

NOT WITHOUT MY JORDANS: A BASKETBALL FATHER'S NIGHTMARE:  
A LIFEMARK MOVIE

Written by

Christopher A. Brown

WGA# 2086379  
1220 Stamford Road  
Gwynn Oak, MD 21207  
240.750.8737  
Uroutnumbered@gmail.com

EXT. PLAINVIEW, USA - DAYTIME

Our view descends on a suburban community bustling with activity. It's a beautiful smallish town that feels like the type of place you'd want to settle in and raise a family. As we descend to street level we see a Range Rover making its way through a neighborhood.

INT. RANGE ROVER - DAYTIME

A 40-something father (Black, handsome) - JEROME JACOBS - and his 16 year-old son (Black, handsome jock-type) - JAY - drive the neighborhood streets. The backseat and trunk are full of boxes and belongings - they're obviously moving.

JEROME

Plainview. Finally. That's the longest drive we've had in years!

Jay is on his phone - typical teenager! Jerome elbows him, making him almost drop his phone.

JAY

Ugh, Dad! If you break it, you buy me a new one!

JEROME

Yeah, yeah. You weren't paying attention, I had to do something to wake you up! You know if you zone out during the game the opposition will elbow you a lot harder than I will!

Jerome laughs, Jay rolls his eyes.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Anyway, what's so fascinating on that thing today?

Jay straightens up in his seat and gets more animated.

JAY

Ok, so boom, there's this theory that there's a rogue planet past Pluto, right? And they think that it's got this weird orbit that makes it so we can't actually ever observe it, but it effects the whole solar system in ways we aren't even aware of!

(MORE)

JAY (CONT'D)

They think it might even be why some of our communications suffered interference - they thought it was solar flares before but now there are some that attribute it to this planet!

Jerome glances over at Jay, both baffled and amused.

JEROME

Your mother would've loved that you've taken an interest in science. That was always her thing.

Jay smiles, a bit sad but still warmed by the emotion.

JAY

Anyway, the whole thing reminds me of that movie about the planet that no one could see because it was on the other side of the sun, then suddenly it appeared one day on a collision course with Earth and like, killed everyone?

Jerome thinks for a second, then it hits him.

JEROME

Melancholia! That movie was SO MESSED UP.

JAY

Right? I had nightmares for weeks!

They laugh together as they pull up to a very nice two story single-family home. A moving truck is already parked in front with movers unloading boxes.

JEROME

Welp, here we are! Home sweet -

JAY

Don't do that Dad.

JEROME

Right.

They get out of the car and Jerome greets the movers.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - DAYTIME

The front door unlocks and opens, and the Jacobs men enter, followed by the first movers carrying boxes. They walk through the foyer, into the living room, where a large unfinished fireplace greets them.

JEROME

Hmmm. Thought this was already finished. Weird.

They continue around to the kitchen, then back through a dining room wrapping around to stairs by the foyer. They look up the stairs to see the banister railing by the bedrooms is unfinished.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Guess it's a bit of a fixer-upper, huh son?

Jay nods and goes back to looking at his phone.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Enough of that, help me get the stuff out of the car, then you can tell them where you want your stuff.

JAY

You mean I can pick my room?

JEROME

Yeah, of course. I mean, obviously not the master bedroom, but the other two bedrooms, go for it. We might as well start off right!

Jay hugs his dad, then runs out the front door. Jerome looks back up at the railing again and shakes his head.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Guess I'm off to the hardware store tomorrow.

Movers carry in a sofa, Jerome points them toward the living room as we -

FADE TO:

INT. RANGE ROVER - NEXT MORNING

Jerome drives as Jay eats a breakfast burrito and scrolls through his phone.

JEROME  
First day jitters?

JAY  
Nobody under 80 uses the word  
"jitters".

JEROME  
So I'm 80, now? Please. People  
think I'm your brother. Remember  
when we were in DC and that random  
lady asked us on the metro if we  
were related?

JAY  
Yeah, well, she was practically  
100, so...

Jerome feigns offense, raises his fist in mock anger.

JEROME  
I'll teach you how old I am, boy!  
You wanna go a few rounds in the  
ring?

Jay laughs, faking fear - but with real respect.

JAY  
No sir, don't want any of that  
smoke! (a beat) Anyway, I'm not too  
worried about school, we've done  
this a few times. It's just, you  
know, it'd be nice to be able to  
set down some roots. Get to really  
know some people, you know?

Jerome nods sympathetically.

JEROME  
Yeah, I know. This should be our  
last move. I promise, I'm not gonna  
uproot us again. You can settle in,  
make some real friends, maybe get a  
girlfriend. Or boyfriend. Or  
whomever. Just...be happy.

Jay rolls his eyes, but smiles.

JAY  
Thanks Dad. I really just hope I  
can find...my people.

They pull up in front of the school. Students make their way to the front entrance, hugging and greeting each other after a long summer. Jay sighs deeply.

JEROME

You got this, son. Besides, you're New York Prep's star player, best baller in the city! Your reputation precedes you! They're gonna be falling all over themselves to get to know you!

Jay rolls his eyes, gathering his backpack.

JAY

Dad, I'm way more than just a ball player. I know it's the ticket to scholarships, but really, Dad, I want to find people who I can talk about comic books and sci-fi stuff, you know? That's what I meant by "my people."

Jerome nods, understandingly. He puts his hand on Jay's shoulder.

JEROME

I get it. Sorry, son. I just want you to use ALL of your talents to the best of your ability. You've got the grades, that's the easy part, but so do so many others. You gotta stand out. And here, in this place, you can be even greater than you were back in the city.

JAY

I hear you. I know you're doing what you think is best.

Jay gets out of the car, then leans back in.

JAY (CONT'D)

Love you, Dad. See you later.

Jay closes the door. Jerome watches him walk toward the front of the school. A few girls and guys turn their heads as he passes them. He's making an impression without even trying. Jerome smiles and drives away.

FADE TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET SHOPPING DISTRICT - LATER

Jerome's Range Rover pulls into a parking space. The shopping district hustles and bustles with activity. Even though it's early in the day, there are people coming and going with their shopping bags. Jerome gets out of the SUV and heads toward a hardware store.

INT. OTTO'S HARDWARE STORE - SECONDS LATER

Jerome enters, the bells on the door jingle announcing his arrival. He mills around the store for a while, looking at random things but he clearly doesn't know much about what he's looking for. Finally he approaches OTTO, the owner.

OTTO

Mornin'! What can I help you with today?

Jerome looks around, slightly embarrassed.

JEROME

So...yeah, I just moved into town, and, well, my place is a bit of a fixer upper. Unfortunately for me, I have no idea what I'm doing!

The owner stares at him for a moment, judgmentally. Then, out of nowhere, he bursts into laughter.

OTTO

You know, if more people would just say that up front, we'd probably not have near as many accidents or damaged property as we do! I appreciate your honesty, son.

Jerome is stunned, then relieved.

JEROME

So you can help me?

OTTO

Nope. But I got someone who can.

The owner turns around to a corkboard behind him and searches for a few seconds before finally finding a business card. He takes it down and hands it to Jerome.

OTTO (CONT'D)

Yep, that should do it. Best in the business. Round these parts, anyway. Fix yer place right up.

Jerome reads the card.

JEROME

Chris Spencer. Repairs, construction...perfect. Thank you, sir! I'll call right now.

The owner stops him.

OTTO

Actually, if I recall, email or textin's better. Chris is busy and doesn't always answer the phone. But a text, you'll get a response quick.

Jerome nods and waves.

JEROME

Thank you sir! Didn't catch your name...?

OTTO

Didn't throw it. Call me Otto.

Jerome smiles and extends his hand. Otto shakes it.

JEROME

Jerome. Pleasure to meet you.

OTTO

Likewise. Sure I'll be seein' ya around.

Jerome starts to head out the door, then decides to send a text to Chris right then and there. He sends it and exits the store.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE - SECONDS LATER

Jerome opens the Range Rover door and his phone chimes - a text!

He reads it - it's Chris. We now see the exchange between Jerome and Chris via text:



Jerome: Hi, got your info from Otto's Hardware. Just got into town, new house is a fixer-upper. Need repairs, especially on fireplace and banister. Please help!!

Chris: Sounds like my kind of job! Can do estimate upon inspectio later today. Address?

Jerome nods his approval as he texts his address. He gets in the SUV, reverses, and drives off as we -

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAYTIME

The hallways are teeming with life. Students come and go, couples are making out against lockers, holding hands; boys are talking amongst themselves, girls passing by check them out. Jay exits a classroom and starts to walk down the hall when BRITTNEY (16, Black but with blond hair, cheerleader) pops up next to him.

BRITTNEY

Hey new guy.

JAY

Hi.

She tucks her hair behind her ear as she awkwardly makes conversation.

BRITTNEY

So, obviously you just moved here. And...you look like you should be on a team? Football? No, too tall...Basketball?

JAY

Basketball, yeah.

BRITTNEY

Totally knew it. You some kind of, like, superstar? (giggles)

JAY

Ugh. I mean, I was ranked #2 in New York before my dad and I moved here, but, you know, I wouldn't say I'm a superstar. I just work hard.

BRITTNEY

I bet you are a hard...worker. I could think of a few other things that require some hard-

Jay looks up and his eye is immediately drawn to another girl down the hall. Brittney stops mid-sentence and catches his gaze.

BRITTNEY (CONT'D)

Oh.

Jay can't control his smile as he watches the girl - RIPLEY (16, Black, SUPER nerdy but adorable) - surrounded by her nerdy friends - all wearing t-shirts from the AV Club.

BRITTNEY (CONT'D)

That's Ripley. Her parents named her after some old movie? Something about -

JAY

Aliens.

BRITTNEY

Riiiiiiight. Don't tell me, you're into that?

JAY

Game over, man. Game over.

BRITTNEY

What?

Jay smiles broadly. Brittney suddenly has an epiphany.

BRITTNEY (CONT'D)

Oh my god. This is so cute. I'm totally gonna make this happen for you. We're gonna be BFFs and I'm gonna make sure you get that nerd booty.

JAY

Wait, wha--

BRITTNEY

Come on!

Brittney drags Jay off happily as she now has a new project.

FADE TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LATER

There's knock at the front door. Jerome opens it. We see his reaction first as he opens the door to see CHRIS. He is shocked.

Chris is 30-something, Black, and an attractive woman. She's dressed in an open flannel work shirt, white tank top, jeans, and boots. Her toolbox is at her feet. Jerome is at a loss for words.

CHRIS

Hi, Jerome? (A beat) I am at the right address, right?

JEROME

I'm sorry, yes, of course, you're Chris?

She smiles broadly.

CHRIS

That's what my parents decided!

