

091876

THE PRINCE

Written by Jesse Wigutow

COLD OPEN

EXT. BOARDING SCHOOL - NEW ENGLAND - CAMPUS - DAY

A lush quad, green with the highest grade of grass, bordered by fiery yellow trees, dotted with boys in blue blazers.

INT. DORM ROOM - SAME

A poster of Brando in Street Car hangs over a bed where someone's digging boxers and socks out of a dirty laundry bag and stuffing them into a backpack. Meet ZACH ABRAMS, 17.

With the still eyes of a predator, the passion of a poet, the jowls of an angry drunk, the world is his to conquer-- if he could only learn to harness the forces warring in his soul and turn them outward. If he could only turn desire into purpose.

Zach reaches into the depths of a cheap bulk-order mahogany Armoire and pulls out a BAG OF GRASS and a FIFTH OF JIM BEAM.

WASPY ROOMMATE

You're gonna bring that?

His blonde haired, blue eyed, pilgrim-born WASPY ROOMMATE looks up from the couch. Zach raises his eyebrow knowingly, playfully.

ZACH

Bring what?

WASPY ROOMMATE

I wouldn't, man. Last time I took the train in, the cops busted this kid next to me for pounding a 40.

ZACH

Yeah, but was he an amateur..

Zach uncaps the whiskey, carefully pours a few fingers of Beam into an EMPTY BOTTLE OF HEAD AND SHOULDERS, winks.

ZACH

Or was he a professional?

The kid shakes his head, uncharmed, turns back to his translation of The Aeneid. Zach shrugs, packs the good stuff.

I/E TRAIN - MOVING - LATE AFTERNOON

Zach Abrams stares out at the passing landscape. Autumn in full bloom. Across from him, a middle aged BLACK WOMAN pours over People Magazine-- on the cover? JAKE ABRAMS and FIONA MCADAMS. IT couple of the month. The header: THE PRINCE AND HIS LADY.

Zach pulls out the Head and Shoulders bottle from his backpack, takes a long hard swig. The Woman looks up, eyes him oddly. He holds out the bottle, offers her a sip.

ZACH

Whiskey?  
 (off her look)  
 Anti-dandruff formula... ?

As if that's the selling point. She looks down at--

A PHOTO in People.

So do we. It's Jake and Zach. Big bro and little bro, both in tuxedos. Now up again. She's slowly making the connection. A huge, gospel-like grin usurps her face, thrilled to be amongst royalty. And on a local commuter line, no less.

BLACK WOMAN

What's a nice rich boy like Zach Abrams doing on the 3:55 to Grand central?

ZACH

Heading into the city for my brother's charity foundation.

BLACK WOMAN

See? That's good upbringing.

ZACH

Or good connections. "The Prince" there--  
 (points at Jake's photo)  
 -- raised 38 million dollars this year towards breast cancer research.

BLACK WOMAN

You don't say.

ZACH

All of it from my dad's friends.

BLACK WOMAN

I could use a couple friends like that.

ZACH

If you want soulless social climbing leaches as your friends, maybe.

She laughs. She gets it.

BLACK WOMAN

I could use a daddy like yours then.

ZACH

My Dad's an unforgiving prick.

BLACK WOMAN

He know you like to drink whiskey outta shampoo bottles?

ZACH

I'm sure he wouldn't be surprised.

She looks up, raises a knowing eyebrow.

BLACK WOMAN

Least you got one, boy. I aint seen my baby's daddy since he was slippin silk drawers off my ankles.

Zach looks out the window. New Haven passes by. He turns.

ZACH

Hey, hold this a sec, will you? I gotta go water the plants.

She smirks, takes the Head and Shoulders from him as he stands, wobbles, catches himself on the seatback. He's housed.

EXT. TRAIN - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Zach's between cars now, holding onto the rail, PISSING out onto the tracks as he LIGHTS A BOWL, inhales. That's when a TRAIN COP opens the door behind him, stops, stares, can't believe it.

TRAIN COP

What the hell are you doing?!

Zach turns back, sways, slurs, doesn't stop, still pissing, exhales. A kid who doesn't care, who challenges consequence.

ZACH

Draining my dragon. Why-- you wanna cross streams?

The Train Cop frowns, reaches for his walkie-talkie.

TRAIN COP

This is Officer Molinari. I got a 420 in wagon 6. Requesting backup. Over.

Off the crackle of headquarters giving the big 10-4, off Molinari reaching for the handcuffs on his belt, we--

FADE OUT.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT 1

EXT. MANHATTAN - DAY

Establishing. The hustle and bustle of the planet's capital.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Central Park in all its glory, every corner, every bench. Quick staccato moments steeped in explosive colors, New Yorkers swarming in droves, wallowing in the first day of Fall.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - TRANSPORT - SAME

A crosstown bus makes its way from the west side to the east.

INT. CROSSTOWN BUS - MOVING - SAME

Amidst a crowd of prep schoolers, we find two high school girls, seniors caught in a combustible combination of their budding womanhood-- sophistication, sex, gossip, profound insecurity.

One of them, **VANESSA ABRAMS**, 17-- blonde, shrewd, quick, a little lady in the making-- spontaneously aims a **DIGITAL CAMERA** at the back of the bus-- click-- and captures **THREE SIXTH GRADE BOYS** in blue blazers staring at her and her pal lustfully.

Unafraid to reveal her natural C cup in an Agnes B tank top, her friend **ALYSSA** runs her tongue over her lips at their admirers.

ALYSSA

Hey, Arbus-- is your brother gonna be there tonight?

VANESSA

Supposed to. But you know Zach as well as I do. I wouldn't hold my breath.

ALYSSA

What about the evil bitch?

VANESSA

You know, Serena's like family. Can't you just drop it?

ALYSSA

Whatevs.

Vanessa rolls her eyes. Whatevs.

VANESSA

You know who *is* gonna be there?  
(off Alyssa's look)  
Taft Hutton.

ALYSSA  
 Look at you. You're blushing.  
 (off her look, blushing)  
 Oh my god. You went down on him, didn't  
 you?

VANESSA  
 What?!

ALYSSA  
 You totally, utterly, thoroughly  
 schlobbed Taft Hutton's knob and I  
 totally can't even deal with it.

VANESSA  
 Whatever. You're a sick, sad, deranged  
 little perv. We just kissed.

ALYSSA  
 Whatever... knob schlobber.

Suddenly, a swarm of students rushes the back door as the bus slows to a stop at 86th and Park. Vanessa and Alyssa join the herd. Behind them, the 6TH GRADERS are in hysterics. One of them has his THUMB sticking out of his FLY. And he's STROKING it.

EXT. CONNECTICUT SUBURBS - AFTERNOON

A police cruiser slowly makes its way downtown, sirens spinning.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - MOVING - SAME

Zach sits in the back seat, stares out through the corrugated metal windows. Nowhere near the city. Nowhere near home. The cruiser passes a sign for NEW HAVEN.

COP  
 Last kid we caught smokin that  
 marijuana spent 2 years in juvy.

ZACH  
 Lovely. Did he enjoy that?

Off Zach's face, alone, trying to spin it his own way, losing--

EXT. 5TH AVENUE - AFTERNOON

88th street. Doormen, nannies, prep schoolers coming home.

INT. ABRAM'S APARTMENT - SAME

An 8000 square foot duplex, wrap around terrace, view over the park that extends westward practically to Santa Monica.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - ABRAMS APARTMENT - SAME

Breakfast at Tiffany's poster framed on one wall, original Toulouse Lautrec on another, Vanessa checks herself out in a full length mirror as CHARLES DUBOZ, 17-- the son of the Museum Director at the Met-- dressed in a sweater vest and French cuffs-- couldn't be more dapper-- or gayer-- looks on.

CHARLES

That's so lame you're taking her. I'm so much more photogenic.

VANESSA

Oh, I didn't tell you? They don't allow uncircumcized penises at The Plaza.

He smirks. Fakes a laugh. That's when Alyssa steps out of the bathroom in a stunning little number, a loud diamond necklace screaming from her neck. She presents herself, strikes a pose.

ALYSSA

So? Am I to die for?

CHARLES

Somebody call Barbara WaWa. All you need is a minor lisp and a wine glass of Dewars and you're so Greenwich divorcee on the brink of menopause.

POP goes a flash-- catching Alyssa's reaction. One of horror and disdain. It's Vanessa's handy weapon again-- her DIGITAL CAMERA.

Before Alyssa can complain, there's A KNOCK at the door. They spin as the door opens to reveal BEVERLY ABRAMS, 51. An elegant woman who's weathered the storm of age with grace and dignity. A woman with great composure and an uncanny sense of truth.

VANESSA

What, Mom?

BEVERLY

Hi, people. Just making sure you weren't planning on coming in our car tonight.

VANESSA

Alyss and I are going with Larry.

BEVERLY

Really? That's nice of you.

VANESSA

He's too insecure to walk the red carpet without a ho on his arm.

BEVERLY

Well... how lucky for him he'll have two  
hos then.

Vanessa looks over. Alyssa and Charles make obscene gestures.

BEVERLY

Did you hear from Zach, by any chance?

VANESSA

Nope.

Beverly lingers. Troubled.

CHARLES

You look lovely tonight, Mrs. Abrams.

BEVERLY

Thank you, Charles. That's nice of you.

VANESSA

Mom, we're busy?

She smiles-- right, she gets it. As she turns to go...

BEVERLY

Oh, Alyssa? Your bra's showing.

VANESSA

That's the point, Mother.

Beverly nods-- right-- turns and shuts the door behind her.

INT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Beverly makes her way down the hall now until she comes upon THE  
MAID knocking on another door. Meet SYLVIA. From Honduras.

BEVERLY

Can I help you, Sylvia?

Sylvia holds out a pair of cufflinks, well polished.

SYLVIA

These are for Mr. Solomon. I polish.

BEVERLY

Thank you. I'll make sure he gets them.

She takes the cufflinks, opens the door. We follow her into--

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - ABRAMS APARTMENT

Where we find a giant bed, tight enough to bounce a quarter on.  
Beautiful dressers and a chaise from what looks like the  
captain's quarters of The Titanic. The elegance is overwhelming.

So is the lack of warmth.

BEVERLY

Sol?

Water runs from another room. She follows its sounds into--

THE MASTER BATHROOM

Walk in shower, two person tub shaped like a scallop shell, a bidet, a wall of perfumes, wall of aftershaves and cologne. And at the sink-- one of the sinks-- we find the man of the house.

SOLOMON ABRAMS, 49. People call him SOL. Or SIR. A handsome man with peppered hair and terrible eyes and the consummate presence of a tiger pacing in a cage. He's ferocious, sharp, calculating, and in the end, impossible to take your eyes off of.

BEVERLY

She hasn't heard from him.

