

FURNISS

Episode 1: "**Lucky**"

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STUDIO DRAFT / 10.12.15

BLACKNESS. The HUM of a million bugs.

PULLING BACK from what we realize is the OBLONG PUPIL of an unblinking YELLOW EYE...

A GOAT. Standing very still, staring at--

EXT. PERKEL FARMS - DAY

--sclerotic ED COX (70s), making water mist rainbows as he rinses off a stack of plastic crates with a hose.

The Goat watches him from a distance on this PRODUCE FARM: rows of fruit and vegetables extending to the horizon, a cluster of OUT-BUILDINGS around the MAIN HOUSE.

Various other WORKERS move in the background. Great HILLS squat in the distance. The twilight of a quiet, sunny day.

Ed coils the hose. Takes a nip from his hip flask. His thoughts drift, staring off at nothing. And then--

--he notices the Goat. Stares at it. Puts the flask away.

EXT. WORK SHED - PERKEL FARMS - DAY

Some CLANKING sounds from within and Ed emerges with a coil of LIGHT CHAIN and two PADLOCKS. Tired and casual.

EXT. PARKING AREA - PERKEL FARMS - DAY

Ed carries the CHAIN, waving goodbye to some WORKERS before he hoists it into the bed of his own RUSTY PICKUP. *K-klink!*

WORKER (O.S.)
'Night, Ed.

EXT. ROUTE 1 - PERKEL FARMS - DAY

ON A FADED ROADSIDE SIGN, '**PERKEL FARMS - Markets - U-Pick**', until we catch ED'S TRUCK pulling out onto the RURAL TWO-LANE ROAD that runs along the property.

From the deep background, the Goat watches him go.

INT. ED'S TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Ed drives, idly finger-drumming the wheel to a jaunty COUNTRY TUNE on the radio. The Statler Brothers or something.

EXT. FURNISS COUNTY (VARIOUS) - DAY

THE MUSIC plays over as ED'S TRUCK winds through this small Southeastern town: low Appalachia country of swaybacked fences, rolling meadows and deep woods, ever looming hills.

He passes occasional HOMES, set back from the road. He passes rusty INDUSTRIAL PARKS and TRAIN YARDS, areas of LOW-INCOME HOUSING, small tight blocks of state projects.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

It's Main Street, yes, but it's got a ghost town feel. Shopfronts with soaped windows, '**Out of Business**' and '**Lease**'. A few PEDESTRIANS amble in the setting sunlight.

Ed pulls into an empty intersection, his MUSIC crackling from the truck. He gets out, goes to the bed, gets the CHAIN.

ACROSS THE STREET, some ELDERLY PEDESTRIANS watch as--

Ed carries the chain to the corner LAMPPOST. Padlocks it around the base. Uncoils it back to--

--the cab of his still-running truck, which he gets into again and then *winds the chain around his neck and padlocks it*. All just as casual as if he's checking his tire pressure.

The Pedestrians stare at him in uneasy curiosity as he--

Cranks his MUSIC to top volume. Yanks the gearshift. Adjusts the chain, like a shirt collar. And stomps on the gas--**VRRM!**

WIDE ON ED'S TRUCK as it jolts out of frame, the chain snapping taut behind it--**CHK!**

ON THE PEDESTRIANS, aghast.

WIDE ON THE INTERSECTION as ED'S TRUCK rolls into frame with his now HEADLESS BODY bent over the wheel, until it hits the opposite lamppost with a dull **THUD**. Silence.

One of the Pedestrians is inhaling to scream but we--

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE SEQUENCE.

INT. KITCHEN - VENTURA HOME - DAY

A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE, '**Public Suicide Shocks Furniss**'.

OSCAR VENTURA (42, Latino, salt & pepper hair) contemplates the newspaper, coffee in hand. A rugged, kind-eyed guy in jeans and a work jacket.

Somewhere nearby, we hear INSANE SCREAMING--

INT. LIVING ROOM - VENTURA HOME - SAME

--from the PRO WRESTLING on TV. On the couch is SHAWN VENTURA (14, redheaded, slight) and his bud ANDREW MUNDT (14, heavy).

It's a sturdy old farmhouse: cluttered but not dirty, and everything feels mismatched, salvaged, restored. *Old*.

Andrew is captivated by the wrestlers, snarling along--

ANDREW
...kill 'em...kill 'em....

--but Shawn is preoccupied with bagging and organizing a stack of COMIC BOOKS. He looks back to see Oscar there in the OPEN KITCHEN, staring at the paper.

SHAWN
Dad?

It's like Oscar didn't hear him at first, but then...

OSCAR
What's up, buddy.

SHAWN
What time're we leaving?

Off Oscar's *huh?* expression, Shawn gestures to his COMICS--

SHAWN (CONT'D)
Venture Con's tomorrow, remember?

Oscar snaps his fingers, saunters in, nodding hugely--

OSCAR
Ahhright right, 'course. Figured we'll hit the road around seven, beat the lines, sound good?

SHAWN
(deeply pleased)
Yeah.

OSCAR
 (re: the comics)
 All bagged n' tagged?

SHAWN
 Just about.

OSCAR
 Good man.
 (fist bumps Shawn, then--)
 Andrew, nice to see you.

ANDREW
 (without looking)
 Hey, Mr. Ventura.

OSCAR
 Get your feet off my table.

ANDREW
 Yes, sir.

OSCAR
 You're a disgusting animal.

ANDREW
 Yes, sir.

As he heads for the FRONT DOOR--

OSCAR
 (re: the TV)
 You know that's fake, right?

Andrew and Shawn give him synchronized faux-astonished looks--

OSCAR (CONT'D)
 Phonus balonus.

--and he exits. Smiling faintly, Shawn watches him go.

EXT. VENTURA HOME / JUNKYARD - SAME

Oscar comes off the porch pulling on WORK GLOVES, heading to--

THE JUNKYARD, which sits only about thirty yards away.
 '**Ventura Scrap & Salvage**' reads the rusty sign on the high
 fence surrounding a VAST ROWS OF STACKED SCRAP METAL.

Behind the house is an old WOODEN BARN. And all of this, it
 seems, is located at the quiet dead-end of a secluded dirt
 road: just grassy fields and deep woods all around.

Oscar heads for the JUNKYARD, starts to unlock the gate.

INT. EMPTY ROOM - VENTURA HOME - SAME

THROUGH THE WINDOW, we see Oscar down there, sliding the gate open and then disappearing into the maze of scrap.

VALERY VENTURA (40, white, flame-haired) watches him go. Sad eyes. She cracks the window and turns to look around at--

--this empty bedroom. Just a single-size bed and a dresser, a few BOXES stacked in the corner. A hushed, dusty vibe.

The TELEVISION downstairs and Shawn and Andrew's VOICES murmur through the floorboards. She shuts the door. Locks it.

Slumps on the edge of the bed. Runs her hand over the mattress. Smells her fingers. Exhales, tiredly.

And then fishes out a thin JOINT. Lights it, hits it. Lays back and blows a plume of smoke towards the window...

She stares at it, how it twists in a shaft of sunlight.

EXT. JUNKYARD (VARIOUS) - DAY

VRRM! A FORKLIFT stabs under an old DRYER, hoists it up.

Oscar sweats in the hot sun, working the forklift controls with deft precision, a masterful junk mover.

FSH! He heaves an armful of useless cardboard waste into a free-standing INCINERATOR, oily flames licking out of it.

POP! He crowbars the housing off an old AC unit.

SHK! With pliers, he strips some wire for the copper.

WUMP! He slides an old STEAMER TRUNK off of his battered PICKUP and pries it open. Awestruck to find--

OSCAR
...ohh baby...

--an ANTIQUE VACUUM TUBE RADIO inside. Oscar's in love.

SHAWN (O.S.)
Dad!

He looks: Shawn, on the porch, making the 'phone' sign.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Oscar takes the phone from Shawn, makes a 'who?' face but Shawn shrugs, already moving back to the couch, the TV--

OSCAR
Where's your mother?

Shawn starts to say something but doesn't and, at that, Oscar's eyes flit briefly, unhappily, upstairs. Then--

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Hello?

VOICE ON PHONE
Mr. Ventura?

OSCAR
Speaking.

VOICE ON PHONE
Oscar Ivan Ventura?

OSCAR
Yes, who's calling, please?

VOICE ON PHONE
*My name is Janet Kirby, I'm an
Administrative Director with the
State Family Welfare Bureau...*

As Oscar gestures 'turn it down' to the boys--

OSCAR
I'm sorry, the what now?

VOICE ON PHONE
*The Family Welfare Bureau. We deal
with displaced children, wards of
the state and foster care,
situations like that.*

OSCAR
Uh huh. Annnd what can I do for
you, ma'am?

From the couch, Shawn is watching him now.

VOICE ON PHONE
*Well, um...we have something rather
extraordinary on our hands.*

OSCAR
I'm...not sure I'm following.

VOICE ON PHONE
Are you sitting down, Mr. Ventura?

On Oscar, hearing something he doesn't understand.

INT. EMPTY ROOM - DAY

Knock knock. Curled on the bed, Valery's eyes slit open. She waits, very still, until...**knock knock knock.**

VALERY
 Yeah?

OSCAR (O.S., THROUGH THE DOOR)
Sweetie...?

She goes to the door, unlocks and opens it, not rushing.

Oscar: a stunned, queasy look on his face. Something big.

VALERY
 What?

EXT. FIELD BEHIND VENTURA HOME - TWILIGHT

Valery reels away from the house: some boiling mix of confusion, rage, and heartbreak.

Oscar trails behind, out of focus, giving her space.

Eventually she stops, staring out across the field, the red-orange sky. Bugs BUZZ. She turns to face him at ten paces.

He looks utterly deflated: pure shame. A long, charged beat.

VALERY
 Where?