A beat. Jerome finally gets the joke and laughs, letting her in.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

Jerome shows Chris the unfinished fireplace. The room is otherwise well furnished with a modern style but still feels home-y.

JEROME

When I signed the papers they assured me everything would be done by the time we moved here, but clearly they missed a few things.

CHRIS

Clearly.

JEROME

So, yeah, it's this and the upstairs bannister, or railing? Whatever it's called. Is this up your alley?

Chris looks grim.

CHRIS

No. This...I have no idea what to do about all of...(gestures wildly) this.

Jerome stops in his tracks.

JEROME

What?

Chris laughs.

CHRIS

I'm joking with you! Yes, I do this kind of work all the time. But, I have to be honest, if you want it done right, it won't be a quick job. You ok with that?

Jerome smiles.

JEROME

I'm ok with almost anything you say...I mean, uh, you're, uh, the expert!

Chris smirks as she kneels and examines the fireplace.

CHRIS

Uh huh. (a beat) Yep, this is...Shoddy work, man. I'm gonna need to take most of this down and redo the whole thing. And if this is any indication of the work that was done, the railing will probably be the same. But, don't worry. I got you.

Jerome smiles. For the first time in a long time, he feels reassured and at ease. Something about Chris makes him feel safe and taken care of.

JEROME

(laughing) I feel like I should just give you a key. There's a lot that needs...doing...around here.

Chris stops inspecting the fireplace and looks up at him.

CHRIS

I don't think we're quite there yet. But...maybe we'll get there.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - SIMULTANEOUSLY

A car sits across the street from the Jacobs' house. Someone watches from the shadows. The front door opens, and Chris steps out.

She turns and waves to Jerome before heading to her pickup truck. The car across the street starts and drives off. Chris turns to see the sedan drive away. She climbs in to her truck, starts it up and drives off.

FADE TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Jerome and Jay sit at the dining room table eating dinner. Jay is half-heartedly eating, Jerome is watching him.

JEROME

OK, boy. What's wrong?

JAY

Nothing.

JEROME

Yeah, right. You normally don't even come up for air, but today you're just pushing the food around your plate. What's wrong, son?

Jay looks up from his plate at his dad.

JAY

I don't know, Dad. I just...(a beat) I started school today and immediately everyone started in on me being a jock. Asking what sport, what position I played, and yet, all I wanted...

JEROME

Yes?

JAY

Never mind. It's dumb.

JEROME

No, it's not. What?

JAY

All I wanted was to talk about science, or movies, or ethical quandaries. Multiverse theory. Literally anything but sports. How come no one can see me for me? I know what I look like, but, there's like, so much more to me than that.

Jay starts to tear up. Jerome goes to his son and hugs him.

JEROME

I know son. It's hard when you're judged by your appearance, and by what people think of you. But that's how the world seems to work. It's not fair. But, we have to work around it. You'll find your way, and you'll find your people.

Jay nods, wiping his face.

JAY

Yeah, I guess. I mean, it wasn't all bad. There's this one girl I made friends with, a cheerleader named Brittney. That's something, I guess.

Jerome smiles, going back to his plate.

JEROME

Ah, nice. Cheerleader, eh? That's my boy-

JAY

Don't start, Dad. She's not my type. But, she said she's gonna help me get (makes finger quotes) my type.

Jerome grins from ear to ear. Jay rolls his eyes.

JEROME

Well, either way, that sounds like a good start. (a beat) When's practice start?

JAY

Next week. This weekend is the kickoff - the Annual Wing Cookoff at John Davies' dad's house. They do it every year at different houses.

JEROME

Ok, ok...that's something. Let me know when and where and we'll go.

Jay rolls his eyes, taking another bite of food.

JAY

Do we have to? I'd really rather not.

JEROME

You need to get to know the team,  
and I should probably meet some of  
the parents too. You guys'll be  
spending a lot of time together.

Jay stands up to clear the table.

JAY

Fine...but for the love of god,  
please don't make it weird.

JEROME

I promise nothing.

Jay laughs and carries the plates to the kitchen.

FADE TO:

EXT. DAVIES' HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Jerome and Jay arrive at the Davies' house. It's Wing Cookoff Day and other parents and players are making their way inside. ROBERT, John's father (40s, white, well-to-do) steps onto the front lawn to greet them.

ROBERT

Welcome! Robert Davies, John's dad.

Jerome daps him up, followed by Jay.

JEROME

Jerome Jacobs. My son, Jay.

Jay nods.

ROBERT

Ahhh, yes, heard a lot about young Jay. Hear he's gonna be the next big thing. Pleasure to meet both of you. Jay, the rest of the team is in the back, you're welcome to go get some food and catch up with them.

Jay looks at Jerome wistfully. Jerome gestures for him to run along. Jay begrudgingly obliges.

JEROME

Great place you've got here.

ROBERT

Thank you! It's all thanks to the wife's salary. She's a physicist.  
(a beat) Let me introduce you to the other team dads.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAVIES' HOUSE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

The backyard is full of people milling about. A cluster of men is off to the side - the Team Dads. Robert leads Jerome to the group and gets their attention.

ROBERT

Gentlemen, meet Jerome. Our newest addition to the team. His son, Jay, is about to be a powerhouse for our squad. Introductions! Meet Malachi, Ray, Jameel, Solomon, Mitch, and Bobby.

They all murmur greetings toward Jerome. None are especially friendly. Each of them holds a wine glass containing what is likely an expensive chardonnay. An awkward silence seems to permeate the group, until JAMEEL finally speaks.

JAMEEL

So. You guys are from...New York, right? Why'd you leave? And why end up here?

ROBERT

Whoa, whoa, easy there Jameel. Let's give the man a minute to at least get a drink and some grub?

Robert offers Jerome a glass of wine, which he politely waves away. He shrugs, then MITCH steps forward.

MITCH

You know, none of that matters anyway. What I want to know is, what's your son's stats look like?

JEROME

What?

MITCH

You heard me. Tell me how many points, average. How many assists? How much time does he get on the court?



The other dads - save Robert - all join in, nodding and murmuring in agreement.

JEROME

I...I don't know that off the, uh,  
top of my, uh, head?

CUT TO:

INT. DAVIES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Jay is watching the other players watch highlights of last year's games on the large screen. He's uninterested. He turns to leave and runs into MRS. DAVIES (40-something, mom-type).

MRS. DAVIES

Are you having a good time?

JAY

I suppose, ma'am.

MRS. DAVIES

No need to be quite so formal, but it's nice at least one of you has manners. (a beat) You seem...bored.

JAY

I am, honestly. I guess I'd rather be reading about exoplanets or...sorry, never mind.

MRS. DAVIES

Oh! Did you read about that planet theorized to exist outside of Pluto's orbit?

Jay's face lights up.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAVIES' HOUSE - BACKYARD - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Mitch and the other fathers have moved in on Jerome. Things have escalated.

MITCH

What kind of father are you? Do you even care about your son? About his future? About ALL our sons' futures?!

JEROME

Wait, what...what is happening here?

MITCH

Oh, you know what's happening. You're getting called out for being a horrible father!

Jerome recoils in horror and disbelief as the other dads - again, except Robert - all join in jeering him.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVIES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Jay and Mrs. Davies are having a lovely conversation, laughing and enjoying each other's intelligence.

MRS. DAVIES

- And so I became a theoretical physicist. You should really look into the profession, if you're truly interested. You've got an aptitude for this type of thought.

JAY

Really? That means so much coming from you. Thank you!

A commotion arises outside. Something crashes to the ground, followed by an audible gasp and elevated voices.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAVIES' HOUSE - BACKYARD

The men are arguing loudly - heated but unintelligible. A wine glass is shattered on the ground. Jay runs outside and joins his father.

JAY

What the entire hell, Dad?

JEROME

(to Mitch) If you cared as much about your hairline as you do your son's stats, you might not look so ridiculous!

Mitch rubs his receding hairline, obviously hurt, then grimaces as he grabs his glass of chardonnay.

MITCH  
(screaming) You sonovabitch!

He throws the chardonnay in Jerome's face. Jerome recoils in horror. The other dads smile, savoring the malicious moment - except for Robert, who is clearly embarrassed.

JAY  
What did you do?

Jerome grabs Jay by the arm and drags him from the party, wiping wine from his face as they exit the backyard. Mitch waves to them as they leave.

MITCH  
See you around, fellas!

CUT TO:

INT. RANGE ROVER - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome and Jay ride in silence. Jerome is fuming with anger and righteous indignation.

JAY  
What the hell was that about?

JEROME  
Apparently, I'm not a good father if I don't know every single stat about you. They're...obsessed!

Jay rolls his eyes and stares out the window for a moment.

JAY  
You see? This...THIS is why I don't want to be seen as a jock. Now do you get it, Dad? These people are so damn obsessed with it. It's their whole lives! And you...you're getting sucked into it too! You don't care about me! You just care what I can do! Or rather, what it looks like I can do!

Jerome slams on the brakes. He turns to Jay, who now has a lone tear running down his face. Jerome reaches out to his son, placing his hand on his shoulder.

JEROME  
Son. I care about you more than you'll ever know. You're my child, and I love you.  
(MORE)

JEROME (CONT'D)

I only want what's best for you. I know you're so smart, and so talented...but that only gets you so far. In this world, people give more to those who show certain...abilities. Colleges pay for athleticism. That's the talent that seems to make it these days. That's why I push you so hard.

Jay pushes his father's hand away.

JAY

But what about MY happiness?

JEROME

There'll be time for that, too, son. But for now, we gotta keep our eyes on the prize. You understand?

Jay stares at him for a moment, then gives in.

JAY

Fine. I get it. But that doesn't make it right. (a beat) I can't believe that guy threw his drink at you.

JEROME

Me either. That hasn't happened in...months.

Jerome starts driving again. As we watch the car round a corner, that same sedan from before is now following them. The shadowy figure appears to be a woman wearing dark sunglasses.

FADE TO:

EXT. DAVIES' HOUSE - DAY

The sedan we've been seeing around is now parked in front of the Davies' house. A WOMAN (JILLIAN, 20s, ambiguous race, disheveled, very intense) knocks on the front door.

Robert opens the door.

ROBERT

Yes?

JILLIAN

Hi, I'm here about the, uh, room for rent?

ROBERT

Oh yes, of course! I forgot we had  
this scheduled. Please, come on in!

She follows him inside and closes the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVIES' HOUSE - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The pair descends the basement steps into a fully furnished  
basement set up like an apartment.

JILLIAN

This is SO cute!

ROBERT

Right? It's got its own entrance so  
you won't have to deal with us,  
bedroom is back there, full bath,  
kitchenette. Uh, it's got its own  
laundry too. You'll literally never  
have to see us if you don't want  
to.

Jillian smiles broadly as she walks around the basement. She  
peeks into the bedroom, then the bathroom, checks the  
laundry.

