

I'm Still Here

by

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OVER BLACK:

Darkness, everywhere. A ghostly breeze MOANS faintly in this void.

RYAN (V.O.)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"...

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - UNKNOWN TIME

ZIP! A match SCRAPES across a matchbox and HISSES to life, revealing a large, bright flame that flickers in the darkness. The flame dies down, and the match head is brought to the wick of a candle taper, igniting it.

The candle wick CRACKLES as the flame engulfs it and grows large once again.

RYAN (V.O.)

...and there was light.

The candle light reveals a large, wooden desk in a dark, empty void. Next to the lit candle are two more candle tapers.

RYAN (V.O.)

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

A man sits at the desk, his face unseen.

A notebook is lightly set down on top of the desk. Next to it, a couple pens. The hands of the unknown character uncaps one of the pens and prepares to write.

He pauses. The character scratches his scruffy chin and neck nervously, and lets out a shaken SIGH. His breath is visible in this cold, dark room.

He TAPS the pen quickly and lightly on the page.

The man brings the pen to his mouth and CHEWS on it with thought. This reveals his face in the low light: shaggy dark hair, tired eyes with bags that grow beneath them, and an expression of pure exhaustion. This is RYAN STOVALL (late 20s).

(CONTINUED)

Ryan stares at the candle flame as it sits still upon the wick. He begins to write.

RYAN (V.O.)

But what was there before light,
before the heavens and the earth
were created?

CUT TO BLACK.

There's a moment of darkness and silence when suddenly--

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

BAM! Doors BLAST open as nurses and doctors shove a stretcher through. They YELL hospital jargon at each other as they roll the stretcher down the long, white hallway.

The wheels SQUEAL almost as loudly as the hospital staff YELL at each other.

On top of the stretcher is Ryan: pale, bluish-gray skin, purple lips, drenched in water and unconscious, or possibly dead. Dark red blood cakes the left side of his face.

A nurse manually pumps oxygen (OXYGEN NURSE) into the mask strapped around his face. Another nurse pushes a crash cart behind the stretcher.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Ryan's body SLAMS onto a hospital bed. His head flops to the side in dead weight. The staff continue to exchange hospital jargon between each other.

Oxygen Nurse cuts his shirt open and exposes his bare chest. Crash Cart Nurse prepares the defibrillator machine.

The paddles warm up with a long, high-pitched SQUEAL. The doctor readies the paddles over Ryan's chest, calls it, and THUMP! Ryan's body jolts upward as the paddles make their contact.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - WEEKS LATER

The room is much more calm and quiet, except for the soft, rhythmic BEEP of the heart monitor.

Ryan lies in bed in a hospital gown. Leads are hidden beneath his gown, an IV needle is stuck in his wrist, and an oxygen tube is gently taped to his nostril.

(CONTINUED)

His eyes are sunken and dark, and a large, fading bruise decorates the left side of his face. A couple of healing cuts and scratches accompany the bruise. Unkempt facial hair has replaced his clean-shaven jawline.

KAYLA WATTS (late 20s) sits on the opposite side of the bed and reads a magazine.

A clock above Ryan's bed TICKS loudly, almost in sync with the heart monitor.

Ryan's eyes slowly flicker open, blinded by the bright hospital lights. He lets out a weak COUGH.

Kayla stands up excitedly and grabs Ryan's hand with a smile on her face.

KAYLA
Ryan! Oh, honey!

She softly caresses his cheek as he stares at her with weak, tired eyes. She sniffs as she attempts to hold back tears; her voice is shaky.

KAYLA
I thought you were never going to
wake up.

RYAN
(weakly)
Kayla...

The instant he says her name, the tears begin to flow. She nods and smiles in a very grateful manner.

KAYLA
Yes, I'm here, baby.

They stare at each other for a moment, Ryan lost in her eyes.

RYAN
(weakly)
Those beautiful, blue eyes...

Kayla CHUCKLES and wipes away her tears. She suddenly perks up.

KAYLA
I'll get the doctor. I'll be right
back, just for a minute.

Ryan doesn't say anything. She gives him a quick peck on the cheek and hastily exits the room.

(CONTINUED)

Ryan lays in bed and listens to the clock TICK and the heart monitor BEEP. Sounds of muffled FOOTSTEPS and CONVERSATION emit from the other side of the hospital room door.

The door CLICKS open and DR. HENRY ROSENBERG, a tall, slender man, enters the room, followed by Oxygen Nurse and Kayla.

DR. ROSENBERG

Hey there, Ryan, nice to see you're finally awake! How are you feeling?

Oxygen Nurse checks the heart monitor and IV fluid bag and respirator. Dr. Rosenberg stands next to Ryan with clipboard in hand.

Ryan attempts to clear his throat, but he winces in pain.

RYAN

My throat hurts.

DR. ROSENBERG

(to Oxygen Nurse)

Could you get him some water?

Oxygen Nurse complies. She feeds the water to Ryan. He painfully swallows the water.

DR. ROSENBERG

Take it in sips.

Dr. Rosenberg jots down a quick note on the papers attached to the clipboard and sets it down on the bed. He holds up his index finger.

DR. ROSENBERG

Follow my finger with just your eyes.

Dr. Rosenberg moves his index finger side to side, and Ryan follows it with his eyes. After a moment, Dr. Rosenberg writes another note on his clipboard.

DR. ROSENBERG

What's the last thing you remember?

Ryan thinks for a moment.

RYAN

Driving. And darkness.

DR. ROSENBERG
Do you know what happened?

Ryan shakes his head.

DR. ROSENBERG
You were involved in a car accident
when you lost control of your
vehicle during a bad storm. That
was six weeks ago. You've been in a
coma since then.

Ryan stares at Dr. Rosenberg in disbelief.

RYAN
A coma...?

Dr. Rosenberg pulls up a chair next to the bed.

DR. ROSENBERG
I can assure you that you've been
in good care. We've been performing
some tests to make sure there
wasn't any permanent damage. It
could've been a lot worse.

RYAN
How?

DR. ROSENBERG
You're a very lucky man, Ryan. On
your way here in the ambulance,
your heart stopped.

Ryan's eyes grow wide. He looks over at Kayla, who sadly
nods.

RYAN
I died...?

Dr. Rosenberg nods.

DR. ROSENBERG
For a full six minutes. The fact
that you're awake and able to talk
and think coherently is a miracle
within itself.

KAYLA
He's going to be okay though,
right?

DR. ROSENBERG

That's what we're going to find out. Now Ryan, you'll need to get more rest, but we're just going to run a few tests before we can safely discharge you from the hospital. When you're more awake, I'll run through the procedures that we plan on performing and what you need to know...

Dr. Rosenberg's VOICE trails off as he explains to Ryan the future procedures.

Kayla shifts her attention from Dr. Rosenberg to Ryan and grabs his hand.

All Ryan can do is stare.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Ryan wakes suddenly with a sharp BREATH. He observes his surroundings before he finally sits up in bed.

He sits on the side of the bed and rubs his eyes. The bags beneath them are no longer there, but his beard is slightly more full than before.

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

Ryan looks at his reflection in the bedroom mirror and examines his beard. He grimaces at the sight.

He sighs and drops his arms into his lap. He notices a tiny red blotch on the inner elbow of his left arm, almost too small to even see. He rubs it with his hand.

KITCHEN

POP! Toast jumps from the toaster as bacon and eggs SIZZLE in pans. Coffee brews off to the side. Kayla, dressed and ready for the day, stands at the stove as she prepares breakfast.

Ryan walks into the kitchen, still rubbing his left inner elbow. He pulls out a chair from the table, which surprises Kayla.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA
Good morning, sleepyhead!

RYAN
You've been saying that every morning.

KAYLA
It's only because I love ya.

Kayla smiles and kisses in his direction. Ryan reciprocates.

RYAN
I got bit by another spider last night.

KAYLA
Again? That's the second time since you've gotten back home. I'll call an exterminator and see if we can get one out here today or tomorrow.

RYAN
It's nothing, really. It just stings a bit.

He rubs the blotch with his fingers. Kayla sets down two plates of breakfast and walks back to the coffee maker.

KAYLA
Well if you keep messing with it it's gonna get worse. Besides, if we have spiders in the house, then we probably have other bugs too.

She sits down with the coffee and they begin to eat.

KAYLA
Don't forget to write in your journal today for Dr. Rosenberg. You have that follow-up appointment in a couple days.

RYAN
You sound just like my mom.

KAYLA
Well she's been calling every day asking how you're doing. She's worried sick about you.

RYAN

She's always worried. That's how moms are.

KAYLA

And your dad?

RYAN

I'm sure Mom told him.

KAYLA

Ryan...

RYAN

He hasn't called since I left the hospital. What do you think that means?

They sit in silence for a moment as they continue to eat.

KAYLA

He was there.

RYAN

Yeah, well I wasn't. I was somewhere else.

Kayla pokes at her food with her fork, hesitant. Finally:

KAYLA

Do you remember what it was like?
What it felt like?

Ryan thinks.

RYAN

It's hard to explain...It felt like I was swimming in darkness. I don't know how long I was there for, but I was able to think. It was like my mind had separated from the rest of my body. Before I came to, I remember feeling a tingling sensation, like my body was trying to piece itself back together. You know when you wake up, but you haven't opened your eyes yet? You're awake but it's still black. You don't know--or remember--where you are. It was kind of like that.

(beat)

I felt...lost.

(CONTINUED)

Ryan looks at Kayla, visibly shaken. His attention suddenly shifts to the light fixture above the table. The light bulb flickers, almost unnoticeable, HUMMING and BUZZING with each very subtle flicker.

BRRINNGG! Both Ryan and Kayla jump at the sound of the phone RINGING. Kayla sighs and stands up to answer it.

KAYLA

Well, I don't think luck had anything to do with it. Someone or something was looking out for you.

She gives Ryan a comforting smile and winks before she answers the phone.

KAYLA

Hello...? Oh, good morning Michelle...I'm doing well, just having breakfast with Ryan. Would you like to talk to him...? Okay, one sec.

Kayla hands the phone to Ryan. He reluctantly takes it, giving Kayla a "look." She shrugs and continues eating. Ryan stands and walks to the corner of the kitchen.

RYAN

Hey, Mom.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Finally! Jesus, Ryan, I've been trying to call you for days now.

RYAN

I know. Kayla told me.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

I've been worried sick about you--

RYAN

I know, I know...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

How are you feeling? Are you okay?

RYAN

I'm fine, Mom.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

I think I should come in for a few days, make sure that everything's okay.

(CONTINUED)

Ryan looks at Kayla, surprised.

RYAN

What? No, you don't need to come visit for a few days.

Kayla shakes her head and mouths the word "No."

MICHELLE (V.O.)

I just want to know that you're doing okay.

RYAN

How many times do I, and Kayla, have to tell you that I'm okay? Really, I'm fine.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Well what did the doctor say?

Ryan SIGHS in frustration.

RYAN

He told me that I shouldn't have any problems recovering. I have to keep a journal of my condition every time I wake up to keep record in case something happens.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Something happens? Like what? What did he say could happen?

Ryan pulls the phone away from his ear as Michelle continues to ask questions. Kayla can't help but chuckle, but she tries to hide it.

Ryan puts the phone back to his ear.

RYAN

Mom, listen, I'll call you later today. We're in the middle of breakfast and Kayla has to run to work in a little bit.

Michelle SIGHS sadly on the other end of the line.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

I just miss you so much. I love you, Ryan.

RYAN

I love you too. I'll talk to you
later, okay?

The line CLICKS on the other end.

RYAN

Hello? Mom?

Ryan looks at the phone and shrugs before setting it back on
the charging stand. He returns to the table.

KAYLA

Told ya she was worried about you.

RYAN

Yeah, well now that she's gotten it
out of her system I'm sure she'll
be able to sleep soundly once
again.

KAYLA

Be nice, she's your mother.

Ryan smiles. Kayla checks her watch and grabs her bag from
the chair.

KAYLA

I gotta get to work. Love you.

RYAN

Love you, too.

She gives Ryan a kiss, but immediately recoils in disgust,
wiping her lips.

KAYLA

And please shave.

Kayla leaves for work. Ryan sits at the table and SCRATCHES
his beard.

BATHROOM - LATER

Ryan stands in front of the mirror, his face a mess of
shaving cream and some blood as he sloppily runs the razor
down his neck.

He grimaces and lets out a frustrated, painful MOAN as the
razor cuts into his skin.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

Ryan runs the faucet as the creamy water GURGLES down the pipe.

He splashes water on his face. Clean-shaven now, he looks better. Cleaner. Healthier.

He admires his smooth jawline.

KITCHEN

Ryan washes the dishes in the sink and sets them in the drying rack.

He wipes down the table and straightens the chairs.

LIVING ROOM

Ryan cleans up the living room, organizing magazines on the coffee table and straightening the couch pillows and cushions.

He sits down in a chair, satisfied. A clock somewhere TICKS loudly.

He looks around the living room, tapping his foot on the ground. He grows a bit impatient and finally stands back up. He walks into the...

KITCHEN

Ryan paces back and forth, the phone to his ear. The phone rings on the other end a few times before going to voicemail.

WALTER (V.O.)

Hi, you've reached Walter Stovall,
I'm sorry I wasn't able to answer
your call but please leave a
message and I'll get back to you as
soon as I can.