OSCAR
 Where what?

VALERY
 Where...did you...go? With *her*.

OSCAR
 (after a beat)
 Comfort Inn.

VALERY
 How many times?

OSCAR

Val--

VALERY

HOW. MANY.

He can't answer.

VALERY (CONT'D)

So I'm at home with Jessie, she's, what, not even a year by then? Screaming her lungs out all day, doctors can't say anything, I'm holding her, she's screaming and you're...where? The Comfort Inn?

OSCAR

I was weak. Stupid.

VALERY

I'm glad she's dead.

OSCAR

Don't...you don't mean that.

VALERY

Yes, I do.

He moves towards her. She looks away, collecting herself.

VALERY (CONT'D)

What are we supposed to do now?

The fearful look on his face is the answer to that.

INT. KITCHEN - VENTURA HOME - SAME

Shawn is at the window, unnerved, watching his parents out there in the field. Andrew leans up alongside him and--

ANDREW

Maybe they're getting a divorce.

SHAWN

Shut up.

INT. DORM ROOM - STATE FACILITY - TWILIGHT

A YOUNG WOMAN, seen from behind, stares out a grimy wire-mesh window onto GREY URBAN SPRAWL. There's NOISE everywhere: CITY NOISE outside and TEENAGE CLAMOR in here, MUSIC and YELLING.

CHRISSY (O.S.)

[snff]

She turns: MIA COOK (17), self-possessed and watchful in THICK UNSTYLISH GLASSES. From her dark skin and kinky hair we might guess at her Latina/African-American heritage.

CHRISSY (13, mousy), is crying quietly in the doorway.

MIA

Oh, Chrissy...again?

CHRISSY

My disc-man.

Mia sighs. *Okay.*

INT. HALLWAY - STATE FACILITY - SAME

Clusters of state-raised YOUNG WOMEN crowd this off-white institutional the space. Mia cuts through them like a ghost.

UP AHEAD, the Amazonian DIDI (17) and her cruel FLUNKIES, hanging around outside DIDI'S ROOM, laughing.

Mia assumes an "excited" posture as she passes them--

MIA

Crystal n' that Dominican girl
gonna fight!

DIDI

When?

MIA

Right now!

Hot damn: Didi and her girls rush off down the STAIRWELL, brushing past Mia, who drops the act and turns back to--

INT. DIDI'S ROOM - SAME

She enters and begin a brisk but organized search. Drawers. Closet. Under the bed. There...a LOCKER BOX.

Mia examines it, pulls a HAIRPIN, bends it into a rudimentary key and teases the cheap lock. Calm focus. Eventually...*kik!*

She pops it. There, amongst other goodies, is a DISC PLAYER with '**Chrissy B.**' on it in marker. She grabs it and turns but--

DIDI is blocking the doorway, pissed, flanked by her girls.

DIDI
Sneaky little bitch.

MIA
(calmly, re: the disc man)
Oh, it's cool, I got it.

Didi steps forward, COCKING HER FIST TO THROW A PUNCH--

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - STATE FACILITY - NIGHT

CLOSE ON MIA'S GLASSES, in her hand now, broken in half.

ON MIA, holding ice on her split lip, sitting across from--

MS. KIRBY (50s), hippie-type at a desk clogged with FILES.

MS. KIRBY
An accident?

MIA
Floor in the bathroom was wet.
Y'all shoulda put a sign.

Ms. Kirby nods blankly at this obvious bullshit.

MS. KIRBY
Well. That's not why we wanted to
see you, Mia.

Mia glances at the STATE OFFICIAL, icily observing as Ms. Kirby slides a DOCUMENT across. Mia squints at it but--

MIA
(gesturing: *my glasses*)
I can't uh...

So Ms. Kirby takes it back, haltingly explains--

MS. KIRBY
This is the genetic screen that was
done last year as a part of your
physical, the blood test. It's a
new component meant to highlight
any possible inherited conditions
that we might otherwise know about
from family history. Do
you...understand all that?

Mia nods slowly: *I'm not an idiot*. Ms. Kirby glances at the Official, *ahems*, and continues.

MS. KIRBY (CONT'D)

Part of this process is that the results are added to a donor registry database. And, after some time, we became aware of...well...

PUSHING IN on Mia, like she's already piecing it together.

MS. KIRBY (CONT'D)

The information we had, from your Mother's file, was that your Father had died when you were an infant. But what this seemed to suggest, and what we then worked very hard to confirm, is that that information was...incorrect.

Mia blinks, hardly breathing.

STATE OFFICIAL

Your father's alive.

Ms. Kirby winces at that bluntness, takes a softer tone...

MS. KIRBY

He lives in Furniss County, about two hours from here. His name is Oscar Ventura. And he's very, very excited to meet you.

On Mia: she feels weightless, unreal.

INT. DORM ROOM - STATE FACILITY - MORNING

ON A LAPTOP SCREEN, glimpses of SEARCH RESULTS scroll by:
Furniss County-- 'Search for Missing Miner Continues'--
'Tractor Tragedy in Furniss'-- 'Unluckiest Town In America?'

Mia reads this, chewing her lip, her TAPED GLASSES glowing with screen light. Behind her, Chrissy sadly folds the last of Mia's clothes into a SUITCASE. She doesn't have much.

CHRISSY

You're so lucky.

As Mia closes the screen and turns--

MIA

C'mon, you didn't need to do that.

Mia goes to finish the packing herself. Chrissy snuffles.

CHRISSEY
I'm gonna miss you.

 MIA
 (without looking at her)
Probably back in a week.

 CHRISSEY
Mmno. That's your dad. That's real.

As Mia JAMS the suitcase shut--

 MIA
For all I know he's some kinda fat
pervert, just wants the tax cut.

 OSCAR (O.S.)
I do need to lose a few pounds
but...

She turns to see Oscar there with Ms. Kirby and the Official.

CLOSE ON OSCAR, seeing Mia's face, astonished by it, all his
jocularly instantly dissolving. Shakily, he steps in...

 OSCAR (CONT'D)
Hi.

 MIA
Hi.

 OSCAR
I'm Oscar.

 MIA
Mia.

The silence booms. Unsure of what else to do, he holds out
his hand. After a beat, she takes it.

EXT. PARKING LOT - STATE FACILITY - DAY

Valery leans against OSCAR'S CAR--a lovingly restored '59
Impala--in the lot outside the BLOCKY BUILDING. Restless.

IN THE DISTANCE, Oscar emerges with a suitcase, now followed
by Ms. Kirby...and then Mia, with her bad posture.

Valery freezes at the sight of her, watching as--

Oscar appears to exchange some final words with Ms. Kirby,
who in turn gives Mia a hug, and then they head this way.

Valery gives an awkward wave.

FROM THEIR END OF THE LOT, as Oscar and Mia walk towards her--

OSCAR
My wife there. Uh. Valery.

MIA
Uh huh. Sweet sled. Fifty-eight?

OSCAR
(an impressed double-take)
Fifty-nine.

Mia looks back at RECEDING BUILDING, where CHRISSY watches her from the ENTRANCE. And DIDI now materializes behind her.

Mia looks away without breaking her stride.

VERY WIDE: the small shapes of Oscar and Mia cross the vast lot until they meet the small shape of Valery. All three just stand there, uncertainly, as CITY NOISE echoes all around.

INT. OSCAR'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Oscar drives, Valery shotgun, Mia in back with her DUCT-TAPED GLASSES. Uncomfortable silence, passing through the country.

OSCAR
Want some music?

MIA
Sure.

Oscar turns the radio on: a MODERN ROCK station.

OSCAR
Or, wait...

He instead finds a HIP HOP station. Valery cringes.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Eh?

MIA
Sure.

Oscar sneaks glances, blips of eye contact with Mia in the mirror. Valery lowers the music a bit, stares out the window.

OSCAR

Soooo. I'm gonna go out on a limb here and describe this whole situation as generally pretty freaky for everyone. Yes? True?

MIA

That's fair.

Valery keeps quiet, her jaw tight.

OSCAR

Right. So what can I tell you?

MIA

About what?

OSCAR

Anything. Whatever you want to know. Or if you just wanna say what's on your mind. Just talk.

Mia sizes him up in the rearview, his open smile.

MIA

No, just...y'know. Thank you.

OSCAR

Aw, come on. Is that it?

Mia shrugs.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Well, I think you're gonna love it. It's a change, yeah, but it's beautiful there. The school's great. Your brother--
(glance to Valery)
--your *half*-brother, Shawn, he's a seriously cool dude. He likes rap, too. So uh...yeah.

After a bit, very calmly...

MIA

I've been in Youth Housing since I was ten, you saw it. Before that, a foster family with five other girls, and before that I slept in the office of a Sunoco. Had some flattened boxes to lay on. Got beef jerky off the rack. I'm sure I'll like it just fine.

That chills the air. Oscar slumps, shut down. But then, it's Valery that twists in her seat to peer at Mia.

VALERY
You hungry, honey?

Mia sizes her up now.

MIA
Little bit.

Valery nods, turns back, and the silence stretches until--

OSCAR
(a breezy aside)
Think we have some jerky, right?

Holy shit: Valery cannot believe he just said that--

But, in spite of herself, Mia can't help but to CHUCKLE at his remark. And at that, the tension dissipates a bit. Oscar chuckles along. Valery's mortified.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
(gesturing, *your glasses*)
What happened to those?

MIA
Oh, they come like this.

OSCAR
That right?

MIA
Yeah, it's the style now.

OSCAR
Huh.

As he nods smilingly at their little deadpan back n' forth--

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

THE CAR passes a sign, '**Furniss County - 20 miles**'--

We might notice the graffiti, after the county name: *IS SHIT*

INT. SHAWN'S ROOM - VENTURA HOME - DAY

A teenager's room: posters, computer, messy clothes. But hints of a little kid, too: model airplanes, a stuffed bunny.

