

LIFE AS A HOUSE
WRITTEN BY MARK ANDRUS

FADE IN:

A clock alarm SOUNDS over TITLES on BLACK. We HEAR someone clearing congested lungs, coughing up phlegm; a slight crash STOPS both the cough and the alarm.

EXT. GEORGE'S BEACH SHACK - MORNING

The cottage is a tiny, peeling paint rat-trap set dead center on a small ocean front cul-de-sac, surrounded by four massive post-modern mansions.

INT. GEORGE'S BEACH SHACK BEDROOM - MORNING

GEORGE NELSON, 42, squints and shivers as the spotty morning light and ocean breeze enter through an open window. Bold waves crash against the cliffs outside the room. A five-foot wide stack of hand hewed beams are piled pyramid style, making movement in the room next to impossible. George stands shirtless in underwear and coughs again. He steps over a pile of tools and stands at the window, facing the sea. A happy sounding tune by Guster, "WHAT YOU WISH FOR," begins with the lyrics: 'Woke up today, to everything gray and all that I saw just keeps going on and on...'

EXT. WEBBER'S HOUSE - MORNING

The post-modern house is three-levels of concrete and glass.

INT. SAM WEBBER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

SAM is sixteen with spiky black hair, a nose ring, two earrings and painted black nails. The song continues with: '...sweep all the pieces under the bed, close all the curtains and cover my head.' Sam looks wasted as he climbs out of bed and rummages through his dresser, retrieving an empty bottle of prescription drugs; he tosses the bottle. He walks to a desk where a half-built model of a house sits unfinished and squeezes glue into a plastic bag and sniffs it. Sam enters the closet and digs into a pile of dirty clothes, pulling out the tie to a robe; he knots it around the closet pole and then twists it once to form a noose. He slips his neck through the noose and lowers his body; though we don't see exactly what he's doing below his neck, it's evident through his jerking arm that he's masturbating.

EXT. BECK'S OCEAN FRONT MANSION - MORNING

COLLEEN BECK, George's next-door neighbor, is a well maintained blonde in her late thirties. She walks out of the angular concrete mansion, grabs the paper and walks back in.

INT. BECK'S KITCHEN - MORNING

This is a minimalist kitchen, with pored concrete walls and stainless steel cabinets. Colleen drops the paper on the table and walks to the sink to wash her hands. The SONG CONTINUES: '...If this serenade is not what you want, it's just how it is...' Colleen appears distracted for a moment. She walks outside onto the terrace with wet hands, then bolts back in, breezing through the kitchen with purpose.

INT. ALYSSA BECK'S BATHROOM - MORNING

ALYSSA is sixteen and perfect with strawberry blonde hair and white teeth; her head is partially out the bathroom window. Colleen bursts in, eases Alyssa aside and with effort, sticks her head out of the same high open window.

COLLEEN

This is ridiculous!

We must not see exactly what they see, but out the window and almost beyond view, a stream of urine arks out from George Nelson's beach house bedroom, into the pacific ocean some twenty-feet below. The piss stops. Colleen bangs her head trying to get it back inside the house.

INT. WEBBER'S UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MORNING

ROBIN WEBBER is George's ex-wife, still beautiful at forty. She herds two boys, RYAN (8) and ADAM (7), down the hall.

ROBIN

Run downstairs and give your dad a hug.

RYAN

Why?

ROBIN

He'll be gone for his birthday.

ADAM

Can we have a party for him while he's gone?

Robin stops and KNOCKS on a bedroom door.

ROBIN

I hope you're showered and ready for school!

A loud CRASH stops Ryan and Adam at the top of the stairs.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - MORNING

Robin rushes in and glances around the room for her son.

ROBIN

Sam?!

INT. SAM'S WEBBER'S CLOSET - MORNING

The closet pole and a long line of clothes have been felled by Sam's dangerous whack-off technique; he's on the floor with the robe tie still around his neck and a pile of shirts sprawled over him. The song continues: '...come out come out, wherever you are, would you do it all over right from the start, and what you wish for won't come true, you aren't surprised to love, are you?'

Robin stops at the door, trying to figure out why her son is sitting in a pile of his own clothes. Ryan and Adam join her, looking equally perplexed.

EXT. GEORGE NELSON'S CUL-DE-SAC - MORNING

George's dog, GUSTER, is doing his business on the lawn of a modern day robber baron, DAVID DOKOS, who exits his house with a briefcase. He hops into his Mercedes and proceeds to chase Guster straight across his well-manicured grass. Guster easily escapes death and runs off. George walks out of his shack as David hops the curb, flips him off and drives away. George waves goodbye.

GEORGE

Stick it up your ass! Have a nice day.

(glancing around)

Guster!

Guster runs to his side as Colleen rushes out of her house.

COLLEEN

This has got to stop!

GEORGE

He escaped. He's going back in.

COLLEEN

Does it give you some sort of perverse pleasure to expose your...penis in plain view of my sixteen year-old daughter?

GEORGE

There are no windows facing my...exposure.

COLLEEN

George, this is the third time.

GEORGE

The plumber's due out on Friday.

COLLEEN

You'll have to explain that to the police.

GEORGE

You were the only neighbor I could tolerate.

COLLEEN

I did warn you.

GEORGE

My life is a warning. I just can't figure out for what.

Colleen shies away from George's stare; he finally turns and walks toward the house but stops short as he turns back.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Colleen, how hard was it for you to get your head outside that window far enough to see my dick?

This stops Colleen for a moment; it was difficult. George walks back to the cottage and locks Guster in before stepping into an old Ford truck and driving off. Colleen watches him drive off, then turns to her house and stares.

INT. WEBBER'S DINING ROOM - MORNING

PETER WEBBER, Robin's husband, is a distinguished, intimidating man with silver hair and an expensive suit. LOIS, the maid, serves French toast to Ryan and Adam as Robin sips tea.

ADAM

Sam broke his closet.

Peter glances at Robin, who shrugs.

ROBIN

I don't have a clue anymore. I wish you'd talk to him. He needs a man.

PETER

His father is a man.

ROBIN

A man he respects.

Sam walks into the room from the hall, outfitted in all black with kick ass boots.

SAM

Thanks for talking about me behind my back...useful in court.

PETER

Are you wearing eye shadow?

Adam, Ryan and Robin check out the eye shadow.

SAM

No.

PETER

Take it off.

Sam flutters his eyelids in defiance of his stepfather.

PETER (CONT'D)

Do it now!

SAM

If I walk out the door, who's gonna be here tonight for the follow through?

Peter hesitates for just a second.

SAM (CONT'D)

Have a nice flight.

Sam's out the door with his eye shadow intact.

RYAN

Queer.

ROBIN

What did you say?

RYAN

Dad said it first.

Robin focuses on Peter, who simply shrugs. Adam stands up, walks over to his father and gives him a hug.

ADAM

I get chocolate cake for your birthday.

PETER

Are your hands clean?

Adam is quick to back away from his father and lick the fingers of one hand.

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN - MORNING

George is resting his head against the glass window as he

stares out at the blighted landscape leading to downtown Los Angeles. A sudden pang tightens his face; he presses his hand against his stomach and closes his eyes.

EXT. LAGUNA BEACH HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Sam is alone at the back of the parking lot, sitting on the hood of an old Saab, smoking as two boys, JOSH and MAREK, both seventeen, park a Porsche and pull Alyssa Beck (George's peeping neighbor) and another girl out of the backseat.

MAREK

Dude, nice look.

Sam simply nods as Marek and the other girl laugh at his all black garb, earrings and eye shadow.

ALYSSA

I saw your dad this morning.

Sam drops his cigarette and stomps it out as he stands; his face lightens as Alyssa waves before walking away.

JOSH

Been thinking?

SAM

No.