Beverly passes him the cufflinks. He turns back to the mirror.

SOL

The little thug's starting to remind me of my brother.

BEVERLY

Oh, please. Mort's a self-serving imbecile. Zach's a smart kid.

SOL

SAT scores don't mean a damn thing in the real world.

BEVERLY

I'm sorry. I didn't realize you were the expert on the "real world."

He looks up at in her in the mirror, winks. Like Zach. Like Jake. It's a family trait. Passed down from generations past.

SOL

You did not know I am Ze Expairt?

Beverly doesn't break. His humor lost on her. And he retreats, his magnanimous grin dissolving into dictatorial impatience.

SOL

He's lazy.

BEVERLY

He needs inspiration.

Sol eyes her in the mirror. Inspiration's for pussies. He turns away, checks his watch, clips in a cufflink.

## EXT. THE PLAZA HOTEL - EVENING

The cusp of Central Park. A tradition of elegance and refinery. And tonight, amidst the lineup of LIMOS and a swarming crowd, notice the plethora of media outlets clamoring for a soundbite.

## TABLOID ANCHOR

We're at the world reknowned Plaza Hotel where tonight New York City's social elite joins hands with celebrities and politicians alike to support real estate tycoon Solomon Abrams' Breast Cancer Research Fundraiser. More known for his grandiose buildings than for his philanthropy, we're told tonight's event was both proposed and organized by the only man who has Mr. Abrams' ear. His son. That's right, ladies. Keep your handkerchiefs handy. The young prince himself, Jake Abrams is expected to arrive any minute now with his Oscar nominated gal pal Fiona Mcadams glued to his arm.

## INT. LIMO - SAME

Beverly and Sol dressed for the event. Paparazzi and media surround the car. Beverly pulls down the mirror, checks her makeup, turns back to Sol, grits her teeth.

## BEVERLY

Do I have anything in my teeth?

He barely looks at her. That's because he's straightening his tie, adjusting the hanky in his breast pocket, fixing his cuff.

## SOL

You're fine.

She frowns, turns away, mutters quietly under her breath.

## BEVERLY

"You look lovely," would work, too.

And that's when the door opens by the hand of a driver, and suddenly, they're showered with CAMERA FLASHES and MEDIA.

## EXT. THE PLAZA HOTEL - RED CARPET - CONTINUOUS

Sol and Beverly step out into the limelight, smiling for the cameras. A steady slew of HIGH POWERED GUESTS fall in around them, celebrities, models, financial players, all of them slowing for the cameras. Tonight's a night to be seen.

Now see the middle aged couple getting out of a CAB down the street, sneaking into the mix. **MORT ABRAMS AND VIVIAN LEROUX**. He's 56, she's-- well, nobody knows. Presumably in her 50's.

Notice the excess of makeup, the face-lift, the garish earrings. On him, notice the eyes, shifty, evasive, darting from woman to woman. It's Sol's older brother and his second wife.

VIVIAN

I swear to God, Mort, if your brother  
put us at the proletariat table again..

He ignores her as they stop for cameras that aren't interested.

Now check out a threesome just arriving. Cameras flash on **VANESSA ABRAMS** and **ALYSSA**, both on the arm of Vanessa's cousin--

**LAWRENCE ABRAMS**, 22. Son of Mort, disciple of hip-hop, Marshall Mathers light. Call him Larry. Or L. Or better yet, Elly L.

LARRY

Yo, you ladies feel my biceps, right?  
Elly L's got crazy guns tonight.

Alyssa leans back so Vanessa can hear her.

ALYSSA

Wow, Vaness, your cousin must be  
rolling in mad chocha.

Vanessa laughs. Holds her **DIGITAL CAMERA** out to catch an offbeat shot of her own posse in closeup. On the red carpet. Click.

But suddenly, **SCREAMS** rise from the crowd. A frenzy of **PAPARAZZI** fight their way to the front. Cameras flash. Pop. Burn.

It's **JAKE ABRAMS** and **FIONA MCADAMS**, 25 and 22 respectively. He in a slim cut tux, jawline of an ancient warrior, eyes of a Mediterranean lover, she a striking starlet in Gucci sunglasses and a revealing Marc Jacobs number sans straps.

They couldn't be more it if they were Brad and Jen.

INT. COAT CHECK - THE PLAZA - NIGHT

Alyssa and Vanessa take their coat tickets as Beverly greets a fur wrapped **ACQUAINTANCE**. That's when A **TRIO** approaches from the other side. A couple with their teenage daughter.

Meet **THE GODSONS**. **HENRY** and **MELINDA**. Both in their 50's. He's a handsome brain surgeon, she's his weather worn wife in a battle with depression. And notice her belly. She's **PREGNANT**.

SERENA

Vaness.

But more importantly, meet their daughter. **SERENA GODSON**. She's 17, face like the moon, eyes the color of algae, a stoic princess disenchanted with her kingdom. Vanessa lights up.

**VANESSA**  
Serena beans!

Kisses to both cheeks, bright warm faces happy to see each other. Now look at Alyssa. Suddenly dark and cold and bitchy.

**SERENA**  
Hi, Alyssa. How are you?

Not a bad effort from Serena, earnest and warm, but it's met with a cold, gum-chewing, painfully fake smile.

**ALYSSA**  
You know. Gellin. Like a felon.

Serena turns back to Vanessa. As if she needs to deal with that.

**SERENA**  
Is Zach gonna be here tonight?

**VANESSA**  
Supposed to. You didn't talk to him?

**SERENA**  
Me? Not since the summer.

Melinda Godson just got Beverly's attention. And after kissing Henry Godson hello, Beverly can't help but fawn over the belly.

**BEVERLY**  
Look at you. My god. How many months?

**MELINDA GODSON**  
Four.

**BEVERLY**  
I'm so jealous.

**MELINDA GODSON**  
Don't be. All I do is vomit and sweat.

Henry looks at their table assignment-- an excuse to move on.

**HENRY GODSON**  
Table 17, Godson team.

**INT. THE PLAZA - BANQUET ROOM - A LITTLE LATER**

Scan the room. The banter, the posturing, the glitz, the glamor, the show. No one's missing. Not even Michael Douglas.

Beneath a banner that reads THE ABRAMS ORGANIZATION, tables are arranged around the room a la The Golden Globes and at the THE ABRAMS TABLE, there's Sol, Beverly, Mort, Vivian, Jake, Fiona, Vanessa, Alyssa, Larry and one glaringly EMPTY SEAT. Zach's.

VANESSA

Everyone lean in, s'il vous plait.

Vanessa's holding her camera out in front of her, checking the frame, squeezing herself in. It's not easy getting everyone's attention, but the man of the hour helps wrangle the team.

JAKE

Hey, Abrams family! Look up!

Heads spin, caught off guard. That's cause Vanessa just popped A SHOT OF THE FAM, everyone just squeezing into frame.

Sol turns now, surveys the crowd, stands, buttons his jacket, leans in conspiratorially again, barks at Vanessa.

SOL

Call the criminal again.

JAKE

The train's probably late. Let it be.

SOL

There are limousines and taxis. Not to mention helicopters and cell phones. Call your brother, please.

Sol doesn't give, lowering his eyes on Vanessa until she sighs, puts her camera away, pulls out her cell phone, dials. As it rings, Sol makes his way to THE STAGE, gladhanding, winking as he goes. Back to Vanessa-- Zach's voice mail picks up. The beep.

VANESSA

Ski-- where are you? Dad's having an angina. I'm gonna buy an island with your half of the inheritance when he cuts you off. Luvsies--

She's about to hang up when Beverly reaches for the phone.

BEVERLY

Zachary. It's Mom. I hope you're okay.. Love you.

She passes it back, but Jake stabs at it on the way.

JAKE

Little man. What's up. It's J. So listen. I don't really mind that you're a degenerate no-show right now but... I am looking at someone who does...

At a table nearby, Jake just found SERENA GODSON as she sips a white wine, watching as Sol Abrams arrives at THE PODIUM.

JAKE

... Ms. Serena Godson. And it just so happens she isn't wearing a breast harnessing device tonight-- we call that a "brassiere" in the industry-- oh, but we already went over that one, didn't we? Call me. You ok?

ON STAGE--

SOL

Signore e Signori--

Sol clears his throat. Light chuckles flicker across the crowd.

SOL

That's about as much Italian as I can remember, because... at the ripe old age of 9, the little punk who organized tonight's event spent an entire month in Tuscany complaining that the pizza didn't have enough cheese.

(chuckles from the crowd)

I think his line went something like, "What's the big deal with Italy, Dad? It looks exactly like Brooklyn."

(torrid laughter)

Little did I know, the same kid would own half of Williamsburg by the time he was old enough to drink a Sambuca.

Sol looks down at Jake, winks. Jake blushes.

SOL

But seriously, people, I don't wanna steal the kid's thunder here. I'm inordinately proud of the man I'd like to introduce. The man who brings us all together tonight- my son, Jacob Abrams.

A STANDING OVATION swells as Jake kisses Fiona... and rises.

INT. JAIL - SAME - NIGHT

Cold grey brick. Bored desk cops. Local pizza delivery. You get it. And there's ZACH, running his thumb across an ink pad-- now turning his face for a profile. POP goes the mug shot.

INT. THE PLAZA - BANQUET ROOM - THE DANCE FLOOR - LATER

The informal portion of the evening. Jake's dancing with Vanessa, taking the lead, a man who knows his ball room moves.

JAKE

What's his deal? You think he spaced?

VANESSA

No. I think he just totally bailed.

Next to them, MORT spins FIONA against the beat. Now dipping her, inappropriately holding her close, soaking in a movie star.

VIVIAN looks on with serrated hostility, downs her Vodka straight like it's a beer and she's in a fraternity basement. Hell, it's free. Then she gets up and storms off to--

THE RESTROOM

But just as she's about to open the door, she sees BEVERLY walking away from a conversation around the corner, composing herself, recovering all too quickly-- like there's something to hide. She stops in her tracks when she sees Vivian.

BEVERLY

Viv. How's your evening?

Vivian tries to see who disappeared behind the corner, but to no avail. There's no one there. Back to what matters. Her husband.

VIVIAN

He'll be lucky if he still has both testicles tomorrow morning.

BEVERLY

Oh, come on. You wouldn't want him neutered-- you'd have to re-upholster the couch every six months.

Vivian frowns. Adjusts her blouse. *Enhanced* breasts.

INT. THE PLAZA HOTEL - BAR - LATER

Vanessa saddles up to the bar, blows in Larry's ear as he does a shot of Sauza, whispers facetiously.

VANESSA

I couldn't help but notice your biceps.

He spits his drink, spins around.

LARRY

Chill, babygirl. Quit playin like that.

