

HEADSPACE

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INT/EXT. WHEATLAND, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

A beat-up Kia minivan packed with household items rolls down a dark, rural highway.

Inside, EDYTHE NORDELL, an exhausted attractive woman in her late 30s, grips the wheel, driving on through force of will.

Beside her mopes FORD, a 17 year old with the weight of the world on his scrawny shoulders.

INT. KIA MINIVAN - NIGHT

They pull past a sign, "Welcome to Wheatland, California
Population 3,841."

FORD

Guess they'll have to send someone
out to change the sign now.

EDYTHE

That's not where we're headed.

They turn away from town, onto a lonely two-lane blacktop lit only by their headlights.

FORD

Wait? We're going somewhere worse
than THAT? Mom, it looks like the
bottom of the ocean out here!

EDYTHE

A few million years ago, it was.

FORD

And I thought Riverside was a shit
hole.

EDYTHE

Riverside is a shit hole. And I
know you were miserable. But you'll
like it here; people do nature
things, like hunting and fishing.

Ford pulls his hoodie tight around thin shoulders with a frustrated, pensive look.

EDYTHE (CONT'D)

And your friend Jamie's been here
for a while.

He rolls his eyes with a doubtful GRUNT.

FORD

I don't know, mom. That guy could
be really weird sometimes.

She shoots him a stern look:

EDYTHE

No, young man, that is NOT how you
treat a friend. You know that.
Jamie was very supportive,
afterwards...

She trails off.

And Ford stares silently at the flat expanse of empty
rangeland that surrounds them.

INT. KIA MINIVAN - BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

TWO AIR COPS stand at the gate. Barbed wire fence on either
side. Edythe lowers her window as they roll past a COUPLE OF
PROTESTORS, huddled together in a pair of folding chairs.
Their signs reference 'predator drones.'

An AIRMAN comes over. She hands him her ID. He shines a
flashlight at her face, at Ford.

FORD

What if they find all that meth in
the trunk?

EDYTHE

(under her breath)
You shut up.

The AIRMAN hands back her ID.

AIRMAN

Welcome to Beale Air Base, Doctor.
On behalf of General Mattin and
everyone here, it's a relief to
have you aboard, ma'am.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

She drives off and the Airman's smile drops. He looks back to
his partner in the booth.

AIRMAN 2

What do you reckon?

AIRMAN
(shaking his head)
The Colonel's gonna eat her alive.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - MORNING

This base is huge, old and empty. Desolate rangeland in all directions. Worn out brown hills in the distance.

Every section is isolated from the rest: the flight line, the Base Exchange, housing.

EXT. NORDELL HOUSE - MORNING

An old ranch-style wood house perched on the edge of a small ravine. The front double doors are open.

MOVERS stream back and forth between their van and the house. Edythe stands in the yard with a clipboard.

MOVER ONE
Ma'am, any idea where this goes?

He carries a box. On one side, in marker: 'Termite Mound.'

EDYTHE
Anything trying to be funny just
put in my son's room.

MOVER ONE
As much as we can fit.

FROM THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE

Ford walks from the back, taking stock. Not impressed.

A young man (MARC, 16), wearing the least cool workout gear humanly possible, watches from the sidewalk.

MARC
You moving in to the house?

FORD
(sarcastic)
Naw, we're gonna live on the roof.

MARC
Well that would be dumb.

FORD
(feeling stupid now)
Yeah. I'm an idiot. Sorry, my
name's Ford.

MARC
I'm Marc. I live over there, on the
inside. Anyway, don't be weirded
out. They cleaned this place up
pretty good.

FORD
It was worse than this?

MARC
(nervous)
Oh. I'm just saying they did a very
professional job, with the clean
up.

Ford comes closer, sensing the boy's anxiety.

FORD
Marc, what did they need to clean
up?

MARC
Please don't say you heard it from
me! They totally re-carpeted, so
you should be good in there.

FORD
What happened?!

MARC
(groaning, frustrated)
This guy killed his self. His wife.
Some other stuff. But mom made me
promise to keep my trap shut!

FORD
(unnerved)
I won't tell her.

MARC
It's no use. My mom is a darn mind-
reader. I got guilt all over my
face. Anyway...

With a forced smile, Marc gives a dorky thumbs up, heading
back across the street.

MARC (CONT'D)
Things are looking up now that
you're here!

INT. NORDELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Boxes everywhere. Ford sits in an easy chair with a concerned look on his face, eying the white walls. Edythe enters with a small wooden box. Carved eagle on top.

ON THE SIDE OF THE BOX, a metal plate: "Jayton Nordell, Father, Husband, Pilot." From the birth and death dates it looks like he's been gone about two years.

FORD
Mom, please! Not by the TV.

EDYTHE
Your father deserves a position of respect. I'm not going to shove him in a box.

FORD
He's already shoved in a box.

Edythe glares. She takes a lot of ribbing. Not about this.

FORD (CONT'D)
(apologizing)
It's always being reminded, is the problem...

She softens. And Ford shrugs it off.

FORD (CONT'D)
Wherever you want, mom. It's not like I can forget, with airplanes taking off every 15 seconds.

INT. MARC'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

This is a 'good' kid's room. Posters for bands that no self-respecting teen would like, an Advent calendar. Marc and Ford are curled up on the floor against the bed, controllers in hand, playing a violent two-person shooter.

Marc's running amok, firing everywhere.

MARC
Douche! Douche! Douche...!

FORD

Idiot. Don't run out in the open!

Marc's fighter is blown away. Then Ford's.

MARC

Sometimes I just like to go for it.

FORD

And why do you keep yelling
'douche'?

MARC

That's my gun noise.

FORD

Man, you better Google that. All
I'm gonna say.

MARC

I don't play the shooty ones much.

Ford lets the controller fall from his hand.

FORD

And I guess this is all there is to
do around here? Besides square
dancing and cow tipping...

MARC

(dry)
Maybe you'd like D&D?

FORD

Dungeons and Dragons?

MARC

I kid. That's like a code word
people use at school.

FORD

For what? Being a dork?

MARC

No, I get it. You think we're
living out in the sticks. It ain't
the big city, but there are some
kids at our school into some weirdo
things.

Ford sits up, curious.

FORD

Like what?

MARC

Orgies.

FORD

Bull shit.

MARC

Sex orgies. And drugs.

That rolls around Ford's head for a second.

FORD

Marc, your curfew is sundown.
You're like Central California
Amish, how would you even know?

MARC

Buddy boy, you would not believe
the things people get into when
there's nothing else to do. Anybody
around here asks you to play D&D,
you better know what you're in for.

FORD

(trying to imagine)
I mean, are the girls attractive?

MARC

Wrap your willy up with duct tape
first.

FORD

Oh. Yeah...

MARC

Then some other dude's dong's all
flapping around in front of you the
whole time...

FORD

(suddenly the expert)
Marc, I don't think you even know
how an orgy works.

MARC

Won't matter for you, regardless.
Only the quote-unquote cool kids
get invited.

Marc didn't mean it as an insult, but it hits Ford like a
slap in the face. He really wants to fit in, this time.

FORD

Ouch.

MARC

All I'm saying is you don't look
like you play the sports. Right?

Ford grabs a pillow and smacks him in the side of the head.

MARC (CONT'D)

E-Sports don't count!

INT. NORDELL HOUSE - KITCHEN NOOK - MORNING

Ford eats cereal morosely. Edythe races back and forth,
preparing for the day. Pats him on the head.

EDYTHE

Remember to find Jamie. Don't be
shy; he can help you break the ice.

FORD

That's not how life works.

EDYTHE

The concept of friends hasn't
changed. You haven't evolved beyond
friends.

FORD

Got it; thanks.

EDYTHE

Maybe Jamie isn't your best friend
ever, but he was nice. Don't be a
'drip'. People respond to positive
emotions.

A mirror leans against the wall; she checks herself out.

EDYTHE (CONT'D)

You love me. Bye.

FORD

Yeah, all that.

EXT. WHEATLAND HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A small school where rural kids mix with military brats. We
see RANCH KIDS who've been up since 5:30 milking cows, HEAVY
METAL KIDS...

AND THE COOL KIDS. An urban gloss, an air of entitlement.

Ford steps off the bus, backpack over one shoulder, trying hard to look like he couldn't care less.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

The school is a giant hollow rectangle, with covered walkways and a courtyard along the inside.

Ford eyes his environment, clocking the power dynamics:

TWO JOCKS MOCKING A GIRL WITH BAD SKIN.

A CLIQUE OF LATINAS SECRETLY VAPING.

A LONELY OUTCAST WHO BRIEFLY MEETS HIS EYES AND LOOKS AWAY.

Then someone brushes past him, turning to smile as she continues on.

IT'S MAY, 19, ATHLETIC, DARK-HAIRED AND DANGEROUS. She's not beautiful in a traditional sense, unless your tradition is some ancient Pagan worship of the elemental forces. May's got a collection of mismatched features, her nose and eyes maybe a little too big. But somehow they come together with a sultry and electric intensity.

Ford sees the faintest gap-toothed grin as she gives him a nod and moves on...

A tall pock-marked man in a cheap suit steps out from beneath the covered walkway to block her path across the quad.

He raises both hands, barely masking his exasperation.

VICE PRINCIPAL ROBERT

May? May... -stop!

She stops short. His eyes linger on her bare legs.

VICE PRINCIPAL ROBERT (CONT'D)

We talked about your skirt. No higher than the middle of your thigh.

MAY

Vice Principal Robert.

VICE PRINCIPAL ROBERT

May...

MAY
 (for all to hear)
 I'm starting to feel uncomfortable
 how often you talk about my thighs!

Kids turn to look. VICE PRINCIPAL ROBERT grits his teeth as May shakes her head in disgust, winks at Ford, then whirls around to continue on her way.

THE SOUND OF A THROAT CLEARING.

Ford turns to see a more conventional girl, AYNE, who's been streaming the encounter on her phone. You can tell she's lower-echelon popular. The sort that keep the rest in line.

AYNE
 Let me help you out. It's not going
 to happen.

FORD
 What?!

AYNE
 Boi, that girl is so out of your
 league.

FORD
 (grasping for a subject
 change)
 Well, no, I'm actually looking for
 my home room, so if you could...

Ayne raises a palm to ward him off.

AYNE
 And so am I.
 (sing-song)
 Sor-ry!

She turns attention back to her phone, muttering something with the word 'loser' in it.

FORD
 But I wasn't...

Ayne ignores him. May is long gone.

Trying to hide his embarrassment, Ford starts walking, only to see...

A STRANGE KID HOLDING COURT BY THE FAR WALL OF LOCKERS:

JAMIE, 17, tall and thinner than a credit card. One side of his head is shaved, the other sprouts multi-hued pony-tails.

He's got a neck tattoo, painted nails, a cutup denim jacket over a woman's blouse. But he makes it work. The kid is popular.

He throws Ford a 'what the fuck are you looking at?' expression. But he pauses. Tilts his head.

JAMIE

Ford?

FORD

Jamie?!

Jamie's face lights up, he races over. Ford is flat-out confused.

JAMIE

What the fuck!? You live here now?

FORD

Pretty much.

JAMIE

Oh man, I've been so down on life lately, but this is the nuts! Now I know we're going to have a fucking great year!

FORD

You look ...different.

Jamie comes in close, drops his broad smile.

JAMIE

(speaking low)

You can tell, I'm kind of going for a different thing now. So don't mention Riverside. I told everybody we're from Los Angeles.

FORD

What? We?

JAMIE

(low)

You're part of the story. Just run with it. It's a new school; no one has to know what fucking geeks we were.

The BELL RINGS and Jamie is back to his public persona: he bursts with energy, grabs Ford's face and kisses his forehead.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

You have no idea how much happier I am at this moment! But shit, I haven't been doing enough of the class thing, so I'd better go make that happen.

FORD

Yeah, of course...

JAMIE

Let's catch up after school.

(then, suggestive)

A bunch of us are going to do some D-N-D?

Ford's been working hard to keep it cool, but that all disappears.

FORD

(worried)

I... You know I actually took a bus today.

JAMIE

We'll give you a ride home; call your mom.

FORD

But... D&D?

JAMIE LAUGHS, wraps an arm around one shoulder, talking close.

JAMIE

It's not what you're thinking.
Trust me: TOTALLY different.

Ford sees other kids watching enviously, pretending not to.

IT'S NOW OR NEVER:

FORD

(trying for confidence)

Yeah. Yes, absolutely. Text me?

JAMIE

Oh, these days I'm kind of into the straight edge thing...

FORD

What?!

JAMIE

Not with drugs. Gimme a break. With drugs I'm a fucking fiend. I'm not doing Instagram, email, texting. All that unreal shit was bringing me down. I got a flip phone now.

He turns to A FRIEND, motions. The kid hands him a pen.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

(to friend)

Something bigger, like a marker?

Instantly, ANOTHER FRIEND reaches over, a different pen. Jamie takes Ford's arm, draws a phone number along his wrist.

Then with a wave, he's off.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Best day in months. Everybody, this is Ford! And Ford:

(wrestling announcer voice)

Wheat-land-High-School!

Ford watches him go, dazed.

Then the girl who mocked him sidles up, taps him on the shoulder.

AYNE

I'll take you where you're going. Sorry I was a bitch. But seriously? My boyfriend was being such an idiot --sometimes I think he's developmentally disabled. My name's Ayne.

Ford sees a pair of GIRLS nearby: Eyeing him, talking...

But in a good way.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

The massive base stretches off in all directions.

Miles from officers' housing: Giant domed bunkers, camouflage brown and grey.

INT. EDYTHER NORDELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Military doctor's office. Posters warn about syphilis and alcoholism. Edythe has a sergeant, RAY, 33, on a table in a patient's smock. Ray is scrawny with apple cheeks and buck teeth, like a cartoon rabbit with a Carolina accent.

She presses the end of a stethoscope to his naked back.

RAY

So it was my C.O. was concerned.
I'm a little run down is the
upshot.

She takes his chin and lifts a small flashlight.

EDYTHER

Follow the light...
(as he turns to look at
it)
--with your eyes.

RAY

I did have a couple cups of coffee,
is why I could be jittery.

EDYTHER

No worries, you tested negative for
everything we care about.

RAY

Oh, I'm worry free. My urine is as
pure as a baby's... uh, urine. I
could sell that stuff on the
internet. --not that I'd do it!

EDYTHER

I am a little concerned about your
D-N-D use.

He's instantly alert. Tries to hide it.

RAY

After the incidents, ma'am, we are
all focused on proper dosage.

EDYTHER

The fact is, you simply have less
body mass than the other airmen.
The point is to connect,
communicate, visualize --not
disappear into a fantasy world.

He nods, maybe a little too eagerly.

EDYTHE (CONT'D)
You're just worn out. I know the
hours people put in around here.

As she turns to put away her flashlight, panicked relief
washes over Ray's face.

EXT. WHEATLAND HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Ford stands off to the side, talking into his phone as kids
stream from the building. He's trying his best not to get
this favor from mom:

FORD
(skeptical)
Jamie said he'd get me a ride home,
at some point, I guess... Unless
you'd rather I came home now?

EDYTHE (V.O.)
I'm so glad you're making friends.
Absolutely you should do some
hanging out.

FORD
(worried)
Okay.

A HONK.

He looks over to a white pickup truck on the street. Jamie
waves from the passenger side. Four kids in the back.

EVERYONE
Ford! Let's go!

Bystanders watch with envy as Ford heads over, trying for
confidence.

As he comes to the passenger side, Jamie bends down to grab a
beer, revealing May in the driver's seat.

THEIR EYES MEET. She cracks the faintest smile.

MAY
Climb in the back, asshole.

EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - RURAL ROAD - AFTERNOON

They race down a tree-lined road. In the bed of the truck,
Ford grips the side for dear life. As he looks from person to
person, we see a graphic of his knowledge about each one:

From the front, Jamie passes an opened beer out the window to a heavysset Latino kid in the bed:

'DOUGIE: RICH KID. FOOTBALL PLAYER. WEIRDLY NICE.'

Dougie drinks and hands the beer to the white girl beside him.

'AYNE: AIR FORCE BRAT. KIND OF BITCHY.'

She drinks and holds on to the bottle. Next to her is a suave half-Filipino boy with a glorious mane of curly hair:

'GRAY: JAMIE'S DJ. THINKS HE'S THE SHIT.'

Ford looks to his right where a hauntingly beautiful girl of Central American descent sits:

'ROBY: THE GIRL WITH THE ASS. DON'T STARE.'

Then he turn to his left, toward May in the driver's seat.

'MAY: JAMIE'S GIRLFRIEND? INTIMIDATING.'

May takes a corner too fast. Roby's hand grabs Ford's shin for support. Their eyes meet.

On screen: 'OH SHIT. HARD-ON. THINK OF ZOMBIES, ZOMBIES...'

EXT. MAY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The pickup pulls onto a gravel driveway leading to a small wooden house set back on an acre of woods.

Ford hops out, straightening his jeans as Roby walks past.

ROBY

My dad used to live in LA. What part are you from?

FORD

Aw, you know. Middle...

ROBY

Like Miracle Mile?

FORD

Kind of. A little down the road.

Ayne hands him her beer as they all head for the front door.

Ford tilts the bottle; it's empty.

INT. MAY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The gang files in. This single-story bungalow is essentially one big room. And other than a kitchen table, there's almost no furniture.

The living room is a mass of blankets and pillows on shag carpet. A few burger wrappers. Underwear.

MAY

Welcome to the manor.

MAY has a precise way of talking that always sounds vaguely sarcastic. With a familiarity born from practice, she turns the oven on, pulls out a Pyrex baking dish.

Jamie opens a drawer and takes out a small yellow box. Ford watches as he removes a vial and empties it into the dish.

JAMIE

This is D-N-D.

MAY

Dimethyl-Nucleic-Methylphenidine.

FORD

Ah, D-N-D. Okay. So you cook this stuff up and snort it?

MAY

(looking deep into his
eyes)

Unless you want it as a
suppository?

Ford can't help glancing over to the pillows and blankets on the living room carpet.

FORD

But... But what's it like?

JAMIE

You've taken E before, right?

FORD

It's like that?

MAY

Nothing like that.

The others come over to watch as the baking dish goes into the oven. An air of anticipation.

JAMIE
(a little loud so all can
hear)
But we're running low...

MAY
Dougie.

Dougie groans.

DOUGIE
What about the new guy?

MAY
Come on, he just got here.

Ford raises a hand.

FORD
I can pitch in. Is it super
expensive?

Jamie, Dougie and Gray all laugh. The girls make what could
best be called a 'wincing' face.

MAY
Doug's going to worry about that.

Ford's already drained a beer. He puts the empty on the
kitchen counter, opens the refrigerator.

Jamie stops him.

JAMIE
You don't want to drink too much
before we get going.

Ford nervously eyes the living room as Jamie leans in close.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
First time is amazing. This is
going to be a great fucking year.

FORD
Hope so.

JAMIE
(under his breath)
Just follow my lead with our story
and we're golden.
(then loud)
I didn't even realize what was
missing, man. It's you.

MAY PULLS OUT THE BAKING PAN

RAZOR BLADE IN HAND, SHE SCRAPES PURPLE POWDER OFF THE PYREX.

She chops it, makes a pile, chops again. It's like watching a sushi chef. They crowd the table like puppies at a food bowl.

DOUGIE
Hey Ford, this stuff popular in
L.A.?

Ford shoots a look to Jamie, who subtly shakes his head.

FORD
Don't think so...

AYNE
I bet you'll miss not being able to
surf.

Jamie interrupts:

JAMIE
--taught me everything I know!

FORD
Ah, I'm not really that good.

DOUGIE
Not what I heard! I want some
lessons before I make the drive
down there.

FORD
(glaring at Jamie)
Will definitely try...

SEVEN LINES OF PURPLE POWDER.

Jamie snorts a line with a rolled up bill. Grimaces.

JAMIE
I'll go make the room. May, could
you help Ford get set up?

MAY
Love it.

She gestures to Ford and a line of purple powder. Jamie hands him the rolled up bill.

Ford sees them all, watching him.

Jamie ambles into the living room and falls back on a pile of pillows with an enthusiastic stretch of his arms and legs.

FORD
(convincing himself)
Okay then. Let's do it.

Ford snorts.

A SUDDEN, INTENSE LOOK OF SHOCK.

MAY
Stings a little.

May takes the bill and efficiently hoovers up a line as Ford makes all the faces a person would if he'd just snorted a line of industrial strength bleach.

May hands the bill to Ayne then takes Ford by the shoulder.

MAY (CONT'D)
This way.

He's dazed, rubbing his nose as she leads him to the living room.

Jamie's on his side, eyes closed. May sits beside him, pats the blanket next to her.

MAY (CONT'D)
You can't wait too long. Lay down
and face me.

He does, a little shaky. His eyes are wide; pupils black.

May studies his face with a frightening intensity. Hungry.

FORD
I'm feeling... Oh...

MAY
The first time is so intense. I can
see it in your face. Say my name.

FORD
May... May, what's happening?!

MAY
It's building a little hard drive
in your brain.

FORD
What?!

He tries to sit up --anxiety redlining-- but can't keep his balance. May guides him back down.

To her left, Jamie's begun making a strange croaking noise, like an old-fashioned dial-up modem.

MAY

You're going to feel this weird ache, and it's going to make you want to make some noise.

FORD

There's something growing inside my head!

MAY

You can think about it that way, if you want.

FORD

(massively fucked up)
But I don't want to! My brain... melt...

MAY

You need to let the noise come out. It's important! Listen to me.

Her mouth goes slack and that strange GROANING SOUND comes out, as her eyes roll into her head and she slowly drops to the pillow.

Ford tries to sit up...

BUT THE ENTIRE ROOM ERUPTS IN STREAKS OF COLOR AND SWIRLING, CUBIST NIGHTMARES.

Ayne, Doug, Gray, and Roby meander to the living room, but they've become color-streaked silhouettes.

Ford's mind shreds into disassociated strings that pulse and throb around the room.

HIS EYES GO WHITE, HIS MOUTH HANGS OPEN AND THAT WEIRD CROAKING NOISE COMES FROM DEEP INSIDE.

CLICKING, INSECTILE, PERCUSSIVE.

SOUND AND COLOR BECOME EACH OTHER AS THE ROOM ACCELERATES INTO HYPERSPACE.

AND THEN A WORLD TAKES FORM.

INT. THE BAR AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE - NIGHT

A huge twelve-sided room, pulsing with light and color. Its very nature subtly mutates from moment to moment, as if it were being recreated every second by a half dozen production designers tripping on twice as many drugs. Through a domed translucent ceiling we see the glorious edge of a galaxy.

The laws of physics are different, too. Jamie stands to one side, arms wide, as a complete bar erupts out from one of the many walls.

IN STYLISH EVENING WEAR, MAY TAKES FORM.

FORD, IN HIS OWN CLOTHES, APPEARS BESIDE HER.

HE HYPERVENTILATES LIKE A MAN JUST PULLED FROM THE WATER.

SHOCKED AND ALERT. HE HOLDS HIS SHOULDERS.

FEELS THIS NEW REALITY.

Then looks over to May.

MAY
Cool, huh.

Too emotional to speak. Ford takes a deep breath.

FORD
I... It's...

MAY
More real than reality.

Ford nods.

JAMIE
Welcome to the bar at the end of
the universe!

INT. MAY'S HOUSE - DAY

On the blankets and pillows, the seven kids are arranged in a circle, heads to the center.

That CROAKING NOISE comes from the entire group, drifting in and out of sync. The sound of insects in summer.

Their bodies twitch like dogs chasing rabbits in their sleep.

INT. THE BAR AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE - NIGHT

Ayne, Dougie and the rest take form as Jamie motions like a conductor.

The room explodes with detail. Liquor bottles rise up to populate the bar like dominoes falling in reverse.

May walks to a blank wall and gestures.

AN ORNATE DOOR TAKES SHAPE. ASIAN MOTIF.

Ford comes over, staring in wonder.

MAY

We create our own rooms. I'll teach you how. I don't think you can help doing it, actually.

Jamie calls from the bar:

JAMIE

Don't take too long!

She opens the door. On the other side there's a tropical beach.

May walks in, takes Ford's hand.

EXT. ON A CAMBODIAN BEACH - SUNSET

A beautiful Asian villa on a pristine beach at sunset. Powder white sand. Fruit bats flying in to roost for the night.

May and Ford enter from a door to the street and she carefully locks it as he stares in awe.

FORD

You made this?! The beach and the sky and everything?

MAY

This is the last place my parents took me on vacation.

FORD

You have an amazing memory.

MAY

They passed away last year. I could never forget this place.

FORD
(suddenly awkward)
Oh. I'm really sorry...

Ford pauses, unsure. Then he blurts out:

FORD (CONT'D)
--I lost my father.

MAY
(oddly casual)
Then you know what it's like. But
now I have this to remember them
by. I escape here when things get
too shitty.

He turns to peek in through the curtained windows of the villa.

MAY (CONT'D)
(grabbing his shoulder)
No! This way. I want to see the
waves.

A TROPICAL PERGOLA

May and Ford sit under a thatch-covered platform on a massive pillow, tea service beside them.

She holds her open palms a few inches apart. Filigrees of light begin to take shape.

MAY (CONT'D)
It's easy once you get the hang of
it. Like drawing with your
imagination.

A TEA SPOON FORMS

She takes it, leans over and spoons sugar into a cup and pours herself tea.

Ford holds his hands like hers.

MAY (CONT'D)
You have to visualize what you're
going to make, so it should be
something familiar.

FORD
My dog?

MAY

No! Holy crap, no. Nothing alive
unless you really, really know what
you're doing. How about a hat?

He stares at his hands.

Shimmering lights form strands between his fingers.

A COWBOY HAT TAKES SHAPE. Cartoon yellow.

Ford puts it on. Doesn't quite fit.

MAY (CONT'D)

So I need to teach you fashion too.
Good to know.

She takes it off his head, casually kissing him as she tosses
it into the sand.

Then she pauses to see how that registers.

Ford's not quite sure.

FORD

But...

MAY

Here's the thing. Don't fall in
love with me.

FORD

What?!

MAY

I know that sounds like I'm full of
myself. I'm not saying it's likely
to happen. I'm just saying it's not
GOING to happen. So be aware.

FORD

You're not with Jamie?

MAY

What I'm saying is, I'm not a
relationship person.

Another kiss, more sensual.

MAY (CONT'D)

We've been doing this a while. You
need someone to teach you the
basics. Might as well be me.

Ford looks like he's being hit with a firehose of Christmas gifts.

FORD
Yes, please.

MAY
But that's all it is. It's a way
for friends to connect and
communicate. Like Facebook pretends
to be. The only rule is no cruelty,
no judgment. If you're here, we're
on the same team.

A moment of intense connection, eye to eye.

FORD
But that's exactly what I've always
wanted.

Ford takes the initiative, hands reaching down the length of
her body.

MAY PULLS AWAY

She stands, straightening clothes that barely exist.

MAY
Plenty of time for that. We don't
just fuck all day. That would get
boring.

He nods in agreement, convincing nobody.

MAY (CONT'D)
We'd better go. I'll teach you more
next time.

EXT. THE BAR AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE - NIGHT

There's ten times the crazy now: glowing schools of fish dart
about, planetary systems spin out of control, Roby and Gray
make out on a cloud, showering phosphorescent rain in the
form of tiny emoticons that hit the floor and burst with
color.

All wear party clothes. Dougie's a pimp, Jamie a 17th-century
fop. Ayne is high fashion, Roby is Gothic Mayan princess.

May leads Ford back inside, then grabs his ass as a friendly
good-bye before floating off to join the others.

He watches her go as Jamie flies over with a pair of tropical drinks in what appear to be living tiki mugs.

TIKI MUGS

"Alooooha!"

JAMIE

May's a great teacher, huh.

Ford takes a drink, shoots Jamie a troubled look:

FORD

And it's okay with you...?

JAMIE

Look, you need to stop thinking about the rules out there, on the outside. That's just stuff people like my dad invented to control the rest of us.

Jamie comes in, talking close, eye to eye.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

If you're not hurting anybody, shouldn't you be allowed to act on your feelings?

FORD

(defensive)

I mean, I've always felt that way, sure.

JAMIE

Those negative voices in your head. Or those kids back in Riverside that made me want to fucking kill myself? They're all trying to control you. But we're not letting that happen in here.

Jamie steps back, raises his hands, and FLASH: he wears an elegant suit. Looks like James Bond.

FORD

It's like being a super hero, with none of the responsibilities.

JAMIE

Just remember when you're back in the prison world: all that 'being last person chosen for volleyball' shit never happened. Now, you and me ARE the shit.

SLOW FADE

INT. NORDELL HOUSE - FORD'S BEDROOM - MORNING

AN ORNATE MIRROR BUILT INTO THE BACK OF FORD'S CLOSET DOOR.

Edythe and Ford stare at him in the mirror. He wears a dated suit that he's almost outgrown. In her Sunday best, Edythe ties his tie.

EDYTHE

I know this is trying for you, but do me this favor and act like you want to be there? For once, save the sarcasm or political statements.

FORD

I'm not a monster!

EDYTHE

I know. Somewhere deep, deep down inside, you're not.

INT. OFFICER'S CLUB THANKSGIVING DINNER - DAY

It's Thanksgiving at the Beale Air Force Base Officers Club. Festive with an obsessive-compulsive edge. Signed photos of airplanes are everywhere. Bunting, turkeys, pilgrims.

The dining room is immaculate, tablecloths precisely cornered. OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES take their seats.

EDYTH AND FORD WALK TO A TABLE NEAR THE WINDOW.

Another family is there already: COLONEL MATTIN, HIS WIFE, SMALL DAUGHTER, AND SON.

EDYTHE

Colonel Mattin, Anne. Sorry, we're a few minutes late.

COLONEL MATTIN

You know I never worry about punctuality.

You can tell he REALLY worries about punctuality. Ford, meanwhile, stares slack-jawed at Colonel Mattin's son.

IT'S JAMIE. A complete makeover. A pressed suit hides his neck tattoo, nails and hair are pristine. A comb-over makes him look more like a new recruit than an emo rocker.

FORD
(dumbfounded)
Jamie?

COLONEL MATTIN
Sit down. We've already got our first course. They operate these dinners with ruthless efficiency. Like a Kawasaki subway system.

Ford and Edythe take their seat. Ford reaches for a roll.

But Colonel Mattin CLEARS HIS THROAT in such a defining manner that all motion at the table stops.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
We waited to say grace.

The Mattin family lower their gaze. Ford looks to his mother, who furiously gestures to the tabletop with her eyes.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
James...

Jamie winks at Ford, lowers his head.

JAMIE
(like a pro)
Dear heavenly father, thank you for this fabulous meal of which we are about to partake. When so many people in this world are suffering needlessly, in daily pain and torment, you provide us with a bounty of glorious food...

A DESSERT KIOSK NEAR THE SALAD BAR

Time has passed. Jamie squirts chocolate soft serve into an ice cream cone as Ford walks over.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
I love this stuff. It's like candy poop.

FORD
How do you do this?!

He motions to Jamie's outfit as he takes a cone.

JAMIE

Dude, clothing is just a costume
society forces on us to regulate
social behavior. So who gives a
fuck? Dad hits me a lot less.

FORD

You're better at this than I am.

Ford squeezes a lever and soft serve squirts into his cone.
Jamie reaches over and drops something on top.

JAMIE

This'll help.