MAREK

Forget him!

JOSH

Two hours a week for three-hundred cash.
The whole summer. Do the math.
(as a dig)

They consider that a hatchback or a station wagon? Oh, that isn't yours anyway, is it?

Josh raises his eyebrows and smiles before walking away. Sam faces the Saab and kicks the bumper as hard as he can. Suddenly, a boy (COREY) bolts up from the back seat.

COREY

I was in total REM, man!

INT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES HIGHRISE - LATE MORNING

The architectural firm of Benson and Feinsilber occupies the entire fortieth floor; George Nelson is their sole model maker. Rather than offices, most of the space is open, segmented only by portable low walls. Along the outer walls, below the long line of windows, is a shelf filled with amazingly intricate models. George is alone in a cubicle of

his own, cutting polystyrene with a hot wire. STEVEN GARDNER rounds a corner with a velocity that makes George flinch.

STEVEN

Done...close to done?

GEORGE

I'm doing the grass.

STEVEN

Fuck the grass. Who said grass?

Steven exits as quickly as he entered, but as soon as George goes back to work, Steven pops his head back in.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Burke bided out the Berlin Plaza. Did he tell you?

GEORGE

I was going to start Monday.

STEVEN

He likes the look of the computer models, anyway. You take too long.

(beat)

After you mow the grass, would you mind bringing the house to my office? I have a presentation to make.

George simply stares as Steven nods and leaves.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA ATRIUM - LUNCHTIME

Sam is by himself, his eyes closed, listening to music through headphones as Alyssa stops to stare; she visually scans him head to foot, appearing slightly perplexed as a friend passes.

FRIEND

I wouldn't make a habit of it.

ALYSSA

Okay.

The friend walks on; after a beat, Alyssa does too.

EXT. TOP OF THE WORLD PARK - EVENING

In the distance, the sun colors the sky a blinding orange as it sets. A Range Rover with blackened windows is parked behind a Porsche. 'TINTED WINDOWS,' an up-tempo tune with a hand clapping by the Pansy Division, begins: 'A bed would be a treat/But all we've got is this backseat/Tinted windows are a beautiful thing.'

Through the front windshield, we can see Marek sitting in the passenger's seat with his eyes closed.

ANOTHER VIEW

Josh, Marek's friend, is sitting on a bench in the park behind the cars. 'A dark secluded spot/In a deserted parking lot/Tinted windows are a wonderful thing.'

Suddenly, the passenger door on the Rover opens and Marek climbs out, brushing his hair with his hands before casually checking his zipper. He closes the door and the car speeds away. Josh walks to Marek and wordlessly they climb into the Porsche and drive off.

EXT. GEORGE NELSON'S BEACH SHACK - DAY

George is shirtless in his front yard, hand hewing a twenty foot beam. One strong, long pull and a thin shaving flutters to the ground; Guster nabs it and starts to chew.

GEORGE

You'll crap real logs if you keep eating wood.

Guster appears unconcerned as he awaits a new shaving.

ALYSSA (O.S.)

Hi, Mr. Nelson.

George glances up, wipes the sweat from his forehead as Alyssa walks toward him in white shorts and a tee shirt.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Sorry I got you into trouble.

GEORGE

I'll survive.

George goes back to works and Guster taste tests shavings as Alyssa searches for something else to say.

ALYSSA

Does Sam have any friends?

George stops and looks up; he has no idea how to answer.

GEORGE

He must.

ALYSSA

He seems lonely.

GEORGE

Are you his friend?

ALYSSA

No.

GEORGE

Why?

ALYSSA

Marilyn Manson...and I guess he's into guys. I hate nose rings. And the blue eye shadow thing really isn't working.

George is totally confused, unsure most of the answer, but before he can question her, a police car pulls to a stop; OFFICER KURT WALKER steps out.

KURT

Thought I'd run over the list.

Officer Walker removes a pad from his pocket and flips through to find his place.

ALYSSA

This is such a street of whiners.

KURT

From Tuesday to yesterday, not including Monday or today. Okay...Mrs. Dokos is repeatedly running over her lawn. The Corliss' have attributed the increase in rat population in their environs to the state of your...structure.

ALYSSA

IPO's caused the rat population on this street.

Officer Walker focuses on Alyssa.

KURT

And of course the Beck's, with the...

ALYSSA

It could have been a squirt gun.

KURT

(to George)

You've been good this week.

GEORGE

You forgot David Dokos and Tom and Barbara.

Kurt stuffs his pad back into his pocket.

KURT

Mr. Dokos calls animal control for Guster
and I was out here on the other.

(pointing to the plane)

Do you mind?

George hands him the plane and Kurt begins to work the wood.

ALYSSA

Are you guys' friends?

KURT

We've known each other since grade
school.

ALYSSA

I mean, but did you both go camping on
weekends? Listen to music? Masturbate
together? Talk on the phone?

George doesn't answer and Kurt keeps working.

KURT

Hunted rabbit in the hills.

Alyssa stares at George, disappointed.

GEORGE

I aimed high.

KURT

We just weren't very much alike, I guess.
I don't know.

(casually; to George)

I liked your dad more than I liked you.

ALYSSA

I wouldn't want you as a friend.

KURT

George just never really...aimed that
high. Even with not hitting a rabbit. I
knew you were doing that, by the way.
That's why I stopped doing it with you.
You were no fun. It was always like you
were frightened. Quiet and boring.

Kurt is beginning to perspire as he shaves food off the beam
for Guster.

ALYSSA

Funny how he's the architect and you're
just a loud mouth cop.

KURT

He builds models for architects. His dad, on the other hand, was the real deal. Designed and built the coolest houses I've ever seen.

GEORGE

Was bankrupt and dead before I was twenty.

KURT

Left you this place.

GEORGE

It was in my name so he wouldn't lose it. He stole it from everyone that deserved it by putting me on title.

KURT

Do you know what I'd give to have this! Forget how I got it! I can't afford dirt in this town. I live in Riverside, Goddammit And you get to piss in the ocean.

Kurt stops working and steps back.

KURT (CONT'D)

Your kid was down around Diver's Cover again, smoking pot. I didn't write him up...told him I wouldn't tell you...

GEORGE

Thanks for telling me.

KURT

At least your father tried, George.

Kurt walks to his car and drives off. There's a moment of awkwardness with Alyssa. George walks into his house leaving Alyssa with Guster.

INT. WEBBER'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Robin is sitting at the kitchen counter, cutting carrots; through the French doors, she's able to watch Ryan and Adam, along with a few friends, play in the pool.

GEORGE (O.S.)

I could be anyone.

Robin jerks with fright as half the carrots roll to the floor.

ROBIN

Then why do you stay you?

George picks up the carrots and washes them in the sink.

GEORGE

You should lock your doors.

ROBIN

Ring the bell before you try the door.

George bites into a carrot as Robin starts chopping again.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Did Sam call to tell you he wouldn't be over this weekend?

GEORGE

You let him pierce his nose?

Robin snatches the carrot from George's hand and chops it up.

ROBIN

Lock the door behind you.

GEORGE

Where is he?

ROBIN

Where he always is.

George takes Robin's hand and removes the knife.

GEORGE

Not that I don't trust you.

As George lets go, Robin holds on; he appears surprised by her grip of his wrist. Robin's eyes well with tears.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I should have knocked.

George is clearly not comfortable with his ex-wife's hold of him, with her tears.

ROBIN

What kind of a mother can't stand her son?

George jerks his arm away from her grip.

GEORGE

I don't know.

INT. WEBBER'S UPSTAIRS HALL - AFTERNOON

George is tense and he walks to Sam's door and KNOCKS.

GEORGE

Why aren't you coming in for the weekend?

(beat)

Sam?!

