

NOS4A2

Pilot

"The Shorter Way"

Written by

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TEASER

UP ON:

A TITLE CARD -- "HERE, IOWA" -- TEXT ABOVE AN INK DRAWING OF A VINTAGE ROLLS ROYCE.

EXT. HERE, IOWA - SUBURBAN YARD - DAY

A blazing sun in a clear summer sky burns down on KAREN MOORE, a young, mid-western mom. She waves to her son, DANIEL, 8, who shows off on his bike.

DANIEL
Mom, look at me--

He pops a WHEELIE. Karen *LAUGHS*.

KAREN
Alright, Dare Devil. I'll call you
in when it's time for lunch.

DANIEL
Wait, one more--

KAREN
That's enough for now, sweetie.
Don't go into the street.

As Karen goes inside their small HOUSE...

Daniel races down the length of the driveway. He skids to a stop just before hitting the STREET. He's about to spin around and charge back when he SEES something on the SIDEWALK...

A CANDY CANE. In July. Just beyond the yard.

Daniel walks his bike to the edge of the driveway. Crouches down to investigate. Definitely candy. He looks up at the house -- no sign of Mom. Daniel steps out onto...

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Daniel picks up the candy cane. *CHRISTMAS MUSIC* tinkles from a sleek, black, old-fashioned CAR parked just up the block. As Daniel heads toward the car...

INT. MOORE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Karen drinks beer with her boyfriend, BRIAN JOHNSON. They *LAUGH*, dance, begin to *KISS*. Things heat up. Karen gestures toward the BEDROOM.

KAREN
Should we?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brian kisses Karen's neck longingly, but...

BRIAN
What about Danny?

KAREN
He's busy with that bike.

BRIAN
I guess we could make it quick.

They share a mischievous smile and... it's on. The pair kiss-walk their way to...

INT. MOORE HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brian backs Karen past a cheap DRESSER with a VASE full of dried flowers toward the unmade BED. The DOOR CLOSES behind them to REVEAL...

IVES, a thick lech of a man with a terrifying GRIN, holds a dripping SYRINGE. A black MEDICAL BAG sits at his feet. He moves toward the couple...

Karen looks up from her lover's embrace in time to see Ives sink the NEEDLE into Brian's meaty ass. Karen SCREAMS.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Daniel approaches the old-fashioned car, close enough now to see it's a 1938 ROLLS ROYCE WRAITH. The CHRISTMAS MUSIC streams out of its open windows from the old CAR RADIO.

As Daniel arrives on the right hand side of the car -- the driver's side on the British Wraith -- the door OPENS. Out steps...

CHARLIE MANX, a long, thin man, wears a CHAUFFEUR'S COAT and HAT from another era. Manx tips his hat to Daniel and cocks his bald head to one side. He's OLD -- covered in fine lines and splotchy liver spots.

CHARLIE MANX
Well, well, well. Hello there.

Daniel FREEZES. He opens his mouth to speak, but finds his voice gone cold.

CHARLIE MANX
It's not polite to stare. Close your mouth unless you'd like someone to drop a fish in it.

DANIEL
(a whisper)
I heard the music...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE MANX

And you were naturally curious.
Nothing to be ashamed of. A
curious mind is an excellent
quality in a boy.

(off the car)

This is a 1938 Rolls Royce Wraith
and it is a very special car. How
do you like that, Daniel Moore?

DANIEL

You know my name.

Manx taps his temple.

CHARLIE MANX

I also have a curious mind. I know
a great many things. You found one
of my candy canes, I see.

Daniel flushes.

DANIEL

I'm sorry.

CHARLIE MANX

You may have it, dear boy. Forgive
me, I'm being rude.

Manx removes a DRIVING GLOVE and extends a pale, bony hand
roped with blue veins.

CHARLIE MANX

Charlie Manx. Very pleased to make
your acquaintance.

(off Daniel)

You should never refuse a person's
hand when offered. I'm sure you
don't want to hurt my feelings.

Daniel hesitates... then shakes Manx's hand. Manx smiles.
He does not relinquish Daniel's hand as he leans in CLOSE...

CHARLIE MANX

Do you like Christmas, young
Daniel?

DANIEL

(breathless)

It's my favorite.

CHARLIE MANX

I know a place where every day is
Christmas Day and unhappiness is
against the law. Would you like to
go there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The BACK DOOR of the Wraith suddenly OPENS on its own accord. Daniel DROPS the candy cane...

INT. MOORE HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Brian SWATS at Ives -- heavy, sedated swings -- but Ives DODGES and goes after Karen with the syringe.

Karen SCREAMS bloody murder, does her best to hide behind Brian's hulking form.

Brian CONVULSES, begins to FOAM at the MOUTH as the syringe's poison does its work. It's violent. Ugly. Brian DROPS to the floor. Lock-jawed, unable to breath, he finally DIES.

Ives is already on Karen, but she thinks fast. Karen grabs the vase from her dresser, SMASHES it against Ives's temple. The dried flowers explode into DUST. She RUNS.

INT. MOORE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Karen clears the bedroom and charges past the sofa. As she fumbles with the FRONT DOORKNOB...

Ives lurches toward Karen. She opens the door, but Ives manages to PRICK the fleeing woman with the deadly syringe. Karen stumbles, but keeps moving. Ives follows...

EXT. MOORE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Karen staggers into the driveway, sees no trace of Daniel.

KAREN
Daniel! Daniel, baby! Run!

As Karen frantically searches for some sign of her son...

INT. WRAITH - DAY

In the BACK SEAT, Daniel, nestled onto the almond, kidskin upholstery, peers out the REAR WINDSHIELD...

DANIEL
I think I heard my Mom.

In the FRONT SEAT, Manx sits behind the wheel. He looks at Daniel in the REARVIEW MIRROR.

CHARLIE MANX
Your mother wasn't interested in your tricks, Daniel Moore, and she isn't interested in you. Just you wait until we get to Christmasland. Everyone loves tricks there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Daniel meets Manx's gaze in the MIRROR. Manx SMILES... revealing a crooked row of brown, pointed TEETH. Off Daniel, fear rising...

EXT. MOORE HOUSE - DAY

Karen COLLAPSES at the end of the driveway. She crawls to..

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Karen struggles forward on her hands and knees, still looking for her son. Ives emerges from the driveway and towers over her. He reaches down and... SNAPS Karen's NECK with a TWIST.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Wraith PEELS OUT, leaving behind the candy cane. As Charlie Manx speeds off with the abducted child, we get a good look at the REAR LICENSE PLATE. A vanity plate that reads...

"NOS4A2".

END TEASER

ACT ONE

TITLE CARD - "HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS" - TEXT OVER AN INK DRAWING OF A NEW ENGLAND COVERED BRIDGE.

INT. HAVERHILL, MASS - VICTORIAN HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

A FEATHER DUSTER whisks a line of field hockey TROPHIES, all from Phillips Exeter Academy, the famous private prep school.

VIC MCQUEEN, 18, dusts diligently but without joy. In her faded jeans and boy's T-shirt, Vic looks out of place in this ruffled teen bedroom. She finishes the trophies, moves to...

A VANITY. Among the lipsticks and perfume bottles, Vic finds a stack of COLLEGE BROCHURES. She sets down her duster to flip through them -- Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Dartmouth...

WILLA EASTMAN, 18, fashionista wardrobe and perky ponytail, appears in the doorway. She startles Vic, who drops the brochures. Willa's quick to smile. This is her room.

WILLA

Vic! Oh my God, hi. I saw your mother, but I didn't realize--

VIC

Yeah, no, I know. I'm helping her out. You know, for the summer.

WILLA

Cool. I could never work with my mother -- I think I'd kill her.

