passing bleak landscape and back, each time seeing her slightly differently: lipstick where there had been none, a slightly different hairstyle, glasses, no glasses, different glasses. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE** *
x4**

**YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)**

Coming home is terrible. / Whether the dogs lick your/face or not; whether you/have a wife or just a wife-/shaped loneliness waiting/for you, coming home/is terribly lonely so/that you will even think/of the oppressive barometric/pressure back/where you have just come/from with fondness/because everything is worse/once you're home./You will think of the/vermin clinging to the/grass stalks, long hours/on the road, roadside/assistance and ice creams/and the peculiar shapes/of certain clouds/and silences/with longing/because you did not want/to return;/coming home is just/awful, and the homestyle/silences and clouds/contribute to nothing/but the general/malaise. The clouds,/such as they are,/are in fact suspect/and made from a different/material than those/you left behind./You yourself are cut/from a different/cloudy cloth,/returned, remained,/ill-met by moonlight,/unhappy to be back,/slack in all the wrong/spots, seamy suit/of clothes, dishrag-/ratty, worn.

You return home/moonlanded, foreign/the earth's gravitational/pull an effort now redoubled/dragging your shoelaces/loose and your shoulders,/etching deeper the/ stanza of worry/on your forehead,/ you return/home deepened,/a parched well,/linked to tomorrow/by a frail strand of/anyway:/you sigh/into the onslaught/of identical days, one/might as well/at a time.

(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Well, anyway, you're back, the sun goes up and down like a tired whore, the weather immobile as a broken limb while you just keep getting older. Nothing moves but the shifting tides of salt in your body. Your vision blears. You carry your weather with you, big blue whale, a/skeletal darkness; you've come back with X-ray vision; your eyes have become a hunger. You come home with your mutant gifts to a house of bone.

Everything you see now. All of it. Bone.

Silence. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE**

* JAKE
Wow.

YOUNG WOMAN
(laughing)
"Wow" is pretty much an all-purpose exclamation, I just realized. It could mean you loved it or that there are no other words to describe how rubbish it is.

* JAKE
I love it. That's what it means.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah? I don't know.

* JAKE
It's amazing. I feel like it's about me. Like completely.

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, thanks. I guess that's the thing one hopes for when writing a poem.

* JAKE
What's that?

YOUNG WOMAN
Some universality in the specific? I don't know.
JAKE
Yeah. A feeling of connection. It’s like you wrote it about me. I don’t know how you do it.

YOUNG WOMAN
Do what?

JAKE
Think in words without setting those thoughts in stone. Use language not to corral the world, but to set it free.

YOUNG WOMAN
Wow.

They both laugh at her use of the word “wow.”

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
Anyway, I don’t know that I do all that, but thanks.

JAKE
You really do. It’s a marvel.

YOUNG WOMAN
A marvel, no less! Well, thanks.

JAKE
Sure.

YOUNG WOMAN
You’re very sweet.

The Young Woman looks out the window.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I’m thinking of ending things. Jake is really great. He’s sensitive. He listens to me. He’s smart. There’s just something... ineffable? Profoundly, unutterably, unfixably wrong here. I almost wish he were horrible, some monster, that he beat me, that he was a drunk, that he ignored me. Then my decision would be clear.

She looks over at Jake. He glances back, fearful.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
But he’s just not right. And no amount of more time will fix that.
JAKE
Is something wrong? I’m feeling --

YOUNG WOMAN
No.

JAKE
You seem sort of far away, is all.

YOUNG WOMAN
Just thinking.

JAKE
About what?

YOUNG WOMAN
(considering, stalling)
About what? Hmm. I don’t know.
Just vague “in my head” stuff.
(beat)
I guess maybe I was thinking about time.

JAKE
Really?

YOUNG WOMAN
How it’s in charge of us, like
we’re on a train and it takes us
where it takes us. There’s no
veering off. No side trips. And
like Mussolini’s trains; it runs on
time.

JAKE
I read that it’s not really true
about Mussolini and trains. The
improvements in the railway system
preceded him. He just took credit.
And even so, they still didn’t
always run on time.

YOUNG WOMAN
Huh. I guess that’s not really
where I was going with that
analogy. Not really about
Mussolini.

JAKE
(beat)
Anyway, you can always jump off a
train, right?
YOUNG WOMAN
In movies, maybe. In real life you will likely die jumping from a moving train.

JAKE
That’s true, I suppose. I watch too many movies. That’s very true.

YOUNG WOMAN
Everyone does. A societal malady.

JAKE
I fill my brain with lies to pass the time. And it does pass -- in the blink of an eye. An eye blink in excruciatingly slow motion.

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s like the rabies virus attaching itself to our ganglia, then changing us into itself.

JAKE
Viruses are monstrous.

YOUNG WOMAN
Everything wants to live, Jake. Viruses are just one more example of everything.

JAKE
I suppose.

YOUNG WOMAN
Even crappy, fake movie ideas want to live. They grow in your brain, replacing your real ideas. That’s what makes them dangerous.

JAKE
But did you know there are insects that blow themselves up? So there’s that. Not everything wants to live.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes. Certain ants, certain aphids.

JAKE
For the good of their communities.

YOUNG WOMAN
Suicide bombers.
JAKE
So not everything wants to live.

YOUNG WOMAN
True. Well, they want their communities to live, which is sort of like themselves writ large.
(beat)
And, also, we don’t know if they really want anything. It’s more likely just how they’re programmed.

JAKE
Maybe we’re all programmed. Right?

He looks at her for some kind of confirmation. The Young Woman glances over at him and makes a gesture and noise as if she’s exploding. They laugh.

YOUNG WOMAN
Now we’re both dead.

Silence.

JAKE
For the good of the community.

42 INT. HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - EVENING
Janitor cleans the bathroom sinks. There is a stage make-up book open to OLD AGE make-up techniques, some open make-up containers, and a white old lady wig.

43 OMITTED

44 OMITTED

45pt1,2 INT. JAKE’S CAR - EVENING
Jake and the Young Woman pull off the road onto a dark, dirt driveway. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE**

JAKE
Ta-dah.
YOUNG WOMAN
This is it?

JAKE
You sound disappointed.

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, no. It’s just... there’s nothing here.

JAKE
It’s here. This is the driveway. The house is set a ways back.

The driveway is long and bumpy with potholes. They make their way to the house in silence, park. It is the farmhouse the Janitor lives in. She studies the house, illuminated by the headlights. Jake looks over at her, trying to gauge her reaction. The house is completely dark. There are no other cars in the driveway.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You hate it.

YOUNG WOMAN
No! It just looks like no one is home. Are you sure we have the right --

JAKE
Of course it’s the right house. I mean, Jesus --

YOUNG WOMAN
I was going to say “night.” Are you sure we have the right night? There are no lights on; there’s no car.

45pt3 EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT 45pt3

A few lights turn on inside, one illuminating an older American sedan that had been hidden in the shadows.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh.

JAKE
Well, shall we?

They open the car door and exit.
EXT. FARM HOUSE - EVENING


JAKE
So I’m not ready to go in. I need to stretch my legs. Long legs. Long drive.

YOUNG WOMAN
Is that rude? I mean, she clearly know we’re here. We were all waving at each other for quite a while.

JAKE
Nah. They know I like to stretch my legs. C’mon, I’ll show you around.

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s cold and getting dark, Jake.

JAKE
I’ll give you the abridged tour.

*
INT/EXT BARN - EVENING

JAKE
I used to love to be outside here when I was a kid. The stars are amazing here when it’s not cloudy. I would lie on my back and look at them for hours. I don’t know when I stopped doing that. It’s weird, there was a last time I did that and I didn’t know at the time that it would be. Isn’t that interesting? The last time you do something is often a secret from you at the time.

YOUNG WOMAN
It is interesting.

They park and walk towards the barn.

JAKE
Maybe we’ll come back in the spring and we can lie out here and look up at the universe. Then whenever that was won’t have been my last time. My last time will be with you.

YOUNG WOMAN
That sounds nice.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I do like that Jake once had this side to him. A child filled with wonder. He’s so burdened now, which makes me sad, and is made all the more heartbreaking knowing that there is still an innocent child buried under all that.

They arrive at an old barn.
JAKE
The sheep are in here. I’d say we
could feed them, but Dad probably
gave them some grain --
(checks watch)
-- about an hour ago. So... But we
can go in and say hi.

Jake enters the barn. The Young Woman follows.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Hi, sheep.

YOUNG WOMAN
Hi, sheep.

INT. BARN - EVENING
It’s darker in here, but the sheep are visible in silhouette. There is the sound of rustling and breathing and chewing.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
There’s something dreary and sad in here. And it smells. I wonder what
it must be like to be a sheep, to
spend one’s entire life in this
miserable, smelly place, doing
Sleeping. Over and over.

JAKE
They’re always chewing like that.
It’s their cud.

YOUNG WOMAN
What’s cud?

JAKE
Semi-digested food. They
regurgitate it and chew it. Sheep
gum.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yum. Sheep gum.

JAKE
(brightly)
Well, there you have it: the sheep.

Jake leads the way out.
INT. BARN - EVENING

They pass three stacked dead lambs. Jake walks right past, without acknowledging them. The Young Woman stops to look. She hurries to catch up.

YOUNG WOMAN
What will happen to the lambs?

JAKE
What?

YOUNG WOMAN
The lambs.

JAKE
Oh, those dead ones?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

Jake keeps walking, says nothing. She follows.

JAKE
(impatient)
I don’t know what you’re asking. They’re already dead. What else can happen to them?

YOUNG WOMAN
I mean, will they be buried?

JAKE
Probably be burned come spring. But they’re frozen solid for now. So.. They’re fine. No worries. C’mon, I’ll show you the old pen where they used to keep the pigs. They don’t keep pigs anymore.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok.

JAKE
Because pigs are hard to keep.
They arrive at the empty pig pen. The young woman looks toward the house in the distance.

JAKE (CONT'D)
They had to put them down.

YOUNG WOMAN
Uh-huh. That’s too bad.

JAKE
Rotten situation. The pigs. Life isn’t always pretty on a farm. Something you should know. 

Jake just waits.

YOUNG WOMAN
( feeling forced to ask) 
So, what happened?

JAKE
To the pigs? Forget it. I don’t think you’d like this story.

YOUNG WOMAN
You have to tell me now. You can’t do that.

JAKE
Yeah?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes! Jesus.

JAKE
Ok. Well, my father hadn’t been in to check on the pigs for a few days. My parents were busy. He’d just toss their food into the pen. But after a few days, he noticed they were just lying in the same corner all the time. So he went inside to check on them. They didn’t look well. He decided he’d better try to move them. And they’re heavy -- I mean, they’re pigs, right? -- but he finally moved one and discovered that its entire underside was filled with maggots. Both pigs were being eaten alive. Life on a farm can be brutal. Should we go in? It’s cold. 

*
Jake walks; the Young Woman follows.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
One likes to think there is always hope. It is a uniquely human fantasy that things will get better, born, perhaps, of the uniquely human understanding that things will not. There’s no way to know for certain, but I suspect humans are the only animals that know the inevitability of their own death. Other animals live in the present. Humans cannot. So they invented hope.

Jake leads the way.
INT. STAIRWELL - EVENING

The Janitor mops up a pile of vomit.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - EVENING

Jake and the Young Woman stand in the entrance in their stocking feet. The room is neat, homey. No one is around.
JAKE
Hello?
No answer.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I’m here! We’re here!
No answer.

JAKE (CONT'D)
It’s Jake!
Silence.

FATHER (O.S.)
We’ll be down in a minute!

JAKE
Ok!

JAKE (CONT'D)
(to young woman)
Do you want slippers? Floors are cold here. Old houses.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah. Thanks.

Jake sifts through a wooden trunk of hats, scarves, gloves.

JAKE
They’ll be big on you. They’re my old ones. But they’re warm.

YOUNG WOMAN
Sounds good.

Jake pulls out the same blue slippers the Janitor had been wearing.

JAKE
And voila.

YOUNG WOMAN
Great.

She puts them on. Jake closes the trunk.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Oh, none for you? You should take these. They’re yours!
JAKE
What kind of gentleman would that make me? My slippers are your slippers.

YOUNG WOMAN
You sure?

JAKE
I am. Mis zapatillas son tus zapatillas. Have a seat.

Jake gestures toward the couch.

JAKE (CONT'D)
They’ll be right down.