Nothing. George tries the door - it's locked. Frustrated, he walks back down the hall and down the stairs.

INT. WEBBER'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Outside, the boys are engaged in a raucous version of Marco Polo. Robin is at the sink; she holds her hair back with one hand and splashes water on her face with the other. George walks by outside, carrying a ladder.

EXT. WEBBER'S BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Ryan is the first to notice George.

ADAM

Marco!

RYAN

What are you doing?

ADAM

I'm not cheating! I'm not looking!

Robin wipes her face with a hand towel as she rushes out.

ROBIN

What are you doing?

GEORGE

He doesn't answer.

The boys have stopped playing; Adam opens his eyes.

ROBIN

He never answers.

GEORGE

Why does he have a lock on his door?

ROBIN

Because he put the lock on! Do you think I told him he could have a nose ring?! Why do you ask me everything you should ask him!? I don't know anything, anymore!

The boys line up against the edge of the pool and watch George extend the ladder against the house and climb.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You climb up there and tell him what he can and can't do. Take him for the summer, okay? Whip him into shape. Cut his hair. Make him smile. Let him hate you for a while!

(sadly)

You're too late for heroics, George.

George lops a leg over the railing and steps onto the bedroom balcony. He peers into the room through the sliding glass door and tries to open it (locked) before removing the screen to the small open window beside it. He climbs in.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Sam is asleep on his bed in his underwear, wearing headphones. On the floor is an aerosol can of whipping cream. George picks up the can and tosses it in the trash. He focuses back on his son with his nose ring, earrings, blue eyeshadow and thin, pale white body. Sam is soundly asleep. George gently removes the headphones from his son's head; drum heavy music surges from the small, padded speakers.

GEORGE

You need every brain cell you've got.

A KNOCK on the door stirs Sam more than his father's voice.

SAM

(half-asleep)

Leave me alone!

Sam's eyes are still closed as he shifts onto his side. George opens the door; Robin is weak and weepy.

ROBIN

I don't know what to do, anymore. Take him. You take him.

(hostile)

You're such a good father.

George walks out of the room, around Robin and down the stairs without a word. Sam stirs at the sound and sits up to confront his mother.

SAM

What are you doing in my room?

ROBIN

I didn't go in your room.

SAM

I locked the door! Get out! I locked

the door! Get out!

EXT. WEBBER'S UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Robin grabs the door and closes it quickly, but doesn't move.

SAM (O.S.)

Stupid bitch! Liar! I locked the door!
I don't sneak around your room! Liar!

INT. SAM'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Sam rushes over to the window and stares down at the screen and ladder. Ryan, Adam and their friends are still in the pool, holding onto the coping, staring up at Sam. Sam slams the window shut and searches for the can of whipping cream. He gets down on his knees to search under the bed. Standing and making one more pass of the room, he notices the can in the trash. He instantly focuses all his rage at the closed door.

SAM

This is my room! You have no right in
here! This is mine!

INT. WEBBER'S UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Robin is sitting on the floor at the top of the stairs, staring blankly down at the foyer of this modernist mansion.

SAM (O.S.)

Why can't you all just die and leave me
alone!

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - MORNING

The traffic is thick and loud and the sky is a blanket of brown as George makes his way down a sidewalk mixed with professionals and panhandlers. Suddenly sick, George rushes to the side of a building and vomits.

INT. BENSON, KIDDLER, FEINSILBER AND ASSOICATES - MORNING

George wipes a clump of wet paper towel against the vomit stain on his cuff as he walks through the pockets of cubicles to a large enclosed office. A SECRETARY smiles as she stands up from her desk and opens the door.

SECRETARY

Good morning.

GEORGE

Is there a...

He holds out the wad of wet paper towels, but before he can

say trashcan, BRYAN BURKE stands up from behind his desk.

BRYAN

George, have a seat! I've got juice.

INT. BRYAN BURKE'S OFFICE - MORNING

George steps in and the secretary closes the door to the office. Bryan approaches with his arm outstretched, but George can only raise the paper towels.

GEORGE

A bird caught me.

Bryan grabs a trashcan and holds it up; George tosses the ball into the trash and sits down.

BRYAN

Orange juice...croissant?

Bryan motions with his hand as he sits.

GEORGE

I'm good, thanks.

BRYAN

What are you on?

GEORGE

Pardon me?

BRYAN

how much weight have you lost?

GEORGE

Oh...nothing. Thirty pounds. I just haven't been very hungry.

BRYAN

How's your wife?

GEORGE

When we divorce a decade ago, she was very, very angry.

(beat)

Now she's just hostile.

Bryan nods and laughs as he takes a chunk of croissant and chews as he talks.

BRYAN

Right...she married...what was he?

GEORGE

He buys and sells the world.

BRYAN

Peter Webber! Right. Quite the spotlight on that guy.

GEORGE

I did tell you, didn't I? That I'd be ready to start the Berlin model today?

BRYAN

Well, that's sort of...you're sure you're not hungry?

Bryan is anxious as he holds up the rest of the croissant. George shakes his head "no". Bryan tosses his croissant into the trash can and leans forward.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

This isn't me.

(beat)

We can show clients endless options, change anything in a matter of hours on the computer. But you won't change.

GEORGE

Typing and clicking myself to renderings isn't why I started building models.

BRYAN

All of us are typing and clicking, George. Whether we want to, or not.

GEORGE

I'm not.

BRYAN

Which is why we bid out a quarter of our projects. It doesn't make a lot of sense anymore to want what we don't have and don't want what we do.

George glances around the office, angered by the thought he's being fired.

GEORGE

I've been here twenty years.

BRYAN

Maybe that's too long.

GEORGE

(hopeful)

Maybe...?

BRYAN

That's too long.

George nods as he stares at Bryan.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Listen, they decided on a week a year severance, but I got them to twenty-six. That's six months salary, George. Medical and everything for six months. You can learn all you need to on the computer long before that. Maybe find a job closer to home.

Bryan is rattled by George's blank stare. He takes his glass of orange juice and sits back in his chair, taking a sip, all the while keeping an eye on George.

GEORGE

My wife left me because I wasn't...very emotional. I kept trying to explain that my father sucked all the emotion from me. Drunks do that, sometimes. Make their kids afraid. Make them unwilling to express themselves.

Bryan knows he's supposed to say something, he just can't seem to figure out what.

BRYAN

Oh.

GEORGE

How old are you?

BRYAN

Forty.

GEORGE

We were probably in school together. You went to Berkley?

Bryan lights up at the sound of his Alma matter.

BRYAN

Class of eighty-six! I didn't know you were there.

GEORGE

I was a sophomore when I got the call my parents were dead.

This is not the direction Bryan had hoped the conversation was headed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

My dad had a blood alcohol level of .18.
A little high. Drove right into oncoming
traffic. Killed my mother with him. A
lady in another car. Hurt her daughter.
A five-year old girl. I think about her
still.

Bryan wants this to end. He leans forward with a whisper.

BRYAN

Listen...maybe I can get you a year.

GEORGE

I hate this job.

BRYAN

What are you talking about? You love
your job.

GEORGE

From the day I started...to today. Can't
stand it.

Bryan is perplexed as George stands.

BRYAN

Then it sounds like I'm doing you a
favor.

GEORGE

It may sound that way, but I react out of
fear. My life has nothing to do with
what I like or don't like. You haven't
been listening, have you?

BRYAN

I didn't know there would be a quiz,
George.

GEORGE

For everything.

BRYAN

Well, I feel better about this now.

GEORGE

Good. I was hoping for that.

Relieved and not understanding anything about irony, Bryan
stands and extends his hand. George shakes Bryan's hand
without malice.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I've got one favor to ask.

BRYAN

What can I do for you, George?