Shawn sits cross-legged in the dimness before a COMIC BOOK LONGBOX, sadly replacing his stack of titles, one by one.

A FLYER ON HIS DESK, '**VENTURE CON! Games & Comics! Buy & Trade & Sell!**', is snatched and crumpled--

--and as he drops it in the trash, he turns to his window, hearing the DISTANT RUMBLE of Oscar's car. He swallows.

INT. OSCAR'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Mia stares out at the '**PERKEL FARMS**' SIGN as they pass it (and today there is a BLACK RIBBON affixed to it.)

MIA
You farmers, too?

OSCAR
Heh. Not exactly.

She wonders at that as OSCAR MAKES A LEFT TURN--

EXT. ROUTE 1 - SAME

--and continues down the DIRT ROAD off of Route 1, with the WOODEN ARROW SIGN that says '**JUNK**' right there.

CRANING UP TO A HIGH ANGLE, we see that this is just a short ways down from PERKEL FARMS, and at the far end of the DIRT ROAD we can glimpse the dully-shining crest of the JUNKYARD.

The Ventura Home and Perkel Farms are neighbors.

EXT. VENTURA HOME - DAY

OSCAR'S CAR arrives trailing a small cloud of road dust.

Mia emerges from the car, taking it all in...

The old HOUSE, the BARN in back, the JUNKYARD over there: she might as well be on Mars. As Oscar gets her BAGS...

OSCAR
I know what you're thinking,
'Jackpot, my dad's a trashman.' I'm
sorry to disappoint but I'm merely
a boutique salvage manager, not
nearly so rock n' roll.

MIA
Might wanna change that sign back
there, then.

OSCAR
My new business manager: you're
hired.

MIA
(re: her bags)
I can get those.

OSCAR
No, no, it's okay--
(faking an injury)
AgghGod! My lumbar!

Valery shoots him a '*knock it off*' look as they head inside.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
No, I got it. Good for my core.

INT. SHAWN'S ROOM - SAME

THROUGH THE WINDOW, we see Mia slouching her way into the
house, disappearing from view down there and--

Shawn turns from the window, wide-eyed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Shawn lands at the bottom of the stairs just as--

Oscar closes the front door behind them all, him and
Valery...and Mia, standing there, looking at him.

Shawn gapes, like something's caught in his throat.

MIA
Hey.

SHAWN
Hey.

A short, quiet beat.

OSCAR
Annnd here we are.

INT. MIA'S ROOM - DAY

The door creaks open. Mia leans in and, seeing the room, her breath catches: a flicker of surprise and gratitude.

Formerly the Empty Room: it's clean now, no boxes, the bed made fresh, folded towels and a vase of wildflowers. And the BANNER, hand drawn on old printer paper: **Welcome, Mia.**

Mia blinks a sudden wetness from her eyes and turns to see--
Oscar, Shawn, and Valery crowded in the doorway behind her.

MIA

Thank you.

Oscar's blinking a bit himself.

OSCAR

It's yours.

But Valery's smile at this seems brittle, and as Oscar steps into the room to put the suitcase down, she turns away...

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

...and walks off down the hall, her hands coming up to her mouth as she goes. Behind her, Shawn watches her go.

INT. DINING ROOM - VENTURA HOME - NIGHT

Dinnertime. Mia watches everything. Oscar spoon food onto their plates and she's about to lift her fork but--

Seeing the others bow their heads, she follows suit.

OSCAR

We are very grateful for this meal,
our home, our health and family.
And tonight we are especially
grateful that our family has grown.
We are so happy to welcome Mia,
with all of our love.

Valery's face tightens. Only Mia notices.

MIA

This looks delicious.

OSCAR

Know what they call me? Boxy Flay.
I'm a master chef so long as it
comes in a box.

She forces a chuckle at that and they're about to eat but--

SHAWN

I'd like to say something, too. Uh.
My sister...I'm so glad to meet
you. I guess that sounds weird to
say...but. Yeah. Welcome.

Awkwardly heartfelt, glad to see Oscar nod his approval.

MIA

Good to meet you, too.

Subtly, Oscar glances to Valery, and...

VALERY

It's a special day. We're so happy.

Not exactly warm. She raises her wine glass, takes a belt.

MIA

I uh, I feel very lucky.

They eat. Oscar smiles Mia's way. Shawn sees this. Valery
focuses on her plate. Mia pretends to not see any of this.

OSCAR

So, I figure, you just take the
weekend. Settle in, rest up.
Riverfront Festival's on Sunday,
that's fun. And next week we'll get
you set up at school.

MIA

Okay.

OSCAR

What's your subject?

Mia's like, *huh?*

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Favorite subject?

MIA

Oh, I don't uh... Science, I guess.

OSCAR

Yeah? Me too. Electronics, engines, physics stuff. Biology. I tinker.

SHAWN

(*'me and my Dad'*)

One time, we built one of those crystal set radios--you know those? We could hear truckers talking.

MIA

Huh. I don't really uh...I don't know about that kinda thing. To be honest, I don't really have a favorite subject. But I remember going to a planetarium when I was little. They played classical music and the chairs went back and you looked up at all these stars, all around you. I remember liking that so, I dunno..."science", I guess.

(beat)

My mom used to take me there, we'd--

At "*Mom*", Valery's fork SCRATCHES her plate. Awkward silence. Mia knows she said *something*, just isn't sure what.

OSCAR

That sounds...I bet that was really nice. We don't have a planetarium but, out here, you don't need one. All the lights in the city create what's called a--

SKRRK. Valery abruptly pushes her chair back and stalks from the room. *Whoa.* Shawn's rattled by this, and looks to Oscar--

Who just stares down at his plate, defeated.

Mia knows better than to say anything right now. After a bit--

OSCAR (CONT'D)

We got some ice cream in the uh...for dessert...

--and leaves the room as well. Mia and Shawn look across the table at each other.

INT. OSCAR & VALERY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Valery lays on the bed, her back to the door. She's not crying but there are tears on her face. Behind her...

The door opens, Oscar steps in, closes it again behind him. Waits for her to talk first. Without looking at him--

VALERY

I'm not sure I can do this.

(beat)

I'm so angry at you.

OSCAR

You have a right to be.

VALERY

Wasn't asking for approval.

Oscar sits on the edge of the bed. She still won't look...

VALERY (CONT'D)

I look at her and I recognize things. The way she stands, the way she walks. But it's a stranger in *that* room, at *that* seat at our table. And it feels like my heart's ripping open all over again.

OSCAR

This isn't fair to you. I know that. And I'll do everything I can to make amends. And if there's nothing I can do, I'll learn to accept that, but right now? I have to do this.

Now Valery rolls over to look him in the eye.

VALERY

She will never be *her*.

Somehow, that seemed to wound him. Very soft now...

OSCAR

I know she won't.

(beat)

But it isn't about that. I have a responsibility.

She snorts softly at that word. Oscar bristles, absorbs it.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

I'll either fulfill it alone or with you but I'm going to fulfill it. There is no other option.

Valery stares at him a long moment, her face reveals nothing. Finally, she lays down again, turning away.

VALERY

I wanna go to a meeting.

He looks away.

INT. DINING ROOM - VENTURA HOME - SAME

Mia watches Shawn as he glances up to the INDISTINCT MURMURS coming from his parents' room above. He's thinking.

SHAWN

How old are you?

MIA

Seventeen.

We can see him add that up in his head, arriving at a troubling conclusion. She sees this, and...

MIA (CONT'D)

Why?

SHAWN

Oh, just...you'll be a junior. You get off-campus lunch. There's a Shoney's across from school.

MIA

Oh. Cool.

SHAWN

Gotta get there early, though. It gets packed.

He's distracted and gloomy. She sees this.

MIA

(re: his plate)

All done?

He nods, his mind wandering. She gets his plate, heads into--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

As she moves to the sink, she glances off at *something* that causes her to stop...and back up to it.

A FRAMED PHOTO ON THE WALL, a YOUNG WOMAN whom we will come to know as JESSICA. 15 here: pale, dark hair, THICK GLASSES and a SLOUCH. A vaguely metal look. Faint, mysterious smile.

Despite the obvious racial difference, there is an eerie physical resemblance to Mia.

SHAWN (O.S.)

She's a year older than you. A senior now.

MIA

Who is that?

SHAWN

Jessie. My-- our sister.

Understanding darkens Mia's face. She stares, captivated.

MIA

Is she...?

SHAWN

She ran away. She was...

He trails off. But then, with a hint of force--

SHAWN (CONT'D)

Some people might tell you that she's dead, but she's not.

Dizzied, Mia's gaze returns to the photo. She notices the DENIM JACKET Jessica wears, *with the with customized Native American applique on the sleeves.*

JESSICA smiles back at her from within the image.

As Shawn takes the plates from her, heads to the sink...

SHAWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But don't worry...when she comes back, you can have my room.

OSCAR (O.S.)

Hey, guys...

As Oscar and Valery pull on their jackets in the FRONT DOORWAY, he sees Mia seeing the PHOTO, and something uncomfortable flickers in his eyes...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

We're gonna go out, just for a bit, you gonna be okay here?

MIA

Yeah.

OSCAR

You sure?

MIA

Yeah. Totally.

Oscar nods and nods, his grin just a *little* too wide, as--

Mia looks to Valery, gives a somewhat anxious smile.

And Valery's smile in return is very brief. They head off.

As the FRONT DOOR closes behind them, Mia glances over at Shawn, who returns his attention to the dishes.

Jessica, in the photo, with her Mona Lisa smile.

INT. PUBLIC ROOM - FIRST REDEEMER CHURCH - NIGHT

AVA COX (70s), speaks in a strained, exhausted voice, her face swollen from crying, a tissue in her tiny hand...