She slides in the too-large slippers toward the couch, sits. Jake remains standing, looking anxiously up the stairs.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Music?

YOUNG WOMAN
Sure.

Jake walks over to the phonograph, puts something on, and music starts up, too quickly, slightly off. The music is some sort of musical number on a scratchy album. It’s hard to tell what it is; it’s far away and vague, more like a song remembered than heard.

Cut to

A52 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - EVENING A52

- Same music plays but more clearly, as Male & Female H.S. Student practice the dream ballet from Oklahoma. The Janitor * wheels a trash can past them down the hall.

52pt. 1 INT. FARM HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - EVENING 52pt. 1

He looks up the stairs again. Then:

JAKE
So the bedrooms are upstairs. Not much else. My mom’s sewing room. A bathroom. Linen closet. I can show you after we eat, if you like. It’s not fancy, as you can see. An old place. Not much up there.
YOUNG WOMAN
It’s nice. I like it.

JAKE
Yeah?

YOUNG WOMAN
Reminds me of the house I grew up in.

JAKE
I suppose all farm houses are alike.

YOUNG WOMAN
Like all happy families.

Jake nods.

JAKE
I’m not sure Tolstoy got that one right.

Silence. Jake looks toward the stairs.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Happiness in a family is as nuanced as unhappiness.

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, I think he was really talking about marriage, in that --

JAKE
And here they come.

They don’t.

JAKE (CONT’D)
I’ll get a fire going in the meantime.

Jake fiddles with the fire place for a moment and there is a roaring fire, a little too quickly.

YOUNG WOMAN
Your parents knew we were coming, right? I mean, they invited us.

JAKE
Invitation sounds a little too formal for my family, but, yeah, of course. We communicated.
YOUNG WOMAN

Ok, cool.

(beat)

Fire feels good. Cozy.

Jake sits, but rigidly, as if ready to spring into action. The young woman spots a scratched up, ragged, closed door.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

What’s in there?

JAKE

The basement.

YOUNG WOMAN

I see.

JAKE

We keep it closed off, mostly. Old houses tend to be drafty.

YOUNG WOMAN

Right.

JAKE

Anyway, the basement is unfinished. A hole in the ground, really.

YOUNG WOMAN

A hole in the ground?

JAKE

Well... unfinished. Just the water heater. Washer and dryer. Stuff like that. We don’t use it really for anything else. Never did.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok.

JAKE

More or less a waste of space.

(beat)

I hate the basement, if you want to know.

YOUNG WOMAN

You have intense feelings about it.

JAKE

(pulling back on reaction)

You know, when you’re a kid, basements are scary.
YOUNG WOMAN
We didn’t have one. Living in an apartment. But I’ve seen enough scary movies to get the idea.
(joking)
Don’t look in the basement!

JAKE
(laughing)
Exactly. He’s hiding down there!

YOUNG WOMAN
Ha.
(beat)
Who?

JAKE
What?

YOUNG WOMAN
What are the scratches on the door?

JAKE
Dog. From the dog. Mostly.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh! I love dogs! I didn’t know your parents have one. I can usually tell when there’s a dog in someone’s house. Toys lying around.

JAKE
My folks are tidy.

YOUNG WOMAN
Where is it? What kind? What’s its name?

JAKE
So many questions! Jimmy. He’s a mutt. Probably outside. He always loved the snow.

Jimmy, covered in snow, galumphs in, pushing with his nose through the swinging kitchen door. He runs up to and jumps onto Jake, licks his face, then onto the young woman.

YOUNG WOMAN
(laughing)
Hi, Jimmy! Ew, he’s all wet!

Jimmy shakes himself off, spraying Jake and the Young Woman. She laughs. His shaking goes on for an oddly long time. She stops laughing, watches puzzled.
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
That’s --

JAKE
And here they come!

52pt. 2 INT. FARM HOUSE - FOYER/SITTING ROOM - EVENING 52pt. 2 *

The parents are coming down the stairs. The Father is tall and rangy; he has a Band Aid on his forehead. The Mother small and birdlike.

MOTHER
Hi! Welcome!

FATHER
The drive ok?

JAKE
Yeah. Fine.

They pass the table, which is now laden with an extravagant meal of ham, potatoes, corn, salad, and various Jello mold concoctions. The Mother hugs the Young Woman.

MOTHER
So glad to meet you, Louisa! Jake has told us so much about you.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh! He’s told me so much about both of you, too!

The Mother appears to have a permanent smile on her face.

MOTHER
Oh dear! And you came anyway?

The Mother laughs at her joke, and everyone else with the exception of Jake joins in. Jake seems tense.

FATHER
Let’s eat already! Or the food will get as cold as a witch’s tit in a brass brassiere!
The parents and Jake are somehow almost immediately seated. It takes the Young Woman a moment longer to arrive at her place -- sliding in her too-big slippers -- and sit, and even though the parents are still smiling, there is a strain of impatience on their faces. Jake looks down at his plate.

YOUNG WOMAN
It smells great.
MOTHER
I hope you’re hungry. All homemade.
Everything you see on the table is
from the farm.

The Young Woman glances at the ham, then Jake. He is looking
down, shaking his head.

YOUNG WOMAN
Looks great.

Food is passed around and shoveled on plates. The Young
Woman notices that the mother’s big toe has no nail.

MOTHER
So Jake tells us you’re a painter?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes. Jake tells you correctly.

FATHER
I don’t really know much about art,
but I like pictures where you know
what you’re looking at.

JAKE
(into his plate)
Dad. For Christ’s sake.

FATHER
What do you call it -- abstract? --
I don’t get that. I mean, I could
do abstract, smear paint on a, what
is it called -- a canvas? -- I
think it’s a con job, if you ask
me. I like paintings that look like
a photograph. I couldn’t do one of
those in a million years. That’s
talent.

JAKE
Why not just take a photograph,
Dad, if you like photographs? It’s
much quicker. And photographs look
exactly like photographs.

FATHER
I like photographs. Mostly sports
photographs.

MOTHER
(to young woman)
What kind of paintings do you make,
Lucy?
YOUNG WOMAN
Um, Well, I’m not an abstract painter! So that’s in my favor.

FATHER
Good.
(to no one in particular)
See? That’s exactly my point.
Good.

YOUNG WOMAN
I do mostly landscapes.

FATHER
Like outside paintings?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah. Plein Air. Which is outdoor painting. I try to capture the feel of the light and atmosphere.

MOTHER
That sounds lovely. Jake used to paint, too, of course.

JAKE
(into his plate)
Mom.

MOTHER
He worked really hard at it.

YOUNG WOMAN
I didn’t know that! Jake!

Jake doesn’t look up.

MOTHER
He was very good.

YOUNG WOMAN
I try to imbue my work with a kind of interiority.

FATHER
Interiority. So you paint insides? I thought --

YOUNG WOMAN
Inside my head. So a landscape would attempt to express how I’m feeling at the time: lonely, joyous, worried, sad.
MOTHER
That sounds very interesting. Like that painting of that girl sitting in a field looking at a house?

YOUNG WOMAN

FATHER
How can a picture of a field be sad without a sad person looking sad in the field?

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s an interesting problem. That’s what I struggle with. I have some pictures of my work, if you’d like to see.

MOTHER
Oh, yes.

FATHER
Yeah, sure.

The Young Woman pulls out her phone, sees that there have been several calls from Louisa. She ignores them, opens up her portfolio, crosses the table, places herself between the Mother and Father, and shows them her work. The painting are beautiful: expressionistic, vast, lonely wintry landscapes.

FATHER (CONT’D)
I mean, they’re pretty, but I don’t see how they’re supposed to make me feel something if there’s not a person in them feeling sad or joyous or whatever other emotion you said.

YOUNG WOMAN
Maybe think of yourself as the person, looking out at the scene.

FATHER
I’d have to see me in them.

YOUNG WOMAN
As if you’re there. If you were there, you wouldn’t see yourself, right?
FATHER
I would if I looked down. I’m not a ghost! Yet!

The Father and the Mother laugh.

MOTHER
I can attest to that! Especially in the bedroom!

JAKE
Jesus.

YOUNG WOMAN
Sure. But if you were just looking out at it, without looking down. You’d just see the scene and feel something. Anything an environment makes you feel is all about you and not the environment, right? None of the feeling is inherent to place.

FATHER
Well, that’s over my head, I guess.

MOTHER
They are pretty though. You’re very talented. I like the colors.

YOUNG WOMAN
Thank you.

MOTHER
Jake, you didn’t tell us your girlfriend is so talented.

JAKE
(to his food)
I did, actually.
MOTHER
So Jake tells us you’re studying physics at the university.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.
FATHER
That’s unusual for a girl, isn’t it?

JAKE
Dad.

FATHER
I’m just asking.

YOUNG WOMAN
It is, actually. But a little less so these days. Which is good, I think.

MOTHER
Well, after seventh grade, I could never understand what Jake was saying! So it’s wonderful he has someone he can talk to about all his ideas!

FATHER
Jake tells us there have been a lot of famous husband and wife physicists.

JAKE
Jesus, Dad.

YOUNG WOMAN
I guess there have been some. Pierre and Marie Curie shared a Nobel Prize in Physics.

FATHER
Even I’ve heard of them. Well, her, anyway. Radiation.

MOTHER
Radioactivity.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

FATHER
I never heard of him, though.

MOTHER
It’s all so exciting. And I’m so glad Jake has found someone. Won’t you please tell us the story of how you met? Jake has refused.

(MORE)
MOTHER (CONT'D)
I love romantic meeting stories. Like in *Forget Paris?* Billy Crystal?

FATHER
I didn’t like that movie.

The Young Woman looks over at Jake. He stares down at his plate. She looks at the Mother, who waits, expectantly.

YOUNG WOMAN
Um, so, I went with a friend to a bar near campus. It turned out to be trivia night.

MOTHER
I love this so far. Jake is crazy about trivia. We used to play the genius edition of *Trivial Pursuit* and --

JAKE
Genus.

MOTHER
What?

JAKE
It’s genus edition.

MOTHER
Really? I’ve always thought the word was genius. I’ve been saying it wrong all these years! It goes to show...
(punchline)
... I’m no genius!

She laughs. The Father laughs.

FATHER
That’s a good one.

JAKE
No. Genus is not the same as genius. A genus is a category.

MOTHER
Oh. I always thought it was the genius edition. I told everybody you knew every answer in the genius edition. I was very proud of that.
(thought)
(MORE)
MOTHER (CONT'D)
Why didn’t we get the genius edition?

JAKE
(yelling into his plate)
There is no genius edition!

The Young Woman looks at him, frightened by his anger.

MOTHER
Ok. I didn’t understand. Ok.

Silence. Everyone eats. The Young Woman tries to lighten the mood. **YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGES**

YOUNG WOMAN
So Jake was with his trivia team and my friend and I found an empty table near them. I was watching him.

MOTHER
Because you thought he was cute!

YOUNG WOMAN
Ha. Yeah, I did. And very serious about the game, which I found -- I don’t know -- charming. His team was called... what?

JAKE
Brezhnev’s Eyebrows.

YOUNG WOMAN
Right. Brezhnev’s Eyebrows. I asked him who Brezhnev was. Basically because I wanted to say something to him. He told me Brezhnev was a Soviet engineer, General...

JAKE
... Secretary of the Communist Party.

YOUNG WOMAN
During the Age of Starvation.

JAKE
Stagnation.

YOUNG WOMAN
Stagnation. Anyway, those kind of team names drive me nuts, usually. They all have them, those teams.
(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Show-offy. But, I don’t know, it
didn’t bother me with Jake.
(to Mother)
Maybe I just didn’t let it, because
I thought he was cute.

MOTHER
Aw. He is cute, isn’t he?

YOUNG WOMAN
He is. So I was trying to get up
the nerve to talk to him, because
even though he had looked over at
me more than once, it was clear he
was not going to say anything.

FATHER
Didn’t you just say you talked
about Brehznev?

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh. Yes. That’s true. But then we
didn’t talk anymore after that, I
guess, is what I meant.

FATHER
Oh.

YOUNG WOMAN
So I said something stupid like,
you guys seem to be doing well. I
had to yell it, practically; it was
so noisy. He held up his beer and
said, We’re helpfully fortified.
And I laughed and the ice was
broken. I think he was egged on by
my laughing, so he told me he is a
cruci...

JAKE
...verbalist.