GEORGE

I built my first model here when I was twenty. There are hundreds of them on shelves around the office. Twenty years of my life. I was wondering if I might be able to pick a few to keep, to take home? Only the ones that really mean something to me.

Bryan recoils slightly from the request.

BRYAN

Oh, well...those are...I mean, we don't get to keep our work. I could maybe ask them if you could choose one. But, you know, frankly George, you were the best. Computer models can't begin to match the beauty you gave yours. They're a part of this firm. They inspire me. I go out there and sometimes just stare at something I've designed. It amazes me. I would miss that too much.

(beat)

Look, I may be going out on a limb, but you go out there and look them over, every single one of them and pick the one you like the best and take it with you. Just run it by me first, just in case, you know...but I'm sure it'll be okay.

GEORGE

Thank you.

BRYAN

Well, it's the least I can do.

GEORGE

Yes, it is.

George nods and leaves. Bryan looks lost and guilty again.

INT. BENSON, KIDDLER, FEINSILBER AND ASSOICATES - MORNING

George walks around the maze of cubicles back to his own. He finds an empty box and starts to pack. Against a wall, a large rack is filled with spools of architectural plans. George pulls one of the plans down, rolls it out and detaches the wooden spool. Without warning and with a fury hard to fathom, he proceeds to bat and smash a shelf of beautifully rendered models. Heads pop up in other cubicles as George walks out of his own and armed with a frightening rage, methodically attacks model after model resting on shelves

just below massive plate glass windows that frame downtown Los Angeles. Steven Gardner, who asked for his model without grass, rushes to within feet of George as he witness his creation deconstruct into shards of cardboard and plastic.

STEVEN

Mother of God! Not my house!

George stops for a second to focus on Steven, but Steven is smart enough to run. George continues on with the business of disassembling his work.

VOICE

Oh, please, please, no!

The plea is instantly followed by a pathetic low whine. George works up a sweat as he whacks model after model; portions of plastic walls or window splatter the office as though bombed in war. Bryan Burke's secretary inches as close as she dares.

SECRETARY

Uh...Mr. Burke would like a word with you, George.

George lowers his stick as he faces her.

GEORGE

Oh...okay.

SECRETARY

In his office. When you're able.

GEORGE

Thank you.

With that, George finishes what he began only minutes prior: the complete and utter destruction of every model displayed on every shelf in the office, save one. Workers huddle together, collectively moaning and moving en mass from the mayhem. George picks up the sole surviving model in his arms and cradles it carefully as he walks into Bryan Burke's office.

INT. BRYAN BURKE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Bryan cowers behind his desk as George enters with his model in one hand and the long wooden stick in the other.

GEORGE

I'll take this one, if that's okay?

It takes Bryan a few aborted attempts to answer before he simply nods.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Thank you for going out on a limb and allowing me one.

Bryan nods again, then quivers as George steps forward, leans the stick against the desk and extends his hand.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You're a great architect and a miserable human being.

Bryan winces as he extends his hand. They shake hands and George grabs hold of the stick again.

BRYAN

Thank you.

George walks around the desk and bashes in a model hidden on the floor, one that Bryan had obviously wanted to save.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Oh, fuck!

George drops the wooden spool and walks out of the office as Bryan garners the courage to stand.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

You're not even an architect and you're a miserable human being.

George turns around only long enough to answer.

GEORGE

You're right. You win.

George closes the door behind him. Bryan stares down at the remains of the model; he gets down on his knees and carefully gathers up the pieces.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - MORNING

George is sweating as he walks with his box of personal items under one arm and the model under the other. Dizzy, he stops for a moment and tires to orient himself, glancing one way, then the other before staggering back and pressing himself against the building for support. Sweat beads and drops from his nose and chin as the song, 'ACROSS THE UNIVERSE' begins by The Beatles. George sets the box down but clings tightly to the model as he closes his eyes.

'Pools of sorrow, waves of joy are drifting through my open mind, possessing them, caressing me...'

George drops face first to the cement, crushing the model beneath him.

MONTAGE AS THE SONG CONTINUES

George is probed and poked by doctor after doctor. An ultrasound test followed by a CT scan, followed by a MRI results in more tests.

A flexible tube is slid down George's throat as dye is shot into his body. 'Sounds of laughter, shades of life are ringing through my open view, inciting them, inviting me...'

A long blunt needle is shoved into George's side for a biopsy of his pancreas. X-rays are lit and highlighted as doctors ponder the specks, the disease.

Finally, George is opened up; nearly bloodless slice through skin, muscle and fat reveals death. 'Limitless undying love, which shines around me like a million suns, which calls me on and on across the universe...'

George is wheeled down a long hall to the critical care unit. 'Nothing's going to change my world, nothing's gonna change my world...'

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

George tries to sit up, but falls back as he closes his eyes, opens his eyes, closes his eyes.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

That took care of the pain?

George opens his eyes again as an attractive NURSE enters with a tray of food.

GEORGE

I could kiss you.

The nurse smiles as she lifts the cover off the dinner.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

No food. I'm painless.

She raises George's bed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What would you do if you had three or four months to live?

The nurse glances over at the other patient in the room, who's sleeping, before answering in a soft voice.

NURSE

I'd eat a lot of red meat.

GEORGE

Good for you.

The nurse smiles as she sits down beside the bed. She fills a spoon with corn and aims it for George's mouth; he accepts the good will, chews and swallows.

NURSE

What would you do?

GEORGE

I'd build a house.

George takes another spoonful of food.

NURSE

What kind of house?

GEORGE

You know what mortise and tenon is?

The nurse shakes her head "no".

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I've got every part of it ready. It's like a jig saw puzzle...all in pieces now, just waiting to make sense. I've been through design and review...the planning commission, city council.

She feeds George another small spoonful of food.

NURSE

No one's really said four months is all you have, have they?

GEORGE

Stage four pancreatic cancer. They haven't even pretended to offer treatment. You tell me, when would you start eating red meat?

NURSE

Can you build a house in four months?

GEORGE

I can die trying.

The nurse rests her hand for a moment on George's cheek.

NURSE

Good for you.

GEORGE

I haven't been touched in years.

Suddenly alarmed by her emotion, the nurse removes her hand and stands back away from George.

NURSE

I'm sorry, I don't know what that was.

GEORGE

A handshake, or you know, someone pats you on your back through clothes. Doctors, people who have to touch you. But not by people who want to.

NURSE

No. A friend... your mother? Everybody gets touched by someone they love.

GEORGE

Isn't that weird? I mean, I dated a little bit after my divorce, for four or five years. Six years. I know when my son was younger...maybe when he was ten or eleven even, he'd run up and wrap his arms around me.

George suddenly stops to catch his emotion. The nurse checks the door before walking back to George; she brushes back his hair with both hands, then fingers the curves of his ears, finally resting her thumbs on his lips.

NURSE

Oh God, I'm married.

Feeling guilty, she flees the room, waking the other PATIENT.

PATIENT

I'm hungry.

GEORGE

I'm touched.

EXT. SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

George is resting, eyes closed, sitting on a bench with his box and the remnants of the model beside him. A black Range Rover pulls to a stop with a HONK. George stands to gather his things as Robin steps out of the car, yelling.

ROBIN

I called everyone, everywhere! You just vanished! You could be dead!

GEORGE

Thanks for waking me up. Picking me up. You're loud today.

ROBIN

You're inconsiderate and absolutely devoid of emotion!

GEORGE

You're the most beautiful woman I have ever known in my life.

Robin is stumped for a second, confused by the words.

ROBIN

What?

GEORGE

I'm not talking just physically. Even your anger is perfect.

Robin climbs back in the car and slams her door shut.

INT. ROBIN'S RANGE ROVER - AFTERNOON

George sets his box in back and climbs into the front seat as Robin takes off. He closes his door as she runs a stoplight.

