The Affair

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PART ONE: NOAH.

EXT. DECK - DAWN.

Noah, early 40s, sits on a picnic bench, in front of an open lap top. He's got a cup of steaming hot coffee and a cold piece of left-over pizza. He's a handsome guy, well-built, solid. Maybe a little scruffy. Probably has a beard. And his hair is falling into his eyes. It's not some kind of hipster declaration, he just hasn't had time to get it cut.

It's late spring, still cool in the mornings. Noah buttons his alpaca sweater, takes a sip of his coffee, a bite of his pizza and stares at the blank page of his word document.

The deck is connected to a brownstone and bordered on three sides by a high wooden fence. The sun has just started to crest the fence, bathing Noah in a rich golden light. He types:

NEW BOOK

He thinks. Then types:

CHAPTER ONE

Stares at the screen. Takes another sip of coffee. Watches a woodpecker beating its head relentlessly against a cherry tree.

NOAH

I feel you, man.

He looks back at the screen. Nothing. Noah sighs.

INT. BATHROOM- DAY.

Noah is in the shower. He tries to squirt some shampoo into his hand but the bottle seems to be empty. So he unscrews the cap, fills the container with water to dislodge the last scraps of soap, and then dumps the whole thing on his head. He rinses it out and turns off the water.

An old-fashioned ALARM CLOCK goes berserk in the adjacent bedroom. Through the open door, Noah see his wife, HELEN, reach one hand out from under a pile of covers and attempts to blindly silence it. Her hand flails, landing to the left and right of the clock, missing it every time.

Noah laughs.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Noah turns off the alarm clock and pulls back the covers. Helen opens one eye and looks up at him, groggy.

HELEN

Hello friend.

NOAH

Why did you set the alarm? I was going to let you sleep in.

HELEN

Too much to do.

She attempts to bury herself back beneath the sheets. Noah leans over and kisses her forehead. Her cheek. Her neck. Her shoulder. She smiles, eyes still closed.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Did you have the rest of the pizza for breakfast?

NOAH

Couldn't let it go to waste.

•

She reaches for him and he climbs on top of her. She pulls his shirt off. He does the same to her. More sleepy kissing. As his hands move down her body -

The BABY MONITOR on the other side of their bed crackles alive and then admits a CRY.

STACEY (O.S.)

Maaaaammaaaa!

Helen groans and rolls out from under him. She grabs his discarded shirt and pulls it on.

NOAH

I'll get her.

HELEN

No, I'll do it. You load the car.

She slips out of bed and starts down the hall. He watches her go.

NOAH

Nice bum.

Helen slaps her ass in response. Noah grins.

EXT. STREET - DAY.

NOAH is packing a minivan on the curb outside his brownstone. It's one of those inconceivable acts of geometry that only men of a certain age with children seem to have mastered. He approaches the task like a chess master. Absolute concentration.

His son, MARTIN, 13, comes out of the brownstone and sits down on the stoop, watching him.

NOAH

Are you packed?

MARTIN

Yup.

NOAH

Are you excited?

Martin doesn't answer. He picks angrily at some debris on the steps.

NOAH (CONT'D)

You're hiding it well, but I can tell that you are.

MARTIN

I wanted to stay here for the summer.

NOAH

I know.

MARTIN

I wanted to go to league camp.

NOAH

Well, next summer, if you bring that grade point average up, you can stay and go to league camp. -

MARTIN

That's ridiculous!

NOAH

Why is that ridiculous?

MARTIN

You said I could go to league camp -

If you got your grades up. You seem to have forgotten the second clause of the contact.

MARTIN

It sucks at Grandpa's.

NOAH

That's not true.

MARTIN

It is true.

NOAH

Martin, your grandfather has a swimming pool, two tennis courts, and a sauna on his property. It categorically does not suck there.

Martin glares at his father.

MARTIN

You suck.

Noah shrugs.

NOAH

That's a more defendable hypothesis.

Martin spots his basketball tucked into middle of the suitcase rubric.

MARTIN

Oh shit, I've been looking for that.

He jumps up, darts over to the trunk and reaches for the ball -

NOAH

No wait!

But it's too late. Martin pulls the ball out, thus destabilizing the structure. The suitcases tumble out, popping open on the street.

MARTIN

That wasn't my fault.

Noah stares at him.

I believe that it was.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY.

Noah sits in front of a massive floor-to-ceiling bookshelf, pulling select volumes and adding them to the pile.

His younger son, TREVOR, 7, walks through the room on his way to the kitchen.

NOAH

Trevor. Come here for a second.

Trevor looks at Noah in trepidation. He's been in similar situations. He knows they don't end well for him.

NOAH (CONT'D)

What are you going to read this summer?

Trevor shrugs.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Come on, you've got three glorious, uninhibited months ahead of you and a whole bookshelf in front of you. Pretty soon, you'll be nine and then ten, you'll get a job, you'll meet a girl, you'll have kids and trust me, you will never have the chance to read for pleasure ever again. You must seize this opportunity, little man.

Trevor reaches up and pulls down a book. Helen enters the room, carrying an arm-load of clean laundry.

HELEN

No, not that one.

TREVOR

Why not?

HELEN

You're too young.

TREVOR

But I want to read Dad's book.

HELEN

When you're older.

TREVOR

Why? Is it dirty?

Noah takes the book out of Trevor's hand and replaces it on the shelf.

NOAH

No, it's derivative. Choose something else.

Helen smiles at him, full of sympathy.

TREVOR

What's derivative mean?

HELEN

I told you not to read the reviews.

NOAH

(pleasantly)

You were right.

EXT. STREET - DAY.

Noah is back on the curb, repacking the trunk. A VOICE begins speaking, over the scene. Noah doesn't react to it. He doesn't hear it.

VOICE

Mr. Simon. Hi. Thanks for coming in.

NOAH'S VOICE

It's not like I had much of a choice.

VOICE

Well, we'll try not to take up too much of your time.

Trevor exits the brownstone and bounds down the steps, followed by his older sister, WHITNEY 16, who wears red lipstick, dark sunglasses and a tiny jumpsuit.

VOICE (CONT'D)

I'd like to begin by asking you a few questions about how this whole mess got started.

The kids climb into the minivan.

(to Whitney)

Good morning, daughter.

WHITNEY

Good morning, father.

NOAH

Do you need your sunglasses in the car?

WHITNEY

I'm breaking them in.

VOICE

Is that alright with you? Mr. Simon?

Helen comes out of the brownstone carrying Stacey in her arms.

NOAH'S VOICE

It's a free country, Pal. Ask away.

HELEN

(looking in the car)

Where's Martin?

NOAH

Still in the house, isn't he?

HELEN

(frowning)

I don't think so.

INT. BROWNSTONE - DAY.

Noah wanders through the house, looking for his son.

NOAH

Martin? Martin?

VOICE

So can you tell us a bit about who you were back then?

Noah checks the kitchen it's empty.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY.

He checks the living room. Empty.

VOICE

Mr. Simon?

NOAH'S VOICE

I don't understand the question.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY.

Empty.

NOAH

Martin? Come on dude, this isn't funny. Everyone is waiting on you.

NOAH'S VOICE

What, exactly, do you want to know?

VOICE

Anything you think is relevant.

CUT TO:

INT. HALL CLOSET - DAY.

Nothing but sheets and towels.

VOICE

How were you feeling about your life?

Noah closes the closet and heads down the hall towards a door with a KEEP OUT sign on it.

NOAH'S VOICE

Fine.

VOICE

Can you say a little more?

Noah's hand is on the doorknob-

NOAH'S VOICE

Great. I was feeling great. My kids were healthy.

(MORE)

NOAH'S VOICE (CONT'D) My wife was beautiful.

CUT TO:

INT. MARTIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS.

A terrible mess. Basketball posters on the wall. Clothes strewn across the floor. Cereal boxes. Piles of sneakers.

Noah crosses the room -

NOAH'S VOICE

My life was pretty fucking perfect.

And opens the door to an adjacent bathroom -

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS.

Martin is dangling from the light fixture on the ceiling, HANGING by a cord.

Noah's heart stops.