Vic's not sure what to say. Palpable class discomfort between these girls -- one of them here to clean the other's house. Willa gestures to the brochures.

WILLA

Where are you applying?

Vic panics inside, but covers with a shrug.

VIC

Oh, you know. All over.

WILLA

You probably already got early admissions, you smart bitch.

VIC

How, um. How's Exeter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLA

A god damn shit show. All AP classes, plus sports and the internship. My mother'll kill herself if I don't get into an Ivy.

VIC

Yeah, well. You're real smart, so. You will.

WILLA

(wistful)

Vic McQueen. You look exactly the same. The last time I saw you, your Dad took me for a ride on his Harley, remember?

Vic smiles.

VIC

Freshman year. You screamed all the way down the block.

WILLA

He drove like a maniac.

VIC

Probably, yeah.

A connection over the shared memory.

WILLA

Are you guys going to Winnepesaukee for the fourth?

VIC

I think so.

WILLA

My parents are throwing a party at the lake house. You should come.

A nice moment interrupted by a sing song *VOICE...*

LINDA (O.S.)

I don't hear vacuuming...

LINDA MCQUEEN, 38, Vic's world-weary mom, pokes her head in.

WILLA

Sorry, Mrs. McQueen. Let me get out of your hair.

Willa grabs a book off her night stand and takes off. Vic watches her go, then starts the *VACUUM*.

EXT. EASTMAN VICTORIAN HOME - DAY

Vic carries the vacuum out to Linda's shitbox CAR. Linda follows. Willa's family's stately home looms behind them. Vic stuffs the vacuum into the back seat. Linda hands Vic FORTY DOLLARS.

LINDA
Here, honey. You earned this.

VIC
Thanks, Mom.

Vic takes the money as they climb into the car.

INT. LINDA'S CAR - DAY

Linda drives while Vic stares out the window, thinking over her exchange with Willa.

LINDA
You've been such a big help this summer. Maybe we could keep it up after you graduate.

There is nothing in the world Vic would like to do less.

VIC
(tight smile)
Maybe.

LINDA
I know cleaning toilets isn't glamorous, but it's steady work, I make my own hours, and the money's pretty good, don'tcha think? We could go into business together.
(pokes Vic)
Be fun.

VIC
Willa's going to college.

LINDA
Her parents are probably refinancing their house. We can't afford to do that.

VIC
I know.

Vic's sorry she said anything. She gazes out the WINDOW as the VICTORIANS give way to more modest HOUSES.

LINDA
Those college kids can't even get a job after they're out.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINDA (CONT'D)
They have to move back in with
their parents. Your father and I
can't support you, Vicki. We can't
afford to.

VIC
I know, Ma.

Linda turns onto PITTMAN STREET, lined with rundown
BUNGALOWS...

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Linda pulls into the driveway of a two-bedroom bungalow.
It's old and in need of repair, but she keeps it neat and
tidy.

Vic brightens at the sight of the '79 HARLEY SHOVELHEAD in
the yard. She jumps out to greet...

CHRIS MCQUEEN, 40, Vic's handsome father, tinkers with the
bike. He sets down his WRENCH and BEER to give Vic a hug.

VIC
You get it running?

CHRIS
You know what they say about
Harleys, Brat.

VIC
They Harley ever run.

CHRIS
How's the cleaning biz?

VIC
I don't understand why people can't
clean their own houses. Mrs.
Eastman doesn't have a job. Her
kids are in school. What does she
even do all day?

Linda, laboring with the vacuum cleaner, interjects.

LINDA
I don't know what she does, but
you're lucky she does it or we'd
all be out in the street.

It's a defensive remark, but also a dig at Chris. He shakes
his head, irritated by the accusation.

CHRIS
I paid the rent, Linda.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINDA

Great. What about the gas, the power, the car insurance, the credit card--

CHRIS

Where is the credit card?

Linda eyes the beer in Chris's hand.

LINDA

My credit card?

CHRIS

Our credit card.

LINDA

(off the beer)

What do you need it for?

CHRIS

It's missing, okay? I don't want anyone to steal our identity.

LINDA

(sarcasm)

Yeah, wouldn't want them to get all our life savings.

CHRIS

You just got home. You're starting this?

The escalating argument drives Vic inside the house.

EXT. HERE, IOWA - MOORE HOUSE - DAY

MAGGIE LEIGH, 23, purple hair and SCRABBLE TILE EARRINGS, heavy BOOK BAG over her shoulder approaches...

A LINE OF POLICE CRUISERS. The yard where Daniel was abducted is now a crime scene.

Alarmed, Maggie stops in front of the YELLOW TAPE. She waves to OFFICER JOE BLY, a COP at the scene.

MAGGIE

H-hey, Joe. W-what's going on?

[NOTE: Maggie speaks with a moderate stutter. It will only be sporadically indicated from here on.]

OFFICER BLY

There was a break in.

MAGGIE

They don't have anything to steal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICER BLY

Have you seen anything suspicious
in the neighborhood lately? Anyone
hanging around?

MAGGIE

I don't think so.

OFFICER BLY

Daniel's father, maybe?

MAGGIE

Never met him. Neither did Danny.
Is everyone okay?

Bly's silence says they're not. Maggie looks past him...

Daniel's BIKE lies on its side like a dead animal. Ives's
SYRINGE lays on the grass. A TARP over KAREN'S BODY.

MAGGIE

Oh my God. Karen?

Maggie tries to push past Bly, but he stops her.

OFFICER BLY

Can't let you back there, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Where's Danny?

Bly gives her a compassionate look.

OFFICER BLY

He's missing.

Maggie blanches at the news.

MAGGIE

He was supposed to come in to the
library for story hour today. I
was gonna walk him.

OFFICER BLY

You two are close?

MAGGIE

I baby-sit him sometimes.

OFFICER BLY

Let me know if you hear from him.
And keep your doors locked. We
don't know what we're dealing with
here.

Bly gets back to work, leaving Maggie to process the horror.

EXT. HERE, IOWA - STREET - CONTINUOUS

Maggie takes a few steps up the block when she SEES... A CANDY CANE on the sidewalk. Odd to see a candy cane in July. She pockets it.

INT. HAVERHILL, MASS - MCQUEEN HOUSE - DAY

Vic lies stretched out on her bed, surrounded by COMIC BOOKS and ART POSTERS. She draws in one of her many SKETCH PADS, trying to ignore her parents ARGUING in the other room...

LINDA (O.S.)
Besides, I gave it back to you.

CHRIS (O.S.)
You didn't give it back to me. You specifically hid it from me like I'm a goddamn child.

Vic sketches fast, with skilled precision - an Escher-like sketch of a LITTLE GIRL in a DARK MAZE. It's hard to tell whether the girl is escaping into the maze or is trapped there.

LINDA (O.S.)
And why would I have to do that?

CHRIS (O.S.)
Because you have no respect for me. You clearly think I'm a moron.

LINDA (O.S.)
No, Chris, I think you're a drunk.

Vic can't listen anymore. She bolts up off her bed and heads out through...

INT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vic walks through the tiny TV room and past her parents' BEDROOM. Behind the closed door, Vic HEARS...

CHRIS (O.S.)
You lost the credit card, you friggin lunatic. Not me. You lost it, like you lose everything.

LINDA (O.S.)
God damn you. God damn you, god damn you, god damn you.

Vic cringes, then hurries out the BACK DOOR...

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Vic beelines over the dirt lot to a BLUE TARP leaned against the house. She tosses back the covering to REVEAL...

A RALEIGH MOUNTAIN BIKE. A man's bike, rugged, beat up from use, Vic's most prized possession. Vic's fingers fly over the combination lock...

EXT. PITTMAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Vic races up the street, passing her neighbors' weedy yards and rusting swing sets. At the end of the road...