GEORGE

I didn't think you'd know I went missing.

ROBIN

You didn't think someone from your office would call and tell me you wrecked the entire building and threatened people with a baseball bat?!

GEORGE

A blueprint spool.

ROBIN

Where have you been for a week?!

GEORGE

Four days. I left to think.

ROBIN

What did you do with your dog?

GEORGE

Kurt's been feeding him.

ROBIN

But you can't call me while you think?

GEORGE

I wasn't thinking. Look, I'm sorry I didn't think to call you while I

thought...I think.

George raises his eyebrows, wanting just the slightest give from Robin. She glances at him, but won't yield.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I need to talk to you.

ROBIN

Why would they tow your truck?

GEORGE

I was parked in day parking.

ROBIN

Why call me?

GEORGE

I'm going to tear down the shack and build my house.

ROBIN

You've been saying that for twenty years. While we were dating, you said it.

GEORGE

There's nothing anymore to stop me.

ROBIN

Money?

GEORGE

Severance pay. And I'm going to cash in my life insurance policy.

ROBIN

How many years did I live with your beams and boards? First in the garage, then in the living room. We're going to do it, Robin. Next year. Next year. Salvaged floorboards from a house in Pasadena. Doors from a church in New Hampshire...

GEORGE

I love those doors.

ROBIN

Where will you live?

GEORGE

The garage.

ROBIN

Look, I wasn't serious about you taking Sam, so you don't have to get into any

actual construction to get out of it.

GEORGE

When's school over?

ROBIN

Friday...God, I hate the thought of him home all day.

GEORGE

I'll be by Saturday to pick him up.

ROBIN

He doesn't want to spend the weekends with you anymore.

GEORGE

Not for the weekend. For the summer.

Robin scoffs.

ROBIN

You and Sam are going to live in a garage without plumbing for the summer?

GEORGE

The garage is plumbed. I'll put in a toilet. We'll survive.

ROBIN

Thank you for at least sounding sincere.

GEORGE

Sounding? I need help. He's cheap labor.

ROBIN

One of you would end up dead.

GEORGE

At least we'll have a house to show for it.

ROBIN

Forget it, really. I'll survive.

GEORGE

I want him with me.

ROBIN

No, you don't. Trust me.

George rests a hand on the back of her neck.

GEORGE

I want Sam for the summer.

Robin furrows her brow for a moment and glances at George. It takes a while for her to answer.

ROBIN

Okay.

George rests his hand on Robin's cheek for a moment, as the nurse had done with him. Robin turns her head and bites his finger.

GEORGE

Hey, hey!

ROBIN

I'm married.

George nods as he mock nurses his finger.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL - AFTERNOON

Sam is walking with Corey, who's wiry and wan with a red nose.

COREY

The whole summer, man. Party in Tahoe.

SAM

I don't know.

COREY

It'll just be my brother the dweeb on weekends. All we gotta do is sand and paint the cabin, dude.

(boasting)

My dad's gonna let me use the boat and my charm is gonna let me use my rod. Income village is the place to hook up with hump.

SAM

I'll ask.

COREY

Hey, it beats letting town folk go down on you for the summer.

Sam stops which stops Corey. Sam glances around to make sure no one's listening.

SAM

I never said anything. I haven't done anything.

COREY

I know what the deal is. Josh is a pimp.
I'm not stupid.

SAM

You don't know what the deal is. There
is no fucking deal.

Sam walks away pissed that Corey knows what the deal is.

EXT. GEORGE'S SHACK - MORNING

George is shirtless, the stitches still fresh on his side; he carries/drops his mattress into the garage. Alyssa walks from her house to the garage and peeks in.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

George is making his bed, which is not easy because Guster is curled up on it. The one car garage is not dry-walled and the cement floor is clean but stained.

ALYSSA

Hi, Mr. Nelson.

George steps away from the bed, slightly rattled by Alyssa.

GEORGE

Alyssa.

ALYSSA

Why have you put a toilet and a bed in
your garage?

GEORGE

I'm living here while I build another
house.

ALYSSA

Is that legal?

Alyssa sits down on the bed beside Guster and starts to bounce up and down. George takes another step back.

GEORGE

Don't you have school?

ALYSSA

Nope.

Alyssa lies down on the bed, lifting the sheet to her nose.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Are these clean?

George is alarmed. Guster licks Alyssa's ear.

GEORGE
What's today?

ALYSSA
Monday.

George bangs his head with his hand and starts to search the room.

GEORGE
My keys.

ALYSSA
What's that?

Alyssa reaches out and slides a finger down his scar.

GEORGE
Nothing. I cut myself.

George pats down his pockets.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I had them in my pocket.

ALYSSA
I'm not shaving my legs or pits this summer, I've decided.

George opens the drawers of a small desk and a chest, not paying attention to Alyssa as she raises her leg and runs her hands down the stubby skin.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)
Paula Cole isn't a vertical kisser.

George dabs his keys from the floor beside the chest.

GEORGE
Make the bed for me, would you? I gotta run.

George turns around to Alyssa's leg up and a great view of her underwear.

COLLEEN (O.S.)
What are you, forty?

George whirls around to face Colleen as Alyssa lowers her leg.

GEORGE
I forgot where I put my keys.

COLLEEN

And you thought they might be under her dress?

ALYSSA

I was just showing him my hair.

Alyssa miffed as she stands.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

I think you need to rethink what you think of me.

Alyssa walks around her mother and out of the garage. Colleen stares at George.

GEORGE

Her leg hair.

Colleen turns and walks out.

INT. GEORGE'S TRUCK - LATE MORNING

George drives the four miles North to Robin's house listening to Paula Cole. He turns into Emerald Bay, a guard-gated community and a Guard waves him in.

EXT. WEBBER'S HOME - LATE MORNING

George rushes from his car and tries the front door, but it's locked. He rings the bell and LOIS, the maid, answers.

LOIS

Mrs. Webber is in the backyard.

GEORGE

And Sam?

LOIS

In his room, packing.

GEORGE

Oh...Good.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - LATE MORNING

Sam has a CD by MARYLIN MANSON on loud as he packs a suitcase on his bed. The KNOCK on the door is barely heard. ANOTHER KNOCK draws his disapproval.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Sam!

Sam's face turns sour as he yanks the door open.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ready?

Sam shrugs and returns to finish his packing.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I think you'll have fun this summer.

It's nearly impossible to hear George over the music.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Don't forget your headphones.

The music is quickly driving George crazy.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Would you mind turning it down?

This doesn't register with Sam.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It won't all be work, you know?

George is once again, seemingly unheard. He walks to within inches of Sam and grabs his head and yells into Sam's ear.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It won't be all work, you know!

Sam pulls away from the touch and turns the music off.

SAM

I heard you already!

George walks to the sliding glass door and stares down at the boys and Robin in the pool.

GEORGE

Your mom and the boys can drop by anytime.

SAM

To check up on me?

GEORGE

I'll be around to check up on you.

SAM

Why would you be there?

GEORGE

Because I live there.

SAM

You live in Cory's parents' cabin?

EXT. WEBBER'S BACKYARD - LATE MORNING

Ryan and Adam are on their backs on rafts as Robin swims laps between them. Suddenly, like a UFO crashing to Earth, Sam's suitcase spirals downward straight into the pool, barely missing both Adam and Ryan.

SAM

No fucking way!!!

The boys are knocked off their rafts as Robin takes off her goggles and focuses on Sam up on his balcony.

SAM (CONT'D)

You liar! You stupid liar! I hate you!

George bursts out of the kitchen, onto the patio.

GEORGE

Did you tell him he's spending the summer with me?

SAM (O.S.)

No I'm not!

Sam storms off the balcony, back into his room.

ROBIN

What was I supposed to do? When you didn't show up Saturday, I tried to call. Your phone isn't working.

GEORGE

I don't have a phone.

ROBIN

I drove over and you were gone.

GEORGE

I can't leave the house?

ROBIN

Last time you were gone for a week!

GEORGE

Did you tell him he was spending the summer with me?

ROBIN

No. I was going to let you do that.

GEORGE

He's not spending the summer in Tahoe.

Sam walks out of the kitchen to confront his father.

SAM

Who are you, anyway? I don't even know you.

GEORGE

You'll know me by the time we're through.

SAM

I'm not going!

GEORGE

I'll get your bag.

George walks to the edge of the pool and scoops up the suitcase, holding it out as it drains.

SAM

Mom, tell him I'm not going. You already promised me!

GEORGE

You have everything?

Robin is in an uncomfortable position as she glances at Sam before focusing on George.

ROBIN

I did say he could go.

GEORGE

Let's go.

SAM

I'm not going!

GEORGE

You don't have a choice.

SAM

Mom...please.

Sam's eyes well with tears as his voice cracks. Robin is ready to concede.

ROBIN

George --

GEORGE

(adamant)

He's not spending the entire summer with another kid in Tahoe. If he leaves, I will follow him up there and I will drag

him home by his nose ring. He can hate me. You can hate me. He can try to kill me while I sleep. You can call the police. You can call your husband or your attorney, but Sam is spending the summer with me. He's my son. He's sixteen. That's it.

Sam is crying now -- snot's running down his nose. Robin is shocked by George's forcefulness.

ADAM

Can we hate you?

GEORGE

You can do anything you want.

George walks to Sam and touches his arm.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Go get in the truck, Sam.

Sam jerks away from his dad as dramatically as he can manage.

SAM

Go fuck yourself!

George drops the suitcase and grabs Sam by the arms. As much as Sam tries to resist, he's clearly no match for his father.

GEORGE

Your nose ring comes out of your nose. If you've got them in your nipples, they come out, too. And there's no make-up at my house. No glue sniffing. Huffing. No pills, no grass.

SAM

If you hit me, I'll call the police.

GEORGE

You've worn out your welcome at this house, Sam. I won't ever hit you.

(beat)

This may well be the worst three months of your life, but you've earned it. So, pick up your suitcase and go get in the truck. Now.

SAM

I'll hate you forever.

GEORGE

You can't even begins to know how much I hate my father.

(upbeat)

Think of it as a family tradition.

Sam glares at his mother before grabbing his soggy suitcase and stomping out of the backyard. Robin is stunned silent by George's decisiveness.

INT. GEORGE'S TRUCK - LATE MORNING

Sam is pressed against the passenger side door. George walks from the backyard and opens the truck door to climb in but is stopped by Sam's suitcase. He lifts it out and sets it in the bed, then slides into the cab, sitting on the soaked seat. George rises up and turns to Sam, who is sullen and silent.

EXT. GEORGE'S SHACK - AFTERNOON

Sam is shirtless on his back on the roof of the shack, sunning himself as George struggles to extricate a sofa from a doorjamb. Guster is asleep on the grass, under a tree.

GEORGE

Sam? I'm...for like three minutes?

After another bout of trying, George drops the sofa and steps back to glance up at Sam.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

That's okay. If I break my back, daddy's gonna buy you a naval ring.

No reaction from Sam.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And if that naval ring don't fit, daddy's gonna rub you down with the sun screen.

Sam glances down at his father, puzzled by the verse.

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

I want you wearing sun block. And I want you down here to help me. Now.

Sam dismisses his father without a word - he simply adjusts his face back to the sun. George walks away. A sudden spray of water drenches Sam, forcing him to his feet in a cold panic. George stops the hose water pelting.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It works on Guster.

MOMENTS LATER

George is still struggling with the sofa stuck in the door.

Frustrated, he steps away from the sofa.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You're in there not helping at all,
aren't you?

INT. BEACH SHACK ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

Sam is leaning against a wall with his arms folded across his chest.

GEORGE (O.S.)

You know what else helped Guster?
Neutering.

The slightest alarm crosses Sam's face.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

George is shirtless in shorts, boiling pasta on a portable stove as he heats a sauce in the microwave. A dresser topped with plywood serves as a countertop; other than a sink being across the garage near the toilet, this is a fairly well equipped makeshift kitchen.

GEORGE

Do you want garlic bread?!

George waits a bit to make sure no response is no response. Then stuffs a hunk of garlic bread into the toaster oven.

EXT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

Sam is sitting on the edge of a cliff that drops twenty feet to the ocean; Guster is whining for attention behind Sam.

SAM

Well, get over here, then, stupid.

Guster inches forward on his belly, which makes Sam smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

Are you afraid of heights, Guster?

Sam drops to his belly and stretches out to pet Guster.

SAM (CONT'D)

The fall probably wouldn't kill me,
anyway.

Guster inches closer and licks Sam's face. George walks out with a tray filled with spaghetti, garlic bread and a Coke.

GEORGE

Thinking of jumping?

George sets the tray on the ground beside Sam.

SAM

Pushing.

George walks to the edge of the cliff.

GEORGE

Only jump after you hear the wave crash against the rock. The water will take you out. Let it. Swim a little North and you'll see the sand.

Sam sits up and faces his father with a trace of alarm.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

First time I did it, younger than you, I thought I'd break my neck and just sort of float to Catalina.

(beat)

You don't always get what you wish for, Sam.

George suddenly leaps forward and disappears into the sea as a wave crashes against the rocks below.

SAM

Oh, shit!

Sam scurries to his feet and scans the ocean for his father; the only thing visible is darkness.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hello?

Guster is lapping up the dinner, bread and all as Sam calls out again. In a bit of a panic, Sam runs from the cliff.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - EVENING

The traffic is heavy as Sam runs against it. Without a sidewalk and with parked cars blocking a reasonable path, this is a dangerous trek North.

EXT. ALISO CREEK BEACH - EVENING

Sam runs to the edge of the water and anxiously waits for his father to emerge from the sea. A jogger startles Sam - he steps into a wave that soaks his shoes. George floats on a wave into view and stands in waist high water, only to be knocked way back down. He rises and falls and rises before making his way to the sand and Sam.

SAM

Are you totally insane?!

GEORGE

I almost saw Catalina.

George coughs and drops onto the sand exhausted. Sam storms off, angry that he cared enough to get angry.

EXT. GEORGE'S SHACK - EVENING

Sam is winded as he walks off the street to the middle of the yard. He glances around for Guster.

SAM

Guster!

Guster bounces out of the garage with spaghetti sauce covering his muzzle.

SAM (CONT'D)

You're so busted, dude.

Sam sits down on the grass and plays with Guster, who yaps with joy as he breaks away and closes the distance with the abandon of a puppy.

SAM (CONT'D)

Where's my dinner, huh?

Sam manages to pin Guster on his back. He looms over the dog as he kisses him on the nose.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm hungry! Where's my dinner? Who ate my dinner? Huh? Who's in trouble now?

ALYSSA (O.S.)

Hi.

Sam rolls over Guster and stands, nearly stumbling in the process - way uncool.

SAM

Hey.

ALYSSA

What are you doing here?

Guster bumps against Alyssa for her attention; she kneels down to pet him.

SAM

They're trying to make me spend the summer here. I'm leaving in the morning.

ALYSSA

Where to?

SAM

I'm supposed to be in Tahoe.

ALYSSA

Your dad's really gonna build his house?

SAM

I don't know.

ALYSSA

Well, if you don't go, I guess I'll see you.

Alyssa stands. Sam is clearly shy around her.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

You should stay.

SAM

I don't know.

ALYSSA

Where's your dad?