YOUNG WOMAN
I didn’t know what it meant. But I
didn’t want to admit that, so I
just said, cool. He was showing off
again and poorly, but I guess I
thought, ok, this guy is awkward.
He doesn’t have any game at all.
There was something sort of
appealing about that. But then it
kept going. He said he had wanted
the team name to be Ipseity.

(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
And I was like, ugh, now it’s getting to be too much.

MOTHER
You didn’t like him anymore?

Jake looks over at the Young Woman.

YOUNG WOMAN
No. I did. I just wanted that stuff to stop. So I said, I don’t know that word and you know I don’t know that word, so why don’t you just cut the crap? He said something like, I’m an asshole. I’m not very good at talking to people, and ipseity is just another word for selfhood. Anyway, after that he just talked like a normal person and he was funny. And I could see he wanted to ask for my number but was shy. Then my friend wanted to go, and so I was getting up, and he just blurted out, could he have my number.

FATHER
Way to go, Jake! About time!

YOUNG WOMAN
And I was very glad he did. The rest is history. That was like, what, six weeks ago? I don’t know. Feels longer. Feels like forever, in a way. I can’t really remember how long ago it is. Feels like forever.

MOTHER
What a wonderful story! It could be in a movie!

(beat)
“Feels like forever.” That’s very romantic.

The Janitor watches a DVD on the TV in the classroom as he scrubs solvent onto paint stains on the art table.
On the TV, a young waitress is finishing up at a booth. The scene is punctuated by a cute score.
WAITRESS
Great! I’ll be right back with your beverages!

She makes her way to the kitchen window. A young man on a mission enters the restaurant, spots her and hurries over.

YOUNG MAN
Yvonne!

YVONNE
What? What do you want?

YOUNG MAN
I just wanted to say hi.

YVONNE
Can’t you see I’m working?

YOUNG MAN
I can. I’m sorry. I just had to talk to you.

YVONNE
I think it’s abundantly clear that you and I have nothing --

She walks off; he follows. She enters kitchen & exits.

YVONNE (CONT’D)
-- more to say to each other.
Goodbye.
   (arrives at new table)
Hello! Welcome to Harris Grill.
I’m Yvonne, I’ll be taking care of you today.

CUSTOMER
There’s a guy behind you.

Yvonne turns to look.

YVONNE
(to young man)
Really??
   (to customer)
That’s Nimrod. He’s the idiot waiter in training trailing me.
YOUNG MAN
(to customer)
Hi, I’m Nimrod.

CUSTOMER
Hey.

YVONNE
So are you folks ready to order? Or can I answer any questions about the menu?

CUSTOMER
How’s the Santa Fe burger?

YVONNE
Very popular.

CUSTOMER
Ok, so which do you prefer, the Santa Fe burger or the Natchez burger.

YVONNE
Hmm. That’s a tough one. They’re both really, really good.

CUSTOMER
You don’t have a favorite?

YVONNE
Well, I guess I’d say --

YOUNG MAN
Look, man, she’s a vegan.

YVONNE
What the hell are you doing?

YOUNG MAN
What you don’t know about this amazing woman before you is that she is not a waitress --

YVONNE
Get out of here!

Yvonne pushes him to the door, but he keeps addressing the customer, raising his volume as the distance between them increases.
YOUNG MAN
-- Well, she is a waitress, but
only to put herself through school
so she can be an animal welfare
lawyer. Not a crumb of meat or
dairy has passed her amazing,
beautiful lips since she was five
years old and she learned that a
hamburger is a ground-up cow. She
has spent all her life since,
trying to make the world a safer,
kinder place for animals. And I
love her! I love her! I love her
because she is the sweetest, most
caring, funniest, smartest --

He is pushed out the door. Yvonne closes it behind him. He
just stands there, watching her through the glass. She turns
away from him to see that everyone in the restaurant is
watching, as well. The customers applaud. Her boss
approaches.

BOSS
That was beautiful, Yvonne. You’re
fired.

V53 EXT. DINER - DAY (TV SHOW) V53

On the street. Yvonne and the young man sit on the curb, both
staring straight ahead. She’s in street clothes now and
holding her bag in her lap.

YVONNE
You are such an idiot.

YOUNG MAN
Agreed.

YVONNE
I needed that job, idiot.

YOUNG MAN
I know.

Silence. Still staring forward, she slugs him on the arm.
Silence.

YVONNE
Did you say you love me?

YOUNG MAN
I did.
YVONNE
Idiot.

YOUNG MAN
Yes.

Both still staring ahead, Yvonne reaches for his hand and takes it.

54
INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

They’re all still at the dinner table. The Mother wears a slightly different dress now. She seems a bit older. Her nailless toe is now wrapped in a bandage. The Father’s Band Aid is on the other side of his forehead. The Young Woman is in an outfit slightly different than earlier, slightly reminiscent of Yvonne’s STREET CLOTHES.**YOUNG WOMAN APPEARANCE CHANGE** She seems somewhat aware of the changes, * but uncertain.

MOTHER
Jake was always a good boy. He was even awarded a diligence pin at school.
(to Jake)
You remember?
(to young woman)
Diligence. At eight. Can you believe that? It was quite a thing. His father and I never got awarded any such pin at eight.

FATHER
At any age.

MOTHER
True enough. At no age.

FATHER
I did have a bunch of sports trophies, but no diligence trophy. I don’t imagine I even knew the word “diligence” at eight.

MOTHER
But Jake knew it.
(to Jake)
You knew.

FATHER
Jake knew.
(to Jake)
(MORE)
FATHER (CONT'D)
Remember how excited you were about
the diligence pin, kiddo?
JAKE

No.

MOTHER
He wore it to school.

JAKE
I didn’t

MOTHER
He did. Every day.

(to Jake)
You did.

JAKE
I didn’t. I was disappointed. I wanted the “Acumen” pin. “Diligence” is an also ran. “You there, you work very hard. You’re not that bright, but we’re impressed that you try anyway.”

MOTHER
Don’t be sour. It was a lovely pin.

(to Young Woman)
Dessert? I made Jake’s favorite chocolate cake

YOUNG WOMAN
Lovely. Of course. I never turn down anything chocolate.

MOTHER
Lovely.

FATHER
(singing)
Wouldn’t it be loverly?

(to Young Woman)
My Fair Lady.

The Mother shoots the father a look, gets up and makes her way to the kitchen, touching his shoulder on the way.

MOTHER
Help me, I’ll serve dessert in the sitting room.

There’s something in the way she says “help me” that isn’t a casual plea for kitchen help. He nods, gets up and follows her out of the room.
The parents voices are raised in the other room, some sort of argument, interspersed with the father singing bits of “Wouldn’t it be Loverly.” Jake and the Young Woman sit in silence, Jake still looking down at his food.
INT. FARM HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

YOUNG WOMAN
You seem so quiet. You ok?

JAKE
(looking up at her)
Do you like them?

YOUNG WOMAN
They’re very nice. Very nice parents. You chose well, my friend.

JAKE
Yeah?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes! Of course! They love you a lot. That’s totally clear. That’s of prime importance in parents.

JAKE
Yeah. I suppose. We’ve had our issues.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jesus. Everybody has issues with their parents!

She looks around, under the table.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Hey, what happened to Jimmy?

JAKE
I’m sure he’s around. Maybe he went back out into the snow. He loved the snow.

The Young Woman spots Jimmy; he’s in the corner, still shaking himself off.

YOUNG WOMAN
There he is.

She crosses to him, kneels down and pets him.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(affectionately)
You stinky, wet monster.

He wags his tail.
JAKE

Sorry.
YOUNG WOMAN
About?

JAKE
His smell.

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s fine, Jake. He’s a dog.

She notices some photos on the wall and crosses to them. Jake is anxious. The photos are of the family: Jake as a teen, his parents. There are a couple of photos of his parents older than they are now, one in which they look elderly and feeble.

JAKE
Just some old family photos.

She looks over at him and nods. When she looks back, those photos of his parents older are gone. She searches for them. Her eyes come to rest on a photo of a young girl. The Young Woman is startled.

YOUNG WOMAN
Wait. Who is this?

JAKE
You can’t tell?

No.

YOUNG WOMAN
No.

JAKE
It’s me.

And it is. It’s Jake now in the same jeans and t-shirt the girl was wearing in the photo.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I’m certain that was a photograph of me as a kid a moment ago. How could that possibly be in Jake’s --

The parents enter with dessert.

MOTHER
Sorry! Sorry for the delay! Kitchen emergency, don’t ya know.

The Mother carries some sort of large, rolled chocolate log cake. There is a garishness to it.

MOTHER (CONT’D)
Jake’s favorite. Chocolate Yule Log. Mmmm.

(MORE)
MOTHER (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Even though it’s well past Yule!

The Mother places the cake on the table, sits. The Father sits. The Young Woman sits back down.

FATHER
That reminds me, when Jake sucked his thumb --

MOTHER
Way past the age when he should’ve stopped.

FATHER
He’d say “yull, yull, yull, yull” as he sucked it.

MOTHER
Yull log. Kind of looks like a thumb.

YOUNG WOMAN
Mmmm. That looks great.

MOTHER
Thank you. Enjoy!

The Mother cuts a too-thick slice, plates it, and hands it to the young woman.

YOUNG WOMAN
Thank you. It really looks amazing.

MOTHER
Enjoy!

She continues to slice the cake and pass it out.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I’ve been having problems with my ears. Just in case anyone was wondering why I keep rubbing at my ears all night long.

She has not been, but she is now.

FATHER
You have more than a problem.

MOTHER
Tinnitus. It is what it is, as they say.
YOUNG WOMAN
What is tinnitus?

FATHER
Not very much fun, is what.

MOTHER
Not very much fun. But shit happens, as they say. I hear a buzzing in my ears, is what. Well, not a buzzing. More of a hiss. Well, more of a whisper.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh no. Always?

MOTHER
Yes. As if I’m constantly being whispered to. Pssss pssss pssss psss.
(laughing a bit manically)
I wish I could tell what it’s saying! Maybe it’s sharing the secrets of the Universe with me!
(beat)
But I can’t tell.
(beat, then laughing)
Maybe it’s giving me stock market tips!

FATHER
Oh ho! We’d be rich!

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, I’m --

The Young Woman’s phone rings. It’s loud and startles her. She grabs for it reflexively, looks at the screen. “Yvonne” is calling.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
Sorry. Sorry. I thought it was dead. Just my friend.

JAKE
Her friend calls a lot.

MOTHER
You can take it. You should take it. We won’t think it rude.

YOUNG WOMAN
No, it’s ok. It’s not important.
FATHER
Well, you don’t know. It might be. It’s a blizzard out there. Maybe she’s stranded.

YOUNG WOMAN
No, it’s ok. Is it a blizzard now?
(looking at Jake)
We don’t want to get stuck.

JAKE
It’s fine. I’ve got the chains.

FATHER
Oh, you put the chains on?

YOUNG WOMAN
(to parents)
I have to work early tomorrow.

JAKE
(to Father)
Not yet. But I have them in the bed.

FATHER
(to Young Woman)
The chains should make it fine.

MOTHER
What’s that? I’m sorry.

She points to her ear.

FATHER
The chains.

MOTHER
Oh.
(beat, to young woman)
The Whispers, I call them.

FATHER
Night is the worst.

MOTHER
What is?

FATHER
Night.

MOTHER
Oh. Night is the worst. I don’t sleep much anymore.
YOUNG WOMAN
That sounds very difficult. I’m sorry.

MOTHER
(not hearing)
I’m sorry?

YOUNG WOMAN
I just said, I’m sorry.

MOTHER
Oh.
(laughs)
We’re both sorry!
(thought)
You should take your call, though.

FATHER
Could be an emergency.

YOUNG WOMAN
No. I know what she’s calling about. It’s fine.

JAKE
(oddly pointed)
You should at least listen to the message.

The Young Woman and Jake stare at each other for a long moment.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok. Sure.

She puts the phone to her ear. Jake watches her closely.

MAN’S VOICE
There’s only one question to resolve. I’m scared. I feel a little crazy. I’m not lucid. The assumptions are right. I can feel my fear growing. Now is the time for the answer. Just one question. One question to answer.

The message is over. She puts the phone back in her purse.

YOUNG WOMAN
She’s fine.

FATHER
What’d she want?
YOUNG WOMAN
Just calling to say hi.