Vanessa leans into the bar, snags the barkeep's attention.

VANESSA

Do you have a 2000 Bordeaux?

The barkeep stares at her blankly. She's 17. Larry sets his eyes on Alyssa. She feels it. Stares back. What?

LARRY  
Yo, we should get down sometime.

ALYSSA  
Why, do you like to be dominated?

TAFT HUTTON (O.S.)  
Hey, lady.

She spins, sees her leading man, almost faints.

VANESSA  
Taft. What the hell are you doing here?

As if she didn't know. Alyssa rolls her eyes. Fine performance.

TAFT  
My dad's on the board.

TAFT HUTTON, 17. A charmer, no doubt. Hair in his face. Button nose. Lanky build-- like a bass player. Only he's a 7 handicap in golf and he's never been to New Jersey. A pause grows.

TAFT  
Not a bad little soiree.

VANESSA  
25 thousand a table, it better be.

She's just covering the fact that her heart is beating five times faster than it was a minute ago. Taft pulls out a CIGAR.

TAFT HUTTON  
You wanna puff a Cuban?

And off her look, which says, I'll smoke anything with you--

INT. THE PLAZA - THE ABRAMS TABLE - SAME

Beverly nods warmly at a collection of well dressed, well aged, well coifed, well bred, middle-aged men and women.

WOMAN  
It's just a marvelous place to summer now. They've made quite a renovation.

HER HUSBAND  
And the grass courts this year should be a tremendous upgrade.

WOMAN  
Especially with those knees of yours... He's like the leaning tower of Pisa.

Chuckles spread around the table. Beverly catches the wave just in time before she's found out. She's been staring at--

SOL -- AT ANOTHER TABLE

his chair reclined, arm on the seatback of ANOTHER WOMAN-- the only lady amongst powerful men. Notice her face. Plain, simple, not unattractive. It's **CLAIRE MCDONOUGH**, 39, a hardnosed Irish businesswoman who's worked her way to the top of Sol's ladder.

That's when a hand lands on Beverly's shoulder. She looks up. It's Jake, offering an impromptu slot on his dance card.

JAKE

Care to dance, Madame?

INT. THE PLAZA - DANCE FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Jake and Beverly slow dance elegantly. Lessons, people, lessons.

BEVERLY

You don't give birth to have your children move away.

JAKE

Watch. Zach's gonna be bigger than any of us. He's gonna buy Dad out one day in a hostile corporate takeover.  
(off her begrudging smile)  
See, you like that idea, don't you.

BEVERLY

Just the hostile part.

But suddenly, in the middle of the dancefloor, Jake pulls out his CELL-- it's ringing-- checks the ID, answers.

JAKE

I hope to God you're in trouble.

INT. JAIL - PAYPHONE - SAME

Zach's eyes are bloodshot as he leans into the payphone.

ZACH

Duuuuude...

INT. COAT CHECK - THE PLAZA - SECONDS LATER

Jake, Sol, and Beverly huddle together near the coat closet.

SOL

The train stopped in between stations and no one can get off?

JAKE  
Exactly.

SOL  
That's a crock. Why didn't he call?

JAKE  
He did. He left me a few messages but I had my phone turned off.

Lie. Mom digs into her purse, pulls out a POWER BAR.

BEVERLY  
Give him this for me, please.

Jake takes the power bar, kisses his Mom. Sol stands rigidly. Unhappy. Jake leans in, kisses HIM on the cheek.

JAKE  
Have a drink, Pops. It's a party.

SOL  
I don't drink.

JAKE  
We know.

EXT. THE PLAZA - BACK ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Jake takes the steps two at a time, sneaking out the back way. That's when he sees a couple in severe liplock, cigar burning over the lady's shoulder. It's TAFT and VANESSA. Frenching.

JAKE  
Hey. Tipper.

Vanessa breaks off in supreme embarrassment, wipes her lips. Taft does the same, tugs on his cigar.

VANESSA  
Where you going?

JAKE  
Pick something up. I'll be back in a bit. Finish what you were doing.

He winks. Vanessa blushes. He points at Taft.

JAKE  
Keep an eye on this one, will you? There's only one of her out there.

TAFT  
Will do, man.

Even Taft's smitten. And like that, with another wink, a salute to them both, Jake Abrams disappears into the night.

I/E MERRITT PARKWAY - NORTH - NIGHT

A Porsche mows down curves. The cockpit glows. Dylan on the harmonica. Jake punches it into 5th. Pushes 80. Rain pounds the windshield. Passing the familiar NEW HAVEN EXIT.

INT. JAIL - LATER

Jake's arm in arm between two cops as another cop pops a photo. A flash blinds them all. Raccoon eyes.

COP

Wait, Sal, take the camera, wouldja?  
Lemme get in there.

And there's Zach off to the side, backpack over his shoulder, tired, defeated.. forgotten. A scene he's more than used to.

I/E THE MERRITT PARKWAY - SOUTH - LATE NIGHT

Jake's tearing up the track. Kurt Cobain wails Something in the Way-- unplugged. Zach stares out the window.

JAKE

You make any friends in the hoosegow?

ZACH

Yeah. A guy named Toe. We're besties.

A beat. Jake grins.

JAKE

Your girl was there tonight.

ZACH

Why you eyeballing her?

JAKE

Cuz she wasn't wearing a bra. Why are you always trying to be so cool?

Zach lights a smoke, doesn't answer. Jake flips the ashtray.

JAKE

What's your deal, man? What are you so angry about?

ZACH

Who's angry?

JAKE

Hey. I left my own bash to come out here and bail you out of jail. The least you can do is not be a dick.

ZACH

Sorry, man, I didn't mean to tear you away from Dad's little circle of aristocratic "friends."

JAKE

Watch it-- they're my friends, too.

ZACH

I'm sure. So are their checkbooks.

JAKE

Hey-- don't take your problems with Dad out on the rest of the world.

ZACH

Whatever.

JACK

Oh, I see. That's your thing, isn't it? "Whatever." I get it now... your problem is you don't care about anything. I can't even remember the last time you stood up for something.

ZACH

We can't all cure Cancer.

JAKE

They teach you how to be a smartass at boarding school already?

ZACH

It's an innate quality. Known to skip generations, apparently.

Jake shakes his head. Annoyed. Nearing his threshold.

JAKE

You gotta find something to believe in. That's what your deal is, Zach. You have the opportunity to do something different-- we all do-- and yet you go around dissing everything. Like you're too cool. Like you don't need it.

ZACH

I got my plan. I'm gonna start my own theater company when I graduate.

JAKE  
So why don't I ever see you acting?

ZACH  
Cuz the teacher's a punk.

Jake takes a deep breath. Silence proves his point.

JAKE  
Look, man. You do what you want, but  
just know you're hurting people.

ZACH  
I am? I'm not even around.

JAKE  
Mom takes it personally you left the  
city... so does Dad.

But suddenly, before Zach can counter, sheets of wind slapping the windshield, they round a curve in the road and both their faces are suddenly lit up by the approaching HEADLIGHTS of

A STATION WAGON-- spinning out of control, across the divide--

And there's no time to react, no time to avoid the collision--

BOOM! They slam into each other. METAL ON METAL--

The Porsche is sent spinning off the road into the brush, spinning and spinning until it slams into A TREE, finally flipping to a stop. Freezing autumn rain pounds the exterior.

When Zach comes to, his face buried in his AIRBAG, shaken, terrified, he looks over at his brother. But he's not there. Jake's airbag didn't employ. RAIN slashes through the jagged hole in the windshield where he exited the car.

Zach struggles out of his seatbelt, pushes the mangled door open, fully in tact, alive, breathing, backing away from the car as flames start to dance out from the engine.

That's when he freezes in terror, his eyes widening, now running to the INANIMATE BODY that lays an inconceivable distance from the wreck. What he sees will change his life forever.

Jake sprawled out in the mud, his body lifeless and mangled, his face bloodied, his arm twisted grotesquely behind his neck.

Zach drops to his knees, holds his head in his hands, but not even the grandest miracle will bring Jacob Abrams back to life.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT 2

EXT. RIVERSIDE CHURCH - MORNING

A procession of limos and town cars. And as the doors open, rise up and find some perspective. There are hundreds-- thousands-- of people-- media, well-wishers-- crowded around the entrance.

INT. RIVERSIDE CHURCH - MORNING

A hallowed place of worship, one of Manhattan's finest and most beautiful. A crowd bustles, all trying to get a better view of the speaker: Sol Abrams, standing at a lectern, adjusting his reading glasses, clearing his throat, reading from notes.

SOL

My family's life has been a life blessed with fortune and success-- a combination that inevitably, I admit, brings with it a fading sense of perspective on the world around you.

On Zach now clearing the hair from his eyes. On Vanessa, Beverly, Larry, Mort, Vivian next to him.

SOL

This event... returns me to my humble beginnings, a small man beneath a great and powerful sky... this time, however, without the potential and promise that accompanied my youth.

He takes a deep breath. Fights back his emotions. Now notice THE GODSON FAMILY a few rows back. SERENA wiping tears from her eye.

Now notice ALYSSA, CHARLES, and a young fellow we'll soon encounter by the name of TRISCUIT. All paying their respects.

SOL

I am reminded that one sudden swipe by the claws of misfortune and one's dreams and hopes can vanish in an instant... my son was my inspiration and... today I stand before you a humbled.. empty man.

Vanessa bawls, reaches for Zach's hand. Takes it. Holds it, squeezes it, now burying her well of tears in his arm.

INT. RIVERSIDE CHURCH - MORNING

Pallbearers carry THE CASKET down the aisle as the crowd stands and the organ inflates the room with a heartbreaking hymn. Amongst the pallbearers, we find Larry and Zach, and as they pass through the spine of the crowd, Zach's eyes meet SERENA'S.

She waves quietly, privately, her eyes red and swollen, and it seems that he almost stops, almost leaps into her arms and cries forever into her soft white neck, but the momentum of the casket carries him away. The connection made in their fleeting moment, though, will not be lost on the boy who would be king.

EXT. BERKSHIRES - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

An entourage of limos-- and a hearse-- roll down a sad country road. Silence of the passing landscape is interrupted only by a CHOPPER overhead.

I/E LIMO - MOVING

Four Abrams family members stare out their respective windows, well spaced apart in their seats. Vanessa's bawling, Beverly's in sunglasses, Zach's in his black Converse All Stars, and then there's Sol-- stoic, removed, just notice Zach's sneakers.

SOL

The least you could do is wear a proper pair of shoes.

ZACH

Who's definition of proper are we using?

BEVERLY

Enough. Jesus Christ. Enough.

And off Sol's look, off Zach never even turning--

INT. ANOTHER LIMO - MOVING - SAME

This one carrying Mort, Vivian, and Larry. Equally as quiet. Equally as distant. Until Vivian opens her enhanced lips.