FORD

...Xanax?

JAMIE

Shit, dad's coming.

Jamie exits, calling 'Sir!' to his father as he heads back.
Ford laps the pill off his cone and follows...

But Colonel Mattin is there.

COLONEL MATTIN

Clifford.

The Colonel is ramrod straight. Could probably do a hundred
pushups without getting winded.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)

Son, I want you to know your father
was a good man.

FORD

(confused)

Sir?

COLONEL MATTIN

I don't want you thinking because
he crashed that he was any less of
a pilot. These are not airliners.
On the best of days, they're
dangerous machines. Could have
happened to any one of us.

Ford's face clouds over. He snarls:

FORD
(furious but controlled)
I never for one second thought my
dad wasn't a good pilot.

COLONEL MATTIN
Many children under this kind of
stress act out. But the concerns I
had were groundless. I think you'll
be a good influence on my James.

He straightens the shoulders of Ford's suit.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
But I wonder if you might do me
this one favor?

Ford waits for it, still angry.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
At one time James had a 'friend.'
Her name was May. He may have
mentioned her in passing.

FORD
Not ringing a bell, Colonel.

COLONEL MATTIN
That young woman is dangerous, she
is unhealthy. She is sick. I do not
want him to 'see' her. In neither
the associative nor Biblical sense.
You understand me?

FORD
Yes.

COLONEL MATTIN
You will call me personally, should
this occur.

A REVEILLE RING TONE.

Colonel Mattin pulls out his phone and speaks, looking
directly into Ford's eyes.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
Mattin.

From the tension in his jaw, you can see the Colonel is
getting super pissed.

AT THE TABLE

Colonel Mattin and Edythe leave, mid-meal. She's taking her lead from him.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
Apologies, as always. Please carry on.

ANNE MATTIN
Jim?

One look from her husband is enough to quiet her. This woman knows disappointment.

Always the fixer, Jamie ladles dressing onto his sister's plate, talking to Ford.

JAMIE
You know, tomorrow you'll finally get a chance to see me perform.

Ford 'smiles,' embarrassed.

FORD
Oh yeah, I meant to ask. About the singing.

JAMIE
No, no, listen! I am so much better than when we were kids. I'm not bragging--but I kick ass now!

FORD
I see the whole humility thing's really working out.

JAMIE
No joke, you're gonna be impressed.

FORD
Then afterwards, you think maybe there's a chance we could all get together and... D-N-D?

Jamie sighs:

JAMIE
Yeah. Put it back in your pants, she'll be there.

Ford glances over at Mrs. Mattin. But she's not paying attention, caught up in her own personal Hell.

FORD
That's not...

JAMIE

--stop thinking like a kid! May talks to me; she likes you. But none of us worry who's with who. That possessive stuff is high school bullshit.

FORD

A hundred per cent.

JAMIE

We're on the same team now. You need to think about all of us.

INT. DEMOLISHED BUILDING - SUAKIN, SUDAN - SUNSET

FIRST LIEUTENANT SPARKS is a mess. Covered in blood, shaking, curled up against a wall. The weird thing is, he's dressed for a day at the beach.

And he's surrounded by WOUNDED SILENT SUDANESE. Bloody, some of them missing limbs. They stand around him, watching.

EDYTHE AND COLONEL MATTIN WALK OUT FROM AROUND THE CORNER.

In their Thanksgiving clothes, they calmly head over to Sparks, paying no attention to the silent locals.

EDYTHE

John, can you hear me? Follow the sound of my voice.

COLONEL MATTIN

(furious)

Lieutenant Sparks!

INT. MARC'S HOUSE - DAY

Marc's bedroom. Ford sits on the floor in his suit. Marc lays on his stomach on the bed. They play a children's video game and Marc is nailing it.

FORD

Until this dinner, I never realized Jamie's dad is who they mean when they say THE Colonel around here.

MARC

I seen him at church. That guy is dark.

Ford drops the controller, stretches.

FORD

So he corners me at one point.
Makes me promise to tell him if I
see Jamie and May together.

MARC

Ooh, land mine!

FORD

I hope mom gets assigned to a
different base before that comes
out.

MARC

Well, I can't say I blame him,
considering.

Ford pulls a double take.

FORD

Are you kidding? May is smart. And
hot.

MARC

I told you what happened...

Marc leans over the edge of the bed to peer down at Ford.

MARC (CONT'D)

She's the one that lived in your
house. Her dad raped her; killed
her mom, blew his brains out. I
heard she was chained to a hospital
bed for a month, all cuckoo brain.

FORD

Why didn't you tell me!?

MARC

I did. Sort of assumed you'd pay
attention.

FORD

You didn't say the rape stuff!

MARC

Well, we were just getting
acquainted.

Ford curls up on the floor, grimacing...

FORD

Oh, poor May.

MARC
Why do you think you're here?

FORD
Me...?!

MARC
Your mom took that guy's job. He
was the drone pilot doctor.

INT. EDYTHER NORDELL'S OFFICE - DAY

A medical area adjoins Edythe's office. She and Colonel Mattin lean over a gurney, wearing what look like massive gaming headphones with mics attached. Each headset has a channel indicator on the side. An ASSISTANT stands nearby.

Lieutenant Sparks is on the gurney, fetal position, wearing one of those headsets. Making that croaking noise from Ford's D-N-D session.

Colonel Mattin rips off his headset. Edythe nods to her Assistant, who wheels out the gurney.

EDYTHER
Well, the first thing I'm doing is
lowering their mission dosage.

COLONEL MATTIN
No. That's not happening.

Edythe isn't used to being countermanded. Stares down the Colonel.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
You know how critical dosage is! He
abused the medication. This was a
personnel failure.

Then a pleading sound comes into the Colonel's voice:

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
Your predecessor almost destroyed
everything. Your work. Professional
reputation. You won't have anything
left if this program fails.

EDYTHER
Or if our pilots are catatonic.

COLONEL MATTIN

This program is a fantastic
success. Suicides are down 80%!
Mission hours are up dramatically.

EDYTHE

With a few that drift off into
psychosis?

Okay, he's done being nice. Mattin's eyes go cold.

COLONEL MATTIN

We are not having a philosophical
argument. Your work saves lives.
Fact. And you will show the men and
women on this base, through your
daily behavior, that you understand
this to be true. Or you will regret
for the rest of your motherfucking
life, doctor, the moment you
crossed me!

(barely calms himself)

--Excuse the fucking profanity.

INT. STASSI'S FOURTH WARD TAVERN - NIGHT

A Marysville dive bar a few miles off base that's probably
been here since Teddy Roosevelt was president. Not too big,
not too friendly. SMALL TOWN LOCALS smoke cigarettes or vape
out front.

Ford drives by in his mom's minivan. Sees a white pickup
parked nearby, beer can on the roof.

INT. STASSI'S FOURTH WARD TAVERN - NIGHT

Tiny bar, quaint decor. A mix of unpretentious locals and
truckers coming down off a meth binge.

Jamie, May, Roby, Dougie, Ayne and Gray are here, clearly out
of their element.

FORD ENTERS THE BAR AND PUSHES THROUGH TOWARD HIS FRIENDS.

He waves to Jamie, then catches May's eye.

Meanwhile, the crowd appreciates a middle-aged BEARDED DUDE
playing an acoustic version of "Breaking The Law", by Judas
Priest:

BEARDED DUDE

(singing)

You don't know what it's like,
you don't have a clue.
If you did, you'd find yourselves,
doing the same thing too.
Breaking the law, breaking the law.
Breaking the law, breaking the law.
Breaking the law, breaking the law.
Breaking the law, Breaking the...

APPLAUSE as the dude finishes, nodding in manly gratitude.

THEN JAMIE AND GRAY QUICKLY PLUG IN THEIR EQUIPMENT.

A LOCAL HIPSTER groans.

LOCAL HIPSTER

Okay, who brought their kids?

A few LAUGHS. Ayne gives him a look. Meanwhile, his friend chimes in.

HIPSTER 2

Bet they're Air Force brats. Who
else would dress like that?

Ayne turns to him, no shit taken:

AYNE

Yes, some of us have parents who
risk their lives every day
protecting your freedom.

She stares him down and the guy clams up, but you can see it eating away at him.

GRAY GETS A RIFF GOING.

A clip from a guitar-heavy Emo song, massive reverb, hip-hop drums ported over. It's melancholy, evocative, a new sound...

And Jamie leans in with his microphone.

JAMIE

(singing)

You want to think that it is.
It's not.
You want to believe in yourself.
Let's stop.
You think we're meant to be,
'cause you say it, baby.
But when I see your eyes,
You're looking right through me.

Ford stands behind May as the song continues.

She turns suddenly, facing him. Then, as May makes the following actions, we see graphic callouts on screen:

She points to herself and Ford: 'US.'

A finger to a nostril: 'DRUGS'

Points to her wrist: 'TIME'

Ten fingers, twice: '20 MINUTES'

Then, close to his face: a look of pure carnality before she turns back to watch the show.

Ford tugs at his jeans: 'ZOMBIES...'

But a loud ARGUMENT is drowning out the band.

IT'S AYNE AND THE LOCAL HIPSTER.

LOCAL HIPSTER

(yelling)

--because your dad sits at a
computer dropping bombs all day!

AYNE

For your information, my father
supervises drone pilots.

LOCAL HIPSTER

Great, he's a mid-level murder
manager.

THE CROWD BOOS. They might not like the music, but they HATE liberals.

Jamie tries to keep going, loses his place...

A MASSIVE TRUCKER STANDS, LOOKING LIKE HE'S DRIVEN OVER FROM MAINE, NON-STOP.

HE BANGS ON HIS TABLE. SILENCE.

MASSIVE TRUCKER

God damn it, I came here to listen
to music, not politics! You shut
your damn mouth and let the little
faggot finish his song!

The Local Hipster grabs Jamie's microphone.

Ford pushes closer, angry.

LOCAL HIPSTER

(to the crowd)

America has been at war for decades! These kid's parents kill people for a living, 24 hours a day, from the safety of their living rooms, and you're all just complacently sitting here, watching the...

FORD GRABS THE MIC.

BUT THE HIPSTER ISN'T LETTING GO.

Dougie punches him in the face. The mic flies across the room. The crowd CHEERS.

The hipster goes down, his friend throws a punch, Dougie pulls back...

THEN SLIPS AND FALLS ON A TABLE, FLINGING BEER IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

EXT. STASSI'S FOURTH WARD TAVERN - NIGHT

Gray and Jamie load equipment into the back of May's truck. The mood is dour. Doug has the beginning of a black eye. Ayne's roughed up. Jamie pulls a six pack from the truck bed.

MAY

Back to my place to forget this
shit parade?

JAMIE

Naw, I'm just empty. You go ahead.

MAY

We're not doing it without you.

Jamie 'smiles,' gives her a thumbs up.

JAMIE

Ford, can I get a ride back?

Ford looks between them, deflated.

FORD

But... Yeah, sure.

May catches Ford's eye, mimes tears, waves goodbye. And Jamie sees it.

DOUGIE

Well, sincere thanks, Ford, for NOT breaking out your Jujitsu on those dirtbags. Last thing I need is more cops in my life.

Ford glares at Jamie, who shrugs it off.

FORD

Well, Doug, you pounded that guy pretty good on your own.

DOUGIE

I think my dad knows him is all. Fucking small town shit.

INT. KIA MINIVAN - NIGHT.

Ford drives his mom's minivan down that lonesome highway. Jamie's slumped against the side window.

FORD

Dude, if you could... Try not to hold it above the level of the window? I promised my mom, no alcohol in the car.

Jamie jerks to attention with a curse:

JAMIE

Crap! Dad won't be asleep for a couple hours. I don't want to get hit any more tonight.

FORD

You can hang at my place.

JAMIE

No, up here. Turn right.

FORD

But...

JAMIE

Just fucking do it!

THE MINIVAN RUMBLES ALONG AN UNEVEN DIRT PATH

Maybe it's a road; maybe it's a goat path. Ford eyes Jamie, who's begun mumbling to himself.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Warning you, I might drink more
than my share this evening. ...Oh
wait!

Jamie stretches to reach the pouch attached to the rear of
the car seat.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
--keep driving. That was like one
of those words, an exclamation. I
totally forgot...

He pulls out a pill bottle, opens it.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
I got three bars left. Want one?

FORD
Jamie! When the fuck did you stash
Xanax in my mom's car!?

JAMIE
For emergencies. Better claim one
now before the rush.

EXT. DARK TRAIL SURROUNDED BY TREES - NIGHT

Only a sliver of moon lights the dark trail. Brush and the
beginning of an oak grove on either side. They both have
beers; Ford carries the carton.

FORD
Well, this place is spooky as fuck.

Jamie stumbles ahead. Ford reluctantly follows.

FORD (CONT'D)
You know, I heard people hunt out
here. Which means they have things
around big enough to hunt.

JAMIE
Maybe I'm here to hunt you? You're
the one who knows my secrets...

There's an eerie moment as he stares at Ford, walking
backward, disappearing into the night.

FORD
Fuck off.

JAMIE (O.S.)
You're safe. I'd have to drive a
minivan back home.

FORD
Dude.

JAMIE (O.S.)
It's a Kia minivan. That's the
minivan of minivans.

Ahead in the darkness, a SPLASH.

JAMIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Found it. Fuck, it's cold!

EXT. WATER HOLE - NIGHT

A ghostly light shines off the gnarled oaks that line this muddy swimming hole. Breeze ripples on the water. A wet pair of pants hangs over a branch.

A thick limb stretches over the water. Jamie, in wet underwear and shirt, lays on the branch facing Ford, who leans against the base of the tree.

Both have beers. Jamie's more intoxicated than ever.

JAMIE
I'll work on a song for days and I
think it's the shit. Then I hear it
with somebody else's ears and I
realize it totally IS shit.

FORD
(keeping it light)
You think that it is. But it's not.

JAMIE
How do you ever know if you're
actually good?

FORD
Are you kidding? People love you.

Jamie reacts off that, flipping from morose to bitter, eyeing Ford with a nasty kind of amusement, as he climbs unsteadily to his feet on the outstretched limb.

JAMIE
Every person I know is so fucking
stupid not to see through me. I'm a
bullshit artist.
(MORE)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I just tell people what they want to hear. If anybody knows that, it's you.

FORD

That's not... really...

JAMIE

You're only popular because I like you. And I'm only popular now because people are fucking moronic sheeps!

He teeters on the branch, wet in his underwear, looking down at Ford.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

And you still don't get it. May and I are trying to build something real, all of us, without the craptacular layers of bullshit from the sheeps. And you are absolutely fucking it up.

Ford takes an angry drink, climbing to his feet.

FORD

See? I knew you were jealous.

JAMIE

Right there! There!

He GROANS, from deep, deep inside:

JAMIE (CONT'D)

You sense something's wrong and the first thing you do is act like our parents. You're running in like some puppy shitting everywhere, and this big smile on your face, because you're finally going to get laid, and you've seen it online and now you get to do it. And you're dragging that mountain of society bullshit right behind you!

FORD

Whatever...

JAMIE

The rest of us are standing right here and you don't even see us.

Ford drops his beer, shocked.

FORD

Holy crap; you're not jealous of her. You're jealous of me!

Jamie GROANS even louder, smacking himself in the face, almost falling off the limb.

JAMIE

Oh, we are never going to win. We're never going to fucking win, with people like you. Like that would even matter? Like we would care!? Oh fucking racist white Jesus Christ, you're a sheep!

FORD

You gotta calm down. I'm sorry.

JAMIE

(staggering)

One word from me, and you'd be DONE at this school!

FORD

Be careful. The water is cold.

JAMIE

(off the rails)

Or you're a pussy? Or both. Or fucking who cares?! Man, I need a better class of friends. Or I need my ass kicked. That's what I fucking need. An ass-kick-ayng!