MOTHER
Well, that’s nice. Friends are important. Jake never really had a lot of them growing up. Or even after. Remember your fiftieth birthday --

JAKE
Twentieth.

MOTHER
What’d I say?

YOUNG WOMAN
Fiftieth.

MOTHER
Oh goodness. Where is my brain? Anyway. Friends are helpful, I’ve always found. Life can be difficult. On a farm.

FATHER
It doesn’t get easier as it trudges along, I’ll say that.

MOTHER
What’s that?

FATHER
It doesn’t get easier.

MOTHER
What doesn’t?

FATHER
Life.

MOTHER
Oh. No. It doesn’t. It’s basically a fast train to Hell.

JAKE
For God’s sake, Mom.

MOTHER
That’s overstating it; I agree.

(laughing)
It’s a fast train to Heck!

The Father laughs.
FATHER
Your mom was always funny. That’s
what I loved about her. I think
it’s what I first fell in love
with. It kind of faded a bit as she
got older.

MOTHER
That’s true. You get worn down, I
guess. It’s not so funny anymore.

FATHER
I miss her terribly.

JAKE
So, Lucia is studying gerontology.

MOTHER
Oh, really? How fascinating.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’ve always been interested in
problems associated with aging. I
think our society has an almost
repulsed relationship to the aged,
which is eminently foolish, because
it’s a natural and inevitable part
of the life cycle of all living
things. Not to mention, it’s
terribly unkind.

MOTHER
Well, how interesting. And
compassionate! You’ve got a keeper
here, Jake. How kind she is.

The Young Woman is looking out the window now. The snow is
coming down hard and the wind is fierce.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh boy. It looks pretty bad. Jake,
I think we should probably --
(turns to room)
-- go.

B55  INT. FARM HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT  B55

The room is empty. The table has been cleared and is set with
a vase overflowing with lush tropical flowers. **YOUNG WOMAN  *
APPEARANCE CHANGE**

YOUNG WOMAN
Jake?
No answer.
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(calling)
Jake?

No answer.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(calling, panicked)
Jake??

JAKE (O.S.)
(very far away)
What?

YOUNG WOMAN
(calling)
I think we should go! It’s looking pretty bad!

JAKE (O.S.)
I have chains!

Jimmy is in the corner shaking snow off himself.

YOUNG WOMAN
(calling)
Where are you?

JAKE
Upstairs.

YOUNG WOMAN
(calling)
Ok.

She starts up the stairs, which are steep and narrow. She looks anxiously around as she climbs, feeling as if she is being watched.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
I’m coming up! Just letting you know!

No response.

INT. FARM HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

At the top of the stairs she finds that the hallway, going off at an odd angle, is much longer than one would expect. Many doorways.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jake? Where are you?
There is no response. She steps into the hall. The first room on the left features a sign that reads "Jake’s Childhood Bedroom." She peers inside. It’s a young boy’s room, empty, but the lights are on. She looks back down the hall.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)

Jake?

No response. She enters the bedroom.

56  INT. JAKE’S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM – NIGHT  56

It is crammed with stuff: piles and piles of DVDs and VHS tapes of movies, but also tapes labeled things like “Humiliations,” and “The Ways People Have Looked at Me,” and “Recurring Dreams of Failure.” There are childhood games, used bandages, porn magazines, a cremation urn labeled “Jimmy.” There are books on the shelves: Wordsworth, Anna Karenina, Virology, a collection of Pauline Kael film reviews, A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again by David Foster Wallace, Theory of Colors by Goethe. There’s a collection of poems by Eva H.D. open on the night table. She picks it up and sees the it is open to the poem Bonedog. A hand touches her shoulder, she turns with a start. The Father is behind her. He is conspicuously older now, feeble.

FATHER

Hi.

YOUNG WOMAN

You scared me. Sorry.

FATHER

Sorry. This is Jake’s childhood bedroom.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. I saw the sign on the door --

FATHER

Oh, that.

(beat)

I can explain that. My memory is going. Early signs of...

He struggles for the word.

YOUNG WOMAN

Dementia? Alzheimer’s? Lewy Bodies -
FATHER
I think that’s it. So we have taken to labeling things around the home. You’ll see labels all over the house.

YOUNG WOMAN
I haven’t noticed.

FATHER
You will notice.

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, I’m certainly very sorry to hear --

FATHER
It’s ok. The truth is I’m looking forward to when it gets very bad so I don’t have to remember that I can’t remember.

He laughs and the Mother (O.S.) laughs somewhere far away.

FATHER (CONT’D)
It seems like that will be a better way to...
  (struggling for word)
... thing.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

FATHER
They say, every cloud has a...

YOUNG WOMAN
Silver --

FATHER
(jumping in)
Silver. Exactly. That’s what they say. Every cloud has a silver. I believe it to be true.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

FATHER
This was Jake’s room. You two can stay in here tonight. His mother and I aren’t old fashioned about those things. Fucking and what not.
The word is jarring coming from this man’s mouth.

**YOUNG WOMAN**
Well, I do need to get home. I have work in the morning, so --

**FATHER**
I know this bed is a little small for two...

(searches for word)

... grown-ups. It’s a child’s bed, after all. And not even for twin children, just for one child. But I think for a single night you could make do.

**YOUNG WOMAN**
That’s very generous of you --

**FATHER**
I mean you won’t be doing any fucking on this bed, I imagine. It’s not made for fucking. It’s a child’s bed. And just for one child. Not two.

**YOUNG WOMAN**
Right.

The Father nods, turns, and limps from the room.

**FATHER**
I think I can find one of my wife’s old... things for you to wear for tonight. I have to dig through some trunks, but I’m pretty sure I can find one of my wife’s old things for you to wear for tonight.

He is gone. The Young Woman, shaking, waits for several beats.

57

**INT. HALL - NIGHT**

The Young Woman makes her way quietly down the hall.

**YOUNG WOMAN**
(whisper)
Jake?

She sees a room marked “Mom’s Room (After Dad Died).” She peeks in. Jake is feeding his mother, ancient and frail, now in a nightgown and wheelchair bound.
MOTHER
Oh, it’s the girlfriend.

Jake turns.

JAKE
(to Young Woman)
I’ll be down in a minute.

The Young Woman enters, startled by the age of the mother.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jake. The snow. I need to leave.

MOTHER
I’ve told him over and over, it’s time for him to leave.

JAKE
Mom, you need to eat.
(to Young Woman)
I’ll be down in a minute.

The Mother turns her head away as Jake is about to stick the spoon in her mouth. The baby food, smears her cheek, spills on her nightgown. Jake is annoyed.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Mom!

MOTHER
Jake was always a good boy.

JAKE
Mom.

MOTHER
Diligent. He won a pin. Maybe not as naturally talented as some of the other students. But he worked so hard. And that’s even more impressive. Being a genius is like being beautiful.

JAKE
Genius

MOTHER
Genius. The luck of the draw, really, the genetic lottery, as they say. But to do as well as Jake did with no special talent or abilities, that’s much more impressive.
YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.
(to Jake)
Maybe you should put the chains on?

JAKE
(curta)
Soon!

The Young Woman reacts to Jake’s tone, backing away slightly.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok.

JAKE
(conciliatory)
We’ll leave soon. Let me just
finish up here.

58
EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

The storm is brutal. The Janitor, mumbling, empties trash
into a dumpster. He turns and watches the storm.

59
INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Young Woman kisses Jake on the forehead. Her attitude
has shifted. She looks at him with affection. **YOUNG WOMAN *
APPEARANCE CHANGE - WARMER** *

YOUNG WOMAN
-- I’m impressed with your
attentiveness to your mom. It’s
rare. We tend to warehouse our
elderly. It’s really special how
devoted a son you are.

JAKE
Thanks. I’m glad to hear you say
that. It makes me feel a bit
better. Sometimes it feels like no
one sees the good things you do.
Like you’re just alone.

YOUNG WOMAN
I see. I’ll wait downstairs. Give
you some privacy.

The Young Woman turns.
60pt.1 INT. HALL - NIGHT

She heads back to the stairs. Her expression shifts slowly to something harder, resolved, as she walks.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I should end this. Just end it. I just make a clean break. No lingering. No waiting for things to get better. You can only wait so long.

She’s descending the stairs now, which seem longer than on the way up. **YOUNG WOMAN _ MULTI APPEARANCE CHANGES**

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I don’t know who I am in this whole thing anymore, where I stop and Jake starts. I’m a pinball. My emotional state is bouncing all over the place. Jake sees me ... needs to see me as someone who sees him. He needs to be seen and he needs to be seen with approval. Like that’s my purpose in all this, in life. To approve of Jake. To keep him going. And he needs to see me as someone whose approval of him is validated because I’m approved of by others. Look at my girlfriend. Look at what I won. She’s smart. She’s talented. She’s sensitive. She can do this. She knows about that. She made this. She cares about that.
(beat)
I need to end it.

60pt.2 INT. FARM HOUSE - BASE OF STAIRS - NIGHT

She arrives at the base of the stairs. Jake is slowly walking by, his arm looped with his now feeble father.

JAKE
Let me just take him to the bathroom, then we’ll go.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok.

FATHER
Is that the girl?
YOUNG WOMAN
Yes, Dad. Louisa.
FATHER
Good. I got your mom’s...

He holds up a nightgown. It has a post-it with the word “nightgown” on it.

FATHER (CONT'D)
(reading)
... nightgown for her.

The Father, with a Parkinsonian tremor, holds out the nightgown the Mother had just been wearing. The Young Woman takes it, her hand touching some still-wet spilled baby food. She tries to hide her revulsion, but Jake sees it, reacts.

YOUNG WOMAN
That’s very kind. But I’m going to have to head home tonight. Soon.

FATHER
I don’t understand.
(to Jake)
What does she mean?

JAKE
I don’t know, Dad. I can’t tell exactly. It’s not exactly clear.

YOUNG WOMAN
I have my shift tomorrow.

JAKE
She’s a waitress. We met when she was serving me. It’s a sweet story. I asked her what she thought of the Santa Fe burger --

FATHER
I’m feeling confused.

JAKE
(to Father)
Let’s just get you to the bathroom. We don’t want another accident. Remember last night?

FATHER
No.

Jake leads his father off. The Young Woman drapes the nightgown over the stairway banister and looks out the window at the storm.
MOTHER (O.C.)
What’s this old thing doing here?

The Young Woman turns to see the Mother holding the nightgown. This is a very young version of the Mother (1950s look).

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m not sure.

MOTHER
Oh my goodness. It’s filthy! It’s got Jake’s baby food on it! What’s it doing here? I tell you, I would misplace my own head if it wasn’t screwed onto my shoulders.

(laughs)
Would you be a sweetheart and toss this in the washer. I just started a load. My hands are full picking up all these darn toys.

She laughs. Children’s toys are scattered around the room.

MOTHER (CONT’D)
Jake would leave his head on the floor if it wasn’t screwed onto his shoulders.

YOUNG WOMAN
Sure. Where is it?

MOTHER
In the basement.

She nods toward the scratched-up door.

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t think Jake wants me down there.

MOTHER
Jake Jake Jake. Jake can be controlling. You can’t allow him to control you. I think that’s the other side of his type of personality, of this diligence thing. He needs to control everything. There are so many, many things that make him nervous that he just keeps closing more and more of the world off.

(MORE)
MOTHER (CONT'D)
And the few people left in his life
have to follow all sorts of rules.
It's a problem.
(MORE)
MOTHER (CONT'D)
I’m sure I’m to blame, but then all
that guilt just causes me to feel
obligated to bend over backwards to
accommodate his every little whim.
It’s a vicious cycle.

The Young Woman and the Mother watch each other for a long
moment.

YOUNG WOMAN
So, what exactly are you saying to
me.

MOTHER
(beat)
I’m saying, take the damn nightgown
to the basement. Live dangerously.

The Mother laughs again. The Young Woman nods, opens the
basement door. The stairs are rickety and it’s dark. There
is a bare bulb at the bottom of the stairs. She heads down.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The Young Woman makes her ways slowly down the dark,
make-shift staircase, the noise of a washer thumping angrily
through an unbalanced load fills the space.

JAKE (O.S.)
You sent her down?

MOTHER (O.S.)
To the washer.

JAKE (O.C.)
Mom, it’s really --
(calling)
Lucy?

She looks up the stairs and sees Jake silhouetted in the
doorway.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You don’t have to do laundry for my
mother! You’re a guest! We’ll get
you a clean nightgown for tonight.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’ll just toss it in! I don’t mind!