The voicemail recording BEEPS.

RYAN

Hey, Dad, it's Ryan...

(beat)

Uh...I'm sure Mom told you what
happened, but...I just wanted to
give you a call and let you know
that everything's okay and that I'm
fine...

(beat)

You don't need to call me back if
you don't want to, but...yeah, I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RYAN (cont'd)
was just letting you know that I'm
okay...
(beat)
Bye.

Ryan hangs up and stares at the phone for a moment before setting it back on the charging stand.

BEDROOM

Ryan sits at his desk (the same one from the opening) with a notebook in front of him. He writes a date at the top of a page, followed by "DR. HENRY ROSENBERG" beneath the date.

"MOOD: RELAXED, BORED"

"FIRST THOUGHT UPON WAKING: TIRED"

"WOKE UP FROM NIGHTMARE, BUT WITH NO CONCERNING HEALTH ISSUES. NO SUICIDAL THOUGHTS. NO NAUSEA. NO HEADACHE. SPIDER BITE ON THE INSIDE OF LEFT ARM; SECOND ONE THIS WEEK. TALKED TO MOTHER, EVERYTHING'S OKAY. TRIED CALLING FATHER; NO ANSWER."

LIVING ROOM - LATER

The clock continues to TICK loudly.

Ryan sits on the couch with a book in one hand and the other on the armrest.

Ryan's finger taps to the sound of the clock TICKING. It gets louder. Louder. LOUDER.

A cold CHILL runs across his right arm.

Ryan inhales a sharp, quick BREATH. He grabs his arm, dropping the book which PLOPS on the floor. He immediately jumps to his feet and takes a few steps away from the couch. His BREATHING is shaky.

The clock continues to TICK as he stands in the middle of the living room tightly gripping his arm. Apart from the clock, the house is completely SILENT.

The front door loudly CLICKS unlocked and Kayla enters the house. This startles Ryan and he spins around, still clutching his arm.

Kayla smiles when she sees him.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

Hey, baby.

Ryan doesn't respond. He's visibly frightened. A look of concern quickly replaces Kayla's smile.

KAYLA

What's wrong?

Ryan shakes his head as he snaps out of his funk. He picks up the book from the floor.

RYAN

Nothing, you just surprised me is all.

KAYLA

Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you.

She gives him a kiss with an exaggerated "MUAH". She rubs his clean-shaven face.

KAYLA

Okay, see, this is much, much better.

She walks into the...

KITCHEN

...and sets her bag on a chair. Ryan walks in after her.

RYAN

How was work?

KAYLA

Oh, nothing exciting, as usual. Everyone's been asking about you, though. They're glad to hear you're doing well.

Kayla looks around the kitchen and leans against the counter.

KAYLA

Did you clean the kitchen?

RYAN

The whole house. I've been so bored just sitting around every day doing nothing.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

When do you think you'll start
looking for another job again?

Ryan walks up to Kayla and presses up against her. He gently puts his hands around her waist.

RYAN

Probably after my follow-up
appointment with Dr. Rosenberg. You
know, just to make sure
everything's working fine "up
here".

He taps his head. Kayla smiles and wraps her arms around his neck. Ryan stares into her eyes.

RYAN

How many times have I told you,
you've always had the most
beautiful, blue eyes.

KAYLA

I've lost count.

RYAN

They just make me feel good. They
make me feel real.

KAYLA

What does that mean?

Ryan lifts her up onto the counter. She LAUGHS.

RYAN

It means I am deeply, madly in love
with you.

The two kiss passionately.

BEDROOM

The setting sun's light breaks through the thin curtains,
giving the bedroom a golden hue.

The bed covers are strewn about as two bodies move around
beneath the sheets. Kayla's GIGGLES escape from...

UNDERNEATH THE SHEETS

Ryan gently cups his hands around Kayla's face and kisses
her with nothing but passion. They smile at each other, feel
each other, make love.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ryan and Kayla lay in bed. Thunder RUMBLES in the distance from outside. Rain PITTER-PATTERS lightly on the window.

Kayla sleeps soundly, her back to Ryan who lays on his back, wide awake. He stares up at the ceiling.

He sits up and hangs his legs over the edge of the bed. He rubs his eyes, tired but wide awake. The room is quiet except for the rain and thunder--

A male YELP echoes from somewhere within the house; it cuts off quickly and sounds distant.

Ryan lifts his head up from his hands and slowly turns his head toward the bedroom door.

CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM

A lamp CLICKS on and low light spills into the dark room. Ryan, now in boxers, slips a shirt over himself. He stands in the dark hallway as he examines the poorly lit room.

The clock TICKS; it seems to echo through the house.

There's no lightning, but distant thunder ROLLS through the house.

Ryan walks into the living room and listens. The house CREAKS and SHIFTS quietly.

RYAN

Hello?

Silence, apart from the TICKING clock. Suddenly, the phone RINGS.

Ryan walks into the dark...

KITCHEN

He flips the light switch, but the room remains dark. He SIGHS and answers the continuously RINGING phone.

RYAN

Hello?

Slight STATIC CRACKLES through the phone.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Hello?

More STATIC. Ryan listens intently to the other line. Through the static, he hears a faint BEEPING. It's almost too quiet to even notice.

Something else accompanies the BEEPING. A woman, SOBBING. Much like the BEEPS, the SOBBING sounds just as faint.

RYAN

Is someone there? Hello?

No response. The other line CLICKS off.

Ryan looks at the phone and hangs up. He sets it on the counter.

That's when he's aware that the SOBBING is still present.

Ryan walks back into the...

LIVING ROOM

The SOBBING seems to have become slightly louder, yet distant, muffled.

The lamp in the living room flickers slightly. Ryan listens to the SOBBING.

RYAN

Kayla?

He turns off the flickering lamp and walks back into the...

BEDROOM

The SOBBING ceases as he enters the room. The house is once again quiet except for the rain against the windows.

Ryan crawls back into bed and admires Kayla as she sleeps. He runs his fingers through her hair, which stirs her awake. She groggily rolls over to face Ryan.

RYAN

You were crying in your sleep.

KAYLA

Sorry.

RYAN

You were having a nightmare. I think I just had one, too.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

I don't remember.

Ryan slips beneath the covers and scoots close to Kayla. They press their foreheads together, and Kayla closes her eyes as she's on the verge of falling back asleep.

KAYLA

I love you so much, Ryan.

RYAN

I love you, too.

KAYLA

I don't know what I would've done without you. I thought you were gone forever.

RYAN

Hey, look at me.

Kayla opens her eyes.

RYAN

I would never want you to be sad.

He brushes a strand of hair out of her face and behind her ear.

RYAN

If anything were to happen to me, I'd want you to live a full, happy life. I'd want you to find someone else who would make you just as happy as I do. Can you make that promise for me?

Kayla nods.

KAYLA

You're here, and that's all that matters.

RYAN

I'm here.

Ryan kisses her forehead.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ryan stands on a chair as he twists in a new light bulb in the light fixture; Kayla watches.

He steps down from the chair and flips the light switch. The light bulb BUZZES to life.

Ryan raises his hands in accomplishment.

RYAN

Ta-da.

Kayla nods in approval.

KAYLA

Impressive.

RYAN

I think the lamp in the living room is about to give out as well.

KAYLA

I just put in a new bulb last week.

RYAN

Huh, must've been the storm last night.

Ryan sits down at the table.

RYAN

Speaking of which, we got a weird phone call last night.

Kayla tosses the old light bulb in the trashcan.

KAYLA

Oh yeah? Who was it?

RYAN

I dunno, there was nobody on the other line.

KAYLA

Must've been a wrong number.

RYAN

Maybe. It just weirded me out a bit for some reason.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA
(sarcastically)
Maybe it was a ghost.

Kayla sits down at the table.

RYAN
Do you believe in ghosts?

KAYLA
Nope.

RYAN
What do you believe in?

KAYLA
I believe that...There's an
explanation for everything.

RYAN
What if you experience something
that can't be explained?

KAYLA
I think it can be. We just haven't
found it yet.

Kayla looks at him intently.

KAYLA
Did something happen?

Ryan hesitates.

RYAN
If something actually did, then I
can't explain it.

BEDROOM - LATER

Ryan sits at his desk and opens up his notebook to a new
page. He writes the date and Dr. Henry's name beneath it.

"MOOD: CONTENT; CURIOUS"

"FIRST THOUGHT UPON WAKING: CAN'T REMEMBER"

"NO CONCERNING HEALTH ISSUES. NO SUICIDAL THOUGHTS. NO
NAUSEA. NO HEADACHE. WOKE UP DURING MIDDLE OF NIGHT; HEARD
VOICES. NIGHTMARE? IMAGINATION? GHOST? SOMETHING TOUCHED MY
ARM YESTERDAY."

Ryan taps his pen on the paper, thinks.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

RYAN'S POV

A bright light blinds Ryan's POV. Behind the light is Dr. Rosenberg.

BACK TO SCENE

Dr. Rosenberg examines Ryan's eyes.

DR. ROSENBERG

Any concerns that you want to talk
about today? Nausea? Headaches?
Anything?

He brings the light away from Ryan's eyes. Ryan blinks as he regains proper vision.

RYAN

Uh, no. Nothing's really gone wrong
since I've been back home.

DR. ROSENBERG

That's great news. How's Kayla?

RYAN

She's hanging in there.

DR. ROSENBERG

Fainting? Loss of consciousness?

Ryan shakes his head.

DR. ROSENBERG

I want to run one more brain scan
just to be sure, but other than
that, you should be safe to drive a
car once again.

RYAN

I dunno, Doc. As good of news as
that sounds, I think I might feel
safer walking for the time being.

Dr. Rosenberg shuffles through Ryan's journal.

DR. ROSENBERG

So, from what I've read, you seem
to be doing fine, except for this
last entry. What happened?

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Right, yeah...Look, Dr. Rosenberg--

DR. ROSENBERG

Henry, please.

RYAN

...I've been experiencing some things that I can't exactly explain.

Dr. Rosenberg reads through the last entry.

DR. ROSENBERG

Right. Apparently you've been hearing voices, is that correct?

RYAN

Yeah. I even felt someone touch my arm the other day, too.

DR. ROSENBERG

And you're sure nobody actually touched your arm?

RYAN

I was home alone when I felt someone--or *something*--touch it.

Dr. Rosenberg sits down and jots down a couple notes in a chart.

RYAN

And the voices I heard, I dismissed them as a nightmare but the more I think about it, the more I feel like I actually heard them. Is that normal?

Dr. Rosenberg finishes his notes before he sets the chart aside.

DR. ROSENBERG

Ryan, you suffered from some serious brain trauma. Even though you're awake and functioning, your brain is still trying to piece everything together. So, yes, it's normal that you might be hearing things and feeling sensations that, otherwise, you wouldn't experience if you were never in that accident in the first place. Some nerves may

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. ROSENBERG (cont'd)
still be shot, and hallucinations,
whether they're physical or
audible, are completely normal.

Ryan thinks for a moment.

RYAN
Can I be honest with you?

DR. ROSENBERG
I'm your doctor, I sure hope you
can be.

RYAN
Do you think it could be something
more?

DR. ROSENBERG
Such as...?

RYAN
I feel crazy for even considering
this as a possibility...

DR. ROSENBERG
Ryan, I've seen my fair share of
actual insane people before, and I
can tell you that you are far from
crazy.

Ryan is hesitant, but finally:

RYAN
Ghosts.

Dr. Rosenberg nods as he attempts to understand.

DR. ROSENBERG
I noticed that in your journal as
well. Do you believe that these
sensations you're feeling, these
voices you're hearing, could be
more than just hallucinations?

RYAN
I just want an explanation.

DR. ROSENBERG
I've read a good amount on the
afterlife before, Ryan. Ghosts and
spirits are nothing more than mere
energy. If you get enough of it,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. ROSENBERG (cont'd)
they can manifest themselves into something more: disembodied voices, appearing in photographs, and sometimes having the ability to physically touch a living person.

RYAN
But do you believe in them?

DR. ROSENBERG
I'm a man of science, Ryan. I'm always looking for the logical reasoning behind everything. People see things out of the corners of their eyes due to a trick of the light. Some people even hear their names being called as they're falling asleep. It's all psychological. The brain is a very complicated organ. It tries to fill in gaps and sometimes it doesn't make a lot of sense.

Dr. Rosenberg pauses for a moment.

DR. ROSENBERG
But, there's one thing that separates you from me.

RYAN
What's that?

DR. ROSENBERG
Well, you died.
(beat)
If an afterlife does exist, Ryan, then you were in it for six whole minutes. You crossed the line between life and death, a territory that only a handful have ever been in. Now, hypothetically speaking, if there is a "door" between the living and the dead, then you've opened it.

Ryan stiffens up. Dr. Rosenberg stands up and walks to the door.

DR. ROSENBERG
I'm going to grab an MRI specialist for you. Once he's done, you can be on your way, okay?

(CONTINUED)

Dr. Rosenberg opens the door, but turns around before he steps out.

DR. ROSENBERG

Oh, and if it's any consolation, what you're experiencing will always have a logical explanation. I wouldn't let some campfire stories keep you from getting any sleep. Take care of yourself, and call me if you have anymore questions, okay?