AVA

Ed was a hard worker. Been a hand with Perkel Farms over ten years. He wasn't a complicated man. Didn't complain. Some y'all know, he did like a taste now and then, and I guess working for Bob Perkel'd be enough to bring anybody low...

Some SYMPATHETIC CHUCKLES from the CROWD of sad-eyed TOWNSFOLK on folding chairs under overbright fluorescents.

AVA (CONT'D)

But I never once thought anything like...*this* was in him. To do *that* to himself. So violent...so public. It just doesn't make any sense. And not understanding's the worst part.

Valery and Oscar listen to Ava and now to JEFF EUELL (40s), the cherubic, casually-attired minister leading the group--

EUELL

Thank you, Ava. Your courage, your grace right now, in the face of this unspeakable loss, is a...I think I speak for us all when I say it's inspirational.

Valery's listening closely but Oscar's eyes wander the room--

The chintzy Christian art. The easel with the **'Grief & Healing Community Group'** sign. The coffee and pamphlets.

EUELL (CONT'D)

I wish I could say Ava's pain is unfamiliar to us...but everyone here is coping with something just like it. And I know sometimes it can feel like this county has more than its fair share. Sometime's God's will is hard to fathom. But it's that familiarity that brings us strength, isn't it? Because neither Ava, nor anyone else in this room, is alone. Are we?

MURMURS of 'No'. Valery says it aloud...

VALERY

No.

...but not Oscar. As Euell scans the crowd--

EUELL

Is there someone else who'd like to share? Oh--Valery, Oscar. We haven't seen you in a while, welcome back.

We notice that SOME OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE looking at them now have unfriendly hard-eyed expressions. Just a few, but still.

EUELL (CONT'D)

Would you like to share?

She shifts a bit, all those faces looking at her, and then--

VALERY

It feels good to reconnect with this community. I didn't realize how much I'd missed it. Mainly, I just want to tell Miss Ava there how sorry I was to hear...what happened. We live right by Perkel Farms so, I didn't really know Ed that well but I'd see him around and he was always very kind. And I just...I'm so sorry.

Ava accepts this with a small nod. Euell smiles to Oscar--

--and he's about to pass but he catches Valery looking at him. So, instead, he clears his throat and...

OSCAR
You're not alone.

MURMURS of agreement. He pointedly avoids Valery's eyes but her expression towards him softens by one tenth of a degree.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - VENTURA HOME - NIGHT

ON MIA, seen from behind, gazing out. It's the same framing as the first time we saw her, in the noisy dorm room...

...except here it's SILENT and SERENE. Fireflies wink in the darkness. Breeze rustles the treetops. An OWL hoots.

We find her face, calmly considering all this.

INT. BATHROOM - VENTURA HOME - NIGHT

A SHOWER KNOB is turned. THE SHOWER HEAD spills water.

Mia leans her forehead against the white tile, letting the hot water fall over her, steam filling the air. *Peace.*

INT. SHAWN'S ROOM - SAME

Shawn turns slowly from his computer to the SHOWER SOUNDS drifting in through his half-open door. He stares a moment, gets up, goes to the door--

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

--and peers anxiously down the hall at the BATHROOM DOOR, where the sounds are coming from, the steam leaking out.

He shuts his door and--

INT. SHAWN'S ROOM - SAME

--returns to his computer, where--

ON SCREEN, his CHAT WINDOW with '**ANDREW**' is open.

ANDREW: Where is she now? The cursor blinking impatiently.

Shawn licks his lip, types hesitantly.

SHAWN: Shower.

The '*is responding*' icon blinks for a few seconds, and then--

ANDREW: PICS!

Shawn types hard and fast--

SHAWN: U R DISGUSTING

--and turns off the monitor. He sits, perturbed, the CLOSED DOOR behind him. But somehow, the SHOWER sounds even louder.

INT. MIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mia brushes her hair, wearing a faded T-shirt to sleep in.

SNAP! She opens her suitcase, brings out folded clothes.

She neatly arranges the clothes in her dresser drawers.

She hangs her windbreaker in the closet.

SLOWLY PUSHING IN as she gets into bed. Looks around the room. Hears the faint CREAKS of this unfamiliar old house.

ENDING ON A TIGHT SHOT, Mia laying there, now glancing to--

THE DOOR, which is opened half an inch.

She slips out of bed, closes the door, and TURNS THE LOCK.

Back in bed, she places her DUCT-TAPED GLASSES on the bedside table and clicks the lamp.

Darkness now, except for the slice of moonlight through the window, in which we can see her laying awake...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MIA'S ROOM - MORNING

Birds CHIRP. Mia comes blearily awake, disoriented at first, stretching in the sunlight. And reaching for...

HER GLASSES, which are actually *not* her glasses. The lenses are the same but the frames are all new, in perfect shape.

She holds them, confused, looking to--

THE DOOR, which is unlocked, opened half an inch.

INT. KITCHEN - VENTURA HOME - MORNING

Mia enters, squinting because the GLASSES are in her hand.

Oscar is busy at the stove, whipping up eggs and pancakes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Valery's out here with coffee and the paper, observing this--

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

OSCAR
(seeing Mia)
Morning! How's the sleep?

MIA
Good.

OSCAR
Quieter than the dorm, eh? Maybe
too quiet! Don't worry, you'll get
used to it, or we can bang pots n'
pans all night, if that'll help--

She holds up the GLASSES in question and he grins.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Not bad, huh? Had a box of old
frames out back. Lenses didn't
exactly fit but they were wire rims
so I just--

MIA
My door was locked.

He stops short.

FROM THE LIVING ROOM, Valery looks over at Mia's hard tone.

OSCAR
You don't like them?

MIA
I don't like people in my room when
I'm asleep.

Oscar puts the skillet down, glances briefly to Valery, and--

OSCAR
Fair enough. But in *this* house, we
have a rule about locked doors--

MIA
I didn't know that. I won't know
the rules if you don't tell me.

OSCAR

Okay. You're right. I should've asked first. I just...I wanted to surprise you.

MIA

You did.

A quiet beat. Looking at each other.

OSCAR

(hoping to shift gears)
Hey. I got pancakes, if ya like--

MIA

No, thank you.

And with that, she leaves the room. Oscar watches her go...and turns quietly back to the sink.

FROM THE LIVING ROOM, Valery watches.

EXT. VENTURA HOME - DAY

OFF IN THE JUNKYARD, where his OLDIES are crackling over the speakers, we can see Oscar stalking about, occasionally dropping something heavy with an irritable **KLANG!**

INT. MIA'S ROOM - DAY

Mia sits on the bed, in her NEW GLASSES, scribbling in a well-worn NOTEBOOK, when a soft **tap** prompts her to look up.

Valery leans in, a basket on laundry hooked under her arm.

VALERY

Anything dirty?

MIA

No. I don't mind doing my own.

VALERY

(small shrug)
We take turns.

Valery nods and is about the leave again when...

VALERY (CONT'D)

At your last place, you locked your door at night?

MIA
 Against the rules. But I'd put the
 trash can against it, or else I
 couldn't sleep.

Valery seems to weigh something in her mind, and...

VALERY
 I have a hard time sleeping, too,
 if Oscar's not there. Last night,
 he didn't come to bed until after
 two. Working on those...
 (re: the glasses)
 Took him a while to get right.

And Valery leaves, making a point to close the door.

Mia looks at the glasses in her hand.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

THE OLDIE on the speakers has Spanish vocals (let's say it's
 "Come On" by Los Saicos for now) as Mia approaches.

Oscar smiles hello, a little more muted than usual, and keeps
 working, stacking trays of MACHINE PARTS.

MIA
 (re: the music)
 Los Saicos.

He gives her a curious look, without stopping.

OSCAR
 How'd you know that?

MIA
 Mom had a buncha records. Got me
 into that old stuff.

Pausing his work now, his eyes drifting off...

OSCAR
 She loved her music.

Mia looks closely at him, speaks in a calm way...

MIA
 Long back as I can remember, I
 thought my dad was dead. That's
 what she always said.

There's an unspoken question there and Oscar frets over the answer, wiping his face, wiping his hands, and then...

OSCAR

Your Mom and I, when we... Fact is,
I was already married. Had a new
baby at home, my daughter. She's...

He trails off...

MIA

Shawn told me. I'm sorry.

And he re-focuses...

OSCAR

Back then, things were...it was a
strange time, for both of us, your
mother and me. I loved her but...it
wasn't right. And so when I stopped
it, that hurt her. Or maybe she was
relieved, I don't know. But she
left. I didn't know where, no more
contact at all.

His throat tightens, a surge of emotion welling up...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

And the worst part of it is that I
never knew about you. Because if I
had? I would have been in your life
from the very beginning.

He's on the verge of tears but keeps it in, staring at her.

She processes all this, looks away. Then touches her glasses--

MIA

These fit great on my nose.

OSCAR

Yeah?

MIA

Much lighter. Yeah.

OSCAR

Not as cool as before.

MIA

No. Not at all.

Back to that nice deadpan patter. He glances at his watch...

OSCAR
Got a few runs. Wanna come along?

She thinks it over, and...

MIA
Sure.

OSCAR
You got a driver's license?

Shakes her head.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Permit?

MIA
Not officially.

OSCAR
Close enough for the country.

And the OLDIE TUNE starts to SUBSUME ALL OTHER SOUND as--

EXT. VENTURA HOME - DIRT ROAD - DAY

OSCAR'S PICKUP TRUCK pulls away with Mia at the wheel and Oscar sitting shotgun. As they fade down the dirt road we--

PAN BACK TO THE HOUSE, where Shawn was watching from the SCREEN DOOR, dropping his eyes as he turns back inside.

I./E. OSCAR'S TRUCK - VARIOUS RURAL ROADS - DAY

MIA DRIVES through the country, Oscar beside her. THE MUSIC feels urgent and propulsive as she rounds TIGHT CURVES...