VIVIAN

Have you talked to your brother yet?

Mort turns slowly. Stares at her incredulously.

MORT

His body's still warm.

VIVIAN

Sooo.. we can't keep living?

Larry scowls, opens the window. Fresh air rushes in.

EXT. ABRAMS ESTATE - BERKSHIRES - DAY

The procession of cars enters the grounds of the Abrams Estate. A palatial compound complete with stables, gardens, pools.

INT. ABRAMS ESTATE - AFTERNOON

The wake. Family and close friends milling about, all in black, all speaking in that respectful tone, a bar above a whisper.

TIDBITS OF CONVERSATION

Stunning loss -- Share prices plummet --  
An angel, a true angel -- The pride of  
the family -- The world's gone to pot --  
I'm leaving the city -- There is no God

And now find Beverly making her way through the crowd in her sunglasses, stopping occasionally, but never staying long, always moving on. Until she comes upon CLAIRE MCDONOUGH.

And the moment their eyes meet, muscles seem to stiffen. Beverly stops to engage, albeit begrudgingly.

CLAIRE

Bev-- I haven't really had a chance to  
say this yet but-- I can't tell you how  
sorry I am for your loss.

Beverly stares at her coldly. Looks her up and down. Ions pass before she responds. Finally, from her pancreas she asks--

BEVERLY

Have you seen my son?

Tears pour out from beneath her glasses. Claire's frozen.

CLAIRE

You mean Zach?  
(off her flat look)  
No.

And with that, Beverly keeps walking. Comes upon Vivian and Larry amongst a group of aunts and uncles.

BEVERLY

Have you seen Zachary?

Off their looks, clearly they haven't, we go to--

INT. THE DEN - ABRAMS ESTATE - SAME

Sol stares off at the stables, arms folded. Mort sits by his desk, soaking in a PHOTO of he and Sol as youngsters, both of them flanking THEIR FATHER, a penniless immigrant from Russia.

MORT

Look at the old bastard.

SOL

He adored Jacob.

MORT  
The old prick was always more of a  
grandfather than he was a Dad.

Sol turns away again. His moves cautious and frightening.

SOL  
At least there was a template.  
Something to learn from.

Mort lights a cigar. Exhales. Smoke billows between them.

MORT  
Listen. I know this might not be the  
best time--

SOL  
Don't.

MORT  
How do you know what I'm gonna say?

SOL  
Don't you dare ask me for money on the  
day of my son's funeral.

And before he can defend himself, suddenly VANESSA'S at the door  
with a glass of wine in hand.

VANESSA  
Daddy?

They both turn.

SOL  
Hi, baby.

VANESSA  
Mom's being weird. She can't find Zach.

SOL  
Where is he?

VANESSA  
I don't know.

SOL  
I'll be out in a second.

INT. ABRAMS ESTATE - STAIRWAY

FIONA MCADAMS slowly makes her way up the grand winding  
staircase to the second floor. Down the hall, past various rooms  
of different themes until she comes to a bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - ABRAMS ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

Fiona opens the door, peeks in. Hears FUMBLING from the closet.

FIONA  
Zach? Is that you?

She steps into the room. Finds Zach in a WALK-IN CLOSET, lit cigarette hanging from his lips, modeling a WEATHERED OVERCOAT in the mirror. It's Jake's. He sees her in the reflection.

ZACH  
He never took this off.

FIONA  
Your mother's looking for you.

ZACH  
No she isn't. She's looking for him. I can't help her with that.

Fiona takes a seat on the bed.

FIONA  
You have an extra cigarette?

He passes her a smoke, lights it for her.

FIONA  
How you feeling, Zach?  
(off his shrug)  
My mom's worried I'm gonna develop an eating disorder and disappear into thin air. I've been chainsmoking for a week.

ZACH  
I don't think it's hit me yet.

FIONA  
He admired you, you know... Zach's not a follower, he used to say,

ZACH  
He said that?

FIONA  
All the time. Jake cared so much about what people thought of him-- he admired you for your independence.

A beat. Zach thinks on that for a sec. No shit.

FIONA  
Did you know he was depressed?

ZACH  
Who was?

FIONA  
Jake. He was on Prozac.

ZACH  
Shut up.

FIONA  
I'm serious.

Beat. Zach looks away defensively.

FIONA  
He was depressed, Zach. Not a crackhead.

Off his look, staring at a wall of Trophies, we go to--

INT. THE BAR -- ABRAMS ESTATE

Back to the crowd. People pepper the living room, waiters carry trays of hors d'oeuvres. A handsome BARTENDER mixes a drink for Vanessa as Larry stands by sipping a brew.

LARRY  
Man, what happened to Aunt Bell? She looks like she ate a gazelle.

VANESSA  
I feel like I might climb a clock tower with a rifle and a high power scope if I have to do this all day.

LARRY  
I keep thinkin about Biggie and Tupac. Like we're livin the madness right now and we don't even know it.

They survey the crowd. Sounds fade to a cacophony of chatter. Until Larry finally breaks the moment, can't help himself.

LARRY  
So, yo, I was hopin you might hook me up with your friend-- Alyssa. You know. The one with the sweet titties.

But before she can answer, Beverly approaches in her dark ominous sunglasses, stops, her voice monotone and lifeless.

BEVERLY  
Where's Zachary?

VANESSA  
I have no idea.

BEVERLY  
Hmmm... What are you drinking?

Vanessa eyes Larry. To lie or not to lie. Larry shrugs.

VANESSA  
A kir royale...?

Beverly stares at the drink stoically-- then gestures for a sip.

BEVERLY  
May I?

Vanessa and Larry share another look before she passes her the drink. They watch as Beverly downs the whole thing in one fell lick. When she's done, she hands the glass back pleasantly.

BEVERLY  
Thank you, love.

VANESSA  
What are you giving it to me for?

But she doesn't respond, turning back to the bartender now.

BEVERLY  
I'd like a vodka, please. With a splash  
of lemon juice. From the rind.

VANESSA  
And maybe a twist of Xanax.

But Beverly doesn't seem to be listening, watching the bartender make her drink. When it's ready, she wets her lips, turns back, completely without emotion, possessed by an evil zen master.

BEVERLY  
Where's Zachary?

VANESSA  
What's wrong with you?! I don't know  
where Zachary is! I'm not his keeper!

Beverly doesn't even blink, doesn't comfort Vanessa, who's now glaring at her in teenage horror. And the rawness, the blunt, unflinching stare Beverly returns sends Vanessa scurrying away.

INT. ABRAMS ESTATE - STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vanessa bounds up the stairs, finds Zach and Fiona at the top. She stops and confronts them.

VANESSA  
What the hell are you doing? Mom's  
totally flipping out looking for you.

ZACH  
I'm right here. What's wrong?

VANESSA  
I'm going back to the city.

ZACH  
You're what?

VANESSA  
I can't breathe in this house anymore.

ZACH  
(dubiously)  
How you getting back?

VANESSA  
Steal a limo...

ZACH  
You're gonna steal a limo?

VANESSA  
Come with? ... Please?

He looks over the rail. Downstairs. Beverly's at the bar--  
ordering another drink. Zach turns back to Vanessa.

ZACH  
The maid's quarters. Around back.  
She falls in behind him down the hall.

FIONA  
Hey, Zach?

He stops, turns. Fiona's staring at him with wanton eyes.

FIONA  
Don't be a stranger.

EXT. ABRAMS ESTATE - DRIVEWAY

Zach follows Vanessa as she surveys the line-up of limos and  
town cars, peering into windows. Finally she stops, tries a  
door, gestures, gets in the driver side. Zach hops in gun.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

Vanessa flips the ignition and the damn thing purrs to life.  
Vanessa turns, stares at her brother, her hand on the shift. A  
look that says, "I'm doing this unless you stop me." He doesn't.

ZACH  
Baby steals a limo. This is a first.

VANESSA

Hey-- watch who you're calling baby.  
I'm only 4 minutes younger than you.

And into drive it goes, and out the driveway it sails.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LIMO - MOVING

Music. Open road. A long stretch black limo.

INT. LIMO - MOVING - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Vanessa at the wheel. Zach riding gun. Neil Young crooning Sugar Mountain on the head.

ZACH

So where are we going in our spanking  
new 2005 stretch Town Car?

VANESSA

Katrina Stein's place. From Chapin.  
Some peeps I know are rockin out.  
I think Triscuit should be there, too.

Silence. Heaviness. You can't be 20 on sugar mountain. Zach  
stares out his window. Vanessa looks over. Just noticing.

VANESSA

Is that Jake's coat?  
(yes)  
Why do you have it?

ZACH

Cuz I'm taking it.

VANESSA

No, you're not.

ZACH

Whatta you mean?

VANESSA

I'm taking it.  
(off his frown)  
I'm totally serious. It's mine. Jake  
told me he was gonna give it to me.

ZACH

What, after he died? He planned it?

VANESSA

Whatever! It's mine, Zach!

Zach rolls his eyes, struggles out of the coat, THROWS it in the  
back seat in annoyance, frustration.

ZACH  
It's all yours. Baby.

He turns away. Silence settles in again. Baby gets her way. And now she presses it. Prods him. Looking for a fight. For emotion.

VANESSA  
You know I saw him with other chicks.

ZACH  
You what?

VANESSA  
Why do you sound so surprised? That's what guys like him do. He was a player.

ZACH  
Who are you talking about?

VANESSA  
Jake. Who do you think I'm talking about?

A beat. Not Jake. Zach lights a smoke, tries to ignore her.

VANESSA  
I think some of them were call girls. Like total crack whores. He used to bring them back to the house when Mom and Dad were gone.  
(off his utter silence)  
Hello??? ... Where are you, Zach????!!!

He frowns, opens the window. To drown her out. But Vanessa closes his window from the driver's console. He tries to open it again, but she just hit the window lock.

I/E THE GWB - NIGHT

The limo crosses the bridge, Manhattan lit up in the distance.

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE HIGH RISE - NIGHT

A few high schoolers lingering on the sidewalk, a respectable Dad walking two Jack Russell Terriers, a couple doormen... and one shiny black stretch town car parked illegally. Typical night.

INT. ELEVATOR - UPPER EAST SIDE HIGH-RISE - GOING UP

Vanessa and Zach staring at the numbers. Music thumps from upstairs. Sounds like a serious bash. Zach turns.

ZACH  
Is Alyssa gonna be here?

VANESSA

Why, do you wanna see her?

ZACH

No. I wanna make sure I'm prepared for an impromptu tongue down my throat.

VANESSA

Hey, if you don't wanna go, you don't have to go, but I'd appreciate it if you didn't diss my best friend while I'm grieving the death of my brother... and by the way, last time I checked, you were the one who boned her and bailed so... reap what you sow, biotch.

ZACH

When did you become such a spoiled pissy little brat?

VANESSA

When did you become such a faggy boarding school loser?

Suddenly, the door opens. But before they can get out, there's A CROWD of kids waiting to get in. Say 30 uber wealthy high schoolers in Patagonia and blazers and imported Japanese sneakers crowding the door. The first group of kids in are CHARLES, ALYSSA, and TRISCUIT, 17-- with a backpack and headphones around his neck, he's as solid as they come.

TRISCUIT

Yo, Z! What the fizzle?!

Zach and Triscuit slap hands in the door. Alyssa and Vanessa fawn over each other as high school girls are want to do.

ZACH

Why we leaving?

TRISCUIT

Fight broke out. 420. Eli and his crew started busting some dude's skull.

Zach's face drops. Clearly a name with weight. Eli. More kids crowd the elevator. Pushing the limit.

CHARLES

Umm, can someone press one, please?  
Like prontissimo!?!??

INT. ELEVATOR - GOING DOWN - SECONDS LATER

Crowded. Elbow to elbow. Probably a fire code violation. Probably many code violations. About 29 floors to go. That's when a BIG KID stuffed into the way back yells--

BIG KID  
Rumblevator!!!!

And PUSHES Triscuit from behind. Triscuit gets shoved into three other kids, who slam into all the girls, who get mushed face first into the elevator door. Like dominoes.

Another kid pushes the big kid back-- who crushes Zach and suddenly it's a free for all, pushing, wedging, leveraging. A giant claustrophobic pile on. The elevator shakes as it goes.

INT. LOBBY - SECONDS LATER

FIVE COPS with night sticks wait for the elevator to arrive. Insane Watts-like riot sounds ECHO down the shaft. The cops brace themselves. And suddenly, the doors open, kids spill out, laughing hysterically-- especially in the face of NYC's finest.

EXT. STREET CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Kids hanging out, piling out of the building. 30, 40, 50. Like a new party on the street. Triscuit, Zach, Vanessa, Alyssa, Charles, a few others who fit the bill hang near the limo.

CHARLES

I wish boys would just take their shirts off if they're gonna fight. It would make it so much more appealing.

ZACH

Or they could just wear singlets?

TRISCUIT

I can't believe you guys are here. Your dad let you out?

ZACH

(pointing at Vanessa)  
Ask Grand Theft Auto over here.

Vanessa stares at her brother, frowns, throws an L up on her forehead. Take a stab at what it means.

CHARLES

Can we go, please? Before Woody Allen makes another miserable self-aggrandizing disaster film?

VANESSA

Where are we going?

ALYSSA

Charles' place. His parents are gone.

Alyssa pulls out a PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLE.

ALYSSA

And look what Mommy Dearest left in the medicine cabinet.

CHARLES

We thought we might conduct our own little clinical trial. Chemical compounds courtesy of...  
(per pill bottle label)  
Merck Pharmaceuticals.

The crowd's falling in with Charles, Alyssa, and Vanessa. But Triscuit lingers. Zach stands by.

TRISCUIT

Yo, I'll catch you later. I can't afford another "curfew adjustment."

ZACH

Go ahead. I'm gonna chill with Triscuit.

Vanessa and Zach share a look. And so much more. But it's fleeting, cause Charles just found the limo, admiring it--

CHARLES

Somebody pinch me and tell me I'm not about to have a nocturnal emission.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE - NIGHT

Triscuit and Zach, each with a slice of 'za, passing the steps to THE MET where a smattering of underclassmen are pounding 40's and French kissing in the great wide open-- an urban makeout point, which I bet you can't find in Toronto. Or Vancouver.

ZACH

So who was it?

TRISCUIT

Eli and some of those Columbia Prep suckers he started hangin with. They're like bona fide 420 now.

ZACH

Who, like Bigelow and Glennberg?

TRISCUIT

Eli, Bigelow, Glennberg, Meyer. All o' them. They're all mad fools. But they're gangsta now.

ZACH

Whatever. They're rich brats on an MTV kick. Next year they'll be French lit majors and sport cardigans.

TRISCUIT

Just sayin.

ZACH

So, what's the beef now?

TRISCUIT

I dunno, but I heard something about this new Horace Mann kid who just moved down to the city from Darien-- kid's been dealing herbs on the hill with 420-- til his mom found his stash and called all the other moms and then his dad called the cops. Now the five-oh's on to some Jamaican drug lord cat named Chief and this preppy cracker from Horace Mann's got a bounty on his head.

ZACH

So they pounced the Horace Mann kid?

TRISCUIT

Nah, they couldn't find him so they roughed up one of his boys.

ZACH

Whatever. I could give two shastas about any of those dudes.

TRISCUIT

I'm just sayin. Eli knows you dropped his ass and so does everyone else. So does 420. Something definitely woulda gone down if he saw you.

That's when they stop under an AWNING. 81st and 5th. It's the--

EXT. ABRAMS APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

Zach finishes his slice, wipes his hands on his jeans, lights a smoke, offers Triscuit one.

TRISCUIT

Nah, man. Only mother nature's finest.

Zach nods, looks away. The night is still.

TRISCUIT

Hey-- I feel like a dick... I wanted to say something but-- you know, I mean what's a fella supposed to say?

Zach's eyes are glazed over, the night catching up to him.

ZACH

It doesn't feel real.

TRISCUIT

I'm sorry, Z. I can't even-- it's just crazy. That he's gone. Jake was like... he was like a brother to me, too.

Triscuit throws out a hand and Zach reciprocates. Now a shoulder, man style, and Triscuit pulls him into a hug.

That's when A CAB pulls up in front of the building one down.

They break, both of them turn, watch a hand take change from the driver, watch the door open and a figure step out. It's SERENA GODSON. Like a grey pink flower in the night.

She looks up, freezes, takes in her neighbors. Triscuit throws up a peace sign. Zach remains still. She approaches slowly, solemnly, elegantly, and finally stops before them.

SERENA

Hi.

ZACH

Hey.

SERENA

Hey, Triscuit.

TRISCUIT

Sup, Serenes.

Triscuit leans in, kisses her hello-- on the cheek, steps back, studies the awkwardness between his boy and his girl.

TRISCUIT

Cool. I'm gonna bust-- before I lose another month's allowance.

(to Zach)

But yo-- let's bust it tomorrow. I wanna play you my new single.

Zach doesn't turn. A live wire exposed between the two of em.

ZACH

Word.

Triscuit rocks a fist in solidarity, turns and splits.

Now under the awning, there's Zach and there's Serena.

Alone. Finally.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT 3

EXT. ABRAMS APARTMENT BUILDING - AWNING - NIGHT

Right where we left them. Zach and Serena. Zach lighting Serena's Camel Light. The air thick with tension and history.

SERENA

I was hoping you'd call.

A beat. Zach exhales. Blows a smoke ring.

ZACH

You coulda called me.

SERENA

You told me not to, remember?

(off his look)

Zach-- are you okay?

ZACH

It's crazy, right?

SERENA

I can't stop thinking about you.

Another pause. He's changing the conversation.

ZACH

I heard your Mom was pregnant again.

SERENA

Can you believe it? After Tommy died, I think the silence was too much for her.

ZACH

Can't blame her, I guess.

SERENA

She's gonna have a stroller at graduation. Have you ever heard of anything more mortifying?

ZACH

What's wrong with a stroller?

SERENA

I dunno. Just that it's four wheeled evidence of my mom in close proximity to an erect penis, I guess.

(off his grin)

I'm convinced my Dad's having an affair. Like it was their arrangement. He gives her another kid and he has 9 months to do whatever he wants.

ZACH  
Sounds familiar.

A beat. She sighs.

SERENA  
How come I feel so sad right now?

ZACH  
I held him, you know?  
(off her look)  
He'd still be here if it weren't for  
me... For my stupid ass.

SERENA  
Zach...

She reaches for him. But he resists. Looks away. Then turns back and fires a sudden shot across her bow.

ZACH  
I hear you're seeing someone.

She sighs. Has to come clean.

SERENA  
It's not serious. He's at Dartmouth.

ZACH  
Ooo. A college boy.

SERENA  
Can we not? Can we be friends, please?

ZACH  
I dunno. Friends don't bang other dudes  
in the Spanish Alps.

SERENA  
How many times can I apologize. It's  
done. It's over. And I didn't sleep  
with him. You know that.

ZACH  
That's not how he remembers it.

SERENA  
God, how many times do we have to go  
over this. Who are you gonna believe?

ZACH  
Who *should* I believe?

SERENA  
We've known each other since, like,  
conception. Why can't we get past this?

But before Zach can answer, another CAB squeals to a stop. They both turn and look. It's VANESSA-- piss drunk, fucked up on any combination of things, ALYSSA helping her to the curb.

VANESSA

Zachy!!!

ALYSSA

She started wiggling out. She kept saying she wanted to see you.

Vanessa stumbles into Zach's arms, yack on her dress, bile dripping from her lips, barely able to hold herself up.

VANESSA

Oh my god! Are you guys like--

But before she can finish, she doubles over and yaks again. Alyssa studies Zach and Serena and shrinks in insecurity.

ALYSSA

Don't let me interrupt.

ZACH

You're not interrupting.

Vanessa finishes. Zach holds her up.

ZACH

I'm gonna take her upstairs.

SERENA

I guess I should say goodnight, then.

They share a look. Alyssa manages a fake smile and a wave.

SERENA

Call me... if you want.

And with that, Zach and Alyssa watching, she disappears into her building where the doorman has the front door open and waiting.

INT. ELEVATOR - GOING UP - ABRAMS APARTMENT - SECONDS LATER

Zach holds Vanessa as she mumbles nonsense to herself-- in bad shape. Alyssa and Zach share an uncomfortable beat.

ALYSSA

So are you guys back together now?

ZACH

No.

ALYSSA

Sure looked like it.

ZACH  
Look. I'm sorry, Alyss.

ALYSSA  
What for?

ZACH  
I dunno. For what happened, I guess.

ALYSSA  
Don't be. It's totally cool like that.

Sure. That's when the door opens. Zach helps Vanessa into the--  
FOYER-- where Alyssa lingers in the elevator. Overcompensating.

ZACH  
I got her from here, I think.

ALYSSA  
Coolio.

A lingering beat. Zach doesn't know what to say.

ZACH  
Thanks for your help.

Alyssa smiles psychotically, steps back into the elevator.

ALYSSA  
See ya 'round, Charlie Brown.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - ABRAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Zach helps Vanessa to the bed, takes off her shoes. She's incoherent, but won't let go of his hand. He smiles.

ZACH  
Let go, Ski. I need that.

VANESSA  
Ski? Why are you so far away at that stupid school?

ZACH  
Because... I just am.

VANESSA  
I miss you.

He takes a deep breath. There's A PHOTO of Zach and Vanessa in a stroller, Jake leaning in behind them on her dresser.

ZACH  
I miss you, too, Ski.

VANESSA  
You're not gonna leave me are you?

ZACH  
Whatta you mean?

VANESSA  
You're not gonna ditch me here with Mom  
and Dad and never come back.

He takes a seat next to her. Emotions swelling.

ZACH  
No.

Beat. She closes her eyes, takes his hand again.

VANESSA  
Don't. Don't leave me here alone.

ZACH  
I'm not going to.

VANESSA  
Promise?

ZACH  
I promise.

VANESSA  
(eyes still closed)  
Are your fingers crossed?

He reveals them. They're not. But it doesn't matter. Her eyes are shut and now she's sleeping, snoring lightly.

INT. HALLWAY - ABRAMS APARTMENT - SECONDS LATER

Zach moves down the hallway. Comes to a door. Stops.

INT. JAKE'S ROOM - ABRAMS APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Zach opens the door, peers in. It's dark and cold and ominous. He steps in and flips the light. And what he sees envelops him.

It's Jake's room. Jake's life. Completely, utterly untouched. Photos, trophies, books, pennants, album covers.

It's a shrine to his brother. Nary a fleck of dust has been moved. Zach slowly takes it all in, falls to the bed, staring widely at the chandelier on the ceiling in the glow of dawn.

INT. BATHROOM - ABRAMS APARTMENT - MORNING

Zach's brushing his teeth-- checking the dark crease under his eyes. Kid's not even legal to fight and he's got bags.

INT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

8 burner Garland stove. Sub Zero fridge, freezer. Thousand dollar espresso machine. Computerized toaster. Whatever else. Zach stops at the door, his eyes widening in surprise. Or fear. There's SOL-- reading the paper, sitting over his eggs. Zach slinks past him, GRUNTS on the way to the fridge.

SOL

Morning.

Sol stares at him with terrible eyes as Zach opens the fridge and pounds the Tropicana straight from the carton.

ZACH

When'd you get back?

SOL

This morning. Enjoy yourself last night?

ZACH

Kinda hard to enjoy a funeral.

SOL

How bout the limo? Did you have a nice time on your little joy ride?

Zach stops. Burps. Puts the juice back.

ZACH

What limo?

He starts moving now. Away.

SOL

Where are you going?

ZACH

Out.

SOL

Where?

ZACH

Spanish Harlem. To smoke some crack.

SOL

I'm late for a meeting, Zach, but there will be consequences for this limousine stunt. Believe you me.

ZACH

Great. Have your lawyer call mine.

And out the door he goes. Sol frowns, watching him go.

BEVERLY (O.S.)  
I can't do the fighting anymore, Sol.

He turns. There's BEVERLY, standing in the other doorway.

BEVERLY  
You're losing our only son.

SOL  
Don't you dare blame this on me.

BEVERLY  
There's too much pain already.

SOL  
You don't think I'm in pain?

A beat. She redirects.

BEVERLY  
What happened between you two?

SOL  
Nothing happened. He's ungrateful and he never learned to respect anything.

BEVERLY  
You sound like your father. Defensive and angry.

SOL  
My father was a coward.

Silence. Exactly.

BEVERLY  
I won't let you drive him away.

And with that, she turns, disappears.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - THE MEADOW - DAY

Strolling across the meadow, in and out of bodies that pepper the lawn, Zach's listening to Triscuit's headphones. A long slow walk as we listen with him. Finally, Zach rips off the headphones, passes em back and the tunes cut out.

ZACH  
Nice one.

TRISCUIT  
That's the moneybags right?  
(off his grin)  
It's like the Beasties rockin a Lou Reed thing. Like V.U. and whatnot.

ZACH  
What about the label?

TRISCUIT  
You gotta have the goods to have a label. As soon as I get my single out there, then all I gotta do is slap my own logo on it and tell people, yo, you wanna rock out with my tunes, you gotta rock out with my label. Build from the ground up. Grass roots style. You know.

But suddenly, as they pass a CREW sprawled out in a circle, a DUDE hops up, gets in their way.

ELI  
Yo, yo, yo. Checky checks what the feline brought in.

It's ELI GREEN, 17, head shaved tight, earrings up and down the lobe, another in the eyelash, Sprewell jersey (from Golden State), lace em up combat boots, blunt behind the ear.

Zach and Triscuit freeze, crazy outnumbered.

ISAAC BIGELOW  
Sup, fellas.

ISAAC BIGELOW, 17, hops up behind them. Not a bad right hand man, a small kid with a big bark. Bite yet to be determined.

TRISCUIT  
Sup, Isaac.

Sitting around the circle is the rest of em-- a posse of PREP SCHOOL HOODS. Rich whities in timberlands and wildly expensive vintage NBA jerseys, all smoking grass they probably deal.

ELI  
Heard about your bro, man.

Zach's eyes are cold as skyscraper steel.

ZACH  
I'm sure you did.

ELI  
See, wassup with that? Why you gotta have an attitude, yo?

ZACH  
No attitude, Eli. None at all.

ELI  
(to Isaac)  
Sounds like attitude to me.

ISAAC BIGELOW

Word up.

ZACH

I aint lookin for any beef right now.

ELI

I know you aint.

ZACH

So you can take it back to Temple  
Emmanuelle where you flubbed Hebrew  
three years in a row. Yo.

ELI

(grinning at his fellas)  
Look who's got a scrotum on him?

And he suddenly spins back, throws a roundhouse at Zach's mug.  
But it was just a feign. He's just playing. He pulls back in the  
last second. His fist millimeters from Zach's jaw.

Only thing is, Zach didn't flinch. He didn't even blink-- crazy  
Confucious Samurai style. And his calm spooked the piss out of  
the aggressor. Eli tries to play it off, sits back down.

ELI

I aint done witcha, Abrams.

Zach just stares at him. Eye to eye. Fearless and stoic. Then  
taps Triscuit, his presence felt, known... and away they go.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E CAB - MOVING - THAT NIGHT

Vanessa, Alyssa, Charles, and Taft squeezed into the backseat  
passing a bum bottle of Vodka between them, wetting their lips  
as they whip down 9th avenue, Arab disco music thumping from the  
front, SIKH CABBIE at the wheel, the city theirs for the taking.  
Now the CAMERA-- held out, aimed inwards by Vanessa. And click.  
All four of them squeezed into the frame, mugs blurred.

EXT. CLUB - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

A crowd of all shapes and sizes swarms the velvet rope where a  
DUDE in an overcoat and clipboard is flanked by two monstrous  
BOUNCERS with their arms crossed. You aint on the list, you aint  
gettin in. Unless you got ladies. Fly ladies.

And pushing their way through the crowd we find our foursome--  
Vanessa, Alyssa, Charles, and Taft. And when they get to the  
front, notice the dude in charge-- it's LARRY.

VANESSA

Elly L. Wassup, dawg?!

LARRY  
Yo, girl. What it is?

He lifts the velvet rope, lets her right in, picks her up, right off her feet, hugs her tight, whispers in her ear.

LARRY  
You know I got you now, Cuz, right? I got your back. All day.

He lets her down. She lands on her feet, moved. Elly L reassumes the role, ushers Taft and Charles through.

LARRY  
Sup, fellas. Zacharia's already inside.

But he stops the rope on Alyssa. She looks up. What the hell?

LARRY  
When are we gonna hook it up, yo?

ALYSSA  
Have you ever heard of statutory rape?

LARRY  
I'll take ten to fitty for a piece of that, babygirl. No parole.

Off her grin, he lifts the rope. In she goes, and so do we.

INT. CLUB - INSIDE

A high school scene. Kids from all over the city-- though primarily, north of 59th. Hard to tell, though, cause it's dark and loud and kids are boozin and smokin and cussin and dancing and gettin down like they're legally sanctioned to do so. Designer purses match designer heels match designer clothes.

INT. THE BAR - CLUB - SAME

Zach and Triscuit pound whiskeys on the outskirts of a crowded bar, folks clamoring for the BARE-WAISTED BARTENDER'S attention. That's when Vanessa, Alyssa, Charles and Taft roll up. Greetings are made. Handshakes, double kisses. It's all so tres adult.

VANESSA  
Ski, this is Taft.

She introduces her man. Zach shakes his hand. Clearly an important introduction. Taft's meeting the family.

ZACH  
Where are you at school again?

TAFT  
Horace Mann.

ZACH  
(nods knowingly)  
Horace Mann. A dear place in my heart.

TAFT  
You're buggin, right?

ZACH  
Expulsion number one.

He grins. Alyssa's been staring, stewing, nostrils flaring.

ALYSSA  
Why are you so fake?

ZACH  
What?

ALYSSA  
What is it that compels you to do that?

Now the gang trades looks. Huh? Zach's confused.

ALYSSA  
You're like all cool and chillin and crackin jokes and being Mr. Charming and funny and humble, like totally that guy, and then, suddenly, like a total deus ex macchina, you're like wearing the bling and rolling like you own everyone, pimping all over the place. I mean what the hell is that?!

Zach stares at her. So does everyone else. A record scratches.

VANESSA  
C'mon, Alyss. I have to pee.

Alyssa's suddenly tearing, ashamed, embarrassed. Vanessa shoots Zach a look, takes her by the arm, leads her away. They disappear towards the bathroom and the gentlemen eye each other in the wake of the outburst. All eyes on Zach.

TRISCUIT  
That was mad insane!

CHARLES  
Can you say Mount Vesuvius?

Zach looks himself up and down. Nothing fancy. T shirt, Chuck Taylors, weathered pin stripe blazer, jeans.

ZACH  
The bling?

Off Zach's look, stunned by the onslaught, we go to--

INT. STALL - THE LADIES ROOM - CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Vanessa watches Alyssa cry into a tissue. Music thumps from the main room and someone's yacking in the next stall over.

ALYSSA  
I'm such a loser.

VANESSA  
I won't argue.

Alyssa shoots her a murderous look. Just joshing.

ALYSSA  
I can't ever face him again.

VANESSA  
Oh, please. Don't let him have that power over you. He happens to be my brother, but for you, he's just another boy. Please. You're, like, so fly I can name 27 boys in our school alone who probably stroke themselves to sleep every night thinking about you.

That seems to register. That joie de vivre rushing back to her cheeks. Off Alyssa's heartbreaking grin, sunshine through clouds-

ALYSSA  
Can we dance, please?

INT. CLUB - BAR - SAME

Triscuit and Zach are leaning into the bar, leaving us momentarily with Taft and Charles. Music blaring.

TAFT HUTTON  
So what the hell was that all about?