Ryan remains on the examination table as he watches Dr. Rosenberg leave the room.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Ryan sits at his desk with a laptop in front of him. He opens up the Internet and types into a search bar: "GHOSTS"

He begins reading through the information in various articles. Certain keywords stand out to him, such as "ENERGY," "MANIFESTATIONS," "DISEMBODIED VOICES," and even "POSSESSIONS."

Ryan CLICKS the PRINT button and the printer HUMS to life. It begins to print out the articles.

Ryan scrolls through several images of supposed ghosts caught on film. Ectoplasm, shadow people, transparent figures, faces in reflections. The word "PAREIDOLIA" stands out to him: "*the phenomenon that causes people to see Jesus on toast or the man in the moon.*"

He shakes his head and gives an embarrassed CHUCKLE, quickly CLICKING the BACK button.

BLOOP. A message pops up in the middle of the screen: "WARNING: BATTERY RUNNING LOW"

RYAN

What the hell? You just had full charge.

Ryan connects the charger to the laptop and continues his search.

He scrolls through another article.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN (O.S.)

"Ghosts and spirits often use energy from electronic devices, such as video cameras and batteries, and sometimes even from people themselves. It is often common that people can become exhausted almost immediately if there is a strong presence in the room with them."

Ryan looks at the charger, then at the status of the laptop's battery. 7% full and charging.

Ryan creates a new search and types in: "NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES AND GHOSTS"

He hovers the mouse cursor over "SEARCH" and hesitates. The text box ticker flashes after his search terms.

TAP. He CLICKS "SEARCH".

MOMENTS LATER

The last of the print job slides out of the printer. Ryan grabs the stacks of papers and reads through them. He highlights some sentences with a highlighter, underlines and circles keywords with a pen.

KAYLA (O.S.)

(faint)

Ryan?

Kayla's voice sounds distant, drowned out. Ryan doesn't look up from his papers.

RYAN

Yeah?

No response from Kayla. Ryan looks at the bedroom door.

RYAN

(louder)

Yeah?

Still nothing from Kayla. Ryan stares at the bedroom door before he gets up, grabs the papers, and walks out.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kayla stands at the stove as she prepares a meal. The sun has already set, and outside grows dark. Ryan walks into the kitchen.

RYAN
What's up?

KAYLA
Nothing, just making dinner.

RYAN
You called for me?

KAYLA
Nope. But you came in just in time.
Dinner's just about ready.

RYAN
I could've sworn you called my
name.

KAYLA
Well, I didn't.

Ryan becomes concerned.

RYAN
Are you sure?

KAYLA
I think I'd know if I called your
name. You must be hearing things.

She plates the food and sits down.

KAYLA
Come on, let's eat.

Ryan reluctantly sits down with her. He looks outside.

RYAN
How long have I been in the
bedroom? It's already getting dark
out.

KAYLA
It's only 6:30.

RYAN
Is it Daylight Savings Time?

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA
It's July, Ryan.

RYAN
Oh.

KAYLA
What have you been doing back there
all this time?

RYAN
Just some research.

He slides the stack of papers to Kayla. She glances at them and notices the words "GHOSTS" and "SPIRITS." She looks at him in disbelief.

KAYLA
Oh you can't be serious.

RYAN
Just listen to this real quick...

He takes the stack of papers and begins to SHUFFLE through them.

RYAN
I've been doing some reading about
this stuff, just out of curiosity,
and look what I've found:
(reads from paper)
"Ghosts have been known to manifest
themselves in a variety of ways,
from disembodied voices to actual
physical beings. In order to do so,
the spirit must first gain energy
from a source, whether it be the
energy from a living being, or from
electronics such as batteries,
cameras, and computers. In some
cases, lights can burn out even
after one has just replaced a new
bulb."

Ryan looks at Kayla and subtly points at the light fixture above the table. She rolls her eyes.

KAYLA
So what? Light bulbs burn out all
the time.

RYAN

It's not just that, Kayla. Ever since I've gotten home from the hospital, I've been hearing things. The other night, I thought I heard someone in our house. I also thought I heard you crying.

KAYLA

I was having a bad dream, you said so yourself.

RYAN

That's what I thought too, but you were sound asleep when I went back into the bedroom. And just now, I'm almost positive I heard you call my name. Or something that sounded like you.

KAYLA

Ghosts aren't real.

RYAN

I talked to Dr. Rosenberg about it today as well. He said the same thing you did, that there's a logical explanation for everything--

KAYLA

And you were also in a really bad accident. You're probably suffering from side effects caused by brain damage or something. I don't want to sound like a dick or anything, but this is stupid. Just drop it.

Kayla resumes eating. Ryan stares at her, hurt.

He slowly slides an article toward her. At the top, it reads "NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES AND THE OTHER SIDE." Kayla eyes it but couldn't care less.

RYAN

I'm not the only one that this has happened to.

(beat)

I died, Kayla. After reading this, I realized that there are other people out there who've also had near-death experiences. They've had the same things that are happening to me, happen to them.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

Eat.

RYAN

You know, I try not to ask for much. But I'm asking for you to at least acknowledge this.

Kayla ignores him. Ryan SIGHS and pushes the paper to the side.

RYAN

Fine. Whatever.

They eat in silence. A moment later:

KAYLA

I'm sorry. You can believe in whatever you want, but I just think this whole thing sounds crazy.

RYAN

I'm not crazy.

KAYLA

I didn't say you were. I just want you to take care of yourself. Not get caught up in something that doesn't exist.

The two continue to eat in silence.

BATHROOM - LATER

Ryan walks in and flips the light switch. Nothing; the room remains dark. He flips it a few more times, but the lights never turn on.

RYAN

Really?

He turns and walks into the...

BEDROOM

He flips the light switch, but the room remains dark as well. He walks up to the ceiling fan and pulls the cord. CLICK. Nothing. CLICK, CLICK, CLICK. No matter how many times he pulls the cord, the light doesn't turn on.

RYAN

Come on...

He turns around and walks out of the bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

LIVING ROOM

Ryan walks into the living room and turns on the lamp. Fortunately, the light bulb BUZZES to life. He's relieved, but it's short lasted as he listens in on Kayla talking from inside the...

KITCHEN

Kayla talks on the phone quietly.

KAYLA

Yeah, I know...Uh huh...He doesn't seem to be doing too well at the moment...It's kind of hard to explain. Yeah, I just think you should come in for maybe a day and stay the night, just to take care of him while I'm at work...Right. Thanks. I can explain more about it later. I really do appreciate it and I know you'd love to see him... Okay. We'll see you tomorrow...Uh huh. Bye.

Kayla hangs up the phone and turns to see Ryan standing in the doorway.

RYAN

Who was that?

KAYLA

Your mom.

RYAN

What was she asking about this time?

KAYLA

She wasn't. I asked her to come and stay with us for a night.

RYAN

Why?

KAYLA

Just for you to have some company while I'm at work. I feel like you get pretty lonely while I'm gone. Plus, it'd be nice for you two to see each other.

Ryan nods.

RYAN

Yeah, I guess you're right. She hates making the drive though.

KAYLA

It'll be worth it, I'm sure.

(beat)

I'm sorry I upset you.

Ryan scratches the back of his head.

RYAN

I just wish you wouldn't dismiss this all so quickly.

KAYLA

I'll at least listen. Come finish your dinner.

RYAN

I'm not hungry anymore. Besides, the bulbs in the bathroom and bedroom have burned out now. Do we have any more?

KAYLA

I think so.

Kayla looks under the kitchen sink and pulls out a few boxes of bulbs. She walks over to Ryan.

KAYLA

This is the last of them. Should be enough to cover all of them.

RYAN

I guess I'll have to go buy some more soon.

Ryan takes the bulbs and examines them.

KAYLA

It's an old house, Ryan. It's going to have its faulty wiring.

RYAN

All in a matter of a couple days?

KAYLA

Life's funny like that.

He kisses her.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Meet me in the bedroom in five minutes.

Kayla smiles. He winks at her.

BEDROOM - MUCH LATER

Ryan spoons Kayla, both nude but covered by the thin bed sheet. They sleep soundly, their bodies bathed in the cool moonlight.

BRRINNGG! The phone rings from the kitchen (O.S.). BRRINNGG! The second RING wakes Ryan from his slumber. He rolls over and checks his iPhone. Exactly 3:00 AM.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Ryan walks into the dark kitchen in his boxers and doesn't bother with the light. The phone RINGS once more before Ryan picks it up. He answers groggily.

RYAN

Hello?

Crunchy STATIC emits from the receiver. It sounds like the other end is underwater.

RYAN

Hello?

He SIGHS, frustrated, and hangs up. He begins to walk out of the kitchen when--

BRRINNGG! The phone RINGS again.

Ryan walks back in, this time more awake, flips on the light switch and answers.

RYAN

(annoyed)

Hello?

Still no answer on the other end. Just the same crunchy STATIC.

RYAN

Listen, it's three o' clock--

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Ryan?

Ryan pauses and waits for a moment. The STATIC continues.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Mom?

The kitchen light begins to flicker slightly.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Ryan?

RYAN

Mom, what are you doing up this late?

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Ryan, can you hear me?

She sounds sad. Hopeless.

RYAN

Yeah, can you hear me? Your end has a lot of static.

Her voice is broken up in the STATIC.

RYAN

Mom? Hello? Can you hear me?

Michelle begins to SOB (V.O.)

RYAN

What's wrong? Is everything okay?

CLICK. The other end goes dead and the BUSY TONE BEEPS in.

Ryan hangs up and redials the number, but all he gets is the BUSY TONE again.

He hangs up and sets the phone on the charging stand. The kitchen light BUZZES and HUMS, and the bulb flickers as it threatens to burn out.

Ryan watches the kitchen light fixture. The HUM gets louder and louder, almost deafening.

KAYLA (O.S.)

Ryan?

Ryan spins around and sees Kayla wrapped in a blanket.

KAYLA

You were sleepwalking, babe.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

I was?

KAYLA

Yeah. I called your name, like,
five or six times.

RYAN

I thought I heard the phone ring.

KAYLA

Come back to bed.

Ryan looks back at the kitchen light fixture once more. It shines normally. He shuts off the light and leaves the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Coffee BREWS loudly. CRACK! An egg splits apart and the yolk dumps into a mixing bowl. CRACK! Another egg in the bowl. Kayla whisks the yolk into a thick, yellow mess.

She sets a pan on the stove and ignites the burner beneath it.

LIVING ROOM

Ryan sits down on the couch, the remote in hand. He presses the power button, but the TV doesn't turn on. He tries again, but the remote refuses to work.

He opens the battery compartment and rolls the batteries a few times, attempts the power button once more. Still, the TV remains off.

Kayla pokes her head into the living room.

KAYLA

Hey, sleepyhead, breakfast is just about ready.

RYAN

Hey, do we have anymore batteries?

KAYLA

Just a few more, I think. Why?

Ryan holds up the remote.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

I just put in new batteries
yesterday. You sure they're dead?

RYAN

I've never been more sure in my
life.

He winks at her.

She slips back into the kitchen. Ryan walks to the TV and presses the power button. The TV broadcasts a rerun episode of The Price is Right. Bob Barker calls down a contestant.

RYAN

Perfect.

Ryan walks into the...

KITCHEN

He sits down at the table in a chair that gives him a view of the TV.

Kayla sets a plate of eggs, bacon, and toast in front of Ryan. She sets down a coffee mug and fills it up.

RYAN

Were you ever a waitress?

KAYLA

Once, and I'd never do it again.

She gives him a kiss.

KAYLA

Alright, I gotta go.

RYAN

You don't have work for another two
hours.

KAYLA

Yeah, Boss wanted me to come in a
bit early today.

RYAN

(mockingly)

A "bit"...

She gives him a big kiss on the cheek, grabs her bag, and heads to the front door.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

I'll see you when you get home!

Kayla waves as she walks away.

The front door opens then closes (O.S.). Ryan continues watching The Price is Right. A contestant just lost to someone who bid one dollar more than them.

BEDROOM - LATER

Ryan sits at his desk with the notebook in front of him. He turns to a blank page. He writes down the date, but avoids the rest of the usual routine and moves straight to the body of the entry:

"TALKED TO KAYLA ABOUT POSSIBLE GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS. DIDN'T BELIEVE ME. CAUGHT ME SLEEPWALKING, BUT I KNOW I WASN'T. WHAT'S HAPPENING?"

Ryan stops writing when he hears a KNOCK at the front door (O.S.).

LIVING ROOM

Ryan walks up to the front door, notebook in hand. He opens the door.

Enter: MICHELLE STOVALL (early 60s). She wears a pixie cut that's beginning to gray, but it suits her slender face and petite frame.

MICHELLE

Ryan, honey!

Ryan smiles. He's actually kind of excited to see her.

RYAN

Hey, Mom.

They embrace.

MICHELLE

Oh, I've missed you so much!

RYAN

I haven't gone anywhere, Ma.

MICHELLE

You know what I mean.

They pull away. She grabs his face gently and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

MICHELLE

You look much better than when I
last saw you.

She walks into the house and Ryan shuts the door. He follows
her into the...

KITCHEN

Michelle sits down at the table and Ryan follows suit. She
SNIFFS the air and let's out a satisfying "Mmm."

MICHELLE

Something smells good.

RYAN

Yeah, Kayla made me breakfast this
morning.

MICHELLE

I knew you bagged yourself a good
one. You know, my cooking is how I
won your father over.

RYAN

You always tell me.

MICHELLE

Have you talked to him yet, by the
way?

RYAN

I tried giving him a call a few
days ago, but it went straight to
his voicemail. Haven't heard from
him back, yet.

MICHELLE

Typical.

RYAN

He knows I'm okay, right?

MICHELLE

Of course, honey. You two may not
talk much, but it's not like he
doesn't care.

Michelle eyes Ryan's notebook.

MICHELLE

What's that?

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

The journal Dr. Rosenberg wanted me
to write in.

Without asking, Michelle takes the notebook. Ryan attempts
to retrieve it, but Michelle dodges his grasp and stands up
from the chair.

RYAN

Mom, stop! That's between me and
Dr. Rosenberg!

MICHELLE

And why can't I read it? I *am* your
mother after all.

Ryan lets out an annoyed SIGH and gives up almost
immediately.

RYAN

Whatever. It's not like there's
anything actually personal in
there.

Michelle skims through the pages as she paces beside the
table. She stops and looks at Ryan.

MICHELLE

Ghosts? I always told you that you
had such an active imagination. You
haven't changed a bit.

RYAN

Neither have you because you're
just as nosy as you usually are.
Now will you just give that back to
me, please?

Michelle hands the notebook back to him. She scoffs at his
comment.

MICHELLE

"Nosy"...Now, how 'bout a drink?

She walks over to the cupboards and searches through them.

RYAN

It's eleven in the morning.

MICHELLE

And?

RYAN

When did you start drinking again?

MICHELLE

When I met your father. Then when your father and I divorced. And then when my son almost died.

RYAN

Is that why you called us at three this morning? Because you'd been drinking?

Michelle can't find any booze in the cupboards. She gives up and leans against the counter.

MICHELLE

I didn't call you at three this morning.

RYAN

Actually, you did. And if you can't remember then you must've been plastered.

MICHELLE

I don't get "plastered."

RYAN

You still called us at three this morning.

MICHELLE

I don't know where you're getting that idea.

She walks up to him and caresses his cheek.

MICHELLE

Are you sure you're feeling okay?

Ryan brushes her hand out of his face.

RYAN

I'm fine, Mom. You really need to stop worrying already.

MICHELLE

I'm your mother, I'm allowed to worry.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Hardy-har.

MICHELLE

Well, how about tonight, you, Kayla and I get sloshed. After what you've been through, you deserve it.

RYAN

"Sloshed?" That's the word you use?

Michelle playfully swats away his comment.

MICHELLE

I'm going to the store to get the "ingredients." You need anything while I'm there?

RYAN

Nah.

MICHELLE

Will you be fine by yourself?

RYAN

I'm not five! Now go!

Michelle raises her hands up, playfully on guard.

MICHELLE

Okay, okay, sheesh! Love you, too!

Ryan watches Michelle walk out the front door. He sits in silence at the table and listens to the clock TICK.

BEDROOM - LATER

Ryan walks in and opens up one of the desk's drawers. He shuffles through some papers and documents until he comes across a pile of business cards.

He spreads them out on the desk and sifts through them until he finds the one he's looking for.

It's a standard business card with the picture of a middle-aged man. He smiles, his mouth partly covered with a bushy mustache. Next to the picture is the name FRANK CARPENTER. Beneath the name reads "REALTOR."

Ryan grabs his iPhone that sits atop the desk and unplugs the charging cable. The phone's battery is at 100%. He dials the number on the business card.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK (V.O.)

Thank you for calling Carpenter Realty, this is Frank.

RYAN

Hey, Frank, this is Ryan Stovall. You sold me and my girlfriend the house at 1411 Conifer Street?

FRANK (V.O.)

Oh, hey Ryan! How's it going?

RYAN

Fine, fine. Hey, listen, I had a quick question about the house's history.

FRANK (V.O.)

What's up?

RYAN

I was just wondering about the previous owners. Did any of them have any accidents here?

FRANK (V.O.)

Accidents? What do you mean?

RYAN

I mean, like...Did anybody die in this house?

FRANK (V.O.)

Well nobody was murdered there if that's what you're asking. It's our policy to inform any buyers of any unnatural deaths that occur on the property. Why?

RYAN

I was just wondering. We've just been experiencing some things lately.

FRANK (V.O.)

Like what?

RYAN

I can't exactly explain it right now. Do you by chance have the phone numbers of the previous owners of the house?

(CONTINUED)

FRANK (V.O.)
I'm sorry, Ryan, I can't give out
that kind of information.

RYAN
Oh.

FRANK (V.O.)
Look, if anything, I'm sure at
least one person has passed away
there due to an illness or old age
or something. That house has been
there for ages.

Ryan thinks for a moment.

RYAN
Okay, thanks Frank. I appreciate
it.

Ryan hangs up. A "LOW BATTERY" message pops up. Twenty
percent left.

RYAN
(appalled)
Really?

He plugs the charger into his phone.

RYAN
Piece of shit.

Ryan opens up his laptop. The screen lights up, but
immediately flickers off.

RYAN
What the hell?

He TAPS the space bar a couple times. Nothing. He presses
the power button and waits. The screen remains black. Ryan
sees the the charger is plugged into the laptop.

A cold chill brushes against the side of his head. His hair
physically moves and he immediately grabs at it. He spins
around in his chair.

There's nothing there.

He gets up and stands in the middle of the room, listens.
The room is silent.

The bathroom door slowly SQUEAKS open by itself. Ryan
stiffens up. Inside the bathroom, it's pitch black; nothing
is visible inside.

(CONTINUED)

Kayla's voice emits from inside. She calls his name, but it doesn't sound natural; it seems like the darkness swallows her voice.

Ryan begins to walk toward the bathroom. His breathing is shaky. A mosquito-pitched RING fills the air. Ryan seems hypnotized as he steps closer toward the bathroom, when suddenly--

SLAM. The front door shuts (O.S.)

KAYLA (O.S.)

Ryan!

He spins around toward the direction of Kayla's real voice. He looks back at the bathroom door. The door is shut.

KAYLA (O.S.)

Hey.

Ryan spins back around and sees Kayla in the doorway. She smiles.

KAYLA

I have a surprise for you.

Ryan stares at her. His face looks pale, his breathing still shaky. Kayla's smile fades away.

KAYLA

What's wrong?

Ryan looks back at the bathroom door. It remains closed. He stares at it for a quick second before shaking his head.

RYAN

Uh...Nothing.

KAYLA

Are you okay?

RYAN

Yeah, it's nothing. Really.

He forces a smile.

RYAN

What's the surprise?

KAYLA

I'm not going to tell you, silly.
It's outside. Come on.

She smiles and walks away. Ryan follows after her.

EXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The sun begins to set; it paints the house and yard gold. The house seems larger on the outside than the inside, and it's definitely noticeable that it's been there for a long while. Despite its age, it's a good-looking house.

The front door opens and Kayla and Ryan walk out. With a big smile on her face, Kayla turns around and motions toward the surprise with a--

KAYLA

Ta-da!

Behind her, in the driveway with Michelle giving her best The Price is Right showcase model impression, sits a car.

Ryan smiles.

RYAN

Wow...

KAYLA

Well? Do you like it?

RYAN

Yeah! But...How? When?

They make their way to the car.

KAYLA

Well, I went to the office early so I could get off earlier. Your mom picked me up and we went to the dealership to seal the deal.

They approach the car and Ryan admires it.

KAYLA

Your parents pitched in a good chunk to help pay for it. It's a used car, but it runs like a champ.

Ryan runs his hand along the hood.

KAYLA

So, what do ya think?

He faces Kayla.

RYAN

Kayla, you didn't have to do this.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

It's time for you to get back to
your normal life.

Michelle butts in.

MICHELLE

And I have the perfect way to start
things off.

She holds up a couple grocery bags. Glass bottles CLINK
against each other from inside them.

KAYLA

Actually, I need to go get my car
from the office real quick.

(to Ryan)

Wanna give it a test ride?

RYAN

Of course!

Michelle makes her way toward the house.

RYAN

Hey, thanks, Mom!

MICHELLE

Don't mention it, honey!

KAYLA

We'll be back in a little bit,
Michelle. You can get a head start
if you want.

Michelle doesn't even look back.

MICHELLE

Don't worry, I plan on it.

Kayla holds the keys up to Ryan and lets them dangle from
her index finger. She gives them a little shake. They
JINGLE.

Ryan smiles and takes the keys. He plops a big kiss on her
lips.

RYAN

You truly are the most awesome
girlfriend ever.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA
(proudly)
I know.

They climb into the car.

EXT. CAR - DAY

The car ZOOMS down the almost empty highway. Few cars are on the road.

In the distance, the sun has already set behind the horizon.

INT. CAR - DAY

The interior of the car is quiet except for the muffled RUMBLE of tires on the road. Ryan observes the nearly empty road, then looks at the radio's clock. It reads 4:53 PM.

RYAN
This is so weird.

KAYLA
What?

RYAN
Usually this highway is a parking lot at this time. Is it a holiday?

KAYLA
It's Wednesday.

RYAN
There's literally nobody on the road, and it's rush hour.

KAYLA
Well, think of it this way: at least you get to drive your new car on an empty road than sit in traffic the whole time.

Ryan remains quiet; he concentrates on something.

KAYLA
Everything okay?

RYAN
Something just doesn't seem right. It's rush hour and there's nobody here. It's not even five o' clock and the sun's already set.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

The clock is probably off by a few hours.

RYAN

Check your phone.

Kayla sighs and pulls out her cell phone. It reads the same time as the clock.

RYAN

See?

KAYLA

Ryan, you've been holed up inside the house for the past week and a half. You're stressed.

Ryan thinks.

RYAN

You'd tell me if I was crazy, right?

Kayla grabs his hand and kisses it. She doesn't look at Ryan.

KAYLA

Whatever you say, baby.

The inside of the car becomes quiet again except for the muffled RUMBLE.

EXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Two cars pull into the driveway. The house is engulfed in darkness except for the porch lights, and the lights from inside the house.

Ryan steps out of his car, Kayla steps out of hers. They interlock arms as they walk to the porch. Ryan looks up at the sky and stops walking. There are no stars, no moon. The sky is pitch black.

KAYLA

What are you doing?

RYAN

(to himself)

There was a full moon the other night...

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

Come on, slow-poke, your mom's waiting for us inside. She's probably already drunk.

Kayla pulls on Ryan, who lingers a while longer as he looks at the sky before they make their way up the steps and into the house.

The porch light flickers and slowly burns out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ryan, Kayla, and Michelle, all drunk, laugh hysterically.

Ryan is slumped on the couch with Kayla laying across it, her legs on Ryan's lap. Michelle sits in a recliner with a drink in hand.

They calm down their laughing and the room becomes quiet except for the loud, TICKING clock.

Michelle admires Ryan and Kayla.

MICHELLE

I really do love you, Ryan. So much.

RYAN

Oh great, she's starting to get sentimental on us.

Kayla playfully slaps Ryan.

KAYLA

Be nice.

MICHELLE

No, I really do, Ryan. You're such a handsome guy. Kayla, you were lucky enough to get someone like him.

Kayla smiles at Ryan.

KAYLA

I know.

Ryan leans in and kisses her.

Michelle finishes off the rest of her drink.

(CONTINUED)

MICHELLE

Anybody else want another one?

Kayla shakes her head and stands up.

KAYLA

I'm spent. I'm going to bed.

RYAN

I think we've all had enough to drink tonight.

KAYLA

You coming, babe?

RYAN

Nah, I'm gonna stay out here with Mom for a little longer.

Kayla yawns.

KAYLA

Alright. I'll see you guys in the morning.

Michelle stops Kayla as she leaves the living room.

MICHELLE

Thanks for being there for him. I don't know what he'd do without you.

KAYLA

Of course.

MICHELLE

Good night, Kayla.

KAYLA

Good night. Night, Ryan.

Ryan waves. He looks at Michelle, who looks back at him with warm eyes and a drunk smile.

RYAN

What?

MICHELLE

You two remind me of Dad and me when we were younger.

RYAN

Oh jeez.

MICHELLE

Let's just hope it doesn't end up
the same way.

RYAN

I don't want to talk about this
right now.

Michelle stares down Ryan almost disappointingly.

MICHELLE

Wake up, Ryan.

RYAN

What?

MICHELLE

Just, wake up.

RYAN

You're drunk.

MICHELLE

Just talk to him.

RYAN

Who? Dad?

Michelle drunkenly waves his question away.

RYAN

Either you're not making any sense
or I'm just really drunk. Probably
both.

Ryan stands up and walks to Michelle.

RYAN

Maybe we should get to bed before
you start crying for whatever
stupid, drunken reason.

Ryan helps her out of the recliner. Michelle begins to slur
her speech.

MICHELLE

I'm not stupid.

RYAN

Come on, Ma.

Ryan walks her out of the living room.

BEDROOM - LATER

Ryan and Kayla sleep soundly. The house CREAKS, and Ryan slowly opens his eyes.

He sits up and listens. The house continues to CREAK and GROAN. He attempts to turn on the lamp on the bedside table, but it doesn't turn on.

Ryan opens the bedside table drawer and pulls out a flashlight. It BUZZES to life.

HALLWAY

Ryan opens the bedroom door and walks into the hallway. He flips the light switch ON, but the hallway remains a dark corridor. A few more tries and the lights still fail to turn on.

He stops when he hears a woman HUM from...somewhere; distant and drowned out. The HUM is the tune of "You Are My Sunshine." He follows the sound and walks into the...

LIVING ROOM

The HUMMING stops almost immediately as Ryan walks into the doorway. He stops and flips the light switch ON; the lights there refuse to turn on, too.

Ryan holds up the flashlight and begins to slowly sweep the living room with it. The room is empty, dark, and still.

The beam of light reveals Michelle, in a nightgown. She stands in the corner of the living room, her back turned to Ryan.

RYAN

Mom?

Michelle mumbles incoherently.

RYAN

What are you doing?

She moves unnaturally, in a jerky fashion. Her head twitches; she rocks back and forth. Ryan doesn't take the flashlight off of her. He slowly walks through the living room toward Michelle.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Mom? Are you okay?

He nears Michelle. She begins to sing.

MICHELLE

*You are my sunshine, my only
sunshine. You make me happy when
skies are gray. You never know,
dear, how much I love you. Please
don't take my sunshine away...*

RYAN

Mom.

She freezes for a moment, then straightens up and very slowly turns around.

MICHELLE

Ryan...

RYAN

You're sleepwalking.

Her voice becomes shaky. She slowly walks up to him.

MICHELLE

Ryan...Do something...

RYAN

What?

MICHELLE

Do something, Ryan. Please.

RYAN

You've had too much to drink, Mom.

MICHELLE

Anything. Please. Do *something*.

Michelle grabs Ryan and shakes him. She becomes hysterical.

MICHELLE

Please! Do something! Say
something!! *Anything!!*

RYAN

What's wrong with you?!

Michelle collapses and begins to CRY hysterically. Ryan kneels down with her and shakes her.

RYAN
Mom! Mom, look at me!

She suddenly stops crying and looks up at Ryan with teary eyes. Ryan sees that she's "awake."

RYAN
Jesus Christ...

MICHELLE
What happened?

RYAN
You were sleepwalking, Mom. I think...

KAYLA (O.S.)
What's going on?

Ryan turns around and shines the flashlight on Kayla, who stands in the doorway.

RYAN
Mom was sleepwalking. I'm gonna put her back to bed.
(to Michelle)
Come on. Let's go.

Ryan helps Michelle to her feet and walks her out of the living room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ryan sits at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee in front of him. He looks concerned.

He watches Kayla walk through the living room to the front door with Michelle behind her, bag in tow.

KAYLA
Well, thanks for staying the night with us, Michelle. We really appreciated the company.

MICHELLE
I'm just so embarrassed about last night. I honestly don't know what came over me.

KAYLA
Well, as long as you're alright. I'm sure it must've been a bad dream.

(CONTINUED)

Michelle looks over at Ryan.

MICHELLE
I'll talk to you soon, Ryan?

RYAN
Yeah.

MICHELLE
I love you.

RYAN
Love you, too.

Michelle looks back at Kayla and they embrace. Kayla opens the door and Michelle walks out, but not before she gives Kayla and Ryan one last glance over her shoulder.

Kayla shuts the door and walks into the kitchen. She joins Ryan at the table.

KAYLA
Please don't worry about her.

RYAN
I just don't know what happened.
I've never seen her act that way
before.

KAYLA
She probably just had too much to
drink.

RYAN
No, it's just...That wasn't her.

KAYLA
It could've been the alcohol, or
maybe a nightmare.

RYAN
Something wasn't right.

He looks at Kayla.

RYAN
Nothing's been right. Since I've
been back home from the hospital,
things have been getting weirder
and weirder around here.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

Like I said before, you're stressed. You're probably getting cabin fever. You need to get out of the house more, get some fresh air. Get a new job, preoccupy yourself with something.

Ryan stares down his coffee cup for a moment. He looks back up at Kayla, reaches for her hand.

RYAN

Be honest with me, Kayla. Is there something wrong with me?

KAYLA

Ryan...

RYAN

Please.

Ryan looks at her with pleading eyes. She looks at him, conflicted.

KAYLA

If you think that you need to get help, we can look into maybe getting you a therapist or something. I'm sure Dr. Rosenberg has some good recommendations.

Ryan nods in agreement.

RYAN

You said that there's a logical explanation for everything. I'm just having a really hard time trying to find one for what's been happening to me.

KAYLA

You're fine. You're not crazy if that's what you're thinking.

Ryan doesn't say anything. He stares down at the floor. Kayla perks up a bit.

KAYLA

Tell you what: why don't we go out tonight, have some fun. It'll get you out of the house and take your mind off of things, especially what happened to your mom.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

I don't really feel like going out for dinner tonight.

KAYLA

Okay, well then why don't we make something together here and have a relaxing night together? I'll go to the grocery store and get something for us.

RYAN

That sounds like a good idea. I'll go to the store though. Like you said, I need to get out for a bit.

Kayla smiles.

KAYLA

Now that's what I like to hear.

Ryan smiles back.

KAYLA

Alright, I'm gonna head to work. You sure you'll be fine by yourself?

Ryan nods.

BEDROOM - LATER

Ryan sits at his desk with the notebook in front of him. He flips it to a blank page, writes the date, and then stops and thinks.

After a moment, he begins to write. The entry is longer than the rest, and he shows no signs of slowing down. Keywords stand out:

"STRANGE HAPPENINGS" "NO EXPLANATIONS" "AM I GOING CRAZY?"

He notices that the shadows from the setting sun are noticeably growing longer--he can actually see them move. He checks his phone. 4:01 PM.

He resumes to his journal entry with a finishing note:

"WHY DON'T LIGHTS AND BATTERIES WORK? WHY IS DAYTIME GETTING SHORTER?"

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

MUSIC plays overhead as shoppers make their way through the aisles. There aren't many shoppers, but the place isn't completely empty. CONVERSATIONS echo through the store.

Ryan carries a hand basket filled with some groceries down the hardware and utilities aisle. A few shoppers occupy the aisle as well.

The MUSIC stops as the voice of a FEMALE EMPLOYEE CHIMES in from the store's speakers.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE (V.O.)
Nancy, could you come to register
six please? Nancy, register six.

The MUSIC continues once again.

Ryan stops at light bulbs and grabs an armful. He dumps them in the hand basket. Next to the bulbs are batteries; he examines them.

A shopper walks hastily behind Ryan. The cart's wheels SQUEAL loudly as they pass by.

Ryan watches the shopper make their way down the aisle. The sound seems off for a shopping cart, much like a gurney.

He focuses his attention back at the batteries and takes a pack, puts it in his hand basket. He grabs another pack and considers it, when suddenly--

SILENCE. The music has disappeared. The chorus of conversations have ceased. Ryan notices, looks up and around.

The aisle is empty. Not even the shoppers' carts are in sight. Ryan drops the pack of batteries. They SMACK the floor, which seems deafening in this eerie silence.

Ryan walks out of the aisle and into an open area of the store. The entire place is empty. Not a soul in sight.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE (V.O.)
(faint)
We need assistance on level six.
Assistance on level six.

The female employee's voice echos through the store. Ryan stares down the long stretch of open area.

(CONTINUED)

A low DRONE fades in, and without warning the furthest row of fluorescent light fixtures from Ryan BUZZ out. He takes a step back.

The next row begins to HUM and follows in suit, BUZZING out. Then the next row, and then the next. Darkness begins to engulf each aisle; it approaches Ryan.

He quickly stumbles back into the aisle he was in and presses himself up against the shelves. Packs of batteries and other items fall off and SLAP onto the floor.

The row of lights above him shut off; darkness washes over him. Faster, the rest of the aisles are consumed by darkness, until the entire store is pitch black.

Ryan hyperventilates. He pulls out his iPhone and turns on the flashlight, holds it out in front of him.

SQUEAKING wheels echo through every aisle. Outside of Ryan's aisle, an abandoned shopping cart wheels by. The SQUEAKING sounds more like the wheels of a gurney.

Ryan follows the cart with his flashlight, which begins to flicker. He looks at the phone's screen. A "LOW BATTERY" message pops up. Ten percent left. Then, the phone shuts down.

Complete darkness.

Ryan's breathing gets heavier. Heavier. HEAVIER.

The darkness seems to last forever when--

The store BUZZES to life. The lights CLICK back on, the MUSIC emits from the speakers, the CONVERSATIONS fill the air.

Ryan remains pressed against the shelf, his hand basket on the floor with his groceries and light bulbs spilled into the aisle. Packs of batteries surround his feet.

The female employee CHIMES in:

FEMALE EMPLOYEE (V.O.)
Attention shoppers! Have we got a
deal for you! For this weekend
only, all seafood is twenty percent
off! Get it while you can!

Beads of sweat have appeared on his face. He BREATHES heavily and looks around him. The shoppers in the aisle stare at him in confusion and concern.

Ryan quickly picks up his groceries and throws them back in his hand basket.

He rushes to a register and dumps everything onto the conveyor belt. The young cashier stares at him before she begins to scan the items. With each item she scans, the barcode scanner emits a BEEP similar to that of a heart monitor.

Ryan notices.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ryan bursts through the front door into the dark house, grocery bags in hand. An electric lantern sits on the coffee table and illuminates the room with a white glow.

He tosses the groceries on the floor.

RYAN

Kayla!

He looks in the kitchen. It's pitch black. He sticks his hand in and tries the light switch, but the light doesn't turn on.

He turns back into the living room.

RYAN

Kayla, where are you?!

Kayla walks into the living room with a flashlight.

KAYLA

I'm right here.

RYAN

Oh thank God.

KAYLA

What's wrong?

Ryan walks up and hugs her tightly.

KAYLA

What's going on? Are you okay?

RYAN

No, I'm not.

Kayla hands him another flashlight.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

Here. It needs batteries.

Ryan takes the flashlight. He walks to the grocery bags and pulls out a pack of batteries. He RIPS them open.

KAYLA

Ryan, what happened?

Ryan tosses a box of light bulbs at Kayla's feet.

KAYLA

There was a blackout. The entire south side of town has no power.

Ryan pops the batteries in the flashlight and turns it on, shaking his head.

RYAN

It's not a blackout.

KAYLA

Babe, you're scaring me. Calm down, please!

RYAN

No, I can't fucking calm down!

KAYLA

Why can't you just tell me what's going on?!

RYAN

Because I don't know what's fucking going on!

KAYLA

Ryan!

She SLAPS him.

KAYLA

(aggressively)

Wake up!

Ryan finally begins to calm down. He holds his hand to his red cheek.

KAYLA

I'm sorry, babe, but you are seriously freaking me out.

She grabs his face.

KAYLA

Look at me.

Ryan does what he's told.

KAYLA

Tell me what happened. *Please.*

Ryan eyes begin to fill with tears. His breathing gets shaky.

RYAN

Something happened at the grocery store.

KAYLA

What?

RYAN

I don't know. I blacked out or...something.

KAYLA

Blacked out?

RYAN

I don't know.

KAYLA

Well, are you okay?

RYAN

I'm fine. I'm just freaking out.

KAYLA

Oh Jesus, Ryan...

She hugs him. He squeezes her tightly.

RYAN

I'm so scared.

She SHUSHES him.

KAYLA

It's okay. I'm here. I'm here...

They pull away. He looks into her blue eyes, caresses one side of her face with his thumb.

RYAN

I feel like you're the only real thing in my life now.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

Go to bed. You need sleep.

RYAN

I'm afraid to.

KAYLA

Why?

RYAN

I'm afraid of what's going to happen tomorrow.

KAYLA

I'll tell you what's going to happen: we're going to call Dr. Rosenberg, he's going to recommend you a psychologist, and we're going to figure out what exactly is wrong with you.

The realization hits him. He begins to cry.

RYAN

Something's wrong with me...

Kayla covers her mouth and she too begins to cry.

She hugs him as he breaks down in her arms.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Ryan wakes suddenly with a sharp BREATH. For a moment, he observes his surroundings with his eyes before he finally sits up in bed.

The room is silent. The entire house is silent. No birds chirp outside. Nothing.

RYAN

Kayla?

Even his voice makes the air RING as it breaks the silence.

He gets out of bed.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

(CONTINUED)

Ryan walks into the living room, dressed in street clothes. He stops in the middle of the living room and listens. It's still completely silent. There's not even the sound of the clock TICKING.

RYAN

Kayla?

His voice travels through the house in broken echoes--he doesn't seem to realize it.

EXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Ryan runs out of the front door. He sees that only his car is in the driveway.

It's eerily quiet outside. A breeze MOANS as it blows through the neighborhood.

Ryan jumps in his car and attempts to start it. The engine SPUTTERS and tries to start, but it won't.

RYAN

What the hell...?

He tries again, but the engine refuses to start. He tries again.

RYAN

Come on, come on...

VROOM! Finally, the engine starts. Ryan quickly backs out of the driveway.

EXT. CAR - DAY

The car drives down a deserted highway. There are no cars on the road. The entire stretch is still and quiet.

The sun hangs low in the sky.

CUT TO:

The car drives through downtown. There are no people on the sidewalks. The streets are clear of any traffic or people.

Traffic lights don't work. All electronics outside and inside of buildings are off. The whole city is deserted.

INT. CAR - DAY

The radio clock reads 11:15 AM.

Ryan looks around as he drives through the city. He has a visibly frightened look on his face.

RYAN

Where the hell is everybody?

He turns on the radio and switches through the stations, but each station broadcasts nothing but static. He shuts the radio off and continues to drive.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Ryan pulls his car up to the entrance of the office building and jumps out. He runs inside.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Ryan runs through the lobby. Where there is normally security is nothing but an empty desk. He runs to the elevators and presses the "UP" button.

Ryan waits a moment before he tries to press it again. The doors won't open. He decides to take the stairs.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

FLOOR 6

Ryan bursts through the stairwell door and into an empty office setting.

The entire floor is dark--all the lights are turned off. It's silent, with every cubicle empty, every computer shut off. Normally a busy office setting with working people and ringing phones, the floor has become nothing more than a ghost town.

Ryan runs through the office as he calls for Kayla.

The sun noticeably sets quickly, casting a golden glow inside the office. Ryan runs back through the office after checking everywhere. He stops and watches the sun dip closer toward the horizon.

TICK. TICK. TICK. A clock nearby catches his attention. The time reads 11:25 AM.

(CONTINUED)

He runs back to the...

STAIRWELL

The stairwell seems to be the only lit part of the building. Ryan enters and begins to make his way back down the stairs.

KAYLA (O.S.)

Ryan!

Kayla's voice echoes through the stairwell. Ryan stops at a platform and listens. Kayla's echoes fade away. He runs to the stairwell railing and looks up at the floors above him.

RYAN

Kayla?!

His voice echoes through the stairwell in the same fashion. It fades away as he continues to look up at the upper floors. It becomes deathly silent.

A heavy DRONE fades in and the top floor of the stairwell blacks out as the lights shut off. Then the next floor goes dark. And then the next.

Ryan immediately races down the stairs as fast as he can. Above him each level is consumed by darkness, faster and faster.

Ryan's breathing is heavy and quick. He's only a couple more floors before he reaches the bottom, but the darkness closes in above him.

He reaches the bottom level, but trips and SMACKS onto the floor. The lights above him flicker. He bears through the pain and frantically crawls to the stairwell door.

The light HUMS. Ryan slams through the stairwell door.

BZZZ! The light goes out, just as Ryan shoves through the stairwell door and falls onto his ass. He pushes himself away from the door as it closes; the darkness inside the stairwell is like a void.

Ryan falls onto his back and catches his breath. He closes his eyes and attempts to calm his breathing. A moment passes when--

BRRINNGG! Ryan's eyes open. A phone rings (O.S.)

He sits up and looks over at the security desk. The phone RINGS.

(CONTINUED)

Ryan stands up and slowly walks toward the security desk. He picks up the phone and slowly brings it to his ear.

RYAN

Hello?

There's slight STATIC on the other end for a moment.

WALTER (V.O.)

Ryan.

Ryan stiffens up.

RYAN

Dad?

WALTER (V.O.)

Where are you?

RYAN

I'm at Kayla's office. What's happening, Dad?

WALTER (V.O.)

I need to talk to you, Ryan.

RYAN

First you have to tell me what's going on.

WALTER (V.O.)

Meet me at Washington Park. Please. It's important.

RYAN

Wait, can't you tell me--

The other line CLICKS off, and the BUSY TONE BEEPS through the receiver.

Ryan drops the phone and runs out of the office building lobby.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - DAY

The sun sits halfway above the horizon and continues to set. No birds or crickets chirp. The wind blows, but even that doesn't make a sound.

Ryan's car pulls into a parking lot. He jumps out of the car and immediately spots his dad sitting on a bench watching the sunset, his back toward Ryan.

(CONTINUED)

Ryan walks briskly up toward his dad but stops just a few feet short.

RYAN

Dad...

WALTER (O.S.)

Ryan. Sit down.

RYAN

First tell me what's going on.
Where is everybody? What's
happening?

Ryan's dad turns around. His voice finally pairs with a face: an older man, early 60s, who looks worn out; he wears a jacket. This is WALTER STOVALL.

WALTER

Please. Sit down.

Walter motions to the empty spot next to him. Ryan stares at him for a moment before he walks up to the bench and sits down next to Walter.

RYAN

What are you doing here?

WALTER

Watching the sun set.

RYAN

It's 11:45 in the morning, Dad. Why
is the sun setting already?

Walter doesn't say anything as he continues to watch the sun set.

RYAN

Nothing's making sense anymore.
Everything seems so real and at the
same time it doesn't. It's like I'm
dreaming.

WALTER

I'm sorry I haven't been here for
you, Ryan.

RYAN

I don't even care anymore.

Walter looks at Ryan.

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

But I do. I've been a terrible father since your mom and I divorced. Hell, I've been a terrible father even before then.

RYAN

I don't care. I need your help. I'm going crazy, Dad.

WALTER

I just wish we could have talked more.

RYAN

But we are talking. Right here, right now!

WALTER

Do you hear me, Ryan?

RYAN

Yes. I do. I can hear every word. Just tell me what you want to tell me. What you've always wanted to tell me. I'm ready.

WALTER

It's too late, now.

RYAN

What are you talking about?

WALTER

You know what I'm talking about, Ryan.

Ryan gets off the bench and kneels in front of his father. He grabs Walter's arm firmly. Walter doesn't even flinch. Ryan's voice is shaky and weak.

RYAN

God damn it, Dad, *please*. I need your help. I'm begging you!

WALTER

I hope you know how much I love you. You were always a great son.

RYAN

Dad...

Walter's eyes water up. He slowly and gently caresses Ryan's face.

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

You're a brave man, Ryan. You can get through this. You have to try.

Ryan can barely get his words out.

RYAN

I'm trying...I'm trying...

Walter calmly SHUSHES Ryan, who begins to cry. He leans in and kisses Ryan on the forehead.

Walter looks up and sees that the sun has just set below the horizon. He sits up.

WALTER

I have to go now.

Ryan SNIFFS and perks up.

RYAN

Wait, what? Why? Please don't leave!

WALTER

I love you, Ryan.

RYAN

You can't leave me, Dad! There's nobody else here! Oh God, please don't leave me!

WALTER

I'm so sorry.

Ryan sees Walter reach into his jacket. A quick flash of metallic black catches his eye.

In one swift movement, Walter pulls out a pistol and shoves the barrel into his mouth.

RYAN

No, Dad, NO!!

Too late. Walter pulls the trigger.

BLAM! The GUNSHOT makes Ryan's ears RING. A few droplets of blood splatter on his face, and he falls backward while Walter's body slumps over onto the bench seat.

Ryan is in shock. He stares wide-eyed at Walter's dead body like a deer in headlights. His whole body shakes, and finally, he screams--but it's inaudible.

(CONTINUED)

All that is heard is the RINGING from the gunshot. It get's louder and louder--

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ryan stumbles into the dark kitchen. He flips the light switch but the light doesn't turn on. He stands there for a moment.

CUT TO:

Ryan replaces the old bulb in the light fixture above the table. The light comes to life, but it's dim and lets out a dying HUM.

He collapses into the nearest chair. He stares in front of him, lost in his thoughts over what just happened.

CUT TO:

Ryan picks up the phone and tests to see if it still works. A DIAL TONE emits from the receiver. He SIGHS in relief and dials a number.

He paces across the kitchen with the phone to his ear. The call RINGS before the receiving end CLICKS in.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Hello?

Ryan sighs in relief.

RYAN

Mom, thank God...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Ryan. How are you?

Ryan stops and presses his forehead against the wall. His voice becomes shaky and attempts to SNIFF away tears.

RYAN

I'm, uh...I'm not good.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

What is it? What's wrong?

Ryan begins to CRY.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN
Dad's dead, Mom.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
What?

RYAN
He's dead, Mom. I was there when it happened.

Michelle sounds oddly calm.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
What are you talking about?

RYAN
Mom...Dad killed himself. He...he shot himself.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Ryan...Dad's sitting right here next to me.

Ryan slowly lifts his head up.

RYAN
What did you just say?

MICHELLE (V.O.)
He's sitting here with me right now. He stopped by to ask about you.

Ryan stumbles away from the wall.

RYAN
That's not possible. I saw him do it...

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Is everything alright? Are you feeling okay?

RYAN
Mom...Who are you really with?

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Ryan, you're starting to really worry me. I'm with Dad. Here...

The phone HISSES and CRACKLES on the other end as the phone is being handled by more than one person.

(CONTINUED)

WALTER (V.O.)
Hello? Ryan?

Ryan collapses into the chair.

RYAN
Who is this?

Walter lets out a nervous CHUCKLE (V.O.)

WALTER (V.O.)
It's Dad.

RYAN
No you're not.

WALTER (V.O.)
Is everything okay--

RYAN
Who the *fuck* is this?!

WALTER (V.O.)
Ryan, please!

But Ryan hangs up frantically. Paranoid, he slides the phone across the table.

He stands up and hastily paces back and forth in the kitchen. He rests on the counter and chews his nails nervously. He looks at the phone on the table and rushes over to pick it up. He dials another number.

The phone rings on the other end and a RECEPTIONIST answers.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Thank you for calling St. James
Medical Center, how may I help you?

Ryan's voice is shaky. He begins to pace once again.

RYAN
Hi, uh, yes is Dr. Rosenberg in the
office tonight?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
I'm sorry, he's with a patient at
the moment. Would you like to leave
a message on his voicemail?

RYAN
Actually, no, it's kind of an
emergency--

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Sir, if this is an emergency, I'm going to have to advise you to call 911.

Ryan TAPS the phone against his forehead in frustration. He returns it to his ear.

RYAN

No, it's not that kind of emergency. I just...Can you please just direct me to Dr. Rosenberg?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Sir, like I said, he's with another patient--

RYAN

I don't give a fuck, just pull him out of the fucking room and give him the god damn phone!

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Sir, I won't tolerate you talking to me like that and cursing will not get you to the front of the line--

RYAN

Fuck you!

Ryan throws the phone at the wall. It SHATTERS into pieces. He BREATHES heavily, but he begins to calm down.

BRRINNGG! Ryan stiffens up. He turns around to see the telephone, sitting on the charging stand. RINGING. He cautiously walks over and answers it.

RYAN

Hello?

KAYLA (V.O.)

Ryan, thank God you're home.

RYAN

Kayla...

KAYLA (V.O.)

I heard what happened. I'm so sorry, Ryan. God, I can't even begin to imagine...

Ryan sits down at the table and covers his eyes as he CRIES quietly.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA (V.O.)

I'm on my way home now. Jesus, I don't even know what to say.

RYAN

I tried, Kayla. I wasn't fast enough. I was right there and I just let it happen.

KAYLA (V.O.)

It's not your fault, Ryan. It's not.

RYAN

I don't know what to do.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Don't do anything, Ryan. I'm going to be home in ten minutes. Just stay in the kitchen. Don't. Do. Anything.

Ryan sniffs and regains his composure.

RYAN

Okay.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Do you want to stay on the phone with me until I get home?

RYAN

No, I just...I'll see you when you get here.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Okay. I'll try and be there as quickly as possible.

RYAN

Okay.

KAYLA (V.O.)

I love you.

RYAN

I love you, too.

Ryan hangs up the phone and immediately the front door opens; Kayla rushes in.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

Ryan!

Ryan stands up and the two embrace. He hugs her tightly.

KAYLA

Oh God, I'm so sorry.

RYAN

Where have you been? I couldn't find you.

KAYLA

I'm right here.

The two hug each other for a moment longer before they pull away.

KAYLA

Just sit down. I'm going make some tea to help calm you down.

She fills a kettle with water and sets it on the stove.

RYAN

I don't know what's going on, Kayla. I'm hearing voices when there's nobody there, the days are getting shorter and the nights are getting longer...I even talked to my dead fucking father on the phone not even five minutes ago!

Kayla kneels down in front of him.

KAYLA

Baby, you're not making any sense.

RYAN

That's exactly what I'm saying! Nothing's making any fucking sense!

KAYLA

I'm going to call Dr. Rosenberg. Something seriously wrong is happening with you.

Kayla stands up and walks over to the charging stand.

RYAN

I already tried, I wasn't able to get through to him.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA
Where's the phone?

RYAN
I don't know, next to the charging
stand?

KAYLA
It's not here.

Kayla looks around the kitchen, then at the floor.

KAYLA
Ryan, what the hell did you do?

Ryan looks at Kayla, then down at the floor where she's
looking: the shattered pieces of the telephone.

Ryan slowly stands up. He doesn't take his eyes off of the
destroyed phone.

RYAN
That's not possible.

KAYLA
Ryan...

RYAN
That's not fucking possible. I was
just talking to you on that phone.

KAYLA
You're seriously starting to freak
me out.

Ryan begins to HYPERVENTILATE. Sweat beads on his face.
Kayla rushes over to him and grabs his face.

KAYLA
Ryan! Baby, look at me!

RYAN
What the fuck is happening?

KAYLA
I think you're having another panic
attack. Breathe, baby.

Ryan freezes. He stares at Kayla. He stares at her eyes. He
suddenly notices the color. They're not blue. Instead,
they're a dark brown.

RYAN

What happened to your eyes?

KAYLA

What?

RYAN

Your eyes! What happened to them?

KAYLA

What do you mean?

RYAN

They're brown. Why are they brown?!
Your eyes are blue!

KAYLA

Ryan, my eyes have always been
brown. You know this!

Ryan GULPS heavily. Sweat drips down his face.

The dim kitchen light flickers and slowly starts to burn out.

The kettle begins to WHISTLE. It's now noticeable that the stove burner isn't even ignited.

Ryan collapses against the counter. He loses his balance and falls to the floor. Kayla attempts to catch him, but he brings her down with her.

KAYLA

Ryan? Ryan!? Oh my God, Ryan!

Ryan's eyes roll to the back of his head. The kettle SCREAMS. It DROWNS out Kayla's CALLS to Ryan. Her voice disappears into nonexistence.

The kitchen light bulb fizzles into darkness.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

It's pitch black. The darkest void. Complete silence overtakes everything. Then...

A GASP of air. Ryan's quick INHALE breaks the silence. His breathing is quick and shaky.

Various SOUNDS of him emit from this darkness. Ryan stands up and stumbles around. He bumps into a piece of furniture, most likely a chair. It SCRAPES along a tile floor.

(CONTINUED)

Something BREAKS. Ryan trips and falls to the ground; it creates a CLATTER as objects CRASH to the ground with him. His breathing gets quicker and heavier. He begins to HYPERVENTILATE again.

He grabs something; it emits a sound of METAL against GLASS. He FUMBLES with it. CLICK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - UNKNOWN TIME

The electric lantern BUZZES to life and washes over Ryan with a bright, white light. The light is dim, but it lights up the living room.

Ryan stands up and takes the lantern. He looks around the living room, then out the windows. It's pitch black outside.

RYAN

Kayla?

His voice echoes through the house.

RYAN

Kayla?!

Ryan walks out of the living room and into the...

HALLWAY

The hallway is a stretch of darkness. It looks like it leads for forever. The light of the lantern doesn't go very far; the darkness seems to swallow it like a black hole.

RYAN

Hello?!

His voice echoes down the hallway and gets swallowed up as well. Something inhuman calls back with a "Hello," its voice garbled and deep.

Ryan stares into the dark hallway. The lantern shakes in his hand. He backs away back into the...

LIVING ROOM

Ryan walks to the front door and opens it. He walks through the front door, which leads him back into the...

LIVING ROOM

Ryan stops in his tracks.

(CONTINUED)

He turns back around and reaches for the front door--but it's not there anymore. It's an empty, dark corner.

Ryan stumbles backward. His breathing is heavy and shaky. He spins back around and holds the lantern up and out in front of him.

RYAN
Can anybody hear me?

No answer.

RYAN
Somebody?!

His voice echoes into the darkness.

RYAN
Hello?!

Ryan falls to his knees. The lantern hits the floor with a loud CLANK. He doubles over and struggles to breathe.

RYAN
What's happening...? Where am I...?

He HEAVES and begins to SOB in the middle of the living room, surrounded by darkness. This lasts for a moment.

Ryan stops SOBBING. Something catches his attention and he listens intently. A faint BEEPING. It's a heart monitor, and it echoes from somewhere within the house.

He slowly stands up and grabs the lantern. He walks into the...

HALLWAY

The BEEPING becomes louder as Ryan peaks into the hallway. He slowly walks toward the bedroom door; the heart monitor BEEPS gradually get louder.

Ryan reaches for the door handle and slowly twists it. The door SQUEAKS open and he walks inside.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - UNKNOWN TIME

The hospital room is dark as well, both inside and outside, but the lantern lights up the room. The door slowly shuts behind Ryan. He takes a few steps into the hospital room and freezes.

(CONTINUED)

There, in front of him, is a hospital bed. Laying in the hospital bed is HIMSELF, in a coma, much like how he looked at the beginning scene: leads are hidden beneath his gown, an IV needle is stuck in his wrist, and an oxygen tube is gently taped to his nostril. Unkempt facial hair has replaced his clean-shaven jawline.

The heart monitor next to his bed continues to BEEP softly. Above his bed is a clock. It TICKS loudly, almost to the same rhythm as the heart monitor.

The hospital room door CLICKS open. Ryan spins around and sees Oxygen Nurse enter the room. Ryan sneaks a peek into the hallway. Someone pushes a gurney, its wheels SQUEAK loudly.

Oxygen Nurse carries a tray with a needle and a bottle of some kind of liquid. She walks over to Coma Ryan and prepares the needle. Once ready, she injects the fluid into Ryan's inner elbow of his left arm.

Ryan HISSES in pain and looks at his inner left elbow. A small, red blotch appears. He rubs it with his thumb and looks back up at Oxygen Nurse and Coma Ryan in pure shock. His body shakes and he stares ahead of him in disbelief.

The nurse finishes and collects the supplies. She walks out of the hospital room. The door slowly closes. Before it shuts, a female hospital STAFF MEMBER chimes in from the loudspeakers:

FEMALE STAFF MEMBER

We need assistance on level six.
Assistance on level six.

The door CLICKS shut.

Lightning flashes outside the windows; it catches Ryan's attention. There's a second or two delay before thunder RUMBLES from the distance. Rain PITTER-PATTERS against the windows.

The door CLICKS open once again, and Ryan turns back to see who's entered. It's Kayla.

RYAN

Kayla?

She ignores him and sits down next to the bed and leans in to Coma Ryan. She runs her hand along his arm. Ryan gets a chill along the same arm and he grabs at it, but stops and stares at what he's just witnessed.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

Good morning, sleepyhead.

Ryan's eyes water up, either from emotional stress or complete fear. Kayla rubs his facial hair.

KAYLA

You need to shave.

She grabs the hospital room TV remote and turns it on. It's the same rerun episode of The Price is Right as before. Bob Barker calls down a contestant.

KAYLA

Look. It's one of your favorite game shows.

Ryan watches; he recognizes the episode.

Kayla runs her fingers through Coma Ryan's hair and stares at him with her dark, brown eyes.

KAYLA

Ryan...

Ryan walks closer to the foot of the bed; Kayla still doesn't notice him.

KAYLA

Ryan...Wake up.

Her eyes grow watery and her lips quiver.

KAYLA

Please.

She grabs Coma Ryan's hand and holds it up to her mouth, kisses it softly. She begins to SOB. Her SOBBING sounds much like that from the first phone call scene.

RYAN

Kayla...I'm right here. Can you hear me?

Kayla ignores him and continues to SOB.

RYAN

Kayla!

He looks back at the TV. A contestant just lost to someone who bid one dollar more than them.

(CONTINUED)

MICHELLE (O.S.)

Ryan?

Ryan turns back around and sees Michelle and Walter on the opposite side of the bed of Kayla. Michelle holds onto Coma Ryan's hand and squeezes it gently. Walter sits next to Michelle, his hand on her shoulder.

RYAN

Mom...

MICHELLE

Ryan? Can you hear me? Please, do something. *Anything.*

Ryan covers his mouth, fights away tears.

MICHELLE

Wake up. Just...*wake up.*

She sniffs and wipes away oncoming tears.

MICHELLE

Dad's here, Ryan. Just talk to him...

She grabs his shoulders and gently shakes Coma Ryan.

MICHELLE

Do something. *Say something!!
Anything!!*

Coma Ryan doesn't move.

Michelle stares at him, waits for a response. There is none. She begins to cry softly.

MICHELLE

*You are my sunshine, my only
sunshine. You make me happy when
skies are gray. You never know,
dear, how much I love you. Please
don't take my sunshine away...*

Ryan slowly takes a few steps away from the bed; he doesn't take his eyes off of everyone in front of him.

There's a low, ghostly MOAN and Kayla, Michelle, and Walter slowly look up at Ryan, as if they can see him. Ryan stares back. He looks terrified.

Behind him stands the silhouetted figure of Dr. Rosenberg. He moves past Ryan; behind him, Oxygen Nurse follows. They walk up to the bed. Ryan slowly follows behind them.

(CONTINUED)

Kayla, Michelle, and Walter look up at Dr. Rosenberg. He looks sad.

DR. ROSENBERG
Are you sure you're ready to do
this?

Michelle begins to cry harder. Kayla covers her mouth as she, too, begins to cry. Walter holds back and nods his head.

RYAN
What? Do what?

He looks over at Oxygen Nurse, who lays out another syringe and a bottle of fluid.

RYAN
What is that?

DR. ROSENBERG
Feel free to leave the room while
we administer the injection.

MICHELLE
Is it...Is it going to hurt him?

Dr. Rosenberg shakes his head.

DR. ROSENBERG
It will only take a matter of
seconds for it to take effect.

RYAN
Oh God...

DR. ROSENBERG
Once it's over, I will check to
make sure that there's no pulse,
and my nurse here will also check
to confirm it. Now, you've already
signed the legal documents, so if
any of you have anything else you
want to say or do before we perform
the injection, now is the time.

WALTER
Uh, I just want to say a few last
things.

Dr. Rosenberg nods and motions for Oxygen Nurse to follow him. They step outside the room.

Walter leans in to Coma Ryan.

WALTER

Ryan...

RYAN

Dad...

WALTER

I'm sorry I haven't been here for you, Ryan. I've been a terrible father since your mom and I divorced.

Walter tears up. His voice becomes shaky.

WALTER

Hell, I've been a terrible father even before then. I just wish we could've talked more.

Ryan becomes weak. He stumbles backward.

RYAN

Oh God...

WALTER

I hope you know how much I love you. You were always a great son.

RYAN

No...

Dr. Rosenberg and Oxygen Nurse enter the room again and walk to the bed. Walter looks at Dr. Rosenberg, who nods solemnly. Walter looks back at Coma Ryan.

WALTER

I have to go now. I love you, Ryan.

Walter kisses Coma Ryan's on the forehead.

WALTER

I'm so sorry.

Walter leans away. Oxygen Nurse hands Dr. Rosenberg the syringe.

Ryan gets a burst of energy and runs to the bed. He begins to SHOUT at everyone, but they don't acknowledge him.

RYAN

I'm right here! I'm awake! Don't do this!

(CONTINUED)

Dr. Rosenberg tests the syringe, squirting some fluid out of the needle.

RYAN

Please! I'm awake!! *I'm awake!!*

Ryan gets within inches of everyone's face and SHOUTS at them.

RYAN

Kayla!! Mom!! Dad!!

DR. ROSENBERG

Again, feel free to leave the room
at any time while we do this.

Ryan turns to Coma Ryan and gets a few inches from his face.

RYAN

Wake up! God damn it, wake up!!
WAKE UP!!! WAKE UP!!!

He SCREAMS with all of his might into Coma Ryan's face. Spit and slobber spray from his mouth. Tears stream down his face, which is as red as ever.

Ryan gets closer and closer to Coma Ryan's face as he continues to SCREAM. Coma Ryan's eyelids begin to quiver; a tear squeezes out from the corner of one of them.

The same mosquito-pitched RING fills the air and silences out Ryan's SCREAMS. Coma Ryan's eyelids quiver more and more and become more similar to that of REM sleep.

The hospital room lights fade in and the room becomes brightly lit as Coma Ryan takes in a slow, deep breath...

...And he wakes up.

Sunlight bathes over Coma Ryan--now the real Ryan--and his eyes very slowly flicker open...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Kayla, Michelle, and Walter jump to their feet as Ryan squints his eyes. They slowly adjust to the fluorescent lights and sunlight. He looks exhausted.

KAYLA

Ryan?! Oh my God!!

(CONTINUED)

MICHELLE

Ryan!!

Everyone is ecstatic. Kayla gently grabs his face.

KAYLA

Ryan, baby! I can't believe it!!

Dr. Rosenberg holds up the syringe. He stares at Ryan almost in disbelief.

DR. ROSENBERG

Wow...

Michelle leans in and kisses Ryan on the cheek. She rubs his face as tears stream down hers.

MICHELLE

We thought we were going to lose you, honey! Oh my God, I can't believe you're awake!

Walter wipes away his tears.

WALTER

You did it, Ryan. You pulled through.

Ryan weakly looks back over at Kayla, into her blue eyes. She wipes tears from her eyes and LAUGHS in happiness and joy.

RYAN

(weakly)

Kayla...

Kayla SNIFFS and leans in, grabs his hand.

KAYLA

Yes, baby?

RYAN

Are you real...?

Kayla nods and smiles.

KAYLA

Yes, I am. I'm right here.

Ryan stares at her for a moment longer. Tears well up in his tired eyes. His lips quiver, and he, too, begins to cry.

Kayla leans in and kisses him on the cheek. Michelle and Walter hug excitedly.

(CONTINUED)

Dr. Rosenberg puts a hand on Ryan's shoulder.

DR. ROSENBERG

I can honestly say that I've never seen anything like that happen before, Ryan. You're a very lucky man.

Ryan, too weak to smile, lets out a relieved SIGH. Kayla caresses his face. Michelle and Walter smile and admire him. The sun shines brightly in through the windows as everyone rejoices.

INT. KAYLA'S CAR - DAY

Kayla drives with Ryan in the passenger seat. He leans his head against the window and watches all of the traffic pass by.

Kayla rubs his leg, and he looks at her and smiles. She smiles back. Ryan returns to looking out the window, and Kayla continues to drive along the occupied highway.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The front door opens and Kayla walks in, followed by Ryan. He stops in the middle of the living room and looks around.

KAYLA

Welcome home.

She smiles and walks into the kitchen. She turns on the light, which shines brightly. Ryan walks over to the lamp in the room and turns it ON. The light bulb shines brighter than ever.