HALEY BRIGGS, 10, watching from her FRONT PORCH, sees Vic swerve onto a DIRT PATH beaten into an overgrown FIELD.

EXT. PITTMAN FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Vic rides over the long grass, over root and rock, into...

EXT. PITTMAN STREET WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Vic glides through the 30-acre strip of scrub pine and birch at the end of her street. Sunlight flickers through the overhanging boughs.

TRAFFIC from nearby I-495 accompanies Vic. The grinding *ROAR* of a *DOWNSHIFTING* eighteen wheeler... the *HUM* of the cars... the *BLAST* of a motorcycle... Entranced by the weightlessness of the bike as it tilts into the curves, Vic CLOSES HER EYES.

Words from Vic's parents' argument come into her mind. We *HEAR* them mixed with the *HIGHWAY CACOPHONY*... *You lost the credit card, you friggin lunatic, not me. You lost it like you lose everything. God damn you. God damn you, god damn you, god damn you.*

Vic OPENS HER EYES. She's slipped from under the trees and out onto a wide DIRT ROAD that runs up to..

EXT. SHORTER WAY COVERED BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

A 300 foot long New England death trap spans the GURGLING MERRIMACK RIVER beneath.

Vic brakes outside the CHAIN LINK FENCE that once barred the entrance, but now lies flattened in the dirt. A tin SIGN bolted to the fence warns, "DECLARED UNSAFE BY ORDER OF HAVERHILL PD."

Vic regards the bridge. Shot through with dry rot, it sags in the middle and looks as though a strong wind would be the end of it. The entrance is framed in tangles of ivy, wavering in the air coming up from the river below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vic considers whether or not to cross the bridge with a growing sense of foreboding. The sound of the *RUSHING RIVER* within morphs into *WHITE NOISE* like *RADIO STATIC*.

Vic PEERS inside the bridge. It's dark. She barely makes out a WORD painted on the LEFT SIDE -- WILLA'S. Weird. Vic's LEFT EYE begins to ACHE. The shrill PEEP and FLUTTER of BATS in the eaves seal Vic's decision...

VIC TURNS BACK.

STAY ON the BRIDGE as Vic retreats into the woods on her bike. It THROBS in the heat waves, the *STATIC* and the otherworldly WHITENESS building to a terrifying *CRESCENDO*...

INT. WRAITH - DAY

STATIC blares from the *CAR RADIO* in the Wraith. Charlie Manx adjusts the dial as he drives -- gets more of the same.

CHARLIE MANX
(to himself)
Hello, who do we have here?

Manx looks healthier than when we last saw him, color has come into his complexion.

Daniel stirs in the back sleep. He's as pale as Manx is rosy.

DANIEL
(drowsy)
What happened to the music?

CHARLIE MANX
It would seem we have a short-circuit.
(then)
Nothing for you to worry about, my boy.

Suddenly the static *CLEARs*, replaced by Burl Ives singing *HOLLY JOLLY CHRISTMAS*.

CHARLIE MANX
There we are. Go back to sleep, child.

Daniel can't help but drift off... the music and rocking of the Wraith lulls him. Off Manx, fixated on the radio, concerned...

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. PITTMAN STREET - HALEY'S HOUSE - DUSK

Vic emerges from the field back onto her street, her left eye sore and bloodshot. Dazed, she sees Haley playing with a cheap TABLET in her yard. Vic pulls up in front of the kid.

VIC
Hey squirt. Kinda late, isn't it?

Haley gestures to a dark STREETLIGHT.

HALEY
I'm not allowed in until it comes on.

VIC
Your parents fighting?

HALEY
Mittens shit under the bed, so Mom threw her outside and she ran away. Steve's pissed. Says she's gonna die out here.

VIC
Every cat dies. Not every cat lives.

That gets a SMILE from the girl. She notices Vic's eye.

HALEY
You okay? You look... weird.

VIC
Headache.

The streetlight flickers ON.

HALEY
I'm sorry, feel better.
(pounds the door)
Ma! The light's on!

Vic pedals off before she risks seeing Haley's mom.

INT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Vic slips inside and quietly makes her way toward her room. A tinny CLINK from the kitchen catches her attention.

INT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vic finds Chris, back to her, can of BEER in one hand as he runs the other hand under cold water from the sink. Something about the tableau worries Vic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIC

Dad?

Chris wraps his hand in a towel before he turns to Vic.

CHRIS

Hey, Brat.

VIC

Is Mom lying down? She's supposed to take me to figure drawing.

CHRIS

I don't know what she's doing.

(then)

Vic, your mother and I... You know we love you--

Vic doesn't want to hear it. She cuts him off.

VIC

I don't want to clean houses with her after I graduate.

(off Chris)

I mean, there's nothing wrong with cleaning houses. I just. She thinks it's all I can do. And it's not. I want to go to college. For art.

Chris reacts, surprised but not disapproving.

CHRIS

Then I think you should go.

VIC

Really?

Chris looks at his daughter. Makes a decision.

CHRIS

Come with me. Come on.

Vic follows Chris to...

INT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Chris tugs on a chain-pull LIGHT fixture -- it illuminates a dust-caked, unfinished basement. Chris leads Vic to an old PIANO, crumbling in a corner. He plays a few CHORDS -- broken hammers, long out of tune.

CHRIS

(re: the piano)

Shame.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chris takes a MILK CRATE down from the top of the instrument. It's filled with SPIRAL NOTEBOOKS.

CHRIS

I wanted to show you these.

Vic picks up a notebook, flips through it... page after page of music and lyrics.

VIC

You wrote all this?

CHRIS

I wanted to be a composer when I was your age. Thought I'd go to music school when I got out of the service.

Vic can guess the end of this story.

VIC

It was too expensive.

CHRIS

Your mom got pregnant, I had to get a job, I couldn't do it. But you? You're young, brilliant, and you're unencumbered. You'll figure it out.

Vic throws her arms around Chris, hugs him.

CHRIS

I only have one piece of advice.
(off Vic)
Don't get married and don't have any kids.

Vic *LAUGHS*. But when she hugs Chris again, he glances at his towel-wrapped hand. Drops his smile.

INT. HERE, IOWA - HERE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Daniel's candy cane sits alongside a desktop COMPUTER and purple, faux velvet BAG with the word "SCRABBLE" printed on it in faded gold letters.

Maggie works behind at the CIRCULATION DESK of Here's quaint, small town library. It's a slow evening and Maggie is alone.

Maggie double-checks that there's nobody coming through the front door, then undoes the drawstring on the scrabble bag. She concentrates on the candy cane, seems to source off it as...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE
 (a whisper)
 Where is Daniel?

Maggie reaches into the bag. Though it's only about six inches long, her arm disappears into it up to the shoulder.

The lights FLICKER. The computer goes WHITE with *STATIC*.

As Maggie withdraws a handful of SCRABBLE TILES, the flickering STOPS and the computer screen NORMALIZES. She sets out the tiles above the candy cane.

H-T-R-W-A-I-T-H-E

Maggie arranges the tiles into "WITH THE RA," but isn't happy with that. She shuffles the letters until she solves the puzzle...

"THE WRAITH."

A chill runs down Maggie's spine. She begins to type something into the computer's search engine.

EXT. HAVERHILL HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Vic and Chris roll up to the institutional looking public school on the Harley. Vic hops off at the curb, sketch pad in hand. She waves to her father and he waves back as he ROARS off into the night -- the coolest Dad in the world.

INT. HAVERHILL HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Vic encounters BING PARTRIDGE, the school janitor, sweeping up. Bing is 42, gangly, and a little slow, mentally. He lights up at the sight of Vic, who's in high spirits.

VIC
 Bing! Brought you something.