SAM

He jumped into the ocean.

ALYSSA

Tell him I said "hi".

Alyssa pets Guster again before walking away. Sam is smitten.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Sam's curled up in a tattered lazy-boy near the toilet, watching television as George sits on the bed, brushing his teeth. Suddenly, Sam turns to face his dad.

SAM

I'm not taking a dump with you in here.

George nods as he continues brushing.

SAM (CONT'D)

My brothers say it's the worst smell they've ever smelled.

George nods again, which appears only to irritate Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

I think you have to have a door between

where you cook and where you crap. Like even in the bush, tribal people and like that have a place for both. It's like a law.

George walks around Sam to the sink and spits, rinses and wipes his mouth with a towel. He faces Sam.

GEORGE

Which side of the bed do you want?

Sam's jaw drops as he glances at the double-bed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Just kidding. The sofa's a pullout.

George smiles and pats Sam on the shoulder before walking to the sofa and pulling it out to make a bed.

SAM

Probably in the bible.

GEORGE

Goodnight.

George drops his pants and climbs into bed. He pulls the sheet up and fluffs the pillow before resting his head.

SAM

I have to take a dump.

George twists around in bed to face Sam. After a beat, he tosses the sheet back, climbs out of bed, pulls back on his pants, slips on his shoes and walks out of the garage.

EXT. GEORGE'S SHACK - MORNING

George is up on the roof, hacking through the shingles and beams with a chain saw. A huge dumpster set on the lawn receives only about half the throws George makes. Sam is near the ocean in a chaise lounge, listening to music through his portable CD player.

GEORGE

Have you got sunscreen on?

There's no chance he's been heard. TOM and BARBARA, two older neighbors of George's nearing home from a walk, stop on the driveway - both look pleased.

BARBARA

It's about time this shack is torn down.

Barbara appears surprised as George turns to face them - she obviously didn't realize he was the one up on the roof doing

the demolition.

TOM
Oh, hello George.

GEORGE
Guess how many low-income apartments the
city approved for this lot?

Tom and Barbara react by trying not to react.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Come on...ballpark figure.

Tom and Barbara step back and walk away. George heads to the
ladder and climbs down.

ANOTHER VIEW

Sam is grooving to the music with his eyes closed as George's
hand, filled with a gob of sunscreen, plops onto Sam's
stomach. Sam bolts up from the chaise lounge in a rage.

SAM
What are you doing?!

GEORGE
I warned you yesterday.

SAM
Don't touch me! You can't touch me!

ALYSSA (O.S.)
Hey, you stayed.

Alyssa walks across her lawn to the feuding family. George
holds out the bottle of sun lotion to Alyssa.

GEORGE
Rub him down, please.

George walks back to the ladder and up onto the roof as
Alyssa and Sam stare at one another.

SAM
He's a freak.

ALYSSA
You look better without make-up.

SAM
I can't even take a shower here.

ALYSSA
Come over to my house whenever you want.

I'll tell my mom.

SAM

I might not stay, anyway.

ALYSSA

I'll get your back.

SAM

No. That's okay.

Sam reaches out for the lotion, but Alyssa hides the bottle.

ALYSSA

Have you ever had anyone but your mom or dad put it on for you?

Sam thinks about it for a second before shaking his head no.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

It's weird how different it is. Lay down.

George is back with the chain saw, hacking away at the roof. Sam is hesitant as he lies down on his stomach. Alyssa kneels and squeezes lotion on his back. She works it in, starting at his neck, working her way down to his pants. She squirts Sam's arm and as she rubs close to his pit, he squirms.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Do you remember me from when you lived here?

SAM

Yeah.

ALYSSA

Your dad dated my mom after her divorce.

SAM

Really?

ALYSSA

I wanted him to marry her.

SAM

Why?

ALYSSA

Turn over.

Alyssa grabs under his armpits and tickles him. Sam yelps and rises onto his elbows as Josh roars by the shack in his Porsche.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Josh and I are going to South Coast.
Wanna ride? Maybe see a movie?

SAM

No thanks.

Sam is disappointed as Alyssa stands to leave.

ALYSSA

Don't forget your front.

Alyssa walks to the shack and waves goodbye to George.
George waves her off. Sam curls onto his side as he watches
Alyssa run across the lawn to Josh.

GEORGE

She's pretty...for a girl.

Sam appears irritated as he stands and walks into the garage.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

Sam glances out the window to check on his father, then quickly rummages through every drawer and cabinet looking for what he finds: a prescription bottle. It's Vicodin. He checks on his dad through the window again, then opens the bottle and takes out five pills. He fills a glass with water and swallows two, saving three for later. He sets the bottle back where he found it before he drops on the bed with a grin.

EXT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Guster is in a full out run for a rubber ball. Sam is shirted, sitting at the patio table. With the ball gladly returned, Sam tosses it again. George walks out juggling two plates of sandwiches and two Cokes and sits down.

GEORGE

Do you ever get like the slightest
inkling that you might want to help me
instead of doing absolutely nothing?

SAM

No.

GEORGE

Get the inkling, Sam. I'm getting tired
of your attitude.

Sam picks up the sandwich, examines it and sets it back down on the plate.

SAM
I hate turkey.

GEORGE
No you don't.

George takes a bite of his sandwich before responding.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I want you to take out your nose ring and leave it out.

SAM
Why?

GEORGE
It bugs me.

SAM
You snore at night. That bugs me. Can I take you out?

GEORGE
Your brothers are right. It was the most god-awful smell I've ever had my nose around.

George tightens his face and waves his hand in front of his nose. Sam stares at his father. A black Range Rover pulls to a stop and Robin steps out with a pizza box in her hands.

ROBIN
Thought you guys might be hungry.

As Robin walks up the drive, Sam picks up the turkey sandwich and starts eating. George glances at Sam as Robin sets the box on the table and sits down.

GEORGE
We're fine. Turkey sandwiches.

ROBIN
Well, for later then.

Robin focuses on the nearly roofless shack. Guster walks to the table and sits down by Robin, ready to beg.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
It makes me sad.

GEORGE
What?

ROBIN
I used to live here.

GEORGE

But you hated four out of the five you did.

ROBIN

I was here six years. And I only hated two.

GEORGE

Which?

ROBIN

The first and the last.

George sets his sandwich down.

GEORGE

I don't even like turkey sandwiches. What kind of pizza?

ROBIN

Sam's favorite.

George opens the box and pulls out a slice. Sam appears disinterested as George starts in on the slice of pizza.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

(to Sam)

Sure you don't want any?

Sam shrugs off his mother, looking away. Robin nods and grabs a piece for herself.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You're too thin, George. From what you used to be, anyway.

George responds with a pleasant face; he's not going to explain his weight loss right now.

GEORGE

Why the first and the last?

Robin sets her slice of pizza down as she studies George.

ROBIN

The first because I wasn't sure you really loved me...the last because I wasn't sure I really loved you.

George nods. Though it may appear that Sam isn't interested in the conversation, his ears are perked.

GEORGE

I was up on the roof this morning,
tearing it down and it struck me as
strong as anything ever has. That I'm
happy today.

ROBIN

What have you been before today?

GEORGE

It was just that, maybe the way the sun
struck the ocean, the sound of the waves.
It was simple, whatever it was. Then I
started thinking about the last time I
felt this good.

(beat)

It's been a long time.

ROBIN

Do you remember?

GEORGE

The only time I can think of for sure, I
was holding onto Sam in the ocean, saving
him from the waves.

George turns to Sam, who's caught staring at his father.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Your head was pressed against my chest. I
could feel your heart racing. And I
remember I kissed your hair.

ROBIN

We have it on video! Was that when? My
parents were down for his sixth birthday!
I remember that.