But she's not a reckless driver: testing the vehicle's power, learning the feel, digging it but with total focus.

And Oscar loves seeing her behind the wheel, working it.

Over the course of this DRIVING SEQUENCE, they will pass by:

A FIELD with the ancient BLACKENED REMAINS of a house just barely visible, far back from the road, some long ago fire.

A FISHING POND with a tiny MAKESHIFT MEMORIAL by the water: a cross of 2x4s and some long dead flowers.

A FADED BILLBOARD: '**MISSING**', with a SCHOOL PHOTO of a young boy and a 1-800 number.

But they notice none of these, looking at the road ahead and, occasionally, each other. Hesitant but warm smiles.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

THE TRUCK passes through the very intersection where Ed Cox did himself in. See that new WREATH laid by the lamppost?

INT. OSCAR'S TRUCK - SAME

Oscar's eyes pull grimly away from the wreath as they pass by. Mia doesn't notice, focused on her driving.

EXT. DAVIS AUTO - DAY

LIZ DAVIS (40s) emerges from the bays of this old garage she owns/operates. A warm smiler, quick to laugh, a little heavy with a faded forearm tattoo. She waves her greasy rag as...

Oscar and Mia pull in, get out. (And Oscar seems a little "extra" upbeat here, doesn't he?)

LIZ

You want these beauties or not?

OSCAR

I want em! I want em!

LIZ

(smiling at Mia)
Got some help today.

OSCAR

I uh...yeah. Liz, this is Mia. My uh...my daughter.

Liz's smile remains, even under a flutter of confusion.

LIZ

How about that. I didn't know you uh...well, I didn't know! Very nice to meet you, Mia.

MIA

(shaking her hand)
Yes, ma'am. You too.

An awkward beat of awkward overbright smiles.

OSCAR

Kind of a...long story.

LIZ

Best one's always are. Here, lemme show ya what I got...you got strong arms, dontcha?

MIA

Yes, ma'am.

LIZ

This ma'am stuff has gotta go, I'm not kidding.

INT. WORK BAY - DAVIS AUTO - DAY

SEVERAL VINTAGE CHROME BUMPERS are leaning in the corner in need of some TLC. As Mia gathers one into her arms...

She looks out to see Oscar and Liz, talking quietly at the edge of the lot. Liz's arms are folded, listening to Oscar without smiling. Oscar gestures in kind of a sharp way.

Mia sees all this. Neutrally processes it.

EXT. PUBLIC HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

THE TRUCK parks by these concrete ROWHOUSES, all identical with their faded yellow paint and weedy walkways.

As Mia gets out, Oscar unlocks the truck bed where those CHROME BUMPERS are now tied down...

MIA

Guess you do a lotta business with her, huh?

OSCAR

What? Oh, yeah...she gets good pieces now and then. I gotta find the super, you okay here a sec?

She gives that a *'course I am'* look, and as he heads off she hauls a HEAVY HAND-TRUCK from the bed, surveys the scene:

MUSIC wafts from screen doors, a BABY cries somewhere. Clotheslines sag with laundry. Off to the side, some KIDS play a pickup game on a small BASKETBALL COURT.

It all has a sun-blasted, half-deserted feeling. Residents seem to be primarily Black. The Kids are eyeballing her.

So she shifts her gaze in the other direction, where--

A BRAWNY YOUNG WOMAN (17) sits on her stoop, sipping a soda with a powerful-looking PITBULL resting at her feet. Her name is J.J. LEDDE: thickly-muscled arms, sleeve tats, cornrows.

Their eyes meet and-- *Wait, did Mia's breath just catch?* The moment stretches. Mia nods *s'up* but...

J.J. just pats her dog, watching Mia without response.

OSCAR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

YO!

OSCAR, with the blank-eyed SUPERINTENDENT, is standing a few buildings inside the complex, waving her in.

Grateful for that, she heads their way, pulling the HAND TRUCK, having to pass J.J.'s stoop, eyes fixed ahead until--

KID (O.S.)

Miss. Psst, excuse me, miss...

A KID comes slithering up, palming his basketball with a few grinning BUDDIES trailing, obnoxiously trying to make time.

KID (CONT'D)

Hey. You ain't wanna talk t'me?

Mia ignores him, walks faster. He comes closer but--

KID (CONT'D)

C'mon, girl, why you actin' all--

J.J. lobs her empty bottle at the Kid's feet--**SMASH!**--and flicks her hand, '*go on*'. As the Kid and his pals retreat in shame, Mia glances over...

And J.J. gives her the tiniest of nods.

BY THE INNER BUILDING

As Mia joins Oscar and the Super--

OSCAR

What was that?

MIA

Nothin'. Just some kids.

And they continue on inside.

INT. CALLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

CALLIE THEROT (90) sits ensconsed in the corner: oxygen tube in her nose, hair like scarecrow straw, bird eyes scanning--

--as the Super leads Oscar in to a old DETACHED REFRIGERATOR. It's a tiny shut-in's place, dusty and dim. Mia follows with the hand truck, sees Callie, gives an uncomfortable smile.

Mia clocks all the SPOILED FOOD piled onto the counter as--

Callie's eyes track Oscar as he assesses the fridge...

OSCAR

Oh, we'll get this piece a' junk
outta your way, ma'am, maybe Reggie
here'll finally get you an upgrade.

SUPER

(not amused)
Maybe so.

As Oscar and the Super set to NOISILY lashing the fridge to the hand truck, Mia glances again to Callie. Tight smile.

Callie stares, something bright and feverish in her eyes. She MURMURS--Mia can't hear it, exactly--and lifts one claw hand towards Oscar, which dislodges the OXYGEN TUBE from her nose.

Mia goes to her, bends to gingerly replace the tube, even as Callie MURMURS something again. This is all very quiet...

MIA

(softly, gently)
Whatcha need, mami?

CALLIE

You with him there?

MIA

Yeah.

CALLIE

Came here with him?

MIA

Uh huh.

Callie clicks her tongue, her eyes quivering on Oscar...

CALLIE

Spiders in his head.

Mia glances back...

MIA

Oh, no, *that* one. Him with the cart.

CALLIE

Who I mean. We *know* him.

Mia straightens, eyeing Callie uncertainly, who keeps her eyes on Oscar, some venom coming into her guttural whisper...

CALLIE (CONT'D)

Know what he do.

Callie turns to her, slowly reaching to CLUTCH her wrist, a look on her face like she's getting ready to *bite* Mia--

--who YANKS her wrist away, alarmed, stepping back as--

THUK! They finally rock the fridge onto the hand truck.

OSCAR

There she is!

Mia crosses to Oscar and the Super as they start to wheel this huge thing to the door. She looks back at Callie...

Who watches her as she goes, MURMURING something again.

EXT. OSCAR'S TRUCK - PUBLIC HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

SLAM! The truck bed claps shut behind the LASHED-IN FRIDGE.

PULLING AWAY FROM THE SUPER, who watches us from the curb, receding there as he wipes his hands with a blank look.

INT. OSCAR'S TRUCK (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Mia drives away. Oscar sits shotgun, pleased, oblivious.

OSCAR

And that's all there is.

Rounding a corner now, Mia looks out and sees--

JJ, walking her dog down the block. She doesn't see them, she doesn't look up, just lopes away into the distance...

Mia pulls her eyes back to the road. Oscar doesn't notice.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Easy peasy.

EXT. ROUTE 1 - DAY

THE TRUCK zooms along, heading back into the country.

I./E. OSCAR'S TRUCK - ROUTE 1 - (MOVING) - DAY

Mia drives, her brow crinkled with idle thought. Nothing serious but...she glances over at Oscar.

Who's just watching the scenery, sun on his face, happy.

MIA

Did you know her?

OSCAR

Old lady back there? Not really. I mean, small town and all but...you can see she don't get out. Nah, Reggie just calls me when he's got heavy crap he needs hauled off.

We barely glimpse the '**PERKEL FARMS**' SIGN that flies by--

OSCAR (CONT'D)

How come?

MIA

Just wondering...

THE TRUCK whips around a BLIND CURVE and suddenly--

OSCAR

WATCHIT--!

--because THE GOAT IS STANDING RIGHT THERE IN THE ROAD--

GASP! MIA STOMPS THE BRAKES--

THE TIRES LOCK--**KEEEECH!**

KUNK! MIA JERKS FORWARD--

UFF! OSCAR CLUTCHES THE DASHBOARD--

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Youokay?!

She nods, terribly shaken, as we--

TRACK RIGHT, passing over the front of THE TRUCK, tire smoke swirling, and then over a short space of EMPTY ROAD...

AND FINALLY LANDING ON THE GOAT, still standing in the exact same spot, a few feet from the grille. Didn't budge an inch.

TIGHT ON MIA, staring ahead, a strange expression blooming on her face. Not alarm but...*recognition?*

MIA'S POV, through the windshield, THE GOAT seeming to stare directly back at her from a swirl of smoke.

TIGHTER ON MIA, her eyes narrowing, as--

VOICE (O.S.)
HEY, GODDAMMIT!

TIGHTER ON THE GOAT, its eerie oblong-pupil eyes staring back, a thin string of spittle dripping from its mouth.

A DETAIL: the rusty FOUR-LEAF CLOVER SHAPED TAG that dangles from the Goat's collar. '**Lucky**', it says.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
HELL'S WRONG WITH YOU?

OSCAR
Mia? MIA.

She breaks from her trance-like state, looks to Oscar--

OSCAR (CONT'D)
You okay?