NOAH

(small)

No.

Noah reaches up and rips the cord off the light. Martin falls to the ground. He lays there in a crumpled huddle.

Then he starts to giggle.

It takes Noah a moment to realize what's just happened. He SEES that the cord continues beneath Martin's collar. He yanks up Martin's shirt to reveal a rock-climbing harness, which was actually supporting the boy's weight.

Noah grabs Martin by the arm and pulls him to his feet with so much force he almost dislocates Martin's shoulder.

MARTIN

Ow! Dad! What the fuck?

INT. MARTIN'S ROOM - DAY.

Noah THROWS Martin into a chair.

NOAH

What is wrong with you?

MARTIN

It was a joke!

NOAH

You thought that was funny? You think killing yourself is -

MARTIN

I didn't kill myself. I faked a hanging. It's totally different.

Noah is just staring at Martin.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

It was really tough to figure out. I had to look it up on the internet.

NOAH

Are you insane? Everyone is in the car waiting for you. Is it so much to ask that for one day - one day out of your entire life - that you think of somebody other than yourself?

Martin's eyes start to swell.

MARTIN

(mumbling)

It was supposed to be a joke.

Noah doesn't know what to do. He would like to punch something. His kid, perhaps, or at least, a wall. Instead, he takes a deep breath and sits down heavily on the edge of the bed.

NOAH

Dude, what is going on with you? Last summer you were this happy guy. What happened?

Martin doesn't respond. He can't. He's concentrating too hard on not crying.

Noah stands.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Let's go. Before your mother comes

Martin doesn't move.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Come on, man.

MARTIN

I hate Grandpa.

NOAH

I know. So do I. But look at it this way. At least you stand to inherit some of his money when he dies.

MARTIN

I won't take a penny of it.

NOAH

Martin, I'm a public school teacher.

MARTIN

So?

NOAH

Take the money.

DAY.

Noah opens the sliding side door and Martin climbs into the mini-van.

INT. MINIVAN -DAY.

Noah climbs into the driver's seat next to Helen.

HELEN

Everything okay?

NOAH

Fine.

HELEN

What happened?

NOAH

He couldn't find his bathing suit.

Helen turns around.

HELEN

(to Martin)

I already packed it for you, honey.

In the backseat, Martin nods, subdued. Noah counts his children.

NOAH

One, two, three, four.

(to Helen)

That's all of them, right?

HELEN

So far.

Noah smiles as he turns on the car.

INT. MINIVAN -DAY.

A few hours later. Stuck in bumper-to-bumper beach traffic on the one stretch of highway that takes vacationers from the city out to the beaches of Long Island.

In the backseat, Whitney is talking on her phone. Martin is playing with his iPad. Stacey is sleeping. And Trevor is, for some unknown reason, TAPPING a penny relentlessly against the glass window.

NOAH

Trevor?

TREVOR

Yeah Dad?

NOAH

I'll pay you ten dollars to stop doing that.

TREVOR

(cheerfully)

Okay.

HELEN

I spoke to my father. Guess what? He read your book.

Noah's jaw tightens automatically.

NOAH

And?

HELEN

He has some thoughts. He's excited to share them with you.

Noah rolls his eyes.

HELEN (CONT'D)

What?

NOAH

Nothing. I can't wait.

HELEN

I don't understand why you have such a chip on your shoulder about him.

Noah doesn't answer.

HELEN (CONT'D)

He's actually quite generous to younger writers. He's famous for his mentorship-

NOAH

I know Helen. I'm happy to talk to him.

TREVOR

Dad?

NOAH

Yeah Trevor?

TREVOR

Who's your least favorite member of this family?

Noah looks at Helen, surprised. Like "Where is this coming from?"

NOAH

Uh. I don't how to answer that question, little man.

TREVOR

Let me put it to you another way. If we were on a plane, and it was going to go down and the pilot said you had to push one family member out in order to save the rest of us, who would it be?

NOAH

That's easy.

TREVOR

It is?

I'd jump myself.

TREVOR

(disappointed)

Oh. I was hoping you'd say Martin.

MARTIN

Fuck you.

NOAH

Hey! Language!

Martin shrugs. Helen reaches over and takes Noah's hand. He brings it to his mouth and kisses the inside of her wrist.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Happy summer, Baby.

Helen smiles.

HELEN

Happy summer.

EXT. MONTAUK - ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE - DAY.

Four hours later, the minivan finally pulls into a restaurant parking lot. All the kids pile out.

INT. BOOTH - DAY.

The family sits around a booth, looking at their menus. Whitney is still wearing her sunglasses.

HELEN

Whit, can you take those things off inside?

WHITNEY

I'm sure I can.

Noah reaches across the table and takes the sunglasses off his daughter's face.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Hey!

She looks up at him, angrily, through BLOODSHOT eyes.

NOAH

Where were you last night?

WHITNEY

I was at Courtney's.

HELEN

What were you doing at Courtney's?

A WAITRESS, early 30s, comes over to take their order. She's very pretty, with dark hair and wide-set eyes. Her name tag reads "Alison".

ALISON

What can I get you all?

WHITNEY

We were studying.

MARTIN

I'll have the burger.

NOAH

Really.

ALISON

(to Martin)

Fries?

MARTIN

Yeah.

WHITNEY

Really.

NOAH

Studying for what?

ALISON

(to Martin)

Cheese?

MARTIN

Yeah.

WHITNEY

The SATs.

NOAH

That test is in November.

ALISON

(to Noah)

Something to drink?

MARTIN

Sure. Surprise me. Something stiff.

She looks up at him. He smirks. She smiles and writes his order down.

HELEN

Your father and I are not morons, Whitney. We know what it looks like when someone has been smoking pot.

WHITNEY

Oh my God. First of all, no you don't because I've been high, like, fifty times in the last year and you have never noticed -

HELEN

Excuse me?

WHITNEY

And second of all-

(to Alison)

Is there *anything* on this menu that is *under* 1000 calories?

ALISON

Probably not.

WHITNEY

That's what I thought. I'll just have a diet Coke.

Helen grabs a menu-

HELEN

(to Alison)

Oh for God's sake, Miss, don't you have a salad or -

WHITNEY

Forget it. I'm not hungry.

HELEN

You have to eat.

TREVOR

Can I have the blueberry pancakes please?

ALISON

(writing on her pad)

Excellent choice.

(to Helen)

Look at it this way ... if she's not hungry, she's not high.

ALISON

(to Whitney)

I could get the cooks to make you an egg white omelette.

Whitney looks at her suspiciously.

WHITNEY

But they cook that in like, a ton of butter, right?

ALISON

(kindly)

I'll make sure they use a nonstick frying pan.

WHITNEY

Fine.

She passes her menu over. Helen collects the rest of the menus and hands them to Alison.

HELEN

Thank you. We appreciate it.

ALISON

Of course.

STACEY

Elmo!

Stacey is pointing excitedly to an ELMO BANDAGE on Alison's finger.

NOAH

(to Alison)

We have those at home.

Alison smiles.

ALISON

Are you guys here on vacation?

NOAH

We are indeed.

ALISON

For how long?

All summer, actually.

ALISON

Welcome to the end of the world.

Alison puts her HAND on Noah's shoulder briefly. A SHOCK of electricity goes through his body, surprising him -

ALISON (CONT'D)

Let me get these drink orders started for you.

Alison walks away. Noah watches her backside as she goes. It occurs to him that he's never seen such long, tan legs.

VOICE

Do you remember the first time you saw her?

NOAH'S VOICE

Like it was yesterday.

VOICE

What do you remember?

Noah is still watching Alison-

HELEN (O.C.)

Noah?

NOAH'S VOICE

Honestly, the first thing I noticed was her legs -

HELEN (O.C.)

NOAH!

Noah WHIPS out of his revelry to see his youngest daughter clutching her little throat -

HELEN (CONT'D)

She's choking! What do I do?

Noah stands, picks Stacey up and turns her upside down. With swift confidence, he WHACKS her on the back until a MARBLE pops out of her mouth and rolls across the floor, coming to rest at Alison's feet. For the briefest of moments, Noah and Alison LOCK eyes. Then Alison bends down slowly and picks up the marble. Noah catches a glimpse of her cleavage -

WHITNEY

Oh my God, Dad!