Vic slides a few COMIC BOOKS out of her sketch pad.

VIC
 The next installment.

BING
 Ah, jeeze. You don't have to do that, Vic. These are yours.

VIC
 Give them back when you're done. Let me know what you think.

Bing takes the comics.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BING

I think you're the nicest girl at
this school.

VIC

Pretty low bar, but thanks.

CRAIG HARRISON, 18, a tattooed stoner, steps between Vic and
Bing.

CRAIG

We gotta get to class.

Craig takes Vic's arm and steers her toward the classroom.

VIC

(over her shoulder)
So long, Bing--

CRAIG

I don't like you talking to that
guy. He's got a record.

VIC

Easy. He's been sober twenty
years. AA, Harrison. I see it in
your future.

CRAIG

My father says he murdered his
parents. Back in the day.

VIC

Your father also says he slept with
Caroline Kennedy. Back in the day.

CRAIG

Why is that so hard to believe?
He's a good looking guy.

VIC

They don't let murderers work in
schools.

CRAIG

You think they check that shit? In
Haverhill?

VIC

He's always been nice to me.

CRAIG

Your heart is too big, McQueen.
Too big and too dumb.

They reach the CLASSROOM and go INSIDE.

INT. HAVERHILL HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - NIGHT

A nude MODEL poses for a handful of ART STUDENTS ranging in age from 18 to 80 -- a summer community figure drawing class. Paint, paper, sculptures of human skeletons litter the room.

MARY SIMONSON, 50, Haverhill's earth mother art teacher, walks the aisles, inspecting work and offering advice.

Vic works with her head down, engrossed in her drawing of...
THE COVERED BRIDGE.

MARY
The model doesn't inspire you this evening?

VIC
I'm sorry.

MARY
Don't be. Beautiful line quality, composition. You have real talent, young lady. Have you given any more thought to art school?

Vic summons her courage.

VIC
Do you really think I could get in?

MARY
I think you stand a very good chance. Mass Art's a great school.

VIC
If you have rich parents.

MARY
There's always financial aid. Let me know if you need any help.

Mary looks again at Vic's drawing.

MARY
That reminds me of the old Shorter Way Bridge off of Pittman Street. I had my first kiss there. Was devastated when they tore it down.

VIC
The covered bridge off Pittman? They tore it down?

MARY
About fifteen years ago.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIC
Are you sure?

MARY
People thought it was a public
hazard. I guess it probably was.
It's too bad.

Mary moves on. Vic stares at her drawing of the bridge -- it seems to emit a kind of *STATIC*. Off Vic, woozy...

EXT. IOWA - INTERSTATE 80 - REST STOP - NIGHT

A clear night. Manx leans against the Wraith in a country rest stop surrounded by CORN FIELDS. He appears YOUNGER than before -- his age spots have disappeared. He checks his watch, annoyed. Manx is about to get in his car when...

Ives emerges from a CORN FIELD, out of breath, carrying his doctor's bag.

MANX
You're late.

IVES
Things didn't go exactly as
planned, Mr. Manx. I had to
improvise.

Manx and Ives climb into the Wraith.

EXT. INTERSTATE 80 - NIGHT

The Wraith hurtles along the wide-open highway.

CHARLIE MANX (PRE-LAP)
Your improvisation left a real mess
back there, Mr. Ives. A real mess.

INT. WRAITH - BACK SEAT - NIGHT

Daniel, curled into a cozy ball, wakes with a groggy YAWN to Charlie Manx's *VOICE*...

CHARLIE MANX
Dead bodies. One of your infernal
syringes.

Manx drives as he lays into Ives. Ives's doctor's bag sits between them.

CHARLIE MANX
Worst of all, the boy heard his
mother scream. Terrible trauma for
a child of his age.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IVES

I am so sorry, Mr. Manx. Lord knows, I never wanted to traumatize the little guy. I just didn't think the bitch would--

Manx eyes Daniel in the REARVIEW MIRROR.

CHARLIE MANX

Tender ears, Mr. Ives.

Ives throws a quick glance back at Daniel, lowers his voice.

IVES

I didn't realize the *mother* would have a man over in the middle of the day.

CHARLIE MANX

You know exactly the sort of parents we're dealing with, the sort of women.

IVES

Women of loose morals intent on ruining their children. You're right. I should have known.

CHARLIE MANX

Your lack of foresight will be a boon for the local police.

IVES

I'm sorry, Mr. Manx.

CHARLIE MANX

It would easier to accept your apology if this were the first time. But it's becoming a pattern. Tampa, Greensboro, Allentown, and now Here. Quite a trail.

IVES

At least the cops will never find us in Christmasland, though, right?

Manx frowns, as though what he's about to say pains him.

CHARLIE MANX

Oh, Mr. Ives. You won't be coming with us to Christmasland.

Suddenly, to Ives's horror, the PASSENGER DOOR UNLOCKS.

IVES

No--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHARLIE MANX

If I've told you once, I've told
you a thousand times. Naughty boys
are not allowed in Christmasland--

IVES

Please, Mr. Manx! It won't happen
again! I promise!

The passenger door FLIES OPEN.

CHARLIE MANX

--and you've gotten yourself onto
my naughty list, Mr. Ives.

With unnatural strength, Manx SHOVES Ives out the door of the
speeding Wraith. He throws Ives's doctor's bag after him.

Daniel watches OUT THE WINDOW as...

Ives hits the PAVEMENT. The force CRACKS his SKULL and FLIPS
his BODY into gruesome somersaults across the highway. The
doctor's bag bursts OPEN, scattering SYRINGES and other
MEDICAL SUPPLIES.

Daniel looks at the MIRROR, scared. Manx looks back at him.

DANIEL

You killed him.

CHARLIE MANX

He was a very bad man. Bad people
ought to be punished.

DANIEL

(realizing)
He hurt my mother.

CHARLIE MANX

Under no circumstances could we
take him with us to Christmasland.
Not one in a million is allowed in,
only those who truly deserve it.

DANIEL

Like me.

CHARLIE MANX

Like you.

Manx watches Daniel's reflection in the mirror. The boy is
paler still than he was, light BLUE VEINS faintly visible
under his skin. Daniel struggles to process what he's seen,
seems to reconcile something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANIEL

Mr. Ives was a bad man, so he had
to be punished.

CHARLIE MANX

That's right.

Having worked it out, the fear leaves Daniel's face. He
settles back, strangely comforted. Off Charlie Manx,
pleased...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

TITLE CARD -- "TERRY'S PRIMO SUBS" -- TEXT ABOVE AN INK DRAWING OF A BRACELET WITH A BUTTERFLY ON IT.

INT. WEIRS BEACH, NEW HAMPSHIRE - TERRY'S PRIMO SUBS - DAY

A seasonal burger and shake shack with ceiling fans, big screen windows, FLY TAPE squiggled from the ceiling. Vic sits with her father at a big BOOTH. Chris looks through Vic's sketch book, lingering over each piece, full of pride.

CHRIS

You just keep getting better and better. Wow.

VIC

I practice a lot. Ever since I took that class freshman year.

(off Chris)

Willa left for Exeter, all the other kids were getting high and skipping school.

(cautious)

You were gone a lot.

Chris feels a twinge of guilt.

CHRIS

I had that big job down the Cape.

Something crosses Vic's face. She doesn't believe her father. But she lets it go, talks about her work.

VIC

Drawing's something I can do by myself. And when I'm really into it, when I'm on a roll... I don't know. It's like being on the Harley.

(stops herself)

I sound crazy.

CHRIS

No, I get it.

Vic turns the page to show Chris her drawing of THE BRIDGE. She forces a casual tone.