He staggers backward on the branch, hands in the air.

FORD

Look, you're going to feel better tomorrow.

JAMIE

Thanks mom.

FORD

Remember like in Riverside? Just take a deep breath.

JAMIE

You want to be homecoming King at the Yuba City Four H Club sheep-fucking parade? Dude, take the fuck over...

Both hands flipping off Ford, Jamie falls backward like he did on the pillows in May's living room.

--INTO THE DARK WATER WITH A MUTED SPLASH.

FORD

Idiot!

Ford crawls onto the branch, reaching into the water.

FORD (CONT'D)

Jamie! Grab my hand!

There's no sign of him.

FORD KICKS OFF HIS SHOES, JUMPS IN.

CRAZY SPLASHING, AS HE DOG PADDLES OUT.

FORD (CONT'D)

Jamie! Jamie! Hey!

Floating now, suddenly silent, Ford looks across the water.

Nothing.

EXT. WATER HOLE - DAY

Morning's pink glow illuminates the swimming hole, now surrounded by COPS, Ford, Edythe, Colonel Mattin, his wife...

And a trio of SCUBA DIVERS in the water.

The divers maneuver Jamie's corpse to shore. It's awkward, one pushing, two pulling.

The rear diver slips. And Jamie's muddy corpse slowly rolls back in.

Ford stands nearby in a blanket, shivering.

And on the other shore, Colonel Mattin stares. Unblinking.

SLOW DISSOLVE:

EXT. WHEATLAND HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Early morning, kids are everywhere. General bullshittery continues as a school bus unloads.

FORD STEPS OUT

Wearing dark clothes, lots of layers.

AND FROM HIS POV, a pall drops. Conversations sputter to a stop. Kids stare.

Ford walks silently up the steps to the school.

EXT. WHEATLAND HIGH SCHOOL - CROWDED LOCKER AREA

Ford rounds a wall of lockers. Suddenly, there's Dougie and Ayne, looking miserable.

Dogie starts to raise his hand in greeting, but Ayne stops him.

FORD
I'm really sorry.

She glares.

FORD (CONT'D)
I tried, and I kept searching...

AYNE
--I saw how you looked at her.

FORD
What?!

AYNE
You're a semi-professional surfer.
Hard to believe you couldn't pull
him out of a pond.

FORD
But it didn't happen like that.

She takes Dougie by the hand and they both walk away.

EXT. NORDELL HOUSE - NIGHT

From behind the house. Night again. All the lights of the neighborhood are out. Except one.

We come to the window, and through the blinds there's Ford, reflected in that ornate mirror attached to the back of his closet door, curled up on his bed, pillow over his head.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - AFTERNOON

Ford sits by himself next to the bus window. He sees May's white pickup truck, Ayne, Dougie and Gray in the back.

They drive away.

And Ford looks around him. The only person on the bus sitting by himself.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - EARLY MORNING

The massive stages of the Remote Piloted Equipment Crew.

We move into one of the hangar-like buildings.

INT. PREP ROOM - BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

Ray and another AIRMAN, in uniform, sit on desk chairs in the prep room. Looks like the kitchen of a major office building.

Ray watches cartoons on his phone. He chuckles as a confident, no-nonsense airman rushes in.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON

Finally get to do your job,
Sergeant! AyJay lost a pair of
rotors.

RAY

Which ones?

LIEUTENANT WINSTON

Right front, right back. Some
national shot him with a god damn
pistol.

EXT. MARC'S HOUSE - DAY

Marc opens his front door to see Ford, looking miserable.

FORD

Hey man.

MARC

You know, sometimes I think you
only hang out with me when your
fancy friends aren't around.

Ford doesn't know what to say. Looks like he could cry.

MARC (CONT'D)
But I still like you. Come on in, I
got Lego Star Wars on the machine.

INT. REMOTE PILOT OPERATIONS GO ROOM - DAY

Monitors illuminate an area of unknown expanse. Two massive screens show different views of a war torn Sudanese port, one from above, one from the POV of a grounded transport.

Six pairs of PILOTS and TECHNICIANS form a circle. Each technician sits before two or three monitors, each pilot lays inside what looks like the world's strangest exercise machine, wearing a skintight jumpsuit covered with sensors, goggles and a headset with a mic.

CLOSE ON A PILOT

Airwoman, hair pulled back. Goggles, headset. Her muscles twitch, as that creepy sound emanates from her slack, open mouth.

Ray hurries into the room. His jumpsuit hangs baggy on a small frame. Lieutenant Winston motions to an empty machine, beside a TECHNICIAN.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON
You know the deets?

RAY
You saw me at the briefing,
Lieutenant. Some half-assed port on
the coast.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON
(doesn't like Ray)
Which is where ports tend to be
situated.

He helps Ray into the machine, puts the headgear on him, the goggles.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON (CONT'D)
We don't have time for a spike; you
inhale?

Ray nods and Winston pulls out a single shot bullet.

Ray snorts, hands it back.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON (CONT'D)
When you tune in, you'll be on the
transport.

(MORE)

LIEUTENANT WINSTON (CONT'D)
 AyJay's two klicks southwest along
 what used to be railroad tracks.

RAY
 This is full strength, Lieutenant!
 Warn me next time.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON
 'Cause I deploy 5 times a week! Do
 not lose this vehicle, sergeant.
 Prepare to return fire.

THE TECHNICIAN'S DESK

On one screen is video of a destroyed port city. On the other
 is a representation of the local topography, covered with
 mapped graphical callouts.

The Technician quickly inputs data as Ray's profile comes
 online.

WE SEE LAYERS OF INFORMATION AS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURES
 FLOWING THROUGH THE WIRES INTO RAY'S HEADGEAR.

AND THAT CROAKING NOISE GROWS LOUDER, BECOMING EVERYTHING...

INT. DEMOLISHED FIELD - SUAKIN, SUDAN - SUNSET

An abandoned football field pocked with blast marks. Acrid
 smoke in the distance. On a sandy stretch squats a remote-
 piloted Chinook helicopter, rear mouth open.

FOUR SCIENCE FICTION NIGHTMARES HOVER BESIDE IT:

LOW GROUND AERIAL DRONES.

These are terrifying: a cluster of weapons, two extendable
 mechanical hands. They look like flying metal death heads.

On the side of each drone is what appears to be a visual
 overlay that isn't part of the actual scene: a translucent
 pink button with a smiling emoticon on it.

A FIFTH DRONE FLIES FROM THE CHINOOK, WITH A BOX IN ONE OF
 ITS CLAWS.

AIRMAN DENOVA (V.O.)
 You got your mask up?

The robot with the box reaches up with a free claw to tap
 that button on its side.

THEN, LIKE A PSYCHEDELIC EXPLOSION, THE BUTTON EXPANDS, ENVELOPING EVERYTHING, CHANGING THE ENTIRE WORLD...

--into something so much more soothing, more colorful, more beautiful:

IT'S JUST RAY AND FOUR TIRED AIRMEN, WAITING BY THE HELICOPTER.

They wear Air Force uniforms, operational camouflage, no weapons. That pink button glows on the temple of each one.

The strangest part is, they're all floating a few feet off the ground. They look like low-rent superheroes.

RAY

Yes, sir.

Giant graphical call outs in the sky register enemies and the location of Airman AyJay. Data readouts pop in and out of sight at appropriate times.

It's just one crazy video game.

AIRMAN DENOVA

Mechanic's here. Chasey take him out.

EXT. SMALL BACKYARD AREA - DAY

POOR QUALITY VIDEO:

A handsome man (JAY, 33) kneels in the grass with a garden hose, squirting a younger FORD, who runs at him with a plastic sword.

LAUGHTER off screen as Ford is overcome by the water. He coughs, dropping the sword.

Then Edythe comes into frame. Pissed.

EDYTHER

Jay, what the hell are you doing?!

JAY

Got to toughen this boy up!

EDYTHER

He's not coming in the house like that.

JAY
I think maybe YOU need some
toughening up...

EXT. FAR SIDE OF THE TRACK - WHEATLAND HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Out by the hurricane fence behind the track, Ford sits, back against a tree, sullenly staring at his phone. We hear LAUGHTER AND PLAYFUL YELLING from the video.

Feet enter his field of view.

It's Gray, Dougie, Roby, Ayne, and May, staring down at him, blank expressions on their faces.

FORD
What?

Dougie looks over to Ayne, prods her in the back.

She kneels down in front of Ford, followed by the rest. You can tell it's hard for her to say this:

AYNE
Look, we were wrong to blame you.

DOUGIE
Ayne...

AYNE
I was wrong. I know it wasn't your
fault. I know you tried to save
him.

FORD
(angry)
How could you possibly know that?!

AYNE
I know it's true. Jamie told me.

Confused, Ford looks to the others. There's kindness in their eyes now. Dougie reaches out and touches his shoulder.

DOUGIE
He's there, dude.

FORD
What do you mean, 'he's there'?

GRAY

He's at the bar at the end of the universe. Jamie is there. It's really him.

MAY

And you can talk to him and he's fine.

ROBY

It's Jamie!

INT. MAY'S HOUSE - DAY

A TRAY OF PURPLE LINES

May's place looks the same. She and Ford stand beside the drugs. She holds out a rolled up bill.

The others are on their backs in the living room, eyes gone white.

THAT GROANING, GRAVELLY NOISE RISES.

FORD

May... I don't know about this.

MAY

Trust me. When you're in there, you'll see, it's the old Jamie.

FORD

But it can't be.

MAY

And don't worry. He totally forgives you.

A sea change in Ford as the words sink in:

FORD

(suddenly pissed)
He forgives ME?!

MAY

You know, for not being able to...

FORD

--Okay, gimme that.

He grabs the bill and snorts a line.

FORD (CONT'D)
After what he put me through? If
Jamie's really there, I'm going to
fucking kick his ass.

INT. DEMOLISHED ROAD - SUAKIN, SUDAN - SUNSET

It's their video game view of the world. So much ugliness is gone. There's a low rock wall between the street and what might have been a school. Blast relics and charred metal.

Drag marks lead to a courtyard, where Indian American AIRMAN AYJAY sits in the dirt next to Ray.

Chasey floats nearby, watchful.

RAY
How you doing, Sir?

AIRMAN AYJAY
Been keeping scavengers at bay.

RAY
I'd guess you're worth about a
hundred years wages out here.

Ray opens the box he's been carrying.

INSIDE: a pair of rotor assemblies.

RAY (CONT'D)
Dropping my mask.

RAY REACHES UP AND TAPS THE BUTTON ON THE SIDE OF HIS HEAD.

THE VIEW MORPHS

All the colorful beauty of the scene SHRINKS down into the translucent pink button on the side of the drone that Ray operates.

--REVEALING THE UGLY, BRUTAL, REAL WORLD VIEW.

RAY'S DRONE'S POV:

AyJay is, of course, a robotic drone like himself. A massive head made of weapons. Two rotor assemblies are twisted and black.

Ray's machine starts to work on it.

INT. THE BAR AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE - NIGHT

The bar now has a stage. Gray and Jamie are setting up their gear. Dougie, Ayne and Roby help out.

WITH A FLASH, FORD APPEARS.

He and Jamie's eyes lock.

Jamie flies over, arms wide.

JAMIE

Ford!

The rest cheer as Jamie grabs Ford and kisses his forehead, almost exactly the way he did on Ford's first day of school.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I thought you didn't like me any more.

Not smiling, more afraid than anything, Ford studies his friend.

Reaches out, touches his shoulder.

Then with both hands: his face, hair.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Did you go blind or something?

FORD

It looks real.

JAMIE

It?! I'm me, asshole.

FORD

It's NOT you.

JAMIE

Dude, I'm showing friendship and you're shitting all over me.

FORD

Jamie died.

Jamie comes closer, their faces inches apart.

JAMIE

Look into my eyes. Do I look dead to you?

FORD

I'm kind of high right now. I don't know.

JAMIE

Every time you meet somebody, when it's somebody you care about, they make a little space in your head. You guys all care about me, you love me. That's how I'm here.

FORD

If that's true, then you're just made out of the things we remember.

Jamie shrugs. Smiles. It's the face he showed the world.

FORD (CONT'D)

What about the other parts? What about the way you were... when you went down. That was Jamie, too.

JAMIE

I'm a little hazy. But I was on three Xans and a six pack.

FORD

Say something Jamie wouldn't say.

JAMIE

I'm not a trained monkey, bitch! You're just being a dipshit now. Stop it.

Ford smiles a little, despite himself.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

What you've missed out on the last week, is me finally finishing my set.

Gray starts A BEAT.

DRUMS COME IN OVER GUITAR AS JAMIE FLIES TO THE STAGE.

It's the song from the bar. But somehow smoother now, more pleasant. Like the memory of a song.

In virtually non-existent evening wear, May comes over to Ford. Hands him a bubbling martini.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

(singing)

You want to think that it is.

(MORE)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

It's not.
You want to believe in yourself.
Let's stop...

INT. DEMOLISHED ROAD - SUAKIN, SUDAN - SUNSET

In the real world view of their surroundings, Ray's drone finishes attaching the last rotor assembly.

THEN IT TAPS THE PINK BUTTON ON ITS SIDE.

AND THE BUTTON EXPLODES WITH COLOR...

Returning us to the video game view.

Just three happy-go-lucky Airmen floating a few feet off the ground in hostile territory.

AIRMAN AYJAY

Decent job, mechanic. We ready?

AIRWOMAN CHASEY

I see moderate action half a klick
out. Aim high!

In the sky at a distance, callouts flicker. Enemy-2. Enemy-1.
Our group flies toward them.

RAY

Most fun I had all week,
Lieutenant!

INT. THE BAR AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE - NIGHT

Jamie draws his song to a close. Meanwhile, Gray flips off the audience, who are all now doing their own thing:

May floats on angel wings. Ayne choreographs a stream of robotic insects that leave tracers all around them. Roby and Dougie dance slowly, upside down, threatening to erupt into sex at any moment.

FORD

See! You just needed a better
audience.

JAMIE

And since I never got to play my
encore, let's pretend you asked for
one.

Gray gets another BEAT going as May taps Ford on the shoulder.

MAY
Class time.

He trails after her, to her private door. It opens.

Ford looks back.

And Jamie gives him a thumbs up, as he begins a new song.

EXT. ON A CAMBODIAN BEACH - SUNSET

In May's room it's always sunset on a Cambodian beach. The door closes behind them.

She leads Ford under the pergola, onto the raised platform.

FORD
I really want him to be real.

MAY
That's crap. What you want is an excuse NOT to believe. But you're finding it difficult.

FORD
(just can't let it go)
Whatever that is in there... I think it's just a collection of our memories.

MAY
Maybe that isn't 'him'. But we're Jamie's best friends. If we can't tell, does it matter?

FORD
Yes!

May rolls onto the pillow, reaching up with her bare feet to pull Ford down beside her.

He reacts defensively, then slowly relaxes as she reaches inside his hoodie, peeling it off. Takes off his shirt.

MAY
You're like I was. Trying to get inside people's heads. Worrying what they think.
(MORE)

MAY (CONT'D)

You want to see through their eyes
so you can figure out why they
might not like you.

FORD

What's your point?

She's got a cold, thirsty look. Glides a palm over his chest.

MAY

It's still always all in your head.

FORD

(frustrated)

But don't you want to know the
truth...?

LIKE A BLOWN UP ARCHITECTURAL DIAGRAM, EVERY PIECE OF THE
PERGOLA DISASSEMBLES, EXPANDING INTO SPACE--

...SLOWLY ROTATING AROUND THEM IN A CLOUD OF WOOD AND THATCH.

MAY

Jamie says he's real. I'm not going
to call him a liar.

They rise into the darkening sky on that massive pillow as
May climbs onto him, her hair writhing in tendrils as if they
were under water.

Then, like a school of fish, her clothes break apart and dart
away. Every teenaged boy's dream.

MAY (CONT'D)

All there ever is, is what you can
see and taste ...and touch.

INT. DEMOLISHED ROAD - SUAKIN, SUDAN - SUNSET

It's the video game view. Our Airmen float ten feet off the
ground. There's a line of buildings ahead and the coast to
their right. In the sky a klick away, a massive floating
callout: HOME.

But, in the air on the other side of those buildings, there's
a mass of jostling indicators: Enemy.

AIRMAN AYJAY

Don't think we can fly over at this
point.

AIRWOMAN CHASEY

Guess it's crowd control time.

They raise their arms and FLARES SHOOT FROM THEIR HANDS.

Two from Ayjay, four from Chasey, like Roman candles, leaving trails of smoke as they arc over the buildings ahead.

AND BEYOND THOSE STRUCTURES A WALL OF FLAME ERUPTS. FROM WHITE TO ORANGE TO BLACK CLOUDS OF OILY SMOKE.

Spreading from the center, enemy indicators flicker out.

THROUGH A BREAK IN THE WALL OF BUILDINGS

The team flies in to see what they've wrought. Fire crackles. Cars are twisted hunks of metal. But so colorful.

Oddly, two dimensional grey squares are everywhere. Each one has a red 'X' on it.

Most of those are on the ground. Some jiggle a little.

AIRWOMAN CHASEY (CONT'D)
You keeping score?

AIRMAN AYJAY
Somebody's buying drinks tonight is what I see.

AIRWOMAN CHASEY
Wait, we got a fun-sized terrorist over here.

She points and they turn to see a small grey square with an X over it.

But the X flickers like an old fluorescent tube. It slowly becomes a red ENEMY callout.

RAY TAPS THE BUTTON ON THE SIDE OF HIS HEAD.

THE VIEW MORPHS

It's the real world view. All the 'X's are dead Somalis.

Blood and rank burnt flesh is everywhere.

A few soot-covered bodies twitch or moan pitifully.

The 'fun-sized terrorist' is a little SOMALI GIRL.

SHE STANDS, IN A PINK SUN DRESS, BLOODY, DARK FROM SMOKE, WIDE-EYED. KNOWING SHE'S GOING TO DIE.

Both arms are blown off. Stumps of bare bone.

RAY'S DRONE

It rotates, turning to view his partners: flying metal death machines.

One extends its arm, also an automatic rifle.

Three shots, rapid succession.

The girl goes down.

AIRWOMAN CHASEY (V.O.)
Drinks on you, bee-otch.

EXT. ON A CAMBODIAN BEACH - SUNSET

Naked on that pillow, floating a few feet off the ground, like the perfectly airbrushed painting on the side of God's hippie van, May and Ford relax.

Their legs are intertwined. He's confident now about touching her.

FORD
So... You know... How did you
decide to like me?

MAY
You seem like the kind of guy who'd
want to fuck his teacher.

FORD
Depends on the teacher.

She sees he's not getting it:

MAY
Ford, you are all Jamie ever talked
about. You taught him how to surf!
You saved his life in Malibu. That
story about the mountain lion and
the duck!? We know everything. We
loved you before you even got here.

He looks into her eyes, and you can see he's never going to deny a word of it.

THE SOUND OF A WOMAN COUGHING POLITELY.

Ford and May turn to see:

A SMILING WOMAN, HOLDING A TRAY OF COOKIES.

Middle aged, provincial but endearing. Probably watches cooking shows so she can impress her family.

MAY'S MOM

I made some gingerbread! Would you
and your friend like a cookie?

The woman doesn't seem to notice they're naked. Ford looks like he's seen a ghost.

May is annoyed ...and concerned.

MAY

No! Mom, go to your room.

In the distance, near the villa, stands a smiling middle aged man in shorts and a Hawaiian shirt. He waves.

MAY (CONT'D)

(way serious)

Both of you, go to your room. Now!

MAY'S MOM

Let us know if you change your
mind.

The woman toddles off toward the man, who puts his arm around her as they head into the villa and disappear.

Ford turns to May, unnerved.

MAY

Those are my parents.

She sees he has no idea what to make of this.

MAY (CONT'D)

When they passed, I didn't know
what to do. I didn't have anybody.
Now I visit them whenever I need
cheering up.

FORD

That cheers you up?!

MAY

They're my parents. You can't
change that.

Unnerved by May's serenity, Ford searches her eyes for a sign of something darker underneath.

MAY (CONT'D)
Maybe something like that could
work for you?

FORD
My last memory is watching him
crash on TV. They just kept playing
it, over and over. I don't want to
think about any of that stuff
again. Ever.

THE GROANING NOISE RISES IN THE BACKGROUND.

SOUND AND COLOR AROUND THEM BECOME FLUID.

MAY
Looks like it's wearing off.

FORD
I didn't say goodbye to Jamie...

MAY
There'll be time.

She leans over and kisses him.

INT. MAY'S HOUSE - DAY

The world snaps into focus with a sickening lurch. Ford lays
on his back, in the tawdry living room.

The rest are gone. Only he and May.

She stands immediately, straightening her blouse and skirt.
She's different in the real world.

He sits up, rubs his face.

FORD
It's always a little sad when I
wake up.

She heads to the kitchen area. Nods to the clock on the wall.

MAY
And it's only 3:30.

He comes over, wraps his arms around her, kissing her neck.

AND MAY REACTS LIKE A CAT AT A PROCTOLOGY EXAM.

She whirls around, SLAPS HIM.

MAY (CONT'D)
Fuck! Don't ever surprise me!

FORD
I...

MAY
Don't touch me! Don't EVER touch
me.

She pulls away, disgusted, looking around as if for an
escape.

FORD
I'm sorry. You know, I thought the
ice was broken.

MAY
Yeah, it's not.

FORD
I...

MAY
Told you. Do not get attached.
Those are two totally different
things.

May shivers as she turns to rummage through the kitchen
drawers.

FORD
You don't have to explain.

MAY
I know some people are into that
shit. Public affection. I don't do
that.

She gives up on one drawer, moves to another. Still trying to
shake off her repulsion.

MAY (CONT'D)
It's done. Now the mood is shot and
I can't focus.

FORD
Okay...

MAY
Let's just do another line.

Ford pulls a double take. What?!

MAY (CONT'D)

But... God damn it. Dougie never got it. We're out. He's so fucking lazy!

She violently slams the drawer.

FORD

That's fine.

MAY

It's not. It's not okay! But there's plenty of time. It's still early. We can go and come back.

FORD

But it's a school night.

Each looks at the other like they're out of their minds.

MAY

Ford, this isn't just, like, beers at the end of the day. This is our communion. We need it. This is our church.

She reaches out, almost touches his elbow.

MAY (CONT'D)

But I also need to know that I have a place to escape. It's a safe place for me.

FORD

I can tell.

MAY

And when we get back, we'll talk. All you want.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - AFTERNOON

Far above the lonely base. Sunset throws mile long shadows over firebreaks plowed into the range.

And miles from the flight line and officers housing is where enlisted folks live.

EXT. ENLISTED HOUSING - BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - AFTERNOON

Looks like any aging, low income neighborhood, except strangely, unearthly clean.

Single story, two room houses painted peach, gray and green. Some have clotheslines. Almost no decoration.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE - BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - AFTERNOON

May has pulled into the covered driveway of a pink stucco house.

Ford's already at the front door.

And it opens on Ray, in Air Force greens and a wife beater.

Sees the pickup, looks at Ford.

RAY

May said you was scrawny. Come on in.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

If Lynyrd Skynyrd and Creed created a home decor line at Cost Plus it would look like the inside of Ray's house.

Beer and vodka bottles are not uncommon. Cartoon network softly plays on a massive TV.

It's dark inside, really dark. Fake Tiffany lamps glow in party colors.

Ray motions him in, three sheets to the wind.

RAY

Just ignore the puppy dog. You'll get used to her. I'm Ray, which surely you know already.

FORD

Wow, kind of dark in here. Hard to see.

RAY

I aluminum foiled the windows. Cause, you know, hours are what they are.

FORD

Nice.

RAY

(sarcastic snort)
Not the most convincing of compliments.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

You sound like my uncle when his wife had that Mexican baby.

FORD

I like your... The lamps.

Ray walks around the counter bar that separates his living room from the kitchen. It's littered with plastic glasses and fast food wrappers.

RAY

Pretty cool how the glass makes the light all different colors, huh. Or plastic, I guess. Color's the same regardless.

FORD

Yeah.

Ray opens the refrigerator. Inside it's just beer, things you can get at the mini-mart and three different ketchup bottles.

RAY

Want a beer? Choices at this point in time are sub optimal.

FORD

Well, you know, I better not. May is waiting. Outside.

Ray pulls a beer from the fridge, opens it. Sniffs it.

RAY

These things ever go bad? Guess I'll never find out!

FORD

So, I can't actually stay long.

Ray takes a plastic cup from the counter, grabs a half empty 1.75 liter bottle of vodka, then pours vodka and beer into the cup.

RAY

Yeah, yeah, I know. No time for old Ray.

FORD

I'm not saying that in a negative way. We're very thankful for everything.

RAY

I call this concoction a vodka-tini, 'cause it's like a martini. Except instead of gin it's beer and instead of vermouth it's vodka.

FORD

I bet that's got a kick to it.
...Yeah.

RAY

Aw, I know what it's like to be young. Always got things to do. Don't worry, you just go onto the couch and pull your pants down.

Ford freezes in place. You can see the gears moving around behind his eyes.

Ray takes a long, hard drink of his vodka-tini. Takes stock of Ford.

Tilts his head a little.

RAY (CONT'D)

May was not lying.

FORD

About?

RAY

You being scrawny. You're like a grasshopper fucked a paper clip. But with hands like that, I bet you got a dick on ya.

Ray takes a long swig, washes it around in his mouth. Smacks his lips.

FORD

I'm a little uncomfortable now.

RAY

You're the one wanted to hurry up. So drop the jeans, Usain Bolt.

FORD

May didn't tell me about any of this part!

RAY

What? Oh, man.

Ray laughs. Giggles.

RAY (CONT'D)

Somewhat of a cold fish, but she does have a sense of humor, that one. Simplest thing in the world, son. You just sit yourself down on the couch, drop your pants, and I'll suck your dick. Basic transactional relationship.

FORD

I absolutely don't want to offend you at this point. But I don't like men.

RAY

Well, hell, boy, I don't want to suck some faggot's dick. What purpose would that serve?!

FORD

I have money.

RAY

Do you know how much I could sell this for on the internet? You kids are lucky money isn't my primary motivating factor.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

In her pickup truck, May taps out a few words on her phone.

THE PHONE

"Everything all right?" A smiley face emoticon.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

On the couch, Ford stares intently at one of the fake Tiffany lamps.

His pants and boxers are pulled down. Ray kneels between his legs, head bobbing back and forth.

Ford focuses on a lamp.

Winces a little.

Slurping sounds.

Oh, God, this is really taking some time...

RAY
Holy mother, you are not making
this easy.

FORD
I'm trying.

RAY
Well try harder.

FORD
Sir?

RAY
Boy, it's the one that sucks dick
says 'sir.' I learned that in the
Air Force.

Ray sits back, hands on Ford's bare knees, looks up at his
wincing, embarrassed smile.

Wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

RAY (CONT'D)
You are not having a good day. I
can see that in your face.

FORD
I'm really trying.

RAY
Hell, you ruined it. I'm not a god
damned 'me too.' Christ sakes.

He stands up.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'll get you the dang drugs. You
earned it, I guess.

Ray walks across the room. Ford yanks up his underwear and
pants. Fumbles at the buttons.

Ray opens a closet and we can see inside: tray after tray of
small, yellow boxes. Hundreds. Also a pile of those fancy
headphone setups the pilots wear. A trio of pistols hang from
pegs next to a Confederate flag.

He takes a pair of yellow boxes, firmly closes the closet.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'm not much in the mood either,
truth be told. You call May in and
let's do a line.
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)
To be sociable at least? Hell,
after the day I had, I think I'd
rather have company than dick
sucking anyway.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Ford walks out the front door, leaves it open, heads for
May's pickup.

INSIDE THE PICKUP

May watches him glaring at her as he comes around. Puts her
phone down.

MAY
Everything come out all right?

FORD
He wants us to do a line.

MAY
(grossed out)
Ew. I don't want to do drugs with
him.

He doesn't have to say a word. He's never been this pissed.
She unbuckles her seat belt.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Ray's pulled his coffee table to the couch and he sits on a
folding chair beside it, chopping out fat lines of purple
powder on a dinner plate.

Ford sits on the couch, playing with one of those military
headsets Ray has.

RAY
Oh, you don't want to mess with
that. You'll end up somewhere you
don't want to be.

A little spooked, Ford puts it down as May comes over with a
beer in hand.

She sets the beer on the coffee table, touches a cushion as
she takes her seat.

MAY
Kind of sticky...

Ray laughs. Ford glares.

MAY (CONT'D)
Too soon?

FORD
You can be kind of callous
sometimes.

Ray rolls a dollar bill around a ball point pen.

RAY
You got to be in this world, Ford.
You need a thick skin or the
world's gonna eat you right up.

Ray snorts like a pro, hands May the rolled up bill.

RAY (CONT'D)
It may not be apparent now, but I
was born a sensitive child.

He rubs his nose, coming around to sit on the couch. May
snorts her line and hands the bill to Ford.

MAY
Me too.

RAY
Did that ever do you a bit of good
in this world?

Ford snorts his line.

MAY
Why do you think I'm here?

LIKE A WAVE ROLLING IN TO SHORE, COLOR AND SOUND MORPH...
AND A WORLD TAKES SHAPE.

INT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S - NIGHT

We're inside a dilapidated children's pizza joint and fun
parlor. It's only partially completed and even those parts
don't look quite right. Like a bad drawing made from memory.

Ray is already sitting at the head of a big table laid out
with pizza.

May appears. Impressed, she's not.

MAY

Dude.

Ford appears across the table.

FORD

Where are we?

RAY

Well, to the best of my abilities this is a Chuck E. Cheese outside of Fayetteville, North Carolina.

FORD

What the fuck, Ray?! Why?

RAY

In training they told us to build a safe place with happy memories, so as we could escape when times get tough.

MAY

You could have literally built anything in the universe that a human being can imagine and this is what you came up with?

RAY

Well, I was never particularly skilled in the visual arts. You can spruce it up if you want?

FORD

Why here though?

RAY

Best birthday party I ever had.

FORD

Oh.

Sympathy on his face.

FORD (CONT'D)

That's kind of sad.

RAY

Bull shite. I had a great ole time. Moms and my step-mom. Most of fourth grade class. I must have eaten an entire pizza, because I threw up that entire night.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

Turns out pepperoni disagrees with my digestive system. But apart from that, this place is the best. Last time I remember being one of the popular kids.

FORD

You bring friends here?

RAY

I do now! Want a beer?

He waves his hands. Varieties of low-end beer appear on the table, all cans.

May grabs one.

MAY

But what do you do?

RAY

Oh, you know. Drink beer. Jack off. Play Skee-ball.

MAY

I love Skee-ball!

Ray jumps up, excited. May too.

RAY

Let's play us some Skee-ball, then!

MAY

You know you're going to lose, right?

RAY

You absolutely have no idea how much time I have to practice.

They head off toward the gaming area.

MAY

(to Ford)

You coming?

He takes a beer.

FORD

(annoyed)

I think I'll practice making things.

MAY
Suit yourself.

FORD
Maybe I'll try to make this place
look less like a child's nightmare.

RAY
Just don't go into any locked
doors. You don't want to see that
stuff.

FORD
Like what? What's in there?

RAY
Those things nobody wants to think
about. Also, I've been in the
process of attempting to build
myself a Tom Cruise.

FORD
The actor?

RAY
I'm not embarrassed to say, results
from that project have been less
than stellar.

SKEE-BALL

May banks a shot, lands a 100. She and Ray cheer each other
on.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM

Ford stands before the Chuck E. Cheese stage, staring up in
repulsed amusement at the animatronic cartoon characters.
They're all half-finished, drunken nightmare versions of
whatever they were trying to be.

He climbs on stage, raises his hands.

Filaments of light play out around the head of some duck
looking thing made of cheap felt and polyurethane.

It begins to change shape, becomes a little more like a duck.

Not much of an improvement, really.

Ford gives up, meanders along the stage, examining the rest.
Definitely a paucity of imagination at work here.

A few Tom Cruise posters on the wall.

But there's a glow from the far side of the stage.

He heads over.

BEHIND THE STAGE

Back here it's a jumble. Literally the most half-assed method of construction a human being could imagine. Bricks and struts going every which way.

He goes deeper.

INT. ENDLESS HALLWAY - DAY

Ford crouches under a girder and enters a strange place. Hotel hallways stretch off in different directions, endless. Gaudy threadbare carpet. Like a casino hotel in Hell.

Ahead a few yards, one of the doors is open.

FORD STEPS INTO THE OPEN DOORWAY

Inside, it's bigger than it possibly could be. Like deep space. Two of those flying drones hover inside, each bristling with weaponry and sporting a pair of mechanical arms.

We hear familiar voices.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON (V.O.)
The mask is just a separate channel of information ported into your head. You need to associate a physical movement with the opening and closing of this channel. Now tap that pink button.

RAY (V.O.)
Sir, I'm trying.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON (V.O.)
God damn it, you are wasting my time! Get it right or get out of my fucking squadron.

The mechanical arm of one of the drones extends, touches the pink button on its side.

AND THE SCENE TRANSFORMS:

The drones become Ray and Lieutenant Winston, floating in space, wearing Air Force greens.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON

My lord, you are the slowest learning motherfucker I have ever met, Sergeant! In the field? You let down my pilots? That will be the end of whatever passes for your sad-sack, slack-ass career.

RAY

Understand, sir.

LIEUTENANT WINSTON

The mask clarifies your input data, it connects you to your fellow airmen. The ONLY time you tune out the mask is during precision repair work, and only for the length of that repair work, you understand?

Ford keeps walking.

Ahead, he notices light spilling into the hallway.

One of the doors is ajar. With flickering amber light playing onto the carpet.

Ford gingerly pulls it open. And goes on through.

EXT. ALLEY - SUAKIN, SUDAN - SUNSET

Ford exits into an alley.

Stone buildings. Ancient, dusty, lifeless.

SOME CRACKLING NOISES. He investigates.

EXT. DESTROYED TOWN CENTER - SUAKIN, SUDAN - SUNSET

The alley exits into the town square. It's the place where Ray saw all the destruction, but now there's even more. Bodies torn apart, burnt and bloody.

Most are dead or mutilated by the fire and the blast. A few still cling to life, or try with weakening desperation to hold their broken bodies together.

A DYING MAN

Holding his wife's decapitated corpse. He reaches for help, his voice a wheezing croak. Eyes blank with horror.

Ford's in shock. Tries to say something.

Nothing comes out.

THE SOUND OF PEOPLE RUNNING

In groups of two and three, terrified Somalis race down the street with whatever they can carry.

THE SOUND OF VIOLENCE RISES

Ford looks from where they came, to a wall of smoke. An explosion of flame.

THEN, FOUR AERIAL DRONES BURST THROUGH THE MAELSTROM, SPEWING FIRE IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

They shoot at the running Somalis.

Ford turns and runs.

INT. ENDLESS HALLWAY - DAY

Terrified, he races back into the endless hotel hallway.

He stops short. In front of him:

A SMALL BOY WITH A BALLOON

The saddest little boy you've ever seen. Buck teeth and apple cheeks. He wears a knock-off Teenaged Mutant Ninja Turtles sweatshirt and holds the string of a wilting helium balloon.

BOY
(embarrassed and sad)
No one came to my birthday.

Ford edges around the boy, who starts to follow him.

The SOUNDS OF A YOUNGSTER BEING BEATEN rise in the distance.

FORD
You have to go. Go back to your room.

BOY
I don't remember where it is. Can I come with you?

FORD
No!

BOY
Can we be friends?

FORD
Go away! I'm sorry...

Ford runs back the way he came.

INT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S - NIGHT

May is kicking Ray's ass in Skee-ball. She nails another shot. Pumps a fist in the air.

MAY
Hoo-yah!

RAY
Dang, girl. Beating me at my own game.

MAY
Told you. I'm the best. There is no one better than me at Skee-ball.

RAY
Yeah, no need to be a dick about it.

Ford comes over, haunted, in shock.

His utter lack of affect gets May's attention.

MAY
Where you been?

RAY
Good thing you're here. She's been aching for a witness to this massacre of a Skee-ball game.

Ray sees the look of concern on May's face, turns to Ford.

FORD
Ray, what do you do for a living?

RAY
Mechanic, mostly. I fix machines.

FORD
The ones that kill people?!

Ray's smile disappears.

RAY
God damn it, boy, I told you not to open locked doors!

FORD
It wasn't locked.

RAY
Well that's even worse!

He races off.

RAY (CONT'D)
(calling back)
You can't let them get in here.
Cause it's hard as hell to get them
back out! Damn it! And watch out
for the dang puppy.

MAY ISN'T HAPPY. FORD'S STILL IN SHOCK.

MAY
(frightened)
You can't go looking for things!

FORD
You want to know what I saw?

MAY
Absolutely the fuck not!

FORD
It's the drone program. From our
base.

MAY
Listen to me. You can't start
thinking bad things. It feeds on
itself. It loops and loops and gets
out of control and it sticks in
your head.

FORD
I saw people getting killed.
They...

MAY
--Stop it!

SHE PUSHES HIM HARD IN THE CHEST.

MAY (CONT'D)
I am not mentally equipped to
handle whatever alcoholic nightmare
fever dream shit he's dredged up
from the depths of that sad,
pitiful brain. We got to bail
before Ray gets back.

FORD

Okay.

MAY

Have you made a room of your own?

FORD

A basic one.

MAY

Great, take me. We have to change the subject.

Ford looks around.

FORD

I need some blank space, I guess.

He finds a stretch of wall, raises his hands.

AND A DOOR APPEARS

It's wood, ornate.

MAY

A little Lord of the Rings, but let's do it.

Ford reaches for the handle, opens the door.

Then May takes his hand.

INT. FORD'S D-N-D ROOM - DAY

Looks like Ford's actual bedroom. Maybe a little bigger. Better furniture.

He leads May in through a glowing portal in the wall, which disappears after they enter.

FORD

I'm just getting the basics down.

MAY

What... Where is this?

FORD

You said I should start with something familiar. So I built my bedroom. As best I could.

MAY SEES THE ORNATE MIRROR BUILT INTO THE BACK OF HIS CLOSET DOOR.

Panic rises in her face, as if the walls were closing in.

MAY
You fucking idiot.

FORD
What?

MAY
What did you do?!

FORD
It's my room.

MAY
This was MY room! This is where
it...

She turns back to the way they came in.

MAY (CONT'D)
Where's the door? I have to get
out!

FORD
It's right there.

He points to the bedroom door.

May is wide-eyed.

MAY
That's not where we came in.

FORD
Isn't it?

MAY
You don't understand what happened
to me. I can not be here!

The sound of a single, creaking floorboard.

Then a KNOCK at the door.

May tries and fails to catch her breath.

MAY (CONT'D)
Go away!

The doorknob turns. The door opens.

On a man. Covered in blood, shirt open. No pants.

His face is a registry of sorrow. But a crazed, drugged-out glow animates his craggy face. The whites of his eyes. It's the same man from May's beach villa. But different.

He sees her, smiles.

BLOODY MAN

Honey.

MAY

Get the fuck out!

BLOODY MAN

Where were you hiding?

He plods into the room, dripping blood.

BLOODY MAN (CONT'D)

We made mistakes, Maegan. But I love you so much.

MAY

Go to your room!

BLOODY MAN

(shaking his head)

I'm going to make everything all right.

May turns and SLAPS Ford hard across the face.

FORD

What's going on?!

THEN SLAPS HIM AGAIN.

MAY

Wake up. You've got to wake up and then wake me up!

FORD

How?

SHE SLAPS HIM EVEN HARDER.

MAY

Wake up!

FORD'S IMAGE FLICKERS AND THEN DISAPPEARS.

But the Bloody Man is even closer, reaching for her, smiling.

MAY (CONT'D)

Go to your room!

BLOODY MAN
This IS our room. It's where we
first made love.

May pushes past him, and races out through the open bedroom door.

INT. MAY'S ENDLESS HALLWAYS - NIGHT

May runs out into a space of endless hallways. Everything is sterile, cold and white.

But the doors begin to open, one by one. Light from a hundred different scenes and settings spill into the hallway.

Ahead, a YOUNGER MAY and her MOTHER step out from an open door, confused.

AND THEN A YOUNGER, NORMAL VERSION OF HER FATHER, holding a pizza box. Wearing a baseball cap. A dad from a happier time.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

May, Ray and Ford on the couch, surrounded by Ray's bumper of a living room. The groaning NOISE emanates from their open mouths. More urgent than before, unpleasant.

Ford twitches.

Starts to mumble.

His eyes open. Obviously drugged to the gills but fighting it with everything he's got.

Slides off the couch.

THEN SLAPS HIMSELF HARD ACROSS THE FACE.

INT. MAY'S ENDLESS HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Running down the endless hallway, May comes up short in front of this earlier version of her family: Mom, Dad, and young Maegan. They're puzzled.

They look past her.

May turns to see The Bloody Man right behind her. Looking with shock and horror at what he used to be.

HE REACHES OUT TO TOUCH HIS EARLIER SELF.

SOMETHING PASSES OVER HIS FACE, A THOUGHTFUL LOOK...

INT. RAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In Ray's living room, at the couch, Ford takes May by the shoulders. Shakes her.

FORD

May!

Shakes harder.

FORD (CONT'D)

Wake up!

Finally, he slaps her. Hard.

MAY WAKES, FURY AND FEAR IN HER EYES.

INSTINCTIVELY, SHE PUNCHES HIM IN THE FACE.

FORD (CONT'D)

Ow! Damn it!

He goes down.

She stands, wobbling, as Ford rolls onto his side, tries to get up.

She hyperventilates, looks with blank eyes around the room.

MAY

You fucking idiot, I was making progress.

She grabs the two yellow boxes of D-N-D from the coffee table and stumbles for the front door.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ray's modest home. Stars in the vast open sky. The entire neighborhood sits empty.

The front door flies open. May staggers for her pickup truck.

Ford follows, even more doped up than she is. Grabbing shrubbery for support.

FORD

You, no shape to drive. Okay?

She climbs in, slams the door. Cranks the ignition. Throws it into gear. All the while he's easing himself forward using the hood of the pickup as a crutch.

Ford almost says something intelligible, fighting to keep his eyes open.

MAY
Don't talk to me.

FORD
But... Not my fault...

Her pickup lurches back into the street and he's lost all support. Ford struggles, drops onto a bush.

She doesn't look back.

EXT. FIRE BREAK - BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

Along a firebreak beside the road, Ford staggers toward some lights in the distance.

The murky darkness forms writhing, sexual shapes. Fireflies arabesque through the night sky in colors not yet invented. Like a Van Gogh painting after an absinthe binge.

Ford stares at his feet. His motion is uncoordinated, a marionette operated by a drunk epileptic.

Then he notices Jamie floating beside him. Glowing.

JAMIE
Dude, you are way too high.

FORD
Shut up.

JAMIE
Just saying. If an Air Cop drives by, you are toast.

On the road: CAR LIGHTS. Ford anxiously watches them fade into red.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Anyway, I just wanted to say, I forgive you.

THAT WAS THE LAST STRAW.

Ford tries to stand in place, pissed and bleary.

FORD

For what?! Creating this entire fake history that I have to pretend really happened? Or for leading me out to the middle of nowhere and killing yourself?!

JAMIE

Dude. For ignoring my mental health problems.

Ford's totally thrown off guard. Doesn't know what to say.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

You remember what I was like in Riverside. I'm the most fun guy in the world ...until it all flips around.

FORD

(defensive)

You seemed better.

JAMIE

You know my dad would never admit anything was wrong. I tried to O.D. two years ago. Only you knew that. You must have known the same thing was happening all over again.

FORD

What could I do? I'm 17 years old!

JAMIE

Friends help each other out.

You can see it eating away at Ford.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I was trying to help you, the best way I could. Fucked up as that might have been.

FORD

You're right. You're right.

He looks like he's about to start punching himself.

FORD (CONT'D)

I'm such an asshole...

JAMIE

(rolling his eyes)

Don't be a drama queen about it.

(MORE)

JAMIE (CONT'D)
I'm telling you I understand.
Nobody wants to be the sensible
one. I know you love me.

FORD
I do.

JAMIE
We're all just trying to fit in.
And never quite making it.

EXT. NORDELL HOUSE - NIGHT

Folks tend to go to bed early on an Air Force Base. It's quiet.

Ford approaches his house. Sees a light on in front. A vague shape against the curtains.

He heads through the covered driveway to the back yard.

INT. NORDELL HOUSE - NIGHT

The rear sliding glass doors. A creak. They slowly glide open.

Ford pushes the curtains aside silently. A ninja.

EDYTHE (O.S.)
Ford?

He winces. Calls out:

FORD
Hi Mom!

EDYTHE (O.S.)
There's some fried chicken in the
fridge. You'll have to make do for
dinner.

FORD
No problem, Mom!

EDYTHE (O.S.)
I've got work to do, but I'll come
in to say good night.

THE REFRIGERATOR

Thoughtfully stocked by a working mom who cares. Some chicken in a bowl.

Ford makes noise without actually taking anything.

Closes the door.

AND JERKS BACK IN SHOCK.

Sitting at the kitchen table is the Bloody Man. Same outfit, same blood, same drugged out look of open-eyed despair.

He sits before a tray, tending with a razor blade to lines of purple powder.

He looks up.

BLOODY MAN

You scared me. I didn't realize you were home.

FORD

(whispering)

Go away!

BLOODY MAN

Okay, you caught me. But please, please, honey, don't tell your mother.

(comical eye roll)

You know how that one gets.

The man puts down his razor and lifts a straw that's been sliced in half.

BLOODY MAN (CONT'D)

Oh no, trust me, this is nothing like that.

It becomes apparent we're only seeing one side of a conversation.

BLOODY MAN (CONT'D)

This is a medication we're using at work. We're helping our pilots do amazing things! With their minds.

Ford is tense but tries to puzzle out what's happening. He realizes the Bloody Man is looking past him.

Ford waves his hand in front of its face.

No response.

BLOODY MAN (CONT'D)

It helps people connect. It does so many wonderful things.

(MORE)

BLOODY MAN (CONT'D)
You wouldn't believe how it can
bring people together.

A mischievous grin takes over his blood-stained face.

BLOODY MAN (CONT'D)
Sweets, your mother could never,
ever, ever, ever know about this.
But... would you like to try some?

Ford edges around the thing at the table.

As softly as he can, he walks down the dark hallway.

There's a light under one door.

And then the door to his room. Partially open. Dark inside.

INT. FORD'S ROOM - NORDELL HOUSE - NIGHT

The light comes on. His actual room. Nothing special, other than a few posters meant to signal refined taste: David Bowie, Nick Cave.

Ford closes his door, as the drugs and his own anxiety battle it out on his face.

He walks to the window. Gently takes the rod that opens the Venetian blinds.

As they louver up, we see The Bloody Man peering in. No sign of recognition in its face.

Then its gaze slowly shifts to Ford.

BLOODY MAN
(silently mouthing)
I... Love... You...

INT. EDYTHE'S ROOM - NORDELL HOUSE - NIGHT

The personal office/bedroom of a working mother without time to worry about decoration. Her bed is rumpled; Air Force greens thrown over a chair.

Only one thing on the wall: a single Xerox of a handsome man in a flight suit. The one thing she can't forget.

Edythe sits at her desk surrounded by paperwork. She wears a thin night shirt and sweats. Only her pen scraping against paper.

A KNOCK.

EDYTHE

Come on in.

Ford enters, worry lines etching themselves into his forehead. He's in workout shorts and a T-Shirt.

She turns. Sees something troubling.

EDYTHE (CONT'D)

Honey, what's going on?

FORD

I'm not feeling good.

EDYTHE

Is it your stomach, or a fever?

She motions. He comes over.

Edythe holds the back of her hand to his forehead.

FORD

Maybe you could give me something to sleep?

EDYTHE

You feel hot. Lay on the bed; I'll check you out.

EDYTHE'S BED

Ford lays on his back on top of the duvet. Edythe feels behind his jaw with both hands.

EDYTHE (CONT'D)

Lymph nodes feel swollen. How were you when you woke up?

FORD

I just really need to sleep.

She reaches under his shirt, feels his chest.

EDYTHE

You're sweating more than I would expect.

With her other hand she reaches down. We see her arm pumping.

FORD

Mom!

EDYTHE
How is that?

FORD
What are you doing?!

EDYTHE
This always helped your father go
to sleep.

FORD
You can't do that!

EDYTHE
Dear...

She leans down.

He looks up into her smiling, admittedly sexy face.

EDYTHE (CONT'D)
If you really want me to stop, why
is your penis so darn hard?

INT. EDYTHE'S ROOM - NORDELL HOUSE - NIGHT

Exactly the same view as before. Edythe at her desk,
surrounded by paperwork.

A MUFFLED YELP through the walls. A THUMP.

INT. FORD'S ROOM - NORDELL HOUSE - NIGHT

Edythe barges into Ford's room to see him shaking and
moaning. He's in bed, duvet knotted around his knees, still
in street clothes.

She rushes to him, sits on the edge of his bed, shakes him
awake.

EDYTHE
Ford!

FORD
Don't touch me!

Edythe pulls him close. His eyes look out wildly from under
her arm. Edythe's naked breasts sway gently under her
nightshirt, an inch or so away.

EDYTHE
Honey; you were having a bad dream.

FORD

Oh, mom.

He sees on the wall behind her, 'I Love You!' scrawled in red.

And slowly, as if it were seeping up from below, the walls become splattered in blood.

EDYTHE

Dear, were you drinking? I can smell it on you, so let's not embarrass ourselves.

FORD

Some beer.

EDYTHE

You should know alcohol can upset the natural rhythms of your sleep.

She seems calm enough, but he just can't lie any more:

FORD

Mom, what is D-N-D?

Edythe pulls away.

EDYTHE

What?

FORD

Di-methyl-di-something-something.

Her mood changes. A sober urgency comes into her voice.

EDYTHE

How did you hear about that?

FORD

What's it for?

She stands. Crosses her arms.

EDYTHE

You cannot talk about this. You'll get into trouble and you will get your mother into trouble.

Ford sits on the edge of the bed, looking up with that eternal teenage stare of superiority and disgust.

FORD

Mom, what do they use it for?!

A standoff. But he's never looked at her like this.

Edythe's voice cracks:

EDYTHE

The government learned... My team learned... that we could use this medicine to help our remote pilots communicate, and reduce mission stress.

FORD

How?

EDYTHE

We teach them to disassociate their actions... From unpleasant side effects. Of their actions.

FORD

You're making it easier to kill people, mom! How the fuck can you do that?!

WITHOUT PAUSING TO THINK SHE SLAPS HIM HARD ACROSS THE FACE.

He's stunned. This is new. Edythe immediately realizes the impact of what she did.

EDYTHE

I'm sorry, I'm sorry...

She reaches for his face, strokes his cheek.

Ford lets her do it. But then something occurs to him:

FORD

(almost not crying)
Doctors aren't supposed to do that.

EDYTHE

Honey, I know it's hard to grasp.

FORD

You think it is. But it's not.

EDYTHE

Sometimes military action prevents... Something even worse from happening.

FORD

I've seen it. These people didn't have weapons. They were running for their lives.

EDYTHE

What do you mean, you've seen it?

He raises his hands, no more.

Stands and walks out of the room.

Edythe follows.

Behind them, through the Venetian blinds, the Bloody Man watches it all.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

She catches up with him.

EDYTHE (CONT'D)

Clifford Nordell. What do you mean, you've seen it?

FORD

I thought you were a doctor.

EDYTHE

Have you taken it?!
(realizing the connection)
Your bad dreams...

He doesn't want to answer. Won't meet her hurt and anxious eyes.

FORD

Mom, all the kids take it. We take it and we hang out with Jamie. It's just like he's really there.

EDYTHE

You cannot do that much! It's insane; that drug could permanently damage your brain.

He's not buying this for a second.

FORD

Then why do you give it to people?

That registers. You can see she's probably asked herself this once or twice.

FORD (CONT'D)

And why is it 'a drug' when I take it and 'a medicine' when you give it to pilots to make it easier for them not to worry about all the people they kill?!

Like any perceptive teen, he can tell when he leaves a mark. Now she won't meet his eyes.

EDYTHE

Please, don't...

FORD

Mom, one time I heard dad complaining. He said, "They give me 'go' pills for long flights and 'sleepers' when they're over." Did you give him drugs too?

EDYTHE

(pleading)

This is different.

FORD

Did you ever think that sort of thing is maybe why he crashed?

Ford swipes aside the curtains and blinds, yanks open the sliding glass door, then disappears into the night.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

On his couch, Ray finally wakes. Looks like a pile of dirty laundry with a face.

RAY

Dang, y'all. Could've stayed.
Woulda broke out some more rails.

KITCHEN COUNTER

He pours a vodka-tini, beer in one hand, vodka in the other.

Ray shakes the last drops of liquor into his plastic cup. Seems like he's talking to someone who isn't there.

RAY (CONT'D)

God-diggly-dang it. You're right, always fucking right. Following me around being right all the time. But that's a long ass walk and I'm in no shape to drive.

EXT. FIREBREAK - BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

Ford trudges back along that ditch beside the main road. The sky is dark and full of stars. Jamie floats beside him.

JAMIE

You really pounded your mom back there.

FORD

Shut up.

JAMIE

I mean, not like in the dream. I just meant you were pretty hard on her.

FORD

Shut the fuck up! How could she do that? How could anybody do that?

JAMIE

Come on, man. We were in history class. You really need to ask how people can do stuff like that to each other?

FORD

People are fucking awful.

JAMIE

Awful people are. Most people, I guess.

Ford stops. Just him and Jamie in the middle of this dark, dirty void.

FORD

Jamie, what do I do?

JAMIE

Beer?

FORD

How do I fix this?!

JAMIE

Beer?

Ford drops to a seat on the empty ground. Head in hands.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Seriously, Ford, where you gonna go? With May?

(MORE)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

She's even more fucked up than you are. We're a hundred miles from anywhere that matters.

FORD

Can I hold out till college?

JAMIE

You're not gonna fix the world tonight. So yeah, beer. Get tanked so you can sleep, apologize to moms tomorrow. You got to move forward. Don't be like me, man. I'm dead.

FORD

So my answer is beer.

JAMIE

Why do you think they invented that shit?

Jamie begins to flicker and fade. Only his Cheshire Cat smile remains:

JAMIE (CONT'D)

And just in time, because it looks like you're almost sober.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE MINI-MART - NIGHT

Like some Edward Hopper painting, there's just this mini-mart lit from above by a few streetlights.

A car at the pump. A PAIR OF AIRMEN head for the store.

Out of the night, beside the mini-mart, Ford comes out. Says something to the airmen. A little back and forth. One of the airmen punches the other in the shoulder.

Ford has bills ready. Hands them over.

INT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE MINI-MART - NIGHT

One of the airmen waves to the WOMAN behind the counter as they head for the back.

AIRMAN PILLICKS

I just don't understand why you'd do that. You're taking a risk.

AIRMAN DENOVA
Lighten up, bro. You don't remember
being that age?

AIRMAN PILLICKS
You don't know that kid. What if
it's the colonel's son and he
passes out in a ditch?

AIRMAN DENOVA
Like that never happened to you?

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE MINI-MART - NIGHT

From the shadows, Ford sees something. Pulls back.

Across the way, Ray shambles into view.

RAY
(talking to no one)
I rather'd you stay here, is my
point, but I know you ain't gonna
listen to a word comes out of my
mouth.

He tosses an empty beer can onto the roof and heads in.

INT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE MINI-MART - NIGHT

Ray has the false good cheer of a man who's got very little
control over his faculties, but is mustering every last ounce
of personal energy to insure he gets more beer.

He waves with both hands to the woman behind the counter.

RAY
Heya Kannitha! How's your uncle
doing? The one with the legs?

The woman smiles patiently.

RAY (CONT'D)
Don't mind the puppy dog, I keep
trying to get rid of the thing, but
I guess she just loves me too much.

He heads on back. Her eyes look left, right. No puppy.

On his way, Ray grabs a bag of chips, opens them, begins
stuffing them into his mouth.

AT THE REFRIGERATED AREA

The airmen grab a couple of twelve packs. They ignore Ray as he comes over. Too close.

Ray munches chips, sometimes swallowing.

RAY (CONT'D)

And what is on the menu tonight,
boys?

AIRMAN DENOVA

Sergeant, you smell like piss.

RAY

Don't worry, it's not mine. Ha-ha!
Just kidding. It's totally mine.

AIRMAN DENOVA

You're gonna get Article 15'd,
dude.

RAY

Don't mind the puppy. She's a dang
nuisance.

AIRMAN DENOVA

Honestly, I don't care what happens
to you. But we're short of
mechanics. All I'm saying.

RAY

That's the nicest thing you ever
said. Aw.... Bring one in.

Ray tries to hug the Airman, who pushes him back, repulsed.

AIRMAN PILLICKS

Not worth it, bro. Come on.

(then to Ray)

Seriously? You smell like piss.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE MINI-MART - NIGHT

The airmen exit, each carrying a paper bag. On the way to their car, Airman DeNova puts down his bag, opens the twelver inside, and slides one out for himself.

He leaves the bag.

They don't look back as Ford comes out of the darkness, grabs the bag and leaves.

AT THE PUMP

The airmen shoot the shit as their car gasses up. Behind them, Ray stumbles out with a six pack in each hand.

AN IMMEDIATE FACE PLANT. BEERS SMASH.

RAY
God dang it, get away. You ruined it!

THE AIRMEN

AIRMAN PILLICKS
You trust that guy in the field?

AIRMAN DENOVA
A lot of mechanics don't make it long term. They have to drop the mask to work. So they're always catching bodies.

AIRMAN PILLICKS
It's war. A corpse is the point.

THE PUMP CLICKS OFF.

Denova removes the hose, screws on the gas cap.

AIRMAN DENOVA
Twenty bucks says you can't go a full deploy without your mask.

AIRMAN PILLICKS
What good will that do when the C.O. finds out? Because you know that motherf..

A SMASH

They turn to see Ray scrambling from the covered area over the trash cans onto the roof of the mini-mart.

EXT. FIREBREAK - BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

At the sound of the SMASH, Ford turns to see Ray on the mini-mart roof. A half naked silhouette, screaming at the sky.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE MINI-MART - NIGHT

The two airmen come closer, watching Ray on the roof. He's shirtless, sweaty, covered in beer and blood and a few dozen cuts from broken glass.

Ray yanks off a shoe and throws it... at something.

AIRMAN DENOVA

He was never much of an airman, but
damn does that man know how to end
a career!

AIRMAN PILLICKS

Finish that beer. I'm not getting
pulled in for this.

AIRMAN DENOVA

Dude, this is magnificent.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE MINI-MART - ROOF - NIGHT

From Ray's POV. Lit by the stark light of the Luminaires. He
grabs his other shoe and throws it.

At the ARMLESS SUDANESE GIRL.

She hobbles toward Ray, OTHER BLOODY BODIES a few feet away.

She makes incomprehensible GRUNTS with whatever is left of
her mouth.

RAY

You all get! Get out of here!

From his military green dungarees Ray pulls a pistol. Points
it at the girl.

RAY (CONT'D)

I don't got no desire to hurt you.
And you sure as shit can't defend
yourself 'cause you ain't got no
arms!

RAY'S TORTURED FACE

He pulls the trigger. SHOOTS AGAIN.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE MINI-MART - NIGHT

Ford comes up from the shadows as the Airmen scramble to
their car.

RAY PUTS THE PISTOL UNDER HIS CHIN.

BLOOD SPRAYS IN THE AIR. RAY FALLS AND ROLLS.

The car takes off, leaving the Airman's beer bottle spinning next to the pump.

The roof of the mini-mart is slightly angled, so it takes some time for Ray's body to roll to the edge.

Thump-thump... Then over.

Onto the blacktop by the front doors of the mini-mart with a wet thud.

In front of Ford, who stares:

BLOOD, BEER, GLASS.

AND A SET OF KEYS.

Beside him, Jamie COUGHS.

JAMIE
(singing)
Op-por-tu-ni-ty!

Ford turns to glare.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Well they're not much use to this
guy any more, are they?

INT. NORDELL HOUSE - EDYTHE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Edythe stands beside her bed, phone in hand.

PHONE SCREEN: BEALE A.F.B. EMERG. RESPONSE

But she turns off the phone and sets it on her desk. She looks to the photocopy taped to her wall:

THE HANDSOME AIRMAN, IN HIS FLIGHT SUIT.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

From above, the enlisted housing area. Red cop lights flicker in the distance.

Ford is at the front door. Opens it.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The closet, with Ray's supply of D-N-D half gone.

Ford grabs a palette of the drug.

He lifts the palette, turns with it in his arms.

And as he carries it past the living room...

HE SEES RAY ON HIS COUCH. VODKA-TINI IN HAND. A LITTLE MORE COGENT THAN USUAL.

RAY

That's a serious amount of dick
sucking you got there.

There's a weary seen-it-all look in Ford's eyes at this point. Nothing can faze him now.

FORD

You're dead, Ray.

RAY

Just messin' with ya.

Near the TV set, the armless Somali girl grunts. There's a pool of blood at her feet.

RAY (CONT'D)

You met my little puppy. I call her
'Stumpy.'

She grunts. Urgent look in her eyes. She wants something.

RAY (CONT'D)

Tried locking her up in a room, but
she always finds a way out. Guess
she figured out how to pick locks.
Which is weird 'cause she ain't got
no fucking arms!

FORD

How can I still see you? I'm not
high any more.

RAY

Hell, I don't know.

(thinking)

Maybe when you took that stroll
through my brains, you downloaded a
little extra.

FORD

(apologizing)

All those doors were open.

RAY

Not surprised, I was never what you'd call a disciplined thinker. But I do have to say, it's all kind of interesting being inside YOUR head for a change.

Ray puts his feet up on the coffee table, arms stretched wide.

RAY (CONT'D)

In some ways it's actually quite a freeing experience, as you seem to have a little more room on the inside than I did. And a somewhat bigger vocabulary. Like 'per-spi-cacious'?! --that's a 'get laid' word!

FORD

Jesus! What do you want, Ray?!

RAY

Well, that's the thing. Since I'm not alive no more. What DO I want?

Ford's not fazed, but he's concerned.

RAY (CONT'D)

Now I don't know a lot, and I forgot half what I knew thanks to bad life choices. And, perhaps trading drugs to suck your dick wasn't exactly what you'd call 'moral high ground', but I tried to be a good person. Always made a good faith effort to address my wrongs. So, asking me what I want? I'm of the mind you and I do whatever we can to help out L'il Stumpy here.

FORD

What can I do? I'm 17 years old!

RAY

Well, kid, if you're old enough to steal a dead man's drugs, I'd say you're old enough to enact positive social change in this world.

Ray gestures to his coffee table, where we see a pair of those military headsets.

EXT. MAY'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Ray's car pulls up May's gravel driveway, parks behind her pickup.

INT. MAY'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

May stands in her barren kitchen, wearing slacks and a white dress shirt buttoned to the neck. Pours Jack Daniels into a shot glass. Carefully. To the rim.

SHE GULPS IT DOWN.

Pours another. Compulsively precise.

Then she notices something through her kitchen window:

RAY'S CAR

MAY
What the fucking fuck?!

EXT. MAY'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

May opens the door to see Ford standing there with a palette of D-N-D in his arms and two headsets balanced on top.

FORD
May, I'm sorry.

MAY
No.

FORD
Ray's dead.

She stops. Looks at the drugs. At him.

MAY
...What did you do?!

FORD
(apologetic)
Ray died on his own. He shot himself and he fell. Off a roof. He was all screwed up, May. I know, I'm all screwed up. But I need your help.

MAY
Ray's dead and you stole his car
and his drugs and you brought them
to my house?!

You can see in his face, Ford hadn't really thought this through.

MAY (CONT'D)
You idiot! Ditch the car.
(a resigned sigh)
...leave the drugs.

INT. EDYTHE'S ROOM - NORDELL HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Edythe at her desk, the photocopy of her husband looking down from the wall.

CLOSE ON A STACK OF PAGES

It's all about D-N-D. How it works.

She opens a desk drawer. Pulls out a small, yellow box.

INT. MAY'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

The palettes of D-N-D and the pilot headgear sit on the kitchen floor. May stands, arms crossed, dourly watching Ford cut up lines of purple powder.

FORD
Look May, I'm genuinely sorry. I
know how bad that must have been
for you.

MAY
Does this expression on my face
signal to you the idea I might
somehow give a flying fuck about
sharing my emotions right now?

FORD
Not really. I'm still sorry.

MAY
I introduced the version of my
father I've been trying to forget
to the one I've been trying to
remember. Maybe they'll sort things
out.

FORD
You think?

MAY
Not really.

She comes over, almost puts her hand on Ford's shoulder. You can see it's hard for her.

Then back to crossed arms.

MAY (CONT'D)
But I am sorry about Ray. He was a fucked up little weirdo, but I think we were all he had.

FORD
Pretty much.

MAY
So why the hell are you cutting lines right now?

FORD
(shaking his head)
Dude, my future is so bleak...

MAY
You're giving up?

FORD
No. I'm gonna have to apologize to mom. And I think I'll have a lot more to apologize for after this... But I promised Ray I'd help him out. And I'm kind of hoping you might help me out, too?

MAY
And why would I do that?

FORD
Because, at the end of the day, that's what friends do for each other.

May laughs, despite herself.

MAY
You're such a fucking asshole.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - MORNING

The sun peeks over the range as the ROAR of a tanker taking off rises in the distance.

INT. PREP ROOM - BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - MORNING

Airman AyJay and Chasey work the espresso machine in the prep room as Airman Pillicks approaches, a little too cocky. All wear remote pilot jumpsuits, hoodies pulled back.

AIRMAN PILLICKS

No one told me there'd be espresso.

AIRMAN AYJAY

New guy?

AIRMAN PILLICKS

David Pillicks.

AyJay hands over a cup.

AIRMAN AYJAY

Twice the caffeine, half the pee.

AIRMAN CHASEY

Better hit it. Round here, if
you're not fifteen minutes early,
you're late.

INT. REMOTE PILOT OPERATIONS GO ROOM - MORNING

The room is lit by monitors and blue desk lamps. PILOTS and TECHNICIANS rush through their morning routine.

The GROANING SOUND of D-N-D use rises. COLONEL MATTIN paces, clearly in charge.

EXT. SUDANESE COASTAL STREET - DAY

The video game view. The rear mouth of an automated Chinook opens and AyJay, Chasey, Pillicks, and Denova float out, seemingly unarmed.

They look around them at the remains of an old port city. Thanks to our visual overlay, it's still somehow attractive. Smoke in the distance.

Various floating callouts: Enemies, feature names. Anything a game player might want to know.

AIRMAN AYJAY
 Since this is Bollocks' first
 day...

AIRMAN PILLICKS
 --never heard that one before.

AIRMAN AYJAY
 We've got it easy. The major force
 moved on, and consequently, a few
 families have come right back.
 We're going to help them realize
 this was a tragic mistake.

A WALL OF FLAME

It engulfs a narrow tenement-lined street.

At different heights, our four Airmen fly through it,
 unaffected.

A FEW GREY SQUARES WITH RED 'X'S ALONG THE STREET.

Pillicks flies to a pair of 'X's. One on the ground, one
 leaning against a battered stone wall.

AIRMAN PILLICKS
 You do things differently here. I
 like it.

THEN HE NOTICES A YOUNG WOMAN CLOSE BESIDE HIM.

IT'S MAY.

The airman has no idea what to make of this. She's wearing a
 Catholic school girl outfit.

May reaches over, FLICKS THE BUTTON ON HIS HEAD.

EVERYTHING PRETTY AND COLORFUL SHRINKS DOWN INTO THAT PINK
 BUTTON ON THE SIDE OF PILLICKS' DRONE.

REVEALING THE UGLY, REAL WORLD VIEW:

Those 'X's are dead bodies. Unspeakably mutilated.

A mother and her little boy. Bone, blood and gristle.

AIRMAN PILLICKS (V.O.)
 What the fuck!?

HIS DRONE TAPS THE BUTTON ON ITS SIDE.

AND IT ERUPTS WITH COLOR AND BEAUTY, TAKING OVER THE VIEW.

AIRMAN AYJAY (V.O.)
What's wrong, Bollocks?

AIRMAN PILLICKS
It's Pillicks. I don't know.

AIRMAN AYJAY (V.O.)
I don't like uncertainty. What's in
view?

AIRMAN PILLICKS
Pair of dead terrorists. All Clear.

FROM AYJAY'S POV

He floats beside a delivery truck simmering with flame.

Ayjay opens the passenger side door.

JAMIE'S IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT. DRESSED TO PARTY.

AIRMAN AYJAY
Who are you?!

JAMIE
(shrugging)
Jamie?

JAMIE SPREADS HIS HANDS WIDE.

GLOWING FILAMENTS SPRAY FROM HIS FINGERS

Like phosphorescent worms, they wrap around AyJay, obscuring
him in throbbing lines of color.

He falls back from the truck with a YELL.

INT. REMOTE PILOT OPERATIONS GO ROOM - DAY

Colonel Mattin stands beside a confused TECHNICIAN. They
watch one of the large screens, where we see a drone flying
erratically.

AIRMAN CHASEY (V.O.)
What the Hell, AyJay?

AIRMAN AYJAY (V.O.)
Get over here, we're being hacked!

Colonel Mattin bangs the table.

COLONEL MATTIN
What is going on?!

TECHNICIAN
Interference... Maybe?

COLONEL MATTIN
Pipe Ayjay's mask through monitor
one.

The technician taps out a quick code and we see a confusing swirl of colors on screen.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
Damn it, suit me up and get me a
spike!

EXT. SUDANESE COASTAL STREET - DAY

VIDEO GAME VIEW, WITH CHASEY, SURROUNDED BY GREY 'X'S.

She turns and flies toward AyJay and the delivery truck.

AIRMAN CHASEY
Bollocks and Denova. Head for the
food truck in front of the hotel.

AIRMAN PILLICKS (V.O.)
It's all rubble. Which is the
hotel?!

AS SHE FLIES, CHASEY SENSES SOMETHING.

SHE TURNS TO SEE FORD. FLYING BESIDE HER.

He smiles. Casual street clothes and a hoodie.

FORD REACHES OVER AND TAPS THE BUTTON ON HER TEMPLE.

THE VIDEO GAME VIEW SHRINKS INTO THE PINK BUTTON ON THE SIDE
OF CHASEY'S DRONE.

REVEALING HARSH REALITY:

WHAT LOOKS LIKE A FLYING METAL DEATH HEAD WHIRRS INTO VIEW.

AIRMAN CHASEY (V.O.)
Christ!

AN IMMEDIATE REACTION: the drone that Chasey operates fires
on the other drone.

IT EXPLODES, SPINNING LIKE A CATHERINE WHEEL, SPARKS IN ALL
DIRECTIONS.

CHASEY'S DRONE TAPS THE PINK BUTTON ON ITS SIDE.

AND THE VIDEO GAME VIEW RETURNS

In place of the blown up drone, Denova lays on the ground.

AIRMAN CHASEY
Damn it, I shot Denova.

She continues on to the delivery truck.

AIRMAN CHASEY (CONT'D)
It's possible this is some form of
radio interference. Don't over-
react. Be careful with your fire.

AHEAD OF HER, MAY STEPS OUT FROM BEHIND THE TRUCK.

CHASEY IMMEDIATELY FIRES FROM HER PALMS. FIVE ROUNDS. RAPID
SUCCESSION.

No effect.

May walks closer, shaking her head sadly in apparent
disappointment.

MAY
Unlike all these bodies you're
trying not to look at, I'm not
real.

AIRMAN CHASEY
What are you doing here?

ELECTRIC BUTTERFLIES FLY FROM MAY'S OPEN PALMS.

THEY ENGULF AIRMAN CHASEY.

INT. REMOTE PILOT OPERATIONS GO ROOM - DAY

Colonel Mattin wears a remote pilot jumpsuit. A technician
helps him into his gear.

COLONEL MATTIN
Where's my spike?

TECHNICIAN
Sir, due to time constraints...

COLONEL MATTIN
The inhaler then, God damn it!

EXT. SUDANESE COASTAL STREET - DAY

WITH AIRMAN PILLICKS

The video game view of his world. He approaches the truck, hands ready like some ninja. Nerves on edge.

AIRMAN PILLICKS
Chasey? AyJay?

THEN HE REALIZES RAY IS STANDING NEXT TO HIM.

In Air Force greens and a wife beater. Drinking a beer.

RAY
Hey soldier.

Pillicks stares, holding it together.

AIRMAN PILLICKS
(calling out)
I need a pull out! Class One
hallucination.

RAY TOSSES HIS BEER.

IT HITS THE BUTTON ON PILLICKS' TEMPLE.

OUR VIEW SHRINKS INTO THE PINK BUTTON ON THE SIDE OF
PILLICK'S DRONE.

REVEALING THOSE AWFUL, AWFUL CORPSES.

THE DRONE IMMEDIATELY RESPONDS, BY TAPPING BACK.

THE VIDEO GAME VIEW TAKES OVER.

ONLY THIS TIME INSTEAD OF RAY, THERE'S A POSSE OF WELL-ARMED
SOMALI SOLDIERS.

PILLICKS REACTS, RAISES HIS HANDS.

BULLETS SHOOT FROM HIS PALMS.

And then we see beyond...

As the Somali soldiers fade away...

The bodies of AyJay and Chasey.

Pillicks looks around him, angry, confused, a little in
shock.

Then Ford and May float out from behind the truck.

AIRMAN PILLICKS (CONT'D)
Do you have any idea what you've
done?!

FORD
Kinda?

Ford gestures:

AND A GLOWING OCTOPUS FLIES FROM HIS FINGERS, WRAPPING ITS
TENTACLES AROUND PILLICKS, INSERTING ITSELF INTO EVERY
ORIFICE.

--And he falls to the ground with a THUMP.

REVEALING COLONEL MATTIN FLOATING BEHIND HIM.

Needless to say, the Colonel isn't happy.

He floats toward May and Ford.

Glaring.

COLONEL MATTIN
You've destroyed millions of
dollars of US Air Force equipment
with this ...prank.

FORD
You're killing people.

Mattin floats closer, furious but controlled, like a snake
ready to strike.

COLONEL MATTIN
You have no idea what my men and
women have to do, every single day,
so children like you can sit safely
in your classrooms and never have
to worry about things like this
happening to you.

FORD
You're not even seeing it. Why
don't you take a look?

FORD GESTURES, AND THE ATTRACTIVE, VIDEO GAME VIEW SHRINKS
TOWARD COLONEL MATTIN.

BUT THE COLONEL SEEMS PRETTY SKILLED AT THIS. HE MOTIONS WITH
OUTSTRETCHED HANDS:

AND THE TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS BATTLE IT OUT FOR SUPREMACY.

THEY MIX, LIKE OIL AND WATER...

--REVEALING BLOODY FLESH IN STARK ARRAY ALL AROUND THEM, AND THEN THE GAME OVERLAY SUDDENLY IN ITS PLACE.

IT'S A CRAZY PSYCHEDELIC MAELSTROM.

A BATTLE OF WILLS.

COLONEL MATTIN
I'm going to find you out there.
And you won't like it.

THEN JAMIE FLOATS OUT FROM BEHIND THE SMOLDERING TRUCK.

The Colonel isn't prepared for this one.

It's the only moment we've seen real humanity in his face:
fear.

Jamie flies over.

COLONEL MATTIN (CONT'D)
This isn't real.

JAMIE
I forgive you, Dad.

He kisses the Colonel's cheek.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
(whispering in his ear)
But we're taking this motherfucking
place down.

SPARKLING FLAMES ERUPT FROM JAMIE'S HANDS AND THE COLONEL
DISAPPEARS IN A FLASH.

JAMIE TURNS, SMILING

BUT FORD IS LOOKING SOMEWHERE ELSE.

There's a plume of smoke in the sky, from behind this line of
buildings.

Jamie and May watch as Ford walks toward it.

INT. REMOTE PILOT OPERATIONS GO ROOM - DAY

Colonel Mattin climbs from the device, removes his goggles.

COLONEL MATTIN
Get Dr. Edythe Nordell on the
phone, now!

EXT. DESERTED FLIGHTLINE - DAY

Ford exits onto a dusty field. The topography isn't quite right. This can't be the same place.

It's a flight line. In the California desert.

And there's a smoldering plane crash.

FORD COMES CLOSER, JAMIE AND MAY BEHIND HIM.

Standing beside this horrible crash is a pilot in a flight suit. He pulls off his huge domed helmet.

IT'S FORD'S DAD, JAY.

He drops the helmet, turning in his massive, puffy flight suit.

JAY
We never got to say goodbye.

Ford comes closer.

FORD
Hey.

JAY
Look, I'm sorry, son. Really. I
know this life is difficult.

Jay reaches out and tousles Ford's hair.

JAY (CONT'D)
But don't worry. It won't last
long.

Jay LAUGHS, almost a cackle.

And then he and the downed plane dissolve into nothingness.

EXT. BEALE AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

From a distance, we see the Beale Air Base gate. Edythe talks to one of the AIR COPS. She hands over a photocopy with Ford's face on it.

The AIRMAN looks it over and nods. Takes the paper into his little office.

Then Edythe heads back toward her car, on the side of the road just outside the gate.

BUT BETWEEN THE GATE AND HER CAR SIT A TRIO OF PROTESTORS.

An older sun-bleached WOMAN in warm clothes sits beside her sign: "Ground the Drones!"

A THICK MANILA ENVELOPE LANDS WITH A PLOP IN HER LAP.

She looks up, confused. Sees Edythe walking back to her car.

Then the woman turns over the envelope.

"Good Luck" is written on the back.

INT. MAY'S HOUSE - DAY

Ford and May slouch at her kitchen table. Two of those military headsets are between them, next to a bottle of Jack Daniels.

Ford glances up at May's beautiful face, her disheveled hair.

They both look like one long weekend of bad decisions. But there's something better now, for both of them.

Perhaps the slightest sense of relief.

FORD

Guess it's about time to go to school.

She SNORTS in response. Their eyes meet.

Ford looks down at her hand next to his on the table.

Then, very slowly, she moves her index finger on top of his own.