JILLIAN

This is perfect. I could move in  
literally right now, if you'll have  
me.

ROBERT

I mean, wow, that was easy. If you  
want it, it's yours!

JILLIAN

Fantastic! I've got first month and  
deposit ready to go.

She produces an envelope from her purse. It's clearly full of  
cash. Robert looks surprised.

ROBERT

I, uh, still need to do a  
background check, though -

Jillian steps close - too close - and looks deep into his  
eyes.

JILLIAN

You mean you're really gonna make me...wait? (whiny) I'm ready nowwwwwww!

Robert looks at the cash, then back at her.

ROBERT

You're not some kind of, like, psycho ax murderer, are you?

She stares intensely at him for a moment.

JILLIAN

Do I LOOK like an ax murderer?

ROBERT

(nervously) Well, no, but -

JILLIAN

No. I'm not an ax murderer...but to be honest, my credit is a little shaky right now. I'd rather not have to go through all of the checking stuff? Like, I'll pay cash every month and I'll pay early. That's no problem. I just need some...discretion.

Robert considers this, as Jillian leans in close and smiles, running her finger across his chest.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)

Pleaaaaaaase?

Robert finally nods.

ROBERT

You sold me. We've all hit a rough patch before, least I can do is give you a shot. Welcome to the house!

Jillian squeals with delight and hugs Robert. He's nervous but also enjoys it.

JILLIAN

OH MY GOD THANK YOU! YOU WON'T REGRET THIS! You won't even know I'm here! Thank you so much!

Robert heads back upstairs, leaving Jillian in her new space. She smiles sinisterly as we -

FADE TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Jay sits at a table eating lunch by himself. The other players acknowledge him with head nods but go to a different table and sit together. One of the players, BRAD (white, looks like a Brad), turns around and comes back to his table.

BRAD

Dude. Heard about the cookout. Sounds like your dad doesn't exactly fit in around here. Not sure you do either, bro.

JAY

Your point?

BRAD

I'm just sayin', if my dad rolled up into a place and all the other dads there turned on him, I might feel some kind of way about it.

Jay starts to get up when Brittney pops up next to him. She puts her tray down and sits next to him before looking up at Brad.

BRITTNEY

So, Brad, that rash clear up yet? Jermonica sent me the pic, it looks NASTY. I can recommend a good doctor for it, if you want. You might have to shave, you know, down there? To get it to really work, I mean.

Brad looks around nervously, then leans forward.

BRAD

(whisper) I asked her not to share that with anybody! Keep your voice down!

BRITTNEY

Well, maybe you should keep YOUR voice down when it comes to OTHER people's issues, hm?

Brad stares at Jay for a moment, then nods.

BRAD

Fair enough. Mutually beneficial situation. Bradley. OUT.

Brad backs away, trying to maintain whatever cool he thinks he still has. Jay turns to Brittney who's happily starting to eat her burrito.

BRITTNEY

So anyway, what's new?

JAY

Nothing, I guess. Why did you help me?

BRITTNEY

I have a thing for sad, wounded animals. Makes me feel like I'm making a difference in the world. You're pretty depressing. (a beat) My intuition tells me that you've got bigger issues than Brad, though.

Jay's attention is now across the room. Brittney follows his gaze and sees he's staring at a table of nerds, but specifically Ripley, the nerdy girl from before.

BRITTNEY (CONT'D)

So yeah, I like to dissect the sad animals and replace their organs with Lego pieces to see if they'll fit.

JAY

Yeahhh. (Snaps out of it) Wait, what?

BRITTNEY

You got it bad, boy. Just go over there and talk to her!

Jay shifts nervously in his seat. He tries to eat a french fry but nearly drops it.

JAY

I...I can't. I feel like she's gonna laugh at me.

Brittney twirls her hair and stands up.



BRITTNEY

All you need is opportunity. You have at least one class with her, right?

JAY

Yeah.

BRITTNEY

So make it count. Get her to notice you, the way you want her to. It's not rocket science.

JAY

Rocket science...that's it! You're a genius Brit!

Brittney smiles.

BRITTNEY

Maybe not in the traditional sense, but my kinesthetic and emotional intelligences are off the charts.

JAY

What?

BRITTNEY

What?

Awkward silence. Brittney finally smiles and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - PHYSICS CLASSROOM

Class is in session. MR. GOODYEAR (50s, decent shape, droll sense of humor) is giving the lecture. Jay sits a few seats behind Ripley, who is paying rapt attention to every word of the lesson.

MR. GOODYEAR

- and so the secondary propulsion systems are initialized after the first 526,000 gallons of fuel are consumed by the Space Shuttle's engines, which takes about eight and a half minutes, and gets the shuttle into the upper atmosphere. Now, for you science fiction fans, why do you think spaceships, like say, Star Trek's Enterprise, would have to be built in space?

Mr. Goodyear scans the room and sees more than one hand, for once. Ripley of course raises her hand, but so does Jay.

MR. GOODYEAR (CONT'D)  
 Ah, a new participant! Mr. Jacobs,  
 isn't it? Please, enlighten us.

The students all turn to look at him. Jay smiles nervously.

JAY  
 It'd take way too much fuel to  
 launch a ship of that size into  
 space. If it takes that much fuel  
 to get the Space Shuttle into  
 space, it'd probably take 5 times  
 that to launch something the size  
 of a small city. By building it in  
 space, you just have to worry about  
 having enough thrust and inertia to  
 move the ship away from the space  
 dock.

Mr. Goodyear nods in agreement. Ripley smirks as she turns back around.

MR. GOODYEAR  
 Surprisingly accurate, Mr. Jacobs.  
 Well done.

The bell rings. Everyone jumps to their feet to move on to the next class. Jay passes by Ripley, who is still gathering her things.

RIPLEY  
 (speaking Klingon) Wej gab, jock.  
 (Subtitle: Translated from Klingon -  
 Not bad, jock.)

Jay smiles.

JAY  
 (replying in Klingon) Qatlho'qu'.  
 (Subtitle: Thank you.)

Ripley does a double take as Jay confidently walks out of the classroom. Ripley pulls out her phone and sends a text.

FADE TO:

INT. HARDWARE STORE - NEXT DAY

Jerome and Chris peruse the aisles of the hardware store. They've got a cart containing lumber, brick, a few tools and odds and ends to fix the bannister and fireplace. They're walking close to each other, clearly they're enjoying each other's company.

JEROME

I've gotta be honest. This is the last place anyone would expect to find me.

Chris looks up at him, grinning.

CHRIS

Whaaaaat? I totally had you pegged as a Mr. Fix-It. You seem SO at home here!

Jerome laughs and playfully bumps into her. She punches him back, hard. He recoils - actually hurt.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Sorry, force of habit. My sisters used to roughhouse a lot, and I always had to hit back hard to get them to quit. You ok?

Jerome rubs his arm.

JEROME

Duly noted. (a beat) Sisters, huh? How many?

CHRIS

Six. I'm the third. You'd think my parents would've stopped after two, or three, or even four.

Jerome nods understandingly.

JEROME

Wow, all of those women. Is that why you're so handy?

CHRIS

Yeah, runs in the family.

Just as they round the corner, JILLIAN steps into their path.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry!

Jerome looks up at her and a look of recognition passes across his face. He knows her...from before. Jillian smirks and turns her attention to Jerome.

JILLIAN

Don't worry about it...Jerome.

Jerome opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)

Be seeing you.

Chris watches her walk away. Jerome is in shock.

CHRIS

Friend of yours?

Jerome tries to regain his composure before replying.

JEROME

Not a friend. Acquaintance. From back in New York. Long, weird story.

Chris takes his hand warmly.

CHRIS

We've all got a past. You'll have to tell me about it sometime...maybe over dinner?

Jerome perks up.

JEROME

Uh, yeah, that'd be really nice.

Jerome can't hide his huge smile. Chris continues pushing the cart down the aisle. When she's out of his view, she smiles too.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Chris lays down parts of the mantle of the fireplace. Jerome is clearly distracted while she works.

CHRIS

Pass me the hammer, would ya?

Jerome stares off into space. Chris stares at him for a moment.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Jerome? Hammer?

Jerome is still spacing out. Chris throws a wad of plastic wrap from the mantle covering and hits him in the head.

JEROME  
Huh?

CHRIS  
Welcome back to Earth. You were out there...(gestures) somewhere.

Jerome shakes it off, clearing his head.

JEROME  
Damn, I'm sorry Chris. I guess my head was elsewhere.

Chris touches his hand. It's the first time in a long time Jerome's felt affection. He glances at her hand, then she pulls away. He looks back at her as she wipes her forehead.

CHRIS  
Clearly. (a beat) You know what? You need a distraction. Let's order some food and take a break. I'm starving.

Jerome nods and takes out his phone.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

An assortment of Chinese food is spread out picnic style on the floor. Jerome and Chris chow down on the various foods. Chris uses chopsticks while Jerome sticks to the fork.

JEROME  
Just what I needed.

CHRIS  
I know, right? Whenever I'm feeling lost, some good food brings me right back to reality!

Jerome smiles. They share a look. He finally looks back at his food as Chris stretches and yawns.

JEROME  
So, you never told me how you became a handyperson?

Chris ends her stretch, then takes another bite of food.

CHRIS  
(with mouth full) Mmmf. Mffmh mfm  
mfff, mmm hmm.

Jerome nods, pretending to understand.

JEROME  
Good to know. Now, can you say that  
again, with words this time?

She swallows her food and laughs.

CHRIS  
Ok, for real this time. When we  
weren't play wrestling, we were  
always building stuff. It's kind of  
in my blood. But, that's not really  
how I got here.

Jerome settles in, curious, still eating.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
So, growing up, I was fearless.  
Always had to show my sisters I  
could take on any dare and any  
challenge.

JEROME  
Typical sibling stuff, huh?

CHRIS  
(nods) Yeah. But what I found was  
that the bigger the dare and  
crazier the challenge, the more I  
liked it. And, I also discovered I  
was practically invincible.

Jerome raises an eyebrow and leans in.

JEROME  
Invincible?

CHRIS  
Practically. Things that break most  
people's limbs I would shrug off.  
Mostly.

JEROME  
Huh.

CHRIS

I know, right? So, I decided to put that to good use. I went - wait for it -

JEROME

(interrupting) To the circus!

CHRIS

No, I like animals too much for that. I went to Hollywood.

Jerome is puzzled.

JEROME

You went to be an actress? That's not where I thought this story was going at all!

CHRIS

No. I decided to become a stunt person.

Jerome, now impressed, stands up and crosses the room for a glass of wine. He raises the glass to offer her one.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Actually, a beer if you've got it?

Jerome nods and heads to the kitchen.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

So yeah, (raising her voice so he can hear her in the kitchen) a stunt person. I was good, too. Got tons of bookings for all sorts of stuff.