VIC

My teacher says that one reminds her of the Shorter Way Bridge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

I can see that. We used to get into a lot of trouble on that bridge. I helped demolish it when you were a kid. Felt like I was blowing up my youth.

VIC

Are there any other bridges like it in Haverhill? Out in the woods?

CHRIS

Nah, they don't make 'em like that anymore.

Linda slides into the booth with burger baskets and frappes. She's bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, determined to have fun. She wears a SILVER BUTTERFLY BRACELET like the one in the title card.

LINDA

Cheeseburger, cheeseburger, cheeseburger, frappe, frappe.
(a playful look to Vic)
Frappe?

VIC

Frappe.

LINDA

I can't wait to get to the lake. Who's ready for fireworks? Vic?

Vic recoils from her mother's overwrought joviality, her garish MAKE-UP. Linda leans across the table towards Vic.

LINDA

I just might have to have a margarita on the beach.
(winks)
If you're good, maybe I'll give you a sip.

VIC

I'm all set.

Though everyone's trying, Linda just doesn't have the rapport with Vic that Chris does. Chris shows Linda the sketch book.

CHRIS

Lin, look at this.

LINDA

(brightly)
A bridge. Very nice, honey. I'd hate to meet a bear on that bridge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHRIS

Her teacher thinks she could go to
Mass Art.

Linda scoffs at the idea.

LINDA

Mary Simonson? What, is she gonna
pay for it? I doubt it. Mary can
barely pay her mortgage.

Vic looks at a SPOOL OF FLY PAPER curling above them. She
notices a FLY squirming on the paper, struggling to live.

VIC

I could get financial aid.

LINDA

That means loans. A pile of debt
before you're twenty years old?
No. Vicki's too smart for that.

The Fly finally gives up. Dies. Linda stuffs a piece of
burger into her mouth. Vic looks away.

LINDA

Eat up! Let's get to the lake!

Linda grins. Vic slouches low in the booth...

EXT. LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE, NEW HAMPSHIRE - RENTAL COTTAGE - DAY

The McQueen family pulls up to a rustic cottage on the shore
of New Hampshire's largest LAKE - a sparkling paradise ringed
by pine-covered mountains. Linda is out of the car first.
[NOTE: Linda is no longer wearing her butterfly bracelet.]

LINDA

We have a view of the fireworks
from the porch!

Linda bounds into the house. Chris pops the TRUNK and
retrieves several CASES of BEER. Vic grabs her backpack and
sketch book.

CHRIS

Hey. We hear a lot stories about
kids who can't pay back their
student loans and then get hooked
on smack.

VIC

"Hooked on smack?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

Your mother's scared. But you
can't let fear dictate your life or
you'll be miserable. Got it?

Vic nods, grateful for her father.

CHRIS

Ready for some steak tips?

Vic smiles. They follow Linda into...

INT. RENTAL COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Linda has opened all the windows and begun a round of anxiety
cleaning. Chris loads the beer into the refrigerator. Vic
sets her backpack down on the sofa.

LINDA

Put your things away in the closet,
please.

Vic moves her stuff.

LINDA

(to Chris)
That's a lot of beer.

CHRIS

A lot of people are coming over.

LINDA

I hope Matt and Laurie don't get
drunk. Laurie's obnoxious when she
drinks.

CHRIS

Just try to have fun, alright?

Vic can't handle the growing tension.

VIC

I'm going to Willa's.

LINDA

Vicki. The fireworks.

VIC

I'll watch them over there.

LINDA

I thought we'd watch them together.

CHRIS

She's eighteen, Linda. Let her go.

Vic doesn't wait for a response. She's out the door.

EXT. EASTMAN LAKE HOUSE - DAY

Vic wanders up a white stone path cut through the lush lawn of the Eastman's waterfront vacation home. She hesitates at the door, unsure what she's in for. Then, she *RINGS* the *BELL*.

MRS. EASTMAN, 44, a beautifully put together Northeast liberal, greets Vic.

VIC
Mrs. Eastman. Willa invited me.

MRS. EASTMAN
And I was so glad to hear it.
You're a good egg, Vic McQueen.
Come in.

Vic smiles at her childhood friend's mother whose warmth makes her feel so welcome.

INT. EASTMAN LAKE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A WAITRESS offers Vic a tray of FANCY LEMONADES. Vic takes one and follows Mrs. Eastman through the well-appointed house. It's like something out of Country Living Magazine.

MRS. EASTMAN
You remember this place.

VIC
I used to sleep over every weekend
in the summer.

Mrs. Eastman stops at a DESK and opens a DRAWER.

MRS. EASTMAN
Before I forget.

She finds a CREDIT CARD in the DRAWER hands it to Vic.

MRS. EASTMAN
Your mother must've dropped it at
the house last time.

Vic stares at the credit card, stunned. Her parents were fighting over the missing card when she saw the mysterious Shorter Way Bridge. Vic remembers the painted word on the inside of Bridge -- *WILLA'S*. Vic feels queasy.

MRS. EASTMAN
Vic? You alright?

Vic snaps out of it and pockets the credit card.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIC

I'm sorry. My parents were looking for this.

MRS. EASTMAN

Willa's outside with the rest of her friends.

Mrs. Eastman opens the BACK DOOR.

EXT. EASTMAN LAKE HOUSE - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

An acre of grass runs down to a SANDY BEACH on the rim of the LAKE. Vic sees Willa in a BIKINI with a group of other YOUNG PEOPLE, all in BATHING SUITS at the water's edge.

MRS. EASTMAN

There they are, the trouble-makers. Keep an eye on them.

Vic is immediately embarrassed by her jeans and tee shirt. She almost turns around, but Willa sees her and WAVES. Vic swallows a ball of anxiety and makes her way down to...

EXT. EASTMAN LAKE HOUSE - BACK YARD - BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Willa greets Vic with a dramatic hug. Her friends, BRENDA, SIMON and DREW, all good looking prep kids, watch with mild interest.

WILLA

Oh my God, I'm soooo happy you came. This is Vic, you guys. We grew up together. She's my best friend.

Vic realizes Willa's drunk. These kids have all slipped something into their lemonades. Drew offers Vic a FLASK.

DREW

Vodka?

VIC

No thank you.

DREW

I thought all Haverhill townies were hopeless alcoholics. Guess I was wrong.

VIC

I thought all Exeter kids were spoiled one percenters with their heads up their ass. Guess the jury's still out.

Everyone looks to Drew for his reaction to the jab.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DREW

Eastman, your friend here is cute,
isn't she?

Vic BLUSHES. The kids LAUGH. Ice broken.

INT. HERE, IOWA - POLICE STATION - RECEPTION - DAY

Maggie sits on a bench across from a COP at a reception.
Officer Bly steps through a set of swinging double doors.
Maggie stands.

UNIFORMED COP

Said she knows you.

OFFICER BLY

She does.

When Maggie speaks, her stutter is worse than before.

MAGGIE

D-d-does Danny's f-father own an
old car? A Rolls Royce Wr-r-raith?

OFFICER BLY

Your stutters getting worse, kid.
(then)
I know you were fond of Daniel--

MAGGIE

Am. I am fond of him.

OFFICER BLY

So I'm gonna tell you something. A
body was found last night on I-80.

Maggie braces herself for the news that it was Daniel, but
Bly hands her MUG SHOT of IVES.

OFFICER BLY

Peter Ives, nurse practitioner from
Florida. We believe he's
responsible for the deaths of Karen
Moore and Brian Johnson, the
disappearance of Daniel Moore, as
well as disappearances in Florida,
North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and
Delaware.

(off Maggie)

Daniel's still missing.

Maggie takes in the news. Then:

MAGGIE

Did Peter Ives own a Rolls Royce
Wraith?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICER BLY
What's with the Wraith?