CHARLES  
Unfortunately, you came to the right person. Gather round and hear of chivalry and lust in The Milners Tale.  
(off his look)  
Chaucer. Canterbury Tales?  
(rolls his eyes)  
So Zach and Serena--

TAFT HUTTON  
Who's Serena?

CHARLES  
Serena Godson. She's this tres suave chick who everyone covets but no one can have but Zach.

(MORE)

CHARLES (cont'd)

So Zach and Serena are Romeo and Juliet without the families at war thing. They're like star-crossed lovers-- like Dante and Beatrice-- like Scott and Zelda-- like Stein and Toklas-- like--

TAFT

I get it.

CHARLES

So last summer Serena went off on some insane bike tour in the Spanish Alps and it just so happens that Eli--

TAFT HUTTON

Eli Green?

CHARLES

You know him?

TAFT

(apprehensively)  
Little bit.

CHARLES

Good. So Eli's on the same tour with Serena. Total coincidence.

TAFT

Eli Green was on a bike tour? I thought he was like prep for prep?

CHARLES

Are you brain hemorrhaging? His Dad was named most successful money manager of the 90's by the Wall Street Journal. His Bar Mitzvah was on The Intrepid. Poor command of the Torah, by the way.  
(off his confusion)

So, context: Spanish Alps. Teenagers. Sangria. Moroccan Hash. Parent-bought condoms. Total self-discovery. No one knows exactly what happened but some say it was a little game of hide the salami. Others say it was just your harmless tongue jousting. Either way, Zach found out and totally flipped and totally fractured Eli's ethmoid bone.

TAFT

What the hell is that?

CHARLES

Nose.

TAFT

Eli and Zach fought?

CHARLES

It was epic.

TAFT

You saw it?

CHARLES

No, but everyone knows. So then Zach breaks it off with Serena and to spite her, he goes and finally cashes in this heaping pile of chips with my girl Alyssa-- God bless her--who's wanted him for like epochs and epochs and finally got what she wanted when he popped her cute little le *ch'aim*.

TAFT

Jesus, man. What happened after that?

CHARLES

Zach had a total Chernobyl. Complete meltdown. He left the city.

(off his look)

You know he's crazy loco, right?

INT. DANCE FLOOR - THE CLUB - LATER

Vanessa, Taft, and Alyssa, getting down. Charles is off to the side, alone, immobile, not a dancer. On the floor, trance dissolves into hip-hop dissolves into trip-hop dissolves into trance. Smoky stop-action scenes of kids letting it all hang.

INT. CLUB - BAR - SAME

Zach and Triscuit hold down a prime spot at the bar, when the Bartender-- coyote ugly type, belly button pierced, essentially nude-- plants a couple brews and shots in front of them.

ZACH

You look like you might be feeling slightly promiscuous tonight... ?

BARTENDER

No different than any other night.

(per the drinks)

On me. I was a close friend of Jake's.

Read between the lines. Zach's smile fades. Triscuit's lights up. A buy back. But suddenly, there's VANESSA fighting through the crowd, SCREAMING in Zach's ear, pointing to the door. We can't even hear her it's so loud up in this mofo.

EXT. CLUB - STREET - SIDEWALK

There's a crowd and there's TAFT-- surrounded by a familiar posse, what we unfortunately have to call "420." The prepster hoods. And there's Eli taunting Taft as thrill-seekers look on.

ELI

So lemme understand this. Your pops has the five oh trackin my man Chief and you think Chief's gonna let that go without some kinda beat-down?

TAFT

There's nothing I can do at this point.

Eli hauls off and SLAPS Taft in the face, open hand. Taft takes it like a man. But he's marked. Nowhere to go.

TAFT

What do you want, man?

ELI

What I want is for you to gather ten bucks from every bitchass friend of yours. Ten skins from any punk wearing Patagonia or I slap you silly.

That's when Vanessa busts out the door, runs right into the mix.

VANESSA

Leave him alone, you pindick loser.

Eli stops, looks at our lady.

ELI

Oh, checky checks. Another Abrams wants to get slain this year?

ZACH (O.S.)

Yo, Greenstein.

He turns. Of course, it's Zach. Ripping off his jacket, pushing through the crowd, getting right up in Eli's mug so there's no two ways about it. Notice the slight shift in momentum.

ZACH

Checky checks. Round two.

And off the two of them, about to get it on, a posse inching in around them, about to change the numbers.. we

CUT OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT 4

EXT. CLUB - STREET - NIGHT

The crowd. The posse. Zach and Eli, nose to nose, Taft off to the side, Vanessa on his heels. It's about to go down.

ELI

Yo, I heard a little rumor about your bro... Nigga liked humpin' dudes.

ZACH

Should I crack your nose again so you look like Gerard Depardieu or do you wanna throw in the flag and go home and take off your makeup and jewelry?

ELI

After I slay you, I may have to tag your sister the way I tagged Serena.

ISAAC BIGELOW

Word up! Like a wolf, yo! Owwww!!!

ZACH

I'd snap on your pops, but...  
(to the crowd)  
I have a policy about snapping on convicted pedophiliacs.

Oh snap! That does it. Clearly, there was truth behind that one.

Eli flips, shoots for the waist, but it's over before it even began. Zach immediately wrestles him into a headlock and pummels his face. Six lightning quick shots to the mug. Blood spills instantly. It happened so fast, no one even saw it.

Eli sinks to his knees, blood dripping through his fingers. That's when the posse of 30 misguided preppy hoods swarm and attack. Zach's cornered, nowhere to go. So is Taft. Vanessa screams, so do others in the crowd, but to no avail.

There's Zach on the ground now, in a ball, getting kicked and punched and beaten mercilessly. The only thing that saves him from a life altering beatdown is the sudden swell of SIRENS in the distance and the subsequent scattering of his attackers.

INT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - ELEVATOR - FOYER - LATER

Arm draped around Triscuit's shoulder, his eye black and blue, his lip bleeding, probably a cracked rib or two, Zach stares at the floorboards, his ears ringing with high pitched static.

INT. KITCHEN - ABRAMS APARTMENT - SECONDS LATER

Zach's sitting at the counter, barely holding himself up as Triscuit prepares an ice pack at the sink. No need for words. That's when a light appears from the other room and footsteps approach. In moments, SOL appears at the door. He takes stock, sees his son-- bleeding, beaten, defeated.

SOL

What happened to you?

ZACH

I got my ass kicked, whatta you think happened to me.

Sol digests, frowns, turns, stares at Triscuit.

SOL

Tristan, go home.

ZACH

No. You can stay wherever you want.

Triscuit eyes them both. Caught in the middle.

SOL

Go home, Tristan. This is a family moment.

ZACH

Whatta you know about family moments?

SOL

You insolent little-- it's not always about you, Zachary!

ZACH

It's never about me...

(off his look)

How could it be? There's only one way to do it in this house. And we all know whose way that is, don't we, Dad.

SOL

You don't know what the hell you're talking about.

ZACH

Sure I do. So, what now? Jake's gone. No more heir to the throne. No more pet project. No more pride and joy.

SOL

Don't you dare talk about him like that. You're a disgrace to this family!

And there's the match in the charcoal.

ZACH

Which family? The one where the father sneaks off to the Carlyle with a red-headed VP and orders a bottle of Perrier Jouet and puts a *do not disturb* sign on the door? Is that the family I'm such a disgrace to? I'm sure Mom has a different idea about what a family is than that!

Direct hit. Silence stuns the crowd. Sol wavers. He's been called out. Called to the stand. Kid didn't hold his punches.

BEVERLY

Zach--

A voice breaks the moment. Everyone turns. Triscuit's bugging. There's BEVERLY at the door in her nightgown.

BEVERLY

It's not your business, Zach.

(beat)

I know..

(off their stunned looks)

I don't need you to fight my battles.

So, now, here they are. The three of them. Plus an alternate. More silence, backed by the hum of the fridge.

BEVERLY

Tristan. Please, give us some privacy.

(off his instant nod)

Do you need cab fare?

TRISCUIT

No, I'm cool.

Triscuit nods, bugs, and quickly skiddadles outta there. They all watch him go, then turn back when the front door closes. We're left with the triumvirate. Father, Mother, Son.

SOL

Did you steal the limousine?

ZACH

What?

SOL

You heard me. Did you steal the limousine?

ZACH

Is that what you're worried about right now? One of your precious limousines?

SOL  
Did you steal it?

Zach looks at his mother. He's fuming. Turns back.

ZACH  
Hell, yeah, I did! And then I left it  
on 81st street and threw the key away.

SOL  
That's it. No allowance until it's paid  
off. That's about fifty grand.

ZACH  
Allowance! You think that matters?! You  
think I give a shite about my  
allowance?! I don't need your money!

SOL  
Oh, you don't? And how do you plan to  
live. You have no idea how to fend for  
yourself. You can't even put on the  
right shoes. You can't even stay in the  
same school for more than a year.

ZACH  
How the hell would you know! You never  
even gave me a chance. I'm just a thug.  
A criminal. A disgrace to the family.

A beat. Sol's voice sinks. The bass in it raised.

SOL  
You never earned it.

ZACH  
So that's how it is? I have to earn the  
love of my father?

Another beat. A standoff. Beverly steps forward.

BEVERLY  
Zach, we'd like you to come home. We'd  
like you be a part of the family for  
your senior year.

ZACH  
You want me to be Jake for my senior  
year.

BEVERLY  
That's not true.

SOL  
I arranged a spot for you at Greeley.  
They're willing to take you in.

ZACH

I bet. How much did that cost you?

BEVERLY

It's not about the money, Zach.

ZACH

Oh, I'm sure. It's out of the goodness of their hearts... You know what? I don't need it. I don't need your help. I don't need any of this hypocrisy.

And with that, he marches off into the living room, disappears up the stairs. Sol and Beverly are left alone. Silence bounces between them like a pinball. Until it's released.

BEVERLY

You're not the only one, Sol.

SOL

What does that mean?

BEVERLY

You figure it out.

That's when Zach reappears in the living room with his backpack, rushes to the door.

BEVERLY

Zachary! Where are you going?

But he doesn't answer. She turns back to her husband, quivering.

BEVERLY

If you have any interest left in this marriage, you'll put your pride away and tell your son you love him.

(off his look)

He's a child, Sol!

INT. ELEVATOR - FOYER - ABRAMS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Bag over his shoulder, Zach waits for the elevator. That's when Sol appears in the front door. Zach takes a step back.

SOL

Here. For your eye.

Sol cautiously holds out a... FROZEN STEAK wrapped in cellophane.

ZACH

What the hell is that?

SOL

It's a hundred dollar steak from Japan. But it's better than ice.