--and nods, shakily, as Oscar turns his attention to--

BOB PERKEL (60s, white), the incandescently angry hatchet-faced farmer stalking from the PERKEL FARMS ENTRANCE--

PERKEL
TOO FAST! THIS AN ACTIVE DRIVEWAY--

Oscar boils out of the vehicle, equally pissed--

OSCAR	PERKEL
CONTROL YOUR ANIMAL! IT'S A HAZARD!	DON'T YOU POINT AT ME, BOY! WHO'S THAT DRIVING--?!

Perkel sees Mia behind the wheel and she's spooked at the sight of him, his bugged-out eyes, his bared yellow teeth--

PERKEL (CONT'D)
Looky what you got here, you naughty *hombre*...

Oscar SHOVES Perkel back, enraged at the implication--

PERKEL (CONT'D)
THAT'S ASSAULT, YOU SUMBITCH!

OSCAR
Control your animal, Perkel.

And Oscar storms back around to the truck as--
Perkel jerks THE GOAT away, leering at Mia as he goes.
Mia watches him as Oscar gets back in, **SLAMS** the door.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about that. You got
assholes in the city, too, right?

MIA
One or two.

But neither one's laughing as she puts it back in gear. In
the distance, Perkel's still glaring at them.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON TELEVISION, A CORNY HORROR MOVIE: bad effects, bad acting.

Oscar, Valery, Shawn, and Mia eat ice cream and watch the
movie. Spoons CLINK. Someone on TV SCREAMS. Finally...

MIA
(rising)
I'm gonna head up.

OSCAR
'Night.

SHAWN
'Night.

And Valery gives her a thin smile. As Mia leaves the room,
Oscar glances at Valery, who keeps her eyes on the screen.

Shawn watches them, sidelong, before returning to the movie.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia enters, unbuttoning her shirt as she closes the door...
HER HAND hovers over the knob...but she leaves it unlocked.

EXT. VENTURA HOME - NIGHT, LATER

THE JUNKYARD is dark and quiet, except for some faint SCUTTling sounds in there. Rats, probably.

THE BARN is shut and locked, as usual.

THE HOUSE is mostly dark, a few soft lights glowing within.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

THE CAMERA PROWLs across empty furniture, their left-behind ice cream bowls, odd patches of moonlight through the window.

INT. KITCHEN - VENTURA HOME - NIGHT

THE CAMERA PROWLs in the darkness, finding...

THE PHOTO OF JESSICA in her patch-worked jacket.

INT. STAIRS - SAME

THE CAMERA PROWLs up the stairs, gliding low over carpet.

INT. SHAWN'S ROOM - NIGHT

THE CAMERA PROWLs the room, the MODEL AIRPLANES, the STUFFED BUNNY, finally finding Shawn, asleep in his retainer.

INT. OSCAR & VALERY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

THE CAMERA PROWLs over Valery, asleep, to find Oscar, asleep, as far away as possible without being out of the bed.

INT. MIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

THE CAMERA PROWLs the room, SLOWLY PUSHING IN on Mia, asleep in bed, until we are TIGHT ON HER FACE.

We hold there a lonnng, quiet beat...

And then, as her eyes slit open, a SCREECHING DISSONANT TONE EXPLODES, astonishingly loud, carrying over as--

HER EYES POP IN TERROR AT--

THE GOAT, hunched in the corner, GRINNING at her, SHIVERING violently, its LIMBS bending at odd angles, and...

SEVERAL UNDULATING ASYMMETRICAL TENDRILS OF BLACK SMOKE emanate from its body, wriggling in the air...

MORE BLACK SMOKE huffs from its nostrils and mouth like breath fog and--

MIA SCREAMS. Not just a scream of fear but a fugue-state paroxysm, a convulsion, hard to say where HER SCREAM stops and that DISSONANT TONE begins as--

THE GOAT SLIDES UP THE WALL as if lifted by a giant invisible hand, its limbs spread crazily, tapping spider-like, the BLACK TENDRILS reaching into the room, and now--

THE GOAT SCREAMS, TOO, a human-sounding scream, like a little girl, notes of mockery--

MIA THRASHES AND SHRIEKS.

CUT TO BLACK.
SUDDEN SILENCE.

INT. BASEMENT - VENTURA HOME - NIGHT

Shawn, in pajamas, quietly wads MIA'S WET SHEETS into the washing machine, his face creased with concern.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Valery, in night clothes, makes a cup of "SLEEPYTIME" TEA. Her hands shake a bit. Her mouth is tight.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mia is bent over the sink, the mirror fogged with steam. She's wrapped in a towel, her hair wet from a recent shower.

Cupping water into her mouth from the faucet, again and again and again. Finally, she's done, turns it off. Leans there.

She's composed...but still shaken as she looks at the VAGUE BLURRY SHAPE of her reflection in the fogged-over mirror.

INT. MIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mia stands against the wall, in a fresh nightgown (just a big T-shirt of Oscar's), holding her cup of TEA, watching as--

Oscar finishes remaking her bed, and then pats it with a gentle smile. *Okay, all set.*

She takes a last sip of tea and climbs into bed like someone who's just run a marathon: slow and aching and spent.

As Oscar pulls her covers up for her...

MIA

I'm sorry.

OSCAR

Whaa? Hey, no, don't be sorry.
Everyone has bad dreams...

MIA

I was awake.

OSCAR

I know it seemed that way. But
you've had a huge change here.
That's stress. Big stress. It can
do all sorta things to people.

She thinks on that, foggily.

MIA

It was the goat. That farmer's
goat.

As Oscar steps out of frame and then returns to place a glass of water on her side table.

OSCAR

Perkel? Oh well, there you go...
Damn thing almost made us wreck.
Scared the hell outta us, no wonder
you'd have a nightmare on it,
right? That dumb movie probably
didn't help, either.

As she curls under the covers and removes her glasses...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

You just gotta rest, okay? You
gonna be able to do that?

MIA

Sure.

Kind of awkwardly, he pats her bedside, starts to go, but...

MIA (CONT'D)

(half-asleep)
It breathed smoke.

Almost to the door, Oscar stops. Stands there a moment, we're just looking at the back of his head...

OSCAR

Smoke?

MIA

Mmhm...that goat. Like your breath in the cold...but black. I saw it.

Oscar turns to face her now, his face purposefully blank.

OSCAR

What else?

MIA

It had these...arms. Long arms, like snakes. But they were smoke, too, I think. Reaching for me. I screamed...

Oscar breathes slowly through his nose. After a beat, he sits on the side of the bed, pull the covers up a bit for her.

OSCAR

Dreams, right? Who knows. Scared the hell outta us, though...

She chuckles, tiredly, embarrassed.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Thought a Bigfoot was coming in the window, way you went off. Jesus.

MIA

Said I'm sorry.

OSCAR

I'm teasing. Look, we'll be right here, okay? You get some sleep. You need anything, just holler, right?

MIA

Okay.

OSCAR

But not like before. Just a regular holler.

("ha-ha")

There's some water for you.

MIA

Okay.

He heads to the door, clicks off the light. As he's leaving--

MIA (CONT'D)

Oscar?

--he pauses, a faceless silhouette in the doorway.

OSCAR

Yeah?

MIA

Thank you.

He nods. Closes the door. Mia lays back in darkness...staring across at that EMPTY CORNER where the goat had been.

EXT. HALLWAY - SAME

Oscar stands there, perfectly still, his hand still clutching the doorknob. Staring down at the floor. *Unblinking*. But--

--instantly changing his expression when he looks up and realizes that Valery is watching him from their BEDROOM DOOR.

He gives her a smile/frown of 'don't worry' but she's not simply concerned: she seems *afraid*. They whisper here...

VALERY

What was that?

OSCAR

Not what you're thinking. Just a nightmare.

She stares at him, not entirely convinced.

VALERY

Oscar...

OSCAR

She's fine.

With that, Valery disappears back into the room, closes the door. And Oscar's expression goes blank again, unaware of--

SHAWN'S DOOR, which is opened just a sliver, SHAWN'S EYEBALL peeking out of his room.

SHAWN'S POV through the narrow slit of his cracked-open door, watching Oscar just *stand there* at Mia's door, unmoving.

Silently, Shawn closes his door again.

EXT. FIELD BEHIND VENTURA HOME - PRE-DAWN

Dead silent. Misty and drizzly. Inky sky, with a thin stripe of pink visible just above the treetops.

INT. MIA'S ROOM - SAME

On Mia, sound asleep until...her eyes suddenly open and she lifts her head, like listening for something.

She slips out of bed, drifts to the window, gazing out.

THROUGH THE WINDOW, a DARK FIGURE is visible out there, trotting *this way* down the DIRT ROAD, as if coming from Route 1, with something BULKY slung over his shoulder.

Mia grabs her GLASSES, fumbles them on to see better and--

THROUGH THE WINDOW, *it's Oscar*, dressed in a DARK SWEATSHIRT with the hood up, crossing to the BARN now.

He has SOMETHING HEAVY wrapped in a BLUE TARP, balanced on his shoulder, like you would with a carpet. In the other hand, he carries what looks like an OLD KEROSENE LAMP. *Weird.*

Hurriedly, he unlocks the BARN and slips inside.

Mia's very still at the window, but breathing fast as--

THROUGH THE WINDOW, a moment later, Oscar reappears *empty handed*, shuts and re-locks the barn, trots to the house.

Mia turns away from the window, wondering darkly.

INT. KITCHEN - VENTURA HOME - MORNING

A subdued breakfast. Mia looks up from her food to find Oscar looking directly at her over his eggs.

MIA

What?

OSCAR

Nothing. You feel okay?

MIA

Yeah.

Oscar smiles, returns to eating. Shawn, having seen all that--

SHAWN

Hey, uh...Dad?

OSCAR

Hm?

SHAWN

Think we could go to the Trading Post later today? I wanted to get some new issues, since uh...we didn't get a chance the other day.

He's clearly implying something but Oscar barely registers the question, eyes down, preoccupied.