Again, Noah snaps back to attention. He sits slowly down in the booth, wondering what just happened. Stacey is huddled in Helen's arms, rocking back and forth and sobbing. The other three children are staring at him.

NOAH

(to Stacey)

Sweetie, are you alright?

WHITNEY

You, like, totally just saved Stacey's life.

NOAH

Whitney, please -

WHITNEY

She was totally going to die -

NOAH

No, she wasn't -

WHITNEY

Yes, she was.

At the sound of this, Stacey starts to CRY harder.

STACEY

I'm dying.

HELEN

No, baby, you're okay now. You're okay.

STACEY

I'm going to diiiiie.

NOAH

(to Whitney)

Thanks very much.

MARTIN

I have to go to the bathroom.

NOAH

(to Whitney)

You don't always have to say everything that pops into your-

MARTIN

I have to go now. Let me out.

Martin shoves Trevor out of the booth and onto the floor, leaps over him and races across the restaurant towards the door marked RESTROOMS.

TREVOR

Ow!

On the floor, Trevor starts to cry.

NOAH

Trevor, you're fine.

TREVOR

He hurt me.

NOAH

No he didn't. Get up.

Noah pulls Trevor back up to his seat. He looks at Helen across the table like "What is happening here?" She coos in the ear of a whimpering Stacey and shakes her head as if to say, "I have no idea".

INT. HALLWAY - DAY.

Noah stands in a little hallway outside the restrooms. He knocks on one of the doors.

NOAH

Martin? Are you in there?

The door to the bathroom opens and ALISON steps out. Her eyes are rimmed with tears.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Oh! I thought this was -

He backs up to look at the sign and realizes he's been knocking on the Women's Room -

NOAH (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. Are you... are you okay?

Alison nods.

ALISON

What you just did ... I've never... it was... that was really incredible.

I'm sorry it upset you. Kids, you know, they... you can't take your eyes off them for a -

An adjacent door opens and Martin steps out of the Men's Room.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Hey Buddy.

MARTIN

Hey.

NOAH

What's going on?

MARTIN

Nothing.

NOAH

I was worried about you.

MARTIN

Don't be.

Martin ignores Alison, walks past Noah and heads back to the booth.

NOAH

I should -

He gestures towards his family. Alison smiles.

ALISON

Your order will be up shortly.

Noah turns away and then turns back again.

NOAH

I'm Noah, by the way.

He holds out his hand. She takes it.

ALISON

Alison.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY.

The kids are loaded back into the minivan. Noah buckles Stacey into her seat. She's sucking on a lollipop.

How you feel Sweetie? Are you okay?

Stacey nods. Her eyelids are drooping.

NOAH (CONT'D)

We'll be at Grandma's soon. You can take a nap.

Stacey's eyes fly open.

STACEY

No nap!

Noah smiles. He closes the door gently. Helen is there next to him. Her eyes are still wide with terror. He opens his arms and she walks straight into them. She buries her face in his chest.

NOAH

She's okay.

HELEN

I know.

He holds her close.

NOAH

Shit.

HELEN

What?

NOAH

I forgot to leave a tip.

HELEN

It's fine.

NOAH

No, they live on those tips. I'll be right back.

Before she can stop him, he's jogging back across the parking lot.

INT. ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE - DAY.

Noah enters from the outside. Alison is clearing off the booth. He watches her from behind... her long, bare legs... her slim waist... her neck...

Then he shakes his head, hard, as if to erase the thought.

Miss?

Alison turns around.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I forgot to leave a tip. I'm sorry.

ALISON

That's okay.

NOAH

No please-

He pulls out his wallet, holds out a bill.

ALISON

Oh, um, okay. Thanks.

She takes the money. For some reason, neither one moves. They just stand there for a moment. Looking at each other.

NOAH

Alison right?

ALISON

That's right.

She puts the money in her back pocket.

EXT. BRUCE BUTLER'S HOUSE - DAY.

Huge wooden gates, covered with ivy, open slowly. The minivan passes through and stops in the center of a circular driveway made entirely from broken shells. Before them stands a Georgian country masterpiece. One of those dreamy old mansions, built by oil barons, at the turn of the previous century.

The front door swings open and Helen's mother, MARGARET, 65, comes flying out.

MARGARET

You're here! Finally!

The kids pile out of the car. One-by-one they embrace their grandmother.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Whitney let me look at you. God, you're so thin. Have you stopped eating or something?

HELEN

Practically.

MARGARET

(to Whitney)

Well, keep it up, you look fabulous.

HELEN

Mom, this is not a behavior pattern we want to encourage.

MARGARET

Don't listen to you mother. She's just jealous. She was always a donut. Lose a few more pounds dear, and I'll take you to Paris.

Margaret puts her arm around Whitney's waist and leads her into the house. The children and Helen all follow behind, leaving Noah to unload the car, alone.

EXT. YARD - DAY.

Noah, a beer in hand, opens the screen door and steps out of the house, unto the expansive deck. Before him is an epic backyard. A swimming pool in the foreground. A flower garden. A vegetable garden. A fountain. A gazebo. A hammock.

Trevor is already in the pool. Whitney is reading in the hammock.

Noah HEARS a sound behind him and turns. Helen's father, BRUCE, 70, has joined him on the deck. He's holding a bottle of white burgundy.

BRUCE

Noah, I thought I might be able to interest in you in an apertif.

NOAH

Thanks Bruce. I've got a beer.

BRUCE

(frowning)

Where in the world did you find that?

NOAH

In the refrigerator?

BRUCE

Huh. Must have been left by one of the Mexicans.

Bruce pours himself a glass and shows the bottle to Noah.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

It was a gift from Paramount.

NOAH

That's right. The new movie opens soon, doesn't it?

BRUCE

Next month.

NOAH

Have you seen it?

BRUCE

I couldn't bear too. After the mess they made of my last book ... nobody listens to me out there. Nobody wants my opinion. They just want me to cash my check and show up at the premiere. So that's what I do. And I feel like a bit of a whore, of course, but then I come home and I look around...

He surveys his kingdom.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

And I feel better.

Noah suppresses an eye roll. Bruce clears his throat.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

So, I read your little book.

Noah winces.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I enjoyed most of it very much. Of course you could have used a decent editor, but the first novel, by an unknown writer ... I'm sure you didn't get to pick.

NOAH

No.

BRUCE

Helen tells us it did rather well?

Not really. But I did secure an advance on a second book.

BRUCE

Well congratulations, son. Now you can finally quit that horrible job of yours.

NOAH

It wasn't that big an advance.

BRUCE

Oh. Pity.

NOAH

I like my job, Bruce. I wouldn't quit it even if I could.

Bruce takes a sip of wine and swishes it around his mouth thoughtfully.

BRUCE

Everyone has one book in them. Almost nobody has two.

NO

Thank you for the pep talk.

BRUCE

Anytime. Say, how's the brownstone?

NOAH

It's ... it's good.

BRUCE

Turns out you got it at the bottom of the market.

NOAH

(flat)

Yes. We appreciate the loan.

BRUCE

It was my pleasure. I couldn't have my grandchildren growing up in a tenement.

Noah drains his beer and holds up the empty bottle.

NOAH

If you'll excuse me.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Helen and her mother are making dinner in the kitchen. Stacey is coloring at the table. Noah enters and retrieves another beer from the fridge. Martin is sitting at the table reading the local paper.

HELEN

Hey, guess what?

NOAH

What?

HELEN

Deep Hollow ranch is looking for an intern this summer. Martin is interested in the position.

NOAH

(to Martin)

Is that true?

Martin shrugs. Noah looks at Helen, confused. She makes an expression like: "Convince him."

NOAH (CONT'D)

(to Martin)

You want to ride over there now and see if we can talk to somebody?

MARTIN

Okay.

Martin heads to the door to get his shoes. Noah looks up at Helen, amazed by this sign of motivation. She smiles.

MARGARET

Be back for dinner by six. Otherwise Bruce gets heartburn.