(MORE)

SOL (cont'd)  
 (off his look)  
 Mort taught me that when I got my nose  
 busted by some Italians down the street-  
 'course we used meat scraps then.

The elevator door opens. Zach hesitantly takes the steak.

SOL  
 It's not your fault, Zach... you know  
 that, don't you?

Zach doesn't answer. Breathing heavily, angrily. There's more to be said, it's on Sol's lips, but it won't happen tonight. They share a final look. Of respect. Of reckoning. Of the new paradigm. But the elevator jockeys, breaks the moment, and Zach turns away, a young soldier who's proven his valor.

INT. ELEVATOR - LOBBY - ABRAMS APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

As the elevator drops, Zach stares straight ahead, backpack over his shoulder, a cold steak pressed to his eye. When the elevator finally rattles to a stop, the door opens and there's... VANESSA.

Waiting anxiously. She looks up-- and her face drops.

VANESSA  
 Oh my god. Look at you.

Zach steps off the elevator, emotional, beaten, shrugs it off. She tries to hug him, but notices the bag, the look on his face.

VANESSA  
 Where are you going?

ZACH  
 I'm crashing at Triscuit's... and going  
 back to school in the morning.

A look is shared. About upstairs.

VANESSA  
 I thought you were gonna stay?

ZACH  
 I can't. Not with him.

She looks him straight in the eye, hurt.

VANESSA  
 You lied.

Zach's eyes are somewhere far away. He shrugs.

ZACH  
 I have to go, Ski... I can't be what they  
 want me to be.

VANESSA

But you don't have to.

But he hasn't figured that out yet-- and it falls on deaf ears. Their eyes are met, and when it's crystal clear his mind is made, Vanessa slowly takes off her coat. Recognize it? IT'S JAKE'S. Worn, weathered, too big for her anyways.

VANESSA

Here. Take it, Ski.

(off his look)

He would've wanted you to have it.

Zach eyes the coat, cautiously takes it like it's a rare gem, carefully puts it on over his blazer. It fits like a glove. And after hugging his sister, long and close, tears pouring down her cheeks, Zach's on his way out the front door, back on the road.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE FIELDING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - MORNING

Plaid skirts, socks, sweaters, school buses-- the elite elite of Manhattan's young women. And there goes Zach, up the front steps, two at a time, through the front doors.

INT. HALLWAY - THE FIELDING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - MORNING

Down the hall he goes, past elementary school girls splayed out on the floor, lockers open, pics of heartthrob boys revealed, all stunned-- and thrilled-- to see a boy in their midst. And not just any boy. The infamous Zach Abrams. In the flesh.

INT. CLASSROOM - THE FIELDING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - CONTINUOUS

Staring through the window on the door, there's SERENA, taking copious notes as a bespectacled OLDER WOMAN lectures a class of fifteen erect young ladies on the virtues of John Locke. And Zach doesn't hesitate, throwing the door open with grandeur, barging right into the room, right in front of the blackboard, pointing directly at Serena, classmates and teacher agasp--

ZACH

I need to see you right now.

TEACHER

Excuse me. What do you think you're doing. You can not be here, young man.

ZACH

Well, I am.

(to Serena)

C'mon. Let's go.

His voice is so commanding, so certain, anyone would follow. Serena turns red, starts packing her bag.

TEACHER

I'm sorry, but you need to leave these premises right this instant. I'm calling security.

ZACH

Good. You can tell them I'm taking Serena Godson to a private funeral for my brother Jacob.

And that's about all she wrote. Legend is made. Fourteen girls watch their lucky peer scamper past the teacher, no apology necessary-- no note, no parental excuse, no nothing but a young prince-- and take the boy's arm, disappear into the hallway.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - GREAT LAWN - MORNING

Zach and Serena amidst the spectrum of turning trees, arm in arm, across the great lawn, until they come to A BENCH where Serena stops, reads the name on the seat back. So do we.

THOMAS EDWIN GODSON - 1992-2002

ZACH

Who knew we'd share something else.

SERENA

Will you sit with me?

He drops his bag, slowly falls in next to her on the bench, reaches for a smoke. But Serena rips it out of his hand.

SERENA

Look at me.

He does. Begrudgingly. Stubbornly.

SERENA

You can't keep running, Zach.  
(off his silence)  
You have to deal with your problems if you want them to go away.

ZACH

You don't know what my problems are.

SERENA

I know you sell yourself short. He was your brother, but he wasn't a Greek God. You said so yourself.

Zach frowns. He knows she's right. Serena gestures to the cityscape as Zach stands, stares off into the swaying trees.

SERENA

It's the capital of the world, Zach.  
There's room for two of you here.

ZACH

Sure there is. He's gone.

SERENA

He has nothing to do with it. This is  
about you now. You having the courage  
to be you in front of those you love.

A beat. He doesn't turn. Watches leaves floating to the earth.

ZACH

You know how there's the person you  
wanna be... and then there's the person  
you really are?

(off her warm nod)

Right now I feel like there's an ocean  
between the two.

SERENA

Who do you wanna be?

ZACH

I dunno.

SERENA

Well, what do you think?

ZACH

I don't know.

SERENA

Challenge yourself then. Have an  
answer. No one's gonna hold you to it.

He looks back at the trees again, remorseful... vulnerable.

ZACH

I just know I wanna be better.

She doesn't parry. But when he turns back looking for a  
response, she's standing before him, nose to nose now, eyes to  
eyes, lips to lips. And she sways with him like that.

SERENA

I'll always be here for you. You know  
that, don't you?... I hate you for it.

And it's hard to say who goes for it first. But there they are  
now, suddenly KISSING with passion and flame, holding each other  
for dear life, alone in the great lawn on a school day.

Until he suddenly breaks, overwhelmed, backs away slowly-- bag on his shoulder, turning, jogging, now sprinting away as fast as he can, tears pouring down Serena's cheek as she watches him go.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

A myriad of faces and ethnicities. Anonymity at its finest. And meandering away from the ticket office, there's Zach, frightened and unsure, ticket in hand, his coat-- JAKE'S-- buttoned to the neck, collar up, bag over his shoulder, looking for his track.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Settled into a window seat, Jake's coat on the seat next to him, his head against the glass, tears slowly, begrudgingly slipping down his cheek, the train BURSTS out into the great outdoors.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)  
First stop, Yonkers!

EXT. TRAIN - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

And like that, the landscape fleeting by as the train reaches maximum velocity, the leaves turning every shade of crimson this side of the sun, the first light snowfall of the season meekly wetting his window... Zach Abrams wallows in his pain.

EXT. YONKERS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

First stop on the Hudson, Zach's train slows to a halt as it pulls into a busy station. Commuters crowd this side of the track while across the way, the same thing's happening on the Southbound track. Commuters on their way into the city.

INT. TRAIN - YONKERS STATION - SECONDS LATER

As soon as the doors open, faces scamper in, bags and coffee and scowls, everyone pining for a seat. But Zach's not interested.

COMMUTER  
Scuse me-- someone sittin here?

Zach doesn't turn, shakes his head no.

COMMUTER  
This your coat?

Now he's got no choice. He turns, looks up, finds a BUSINESSMAN in a cheap suit, weathered briefcase, knockoff Burberry, holding JAKE'S COAT. Zach nods, frowns, reaches for the coat.

But in the transfer, something falls out of the breast pocket. Right into the empty seat. Something Zach's never seen before.

It's hard to miss. AN ENVELOPE of photos, straight from the one hour photo counter. And it takes a moment before Zach realizes they're now his property to claim. Staring at it in confusion.

But the businessman needs his seat, so Zach comes to, takes what's his, makes way as the big fella nestles in right next to him, a snug fit for lovers much less strangers.

And his interest piqued, Jake's coat now in his lap, Zach sits forward and starts flipping through the PHOTOS. So do we.

First one's a set of blue toenails-- then Alyssa sticking out her tongue-- a pigeon-- a hand-- three 6th graders on the back of a bus-- Vanessa in the mirror-- Alyssa vogue-ing in her dress-- Larry, Alyssa and Vanessa on the red carpet-- Vanessa, Alyssa, Taft, and Charles all squeezed into the back of a cab.

It's Vanessa's latest work. And something in Zach just moved. Something creaked. Something's about to come undone.

That's cause the next photo up brings us back to another chapter in the history of this storied family.

It's The Abrams Table at the fundraiser. You know the one. You were there. Sol, Beverly, Mort, Vivian, Jake, Fiona, Vanessa, Alyssa, Larry, and one glaringly EMPTY SEAT. Zach's.

A rumble from Zach's core shakes the photo in his hand and despite his efforts to stop them, tears wash down his face, his swelling eyes hidden by the greasy curls of his princely mane.

But the moment is suddenly cut short when THE TRAIN ACROSS THE WAY WHISTLES, releasing steam-- a shrill cut right to the bone.

Zach spins, stares out the window, his future about to pull away-

Now back down at the family that, for better or worse.. is his. And in a flash, inspiration found-- at least for the all important moment-- he grabs his bag and makes a break for it.

Pushing past the businessman, down the aisle he goes, elbowing people aside brusquely, out the door, into the cold--

EXT. YONKERS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Onto the platform he goes, weaving in and out of human obstacles-

UP THE STAIRS

eyes wild and scared and filled with blind purpose

DOWN THE OTHER SIDE

two steps at a time, leaping, landing squarely on

THE SOUTHBOUND PLATFORM

just as the train doors start to close, just as they're jockeying back and forth as train doors are want to do..

But as he skids to a stop in front of the last door of the last car, hand outstretched... IT MERCILESSLY SLAMS SHUT IN HIS FACE.

He stares through the window, frantic, desperate now, banging on the aluminum Amtrack logo, hell bent on getting on that train--

And it seems that someone's looking out for-- or down on-- Zach Abrams on this consequential day. Because just when he's about to turn away, THE DOORS SLIDE OPEN again for one final instant.

And this time, he doesn't hesitate, gracefully slipping through to the other side, his bag tucked closely against his body--

INT. TRAIN - SOUTHBOUND - CONTINUOUS

And there he is now, on the other side, enveloped by warmth, panting, electrified, adrenaline still pulsing in his veins.

The car suddenly lurches into motion and Zach balances himself against a wall as it slowly chugs out of the station... steadily picking up speed now, he takes a deep breath, drops his bag at his feet, clears the hair from his face...

And finally looks up. What he sees is a wagon full of bored commuters staring at the wild haired young man who just made it...

It's a packed house, to be sure, nowhere to sit, no comfortable corner to hide in, no nook to disappear to...

But at least for the moment, from the look on his face, the personal triumph he doesn't even know is his yet...

The young prince doesn't seem to mind standing. At least for the moment, he doesn't seem to mind the spotlight.

Because, for once, he's on the right train.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)  
Next stop... Manhattan.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END