

# MANHATTAN GHOST STORY

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INT. TRAIN - DAY

Rattling train, making time through New England countryside. From somewhere, a disembodied voice...

AARON (V.O.)  
The first thing I remember. Is  
the train ride.

SEE him now, carrying his bags. AARON CRAY, mid-thirties, unassuming smile. Passing each full compartment, seeing the array of commuter travelers. Until the voice of his memory recalls...

AARON (V.O.)  
I remember seeing the woman...

...a compartment with one seat empty. Next to a middle-aged WOMAN, conservatively dressed.

AARON (V.O.)  
...and suddenly thinking, for  
reasons I couldn't name...I don't  
want to sit with her.

Watch him, peering through the glass. She suddenly stares STRAIGHT UP at him. An expectant look on her refined features.

AARON (V.O.)  
...I was ashamed to think such  
a thing. So, of course, I sat.

And Aaron pushes through the door. He smiles at the woman, who continues to stare at him, unsmiling, somehow eager. He lifts his bags to the overhead rack. And when he takes his seat, he looks up into her intense, unsettling gaze.

WOMAN  
Hello, I'm Madeline.

More than abrupt. An energy to it that really takes him back. Naturally shy, Aaron manages a friendly smile...

AARON  
I'm Aaron Cray. It's nice to  
meet you.

She doubts that. Studies him appraisingly.

MADELINE  
...you're going to a new job.  
In the City. A book, you're...  
writing?

Aaron is stunned. He glances across at their companions. A watery-eyed PRIEST, fixed on his paperback. An anorexic teenage

GIRL. Cracking gum as she leafs a magazine. Back to Madeline, his smile now politely awkward...

AARON  
...photographing, actually. How did you kn...

MADELINE  
...sorry, I see some things more clearly than others.

Not an apology. A simple explanation.

MADELINE  
I do better on intimate matters. For example, you've been disappointed in love, haven't you, Aaron?

AARON  
Ma'am, I...

MADELINE  
...in business, as well, I see. I think the better side of your nature has made you vulnerable, Aaron. To the darker side of human nature.

He doesn't know what to do. Glances helplessly back at the priest, who is turning a single page back and forth, slightly unnerving, like a defective loop of videotape. The girl, horribly thin, CRACKS her gum more loudly than social convention permits.

MADELINE  
They don't care, Aaron. They never do.

When he turns back, the woman has leaned perceptibly nearer.

MADELINE  
I think you've locked your heart away, so you won't be hurt, ever again. Of course, that's pathetic.  
(beat)  
Albeit sweet.

Silence.

AARON  
I'm going now.

But as he rises to reach for his bags...

MADELINE  
Your mother is dead, isn't she? She committed suicide.

He stops.

MADELINE

She wrote a little note that said, 'This isn't what I wanted, Frank. This isn't it at all.' And then she shot herself in the head.

And as further explanation...

MADELINE

That was a disturbingly masculine act. Most women slit their wrists.  
(beat)  
Frank was your father. He's dead, too.

Aaron is reeling now. Eyes searching her proper features...

AARON

Who are you?

MADELINE

You are going, remember? You don't want to sit here, I make you nervous.

AARON

That's not the word.

MADELINE

I made my husband so nervous, he left me for another man, for Christ's sake!

And in the midst of his confusion, he feels her anguish. Straight to her eyes...

AARON (softly)

I'm sorry.

She looks at him. As if deciding.

MADELINE

You know, Aaron. I believe you are.

Aaron pulls his bag down from the rack, so awkward that he nearly clobbers the anorexic girl, who never even notices.

MADELINE

Nice reading you mind, Aaron. See you again.

Aaron nods. One quick glance at the others, who are completely oblivious, and he stumbles from the compartment.

HOLD on Madeline. Watching him go.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Aaron cutting through Central Park with his bags, two cameras around his neck. Still clearly disturbed by his encounter.

AARON (V.O.)

This guy I knew, Paul DeGraff, said I could crash at his place during my shoot. Sort of surprising, actually. We hadn't seen each other in awhile...

Blustery April morning, wind whipping at him.

AARON (V.O.)

We grew up together, but Paul went on to great success. He was in Paris on some big deal, so his place would be...

His stride slows. Over there, by the pond. Two POLICEMEN in heavy winter coats look down at...

...a LITTLE GIRL, laid out at the edge of the water. Golden curls, small angelic face, eyes shut. So beautiful and still. Incongruously, she wears a white snowsuit. She is drenched. Passersby are passing by, but...

Aaron, being Aaron, is stopped by the sight. Always hesitant to come forward, his first instincts are to reach slowly for his camera. Focusing on the child through his lens now, the shield which keeps him safe as compassionate observer...

AARON

Is she...is she all right...?

...hoping against hope, but knowing the answer. CLICKING off a shot, moving laterally to another angle, not coming closer. The short policeman has a puffy red face. Shrugs...

POLICEMAN

She fell through the ice.  
Musta been that sudden freeze.

Freeze? Aaron looks out over the wind-rippled pond. Looks again at the policemen, bundled up for below zero. This doesn't compute.

POLICEMAN

...musta been that sudden freeze.

AARON

There's no freeze, there couldn't have been a...

(beat)

...where's her parents?

POLICEMAN

They never showed up.

Hesitantly, Aaron comes forward at last, kneels by the child. So peaceful in death. Touches her with genuine sorrow. His eyes linger, and then he looks up. The busy crowd bustling by. He's angry that...

AARON

...look at this. Not one of them even notices!

POLICEMAN

New York.

And Aaron shivers at that thought. A last look at the child, and he rises slowly. So helpless, nothing he can say or do. And as he heads off...

POLICEMAN (O.S.)

...musta been that sudden freeze.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK WEST - DAY

Aaron heading up the avenue, eyes lost in disturbed thought. As oblivious to the passersby as they are to him. Until...

SMALL VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, Mister, wanna puppy? Only two bucks...

And he turns. The BOY is about seven, poorly dressed. A nervous smile and a cardboard box with six tiny puppies, scarcely more than newborns. With him, his sister NATASHA, not quite four. Rich blonde curls, huge dark eyes, she's lapping at a big waffle cone.

BOY

Hey, Mister, wanna puppy? Only two bucks...

And Aaron puts his heavy thoughts aside. He smiles at these children. On an impulse, nods, sure. He lifts the smallest puppy in his hands, a smoky gray furball.

AARON

Well, this is the best one. I'd pay five for him.

And pulls a five dollar bill out of his pocket. Puts it in the cardboard box. But the boy just stares up...

BOY

Hey, Mister, wanna puppy? Only two bucks...

A little disconcerting. Aaron looks to the five dollars in the box. To the puppy in his hands.

AARON

Uh, sure. This one okay?

But the boy says nothing. Shivers in the wind. Natasha keeps lapping at her waffle cone. Big eyes staring. A trickle of fudge running over her hand.

AARON

Kinda cold for you guys to be out, huh? How about if I walk you home...?

BOY

Can't. Our momma's there, she's always there. She sent us out to sell these. Unfinished business.

Something in that last makes Aaron pause. Stare at these sweet children.

AARON

Okay, guys. Just don't stay too long, huh?

No answer. He tousles Nastasha's head affectionately. Heads off with his puppy.

The children watch him go. And when he is too far away to hear...

BOY (calls out)

Hey, Mister, wanna puppy?  
Only two bucks...

EXT. WEST EIGHTIES - DAY

Aaron coming down a West Eighties street, hands in his pockets, eyes wandering, disoriented...

AARON (V.O.)

I mean, New York is always weird, but...

Stops. This is the building. Checks the number against a slip of paper. Looks across to the puppy, rambling way up the street, full of spirits. It stops to look back, stare quizzically at us. So Aaron...

...WHISTLES sharply. The puppy DARTS back. Straight past Aaron, up the steps and as someone exits, DASHES inside. Gone.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The smoky gray puppy sits at the door to 4B, his engine running. Aaron checks the number against the slip. Looks down to a potted plant near the door...

AARON (V.O.)

The more I thought of it, the more puzzling it was that Paul had offered me his place...

Rummaging around the base of the plant, now. Finding the key...

AARON (V.O.)  
We had never been close. He  
was sort of a difficult guy.

Opens the door. The puppy CHARGES in. Aaron follows...

AARON (V.O.)  
The first thing I noticed was  
the smell.

Moving through the spacious, expensively decorated apartment. As  
if he's following a scent...

AARON (V.O.)  
...vaguely pleasant. A smell of  
damp, sweet wood.

Hearing a cheerful YIP, into the kitchen, where he...stops cold.  
Puppy sits at the feet of a breathtaking YOUNG WOMAN. Flowing  
auburn hair, dark eyes. Tight, faded jeans, cut-off top. She sits  
casually at a round table, dealing solitaire with slender fingers.  
Not looking up...

YOUNG WOMAN  
So what's his name...?

Aaron is slightly dumbstruck.

AARON  
The dog?

She keeps playing, red seven on the black eight. Wiggles her nose  
at the next card. She seems to have forgotten him.

AARON  
He's the Silver Bullet. Cos  
he won't slow me down.

She glances at the puppy. Just wagging its tail, staring up at her.

AARON  
Two little kids were selling  
them, they were so sweet, but...  
really strange...

But she's not listening. Eyes locked to the dog.

YOUNG WOMAN  
Hey, Bullet, want a kiss?

SNAPS her fingers, and the Bullet LEAPS to her lap. She kisses his  
mouth straightforwardly. Looks up...

YOUNG WOMAN  
Now, what's your name?

Direct, open stare. She is so beautiful.



AARON  
I'm, uh...Aaron Cray, I'm...a  
photographer...

YOUNG WOMAN  
...this explains the cameras.  
What explains you?

No smile. No attitude. Just confident and straight as hell.

AARON  
Paul gave me the key.

YOUNG WOMAN  
He's never mentioned you.

Awkward. On the defensive...

AARON  
Well, we've known each other  
all our lives...through school,  
and...we haven't always gotten  
along, I suppose...

YOUNG WOMAN  
...and why is that?

The dark eyes probing, reading. Looking for something.

YOUNG WOMAN  
...you're not...assertive enough  
for his taste?

Sounds like an attack.

AARON  
...yeh, he thinks I'm a wimp.

Edge to that. Suddenly, Aaron doesn't seem like a wimp at all.

YOUNG WOMAN  
...and what do you think?

AARON  
...that he's sort of an arrogant  
dickhead. With some charm as a  
saver.

Aaron looks pretty pissed off. She doesn't care.

YOUNG WOMAN  
I mean. What do you think about  
you? Are you a wimp?

He's been holding his bags. Drops them now with a THUD.

AARON  
...must be, taking this kinda  
shit from a perfect stranger.

And her eyes cloud with feeling. Her voice softens to a wisp...

YOUNG WOMAN

Not perfect, Aaron. Not perfect  
at all.

And goes back to her solitaire hand. He's sorry he was angry.

AARON

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to get  
into an argument, and...

She doesn't look up.

AARON

And I'm sorry I barged in on you,  
Paul didn't tell me someone was  
living h...

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, I'm not. There's no one  
living here.

Now she looks up. The smile is playful, even enticing.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm Julianne Potter. I used  
to be Paul's girlfriend.

AARON

He's never mentioned you.

She never looks up.

JULIANNE

Then again, you don't see him  
all that much.

Red seven on black eight. Wiggles her nose at the next card.

JULIANNE

You've got a key. I've got a  
picture on the mantle two rooms  
back, with Paul's arm around my  
black evening dress. Now we both  
need an apartment...

And turns straight to his eyes.

JULIANNE

We could share it.

He just stands there. She studies that.

JULIANNE

Not a flattering response.

She twists around in the chair, throwing out one impossibly long  
leg. Her body is amazing.

JULIANNE  
Do you find me unattractive?

AARON  
You mean, am I gay or blind?  
No.

She liked that. First trace of a smile. Even at one-tenth power, it's electric.

JULIANNE  
Are you shy, Aaron?

AARON  
A little. But I live with it.

Somehow, she liked that even more.

JULIANNE  
So why won't you live with me?

Is she teasing? She must be. But it's all very light and charming.

AARON  
You're Julianne Potter. You used to be Paul's girlfriend.

Ah. And her smile fades. When she turns away, we see an orange on her table. And a knife. She picks them up.

JULIANNE  
Maybe this would be just the thing. To improve Paul's image of you.

Starts to peel the orange, which is blood red inside.

AARON  
...if he's that twisted, why do you see him?

Every slow move she makes is effortlessly sensual.

JULIANNE  
...then again. We both need a place. Badly.  
(turns)  
You like blood oranges, Aaron?

And reaches out a red succulent section. He stares at it.

AARON  
Funny thing is, I'm crazy about them. They're just hard to find.

She's still holding it. Dark eyes watching him...

JULIANNE

Well. Are you going to come  
and get it?

But he doesn't move. So she stands. Walks boldly to him. Lifts  
the orange to her own lips. And around the mouthful...

JULIANNE

No sweat, Aaron. The place  
is yours.

And walks out. He stares at the empty doorway for a full beat.

AARON (V.O.)

Just like that. She was gone.

Eyes flicking to the empty table...

AARON (V.O.)

...even her cards.

His eyes linger there...

AARON (V.O.)

I didn't want to like her...

Then come up. To the eager puppy.

AARON (V.O.)

And it bothered me that I was.

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE - SUNSET

Photos spread across a table. Each taken of a single person.  
Cross-section of age, race, class. Bus station, park, flophouse,  
beach. People alone.

WOMAN (O.S.)

I want a lot of black and white  
in this book. I think you're  
pretty good in black and white...

SEE her now. SERENA HITCHCOCK, prowling behind her desk. She is  
short, late thirties, shoulder pads that accentuate her stockiness.  
Close-cropped hair, soft pale eyes. A hard intellectual's mouth.

SERENA

...don't go beyond yourself,  
Aaron, this is just what you  
do. Alone in Manhattan...put  
the face on the faceless, let the  
architecture and the angles, just...

She stops. He's staring out at the city in fading light.

SERENA

Am I keeping you up?

He blinks. His boyish smile...

AARON  
I'm sorry. I've had a confusing  
day.

She's not at all charmed. In fact, wary.

SERENA  
Look, you should have been  
here four days ago...

He's sorry. But not anxious, which is the effect she wanted.

SERENA  
...because if your heart isn't  
in this book, I can just go  
farther down my list.

He looks at her openly.

AARON  
Whatever you think best.

She would have preferred a little groveling.

SERENA  
I'm not sure I like your  
attitude.

AARON  
I'm getting a lot of that today.  
Should I try groveling?

She thinks that over.

SERENA  
Sure.

INT. PUBLISHER'S CORRIDOR - LATER

Aaron down the hall, his portfolio under his arm. Into an empty  
elevator. He presses LOBBY. And hears...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Hold that please...

The doors have begun to close, so Aaron reaches out quickly to  
press DOOR OPEN. And it does. But nobody gets in. So he lets go  
of the button. And just as the doors begin to close...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Hold that please...

...and Aaron STABS OUT. Hits the button. But no one comes. So he  
sticks his head out, looks down the hall...

...at the far, far end of the corridor a receptionist chats on her  
phone. No one in between. So Aaron looks in the other direction,  
to find...

...a middle-aged MAN in a slightly threadbare serge suit. He is unnaturally still. Almost frozen in mid-stride. One finger pointing vaguely in our direction. Eyes locked ahead.

AARON  
Excuse me, sir? Did you call  
the elevator?

But the man says nothing.

AARON  
Sir? Are you all right?

Only the eyes move. Straight to Aaron. No sound, and Aaron steps back into the elevator, visibly confused. As the doors close...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Hold that please...

And as he rides down alone...

AARON (muttering to himself)  
Mimes. They'll work anywhere.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Photo of Julianne, black evening dress, tropical drink. Hazy smile of a light high. The guy with his arm around her must be PAUL DeGRAFF. Shorter than she is, wiry with dark good looks. An intensity to him that jumps off the print. Wheels within wheels. PULL BACK to...

...Aaron, wearing only boxer shorts, studying the photo. Sets it back on the mantle, positioning it just so. The way it was. Back through the apartment to the kitchen. The Bullet is lapping water from a cut-crystal bowl. Newspaper covers the floor.

AARON  
If you need anything at all.  
Keep it to yourself.

The Bullet doesn't object. Aaron strokes him goodnight. But as he turns to go...

A silhouette fills the doorway.

AARON (V.O.)  
...it was as if she'd been there  
all the while. And I'd somehow  
missed her.

She steps through the door. A neutral, yet somehow tender stare.

JULIANNE  
Hello, Aaron. I came to visit.

She walks to him, slowly.

JULIANNE  
I've been thinking about you.  
All day.

She comes very close. Reaches a slender hand, and places her fingertips...

...gently. On his chest.

JULIANNE (softly)  
Were you thinking. About me?

And he steps back. Just an inch. But it's enough.

JULIANNE  
You're worried about Paul.

Is that it?

JULIANNE  
That ended. Such a long time ago.  
And very...very badly.

He's staring in her eyes.

JULIANNE  
I thought you liked me, too. I  
thought I saw that.

AARON  
I'm sorry, it's just...I don't  
know you.

That brings a silence. She raises a hand to touch him, but she's afraid to. And seeing this...

AARON (so awkward)  
This...this isn't how I work inside.  
I'm an old-fashioned guy.

And her smile fades.

JULIANNE  
You don't have to be shy.

But watching his face...

JULIANNE  
...maybe you do.

Somehow, the shyness only seems to make her like him more.

JULIANNE  
Do you want me to go away?

That was vulnerable and real. It strikes him to the heart to have hurt her so. She sees that, too. Touches his hair...

JULIANNE  
May I sleep on your sofa,  
Aaron? Please.

He touches her arm. Staring at the black eyes. Nods, sure. And holding the eye contact...

...she slowly backs away. Smiles at him. Sadness and simplicity in...

JULIANNE  
...good-night, Aaron.

And she leaves. HOLD on him. Staring after her.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Aaron sleeping. Fitful. PUSH IN, closer, on...

AARON'S DREAM...an eight-year-old BOY, Aaron as a child, creeping down a darkened stairwell. Dead of night. Something in his hand. He flicks it ON, a flashlight, the beam lighting his way around a corner, and into...

...the darkened living room. The sharp beam finds a CHRISTMAS TREE, its glass balls quivering just slightly beneath the tinsel, as if the tree or the room were breathing. And beneath the tree...

...a careful stack of wrapped GIFTS. As little Aaron approaches, the beam lovingly traces the outline of his packages. One is clearly a standing bicycle. One round, a ball or a globe, he kneels to touch it, and...

...a soft noise from behind makes him...

...STARTLE, WHIRL around, as we CUT...

BACK TO...adult Aaron WAKING UP, suddenly. Eyes wide, fearful. Holding himself still now. Very still.

Except for the breathing.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Aaron lying in darkness. Eyes wide and staring. They glance at the clock for the millionth time. It says 3:17. Slowly now, he climbs from his bed. Down the hall, to the doorway of...

