



now again
by louis COX

Now Again

written by

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LETTERBOX 2.35:1 ASPECT RATIO [CINEMASCOPE]

BLACK SCREEN

TITLE CARD: " Normal Problems "

INT. OLD HOME (JAME'S BEDROOM) - MORNING

A young man named JAMES wakes up in bed.

He looks around the room.

Then decides to roll over and sleep a little longer.

A few moments later, he hears muffled shouting coming from another room:

CAROL (O.S.)
Wake up!! This is unacceptable.

COLE (O.S.)
Go away!

INT. OLD HOME (COLE'S BEDROOM) - MORNING

A mother CAROL stands over her son's bed.

COLE is lying in it, trying to ignore her.

CAROL
I will not go away. What is this?
Explain yourself, now.

Carol throws a bag of white powder on the floor.

COLE
Please just go away.

CAROL
I will not. Do you think I'm
stupid?

COLE
Please just go away. Please.

CAROL
No. I'm not going anywhere.

COLE
FUCK OFF MOM!

CAROL
What's WRONG with you?

COLE
Just leave me alone!

Cole gets out of bed and storms passed his mother.

INT. OLD HOME (HALLWAY) - MORNING

As he walks through the hallway he passes by his younger brother JAMES who's overheard the argument.

James follows him downstairs.

EXT. OLD HOME (FRONT STOOP) - MORNING

The sun is shining and the morning is crisp.

The front door of an old brownstone opens and Cole steps out.

JAMES (O.S.)
Hey wait!

COLE
What?

JAMES
Are we hanging out tonight?

COLE
I can't.

JAMES
You promised.

COLE
I'm sorry.

JAMES
I miss it, man. Remember when we used to play Super Nintendo?

Cole laughs.

COLE
Yeah. Building forts around the TV and eating salami sandwiches.

JAMES
Exactly.

Cole looks at his phone and then at James.

COLE
Ok. Ok. I can't hang out too long. But I'll come over a few hours before my thing tonight. Ok?

JAMES
Ok.

COLE
Ok. See you later.

Cole leans in to hug James.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

JAMES (V.O.)
Is this really happening?

Muffled shouts and arguing.

Sounds of crunching glass.

INT. OLD HOME - NIGHT

Feet running up stairs.

JAMES
No! Don't!

A confusion of hands fly across the screen.

JAMES
Please. Just stop. Please.

James is running up a flight up stairs.

JAMES
This can't be happening, this can't be happening.

INT. OLD HOME (TOP FLOOR) - NIGHT

James runs through a doorway.

He reaches for someone who slaps him away.

He grabs the back of their belt.

It's Cole.

He shoves James back.

James doesn't let go.

Cole is moving towards a window.

He grabs the edges of a window frame.

Socks slide on the floor.

JAMES

God. Damn it!

James tightens his grip and sits down: using dead weight as a counterbalance.

JAMES

Goddamn it! Someone help me!

Circulation cuts as his fingers go numb.

Just then, his mother Carol bursts through the door and discovers the scene.

CAROL

Dear lord! What's going on?

JAMES

Mom, help! he--

Carol is already moving towards them.

She wraps arms around her son hanging out the window like she's about to give him the heimlich, and pulls.

It's almost working.

Cole comes back through the window, but he's determined, and he grips the sides of the frame.

CAROL

God damn it, what's wrong with you?

James is sitting on the floor.

Fingers blue and numb, gripped tight to the belt.

CAROL

I've got him. I'll hold him. You run across the street and get help.

He doesn't move.

CAROL
James! Let go. Stand up. Go
across the street. Get help, Now!

James leaps to his feet without thinking.

Turns around --

and stares at the scene in disbelief.

CAROL
Well?! What are you waiting for?!

James is standing there.

In shock.

He looks down.

JAMES
I'm not wearing any shoes.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: " Chapter 4: Hospital "

BLACK SCREEN

LETTERBOX 2.35:1 ASPECT RATIO [CINEMASCOPE]

EXPANDS TO 1.77:1 FULL FRAME [TELEVISION]

INT. HOSPITAL (WAITING ROOM) - UNKNOWN

The fluorescent tube lighting of a hospital ceiling comes into focus as James raises his hand to cover it, blinking as he strains his eyes.

He awakens on a bed made of two small chairs with one third of his body hanging in-between them like a suspension bridge.

He looks at his phone.

He sighs.

Responds to a text. Dials a number, and lifts it to his ear.

CUT TO:

INT. HOME (FRONT HALL > KITCHEN) - DAY

James walks through the front door into the kitchen where Carol is making a BLT sandwich.

He calls from the hallway:

JAMES
Hey mom

When he reaches the kitchen she responds:

CAROL
Hi honey.

JAMES
I'm exhausted.

CAROL
You look it.

JAMES
I'm going upstairs to take a nap.

James is already holding the sandwich in his hand.

He begins taking bites while standing by the counter.

CAROL
Why don't you sit down?

James stands.

JAMES
Been sitting all day. My back
hurts.
(takes a bite)
Standing is my rest.

Carol laughs a little.

CAROL
Ok honey.

James finishes his sandwich.

JAMES
I'm going to sleep for a bit.

CAROL
Want me to wake you?

JAMES
Could you in a few hours?

CAROL

Of course.

(pause)

If you want I could take you to the hospital, but I didn't know if--

JAMES

I want you to take me.

CAROL

Ok

James leans over touching his mother's shoulder:

JAMES

Thanks mom.

He kisses her on the cheek.

JAMES

I love you.

She's awkward about it but she loves him too.

James heads up the stairs into--

INT. HOME (BEDROOM) - DAY

--where he falls down on the bed.

He lays there for a moment staring upwards before taking a deep breath, exhaling, and extending his arms out to the ceiling.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOME (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

He awakens several hours later in a jolt.

It's nighttime.

He's confused.

Still wearing all his clothes. His shoes off. A blanket on top of him.

He calls out to the house:

JAMES

Mom?!

He gets up from bed and stumbles through the hallway calling to his mom.

Eventually she hears him from downstairs and they meet in the kitchen.

CAROL
Yes baby?

JAMES
What time is it?

CAROL
Nine.

JAMES
What happened? Why didn't you wake me?

CAROL
You seemed so tired.

JAMES
But we were supposed to--

CAROL
I can drive you back if you want.

JAMES
(pause)
We can go in the morning.

James returns upstairs and goes back to sleep.

Carol watches from the kitchen, concerned.

INT. HOME (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

James awakens in darkness.

He turns over. Checks the clock. 4am.

He gets dressed.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

James is standing on a subway platform waiting for the train.

He pulls out his phone and sits down.

He types something on it.

INT. SUBWAY CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

James rides the subway.

He's wearing headphones and listening to music.

INT. HOSPITAL (WALKING MONTAGE) - NIGHT

James walks into a hospital late at night.

He takes an elevator upstairs alone, nodding at the hospital staff as he passes them.

He walks passed a sign that reads: "Intensive Care Unit" and presses a large metal button that swings open two doors.

James checks his father's room: he's sleeping with an oxygen mask on.

Just then, James is startled by a nurse he didn't know was there.

She appears from behind a curtain and asks him to leave the room while she finishes checking things.

James does.

INT. HOSPITAL (WAITING ROOM) - NIGHT

James returns to the same room he woke up in and rebuilds his make-shift chair bed, sliding into it for the long haul and building a pillow with his balled-up sweatshirt.

He stares up at the fluorescent ceiling light, falling asleep into a--

FLASHBACK -- INT. HOME (BEDROOM) - MORNING

The room is dimly lit with an orange warmth.

James is standing over his father WILLIAM's bed.

JAMES

Are you gonna get up?

His father doesn't say anything.

JAMES

We need to go.

William pushes his head into the pillow.

JAMES

Really?

James paces. He's not sure what to do.

JAMES

You're going to miss your appointment. You were the one that wanted me to take you. You missed the last one. I can't wait. You have to go. I already let you sleep in. We're going to be late. You have to go. You can't miss this one.

William groans louder.

James is frustrated. Unsure what to do, he walks out of the room.

He paces in the hallway.

Upset, tense, and ready to scream. He mimes the action but no sound come out.

He looks at his phone.

Puts it back in his pocket. Takes a deep breath. And re-enters his father's room.

He stands over the bed, deciding what to do, then says:

JAMES

Look, you have two options: either you're going to get up --with dignity-- and put your pants on and we walk downstairs, and get into a cab. Or I call the paramedics, they come up here, and carry you out, in your underwear.

(pause)

So what's it gonna be.

William rolls over in the bed and groans.

JAMES

Come on...

EXT. CITY STREET (OUTSIDE HOME) - MORNING

A black town car waits outside. The air is crisp and the light is blue.

James holds his father's hand and walks him out the door, grabbing his cane along the way.

When they get to the curb it becomes apparent just how yellow and green his father's skin is.

JAMES

Come on.

James gently helps his father into the car, closes the door and runs around the other side to get in with him.

INT. CAR (DRIVING) - MORNING

James is sitting in the backseat of a cab with his father, who seems to be invigorated by the momentum.

WILLIAM

Where are we going?

JAMES

The doctor.

WILLIAM

We don't want to be late.

JAMES

No we don't.

James looks forward out the front window.

--just then his cellphone rings.

He picks it up.

JAMES

Hello?

DEBT COLLECTOR (PHONE)

Yes hello, I'm calling on behalf of Stevenson Debt Collection and they are trying to reach you in regards to some outstanding medical debt -- Do you have a moment to discuss this?

James looks at his father, then turns in the opposite direction:

JAMES

Now is really not a good time.

DEBT COLLECTOR (PHONE)
Yes well this outstanding debt has
been transferred to us because of
failure to make payment on your
part.

JAMES
What debt? What is this in regards
to?

DEBT COLLECTOR (PHONE)
The bill indicates... Labcorp 3459

JAMES
Labcorp? I paid that.

DEBT COLLECTOR (PHONE)
Oh, do you have the confirmation
code?

JAMES
Are you fucking serious?

DEBT COLLECTOR (PHONE)
My apologies sir but if you have
the confirmation code...

JAMES
I'm sorry, just hold on a sec.

James starts rummaging through his wallet for a piece of a
paper. He's not finding it.

JAMES
...Look can I call you back?

DEBT COLLECTOR (PHONE)
Sir I'm afraid I don't have a
direct line, but if you have the
confirmation code...

James turns to the window, their car is getting off the
highway.

He looks at his father, who's slumped over in the door with
his eyes closed.

James hangs up the phone.

EXT. CITY STREET (OUTSIDE DOCTOR'S OFFICE) - MORNING

The car pulls up in front of a tall corporate looking office
building with a revolving glass door.

There is no parking.

INT. CAR (BACKSEAT)

James is looking at the traffic ahead of him and trying to think of ideas.

His father next to him seems barely coherent.

James mimes an obscenity under his breath.

JAMES

Hold on.

He jumps out of the car--

EXT. CITY STREET (OUTSIDE DOCTOR'S OFFICE) - MORNING

--A car HONKS at him as he does.

James gestures his hands in a low calming motion as he runs to the curb, inside the building, and back out after a few moments.

He's pushing an empty wheelchair in front of him, running as fast as he can.

The driver helps James get his father into the chair.

James gives him a wad of twenty dollar bills and starts hurrying back to the building with his father slumped over in the wheelchair.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE (LOBBY) - DAY

James is worked up, breathing quickly.

He jams his finger into the elevator button.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE (WAITING ROOM) - DAY

James sits with his father in a waiting room chair.

JAMES

I'll be right back.

WILLIAM

(inaudible groan)

William drifts in an absent-minded way.

James runs to the counter.

JAMES
My father has an appointment with
Doctor Nolen.

FRONT DESK RECEPTION
What's his name?

JAMES
William Douglas

FRONT DESK RECEPTION
Ok take this and fill it out and
bring it back to me.

She hands him a clipboard with forms and a pen.

James returns to the waiting room area where his father has slumped over further in the chair.

He sits down next to him.

He looks at his father, worried, and begins filling out the form.

Name. Date. Address. All this is easy but he gets to the harder questions.

He turns back to his father.

JAMES
What's your social security number?

William stares absent-mindedly. Forward.