He smiles.

BEDROOM

Ryan walks into the bedroom and observes it. He notices something on his desk. The notebook. His smile fades away and he walks up to the desk.

Slowly, he reaches for the notebook and opens it up...

It's blank. Every page is blank. He lets out another relieved SIGH and closes the notebook.

Kayla walks into the room and hugs Ryan from behind. He grabs her arms and they rock side to side.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA

I'm so glad you're home.

Ryan turns around. He lifts her chin up with his finger and plants a soft, gentle kiss on her lips. She wraps her arms around his neck and they kiss more passionately.

They make love.

BEDROOM - LATER

Ryan and Kayla lay in bed and stare at each other. He brushes a few strands of hair out of her face and admires her.

RYAN

Your eyes have always been blue,
right?

Kayla chuckles.

KAYLA

Of course, silly.

RYAN

I just wanted to make sure.

She scratches Ryan's beard.

RYAN

(re: his beard)
What do you think?

KAYLA

I think if you clean it up a bit,
you'd look very handsome. But, then
again I think you always look
handsome.

RYAN

I can shave it if you'd like.

KAYLA

You can do whatever you want with
it, babe. Why don't you clean up
and we can make dinner together,
okay? I bet you want some real
food.

RYAN

You have no idea.

BATHROOM

(CONTINUED)

Ryan finishes shaving. He washes down leftover facial hair and shaving cream residue from the sides of the sink, splashes water on his face.

He admires his clean-shaven face in the mirror.

From somewhere in the house, At Last by Etta James begins to play. He looks in the direction of the music and walks out of the bathroom.

LIVING ROOM

Ryan walks into the living room and sees Kayla standing in front of a stereo. She turns and smiles at Ryan.

They walk up to each other and begin to dance slowly in the middle of the living room to the song. Kayla rests her head on his shoulder. Ryan closes his eyes and rests his head on hers.

ETTA JAMES

*At last...My love has come along...
My lonely days are over...And life
is like a song...*

INT. LIVING ROOM - UNKNOWN TIME

Etta James' voice trails off at the word "song" into a long stretch of echo as it is swallowed into darkness.

Ryan opens his eyes. He stands in the middle of the living room, surrounded by blackness. The only light source comes from his electric lantern.

He spins around; Kayla is nowhere in sight.

RYAN

No...

Ryan circles around the living room with the electric lantern.

RYAN

No, no, please God, no...Kayla?
Kayla?!

He runs into the...

HALLWAY

(CONTINUED)

Ryan begins to run down the long, dark hallway. It stretches for forever. There's absolutely nothing around him--just darkness. Even the light from his lantern doesn't go far. He continues to SCREAM for Kayla and runs forever.

HE COMES TO A STOP AND COLLAPSES TO HIS KNEES. HE BEGINS TO CRY AND WHEEZE, EXHAUSTED. HIS BREATH IS VISIBLE. HE'S IN THE ULTIMATE DARK, COLD VOID.

RYAN

Why is this happening to me?

He looks up, or what he believes is up.

RYAN

God damn it! Why are you doing this to me!

He continues to CRY.

RYAN

I can't do this anymore...

He hears a male's voice MUMBLING to himself. He sits up and looks behind him.

In the darkness is his bedroom door. Ryan slowly stands up and walks toward it, opens it. He walks into the...

BEDROOM

Ryan holds the lantern up in front of him as he walks into the bedroom. The room is empty except for the hospital bed with Coma Ryan in it; next to the bed is Dr. Rosenberg.

Dr. Rosenberg speaks softly into a voice recorder. Next to Coma Ryan is an EEG machine and an artificial respirator that HISSES and BREATHES as it sucks in air and dispenses it into his lungs. A flat line runs across the EEG screen.

Ryan walks closer to Dr. Rosenberg, whose voice becomes more coherent.

DR. ROSENBERG

The last spike in brain activity happened almost two weeks ago. It's been the last spike we've seen since he had fallen into the coma six months ago.

RYAN

Henry...

(CONTINUED)

The line on the EEG machine spikes just a bit. Dr. Rosenberg notices; he watches the EEG machine for a moment, expects something. Nothing else happens. He makes a quick note in a chart.

Dr. Rosenberg returns to his diagnosis.

DR. ROSENBERG

We've continued our attempts to produce some kind of stimulus response to determine whether or not he has any chance of waking up from his comatose state. At first we had hope, but he's become unresponsive to any and all procedures.

Dr. Rosenberg stops recording and sets the recorder and chart on the hospital bed. He leans into Coma Ryan.

DR. ROSENBERG

Ryan...

Dr. Rosenberg's voice ECHOES through the darkness. Ryan looks up and around as Dr. Rosenberg's voice surrounds him.

DR. ROSENBERG

...If you can hear me, try hard to do something. Show us that you're still there.

RYAN

I'm here...

Dr. Rosenberg waits. He ignores Ryan who walks over to the bed and stands opposite of Dr. Rosenberg.

RYAN

I'm here, God damn it! I'm right here! I'm fucking standing right in front of you! I'm trying to wake up! I am awake!

Dr. Rosenberg shakes his head in disappointment and reaches for his chart and voice recorder again.

RYAN

I'm awake! I'm awake!! I'm awake!!!

Dr. Rosenberg presses the RECORD button.

(CONTINUED)

DR. ROSENBERG

Essentially the lights were on and nobody was home. Now the lights have completely gone off as well. I believe Mr. Stovall is on the very verge of the state of brain death, with no hope of regaining consciousness. I will be contacting the family shortly. Dr. Rosenberg, M.D.

Dr. Rosenberg gives the date and stops recording. He stands up and looks down at Coma Ryan one last time.

DR. ROSENBERG

I'm sure you tried, Ryan. I'm sorry.

He turns and makes his way to the bedroom door. Ryan follows after him.

RYAN

Where are you going? Wait! I'm still in there! Do something!

Dr. Rosenberg walks through the bedroom door and shuts it. Ryan immediately opens it, only to find darkness; Dr. Rosenberg is nowhere in sight.

Ryan stumbles backward. He turns back around. The hospital bed is gone. He's in an empty room.

RYAN

I'm still in there...

He spins around and stares into infinite blackness.

RYAN

I'm still here!!

The lantern begins to flicker. Ryan holds it up and sees the light beginning to fade.

RYAN

No...

He runs to the bedroom door.

RYAN

No, no, no, no....

Ryan runs into the...

HALLWAY

(CONTINUED)

He runs through darkness, his light getting dimmer and dimmer. He holds it up and attempts to navigate his way through this black hole.

RYAN

Where the fuck am I?!

He continues to run, his breath visible and WHEEZY. He seems to run for hours. He takes a random turn and manages to make his way into the...

LIVING ROOM

Ryan trips and falls. The lantern rolls away from him, and it flickers, threatens to die right then and there. Ryan stares in fear.

He pushes himself up off the floor and grabs the lantern. He runs into the...

KITCHEN

Ryan throws the lantern onto the counter and begins to rip all of the drawers out of their spaces. He digs through them.

Silverware CLATTERS on the floor, appliances BOUNCE and BREAK as he tosses them behind him.

The lantern fades more and more. Ryan spins around, exasperated.

RYAN

FUCK!

He walks over to another set of drawers and rips them open. Nothing of use except for more appliances. He pulls more drawers open and finally finds what he's looking for: four candle tapers, a candlestick, and a matchbox.

He snatches them from the drawer and throws them on the counter. Matches spill out of their box as he shoves his fingers inside. The lantern is just about dead. It emits a dying HUM.

Ryan attempts to light the match, but it won't ignite. He curses to himself as he strikes it over and over again. ZIP. ZIP. Nothing.

Ryan looks over at the lantern. It HUMS loudly before finally fading out.

Ryan stares in defeat as the darkness engulfs him. He lets out his last words--

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Aw, shit...

The darkness swallows him.

Silence. Darkness. Nothingness.

DARK VOID

ZIP! A spark ignites and a tiny flame HISSES to life. Ryan's face becomes visible as he holds a lit match up to his face. It dances in front of his eyes before he lowers it down to reveal the candle tapers.

He grabs one and lights it; Ryan looks around. He's not in the kitchen anymore. He's not even in his house. He's in a world of darkness. It's completely silent in this cold void except for his shaky BREATHING, which is visible.

He walks through the darkness in silence--it's almost deafening.

RYAN

Hello?

His voice doesn't even echo in the darkness. His eyes begin to tear up.

RYAN

(more frantically)

Hello?!

His whole body shakes in fear. He continues to walk into nothingness. There's no sense of direction. No other people. He's all alone.

LATER

The candle sits next to Ryan, who lays on the floor on his side; his back is to the candle. He SOBS quietly to himself. The candle is almost melted away.

Ryan rolls over and sees the candle flame nearing the bottom of the candle taper. He SNIFFS away his tears and picks up the candlestick. He continues to walk through the darkness.

CUT TO:

Ryan navigates through the darkness until something catches his eye from the weak flame. A desk. His desk. The desk from the opening scene.

(CONTINUED)

He sets the candlestick on the desk and sits down in the chair. He opens up a drawer, and the only thing inside is his notebook and a couple pens.

The candle flame slowly begins to extinguish itself. Ryan pulls out the box of matches and another candle taper.

The flame goes out. There's darkness and silence.

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - UNKNOWN TIME

ZIP! A match SCRAPES across a matchbox and HISSES to life, revealing a large, bright flame that flickers in the darkness. The flame dies down, and the match head is brought to the wick of a candle taper, ignites it.

The candle wick CRACKLES as the flame engulfs it and grows large once again.

Ryan sets the notebook lightly on top of the desk. He uncaps one of the pens and prepares to write.

He pauses, scratching his scruffy chin and neck nervously, and lets out a shaken SIGH. His breath is visible in this cold, dark room.

He TAPS the pen quickly and lightly on the page before bringing it up to his mouth and CHEWS on it.

Ryan stares at the candle flame as it sits still upon the wick. He begins to write.

RYAN

(quietly, to himself)

In the beginning when God created
the heavens and the earth, the
earth was a formless void and
darkness covered the face of the
deep...

His voice trails off into the darkness as he writes.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A heart monitor BEEPS at a steady rhythm, while a clock TICKS along to the beat. The room is brightly lit by fluorescent lighting, and sunshine spills through the open blinds.

(CONTINUED)

Ryan lays in the bed, hooked up to the machinery and a respirator that HISSES as it feeds him oxygen.

Next to the bed is Kayla. She sleeps soundly in a chair, but stirs awake when Oxygen Nurse enters the room.

OXYGEN NURSE

Would you like something to eat or drink, Kayla?

KAYLA

(groggily)

What time is it?

OXYGEN NURSE

7:20.

KAYLA

I should probably get home. I've been here all night. Thanks, though.

Oxygen nurse nods and walks out of the room. Kayla turns to Ryan and caresses his arm. She watches him "sleep" for a moment with her dark, brown eyes.

KAYLA

I love you, Ryan.

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - UNKNOWN TIME

Ryan is down to the last candle, which doesn't look like it'll last much longer. He finishes writing in his notebook and sits back. He lets out a quiet SIGH and shuts the notebook.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Kayla leans in and gives Ryan a long, gentle kiss on the lips.

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - UNKNOWN TIME

The candle flame flickers, and he closes his eyes and leans his head back. A cool CHILL rushes through the air. A sense of euphoria rushes through his body and he INHALES a long, deep breath through his nose, EXHALES shakily out of his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Kayla...

He looks down at the desk. His notebook is nowhere to be seen.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Kayla pulls away and caresses his cheek. She smiles.

KAYLA

I'll be back soon. Don't forget about me.

Kayla gathers her things and quietly walks out of the room. Coma Ryan remains in the bed. The clock TICKS. The heart monitor BEEPS. All is still.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kayla walks into the living room and sets her things down on the coffee table. There's no TICKING clock this time.

She walks into the...

BEDROOM

Kayla stands in the middle of the quiet bedroom and looks around. She walks over to the desk.

At the desk are a few photos of her and Ryan, smiling, happy, having great times. She smiles as she admires them. She begins to turn and resume her business when something else catches her attention: Ryan's notebook.

Curious, she picks it up and opens it. At the top of the page is that day's date. Kayla pulls out her cell phone; the date matches the one written in the notebook. She looks back and forth from the notebook to her cell phone in disbelief.

KAYLA

Oh my God...

She sits down and begins to read.

RYAN (V.O.)

I know what was there before light, before the heavens and the earth were created. There was nothing. A cold, empty space of loneliness. A realm devoid of direction, time, hope...

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - UNKNOWN TIME

Ryan sits solemnly at the desk, his eyes closed. The candle flame is reaching the finish line, and grows smaller and smaller.

RYAN (V.O.)

...If this isn't real, then I don't know what is anymore. I've come to terms with the fact that everything I know is nothing more than just a dream. Another life. A life that once was.

Ryan opens his eyes and watches the candle melt away.

RYAN (V.O.)

If it's possible for the real world to bleed into my dream world, then I'm going to do everything in my power to reverse the process. If somebody, anybody, finds this, then you'll know I succeeded. This is my story.

The candle flame becomes nothing more than a blue ball of fire. Finally, it extinguishes itself.

Complete darkness has taken over.

RYAN (V.O.)

My name is Ryan Stovall, and I'm still here.

THE END.