...the large living room. There, in a far corner, she is curled in a ball on the sofa. A blanket clutched around her. Sleeping with the peace of angels. And Aaron's arms absently hug himself, as...

...he stands and watches. She's still there.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Aaron in bed. Stirring. Waking. And with his first thought, he rises. Pulling on a robe, down the hallway...

...the sofa is empty. And in that moment, so is he.



AARON  
Julianne...?

Too loud. A shade of panic in that. When no sound comes back, the sense of loss washes through him. Bone deep. The feeling of missing something that has long been a part of him. He sinks now, to sit on his heels, head down, trying to fight back the wave, as...

JULIANNE (O.S., singing)  
Where are you going,  
My little one, little one...

And a slow smile spreads across his face and his spirit.

JULIANNE (O.S., singing)  
Where are you going,  
My baby, my own...

Sweet lullaby from some distant room. Pure, innocent voice...

JULIANNE (O.S., singing)  
Turn around and you're two,  
Turn around and you're four...  
Turn around and you're a young girl,  
Going out of the door.

He breathes his feeling for her. Deep and deeper. And when no more song comes, he goes to find her.

Bathroom first. But she's not there. Everything neat, not a trace. Down the hall to the den, already turned into Aaron's dark room. No one.

AARON  
Hullo...?

...calling to the air. Back to the living room. Empty. Silent. The fear begins to creep up through him, as he backs into the hallway, to see...

...the kitchen door open. His shoulders relax. Strides toward it, a little too quick for casual. Calls out...

AARON  
How's the Bullet doin'? You  
find his food in th...

...as he enters to find the Bullet asleep. And very much alone. On the table, a solitaire hand laid out. Next card to be played, a red seven. As he fingers the card...

...a soft CLICK. Distant. From the front door, maybe? He FREEZES. Calls out...

AARON  
That you...??

There is nothing. He drops the card. HOLD on it, as we HEAR his slow footsteps retreat.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

Rich, hard-looking woman through the window of FAO Schwartz. Her laser eye assessing a huge Gund stuffed platypus as if it were an emerald brooch. CLICK-CLICK, CLICK-CLICK. PULL BACK to see our view has been through Aaron's shutter. As he readies another shot, he hears a YIPPING. Turns to see...

...the Bullet has discovered a subject of his own...

...shuffling toward us, absently murmuring to himself. He is young, not yet twenty, with shoulder length hair and a flowing moustache from the Sixties. Even the stub of a Frank Zappa goatee. He wears a faded blue uniform jacket from Sgt. Pepper.

Aaron readies his Nikon, as our anachronistic hippie keeps heading straight for us. Close enough now to see the t-shirt beneath his open uniform jacket, WAR IS NOT HEALTHY FOR CHILDREN AND OTHER LIVING THINGS.

Close enough to see fire in the young eyes that suddenly look straight up to us. As we pull the camera up, we see him through the shutter now, but he THRUSTS out his hand, blocking our view. The Nikon comes down.

HIPPIE

What is that, man? What the  
HELL is that??

AARON

It's just a camera. I'll pay  
you for a picture, one picture.

Aaron's easy smile. The boy screws his face into paranoia.

HIPPIE

Why?

AARON

Well. I'm a photographer.

HIPPIE

For which side, man...?

Aaron doesn't quite know about that. But his hesitation makes the boy more than angry. A crazed glint in...

HIPPIE

FOR WHICH SIDE, MAN, FOR  
WHICH SIDE...?

As if Aaron were deaf. As he looks around, the passersby must be deaf, too. No one gives this a flicker of attention. New York, shit. When Aaron looks back, the boy is right in his face. Eyes glowing.

...BLOOD ORANGES tumble out. Four, five dozen, easy. At his feet, the note. He bends slowly to read...

AARON (V.O.)

...'what else are you crazy about?'

And smiles. From his soul. Then, looks around the room. There, on the table...

...the solitaire hand, still laid out. He wanders over. Touches the empty chair. The cards. Everything makes him think of her, increases the longing. As he stares down at the hand...

...the red seven sits waiting. His fingers lift the card. Gently lay it on the black eight. When he looks up, Bullet is there. And from the look on his face...

AARON

...I know. I miss her, too.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

Back on Fifth Avenue, walking his photo beat, looking for subjects, Aaron suddenly jog-steps to one side. We look down to see he had almost stepped on...

...a snail. The tiny creature is doggedly crossing the pavement, miraculously still intact despite the passersby. Aaron crouches low, his body now something of a shield, and gently lifts the snail in his hand. Watches it for a beat...

AARON (V.O.)

I don't know why I did it...

Crosses the sidewalk. Sinks down beside the curb...

AARON (V.O.)

I've never been a fanatic on reverence for life...

...carefully releases the snail into the gutter. As he watches it inch off, a HAND reaches slowly from behind him, and...

...TOUCHES his hair, he FREAKS, WHIRLS, his face inches from a murmured...

JULIANNE

God, I missed you.

...as if surprised by how very much. She sinks down, so close to him.

JULIANNE

Do you hate me?

The question seems desperately straight. He stares at her sweet face...

AARON  
...why would I do that?

JULIANNE  
Because of the way I am.

AARON  
I don't know the way you am.

He smiles. It makes her less apprehensive.

AARON  
And if it's different from this.  
I don't want to.

Her fingertips touch his face. She stares so intently. Slips her hand into his...

JULIANNE  
Let's take a walk.

She rises, gently tugging him up. A held look, and they start up the avenue, hand-in-hand. We PULL BACK to a LONG ANGLE, the couple heading toward us. As they come, FOCUS ON...

...a MAN, who stands watching them from behind. Wiry and dark and small. He is PAUL DeGRAFF. Staring at our couple with an intensity we can feel from here. Foot traffic flows around him, and a BIG GUY...

...BUMPS into him from behind. Paul WHEELS, a hair-trigger temper. The big guy just looks down, unimpressed. Paul steps closer, and...

...says something. One single word. And the big guy begins to...

...TWITCH. His shoulders first, his neck, his head. As Paul watches, the big guy's body begins to VIBRATE SAVAGELY, the gyrations increasing, more and more horrific, his entire being CONVULSING now in escalating SPASMS, only...

...no one seems to notice. Except Paul. He smiles slightly at the grotesque agony, thrusts his hands in his pockets, and...

...heads toward us. Up the block.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Smoke billowing. As it clears, two faces look down at us. Julianne nearly in tears. Murmurs...

JULIANNE  
This is so very disappointing.

PULL BACK to see they are staring into a large slow-cook pot which has somehow boiled over.

AARON  
What wa...is it?

She stares down with such sadness.

JULIANNE

It was veal curry creole. I  
snuck in this morning and fixed  
it all up...must be Paul's stove...

Her little shrug...

JULIANNE

I did so...want to impress you...

He strokes her hair tenderly. Whispers...

AARON

Hey, black eyes, I'm impressed.

She's still gazing down at her creole.

JULIANNE

I mean favorably.

AARON

I'm past favorably, closing  
in on stupefied.

Julianne is disconsolate. He PLUNGES his hand into the pot, and  
stuffs hot food into his mouth. Rolling his eyes, in a mixture of  
pain and simulated ecstasy. Mmmm-good! She is not reassured.

JULIANNE

I'll do it right, tomorrow.

She lifts the pot, dumping the entire contents in the sink.

JULIANNE

Just give me a minute, I'll  
make you a five-spice omelette.

AARON

There's no eggs.

She's running water. Stuffing veal and rice down the disposal.

JULIANNE

There's everything. I told you,  
I snuck in.

So he goes to the fridge. Opens to find it indeed crammed with  
everything. Including...

AARON

What's this package with the  
ribbon?

She keeps cleaning the pot. Never looks around.

JULIANNE

A present, of course. You mean  
you didn't get me one?

And sensing his instant guilt...

JULIANNE

That's a joke, Aaron.

She turns now. He seems so touched, staring at the package.

JULIANNE

...open it, it's just a couple  
of books.

So he does. Slowly.

JULIANNE

...I wanted to see if we read  
the same things.

When he looks at the titles. A small, astonished smile. A quiet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

They are sprawled in front of a softly burning fireplace. She wears  
a man's robe. Could be Paul's. She's teaching him the Japanese  
game of 'Go', and we see countless white and gray stones spread  
across the game board. Looks complex. He makes a move and...

...looks up to her for approval. A solemn shake of her head. He  
tries again. Looks up like a little kid. She takes his stone, and  
makes the move for him somewhere else.

AARON

Why do they call this game  
'Go', when I never get to?

JULIANNE

'Go' is five, in Japanese.

No smile with...

JULIANNE

When lovers play, there's a  
tradition. The winner chooses  
the first five ways they'll make  
love that night.

This is not coming to him as entirely bad news.

AARON

You made that up.

JULIANNE

Sure.

She's just moving the stones. When she looks up, he is there.

AARON

Why? You expect to win?

So close. Her face twitches, spasms, into an enigmatic GRIN that flickers, and is gone. He moves even closer, murmurs...

AARON

That grin, what is that? You do it sometimes.

She smiles lightly. Her eyes flash with what could be taken for mischief...

JULIANNE

I have to grin, sometimes.  
I'm falling apart.

And before he can think or respond, she moves to him. Kisses him once, beautifully, perfectly. His arms slide around her. Shyly, tentatively. But it is Julianne who pulls back...

He doesn't understand. Whispers only...

AARON

...what?

She takes a breath. Shivers slightly.

JULIANNE

I got scared.

Scared?

JULIANNE

Scared you'll disappear.

So fragile with that. He has to stroke her. And he smiles. Everything is all right.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

She lies curled on the sofa in her blanket. He kneels by her pillow, tucking her in for the night...

AARON

...good-night, black eyes.

...staring down.

JULIANNE

...you keep saying that. It's such a a strange name, like someone punched my lights...

She smiles up at him. Her softest smile.

JULIANNE

...and my eyes aren't black, anyway. They're mud brown.

AARON  
...I see them black. Full of  
secrets. No bottom, they go  
on forever...

In this light. They do look just as he says.

JULIANNE  
Did you ever call another woman  
that?

He's about to deny it. When he stops himself. Has to smile...

AARON  
Y'know, I think I did. And  
the strangest thing is, I can't  
remember who.

She doesn't seem angry. Only interested.

JULIANNE  
And did you love her very,  
very much?

His smile slowly fades. She reads his eyes.

JULIANNE  
You did.

Reaches one long arm around his neck. Whispers...

JULIANNE  
...then it's all right.

She kisses him.

JULIANNE  
Good-night.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

CLOSE on Bullet, who sits attentively in early morning light.  
Staring at the empty sofa, perfectly made. HEAR footfalls...

AARON (O.S.)  
...anyone for breakfast?

...sounded hopeful. Maybe hoping against his fear. When he  
appears in the doorway, he stares at the sofa. Crestfallen, but  
down deep not surprised. Bullet whimpers. Aaron looks down...

AARON  
Okay, breakfast for two.

Back they go. Down the hall to the kitchen, where...Aaron stops.  
The slow-cook pot is simmering. Taped neatly to it, a note. Aaron  
staring from across the room...



AARON (V.O.)  
It said, 'I'm not fit company  
today. Eat this and think of me.'

HOLD on his eyes...

AARON (V.O.)  
And then it said, 'You'll see me,  
again. When I'm presentable.'

Watch him wonder. About that word.

EXT. LEXINGTON AVENUE - DAY

Aaron working. Stalking the city with a studiedly casual eye. We follow his VIEW now, people on the street, lingering on anyone who is alone, until our PAN moves across...

...a gaunt FACE staring straight at us. The anorexic girl Aaron once saw on the train. At her side, her three equally thin companions, all trying to hail a taxi. Without a word now, the others turn to watch Aaron, too. He is standing, just staring back at their expressionless eyes, as...

...a cab pulls up behind them. The door swings open. But the girls don't notice. The DRIVER, a large Slavic man of perhaps sixty, calls out...

DRIVER  
I don't got til doomsday, here!  
And there ain't nobody else gonna  
pick you up!

They don't seem to have heard. But they must have, for after a frozen moment, they turn. Slowly, stiffly, they get into the cab. As it pulls away, we HOLD on Aaron. Watching them go.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Aaron working Central Park. People wandering aimlessly, going anywhere briskly, eating, worrying, gazing from benches. He lowers his camera from one subject, and turns to notice...

...the two POLICEMEN he once saw here. As before, they are bundled in their warmest coats. Even more incongruous on this sunny spring afternoon. Their shoulders are hunched against some imagined cold, as they eat hot chestnuts from a paper cone.

AARON (V.O.)  
...the amazing part was. No one  
else was even noticing. New York.

He brings his camera up to capture the moment, when a sudden impulse makes him turn, slowly...to the pond. And there. Far on the other side...

...a little girl. Just like the one who drowned. White snowsuit, perfect blonde curls. She is wading out into the pond, the water nearly at her waist. He is frozen, watching her...

AARON  
LITTLE GIRL! GO BACK TO  
THE SHORE!

She can't hear him. She is giggling, wading deeper, little hands above her head. The time of her life.

AARON  
LITTLE GIRL, GO BACK! THAT'S  
DANGEROUS!

And she looks up. From across the pond, directly to us. Somehow, her little voice floats crystal clear across the water...

LITTLE GIRL  
...it's okay. I can do it now.

Keeps wading deeper. Aaron turns in panic toward the cops, but...

...they are gone. He WHIRLS back to the pond, and somehow, the little girl...

...stands safely on shore. Gazing down at the ripples in the water. From here, it seems that...

AARON (V.O.)  
...her snowsuit looked completely  
dry. Although I knew that was  
impossible.

The girl takes a step toward the pond, and Aaron...

...BOLTS after her...

AARON  
WAIT! STAY THERE!

Running, RUNNING, and from nowhere...

...a HAND GRABS Aaron's camera STRAP, TEARING it VICIOUSLY around, FLINGING Aaron to the GROUND. Dazed, he lurches to look back to the pond...

...but the girl has gone.

WILLIE (O.S.)  
What the HELL is that, man?

Aaron turns back to see him, wild glint in the hollow young eyes. Unafraid, Aaron slowly climbs to his feet, looks evenly at the young hippie...

AARON  
It's a camera, Willie, I'm taking  
pictures.

WILLIE  
Why?

...the same paranoid expression as before. Exactly the same. Aaron squints back into the trees. But no sign of the little girl.

AARON

We've been through this, Willie.  
I'm a photographer.

WILLIE

Which fucking side, man? You  
gotta make a choice! You  
gotta COMMIT!!

The boy so agitated. Is he scared or angry? Gently, now...

AARON

Which side. You're talking  
about the war, son?

As before, the quiet voice softens Willie's face. His motor slows.

WILLIE

Yessir.

AARON

There are no sides anymore.  
The war is over.

The reaction is instantaneous. Shock, fear.

WILLIE

There's always war, man,  
there's...

AARON

...Willie, Vietnam ended when you  
were about three years old. The  
only war since then was Iraq,  
which lasted four days...

Willie is freaking. Aaron only wants to calm him...

AARON

The Russians are crumbling,  
there's no more enemies, Willie,  
there's not gonna be any more  
wars to protest...

But Willie GRASPS Aaron's shirt and somehow LIFTS him from the ground...

WILLIE

FUCKING LYING SACKA SHIT...

...and FLINGS Aaron like a rag doll, through ten feet of air to CRASH against a tree. Crumpled on the grass, Aaron blinks up...

...Willie stares across the distance. Somehow, the boy's face is compassionate now, almost tender. As if it is Aaron who has the

problem. One that Willie can't help him with. The boy sadly shakes his head. And walks off.

INT. APARTMENT - DUSK

Aaron letting himself in. He stops, inside the door. Afraid to call out. Afraid not to. Down the hall, glancing into each empty room. And when he reaches the kitchen...

...Julianne sits, playing solitaire. She is dressed quite conservatively tonight, a noticeable change. Without looking up...

JULIANNE

You're late, I was worried.

AARON

You can't believe what I saw in the park! There's these cops, dressed for winter, and this little girl, she...she...

How to explain this?

AARON

Two days ago she was dead...then she's in the water, then she's on the shore, but she's dry...

Stops. Realizing...

AARON

I'm babbling like an idiot, huh?

JULIANNE

Poor baby.

And with that voice. That smile. He gets a little lost in her.

JULIANNE

Are we having a breakdown?  
Or are we just in New York.

He smiles. He has to.

JULIANNE

I was worried that you weren't coming back to me.

Dark eyes probing.

JULIANNE

Did you have thoughts like that, Aaron? Even a few?

He shakes his head. Not a one.

AARON

So how are we, tonight? Are you...presentable?

JULIANNE  
That's for you to judge.

AARON  
You look normal. Which means  
amazing.

JULIANNE  
Looks are deceiving.

AARON  
I'm starting to notice that  
a lot.

That freezes her. Just a little.

JULIANNE  
What's that mean?

AARON  
What I said before, this is the  
weirdest three days of my life!  
Crazy psychics, oddball hippies,  
that little girl...

And...

AARON  
And you. Don't you think  
you're a little mysterious?

Her eyes are glistening. She looks almost frightened.

JULIANNE  
Tell me you won't leave me.

AARON  
Only you get to leave, huh?

JULIANNE  
...does that sound so unfair?

Hearing those words so earnestly said, he has to smile. No, he  
shakes his head. I guess not.

AARON  
What do you see in me?

She looks so fragile, so serious.

JULIANNE  
A sweetness of spirit.

She says this from her heart. It means the world to her.

AARON  
You don't know that.

JULIANNE  
The hell I don't.

Draws a narrow, ragged breath.

JULIANNE  
Aaron, will you come with me  
to meet my parents?

AARON  
That sounded like you mean  
right now.

JULIANNE  
Why do you think I'm dressed  
like my Aunt Sophie?

He has to grin at that. Softly...

AARON  
I was starting to wonder.

EXT. BRONX - DUSK

Aaron and Julianne walking a bombed-out street. Most of the  
buildings are abandoned, some of them only shells. He's looking  
around in complete confusion...

AARON  
I guess you're sure they  
live here...

JULIANNE  
...no, Aaron, it's an elaborate  
hoax.

She seems a little annoyed. But mostly edgy.

JULIANNE  
...soon, my confederates will  
appear and steal your watch.

AARON  
Do you blame me for...

JULIANNE  
...not trusting me? No. The  
neighborhood used to be much  
nicer, believe me.

He does.

JULIANNE  
And by the way. Please don't  
mention Paul. His very name  
freaks them out.

She seems a little upset herself.

AARON  
Any particular reason?

Jaywalking now. No matter, the only cars around are junk heaps.

JULIANNE  
He's an arrogant dickhead,  
with some charm as a saver.

AARON  
A rumor.

JULIANNE  
Turns out, he was a big  
disappointment.

Yeh, well...

AARON  
I can't understand what you saw  
in that guy in the first pl...