OSCAR

Mm. Yeah, I dunno, bud, got some things to catch up on.

Shawn's deflated. Valery clocks Oscar's obliviousness.

Until Mia scoots away from the table, and then he looks up--

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Where you headed?

MIA

Take a walk.

He watches her exit, unaware of how Valery is staring at him.

EXT. FIELD BEHIND VENTURA HOME - MORNING

Mia walks along, distracted, semi-aimless.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

From afar, we see Mia moving among the dense trees. A fine MIST hangs in the air. All sound is muted.

She stops suddenly, looks back. *Did I hear something?*

After a moment, she moves onward, soon coming upon...

A CREEK BED. She sidles down the incline to stand at the edge of it. Stares at her rippled reflection in the DEEP GURGLING WATER. Listens to it. Breathes deeply. Closes her eyes.

But when she opens them again...THERE'S ANOTHER FIGURE IN THE REFLECTION. She whirls to see--

ETHAN PERKEL (17, white) standing several paces behind her. Sunburned, clipper haircut, cracker vibe. Red eyes: *maybe from crying? Maybe from drugs?*

She instinctively takes a step back but realizes *the creek blocks escape that way.*

His expression isn't exactly threatening, though...more *curious*. Still, his sudden appearance has alarmed her.

ETHAN
Who're you?

MIA
Who are *you*?

ETHAN
I'm Ethan.

She gestures without taking her eyes off him--

MIA
I'm allowed to be here.

ETHAN
So'm I. That's my farm up the way.
My daddy's.

MIA
I live up there.

ETHAN
With the *junkman*?

MIA
Salvage manager. My dad. Yeah.

ETHAN
(quietly surprised)
That's...your *dad*?

She nods.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Since when?

MIA
Since...always, I guess. What're
you doing out here?

ETHAN
Public property.

Then, as if remembering something sad, he scans the woods...

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Lucky run off. Can't find'm.

His eyes narrow on her, he steps forward--

ETHAN (CONT'D)
You seen him?

MIA
I don't know any Lucky.

ETHAN
Don't gotta be nervous--

She steps back, her foot SLIPS in the water, she STUMBLES--

--and he reflexively SPRINGS forward, his hands out, *maybe* to help, but she reacts instantly in self-defense--

SHE SNATCHES A ROCK AND--**KAP!**--CLUBS HIS HEAD WITH IT. *HARD.*

HE STAGGERS AND DROPS AS SHE DARTS AROUND HIM UP THE INCLINE.

SHE SPRINTS THROUGH THE WOODS, his angry VOICE behind her--

ETHAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
HEYYYY!

She's not stopping.

I./E. SHERIFF'S CAR (MOVING) - VENTURA HOME - DAY

SHERIFF AL WEYERS (40s, African American) drives down the DIRT ROAD, not thrilled to be here. There's OSCAR up ahead, apparently waiting for him on the porch.

EXT. VENTURA HOME - DAY

As Weyers parks and gets out, Oscar gives him a wan, familiar wave. Weyers approaches, amiably enough.

INT. WINDOW - VENTURA HOME - SAME

Mia and Shawn watch this unfold, Valery behind them.

SHAWN
Don't worry. We know him.

MIA'S POV: the BADGE, the UNIFORM, the LIGHTS. "**Police.**"

Her eyes are hard. Her mouth is a tight angry line.

MIA
I'm not worried.

Valery watches Oscar and Weyers TALK, Oscar gesturing, Weyers nodding along. She's tense.

EXT. VENTURA HOME - SAME

Weyers blinks in surprise at what he's just been told.

WEYERS

Good God. How'd they even...?

OSCAR

DNA. I was in the system from when...well, you know. And they matched us up. A fluke. She'd thought I was...Angie'd told her I was dead.

WEYERS

Jesus. Some Maury Povich stuff right there.

OSCAR

Big time.

WEYERS

How're you guys doing with all this? How's uh...how's Valery?

It's almost invisible but when Weyers says 'Valery', Oscar has a tiny twitch, and kind of *looks* at him.

OSCAR

It's hard. Y'know.

Weyers nods, glances to the WINDOW, where he sees the kids...and Valery. He quickly looks away and--

WEYERS

I'ma need to talk to your girl.

OSCAR

'Course. Come on in.

INT. LIVING ROOM - VENTURA HOME - DAY

On Mia, on the couch, calmly recounting--

MIA

...and then he moved towards me. Fast. So I hit him.

Weyers sits across from her with his REPORT PAD, with Oscar and Valery hovering nearby. Shawn peeks from the kitchen.

WEYERS

With a rock?

Mia nods, giving Weyers nothing.

WEYERS (CONT'D)

He says he was trying to help you up.

MIA

I don't know that. I don't know *him*. All I know's he crept up on me, talking weird. Maybe out here you let someone like that touch you. Not where I'm from.

Weyers swallows a smile, jots some notes...

WEYERS

It's true, he is upset over a missing pet. A goat, apparently. Says he was out looking.

At 'goat', Mia tweaks, glances to Oscar, who has no reaction.

Weyers closes his pad, speaks to Oscar now in a resigned way--

WEYERS (CONT'D)

In fact, uh...Ethan's pop, Mr. Perkel, in this complaint, he alleges that you might have something to do with that, Oscar.

OSCAR

With what?

WEYERS

His missing animal.

OSCAR

I mean, yeah, when scrap metal's down, I'll make ends meet kidnapping some livestock, time to time, who doesn't?

WEYERS

(ignoring the joke)

He says y'all had some kinda fracas yesterday in the road. Goat got loose, he says you swung on him?

OSCAR

Al, *come on*: this is Bob Perkel,
guy drinks turpentine for breakfast
n' howls at the moon. Be serious.

Weyers spreads his hands, '*I know, I know.*'

OSCAR (CONT'D)

And you know how he is about brown
folk.

Weyers frosts over at that.

WEYERS

Just so I can say I asked, you
weren't anywhere around Perkel's
farm early this morning, were you?

OSCAR

No. I was here.

Hearing that, Mia stares at Oscar. He doesn't notice.

Weyers nods, satisfied, and...

WEYERS

How you doing, Val?

She nods, arms folded, small polite smile.

VALERY

Hangin' in.

Weyers taps his pad, refocuses on Mia as he rises...

WEYERS

Technically speaking, you laid
hands on Mr. Perkel's son, so this
is a situation. But given your
uh...*circumstances* here, the way he
approached you, the fact he's not
really hurt...I'm gonna chalk it up
to a misunderstanding, call it a
warning.

MIA

Yes, sir.

WEYERS

Might be a good idea to stay away
from your neighbors a while.

(to Oscar)

All of ya.

Weyers rises, shakes Oscar's hand and, just as he goes, nods 'goodbye' to Valery. She nods back, avoids Oscar's look.

And Mia, through all of this, is looking closely at Oscar.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

As Oscar loads crates of COPPER WIRE into his TRUCK--

Mia watches him from nearby, hands deep in her pockets. He finishes, grins at her as he dusts his hands off--

OSCAR

Wanna come along? I'll split the
take with ya.

MIA

Kinda tired.

As he gets into the cab--

OSCAR

'Nother time then.

She moves a little bit closer, very casual but watching.

MIA

You see all that fog this morning?
Right at dawn? I never seen
anything like that before...

OSCAR

(without looking at her)
Nah. Last night wore me out.

MIA

You probably see that all the time,
anyway.

OSCAR

Oh yeah. Back later, okay?

MIA

'Kay.

And he pulls away, leaving her there, staring at the truck as it goes. Once it's gone from sight, she turns to look at...

THE BARN, locked and grim and forboding.

INT. HALLWAY - TWILIGHT

PULLING OUT from the cracked-open BATHROOM DOOR, where we can glimpse the vague shape of Valery in the shower--

TO FIND MIA, now creeping down the hallway to peek into--

SHAWN'S ROOM, where he's hunched over his computer, HEADPHONES on, playing a game.

Mia continues onward, anxious determination on her face.

EXT. VENTURA HOME - TWILIGHT

Mia comes out of the house, moving quickly across the yard, glancing back towards the house. Seeing nobody there, she--

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

--hurries to the MAIN DOOR of the barn, where she sees that the HASP is locked with a TUBULAR-STYLE LOCK, which she inspects and then moves quickly back towards the house.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

A JUNK DRAWER is yanked open: tape, scrap paper, clothespins--

Mia digs through it until she finds what she needs: a BALL POINT PEN. As she twists off the CASING to leave her with just the INK TUBE, there's a CREAK from upstairs--

She freezes in place. Listening for movement up there.

EXT. BARN - TWILIGHT

CLOSE ON THE TUBULAR LOCK as Mia takes it in hand and works the INK TUBE into the circular key slot, nudging and turning.

She's visibly nervous but focused on the work until--**SNAP!**

INT. BARN - SAME

SKKRRCH! THE DOOR SLIDES OPEN, revealing the silhouette of Mia before the gloomy outside world, staring in at the dim, dusty interior. After a beat, she steps inside...

She takes it all in. Half-workshop, half-storage space. TOOLS and HALF-ASSEMBLED APPLIANCES and BOXES in every direction.

Rows of PACKED SHELVES to the rafters, stacks of BOXES back into the shadows. *Like a maze.*

She drifts along, peering at the multitude of OLD TEXTBOOKS, OLD MACHINES, OLD RECORDS and PULP MAGAZINES and COLLECTIBLE BRIC-A-BRAC (including vintage eyeglasses!)

As she moves deeper into the shadows, it starts to feel less 'museum' and more 'hoarder', all moldy and grimy, she coughs on the dust motes turning thickly in the air.

Passing a CERTAIN SHELF, she glances at the collection of **STRANGE LAMP-MACHINES**. Amalgamations of OIL LAMPS and GEIGER COUNTERS: several unwieldy, odd, *Frankenstein-devices*.