INT. MINIVAN -DUSK

Noah and Martin drive away from town, up Montauk highway, towards the eastern most tip of the island. Martin's hand floats lazily out the window , moving up and down in the thick, salty air.

NOAH'S VOICE

NOAH'S VOICE (CONT'D) everything I promised myself I'd achieve when I was a young... I'd done it.

VOICE

But?

NOAH'S VOICE

That's the thing. There was no "but". When I look back, I can't tell you why it happened.

EXT. RANCH - DAY.

Noah pulls the mini-van down a dirt road and stops before an old wooden gate in a fence. Behind the fence lies a huge, weather-beaten barn and beyond that, a pasture where a dozen horses are grazing.

The sign reads: Welcome to Deep Hollow Ranch.

INT. BARN - DAY.

Noah and Martin wander through, looking for someone to talk to. Huge, beautiful thoroughbreds in spacious, hay-filled stables, watch them warily. Noah reaches out his hand to pet a particularly striking BLACK MARE.

She SNARLS and tries to bite him. Noah jumps back. Martin rolls his eyes.

MARTIN

They're vegetarians, Dad.

NOAH

(shaken)

I know.

Martin is already moving on.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY.

Martin and Noah emerge from the back of the stables into blinding sunlight. Noah spots a little plaque attached to the side of the barn.

NOAH

Hey Martin, this is cool. It says here this is the oldest working ranch in the United States! No response. Noah looks up and sees Martin watching a MAN, in a cowboy hat, galloping down the pasture towards them on a chestnut stallion.

The man rides right up to barn and tips his hat at Martin. He's around 35, tall and wild-looking.

COLE

Hi there.

MARTIN

Hello.

COLE

What can I do for you?

MARTIN

I'd like to apply for the internship that you advertised in the village paper.

Noah's jaw drops. He has never heard Martin speak so politely.

COLE

You're a little younger than I'd imagined. Ever ridden a horse before?

MARTIN

No.

COLE

Ever worked on a ranch?

MARTIN

No.

COLE

A farm?

Martin thinks.

MARTIN

I water my Dad's house plants every other day.

Cole laughs.

COLE

That your Dad over there?

Noah comes up, hand outstretched -

I didn't mean to be rude. I'm Noah -

They shake.

COLE

Cole.

NOAH

Is this your ranch?

COLE

No, I'm just the manager. It belongs to my folks. Been in our family for seven generations.

NOAH

Wow, that's so... American.

MARTIN

I'm American. We're American, aren't we Dad?

NOAH

Not that kind of American.

Noah smiles at his own joke. Both Cole and Martin stare at him, blankly.

COLE

I'll tell you what. You're not qualified but you are the first and that counts for something. Come back tomorrow and I'll show you how to polish a saddle and we'll see if you've got the stuff.

MARTIN.

Awesome!

NOAH

(sincerely)

Thank you.

COLE

No problem, man. I like your kid.

Martin beams. For some reason, Noah feels compelled to put a fatherly arm around his shoulder.

NOAH

So do I.

INT. BRUCE'S HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Noah and Helen make love silently in a little attic room. They move with the practiced familiarity of two people who have been together for years, who know each other's bodies like their own...

Noah is close to coming. He shuts his eyes. His tongue slides out of his mouth a little. Helen laughs.

Noah's eyes pop open.

NOAH

What?

HELEN

Nothing. I love the face you make when you're about to come.

There's a SOUND outside the door. Helen freezes.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Did you hear something?

NOAH

No.

HELEN

I did. Stop, stop.

From outside the door, comes a light scratching, and then-

TREVOR'S VOICE

Mom? Dad?

Noah groans and rolls off of his wife for the second time that day. Helen scrambles out of bed and opens the door. Trevor is standing there, tears in his eyes.

TREVOR

I had a bad dream.

HELEN

Oh Baby, I'm so sorry. Come sleep with us.

INT. BRUCE'S HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - LATER.

The room is dark. Trevor is sleeping in between Noah and Helen, his little body splayed sideways in the bed. Helen's arms are wrapped around her son. Noah has been relegated to the very edge of the mattress. He's wide awake, staring at the ceiling.

Suddenly, Trevor JERKS in his sleep and kicks Noah in the thigh. Noah groans and rolls out of bed.

He stands and goes to the window. From this high up, he has a clear view, past the backyard, over the dunes, all the way to the water.

NOAH'S VOICE

I was a little restless, sure. But all men are a little restless.

He turns and looks at his sleeping family.

EXT. DUNES - NIGHT.

Noah quietly opens the wooden gate that separates Bruce's property from the sand. He continues down a small path of wooden planks through the dunes.

NOAH'S VOICE

You give up some personal liberties to live in a secure state. On all levels. National. Municipal. Marital.

The sky above him is streaked with stars.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Noah wanders down the midnight beach. Up ahead of him, he sees a bonfire with a group of people gathered around it. Soft laughter drifts towards him, over the sand. He looks at the scene wistfully. Envious of the revelers. Wishing he had a reason to join them.

NOAH'S VOICE

I'd never had a problem with it before. I liked being married. When other men used to complain about their wives, I'd think "Well that poor sucker made a bad choice."

Suddenly, he notices a woman near to him, sitting alone by the surf. As he crosses behind her, she turns to look at him.

It's Alison. Her face is lit by the moon. She's stunning. Otherwordly.

NOAH

(amazed)

Hi.

ALISON

You found me.

NOAH

What? No, I was just out for a walk.

ALISON

(smiling)

I'm kidding. It's a tiny town.

NOAH

Oh. Sorry, I -

ALISON

How's your daughter?

NOAH

Uh, she's fine. Absolutely fine. She's already forgotten all about this afternoon.

ALISON

Are you going to the party?

NOAH

What party?

ALISON

The surfers are throwing a bonfire.

NOAH

I don't surf.

ALISON

Me neither. Walk me home then?

NOAH

(surprised)

Oh. Okay.

ALISON

I'm just up over that dune.

She holds out her hand to him for assistance. He pulls her up to stand, but she falls into his chest and they stumble backwards, together.

NOAH

Sorry, I -

She smiles a coy smile, then looks down at herself.

ALISON

God damn, I'm sandy!

As Alison brushes the sand off her long legs. Noah tries hard not to stare.

She stands again and pulls a pack of cigarettes out of her purse.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Want one?

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT.

Noah and Alison walk down a little paved road that runs parallel to the beach. They're both smoking.

ALISON

Wow. You're a writer? You must be so smart.

NOAH

(pleased)

Not really.

ALISON

I could never write a book. I love reading though. Guess what my favorite book is.

NOAH

Anna Karenina?

ALISON

Peter Pan!

Noah smiles.

NOAH

"All children grow up except one."

ALISON

(surprised)

You know it?

NOAH

"On these magic shores children at play are for ever beaching their coracles. We too have been there; we can still hear the sound of the surf, though we shall land no more."

ATITSON

You know it well!

NOAH

I must have read it to my kids a hundred times. We finish it and then begin again.

Alison is looking at him strangely. Her face turns suddenly serious and full of longing.

She stops walking.

ALTSON

Well. Here were are.

They're standing in front of a gravel driveway which leads to a small, airy beach cottage, up on stilts.

NOAH

Wow. What a great house.

ALISON

Thanks.

NOAH

Do you own it?

Alison nods.

ALISON

My parents moved out here years ago, when land was cheap. My father was a fisherman. There was no indoor plumbing, when they bought it. They used an outhouse and an outdoor shower. I got rid of the outhouse but I kept the shower.

NOAH

I love outdoor showers.

ALISON

Want to see it?

NOAH

Oh, uh. No, that's okay... I should probably, you know -

ALISON

Past your bedtime?

NOAH

Ha. Right.

She smiles at him. He knows he should leave. But his feet seem suddenly rooted to the gravel.

ALISON

Come on. I think you want to see this.

Alison heads up the driveway. Noah looks down at his feet. To his great surprise, they seem to be following her.

EXT. OUTDOOR SHOWER - NIGHT.

Alison leads Noah around the side of the house to a quaint water closet made entirely of wooden planks.

NOAH

Wow. This is incredible.

Alison is taking off her jeans -

ALISON

Do you want to try it?

NOAH

Now? No thanks.

Alison steps out of her pants and starts to unzip her hoodie -

ALTSON

Why not?

NOAH

I'm, uh... I'm not dirty.

She stops.

ALISON

I am.

She's staring at him. Half-naked. Practically challenging him to touch her. He freezes.

She steps into the shower, closing the door. Through the slits between the wooden beams, Noah can see her undress the rest of the way. The slats cover her most delicate parts, but the skin that is exposed leaves only the bare minimum to Noah's imagination.

Her head and neck are exposed above the door. Her bra and panties are at her feet. She hasn't broken Noah's gaze since she stepped behind the door.

They look at each other.

NOAH

I - uh - I have to go. It's late. I
don't know what I'm doing here. I
have to go.

Alison turns on the water. It pours down, over her head. She looks up at him through the deluge.

ALISON

So go.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT.

Noah walks down the dark road, trying to calm his heartbeat. Behind him, he HEARS the muffled sound of a man and a woman arguing. The woman's voice sounds a lot like Alison.

The fight seems to escalate. They're screaming at each other.

Noah slows down.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT.

Shrouded by shadows, on the far side of the street, Noah watches the events unfolding down Alison's driveway.

She's wrapped in a towel talking to a MAN, mid-30s, in swim trunks. Noah is too far away to hear what they're saying. But he watches Alison PUSH the man away as hard as she can. As he stumbles back, the motion-sensitive light switches on and Noah can see his face -

It's Cole, the ranch manager.

Cole reaches for Alison. She SLAPS his hand away. He comes at her again, grabbing her by the hair, whispering into her ear. Noah doesn't know what to do. It looks like she's being attacked. He steps forward, into the street, intent on saving her -

Just as he does, she turns her head and looks down the driveway. She seems to SEE him. Somehow, through the dark, she's looking right at him.

Then she does something strange. She SHAKES HER HEAD. It's a slight movement, but it's clear.

Alison turns back to Cole and says something incendiary. He takes a beat, then he turns her around and PUSHES her against the hood of the parked car. He bends her over on her stomach and enters her from behind.

Alison rests her head against the hood of the car, facing Noah. Her eyes meet his and LOCK.

He can't breathe. It's clear she wants him to see this. She's putting on a show. For him.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY.

Noah is sitting across the table from a POLICE OFFICER, mid-40s. His hair is shorter, almost cropped. He's older too, though it's difficult to say how much. He looks exhausted.

He stares off into space, remembering.

POLICE OFFICE

Mr. Simon? Mr. Simon?

Noah snaps back to the present moment. He looks at the police office.

POLICE OFFICE (CONT'D)

Then what happened?

Noah just looks at the cop.

CUT TO BLACK.

PART TWO: ALISON

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - DAY.

Ditch Plains, Montauk. Dawn. The same beach cottage. Up on stilts, with a view of the ocean.

ALISON, 31, lies in bed, staring at the ceiling. She turns over and looks at COLE, 35, sleeping next to her. He's facing away from her, curled around a pillow.

Alison stares at his back. Between his shoulders, there's a striking TATOO of the archangel Gabriel, as a child, sitting down, holding his knees to his chest. His wings are spread majestically behind him. A sword lies at his feet.

Alison reaches her hand out to touch the tattoo, then thinks better of it, and slips out of bed instead.

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY.

Cosy and cluttered. Shells from the Maldives, rocks from Hawaii, wood carvings from Indonesia. The old wood floors are covered with colorful rugs. The couches are deep and faded by the sun.

Alison fills a tea kettle with water and sets it to boil on the stove.

Slicing a lemon on the butcher block counter top, she ACCIDENTALLY CUTS HER FINGER.

She draws a sharp breath in and looks down at the blood starting to pool. Stares at it actually. As if it interests her.

Then she opens a drawer, pulls out a package of ELMO BANDAIDS, and tears one open -

COLE (O.S.)

(from the other room)

Where'd you go?

ALISON

Nowhere.

COLE (O.S.)

Come back to bed.

Alison sighs.

ALISON

Okay.

CUT TO:

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY.

Alison and Cole are having wild, hungry sex on a mattress on the floor. Cole is on top, pumping mightily. Alison's arms and legs are wrapped tightly around him. But she's staring at the ceiling, her expression is oddly vacant, like her mind is someplace else entirely.

Cole's breathing gets harder and faster. Alison knows it well. She knows every inch of his body. The way each muscle rolls. The way each hair falls. She reaches down and SQUEEZES his cheeks apart, sticks her finger inside his ass ...

COLE comes, ferociously. He rolls off of her, with a groan.

COLE

(panting)

Jesus, Ali.

Alison is still staring at the ceiling.

ALISON

How many times do you think we've had sex?

COLE

Thousands.

ALTSON

Ten thousand?

COLE

Maybe.

Alison doesn't respond. Cole props himself up on an elbow and looks at her.

COLE (CONT'D)

What about you?

He reaches down between her legs. She stops him.

ALISON

Just hold my hand.

COLE

(surprised)

Okay.

Cole takes Alison's little hand in his big one. She turns and curls her body into his.

EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE - DECK - DAY.

Back on the deck, Alison is sewing a patch on a pair of man's blue jeans. The sun has now risen above the houses. The light is clean and pale.

On the driveway below, Cole appears, in a half-zipped wetsuit, carrying his surfboard under his arm.

He waves to her. She waves back.

COLE

My Mom asked us to stop by tonight.

ALISON

Oh.

COLE

She wanted to do something. I said it would be alright. She's making lasagna. Everyone is coming.

Beat.

ALISON

Great.

Cole stares up at her, shading his face with his hand.

COLE

I'll see you at the ranch, then?

ALISON

Okay.

Beat.

COLE

Hey. Let's try to have a good day today.

Alison just nods. Cole starts down the driveway with his board.

Suddenly, Alison stands, goes to the railing.

ALISON

Cole!

He turns around.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Be careful.

COLE

I always am.

EXT. OUTDOOR SHOWER - DAY.

Alison sits on the floor of the outdoor shower, under the spray. She's staring at the water as it hits her feet and trickles between the wooden planks. We get the feeling she's been sitting there for a while. Like, maybe, she's having a hard time getting up.

A VOICE starts speaking. It's the same voice we heard on Noah's side, the POLICE OFFICER. And just like Noah, Alison doesn't seem to HEAR it.

VOTCE

Why don't you tell me how it began?

ALISON'S VOICE

It was so long ago, who remembers?

VOICE

We're hoping that you do, Ms. Bailey.

EXT. ROAD - DAY.

Alison peddles her bicycle along the side of Montauk Highway on her way into town. The road is mostly deserted. The sun is now cresting over the tops of the hills.

ALISON'S VOICE

It all started on a dark and stormy night.

(beat)

Oh, God, I'm kidding. Please don't write that down.

INT. ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE - BATHROOM - DAY.

In a dirty, cramped employee bathroom, Alison changes into her uniform. A short, candy-striper dress. She rolls her hair into a tight bun and covers it with a baseball cap that reads ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE.

INT. ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE - KITCHEN - DAY.

Alison emerges from the bathroom into the restaurant kitchen. The LINE COOKS are behind the counter, prepping food.

LINE COOKS

Alison! Que pasa?

ALISON

Otro dia juntos en el paraiso.

They laugh. She goes to the linen closet, finds an employee apron, order pad, etc., then turns and bumps smack into -

LUTHER, mid-thirties. Too handsome for his own good.

LUTHER

Hey, good morning.

ALTSON

Luther. What are you doing here?

LUTHER

I own the place.

Alison points to a clock on the wall. It's says 7 am.

ALISON

Isn't that your bedtime?

LUTHER

Ha.

INT. ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE - COUNTER - DAY.

Alison stands behind the counter, wiping down menus and stacks them in a pile. Luther hovers.

LUTHER

So what's going on, Bailey?

ALISON

You know. Just dying slowly.

LUTHER

You know what I was just thinking about? That first summer you came to work for us. What were you, sixteen? My father still owned the place. I was working behind the counter. Remember that?

ALISON

Not well.

LUTHER

You were the prettiest piece of ass back then, in your little candy stripes.

She tries to ignore him.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

Not to say there's anything wrong with you now, but fifteen years ago... jesus. I thought, if I just put my penis in that girl's vagina before I turn 18 ... and then I did. The end.

She glares at him. He grins.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

I love that story.

Alison moves down the counter and begins scooping butter from a large tubs, into individual serving trays.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

How's Cole?

ALISON

He's fine.

LUTHER

You guys still together?

ALISON

We're married.

LUTHER

Listen. I didn't want to be the one to have to tell you this, but whenever I've seen him lately, he's been joined at the him with this little blond-

ALISON

Jocelyn. She works at the ranch.

LUTHER

Have you seen her? Because assuming she's not half the bitch you are (and honestly, how could she be) and assuming Cole has eyes in his head, it's just a matter of time until -

ALISON

Shut the fuck up, Luther.

JANE, late twenties, enters the restaurant from the outside door, already in her uniform.

JANE

Sorry I'm late.

She stops. Confused.

JANE (CONT'D)

(to Luther)

What the hell are you doing here?

LUTHER

This is my restaurant. Why does everyone keep asking me that?

JANE

(to Alison)

How are you?

ALISON

I'm fine.

JANE

Isn't today -

ALISON

(quickly)

Yes.

LUTHER

(oblivious)

Jane, what did you do last night?

JANE

Why?

LUTHER

Did you get laid? You look like you got laid.

JANE

You're not allowed to ask me that, Luther.

LUTHER

Why not?

JANE

It's sexual harassment.

Luther frowns.

LUTHER

How so?

Alison smiles a little, in spite of herself.

INT. ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE - COUNTER - LATER.

Mid-afternoon. The lunch rush is finally clearing out. Jane and Alison are both back behind the counter, looking worse for wear. Alison consolidates ketchup bottles. Jane empties the coffee and makes another pot.

A BELL rings to indicate the front door has opened. Noah and his family enter the restaurant. Noah is holding Stacey, who's half-dozing, sucking her thumb against his shoulder.

He talks to her softly, trying to wake her up. She nods and then cranes her little neck to kiss him on the cheek.

VOICE

Do you remember seeing him for the first time?

ALISON'S VOICE

Yes.

VOICE

Do you remember what you thought?

No response.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Ms. Bailey?

ALISON'S VOICE

No. But I remember he was holding his daughter.

Helen looks around the restaurant for someone to help them. She sees Jane and Alison behind the counter and gives an impatient little wave.

JANE

A six-top. Awesome.

She grabs some menus off the pile.

ALISON

I'll take them.

Jane looks at her, concerned.

JANE

You sure?

Alison rolls her eyes.

ALISON

Stop.

She takes the menus from Jane and heads across the restaurant.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Welcome to Elmo's. Will you need a high chair?

Noah looks up at her and smiles.

NOAH

That would be great.

CUT TO:

INT. ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE - COUNTER - DAY.

A few minutes later. Alison is taking drink orders. The boys, Martin and Trevor are shooting marbles across the tables at each other. Stacey squeals with delight, trying to catch them.

Alison watches Stacey of the corner of her eye. She can't concentrate.

ALISON

(to Whitney)

I'm sorry, did you say a coffee?

WHITNEY

A cappucino. With skim.

ALISON

We don't serve cappucino.

WHITNEY

Then an espresso.

HELEN

Whitney, this is a diner. They have coffee.

WHITNEY

Gross.

HELEN

(to Alison)

I'm sorry.

Alison smiles.

ALISON

I'll see what the kitchen can do.

HELEN

Just put it in a fancy cup or something. And I'll have a diet coke. And this little girl will have some milk -

Still looking at the menu, Helen puts her hand on the top of Stacey's head. Alison looks down at Stacey. She's gagging.

Alison drops her pencil.

TREVOR

Uh, Mom? Dad? There's something wrong with Stacey.

HELEN

What -

(she looks at Stacey)
Stacey, baby what is it? What's the

matter?

Stacey can't respond. Her hands go to her little throat.

ALISON

She's choking.

TREVOR

I think she just swallowed a marble.

NOAH

You think?

HELEN

Oh my god! Noah!

Noah hits Stacey on the back.

NOAH

Spit it out. Stacey, spit it out.

HELEN

It's not working. It's not working!!

Noah tries to pick Stacey up and give her the Heimlich manuever, but she's squirming in his hands and won't stand up. Alison knows he's running out of time -

ALISON

She's too little. You've got to turn her over. Turn her upside down.

Noah picks Stacey up and turns her over, holding her by her ankles.

NOAH

(to Helen)

I'll hold her. You hit her on the back. Hit her hard.

But now Helen is completely hysterical. Stacey is turning blue.

HELEN

I can't. She's turning blue. Oh my god, she's blue!

Suddenly everyone at the table is screaming at once.

NOAH

HELEN! I need your help!

WHITNEY

Oh my God! Oh my god!

TREVOR

Dad!

MARTIN

Is she going to die?

HELEN

(screaming)

Do something! Do something! DO SOMETHING!

Without thinking, Alison steps forward and POUNDS Stacey on the back, between her shoulder blades. The marble pops out of her mouth, drops to the floor and rolls under the table.

Noah turns Stacey back around again. She's gasping for air. She starts to wail. Helen, who is white as a sheet, pulls Stacey onto her lap and kisses her all over. The boys sit back, stunned. Whitney starts to cry.

Alison backs slowly away.

Noah looks at her, his eyes wide with gratitude.

ALISON

I'll.. go get these drink orders started.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY.

Alison vomits into the toilet. She slumps back against the wall. Her face is wet with cold sweat and she's shaking.

There's a KNOCK on the door.

ALTSON

(weakly)

One second.

MAN'S VOICE

Are you alright?

Alison frowns.

ALISON

This is the woman's bathroom.

MAN'S VOICE

I know.

(beat)

I just wanted to say thank you.

CUT TO:

Alison opens the door. Noah is standing there.

NOAH

I don't know what to say. You saved her life.

ALISON

It's alright.

NOAH

Can I offer you some money or -

He starts to pull his wallet out of his back pocket -

ALTSON

Oh god, no. Please.

An awkward moment.

NOAH

Are you sure you're alright?

ALISON

I'm fine.

NOAH

Well... are you going to come back and take the rest of our order?

Alison looks shocked for a moment and then she laughs.

ALISON

Yes, yes. Just give me a minute.

Noah smiles. The skin around his eyes wrinkles gently. He's a handsome, but tired, man.

NOAH

Okay. I'm Noah, by the way.

He holds out his hand.

ALISON

I'm Alison.

She takes it. She has a strange urge to pull him towards her. To take his hand and put it in her back pocket. To bury her head in his neck...

Alison shakes her head sharply.

NOAH

What?

ALISON

Nothing. I'll be right there.

INT. ELMO'S PANCAKE PALACE - DAY.

The restaurant is practically empty. Alison is clearing off the carnage that Noah's family left in the booth. Jane comes up with a tray, to help her.

JANE

What happened?

ALISON

The baby choked.

JANE

On what?

ALISON

A marble.

Jane shakes her head.

JANE

Some people really shouldn't be parents.

EXT. ROAD - DAY.

Alison, back in her civilian clothes, peddles up a great hill.

ALISON'S VOICE

Look, I can't really tell you what I was thinking. That first year, everything was still such a blur.

EXT. THE LIGHTHOUSE - DAY.

Alison pulls into a parking lot. In front of her, an old New England lighthouse perched high on rocky bluffs.

ALISON

I do remember the sun was really bright. Like, unusually strong for so early in the season.

EXT. STEPS TO THE SEA - DAY.

Alison descends a winding staircase of stones, down the bluffs to the sea.

ALISON'S VOICE There was no place to hide.

EXT. BEACH - DAY.

Alison sits on the sand, tucked inside a shaded cove, watching the water. She's out on the end of the island, where the ocean crashes violently into the sound.

ALISON'S VOICE

I liked this one spot under the lighthouse because the waves out there seemed even angrier than I was.