JAMES
Dad, you need to wake up. Dad.

He shakes him.

WILLIAM
Huh?

JAMES
I need your help filling out this
form.

WILLIAM
Ok..

The woman from the front desk reception appears and says:

FRONT DESK RECEPTION
You can go back now.

James stands up.

William doesn't.

JAMES
Look. Just let me talk to him a
second.

James walks passed the front desk reception down a hallway
and into an office. We hear and see him through an
obstructed doorway as he explains in detail to the doctor.

In the foreground William sits confused and drooling.

CUT TO:

INSERT - the doctor's hand picks up a phone.

James gives him an inquisitive look.

DOCTOR
I'm calling 911

JAMES
Are you fucking serious?

The doctor looks up from his desk at James.

CUT TO:

The metal bars of an ambulance stretcher snap into place as
two EMS workers move William out through an office hallway.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET (AMBULANCE) - DAY

The stretcher is loaded into the back of an ambulance.

James stands on the curb dumbfounded.

The EMS worker looks at him, and says:

EMS WORKER
Wanna ride with us?

JAMES
Can I?

EMS WORKER
Fuck yeah you can.

The EMS invites James into the back of the ambulance and shuts the doors.

INT. AMBULANCE (CITY STREET) - DAY

EMS WORKER
Hey Jimmy! Kick the sirens on.

The EMS DRIVER yells back from up front:

EMS DRIVER
But we're only going a few blocks!

EMS WORKER
Yeah, but it'll be fun!

They all laugh.

James smiles.

Lying on a stretcher in between them, underneath an oxygen mask, William smiles too.

James notices.

So does the EMS Worker, who turns toward the front, bangs his hand on the wall and says:

EMS WORKER
Fire it up! Let's get this party started.

EMS DRIVER
You got it chief.

He flips a switch and the ambulance SIREN starts blaring.

Turning back towards James he says:

EMS WORKER
There you go. Door to door chauffeur service -- now we're talking.

James is looking at his father.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL (EMERGENCY ROOM) - DAY

Doctors and nurses are working on William by cutting open his shirt, taking vital signs, placing an oxygen mask, and asking James the same questions.

Things speed up and slow down until James is all alone with his father and a bunch of medical trash on the floor.

He's overwhelmed. Takes a breath. Then decides it's time to call his mother and tell her what's going on.

He takes his phone out and dials.

Almost instinctively, his father becomes conscious enough to beckon him over.

James does.

He speaks:

WILLIAM

Please don't talk to your mother in
the room with me.

She picks up.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)

Hello?

James can't help but almost laugh.

JAMES

(holding back giggles)
One second.

He places the phone over his chest and walks out of the room.

He finds a place to stand, then looks at the phone screen which reads "Mom"

He knows what he has to say but it's finally come time to speak the words out loud.

He takes a breath before delivering:

JAMES

It's dad. I think he's in bad
shape. We're at the hospital.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL (PATIENT ROOM) - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

James is sleeping in a hospital chair next to his father's bed. His father lies there with yellow greenish jaundice colored skin and an oxygen mask. He appears to be sleeping.

Some machines beep.

He groans.

Tries to turn over.

Can't.

His wrists are tied.

The noise causes James to wake.

He moves to the bed.

His father groans and turns over.

James watches him for a moment.

Then steps outside into the hallway--

INT. HOSPITAL (HALLWAY) - DAY

James sits down on a bench and pulls out his phone.

He dials.

Someone picks up.

James stands up and starts pacing in the hallway.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Hey, can you talk?

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
Yeah what's up?

JAMES (ON PHONE)
I'm at the hospital with dad.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
Are you ok?

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Yeah I'm fine.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
What's wrong?

James looks back towards his father's room.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
I'm afraid I'm forgetting him.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
Your father?

JAMES (ON PHONE)
No. Cole.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
You won't ever forget him. You
can't.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
You would think so. But every day,
week, and month that goes by--I
remember less and less.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
You haven't lost them.

James looks at his father's room again.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Are you sure?

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
Yes.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Y'know dad used to say, "I'm the
only one left who knows." And at
the time I just thought he was
telling stories about grandma.
(pause)
But I get it now.

James looks down.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
I feel like I'm the only one left
who knows.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
Are you alone right now?

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Yes.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)
Do you want me to come there?

--Looking back towards his father's room there seems to be a commotion of doctors.

James is distracted.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Listen, can I call you back?

James hangs up the phone and walks toward the room--

INT. HOSPITAL (PATIENT ROOM) - DAY

There are several doctors inside.

They all look at him.

One of them speaks:

DOCTOR
Are you the patient's next of kin?

JAMES
Yes. What's going on?

DOCTOR
Well he has swelling in his brain
and his kidneys are failing.
(pause)
We're hopeful, but... you have to
understand this is very serious.
We may need to put him on dialysis.
Does he have a power of attorney?

JAMES
What's that?

DOCTOR
In time he may not be able to make
his own medical decisions. We need
to be prepared for that
eventuality.

JAMES
I thought you said you were
hopeful.

DOCTOR
We are.

The doctor looks at one of the others.

SENIOR DOCTOR

We need to be ready with this
paperwork just in case.

(pause)

Is there anyone besides you who
should be making these decisions.

JAMES

No. Just me.

DOCTOR

Well these are the forms.

The doctor hands James a clipboard.

DOCTOR

Please take some time to look over
them.

JAMES

Ok.

The doctors begin moving to the door.

JAMES

What about my dad?

One of the junior doctors waits behind the group.

JUNIOR DOCTOR

We'll be back in a little bit. And
the nurse will stop by periodically
if you need anything.

JAMES

Ok. Thanks.

The junior doctor looks at the machines.

JUNIOR DOCTOR

Vitals are looking good. He's
stable right now. Sleeping.

JAMES

Thank you.

JUNIOR DOCTOR

No problem.

The junior doctor smiles, then checks on a few machines
around the bed before leaving the room.

James sits down in a chair with the clipboard.

He takes out his phone, sends off a bunch of random text messages to people.

Looks out the window.

The sun is setting.

He falls asleep.

INT. HOSPITAL (PATIENT ROOM) - NIGHT

James wakes up to a BEEP from a machine.

He has the clipboard of paperwork in his hand.

Someone has placed a blanket over him.

He hears his father coughing nearby.

JAMES

Dad?

James gets up and moves to the bed.

William coughs inside the mask.

He slides it off.

JAMES

Are you ok?

WILLIAM

(coughing)

Neither your mother or your girlfriend are here, James. So you can stop putting on the show.

JAMES

She's not my girlfriend.

WILLIAM

That's not my point.

JAMES

What is?

WILLIAM

It's too late for pleasantries. You know how I feel about your mother. I don't intend to interfere. I'm happy that you have a relationship with her.

William pauses.

JAMES

But?

WILLIAM

But she's crazy. Always has been.
To pretend otherwise is foolish.

JAMES

Dad...

WILLIAM

I know what you're going to say and
so I won't bother defending against
it. There is no convincing you--
and, honestly I wouldn't want to if
I could.

William reaches for his oxygen mask. His efforts to speak
have strained him.

WILLIAM

I find your optimism refreshing.

JAMES

Then why say this at all?

WILLIAM

I worry about you, and your mother.
I worry about the blind commitment
you have to others.

JAMES

Dad...

WILLIAM

No, listen to me. Yes, respect
your mother. Treat women well.
But stop giving them your power.
Stop undoing yourself. Stop
negating your own feelings. Stop
dismantling your beliefs. Stop
propping up their's. No more carte
blanche. Stop giving it all away,
James. Or you'll be old and tired
by the time you're twenty five.

JAMES

Dad...

WILLIAM

One day you're going to wake up and realize you've been taking care of everyone but yourself.

(takes a breath)

It is ok to leave.

William puts the oxygen mask back on.

James stands there for a moment. He doesn't want to move.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: " Chapter 1: Sick Day "

BLACK SCREEN

JAMES (V.O.)

When I was seven years old my father took me to my first psychologist.

FULL FRAME 1.77:1 ASPECT RATIO

CONTRACTS TO 2.35:1 LETTERBOX

INT. OLD HOME (BEDROOM) - LATE MORNING

We see a young James sitting on his bed, quickly typing messages back and fourth with someone named DONNA.

The message reads:

" When I was seven years old my father took me to my first psychologist. I don't know. I love him. He never had his own father. He wanted to do it right. He was afraid, so he hired a professional. He doesn't know this now. I think he still thinks he fucked it all up. But doesn't every parent? Isn't that normal? My father never left. He was always there. Trying... "

INT. OLD HOME (KITCHEN) - LATE MORNING

Downstairs a mom named CAROL cooks grilled cheese and tomato soup. She's talking to someone on a phone plugged in with a 10 foot charging cord.

Struggling to do both at the same time she squeezes the phone with her neck and a bit of exasperation:

CAROL
(on phone)
I don't know. Why can't he just
have normal problems.

INT. OLD HOME (BEDROOM) - LATE MORNING

Upstairs her son James reclines with pillows propped against a wall, his bathrobe on, and a towel draped over himself.

The TV is on. He's watching old episodes of The X-Files.

While downstairs in the--

INT. OLD HOME (KITCHEN) - LATE MORNING

--Carol pushes the sandwich with a spatula and stirs the pot of tomato soup.

She looks at the ceiling above her.

She opens the cabinet and reaches into the back, pulling out a bottle of vodka wrapped in a black plastic bag.

She unscrews the cap, drinks from the bottle, and returns it to the cabinet.

Plates and glasses CLINK on a tray of food as she lifts it.

INT. OLD HOME (BEDROOM) - LATE MORNING

CAROL
Did I miss anything?

JAMES
Nothing yet.

Carol places the tray down on the bed and sits next to James.

They eat and watch TV together, having a fun time.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OLD HOME (BEDROOM) - MORNING

JAMES is asleep. The clock reads 8:26am.

We hear the sound of downstairs play against a blank wall.

James lies in bed.

INT. OLD HOME (KITCHEN) - MORNING

Hurried hands making coffee.

Carol shouts to the ceiling above her.

CAROL
You're gonna be late!

She screams upward. Then looks at the wall.

Silence.

She pushes her hands into the counter and exhales.

Carol pours a cup of coffee, and stands in the kitchen for a moment, doing nothing.

She then quickly turns around, walks across the kitchen, and opens a lower cabinet where she removes a large bottle of vodka wrapped in a black plastic shopping bag. She unscrews the cap while leaving the bag on, taking several big swigs.

INT. OLD HOME (HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEDROOM) - MORNING

Carol walks briskly through a hallway to the door outside James' room. She stops. She knocks.

INT. OLD HOME (BEDROOM) - MORNING

James doesn't move.

INT. OLD HOME (HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEDROOM) - MORNING

Carol knocks again.

Still nothing.

Carol starts knocking, again.

INT. OLD HOME (BEDROOM) - MORNING

CAROL
(through the door)
James. It's time to wake up.

James doesn't move.

The clock reads 10:03am.

We see the doorknob turn as the door starts to open.

Over James' shoulder we hear a soft plea:

CAROL

James. Honey, it's ten-thirty.
Didn't they say you can only miss
three days?

He doesn't move.

CAROL

Lucy will be here in a few hours.
You can't stay in bed all day.

Carol gently shakes his shoulder, pulling him towards her:

CAROL

James. I have to go to work.
(steps back)
I can't do this all morning.

James rolls away from her, putting a pillow over his head.

Carol stands there in awe, then she flips out:

CAROL

I won't allow you to do this!

Carol leans into James' bed and begins shoving and shaking the mattress. He stays quiet.

CAROL

James! JAMES!!!

She pulls the pillow away from his head.

CAROL

James William Douglas!

He ignores her.

She rips the blanket off and drops it on the end of the bed.

James suddenly jumps up and grabs it from her.

JAMES

Mom! Get the fuck out of my room!

Carol steps back.

CAROL
You're sick.

She storms out.

James turns his alarm clock to face the wall.

James tries to close his eyes with the door behind him and fade back to sleep as we hear his mom run up and down stairs, BANG a cabinet, and SLAM the front door on her way out.

James sighs, and falls back asleep. The clock reads 10:30am.

FADE.