She's looking closer when something *else* catches her eye...

Up ahead, as if peeking from around a corner at her, a CORNER OF BLUE TARP. She sees it, gulps, approaches slowly.

IN THIS DARK SECLUDED CORNER, she kneels before it, a TARPED BUNDLE on the floor that contains...*something*.

She hesitates a long beat, then reaches out with a shaking hand, peels the TARP back and...

Her face visibly relaxes. Like, *Oh*.

It's that WOODEN SIGN that used to be at the entrance to their property, '**JUNK**', along with a RUSTY SHOVEL. Looks like Oscar was just switching out his sign, as she'd suggested.

She exhales in a kind of annoyed relief, shaking her head at herself, and starts back the way she came.

SPARSE MINOR-KEY MUSIC CUES and carries us through the following M.O.S. SEQUENCE, which will be accompanied by a calm, warm VOICEOVER FROM OSCAR...

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - TWILIGHT

MOS: Oscar gloomily counts the FEW DOLLARS given to him by the MANAGER, as some LABORERS haul off that COPPER WIRE.

OSCAR (V.O.)
We are grateful.

Oscar summons a smile and shakes the Manager's hand.

INT. WEYERS' TRAILER - TWILIGHT

MOS: Weyers sits before the TV in his tidy DOUBLE-WIDE, shoes off, work shirt unbuttoned, eating a microwave dinner.

OSCAR (V.O.)
*Because although it may be
 imperfect, we have love.*

He stares at the TV without seeing it.

EXT. PERKEL FARMS - TWILIGHT

MOS: Bob Perkel sways at the edge of his field, drunk, hands cupped to his mouth as he silently screams out, 'Luhhh-keee!'

OSCAR (V.O.)
*We have family...and in this world
 that's no small thing.*

Behind him, from a distance, Ethan watches this. There's some GAUZE taped to his forehead. He looks bereft and helpless.

EXT. CEMETARY - TWILIGHT

MOS: THE FRESH GRAVE OF ED COX, a simple little headstone, a bunch of fresh flowers now set there--

OSCAR (V.O.)
*It's easy to forget when you're
 warm, that others might be cold.*

--by Ava Cox, who then turns sadly to shuffle off by herself.

INT. PUBLIC ROOM - FIRST REDEEMER CHURCH - NIGHT

MOS: A TOWNSPERSON finishes sharing and is patted by Minister Euell, who then scans the group, and calls on--

OSCAR (V.O.)
*Sometimes I forget that, and I need
 to be reminded...*

Oscar, who has his hand raised, sitting there with Valery. He takes a deep breath and begins to share.

INT. DINING ROOM - VENTURA HOME - NIGHT

Dinnertime. Oscar is saying grace again, that's what we've been hearing--

OSCAR

That I have an amazing son.

He looks at Shawn, very sincere. Shawn smiles, bashful.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

And a daughter I've only just met,
but whom I already love as if I'd
known her forever.

He looks at Mia, who meets his gaze, smiles faintly.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

And I have a remarkable wife that I
do not deserve. I...

But he gets a little choked up. Valery gives a neutral nod of acceptance and, seeing that's all he'll get, Oscar moves on.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

And...we all have...a daughter, and
a sister, and although she's not
here with us right now...

Valery's eyes fill, she looks down. Shawn's mouth tightens.

Mia watches. It takes a moment for Oscar to continue...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Though she's not here at the table,
she's here in our hearts and one
day she'll be with us again. So...

(raising a glass)

To Shawn. And Valery. And Mia. And
Jessie. I am the luckiest man I
know.

They take sips. Slowly start eating. A beat, and then...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

(blandly, to Mia)

So...making any new friends?

And everyone can't help but to CRACK UP. Even Valery.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

No? Give it time. The neighbors are
sweethearts.

As they pass the food...

CLOSE ON THAT PHOTO, with JESSICA smiling out at us.

INT. SHAWN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Shawn looks up from his computer as Oscar **taps** quietly on the half-opened door. He's got a PACKAGE under his arm.

OSCAR
(re: computer)
That Andrew?

SHAWN
Yeah.

As Oscar comes into the room to sit on the bed...

OSCAR
Tell him to stay outta the fridge
when he comes over. He's like a
human ant problem.

Shawn chuckles lamely at that, clicks off the computer. Oscar passes him the PACKAGE, which he curiously unfolds...

It's a STORE BAG containing a stack of NEW COMIC BOOKS.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
I just asked for whatever came out
this week. Those right?

SHAWN
(genuinely touched)
Mostly. This one's a re-print but
the cover's new so, yeah...

Oscar turns serious.

OSCAR
Bud. I owe you a huge apology. I
was driving out today...and all at
once it hit me. Venture Con. I
just...totally forgot. My head's up
my ass right now.

SHAWN
It's okay--

OSCAR
No. It's not.

SHAWN
Dad. With...
(nods to the hallway)
...her. And everything. I
understand. We'll do something
else.

OSCAR

We will.

Oscar gives him a huge hug. Shawn hugs back.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

I love you, bud.

SHAWN

Love you, too.

Oscar heads out, pausing to glance back at his gawky geeky son, thumbing through the comic books.

INT. MIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Oscar peeks in--

OSCAR

Hey.

Mia looks up from bed, writing in that NOTEBOOK of hers.

MIA

Hi.

He edges in, works on what to say. She waits.

OSCAR

I'm...sorry that happened today.

She puts the notebook aside.

MIA

Not your fault.

OSCAR

It's just...it's important to me that you feel safe here. That's the whole...that's all that matters.

MIA

I do.

He marvels at her, starts to say something, but stops.

MIA (CONT'D)

What?

OSCAR

I was about to wonder who you got all that strength from. But I know. Wasn't me.

She shrugs, picks up the notebook again...

MIA
Bet some of it was.

He goes to her. Kisses her lightly on the forehead. Starts to leave but pauses at the door...

OSCAR
Want me to lock this?

She shakes her head.

MIA
It's fine.

And he goes. She's still smiling as she continues to write.

CLOSE ON A LINE ON THE NOTEBOOK PAGE: **Oscar said grace.**

She scratches something out. Writes something new.

CLOSE ON THE PAGE: **DAD said grace.**

INT. OSCAR & VALERY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Valery is already in bed, when Oscar slips in behind her. She remains facing away from him.

They lay in silence a moment. He turns slightly to look at her. Summoning courage, he's about to speak but--

VALERY
Not tonight.

Slowly, hurting, he rolls over. Valery clicks off the light.

BLACKNESS.

Then...faintly, distantly, a METALLIC SCRAPE.

INT. MIA'S ROOM - NIGHT, LATER

MIA'S EYES pop open. *What was that?*

She sits up. Looks to the window. Rises. Looks out...

THROUGH THE WINDOW, there's a VERY FAINT LIGHT spilling from behind the CRACKED BARN DOOR.

EXT. VENTURA HOME - NIGHT

The screen door opens silently. Mia, still in her sleeping shirt, barefoot, steps out into the humming darkness.

Across the yard...THE BARN. That weird, pale LIGHT inside it. Very faintly, another SCRAPING sound.

She stares at it.

INT. BARN - SAME

CLOSE ON THE BARN DOOR as it creeps open and a little sliver of Mia's head appears. A DIFFUSE GREENISH GLOW fills the air like mist. We can hear her BREATHING, she's terrified, and yet..she enters. *Drawn forward.*

TRACKING BACK WITH MIA, as she moves slowly forward, her head tilting in confusion, unable to process what it is she's looking at.

ALL THOSE LAMP-MACHINES ARE GLOWING. They glow at varying brightnesses, some flicker, but all have a pale green light.

She's alone, shelves of weird glowing devices rising before her for an image that resembles a young girl at an aquarium, framed against this high wall of otherworldly light. She steps towards them...

And they GLOW even brighter. She steps back, they fade.

CLOSE ON MIA, astonished, but then as *something* comes into her periphery, she turns slowly...and that amazement curdles into confusion...and then into horror.

Her BREATH, ragged and strained, overtakes all other sound as-

She nears the WORKBENCH, aghast at what she sees there...

A REVOLVER with what looks like a MELTED PLASTIC BOTTLE attached to the barrel with duct tape. And next to it...

A MOUND, underneath a BLUE WEATHER TARP.

SLOWLY PUSHING IN ON HER FACE as she stares at the MOUND for a long moment...and then she extends her shaking hand to pull the tarp aside and as she does--

All sound cuts out. It's just abrupt and total silence so we can look at what's under there in dispassionate objectivity:

THE DISMEMBERED BODY OF A GOAT. The HEAD has been removed, the EYES pried out, the ORGANS piled in a bucket, the HIDE peeled back with needle-nose pliers. Bloody LATEX GLOVES crumpled there. Amateur-hour autopsy.

She covers her mouth, her eyes bug wide. There, a detail:

That CLOVER-SHAPED TAG on its gore-soaked collar: "**Lucky.**" There's no doubt: *this is the Perkel goat.*

Her head shakes, reflexively, as if to disagree with what she's seeing, when--

FSSST! She GASPS and WHIRLS at the sudden noise to see--

OSCAR, having just popped the cap off a bottle of CREAM SODA on the edge of a shelf, but already shaking his free hand out because he seems to have scraped his knuckle in doing so.

With a weary half-smile at odds with this nightmare scene--

OSCAR

Damn. I was really good at that in college. Need to get a popper in here.

She watches, horror-stuck, as--

He shakes his head, sucks on his BLEEDING KNUCKLE, and then with that hand picks up *HIS SODA*, sips it, burps softly.

Casually, he offers her the other one, holds the bottle out even as he tips his head towards the workbench...

OSCAR (CONT'D)

It uh...it doesn't look too good, does it?

PUSH IN FAST ON MIA, frozen there as we--

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE.