

FILM SCORE

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INT. SMALL COLLEGE HALLWAY - DAY

The hustle and bustle of the usual traffic jam on the way to class while managing gossip, dodging bullies, and whatever is hip on YouTube.

DAVE WHITAKER stands in the middle of the craze as students rush by him. A basic white t-shirt that's far too big for him, drapes over his skinny frame. Plaid cargo shorts fall past his knees.

It's completely QUIET, other than a slight HUM that may or may not be vibrating in Dave's ears.

TEACHER (O. S.)
Dave. Mr. Whitaker!

Snapping to, Dave turns and faces DR. BEHAR, English literature extraordinaire.

BEHAR
You deaf, son?

DAVE
Sometimes wish I was.

BEHAR
Exams tomorrow. A final day of college remains. Muting your life won't help. Get to class and stop blocking traffic.

Looking back over his left shoulder, two football JOCKS lean against a locker. They stop talking as a perfectly pretty, hometown girl walks by - RACHEL MOORE.

Wide-eyed, Dave turns to look too, surprised they're not making fun of him, but -

CRASH! He turns right into her. Books topple to the floor.

DAVE
Oh my gosh. I'm so sorry. I'm so -

JOCKS
Whitaker! Football tryouts in the fall. You could be designated idiot. We don't have one yet.

They laugh as if they're discovering laughter for the first time.

Dave continues trying to pick up Rachel's books.

DAVE
(to Rachel)
I really am...I mean, I'm such...

RACHEL
You would think college would have
made them mature enough to mind
their own biz -

Fumbling one of her giant text books, Dave's scrawny arms can barely pick it up.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Oh, seriously, you don't have to -

DAVE
(trying not to grunt)
Who knew calculus was so light?

RACHEL
Thanks.

Gathering himself, he stands and nods with a terrified smile - oh my gosh, she's beautiful.

With a slight smile, she continues down the hall.

He readjusts his backpack as the BELL rings. Head down, he pushes through the hall traffic.

EXT. SMALL COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

A small, Midwestern college with a round-about drive pours students from its doors. Summer is almost upon them, and an excitement radiates as only an impending summer break can.

Dave stops in the middle of the circle round-about. He takes a deep breath, turns and looks at his tiny college. The rest of his life awaits. Everything grows quiet again - near silence as a basic HUM reverberates again.

FADE TO:

INT. WHITAKER HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The late setting sun shines its way into a quaint, middle-income kitchen. A center, butcher block island is filled with food - enough to cater a party.

Dave enters and stops with a skid. He sees the food. Hears MURMURS of guests in the backyard. He cringes.

In storms MRS. WHITAKER, a plump, loving yet forceful woman, with a crumb-filled tray.

MRS. WHITAKER

Oh, Dave, good, you're home. Grab those reuben sandwiches and set them on the table outside, please.

DAVE

Please don't tell me family is here.

MRS. WHITAKER

That's kind of the point of a family reunion, Dave. Yes. Family is here.

She points at the little appetizers.

MRS. WHITAKER (CONT'D)

Reubens.

DAVE

Mom, I told you that I have the biggest test of my life tomorrow. I can't spend time with people I don't know. I need to study!

MRS. WHITAKER

People you don't know? They're your family.

DAVE

Cousins don't count as family.

She sighs - annoyed.

MRS. WHITAKER

Then now it's time you do get to know them. You'll study later.

Rolling his eyes, he shuffles outside with the tray of reuben sandwiches.

EXT. WHITAKER HOME - NIGHT

A small gaggle of family members mingle around a white-clothed table full of half-eaten finger food. A basic bar top with near-empty liquor bottles and beer cans looks as though it's been visited quite a bit more than the buffet.

Dave places the tray of sandwiches on the table, turns and surveys his family.

Aunts and uncles he hasn't seen since he was five. A couple younger cousins play tag in the far corner of the yard, while two grey-haired women sit, muted, with a plastered smile on their face and empty rocks glasses in their fingers.

After a couple steps over to the bar, Dave grabs a bottle of Jim Beam and pours it into a small plastic cup. As he searches for a can of some kind of mixer, an elderly chap wearing a driving cap and cane with an ornate dragon's head at the top, sidles up to him.

MERVIN could be 187 years old, but his energy and spunk allows for a younger flare - maybe he's a sprite 85.

MERVIN

No more Coke. Gonna have to drink that like a man.

Dave stops searching for a mixer and looks at Mervin. He has no idea who he is, pauses, looks at his plastic cup filled with whiskey.

Mervin's smile is spread across his face as he waits for Dave to take the shot.

DAVE

I don't even drink. Don't know why I -

MERVIN

Even the greatest men in history needed to drown themselves in some form of mind altering drug.

DAVE

If you're comparing me to a 'great man in history', you're just proving my point that I don't know anyone here and evidently you're family...?

MERVIN

Distant relative. I'm just here for the free booze.

DAVE

I live here, so...

Dave throws back the shot. He winces as the liquor slides down his throat. It's awful.

MERVIN

That's what I like to see. An underage student getting drunk before his final college exam. Dammit, I wish I was your age again.

DAVE

How'd you know -

MERVIN

Did you know your mom has a tendency to never shut up?

DAVE

And to never listen.

Mervin puts his hand on the small of Dave's back. Awkward.

He hobbles with his cane and lightly pulls Dave toward a round table filled with empty liquor bottles. The old man sits. Waits. Looks up at Dave as the kid hovers over him.

MERVIN

Ya gonna hover like a psycho, or sit down and join an old man for a drink?

Doing as he's told, Dave sits. Looks at the empty liquor bottles in front of Mervin.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

Relax. I only had two of those.

(beat)

You believe in angels, Davey?

DAVE

It's Dave, but...

MERVIN

Fairies? Spirit guides? God, even?

DAVE

I really don't know what -

MERVIN

Here's the deal. I'm your mom's second cousin twice removed on her dad's side. My immediate family is dead. No more kids around. My dog died last week.

DAVE

Man, I'm really -

MERVIN

Never mind, he was old.
Point is, kid, these people in this
dumpy backyard in the middle of the
lame Midwest, are all I have left,
and yet I chose to come up to talk
to you. Why?

DAVE

Because you wanted to have another
drink and I was at the bar?

MERVIN

I would have had another drink even
if you wouldn't have been at the
bar. C'mon, kid, give yourself some
credit! I chose you!

Mervin straightens one of his legs and digs into his pants pocket. Finally ripping something out of it, he places it on the table.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

You have an exam tomorrow, yeah?

DAVE

Yes.

MERVIN

Nervous?

DAVE

Yeah, I -

MERVIN

It's only the rest of your life.

He taps on the object he placed on the table. It looks like a basic plastic CD jacket.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

This will help.

Struggling to make his old legs stand him up, Mervin pushes off his cane and straightens up.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

I used to work in the movie
business. Created music for some of
the greats.

Dave picks up the CD case, studies it. Nothing special about its appearance.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

These are the songs that never made it into any of the movies. The studios had no idea what they were missing. It's gold. Helped me through more tough times than you'll ever know.

DAVE

Uh, thanks.

Turning toward Dave, the old man gives him a serious look, then motions toward the CD case.

MERVIN

Wouldn't it be nice to have someone or something guide you through your life? Pointing the way? Fairies and spirit guides and angels - all bull. This?

He taps on the CD case again.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

Your whole life. It's gonna be just fine.

Spinning on his heels, Mervin tips his driver's cap at Dave and walks away.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

Oh! I almost forgot...

Heading back toward the table, Dave watches Mervin reach for -
A half-empty, giant bottle of Jack Daniels. He raises it in a toast.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

Final piece of advice? Just listen.

Dave watches him leave - surprised at how lame the final piece of advice actually was.

INT. DAVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A soft shaft of moonlight beams in through a dirty window and on to the floor of a clothes-strewn bedroom.

Drool drips from Dave's mouth as he lays on his back, out cold, with a giant textbook over his chest. The book slowly slips down his chest and falls barely an inch, but...it JOLTS Dave awake.

Pushing the heavy book off his chest, it falls to the floor with a thud. He sits at the end of his bed, staring at the fallen book. Brushing thin fingers through his hair -

DAVE

I'm screwed. And I think I hate you.

With a deep breath, he gingerly picks up the book as if physically apologizing and neatly places it on a desk.

At the end of the desk is Mervin's CD. A GLEAM of moonlight flashes off of the plastic case. Dave looks at the clock next to it: 2:17am

DAVE (CONT'D)

I may never sleep again.

A shimmer of moonlight GLEAMS from the CD case again - a bit over zealous this time.

He grabs the dumb CD case, opens it, and rips out the disc.

DAVE (CONT'D)

How do I even play this thing?

He looks at his iPhone. Yeah, that's not gonna work. Shuffling over to his closet, he digs through old clothes and Christmas sweaters until he finally finds -

A dusty CD player.

Plugging the stereo in, he pushes a button and it SLOWLY sticks out its CD tray tongue as if it hasn't opened its mouth in a decade.

He plops the CD on the tray. It closes - even slower than before and as if it's asking if this really is such a good idea.

Plopping himself down in bed, still fully dressed, he presses his weary head against the pillow.

A perfect LULLABY softly twangs from the stereo's speakers.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Hm. Not bad. I might actually -

SNORE. He's out cold.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITAKER HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

The birds aren't even chirping, it's so early.

Dave bumbles down a back staircase that leads into the humble Whitaker family kitchen. He stops at the bottom step to see -

STEWART, a 13 year-old who thinks he's 47, munching on perfectly browned cinnamon toast.

DAVE

What time is it?

Flipping his wrist, Stewart looks at his iWatch - it blinks 5:39am. He raises his wrist, showing the watch to Dave, and chomps into his toast again.

DAVE (CONT'D)

And you're awake, why?

STEWART

Lawns to mow.

Continuing off the bottom step, Dave rubs his eyes and heads for the fridge.

DAVE

After that first million before ya hit puberty, huh?

STEWART

Happened last year.

Still chewing, Stewart barely acknowledges his brother.

DAVE

The million or the puberty?

STEWART

Test today, eh?

DAVE

Ugh.

STEWART

It only defines and sets up the rest of your life. Big deal.

DAVE

Thanks for that. Cereal?

STEWART

Pantry. Leave some Krispies for me.

Swinging the refrigerator door open, Dave reaches and wraps his hand around the milk container.

FRENZIED MUSIC erupts as if a murderer is chasing a slumber party princess!

DAVE
What the fu--?!

He pulls his hand back and stands up straight. Looks around. The music STOPS abruptly.

Bending over again and looking into the fridge, he hears a slow JAWS-LIKE, suspenseful theme.

Standing up straight again, he looks at Stewart. His brother is blissfully licking the cinnamon from his fingers.

DAVE (CONT'D)
What is that?

STEWART
Cinnamon. S'matter with you?

DAVE
I just -

Dave shakes it off and bends over again - SUSPENSEFUL MUSIC fills the kitchen once again.

Reaching in quickly, he -

Grabs the milk - ACTION HORROR MUSIC erupts!

Rushing to the kitchen table, he sets the milk jug down.

SUSPENSEFUL MUSIC slowly continues.

Dave sits. Bewildered. He looks at Stewart.

DAVE (CONT'D)
You seriously don't hear that?

STEWART
It's just a test dude. Stop freakin' out.

DAVE
No. It's - that -

Lifting himself off the chair, Stewart skips a quick little jump to the pantry, grabs the Krispies, and sits back down. As he slides a cereal bowl over, the SUSPENSEFUL MUSIC grows in volume and intensity as he shakes some cereal into it.

When Stewart grabs the milk jug and lifts it toward him, HORROR MUSIC erupts all over again. Dave's eyes are wide with terror as he watches his brother pour the milk into the bowl.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Um, I don't know if -

The music continues as if the murderer is mere inches away from his victim.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Check the date on that milk!

Dave yells this, and Stewart flinches, causing him to spill a little of the milk on the table.

STEWART
Damn dude.

About to wipe the mess up, Stewart stops, sniffs, and leans over to the spilled milk.

Yuck!

STEWART (CONT'D)
Whoa, that's nasty.

DAVE
Is it bad?

STEWART
Is it bad? It smells like a homeless person hasn't cleaned himself for a couple a weeks.

Dave stands - eyes still wide.

DAVE
So you seriously didn't hear that music earlier...?

STEWART
Dave. I'm your brother and I care about you. But seriously, go to school, take your final exam, and get it over with. You'll be fine. You're whole life. It's gonna be fine.

Furrowing his brow, Dave looks quizzically at his brother. That comment rings a bell.

DAVE
What did you just say?

At this point, Stewart is grabbing a rag and wiping up the mess, and pouring his sour cereal into the garbage disposal.

Slowly turning around and ignoring breakfast altogether, Dave heads back upstairs - wide awake.

INT. DAVE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

He walks into his room, softly and deliberately shuts the door. Standing in the middle of his room, he looks at a stand-up mirror on the opposite wall.

DAVE

Don't lose it, man. Don't lose it.
Not today.

With a deep breath, he steps to his closet and surveys some hanging shirts.

CIRCUS MUSIC suddenly sings in his ears as he looks at his clothes.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Whaaaat is happening?

Reaching for a shirt, more HORROR MUSIC erupts. He rips his hand back, scared to touch it.

Reaches for a different shirt - plain, white, polo shirt - no music! He smiles, pulls it off the hanger and then digs through a dresser.

He removes a pair of blue plaid pants and, HORROR MUSIC taunts him again.

Dropping the pants like they're diseased, he takes another deep breath, looks into his dresser and sees a pair of clean, ironed khaki's. Reaches...

TRIUMPHANT MUSIC blares as if an alien race is rewarding him with a medal.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Ah ha!

He stops. The music falls to a slight climax and then fades out. Coming back down to Earth, Dave shakes it off - still unwilling to understand what the hell is happening.

Stepping into the khakis, he zips up. Pulls the polo shirt over top of him and looks in the mirror.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I look like some douche from The Hamptons.

A quartet of lovely VIOLINS play a soft tune as Dave continues to survey himself in the mirror.

He shrugs.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Spitting toothpaste from a freshly washed mouth, Dave looks at himself in the mirror - his hair is a mess.

He wets a comb and attempts to style his hair. He stops - waiting for the music to fire up again.

Nothing...yet.

Continuing the styling and finishing up, he checks himself again. Not bad.

A sudden jolt of a James Brown-esque, I Feel Good tune plays.

Dave laughs, but then - serious all over again, looking up into the air. He's officially lost it.

DAVE

OK, seriously!

The music stops. He looks in the mirror again. Still...he actually looks pretty damn good.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hall is nearly empty but for a couple students rushing to class. And then there's Dave -

In full sprint with his backpack bouncing over his shoulder. As he turns the corner, a SPORTS-THEMED, inspirational melody rounds the corner with him. Though he's late, he's running with a purpose.

Huffing and puffing his way to the classroom door, he stops, takes in a few breaths, and waits...the music falls to a quiet set of violins.

It relaxes him. He smiles as he enters -

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

A full room of students eagerly awaiting their final exam of the year.

BEHAR

Ah, now that our resident truant is finally here, we'll begin.

DAVE

I'm on time, actually, aren't I?

Dr. Behar looks up at the clock.

BEHAR

Hm. First time for everything. Sit, please.

The only available desk is right next to - Rachel. She's perfect in a yellow summer sun dress with white lace tracing the edges of her thighs.

Dave wants to die as he looks at her, but then - a soft, piano LOVE THEME (we'll call it, "Rachel's Theme") accompanied by a perfect set of violins swings its way through Dave's ears.

The entire class, especially Rachel, notice that Dave is just standing right next to her - thoughtful, and smiling.

RACHEL

Ahem.

He comes to.

DAVE

Oh, I mean... this desk. This desk?
I got it.

Sitting, he crashes his books to the floor as the violins creak to a halt.

He chances another look over at Rachel. She's not only looking, but - SMILING. Holy hell, she's smiling and it's not a smile that shows an insult, but the kind that offers the possibility of a new crush.

Smiling back, more to himself than anybody else, he twirls a pencil in his fingers as Dr. Behar pauses over his desk - exam in hand.

BEHAR

Last one, Whi taker. You're gonna be fine.

DAVE
My whole life?

Dave nods. Behar winks at him. Dave glances over at Rachel again. They smile - again!

Looking down at the test, it's filled with a thousand little tiny multiple choice holes to fill in, and alongside the booklet are more questions than any normal student would enjoy answering.

With a deep sigh, Dave readies his pencil and digs in. He reads the first question to himself. Considers the answer.

He leans with his pencil positioned over a little letter "C" - ready to fill it in, but -

HORROR MUSIC ERUPTS again just as the pencil is about to press against the paper.

He pulls the pencil back with a little jolt of his shoulders. Looking around at his fellow classmates, it's obvious he is the only one who can hear the music.

Mouthing "what the hell" to himself, he readies his pencil again and attempts to fill in the letter "C".

HORROR MUSIC!

Pulling the pencil back - it stops. He quickly aims the pencil again - quick host of HORROR!

He pulls it back - stop. Presses quick - HORROR. He does this a couple times, but -

DAVE (CONT'D)
C'mon! That's the right answer!

The entire class turns to look at him - including Rachel. Rachel snorts a little laugh.

BEHAR
If you say so, Mr. Whitaker, but I think we would all prefer that you say so to yourself, please.

Dave glances over at Rachel - she snorts a playful laugh, and again, not one of insult, but - cute. If Dave wasn't so hellbent on answering this question, he would probably melt over how cute her laugh is.

Looking back down at his test, now sincerely embarrassed, he hovers the pencil over the letter "A" - HORROR MUSIC again!

Sighing, frustrated, he hovers the pencil over "D" - a soft, easy and comfortable little LULLABY cascades through his eardrums.

He fills it in - TRIUMPHANT MUSIC blares this time, wrought with winning trumpets!

Dave smiles - for what feels like the first time in months.

FADE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Only a few students are left, including Dave. He has been so engrossed in taking the exam, that he didn't even notice that Rachel finished before him.

His final question - filling in the little letter, TRIUMPHANT TRUMPETS blare again. He sits back and smiles - rather confident and fulfilled.

Gathering his things, he shuffles up to Dr. Behar and hands over the finished test.

BEHAR

You're smiling, Whi taker. You OK?

DAVE

I think so. I really think so.

BEHAR

Good luck with everything, Dave.
Enjoy the summer.

He winks at Dave and shakes his hand. Continuing his smile, he brings it with him as he repositions his backpack and exits the classroom.

EXT. COLLEGE QUAD - DAY

The TRIUMPHANT TRUMPETS are playing a much softer and relaxed tune as Dave skips down a couple steps and into a small courtyard. Students amble about, hugging, saying goodbye - end of the year high-fives.

The trumpets slowly change to RACHEL'S THEME, the romantic, soft violins and piano he heard earlier, though it has a somber and rather distraught tone to it - minor chords abound.

Odd - he looks around and doesn't see Rachel.

Finally, after a few steps around a circling sidewalk, he spots her sitting alone on a bench just next to the college parking lot.

Crying.

He cautiously approaches and steps around the corner of the bench. She quickly wipes a tear away, trying to hide the crying.

DAVE

Hey, are you...?

RACHEL

Oh, hey. I was just about to leave.
You can have the bench if you want.

DAVE

No, no. I was just - mind if I sit?

The music transitions to the previous RACHEL'S THEME and veers away from the minor chords.

She scoots over, nodding.

DAVE (CONT'D)

So that, uh, test, huh?

RACHEL

Yeah. Kinda rough.

He looks at her - this time without being bashful. Her eyes are still soaked from crying. Even though she's trying to hide it, it's noticeable.

DAVE

Are you...you OK?

RACHEL

Oh, yeah yeah, I'm just...I just
get emotional for no reason
sometimes.

DAVE

Really? No reason? You break into
tears on park benches often?

RACHEL

(giggling - wiping another
tear)

I suppose...well, I suppose it's
not for no reason. Do you ever -

DAVE
Would you like to -

They chime in at the same time - cutting each other off.

RACHEL
I'll go first? I prefer it that way.

DAVE
Great. I hate going first.

RACHEL
Ya ever think that life is just...just fricken weird?

DAVE
You're a philosophy major, I take it.

RACHEL
Har har.

She gives him a playful dirty look.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Seriously, though. I just spent four years of my life at this little college preparing myself for the rest of my life, and I feel like I haven't even begun any of it.

DAVE
Believe me, I know how weird life can be.

RACHEL
Right? I mean, I came into all of this thinking I would make life-long best friends, get wasted at fraternities and make terrible decisions with douchebags, but come out of it somehow unscathed and yet look at it as if it was the greatest time ever.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)

That I'd fall head over heels for the first time, and then get my heart broken and never want to love a man again, and maybe I'd frequent tons of parties, fool around with other guys and then realize that I never really loved that idiot guy in the first place, and instead focus completely on my studies and graduate with honors and storm toward grad school hellbent on changing the world.

A long beat. Dave is staring at her, wide-eyed, not sure if he should laugh or get up and leave. But as he looks a little longer, she just keeps staring off into the distance. Her profile - she's beautiful. As suddenly neurotic as she is.

She finally turns and looks at him.

They burst out in laughter.

DAVE

That all sounds horrible!

RACHEL

I know! But it's just...it wasn't at all like that and when life doesn't live up to even your wildest and most horrible expectations, it still seems like a downer.

DAVE

So none of that stuff happened. I mean, for one, thank God, but -

RACHEL

Well, I wouldn't say none of it happened, but -

Dave pauses, suddenly a little terrified.

DAVE

Was it one of the douchebags that made you cry?

RACHEL

Oh gosh, no!

DAVE

OK, phew.

RACHEL

No, I guess I just feel - well, I don't know how I feel. Maybe that's why I was crying.

DAVE

I was told recently, by a lot of people which is kind of weird, that my whole life is gonna be ok. My whole life. They kept saying that. My whole life. That's nice and all, but...how do they know? Ya know?

RACHEL

Right? As if that little sentence is just gonna soak in and let us sleep better at night just because they say our whole life is gonna be OK. And what if we don't want it to just be "OK"? Ya know? What if we want it to be great? Amazing? Unexpectedly brilliant!

DAVE

I'd prefer just brilliant. I kind of like the expected.

RACHEL

You do, huh? Can I ask you a question?

DAVE

Of course. Please.

RACHEL

Who are you?

They both laugh again - a rather ridiculous yet necessary question.

DAVE

Dave. I've been in class with you for the entire -

RACHEL

No. I know your name, but...

She stands up.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Dave. I'm Rachel. I figure we have until sundown for this to be our final day of college. And we're going to do something unexpected.

DAVE

Please don't make me sleep with a douchebag.

RACHEL

Oh my gosh, that's a great idea!

DAVE

What?

RACHEL

I'm kidding. Get up.

Dave stands and picks up his bag.

DAVE

I kinda promised my mom that I'd help her get the house cleaned up -

HORROR THEME music erupts again - he'd almost forgotten about his odd musical friend.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I mean. Nevermind. What's the plan?

RACHEL

You need to learn what "unexpected" means.

She reaches out her hand - waits for him to take it.

He looks at it. Is this the beginning of the rest of his life? The soft RACHEL THEME tunes in again. He didn't need the music this time.

Grabbing her hand, she tugs.

FADE OUT.

EXT. LAKESIDE TRAIL - DAY

Rachel skips down the dirt path as Dave tries to keep up. His backpack still dangling over his shoulder.

RACHEL

So tell me everything about you!

DAVE

We're having fun. Why ruin it?

RACHEL

OK, so you're funny and kind of a wise ass. What else?

DAVE
My last name is Whi taker.

RACHEL
Lame. My last name is Moore. As
in...tell me more than your last
name.

She grabs the low hanging arm of an old oak and starts climbing the tree like she's suddenly 12 years-old.

DAVE
I love trees, but I'm terrified of
climbing them.

RACHEL
Scared of heights?

Still climbing, she edges out onto a branch that leans over the nearby river.

DAVE
More like dying.

RACHEL
Everyone is scared of dying.
Nothing special. More please.

Balancing along the edge of the branch, she GASPS and points.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Dave Whi taker, look!

A rope hangs from the thick branch, dangling over the river - a rope swing that hasn't been used in years.

Dave has angled himself beneath her, ready to catch her if she falls. He looks at the rope.

DAVE
Please tell me you're not -

Yep - she's already climbing down the branch and reaching for the rope.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Oh my gosh, please be careful. That
rope is probably -

A FUN VERSION OF RACHEL'S THEME hums in his ears. He pauses and listens.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Really? This is OK?

RACHEL
Of course it is! And if I fall,
I'll just -

SNAP! The rope breaks immediately as she swings herself on to it. She splashes into the river.

DAVE
Rachel!

He drops his backpack, runs toward what's left of the rope, grabs it and swings himself into the water!

KERPLUNK! He cannonballs it into the river.

Splashing back up to the surface, he searches for her. No sign of her.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Rachel!

Along the edge of the river bank, Rachel is on her knees - laughing uncontrollably. At first Dave thinks she's crying.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Oh my gosh - are you OK? Are you -

She bursts out with a loud, raucous laugh, holding her belly and falling onto her back. She's lying on the dirt of the river bank, unable to control the laughter.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Oh you jerk!

RACHEL
Hoo Dave Whi taker, you are a funny one.

He climbs on to the river bank, sopping wet, drenched like a beached whale. Out of breath.

DAVE
I seriously thought - I mean I expected to find you floating down river or something.

RACHEL
Yes! See?

DAVE
See what?

RACHEL
Unexpected!

She sits up, just as wet as he is. Her THEME PLAYS again as he looks at her. The afternoon sun is high in the sky and blazes a shaft of sunlight across her body.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Now what? That was fun.

DAVE
How about a towel?

RACHEL
Bah. A towel. Next adventure comin' right up.

She quickly pulls herself up off the ground with an excited bounce.

The CIRCUS THEME plays again.

DAVE
Oh shut up.

RACHEL
Ooh, you have a little attitude too.

DAVE
Oh no, no, that wasn't -

RACHEL
It's OK. I like a little attitude.

She smiles at him - for the first real time, they meet eyes. Both sopping wet. Both smiling. Both waiting for something to happen.

Reaching her hand, she offers to help him up.

He takes it with a huge smile.

INT. ICE CREAM SHOP - DAY

They're still both soaked as they enter the shop. Rachel looks like she hasn't had this much fun in months. Dave, on the other hand, looks like a wet dog who needs a bath.

RACHEL
This is what we're gonna do.

DAVE
Holy hell, it's freezing in here.

RACHEL
 (to cashier)
 How many flavors do you have?

CASHIER
 Uh, you're getting the floor all -

DAVE
 Yeah, Rachel, we should probably -

RACHEL
 It looks like you have about twelve different flavors here. Yeah?

CASHIER
 Uh, well, yeah I guess. I mean, with the different candies and cookies and stuff, you can add more and -

RACHEL
 And create a flavor of your own. Exactly. This is my friend, Dave. He hasn't done anything exciting today.

DAVE
 I haven't?

RACHEL
 No.

CASHIER
 You're dripping water all over the -

Rachel presses her nose against the glass of the ice cream trays.

RACHEL
 This is what we want. A half a scoop of each of the flavors, but just randomly throw them into two bowls.

She turns to Dave.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 Ok, so you're - oh my gosh, you're shivering.

DAVE
 We're standing in a freezer, you realize.

RACHEL
Even better.

She turns back to the cashier.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Each of the flavors. Two bowls.

Grabbing some napkins, she dabs them all over Dave. Evidently this is her way of drying him off.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Have you ever played, Strongest Brain?

DAVE
Um, I don't think this is really helping, but -

RACHEL
Strongest Brain, Dave. It's easy.

She dabs his forehead - they meet eyes. Yep, they're hitting it off and, RACHEL'S THEME plays again.

DAVE
OK. Strongest Brain. How do you play?

RACHEL
We take these two bowls of ice cream.
(to cashier)
Thank you.

She tosses some wet dollar bills at the stunned cashier.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
And eat them as fast we possibly can.

DAVE
Oh my gosh.

RACHEL
First one to get a brain freeze...

DAVE
This is a horrible idea.

CUT TO:

EXT. ICE CREAM SHOP - SIDEWALK - DAY

CIRCUS THEME music is playing again as Dave crouches over a sidewalk bench holding his head - moaning.

Rachel still shovels ice cream into her face.

RACHEL

My family has this crazy immunity
to brain freezes. I don't know.
It's weird.

DAVE

I think I hate this game.

RACHEL

I love it!

She pats him on the back as she continues to shovel more ice cream into her mouth.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

The sun is a bit lower and ready to set. Their day isn't quite done yet, and Dave's smile is showing that he's perfectly fine if it never ended - in spite of the crippling brain freeze.

RACHEL

My mom past away when I was 4. I
barely remember her and, really,
that's not the sad part.

She looks up at him - he's holding his forehead.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Do you still have a brain freeze?

DAVE

You told me to eat it as fast as I
could. I was following directions.

RACHEL

(pointing to her head)
Strongest brain! Strongest brain!

DAVE

So what's the sad part then?

He's laughing as he asks it, but catches himself as a slowed version of Rachel's Theme strikes up again.

RACHEL

Oh...not knowing what it's like. To really have a mom, I mean. I see daughters with their mothers all the time and it's this weird balance between being numb to it, and feeling frustrated.

DAVE

You're just frustrated? I'd think you'd be angry.

RACHEL

Why? It's completely out of my control. My mom died.

She shrugs her shoulders.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Ya know? I'm not jealous of them, because who knows? There are daughters out there who have terrible mothers, so it's not like I'm jealous of every girl who has a mom.

They turn the corner around a quaint neighborhood downtown. If it isn't the Hamptons, then it's a Midwestern twin. A little hat shop has a sign that dangles overhead.

Rachel stops. Looks up at it.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

It's that I don't know what the connection is like. It's the not knowing that's frustrating. But again, maybe not knowing isn't so bad. Want a hat?

DAVE

Anything to warm my brain.

INT. HAT SHOP - EVENING

Rachel twirls with an over-sized hat covering her head and eyes.

RACHEL

I mean, if I'm not Audrey Hepburn's twin, I don't know who is.

DAVE

I think you'd make a great mom.

Picking up an old driver's cap, a lot like Uncle Mervin's, Dave tries it on.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I don't know. What do you think?

He's referring to the hat, but...

Rachel has stopped twirling - she's staring at Dave with a glossy look in her eye.

He notices the change in energy... especially since the music has switched to an all-piano version of Rachel's Theme.

DAVE (CONT'D)

What? You OK?

RACHEL

I've never really thought about it.

DAVE

It's just a hat. I can take it off.

The music SKIPS, as if the record player was bumped.

RACHEL

No. About... no one has ever said that to me. About being a mom.

DAVE

Oh. Well...

RACHEL

You wanna make babies with me or something?

Horri fied and embarrassed, Dave turns his blushed cheeks away. Rachel's Theme suddenly starts back up - a bit faster in tempo.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Holy rosy cheeks!

DAVE

It's getting a little late. I should probably head back home.

He sets the driver's cap back down as a tense, high-pitched set of violins PLAY a dramatic, high intensity tune.

RACHEL

What? I was kidding!

DAVE
 No, I know. It's just been... a
 really really weird day.

The VIOLINS continue - tense and anxious.

Rachel tries on another hat - a smaller, more Victorian-styled cap with feathers.

RACHEL
 (in a southern twang)
 Well, Mr. Whittaker, I surely won't
 know what to do with myself without
 you.

DAVE
 I really did have fun, ya know.

RACHEL
 I know.

They smile at each other as the violins continue their
 tension-filled, high-pitched TONES and MELODY.

DAVE
 Goodnight, Rachel.

RACHEL
 Goodnight, Mr. Whittaker.

She curtsies as he turns to leave. When he exits, she pauses -
 a look of disappointment, and she tugs the hat off. Tosses it
 back onto the shelf.

EXT. TOWN SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Dave pushes along the sidewalk with his hands in his pockets
 and his head down.

The MUSIC is bursting a low, dramatic TUNE. Louder and louder
 as he hurries through the small town.

He rounds a corner, a few blocks from his house. It's
 building in drama and tension, until finally -

DAVE
 Stop! Stop it!

The music stops. It's quiet. He looks around - thankfully no
 one is there to see his sudden outburst.

He pauses for a moment, knowing that he shouldn't have left
 so abruptly.

A deep breath and sigh.

INT. DAVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rifling through his dirty clothes and messy bedroom, he's searching for something.

Finally finding it, he looks at Uncle Mervin's CD case. Opens it and finds what he's looking for.

A plain white business card, but all it reads is "Film Score - 204 N. 3rd St."

DAVE

North third - north third street?
That's right down the street!

Bolting out of his room, Dave whips his door open and charges down the stairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Speed walking through the living room with the CD case in his hand, his mom is lounging on the couch - notices her son rushing to the door.

MRS. WHITAKER

Where are you going?

DAVE

(not stopping)
To see Uncle Mervin.

MRS. WHITAKER

Ok...wait, who's Uncle Mervin?

Dave has already rushed through the front door, but...a long beat as we hear his steps come back up to the front door.

He opens it and pauses.

DAVE

What do you mean?

MRS. WHITAKER

I mean, who the heck is Uncle Mervin? Are you doing drugs??

DAVE

What? No! Why would that have to do with - no, what do you mean? He lives just down the street.

MRS. WHITAKER
Who does?

He looks at his mom as if to just stop kidding around.

MRS. WHITAKER (CONT'D)
I'm serious. Who lives down the street?

DAVE
Uncle -! He was at our family reunion yesterday. Old guy. Cane. Weird hat.

MRS. WHITAKER
I seriously have no idea who you're talking - hey!

Dave rushes out the door before she can finish.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Bounding down the little sidewalk, he's looking at each house's address.

197...199...he crosses the street.

200...202...

He stops in front of what must be 204. It's difficult to call it a house. At least, at one time it was a house, but now it's a heap of broken wood, smashed windows, and a roof that is about to cave in.

And old Craftsman that hasn't been tended to in decades.

DAVE
How have I never seen this place?

Cautiously approaching the front steps, he climbs them and ducks underneath a broken porch beam.

The front door is slightly ajar - he pushes.

CREAK. It swings open.

INT. OLD CRAFTSMAN - CONTINUOUS

Peeking his head in, it catches and snags on a thick cobweb.

Spitting the web away from his face, he stumbles inside. It's nearly pitch black.

The floorboards creak and echo as he steps on them, one at a time. Careful not to break them or fall through.

DAVE
Uh...hello?

A calm, slightly peppy version of the LULLABY from last night plays. The friendliness of the tune completely juxtaposes the surroundings which are dark, dilapidated, and really, quite horrifying.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Uncle Mervin?

MERVIN (O.S.)
It's a comfy tune, isn't it?

Dave jumps back at the sound of his voice. He doesn't know exactly where it's coming from until -

A match is struck and lights up Uncle Mervin's face. He sets the match to a candle on a large fireplace mantel. Then lights another candle. The room fills with a soft orange glow.

MERVIN (CONT'D)
It does that to let you know that things are fine, kid. Things are fine.

DAVE
My mom has never heard of you.

MERVIN
That old bag. She would barely remember her father if he spit in her face.

DAVE
Uh, that's my mom you're -

MERVIN
Yeah, yeah, sorry. Lovely woman. Lovely woman.

DAVE
So...do you live here?

MERVIN
What the hell, kid? You think I'm some crazy homeless squatter or something?

Dave shrugs - actually, yes.

MERVIN (CONT'D)
I'm neither crazy, nor homeless. I
squat sometimes, but for very
different reasons.

Gross.

MERVIN (CONT'D)
Movies tend to draw out suspense,
huh?

DAVE
What?

MERVIN
Movies. Movies! You've seen a movie
before, yeah?

DAVE
Yeah.

MERVIN
They have a way of preparing you
for love. For drama. For conflict.
They get your heart pumping that
thick red blood before the murderer
is going to splash a whole bunch of
it from a sorority girl's neck!

DAVE
I'm kind of hoping you don't do
that to me right now, actually.

MERVIN
I told ya, son, I'm not crazy. I
thought I was. For a while,
actually.

He moves to a dirty old lazy-boy chair in the middle of the
broken down old room and sits with a sigh.

MERVIN (CONT'D)
But then I didn't.

DAVE
If you don't live here, why did you
give this address for... for Film
Score?

MERVIN
Because Film Score lives in the
deep recesses of our spirit. And
this is what the spirit can look
like when it's ignored.

(MORE)

MERVIN (CONT'D)
It's amazing how many people
actually do.

A long beat as Dave mulls this over. What the hell is he
talking about?

MERVIN (CONT'D)
Or I just wanted to scare the hell
out of you. Working?

DAVE
Yep.

MERVIN
Sit please.

Mervin points to an old church pew along the other end of the
room.

Dave follows orders - the bench squeaks as he places his butt
on it.

MERVIN (CONT'D)
So. You ignored it, huh?

DAVE
Ignored...?

MERVIN
Just - let's just try opening up a
little. I know you've heard it.

DAVE
What is it? It's been driving me
crazy all day, but...well...

MERVIN
But it's also been your best friend
all day.

DAVE
Right! I mean, well, I don't know
what it is.

Mervin leans forward in his big chair.

MERVIN
It won't ignore you. Even if you
try and ignore it.

A Beat.

MERVIN (CONT'D)
Did you meet a girl?

DAVE

How did you know that?

MERVIN

It was what Film Score did for me when it first sang to me. Or, well, played for me.

DAVE

You keep calling it Film Score.

MERVIN

It's a perfect combination of all of the music I created during my career. I didn't know what else to call it, so, "film score" kinda stuck. I know...I could have called it Olivia, or Bethany, or Richard or some kind of royal name, but it just didn't feel like it had a specific name, so...

He lights up a pipe and tugs on the smoke.

DAVE

I left too early.

MERVIN

Say that again?

DAVE

I - Rachel. This girl. I've never had more fun with someone, and I just...I just left. I said I had to go home.

MERVIN

(Laughing like Santa Claus)

Ho, I bet Film Score loved that one. What was it? Violins that made you feel like an anxiety attack? That's the worst one. The horror one is rough, but that anxiety tune. Whew.

DAVE

Yeah. Yeah, that's exactly what it - what is happening to me?

Standing up and brushing his fingers through his hair, Dave paces.

MERVIN

Listen. I gave you that CD because I could tell that you were standing at the precipice. You were leaning over the edge of your life and worried that if you jumped, you wouldn't be able to fly. I've been there. I've been there, kid, and had I had Film Score to guide me along the way, my God, the things I would have done. The amount of fear I would have let go of. She came into my life quite late, ya know.

Dave turns to Mervin, listening.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

Melanie. I mean, Film Score did too, but Melanie. She was my sweetie. I fell in love with her sweetness immediately and didn't need Film Score to tell me to take her hand and run away with her. I knew, but Film Score pushed me along.

Sitting back down on the church pew, Dave is all ears.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

You just have to trust it, Davey. When the music plays, it's your job to listen. And not with your ears, but with your heart. Is Film Score playing right now?

Dave shakes his head, no.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

Because it knows that you need to start listening with this.
(points to his chest)
She goes quiet sometimes only because you're over thinking. Try letting go.

With a deep breath, Dave sits back. Closes his eyes. His shoulders slouch a little as he lets go.

FADE TO:

EXT./INT. DAVE AND RACHEL MONTAGE - DAY/NIGHT

A slight, SINGLE VIOLIN, plays a pretty, calming, and lovely little melody. A single violin's rendition of Rachel's Theme.

AT THE BEACH: Dave runs along the sandy shorelines, kicking water up at Rachel. She laughs, kicks back.

RESTAURANT: Rachel talks Dave's ear off over half-eaten food at a fancy restaurant. A funny story makes her even more animated. Dave simply smiles and listens.

MERVIN (V.O.)

That's her theme, isn't it?

DAVE (V.O.)

Can you hear it too?

MERVIN (V.O.)

No. When I close my eyes and really listen, I hear my Melanie. She never goes away. That theme, Dave, is your heart's song and it's singing to you. The girl is singing to you. Ignore the song, and the girl will slip away.

GAME NIGHT: Dave and Rachel play charades with friends. Their friends are laughing hysterically as Rachel can't, for the life of her, understand what Dave is trying to convey.

DAVE (V.O.)

She won't go away. Not in my head anyway. She just...she's not like anyone I've ever met.

MERVIN (V.O.)

Let her theme play. It'll serve you in the future. I promise.

DAVE'S PARENTS' HOUSE: a small, yet delicious meal sits in front of Dave, Rachel, and Dave's parents.

Dave stands as Rachel's theme quiets to the background. He raises his glass.

END MONTAGE

DAVE

I have to make an announcement. The past four months have been the best of my life thus far.

DAVE'S DAD
You're still young.

They laugh.

DAVE
Exactly! And the reason I'm standing up and raising this glass is to let my parents know that I intend for the rest of my life to be filled with continual four month intervals that only get better and better.

RACHEL
We have to measure it every four months? Mr. Organized is already setting deadlines.

MRS. WHITAKER
My boy is just getting ready for his big city job. Even though it does add some anxiety, Davey.

DAVE
Am I the one standing up and giving the announcement?

RACHEL
Well well well. Testy.

Rachel winks at Dave, already knowing what he's about to announce.

DAVE
I met Rachel a little over four months ago, and she's the main reason these past four months have been so wonderful. Because she's wonderful. I haven't been able to get her out of my head since I met her.

RACHEL
I won't let him forget.

DAVE
And she'll be reminding me to never forget her for the rest of my life. Because...when I asked Rachel to marry me, she said yes.

Gasps from Mr. and Mrs. Whitaker. They both stand - Mrs. Whitaker already in tears and running around the table to hug Rachel.

Rachel stands, hugs Dave and kisses him on the cheek. She shows Mrs. Whitaker the ring - subtle, delicate, perfect.

Mr. Whitaker shakes his son's hand and hugs him like a bear.

DAVE'S DAD

Proud of you, boy.

MRS. WHITAKER

(RE: the ring)

Oh my, look at it! It's just perfect! Oh dammit, Davey, you should have said this was going to be an important dinner. I would have used our China.

DAVE

Well, it just turned into an important dinner, so let's at least break out some wine.

Mr. and Mrs. Whitaker hurry to the kitchen. Rachel and Dave hold each other - look into each other's eyes.

RACHEL

They didn't comment on how fast this was.

DAVE

They've been waiting for me to fall in love since I was nine. To them, this took forever.

RACHEL

I really do love, Dave Whitaker.

DAVE

And I really do love you, Rachel... Whitaker.

RACHEL

I like the sound of that.

They kiss.

FADE TO:

EXT. BUSTLING CITY - DAY

The exterior of a skinny brownstone apartment complex stuck between a dozen other brownstones. A nicely kept street - modest, but clean and up and coming.

INT. CITY APARTMENT - DAY

Pulling bubble wrap from an opened box, Rachel is on her knees, unpacking.

RACHEL

Honey? Where is my CD collection? I can't find it anywhere.

DAVE (O.S.)

Who has CD's anymore?

RACHEL

Those CD's raised me. It would be like forgetting to pack my mother.

DAVE (O.S.)

Your mom would never let you forget to unpack her. She doesn't shut up.

RACHEL

Very funny. Seriously, though. Where -

Dave walks out of the bedroom dressed in business attire.

Rachel WHISTLES.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Look at my hot business man! There better not be any female co-workers at this new job of yours.

DAVE

It took me forever to ask you out, much less have sex with you. I'm not exactly a Casanova.

Digging through a box in the kitchen, Dave pulls out the CD collection.

RACHEL

Doesn't matter. Some girls just want well-dressed guys.

He raises the CD collection up.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh, thank you.

DAVE

Where are we going to put all of the wedding gifts?

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT' D)
800 square feet of apartment space,
and I'm pretty sure we have about
500 square feet of presents.

In the far corner of their new living room, a pile of unpacked gifts rises half-way up to the ceiling. It's like an adult Christmas morning.

RACHEL
Mr. Whittaker? You're needed in
conference room B.

Dave turns around and sees Rachel... slowly unbuttoning her top.

RACHEL (CONT' D)
A debriefing about how I'm the only
secretary who can touch you.

DAVE
Are we calling the bedroom
conference room B now?

A slow roll of a laugh - they burst out in laughter as Dave grabs her by the waist, picks her up and carries her down the hall, out of sight.

DAVE (O.S.) (CONT' D)
Hold all my calls!

FADE OUT.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's dark, but for the street lamps shining in through the white curtained window.

Rachel lays on her side next to Dave, also asleep. SOFT and peaceful BREATHING from the two of them until -

OMINOUS/THREATENING music erupts in the room, and Dave quickly sits up in bed as if waking from a nightmare.

He's breathing heavily as the MUSIC continues to drone on at a rapid, ominous tempo.

He looks over at Rachel. She hasn't noticed a thing - still out cold.

Getting up, he steps out of bed and brushes his fingers through his hair. The bedroom is tidy, clean yet well-lived in. It's obvious this is months after their move-in.

Turning back around, he looks at Rachel. She sits up in bed and looks at Dave.

RACHEL
What's the -?

She grabs her head and groans.

Dave runs to her, holds her hand.

DAVE
What's wrong? What hurts?

RACHEL
Nothing. It's... nothing. Probably just got up too fast or something. I am pregnant, ya know. Weird things are
-

She grunts again, grabbing her head. A bit more pain this time.

DAVE
Can you stand?

RACHEL
Honey, I'm fine. A baby is growing inside of me. Just go back to bed.

The MUSIC continues its fast paced ominous tones and melody.

DAVE
We have to go. Now.

Rushing through the dresser drawers, he pulls out articles of clothing and shoves them into a duffel bag.

RACHEL
Dave. I'm OK, just a little dizzy.

DAVE
You're not. I just...I have a really bad feeling. Please.

He reaches out her hand. She hesitates, but eventually takes it. He helps her out of the bedroom.

She can tell he's legitimately worried and goes along with it.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The ominous music is still drumming its way through Dave's head as he speeds through empty city streets.

RACHEL

My head is rather sore though, I guess. But then again, lack of sleep in these last few weeks is probably gonna do that to you?

Trying to get a giggle out of her husband, she looks at him with a smirk.

He is looking straight ahead, going as fast he can without breaking the speed limit...at least not enough to get a ticket. He takes a turn a bit loose.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Dave, what the heck? I'll be fine.
At least slow down.

Taking her hand, he's visibly upset. She notices.

The car speeds along.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Pacing in an empty waiting room, a doctor finally enters holding the usual clipboard and serious face.

The MUSIC has since switched to a minor key version of RACHEL'S THEME. Not nearly as ominous, but still hesitant, cautious, not right.

DAVE

Doctor?

DOCTOR

Let's sit down, Mr. Whittaker.

Agreeing and taking a seat among the waiting room chairs, the doctor sits next to him.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Have you heard of Preeclampsia?

Dave shakes his head.

DAVE

No, but it sounds awful.

DOCTOR

It can be. Especially when the brain is involved. If it's caught in advance though, it's usually treatable.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Still dangerous and needs
monitoring, but...you're a very
intuitive man, Mr. Whitaker.

DAVE
Or just constantly worried.

DOCTOR
The baby is in fine shape so far,
but that's not to say we shouldn't
tread lightly here. Without your
quick reaction, your wife would
have likely had a seizure and gone
into a coma.

DAVE
So, she'll be OK.

DOCTOR
For now. But this is a pregnancy we
will need to watch very carefully.
Just keep that intuitive brain of
yours working, Mr. Whitaker, and we
should be OK.

The doctor stands.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I'm going to finish up with Mrs.
Whitaker and you can see her in a
few minutes.

DAVE
OK. OK, thanks.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rushing in, Dave hurries to Rachel's bedside. He touches her
as if she might break.

RACHEL
Hi there, Dave Whitaker.

DAVE
Hi my Rachel Whitaker.

He has tears forming in his eyes. She touches his face.

RACHEL
I'm fine. I'm going to be just
fine. I guess having a worried
husband can pay off.

DAVE

If anything happened to you and the baby, I really don't know...

She "sshh's" him.

RACHEL

You know those families that are constantly running around? Tons of noise. No one shuts up for more than a minute? Constant anxiety?

He smiles at her.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I can't wait for that family to be our family. I love you. And this baby is going to love you. Just please promise me something.

DAVE

Anything.

Leaning in close to his ear.

RACHEL

Don't ever let me be seen with you in your boxer shorts again.

They burst into laughter. Dave takes her hand and nods, still unable to control the laughter.

DAVE

You got it. Deal.

They kiss.

FADE TO.

INT. CITY APARTMENT - DAY

Opening the front door, Dave walks in, briefcase in hand.

SUPER: Five Years Later

Rachel is in the kitchen. Her voice can be heard, talking over a loud, rumbling TV playing some form of a cartoon. Dave can't make out exactly what she's saying, but it sounds like scolding of some kind.

He takes a deep breath as a screaming five year old comes running at his legs.

EMILY-JANE, a curly haired blonde, cute as a button, and she's running with a long jump rope in town.

DAVE
My little Em!

EMILY-JANE
Daddy! I have to tie you up.

DAVE
Oh. Right now. I just -

Emily-Jane is already wrapping the jump rope around his legs.

EMILY-JANE
You're my prisoner and there is nothing you can do about it, Daddy.

DAVE
Nothing I can do about it? But what did I do wrong?

A screaming baby's CRY makes its way around the corner of the entry way. Rachel is bobbing little CONOR, a one-year old, in her arms as he cries his eyes out.

RACHEL
E.J., I told you not - oh, well hello Mr. Whi taker.

DAVE
Hi there. I'm a prisoner. And I only just got home.

RACHEL
Well, I've been a prisoner for the past eight hours, so... welcome home.

Conor continues to scream in Rachel's ear. Emily-Jane is now screaming too as she is running around Dave's legs - the jump rope fully wrapped around him.

Dave and Rachel shrug their shoulders. Giggle and smile.

DAVE
So? Order in?

EMILY-JANE
Serenity tacos with a side order of peace!

The two parents laugh even harder.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

A full spread of the local taco joint is strewn across the table. The setting sun shines through their little apartment windows.

Conor is falling asleep, bobbing his head, in the high chair, as Emily-Jane is shoveling far too much lettuce in her mouth.

RACHEL

Honey, honey don't put so much in your mouth. You'll choke.

DAVE

At least it's lettuce. Our little vegan.

Dave rubs Emily-Jane on her head. He nods his head toward Conor, making sure Rachel sees.

She looks - the poor kid is out cold. Chin inches above his little bits of taco meat.

RACHEL

Oh, no no. It's too early. Conor?
Conor, sweetie, stay awake, please.

The one year old barely reacts.

Emily-Jane tosses a couple pieces of taco shell at her brother.

DAVE

Hey, that's not cool. E.J.! Stop.

EMILY-JANE

Just helping, Daddy.

DAVE

Are you going to help your mom and dad clean the kitchen after we eat?

EMILY-JANE

Nope.

DAVE

Then stop throwing taco shells at your brother.

She giggles.

Rachel takes Conor out of the high chair and sets him in his lap. She lightly bounces him on her knee.

RACHEL
 Fernando's didn't nail it tonight,
 did they?

Dave looks at the messy table. Tacos and salsa and pico de gallo everywhere.

DAVE
 How dare you mock our favorite taco
 joint.

RACHEL
 Just sayin'.

DAVE
 Well, maybe we'll find a new taco
 place.

RACHEL
 We've tried. They all suck.

Dave wipes his mouth with a napkin after another bite. He helps Emily-Jane wipe taco sauce from her cheek.

DAVE
 I hear there are some excellent
 Mexican restaurants in Glen Cove.

Trying to shove her own taco into her mouth while also bouncing Conor, Rachel gets barely a bite before the baby reaches for it.

RACHEL
 They don't deliver downtown. You
 know that.

DAVE
 They won't have to deliver
 downtown.

RACHEL
 Oh really? You're gonna drive all
 the way out to Glen Cove after
 slaving away at work all day?

Reaching for his beer, Dave grabs it. Helps Emily-Jane reach for and grab her juice.

DAVE
 This slave won't be a slave as of
 next week.

Rachel pulls the taco away from her mouth. Waiting for Dave to go on.

DAVE (CONT'D)

E. J., honey, your'e spilling. Here -

He wipes the bottom of her cup.

RACHEL

Are you going to explain what that means, or are you going to make me hold on to both our baby and this semi-perfect taco all night?

A beat. Dave looks at his wife - serious. Rachel's theme slowly TUNES IN. Happy.

Dave smiles.

DAVE

I was called into Rick's office today. Thought I'd done something wrong, but...

RACHEL

But...?

DAVE

We don't need to live in this tiny apartment for much longer.

Rachel gasps - happy!

DAVE (CONT'D)

And I will be getting a much bigger office starting next week.

YELP! Rachel, with Conor in her arms, stands and runs around the table to Dave.

EMILY-JANE

What's the matter, mommy?

RACHEL

Oh, Dave Whittaker, my perfect little -

She hurries to him, bends over and hugs him. Conor giggles.

EMILY-JANE

Mommy! What's wrong?

RACHEL

Nothing's wrong, sweetie. Your dad just did something today and I'm so very proud of him.

DAVE

And your mom is happy because she'll have a much bigger house to play with you in.

RACHEL

A house? Was it that big of a -

Dave is nodding even before she says it.

DAVE

It was a hell of a promotion.

YELP again! Rachel stands up and dances with little Conor in her arms.

EMILY-JANE

I'm getting a house?

Turning toward his daughter, Dave picks her up and dances right along with Rachel and Conor.

DAVE

You're getting a house! Mommy's getting a house. So is Conor!

RACHEL

Yay!

She swings Conor around - he giggles even harder.

EMILY-JANE

But daddy!

The five year old looks like she's about to cry. Dave stops dancing.

DAVE

Oh honey, it's OK. You can still bring all of your toys and stuff. You'll have a whole bunch more room, and even a yard to play in!

EMILY-JANE

No!

RACHEL

E.J.! This is a happy thing!

EMILY-JANE

But if I have a house, and Mommy and Conor has a house... where will Daddy live?

Rachel and Dave laugh, trying to hold back the hysterics, and hugging their little ones even tighter.

The FILM SCORE triumphantly plays Rachel's song as the little family dances through their perfectly messy little kitchen.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rachel is laying with her head on Dave's chest - post-coital. It's quiet. Perfect. Smiles on each of their faces.

RACHEL

I've always wanted to have a garden.

DAVE

Yeah? I never knew that about you. Didn't picture you as a gardening type.

RACHEL

Oh hell no. I want a garden, I just want someone else to tend to it while I sit and look at it.

DAVE

(Laughing)

We'll see if my promotion has room for hiring a full-time gardener.

Rachel laughs and sighs - happy. She sits up on her elbow, looks at Dave.

RACHEL

I'm so proud of you. I hope you know that even though I joke around, poke fun and stuff, I am really so proud of you.

DAVE

I know you are.

RACHEL

Are you nervous?

DAVE

Extremely. But...

RACHEL

But what? Being nervous just means you care.

DAVE

Oh, no I know. I just...because
you're here, I know that I will
always have you to come home to. No
matter how rough a day. No matter
how many mistakes I make, or if I
get fired and we're broke and
suddenly need to live on the
street.

RACHEL

Easy there, Dave Whi taker.

They laugh.

DAVE

Would you still love me if I was
broke?

RACHEL

That is a horrible thing to ask me,
Dave.

DAVE

Sorry, I just...it just popped in.

RACHEL

Of course I would still love you.
I'd miss you terribly, but I'd
still love you.

DAVE

Har har.

Rachel rolls over on to her back and laughs.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Just don't go anywhere. Ever. OK?

Suddenly noticing how serious he is, Rachel sits up again,
looks at him.

RACHEL

Dave Whi taker, I will love you
'till the day I die.

They kiss.

FADE OUT.

EXT. WHITAKER HOUSE - DAY

A hot mid-summer day. Lugging two giant suitcases toward the driveway, Dave's new SUV already has two suitcases strapped to the top of the car.

SUPER: TWO YEARS LATER

From out the front door of their perfect, English Tudor, suburban home, runs Conor, now three years old. Emily-Jane chases after him. She's just as beautiful as her mom, and not in a happy go-lucky mood.

Conor has Emily-Jane's cell phone in his hand, and is loving every second of the chase.

EMILY-JANE

Get back here, you little brat!
Dad! Your son has my phone!

DAVE

Hey, Rachel? Do we really need to
put these on the top of the car?

EMILY-JANE

Dad! I'm tired of Conor stealing my
stuff!

DAVE

Honey, he's three. He just wants
your attention.

EMILY-JANE

Yeah, well he's got it. And my
phone.

RACHEL

We need the space in the back for
the stroller. I'm tying that thing
to the roof.

DAVE

Conor, buddy, give your sister her
phone back.

Conor is already climbing into the SUV - a huge smile on his face.

CONOR

EJ, EJ, EJ!

DAVE

He's chanting your name. You should be proud to have a fan. Please get in the car. We're late.

Emily-Jane growls.

EMILY-JANE

How can someone be late to a vacation?

RACHEL

Excellent point, EJ. Why are you in such a hurry, Dad?

DAVE

It's called traffic, and I hate it.

CONOR (O.S.)

EJ! EJ! EJ!

Rachel kisses Dave on the cheek and pats him on the shoulder.

RACHEL

How about starting vacation with a little less stress, eh?

DAVE

If you can make your son not chant your daughter's name for the entire ten hour drive, that will be a good start.

RACHEL

Oh, so suddenly these are only my children.

DAVE

I'm sorry and I love you.

RACHEL

(to the kids)

Who's ready for vacation?

CONOR

Yay!

RACHEL

Road trip!

Dave finishes tying up the suitcases. Smiles to himself as Rachel gets the kids to chant, "road trip".

INT. WHITAKER SUV - DAY

The expressway is rather open - very little traffic - and the city is slowly disappearing in Dave's rear view mirror.

Emily-Jane is trying to talk over the road noise, and Conor's constant ramble. POP MUSIC is playing from the car speakers.

RACHEL

It has been scientifically proven,
EJ, that boys are dumb. You'll just
have to accept it.

DAVE

Scientifically?

EMILY-JANE

They're mean at least. Dad, can you
turn this up? I like it.

Referring to the POP MUSIC, Dave reaches for the radio.

He pauses as he thinks he hears RACHEL'S THEME play in his head, but the noise of his family's conversation, Conor's rambling, and the HUM of the road makes it difficult to hear much of anything.

Just as he is about to turn the radio volume up, an ominous, up tempo version of RACHEL'S THEME blares, but -

EMILY-JANE (CONT'D)

Louder, Dad!

RACHEL

Yeah, let's rock this trip!

DAVE

OK, OK.

He turns the POP MUSIC up, drowning out RACHEL'S THEME.

The girls SING along to the song, laughing, dancing in their seats. Conor is LAUGHING at his sister, loving every second of it the noise.

Dave looks in his rear view mirror and smiles as he sees how much fun Conor is having.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Rachel, can you -

Slightly reaching for a bag at Rachel's feet, she isn't paying attention, nor can she hear him. Rachel is turned around, laughing and singing along with Emily-Jane.

He reaches again, but tries to keep his eyes on the road. A bag of pretzels is just beyond his fingertips.

Taking his eyes off the road, the MUSIC blares and the girls sing at the top of their lungs.

In front of him, a large tanker truck SWERVES.

Sliding and veering horizontally across the expressway, traffic screeches to a halt.

Dave's SUV is zooming directly toward it - he's reaching for the bag of food. The girls keep SINGING.

He looks up.

Hears RACHEL'S THEME - ominous, high-pitched.

It's too late. He jerks the wheel, but -

CRASH.

GLASS and METAL explode and crunch.

Everything is quiet - noiseless. Soundless.

BLACK.

Blinking awake, blood drips from Dave's head. Panic sets in. Adrenaline takes over.

Looks to his right - Rachel is unconscious in the seat. Blood also drips from the side of her face, down her chin.

Trying to turn around, his back aches. He grunts through the pain. Looks into the back seat.

Emily-Jane is blinking awake, still strapped in.

EMILY-JANE

Daddy?

DAVE

EJ, honey. Are you -?

He notices the seat next to Emily-Jane is - EMPTY. Conor's car seat is gone.

Searching and searching, Conor is gone.

RACHEL

Dave. EJ? Conor. Where is Conor?

Rachel's panic is setting in. Dave grabs Rachel's hand, looks forward.

Their windshield is completely shattered - the front of the SUV is mangled, smashed, unrecognizable.

VOICES, YELPS and SCREAMS from bystanders and other drivers are vaguely heard outside.

Pushing the door open, Dave can barely squeeze out. He struggles through the pain.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Dave!

Looking straight ahead, Rachel points to something.

Dave looks -

Along the middle of the expressway, Conor's car seat lays ripped and torn, flipped over.

SLOW-MOTION: Running and pushing through broken glass and wreckage, Dave's worst fear is plastered across his face.

RACHEL'S THEME slowly and sadly HUMS.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A crowd of family and friends are lined up down the aisle of a quaint and simple church. A small casket sits on an altar, adorned with flowers and photos of Conor.

Dave sits between Rachel and Emily-Jane in the front pew, holding their hands. Dazed, staring, all three sit with lifeless eyes, unable to take their eyes off of the closed casket.

A MUFFLED church organ plays some form of a song, but -

DAVE'S EYES - they stare at the ground. Tired, emotionless, red from sleepless nights.

The muffled organ is overtaken by a SOFT THEME - a sad combination of RACHEL'S THEME and a new, SINGLE VIOLIN tune that softly bounces between only Dave's ears.

His eyes suddenly shift to Rachel's hand.

She removes it from his and places it on her lap. Not looking at him.

His hand remains palm up, but empty.

INT. DAVE AND RACHEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A large, grand master bedroom. It's dark but for a shaft of light creeping in through the soft white linen that covers an over-sized, round picture window.

In the king-size bed lays Rachel. She's on her side, lying along the very edge of the giant bed. Her back is to -

Dave as he cautiously enters the room. He leans against the door frame and stands in the darkness looking at his wife.

DAVE

Rachel?

His soft voice goes unheard. Rachel doesn't respond.

A SIMPLE PIANO plays RACHEL'S THEME - it echoes softly through the bedroom. She still doesn't stir.

Slowly walking to the bed, he undoes his black tie and sits on the opposite edge as the THEME continues.

Tears form in his eyes as the THEME steadily grows louder. With the tie in his right hand, he slowly raises both hands to his ears.

Squinting, squeezing the downpour of tears from his eyes, he covers his ears, not wanting to hear the music anymore.

He weeps.

At the other edge of the bed, Rachel is awake - eyes wide open. Red from crying. She hears her husband trying to choke back the weeping. The bed quivers from his shakes.

She stares.

FADE OUT.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Sitting in his corner office, in front of an ornate desk, Dave stares at his computer screen.

The screen is black - it isn't even on. His reflection is the only visible image.

A KNOCK at the door.

DAVE

Yes.

His SECRETARY cautiously enters. From the look on her face, she understands Dave's need to be alone, but -

SECRETARY

Mr. Whittaker, Lawrence is asking for you.

He looks up. Her words barely register, but he stands anyway. Pale-faced, and thin, Dave looks terrible. This isn't a surprise to his secretary.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything?

Dave forces a smile. Shakes his head, "no".

Touching his shoulder like a caring mother, his secretary nods and lovingly smiles back.

Exiting the office, Dave leaves the secretary behind. She takes a deep breath and exhales, slow, sad.

INT. LAWRENCE'S OFFICE - DAY

Knocking on LAWRENCE'S door, he softly pushes it open and peeks his head in.

DAVE

Lawrence?

LAWRENCE

Come on in, Dave. Drink?

Lawrence motions to a mini-bar that hosts an array of crystal and fine liquor.

Dave's CEO and boss, Lawrence is an older gentleman, late 60's, clean cut, but with a soft and caring demeanor. Not your typical "suit", but more so, the friendly old man you could sidle up next to at a bar and be right at home.

Shaking off the drink, Dave grabs a chair and exhales as he sits.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

I suppose it is a bit early for booze.

DAVE

Right

Sensing that Dave isn't in a joking mood (understandable), Lawrence sits next to him in the opposite plush, leather chair.

LAWRENCE

I am so sorry, Dave. I really don't know what to say.

DAVE

It's OK. There has been enough said over the past few weeks.

LAWRENCE

Any news on the settlement?

DAVE

We'll win. The truck driver was drunk, so...

A deep breath from Lawrence - relieved, but still, it doesn't change what happened.

LAWRENCE

I have news, Dave.

Looking at Lawrence, Dave is waiting. What now?

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

The sale went through. I decided to take the offer.

DAVE

What? I thought you -

LAWRENCE

I know. So did I. But I talked it over with Cynthia and we both feel that retirement is the best for both of us. Your accident actually -

DAVE

Best for YOU, but what about the rest of us? Lawrence, you know what will happen with this sale!

Trying to avert Dave's suddenly anger-filled eyes, Lawrence stands - another deep breath.

LAWRENCE

You'll get a severance and I'll make sure -

DAVE

A severance?! I have a family I
need to feed!

LAWRENCE

I won't just leave you in the dark,
Dave. But this is the decision, and
the sale is final.

Jumping up off the chair, Dave storms to the exit.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Dave wait, just - please.

DAVE

You expect me to go home and tell
my grieving wife...my little girl
who just lost her...

Tears of frustration and devastation flare up.

LAWRENCE

Maybe this is for the best. After
everything -

DAVE

Don't you tell me what's for the
best! There's no "best" here,
Lawrence!

As he storms out and slams the door behind him -

DAVE (CONT'D)

Enjoy your retirement.

INT. WHITAKER HOME - DAY

Softly closing the front door behind him, his home is quiet.
No kids rushing up to him. No sound of cartoons in the
background.

No theme music playing. The quiet is deafening.

His steps echo through the front foyer, but he stops as he
looks at the flowers from Conor's funeral.

Wilting and desperately in need of water, the plants should
just be thrown out.

Setting his briefcase on a side table, he ignores the flowers
and enters the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Emily-Jane is sitting at the kitchen table, eating cereal. She stops chewing enough to say -

EMILY-JANE

Hi daddy.

The clinking of her spoon to the ceramic bowl continues. She goes back to crunching on her corn flakes.

DAVE

What are you doing home? Don't you have school? And cereal at 2pm?

Suddenly ashamed, Emily-Jane blushes and looks up at the ceiling.

DAVE (CONT'D)

She's still not up?

Tears form in his daughter's eyes - she breaks out in a heavy cry.

He rushes over to her and puts his arms around her.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Your mom loves you very much, honey. She really does. Please believe that.

EMILY-JANE

I know. I just -

DAVE

She'll get through this. We will all get through this.

EMILY-JANE

I just wish she would be happy again.

Pushing through the tears, Emily-Jane sets the spoon in the bowl, turns and hugs her dad. So tight is the hug, it actually takes Dave a little off guard.

DAVE

We're going to be OK. We're going to be OK.

Emily-Jane continues to cry into her father's chest.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The drapes are drawn, blotting out the afternoon sun. The room is dark, grey and could use a cleaning.

Rachel is lying in her usual position along the edge of the bed as Dave enters.

Approaching her side of the bed, he sits next to her and places his hand on her hip.

DAVE

E.J. should have gone to school today, honey.

A long pause - no response. Finally -

RACHEL

Sorry.

He nods. At least she said something. His patience is waning, though.

DAVE

It's been over a month. I think it's time to get out of bed.

RACHEL

Time? It's not time for anything, Dave.

He stands up, opens the drapes and let's the afternoon sunlight in.

DAVE

It's at least time for our daughter to get back to school.

RACHEL

I said I was sorry.

DAVE

So have I.

Turning back toward her, he stares a set of serious eyes at her.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I've said sorry so many times, I can't say it anymore without it sounding like it's meaningless.

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)

I don't even know how to say it anymore, as if it's a foreign language. So, good, you're sorry. So am I.

Rachel sits up in bed, anger brimming.

RACHEL

I'm sorry for not taking E.J. to school, but I won't apologize for being sad that my son is dead!

DAVE

Being sad is normal, honey! Do you think I'm not -

RACHEL

This isn't normal, Dave! None of this is normal! This doesn't happen! It's not supposed to happen!

DAVE

Well it happened!

The volume in which he just yelled was not what Rachel was expecting. She flinches again as -

DAVE (CONT'D)

And there isn't anything we can do about it! Emily-Jane lost Conor. His grandparents lost him. His friends. His teachers. I lost my son!

A long beat as they stare at each other.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I can't lose you too. Not now. Not ever. Especially since -

About to continue, Dave holds back the news. The news he needs to share, but when is the timing right to do so?

RACHEL

Especially what?

DAVE

Nothing. We can talk about it later. We should feed our daughter something other than cereal.

RACHEL
Let's talk about it now, Dave.
Especially what?

DAVE
Now you want to talk? You've been
radio silence for almost a month.

RACHEL
I thought you wanted to -

DAVE
I don't know what I want!

She flinches again - fragile. Scared to see her husband so
upset.

RACHEL
I'm sorry, I just -

DAVE
Stop saying I'm sorry!

RACHEL
Well what do you want me to say?!

The crying starts up. She's trying to hold it back, but it's
just natural now.

DAVE
Lawrence sold the company.

Choking back the tears, she pauses - catches her breath.

Dave paces over to his dresser, unable to look at his wife.
He opens his dresser drawer, and starts removing his shirt.

RACHEL
What? What's that mean -

DAVE
I'm out of a job.

RACHEL
You're out - he fired you?

DAVE
There will be a severance, and with
the settlement from the -

RACHEL
The settlement? The settlement!
It's not enough to -

DAVE

What do you want me to do, Rachel?!

RACHEL

Bring my son back!

She falls to her side, away from Dave, and into a heap of writhing pain and tears.

Dave takes a step toward her, but stops. With his hands at his hips, he un-tucks his shirt. Frustrated, he walks out.

FADE TO:

INT. OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Sitting on a plush leather couch in the middle of a massive marble foyer of some form of a corporate headquarters, Dave watches the front desk secretary roll call after call.

RINGING of the phone. She picks up. Basic response. Repeat. The RINGING echoes through the marble foyer.

The occasional pair of dress shoes PITTER PATTERN across the hard stone floors. He turns and at looks at the shoes as they make their way out the revolving exit doors.

RING again of the front desk phone. Dave looks back, and then closes his eyes.

He doesn't hear a thing. QUIET. Stillness.

Opening his eyes again, he notices the other men sitting in the front foyer. All dressed in some form of high-class, expensive dark suit. All of them have their legs crossed in the same manner.

A different secretary enters, approaches the front desk.

The front desk secretary points to Dave.

SECRETARY #2

Mr. Whittaker?

She forces a fake smile. Dave stands and walks up an escalator with her.

INT. COLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY

A YOUNG EXEC, probably ten years younger and just out of Harvard, sits across from Dave.

Slumped in a giant chair, Dave tries to sit up straight so he's on an even eye level with the Young Exec.

YOUNG EXEC
Five years with multiple promotions in those five years. You were moving up fast. A go-getter, eh?

DAVE
You could say that.

YOUNG EXEC
Yes, I could.

A long stare. Finally the Young Exec laughs.

YOUNG EXEC (CONT'D)
Look, I'll be real with you. I took this meeting because Old Man Lawrence mentored me in grad school. I owe a lot to him, but I would have to create a position just to fit you in. And to be honest, there are ten other guys out there who have more experience...even if I were to create the position.

DAVE
Right. Right, I understand.

YOUNG EXEC
I don't want to offer a position that's beneath you. Ya know? You deserve better than that.

Dave nods, unable to look the younger and more successful executive in the eye.

YOUNG EXEC (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. But let's stay in touch. And I mean that.

The Young Exec stands, reaches out his hand. Dave, zombie-like, stands and shakes it. Still unable to look him in the eye.

DAVE
Thank you.

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - BENCH - DAY

Staring at the lapping little waves long the edge of the river, Dave slouches on a park bench.

A seagull flaps to his feet, waiting for some form of food to be offered. Dave just stares at the water.

Again, he closes his eyes.

Small WAVES from the river.

The COO'ING of the pigeon. It FLAPS its wings - flies away.

Distant HONKING HORNS of the city pierce his ear drums.

No music. He squints a little harder as if trying to hear something. Anything.

Nothing.

He opens his eyes again. Dark, puffy circles rim the bottom of his lids. How much longer can he do this?

EXT. WHITAKER HOME - DAY

The sun is setting over the suburban skyline of wealthy, upper class homes. A YELLOW CAB is parked in driveway.

Dave walks up his driveway, looks at the cab, and crosses through the grass. He passes a for sale sign.

About to get to the front steps, his mom exits and stops him.

DAVE

Mom. Hey. What are you -

MRS. WHITAKER

I've tried talking sense into her. She just won't listen, Dave.

DAVE

What do you mean? Did you take a cab here?

From out the front door, Rachel pushes past Mrs. Whitaker. Emily-Jane is close behind - her hand tightly gripped by her mom's.

She's holding a suitcase in her other hand.

MRS. WHITAKER

Rachel, honey.

DAVE

Rachel? What -

RACHEL
Hurry up, EJ. C'mon.

DAVE
Where are you going?

Rachel, pulling Emily-Jane along, rushes toward the cab. The cabbie gets out and opens the trunk. He takes the suitcase from her.

RACHEL
Get in the car, EJ.

EMILY-JANE
I don't want to go, Mom.

RACHEL
Get in the car, please.

Unable to look at Dave, Rachel tries to avoid contact of any kind. She pulls her hand away from his as he reaches out.

DAVE
You're just leaving? You don't want to talk to me about this first?

RACHEL
I'm sorry. We just -

DAVE
You're giving up, is what you're doing. Things get too hard and you're -

RACHEL
I gave up months ago, Dave! It got hard the day our son died. I've tried.

DAVE
No you haven't! I come home to you just packing up?

She opens the passenger side door and tries to get in, but Dave grabs her by the arm.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Please don't do this!

EMILY-JANE
Daddy, where are we going?

RACHEL
We're going to stay at your
grandpa's, honey.

She looks back at Dave - they meet eyes.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
I need this. We need this. I can't
live in this house any longer.

DAVE
Well, then I'll go with you. Don't
just leave. Were you going to leave
without telling me?

RACHEL
I was going to - I don't know. I
don't know anything anymore, Dave.

DAVE
I do. I know I still love you. And
I can't live without you and EJ.

RACHEL
We'll be at my dad's place. I can't be
here when this house is sold.

Climbing into the cab, Dave won't let her close the door.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Dave, please. Just let me do this.
For me. Please.

EMILY-JANE
Daddy?

DAVE
(to Emily-Jane)
Honey, I'll be close behind. OK? I
just - I'm going to take care of
the house and stuff. I'll be right
behind.

EMILY-JANE
You promise?

Dave looks back at Rachel. She's crying, but holding back for
Emily-Jane's sake.

DAVE
I promise.
(to Rachel)
Please call me when you get there.

She doesn't look at him.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Rachel? Please.

Pulling the car door toward, she continues crying. Finally, she slams it in front of him.

He backs off as the cabbie pulls out of the driveway. Dave's mom slowly approaches and curls her arm around his waist.

Watching the car drive away, he's lost. In spite of his mother's hugs, the frustration is too much to bear.

MRS. WHITAKER
She still loves you, Davey. She just needs -

DAVE
Time. Yeah. We've had time, but now she wants to spend it without me.

MRS. WHITAKER
Dave -

He storms into the house.

FADE TO:

EXT. TOWN SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Speed-walking along a familiar sidewalk, Dave's old home town whizzes by him as he quickly approaches old craftsman's home.

EXT. OLD CRAFTSMAN - FRONT STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Skipping a couple steps as he approaches, he hurries toward the door. Determination and frustration launches a few quick KNOCKS on the front door.

The door CREAKS open. He leans himself in.

INT. OLD CRAFTSMAN - CONTINUOUS

Even dirtier, dustier, and filthier than before, Dave steps inside. Completely dark, it's impossible to see through the shadows of the old home.

DAVE
Mervin! For your sake, I hope you're not here, but for my sake...

He risks a couple more steps inside, unsure of even the floorboards beneath.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Mervin? I don't know why he would be here, anyway.

Holding up a CD case - the same one his uncle gave to him years ago - he calls out again.

DAVE (CONT'D)
It's broken!

Rearing his arm back, he WHIPS the CD case against the wall. It shatters, exploding into the darkness of the home.

Still no sound or sign of his uncle.

He waits a bit. A beat.

Nothing.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Not surprising.

He leaves just as quickly as he entered.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Walking through his home town, Dave has his hands shoved into his coat pocket. The air is a bit colder here and the wind isn't being too kind.

Stepping across the street, head down, the little town seems nearly deserted. Peaceful, yet sad.

He hops up the curb and plods along the rest of the sidewalk, only to look up and see -

A SIGN dangling above the entrance to what was once an ice cream shop. The lights are off.

He stops and presses his face against the glass. Looks inside. The counters and glass cases are still there, but it looks as if the parlour went out of business years ago.

Looking back up at the sign -

RACHEL (V.O.)
This is my friend, Dave. He hasn't done anything exciting today.

Her voice ECHOES as he remembers their ice cream shop adventure.

DAVE (V.O.)

I think you'd make a great mom.

RACHEL (V.O.)

No one has ever said that to me before. You wanna make babies with me or something?

Dave smiles, for what feels like the first time in ages.

He looks back at the ice cream parlour, then reaches into his pocket and withdraws his cell phone.

INT. RACHEL'S FATHER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lying in bed, Rachel is again on her side. She's been crying, and she wipes a tear as it cascades down her cheek.

Into the room walks RACHEL'S STEP MOM. She's holding a cell phone as she approaches her daughter.

Holding it out toward Rachel.

RACHEL'S STEP MOM

I think you should talk to him.

Rachel shakes her head, "no".

RACHEL'S STEP MOM (CONT'D)

It's the third time in less than an hour, honey. He hasn't done anything wrong.

RACHEL

I know...

She turns and rolls on to her other side, away from the phone.

Rachel's Step Mom brings the cell up to her ear with a deep sigh, and exits the bedroom.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Back on Dave as he listens to the cell

RACHEL'S STEP MOM (O.S.)

(into phone)

Keep trying, Dave.

(MORE)

RACHEL'S STEP MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 It does mean a lot that you're
 calling. She's just not ready to
 pick up yet.

DAVE
 Thanks. Please tell her that I love
 her.

He listens and nods, finally hangs up.

A deep sigh as he looks back at the ice cream parlor.

EXT. TOWN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Leaning along the edge of a stone railing, Dave's hands are
 in his coat pockets as he looks out over the town he grew up
 in.

Quiet. Simple. Little street lights line the picturesque town
 center, and reflect off of the rippling water of the small
 river.

FOOTSTEPS approach along the sidewalk behind him. He doesn't
 react until -

MERVIN (O.S.)
 Mr. Whittaker.

Startled, Dave turns and sees his uncle leaning over a cane.
 He's much older, a little heavier, and could be nearing the
 end of his days, but he's just as spritely as ever.

MERVIN (CONT'D)
 If ya jump, I can't go in after
 you. And from the looks of things
 (motions to the empty
 town)
 No one else will either.

DAVE
 I destroyed your CD.

MERVIN
 This CD?

The old man holds up a cracked CD case and busted disc.

MERVIN (CONT'D)
 I check in on the old manor every
 now and then. Didn't know you were
 in town. When I saw this...

DAVE

It doesn't work anymore.

MERVIN

Seeing as though it's busted in half, I would have to agree.

DAVE

No. I mean, I haven't heard the damn thing in months.

Mervin joins him along the railing, leans and sets his hand on his shoulder.

MERVIN

Your mother told me about Conor.

A small nod is all Dave can muster.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

Life. It's full of a whole bunch of shit sometimes.

DAVE

You're a poet.

MERVIN

When that shit gets too heavy to carry, it's easy to forget the shine.

DAVE

The shine?

MERVIN

Haven't you heard the saying, "You have to cut through the shit to get to the shine-ola?"

DAVE

You're making up words now?

Mervin turns and looks out at the water.

MERVIN

Why do you think you can't hear it anymore?

DAVE

Everything else seems to be leaving me. My job. My wife. My -

His uncle, again, pats him on the shoulder.

MERVIN

We can't avoid the bad things. The ugly things. The things that make life too loud. But we can choose to let go of the noise. To let go of it just long enough to hear what matters.

A beat as Mervin grabs his cane and is about leave.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

You know what matters, Davey. Just focus on that, and you'll be OK.

The old man shuffles off down the sidewalk, but stops and turns when -

DAVE

Are you real?

MERVIN

What is real and what isn't, Mr. Whittaker?

DAVE

I don't think I know anymore.

MERVIN

Yeah ya do.

He points to his ear.

MERVIN (CONT'D)

Just listen.

Dave watches the old man limp along the sidewalk and into the quiet little town.

FADE TO:

EXT. WHITTAKER HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Taping up a big cardboard box, Dave mashes the final piece on top, pushing it down with his hand.

His brow is sweating as he looks around him.

Boxes are stacked from floor to ceiling. The house is empty but for mountains of cardboard and bubble-wrapped items.

MOVER (O.S.)

Mr. Whittaker?

DAVE
Kitchen!

A broad-shouldered man with a rounded stomach protruding from his shirt steps into the room.

MOVER
We're set for the night. We'll grab these tomorrow and that'll be everything. 8am?

DAVE
8am. Thanks.

Dave salutes. The mover exits.

Standing and wiping his brow, Dave looks at everything. The rest of his life, packed up and ready to make another move.

He crosses the empty kitchen and brings a plastic cup to the sink. Turning the water on, he pours himself a bit, but just before he takes a swig, he sees something on the window sill.

Taking a gulp of the water, he heads over to the window. Looks down.

Uncle Mervin's CD. The plain plastic case is pristine. The disc is in perfect condition. The same red writing and title is written across it.

DAVE (CONT'D)
What the -

Looking and searching the kitchen, no one else is there.

INT. FRONT FOYER - NIGHT

Bounding into the foyer, Dave is still searching. Again, no one is there.

He looks at the CD again. Shakes his head - laughs.

DAVE
Crazy old man.

Stepping toward the front staircase, Dave grabs the railing, about to ascend. As his right foot touches the first step -

A slight echo of RACHEL'S THEME bounces through the foyer. Steadily growing louder, Dave is frozen. He listens.

It grows just a bit louder - enough for him to know exactly what it is.

RACHEL'S THEME increases not only in volume, but a set of VIOLINS begin an anxious, intense tune.

Dave steps off the staircase, looks around him.

Runs toward the dining room -

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The THEME continues, but it grows more and more OMINOUS as he hurries from room to room.

It's real. It's back.

INT. FRONT FOYER - NIGHT

Standing in the middle of the foyer, Dave waits. Closes his eyes.

Listens.

RACHEL'S THEME - something is wrong. Very wrong.

DAVE

Rachel.

Swiping his keys from the front door side table, he rushes out the door.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - NIGHT

Zooming through suburbia, Dave is squeezing through yellow lights, honking his horn.

His cell is to his ear.

RACHEL'S THEME, still ominous and intense, blares all around him.

DAVE

(into the phone)

Pick up. Someone pick up!

He continues to weave in and out of traffic, honking his horn.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Pick up the phone, Rachel!

No answer. He tosses the phone onto the passenger seat.

EXT. RACHEL'S FATHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain has started to trickle down, misting his front windshield.

The MUSIC is the most intense Dave has heard yet.

Squealing his tires as he turns into the driveway, he barely sets the car into park before he's thrusting himself out of it.

Rushing to the front door, he POUNDS on it.

DAVE

Rachel!

POUNDS harder. Over and over.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Anybody?! Dammit!

Running to the side of the house, he looks into each window. It's dark - he can't see anything.

EXT. RACHEL'S FATHER'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Sprinting through the wet grass, the rain is starting pour. He hurries to a back window - a bedroom window.

Looking in, he can't see much of anything as the rain patters the window.

He steps on a large stone to get a better view. He faintly sees a candle burning next to a bed and finally -

Sees her!

DAVE

Rachel!

He pounds on the glass. Wraps again and again.

She's passed out, face down.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Oh my God. Wake up. Wake up!

Stepping down from the rock, he rushes to the back door.

It's locked too!

DAVE (CONT'D)

Come on!

A thick branch lays in the middle of the yard. He rushes over, grabs it, and sprints to Rachel's window.

SMASH! He forces the branch through the glass, breaking and shattering it.

Rachel still doesn't wake up.

INT. RACHEL'S FATHER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hurrying to her side, she hasn't moved in spite of the chaos. Dave looks at her bedside table.

A bottle of pills has been spilled.

DAVE

No no! Rachel! Rachel, honey,
please wake up.

RACHEL'S THEME is as loud and ominous as ever as he wraps his arms around her, cradling her. She's limp in his arms.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Please. Oh my God, please!

Reaching into his pocket, his wet fingers dial 9-1-1. There's no signal. In a panic he lifts her limp body and cradles her in his arms and rushes down the passage to the front door.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Please! Rachel, honey, please, wake up!!!

He rushes to the car and carefully places her in the passenger seat. Still no response from Rachel. He barely starts the car as his tires screech out the driveway into the cold, frightening night. Dodging red lights, cars, pedestrians alike, Rachel's THEME is fraught with panic stricken instruments clamouring to to a frenzied climax.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Dave bursts through the doors clutching Rachel's seemingly lifeless body in his arms.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Help somebody please, help me!!

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Pacing back and forth, Dave is unable to control himself. Rachel's THEME is quieter now, but still thick with intensity.

He rushes to the front desk again.

DAVE

Can you please check on her.
Anything from the doctor or -

NURSE

Mr. Whittaker, please sit down. The
doctor is with your wife right now.
There isn't anything I can do until
-

EMILY-JANE

Daddy!

DAVE

Oh, EJ!

He runs to his daughter, picks her up, and hugs her.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Oh, I love you. I love you so much.

EMILY-JANE

You're all wet. Where's Mommy?

DAVE

Mommy isn't... Mom isn't doing so
well, honey.

RACHEL'S MOM

What happened? We just went out for
ice cream and she said she was just
going to sleep.

Rachel's step mom is frantic, doing everything she can to hold back utter panic.

EMILY-JANE

You're scaring me, grandma.

RACHEL'S STEP MOM

Oh honey, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

She takes her from Dave's arms.

DAVE
I haven't heard -

DOCTOR #2
Mr. Whitaker?

Quickly turning around, Dave sees the doctor and rushes over. Rachel's mom joins him.

DAVE
Anything?

DOCTOR #2
First, your wife is very lucky to have you. She's stable.

DAVE
Oh thank God.

EMILY-JANE
What's that mean?

DAVE
She's going to be OK, honey. Mommy is OK.

DOCTOR #2
Now, that's not to say she's healthy, Mr. Whitaker. She took a very serious amount of drugs. Her system would have shut down entirely had you not brought her in. And this - she was very serious about this, Mr. Whitaker. Do you understand?

Tears well up in Dave's eyes. Rachel's Step Mom cries audibly, in spite of trying to compose herself. She grabs Dave's arm.

Dave nods through hiccups.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Cautiously entering, Dave lightly pushes open the door. RACHEL'S THEME merges into a single, soft violin. A light, MINOR-KEYED PIANO joins.

DOCTOR #2 (V.O.)
Not only is her system fragile, Mr. Whitaker, but...she will need time to deal with this. I hope you understand that.

Dave tip-toes to the side of the hospital bed. A tube is inserted into Rachel's nose - she is lying on her back, eyes closed, and breathing peacefully.

A heart rate monitor CHIMES in time with the slow, peaceful RACHEL'S THEME.

He pulls a chair next to the bed and sits, holding her hand and looking at her sleep.

DAVE
(whispering)
You said you would never leave me.

Bringing her head close to her arm, he caresses his cheek along her wrist, and cries. Uncontrollable.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Sunlight breaks through the window of Rachel's hospital room. Dave is still in the chair, his neck uncomfortably leaning on the back of it. He's asleep as -

Rachel opens her eyes. Blinks, and finally looks to her left. She sees Dave sitting there, fast asleep. At first a slight smile creases her lips, but it slowly turns into tears and sobbing.

Waking up, Dave blinks to and sees Rachel crying.

DAVE
Hey. Hey, hey -

He stands and leans over her, again holding her hand.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I'm here. I'm here.

RACHEL
I'm so sorry.

DAVE
So am I. I am so sorry, honey.

She wants to turn away, to roll over, to hide her weeping eyes from him, but he won't let her.

He tears up and fights his own crying.

DAVE (CONT' D)

Can you do something for me.
Please?

RACHEL

There's nothing I can do. There's
nothing I can do anymore.

DAVE

Yes. Yes, there is. Please, Rachel.

His crying intensifies, as does a soft VIOLIN and PIANO of RACHEL'S THEME.

She finally turns and peers through the tears to look into his eyes.

DAVE (CONT' D)

Forgive me. Please. Please forgive
me.

Not expecting this, Rachel bursts into more tears. They're uncontrollable, but she slowly reaches her arms around him.

They hug as she nods her head over and over into the crook of his neck.

They both cry - tears that have been held back for far too long. Tears that needed to be shared together.

Quietly entering the room, Rachel's Step Mom, along with Mr. and Mrs. Whitaker, lead by little Emily-Jane.

The little girl looks up at Rachel's Step Mom as if to ask if it's OK for her to join them.

Her grandma nods through tears of her own.

Emily-Jane walks over to her parents and puts her hand on Dave's back.

EMILY-JANE

Daddy?

He turns. Rachel sees her daughter.

Nothing to say - instead Dave picks her up, places on the side of the bed, and their little family hug each other. More tears, but necessary ones.

FADE OUT.

EXT. WHITAKER COTTAGE - BACKYARD - DAY

Autumn is in full swing as the golden brown leaves of a large oak tree fall past -

The beginnings of a tree fort. Emily-Jane stands on the wooden platform with a square paper hat on her head.

She holds a cardboard sword and points it straight up.

EMILY-JANE
Land, ho! Daddy, land ho!

DAVE
Yes. Ho - land -

Struggling to climb the tree, Dave is trying to make it to the top of the platform.

Below them, Rachel is laughing - trying to hold back hysterical laughter - as she watches her uncoordinated husband climb the tree.

Rachel calls out from below -

RACHEL
Is the ship ready to be anchored,
my captain?

EMILY-JANE
The first mate isn't on board, yet,
Mom.

RACHEL
Well tell the first mate to get his
little butt in gear.

DAVE
I'm working on it.

EMILY-JANE
Mom says that -

DAVE
I heard her. I heard her.

Finally Dave makes it to the platform, adjusts his jeans and stands up. He looks out over their backyard. It's actually quite high - he's visually uncomfortable.

RACHEL
Uh, first mate? You OK up there?

Dave gives an awkward thumbs up.

Rachel mouths, "be careful".

DAVE
So where have we landed, cap?

Once again, Emily-Jane raises her sword triumphantly.

EMILY-JANE
I dub this Whitaker Isle! And all
men and women shall be free!

DAVE
Freedom!

Rachel claps and cheers from below.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Free to do what, cap?

EMILY-JANE
To...to... eat as much ice-cream and candy
and never have to go to school again!

They all burst out laughing as Rachel beckons them all to lunch.

Rachel's THEME plays gently as if smiling upon them with great love and affection.

FADE OUT.