James' eyes open to the sound of a VACUUM.

He groans, and rolls over.

Inaudible shouts can be heard through the floor.

JAMES
(yelling to someone
downstairs)
Just give me a second!

The clock reads 2:26pm.

James rolls out of bed, leaves his room, walks down the hallway, uses the toilet, and FLUSHES.

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM) - MIDDAY

James is outside the window smoking a cigarette. He takes another drag before putting it out and comes back inside.

He walks through a shadowed living room into a dark kitchen.

He walks to the light by the window.

He closes the curtains.

INT. OLD HOME (PHOTOGRAPHY DARKROOM) - UNKNOWN

A hand rocks waves of chemicals bathed in red light over a white print in a plastic tray.

James stands by himself at the end of a long basin.

He resets the exposure clock and lifts his plastic tongs to the ready.

Just then, the door knocks.

JAMES

One minute!

He rushes to tidy up what he's doing, quickly turns around to fold over black plastic and closes the print box to protect it from light.

The door KNOCKS.

JAMES

Yeah! Ok. Coming!

A little frazzled, James hurries to the door and quickly opens it, sticking his head out.

JAMES

Yeah?

A beautiful latin girl named DONNA stands on the other end. James is entirely surprised. Dumbfounded.

DONNA

I know I'm early, but your cleaning lady let me in.

JAMES

Oh. It's ok. Just give me a second.

James closes the door and makes a few RUSTLING noises on the other side before re-emerging a few moments later.

JAMES (CONT'D)

So wait what were you doing here?

DONNA

We had class.

James crosses his arms.

JAMES

Uh yeah. My bad.

(looks to the floor)

But wait, still-- Why are you here?

DONNA
I'm worried about you.

JAMES
(sarcastically)
Shut the fuck up.

DONNA
Ok, fine. I'm here so you can do
my homework for me.

James laughs.

JAMES
Finally, the truth comes out.

DONNA
Wanna go for a walk?

JAMES
No.

Dead silence.

DONNA
Well, at least I tried!

James lets out a laugh.

DONNA
Oh so he has a sense of humor after
all.

James uncrosses his arms.

JAMES
Look, it's already weird enough for
you to see me in my pajamas.

DONNA
I've seen worse.

JAMES
I'm sure.

DONNA
What's that supposed to mean.

JAMES
Nothing. Sorry.

DONNA
That's right.
(switching to sarcasm)
Asshole.

James chuckles.

DONNA
That's better.

EXT. OLD HOME (BACKYARD) - MIDDAY

James and Donna sit on deck chairs in the backyard. It's awkward silence but only because they like each other.

Then, in a bit of a dramatic gesture, Donna swings her arms above her head and leans over to reach into a large purse.

After digging around for a few moments, she pulls out a large DSLR camera.

JAMES
(noticing)
Really?

DONNA
Oh, what? You thought I was kidding about the homework?

James is quiet.

JAMES
So what's the assignment?

DONNA
No worries. It's just some easy art school bullshit.

JAMES
Then why don't you do it?

DONNA

Would if I could. But this is a two person assignment. Can't do it alone.

JAMES

Oh yeah?

DONNA

Yeah.

Donna fiddles with the camera settings.

DONNA

Portraits...
Teacher said, and I quote:
"Find a friend whose opinion you trust and have them take one photograph of you."

JAMES

This was Misses Jensen?

DONNA

Yes. Though I don't think she would ever want to be called "Misses"

JAMES

So you trust my opinion?

DONNA

Shut up.

JAMES

The truth comes out after all.

DONNA

You're the one with a darkroom in his basement. With a photographer for a father. Aren't you supposed to be good at this?

JAMES

I guess. Never really thought of it that way.

DONNA

And so modest!

JAMES

You're funny.

DONNA

Look man, I just need you to take my picture and I'll get out of your hair.

JAMES

Yeah but half the photo is the conversation we're having right now.

DONNA

What do you mean?

JAMES

Well if I told you that, it wouldn't work.

DONNA

Yeah but you already did.

James pauses.

JAMES

True.

DONNA

Sooo...?

JAMES

(gathering his words)

The whole point is that I can't get to know you if you aren't comfortable.

DONNA

Yeah but it's just a photo.

JAMES

Yes but all photos are revealing of who we are.

Silence. They both sit there.

DONNA

Yeah, and I'm uncomfortable...

Ta-da!

(sarcastically)

Revealed.

CLICK, BEEP. The sound of a digital camera shutter goes off.

JAMES

Gotcha.

DONNA
Hey, no gimme that!

JAMES
No, you've been revealed.
Sarcastic till the end.

DONNA
Delete that!

JAMES
Aww come on, that wouldn't be any
fun.

DONNA
Fine, then I get to take one of
you.

JAMES
Sure!

James enthusiastically offers the camera to Donna.

She doesn't take it.

DONNA
Except, we need a second camera.

JAMES
Why?

DONNA
So I can snap a photo of you going
around snapping photos of everyone
else.

James laughs.

DONNA
It's revealing.

JAMES
Very funny.

DONNA
Right?
(pause)
Say, would you think yourself a
judgmental person?

James gets cold.

JAMES
No. Why would you say that?

DONNA

It's just that, you going around observing people, deciding their thoughts without ever really talking to them.

JAMES

That's not always true.

DONNA

What do you mean?

JAMES

Well, the way I prefer to take photos, when I have a choice. Is like this. The way we're doing right now. With the camera as a conversation piece.

DONNA

Yeah, yeah. Whatever.

Donna takes the camera back from James' hand.

DONNA

Look, I gotta get home before the school realizes I skipped. And then they'll tell my parents, and then that will be a whole thing.

She begins moving inside.

JAMES

Wait, what?

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

Donna doesn't respond.

James follows her inside.

JAMES

You didn't go either?
(confused)
Then why are you here?

DONNA

Getting the homework that's due tomorrow done today. Smartest way to skip.

Donna is moving towards the front door.

JAMES

Oh.

DONNA

(positioning the camera
safely in her bag)

Yeah well, not everyone is the
world's smartest dumbass like you.

James laughs. Donna motions for the doorknob.

DONNA

It's been real, dude.

...

See you at school?

James thinks.

JAMES

Yeah.

DONNA

Cool.

Donna smiles as the door slams behind her.

James returns to the red light of the darkroom.

He continues his work as we dissolve to the sun setting over
a city skyline.

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN) - NIGHT

James rises from the basement holding a black binder full of
prints and negatives.

His mom is already there. She's on the phone.

JAMES

Do you have a sec?

Carol doesn't acknowledge him.

Nothing.

James continues upstairs passed his mother to the 2nd floor.

Carol stands in the kitchen, we hear snippets of her
whispered conversation. She sounds concerned:

CAROL

It's just that. If he keeps
missing days.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)
They'll kick him out. I just don't
know what I'll do if that happens.

James returns downstairs wearing a coat.

He looks to his mom.

She gestures "just one more minute"

James stares at her.

She turns around to face the window.

He stands there alone, looks at his phone, then leaves.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

James is walking.

He takes his phone out to text someone.

EXT. PIER BY THE WATER - NIGHT

He's by the water looking at the city night skyline when he
pulls his phone out again.

They've texted back.

He responds and slides the phone back into his pocket.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

James arrives at the park first, looks for a good spot to
sit, and opts for one of the tables instead of a bench.

Checking his phone while he waits.

Just then, he hears her voice standing in front of him:

DONNA
Hey what's up.

She's arrived. James smiles. Donna sits.

DONNA
So what's up?

JAMES
I'm tired.

DONNA
Tell me about it.
(joking)
You're tired. I'm tired.
Everyone's tired.

James laughs.

Donna notices.

DONNA
Y'know... I think life got a lot
easier when I just accepted being
tired all the time. That way, I'm
never tired because I'm never
awake. I'm just always, whatever.

JAMES
Very funny.

DONNA
Why thank you.

JAMES
So how you been?

Donna pauses.

DONNA
(serious)
I don't know. I can't stop
thinking about him.

JAMES
What do you mean?

DONNA
You know what I mean.

Donna looks at James.

JAMES
(afraid)
Not now. Please.

DONNA
I'm sorry. How's your mom?

JAMES
Oh. She's good. I guess.

DONNA
Yeah? What have you two been up
to?

JAMES

Not much. Just hanging out.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

The front door closes. James walks in. He hears the crinkling of plastic around a glass bottle.

He walks quickly into the living room where he finds his mother scurrying to hide something.

She's on the phone:

CAROL (TO PHONE)

...and then Lucy comes out and says 'you're cutting too much' and before I know it the rose bush has been completely ripped out. He was going at it like a madman with an axe. And then of course I had to help him clean it up.

(listening on phone)

Yes, I've heard he's turned out to be quite a nice young man. But James is another story.

James steps on a creaking floorboard.

It catches her attention.

Carol turns around, acting half-surprised and says:

CAROL

oh hi.

James stops. He looks at his mother. She notices.

CAROL

James, you know if you keep missing days they're going to kick you out. Why can't you just have normal problems?

James quickly walks over to where she's standing. Pushes behind her, and lifts a black plastic bag into view.

He rips the bag off to reveal a half empty liter of vodka.

They stare at each other for a moment, and then he quickly moves to the kitchen cabinet, returning with an empty glass.

He places it on the table, and begins pouring.

JAMES

It's not even the drinking that bothers me. If you want to drink. Fine, go ahead. I'll even drink with you.

(pause)

What bothers me is that you feel the need to hide it.

The glass completely full, he pushes it towards his mother.

She looks at it and then up at him:

CAROL

James this isn't funny.

JAMES

No shit.

James reaches across the table and picks up the glass.

He's drinking it himself.

CAROL

James what are you doing?

JAMES

You think this shit isn't stressful? You think I'm not upset?

CAROL

Stop it.

JAMES

Stop what?

CAROL

Stop drinking.

JAMES

Well that's funny.

CAROL

James would you stop it.

JAMES

(taking another sip)
Stop what?

CAROL
Stop being a smartass little shit.
That's what.

JAMES
It's the only way you'll listen.

CAROL
James I'm your mother.

JAMES
JUST SHUT UP JUST STOP IT. STOP IT
RIGHT NOW.

Carol is frightened. James notices.

JAMES
Please... just stop talking to me
like I'm a child.

Carol is awestruck.

JAMES
I miss him too. I miss you.
(looking down)
I'm angry. I'm sad. I know you
are too.
(pause)
Please mom. Just talk to me.
I'm listening.

Silence.

CAROL
Honestly James I don't even know
what to say.
(pause)
What do you want me to say?

JAMES
I don't want you to say anything!

CAROL
Well then how can I--

JAMES
I just want you to listen to me.
To talk to me. Like a normal
person. We've been through too
much for all this bullshit.
(pause)
I love you mom.

Carol doesn't know what to say.

CAROL
Oh honey. I--
(pause)
I love you too.

James realizes how he's been acting.

JAMES
I just-- I just want to listen to
you. To hear you.
(pause)
What's wrong?

Carol looks at the glass of vodka on the table and then at her son.

CAROL
James. That's a long story.

He laughs, pulls a chair next to his mother and sits down.

JAMES
Well, I have time.

Awkward silence.

CAROL
Well now I can't. I don't know
what to say when you've put me on
the spot like this.

JAMES
(getting up to leave)
Ugh.

CAROL
Look. Wait. James, can't we just
talk about this tomorrow? When
we're both rested?

JAMES
Always later.

CAROL
Come on.

JAMES
If you really cared you would talk
to me now.

CAROL
James...

JAMES

I heard you on the phone earlier.

CAROL

What do you mean?

JAMES

What you said about me.

CAROL

James I was talking about your brother. You aren't like him.

James is surprised.

JAMES

Oh. I didn't know.

CAROL

You've never been like him. Well you are. But you aren't.

JAMES

What?

CAROL

I always felt like Cole was my little politician and you were my lawyer. He could convince anyone to do anything and you could argue anything. It could be exhausting!

James laughs.

CAROL

Everything was always 'why?' and what reason. Sometimes I just wanted to say: 'Because I'm your mother and I said so.'

CUT TO:

INT. OLD HOME (TOP FLOOR) - NIGHT

James turns around --

and stares at the scene in disbelief.

CAROL

Well?! What are you waiting for?!

James is still standing there.

In shock.

Looking down at his shoes.

CAROL

James?!

He looks up.

CAROL

Get help. NOW!!!

James starts running.

We follow him down the stairs.

Things are shakey and disturbed.

James is talking to himself:

JAMES

This can't be real. This can't be
happening.

He grabs the railing and pulls himself down the stairs.

He reaches the door.

He swings it open.

Out on the stoop.

--Something's different.

A lincoln towncar pulls up in front of the house.

A young woman and two large men with heavy jackets get out.
She points at James.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: " Chapter 2: Teachers "

BLACK SCREEN

JAMES (V.O.)

I don't know. I don't know. Well
I do know. But it's complicated.

INT. OLD HOME (BEDROOM) - DAY

JAMES is sitting upstairs in his bed.

He's writing quickly on a notepad:

" I don't know. I don't know.
(MORE)

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Well I do know. But it's
complicated..."

INT. OLD HOME (KITCHEN) - DAY

Carol is tidying up a few things waiting for something.
There's a tall dark man sitting at the kitchen table.
The phone rings.
She picks up.

CAROL (ON PHONE)
Yes. Yes, he's available to meet
with you now.

She exchanges glances with the man at her table.

CAROL (ON PHONE)
Yes, ok. See you in five.

She hangs up the phone.

CAROL
He'll be here soon.

BARRY
Wonderful.

CAROL
Can I get you some coffee?

BARRY
Yes thank you. I can never say no
to coffee.

Carol smiles.

And begins making coffee.

CAROL
Yes a good cup of coffee in the
morning gets things started right.

She's moving around the kitchen.

CAROL
I never drank coffee. Well,
sometimes decaf for the flavor.

BARRY
I've gotta have my caffeine.

CAROL
Yeah some people really need it.
That's why I keep some around.

BARRY
None for you?

CAROL
I never have. William didn't
either. Though Cole likes his
coffee. James drinks tea.

BARRY
So how is James?

CAROL
I don't know.

BARRY
What does he do with his time?

CAROL
Nothing. He doesn't go anywhere,
he doesn't want to do anything.

BARRY
Why?

CAROL
I don't know. His father just
let's him.

BARRY
Let's him?

CAROL
If he doesn't feel like going. He
doesn't go. Real big into feelings
over there.

BARRY
He seems to have a good reason for
not going.

CAROL
Yes. Of course. We all do.
But... he still has to go to
school. That doesn't mean he can't
go to school.

BARRY
Of course.

The doorbell rings.

CAROL
That must be him.

Carol walks out of the kitchen to answer the front door.

While she's gone, Barry looks around the room.

The kitchen itself seems very clean.

Carol returns with William.

She introduces them:

CAROL
Will, this is Barry.

WILLIAM
Hi, nice to meet you I'm William.

William extends his hand to Barry.

Barry accepts.

They shake.

BARRY
Nice to meet you.

CAROL
So Lucy tells me you went to
Amherst. Is that true?

BARRY
Yes, on a scholarship program.

CAROL
Did you know that Will went to
Amherst too?

BARRY
I didn't.

Barry looks at William, who seems a bit skeptical.

WILLIAM
Did you have Strunk for english
class?

BARRY
No, I had White.

William smiles.

WILLIAM

So what exactly did you have in mind for our son?

BARRY

I think we could meet 4 days a week for 4 hours each time. A core curriculum of English, Math, and Science.

WILLIAM

Why not 5 days? Why so short?

BARRY

When it's one-on-one things tend to move a lot faster and more focused, and with a 3-day weekend he'll be happier and more relaxed overall.

(pause)

And you'll save money.

William laughs.

WILLIAM

Well that's always good.

He looks at Carol.

She smiles.

WILLIAM

So what's the plan?

BARRY

I would like to speak with your son for a few minutes if possible.

CAROL

Of course. I'll ask him to come downstairs.

BARRY

What happens if he doesn't want to come downstairs?

WILLIAM

Then you'll go up there.

CAROL

If that's what it takes.

Barry waits.

BARRY
We'll start tomorrow.

CAROL
Why not today?

BARRY
It's later in the day, and I like
to begin lessons in the morning.

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM) - MORNING

James and Barry are sitting at a table across from one another. There are books and notepads in between them.

James is looking at his notepad, fiddling with a pen.

Barry is staring at James.

This goes on for a few moments, until the silence is broken:

BARRY
I know what you just did down
there.

James has a look.

JAMES
What?

BARRY
I know what you did.

JAMES
What do you mean?

Barry sighs. Stands up from the table and leaves.

James shifts in his seat.

Barry returns shortly and sits back down, lifting his finger into view.

It's covered in white powder.

JAMES
Oh.

James is caught.

Barry sees his face.

They both sit in the world's most uncomfortable silence.

Then Barry says:

BARRY

We're going to finish the lesson.

James wants to say something but the words don't come out.

He looks to his notepad.

Then back to Barry.

BARRY

Have you ever heard of freewriting?

James is silent before saying:

JAMES

No.

BARRY

It's where you write about whatever you're thinking. Whatever comes to your mind, and then keep writing.

JAMES

That sounds stupid.

BARRY

Well if you're going to be coked up I figure we might as well use it.

James squints at Barry.

BARRY

I want two pages. Can you do that?

JAMES

Yes.

BARRY

You have twenty minutes.

James look down at the table to a notepad, pen, and textbook.

He looks up to Barry. The clock is already ticking.

He looks down to his paper, and begins writing.

DISSOLVE TO:

KNOCK, KNOCK KNOCK!!

INT. HOUSE PARTY - EVENING

KNOCK! KNOCK!! The sound of a fist bangs against a door.

LOVBORG

Shit.

COLE

Dude, what am I going to do?

Two friends, COLE and LOVBORG, sit in chairs at a table cutting lines of cocaine.

MUSIC plays on the stereo.

On the other side of a locked door in the hallway a girl screams and bangs against the door, trying to get in.

She wants to talk to Cole.

He's busy.

One friend looks to the other and the other back at him and then at the door.

They both look back down to the table and quickly decide to finish the rest of the drugs.

It becomes a race.

They finish.

Cole looks around the room. Lovborg joins him not sure why he's doing it.

The window.

They look at each other. A plan.

Lovborg moves smoothly to the door and opens it:

LOVBORG

Hey.

DONNA

LET ME IN!

LOVBORG

Woah what's up?

Meanwhile Cole is on the other side of the door starting to climb out the window.

DONNA
(calmer)
Nothing, I just need to talk to
Cole.

LOVBORG
He's in the bathroom.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY (FRONT) - EVENING

Outside the window, Cole has begun to scale the wall.

Hopping the last few feet down and landing in the bushes.

He stands back up, brushes the dirt off his hands and notices
someone familiar:

JAMES
Hey.

James is standing outside sharing a cigarette with a cute
girl holding a frisbee.

COLE
Nice.

Cole smiles and walks out of the bushes, swings his leg over
the fence, and continues down the street as if there was
nothing odd about that at all.

The girl giggles at the sight of it:

EMILY
Who's that?

JAMES
My brother.

EMILY
Cool.

JAMES
Yeah.

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

BARRY
Time's up.

James finishes his sentence in a hurry.

He leans back, exhales, then pushes the paper towards Barry.

BARRY

What is this? This is not the reading.

JAMES

No. But the theme is related.

BARRY

Do you think drugs are cool?

JAMES

No.

BARRY

How is the theme related?

JAMES

It's a book about failed role models.

BARRY

Very funny.

JAMES

Isn't it though?

He pauses with hesitation.

Barry listens.

James continues:

JAMES

...he talks to everyone. Reaches out to everyone. Asks for the opinions of others. Respects their beliefs. And lifts them above himself. But in the end he realizes they're all bullshit. So when he goes to his teacher, the last one he hopes understands, only to be violated in some sort of bizarre molestation scene. Well you can see why he ends up screaming at the girl on a carousel, know what I mean? Shoot the bull, indeed.

BARRY

Very funny.

JAMES

I'm not joking.

BARRY

Ok... Then why do you think he's so angry?

JAMES

Because they're all liars. He's surrounded by hypocrites and bullshitters.

BARRY

Including himself.

JAMES

Yes. Himself chief among them.

BARRY

So what's the solution?

JAMES

Who said there was one?

BARRY

Does there need to be?

JAMES

Very funny.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE PARTY (KITCHEN, UNDER TABLE) - NIGHT

James sits under a table talking to the girl he was smoking a cigarette with at the party, it's unclear whether it's earlier or later in the evening.

She's carrying a canvas tote bag with a plastic frisbee sticking out of it.

She's wailing tears. James is listening.

EMILY

And what's with me? Crying like this when you have it so much worse. What's wrong with me?

JAMES

Come on. It's not that bad.

EMILY

See! What's wrong with me?!

JAMES

It's ok.

EMILY
I'm so sorry.

JAMES
It's ok.

EMILY
No it's not!

JAMES
Look.

James gestures emphatically with his hands.

Emily stops.

JAMES
The worst thing that ever happened
to you is the worst thing that ever
happened to you.

She's listening.

JAMES
Don't undo yourself like that.
Starving kids in Africa may have it
worse but that doesn't make your
pain any less real.

EMILY
I'm sorry.

JAMES
Don't be. It's ok.
(pause)
Really.

Emily looks at him.

EMILY
Can I get you anything?

JAMES
I don't know.

EMILY
Maybe a drink?

JAMES
Uh, yeah I guess. Sure.

EMILY
Ok! Be right back.

Emily leaves with excitement.

James falls back onto the kitchen floor and stares up at the bottom of the table.

Something odd, he turns his head sideways to notice that someone has scratched a message underneath the table:

"No one is listening"

CUT TO:

LETTERBOX 2.35:1 ASPECT RATIO

EXPANDS TO 1.77:1 FULL FRAME

PRESENT -- INT. HOSPITAL (PATIENT ROOM) - NIGHT

A hand waves for James to come in close.

He does.

William can't speak. He tries. But he can't.

James looks around.

He spots a notepad and pen across the room.

JAMES

Hold on a sec

He grabs them and returns to the bed, handing pen and paper to his father.

William can't take it.

James puts the paper down on the bed, lifts William's hand on top of it, and sticks a pen between his fingers.

Then he waits.

His father groans.

And scribbles something.

James waits.

He takes the piece of paper.

Written on it in scratch are the words:

"It is ok to leave"

JAMES

I just need to get something to eat. I'll be right back.

James walks out of the hospital and asks directions from the security guard outside.

JAMES

Do you know where I can find a vending machine or something?

SECURITY GUARD

There's a cafeteria in the other building if you go outside and around.

James walks out through a parking lot structure.

Then back inside a different entrance, where he wanders through a hallway into what looks like a school cafeteria, rummages through the leftovers, and goes to the cash register where he stands in line and waits to pay.

Except there is no one there.

He puts his tray down and goes looking.

He finds an employee.

He approaches them and asks:

JAMES

Hey can you help me pay?

CUT TO:

LETTERBOX 2.35:1 ASPECT RATIO

EXT. OLD HOME (FRONT STOOP) - NIGHT

DONNA (O.S.)

Him! That's the guy!!

DONNA

That's his brother!!!

James is standing in front of his old house with no shoes on. The same woman from before is pointing at him. It's Donna.

DONNA

This is the place.

Two large men stand with her, behind them a half-parked car with red and blue lights flashing from inside the windshield.

She's running up the front stoop--

JAMES
What's going on?

DONNA
Your brother called me.

She looks in the doorway up the staircase and then at James.

DONNA
Where is he?

JAMES
Upstairs. Hurry.

James turns around and runs back up the stairs followed immediately by Donna and the two men.

CUT TO:

FULL FRAME 1.77:1 ASPECT RATIO

PRESENT -- INT. HOSPITAL (CAFETERIA) - NIGHT

CAFETERIA EMPLOYEE
You needed help paying?

JAMES
What? Oh, yeah.

They return to the cash register and James awkwardly pays for his tray of food.

He walks to the seating area. It's a wide open empty room.

James sighs.

He places his tray down on a table somewhere in the middle, pulls out his phone, and dials a number.

It goes to voicemail.

DONNA (ANSWERING MACHINE) (V.O.)
Hi this is Donna. Leave a message!

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Hey can you meet me?

He pauses.

JAMES (ON PHONE)

Yeah. I know it's been a while. I hope you're well. I know it's late. It's just. This is weird to say -- My dad is in really bad shape. I'm in the hospital.

James hangs up the phone.

He sits down, pushes the tray forward, places his elbows on the table, runs his hands over his head, and exhales.

We sit with him in the wide open silence for a moment.

Then he gets a text message:

"Are you ok? I'm at work. I'll call you soon."

James walks back to his father's room.

INT. HOSPITAL (PATIENT ROOM) - NIGHT

James sits down in the chair by his father's bed.

A few moments later a nurse walks in.

She moves around the room checking on things.

He tries not stare at her but he watches what she's doing.

She notices:

NURSE

Do you have any questions about it?

JAMES

Uh, no sorry to bother you.

NURSE

It's ok. It's no problem.

JAMES

Well, I guess, I was wondering.
What's that?

He points at a machine next to his father's bed.

NURSE

It's a dialysis machine. It's used to clean his blood in place of his kidneys.

JAMES
Oh, thats kinda cool.

NURSE
Yeah, it is isn't it?

They both laugh a little.

JAMES
Hey, I was wondering. Do you know
what my dad's condition is?

NURSE
Well, that's not really my
department.

She looks at James.

NURSE
But if you want, I can make sure
one of the doctors comes and speak
to you about it tomorrow.

JAMES
Thanks.

The nurse smiles.

NURSE
Of course.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL (FRONT ENTRANCE) - NIGHT

James walks out of the entrance where he finds Donna waiting
for him holding a phone in her hand.

JAMES
Thank you for coming.

DONNA
It's good to see you.

They hug.

DONNA
How are you?

JAMES
(pause)
Wanna get some coffee? There's a
24 hour place inside.

DONNA

Sure.

They enter through the doors and find a cafe seating area.

INT. HOSPITAL (CAFE) - NIGHT

James and Donna sit alone with two cups of coffee amongst a group of empty tables.

The night shift attendant in the background moves away from the cash register to clean the coffee pots.

DONNA

How are you?

JAMES

I'm fine.

Donna laughs.

DONNA

Well obviously that's not true.

James laughs with her.

DONNA

How is your father?

JAMES

He's really bad.

DONNA

I'm sorry.

She leans across the table and touches James' hand.

He lets it sit there a moment before pulling back.

JAMES

So what's new?

DONNA

Not much. Just the same old same old.

They sit in an awkward silence for a moment.

JAMES

Listen, I have a weird question. I know this is random but... nevermind.

DONNA
No, what. What is it?

James is silent as if holding his breath. Then he says:

JAMES
Do you ever wonder why he called
you?

DONNA
Cole?

JAMES
Yeah. I know it's a strange
question.

DONNA
I know why. He told me.

JAMES
What?

DONNA
It was a long time ago. Why are
you asking now?

JAMES
It's all I can think about.

DONNA
Let's talk about something happy.
You don't need this right now.

JAMES
It's all I can think about right
now. Please.

DONNA
James...

JAMES
Please.

DONNA
I don't really--

JAMES
That's ok.

DONNA
I don't know what you expect.

JAMES
That's ok.

DONNA

Ok...

Donna leans forward in her chair and takes a sip of coffee.

DONNA

He told me he didn't want to fight anymore. I don't know. There was something in his voice. I could tell something was wrong. He seemed so upset. I asked him where he was. He said it didn't matter. I asked him where he was going. He said he didn't know. I asked him what's wrong. And he told me everything. The pressure. The expectations. I didn't understand everything he said. But I could tell he had been holding it in for a while.

(Pause.)

He said he'd rather die than continue living in a world where no one loved each other.

I told him that wasn't true.

He said, "then why does everyone always hurt the people they love? Why does no one care? Why does no one try?"

I told him that wasn't true. I told him we were trying right now, in this moment. That he had called me. I picked up. He needed help. I could help him. Let me help him.

(Pause.)

I asked where he was.

He said he didn't know. I asked where he was going.

(Pause.)

He said home.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: " Chapter 3: Cole "

BLACK SCREEN

LETTERBOX 2.35:1 ASPECT RATIO

INT. HOUSE PARTY (KITCHEN, UNDER TABLE) - NIGHT

Cole is lying underneath a table carving the words "No one is listening" into the bottom of it with a pocket knife.

He's wearing a white t-shirt and has a lit cigarette sticking out of his mouth.

Lovborg's voice comes from offscreen:

 LOVBORG (O.S.)
Dude what are you doing.

 COLE
Nothing just give me a second.

 LOVBORG (O.S.)
Alright dude whatever.

INT. HOUSE PARTY (HALLWAY LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Cole is wandering around the party. He's looking for someone.

He stops by a group of people. One of them a friend of his, MARILYN HAYES, is lighting a blunt.

 COLE
Hey have you seen Donna?

 MARILYN
Nah

 COLE
Know anyone who has?

The group of people gesture that they haven't.

 MARILYN
I think she may have been outside
or something.

 COLE
Oh, thanks.

Cole starts to walk away.

 MARILYN
Heyyyyyyy!

He stops.

 MARILYN
Why don't you take a load off? Sit
down. Smoke with us.

Cole looks at the blunt in her hands.

He walks back to the group of people.

She hands it to Cole.

He smokes.

EXT. BISTRO RESTAURANT - DAY

A healthy William sits together with Barry at an outdoor cafe having lunch.

William appears as if he isn't paying attention.

Looking at something in the distance: a child playing with their parent across the street.

BARRY

Will, are you listening?

WILLIAM

What? Yes of course. Sorry my hearing aids.

BARRY

This lunch was your idea.

WILLIAM

I know.

BARRY

And?

WILLIAM

(sharp)

And you said you wanted to discuss James.

Barry waits for the moment to be his again.

BARRY

I'm concerned about his role models.

WILLIAM

I agree.

The two men lock eyes with one another.

BARRY

We need to get James away from Cole.

WILLIAM

What?

BARRY

He's a terrible influence.

William thinks about it.

WILLIAM

I know.

BARRY

He's on drugs.

WILLIAM

I know.

BARRY

William what the hell is wrong with you?

WILLIAM

Excuse me?

BARRY

You're allowing your son to do drugs.

WILLIAM

This is New York City. If my son wants to do drugs. He will do drugs. If he wants to get into trouble. He will.

(Pause.)

Better I know about it, then not.

BARRY

You're letting him ruin your other son.

WILLIAM

I don't like your tone.

BARRY

Will -- James is not like his brother. It's not too late for him.

WILLIAM

And it is for Cole?

BARRY

Let me do my job. Let me help your son.

William leans back in his chair.

WILLIAM
What did you have in mind?

BARRY
Boarding school.

WILLIAM
What?

BARRY
We need to get James away from
Cole.

WILLIAM
Yes, you said that already.

BARRY
Didn't you go to boarding school?

WILLIAM
Yes. Because my parents sent me
away.

BARRY
Wasn't there anything good about
it?

WILLIAM
I suppose. I did get a chance to
learn who I was. Away from my
family.
(Pause.)
Just me.

BARRY
Exactly. James is a good kid. In
the right environment...

WILLIAM
And what's wrong with this
environment?

BARRY
Everything, William. Everything.
(Pause.)
You know this is true.

INT. HOUSE PARTY (HALLWAY LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Cole is still smoking with Marilyn and her friends.

Lovborg has joined them and is lounging across from Marilyn.

James walks by awkwardly and sits alone on the couch across the room.

MARILYN

Is that your brother?

COLE

Yeah.

MARILYN

And you just let him sit by himself?

She takes a puff from the blunt and passes it to him.

COLE

No it's not like that. I bring him with me so he's not alone at home.

MARILYN

Oh. Well you should invite him over then!

James while looking around the room has noticed them.

Marilyn notices him noticing, and starts enthusiastically waving him over.

Cole laughs and then follows suit.

James walks over.

COLE

Hey have you met Marilyn?

MARILYN

Don't be shy!
(passing)
Here smoke this!

James takes the blunt, inhales, and coughs.

Marilyn giggles.

MARILYN

So cute.

Cole is laughing and enjoying himself with his brother and friends.

Music plays in the background.

Then he spots Donna standing alone by a window smoking a cigarette.

She takes a drag and then as if noticing him seeing her, she looks up.

He smiles, and walks over.

COLE
Hey, can we talk?

DONNA
(attitude)
Sure.

COLE
What?

DONNA
What do you want?

COLE
Nothing. I just wanted to talk.

DONNA
Right. Weren't you just talking to Marilyn?

COLE
Come on...

DONNA
Look. Can you just leave me alone please?

Donna looks at Cole's face.

DONNA
It's not even like that. I'm just smoking this cigarette. It's something I like to do alone. It's a zen thing. Can you just let me have that? Please?

COLE
I don't care about her.

DONNA
Well that's not being a very good friend.

COLE
You know what I mean.

DONNA

Ok. What do you want to talk about?

COLE

Why so serious? This doesn't have to be so serious.

DONNA

Whatever dude.

(pause.)

What do you want?

COLE

I miss you.

DONNA

Cole, please don't.

COLE

Why?

DONNA

You know why. We can't keep doing this.

Donna takes a drag from her cigarette.

COLE

I know you still want to.

DONNA

That's not fair.

COLE

Can I get a drag of that?

Donna looks down at the cigarette in her hand. She takes one more drag for herself, and then hands it to Cole.

He takes the cigarette, making eye contact with her before he takes a drag. Not too long, but just long enough.

She looks away. Hiding a tiny smile.

DONNA

Can't we just be friends?

COLE

Is that really what you want?

DONNA

We had some good times but.

COLE
Nothing is hanging over me anymore.
I don't care what my dad says.

DONNA
Cole, It ended really badly.

COLE
I know you still feel it.

DONNA
Cole. I'm with someone else now.
I'm sorry.

Cole looks as if he's been punched in the gut.

Donna feels it too.

DONNA
Cole, are you ok?

He's quiet.

COLE
Do you love him?

DONNA
Yes.

Donna is clear but then adds:

DONNA
Through and through.

Cole is silent.

Donna is concerned.

DONNA
Are you ok?

COLE
I don't believe you.

DONNA
Cole it's true.

COLE
Do you not love me anymore?

DONNA
You'll always have a special place
in my heart.

Not helping the way she meant it to.

COLE
But you'd rather be with him?

DONNA
It's not like that.
(Pause.)
Please don't do this.

COLE
I know you still love me.

DONNA
Can't we just be friends?

Cole is starting to cry.

DONNA
Please don't...

She reaches out with her hand to touch Cole's shoulder.

He recoils.

DONNA
No...

Donna begins to cry too.

COLE
I don't want to be pitied.

DONNA
I know... I'm sorry.

Cole looks up at Donna. She's being sincere.

COLE
Are you happy with him?

DONNA
Yes. We're taking it slow.

COLE
Ok.
(pause.)
I'm happy that you're happy.

Cole turns to walk away.

Donna grabs his arm.

DONNA

Wait.

Cole turns back.

COLE

What?

DONNA

Maybe we could get coffee, and
catch up?

Cole doesn't say anything. He just stares at Donna.

DONNA

Cole? Are you ok?

COLE

I would like that.

DONNA

When are you free?

COLE

Most nights.

(Pause.)

Whenever is good for you.

DONNA

Let me check.

Donna pulls her phone out of her coat pocket.

On it are several messages from someone with two red heart emojis surrounding their name.

He can see the hearts splattered across the screen at the header of several unanswered messages.

DONNA

I could maybe meet Wednesday
afternoon for lunch.

COLE

What about this weekend?

Donna pauses.

DONNA

I'm not free this weekend.

COLE

Nevermind.

Cole speaks as sternly as he can through a blanket of emotion.

Then he turns to walk away.

DONNA
Cole, wait.

She doesn't follow him.

On the way out Cole passes by Marilyn and James who are still smoking with a group of people.

His brother notices.

JAMES
Hey you ok?

COLE
Yeah I'm good.

...and he continues walking.

Cole looks at Lovborg.

COLE
Upstairs?

LOVBORG
Yeah?

COLE
Yeah.

LOVBORG
I'll meet you up there.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE PARTY (ROOM) - EVENING

SCRUNCHING and SCRAPING can be heard. Cole is tapping his leg. Waiting.

COLE
Dude hurry up.

LOVBORG
Shut up.

Lovborg is cutting lines of cocaine.

LOVBORG

What about the time she went nuts
on you?

COLE

You don't know what happens between
two people when they're in a
relationship.

LOVBORG

I know because you told me. You
can't keep making excuses for her.

COLE

I wound her up man. What she did
wasn't ok. She knows that. She
apologized. And it's not my fault
either. But she didn't just--

Cole makes a pair of bunny ear scare quotes with his fingers--

COLE

"Go crazy."

Lovborg just sorta stares at him.

LOVBORG

Whatever dude.

Then he does another line of cocaine.

LOVBORG

If you love her so much then just
go be with her.

COLE

She has a boyfriend.

Lovborg laughs.

LOVBORG

Really? Wow you sure can pick em.

COLE

Shut up.

LOVBORG

Nah man it's alright.

COLE

There's a chance she might leave
him.

LOVBORG
You know what you are?
 (pause.)
You're the other woman.

 COLE
What?

 LOVBORG
You're the other woman.

 COLE
What does that even mean?

 LOVBORG
It means you're so devoted to this
girl and you're just the side
chick!

Lovborg lights a cigarette.

 LOVBORG
Plus! She knows how much you love
her. So she doesn't have to do
shit. You'll always be around. At
best she will string you along.

Suddenly, a loud KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!

They both look to the door.

 DONNA (O.S.)
Cole are you in there?

The two guys look at each other.

 DONNA (O.S.)
 (through door)
I need to talk to you.

 COLE
Just a minute!

 DONNA (O.S.)
What?

Cole looks at Lovborg.

Lovborg shrugs.

 COLE
I just need a second. Give me a
second.

DONNA (O.S.)
What are you doing in there?

Cole looks at Lovborg and gestures to the cocaine on the table.

He points at the door and then back to the table.

The two guys mime back and fourth to one another silently.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

DONNA (O.S.)
(through door)
Let me in.

They decide what to do.

INT. HOUSE PARTY (HALLWAY OUTSIDE ROOM) - EVENING

Outside in the hallway, Donna is knocking on the door.

Muffled music and movement can be heard coming from the other side.

LOVBORG (O.S.)
One minute.

She's growing impatient.

DONNA
Guys what's going on in here?

LOVBORG (O.S.)
Sorry it's just me I'm on the phone
with someone.

DONNA
Lovborg? Have you seen Cole? I
thought I saw him come up here with
you.

LOVBORG (O.S.)
Yeah we smoked earlier but I don't
know where he went.

Just then a loud THUD comes from inside the room.

Donna isn't buying it.

She starts slamming on the door.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!!!

DONNA
 Cole?? I know you're in there. Open
 the fucking door.

She's KNOCKING.

DONNA
 Let me in!

--just then the door opens.

It's Lovborg.

LOVBORG
 Hey.

DONNA
 LET ME IN!

LOVBORG
 Chill.

DONNA
 Sorry. Is Cole in there? I need to
 talk to him.

LOVBORG
 No he left.

DONNA
 Oh. Well can you tell him I'm
 looking for him.

LOVBORG
 Yeah if I see him, sure.

INTERCUT scene with Cole climbing down the exterior of the
 building.

DONNA
 Thanks.

Donna walks down the hallway to find a place alone and then
 pulls her cellphone. She dials.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY (FRONT) - EVENING

Cole jumps down from the wall.

He lands in the bushes.

JAMES
 Hey.

His brother James is standing there sharing a cigarette with Emily.

Cole looks at his phone. Donna is calling him.

He ignores the call.

He looks up at James with Emily:

COLE

Nice.

Then he nonchalantly swings his leg over the fence and starts walking down the street.

She giggles at the sight of it:

EMILY

Who's that?

JAMES

My brother.

EMILY

Cool.

JAMES

Yeah.

EMILY

What's his deal?

JAMES

He likes to climb shit.

EMILY

(giggling)

I can see that.

She cranes her neck upward looking at the wall where Cole jumped down from.

James looks forward, uninterested.

Then she taps his arm.

EMILY

Look.

JAMES

What?

She taps harder.

EMILY

Look!

James looks upward to see Lovborg leaning halfway out a window.

Loud music is blaring behind him and sounds of the party can be heard coming from inside.

JAMES

(upwards)

What the hell?

Lovborg mouths the words:

LOVBORG

Tell your brother to call me.

James yells:

JAMES

What?!

Lovborg makes a phone gesture with his hand to his ear.

LOVBORG

(downward)

Tell your brother to call me.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM) - MORNING

BARRY

So is that why you think your brother is so cool?

JAMES

Shut up.

BARRY

No. I really want to know.

JAMES

You're just some asshole I met last week. You don't know anything.

BARRY

Then explain it to me.

JAMES

You don't care.

BARRY

What makes you think that?

JAMES

My parents hired you. Which means you don't really care.

(pause)

You're just paid to pretend you care, sometimes.

BARRY

I take all my cases seriously.

JAMES

See. I'm just a fucking case to you.

BARRY

What word would you prefer I use?

JAMES

I don't care.

BARRY

Sounds like you're trying to get angry.

JAMES

(sarcastic mocking)

Oh my god. Just shut up. Please.

Barry looks James straight in the eye.

BARRY

Look. I may be paid. But don't mistake that for thinking I don't care. My time is important to me. I wouldn't be here if I didn't care.

James has his arms crossed.

JAMES

My brother just gets it. He's always been there. When my parents never were.

Barry listens.

JAMES

In some ways he's more my parent than they are.

James looks down.

JAMES

At least he's around more than they are.

James gets excited.

JAMES

He knows a lot of cool stuff. He's always telling me about it.

BARRY

That's cool.

James looks at the table.

JAMES

He reads a lot of books.

He looks at Barry.

JAMES

You two might get along.

--eyes quickly to the floor.

JAMES

I think.

EXT. BY THE WATER - DAY

The sky shines brightly.

Cole and Donna are outside in the weather, sharing a joint.

They pass it back and fourth to one another.

COLE

She'll be here in a few hours.

DONNA

Yeah.

Cole looks at Donna.

COLE

Don't be nervous.

DONNA

What? I'm not nervous.

COLE

You got nothing to worry about. She's gonna love you.

DONNA
I'm not nervous!

She is.

COLE
(laughing)
Ok, ok.

She gives him a look.

He raises his hands up to make an apologetic gesture.

COLE
Okay.

DONNA
Shut up.

COLE
Ok.

Donna laughs.

COLE
It's gonna go well. I promise.

Donna leans in to kiss him.

DONNA
Ok.

Cole puts his arm around her.

They finish smoking the joint.

DONNA
We should get the stuff.

INT. GROCERY STORE (AISLE) - DAY

Donna is standing alone in the dairy aisle perusing the options.

She spots something interesting and grabs it.

--meanwhile, in a different aisle, Cole is grabbing hamburger buns and stacks of cheese.

Donna surprises him from behind.

Cole is startled.

DONNA
(laughing)
Haha! Gotcha!

He gives her a look.

She sees it.

DONNA
Hey, look what I found.

She reveals a tube of goat cheese from behind her back.

DONNA
Jalapeño honey goat cheese.

Cole is into it.

COLE
Oh wow.

He chuckles.

COLE
Verry nice.

DONNA
It's almost a crime that things
like this exist.

COLE
I know, right? The hubris.

DONNA
Do you think she'll like it? I know
she likes fancy stuff.

COLE
My mom? Nah she doesn't
discriminate. She likes all kinds
of food.

DONNA
I know your dad loves his cheese
and crackers.

COLE
Yeah

He laughs.

COLE
We could probably just have that
for dinner.

She laughs. They laugh together.

COLE

You ever run into him late at night
with no pants on, eating cheese and
crackers at the kitchen counter?

DONNA

(dramatically)

Yes.

Cole laughs.

DONNA

Yes I have.

He keeps laughing.

DONNA

It's not funny!! It's traumatizing.

COLE

Was he wearing boxers?

DONNA

Which time?!

Cole laughs.

DONNA

I'm afraid to go to the bathroom
late at night now!

COLE

Really? I'm sure he doesn't mind.

DONNA

Yeah, but I do!

COLE

What happened?

DONNA

I woke up to use the bathroom and
then went downstairs to get a glass
of water. There he was, standing at
the counter wearing a t-shirt and
nothing else.

COLE

Well, at least there's that.

DONNA

He screamed and tried to cover himself with the shirt.

COLE

What'd you do?

DONNA

I screamed too! What do you think I did?

Cole laughs.

DONNA

Then he started apologizing but I was already saying I was sorry and then we were both just saying "sorry" and I ran away up the stairs.

COLE

All the while saying sorry!

DONNA

So many sorrrys.

They both laugh.

DONNA

Honestly I kinda thought your dad hated me.

COLE

He doesn't hate you! Why would you think that?

DONNA

Remember what happened with the pan?

COLE

He's like that with everyone. He's like that with me. He's just, very... particular about things. And he hasn't left the house in a long time -- I wouldn't take it personally.

DONNA

Yeah... I guess.

COLE

I'm sorry. I know he can be kind of an asshole.

DONNA
No he's not an asshole.
(pause)
Your father is just... he's a
complicated man.

COLE
Yeah...

Cole looks at the shelf.

COLE
Is that everything?

DONNA
Yeah I think so.

They finish their shopping and pay at the cash register.

INSERT - hamburgers, buns, and condiments are swiped over the
barcode reader.

EXT. GROCERY STORE (FRONT ENTRANCE) - DAY

Cole and Donna exit the grocery store with bags in hand and
begin walking down the block.

COLE
Did I ever tell you about the time
my dad grilled in the rain?

DONNA
(giggling)
No! What happened?

COLE
Well it all started when my dad--

Cole shifts the grocery bags in his hands.

DONNA
Do you need me to carry one of
those?

COLE
Could you?

DONNA
Of course!

Cole moves to hand Donna one of the bags.

COLE
Juice or buns?

DONNA
Buns. I don't wanna carry that
liquid.

She laughs.

COLE
I thought so.

They both laugh.

She takes the bag from him.

COLE
So yeah, basically, when my parents
got divorced and my dad bought his
own place. He tried to cook. But
he could never do anything on a
stovetop. Especially rice.

DONNA
Rice can be tricky.

COLE
Exactly! The secret is to just set
the timer and trust it. Don't
check it. Every time you lift the
lid to see if it's done, you fuck
it up.

DONNA
Yup.

COLE
So yeah, he was trying on the stove
and he just couldn't do rice.
After several months of mushy rice
or burnt rice, he just gave up and
started cooking every single meal
on the grill.

Donna laughs.

COLE
He was always good at grilling. So
he stuck with it. Even in bad
weather.

DONNA
What?

COLE

Yeah! One night it rained and he was out there with an umbrella, standing over the grill, flipping steaks in the rain.

DONNA

That's dedication.

COLE

Yeah.

Cole chuckles.

COLE

My dad takes grilling seriously.

Cole pulls his phone out to check the time.

COLE

It's almost 5. So he'll probably be awake.

DONNA

Your mom gets here at 5:30?

COLE

Yeah.

DONNA

Do you think I have time to shower?

He wants to say yes.

COLE

Do you have to?

Cole and Donna look at each other.

DONNA

I just, want to be ready.

COLE

Ok yeah. If you hop in right when we get there it should time out just fine.

Cole looks at Donna. He can tell she's nervous.

COLE

Don't worry. She's gonna love you.

DONNA
Stop saying that! You're gonna
jinx it.

Cole laughs.

COLE
Ok... ok..
(pause)
Really though.

He leans in to kiss her and they give each other a reassuring
smooch.

DONNA
Ok.

Donna smiles.

INT. OLD HOME (BATHROOM) - EVENING

A shower curtain. The sound of running water.

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN) - EVENING

Cole is setting knives, forks, and napkins in their proper
places around a dinner table.

The doorbell rings.

Cole shouts upstairs:

COLE
Mom is here!

Cole goes to the door and greets his mother.

A few moments later Donna comes downstairs, having finished
her shower.

DONNA
Oh my god I'm so sorry to keep you
waiting.

CAROL
Not at all honey. I just got here.
Now come give me a hug.

She goes to hug Donna.

CAROL
It's so wonderful to finally meet
you.

William comes downstairs.

WILLIAM
Hello Carol.

The whole room turns their attention to him.

CAROL
Hi Will. It's been a long time.

WILLIAM
Yes it has.

He turns to his son:

WILLIAM
Shall we get this show on the road?

COLE
Ok... Yeah, sure.

Cole goes outside into the backyard.

William turns toward Donna:

WILLIAM
When will you graduate college?

DONNA
I'm planning to go back to school
in the spring.
(pause)
Right now I'm focused on saving
money at my job.

CAROL
Oh that's wonderful. I worked my
way through school too.

WILLIAM
What will you study?

Cole comes back inside.

Everyone looks at him.

COLE
So, this is embarrassing... But,
we're out of propane.

WILLIAM

What?

COLE

The tank is empty.

WILLIAM

You didn't check it ahead of time?

COLE

I never have before.

WILLIAM

Oh, I see.

COLE

What?

WILLIAM

I thought you prepared. You're the one that planned this.

CAROL

It's no problem. We'll just get takeout. What does everyone want?

WILLIAM

I don't know.

Silence fills the room.

CAROL

Well it's not that big a deal. Do we have any menus?

Cole goes to the kitchen and grabs a folder of menus.

The room is awkward. No one knows quite what to do.

CAROL

Well what are the options? What is everyone hungry for? Chinese? Japanese? Indian?

COLE

How about Chinese. That's easy.

WILLIAM

I don't want takeout Chinese. Too salty.

COLE

How about Japanese? I know you like that one spot.

WILLIAM

Ok, sure.

Cole grabs the menu and they all pass it around.
Everyone is taking their time with it, unable to decide.
Carol grabs the menu, and a pencil.

CAROL

So what does everyone want?

She looks around the room. Everyone is quiet.

CAROL

How about we get a few rolls. Some
appetizers. A nice mix of things.

She's writing all this down. Circling items on the menu.

CAROL

Here, Cole... Why don't you call
the restaurant.

She hands him the list.

COLE

Sure.

Cole dials the restaurant on his cellphone, they pickup:

COLE (ON PHONE)

Hi I'd like to place an order for
delivery please.

He's on the phone...

The news on his face does not look good.

He hangs up.

Turns back to the group:

COLE

The restaurant doesn't exist
anymore. They said they moved
locations.

WILLIAM

Really?

COLE

It's fine. We can just call
another Japanese place.

WILLIAM

And what new problem will that bring?

COLE

It's fine. I'll just go out and get it.

William looks at Cole, then over to Carol and Donna.

WILLIAM

No. You two can go.

They're a little surprised. Nervous.

COLE

What?

DONNA

It's fine. No problem.

COLE

You sure?

She gives him a look.

DONNA

Yeah.

EXT. OLD HOME (FRONT STOOP) - EVENING

Carol and Donna exit the house.

Donna pulls out a pack of cigarettes, then asks:

DONNA

Mind if I?

CAROL

Not at all.

Carol pulls out her own pack of cigarettes.

CAROL

You got a light?

Donna laughs.

DONNA

Sure.

They take turns lighting cigarettes.

CAROL
Don't worry about it. He can be a
real asshole sometimes.

DONNA
It's ok. I just feel bad for Cole.

CAROL
He'll be alright.
(pause)
So where are we going?

DONNA
I think the place is a few blocks
this way.

Donna points in a direction.

They begin walking down the street together.

INT. OLD HOME (LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN) - EVENING

Cole and William sit across from each other in the kitchen.

Things are quiet for a moment.

Cole is staring his father down.

Then he leans forward in his chair:

COLE
What the fuck?

William stays silent.

COLE
What the fuck is wrong with you?
(pause)
Why are you doing this?

William remains stone faced.

WILLIAM
Doing what?

INT. HOUSE PARTY (HALLWAY LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Back at the party, James is sitting next to Emily on a couch.

Music plays in the background.

She's doing something on her phone.

James is being awkward.

She isn't noticing.

James gets an idea.

He takes his phone out.

Pulls up a phone number by the name of Emily and types a text message:

"Would you like to dance?"

She's typing something else when she gets the message.

She giggles and looks over at him.

She then turns away and types him a response:

"No"

"Haha"

"thanks tho"

EMILY

That was very funny.

James is disappointed.

JAMES

Wasn't it?

They sit in an awkward silence for a moment.

Then Donna walks up to them.

DONNA

Hey, have you seen Cole?

JAMES

I thought he was with you.

DONNA

He was. For a moment. But now I can't find him.

Donna is worried.

DONNA

Do you know where he went?

James is reluctant but he changes his mind.

JAMES

No I haven't seen him in a while.
Maybe he left?

DONNA

Thanks.

Donna glances at her phone and walks out.

EMILY

Look. I'm terrible at dancing and
I would feel like an idiot.

JAMES

What? Oh yeah.

He leans with confidence.

JAMES

The whole point of dancing is to do
it like no one's watching. Anyone
that's going to judge you is
probably too afraid to dance
themselves... so fuck 'em.

EMILY

Yeah but still! Everyone will be
watching!

James is looking at his phone.

JAMES

No they won't. No one gives a
shit.

EMILY

Jeez that's dark.

James turns to Emily:

JAMES

I'm sorry. I gotta go.

James gets up and leaves.

INT. FRIEND HOME (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Lovborg is sitting in what looks like a teenage bedroom in an
apartment somewhere.

His phone rings.

He glances at it and then looks to the window.
Cole is standing outside on the pavement holding a phone.
Lovborg knocks on the glass and gestures for Cole to wait.

EXT. FRIEND HOME - NIGHT

Lovborg opens the door without shoes on.
He invites Cole in and they tiptoe up the stairs.

INT. FRIEND HOME (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

They enter the bedroom.

COLE
How'd you get back here so quick?

LOVBORG
You know that moment when you're
having such a great time that you
decide it's time to leave?

Cole laughs.

COLE
Dude what are you talking about?

LOVBORG
Like when it's going so well that
you want to end on a high note
while the person still likes you.
Instead of waiting for it to get
awkward again and then that's the
memory you leave them with.
Sometimes when it's all going well,
that's when I know it's time to
leave as soon as possible.

COLE
That doesn't make any sense.

LOVBORG
What are you talking about? It
makes perfect sense.

Lovborg is reaching for his secret stash of cheap liquor.

LOVBORG
Besides all the girls had left.
Party became a sausage fest.

He pours shots of whiskey for both him and Cole.

LOVBORG

Hey where'd you go? You're the one jumping out of windows and shit.

COLE

I couldn't let her see me doing that.

(pause)

Do you have any left?

They both down the shots.

LOVBORG

Nah I finished it all.

COLE

Wanna get more?

LOVBORG

You got cash?

COLE

Some. Yeah.

LOVBORG

Ok yeah.

Cole's pocket starts vibrating. He pulls his phone out and the caller ID reads: "Donna"

He ignores the call.

COLE

You got anything I can come down with later?

LOVBORG

I have a couple of Xanies.

COLE

Lemme get one.

LOVBORG

Do you have five dollars?

COLE

Really?

LOVBORG

Dude they cost me--

COLE
 --I'm putting money down on a
 twenty.

LOVBORG
 Right. Ok.

Lovborg reaches into his pocket and hands Cole a long white Xanax pill.

LOVBORG
 Actually... While we're waiting...
 I do have a little left.

Cole laughs.

COLE
 Seriously?

Lovborg goes to a small cabinet drawer on top of his dresser and pulls out a small white bag.

LOVBORG
 Yup.

Cole's pocket starts vibrating.

He takes his phone out. James is calling. He picks up.

COLE (ON PHONE)
 Yeah?
 (listening)
 I'll meet you back at the house in
 a bit.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY (FRONT) - NIGHT

James is outside the party on the phone with Cole.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
 Yeah, ok.

James hangs up the phone.

As he begins to continue walking away, Donna shouts behind him:

DONNA
 Hey where are you going?

JAMES
 Home.

DONNA
Alright. If you hear from Cole,
please tell him to call me.

JAMES
I will.

James continues walking.

Donna looks at her phone, worried in the dark.

INT. FRIEND HOME (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Cole's phone is vibrating. He's not picking up.

Low music plays on a small speaker in the background.

LOVBORG
Hey do you have that twenty. The
guy is downstairs.

Cole reaches for it.

COLE
Is he coming in?

LOVBORG
I'm meeting him downstairs. He's
not coming up.

Cole hands him the twenty dollar bill.

Lovborg exits the room.

While Cole is waiting he looks around the room.

Then at his phone.

He has several missed calls from Donna.

He goes to dial her back.

But then he doesn't.

He looks around the room.

Sighs.

He lifts the phone back up and begins typing a text.

Then he deletes it without sending.

He hears Lovborg coming back up the stairs.

Cole lifts the small bag of Xanax that Lovborg gave him earlier.

There are two long rectangular white pills in the bag.

He takes both of them, and downs it with a shot of whiskey.

--Lovborg reenters the room.

COLE

Hey.

LOVBORG

Hey.

COLE

Did you get it?

LOVBORG

No he ripped me off.

COLE

What?!

LOVBORG

Just kidding.

Lovborg reveals a small bag of white powder.

COLE

Asshole.

LOVBORG

It was funny though.

COLE

No.

Lovborg sits down with the bag.

LOVBORG

Not even just a little?

COLE

Fine. Maybe a little.

LOVBORG

I thought so.

He starts cutting lines.

LOVBORG

Hey what happened to the music?

COLE
Must have reached the end of the
playlist.

LOVBORG
Put something new on.

COLE
Alright one second.

Cole looks at his phone and sees a missed message from Donna.

COLE
Hey can I use yours?

LOVBORG
Sure.

Lovborg hands Cole his phone.

Cole selects an upbeat track.

Lovborg presents the lines of cocaine like a showman.

The two of them take turns snorting through a rolled up
dollar bill.

Cole's pocket starts to vibrate.

He checks his phone.

This time it's James.

He hesitates, before picking up.

COLE (ON PHONE)
Hello?

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Are you coming home?

INT. FRIEND HOME (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

COLE (ON PHONE)
Yeah man I'll be there in like 30-
45 minutes. Don't wait up for me.

Cole glances at Lovborg as he says it.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

JAMES (ON PHONE)
Alright. It's fine. I just think
Donna may be worried. You might
want to call her.

James looks down the street.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
See you soon.

He hangs up the phone and continues walking.

INT. HOME (FRONT HALL) - NIGHT

James enters his home.

He can make out a faint trail of smoke leading through a doorway into a room with the bright flashing light of a television playing against the wall.

As he approaches he sees a glass of vodka on the table.

His mother Carol is sleeping in a chair.

James tidies things up and puts a blanket over her.

He turns off the TV.

She wakes up.

CAROL
Cole?

JAMES
It's me, mom.

CAROL
Oh James. Hi.

Carol sits up straight and stretches her eyes open.

CAROL
What time is it?

JAMES
Late.

James hesitates.

CAROL
Are you going back to your father's
tonight?

JAMES
I'm going upstairs to bed.

CAROL
I know your father wants you to
live with him.

JAMES
Mom can we not do this now?

CAROL
You know your father didn't always
hate me. At one time, he loved me
very much.

JAMES
I know mom.

CAROL
Your father and his rules.

JAMES
Mom I'm going to bed.

CAROL
Yeah, yeah. Your crazy mother.

JAMES
That's not what I said.

CAROL
Yeah yeah whatever.

JAMES
Mom...

CAROL
Are you going to your father's
tomorrow?

JAMES
Yeah yeah whatever.

CAROL
James...

JAMES
Don't change the subject like that.

CAROL
What are you talking about?

JAMES
I didn't call you crazy. You said that. Not me.

CAROL
I don't understand.

JAMES
Don't do that. Don't pretend like you didn't say what you said.