JAKE
Well, we should get on the road!
YOUNG WOMAN
Yes! I’ll be up in the minute!

JAKE
I could use some help with the chains!

YOUNG WOMAN
Right! I’ll be up!

INT. FARMHOUSE – BASEMENT – NIGHT

At the bottom, she looks back up; Jake is no longer in the doorway, which now seems to lead directly outside to the storm. Snow blows down the stairs. She turns to the room. Dirt floors. Scarred concrete walls. An old washing machine is bouncing and chugging. She opens the lid, watches the dark, sloshing water come to a stop, the room turning silent, aside from the howling wind. She stares down into the black water. After a moment, she plunges her arm (sleeve and all) into it, fishes around, and pulls out several dark green work shirts featuring the name of a high school stitched above the breast pocket, one after another. She puts them back, throws in the nightgown, closes the lid. The agitator resumes. She looks around the room. A small easel is set up in the corner with a crude landscape painting on it. Taped to the wall behind it are prints of the landscape paintings the Young Woman had on her phone. Printing on the bottom of the white borders indicate these are 19th century paintings by Isaac Levitan. The painting on the easel is a terrible attempt to copy one of the prints, unskilled, lifeless. She sees a pile of paintings and flips through them; they are all miserable attempts at copies. They are all signed “Jake.” She tries to bring up her own paintings on her phone. They are gone. Her phone rings again. It is from Louisa. She answers it.

MAN’S VOICE
There’s only one question to resolve. I’m scared. I feel a little crazy. I’m not lucid. The assumptions are right. I can feel my fear growing. Now is the time for the answer. Just one question. One question to answer

She hurries up the stairs.

INT. SITTING ROOM – NIGHT

The Young Woman, out of breath, emerges from the basement to see Jake standing mournfully over his ancient mother, clearly dead, lying on a hospital bed in the middle of the room.
YOUNG WOMAN
Oh my God, Jake. Is your --

JAKE
Shh. She’s asleep.

YOUNG WOMAN
She’s --?

JAKE
We should go. It’s getting treacherous.

YOUNG WOMAN
Are you certain she’s all right?

JAKE
Out like a light. A good time to go.

YOUNG WOMAN
What about your Dad?

JAKE
He’s... puttering somewhere.

YOUNG WOMAN
Should we say goodbye?

The Father emerges from the kitchen, younger, holding a spanner and an elbow joint.

FATHER
Disposal’s out again. It was sure great to meet you though.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh! Thank you. It was great to meet you. Thank you so much for your hospitality.

FATHER
You’re always welcome here.

YOUNG WOMAN
That’s --

FATHER
Jake’s a good boy. Yes?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.
FATHER
A good man, I should say. You agree?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

He hugs her.

FATHER
Ok, then. Be safe.

64 Ext. Farm House - Car - Night

Jake is laying out the chains while the Young Woman watches. It’s windy and snowing hard.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m impressed you know how to do such things.

JAKE
It’s no big deal.

YOUNG WOMAN
I guess I’m just not very mechanically inclined.

JAKE
Everyone has their talent. You’re more of an art --

He stops himself, looks up at her.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes. That’s true.

65pt.1 Int. Car - Night

Jake drives through the storm. She looks out at the night.

JAKE
So?

YOUNG WOMAN
What?

JAKE
Did you like them?

YOUNG WOMAN
They’re very nice.
JAKE

Really?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes!

JAKE

They can be a little pushy. But they’re basically decent people.

YOUNG WOMAN

That was eminently clear.

JAKE

Good.

(beat)

They loved you, by the way.

YOUNG WOMAN

Good. I’m glad.

JAKE

So smart, my mother said.

YOUNG WOMAN

Did she?

JAKE

Well, not to you. That would have made you uncomfortable. When I was helping her with the dishes.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh.

She stares out at the storm.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

I don’t remember Jake helping his mother with the dishes. I feel uncertain about a lot of what happened tonight. It seems as if everything was slightly --

JAKE

When you and Dad were discussing -- What was it?

YOUNG WOMAN

(suddenly recalling)

Tariffs.

JAKE

Right, tariffs.
YOUNG WOMAN
I remember now. I’m a little fuzzy.

JAKE
You had a lot of wine. He was thrilled to have someone who knew --

YOUNG WOMAN
Did I?

JAKE
You did. I don’t think you noticed, because Dad kept topping you off.

YOUNG WOMAN
Did he?

JAKE
Oh, yes.

YOUNG WOMAN
Right. I did notice that. Tricky.

JAKE
Makes it hard to keep count.

YOUNG WOMAN
It does.

JAKE
But all in all, I think it was a successful visit.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

JAKE
Everyone got to know each other.

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s true. They’re very nice.

JAKE
You liked them?

YOUNG WOMAN
I did. Yes.

JAKE
Good. They both liked you. I think that’s a good sign.

YOUNG WOMAN
Sign?
JAKE
Sign is perhaps not the right word.
Thing. A good thing.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh.

JAKE
It’s good when people you like like each other.

Jake looks over at her for confirmation. She nods without
back at him, watches the snow in the headlights.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
People think of themselves as
points moving through time, but I
think it’s probably the opposite,
we’re stationary and time passes
through us, blowing like cold wind,
stealing our heat, leaving us
chapped and frozen and -- I don’t
know -- dead. I feel like I was
that wind tonight, blowing through
Jake’s parents, seeing them as they
were, seeing them as they will be.
Seeing them after they’re gone,
when only I’m left. Only the wind.

JAKE
What are you thinking?

YOUNG WOMAN
Not much.

JAKE
Really?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah. I’m tired, Jake. The wine, I
guess.

JAKE
You did have a lot.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

JAKE
Alcohol is a depressant, as you
know. So --

YOUNG WOMAN
Of course I know.
JAKE
I think a person needs to keep that
in mind before making decisions
under its influence.

YOUNG WOMAN
(chuckling)
A woman under the influence.

JAKE
Amazing film.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m not sure I agree. I’ve been
watching it over and over for my
essay due Wednesday.

JAKE
I mean, I felt a kinship with
Mabel, I guess. She’s such a
powerful and horribly wronged
character.

YOUNG WOMAN
Is she? Hmm. I think --

(beat)
Mabel Longhetti is bombed out
because she has always wanted to
please everyone, so she can be
considered one more victim-heroine
for "women's liberation" -- but
only by women's liberationists who
are willing to accept textbook
spinoffs as art. The Junoesque Gena
Rowlands (Mrs. Cassavetes) is a
prodigious actress, and she never
lets go of the character.

JAKE
I agree. I thought she was great in
the role. It seemed to me she
encompassed this character as a
kind of spectrum of --

YOUNG WOMAN
Now, at an indeterminate age when
her beauty has deepened beyond
ingénue roles, Rowlands can look
old or young, and shades of
expression transform Mabel
Longhetti from a radiantly
flirtatious beauty into a sad,
sagging neighborhood drunk.

(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Rowlands externalizes schizophrenic dissolution. Mabel fragments before our eyes: a three-ring circus might be taking place in her face. Rowlands' performance is enough for half a dozen tours de force, a whole row of Oscars - it's exhausting. Conceivably, she's a great actress, but nothing she does is memorable, because she does so much.

(beat)
It's the most transient big performance I've ever seen.

JAKE
I guess, I'm unclear what you mean by 'transient.'

The young woman considers this, then:

YOUNG WOMAN
Mabel tries to slash her wrist, and Nick puts a Band-Aid on the cut: the idiot symbolism may make you want to hoot, but this two-hour-and-thirty-five-minute film leaves you too groggy to do more than moan. Details that are meant to establish the pathological nature of the people around Mabel, and so show her isolation, become instead limp, false moments. We often can't tell whether the characters are meant to be unconscious of what they're doing or whether it's Cassavetes who's unconscious. Mabel's children keep murmuring that they love her, and there are no clues to how to decipher this refrain. Are the children coddling her-reversing roles and treating her like a child in need of reassurance? Or are they meant to be as unashamedly loving as she is? And what are we to make of Nick the pulper's constant assertions --

JAKE
Is assertions even a word? I thought it was assertions.
YOUNG WOMAN
It is. They’re both words. Look it up.
  (continuing)
And what are we to make of Nick the pulper’s assertions of love? The movie is entirely tendentious; it’s all planned, yet it isn’t thought out.

Jake seems embarrassed. How could he have liked this film?

JAKE
I do see what you’re saying. And you’re certainly the expert on things cinematic.

The Young Woman seems blurry, confused, somewhat startled by her long-winded assessment of the movie.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah. That I am.

JAKE
I guess I was just taken in by the sympathy Cassavetes showed for her. I feel like maybe our society lacks a certain kindness, a willingness to take in the vulnerabilities and struggles of others... struggling with issues caused by...

YOUNG WOMAN
An alienating society?

JAKE
I don’t know. I guess, yeah. It seems hopeless.

YOUNG WOMAN
What does?

JAKE
Everything? It’s like, feeling old, like, your body is going, your hearing, your sight. You can’t see and you’re invisible, and you made so many wrong turns. The lie of it all.

YOUNG WOMAN
What’s the lie of it all?
JAKE
I don’t know. That things are going to get better. That it’s never too late. That good things come to those who wait. That God has a plan for you. That age is just a number. That it’s always darkest before the dawn. That every cloud has a silver lining.
(beat)
That there’s someone for everyone.

YOUNG WOMAN
Platitudes, all.

Silence.

JAKE
That God never gives us more than we can bear.

YOUNG WOMAN
God’s a good egg that way.

Silence.

JAKE
Hey, do you feel like something sweet?

YOUNG WOMAN
What do you mean?

JAKE
Something sweet. Dessert.

YOUNG WOMAN
Didn’t we have dessert at your mom’s? I feel like there was some huge cake-thing she brought out and --

JAKE
True. I guess I’m a sugar junkie. I don’t know. It might help me stay awake.

YOUNG WOMAN
Then definitely. We need Jake awake for a bit. This is all so treacherous.
JAKE
Good. There’s a Tulsey Town just at the turn-off up ahead.

YOUNG WOMAN
(laughing)
A Tulsey Town! Open now? In this? It’s freezing.

JAKE
(chuckling)
It is. Perfect weather for a BURR, don’t you think?

YOUNG WOMAN
Ha. I guess it is.

JAKE
(singing)
In the land of Tulsey Town we are here to soft serve.

YOUNG WOMAN
The land of Tulsey Town. Jesus. I never thought about that before. What is the land of Tulsey Town, do you suppose?

JAKE
Based on the clown, it’s a circus town. Maybe like that place where the sideshow folks go during the off-season.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ooh. Ruled by the clown lady?

JAKE
Well, yes she wears a crown.

YOUNG WOMAN
A clown crown.

JAKE
A benevolent and tolerant ice cream clown queen made entirely of lactose.

YOUNG WOMAN
She’s lactose tolerant!

JAKE
Ha. Yes. She’s sweet but cold.
YOUNG WOMAN
Like your mom.

JAKE
What do you mean?

YOUNG WOMAN
Nothing. I don’t know why I said that. Just kind of came out.

JAKE
Did you think of my mother as cold?

YOUNG WOMAN
No! She was lovely. She really was.

JAKE
Yeah. I don’t subscribe to that “the mother is cause of all psychological problems” crap.

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s misogynistic claptrap. Freudian bullshit.

JAKE
Yeah. It’s tempting to have someone to pin it on, though.

YOUNG WOMAN
Pin what on?

JAKE
All of it. I don’t know. Why you feel a certain way, why you are a certain way.

YOUNG WOMAN
But it’s misogynistic claptrap. Freudian bullshit. A person, an adult, has to, at some point, take responsibility for who they are, what they’ve become. Don’t you think?

JAKE

(breat)
I do.

YOUNG WOMAN
Mothers are just people with their own pain, their own histories of neglect and abuse.

(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Yet at one time or another in the 20th century every fucking childhood trait was blamed on them: schizophrenia, autism, narcissism, homosexuality.

JAKE
Not that homosexuality is akin to any of those other things.

YOUNG WOMAN
Of course not.

JAKE
Saying that a mother is “to blame” for her child’s homosexuality is to imply that homosexuality is somehow negative.

YOUNG WOMAN
Of course. And I didn’t mean that. But when homosexuality was considered a pathology, in the DSM, before 1973, a coddling mother was often seen as the culprit.