MAGGIE
I think if you find the Wraith,
you'll find Danny.

OFFICER BLY
Did you see a Wraith on your
street?

MAGGIE
No.

OFFICER BLY
Then--?

MAGGIE
My scrabble tiles told me.
(off Bly)
Kidding. But I think I'm right.

Bly doesn't really have time for this.

OFFICER BLY
Okay, Maggs. We'll keep in mind
your mystery theory.

Bly reaches for the mug shot, but Maggie withholds it.

MAGGIE
Can I keep this? For the library?

OFFICER BLY
Knock yourself out. It'll be all
over the papers tomorrow anyway.

Bly heads back to the bullpen. Maggie stares at mug shot.
Off Ives's face...

EXT. LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE - EASTMAN LAKE HOUSE - BEACH - DUSK

Vic hangs with Willa and the others. She's the only sober
one, but is having a good time soaking up Willa's affection
and the others' curious attention.

SIMON
I heard a kid got stabbed at
Haverhill last week of school.

VIC
Joey Irving.

WILLA
Oh my God.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIC

He was fine.

WILLA

I showed Joey Irving my underwear
when I was four and he was five.
His mother called me a slut.

BRENDA

Oh my God. You are a slut.

LAUGHTER. Willa turns to Vic.

WILLA

I am kind of a slut, Vic.

BRENDA

All Exeter girls are. It's on our
college apps.

DREW

Where are you going to college?

Vic doesn't miss a beat--

VIC

Mass Art.

DREW

Really? I wish I could go to art
school.

VIC

So go.

DREW

The Doctors Butler wouldn't like
that.

SIMON

Both his parents are doctors.

DREW

And they have all the money. So.

SIMON

What do your parents do?

VIC

My mother's a housekeeper and my
father's in demolition.

A beat. Everyone *LAUGHS*. Vic doesn't get it.

SIMON

No, I'm sorry. It's just. You're
obviously smart.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VIC

Okay--

SIMON

We figured your parents must be smart, too.

Willa see's Vic's hurt. She jumps in, trying to help--

WILLA

Her parents are smart. Her mother cleans our house.

--and misses the mark. Vic tried to fit in with these guys and now she feels betrayed.

VIC

I need a glass of water.

Vic walks away from the group. Willa realizes her mistake, but is too drunk to follow.

EXT. EASTMAN LAKE HOUSE - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Vic makes her way towards the bar when Drew catches her.

DREW

Such a boring question, what do your parents do.

VIC

Like you could do better.

DREW

I absolutely could.

She spins to face him. A challenge. He accepts.

DREW

What are you afraid of?

Agitated, Vic thinks *fuck it*.

VIC

I'm afraid my parents will break up and I'll have to live alone with my mother. I'm afraid of getting stuck in Haverhill my whole life. But most of all I'm afraid I'm going crazy because the other day I saw a huge-ass bridge in the middle of the woods that was apparently demolished years ago.

A beat. Then:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DREW

How do you know it's the same
bridge?

VIC

There's a second old as hell
covered bridge in the woods by my
house?

Probably not. Drew thinks.

DREW

Maybe it's a ghost.

VIC

Maybe you're crazy.

DREW

Maybe you're a time traveler.

Drew moves to KISS Vic, but Vic can't handle it. She dodges.

VIC

That your idea of fun? Slumming
with the cute Haverhill townie?

DREW

What?

VIC

I need a glass of water.

Vic continues to the bar, leaving Drew behind.

EXT. EASTMAN LAKE HOUSE - CATERING BAR - CONTINUOUS

Vic steps into the bar line behind Mrs. Eastman, who has had
a few glasses of wine.

MRS. EASTMAN

Vic! Enjoying the party?

VIC

It's beautiful.

MRS. EASTMAN

The fireworks should start soon.

(then, serious)

How's your mother? I always mean
to speak with her when she's at the
house, but you know her. All
business.

VIC

That's Linda.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. EASTMAN

You know, I donate to a women's shelter in town. An excellent organization. Very clean.

Mrs. Eastman grabs a pen and a napkin, writes down a number.

MRS. EASTMAN

If your mother ever feels she's not safe... If ever you're not safe...

VIC

My mother and I are both safe, thank you.

Disturbed and offended, Vic gets out of there.

EXT. LAKEWOOD DRIVE - NIGHT

Vic walks the dark, tree-lined road back to her family's rental. She passes lively country HOUSES with their American flags and sparklers and cook out parties.

As she walks, Vic begins to hear *POPPING EXPLOSIONS*. The FIREWORKS. An occasional burst of green or purple peaks up above the trees, but for the most part, Vic misses them.

EXT. MCQUEEN RENTAL COTTAGE - NIGHT

Vic arrives to a RAGER in full swing. She hangs back from the buoyant, drunk MASSHOLES. Loud, brash, swaying. Vic almost turns around to leave when...

CHRIS

Brat! C'mere, you know this one!

Chris shouts to Vic from the PORCH where he's playing GUITAR with a few BUDDIES. Linda and some other WOMEN, including TIFFANY JONES, 30, listen and cheer them on.

Vic wavers, uncertain where she fits in the world, but seeing both her parents smiling, happy to see her, she joins them.

LINDA

There's my girl.

Vic hands Linda the credit card from Mrs. Eastman.

VIC

Mrs. Eastman had it. You must've dropped it while you were cleaning.

LINDA

How about that? You see the fireworks?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIC

Yeah.

LINDA

Weren't they somethin'?

Linda hugs Vic. Chris starts up another *SONG* on the *GUITAR*. Something like, "HERE COMES THE SUN," by the Beatles. The Women *SING ALONG*.

Chris winks at Vic, who joins in the *SINGING*. Vic looks at her mother, also *SINGING*. Linda glows -- happy.

It's a nice moment, but Vic notices some make-up has worn off Linda's lip. And under the make-up, an unmistakable *BRUISE*.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. HAVERHILL, MASS - MCQUEEN HOUSE - VIC'S ROOM - DAY

Vic works over her drawing of the Shorter Way Bridge with a set of PASTELS. As she adds highlights to the roof, a *SHARP SOB* comes from her parent's bedroom. Vic freezes, listening.

LINDA (O.S.)
My grandmother gave me that bracelet. I asked if you checked the bathroom. You said we had everything.

A door *SLAMS*, followed by another *CRY*.

CHRIS (O.S.)
Here we go. Right on cue. You left it on the beach yesterday. You and Regina Roeson had a bunch of sun and a bucketful of margaritas--

LINDA (O.S.)
I wasn't drunk, if that's what you're implying. That's your specialty, Chris.

Vic tries to concentrate on her drawing.

CHRIS (O.S.)
--and now you're pulling your usual shit and making it my fault.

LINDA (O.S.)
I always put it on the sink beside my earrings. If they don't have it at check in, then one of the maids took it.

CHRIS (O.S.)
Okay, then, the maid's fault. Anyone's but your own.

Vic sets down her pastel. Gets up.

INT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vic passes her parents' BEDROOM. The door is OPEN about a foot. Vic SEES...

A slice of BED and a SUITCASE lying on top of it. In a spasm of strong feeling, Linda has started yanking clothes and other items out of her closet, searching for the bracelet.

LINDA
You've seen those maids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
You're a 'maid.'

LINDA
It's different and you know it.

CHRIS
Oh, yeah? How's it different?

LINDA
They're illegal. They come in here, they work for peanuts and then they steal to supplement their incomes. It's what they do.

CHRIS
(disgusted)
What an ugly fucking person you are inside.

Vic flinches. She braces herself, then opens the door.

INT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - CHRIS AND LINDA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chris and Linda freeze at the sight of their daughter, caught like a couple of kids.

LINDA
Vicki. Your father and I... I lost my bracelet.

The EMPTIES on the dresser. Linda's red rimmed EYES. Vic glares at Chris. He fills with shame.

CHRIS
Vic--

VIC
No.

LINDA
I'm sorry, Vicki. I--

That's all Vic can handle. She rushes out.

EXT. PITTMAN STREET - DAY

Vic races down the street on the Raleigh, past HALEY'S HOUSE, and swerves onto the DIRT PATH...

EXT. PITTMAN STREET WOODS - DAY

Vic slips under the foliage and CLOSES her EYES. Again words from her parents' argument come into her mind, again we HEAR them mixed with the HUM of the HIGHWAY...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

*They steal to supplement their incomes. It's what they do...
What an ugly fucking person you are inside...*

EXT. SHORTER WAY BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Vic OPENS her EYES. She slows for a moment. The bridge looks rickety, but decidedly not demolished. Vic STANDS UP and works the pedals harder. The chain-linked fence RATTLES beneath her tires and she plunges into...

INT. SHORTER WAY BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

BATS FLUTTER in the dusty darkness. Vic immediately sees WRITING painted on the wall to her left -- TERRY'S. Vic whips past.

Everything SOUNDS different inside the bridge, AMPLIFIED and STRANGE. The Merrimack River, a hundred feet below, sounds more like a BLAST of WHITE NOISE, like STATIC, than the rush of water.

Vic soars over GAPS in the FLOOR without ever looking down. She keeps her gaze fixed on the GOLDEN SQUARE at the far end of the bridge...

Pedaling harder and harder, Vic passes stammering rays of WHITE LIGHT. She winces as she crosses each one of those wafer-thin sheets of BRIGHTNESS, the THROBBING back in her LEFT EYE.

The square of SUNLIGHT grows and intensifies. Finally, Vic draws a deep gulp of air and RIDES OUT of the Shorter Way Bridge and hits...

EXT. PAVED ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

ASPHALT. The HISS of the white noise STOPS, like a flipped switch. Vic glides about a dozen feet before she BRAKES. This is NOT the other side of the Merrimack River.

Vic takes in the DUMPSTER and TRASH CANS against the brick wall of a one-story BUILDING. She looks behind her and stifles a scream.

THE BRIDGE fills the mouth of the alley, rammed between two BUILDINGS, stuffed into a space that barely contains it.

Vic shivers. She looks into the darkness of the bridge and can distantly see... the shadowy green PITTMAN STREET WOODS on the other end.

Vic eases off her bike. Her legs shake. She walks the Raleigh over to the Dumpster and leans it against the side. Vic walks past a SCREEN DOOR looking into a NOISY, steaming KITCHEN to...

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Vic looks up the STREET at... WEIRS BEACH, LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE. BOYS in swim trunks toss a Frisbee, the lake ripples beyond them. Vic's temples pound as she rounds the corner to...

EXT. WEIRS BEACH, NH - TERRY'S PRIMO SUBS - CONTINUOUS

Vic walks past a row of motorcycles, chrome burning in the afternoon sun. A LINE of GIRLS in bikini tops and cut-off shorts GIGGLE and GOSSIP at the ORDER COUNTER. Vic cringes at the sound of them.

INT. TERRY'S PRIMO SUBS - CONTINUOUS

Vic opens the door, DINGING the brass bell. Perspiration drips down her slick face despite the open windows and half dozen fans.

Vic glances at the spools of FLYPAPER waving in the breeze. Dead and dying flies hang above CUSTOMERS shoveling hamburgers into their mouths. Vic feels she might faint when...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

There you are. I was wondering if you'd come back.

Vic turns to the big, sunburned cashier. His NAME TAG says "PETE." Vic is utterly lost.

PETE

You know, for the bracelet.

Vic squints at Pete.

VIC

What?

Pete opens the REGISTER and produces Linda's SILVER BUTTERFLY BRACELET. Vic stares a moment in disbelief. Her left eye throbs. Pete hands the bracelet across the counter.

VIC

Um. Thank you. It's my mother's.

PETE

Cool.

(then)

You want something to drink? You don't look so good.

VIC

I've had a lot of sun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
Coke? Frappe?

Vic eyes the dying flies above the register, nearly gags.

VIC
No, thank you.

Vic slips on the bracelet, then wobbles to the door.

EXT. TERRY'S PRIMO SUBS - CONTINUOUS

Vic's legs tremble steadily as she makes her way past the line of Girls and the motorcycles. She holds her eye.

EXT. PAVED ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Vic sees the Bridge hasn't moved. A tattooed DISHWASHER from Terry's stares with a combination of outrage and fright.

DISHWASHER
What the holy hell?
(to Vic)
You see that, kid? I mean, what in the motherfriggin holy hell?

VIC
Beats me.

Vic throws her leg over the Raleigh, turns toward the Bridge, and dives into the *HISSING* darkness.

INT. SHORTER WAY BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The *ROAR* of *STATIC* rises as Vic makes the cross. This time, she looks at the long cracks in the wall as they flash by...

Through them, a flicking white brilliance storms against the decrepit Bridge, a blizzard of light. The Bridge *BUCKLES* slightly as the downpour dashes against the walls.

Vic closes her eyes, not wanting to see any more. She stands up on the pedals and rides like hell for the other side.

The raging *STATIC* rises in volume and builds to a maddening *INTENSITY*. Winded and sick, Vic is about to shout out when the bike thuds back down in...

EXT. PITTMAN STREET WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The static *CUTS OUT* with a soft electrical *POP*. Vic feels it as a pain in her left temple. She opens her eyes and slows to a stop, relieved to be back in the woods. She turns back for a look at the Bridge, but...

THE BRIDGE IS GONE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A GUARDRAIL marks the place where the entrance had been. Beyond that, the ground falls away in steep slope down to the Merrimack. Three chipped concrete PYLONS poke out of the water -- the only remnants of the Shorter Way.

Vic stumbles, weak and feverish. Tears stream from her pounding eye. She pushes the Raleigh as best she can, her mother's bracelet rolling loosely on her damp wrist.

EXT. PITTMAN STREET - HALEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Haley plays with her tablet on her front steps. She sees Vic emerge from the dirt path, pushing the Raleigh. Haley is immediately alarmed by the state of Vic -- pale, dazed, slow.

HALEY

Vic--

VIC

I need to lie down.
(drops her bike)
Call my parents.

Before Haley can respond, Vic slouches next to the Raleigh, then PASSES OUT.

HALEY

(calling out)
Mom!

As Haley runs to Vic's side...

BEGIN A SERIES OF DREAM IMAGES:

-- A GASMASK ON A CEMENT FLOOR.

-- A DEAD SAINT BERNARD WITH ITS HEAD SMASHED IN.

-- TOWERING PINE TREES HUNG WITH ANGEL CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS.

-- A GHOSTLY FACE WITH A BROWN, CROOKED GRIN - CHARLIE MANX.

Off this last nightmare image of Manx, Vic SCREAMS...

TITLE CARD -- "SLEIGH HOUSE" -- TEXT ABOVE AN INK DRAWING OF TALL PINE TREES DOTTED WITH CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS.

INT. SLEIGH HOUSE - CHARLIE MANX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Manx sits up in his narrow BED as though he heard Vic's scream. He swings his feet into a pair of old-fashioned SLIPPERS, then shuffles across the CREAKING floorboards to a wooden DESK. Manx unrolls a MAP...

"UNITED INSCAPES OF AMERICA" is written across the top, above a depiction of a CONTINENT that resembles a shriveled United States. The entire country collapses toward the center.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The usual cities are gone, but in their place are other points of interest: ORPHANHENGE, THE TREEHOUSE OF THE MIND, LOVECRAFT KEYHOLE, PENNYWISE CIRCUS... The ST. NICK PARKWAY cuts East to West.