CAROL
What did I say?

JAMES
Mom, stop doing that.

CAROL
Tell me what I said.

JAMES
I can't remember exactly what you said. Stop that. You know what I mean.

CAROL
Why do you always want to analyze everything?

JAMES
I'm not analyzing. I'm trying to talk to you about something you brought up.

James waits for a response.

JAMES
I'm going to bed.

He turns to walk away.

CAROL
I learned to be a tough cookie. I never complained.

JAMES
Talk to you in the morning mom. I love you.

Carol stirs in her chair.

CAROL

Wait. Let me make you something to eat.

EXT. FRIEND HOME (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Cole and Lovborg are sitting in a smoke filled room.

COLE

Hey I can use your bathroom?

LOVBORG

Sure just be quiet in the hall.

Cole exits the room, closing the door carefully.

INT. FRIEND HOME (HALLWAY) - NIGHT

He moves through a dark hallway.

INT. FRIEND HOME (BATHROOM) - NIGHT

Cole flicks on the bathroom light.

He looks at his phone.

He pees in the toilet.

He looks at his phone.

He checks his face in the mirror.

He splashes water on himself.

He checks his phone.

He looks in the mirror.

He calls Donna.

DONNA (ON PHONE) (V.O.)

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. OLD HOME (TV ROOM)

The room is dark and quiet. A single lamp lights a desk by the window. Underneath it is a dinner tray of food with half a glass of water.

The TV is on with the volume low.

James is asleep in front of the TV lying on a pull-out sofa with a fleece blanket over him.

We can hear keys and a door opening downstairs in the front.

Someone is crying.

We hear a muffled shout, "none of it matters!"

James stirs.

The TV is showing an argument scene.

James looks at it for a few moments and then puts his head back into the pillow.

INT. OLD HOME (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

COLE

(sobbing)

None of it matters. None of it matters.

CAROL

Cole, none of what matters? What's wrong.. Talk to me.

COLE

It's all pointless. Nothing matters.

CAROL

What happened baby?

COLE

Just fuck off! You don't care.
See--

Cole walks over to a kitchen drawer. He opens it.

There are knives inside.

He pulls one out.

CAROL

Woah woah woah

COLE

See!

Cole takes a long kitchen knife and holds it to the inside of his arm.

Carol has her hands out gesturing empathically to calm down.

CAROL
Honey you don't want to do this.

COLE
You don't care!
(sobbing)
None of it matters!

Just then James shouts from upstairs.

JAMES (O.S.)
What the hell are you yelling
about?! It's 3am.

Cole shouts back:

COLE
Shut the hell up! Just shut the
hell up!!!

He throws the knife on the floor and then turns to the counter where he sees his mother's empty vodka glass.

He picks it up and throws it across the room. It smashes against a wall.

COLE
(sobbing)
God damnit!

Cole drops to his knees, crying.

COLE
God damnit.....

He's almost out of breath.

Carol begins to lean in.

James is watching from the stairwell.

JAMES
What the fuck is wrong with you?!?!

Cole looks up at James.

There is rage in his eyes.

He stands up, walks passed Carol, and starts marching up the stairs.

James sees this, turns around, and starts walking back to the TV room.

Cole follows him.

They're in the room now.

James turns around.

JAMES

I didn't mean it like that.

Cole shoves him onto the pull-out sofa.

He walks over to the glass of water, picks it up, and pours it on top of him.

JAMES

(shocked)

What the fuck?!??

He sits up and tries to brush off the excess water.

JAMES

--is wrong with you?

Cole's face tenses up.

He smashes the empty glass against the side of his head--

CUT TO:

FULL FRAME 1.77:1 ASPECT RATIO

PRESENT -- INT. HOSPITAL (HALLWAY) - NIGHT

James jolts awake next to Donna on a hospital bench.

DONNA

What happened? Are you ok?

James is confused as bright fluorescent lights hit his eyes.

A few moments later he adjust them to see Donna.

JAMES

Yeah I'm ok. Just a... a bad dream.

James looks around the room down the hallway.

JAMES
What happened?

DONNA
We were talking and you fell
asleep.

JAMES
Sorry. I haven't gotten proper
sleep since I've been in this
place.

DONNA
I bet.

JAMES
What time is it?

DONNA
Late.

James laughs.

DONNA
So what do you want to do?

James thinks about it.

JAMES
Well there's this 24 hour deli I
got a good sandwich at the other
night. We could go there. They
have chairs.

DONNA
Sure. I can't stay out too late.
I have to meet my parents tomorrow,
but--

She looks at James.

He looks at her back.

DONNA
--I can stay out for a little while
longer.

JAMES
It's ok. If you have to go home I
understand.

DONNA
No I can stay a little longer.
Really.

JAMES

You sure?

DONNA

Yeah.

James makes a long tired blink and rubs his temples to wake up.

DONNA

Y'know it's you that should probably go home and get a proper night's sleep-- Take a shower.

JAMES

One of the nurse's here let me use a shower in the NICU unit.

DONNA

Oh, that's nice. But... Have you left since you got here?

JAMES

No.

DONNA

How long has it been?

JAMES

I don't know. It's hard to tell.
(pause)
A little over a week maybe?

DONNA

You should get some rest.

JAMES

I will.

He leans back against the wall.

So does she.

A few moments go by. Then Donna says:

DONNA

While we're talking about it... I know this has been a difficult time for you, but-- nevermind.

JAMES

No, what is it?

DONNA

It's just that. Well. Do you know why Cole met up with you that night?

JAMES

What do you mean?

DONNA

Well... was he looking for drugs?

JAMES

What?

DONNA

I saw the text messages from you addressed to him. I know you two were doing cocaine that night.

James is hurt.

DONNA

No it's just that.

JAMES

Y'know it's actually kind of your fault.

DONNA

What's that supposed to mean?

JAMES

He was upset about you that night. If you hadn't always been messing with him he wouldn't have lost his damn mind.

DONNA

James you can't do that.

JAMES

Do you know what you just accused me of?

DONNA

No I didn't--

JAMES

Yes. You did.

DONNA

I saw the text messages James. I know you two met up that night.

JAMES

Fuck off.

He gets up to walk away.

DONNA

James. Wait. I didn't mean it
like that.

He keeps walking.

Turning the corner and getting in an elevator.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: " Chapter 5: William "

BLACK SCREEN

The elevator doors open.

James walks forward into a hallway.

JAMES (V.O.)

When we were kids my father tried
to limit our TV time. After
getting in trouble he once tried to
put a lock on the cable box.

James turns through hospital corridors.

JAMES (V.O.)

So we stole our mom's cigarette
lighter and days later devised a
plan to break it open that involved
taking turns keeping watch, and
heating the lock with a tiny flame
while we chiseled at it with a
screwdriver and hammer. Two weeks
later. We got that lock off.

James reaches his father's room.

JAMES (V.O.)

It's one of the fondest memories I
have of my brother.

He stands over William's bed.

JAMES (V.O.)

But sometimes I wonder if our
father was right.

The phone in James' pocket vibrates.

He looks at it.

A message from Donna.

He ignores it.

A doctor enters the room.

DOCTOR

He's been on dialysis for nearly a week. He never woke up after he came out of surgery. Are you prepared?

JAMES

What do you mean?

DOCTOR

Did he have wishes?

JAMES

What do you mean, wishes?

DOCTOR

A will or anything like that.

JAMES

No.

DOCTOR

Are you his healthcare proxy?

JAMES

No.

DOCTOR

Is anyone else?

JAMES

No.

DOCTOR

Are you his closest next of kin?

JAMES

Yes.

DOCTOR

Well then we'll have to work on getting you proxy forms.

JAMES

Yes.

James blinks.

JAMES

Wait what?

DOCTOR

You'll have to decide whether or not want to sign a DNR order for your father.

JAMES

Right.

The doctor looks at James' face.

DOCTOR

Do you have family to discuss this with?

JAMES

No.

DOCTOR

Would you like me to send in the social worker to discuss this with you?

The room is quiet.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry to bother you with this but we do need a decision.

JAMES

Ok.

DOCTOR

The social worker will swing by in the next few hours. That should give you time to discuss this with any family you may have.

JAMES

Ok.

The doctor stands there wishing they could do more. Then leaves the room.

James sit there. Exhausted.

He runs his fingers over his face as if that will somehow wake him from this nightmare.

He moves around the room, tense.

He looks over his father's bed. Trying to think of something special to say.

He doesn't know what to do.

His phone rings. He looks. It's Donna again.

He tightens his grip on the phone.

He picks up.

JAMES (ON PHONE)

(letting loose)

Y'know you're not so innocent. You and Cole were doing coke together long before you broke up. Have you forgotten the time you had a seizure and I caught you? For fucks sake, your toes curled up, you went stiff as a board, and leaned up and tipped backward. Hit the floor. And started convulsing. I didn't know what to do. I think I turned you over. If my father hadn't been there. Jesus. When you came to, it was like your mind was a computer rebooting itself. You sounded like a goddamned invalid. I thought you fried your brain, Donna. But slowly you came back to us. I don't understand it. What the fuck is wrong with you people!? Do you all have a death wish? Why are you doing this to me. I'm sorry. I just don't know what to say anymore.

Silence.

James is shocked by his own words.

His face is filled with regret.

He hears sobbing on the other end of the phone.

Donna is crying.

DONNA (ON PHONE) (O.S.)

I'm sorry.

She breathes through a wet nose.

DONNA (ON PHONE) (O.S.)

I'm such a piece of shit.

JAMES (ON PHONE)

I'm sorry.

James looks at his father.

DONNA (ON PHONE) (O.S.)

You don't have anything to be sorry
for.

James sits down.

JAMES

It's not your fault.
It's not my fault.
It's not anyone's fault.

He runs his hand over his head.

JAMES

It's just all so fucked up.

Medical machines beep.

Something is wrong.

James looks up at the bed.

It's his father.

JAMES

No.

--Doctors rush into the room.

JAMES

No, no, no.

James takes his phone out.

He dials his mother.

JAMES (ON PHONE)

Mom? I need you to come to the
hospital.

CAROL (ON PHONE) (V.O.)

I thought you said your dad didn't
want me to come.

JAMES (ON PHONE)

I don't care what he said.

James looks at the flashing lights around the room and the
doctors and nurses working.

He speaks closely into the phone.

JAMES (ON PHONE)
He's dying, mom. Just hurry.
Please.

Things SLOW DOWN. The room begins to blur.

White noise.

CUT TO:

FULL FRAME 1.77:1 ASPECT RATIO

CONTRACTS TO 2.35:1 LETTERBOX

INT. OLD HOME (STAIRS) - NIGHT

James is running up the stairs in SLOW MOTION.

Donna and the two men are behind him.

INT. OLD HOME (TOP FLOOR) - NIGHT

Carol is holding Cole back from the window.

INT. HOSPITAL (PATIENT ROOM) - NIGHT

James is watching his father die.

INT. OLD HOME (TOP FLOOR) - NIGHT

James reaches the room with Carol and Cole.

His face widens.

He runs forward.

INT. HOSPITAL (PATIENT ROOM) - NIGHT

Doctors move around the room.

William is crashing.

They pull out the electric paddles.

James drops his phone.

INT. OLD HOME (TOP FLOOR) - NIGHT

Donna reaches the room with Carol and James.

The two men follow immediately behind.

Her face is ghost white.

Cole is not there.

It's just Carol and James.

Sitting on the floor.

His arms are wrapped around her.

INT. HOSPITAL (PATIENT ROOM) - NIGHT

William is dying.

James is watching it happen.

A MONTAGE continues until it's all over.

James is left alone in the room.

Eventually he's approached by a nurse.

NURSE

Is there someone I should call?

JAMES

I'll be alright. I just need to be alone for a little bit.

NURSE

Are you sure?

JAMES

Yes.

The nurse exits the room.

James sits in complete silence.

He looks out the window at the skyline.

It's beautiful.

The city lights have streaked across the water.

James is in awe.

He takes it in.

--a moment later, he hears someone behind him.

Carol walks into the room.

She sees James there, alone.

She walks over and sits down next to him.

Carol puts her arms around James.

CAROL

It's ok. I got you baby.