Jerome returns with the beer and hands it to her. She nods her appreciation.

JEROME

Damn, anything I might have seen?

CHRIS

You ever see a movie where a car drives off a bridge and the driver bails at just the last second, and the car explodes on impact while the driver rolls to safety?

JEROME

Like, every action movie ever?

CHRIS  
Yep. That's me.

JEROME  
Daaaammmmn. Ok, badass!

Chris smiles as she takes another bite of food.

JEROME (CONT'D)  
So what happened? That's obviously  
not the end.

CHRIS  
Obviously.

She inhales. The next part is difficult for her.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
After tons of roles, I started to  
feel unfulfilled. After a while, I  
realized there was really only one  
place that I'd ever truly felt  
comfortable. Back here...in the  
town I grew up.

JEROME  
Seriously?

CHRIS  
Ok, ok, mayyyybe I left out the  
part about the pending lawsuit and  
the multiple criminal manslaughter  
charges that were ramping up,  
forcing me to leave LA in a hurry.

Jerome grows nervous. The silence is awkward.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
(laughing hysterically) Can't  
believe you actually believed that!

JEROME  
I can't either.

He laughs, finally.

CHRIS  
No, the truth is, I really was  
homesick. I decided to take a break  
from the LA struggle and come home  
to my family. Unfortunately, when I  
got back, my sisters all  
had...issues.



He listens carefully, nodding as she continues.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

So yeah, they needed me to help  
out, so, here I am. Best decision I  
ever made.

Jerome shrugs it off.

JEROME

I'd agree with that.

They look longingly at each other. Chris leans in to kiss  
Jerome, but his phone chimes - a text! Chris pulls back  
slowly.

CHRIS

You better check that, huh?

JEROME

I guess.

Jerome reads the text.

Jay: Dad, can we get new shoes today? Blew out the old ones.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Never ends with that kid, I swear.

Chris nods understandingly.

CHRIS

That's ok. Do what you need to do,  
we'll continue this another time.  
Thanks for having me over...see you  
tomorrow?

JEROME

Definitely.

Chris smiles and touches his face, then the pair walks to the  
door. Just as they open it, Jay is walking up the steps.

JAY

Hey dad - oh, sorry, didn't know  
you had company.

JEROME

Just got your text. Answer is yes.  
(a beat) This is Chris. She's, uh,  
fixing up the fireplace and the  
upstairs bannister.

JAY  
Nice to meet you.

He extends his hand and she shakes it. As they shake, his phone chimes with a text.

CHRIS  
Ahhh, the famous Jay. Pleasure's mine! Heard a lot about you!

JAY  
I doubt that. Or at least, I doubt it was anything that wasn't basketball related.

CHRIS  
Well, hopefully I'll get to learn more straight from the horse's mouth!

Jay ignores her as he checks his phone.

JAY  
Sorry, I gotta answer this. And do homework and...yeah. Nice meeting you.

He sidesteps them and runs up the stairs, mostly to escape the awkwardness.

JEROME  
He used to be so nice.

CHRIS  
He's got your looks.

Jerome nearly blushes.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - SECONDS LATER

Chris waves as she walks to her truck, while Jerome watches. He waves and looks longingly as she gets in and drives away. He notices a sedan parked up the street, but can't make out anything. It creeps him out a little.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOE STORE - NEXT DAY

Shoppers mill around the shoe store picking up sneakers and browsing clothes. Jerome and Jay are looking through the rows and rows of sneakers.

JEROME

Are we doing Jordans or just basketball shoes?

JAY

Just basketball shoes. You know I don't wanna be THAT guy.

JEROME

But Jordan was the man back in the day!

JAY

That was literally 30 years ago. Now it's just a name for some expensive ass shoes. They don't make me play any different, and if I'm being honest, they don't really give me the ankle support I'm looking for. And these?

He holds them up to his dad's eye level.

JAY (CONT'D)

These are just ugly.

Jerome nods in agreement.

JEROME

Point made. (a beat) So, how goes it?

Jay picks up another shoe, turns it around in his hand. A cute high school aged EMPLOYEE saunters over next to Jay as he looks at the shoe.

EMPLOYEE

Oooh, those are hot! You like?

JAY

Not really.

She looks mildly offended for a second, then recovers and comes back, extra bubbly.

EMPLOYEE

Well, you let me know when you DO find something you like!

She leaves. Jerome smiles broadly at Jay.

JAY  
Cut it out dad.

JEROME  
I'm just saying.

JAY  
Annnnyyyywayyyyyyy. (dryly, but trying to be interested) Things are good with the team. They're talking about starting me next game, which is great because -

Jerome holds up his hand to interrupt.

JEROME  
That's great and all, but I really meant, how are YOU? Like, school, life, friends? That sort of thing.

Jay picks up another shoe. He admires it for a second, then motions to the Employee, who rushes over - she's been watching intently.

JAY  
Could I see these in a 13, please?

EMPLOYEE  
Handsome AND big feet, just like I like? Too good to be true!

Jay rolls his eyes as she walks toward the back room. Jerome looks up at the ceiling pretending to ignore the now blatant flirting.

JAY  
So yeah, um...things are...cool, I guess. Classes are going well, met some people. There's this one girl...(trails off) Forget it.

JEROME  
No, tell me! That's what I'm here for!

JAY  
Oh god. (a beat as he smiles, thinking about Ripley) Ok. So there's this one girl that I kinda like. In physics. She's sooooo smart and sooooo cute. She barely knows I'm alive.

(MORE)

JAY (CONT'D)

So far out of my league. (a beat) I can't believe I'm even discussing this with you.

Jerome smiles, proud to be talking with his son.

JEROME

First of all, I'm just glad you're discussing anything with me. Most teenagers think their parents are the most out of touch people on the planet. And second, the least I can do is pass on my expertise.

Jay rolls his eyes as the Employee returns. She gestures for him to sit down and kneels in front of him. She removes his shoe and puts the new one on, all while smiling broadly and making eyes at him.

JAY

Expertise, huh?

JEROME

Yeah, man. Your old man used to be pretty good at this stuff.

The Employee rolls her eyes at Jay, who tries to contain his laughter. Jay stands up, takes a few quick steps around, bounces up and down, then smiles.

JAY

I like these.

JEROME

We'll take 'em.

The Employee nods and takes the box to the register. Jerome and Jay follow.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Anyway, you're a fantastic guy, with all the potential in the world. And, it doesn't hurt that you're basically the best ball player in this entire region.

Jay lowers his head in disgust.

JAY

There you go again, dad. That's not what it's about for - forget it. You don't get me at all.

Jay storms off. Jerome starts to follow, then returns to pay for the shoes. The Employee hands him the receipt, and then another slip of paper.

EMPLOYEE

Could you, like, pass that on to him?

Jerome stares at her for a moment.

JEROME

Yeahhh...No.

The Employee sucks her teeth as Jerome takes the bag and follows Jay out of the store.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVIES' HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jillian sits in relative darkness, illuminated only by the light of a television screen. She watches something intently, while cutting out paper. We see that she's cutting out newspaper articles and printed out webpages featuring Jerome Jacobs - film reviews, features, his pictures. She has them spread out in front of her and continues to cut more.

On the television is what appears to be a very strange indie movie. The camera closes in tight on a man's face, clearly distressed.

MAN

You're that goose!!

The man tries to swing on the goose and misses.

Jillian watches this scene intently, smiling in the dark. She continues to cut paper.

JILLIAN

Brilliant. Just...brilliant.

More weird sounds emanate from the television as we watch her expression. The goose honks at the man as though laughing.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)

I'm that goose.

FADE TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The basketball game is in full swing. Jay's team - the Cheetahs - are up by 10. The clock has seconds left, it's pretty much a done deal. Jay gets the ball, drives down court, leaps into the air and dunks just as the final buzzer sounds. Cheetahs win! The crowd goes wild.

Jay looks around the gym and sees Ripley and the AV team with cameras - they've been filming the game. He makes his way through the crowd to her.

JAY

Hey!

RIPLEY

Hey yourself.

Jay looks around for a second, trying to get his confidence together.

JAY

So, you guys get lots of good shots of me?

RIPLEY

We did our job. You know, filming everyone that's playing. So technically, yes, we got you, too.

Jay realizes that was a dumb move and tries to recover.

JAY

Do you guys shoot, uh, 60 fps for that live tv look, or go for more cinematic 24 fps?

Ripley raises an eyebrow.

RIPLEY

What'd you do, see an IG post about filmmaking or something?

JAY

(laughs) No, no, film is kind of in my blood. Huge fan of both the process and practically every genre.

Ripley smiles and relaxes, slightly.

RIPLEY

Well, to answer your question, we were shooting at 60 until recently, when we upgraded to cameras that can shoot 240. That way we can get -

JAY

- super clean slow motion! Oh my god, that's awesome! Can I see?

RIPLEY

I - yeah, ok, sure! You actually know a little about this, huh?

Jay takes her camera and looks through the viewfinder, then starts to go through the settings. He's genuinely happy and interested. He almost doesn't hear her.

JAY

Ooooooh, this is nice. I thought I was getting some good stuff on my JVC, but this is sweet!

Jay realizes she asked him a question.

JAY (CONT'D)

Yeah, sorry! I actually have a collection of cameras. Old Super8, a couple of old broadcast quality cameras from the 80s, even an old reel to reel. You should come over and see them some time.

Jay grins winningly, mostly proud that he got up the nerve to ask Ripley to come by. She smirks.

RIPLEY

I should, huh?

Before Jay can reply, other members of the AV Club join them. BRENT (16, nerdy but aggressive) steps between them.

BRENT

This guy bothering you, Rip?

Ripley rolls her eyes.

RIPLEY

I told you. It's Ripley. Never shorten it. And no, he's -



BRENT  
 (ignoring her) I know this jock  
 doesn't think he can talk to you.  
 He's clearly out of his league. And-

Brent exaggerates taking a whif of Jay.

BRENT (CONT'D)  
 You know what smells worse than the  
 inside of a TaunTaun? Jock sweat!

The other AV Club members crack up laughing. Jay,  
 embarrassed, balls his fist up in anger.

JAY  
 You half-witted, scruffy looking  
 nerf herder.

Brent looks to the AV Club, who look back both impressed and  
 confused.

BRENT  
 Did...did he just call me a scruffy  
 looking nerf herder?

The AV Club members look at each other, then back at Brent.  
 One of them steps forward.

AV CLUB MEMBER  
 I think he did, and I think he  
 might secretly be one of us.

Jay nods, preparing to blow their mind.

JAY  
 This is the way.

The other members of the AV Club nod approvingly and back up.

AV CLUB MEMBERS  
 (in unison) This is the way.