JAKE
Right. It’s despicable how we label people, categorize them, dismiss them. I look at the kids I see at school every day. I see the ones who are ostracized. They’re different, out of step. I see the lives they’ll have because of it. Sometimes I see them years later, in town or at the supermarket. I can tell they still carry that stuff around with them. Like a black aura. A mill stone. An oozing wound.

The Young Woman, watches him, taking it in. Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
Jake, I’m thinking of --

JAKE
Here. Ta-dah!

65pt.2 EXT. TULSEY TOWN - NIGHT

She looks over to see that they have arrived at an old and somewhat decrepit Tulsey Town.
It sits isolated, open and glowing, in the middle of the snow storm, surrounded by blackness.
EXT. TULSEY TOWN - JAKE’S CAR - NIGHT

The wind howls and the snow swirls as Jake and the Young Woman emerge from the car.

YOUNG WOMAN
Man. It’s brutal.

JAKE
Brutal place, the land of Tulsey Town. Climate change here, too. You ever read the novel Ice?

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t think so.

JAKE
By Anna Kavan?

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t think so.

JAKE
1967. It’s a fable of sorts about --

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t think so. Let’s get the ice cream and go. I’m freezing.

Jake peers into the Tuley Town window. The store seems empty.

JAKE
In a minute. I want to see who’s on tonight first?

YOUNG WOMAN
On?

JAKE
Working.

YOUNG WOMAN
You know the people who work here?

JAKE
Some of them. I stop sometimes after visiting my parents. I don’t like some of the girls who work here so I want to make sure...
YOUNG WOMAN
What’s wrong with them?

JAKE
Nothing. I don’t know. People can be cold to me.

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, let’s do this or I’m waiting in the car.

She heads back to the car.

JAKE
No!

She looks at him.

JAKE (CONT’D)
(more softly)
Let’s stay.

Jake knocks on the window --

There are no employees visible.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Say hello. They won’t come if they know it’s me.

She eyes him, then:

YOUNG WOMAN
(calling)
Hello? Anybody here?

GIRL (O.S.)
In a minute.

JAKE
So Ice takes place during an environmental cataclysm that’s caused the world to become a frozen wasteland and --

Two girls, who were seen among the high school students in the play earlier, emerge from the back. They wear T.T. hats and shirts, still in their stage make-up. They see the Young Woman first, then Jake, who stands off to the side, looking sheepish.

T.T. GIRL 1

Oh.
The two employees side-eye each other.

    T.T. GIRL 2
    (mockingly polite)
    Can we help you, sir?

Jake doesn’t say anything. The Young Woman looks over at him, sees he is unable to speak. The girls snicker.

    YOUNG WOMAN
    Um...
    (looks at menu)
    I’ll have a... medium Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough B-r-r-r and he’ll have...

She looks at Jake. The Tulsey Town girls watch him.

    JAKE
    (quietly)
    Same.

    YOUNG WOMAN
    Two of those, please.

The Tulsey Town girls eye each other and giggle.

    T.T. GIRL 2
    Two “sames.”

The Tulsey Town girls just stand there, whispering to each other and giggling as they side-eye Jake. The Young Woman watches them, waiting, confused.

    YOUNG WOMAN
    So..., um, sorry, we need to get
    back on the road, so can we get
    those --

Another uniformed girl emerges from the back and goes about making the B-r-r-r’s. She is small and haunted. Jake looks down at his shoes.

    T.T. GIRL 3
    Sorry for the smell; they’re doing
    some varnishing in the back.

    YOUNG WOMAN
    Varnishing?

    T.T. GIRL 3
    Shelves.
YOUNG WOMAN
Oh. Ok. No problem.

The Young Woman glances over at Jake. He’s looking at the haunted girl’s exposed arms, which are covered with an eczema-
type rash. The Young Woman follows his look and sees the rash, too. The girl scratches mercilessly at her rash as she makes the B-r-r-r’s.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I know this girl. I’ve seen her somewhere. I’ve seen her before.
Her face. Her rash. I know her.
It’s on the tip of my tongue. The tip of my brain, as Jake says.
She’s someone. She’s from somewhere. I’m certain of it.

The girl turns from her task to the young woman.

T.T. GIRL 3
(meekly)
It’s a fucking blizzard out there. *

The Young Woman is surprised by the girl’s choice of words. She takes a moment to formulate a response.

YOUNG WOMAN
It is. I was surprised you were even open on a night like --

T.T. GIRL 3
Fucking blizzard out there, fucking B-r-r-r’s in here. *

T.T. Girl 3 smiles apologetically for her attempt at a joke.

YOUNG WOMAN
(supportively)
I was thinking the very same thing.

T.T. GIRL 3
You’re kind. Not like them.
(indicating other girls)
You’re not like them. Vapid and mean and pretty.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ha. Thanks a lot.

T.T. GIRL 3
(on the verge of tears)
I didn’t mean it like that.
(MORE)
T.T. GIRL 3 (CONT'D)
I love the way you look. You have a kindness. And of course you’re very attractive. I didn’t mean it like that.

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s ok. I understand.

T.T. GIRL 3
I didn’t mean it like that. It’s just that there seems to be a certain... hardness that comes with a certain kind of pretty. You don’t have that. Maybe they suffer, too, the pretty ones. I don’t know. Maybe their prettiness causes them suffering. I’m not a psychiatrist.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
What an odd thing to say. Of course she’s not a psychiatrist. She can’t be more than fifteen.

T.T. GIRL 3 holds the piled-high B-r-r-r's upside down, then places them right side up on the counter.

T.T. GIRL 3
I made them extra high. Because you’re so nice.
(beat)
That’ll be eight dollars, please.

Jake hands her a ten. The Young Woman notices that Jake has a similar rash on his hand. Tulsey Town Girl 3, puts the money in the register and gives the change to the Young Woman.

YOUNG WOMAN
You keep the change.

T.T. GIRL 3
(to Young Woman)
Thank you.

YOUNG WOMAN
You’re welcome. Thank you.

T.T. GIRL 3
I’m worried.

The Young Woman looks around, confused. No one else is paying attention. The other girls are giggling. Jake is at the door, looking at the storm.
YOUNG WOMAN
Excuse me?

T.T. GIRL 3
I shouldn’t be saying this. I know what happens. It’s not good.

YOUNG WOMAN
(looking at other girls)
Are you ok? Do you need me to call for help?

T.T. GIRL 3
It’s not varnish. That’s not why it smells. You should know that.

YOUNG WOMAN
What do you mean?

T.T. GIRL 3
You don’t have to go.

The other two employees are whispering and giggling.

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t have to go where?

T.T. GIRL 3
Forward. In time. You don’t have to. You can stay here.
(beat)
I’m very scared.

YOUNG WOMAN
Of what? What are you scared of?

T.T. GIRL 3
I’m scared for you.

Jake looks over. T.T. Girl 3 changes her tone.

T.T. GIRL 3 (CONT’D)
Have a good night. Be careful out there. The roads are treacherous.

67pt.1 INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jake drives. They pick at their B-r-r-r's.

JAKE
Any good?
YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah. It’s fine. It’s good.

They eat in silence.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
Did you notice that girl’s arms?

JAKE
Which girl?

YOUNG WOMAN
At the Tulsey Town.

JAKE
(containing impatience)
Which girl. There were several.

YOUNG WOMAN
Several? There were three.

JAKE
(beat)
Several is anything more than two.

YOUNG WOMAN
Really?

JAKE
Look it up.

YOUNG WOMAN
Look it up? Now? Will you stop saying that? Anyway, the skinny one.

JAKE
Weren’t they all skinny?

YOUNG WOMAN
You are being willfully obtuse.

JAKE
Not my intention.

YOUNG WOMAN
(mockingly)
Not my intention.

(angry)
The one with the rash all over her arms!
JAKE
(beat)
I didn’t notice.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok. Anyway...

Silence.

JAKE
How’s the Burr? Too sweet?

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s sweet, yes. But it’s good.

Jake has placed his B-r-r-r in the cup holder. It’s melting.

JAKE
I always forget how sweet these are. A little goes a long way. I don’t think I can eat any more of mine.

YOUNG WOMAN
You barely touched it.

JAKE
It’s very sweet.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN
It is a lot.

She turns up the heat.

JAKE
Cold?

YOUNG WOMAN
Probably the ice cream.

JAKE
And we’re in a snowstorm. Whose idea was it to go to Tulsey Town in the middle of this, anyway?

She looks over at him.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m not saying a word.
They both laugh. She looks out at the storm, which has an otherworldly quality to it.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
How odd. This is probably the last time I’ll ever be in a car with Jake. Soon this will all be a distant memory. We’ll both be in different places, remembering this moment, this shared laugh. And maybe there’ll be regret. Maybe time will soften the harder edges and we’ll both think, that was sort of nice. Why did it have to end? And there’s no way back at that point. There’s never a way back. Maybe it doesn’t need to end. Why am I putting so much pressure on this to be some bullshit out of a movie? Maybe I will eventually fall in love with Jake. Maybe it will get better. Relationships take effort. Anyone in a successful relationship will always tell you --

JAKE
You got quiet all of a sudden. Penny?

YOUNG WOMAN
Just watching the storm.

JAKE
Huh.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
But if you can’t even tell the other person what you’re thinking, that doesn’t bode well.

Jake looks back and forth several times from the road to the Young Woman, trying to read her mood. She stares straight ahead, watching the storm in the headlights.

JAKE
Looks like you’re done with it.

YOUNG WOMAN
(looking at him)
What do you mean?
He gestures to the two B-r-r-r's sitting in the cup holders and melting down their sides.

JAKE
Me, too.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m a little cold, I guess.

JAKE
A bit of a wasted stop.

YOUNG WOMAN
At least I can say I’ve been to a Tulsey Town in the middle of nowhere in the middle of the night in the middle of a snowstorm.

JAKE
(singing)
I’m your favorite clown/from Tulsey Town/where ice cream grows on trees/So have no fear/come and join me here/and eat as much as you please/I will turn your frown/fully upside down/when you take your very first bite/of vanilla, chocolate, or strawberry/We’re open day and night!

YOUNG WOMAN
(chuckles)
And it’s something I’ll never do again.

JAKE
A Supposedly Fun Thing You’ll Never Do Again.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes. Exactly.

JAKE
Have you read that?

YOUNG WOMAN
Read what?

JAKE
It’s a book of essays by David Foster Wallace.

YOUNG WOMAN
I have not.
JAKE
A book of essays.

YOUNG WOMAN
Uh-huh. No. I haven’t read it.

JAKE
We should find a place to dump these. They’re going to melt and get the cup holders all sticky.

YOUNG WOMAN
Um. Ok.

JAKE
He’s got an essay in it about television. “One of the things that makes the people on TV fit to stand the mega-gaze is that they are, by human standards, really pretty. I suspect that this, like most television conventions, is set up with motive no more sinister than to appeal to the largest possible Audience. Pretty people tend to be more pleasing to look at then non-pretty people. But when we’re talking about television, the combination of sheer Audience size and quiet psychic intercourse between images and oglers starts a cycle that both enhances pretty images’ appeal and erodes us viewers’ own security in the face of gazes. Because of the way humans relate to narrative, we tend to identify with those characters we find appealing. We try to see ourselves in them. The same I.D.-relation, however, also means that we try to see them in ourselves. When everybody we seek to identify with for six hours a day is pretty, it naturally becomes more important for us to be pretty, to be viewed as pretty.”

(beat)
That’s from the essay.

YOUNG WOMAN
Huh.
JAKE
There’s a lot more, but I won’t bore you.

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s interesting. Kinda long-winded.

JAKE
He killed himself.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes. I think I knew that.

JAKE
Everybody knows it. Even people who know nothing else about David Foster Wallace, have never read a word of his writing. Suicide becomes the story. The mythology. The cautionary tale. It’s obnoxious. Other people’s suffering turned into stories. They made a movie about him. Based on a bestselling book, published two years after he killed himself.

YOUNG WOMAN
Huh.

JAKE
Neither of which would have existed had he not killed himself.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah.

JAKE
I don’t think we know how to be human anymore.

YOUNG WOMAN
Who doesn’t?

JAKE
Our society. Our culture. People. Whatever all this is. Any of us.

YOUNG WOMAN
Have you ever read any Guy DeBord? The Society of the Spectacle?

JAKE
Exactly! Yes! Of course!
YOUNG WOMAN
DeBord says, “The society cannot be understood as a mere visual deception produced by mass-media technologies. It is a worldview that has actually been materialized.”

JAKE
Exactly. We watch the world through this glass, pre-interpreted for us. It infects our brains. We become it.

YOUNG WOMAN
A virus.
Silence.

JAKE
Listen, these melting things are driving me crazy. It’s going to get everything all sticky.

YOUNG WOMAN
Do you have a plastic bag I can put them in? Some napkins, maybe?

JAKE
No. Nothing like that. I want to find some place to dump them.

YOUNG WOMAN
There doesn’t seem to be anything around here.

JAKE
There’s a small road up ahead I know of. There’ll be a garbage can.

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t know. Maybe we should just head home.

JAKE
(confused)
To the farm?

YOUNG WOMAN
What? No. To the city. I’m worried about getting stuck out here. If we turn off the main road and get stuck, no one will find us.
JAKE
Yeah. True.

Silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I’m just not going to feel right if I don’t get rid of these. It’ll prey on my mind. Shit. I should’ve brought napkins. And a plastic bag. Like you said. That was really stupid. A plastic bag would’ve solved everything.

YOUNG WOMAN
Not everything.

Jake pounds at the steering wheel. The Young Woman watches.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
It’s not a big deal. Really.

JAKE
Yes. I know that, Ames.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
Ames? Is that short for Amy? That doesn’t sound right. That doesn’t seem like my name. Or my nickname.

JAKE
Just let’s go here real quick.

Jake turns off onto a narrow dirt road -- almost a path -- bordered by tall dark trees.

JAKE (CONT’D)
And I’ll get to show you my high school.

YOUNG WOMAN
This goes to a high school?

JAKE
Yes. My high school. Where I went every tortured day for so long. So goddamn long.

(beat)
I did not like high school.

YOUNG WOMAN
(worried)
No one did, really.
JAKE
That’s what they tell me. I am told that.

YOUNG WOMAN
It’s true.

JAKE
I see people who seem to thrive there.

YOUNG WOMAN
This road goes to a high school?

JAKE
Yeah. Why?

YOUNG WOMAN
I don’t know. It seems so -- It doesn’t seem like a road at all.

JAKE
What does it seem like?

YOUNG WOMAN
Hmm. A path? A trail? The road less travelled?

JAKE
Well, it is a bit Frosty out.

YOUNG WOMAN
(chuckling)
Fired.

JAKE
Just trying to lighten the mood.

YOUNG WOMAN
And that has made all the difference.

JAKE
(chuckling)
Now who’s fired?

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN
I do feel uneasy, Jake. I think we should turn back. It doesn’t feel right.
JAKE
It’s just a high school.

YOUNG WOMAN
It feels wrong.

JAKE
Anyway, I can’t turn around. The road’s too narrow. I’ll just get to the school, dump the cups, and we’ll leave.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok.

JAKE
Good.

YOUNG WOMAN
I just don’t really get this. This road makes no sense to me. How do school buses get down here?

JAKE
It’s a rural high school.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jake, I grew up on a farm. I went to a rural high school. We had a normal entrance with a paved road.

JAKE
It’s fine. It’ll be fine. Everything is tinged. That’s the thing you have to realize.

YOUNG WOMAN
Tinged?

JAKE
Colored. By mood. By emotion. By past experience. There is no objective reality. You know there is no color in the universe, right? Only in our brains. Just electromagnetic frequencies. The brain tinges them.

YOUNG WOMAN
I’m a physicist. I know what color is.

JAKE
Yes. You are. You do.
YOUNG WOMAN
(beat)
Colors are the deeds of light, its deeds and suffering.

JAKE
That’s beautiful. Not physicist talk, but eminently poetic.

YOUNG WOMAN
Well, I am a poet, after all.

JAKE
Yes, you are. It’s beautiful.

YOUNG WOMAN
This road seems excessively long.

JAKE
Seems. That’s the operative word. Time, another thing that exists only in the brain.

YOUNG WOMAN
And yet we get older.

JAKE
Older and older. Or so it seems. Sometimes I feel I am much younger than I actually am. Like still a kid inside. Until I pass a mirror.

YOUNG WOMAN
Is younger better?

JAKE
(quickly, confidently)
Yes.
(beat)
I think so. It’s admirable.

YOUNG WOMAN
Youth is admirable? How can you admire a person for their age? It’d be like admiring a specific point in a stream.

JAKE
It’s healthier, brighter... more fun. More attractive. Hopeful.

YOUNG WOMAN
Like a Coca Cola commercial!
JAKE
Almost all ground-breaking work in
science, in the arts, is done by
young people. Old people are the
ash heap of youth.

YOUNG WOMAN
Listen, Jake, I’m thinking we need
to end --

JAKE
Tah-dah.

67pt.2 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT 67pt.2 *

The road has opened up to reveal a large high school. It is
the high school in which the Janitor works.

YOUNG WOMAN
Wow. I wasn’t expecting anything so
enormous.

JAKE
130 classroom, a gymnasium, 2
locker rooms -- boys, girls --
auditorium, 10 bathrooms, 6
administrative offices, teacher
lounge, counseling center, nurse’s
office. It’s regional, so 11 towns
feed into it.

YOUNG WOMAN
You certainly know your high
school.

JAKE
Like the back of my hand.

68 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT 68

Jake pulls into the parking lot. It’s empty, except for
the Janitor’s truck.

YOUNG WOMAN
There’s someone here. That’s weird.

JAKE
School maintenance? Janitor.
Something.
(looking)
There!
YOUNG WOMAN

What?
JAKE
Trash can. I knew it.
(grabbing cups)
I’ll be right back.

He opens his door, exits the car, slams the door. The Young Woman starts at the violence of the slam. She watches Jake as he trudges, struggling against the wind, toward the receptacle. It’s slow going. Snow falls on the windshield, obscuring Jake. Then he is revealed again by the scraping windshield wipers. Obscured, revealed, obscured revealed. He arrives at the bin, opens the lid and just stands there, peering in.

YOUNG WOMAN
What is he doing? Jake, c’mon,
let’s go.

She glances over at the pick-up truck. Jake places the lid back on; he’s still holding the cups.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
What are you doing?? Argh!

He looks toward the car, holds one finger up to indicate “one minute,” and trudges off, disappearing behind the school.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
What?? Jesus, Jake.

She reaches over to the driver’s side and locks the car doors, looks behind her into the blackness. She glances at the truck, somehow made sinister by the lot’s sodium vapor lamps.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
Ugh.

For a long while, she watches the corner around which Jake has disappeared. She seems to be willing him to reappear. Eventually he does.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
Yes! Let’s go let’s go let’s go
let’s go...

He waves and trudges toward the car: obscured, revealed, obscured, revealed. He arrives at the car, opens the door.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
Where were you?!

Jake gets in, closes the door. He is covered in snow, out of breath.
JAKE
Sorry. Sorry. That bin was filled with road salt. For the ice. I remembered there was a dumpster on the other side, near the loading dock. So... mission accomplished.

YOUNG WOMAN
Good. Let’s go.

JAKE
It’s humid in here.

His glasses are fogged. He turns the ignition key; the engine stops.

JAKE (CONT'D)
There.
(beat)
Kind of peaceful, no?

YOUNG WOMAN
More creepy than peaceful, I’d say.

JAKE
I don’t agree.

YOUNG WOMAN
I want to go.

JAKE
What’s the rush all of a sudden?

YOUNG WOMAN
All of a sudden? All night I’ve been a broken record about getting home. I’ve given you, like, forty reasons I need to get home tonight.

JAKE
I guess that’s true.

YOUNG WOMAN
You guess?

JAKE
I just thought, you know, since it’s peaceful and quiet here and, Baby, it’s cold outside --

YOUNG WOMAN
Really? You’re going to quote a rape song at me to convince me to --
JAKE
It’s not a rape song.

YOUNG WOMAN
She keeps saying she wants to leave. He keeps ignoring her. What would you call that?

JAKE
She wants to stay. She’s just afraid of what people will think.

YOUNG WOMAN
She asks him “What did you put in my damn drink?”

JAKE
Jesus, the song was written in 1936. It’s not about roofies.

YOUNG WOMAN
Roofies or not, he’s trying to break down her defenses with strong liquor. And, anyway, I’m sorry, but they had mickeys in the thirties. It’s a song about coercion.

JAKE
Why are you getting so angry?

YOUNG WOMAN
(beat)
I just want to go home.

JAKE
To the farmhouse?

YOUNG WOMAN
No! Not to the fucking farmhouse. To my house, Jake! To my house!

JAKE
Ok, ok.

He turns the ignition key. The car starts. He waits for the wipers to clear the snow from the windshield.

YOUNG WOMAN
Thank you.
(beat)

(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Y’know, he says, “What’s the point of hurting my pride?” Like it’s her job to make this guy feel sexually attractive.
(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Regardless of her own desires.
That’s not her responsibility.

JAKE
I see that. You’ve convinced me.
I’m sorry.

He leans over to give her a conciliatory kiss, which she
accepts. The kiss turns a bit romantic. Jake suddenly pulls
away.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Jesus!

YOUNG WOMAN
What??

JAKE
In the window!

YOUNG WOMAN
(looking toward school)
What??

JAKE
There was someone watching us.

YOUNG WOMAN
(scanning windows)
I don’t see anyone.

JAKE
He was there. Watching us. Like a
goddamn pervert.

YOUNG WOMAN
Let’s go. Maybe he was just looking
out the window, wondering what our
car was doing here in the middle of
the night.

JAKE
Believe me, I am very familiar with
that particular look.

YOUNG WOMAN
What does that mean?

JAKE
I’m going to give him a piece of my
mind is what it means. That is not
acceptable.
YOUNG WOMAN
Jake, really, let’s just --

Jake turns off the car, opens the door and exits car.

JAKE
I’ll be right back. This is not acceptable.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jake!

JAKE
At all!

He slams the door and is gone, running toward the school. The Young Woman shivers, looks at the ignition. The key is missing.

YOUNG WOMAN
Crap.

She sits there, shivering, watching Jake recede. Soon he is around the corner and gone. The Young Woman watches the school, turns and looks back at the road, settles back into her seat, puts her hands in her pockets and waits.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
This was a mistake. I shouldn’t have come. I knew things between Jake and me were not going to work out. I think, if I’m honest, I knew from our very first conversation. There was something. Something needling. In the back of my brain. Some little voice whispering, this isn’t right. This isn’t for you. Turn back. But it’s hard to say no. I was never taught that. It’s easier to say ok. It’s smoother. Feathers don’t get ruffled. People don’t get hurt. And, anyway, sometimes you’re caught off-guard. The request comes, can I have your number. And the easiest way out is to say yes. And that yes leads to the next yes and then more yes, yes, yes, yes and then you find yourself in a relationship. And it’s too late to say no, or at least it has become much harder. Because you don’t have a good reason. He’s not a monster. He doesn’t beat you.

(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.) (CONT’D)
He’s a nice guy and now you need a reason. But you fantasize about being rid of it, the whole thing. And none of it is fair to him, this constant unspoken pulling away. And you should’ve just said no thank you in the first place. But he’s a nice guy and I imagine we’ve had some fun. I’m sure we have. I’m certain we’ve laughed. I’m certain the sex has been good, at least some of the time. It has to have been, although right now I have very little actual memory of it. Right now the whole thing seems vague. All this time together and I can’t feel it. Where did it go?
(trying to see through windshield)
Where did Jake go?

The windshield is obscured; she opens the door, pokes her head out, looks into the distance, searching for his figure amidst the swirling snow. She gets back in, closes the door, locks it.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
I’m so cold. Where is he? And how long does it take to get hypothermia? Maybe it’s not a bad way to go, if you have to go. Numbness has its advantages. Sometimes it’s the only way to get through. Just turn it all off, all the damn signals to the brain, all the noise, all the time.
(beat)
Slow it down.
(beat)
Slow it, slow it, until it all just stops.

The Young Woman sits there in silence, shivering, staring at the quiet school.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jesus, Jake. C’mon.

She sighs, opens the car door, exits, closes the door, immediately realizes, tries the door, it’s locked behind her.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT’D)
Shit. Shit.
She tries all the other doors. All locked.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Shit shit shit.