JULIANNE  
...he's a type, you know. Charming,  
intelligent, worldly. Smart enough  
to hide how self-centered and con-  
trolling he is...

Right up the steps. Of a long-abandoned brownstone.

JULIANNE  
Until he can't hide it. Anymore.

The door has been boarded up, but the ancient nails are rusty and  
she RIPS it open. Strides into the darkened lobby like she does it  
every day. He has to hustle to catch up...

AARON  
What's going on, talk to me!

JULIANNE  
I take it your parents aren't  
eccentric.

AARON  
Actually, they're dead.

Heading to a stairwell. Pitch black above them.

JULIANNE  
There you go, nobody's perfect.

He grabs her arm, and she WHIRLS on him...

JULIANNE  
You think this is easy?

And everything stops.

JULIANNE

However strange this is for you,  
my parents are very dear to me.  
They are precious and wonderful,  
educated and refined. She's a  
mathematician and he's a full  
professor of modern European  
history...

Her eyes seem hurt, angry. But she winds her fingers through his...

JULIANNE

And you need to meet them.  
Because I care for you.

And Aaron feels lost, guilt-stricken. He wouldn't have hurt her  
for the world.

JULIANNE

Now it's only eight flights up  
in the dark. Hang on tight and  
be a good sport.

And she YANKS him up the stairs...

INT. EIGHTH FLOOR - NIGHT

As they come to the landing, Aaron finds the eighth floor is dimly  
lit by two fixtures with low-wattage bulbs. She clutches his hand  
tightly. Leads him to 806, knocks sharply, loudly. Then waits,  
licking her lips in nervous expectation. Staring at the numerals  
on the door, until...

It opens. A handsome WOMAN stands there. Elegant bones, a smile  
that lights the way her daughter's can.

JULIANNE

Mother, this is my Aaron.

The woman extends her hand...

MOTHER

I'm Lorraine, Aaron. And this  
is Thomas...

She steps aside, revealing a cozy apartment, clean and bright. Her  
HUSBAND rises from his high-backed chair. His double-breasted suit  
is buttoned, his silk tie immaculate. He winks at Aaron, waves a  
greeting. And as Aaron moves past Lorraine, into the room...

...mother and daughter exchange an unseen look. Sharp, raw, almost  
desperate on Lorraine's side. Julianne's eyes lower. She follows  
Aaron in.

INT. PARENTS' APARTMENT - LATER

Tea and crumb cake. Held on laps, in a parlor of print sofas. Our  
view CIRCLES as they chat MOS...



AARON (V.O.)

She was right. They were refined, educated. And despite a certain stiffness, easy to be with.

Lorraine pours another cup for Aaron.

THOMAS

Tell me, Aaron, why do you take photographs?

Lorraine shoots a disapproving look. Her genial mate is a sometime embarrassment.

THOMAS

Is it to immortalize the past? Or stave off the future.

A little twinkle with that.

AARON

Actually. I think it's a desperate attempt to cling to the present.

THOMAS

Ah, the present. And what is that?

LORRAINE

...please regress to your obsession with baseball, dearest. I'd rather Aaron found you boring than odd.

Thomas has other ideas.

THOMAS

You know, you haven't said a word yet, Aaron. About the neighborhood.

JULIANNE

Look at the time. My God, we must be going.

But she's smiling. As if she has real affection for this old man.

THOMAS

Actually, we never lived here. Only just moved into the Brownstone.

AARON

The Brownstone.

THOMAS

That's what they call the building. It seemed the logical choice for us.

Seeing Aaron's confusion...

LORRAINE

Our plane was forced down near Chicago. People were killed. That kind of thing...makes one reassess.

And smiles. And sips her tea.

LORRAINE

Who knows how long we'll be here.

...a private glance toward her daughter. Julianne is looking away. But we know she's heard.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Key turns in the door. It opens. Julianne leading Aaron into the darkened apartment. Her back still to him, as...

AARON

Now can we talk...?

And she turns. Her body is just against him. When he sees her eyes, all thoughts leave him. Because this is the moment...

...he leans to kiss her mouth, and she answers with a sudden HUNGER. Violent, rhythmic, and yet surpassingly warm. Slowly now, she draws him...

...down to the floor, kissing his mouth, his face, his hair. His foot reaches to SLAM the door closed behind them. Right there at the threshold, they wind their limbs around each other...

There to stay awhile.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A large upturned sombrero. Our angle SHIFTS to reveal the Bullet, sleeping, neatly curled up in the crown. PAN to Aaron sitting in bed. His eyes are locked in the dizzying whirlpool of his thoughts, until...

...Julianne enters. She wears a flannel nightgown, buttoned to the throat. More beautiful than ever. As she crawls up onto the bed...

JULIANNE

That smile. What is it?

In his pain and love he looks at her. Softly...

AARON  
I have to grin, sometimes.  
I'm coming apart.

She touches his hair.

AARON  
Since the morning before I met  
you. The train ride. I've  
been losing my mind...

She doesn't protest. Just the picture of compassion. Wants to  
listen.

AARON  
Things...probably very explainable  
things...seen like a series of...  
nightmares.

He shrugs. Confused that...

AARON  
...only I'm not scared. I should  
be...but it's like...the logic of  
a dream...

JULIANNE  
...crazy things. Making sense to  
everyone but you.

Yeh, like that. Just like that.

JULIANNE  
Aaron in Wonderland.

Grinning up at him.

AARON  
That makes you the Cheshire Cat.

JULIANNE  
Like you said. A little  
mysterious.

AARON  
A little.

He strokes her long hair.

AARON  
Those books you bought me...  
I have all that author's stuff.  
Except those two titles.

She smiles innocently. How about that?

AARON  
And that building your parents  
live in...?

He has to shake his head. Unbelievable.

AARON

Everything about you...is too good...or too strange...to be real.

She takes his hand. Kisses the back of his fingers.

JULIANNE

...it's a little tough on our relationship, me being fictitious.

She leans over him. As he stares up, an absent...

AARON

...yeh, well, relationships are about compromise.

And straight from his heart...

AARON

I just want you to be with me forever.

Her bittersweet smile.

JULIANNE

You make me. So happy.

And he grins. He pounds his chest with relief.

AARON

I was so...scared. You wouldn't say yes.

She comes closer still. Inches away.

JULIANNE

I didn't say yes.

Her finger traces the outline of his cheek. So lovingly.

JULIANNE

I said. You make me the happiest woman. Who ever lived.

Her smile glows. And still, it seems so sad...

JULIANNE

You do, baby, you really do.

His fingers touch her face. She puts her body against his, as only she can.

JULIANNE

Let me show you...

Whispered...

JULIANNE  
...how happy.

INT. CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

Once more, Aaron's DREAM. He is eight years old, clicking ON his flashlight, as he creeps down Christmas morning. Around the corner, into...

...the living room. The tree. The presents. Closer, closer, the flashlight beam playing across the surface of the packages. The child's face ravenous to devour every detail, every nuance of shape and bulk. The bicycle, the round package, kneel to touch it, as the sound wakes him...

...WHIRL, startled, to see...

...framed in the doorway, a WOMAN. Her slender body wrapped in a flannel robe. There is a steaming cup in her hand. Her face, even in this light, is lovely. And as she smiles...

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

...Aaron wakes with a GASP, his body JOLTING halfway off the pillow, FREEZING to see...

...Julianne. Just opening the curtains.

JULIANNE  
Bad dream, baby?

Soft words. She's dressed in a crisp suit. It is businesslike and sexy. When he doesn't answer...

JULIANNE  
Tell me.

But he's just frozen. Immobile.

JULIANNE  
Tell me, please...

Gently, coaxing...

JULIANNE  
Tell me what scared you, it'll  
do you good.

Walking toward him now...

JULIANNE  
Believe me, I know.

His lips are parted. But no sound comes.

JULIANNE

Say it!

Sharp, startling. For some reason he cannot name, tears stand in his eyes. She is there now, just above him...

JULIANNE

It's all right. Another time.

That was soothing. She stares down, sorry that she tried to startle the secret from him.

JULIANNE

My grandma used to say. If you tell your nightmare before breakfast...

(smiles)

...it won't come back.

But he can't tell her. She sees that now. And so...

JULIANNE

Breakfast's on the table. I hope you like it, I worked hard...

Something in her eyes has him very alert. She moves to the door.

AARON

You're going out.

JULIANNE

Away. For awhile.

The words a stake through his soul.

JULIANNE

I love you, Aaron.

Her eyes mean this. And more...

JULIANNE

I've never said that to another man.

A shrug. Of helplessness.

JULIANNE

I never will.

And gone. Heels on the hardwood. Taking her away. Somewhere, far off, a door opens. Closes. He is alone.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Breakfast on the table, counters, everywhere. It looks like breakfast for ten. Waffles, sausage, fruit, eggs...

AARON (V.O.)  
It was the most beautiful  
breakfast. Of course, I  
couldn't touch a bite...

Keep PANNING the spread...bacon, French toast, different eggs, more  
fruit, fresh baked muffins and croissants, three kinds of juice...

AARON (V.O.)  
I thought, well, I'll always  
leave it there. Sort of a  
shrine.

...coffee, enough for a week. With coffee cake beside it.

AARON (V.O.)  
Then I realized that was  
excessive.

PULL BACK to see him focusing his Nikon...

AARON (V.O.)  
I'd just snap off eight, nine  
rolls. Hang the blow-ups on  
my wall...

He begins, CLICK-CLICK, CLICK-CLICK, circling the table. The phone  
RINGS. He doesn't seem to hear it. Zooming in for a close-up on  
the eggs benedict, choosing a better angle, but it keeps RINGING.  
So he punches the speaker button, goes back to work...

AARON  
Yah, Paul DeGraff's residence...

VOICE (O.S.)  
...not recently.

And Aaron stops. The man's voice sounds a little like...

AARON  
...Paul?

PAUL (O.S.)  
How's it goin', pal?

The voice tries to sound easy, but there's an underlying tension.  
Aaron doesn't notice.

AARON  
How's Paris?

PAUL (O.S.)  
Oh, it's a heck of a town.

Aaron close on a bowl of blood oranges, which have been peeled and  
sectioned. Each segment laid out in a delicate arrangement...

PAUL (O.S.)  
So how's the place, pal?  
Everything...the way it  
should be...?

Steps back, choosing a focal length...

AARON  
Place is nifty, Paul. I really  
owe you...

PAUL (O.S.)  
So no...problems...?

Even Aaron can hear the tightness. He turns to the phone.

AARON  
Paul. You okay...?

PAUL (O.S.)  
Okay as I'm gonna get. Just  
wondering how you were doin'...

A moment to decide. Then...

AARON  
I'm fine, Paul. Finer than I  
ever thought I could be.

He lets that sit a beat.

AARON  
When I got to the apartment,  
Julianne was here...

Silence. So...

AARON  
We got to talking. She told  
me you guys broke up.

PAUL (O.S.)  
...you could say that.

Voice sounded really strange. Constricted. Aaron wondering if he  
should go ahead.

AARON  
One thing led to another, Paul,  
and...we got close. We got to  
be...more than lovers, I...I  
want to marry her.

Silence once more.

AARON  
Jesus, Paul, say something. I've  
got this awful feeling you're  
not okay with this...



PAUL (O.S.)  
I'm okay. I'm right as rain,  
pal. Right. As fucking. Rain.

A chill in that.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Someone's got a minor problem.  
And lenne suggest it's not me.

AARON  
You want to spell that out?

PAUL (O.S.)  
...well, I don't know who you've  
been fucking and falling in love  
with, pal.

(beat)  
It sure ain't Julianne.

Aaron can only blink. It's a full beat before...

AARON  
Well, of course it is. Why  
would she lie about something  
like...

(realizes)  
...that picture on the mantle,  
the woman in the black dress...

PAUL (O.S.)  
Julianne Potter. A little uppity,  
a little judgmental. An ass you  
could hang in the Louvre.

AARON  
That's the love of my life,  
Paul. Forever.

A beat. And...

PAUL (O.S.)  
Except I don't really see how  
that's possible, pal...

Almost a chuckle with...

PAUL (O.S.)  
Because Julianne. Is very...  
very...dead.

And everything. Stops.

PAUL (O.S.)  
She's buried in Brooklyn, a  
cemetery on McDonald Avenue.  
Check it out.

Aaron fighting for breath, for sanity...

AARON

That's a pretty sick joke, Paulie,  
even for...I mean, I told you I  
want her to marry me, how could  
you find the balls to even say  
something like...

PAUL (O.S.)

...easiest reason in the world,  
pal.

That sounded very sure of itself. Very sure, indeed.

PAUL (O.S.)

I'm the guy who killed her.

Frozen. Timeless moment. HEAR the nervous laugh...

PAUL (O.S.)

Small world.

HOLD on Aaron. And hold. And hold.

EXT. STREET - DAY

VIEW from above, as Aaron comes hurriedly DOWN the steps of his  
building, fights through the cross-flow of pedestrians, looking  
wildly to...

...HAIL a cab, and as it SWERVES to the curb across the street,  
Aaron PLUNGES into traffic, but is stopped by the HONKING  
unyielding flow which blocks his view of...

...the passenger exiting the far side of our cab. It is PAUL,  
still holding an open cellular phone, as he...

...blends into the street crowd. Watches unseen, as Aaron jumps  
into the cab, speeds off. And Paul stares after him...

...snaps his phone SHUT. Small world.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Taxi rolls up to an old cemetery, and Aaron is out the door before  
the cab fully stops. Thrusts some bills through the cabbie's  
window...

AARON

Wait, okay? I'll be back.

Crosses under a street lamp and onto a small cemetery. Ancient  
headstones, spreading trees. Patches in utter darkness, others lit  
in varying degrees of shadow by the surrounding street lights.  
Aaron passes between two stately headstones with dates in the  
1780's. And is gone in darkness...

ANGLE...a row with small plaques instead of headstones. The graves lie beneath a line of slender trees which filter and partially block the ambient light. Aaron walking, head down, seeming scarcely to look at the dimly illuminated names, until...he stops. Beside our tree. Stares down with empty eyes.

AARON (V.O.)  
I knew, of course, there would  
be an explanation...

He clears his throat. His hands absently rub each other.

AARON (V.O.)  
Twin sisters. Or something less  
exotic. Maybe the photo was...  
doctored, or switched, or...

VIEW of the engraving. JULIANNE POTTER 1968-1998. And CLOSE now, on Aaron's face...

AARON (V.O.)  
...something else.

He looks up at the night sky. Mind racing behind his eyes, struggling against the overload.

AARON (V.O.)  
No problem. Just go find out.

And then down to the gravestone. The name. Of the woman he loves. He touches the stone with such feeling.

AARON  
...whoever was here, poor woman.  
I saw she could use some flowers...

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Aaron climbing back into the waiting cab. He shuts the door. Stares at the hands in his lap, dazed, confused, trying to hold himself together. The cabbie says nothing.

AARON  
Back to my place. West eighty-  
first, just off the park...

And the driver turns all the way around. Sixty and brawny, Slavic features. He is the SAME DRIVER who once picked up our anorexic girls. Stares intensely, strangely. But Aaron doesn't notice. His only thought...

AARON (V.O.)  
She's out there, I'll find her.

And the cabbie has turned around. They drive off. As they do...

...a WINO watches them drive away. From his POV...

The driver's seat. Looks empty.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Stopped at a light on Park Avenue.

DRIVER  
Personally, I never listen,  
y'know, cos they're all fulla  
shit...

Green light, the driver eases off down the avenue...

DRIVER  
...pretty ones, they're the worst.  
Tossing their hair, moving their  
bodies just a little, just right...

The cab starts to pick up speed.

DRIVER  
...that low sexy voice, like they  
wanna make every guy think he's got  
a chance, when you know a girl looks  
like that can't really want you!

Suddenly they're doing FIFTY. Aaron's hanging on:..

AARON  
Hey...

DRIVER  
Happens to everybody, some  
incredible piece and ya kid  
y'self cos y'wanna believe.  
Happened to you, right?

Doing SIXTY now, DODGING everything in our way, horns are BLARING,  
intersections FLASHING by...

AARON  
Stop the cab, okay, just...

And the driver turns COMPLETELY AROUND, calm knowing smile...

DRIVER  
Ain't it, Mac? Ain't it  
happened to you?

Aaron's eyes FLASH to the I.D. card, the driver's photo thirty  
years younger, MATTHEW PETERSAK.

AARON  
Matthew, where are you going?  
This isn't the way t...

PETERSAK  
...happened to you?

SAILING through a RED LIGHT, we see the OLD WOMAN on the traffic island hesitantly step...

AARON  
WATCH IT!!

...DIRECTLY in our path, and we CRACK INTO her with our left bumper sending her SPINNING sideways, arms wide, a look of tremendous surprise and fear on her face, somehow keeping her balance in the spin like a crazy endless dance...

AARON  
Christ, you hit that woman,  
you could have killed her!

PETERSAK  
...wouldn't be the first  
time, Mac.

Aaron can only blink at that. All sound fades now, all sight becomes a blur. Only Petersak's gentle smile and even voice...

PETERSAK  
...wouldn't be the first  
time, Mac.

And he wheels smoothly around a corner. He's driving slowly now, perfectly, cruising to a stop beside a fashionable apartment building. Central Park is half a block away.

PETERSAK  
Someone inside. You wanna  
talk to.

A meaningful look. Like he knows what he's talking about. His shoulders tremble in a gentle spasm.

PETERSAK  
...wanna talk to.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Aaron waiting at a door. Tighter than ever. As it opens, his breath catches slightly, before he sees...

...GERALD. Six years old and angel-blond. Pale eyes, groomed hair, a perfect little outfit. And a cat's SCRATCH across his face, red and terribly angry. Gerald's eyes are frozen in apprehension. And in spite of his own confusion and despair, Aaron sinks to the floor, to be Gerald's size. Smiles...

AARON  
Hi.

GERALD  
Hi, sir.

And seeing Aaron's gentleness, the child relaxes. A little.

AARON

Do you know Matthew, the  
taxi driver?

The boy does:

AARON

He said there's someone here  
I wanna talk to...

The boy SPASMS once. As if a shiver runs through him.

AARON

...wanna talk to.  
(grins)  
...wanna talk to.

And the boy grins back. Aaron takes his hand.

AARON

Matthew talks like that,  
doesn't he?

GERALD

They all do.

And tugs Aaron after him. Down a hall with gilt paper, past  
Victorian rooms to the parlor. Someone is waiting, sipping wine,  
the middle-aged psychic from the train. Aaron stunned to see her.

MADELINE

Hello, Aaron. I see you've  
met my baby.

Gerald leads him to a chair. Aaron sits slowly, his shock becoming  
a realization. Maybe she can help. Cautiously...

AARON

He's a good-looking guy. How  
long has he had that scratch?

MADELINE

Long enough.

Her child goes to her. We see the affection between them.

AARON

It looks infected. You should  
take him to a doctor.