BRENT  
 Don't think just because you can  
 quote The Mandalorian and know a  
 few things about Star Wars that it  
 makes you one of us. I got my eye  
 on you.

The others leave. Ripley starts to leave, then turns around  
 and comes back to Jay.

RIPLEY  
 Phone.

Jay, confused, hands it over.

RIPLEY (CONT'D)

Unlock.

Jay obliges. She smiles, punches something in quickly, then returns it to him.

RIPLEY (CONT'D)

I have spoken.

He looks at his phone and sees she's entered her phone number. He puts his phone away and walks toward the stands where his dad is waiting. Jerome daps him up and they start to walk out of the gym.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jerome and Chris stand by the now completed fireplace. It's a masterpiece! Chris is pleased with her work, while Jerome looks at her longingly.

CHRIS

You can't tell me that doesn't look  
AMAZING.

JEROME

(looking directly at her) Truly a  
work of art. (a beat) Best  
fireplace in the region. I'd stake  
my reputation on it.

CHRIS

So would I. You're gonna have to  
find someone really special to  
light this baby up with.

Jerome looks deep into her eyes. She looks back. The chemistry is palpable.

JEROME

For all you've done for me, it'd be  
an honor and a pleasure for you to  
be that person.

Chris - for the first time - is embarrassed, but smiles and nods.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

The fire roars in the fireplace, and Jerome and Chris are sprawled out on a blanket in front of it drinking wine. After a few sips, Chris moves in closer. She starts to make her move, but Jerome stops her.

JEROME

Wait.

CHRIS

I'm sorry, was that too fast?

Jerome holds her hand.

JEROME

You...you don't know my past. Why we had to move here, or anything about-

Chris puts her finger up to his mouth, stopping him from speaking.

CHRIS

I know all I need to know. You're a wonderful father, and a good man, and that's enough for me.

She leans in, and they kiss.

FADE TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

The sun is shining in through the window as we watch Jay dash into the kitchen to find Chris at the stove. She's dressed in his dad's wifebeater and basketball shorts and is making breakfast. Jay stops in his tracks, stunned by the image.

CHRIS

Good morning! Just making an omelette. You want one?

Jay takes a step backward into his father, who's just entered the room. He's wearing a silk robe and clearly is basking in the after glow of a great night.

JAY

Dad, what in the entire hell?

Jerome opens his mouth to speak but Jay interrupts.

JAY (CONT'D)

You always do this! Every time we  
move to a new place! I can't  
believe this!

Jerome tries to stop him from leaving.

JEROME

Wait, son, that's not what's-

Jay pushes past him, slamming the front door on his way out.  
Jerome turns to Chris, who goes back to making omelettes.

CHRIS

(over her shoulder) You should talk  
to him.

Jerome looks wistfully at the door as we -

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Jay opens his locker, irritated. He angrily grabs his laptop  
and a few papers and slams the door. Behind it is Brittney,  
who recoils a little at his violent behavior.

BRITTNEY

Rough morning?

JAY

Don't wanna talk about it.

BRITTNEY

Clearly. Next subject, then. What's  
going on with Ripples?

JAY

RipLEY.

BRITTNEY

That's what I said. Protective,  
much?

Jay starts to storm off, but Brittney catches up to him.

BRITTNEY (CONT'D)

Ok, ok. I'm sorry. Was just trying  
to lighten the mood. After all, she  
knows who you are, now.

She points as they walk the hall. He looks up to see Ripley look away from her conversation with some other students to watch him walk past. She smiles briefly before going back to her conversation.

Jerome brightens up.

BRITTNEY (CONT'D)

See? It's not ALL doom and gloom.

JAY

Sorry, I guess you're right. That does make me feel a little better.

BRITTNEY

And now that she knows who you are, you really gotta reel her in.

JAY

How?

Brittney smiles devilishly as she takes out her phone and opens the photo app. She shows him a rather risqué photo of her seductively smiling for the camera, her bare shoulder revealed.

BRITTNEY

You got that athlete's body, use it! Show a little skin! You got her number, right?

Jay looks nervous. He looks back at Ripley, who happens to be looking at him again. He smiles and she returns it.

JAY

You...you sure about that?

Brittney puts her hand on his shoulder.

BRITTNEY

It's never failed me.

Jay stares longingly at Ripley, who obliviously enjoys her conversation with her friends. He nods, knowing what he has to do.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - JAY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Jay lays on his bed. Movie posters from the 80s - 10s are all over the walls, along with shelves that house his camera collection. He scrolls through some posts on his phone before opening his text messages. He texts Ripley.

Jay: Hey

After a few seconds, the ellipses appear - she's typing.

Ripley: hey

Jay: wyd

Ripley: eating chips and solving string theory. u?

Jay: (sends crying laughing emoji) Is that all?

Ripley: all in a day's work.

Jay: You know what they say, all work and no play makes Ripley a dull girl

Ripley: The Shining. Not bad. What else you got?

Jay: I got a million of em. Film is my love language.

FADE TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME JEROME'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

We see Jerome's office for the first time. Framed film reviews adorn the walls, along with favorite movie posters throughout history. Jerome is seated at his glass desk as he types his latest review on his desktop computer. He leans back in his leather chair, admiring his work.

A text chimes.

Chris: "I know you're working hard. Just thinking about you. Dinner?"

He smiles and starts to respond when an email pops up. He reads it and grows excited. Instead of texting, he calls. After a few rings, Chris answers.

CHRIS (V.O.)

I like a man who isn't afraid to call first.

JEROME

That's definitely me. I'd absolutely LOVE dinner tonight. And get this: I just got an offer to attend a major film festival up in New York tomorrow night.

CHRIS (V.O.)

Nice!! I want to hear all about it. See you around 6?

Jerome exhales and leans back.

JEROME

Perfect.

CHRIS (V.O.)

Ok. I might even dress up for you, if you're lucky.

JEROME

Oh, well in that case, I'm crossing my fingers and toes.

Chris laughs as she disconnects. Jerome snickers as he stands up and starts saving his work and packing up his laptop.

He hangs up, grabs his things, and heads toward the door.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - JAY'S BEDROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jay continues to text with Ripley. He's leaning back against his wall and is clearly having the best time he's had in ages.

Jay: What is there to do for fun around here?

Ripley: besides bullseye womp rats in our T-16's?

Jay: OBVS

Ripley: some of us like to get together for watch parties

Jay: OMG YES

Ripley: I'll add you to the group chat later

Jay is giddy with excitement. Finally! Making some headway. There's a knock at the bedroom door.

JAY

Yeah?

Jerome opens it and leans against the door frame.

JEROME

Hey, I gotta make a run to New York. There's a festival I have to cover tomorrow night. And as for tonight -

He hesitates, then sits on the chair opposite Jay's bed.

JAY

Uh oh.

JEROME

Gonna be on your own tonight. I'm having dinner with Chris.

Jay sits upright.

JAY

Really? So...this is like, a thing?

JEROME

I'm hoping it's more than a thing, but yes. And I'm sorry I didn't get to tell you she was here this morning. Things just kind of...happened.

JAY

I mean, I don't care so much that things happened. It's just nice to be in the loop rather than walk in on someone in your dad's clothes making breakfast. That was just...weird.

Jerome laughs.

JEROME

I bet it was. Sorry you had to see that.

Jay considers for a moment.

JAY

Dad. I want you to be happy. Really. After mom...I mean, there hasn't been anyone really, like, serious serious...in a minute.

(MORE)



JAY (CONT'D)  
 So, if this makes you happy, then  
 I'm all for it. Just -

Jay leans forward and takes his father's hand.

JAY (CONT'D)  
 - be safe, and you know, don't make  
 me have to see it.

Jerome nods, feigning seriousness until he can't take it  
 anymore and bursts into laughter.

JAY (CONT'D)  
 (now also laughing) I'm serious  
 though! Nobody wants to KNOW their  
 dad's gettin' some!

CUT TO:

INT. CHESTER'S TASTE OF THE BAYOU RESTAURANT - EVENING

Jerome and Chris sit at a reasonably nice window table in a  
 Creole restaurant. They're nicely dressed, Jerome is in a  
 button down shirt open just enough to show his chest; Chris  
 is wearing a sensible turtleneck and jeans. Low jazz music  
 (Michael Haggins - Daybreak) plays as they look over the  
 menu.

JEROME  
 God, it's been ages since I've done  
 this.

CHRIS  
 What?

JEROME  
 A...date with a beautiful woman.

Chris smiles and reaches across the table, taking his hand.

CHRIS  
 Keep this up and you'll have a  
 tough time getting rid of me.

JEROME  
 That's the idea.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jillian stands across the street from the restaurant staring at the couple as they share the moment. Her fist clenches tightly.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - SIMULTANEOUSLY

The waiter approaches the table.

WAITER  
Decided on drinks?

A beat as they shuffle menus.

CHRIS  
I'll have...what's on draft?

The waiter starts to respond, but Chris interrupts.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Actually, never mind, I know you've got Guinness. And he'll have a house pinot noir.

Jerome raises an eyebrow.

JEROME  
If I didn't know better, I'd think you were trying to get me drunk.

Chris winks and strokes his hand.

CHRIS  
I just want you in a good mood tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jay, lying on his bed, scrolls through the pics on his phone. We see each one a little more risqué than the last: first an open shirt, then shirt off the shoulder, then over the shoulder, with more skin revealed. We close in on his face as he is clearly making the decision to send.

A text from Ripley pops up: Hey!

He clicks on it. He takes a deep breath and types "Hey yourself <3" and sends all of the risque pics at once.

Suddenly replies start popping up rapidly.

Brent: LMAO WTF

Justin: OMG WHAT A SLUT

Tina: OMG OMG OMG

Robert: Is THIS what the group chat was for? LOLLOLOLOLOL

Jay watches in horror as the phone notifications continue to explode. He realizes he's sent all of the pics to the wrong text thread - the group chat Ripley created. Jay is mortified. A lone tear runs down his cheek.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - DINING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Jay sits at the dining room table eating cereal, clearly depressed. He moves it around in his bowl while staring at his phone.

Jerome and Chris enter giggling after clearly having had a good night.

CHRIS

Hey, Jay! Good morning!

Jay doesn't respond.

JEROME

Jay? What's up?

A beat.

JEROME (CONT'D)

You good?

Jay drops his spoon and looks at them.

JAY

Nah.

He pushes his bowl aside, grabs his backpack and heads toward the door.

JEROME

What -

He follows Jay to the door and puts a hand on his shoulder.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Jay! If this is about me and Chris-

JAY

No. Nothing to do with y'all. I got my own problems, alright?

Sympathetic, Jerome squeezes his son's shoulder and turns him to face him. Chris approaches tentatively.

JEROME

Talk to me, son.

Jay pauses, considering.

JAY

I...embarrassed myself. And you.