Alison runs her fingers through the rocky sand. She picks out three, smooth, white stones and turns them over in her palm.

EXT. ROAD - DAY.

Alison peddles back up the highway, in the opposite direction. She pulls off and turns onto a dirt lane lined in holly trees.

EXT. CEMETERY GATES - DAY.

Alison stops at the entrance to a small New England cemetery. She leans her bike against a crumbling stone wall. She stays there for a long time, standing under the gates, unable to enter.

She checks the time on her phone. It's already 6 pm.

And there are three MISSED CALLS from Cole.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY.

Alison sits in front of a new headstone. She traces her hand over the engraving.

It reads:

GABRIEL BAILEY, 2009-2012.

There are fresh flowers on the grave and a little keychain with a surfboard attached. Cole, it seems, has already been there.

Alison reaches into her pocket and takes out the white stones.

She places them carefully at the foot of the grave.

Then she kneels down and gets her face very close to the ground.

ALISON

Hello Munchkin. I'm sorry it's taken me so -

She chokes on a unexpected sob. She wipes a sudden torrent of tears away with the back of her hand.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Do you know what today is? Do you?

Alison waits. Listening. Desperate for some sort of response. She HEARS the wind in the trees. The birds. Perhaps a truck on the highway in the distance. She puts her face down, very close to the dirt.

ALISON (CONT'D)

(whispering)

It's your birthday.

Alison takes a tattered copy of J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan out of her bag and opens it to a dog-eared page.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Where were we?

(reading)

His sobs woke Wendy and she sat up in bed. She was not alarmed to see a stranger crying on the nursery floor; she was only pleasantly interested. "Boy" she said courteously, "Why are you crying?" INT. THE RANCH - NIGHT.

Alison rides up to a massive wooden gate protecting an old barn. Over her, DEEP HOLLOW RANCH is spelled out in wrought iron letters that canopy the gate.

Beyond the barn, a horse corral and beyond that, a gently rolling pasture where a half dozen horses are grazing.

INT. CHERRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Cole's whole family sits around a long table, eating lasagna. They're boisterous, chaotic. Cole has three BROTHERS, each one more handsome than the last, all of them married with CHILDREN, who are running in and out of the room, diving under the table and snatching food off their parents' plates. The scene is overflowing with joy and love.

Alison enters the room, dirty and shivering. A silence falls over the table as they all turn to look.

Alison looks at Cole. She's trying to apologize with her eyes. Cole won't accept it.

CHERRY (60), Cole's mother and the matriarch of this mayhem, observes the interaction and decides she needs to intervene.

CHERRY

There she is! Right on time!

Cherry gets up from the table, crosses to Alison and envelops her in a bosomy hug. As if on cue, the table erupts back into conversation.

INT. CHERRY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER.

Alison helps Cherry wash dishes after dinner. The brothers, Cole, ERIC (32), EDWARD (30) and HAL (28) are visible through the kitchen window, smoking cigarettes in front of the barn. The rest of the family ... the children, the wives are gathered around a fire in the adjacent family room, watching Beauty and the Beast.

Alison peers out the window.

ALISON

It looks like they're having some sort of a conference.

MARY-KATE (23), Hal's young, hippy wife, enters and picks up a dish towel.

MARY-KATE

They are. Haven't you heard?

ALISON

Heard what?

MARY-KATE

Cherry's had an offer on the ranch.

ALISON

(surprised)

You have? From who?

Cherry shrugs.

CHERRY

City folk.

ALISON

For how much?

MARY-KATE

A shit ton. Enough for her to retire and live the rest of her days like a fancy lady.

ALISON

Are you going to take it?

CHERRY

I'll let the boys decide.

ALISON

It's your house.

CHERRY

But it's their inheritance.

Alison swallows her tongue and concentrates on the dishes.

CHERRY (CONT'D)

How are you, my dear?

ALISON

I'm okay.

CHERRY

How was today?

ALISON

It was fine.

Cherry gives Alison a long, serious look but doesn't push her.

CHERRY

Is Cole being good to you?

ALISON

Always Cherry.

Cherry nods, approvingly.

CHERRY

That's my boy.

MARY-KATE

So guess what I'm really into now?

ALISON

What?

MARY-KATE

Tarot cards. Want me to do a reading for you?

ALISON

(not at all)

Um...

CHERRY

Go on, girls. Have fun. I'll finish up here.

Alison can think of a million things she'd rather do, but there's no disobeying Cherry.

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT.

Alison sits opposite Mary Kate across a picnic table, passing a joint back and forth. The air is cold, and the girls are huddled under blankets. Above their heads, little colored lights twinkle in the trees. Mary Kate lights a candle and lays the cards out between them. The wind from the sea whips her hair in front of her eyes.

ALISON

Where'd you learn to do this?

MARY KATE

From a gypsy that came into the store. I've been practicing all winter. It's really hard. Let me see...

She flips over one more tarot card and lays it at the end of the line. She frowns. MARY KATE (CONT'D)

Lucifer. That's worrisome.

ALISON

(a joke)

Am I going to hell?

Mary Kate doesn't laugh.

MARY KATE

I'm not sure. Let me look it up.

She pulls a paperback, Tarot-card bible out of her purse and opens it.

ISABEL

It says here Lucifer is the card of temptation. Something is coming. Something... powerful... wild... ... it may be a very good thing... or he may enslave you.

Mary Kate looks up at Alison.

MARY KATE

That's strange. What could it be?

Alison reaches down and picks up another card from the line. It's the picture of a very young squire.

ALISON

What about this one?

MARY KATE

That's the Page of Cups.

ALISON

Does that mean... is he a child?

Mary Kate looks pained.

MARY-KATE

Not necessarily. He's a messenger. Wait, let me see...

She opens the book again.

MARY-KATE (CONT'D)

It says here... he is *like* a child. This messenger. He is very sensitive. You must be clear with him. Or he will misunderstand you.

Alison stares at the SMILING LITTLE BOY.

COLE'S VOICE

There you are.

Alison STARTS and turns around. Cole is approaching.

COLE

I've been looking for you. I'm heading down to the bonfire. You want to come?

Alison just stares at him. She's suddenly so tired. She doesn't want to move.

ALTSON

Can I meet you there in a bit?

COLE

(annoyed)

Sure. Do whatever you want.

Cole leaves in the direction of the beach.

MARY KATE

Are you guys okay?

ALISON

We're fine.

Alison watches Cole's figure receding into the dark dunes.

ALISON (CONT'D)

He never gives up though. You got to give him that.

EXT. THE BEACH - NIGHT.

Alison wanders down the dark beach, in the direction of a glowing bonfire. She's still wearing the wool blanket for warmth.

Just beyond her, the dark surf is churning. The ocean seems restless. Hungry.

VOICE

How old were you? When it all began?

ALISON

I was thirty-one years old. I remember promising myself I'd get to thirty-five. I'd make it through until then.

(MORE)

ALISON (CONT'D)
And if nothing had changed... well
then I had tried hard enough.

Up ahead, the gathering around the bonfire is becoming clear. About twenty people or so, smoking joints, playing the guitar, singing softly. They are a happy seeming bunch. Lean, tanned people in soft, warm colors. Not too fancy. Some dreadlocks. Some beads. A few SURFERS come up to join them, carrying their boards, fresh from a midnight surf.

Alison stops with some distance, and watches them. She sees Cole, at the center of the circle, leaning back on his elbows, staring into the fire. The light flickers on his face. He looks relaxed. Content. To his right, a beautiful, younger GIRL, with long dark hair, whispers something in his ear and giggles. Cole smiles but doesn't take his eyes off the flames.

Alison watches him. Unable to join. Their merriment is like a barrier, impossible to breach.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Cole was getting better. He was recovering. That wasn't possible for me. And I was so angry at him. I thought... it seemed... almost evil, to be happy.

Alison turns and walks away in the other direction. She sees a figure coming towards her on the sand and instinctively, pulls the blanket around her tighter.

NOAH

Hello.

Alison squints into the darkness. She's shocked to realize it's Noah.

ALISON

(stunned)

Hi.

NOAH

I found you.

ALISON

(confused)

Were you looking for me?

NOAH

I'm kidding. I was just on my way to check out that bonfire down there.

ALISON

Oh. Wow.

NOAH

Are you coming from there, or ...?

ALISON

Oh, I... no, I'm... uh, no.

Noah smiles.

NOAH

Oh. That's too bad. I could use an introduction. Do you live around here?

ALISON

A little farther up. Ditch Plains. What about you?

NOAH

Right over there actually.

Noah points casually in the direction of a nearby mansion.

ALISON

Really?

NOAH

Yeah, but it's not my house. It belongs to my father-in-law.

ALISON

Your father-in-law is Bruce Butler?

NOAH

You know him?

ALISON

Yeah, I mean. Who doesn't?

NOAH

Right. I guess he's pretty famous.

Awkward silence. Alison steps out of his way.

ALISON

I don't want to keep you.

NOAH

Oh, that's okay. I'd probably feel kind of weird going over there. Those people look way too cool.

Alison smiles.

ALISON

They're not really.

NOAH

Maybe not to you. I'm easily intimidated though.

Noah pulls out a pack of cigarettes and lights one.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Want a smoke?

ALISON

I don't smoke.

NOAH

Neither do I.

ALISON

You're offering me a cigarette.

NOAH

Right. I should amend that. I don't smoke EXCEPT when I'm on vacation. And even then, I only let myself smoke french cigarettes.

ALISON

Why?

NOAH

Because they're impossible to come by and I usually give up before I find one.

He offers her the pack.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Come on. They're "Gauloises."

Alison smiles again and takes a cigarette.

Noah lights it for her.

NOAH (CONT'D)

So I'm Noah, in case you -

ALISON

I remember. I'm Alison.

NOAH

Listen, I'm sorry again about this afternoon. You shouldn't have to save a child from choking to death. That's probably above your pay grade.

ALISON

It's okay. I'm happy I could.

NOAH

Yeah, me too. I keep wondering what I could possibly do to repay you.

ALISON

You don't have to do anything.

NOAH

You don't understand the way my brain works. I'm pretty neurotic. This is going to haunt me until I buy you a pony or something.

ALISON

I don't want a pony.

NOAH

See now you're just making it worse.

Alison laughs.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Can I at least walk you home? I
mean, will you let me do that?

Alison pauses. Something tells her, this isn't the best idea. But he seems so harmless.

ALISON

Okay.

EXT. LANE - NIGHT.

Alison and Noah walk down a little beach road, past rows of houses raised on stilts, softly lit by charming street lights.

ALISON

Four kids?

NOAH

Last time I counted.

ALISON

Can I ask you a question? It may be kind of rude.

NOAH

Please do.

ALISON

Why four?

NOAH

I used to have a good answer for that. I wanted to populate the earth with reasonable people so the extremists didn't take over.

ALISON

Really?

NOAH

I was in grad school. It seemed like a good idea at the time. Do you have any?

Beat.

ALISON

Kids? No.

NOAH

You should try it one day. They really are the best things that ever happened to me. I know everyone says that, but it's true.

Alison stops in front of the pebbled driveway that leads to her house.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Wow. This is where you live? This place is great.

ALISON

Thanks.

Noah spots the outdoor shower adjacent to the side of the house.

NOAH

Is that an outdoor shower?

ALISON

Yeah.

NOAH

Oh man, I've always wanted one of those. Can I check it out?

ALISON

Sure.

EXT. OUTDOOR SHOWER - NIGHT.

Alison opens the door and shows Noah the little wooden stall.

NOAH

This is my idea of happiness.

ALISON

You want to try it?

Noah grins.

NOAH

No. I should go home.

ALISON

Okay. Well, thanks for the walk.

She puts out her hand to shake. He ignores it, moves in and KISSES her on the cheek.

Something HAPPENS in that moment. It's difficult to describe (But when is it ever easy?). There's a flash of something. A surge of warmth. Alison steps back.

ALISON (CONT'D)

(surprised)

Oh.

NOAH

I'm sorry, that was... I don't know why I... I'd say I'm European, but I'd clearly be lying.

Alison smiles, nervously.

ALISON

Well...

NOAH

I guess I'll see you around town?

ALISON

There's no real way to avoid it.

Noah turns and heads up the driveway.

Alison watches him go, confused. She doesn't know why her heart is suddenly beating so quickly.

She steps into the shower, turns on the hot water and takes off her clothes. The hot water hits her face with a HISS.

She stands for a moment, still as a statue. Then she slides down the wall to the floor.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Alison exits the shower, wrapped in her towel just as Cole is turning up the driveway, accompanied by the dark-haired, younger girl. This is his employee, JOCELYN, 25.

COLE

Hey.

ALISON

Hey. Hi Jocelyn.

JOCELYN

Oh hey Alison. We missed you at the bonfire.

ALISON

(icy)

I'll bet you did.

An awkward moment. Cole is furious. Jocelyn, confused.

JOCELYN

Okay well, nice to see you. See you tomorrow Cole.

COLE

See you Joce.

Jocelyn waves and heads up the street. Cole walks slowly towards Alison.

ALISON

"Joce?"

Cole ignores her.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Fuck her if you want to. Just don't make me watch.

Cole freezes. Then he turns, PUNCHES a dent in the hood of his truck.

Alison JUMPS.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Cole!

COLE

What?

ALISON

Don't do that!

ALISON (CONT'D)

Because you're scaring me!

COLE

I'm scaring you? I'm scaring you? I did everything you wanted. I read all the books. We went to the counselor. We went to the priest. I'm trying, Alison.

ALISON

I know.

COLE

I wake up every day with his face in my head too. You're not the only one who lost a child.

ALISON

I know!

A long pause. Then Alison goes over to him. She leans into him.

ALISON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Cole doesn't respond.

ALISON (CONT'D)

It hurts.

Cole relents. He wraps his arms around her.

COLE

I know it does, baby.

ALISON

Make it stop.

COLE

I don't know how.

Alison reaches up and kisses Cole. He kisses her back, gently. She kisses him harder. Her hands move down his body, into his trunks. He puts his fingers in her hair and pulls her towards him gently, whispers in her ear -

COLE (CONT'D)

Let's go inside.

ALISON

No.

Alison SHOVES Cole away suddenly. He looks at her, confused. He reaches out - she SLAPS his hand.

They stare at each other. Breathing hard.

In one swift movement, Cole grabs Alison by both shoulders, turns her around and pushes her against the hood of his car. He bends her over onto her stomach, rips off her towel -

COLE

Is this what you want?

Alison doesn't answer.

COLE (CONT'D)

Is it??!

ALISON

(small)

Yes.

As Cole fucks her, Alison rests her head on the cold metal of the car hood and looks out into the darkness. As usual, she feels nothing.

Suddenly, she draws a quick breath in. There, in the shadows, on the other side of the street, she sees Noah. Watching.

He's not looking away. He's not ashamed. He's just standing there, taking it all in.

As if it's all for him.

ALISON (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Harder.

Cole pounds into her harder. Noah doesn't break his gaze. Alison is terrified, but at the same time, turned on. She FEELS something start to build -

ALISON (CONT'D)

Harder.

Cole grabs her hips and slams himself into her. She closes her eyes and lets the sensation overwhelm her. They both PEAK at the same time.

It's the first orgasm she's had since Gabriel died.

Cole falls on top of her.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

Alison opens her eyes and looks out into the darkness.

Noah is gone.

INT. POLICE OFFICE - DAY,

Alison sits in the interrogation room. She looks radically different. She's wearing a business suit. Her wild hair is pulled tightly back and clipped into a neat bun. There's a briefcase on the floor next to her. She's older too, though, like Noah, it's difficult to tell how much.

She stares off at the wall...

POLICE OFFICER

Ms. Bailey?

Alison turns and looks at him.

ALISON

Officer?

POLICE OFFICER

(gently)

It's almost three o'clock. You said you had to pick up your kid at three.

Alison looks at her watch.

ALISON

Oh God, thank you. Can I go then?

OFFICER

You can go.

Alison gathers her things and leaves.

END OF PILOT