She looks at the school, heads toward it. As she walks, she stares up at the school’s darkened windows, she looks behind her, she looks at the pick-up truck in the parking lot. She feels she’s being watched through every black rectangle. She becomes self-conscious, and, incongruously, as she walks through the snow and wind, she attempts to fix her blowing hair. She rounds the corner and sees the dumpster Jake had mentioned. She approaches it, opens the lid. It is filled with hundreds of half-eaten B-r-r-r-r's. The Young Woman is startled, jumps back, the lid slams closed with a metal clang that echoes off the building. She makes her way to the school’s glass front doors, peers in: a long, dim, empty hallway. She doesn’t know what to do, she’s scared to go in; she’s too cold to stay outside. She rests her forehead against the glass of the door for a long moment.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Jake. Please.

She girds herself, enters the building.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Young Woman walks cautiously down the hall. The shot mirrors the initial shot of the Janitor walking the same hall.

YOUNG WOMAN
(quietly)
Jake?

The Janitor appears in the distance at the end of the hall where it intersects with another. He is mopping, seems unaware of her. She gasps and hides in a doorway. Breathing hard, she peeks back down the hall; the Janitor is gone.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Jake, I want to go. Please.

She steps back out into the hall. The Janitor appears again in the intersecting hall, now mopping in the other direction. Again, the Young Woman jumps back into the doorway.
YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
What am I doing here? This entire night makes no sense. I’ve lost myself in all of this, in this relationship, in this world of Jake. How is it one always finds oneself in a foreign country in relationships. In the land of Jake. We treat you right.
(looking toward entrance)
Maybe he’s back out in the car? Can he have passed without me seeing him? I don’t think so. He has to be in here somewhere. And even if he is out there, he wouldn’t leave without me. He’d come looking for me. I’ll wait, in the warmth, out of sight. Watching. For Jake. Is it possible that the janitor guy has done something to him? Hurt him somehow? If he’s hurt Jake -- killed him, even -- what chance is there for me? I’ll just wait. Till morning, if I have to. Till the school opens.
(beat)
Unless it’s a snow day. It’s going to be a snow day tomorrow, isn’t it? Of course it is. It’s going to be a snow day tomorrow and nobody is coming. Shit. Jake. Ok. Still. In daylight I can walk to the road. There’ll be somebody. A snowplow. A cop. I’ll just sit tight. Unseen.

She peeks down the hall.

The hall is now seen from the Janitor’s POV. He has spotted the Young Woman’s head poking out. She sees him, pulls out of sight. He mops toward her, slow, methodically, deliberately, mumbling to himself. The mumbling, for the first time can partially be made out.

JANITOR
Don’t... Don’t... You can’t...

The Janitor continues toward her, drawn like a magnet.

JANITOR (CONT’D)
Don’t... No... Mustn’t...

He arrives at the doorway in which she hides. He stops, seemingly unable to make the final step to see her. Her breathing is audible.
Finally, he pokes his head around the locker. She is looking at him (at us), no recognition on her face.

**YOUNG WOMAN**

Oh. Hello. I’m sorry. My boyfriend... I think he came in here. I think he went to school here. A while back. So maybe you know him. I don’t know if you were here when he was a student. How would I know? Anyway, I’m locked out of his car. So I came in looking for him -- I hope that’s ok -- But I didn’t see him. So I’m waiting here, but I can go if that’s not all right. You haven’t seen anyone in here, by any chance, have you? I’m a little worried. You haven’t seen him, have you?

Silence. Then:

**JANITOR**

What does your boyfriend look like?

**YOUNG WOMAN**

Um, It’s so hard to describe people. Anyway, it’s so long ago. I barely remember. We never even talked, is the truth. I’m not sure I even registered him. There were a lot of people. I was there with my girlfriend. She and I were celebrating our anniversary. Stopped in for a drink and this guy kept looking over at me. It’s a nuisance. The occupational hazard of being female. You can’t even go out for a drink. Always being looked at. A creeper, you know. I remember thinking, I wish my boyfriend were here, which is sort of sad, that if you’re a woman, guys don’t leave you alone unless you’re with another guy, like you’ve been claimed, like you’re property. Even then, not always. Anyway, I can’t remember what he looked like. Why would I? Nothing happened. He was just one of thousands of such non-interactions in my life.

(MORE)
YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
It’s like asking me if I can describe the mosquito that bit me on a certain evening forty years ago.
(beat)
So have you seen someone fitting that description.

JANITOR
I haven’t seen anyone.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ok.

JANITOR
I mean, other than you. I see you.

YOUNG WOMAN
(beat)
I’m worried about him.

JANITOR
I’m sure there’s no need. He’s safe if he’s here. It’s safe in here. Quiet.

YOUNG WOMAN
(studies his face)
Ok.
(beat)
Is it ok, if I look around for him?

JANITOR
Maybe take your wet shoes off. I’ve just cleaned the floors.

YOUNG WOMAN
Thanks.

The Young Woman takes off her shoes. The Janitor watches, her feet now in the big blue slippers. She smiles back at him briefly, sadly.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Bye.

JANITOR
Yeah. Bye.

The Young Woman pads silently down the hall, her voice receding.

YOUNG WOMAN
Jake? Jake? Jake?
The Janitor mops up the small puddles left by the Young Woman’s shoes.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL – HALLWAY INTERSECTION – NIGHT

The Young Woman arrives at the hall intersection, stands still and looks down at it. Jake is in the distance looking at her. A Second Young Woman, dressed identically to the Young Woman, emerges from another classroom doorway and stands behind her. A Young Man dressed as Jake emerges and stands behind Jake. The real Jake and Young Woman back away leaving only their replacements. Eerie, burbling orchestral music begins, vague and poorly remembered. The two replacements wave and hurry toward each other in a balletic run. They meet in the middle of the hall and embrace. “Jake” spins “Young Woman” around, lifts her, and the two perform a pas de deux expressing their love. The real Jake watches, profoundly moved, and the real Young Woman looks perplexed and anxious. The dance continues as a wedding ceremony is performed and the “Young Woman” walks down the school hall towards “Jake” and a “Minister.” The Janitor appears, intercepts the “Young Woman” and pulls her away from the ceremony. She escapes down a surreal, dark hall, and ends up “outside” in a stylized version of the school exterior, struggling against the snow and wind, the Janitor in pursuit. He grabs her and she fights to disengage. “Jake” appears in the storm, and the Janitor and “Jake” engage in a balletic fight, ending when the Janitor pulls out a knife and stabs “Jake,” leaving him to die on the ground, with bright red silk scarves spilling out around him on the snow. The Janitor grabs the “Young Woman” and carries her away, leaving the actual Young Woman, Jake, and dying “Jake.” Jake and the Young Woman look at each other with resignation and walk off into the storm in opposite directions, soon becoming obscured by the blowing snow.

The Janitor’s POV, through which all this has been experienced: He wheels his cart toward the body of “Jake,” lifts it, places it and the red scarves in the trash receptacle on the cart, and wheels it off.

INT. SCHOOL – NIGHT

Various shot of the Janitor cleaning, now in silence, punctuated by the occasional distant call of “Jake?” These become fewer and farther between, and even more distant. Eventually the calls cease.

INT. JANITOR’S CLOSET – NIGHT

The Janitor, changes his shirt, collects his thermos, puts on his jacket.
EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

The Janitor trudges toward his truck in the empty parking lot. The truck is covered with snow. He glances over to where Jake’s car had been parked; it is gone. He unlocks the truck’s door, dumps his stuff on the passenger seat, pulls out a scraper, brushes the snow off his windows, gets in the truck, closes the door.

INT TRUCK - NIGHT

The Janitor pulls his ignition key from his pocket, brings it to the ignition, hesitates, doesn’t insert it, puts it back in his pocket, watches the snow fall. Gradually, it begins to fall in a sort of time-lapse loop, otherworldly. The windshield gets covered with a thin layer of snow, still allowing the light from the parking lot through, casting the inside of the cab into yellow dimness. The Janitor shivers. The cab gets darker as more snow accumulates. His shivering becomes more violent, turns into a jerky timelapse. He rips off his gloves, his hat, wipes his brow. With thick, now clumsy hands, struggles to unbutton his shirt, succeeds, tears it off. Pulls off his boots, his socks, his pants, his underwear. He is now naked in the ever dimming cab. The snow-covered windshield begins to sizzle and percolate like TV screen “snow.” This jitteriness turns to maggots, which fall away to reveal a suffering pig, who turns his head and acknowledges the Janitor with sorrowful eyes. The pig turns away and walks slowly toward the school. He looks back at the Janitor, urging him to follow. The Janitor gets out of the truck and walks, naked, behind the pig. His body shakes with cold.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Janitor follows the pig, who, on occasion, looks back as he walks. The pig talks to the Janitor.

PIG
It’s not bad. Once you stop feeling sorry for yourself because you’re just a pig, or, even worse, a pig infested with maggots. Someone has to be a pig infested with maggots, right? It might as well be you. It’s the luck of the draw. You play the hand you’re dealt. You make lemonade. You move on. You don’t worry about a thing.

*
JANITOR
That song has always made me cry.

PIG
I’ve always loved it. There is
kindness in the world, y’know? You
have to search for it, but it’s
there.

JANITOR
You’re kind.

PIG
Eh. I’m just evolving. Even now,
even as a ghost, as a memory, as
dust. As you will.

JANITOR
We’re the same?

PIG
Everything is the same. When you
look close enough. As a physicist,
you would know that. You, me,
ideas. We’re all one thing. Let’s
get you dressed.

JANITOR
But I’m so hot.

PIG
Heat, cold. Variations on a theme.
It’s not important.

The pig leads the Janitor, now dressed in tails into the
auditorium, a Nobel medallion around his neck.

INT. AUDITORIUM STAGE – NIGHT

The Janitor steps onto the stage. The Oklahoma! set is there,
looking very much like Jake’s farmhouse. His mother, the
young version, dressed like Aunt Eller, in grease paint old
age make-up, sits in a rocking chair on the porch of the
house. She smiles at him. The Janitor looks from her to the
audience, which is filled with high school students, now
dressed in tuxes and gowns. They applaud enthusiastically.
The Young Woman, also in old age grease paint, is in the
audience, too, smiling up lovingly at him. His Father, the
Tulsey Town girls, Jake, all there.

JANITOR
Thank you. My acceptance speech:
(clears throat)
(MORE)
JANITOR (CONT'D)
I accept. I accept it all. I gratefully accept your acknowledgement, this award. I accept all that it entails. That this award comes near the end of a long, fruitful life in acknowledgement for the work I did decades ago. My quest has taken me through the physical --

In the audience young Jake mouths along with this.

JANITOR (CONT'D)
-- the metaphysical, the delusional -- and back. And I have made the most important discovery of my life: It is only in the mysterious equations of love --

In the audience, the Young Woman watches adoringly.

JANITOR (CONT'D)
-- that any logic or reasons can be found. I am only here tonight because of you. You are the reason I am. You are all my reasons. Thank you.

The Young Woman is moved to tears. The Janitor sings, now dressed like a farmer. A stage set of a shack interior is rolled in behind him. It bears a striking resemblance to Jake’s bedroom.
JANITOR (CONT'D)
The floor creaks,/the door
squeaks,/there’s a field mouse a-
nibblin on a broom/And I sit by
myself/Like a cobweb on a shelf/By
myself in a lonely room/But when
there’s a moon in my winder/And it
slants down a beam crost my
bed/Then the shadder of a
tree/starts a-dancin on the
wall/And a dream starts a dancin in
my head/And all the things I wish
fer/Turn out like I wanted them to
be/And all the things I wish
fer/Turn out like I want them to
be/And I’m better’n that smart
aleck cowhand/Who thinks he’s
better’n me!/And The girl that I
want/Ain’t afraid of my arms/And
her own soft arms keep me warm/And
her long tangled hair falls a-crost
my face,/Jist like the rain in a
storm!/The Floor creaks, the door
squeaks/And the field mouse starts
a-nibblin on the broom/And the sun
flicks my eyes/It was all a pack of
lies!/I’m awake in a lonely room/I
ain’t gonna dream about her no
more!/I Ain’t gonna leave her
alone/Goin’ outside,/Git myself a
bride/Git me a woman to call my
own.

The Janitor finishes and is met with passionate, extended
applause. He stands there for an uncomfortably long time,
taking it in.

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

The storm has stopped. Silence. The sun is shining. The
ground is covered in drifts of snow. In the empty parking
lot, sits the Janitor’s pick-up, a white truck-shaped lump of
snow.

END