JEROME

You could never embarrass me, son.

Jay slowly pulls out his phone.

JAY

I...I was trying to get this girl's attention and I sent...I sent some pics.

Jerome lowers his head in sympathy.

JEROME

We've all done that before, son, it's not that ser-

A lone tear runs down Jay's face as he interrupts.

JAY

I sent them to a group, not just to her. I...it's...everyone saw them! By now it's all over the school! I'm gonna be a big joke, Dad! I can't face them!

Jerome pulls his son in close and holds him.

JEROME

It's ok, son. It's ok.

Chris puts a hand on his back.

CHRIS

You know, I say own it. Yeah, you sent them. Yeah, you were sending them to the girl you like. Own your body and your choices. Anyone says anything, you say, 'Yeah, and?' Get in front of it and make it yours. See if they want autographs!

Jay wipes his face as he steps back from his father's embrace. He nods slowly.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Jay walks the halls as people look at him and whisper to each other. He reaches his locker and finds printed pages of the photos he sent taped to it with the word "slut" and "whore" and "easy" written in marker on the locker. He exhales deeply, trying to keep it together.

RIPLEY (O.S.)

Hey.

Jay whirls around to see Ripley standing before him, holding her books.

JAY

H...hey. Listen, I-

RIPLEY

Shh. Don't. High school's full of jerks. It'll blow over eventually. Next time, just make sure you're sending them to me, and me alone, ok?

She smiles and touches his arm before walking away. Jay looks slightly relieved until -

BRAD

What's up, Slutsky von Stripperella?

Jay turns to face Brad, exhaustion on his face.

JAY

What?

Brent steps forward aggressively.

BRAD

I saw your little pics, man. You're giving the team a bad name.

Jay doesn't back down, but he does look away sheepishly.

JAY

Look, man, I-

Brad shoves him against a locker. Jay bounces back quickly and shoves Brad back a few feet. A crowd gathers around them.

BRAD

Yeah, you gonna take off your shirt to fight me?

Jay clenches his fist but a hand grabs it - it's Ripley.

RIPLEY

Don't. He got busted last year for looking at porn in school freshman year.

Brad looks around nervously.

BRAD

That...that's an unsubstantiated rumor! We do not know if I looked at porn in the boys' bathroom or not!

The crowd laughs. Jay locks eyes with Ripley.

RIPLEY

We do now. (to Jay) Not. Worth. It.

Ripley starts to walk away. Jay exhales and picks up his bag.

JAY

(to Brad) If you can live that down, I can survive this.

Jay jogs to catch up with Ripley.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Jay and Ripley walk together. It's sunny and warm, a nice contrast to the cold hard school they'd just left.

JAY

I owe you one. Thanks for, well,  
for being there.

RIPLEY

Yeah, you do. And you're welcome.  
You didn't deserve any of that.

Jay smiles shyly. They walk for a moment in silence.

RIPLEY (CONT'D)

So, you never did tell me about  
your mom?

Jay's smile fades a bit, clearly he's uncomfortable with the  
topic.

JAY

Yeah. I don't, um, talk about her  
much. Kinda hard, you know?

RIPLEY

I can imagine. You don't have to if-

JAY

No, no. It's ok. She was a  
photographer. Got me my first  
camera when I was like three years  
old. I couldn't even say aperture  
but she was showing me how it  
worked.

RIPLEY

I still can't say it. Ap-a...yeah,  
no. Can't do it.

They laugh.

JAY

That's ok. Most people don't even  
know WHAT it is, let alone say it.  
(a beat) So yeah, for years every  
time she'd go on a trip for work  
she'd come back with a new camera.  
Well, new to me, anyway. That's how  
I got my collection started.

Ripley nods.

RIPLEY

So...that invitation still open?

JAY

Yeah! You want to come over now?

RIPLEY  
No.

JAY  
Oh.

RIPLEY  
Relax, Romeo. I need to go home, do  
some homework, check on Lando...

Jay raises an eyebrow.

RIPLEY (CONT'D)  
My chinchilla.

They stop in front of her house.

JAY  
I'd love to meet him.

RIPLEY  
You will. (a beat) I'll text you  
later.

She smiles as she walks backwards away from him, then turns  
to head up the steps to her house. Jay grins from ear to ear.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jerome's car pulls into the driveway. He opens the door  
slowly and steps out, his jaw dropping in disbelief.

JEROME  
What. The. Entire. F--

We see from his perspective the garage has been vandalized  
with red spray paint. The words read, "YOU'RE SONS A SLUT!"  
Jerome slams the car door and stares at it for a moment.

MITCH (O.S.)  
If the paint fits, eh?

Jerome turns to see Mitch and a few other basketball fathers  
gathered across the street. He marches to the end of his  
driveway as Mitch crosses the street to confront him.

JEROME  
You do this?



MITCH

I'm not saying I did, and I'm definitely not saying I didn't.

JEROME

What the hell is wrong with you?

MITCH

Your kid is making the team look bad. Word's spread all over the county about his little indiscretions, and now we're the laughing stock of the Division.

Jerome shakes his head and steps forward, now face to face with Mitch. Barely two inches of air separate them.

As this unfolds, in the background Chris's truck pulls up in front of the house. She gets out just in time to see Mitch pull back and punch Jerome in the eye. Before Jerome can respond, Chris leaps into action, wielding a rubber mallet. In slow motion, and with uncanny precision she throws the mallet and nails Mitch in the head, knocking him over. Mitch rolls around on the ground in pain.

MITCH (CONT'D)

OWWWWWWW WHAT THE HELL MAN?!

The other fathers gather him up. His pride is the main thing that's injured.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You're lucky you got her on your side, man.

The men disperse. Chris grabs the first aid kit from her truck and tends to Jerome's eye. After a few dabs he stops her.

JEROME

Thanks. I really need to deal with THAT, though.

They both look to the vandalized garage.

JEROME (CONT'D)

I really don't want Jay to see it.

Chris nods.

CHRIS

I got this. There's some paint in the truck.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You need to get going, don't you?  
You should've been on the road  
already.

JEROME

Damn, you're right.

CHRIS

Go ahead, I'll handle this.  
Besides, I want to show Jay the  
surprise in the back.

JEROME

He's gonna be so excited. You sure  
you're good with-

Chris kisses him gently, then touches her head to his.

CHRIS

You're wasting time. Get going. Let  
me know when you get there.

Jerome nods and heads inside. Chris shakes her head at the  
garage and heads to her truck.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - EVENING

Jay walks up the driveway and stops in his tracks.

JAY

What the hell?

Chris sighs. The word SLUT still stands on the garage. She  
wasn't fast enough.

CHRIS

Hey. I, uh...someone did this  
because of me. Didn't like that  
your father and I were seeing each  
other, I guess.

Jay shakes his head in disbelief, then smiles a bit.

JAY

You don't have to do that. I know  
what that's about. It's about me.

Chris lowers her head.

JAY (CONT'D)

That was sweet of you to try and protect me. Thank you.

He picks up a paintbrush and helps her paint over the words. They paint in silence for a moment.

CHRIS

Hey, since you've seen this anyway, let's take a break. I want to show you something.

Jay drops the brush in the bucket.

JAY

I like surprises. Unless they're the kind that leap out of the shadows and try to kill you.

Chris laughs.

CHRIS

Yeah, that's not my style. Come on.

She leads him around the back of the house to a large, freshly painted shed and stands in front of it, arms folded.

JAY

You...painted the shed. Nice.

He takes his phone out to start texting. Chris takes his phone.

JAY (CONT'D)

Yo! What-

CHRIS

Uh uh. You're not doing that. Open that door, boy.

Jay clearly feels some kind of way about being talked to like that, but obliges. He opens the door. Chris reaches in and turns on the light. We see Jay's face as his jaw drops in shock and awe.

Inside the shed are numerous shelves lined with all of his cameras, along with a small loveseat, desk, and film themed decorations.

JAY

Holy...how...when? WHAT?

Jay starts to laugh hysterically.

JAY (CONT'D)

What the? When did you? Oh my GOD!!  
This is AMAZING! I can't believe  
this! Thank you so much!! You've  
done so much around here.

Chris smiles as he hugs her.

CHRIS

This was your dad's idea. My  
execution. He figured you might  
want some space of your own, a  
little bit away from the house for  
friends to come over or whatever.  
(aside) Still gotta fix that  
railing upstairs, though.

Jay is giddy and hardly can contain his excitement.

JAY

I can't thank you enough.

Chris nods and starts to turn around, then looks back.

CHRIS

I'm willing to bet you've got  
someone in mind you want to invite  
over?

Jay smiles broadly but says nothing. Chris smirks at him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Fine. Have your secrets, then.

She walks away, and Jay starts rapidly texting.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING

Jerome is stuck in traffic. He clearly missed his window to  
beat rush hour and is now trapped indefinitely in the nightly  
grind. He turns on some music and begins singing along.  
Badly.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - EVENING

Jillian stands across the street from the Jacobs' house. She watches intently as Chris waves goodbye to Jay and gets into her truck. She drives away, and Jillian walks toward the house.

CUT TO:

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jay's phone chimes - a text from Ripley. We now see the text exchange.

Jay: OMG U GOTTA SEE WHAT MY DAD DID

Ripley: What?

Jay: Can you come over?

Ripley: K. 10 mins.

Jay types a reply, then smiles and exhales. He sniffs himself, recoils from the offensive scent, and grabs some fresh clothes. He heads to the bathroom and we hear the shower start.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - KITCHEN

Through the kitchen window we see a shadowy figure move past. Jillian appears at the back door. She quietly smashes the pane glass with a rock wrapped in cloth and reaches through, unlocking the door. Glass cracks under her feet as she enters and closes the door behind her. She pulls the window shade down, obscuring the hole in the window. She notices a broom and dustpan in the corner and sweeps up the glass. There's now no obvious trace of a break-in.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Jillian looms in front of the large tv mounted over the fireplace that Jerome and Chris spent so much time repairing.

CUT TO:

JAY'S BEDROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jay puts on his shirt as his phone chimes.

Ripley: Here!

Jay hurriedly pulls his shoes on and runs out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

Jillian ducks behind the couch as Jay passes through to get to the front door. He exits and closes the door behind him. Jillian stands, remote control now in hand. She turns on the TV.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Jay leads Ripley to the shed.

RIPLEY

This better be good. You dragged me away from a binge of "Real Heroes of District City" for this.

Jay feigns offense.

JAY

You'd pick that over me?

Ripley stares into his soul.

JAY (CONT'D)

Don't answer that.

She finally laughs.

RIPLEY

Ok, but seriously, what am I looking at?

JAY

Voila.

He opens the door and turns on the light. Ripley reacts nearly identically to Jay, her face lighting up and her jaw dropping.

RIPLEY

Whoa.

JAY

Right?

Ripley walks in and touches each camera with reverence.

RIPLEY

This is...awesome.

Jay closes the door behind them.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Chris parks her truck at a local fast food spot and heads inside. She reaches the front of the line and orders.

CHRIS

Heyyyy. I'd like...a large fry,  
pie, large coffee.

CASHIER

Anything else?

CHRIS

Large fry, pie, large coffee.

CASHIER

Mkay. \$3.79.

Chris pulls out a \$5 bill and pays.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jerome is still in traffic. He hasn't made it very far at all and is increasingly irritated. He puts on a podcast. The voice is very dry and boring.

VOICE

Thank you for joining us. Today  
we'll be discussing the merits of  
Afrofuturism as it pertains to pop  
culture.

Jerome actually perks up at this. His interest is piqued.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

Jillian stands in front of the television. Once again the very strange indie movie plays. Over odd psychedelic colors, text appears on screen:

Director: Jillian Greeble.

Subsequent titles appear:

Producer, Editor, Graphics, Cinematography - all by Jillian Greeble.

It becomes painfully clear this is her movie.

WOMMAN

Do you smell tacos? I do.

The woman looks deep into the camera before backing off to reveal a taco stand behind her. She walks to it, then looks back at the camera and waves. Odd music plays.

Jillian wipes a lone tear from her eye.

CUT TO:

INT. SHED - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jay and Ripley are making out on the loveseat. They finally come up for air.

RIPLEY

So. This...uh...going as well as you'd hoped?

Jay laughs nervously.

JAY

Better?

Ripley kisses him again.

RIPLEY

Good.

They start making out again when something cracks outside.

JAY

What was that?



Ripley grabs her phone and hits the flashlight app. She holds it up toward the window but it reflects back. Jay stands up and gets in front of her. He looks out the window - all clear.

JAY (CONT'D)  
I don't see anything.

RIPLEY  
Famous last words.

They cautiously open the door. Still clear. They both exit the shed to the backyard and look around. Jay starts to head left, and she turns right, then stops and grabs him.

RIPLEY (CONT'D)  
Last thing you should do is split up. You know how horror movies work!

Jay opens his mouth to respond when a shovel hits him from behind, knocking him out. Ripley turns to run but Jillian grabs her by the hair and pulls her to the ground. Before she can react, Jillian has a chloroform rag over her face. Ripley passes out.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVIES' HOUSE - BASEMENT

The upstairs basement door unlocks, the light turns on, and Robert Davies descends the steps.

ROBERT  
Hello? Jillian? Sorry to barge in,  
but I came down to check on the  
heating system. You here?

Robert walks through the room and notices a small table in a dark corner. Curiosity gets the better of him.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
What's this?

He notices a small light and turns it on.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Oh. Oh no. OH NOOOO.

An insane collage of pictures, articles, drawings and other assorted weirdness are all pasted together. The focus is Jerome.

Stalker type photos of Jerome walking, hanging out with Chris, and Jay are mixed in with red marker writing that reads "DIE HACK CRITIC."

Robert recoils in horror.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
This is why you get a background  
check.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

Jay and Ripley, both unconscious, are tied up on the couch. Jillian waves smelling salts under their noses.

JILLIAN  
Wake up my little chili babies.

Both recoil at the smell and come around.

JAY  
My head...Ripley?

RIPLEY  
Here. (to Jillian) What the hell is  
this, a robbery?

Jillian laughs. She steps in front of the television, already on and paused with the opening scene of her movie.

JILLIAN  
No. This...is art.

She presses play. The audio begins as we watch Jay and Ripley's faces both immediately turn from horrified to confused.

RIPLEY  
Wait, what?

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Traffic has finally opened up and Jerome's finally on his way. He decides to call Chris. After a few rings it finally connects.

CHRIS (V.O.)  
Hey there, sexy. How's the drive?

JEROME

Hit a wall of traffic for a while,  
but it finally eased up. How'd it  
go with Jay?

CHRIS (V.O.)

Good. He's stronger than you think.  
He saw the garage before I could  
finish, but he held it together,  
and even helped me fix it. Then I  
took him to the He-Shed.

Jerome smiles.

JEROME

Ahhh, how'd he like it?

CHRIS (V.O.)

You should have seen his face.  
Better than Christmas. And I think  
he's got a girlfriend he wants to  
show it to. I left out, but he had  
the look of a man about to go after  
his woman.

Jerome nods.

JEROME

Awesome. Thanks again for all of  
that. It means the world to me.  
I'll check in with him a bit later.

CHRIS (V.O.)

Ok. Call me later.

They disconnect. Jerome drives into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

The movie continues. Jay and Ripley look baffled by what's on  
screen. Jillian revels in it. She's got a captive audience.

MAN (O.S.)

He said, "See you next Tuesday.  
Didn' t you hear him?"

CUT TO:

INT. DAVIES' HOUSE - BASEMENT

Robert dials Jerome on his cell. He paces, waiting for Jerome to pick up.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jerome sees the call pop up on his car's display. He rolls his eyes and hits the Do Not Disturb button.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVIES' HOUSE - BASEMENT - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jerome's voicemail plays as Robert stops pacing.

ROBERT

Oh man, hey, uh, Jerome, listen.  
I'm renting my basement out to this  
lady, and, uh, she seems to know  
you? Like, not in a good way? I  
think you might be in, uh, danger.  
Yeah. Call me back? OK. Have a good  
night.

He hangs up and looks at the death shrine once more.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

The terrible movie continues. At this point it's literal torture for Jay and Ripley.

RIPLEY

You know what? Just kill us now.  
It's gotta be better than...this.

JAY

What the hell does any of this even  
mean? And what does this have to do  
with us?

Jillian pauses the movie and leans toward them menacingly.

JILLIAN

Oh, you don't know? Your father.  
That's what.

Jay and Ripley look at her blankly.

JAY

That doesn't mean anything. That's not even a sentence.

RIPLEY

Is that like an insult? Like, yo' momma?

Jillian rolls her eyes and paces.

JILLIAN

Your father critiqued this film exactly one year ago to the day.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: TITLE CARD - 1 YEAR EARLIER

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

It's the night of Jillian's big indie film premiere. The film has just ended and a crowd of people exit the theater and file into the lobby. Their facial expressions range from confused to angry. They murmur amongst themselves, but it's clear none of the conversation is good.

Jerome exits the theater, rubbing his eyes. Jillian spots him from a distance and runs up to him.

JILLIAN

Mr. Jacobs! I'm a huge fan, and it means so much that you came to my premiere. What did you think? Please, be brutally honest.

Jerome shakes his head and looks down at her with a look of almost pity.

JEROME

It sucked.

He turns and walks away, leaving a broken, defeated Jillian in his wake. She breaks down and sobs loudly, sinking to her knees.

CUT TO:

PRESENT DAY

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Jay looks to Ripley, who rolls her eyes and stares back at Jillian.

JAY

Wait. You're doing all of this  
because he gave you a bad review?

Ripley starts to laugh, quiet at first, then growing into full on hilarity. This is the funniest thing she's ever heard.

JILLIAN

NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

She brandishes a large knife seemingly out of nowhere. Ripley fights to stop laughing.

RIPLEY

(aside to Jay) Oh, she's craaaazy  
crazy. (to Jillian) So, like, did  
you all sleep together or  
something? Did he promise to make  
you a star and then toss you aside?  
Like, are we in Fatal Attraction  
territory, or...?

Jillian looks offended.

JILLIAN

What kind of woman do you think I  
am? I would never sell my body or  
compromise my art! Nothing like  
that ever happened. He only  
rejected...my talent.

Ripley bursts into hysterical laughter again. Jillian grabs the chloroform rag and knocks her out again. Jay looks around nervously for any escape but can find none.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)

As for you. You're going to call  
your father and get him back here.

JAY

No.

She reaches in his pocket and pulls out his iPhone. She sees that it's locked and holds it up to his face. It unlocks.

JILLIAN

Figures.

She goes into his messages and texts Jerome.

Jay: Dad, I'm feeling really sick. I need you to come home right now.

She sends it.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)

Now we wait. And while we wait, you can keep watching my film.

JAY

Oh god, why.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome's car notifies him of a new text message from Jay.

JEROME

(to car) Play message.

The car's automated voice reads the message.

CAR (V.O.)

Dad. I'm feeling really sick. I need you to come home right now.

JEROME

Oh, man. Damn. (a beat) Call Chris Spencer.

The car obliges. The phone trills. No response. Her voicemail begins.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Hey, Chris. Jay just texted me he's really sick, can you swing by? I'm gonna call Robert, too, since he's nearby. Call me back when you get this.

He then realizes he's got a message from Robert and plays it back.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Oh man, hey, uh, Jerome, listen. I'm renting my basement out to this lady, and, uh, she seems to know you? Like, not in a good way? I think you might be in, uh, danger.

(MORE)

ROBERT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Yeah. Call me back? OK. Have a good night.

JEROME  
Damn it...

He takes the next exit and floors it back towards home.

JEROME (CONT'D)  
(to car) Call Robert Davies.

The phone trills as Jerome weaves through traffic.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
Jerome, hey, thank god. Listen, did you get my-

JEROME  
(cutting him off) Yeah, listen, I need you to go over to my house and check on Jay. I think something might be wrong and I'm still pretty far away from home.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
Sure, no problem. I'll call you as soon as I have eyes on him.

JEROME  
Thanks man, appreciate it.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS' TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Chris climbs into her truck and realizes she hasn't checked her phone. She checks around, realizes it wasn't on her person, then sees it on the floor of the passenger's side. She leans over, picks it up, and opens it to see missed calls from Jerome. She listens to the voicemail.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Robert strolls up the walk and knocks on the door. He waits a second, then rings the doorbell.

CUT TO:



INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

Jillian hears the knock, then the doorbell. She holds up the knife to Ripley's unconscious head and makes a shush sound with a finger to her lips. Jay nods his understanding. She gags him, and then Ripley, then makes her way toward the kitchen.

EXT. JACOBS HOME - KITCHEN - SECONDS LATER

Through the window we see Robert peering inside - nothing to see. He goes to the back door and tries it. It's unlocked. He steps inside.

ROBERT  
Hello? H...hello? Jay? You here,  
buddy?

He walks through the kitchen and something crunches underfoot. A small piece of glass.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Huh.

He stoops to pick it up and holds it up to see. He turns toward the back door and takes a knife to the chest. He screams in agony as Jillian proceeds to stab him repeatedly.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome speeds toward home. His hands grip the wheel like a Formula One racer as he flies through red lights.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

Jillian drags Robert's lifeless body into the living room and drops him. Jay's eyes widen and he starts to scream - muffled by the gag.

JILLIAN  
See, none of this had to happen.  
All your dad had to do was give me  
a halfway decent review, and I  
wouldn't be here murdering very  
nice people.

She leans down next to Robert's ear.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
 I'm really sorry I had to kill you,  
 Mr. Davies. Don't worry, once I  
 take care of Jerome, this will all  
 be over. Then again, you've got no  
 worries now, do you?

She laughs, slightly hysterical.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)  
 Anyway, while we wait, let's watch  
 some more of my...masterpiece.

She presses play. On the screen, an obviously fake goose is  
 tied to a large bundle of balloons and floats upward toward  
 the sky. The man we'd seen before raises his fist in  
 defiance.

MAN  
 YOU'RE...THAT...GOOSE!

Jillian mouths the words in unison. Jay sheds a lone tear.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome's car squeals into the driveway. He leaps out,  
 slamming the door behind him and runs to the front door.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jillian hears the car door slam. Jay tries to yell but is  
 gagged. Jillian holds up the knife and Jay quiets. She slips  
 out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - FRONT DOOR - SECONDS LATER

Jerome opens the door and looks around frantically.

JEROME  
 JAY?!

No response.

JEROME (CONT'D)  
JAY?! WHERE ARE YOU?

Still nothing. He makes his way toward the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

No sign of Jay and nothing obviously out of the ordinary.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Still nothing, until he notices the blind is drawn on the back door. He pulls it open and discovers the missing pane of glass.

JEROME  
Oh, no. JAYYYY?!?

Frantically he rushes toward the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He runs in and stops cold. Jay and Ripley are bound on the couch. Ripley is still unconscious, while Jay looks to his father pleadingly. His eyes dart to the left, then to Jerome, then back to the left. Jay slowly nods, understanding.

The movie suddenly starts playing on the television again. On the screen, the same man now pours a bucket of paint over himself while crying tears of joy.

JEROME  
Jillian.

She steps out of the shadows to his left brandishing her blade.

JILLIAN  
I'm shocked you remember me. I figured you dismissed me once and for all after crapping all over my movie.

JEROME  
I didn't crap on it. I said it needed work.

JILLIAN  
YOU SAID IT SUCKED!

JEROME  
That's NOT what I said!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: TITLE CARD - 1 YEAR EARLIER

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Once again, it's the night of Jillian's big indie film premiere. The film has just ended and a crowd of people exit the theater and file into the lobby. Their facial expressions range from confused to angry. They murmur amongst themselves, but it's clear none of the conversation is good.

Jerome exits the theater, rubbing his eyes. Jillian spots him from a distance and runs up to him.

JILLIAN  
Mr. Jacobs! I'm a huge fan, and it means so much that you came to my premiere. What did you think? Please, be brutally honest.

Jerome rubs his eyes and looks down at her. She looks up at him as though her whole future depends on his next words. He chooses them carefully.

JEROME  
Look, clearly this is a first work, and for a first work it's got...potential. But until you get some more skills under your belt, you're going to run into people who will tell you it sucked. You have to push past those people and keep making your art and eventually you'll find the people who will understand it.

Jillian collapses on the floor, sobbing. Jerome looks around, bewildered, and backs away slowly.

CUT TO:

PRESENT DAY

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Jillian stares at Jerome for what seems like an eternity.

JILLIAN

No. You said it sucked and you walked away. I remember. It DESTROYED ME. I never made another film because of you. And you! Who gave you the right to decide what is art and what isn't?!

She raises her knife as she talks, swinging it randomly in his general direction.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)

Just because you went to some fancy school and took some courses, someone decided YOU get to be the end all be all authority on good film? NO! You wouldn't know a good film if it was right in front of you! AND IT IS!

She exhales, trying to calm down. Then an epiphany.

JILLIAN (CONT'D)

Of...course. OF COURSE! You just didn't get it the first time. You didn't understand! Yes, yes, of course. You sit down, right there, and we'll watch it together. And then you'll review it again, properly! Yes!

She gestures with the knife for him to sit in the chair by the sofa. Jay watches as his father takes a seat. Jillian reaches down by the chair

JEROME

How much

Jillian ties him up, gags him, and starts the movie over again. Ripley stirs and realizes the movie is still on and begins to scream and cry through her gag. Jerome looks down beside his chair and notices Robert lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Oh god.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - LATER

Chris pulls up in front of the house. She checks her phone, no new calls or texts.

She looks up to see Jerome's car in the driveway. She calls his phone - straight to voicemail. She gets out of the car and observes the house. It's unusually dark for both Jay and Jerome to theoretically be home. She heads up the walk.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM

The movie continues to play. Jillian watches intently. Behind her, Jay, Jerome and Ripley look at each other and try to figure a way out of this.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS HOME - SECONDS LATER

Chris starts to knock then stops. She looks through the window and sees the television light flickering. She circles around to the back of the house and looks through the kitchen window, then to the back door and sees the glass has been broken. She reaches in and opens the door.

INT. JACOBS HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Chris steps inside and quietly closes the door. She can hear the sounds of the movie from the kitchen, followed by Jillian's laughter. Chris makes her way toward the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chris peeks from around the corner into the living room and sees the scene: Jerome, Jay and Ripley tied up on the chair and sofa respectively as Jillian stands behind them. Her back is to Chris which gives her a possible opening. Chris looks around and finds a hammer by the fireplace - she'd forgotten to take it the last time she left. She quietly grasps it in her hand and takes aim.

Jillian laughs at a scene on her movie when she suddenly catches a glimpse of movement. She turns just in time to see the hammer flying at her. She throws her hands up barely in time as moves her head out of the way, catching the brunt of the hammer's blow with her hand. Chris springs into action, tackling her to the ground. The two struggle.

Chris manages to kick Jillian off of her. Jillian rolls backwards and gets to her feet quickly only to find Chris gone.

Jillian gets to her feet and snatches the knife from the floor.

JILLIAN

OHHHH, you are going to payyyyyy for interrupting my film festival.

Jillian heads out of the living room.

INT. JACOBS HOME - STAIRCASE

Jillian circles around the stairs and looks upward. She hears a door close upstairs. She tosses the blade into the air and catches it, switching her grip so the blade is now facing downward.

JILLIAN

Ollie ollie oxenfreeeee! Marco?  
Polo? Come out, come out, wherever you are!

Silence. She continues up the stairs, dragging her knife along the wall, making an eerie screeching sound.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

All three of the captives struggle to free themselves but to no avail. Ripley manages to wiggle off of the couch and rolls her way to the kitchen where she finds another piece of glass. She grasps it in her hand, gets to her feet and hops her way back to Jay and Jerome. She maneuvers herself back onto the couch and starts sawing through his ropes.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBS HOME - STAIRCASE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Jillian, having now reached the top of the stairs, makes her way toward the closed bedroom door. She tosses the blade back and forth between her hands as she approaches. She notices the bathroom and the laundry room as she passes.

Jillian reaches the bedroom door and places her free hand on the knob. There's a creak behind her. She turns to see Chris come out of the bathroom shower wielding that same hammer. Jillian tries to swing her knife but isn't fast enough. Chris hits the knife with the hammer, knocking it clean from her hand.

Jillian recovers quickly, sidestepping Chris and going for her hair. She grabs a handful, but Chris moves with her backwards and slams into the wall, taking Jillian with her.

Jillian is forced to let go. She grabs Chris by the arms. Chris shifts her weight backwards, taking Jillian off balance, then pivots and redirects Jillian away from her. Jillian stumbles and falls backwards into the railing, which was never repaired. The railing breaks and Jillian falls over the side, hitting the floor with a loud crash.

Chris look over the side to see Jillian laying on the ground motionless.

CHRIS

Bitch.

Chris makes her way down, keeping an eye on Jillian. She does not move. Chris goes to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Chris enters just as Ripley manages to saw through Jay's binds. Jay pulls out his gag and starts to untie Ripley. Chris removes Jerome's gag and unties him.

RIPLEY

You must be Chris. Glad to meet you.

CHRIS

Likewise. Jay has good taste.

JEROME

Hey, this is great, but where is the crazy person?

CHRIS

Unconscious - or maybe dead - on the floor. Fell through the bannister.

Jerome stands up, rubbing his wrists.

JEROME

You sure? You tie her up or something?

CHRIS

Sh...no. I was trying to get you guys free and wasn't thinking.



Jay and Jerome look at each other. The four of them head toward the spot where she fell.

JEROME  
Gone. Of course.

JAY  
No disrespect whatsoever, but...why  
didn't you finish her off?

Chris starts to answer when there's a loud squeal of brakes and then a thud.

All four of them run to the door and look out.

EXT. JACOBS HOME - SECONDS LATER

An SUV is stopped in front of the house. A body lays in the middle of the street about 15 feet ahead of the car.

JAY  
Oh shi--

The group approaches as the car doors open. It's the basketball dads. Mitch gets out of the driver's seat.

MITCH  
Oh god. Oh god what did I...Oh man!  
It wasn't my fault! IT WASN'T MY  
FAULT!!

Jerome walks to the body in the street. It's Jillian, and she's quite dead. Mitch runs up and collapses on the ground next to her.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
Oh my god. I'm going to jail. I'm  
going to jail.

The other fathers surround him to try and console him.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
All y'all were drunk! If I go down,  
we all go down!!

Jerome senses an opportunity, and puts a hand on Mitch's shoulder.

JEROME  
I can make this go away for you, if  
you cut out all the crap against my  
son and I. Deal?

Mitch stands up and looks into Jerome's eyes.

MITCH

Deal. I'll never mess with either of you again. None of us will, right?

The other fathers nod.

JEROME

Go. Get out of here. I'll deal with the police.

Mitch and the others scramble and get back in the SUV. They speed off down the street. Jerome waits until they're out of sight and dials 911.

FADE TO:

TITLE CARD: 6 MONTHS LATER

INT. JACOBS HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Jerome and Chris recline on the sofa, cuddled up watching a movie. The doorbell rings.

JAY (O.S.)

I got it!

Seconds later, Jay and Ripley enter. They're in full costumes: Jay is dressed as The Mandalorian, holding his helmet under his arm, while Ripley is dressed as her namesake, wearing a blue jumpsuit, brunette wig, and holding a stuffed cat.

JEROME

I see y'all! Ready to hit up SheaCon?

JAY

Yep. All set.

JEROME

Ok. Catch you guys later, home by midnight, ok?

JAY

Yes sir.

Chris nods to Ripley.

CHRIS

I might have to borrow that  
jumpsuit some time, Ripley!

RIPLEY

You got it! (to Jay) We gotta get  
going, we're gonna be late.

JAY

Right. See you guys later!

They head out the door. Jerome and Chris watch them leave,  
then embrace.

CHRIS

So...we've got the place all to  
ourselves. Whatever shall we do?

Jerome leans in for a kiss as we -

FADE TO BLACK.