MADELINE

Oh, I did. But not in time.

A terrible sadness in that, despite her brave smile. Aaron's heart  
goes out to her. But he has his own agenda...

AARON

Please...I need some answers, I...

The desperation brings her eyes up.

AARON

...I think maybe I'm going crazy.

She stares back with quiet compassion. Then...

MADELINE

Have you encountered certain people who are...disturbingly odd? I mean, recently. I mean, other than me.

The smile is rueful.

MADELINE

For I assure you, Aaron. I am very much alive.

Her small sigh.

MADELINE

Which distinguishes me. From the rest of them.

My God, of course. Of course!

MADELINE

Scary, isn't it?

He can only blink at such a question.

AARON

Nah.

His mind racing now, tumbling.

MADELINE

My Sight began when I was five, on a beach. But I can only see a few of them. So compared to you, I'm blind...

Compared to you. Watching that sink in. She reaches now, to stroke her child...

MADELINE

You see them all, don't you, Aaron?

AARON

I think so.

MADELINE

Then you are a remarkable freak.

AARON

Thank you. Don't be envious, you're pretty strange yourself.

Gerald smiles. His mother kisses him, with a tenderness we might not have guessed was in her. Murmurs...

MADELINE  
Aaron is a photographer.

GERALD  
Will he take my picture?

She glances to Aaron. Will you?

AARON  
Will it...will it show?

MADELINE  
...same as looking at him.  
I'll see it, you'll see it,  
but the Fotomat girl thinks  
it's a picture of a wall.  
(to Gerald)  
Get your baseball things, dear.

AARON  
He doesn't have to...

But Gerald scampers off...

MADELINE  
...he's very attached to  
baseball. So it helps.

Helps?

MADELINE  
...it makes him less dead.

His shock, confusion...

AARON  
...'less' dead? Like it's a  
matter of degree...?

MADELINE  
Yes. The degree of attachment.  
To life.

She watches him struggle.

AARON  
Attachment. What...what is  
that, what...?

MADELINE  
We are attached to loved  
ones, work, hobbies, pleasures.  
Habit, even trivial habits can  
be desperately, surprisingly,  
strong...



AARON

What about a boyfriend? If a girl has a boyfriend and she... she really loves him, would that help...?

She understands. It's not a random question. Nods slowly, it could.

MADELINE

And don't forget hatred. All its forms, jealousy, revenge...

Reflecting on the irony...

MADELINE

That's apparently the best. It seems to make them last the longest.

AARON

Last? Don't they last? How long can they last...?

MADELINE

Look, I don't have all the answers, I'm not even dead. And I'm not sure how much they understand themsel...

AARON

...just tell me, okay?

That was a little sharp.

AARON

I'm sorry, it's just...tell me what you know. Help me...

She wants to. She'll try.

MADELINE

After you 'die', whatever that means, you continue to be present in this world. But the length and the strength of that presence...

Gerald has appeared very silently, suddenly at Aaron's side. He carries an armful of stuff. But Aaron's eyes are locked to...

MADELINE

...depends not on which attachment you choose, but how strongly you hold it, how desperately you cling to this world.

Gerald kneels at Aaron's side. Starts to lay his things out with little-boy care...baseball glove, bat, Red Sox cap.

MADELINE

The most strongly attached are so present, they have been known to become visible, touchable, to the living...

Touchable. A sadly murmured...

AARON

...tell me about it.

The loss washing over him. She sees it all.

MADELINE

The newly dead, if they haven't learned the rules, might visit a loved one and become so attached in that moment that they suddenly appear!

Gerald sets out a precious box, filled with baseball cards. He tugs at Aaron, looking up so hopefully.

MADELINE

Of course, the loved one, how shall I put it...?

Aaron sorting through the boy's cards, as Gerald watches, trembling slightly.

AARON

...freaks out.

MADELINE

...exactly. And when the dead see the terror, disorientation, denial...they never do it again.

Aaron pulls out a card. Nods, impressed. He and Gerald share a look. A bond that makes Gerald almost glow. His twitching stops.

MADELINE

Apparently, the most strongly attached can last quite awhile. Others are gone in a day or so...

And his eyes come up fast. A day or so.

AARON

How do I...how do you keep them from going away...?

Compassion in her eyes. Has to tell him...

MADELINE

You can't, Aaron. Eventually, they all detach. And go away.

Like hearing his own death sentence. And just above a whisper...

AARON

Go where?

MADELINE

They don't know. It's like dying is to us, the next stage of the process.

Shaking his head...

AARON

Why can't they just stay?

MADELINE

...they can't hold the attachment forever. Fear, frustration, knowing it can't last...it gets to them...

Gerald tugging at Aaron's sleeve. He's got the little bat.

MADELINE

...finally, they can't hang on. Or they just let go.

Eyes locked to hers. Then, he looks down at the boy.

MADELINE

Gerald, for example, is dead eight months.

Gerald takes a batter's stance. For his picture.

MADELINE

And for all the things he can no longer do...

Aaron fixing the boy's stance now. Feet apart, more aggressive twist to the torso.

MADELINE

...he can still love me.

Such tenderness in that. Aaron has to stop for a flicker, gather himself. Somehow, keeps his smile there for this child.

MADELINE

So we cling to that.

Aaron slaps the Red Sox cap on Gerald's head. Fits it just right. Slides the boy's grip now, down the end of the bat. Murmurs...

AARON

Better for stroking the long ball.

GERALD

...take 'em deep.

The boy nods, seriously. Aaron's eyes glisten, but he blinks that away. Looks down into the boy's eager face. Whispers...

AARON

...we'll take 'em downtown, kid.

So Gerald digs in. Killer stance. And Aaron pulls out his Minox, crouches. CLICK-CLICK, CLICK-CLICK. Gerald SWINGS from his heels. Holds the pose, eyes looking hopefully. CLICK-CLICK. Aaron sends a thumbs up. And turns at last...

AARON

Do you know Julianne Potter?

She wishes she did.

MADELINE

I assume she's dead?

AARON

I assume she's dead.

She sees how much this means. Gently...

MADELINE

The dead are not my crowd, Aaron.  
I have a limited acquaintance  
there.

His eyes drift down to his hands. He is lost.

AARON

If you think of it. Ask around.

EXT. MADELINE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Aaron through the door, onto the street, dazed, thunderstruck...

AARON (V.O.)

It had to be true. Because it  
explained everything. At the same  
time, of course, it was impossible...

Looks to his left, to his right...

AARON (V.O.)

...or at least, insane.

...the taxi is gone. He throws back his head...

AARON

MAAAATHEWW...

There is no one.

INT. AARON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bullet sits on the bed. Listening, as the front door CRASHES open...

AARON (O.S.)

JULES...!

Hear him CHARGING from room to room, doors opening, BANGING shut...

AARON (O.S.)

Black Eyes, please...

TEARING up the hall to APPEAR in our doorway. Breathing hard. Aaron and Bullet exchange dead-on stares.

AARON

Okay. Where do I look?

EXT. BRONX - NIGHT

Aaron RUNNING up a bombed-out street, oblivious to homeboy eyes, he POUNDS the pitted pavement, dodging trash, flying UP the steps of the Brownstone. It is boarded up exactly as before. With all his strength he TEARS it open, the door CRASHING from its rusted hinges, and he...

...BOLTS into the darkened lobby. Finds the staircase. In blackness, HEAR him race upward, three stairs at a time...

INT. EIGHTH FLOOR - NIGHT

The two dim bulbs. The silent hallway. More than creepy. Along the corridor, chest heaving from the climb. Room 806. He knocks. And the door just swings slowly open...

...there is NOTHING. No light, no furniture, no printed wallpaper. Only the dust of a room abandoned for twenty years. Aaron can't believe it. He squints at the number on the door. 806. Back in at the desolate room. There is no answer.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Aaron's silhouette, trudging slowly down the ancient staircase, turning the corner of another landing and...stopping. This hallway has no bulbs. But is illuminated by a brilliant LIGHT pouring from the doorway of a far room. Aaron squinting at it, deciding. And then...

...he heads toward the light. Closer, closer. Eyes wondering what this could possibly be. There, now. The door to 431. Aaron draws a breath, steps INTO the blinding light to see...

...a room flooded by DAYLIGHT. It seems like the parlor of a rustic farmhouse. Crude furniture, some well-preserved antiques. A spinning wheel. At the far end of the room...

...a WINDOW which looks out on GRASSY FIELDS. Trees stretch into distance. Horses run. Aaron blinks against the impossibility of all this. And seated by the window, is...

...WILLIE. Gazing at the fields, cleaning a rifle laid across his lap. He turns to us now, so surprised to see Aaron. And then watchful, remembering him. So Aaron's voice comes gently...

AARON

Hello, son. Can I come in?

Willie nods. Calm, silent. Gaze so intense.

AARON

I need to say I'm sorry.

Aaron entering the room. Slowly, as if not wanting to spook him.

AARON

I didn't underst...

WILLIE

...where's your camera?

Aaron sits on a three-legged stool. Just in front of the boy...

AARON

I don't always bring it. Cameras  
make you...uncomfortable...?

And straight back. Innocent as a child...

WILLIE

It's photographing, sir. It's  
not good for us.

Curious way of putting it. Aaron's smile shows his puzzlement.

WILLIE

It's looking at things through  
a box. From a distance.

And Aaron nods. Only partially understanding.

WILLIE

We need to do things, sir, not  
watch 'em. We need to.

AARON

Like...protesting the war, huh?

Willie raises his hand, for a Sixties-style power handshake. We see his t-shirt beneath the uniform jacket...WAR IS NOT HEALTHY FOR CHILDREN AND OTHER LIVING THINGS...

WILLIE

Keep the faith!  
(hesitantly)  
...right?

Something touching, childlike in that. Aaron doesn't quite understand. But he nods, sure, keep the faith. Clasps Willie's hand in the Sixties shake.

AARON

I like your place, here.

Willie nods. Glances out the window.

WILLIE

We raised horses. Before the war.

Sad with that. The sadness makes him shiver.

AARON

I'm looking for a young woman, Willie. Her name is Julianne Potter. Long hair, kind of red, and black eyes. Have you seen her?

Willie shakes his head. Compassion in his youthful gaze.

AARON

She's my true love, Willie. Did you ever have a true love?

Willie swallows. Remembers for a beat. Then...

WILLIE

I hope you find her, sir.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Aaron coming out of Willie's room into the hallway. Quietly closing the door behind him, he heads toward the staircase, and...

...stops. A new door is open. Just a crack. A shard of brilliant LIGHT glares from within room 409. Aaron staring at the door. This wasn't open when he came. A fear he can't quite identify flickers across his face...

...and then. He OPENS the door, stepping THROUGH it to...

...the crest of a SNOW-PATCHED HILL. It's astonishing! Above him, a crystal sky. A chill wind blows. He looks below him now...

...a field of WINTER TREES, naked, delicate, exquisite. And dotted all along the snow-patched ground...

...GRAVESTONES. Aaron's eyes light with obvious recognition and wonder. This can't be true! His feet carry him down now, into the cemetery, as...

...CRACK! The noise makes him TURN. There, in a cluster of naked trees...

...an open GRAVE. The sound of earth, waiting. A simple wooden CASKET stands on the catafalque, waiting for gravediggers to come and lower the coffin to its rest. Aaron stares, nearly overcome with emotion, he...

...goes TOWARD it now, stumbling a little, closer, closer, until...

...he could reach out and touch it. And in a heartbeat, his hand is reaching, reaching...and stopping. Just short of the casket, an inch away. He trembles. And...

...backs away. One step. Two. A last look, turning...

...heading back through the trees, our view following his path toward the doorway to room 409, which appears as a black rectangular HOLE set against the winter landscape, and as he goes...

...our angle ROTATES. Past the silent casket, in a slow PAN, to see...

...there, crouched behind a tree. Paul. Flint-hard eyes. A satisfaction so profound in its cruelty, it admits only the slightest wisp of a twisted smile.

EXT. AARON'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Aaron getting out of his cab in the rain. Eyes dazed, lost, not even noticing that he's getting soaked. As he reaches the steps to his building...there is Bullet. Staring back in the rain. Aaron just blinks.

AARON

I leave the door open...?

Bullet doesn't answer. He stands up. Walks slowly off, kind of looking back at us. Aaron starts after him, but as he glances across the street...he stops cold. Nearing the corner, moving quickly through the flow of pedestrians is...

AARON

PAUL! PAUL!!

But the words are lost in rain and distance and street noise. Paul turns the corner, and Aaron BOLTS after him, INTO the street, DODGING a skidding Mercedes, to the other side, around the corner, and...

...nothing. Look in all directions. Gone. And back at Aaron's building, the Bullet stands looking in the other direction, down the block to...

...a figure in a raincoat, standing by a stone stairwell. Too far away to distinguish. The Bullet looks momentarily back toward Aaron. Starts trotting up the block.



EXT. STONE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

VIEW from behind, we see the lower back of the raincoated figure, as the Bullet comes toward us. Now he begins to RUN to us at top speed, our figure DROPS to its knees as the Bullet...

...LEAPS into her arms. Julianne nuzzles the puppy, kisses his face. Wraps her coat to protect him from the rain. Murmurs...

JULIANNE

...how's our friend, huh, you keeping him happy?

She takes a better look now, running slender fingers through his coat, staring into his eyes...

JULIANNE

You're holding up great, better than me...

The Bullet starts licking her face. Rain pouring off them.

JULIANNE

...yeh, yeh, I love you, too.

Cuddles him once more under her coat, as...

JULIANNE

Has he noticed you're not getting bigger? Well, it'll take him awhile.

...a HAND reaches from behind, TOUCHES her hair, and she SCREAMS, WHIRLS to see Aaron, down on the pavement with her. Very close.

He stares at her. In a way he never has before. So loving, so intense. It frightens her. And seeing this...

...he reaches his arms around her.

Holds her so tight. So dear.

Kisses her head. Then, pulls away. But only inches.

AARON

I have a secret. But I'm afraid to tell you...

Her eyes searching his face. Why...?

AARON

Because I'm scared. That when you learn the truth about me...

His hands find her rain-soaked hair. Move it tenderly back behind her shoulders.

AARON

...you won't love me anymore.

She doesn't understand. So he comes even closer. Their lips now only inches apart. Murmurs...

AARON

I'm not dead.

And kisses her softly. When he pulls back, we can barely hear her...

JULIANNE

Fuck it. Nobody's perfect.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE on Aaron. Head tilted back. Eyes closed. Water gently floods down over his face.

JULIANNE (O.S.)

You're very quiet.

PULL BACK to see he lies in a tub. His head tilted back on the rim. Julianne kneels over him from just behind the tub. Wearing only one of his dress shirts. She's bathing him with a sponge.

JULIANNE

You're angry I didn't tell you.

And without turning...

AARON

I'm angry you're dead.

He doesn't look angry. Only tense, worried.

JULIANNE

How'd you find out?

He closes his eyes.

AARON

Paul called from Paris. He told me he killed you.

JULIANNE

And what else?

Said lightly. But her eyes are not light at all.

AARON

God, there's more?

Instead of an answer, she squeezes sponge water over his face. He grins now, and licks some up. She kisses his head.

AARON

How come some of the people I meet are so different from... each other?

JULIANNE  
You mean from me.

He does.

AARON  
I mean, in how far they've...

JULIANNE  
...unraveled.

AARON  
That's the word, huh?

JULIANNE  
That's what we do. We unravel.

She strokes his face. His eyes are closed, but we can see her love for him. And how much it hurts her.

JULIANNE  
The more we detach, the more we twitch, and spasm, and...a lot of gruesome stuff at the end...

She said that soft enough. But it brings his eyes to her, sorry he's asked. She just goes on about her work, soaping his shoulders, his chest...

JULIANNE  
You've seen the repeating. Words, actions. Whole little...episodes, sometimes...

Rinsing him with care.

JULIANNE  
We're trying to hang on, then. Desperate. Clinging to our most important thing, or most familiar. Whatever attaches us, or...  
(beat)  
Who the hell does your hair?

She's picking at it. Repelled.

AARON  
You've seen dead men with better haircuts?

JULIANNE  
Dead dogs. Yours included.

On her feet. Going to the medicine chest.

AARON  
...all I meant was. Some of them seem so normal...

JULIANNE  
...being dead is normal, Aaron.

At the cabinet, rummaging through.

JULIANNE  
In fact, if you define normal  
as something that applies to  
everyone...

Finds two scissors...

JULIANNE  
...getting dead is the only  
normal thing there is.

One is big and straight. The small one is curved. HOLD on her as  
she's choosing...

AARON (O.S.)  
The thing is, you expect the  
dead to all be the same. So  
the variety is a little dazzling...

The big one, she decides.

AARON (O.S.)  
You've got these poor souls,  
who seem like mechanical dolls...  
all the way up to...

He stops. And quietly...

JULIANNE  
...you can say it, Aaron. All  
the way up to me.

Staring at the scissors. Staring hard.

JULIANNE  
I'm what we call high-  
functioning...

A sticky white substance trickles from a corner of her mouth. She  
licks at it.

JULIANNE  
But we can turn sour, real  
fast.

Her finger absently flicks the last of the white away. She heads  
back with her scissors.

AARON  
What would do that?

No smile in his voice now. Very straight question. She kneels  
down behind him.

JULIANNE  
Sadness detaches us. And  
loneliness...regret...

She's plucking his hair. Sizing up the job.

JULIANNE  
Fear is the worst. That's  
what gets us in the end.

AARON  
What can help?

He's trying to see her. But she holds his head still, from behind.

JULIANNE  
Love and anger.

Love and anger.

JULIANNE  
They are completely equal. Any  
passion makes us more present.

She snips at a lock of hair. Still tentative.

AARON  
Are you ever present enough  
for people to...

JULIANNE  
...see me? Let's put it  
this way...

Snips again. A little bolder.

JULIANNE  
If we made love in Macy's window,  
you'd look pretty silly for awhile.  
And in the right moment...  
(snip)  
...so would I.

She's cutting away now, fast. Fearlessly.

AARON  
Isn't all this hair gonna  
screw up the drain...?

The clippings drift onto the water in a fine sprinkle.

AARON  
Then again. It's Paul's drain.

JULIANNE  
...so now we're even.

He chuckles. Looks back up into her smile. His hands reach, and GRASP her suddenly, FLIP her SCREAMING over his head, and CRASH into soapy water. Silent for an instant, while she's under. Then, she...

...surfaces, SHRIEKING louder than ever, SWINGING wildly at him with her eyes closed, he's reaching in, TICKLING her without mercy, until she dissolves in laughter, and he...

...holds her tight. Wipes the hair and wet from her face with strong hands. And when the dark eyes open...

JULIANNE

How the hell. Are you ever gonna live without me.

They both know the answer. No way at all.

AARON

How can I imagine something. A billion years from now...?

And just above a whisper...

AARON

Listen up. Here's the rules...

He smiles. With all the confidence he can pretend...

AARON

Get mad. Make love. Only the good stuff.

Closer.

AARON

No sadness. No regrets. Never lonely, not you, not anymore...

Okay?

AARON

And no fear, you're not allowed. Hear me...?

Her eyes fill with feeling. But she nods. She hears him fine.

AARON

We have the best ride. The best. For as long as we can make it last...

She kisses him. He whispers...

AARON

And that's long enough for me.

She couldn't love him more. Whispers back...

JULIANNE

I hate a guy. With an attitude problem.

They kiss. And kiss some more.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Bed, moonlight. She's curled so comfortably against his chest, her eyes closed. His are alert, trying to figure...

AARON

So what makes live people see you,  
is it always the s...

She never opens hers...

JULIANNE

...you know what time it is?

...drowsy, dreamy. But it just reminds him of another question...

AARON

...do you really sleep?

JULIANNE

Only when you stop talking.  
It's four o'clock.

AARON

Okay, it's my first day, I  
have a couple of questions.

She kisses his chest. But her eyes stay closed.

JULIANNE

When you hit three thousand,  
you have to shut up.

All right. He'll be selective.

AARON

How close am I?

JULIANNE

That's it.

And she rolls into a ball at his side. Nestles into him like she's hibernating for the winter. But he's thinking now. The one thing he's been holding back...

AARON

I went to your folks' apartment...  
looking for you...

That opens her eyes.

JULIANNE

Really.

A little stiff with that. He doesn't notice. Too absorbed with his recollection of the Brownstone. Says only...

AARON

I love the way you are with  
them. So close.

But there's something more behind his eyes. She's watching this, closely, almost knowingly.

JULIANNE  
What...? What is it?

That was very soft. He shakes his head, nothing. She lets it go. Back to...

JULIANNE  
Well, my folks and I. We aren't close at all.

In fact...

JULIANNE  
The night I brought you over?  
The first time I'd seen them.  
In sixteen years.

Sixteen years? She watches his astonishment.

JULIANNE  
I ran away at fourteen. They loved me, all right. They just didn't love each other.

Anger and sadness. And more hurt than she can count up.

JULIANNE  
After all those years. They flew out to stay with me and this guy I was living with...

Can you believe...

JULIANNE  
...and the plane crashed.  
That's how they died.

She tries a shrug. The ironies of fate. Then, guardedly...

JULIANNE  
So. You had a good visit?

She's watching his tension rise once more.

AARON  
They were out. More than out, there was...nothing there. The room was...

He stops. Troubled, confused.

JULIANNE  
They carry it with them.

She didn't expect he'd get that.



JULIANNE

It's a room that helps them attach. That was their parlor in Madison, Wisconsin. Where I grew up.

AARON

But I could see it. I sat on the couch.

JULIANNE

The strength of their attachment makes the room present. At least in the Brownstone, that's why a lot of them live there.

Silence.

JULIANNE

In the talk...the Brownstone is 'easy to furnish'.

More silence.

JULIANNE

...it's an empty vessel. Been abandoned so long. Nothing to interfere with what they bring to it.

His eyes are strange now. Intent, staring.

JULIANNE

So they bring their past. They call it 'decorating'.

Pauses...

JULIANNE

...you okay?

Sure, he nods. I'm fine.

JULIANNE

It can be any size. Sometimes, it's an exterior...a mountain, anything. It all fits in the room, because it's inside them.

AARON

I saw. I saw a horse ranch...and...

She watches his struggle. Once more, her gaze seems somehow knowing.

JULIANNE

...and what, baby?

But as much as he wants to, he can't tell her about the graveyard.

AARON  
...and it was amazing. Sky,  
rolling hills, horses...

And then...

AARON  
Just being in that building.  
Could it make you...imagine  
someplace? As if you were there...

She pauses, thinking. Then shrugs...

JULIANNE  
I don't know, maybe.

Watching him. Sends a sweet smile...

JULIANNE  
You checking out? Is this  
one just too weird?

He closes his eyes.

AARON  
It is the coolest. Thing.  
Ever.

End of discussion. He rolls over, as if to sleep. HOLD on her...

Still watching.

INT. CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

Aaron's dream. The little boy crouched by his presents. The  
mother standing in the doorway. Steaming cup. Lovely smile. A  
frozen moment, and...

...she comes toward him. Slowly, almost carefully. As if there is  
thought in every step. Just as she reaches him, she flicks on a  
three-way lamp. To the dimmest setting.

MOTHER  
Just want to see your face.

The voice is soft and lovely as the smile. But there is the  
slightest catch in it. She crouches down...

AARON  
Do I have to go back to bed?

MOTHER  
You have to drink your chocolate.

And she hands him the cup. He grins...

AARON  
Why?

MOTHER  
Because I made it.

There is extra sweetness in her look. The eyes are glistening a little, but the child doesn't notice. Drinks his cocoa.

MOTHER  
When you saw all the presents.  
How did you feel?

AARON  
Happy.

Happy.

MOTHER  
Will you remember that, always?  
Strangely intense. But not to him. He nods, sure.

MOTHER  
Will you promise?  
He does. She comes real close. Murmurs...

MOTHER  
Mommy loves.  
She puts that love into her touch. Fingers tracing his hair, his cheek. A whispered...

MOTHER  
Remember that, too.  
HOLD on her face. And CUT TO...

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

...Aaron WAKING with a start. No gasp this time, no sound.

JULIANNE (O.S.)  
...it's all right, darlin'. It's  
just a dream.

When he looks. She is coming toward him. Holding out a steaming cup. He blinks, can't believe this...

AARON  
I...I don't drink chocolate  
anymore.

She smiles, as if mildly puzzled by that remark.

JULIANNE  
I do. But this is coffee.

Sits beside him. Hands him the drink. He just holds it, staring at her...

AARON

I was dreaming of my mother.

And Julianne nods. Supportive, interested. But not pushing it.

AARON

The last time I saw her.

Just the way he says that. The hurt for him comes straight to her eyes.

AARON

It was Christmas. I got up in the night, and we talked. Then she went back to Dad.

He has to shrug. So he won't cry.

AARON

In the morning, we opened my presents. There were fourteen of them.

He sips the coffee. Real slow. Finally...

AARON

When I went out to play, she shot herself.

His face is almost an apology. Her eyes just hold steady for him. Right there. Her fingertips stroke his leg.

AARON

And tonight...in the Brownstone... I saw her grave. It was so real.

He can't understand. Can't understand at all...

AARON

I just...imagined it, huh?

She nods, maybe. But it's not what she's thinking. Asks...

JULIANNE

Did you see anybody? Anyone else in the graveyard....

He shakes his head. No, he didn't. She seems to toss it off, just wondering, that's all.

JULIANNE

Will you talk to me? About Christmas.

That brings him right to the edge. She reaches fast for his hand. Winds her fingers tight. They sit like that. Locked in each other's eyes.

JULIANNE

You thought it was your fault.

Very, very soft.

JULIANNE

Your love. Wasn't good enough  
to save her.

He's choking back the feeling now. Because she's right.

JULIANNE

Kind of made you wonder...if  
love...if any love...can ever  
really work.

It is just what he feels. He is moved beyond words that she knows  
this.

JULIANNE

Well, it wasn't your fault.

Such conviction in that.

JULIANNE

And love can work, baby.  
Sometimes, somehow.

Very close...

JULIANNE

And your love...

And closer...

JULIANNE

...is good enough. It's good  
enough for me.

A last look. And slowly, they kiss.

EXT. STREET - LATE NIGHT

Late night on the empty street outside Aaron's building. Nothing  
stirs, until a street sweeper rumbles around the corner. Brushes  
churning, it lumbers along toward us. And when it passes, we  
notice for the first time...

...a figure sitting on the curb. Paul is eating popcorn in slow  
huge handfuls. And as he stares up at Aaron's apartment...

There is an unnaturally wide smile on Paul's features. A crackling  
energy to the way he eats his popcorn. Unmistakably, a zest for  
life.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Julianne sits at the round table. Dealing out a hand of solitaire.  
Her eyes are somewhere else, somewhere painful. She closes them  
gently, and her hands STOP. Suspended in mid-air. A full chilling  
beat, and...

...the dark eyes open. The hands continue gracefully, laying the card. Red seven on the black eight. Her nose wriggles at the next card, and a SHIVER runs the length of her body. Her eyes WIDEN suddenly, and a gorge RISES in her throat. She CHOKES it down, her face TWITCHING in an uncontrollable flicker, and...

...Aaron enters. He has her jacket.

AARON  
Ready to go?

And she turns to him. A perfect smile...

JULIANNE  
Good as gone.

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

Aaron sighting a subject through his Nikon. Julianne stands watching him as he works. When...

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)  
Aaron...?

They turn sharply to see...

SERENA  
Hard at work?

His editor. She's standing a little close to him. Trace of a glint in the hard smile.

AARON  
...uh, yeh. Serena, I'd like  
you to meet my girlfriend,  
Julianne Po...

...he stops, as Julianne is elaborately SIGNALLING NO. When he turns back, Serena's eyes are searching the surrounding airspace for someone who isn't there. She looks quizzically to Aaron...

AARON  
...Julianne Potter. Sometime  
soon.

Ah.

SERENA  
...not too soon, I hope.

Something predatory in that. She steps a little closer.

SERENA  
We need to have a long chat,  
Aaron. About the book. But  
my daytime schedule's pretty  
packed...

And even closer.

SERENA

Come to my place, tonight. I'll  
cook you dinner. You like red  
wine, don't you, Aaron?

And reaches. As if to brush something from his lapel. Off to one  
side, we glimpse Julianne's rising fury. And when Serena TOUCHES  
Aaron, Julianne suddenly...

...APPEARS at Aaron's side. A frozen instant of shock. And Serena  
SCREAMS wonderfully, her eyes wide. Like she's just seen a ghost.  
Which makes Julianne smile, sweetly.

AARON

Oh, there you are, dear.

Serena looks back to Aaron in complete amazement.

AARON

...my girlfriend. I said I'd  
like you to meet her...

JULIANNE

...was that too soon?

...she asks solicitously, holding out her hand. Serena gives the  
hand a double take. Deciding whether to touch it. When she does,  
Julianne holds the handclasp. Firmly.

JULIANNE

Aaron can't come to your place.  
It would cut into our late-night  
sharing activities.

Dead at her eyes...

JULIANNE

Tonight, he's giving me his  
oral report. Several times.  
I can't wait.

Serena only gulps.

JULIANNE

Would you like to hear. What  
I'm giving him?

And in the silence...

AARON

(cheerful)

I sure would!

ANGLE...Aaron and Julianne strolling, holding hands. She's  
explaining...

JULIANNE

...some of them are visible a  
lot. I just don't have the  
hang of it...

Points across the street. A PRIEST is walking, seeming to thumb a paperback as he goes.

JULIANNE

See, that priest. He's always around.

Aaron's look. Recognizing...

AARON

I met him on a train. He was reading the same book...

The priest stops, chatting with a pretty young woman...

JULIANNE

See, she's alive. She hasn't a clue that he isn't.

They exchange smiles. The woman walks on. Priest watches her go.

AARON

What makes him attach so strong? Pretty girls...?

JULIANNE

Saving sinners.

And on Aaron's look...

JULIANNE

So he's visible most of the time.

She snuggles her arm through his. As they walk on, we...

PULL BACK...just a little...

...a figure steps into frame. Paul carries a large bag of pork rinds, from which he eats continuously as he strolls. All the while, wearing this overbroad smile. Eyes dancing, just a little. He slows a moment, as he pulls from his belt...

...a flat gray PISTOL. Munching, walking, he checks the clip, fits a silencer onto the muzzle. Raises it...

...SIGHTS it, DEAD on the middle of Aaron's back, as he walks with Julianne thirty feet ahead. Paul releases the safety with a CLICK, and the gun...

...swerves to the left, as something distracts Paul's attention. Pedestrians everywhere, but no one seems to notice. Still walking, Paul aims the pistol straight at...

...the back of Aaron's HEAD. Holds it steady as they walk, steady, and as his finger SQUEEZES trigger, the muzzle TILTS...

...UP and a street lamp near our couple SHATTERS with a tinkle, glass raining down. Julianne...



...noticing as they pass. Curious for an instant. But Aaron cuddles her near. And they walk on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Bullet lies in a corner. Pensive, staring intently at Julianne. She is alone, kneeling by a crackling fire. Her body is frozen in the pose of someone dealing cards. But there are no cards to be seen. Her eyes stare blankly into the flames. In Aaron's absence, her fear has overcome her.

The puppy whimpers, it is a sight unnerving even to him. But Julianne does not stir. He rises now and trots over. Gazes up at her. But she does not breathe. And from somewhere...

...the front door OPENS. Clicks shut. Julianne blinks, and as she does, a card is in her hand. Red seven. She looks down, cards are now spread before her. Plays on the black eight. And as Aaron enters, carrying an armload of fast food sacks, she wriggles her nose at the next card.

AARON

Hungry?

JULIANNE

...how long were you gone?

Her voice a little shaky. His concern immediate.

AARON

You okay...?

He's kneeling with her, setting down the food.

JULIANNE

...you don't have to always ask that..

Her voice is soft. She puts up the best smile she can.

JULIANNE

I'm not made of glass. I'm just dead.

He's looking in her eyes. Murmurs...

AARON

You're frightened, huh?

The dark eyes move across his face.

JULIANNE

It goes together, a little...  
(beat)  
Loving you. And being afraid  
of when I lose you.

Her little shrug. What can I do? He wants so much to touch her, comfort her. But her cues are telling him to play this down. So, he glances to the Bullet...

AARON

...and what about you? I left  
you behind to cheer her up.

JULIANNE

Well, he reads to me. But  
it's always Stephen King.

She's poking around in the fast food.

JULIANNE

This one's ready, it's coming  
right through the sack.

As she pulls stuff out...

AARON

We got Mexican, Chinese,  
Italian and burgers.

She just blinks at that.

JULIANNE

(tactfully)

It's comprehensive.

Removes her selection like handling toxic waste.

JULIANNE

What's to drink, Valvoline  
ten-forty?

She's grinning. He likes that.

AARON

...this would be a nutrition  
comment.

JULIANNE

...no, it's a grease comment.  
A nutrition comment would be,  
try some.

She's relaxed him. Everything's fine.

JULIANNE

...and since we're stating the  
obvious, it's cold at night.  
That's why girlfriends give  
their boyfriends nice mufflers.

...carefully unwrapping her taco. The paper drips.

AARON

...any more health tips from  
the dead?

JULIANNE

...yeh, never date Paul.

She takes a humongous BITE from the taco, and juice dribbles down her chin. As he bends to find a napkin, her face TWITCHES, and her smile becomes the GRIN, the eerie rictus of a corpse, her whole mouthful cascading down her dress. But as Aaron looks up...

...her smile is back, a little dazed, embarrassed. He looks at her dress, at the napkin in his hand, and...

AARON

...might need two.

He starts gathering a handful...

AARON

...now I know why we don't eat out more...

...as she rises, a little unsteady. Heads out of the room...

JULIANNE

Think I'll just hose down.

And gone. From seemingly too far away, a voice floats back...

JULIANNE (O.S.)

...you dig in.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Julianne BOLTING into the bathroom, whirling back, LOCKING the door, turning in blind panic to the mirror. There is an instant of stark realization. This is it. Her body...

...SPASMS in a JOLT, a single electric SHOCK, and eyes wild she LUNGES for the sink, but FREEZES in mid-motion. A grotesque mannequin. The horror holds. Holds. Her eyes fill with panic, and suddenly, her frame...

...TWITCHES, she tries to scream, but her mouth LOCKS OPEN, her limbs, her torso now, JERKING in short repetitive BURSTS toward the sink, and back, and toward it, and back, a short-circuited wind-up doll, and though her dark eyes are streaming tears...

...a throaty LAUGH begins within her, rich and full and even sexy. Her head shakes no, no, no, and with everything in her she LURCHES, GRASPS the rim of the sink in a death grip, as from behind her...

...POUNDING on the door, Aaron's voice SHOUTING, calling to her, and still the unbidden laughter pours from her like eerie music, and her body VIBRATES as if it were an air hammer, as if it would shatter or fly apart, and the sink...

...RIPS LOOSE from the wall, her slender frame ARCS, poised frighteningly for a single CONVULSION, her hands FLY to cover her mouth, staring at her reflection in horror, and...

...from one nostril, a milky white substance trickles down across her hands, as the door CRASHES OPEN, Aaron's reflection appears behind hers, and she...

...WHIRLS to him, terrified. But in the silence, whole once more. Her fingers wipe the milky white from her face...

AARON

What is that stuff?

He looks more frightened than she is. She snuffles, smiles somehow...

JULIANNE

...I don't know, Aaron. We don't come with a manual.

She tries to brush past him to the doorway, but he grabs hold of her, and she...

...flinches from his touch. The first time that's ever happened. And it stops them both. His hands come away. Her eyes would rather anything in this world than to have hurt him. They flutter down. She clears her throat.

JULIANNE

I just...I just need some air.

And in the silence...

AARON

...great. Me too.

She turns away, heads down the hall. He follows. She opens the closet, pulls out her jacket...

JULIANNE

I'm gonna be fine...

AARON

I know that.

She slips it on, heading for the door. The Bullet comes running. Aaron right with her, Julianne turning...

JULIANNE

Look, I need some time alone. Do that for me.

He steps closer. His softest smile.

AARON

I don't like you that much.

Their eyes hold. She won't change his mind. She sinks to the floor, takes the puppy in her hands. Murmurs to it...

JULIANNE

You stay here. I'll catch you later.

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT

Walking on an unlit dock, holding hands. Shadows, darkness,

everywhere. The black shapes of hulls rise above them, moonlight slides along the river below. She holds tight to his hand, but her eyes are far away. She stops at a piling. He watches, as she stares out. Stares out.

JULIANNE (singing)  
Barges, I would like to go with you...

So quietly. Almost a murmur to herself.

JULIANNE (singing)  
I would like to sail the ocean blue...

A faint smile.

JULIANNE (singing)  
Barges, is there treasure in your hold...?  
Do you fight with pirates, brave and bold...?

The smile is gone now. Eyes locked across the water.

JULIANNE (singing)  
Out of my window, looking in the night...  
I can see the barges, flickering bright.

He leans closer. Kisses her hair. She doesn't turn.

JULIANNE  
When you're little. Everything  
you sing about...

A ragged breath...

JULIANNE  
...will belong to you, someday.  
They promise you that. Just  
to see you smile.

Her gaze goes down.

JULIANNE  
If I had a little girl. I'd  
have done it, too.

The eyes close. Just above a whisper...

JULIANNE (singing)  
Starboard glowing green,  
Port is glowing red.  
I can see the barges...  
Up ahead.

She turns to him. Moonlight across her face.

JULIANNE  
Something is happening to me,  
Aaron.

Yes, it is.

JULIANNE  
And no promise of something  
beautiful can change it.

She ~~comes~~ closer.

JULIANNE  
Will you help me with something?  
Before it happens...

He will. Anything.

JULIANNE  
If you love me...

If he loves her.

JULIANNE  
Feel it now, feel it strong.

A whispered...

JULIANNE  
Let me see it.

Eyes shining...

JULIANNE  
...thank you.

A sigh escapes her. Like a soft gasp.

JULIANNE  
I know what you're going to  
think. But fight it...fight  
it for me...

She touches him.

JULIANNE  
Because this isn't your fault.

Leans her face up...

JULIANNE  
And your love. Was more than  
good enough.

One perfect kiss. And she steps back, to be...

...GONE in darkness.

A forever beat. Before he realizes...

AARON  
NOOOOOOOOO!!

...CHARGES into the blackness, turning WILDLY in every direction,  
SHRIEKING her name, to the shadows, to the water, to the night...

...a SOUND behind him. He stops dead. WHIRLS to...

PAUL  
Hey there, pal...

~~There~~ is no food. Only the overbroad smile. And the pistol.

PAUL  
...fickle, y'know. I coulda  
told you that.

He ~~steps~~ forward into better light. The muzzle glints.

PAUL  
Did you think I was in Paris?

Paul shakes his own head. Slow.

PAUL  
Too far from her. I watch  
her, Aaron. All the time.

AARON  
You can see her.

PAUL  
I can't stop.

The smile flickers crazy.

PAUL  
Did she tell you why I  
killed her?

And in the silence, he raises the pistol. Just enough.

AARON  
...jealousy. You're a jealous  
guy.

PAUL  
I protect what's mine. That's  
sound policy, pal, don't you  
think?

And then...

PAUL  
...did you ask about the cards?  
Why she plays solitaire.

AARON  
She said it was private.

PAUL  
...and you respect privacy,  
don't you, Aaron. You're a  
respectful guy.

And starts toward him...

PAUL

In fact, you're an all right  
guy all around...

Aaron holding his ground...

PAUL

That's what gives this moment  
its irony.

And he's there. Inches away.

AARON

If I'm such a prince, why  
are y...

PAUL

...well, her, of course.  
You're nothing at all. It's  
just about her.

Stone eyes. Above the easy smile.

AARON

Paul, she's already dead.

PAUL

Not dead enough.

Here the voice loses its wise-guy edge.

PAUL

She walks and talks. She  
moves that body, clothed  
and otherwise...

And more to the point...

PAUL

...for you, Aaron.

Isn't it obvious?

PAUL

She's only still here. Because  
she's so attached...to her new  
love.

(beat)

Subtract you, and...

Gestures with his hand, POOF!

PAUL

Two minus one, equals zero.  
It's the new math, pal. Dead  
math.

He shrugs.



PAUL

And there's no other way to get at her. Because she's already...well, you said it. So you see my problem.

Aaron does. And one thing more.

AARON

But you gave me your apartment, you put us together...

Paul stares back. He cocks the pistol.

AARON

Why...?

But Paul just smiles. Very small. For me to know and you to find out, pal. He clearly has an agenda of his own on this.

AARON

What was her crime?

Paul releases the safety...

PAUL

Who? The lying slut?

And now the grin widens.

PAUL

Stop and think, Aaron. I'm a jealous guy. And she was already dead when you found her at my place.

The grin freezes. Are you listening?

PAUL

So who was I jealous of pal? Who came before? Does she ever talk about that?

Reading Aaron easily. No, she hasn't. The grin turns mean.

PAUL

That's her biggest talent, my friend. Tell you you're the one. And make you believe it.

Shoves the muzzle straight into Aaron's breastbone...

PAUL

She's a lying, teasing, little whore, pal, and it hurts to hear it, bec...

...Aaron SLAMMING the gun hand, a shot CRASHES into the darkness, both men STRUGGLE for control of the weapon. The pistol's muzzle turning slowly, slowly, toward Paul's belly. But as Aaron looks up, he sees...

...a smile. The scariest one ever. And a murmured...

PAUL

Go ahead. Pull the fucking  
trigger, pal...

(twitch)

...fucking trigger, pal...

(twitch)

...fucking trigger, pal...

...and a shot EXPLODES through the center of Paul. But Paul  
doesn't blink. A faint silver GLOW at his middle, which SHIMMERS  
and fades. Stunned, Aaron recoils...

AARON (V.O.)

I felt a little foolish. Not  
having realized...

...and now Paul holds the gun.

AARON (V.O.)

...Paul was dead, too.

Paul's smile changes once more. You poor boob.

PAUL

How do you think your momma's  
grave got into the Brownstone?  
Only dead guys can redecorate,  
pal. From their past...

Spreads his hands...

PAUL

Did you forget, old buddy? I  
was at her funeral. We do go  
way back, don't we?

The cruelty shines through the grin...

PAUL

So I thought you'd enjoy a little  
trip with me. Down memory lane.

Aaron is reeling, rage, confusion...

PAUL

As you ponder the consequences.  
Of my being dead. Start with  
this one...

Very quiet...

PAUL

...it makes me tough to beat.

And raises the pistol. Dead at Aaron's eyes.

PAUL  
Sporting chance, old bean.  
Five...four...three...

...and Aaron has BOLTED into darkness, HEAR his footsteps POUNDING away in the night...

PAUL  
...two...one and a half...one...

Paul raises the gun straight toward Aaron's fleeing back. He could kill him if he wants to. Instead, he points the pistol skyward...

BLAMM! Paul FIRES in the air. SHOUTS after the footfalls...

PAUL  
WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT!  
WHERE YOU LEAST EXPECT IT!  
(beat)  
PARTY TIME!

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DUSK

Back on Fifth Avenue, just as we've seen him before. End of day now, and he stumbles absently through the crowds.

AARON (V.O.)  
I ran all night, all day, hid  
in alleys. Where do you go to  
hide from a ghost...?

Staggering on, looking in all directions at once...

AARON (V.O.)  
I don't know why I wound up here...

And that very thought makes him slow. Realize...

AARON (V.O.)  
...sure I do. This was where she  
found me last time...

...and jog-steps to one side. We look down to see he had almost stepped on...a snail. The tiny creature doggedly crossing the pavement. Aaron stares at it for a beat. Then crouches low, his body something of a shield, and gently lifts the snail in his hand. Watches it move.

AARON (V.O.)  
I don't know why I did it...

Crosses the sidewalk. Sinks down beside the curb...

AARON (V.O.)  
I've never been a fanatic on  
reverence for life...

...carefully releases the snail into the gutter. As he watches it inch off, his gaze drifts way down the block. To where a lumbering

STREETSWEEPER chugs its way toward us. Aaron stares, as if sensing something. Mesmerized, as the streetsweeper unaccountably...

...pulls straight up ONTO the sidewalk. Strange. It sits there now, rumbling slightly, almost as if breathing. And as Aaron watches, the thing...

...BURSTS toward us, the huge vehicle EXPLODING up the sidewalk like a demented dragster, and people SCREAM, DIVE for cover, HURL themselves into the street, raw chaos, Aaron staring transfixed, as the ROCKETING vehicle is ON him at two hundred miles an hour, and...

...STOPS. Impossibly still, like a freeze frame, six inches away. In the silence, a whispered...

AARON

...sonofabitch.

And down from the cab...climbs Paul DeGraff. Slow. He's eating a big pink cotton candy with deliberate relish. Never even looks at Aaron. Like talking to himself...

PAUL

The downside of a really great close call. It's only fun once.

Stops for a big lick at the cotton candy.

PAUL

Second time. You go for it.

And then he looks up. Straight at Aaron's eyes.

PAUL

Haven't eaten this shit since I'm nine.

Plucks off a pink patch of sugar. Stuffs his mouth. Smiles as he delivers an enigmatic reminder...

PAUL

Solitaire. Pal.

Walk away slow.

And as Aaron watches. His eyes flicker...and flicker again...

AARON (V.O.)

...that's when I saw my first piece...

HOLD on his disturbed gaze, and CUT TO...

...a dark leafy place, like a forest at night, we are moving through it quickly...

AARON (V.O.)

...I called it the mosaic...

...moving faster, stumbling, changing direction, trees everywhere...

AARON (V.O.)

...because it came to me one little piece at a time, like a jigsaw...

...turning toward a filtered light now, through the trees, HEAR our footfalls trampling foliage...

AARON (V.O.)

...it was like a memory...or pieces of a memory...

...and stopping. Peering through leaves at...

AARON (V.O.)

Only, how could it be? When it never happened

...a clearing. A tall street lamp, with a glowing yellow bulb, and as we PAN down its length, we SNAP...

BACK TO...Fifth Avenue. He blinks, dazed by the vision he's experienced. And when he turns...a TAXI at the curb. A moment to realize. Then he RUNS down the steps, THROWS open the rear door, sticks his head in...

PETERSAK

Jesus. You could use a drink.

Staring in the rear-view mirror. Aaron absorbs this. Slides in...

AARON

If you wanted to find somebody who was...y'know, dead. Where would you go?

Petersak blinks in the mirror. Real quiet with...

PETERSAK

I know a place.

SLAMS it in gear, and they TAKE OFF.

AARON

Uh, are we gonna...hit that old lady?

...the speedometer at FORTY and climbing...

PETERSAK

...if we take Park.

...FIFTY...

AARON

...how about Madison?

...SIXTY...

PETERSAK  
...well, we got three matched  
Afghans. On rhinestone leads,  
yet.

...SEVENTY...

AARON  
...do we hit 'em?

Petersak's ~~smile~~ in the rear-view. Very, very small.

PETERSAK  
Could be.

...padding NINETY, as Aaron hangs on...

AARON  
Let's try Third Avenue...

And Petersak WHEELS INSANELY around a corner, as two wheels are  
airborne and the others lay rubber. We land square, ROCKET away...

AARON  
...and step on it.

EXT. BRONX - NIGHT

Abandoned commercial district. Hotels, restaurants, shops.  
Decomposing for years. Silent moonlight now. No one, no cars,  
until the SOUND precedes them, as up the avenue...

...our taxi BLASTS toward us at about ONE-FIFTY, and from two  
blocks away HITS the brakes, going into an incredible fishtailing  
two-block-long swerving screaming SKID, and we CUT...

...INSIDE the cab, Aaron slammed around, hanging onto whatever,  
Petersak grimly fighting the wheel, as they WHIRL in circles, the  
ear-splitting SCREECH rending the air, and CUT...

...BACK OUTSIDE, two blocks of rubber, the cab corkscrewing out of  
the skid to glide backwards to a perfect stop in front of...  
SMITTY'S. The ancient awning hangs in tatters from rusted poles.  
The burnt-out neon says LIVE ENTERTAINMENT. And...

...INSIDE the cab, Aaron has got his heart started again. Petersak  
blinks benignly in the rear-view. We're here.

AARON  
This is the place...?

PETERSAK  
Believe it, Mac. Somebody  
inside is dyin' to see ya...

Aaron dubious, starts to exit...

PETERSAK  
...dyin' to see ya.

...across the pavement, down the steps, to find the door **BOARDED SHUT**. He sighs. Boy, nothing is easy. Grabs one board, pulls it **FREE** with all his strength. Then another...can't get it...can't... **RIPS** it away, as the door swings open, revealing...

**INT. SKITTY'S - NIGHT**

Smoke-filled club, packed with customers drinking, bullshitting, dancing to a pretty fair blues band on the raised platform. The bar is jammed three deep, and down the counter, a grill churns out hot food. Patrons seen mostly black, but plenty of Hispanic and Anglobrepresentation.

**MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)**

...bar's this way.

From behind Aaron, a **BLACK GUY**, with a drawn **KNIFE**. He puts the point of the blade right in Aaron's spine, gestures, move it! And Aaron does..

...Through the crowd now, sliding past oblivious regulars, Aaron pushed at knife point all the way to the bar. Somehow, a space opens as they get there, and Aaron suddenly faces...

**BARTENDER**

Shit, it's Ab-ner the Pussy!

He is a huge man. With a huge, very unsettling grin.

**AARON**

How do you kn...

**BARTENDER**

Paul tol' me all about you, pussy. Paul is a interesting guy!

**AARON**

Comes a surprise to me.

**BARTENDER**

Oh, yeah, Paul is a big tipper, with a lot to say 'bout you.

More surprises.

**AARON**

He say I'm looking for Julianne Potter?

**BARTENDER**

And who would that be?

**AARON**

Ah. Paul's a very big tipper...

**BARTENDER**

...in these circles, Paul stand out.

Aaron checks out the place. Bedlam of the cool.

AARON  
How's business?

BARTENDER  
Thursdays is slow. But the  
place gets really dead on  
the weekend.

Back to the bartender. Straight to his eyes.

AARON  
Help me find her, it's worth  
all the money I've got...all  
I can steal...

BARTENDER  
What the fuck I do with money?  
He don't tip me with money...

Aaron has to think twice before asking...

AARON  
Okay, how does...

BARTENDER  
...live women.

The guy behind Aaron with the knife starts to LAUGH. A crazy,  
continuous, really scary laugh. As Aaron listens, his eyes flicker  
and we CUT TO...

THE MOSAIC...our VIEW running through darkened forest, stumbling  
as before, changing direction. Finding the light source through  
the trees, toward it, toward it, stopping to peer through at...

...the clearing, the lamp post, PANNING DOWN its length, this time  
we SEE...

...a WOMAN'S ANKLE, her leg on the grass, PAN to her bare arm, her  
wrist, her slender fingers, graceful, reaching for something, and  
SNAP...

BACK to the bar. The far side of the club. A man is rising from  
his table. Paul pulls out a smoke and some matches, as he strolls  
through the tables and crowd to...

...the grill, two fry cooks working fast. Paul stands there,  
getting his cigarette lit just right. Then FLIPS it, arcing  
through the air to land in a pan which...

...FLAMES instantly, SPREADING to the grill, a grease fire FLASHING  
the length of the counter. Paul nods absently, walks off through  
the crowd, passing behind Aaron and Nicholas, but no one turns to  
see him, and as he leaves the place...



...the grease fire is ROARING through Smitty's, but no one seems to notice. Dancing, drinking, hustling in progress, even though diners and drinks are becoming FLAMBE. Dancers with clothes, even hair, on fire. Saxophonist with flame coming out of his horn. Nobody cares. At the bar...

...Aaron just gapes at the scene, and we CUT TO...

...CURB, where Paul stands on the curb, carefully folding a long licorice whip into manageable size, as a TEXACO TRUCK appears down the block, heading this way, picking up speed...

...Paul doesn't seem to notice, folding his licorice just the way he wants it. The Texaco truck, still gaining momentum, really hurtling almost to us, as...

...Paul STEPS from the curb, gnawing his licorice, the speeding gasoline truck SWERVES WILDLY to avoid creaming him, and PLUNGES...

...THROUGH awning post, sign, stone wall, CRASHING INTO Smitty's itself, clearing a swath through tables and customers alike, debris HURDLING in all directions...

This. Everyone notices.

The gasoline truck just sits for a frozen instant, surrounded by flames and dead bystanders, and...

...BLOWS the place to SMITHEREENS! An EXPLOSION of smoke and ROLLING FLAME that RIPS the shit out of everything, bodies, equipment, sections of wall FLASHING past us at warp speed, and in the chaos, our PAN finds...

...Aaron, way at the fringe, still being BLASTED in SLO-MO through a gaping hole where the bar used to be and into...

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

...a dank, fetid alleyway, where his body ROLLS in garbage, and filth, sprawling INTO a cluster of plastic trash cans that break his momentum, and cover him completely. A beat of silence. And then, from somewhere...

...the blues MUSIC begins again. Voices laughing, partying. The trash cans move a little. Aaron pokes his way out, dazed, battered, to see...

...Smitty's RESTORED. No hole in the wall, no debris, except Aaron. Open for business. His eyes flicker, and we CUT TO...

THE MOSAIC...once again, stumbling in darkened forest toward filtered light. Looking through the foliage to...

...the lamp post. The woman's ankle. Her bare arm, her wrist, her slender fingers reaching for something, obscured suddenly by...

...the lower body of a MAN who has stepped across our view, as we shift to see around him, we SNAP...

...BACK to the alley, the music and laughter pouring from Smitty's. Aaron's mind reeling, trying to cope, his eyes drifting down the alley to see...

...a FIGURE, crouched behind garbage. And seeing that Aaron is looking, the figure rises, twitching, into half-light. She is a BIG WOMAN, trembling in hideous spasms that seize her completely, but as Aaron stares, he...

...moves toward her, and the woman BOLTS, stumbling, running away down the alley, and Aaron TEARS after her, hurtling cans, crates, debris, the poor woman is SOBBING, SCREAMING incoherently, flinging objects behind her to block his way, but...

...it is no use, Aaron dodges each obstacle like a man possessed, closer, closer, stumbling in filth and slime, closer, the woman SHRIEKING as Aaron...

...DIVES and TACKLES her, their bodies CRASHING into a mound of trash and debris, her limbs flailing uselessly at him, he TURNS her onto her back, her face to light, revealing...

...JULIANNE, horribly disfigured, flesh rotted and sagging, her hair, her bones, decaying before our gaze, her eyes WIDE with the horror of him seeing her this way, gaping mouth slurring...

JULIANNE  
...NNNOO, NNNNOOOOOO...

...but his strength PINS her beneath him, his hands hold her twitching head, hold it fast. And so softly...

AARON  
...shhh...shhh...shhhhhh...

...the huge black eyes fill with tears as she struggles...

AARON  
Don't you know this doesn't  
matter...?

From his heart...

AARON  
Don't you know it's you I love?

And beneath his hands. The trembling subsides. He murmurs...

AARON  
It's you.

The black eyes stare back. A frightened, uncomprehending animal.

AARON  
And if my love is good enough...

Closer.

AARON  
You have to do. Something  
for me.

She shakes her head, knows what's coming...

JULIANNE  
I tried it, I've tried and  
tried...

Can't he understand...?

JULIANNE  
...it doesn't work anymore.

But he won't buy that. Nothing can make him.

AARON  
If you love me.

Close. Quiet. His eyes holding her.

AARON  
Feel it now.

You're with me. You can do it.

AARON  
Feel it strong.

She stares up, fragile enough to shatter. As he whispers...

AARON  
Let me see it.

And before his eyes, her flesh begins to...

...HEAL itself. The skin, the bones, slowly reversing in the  
passion of her attachment, until...

...she is Julianne once more.

His eyes are shining. They don't seem to have doubted for a  
moment. A hushed...

AARON  
...thank you.

And they kiss.

EXT. BRONX - NIGHT

Two lovers walk a bombed-out street. Arms around each other's  
bodies. They seem lost in each other's love. But she can't see  
his eyes...

AARON (V.O.)  
What I didn't know was...what  
would happen next time?

...which is just as well. She snuggles close.

JULIANNE  
How's the dreams? The memories  
of your mom...

And now she does glance up.