As Manx examines the map, a new attraction MATERIALIZES before his eyes... "THE SHORTER WAY," text over a small illustration of a COVERED BRIDGE appears roughly where Haverhill should be.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

OVER BLACK:

CHRIS (PRE-LAP)
Relax, Brat, it's Dad.

INT. HAVERHILL, MASS - MCQUEEN HOUSE - VIC'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vic wakes in her own bed to find Chris sitting beside her, holding his jaw...

CHRIS
You hit me.

VIC
I'm sorry.

CHRIS
It's alright, I had it coming.

Vic tries to sit up, still very sick.

VIC
I dreamt there was a man. He was... really scary.

CHRIS
You have a fever. You fainted out by the woods. It's lucky Haley was there.

VIC
You hit Mom.

Chris swallows his shame.

CHRIS
I'd had too much to drink. I promise you it will never happen again.

VIC
You promised the last time. Before you left for that job down the cape.

CHRIS
I know. I'm sorry.

Vic shakes her head, feverish.

VIC
I know it wasn't a job. It was rehab.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chris is stunned. Vic's right, but he had no idea she knew. But Vic is losing the thread of the conversation.

VIC
(dreamily)
I found Mom's bracelet.

CHRIS
Yeah. Where was it?

VIC
At Terry's. The Bridge took me there.

Concerned, Chris puts a hand to Vic's forehead.

CHRIS
Christ, you're sick as a dog.

Chris hands Vic a glass of water from her night stand. Vic devours it in three swallows, then shivers from the cold shock of it. Chris pulls the blankets up around her, then sits with her, waiting for the chill to pass.

VIC
Mom's bracelet is very valuable.

CHRIS
It has sentimental value, yeah.

VIC
It's an antique.

CHRIS
No, it's just old.

VIC
It's diamonds. Diamonds and gold.

CHRIS
The diamonds aren't real, Brat.

VIC
Yes they are.

He sounds very far away, his voice tinged with regret.

CHRIS
It means a lot to your mother, but it's fake. The gold's rubbing off.

Vic wants to protest, but she's too sick, too exhausted.

CHRIS
Hey, Brat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VIC

Yeah?

CHRIS

Your father's a knucklehead and your mother's a lunatic, but you can be anything you want to in this world. Don't let anyone stop you or tell you different. Not your mother, not anyone.

VIC

Okay.

CHRIS

Just don't get married--

VIC

--and don't have any kids.

CHRIS

I love you, sweetheart.

As Vic drifts back to sleep...

INT. HERE PUBLIC LIBRARY - CHECK OUT DESK - DAY

Maggie works alone at the desk -- another slow day. She has the mug shot of Ives laid out next to her scrabble bag. She concentrates on the mug shot, then asks the bag:

MAGGIE

How can I find the Wraith?

Maggie's arm disappears into the bag. The LIGHTS FLICKER. The COMPUTER SCREEN turns to *STATIC*. Everything returns to normal when Maggie withdraws the tiles...

H-T-B-T-E-A-R.

Maggie arranges them into, "THE BART."

Could that be right? Maggie doesn't think so. She rearranges them to:

"THE BRAT"

Off Maggie, unsure what to make of the message...

PRE-LAP: *SOFT WEeping...*

INT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - VIC'S ROOM - DAY

Vic wakes again, this time to Linda sitting at the foot of her bed, shaking gently, her head in her hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIC

Mom.

Linda turns her tearful eyes to her daughter. She's a wreck.

LINDA

Your father left.

VIC

For work.

LINDA

No. He left.

Vic sits up.

VIC

Where did he go?

LINDA

I don't know where and I don't know why. He just left.

Vic stares at Linda, incredulous.

VIC

Call him.

LINDA

Vicki--

VIC

(panic rising)

Call him right now.

Linda's response is weary.

LINDA

It's no use. I've tried so hard to keep him. So hard. I've kept beer in the fridge--

VIC

He has a drinking problem--

LINDA

I kept dinner warm when he got home late. I got a job cleaning toilets to help with the bills. But I can't be twenty-four anymore. That's how old the last one was.

Vic's blood goes cold. She can't accept Linda's implication.

VIC

Don't say that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LINDA

I don't know who this one is or why
she's so special--

VIC

Stop.

Vic gets out of bed and pulls on her sneakers.

LINDA

It's the truth, honey.

VIC

(reeling)

If Dad's leaving, I'm going with
him.

LINDA

He doesn't want you with him. We
discussed it. He didn't leave me.
He left us both.

Vic can't accept it. She glares hard at her mother.

VIC

Liar.

Vic LEAVES. *SLAMS* the door behind her.

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DUSK

The sun is setting. Vic finds her Raleigh back in its place
under the blue tarp. She throws off the tarp...

INT. BING PARTRIDGE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DUSK

Bing Partridge, still in his janitor's uniform, pages through
a COMIC BOOK. He finds a PICTURE of a scantily clad woman
frozen in a block of ice. As Bing lingers on the picture...

REVEAL he's got his PANTS DOWN and his BARE ASS on the
concrete floor. His free hand rests on his lap, not busy,
not yet. Bing turns the page looking for more skin.
Instead, he finds...

AN ADVERTISEMENT in small block print. A SNOWMAN in a top
hat gestures to a line of type, "DO YOU BELIEVE IN A PLACE
CALLED CHRISTMASLAND??" Bing stares at the Snowman,
transfixed.

EXT. SHORTER WAY BRIDGE - NIGHT

Vic steels herself as the Raleigh rattles over the chain link
fence...

INT. SHORTER WAY BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The *STATIC* rises around Vic. To her left, she sees the painted WORD. This time it says, "TIFFANY'S." As bats SWOOP above her...

INT. WRAITH - DRIVER'S SEAT - NIGHT

Charlie Manx drives along a snowy PARKWAY. He's fresh and YOUNGER than ever -- the fine lines and liver spots from the teaser are gone. He regards sleeping Daniel in the REARVIEW MIRROR.

EXT. LOG CABIN - NIGHT

Vic exits the Shorter Way into a grassy, moonlit BACK YARD. The static *POPS OFF*, leaving the sound of *CRICKETS* chirping away in the summer night. Across the lawn...

THE CABIN. Warmly lit. In the WINDOW, Tiffany Jones, from the Fourth of July party, washes dishes at the sink.

Vic watches, confused. Chris McQueen appears in the window with a BEER. He puts his arms around Tiffany from behind, KISSES her neck.

Devastated and enraged, Vic picks up a ROCK and hurls it at the window. Off the SHATTERED GLASS...

INT. WRAITH - BACK SEAT - NIGHT

Daniel wakes and sits up. He now looks close to death. He's bone white, except for the bruise-colored hollows of his eyes. Black veins crawl beneath his skin. His hair is the color of frost.

DANIEL

It's snowing.

CHARLIE MANX

It's always snowing on the St. Nick Parkway.

DANIEL

Are we almost at Christmasland?

CHARLIE MANX

Our very next stop. I'll drop you off with the other children before I set out on my errands.

DANIEL

I hate errands.

CHARLIE MANX

And you'll have none whatsoever in Christmasland.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE MANX (CONT'D)
Only games and rides and fun. Have
you ever played Scissors for the
Drifter?

DANIEL
No.

CHARLIE MANX
I'll teach you myself just as soon
as I'm back from a terrible place
called Haverhill.

Daniel SMILES, at home now in the deadly Wraith. His TEETH
have become SHARP and POINTED. Charlie Manx adjusts the
MIRROR, pleased, and then PRESSES on the ACCELERATOR.

As the Wraith SPEEDS on...

CUT TO BLACK.

END PILOT