AARON  
Gone. There's different ones  
now. I'm awake, and I just...see  
them. Like I'm remembering pieces  
of something...

She looks at the street as they bump along. As if she doesn't want  
to reveal too much interest.

AARON  
I'm in a woods or a park, or...  
and I come through the trees.  
There's a woman's leg, and her  
hand is reaching for...I don't  
know what...

(beat)  
And I think there's a man there.

His voice sounds so confused, disturbed...

AARON  
How can you remember something.  
That never happened.

Without looking at him, she brings his hand to her lips. Kisses  
the back of his fingers. Murmurs...

JULIANNE  
It'll be all right, baby. I'm  
here now.

They walk on.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - NIGHT

View from Central Park, as across the street...our lovers walk the  
avenue hand-in-hand. They turn now, onto a fashionable East Side  
street. We do not follow them. Our view PULLS BACK to reveal...

...a small, wiry man at the edge of the park. Paul stands under a  
leafy tree, eating a three-decker frozen yogurt waffle cone. Jam,  
sprinkles, the works. As Paul licks methodically, he watches our  
couple stop partway down the block. Sees the door open.

SMALL VOICE (O.S.)  
Hey, Mister, wanna puppy? Only  
two bucks...

And Paul turns. Looks down at the small boy in his shabby clothes. The box with five tiny puppies. Natasha at his side eating her own waffle cone. Fudge dripping down over her tiny hand.

BOY

Hey, mister, wanna puppy? Only two bucks...

Paul just stares a beat.

PAUL

You sure you want to sell those? You seem pretty... attached to them.

The little boy blinks.

BOY

Our momma sent us out to sell these. Unfinished business.

PAUL

Ah.

And smiles a dark smile.

PAUL

In that case. I'll take them all.

The boy stares blankly. This doesn't compute. Paul peels off ten dollars. Scoops up his five puppies. Throws the ten-spot in the box, as...

...the boy starts to TWITCH, to spasm. Natasha blinks at the sight of this. Keeps licking her cone. Paul watches with a knowing eye as the boy's trembling becomes uncontrollable...

PAUL

Pleasure doing business with you.

And walks off. Into the blackness of the park.

EXT. MADELINE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Aaron and Julianne waiting at the door.

AARON

...he's crazy about baseball. So when he shows you his cards, make a big fuss.

Her look says, no duh. How dense do you think I am? As from inside, a BUZZER sounds. The lock CLICKS open. They look at each other. Aaron opens the door...no one there. They enter slowly...

AARON

Gerald...?

...down the gilt-papered hall, past Victorian rooms...

AARON  
Gerald...?

...to the parlor. Madeline waits. Same chair, glass of wine. But something has changed.

MADELINE  
Gerald is gone.

Her tone is so even, it takes him a beat to fully grasp what has occurred.

MADELINE  
I was there at the end. In a way, it was quite beautiful.

She sees how deeply this affects him. Decides to confess...

MADELINE  
I would like to join him, but I haven't the courage.

Something passes between them. A bond neither would have anticipated.

AARON  
I miss him.

MADELINE  
I know you do, Aaron. Perhaps somewhere, he's missing you.

He looks down at his hands. Imagining that.

MADELINE  
You need something.

AARON  
Well, we came to...

MADELINE  
...we?

She's looking around. He doesn't understand.

JULIANNE  
She can't see me, Aaron.

MADELINE  
...have you brought a guest?

AARON  
(to Julianne)  
Well, do something, she can't see you...

JULIANNE

I'm trying, Aaron, I'm not a light bulb, you know.

MADELINE

What is she saying?

AARON

How did you kn...

MADELINE

...she's a she. I'm assuming you found your Juliet.

AARON

Julianne.

JULIANNE

Hush, Aaron, she's being poetic.

MADELINE

What does she say?

AARON

She says she's not a light bulb.

And this makes Madeline smile. First time ever.

MADELINE

Quite right. She's a very beautiful woman.

And smiles again. Softer.

MADELINE

That. I see in your eyes.

Julianne slips her hand in Aaron's. She likes this lady.

MADELINE

You need something.

Yes, he does.

AARON

I'm being pursued by a dead man. He intends to kill me.

MADELINE

And you feel dialing 911 might be insufficient.

Guess so.

MADELINE

You need to detach him. What is his passion?

AARON

Love of Julianne. Hatred of  
rivals.

Her eyes cloud.

MADELINE

So everything he's doing. Just  
attaches him more.

No way out. Except...

MADELINE

You'd have to give her up.

She knows before he answers that...

AARON

He'll have to come take her.  
And he'll have to come through  
me.

She shakes her head. Her compassion real, touching. And in the  
silence...

JULIANNE

Tell her. I believe her baby  
sleeps with angels.

He just looks at Julianne. But she stares only at Madeline.

JULIANNE

I do believe it. Tell her.  
She may think I know.

And Aaron turns back...

MADELINE

What did she say?

AARON

She believes...that Gerald  
sleeps with angels.

Tears fill Madeline's eyes. One last thing we never thought we'd  
see. She looks urgently around the room, as if somehow the eyes  
could find Julianne, to ask her in a whisper...

MADELINE

Do you, really?

The lovers side by side, just alike.

JULIANNE

With all...

AARON

With all her heart.



Madelaine's tears come now. The release she's denied herself. Her voice shakes with...

MADELINE

Ask. If she'll visit me again.

He manages a nod. Of course, she'll come.

MADELINE

It's a shame...

Swallowing her tears. Her voice low. Aaron doesn't understand...

MADELINE

A shame you didn't get the sight...

Her helpless shrug...

MADELINE

...in time for your mother.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Aaron and Julianne crossing Fifth Avenue, holding hands. He's watching out for traffic. Her head is bowed in thought. At the edge of the park now, Aaron glances up at leafy trees. A street lamp. His eyes flicker...flicker again...and we CUT TO...

THE MOSAIC...the leafy trees, the street lamp. PANNING to the woman's leg, her arm, her fingers reaching for something, as...

...the lower body of a man steps across our view, and we shift to look around him, this time SEEING the woman's hand reaching to...

...a deck of PLAYING CARDS, lifting one, moving toward...

...a hand of SOLITAIRE laid nearly on the grass, the card lowering, as we SNAP...

BACK to the park. Julianne blinking up at him...

JULIANNE

What? What's happening...?

He stares down at her. Draws a breath...

EERIE VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, M-M-Mister...Wannnnnna  
p-p-p-p-puppy-y-y-y...

They boy beneath a tree, clutching his empty cardboard box, which is nearly being torn apart as his little body VIBRATES like a rattling engine. His baby sister watching with wide, uncomprehending eyes. Still clutching her dripping cone.

BOY  
Onnnnlyy t-t-t-t...

They can only stare at the heartbreaking figure. She glances to Aaron...

JULIANNE  
Is this...?

It is. And she steps to the boy. Straight to his eyes.

JULIANNE  
No, I don't want your puppies.

Shakes her head.

JULIANNE  
In fact. The one you sold my  
boyfriend, didn't work out.

The trembling boy blinks up in fear, confusion.

JULIANNE  
And you better. Take him back.

She closes her eyes. And calls...

JULIANNE  
Bul-lett! C'mere, boy...!

And from across Fifth Avenue, way down the block...

...something small comes running. It DARTS into traffic, just missing the wheels of each onrushing vehicle, until it reaches the curb. Full speed now, over the pavement, the grass, straight to...

...Julianne's arms. She kneels to hold the puppy. Kiss its face, as she has before. She looks in Bullet's eyes as if only the two of them will understand, and sets him gently in the cardboard box. Murmurs...

JULIANNE  
You stay here. I'll catch  
you later...

And the boy's twitching STOPS. He looks at the puppy. The look says everything. Softly...

AARON  
Where do you live, son?

BOY  
I don't.

AARON  
Poor choice of words. Where  
do you and your sister sleep?

BOY  
We play, mostly. At the  
Brownstone.

That interests them.

JULIANNE  
You like that place.

And the boy looks up to her...

BOY  
You can hide there. All those  
rooms...

Aaron and Julianne look at each other. The same thought...

BOY  
...nobody find you in a  
billion years.

She turns now. Natasha stares up with huge eyes, lapping her cone.

JULIANNE  
Is that good?

NATASHA  
No.

Keeps eating it. Julianne's beautiful smile.

JULIANNE  
Do you want a bye-bye kiss?

NATASHA  
No.

BOY  
She just likes to say no.  
A lot.

Oh. I see.

BOY  
She wants a kiss.

And Julianne kneels. Puts her hands up to the blonde curls.  
Natasha just staring big. Gently, Julianne moves the waffle cone  
aside. Sweet kiss on the mouth.

NATASHA  
Bye-bye.

ANGLE from the foliage...the couple leaving, hand-in-hand. And  
when they are gone...

Paul steps from the trees. Strolls across the ground, eyes fixed  
on where the couple had passed from view. Until...

BOY

Hey, Mister, wanna puppy? Only  
two bucks...

Paul turns to see him. Cardboard box held out. The Bullet panting  
happily. Natasha at his side, same as always.

PAUL

Y'know, kid. I think I do.

And pulls out his money. The small face stares up earnestly...

BOY

Sorry, Mister. He's not for  
sale.

INT. BROWNSTONE LOBBY - NIGHT

The long-decaying lobby in glaring light. Looks even spookier this  
way. Across the room, the main door is suddenly RIPPED open.  
Julianne enters first, blinking in the overpowering glare...

AARON

The dimmer switch is on  
backorder...

JULIANNE

...no, this is nice. Highlights  
the mold.

As he leads her toward the staircase, she's looking around at the  
ghastly ruin...

JULIANNE

Maybe a throw rug.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR

At the landing, he gestures down the corridor, to...

AARON

...431. I want you to meet  
my friend, if he's in...

She hesitates. Her eyes flicker up the staircase.

JULIANNE

You go ahead. I'll be right  
down.

A little anxious as she smiles. She heads up the staircase alone.  
He lets her go.

INT. EIGHTH FLOOR

The door to 806. Julianne standing, arm frozen in position to  
knock. She looks plenty scared. Holding her breath, she knocks  
once. Softly. And the door swings open into...

...a CHILD'S ROOM. Canopy bed, lace ruffles. Stuffed animals and books. Dolls, a dresser lined with toys. Too neat.

Lorraine stands at an open closet, sorting through little girl clothes. Thomas sits on the bed, holding a music box. And as they look up, of all the three...no one smiles.

Julianne walks through, looking at everything. The dress on which her mother's fingers rest. Small and white. With pale green trim.

JULIANNE

Come here a lot?

LORRAINE

First time.

There is no anger in these voices. Only the strain of long-held silence. Their eyes never meet. Julianne wanders to the dresser. Her fingers touch a picture frame. Pretty Julianne. At five. Behind her, a throat clears...

LORRAINE

I wasn't ready. Til now.

Julianne opens a drawer. pulls out a barrette, shaped like a butterfly. Muses...

JULIANNE

I thought I took this with me.

THOMAS

You did. Later.

And she turns to him.

THOMAS

The room is 1973.

He holds out the music box. A sweet, sort of helpless smile...

THOMAS

This will break in three years.  
But right now, it plays...

He turns the key. The melody to 'Where Are You Going?', the lullaby we've heard her sing. She goes to him, now. Sits beside him on the bed. As the music plays...

THOMAS

All the times I planned to  
fix this...

JULIANNE

Well. You were traveling.

THOMAS

...every chance I got.

Quiet and heartfelt. Meant as an apology. He looks to see how it is taken.

LORRAINE  
I could have fixed it...

JULIANNE  
You worked nights.

LORRAINE  
...I did that for me. Because  
it made me less lonely.

She sinks to the floor now. At her daughter's feet. And when the ballerina stops...Julianne looks at her.

LORRAINE  
Why are you here?

Direct look between them. Long and unblinking.

JULIANNE  
Just tonight, I met a woman.  
Her child has gone away.

A narrow breath, to tell her...

JULIANNE  
And very soon, I think.  
Yours will too.

Silence.

LORRAINE  
Why now...?

Her heart breaking before her daughter's eyes.

LORRAINE  
...can't I have one chance...to  
show how much...

...the voice trails off, helpless. Julianne feels it, too. This isn't fair, any of it.

JULIANNE  
Why is everything so...so very  
hard. Do we deserve that?

LORRAINE  
Some of us do.

JULIANNE  
I don't think so anymore. I meet  
these poor people...searching  
for a little...

She doesn't know what.

JULIANNE  
...kindness, I think. To hold  
them together. And we just  
make it...

A rueful smile. Down at her lap.

JULIANNE  
...so goddamned hard on each  
other.

And up again. To her mother's eyes.

JULIANNE  
I'm going tonight, I think.  
And I need to say I'm sorry...

The honesty in that.

LORRAINE  
...you? You were the baby.  
We did this.

Yes. Except...

JULIANNE  
I didn't forgive. And that's  
the worst.

Lorraine's lays her head in her baby's lap. Julianne looks to her  
father...

JULIANNE  
I need you to forgive me,  
Poppa. It's not too late.

His eyes are his answer. And in Julianne's lap...

...her mother HOLDS her strong. Holds her. As if she would never  
let her go.

INT. WILLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The door to 431 stands ajar. Light pouring from the hallway into  
the darkened abandoned room. Filth and neglect and emptiness  
everywhere. Aaron sits on the floor. Scrap of paper. Stub of  
pencil. And as he writes...

...he hears something. A sound. Or was it? Chillingly quiet now.  
His eyes flicker. And we CUT TO...

THE MOSAIC...the leaves, the lamp, the woman's leg. Her arm  
reaching as the man STEPS across our view. We move to see the card  
in her fingers. The solitaire hand on the grass. And as she plays  
her card, we now SEE...

...the man's HAND RISING into frame. Held loosely, easily...

...a flat gray PISTOL, and we SNAP...

BACK to the abandoned room. Aaron still as death, paper and pencil forgotten in his hands. And...

...a CRASH! Far below, main door. A frozen moment. A jubilant, warbling...

PAUL (V.O., distant)  
LET'S PARTYYYY!!

Trapped in the building. Scrawling wildly...

AARON (V.O.)  
...find me - help me - good as gone...

...dropping the paper, BOLTING from the room, DOWN the floodlit corridor. Below, FOOTFALLS begin up the stairs, as...

JULIANNE (V.O.)  
Hurry...

She's on the stairs, halfway to the next floor, and he RUNS, bolting up to her, grasping her hand, as footfalls CLIMB far below them, and up they RACE, two, three stairs at a time, fifth floor landing, and up, chest pounding, she STUMBLES, he catches her arm, PULLS her up, to...

...sixth floor landing and up again, POUNDING on the ancient stairs, her breath ragged, keeping her balance, to the seventh floor, where she tugs him DOWN the corridor. Past closed doors, a few ajar into darkness, running together, she's looking at every door...

AARON  
What are you looking for?

JULIANNE  
...a feel, I guess, something.  
I'm not quite...

...slowing to a stop, breathing hard, looking in all directions...

JULIANNE  
I've never done this...

Her eyes taking in 741, 743...

AARON  
If you bring it with you,  
does it matter?

She grasps his hand, tight. Closes her eyes...

JULIANNE  
...okay, okay...just...



Takes a breath. Reaches for 747. And enters, into...

...a gigantic BALLROOM, maybe a hundred feet long. Tables, chairs a polished dance floor. Gleaming bar. Above the center, a massive chandelier of shimmering crystal. It is breathtaking. Staring, gaping, he closes the door, the world, behind them. Murmurs...

AARON

You do good work.

And the walls CREAK, the floor ROLLS gently.

JULIANNE

It's a ship. We're at sea.

Above them, the huge chandelier rustles slightly with the motion. They begin slowly to walk through. Neither can quite believe it.

JULIANNE

It was the Christmas they got back together, and we were a family. I was ten years old...

Through the tables. He's ahead of her now. Almost to the bar...

JULIANNE

And I thought...this is my life from now on. Every Christmas... everything...beautiful, perfect...

He looks back.

JULIANNE

All surprises would be happy ones...

Her tiny shrug. As if an apology.

JULIANNE

But we never came again.

And then...

JULIANNE

I thought...

A smile that flickers past. And gone.

AARON

What?

The dark eyes go down. He takes her hand. When she looks up...

JULIANNE

I thought. Well, I'll be married in this room...

There it is. Why they're here. She swallows against feelings that choke her. But she won't look away.

AARON

Was there never another man  
you wanted to marry? Because  
it's alright if there was.

And from her heart...

JULIANNE

No, never. I told you that,  
Aaron. Don't you believe me?

In his, there is no question.

AARON

I believe you.

His eyes linger. Then, glancing around...

AARON

No one on board, huh?  
Only us...

JULIANNE

We bring the place. The people  
belong to themselves.

And he smiles...

AARON

Well, then. We need to elect  
a captain. I vote for me.

The gentle seas rock the room, just a little. She smiles back...

JULIANNE

...so do I.

His smile fades. But his eyes stay right with her.

AARON

You thought you'd be married  
in this room...

Just above a whisper...

AARON

And so you will.

She doesn't understand. He turns from her now, opens the bar's  
refrigerator. Pulls out a beer. POPS the top, TEARING OFF the  
ring. He holds it up to her eyes...

AARON

By the authority vested in me,  
as Captain of this vessel...

She looks as if she might cry. He gives her a very goofy face.  
What's up? She giggles, sniffles...

JULIANNE  
Aaron, I'm dead.

AARON  
Don't you believe in mixed  
marriages?

She can't believe how much she loves him. Murmurs...

JULIANNE  
...I guess relationships. Are  
about compromise.

So he takes her hand. Walks her to the center of the dance floor.  
Stares into her eyes...

AARON  
Do you, Julianne...take Aaron  
as your wedded husband...

JULIANNE  
...this is very unorthodox...

AARON  
...to cherish and protect him,  
in sickness and health. To  
comfort and encourage him. To  
forgive him and to give him  
strength when his is gone.

Her smile is gone now. This has become very serious.

AARON  
...to be part of him, the best  
part of him, forever.

Forever.

AARON  
...and do you swear that this  
love...which has reached beyond  
death...

She starts to cry, she can't help it. So he whispers...

AARON  
Hush, Black Eyes. I'm  
being poetic.

Well, she has to smile at that. Quiets to hear...

AARON  
...shall bind you...to each  
other...for as long as that  
love shall live?

JULIANNE  
Yes, I do.

He takes the beer can ring. Slips it onto her finger.

AARON

Me, too. I now pronounce us  
husband and wife. I may kiss  
the bride.

And slowly, he does. The one perfect kiss of his life. As it  
continues, his body moves against the woman in his arms. And they  
are dancing. A dreamy murmur...

JULIANNE

How come no band...?

They are one body now, swaying, spinning so slowly, effortlessly  
together. He brings his lips to her ear...

AARON (singing)

My ship has sails that are  
trimmed with silk...

Soft, thin voice. With the dreams of childhood.

AARON (singing)

Its decks are made of gold...

She holds him forever tight now...

AARON (singing)

And of jam and spice,  
There's a paradise in the...

...DARKNESS. The room, the world, plunged into black as Julianne  
GASPS. Still clinging to each other, as the ship's INTERCOM clicks  
on. Loud. Static precedes the rather bored, routine voice...

PAUL (O.S.)

...aaahh, this is the Captain.  
Like to welcome you all aboard  
our, aaahh...Judgement Day Cruise...  
one of our least, aaahh...popular  
holiday excursions...

Aaron has her hand now, tugging her swiftly through the darkened  
ballroom. A neon green EXIT.

PAUL (O.S.)

...we've planned our usual  
grab bag of surprises...

Through the exit into a nearly pitch-black corridor. Along the  
wall now, feeling their way...

PAUL (O.S.)

...so just relax, kids, and  
remember to, aaahh...

...Aaron at a small doorway. He steps through, pulling her along  
with him...

PAUL (O.S.)

...have fun!

...CLICKS off. Simultaneously, a green light BLINKS ON in what they can now see is the ship's elevator. As he turns to her, the doors SLAM SHUT. On the panel, the button marked G glows green and bright. A frozen instant, and the elevator LURCHES into motion. Going up, slowly...

PAUL (O.S.)  
You're heading for the galley,  
kids...

Aaron's hand stabs the STOP button, but the elevator keeps moving.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Don't come too quick. I'm  
still selecting my cleaver.

SLAM all the buttons now. Useless. Still rising. Aaron WHIRLS from the buttons, eyes and hands searching the walls, roof, as if for some hidden panel, trap door. Julianne, near-hysterical, POUNDING the buttons with her fists, turns with helpless eyes, as...

...the car CLANGS to a stop. The deck indicator glows G for galley. Their eyes riveted to the door, she begins to TWITCH, and his arm slides protectively around her. He shivers slightly himself, as we HEAR the door OPEN, and together...

...they stare in AWE. At what we cannot see. Until...

...the first SNOWFLAKES drift into the tiny compartment, and we SNAP TO REVERSE ANGLE...

...deep SNOWY WOODS in first light. Exquisite, dreamlike. Flakes drifting to cover endless trees in their soft blanket. And as we step out, hesitantly...

...our feet CRUNCH deep into snow. Through the woods now, Aaron and Julianne holding hands, looking around in equal wonder at the sight of it, flakes settling gently on their clothes and hair, Julianne tasting it on her fingers...

AARON  
Where is this? From your  
childhood...?

JULIANNE  
I've never seen it before. Or  
anything like it.

And they look at each other. How is that possible? Is this a dream?

AARON  
Maybe Paul can't find it.

She looks away, searching the trees, the snow-covered ground as they go. Instinctively huddling closer to him, and suddenly...

...he stops. A huge oak, covered with new snow. He is looking up. Up to the tall branches. A child's treehouse. Aaron blinks at it. Then turns. slowly, as in a dream...

...to a very particular view. There, in distance, between the trees, behind the snow. A farmhouse. He stares, stares, and... reaches now. To the trunk of the huge oak. Wiping away the snow, to reveal...

...a HEART carved into the bark. Freshly cut, by the look of it. Two sets of initials. MC. WC. A lover's arrow, as Julianne...

...SCREAMS; Aaron WHIPPING around to see...

...PAUL coming at them through the trees, a gigantic CLEAVER in his hands, a frozen instant, and Aaron...

...stalks straight TOWARD Paul...

JULIANNE (O.S.)  
AARON, NOOOOOO!

...and FLINGS his arms WIDE, to accept the blow. And for the first time ever...

...Paul stops. Uncertain. Cleaver drawn back, poised.

JULIANNE (O.S.)  
NO, PLEEEEEASE!!

Dead at Paul's eyes, a quiet...

AARON  
Go ahead. Pal.

Paul conflicted. Confusion, crazy rage, maybe even a little fear.

AARON (V.O.)  
The tree made me realize. Only one person could have redecorated us to this place...

...and Paul SWINGS in blind FURY, the CLEAVER SLASHING STRAIGHT THROUGH Aaron's body.

AARON (V.O.)  
...me.

Which remains upright.

AARON (V.O.)  
I guess my first reaction was relief...

Where the cleaver passed through him, only a faint silver GLOW, which SHIMMERS and fades.

AARON (V.O.)  
Then I felt a little foolish, not to have realized...

His hand touches where the mortal wound should be.

AARON (V.O.)

...I'd been dead, all along.

Paul has backed away, stumbling to his knees in the snow, powerless. Aaron turns...

...Julianne is frozen, watchful. But not at all surprised. As he goes to her, he sees the distant farmhouse through snow and trees. Hears a murmured...

JULIANNE (O.S.)

...Merry Christmas.

He looks to the dark eyes.

AARON

My father. He carved those initials...

JULIANNE

...because he loved her.

Yes, he did. She has to tell him...

JULIANNE

See, love can't do everything.

Takes his hands in hers.

JULIANNE

It was never supposed to.

Her bittersweet smile. The look holds. And he smiles back.

JULIANNE

Are your folks in that house?

They are.

AARON

It's early, I think they're still sleeping. In each other's arms.

She reaches both hands. Touches his dear face.

JULIANNE

Well. We'll let them sleep.

Aaron blinks. And when his eyes open, we are in...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Warm summer's night. A small floodlit clearing. Everyone's position remains precisely the same, Julianne touching his face, Paul crouching away off. Only the setting has changed to...

...the place of the mosaic. Looking around at the trees, the streetlamp, the solitaire hand across the grass. Above the treetops, we now see the skyline of Central Park East. He murmurs...

AARON  
Where are we...?

JULIANNE  
Still in the Brownstone, you're just redecorating. First, the woods...and now...

He's looking around at the vast skyline. Paul crouched in lamplight, staring back, with neutral but interested eyes.

JULIANNE  
Can you remember now?

He's trying. With everything in him.

JULIANNE  
I was waiting at the edge of the park. For the man I loved.

And on his look...

JULIANNE  
That means you, doofus. I was waiting for you.

SEE it now, the FLASHBACK of her story. She reads on a bench, beneath a light.

AARON (O.S.)  
For me...?

JULIANNE (O.S.)  
Sure. I'd left Paul six months before.

From out of the shadows behind her, a SILHOUETTE appears...

JULIANNE (O.S.)  
And then I'd come to you. We were together all that time...

The silhouette is Paul. And his pistol.

JULIANNE (O.S.)  
You were the love of my life.

Paul puts the pistol into her neck, as she STARTLES.

AARON (O.S.)  
But Paul was a jealous guy.

Her eyes look up. Into that crazy overbroad grin.



JULIANNE (O.S.)

He took me way into the park  
that night...

SEE them now, in this very clearing. Julianne terrified, kneeling  
before Paul's pistol...

JULIANNE (O.S.)

He gave me a pack of cards.

At gunpoint, Julianne opens the deck, deals out the hand...

JULIANNE (O.S.)

There had been some gang murders  
in the park. The victims were  
found with a solitaire hand...

And slowly, tears streaming, she begins to play the cards...

JULIANNE (O.S.)

Crips and Bloods, topping each  
other. Depending on whether  
the last card...

Red seven. On the black eight.

JULIANNE (O.S.)

...was red or black.

Paul's pistol RISES now, into frame. Aimed at her.

JULIANNE (O.S.)

So when he killed me, the  
police would think...

And she stops at the next card. Her nose wriggles, sensing...

JULIANNE (O.S.)

And then you found me.

The FLASH OF MOSAIC we've seen before, our VIEW through the leaves,  
Julianne playing the card, Paul's pistol moving into frame, as...

...Julianne TURNS to us, terrified, Paul stepping between, raising  
the gun DEAD at us, and we SNAP to REVERSE ANGLE...

...Aaron CHARGING from the trees, Paul calmly standing his ground,  
and...

...BLAM! He FIRES directly INTO Aaron's chest, and Aaron goes  
DOWN, we HEAR Julianne's SCREAM, and Paul WHEELS to see her on her  
feet, RACING past him, running to Aaron, as Paul...

...FIRES INTO her back, and in SLO-MO...

...Julianne's body ARCS, crumples lifeless to the ground, as...

...Aaron RISES somehow, BURSTS toward Paul in fury, and as SLO-MO  
CONTINUES, Paul FIRES...

...INTO Aaron, point-blank, but Aaron...

...KEEPS COMING, so Paul FIRES AGAIN, and yet AGAIN, and Aaron  
is...

...ON HIM, a crazed animal, pure terror in Paul's eyes as Aaron  
RIPS the pistol from Paul's hand, JAMS the barrel in Paul's face,  
and...

...BLOWS HIM AWAY...

...and turning, still in SLO-MO, to the place where Julianne lies,  
Aaron stumbles, FALLS to his knees, and...

...goes to her, across the ground. He can't die until he gets  
there. And when he does...

...he turns her gently. The black eyes stare past him. Lifeless,  
unseeing. He closes them so carefully.

Slumps across her. Very still.

WIDE ANGLE of the clearing. Three bodies in silence. Manhattan  
above the trees. and CUT...

BACK TO the present. Aaron standing, Julianne kneeling on the  
grass. The love in her eyes...

AARON  
You're telling me...I forgot  
all this.

The wonder so great that a smile begins to form...

AARON  
I forgot I was dead.

And bangs his own head. What a dope. She whispers...

JULIANNE  
Hey. Nobody's perfect.

And he sinks slowly to the grass. To be closer to her.

JULIANNE  
It's called denial.

She means this.

JULIANNE  
Denial of death is the strongest  
attachment possible. So strong  
that it makes you present for  
all the living.

Her eyes fill. Above the beautiful smile.

JULIANNE  
It means you wanted life so  
desperately. You must have  
loved someone very much.

Someone. Very much.

JULIANNE

Of course, you could see all the dead, because you were dead. You just didn't know it.

He just stares into those eyes. Deadpan...

AARON

This explains. So much.

She tries not to smile...

JULIANNE

How I knew about oranges and books and...what you were dreaming. What made you shy. I had a six-month head start.

She watches him. Flooded with questions.

AARON

Why didn't Serena know I was dead?

JULIANNE

It only happened four days before you saw her. Some gang kids found our bodies, took your wallet. You were just an unidentified victim...

The smile. The one he died for.

JULIANNE

You weren't special. To anyone but me.

She touches his face.

JULIANNE

Very scary that first day. You didn't know me. What if you wouldn't fall a second time?

AARON

Yeh, right. I was really on the fence, there.

Just beaming at him. So softly...

JULIANNE

You were always the one. The only one.

AARON

Your parents died. Coming to stay with you...and this guy you were living with.

She ~~puts~~ a fingertip to the tip of his nose. This guy.

JULIANNE

So now they've met him. When I left her tonight...my mom put her arms around me. She said, keep him safe.

Her hands trail down the length of his arms. Her smile fades now. The ~~scared~~ look is starting to creep back around the edges.

JULIANNE

Aren't you wondering. Why I didn't tell you?

AARON

No.

No?

AARON

It was our best chance to stay together. The longer I thought I was alive, the longer I'd be around for you to attach to.

And slowly, he turns...

AARON

What I can't figure out...

...to Paul. Still crouching across the way.

AARON

...is why you didn't tell me. If I knew I was dead, I'd start to unravel...and then so would she. You'd be rid of us both...

No overbroad grin any longer. Just a straightforward sigh...

PAUL

...unfortunately, I'd be gone as well.

Quiet. Simple.

PAUL

Hating the two of you. Is what keeps me around.

(beat)

It's called Catch-22.

A shrug.

PAUL

See, torturing you guys gave me reason to live...

His little smile...so to speak.

PAUL

But the tricky part, was to never quite 'kill' you. Because when you realized I couldn't... the game would be up. Believe me, it hasn't been an easy line to walk...

Aaron just nods. Quietly back...

AARON

...my condolences.

Then, he realizes something. Looks down at his hands, his body...

AARON

Hey. I'm not twitching or anything.

Turns to Julianne...

AARON

...and neither are you.

They look to each other's eyes. What's going on here? As somewhere behind them...

...a DOOR OPENS.

It is, of course, the door to room 747. It appears as a rectangular HOLE opening right in the center of dark trees and foliage, brilliant LIGHT STREAMS IN from the hall, making the figure in the doorway seem like...

...an angel from heaven.

AARON

Hey, man. Great to see you!

...and WILLIE enters, slow and shy, looking around at the park...

AARON

...this is just temporary. We're thinking of bringing in a professional decorator.

Willie doesn't understand that. But he does warm to Aaron's easy smile. He comes to the young couple. Sinks to the grass, staring at the beautiful woman. And in complete innocence...

WILLIE

You're his true love, you know. Did he tell you that?

She loves this boy. Nods, yes. He told me that. But Aaron is realizing something...

AARON

Maybe we've got more time than we thought. See, Willie here died in the war...

He pulls back the blue uniform jacket. The t-shirt announces WAR IS NOT HEALTHY FOR CHILDREN AND OTHER LIVING THINGS.

AARON

When did you die, Willie? What year.

WILLIE

'62, sir.

Wow. They're both impressed.

AARON

Thirty years, and you still look...

...and then he stops. Realizing...

AARON

I didn't know we lost anyone in '62. Were you with Kennedy's adviser teams...?

Willie is suddenly confused.

AARON

Where did you die, son? The Mekong Delta?

WILLIE

Shiloh, sir.

And everything. Stops.

WILLIE

It was Confederate artillery that did me. April 6...1862.

Slowly, unconsciously, her hand reaches. Touches the Union jacket, the wispy goatse, the flowing hair...

JULIANNE

Did you always wear your hair this way?

WILLIE

Yes, ma'am. It goes in and out of fashion, but I like to keep it long.

She nods. Smiles. He opens his jacket, to show...

WILLIE

They change the shirts sometimes.  
tho. I try to stay sharp on that.

Aaron raises his fist. Murmurs...

AARON

...keep the faith.

He and Willie do their Sixties handclasp.

JULIANNE

A hundred thirty years...

WILLIE

...and I'm a youngster to some.  
Appears there's really no limit...

She looks to Aaron. In her eyes at last, the realization...

JULIANNE

...bound to each other. As long  
as love shall live...

A hush between them.

JULIANNE

...well, no problem there.  
That's our wedding promise.

As the look holds...

WILLIE

Course, it takes some gettin'  
used to. This bein' around  
forever.

AARON

Does it.

He's still just staring at her.

WILLIE

For instance. You won't ever  
get any older. She'll always  
look just like that...

Tough break for Aaron. She whispers back...

JULIANNE

...course, I'll change my  
t-shirts...

He can't keep from kissing her any longer. Sweet and slow. And so  
lingering that an embarrassed Willie clears his throat...

WILLIE

Uh...who's your friend?

Oh, yes. Aaron had almost forgotten.

AARON  
Well, next to us. He's the  
luckiest guy around.

And turns. To see Paul crouching there.

AARON  
Aren't you, pal. You get to  
watch us...and hate us...forever.

Watching now. As Paul absorbs the enormity of that.

AARON  
Because living in your jealousy,  
and your envy, is your only way  
to stay around.

Glances to Julianne. A playful smile...

AARON  
I don't know about you. But I  
could get to enjoy this...

The fear of that, the horror, creeping across Paul's eyes.

AARON  
It's what you want, isn't it?

JULIANNE  
Because if it isn't...

Here her voice is very soft, very kind...

JULIANNE  
...you could just let go.

And for the first time ever. Paul TWITCHES violently. Her voice  
comes soothingly, almost lovingly...

JULIANNE  
...maybe it's time to move  
on. Maybe it's best.

...and his body CONVULSES in SPASMS, the white sticky substance  
oozing from his mouth, his nostrils, even trickling from his ears,  
as he VIBRATES wildly...

PAUL  
...whaaaat...whaat dooo I  
doooooooooo...?

Tears fill his eyes. The convulsions horrible to watch. But her  
voice grows even softer...

JULIANNE  
...let go of hating, Paul.  
And wish us well.



A held beat, the spasms seem to quiet. His eyes locked to hers...

...he nods. He does. And in that moment, Paul has...

...VANISHED: Only a silver GLOW where his body used to be. It SHIMMERS and fades. And in the hush that follows. A simple...

WILLIE (O.S.)

...gone to glory.

EXT. THE BROWNSTONE - DAWN

The nailed-up door stands WIDE OPEN. A couple comes through it. Arms around each other. Down the steps together to see...

...the street is still bombed-out. But the sunrise is alive with promise. As they stroll away...

...he suddenly jog-steps to one side, pulling her with him. They look down to see...

...a snail. Doggedly crossing the empty pavement. Nobody around for miles. They give it a wide and friendly berth, and...

Keep on going.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

We have seen these woods, this huge oak, before. But only in snow. The snow of Christmas. Tonight, moonlight blankets all, as winter had once long ago. And we HEAR...

...the CAR pull up. See the two figures get out, walk, hand-in-hand. To the oak.

The carved initials are faded smooth. But despite the years, in the moonlight, we see them. The heart. The arrow.

The proof. That love once lived here.

AARON

I'm glad we came. If only for this.

His fingers touch the wood. She murmurs...

JULIANNE

You can't give up. We drove all this way...

She nestles into him. His eyes stay on the carving.

JULIANNE

Mine stayed for me. Waiting. To set things right.

He nods, absently. Yes, they did.

JULIANNE

Love, anger, they aren't the only attachments, you know.

She kisses his ear. So tenderly.

JULIANNE

...don't forget hope.

His eyes look up. The dark farmhouse. Across the way.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

They stand at the door. Aaron seems frozen solid. So she KNOCKS, bold and LOUD. He shivers once in the night air, and the door...

...OPENS. Aaron gazes in. Struck speechless:

We know her right away. A smile as lovely as the rest of her. The cup of cocoa, steaming in her hand. She regards the stranger with wonder. A leaping heart, even before the words...

AARON

Merry Christmas, Mom.

And she GASPS, the cup falls, SPLASHES headlessly, and she is...

...IN his arms. Holding TIGHT. Tight. Her eyes squeezed shut, there is no sound. It is silent enough to hear a heartbeat. At last, she pulls back, takes his face in her hands...

MOTHER

Oh, Frank, come see...

And he is there, tall and broad-shouldered in his cardigan sweater. As overcome as his son. Who tells them both...

AARON

This is Julianne. She brought me home.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A family at a Christmas table. It is heaped with food, shining with candles. We see the tree, the presents wrapped with love. Where they have always been.

And as our family eats, as they talk in excited bursts, as the men watch the women with such pride...

...we pull AWAY slowly from this room, out through the window. The farmhouse is lit now, from within. The woods, from above. As the peace, the rightness, the eternal nature of it all settles on us...

AARON (V.O.)

Don't forget hope...

The voice laughs softly. We TILT to treetops, stars.

AARON (V.O.)  
Words to live by, huh?

FADE TO BLACK. ROLL END CREDITS.