Robin inexplicably starts to cry. She instantly tries to
take it back, pressing her hand to her mouth, wiping her
eyes, but whatever emotion has her, has her good. Both
George and Sam are confused and concerned.

SAM

I have to go.

She stands and backs away from the table.

GEORGE

What is it?

ROBIN

I'm fine. Nothing.

(beat)

I'll drop by your lunch tomorrow.

Robin wipes her eyes again as she climbs into her car and drives off. Sam and George face one another.

GEORGE

I don't know.

SAM

I'm gonna take a walk. I need some money.

GEORGE

You'll have money when you work.

SAM

You're so predictable.

Sam sets his sandwich down and grabs a slice of pizza as he stands. He walks for a few feet, stops and turns around.

SAM (CONT'D)

You haven't been happy in ten years?

He doesn't wait for an answer; as he walks away, Guster follows. George takes Robin's slice of pizza and drops it on the cement; that's all it takes to turn Guster around.

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Robin is sitting alone at the table, doing nothing. The TV is on loud in another room. Adam walks into the room in his pajamas. He sits down across from his mother at the table. Robin smiles at him. He smiles back as he scoots his chair closer to the table and extends his arms straight out across the top. Robin extends her arms and they lock hands near the middle. Without a word, they hold hands. Adam lets go and climbs on top of the table, scoots across it with a kiss for his mother before he's gone, sliding off the table on his rear and running back to the TV.

EXT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

George is on the patio, bending a thin piece of copper tubing. Sam storms out of the garage, fuming.

SAM

No one would blame me if I left!

GEORGE

I'd blame you. I want you here.

SAM

I'm not doing it!

GEORGE

It'll be fine.

SAM

Why don't you just beg some money off my dad and move into something decent with a real kitchen and a real bathroom?

GEORGE

I'd rather sell my nuts to a castrati.

Sam screws his face down - huh?

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I don't beg.

SAM

And I don't take a shower in the middle of the yard.

GEORGE

I can promise you complete privacy.

SAM

You can't promise me anything! You don't have anything to promise! You live in a garage! You don't have cable! You're not hooked up to the internet because you don't even own a computer! You don't have a job!

George finishes bending the copper into a circle. He stands and holds the copper circle out for proof of privacy.

GEORGE

This will save you from prying eyes.

Sam dismisses his father with a shake of his head. He heads back into the garage.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

Sam quickly heads to where George's prescription bottle was hidden under a pile of underwear. He steals two more pills and swallows them before grabbing a towel and walking out.

EXT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

SAM

If you had a stupid phone or I could use your truck, mom would give me some money.

GEORGE

You'll have money when you work for it.

Sam stomps down the driveway and across the grass to Alyssa's house. George walks around to the back of his garage with

the rounded copper tubing.

EXT. ALYSSA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Sam is standing on the porch with his towel and clean clothes. Colleen answers the door.

SAM
Is Alyssa home?

COLLEEN
She's out with a friend.

SAM
Oh...do you know when she'll be home?

COLLEEN
She didn't really say.

SAM
Oh...okay.

Sam nods and steps back as he prepares to leave.

COLLEEN
Sam?

SAM
Uh huh.

COLLEEN
I didn't recognize you!

SAM
I'm sorry.

COLLEEN
Alyssa said you don't even have plumbing over there.

SAM
Not a shower.

Colleen takes Sam by the arm and nudges him into the house.

INT. ALYSSA'S ROOM - EVENING

Sam is slowly making his way around the room, taking note of everything: some dried flowers; a yearbook; a cabinet full of CD's; dirty clothes stuffed in a hamper. He walks into the bathroom before walking back out and making one more round.

INT. ROBIN'S FAMILY ROOM - EVENING

Robin is sitting between her sons on the sofa, watching a

movie. Peter enters the room, carrying his jacket.

PETER

The goddamn traffic. Were we going out to dinner?

Robin focuses on her husband, but the boys are riveted to the television.

ROBIN

We've eaten.

PETER

Is Lois still here? I'm starved.

ROBIN

I'll make you something.

Robin stands as Adam and Ryan try to hold her down.

PETER

Did someone call to tell you I'd be late?

Robin walks into the kitchen without responding.

INT. ALYSSA'S BATHROOM - EVENING

Sam's in the shower, obscured by the sandblasted glass.

JOSH (O.S.)

Bro, I need you tonight.

Sam bumps an elbow against the glass as he opens the shower door enough to look out. Josh is sitting up on the marble countertop.

SAM

I locked the door.

Josh holds up a tiny screwdriver.

JOSH

It'll take you like twenty, thirty minutes.

SAM

Does Alyssa know?

JOSH

Nothing.

SAM

You got any weed?

JOSH

You got the money?

Sam waits a beat before closing the shower door.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Alyssa sent me up to see if you wanted to hang around and watch a movie with her and her mom.

EXT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

The round copper tube is braced and nailed to the side of the garage; on it hangs a shower curtain. George is making noises inside the curtain as he showers.

GEORGE

Ah! Oh....

KURT (O.S.)

I know there's an explanation.

George pulls back the shower curtains just enough to see Kurt standing by in his police uniform.

GEORGE

No hot water.

George is shivering as he closes the curtain back up.

KURT

Mr. Dokos called to complain that you and a boy are squatting illegally in the garage of your house.

GEORGE

Check the permits. It was built as a guesthouse. It's a legally rentable unit grandfathered when South Laguna was incorporated.

Without warning, the copper tubing holding the hanging curtain falls to the ground. George turns the water off and grabs a towel. Unfortunately, his ass is not what the towel covers.

KURT

Now that should be illegal.

INT. ALYSSA'S FAMILY ROOM - EVENING

Alyssa and Colleen are curled up on the sofa as Josh and Sam stick their heads in to say goodbye.

SAM

Thanks for the shower.

COLLEEN

I want you both to stay.

ALYSSA

And candy too.

Alyssa holds up a huge bowl of popcorn and the DVD case.

JOSH

I'm gonna give him a ride in my car.

ALYSSA

I'll see you tomorrow.

COLLEEN

Come over anytime you need to, Sam.

SAM

Thanks, I'd like that. Thank you.

The only thing keeping Sam from staying is Josh, who jerks him out by the shirt.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

With Kurt in the only chair, George hands him a cup of coffee and sits down on the pullout sofa, which is pulled out.

KURT

I'm surprised he hasn't left.

GEORGE

I haven't forced him to work. I only wet him down once. Why would he leave?

Sam rushes in and grabs a sweater before starting out.

SAM

I'm leaving.

GEORGE

Hey...hey!

Sam stops at the door and waits impatiently.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

SAM

I don't know.

GEORGE

When are you going to be back?

SAM

I don't know.

GEORGE

Well, until you know, you can't go.

SAM

Oh, okay.

Sam is gone in a flash. Kurt studies George for a second.

GEORGE

I'm not very good at it. Parenting.

Kurt nods; agreed, he's not.

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Robin arranges an attractive plate of food, which she sticks in the microwave. Peter walks in wearing different clothes but the same personality.

PETER

I hope your ex-husband is equipped for the havoc of Sam, because it seems absolutely blissful here tonight.

He sits down at the table, opening up a newspaper as Robin stares at him.

ROBIN

Do you think it's odd your kids don't hug you?

PETER

Should I?

ROBIN

It would worry me.

Peter glances up from the paper, focusing on Robin.

PETER

If I let everything that should worry me, worry me, I'd be dead from worry.

ROBIN

What would you be if you asked Adam and Ryan to run in now and hug you?

PETER

I'd be you.

The answer bothers Robin enough that Peter can't concentrate back on the paper.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'll do it if that's what you want.

Robin walks out of the kitchen. Peter folds the paper and shoves it across the granite counter.

INT. JOSH'S PORSCHE - NIGHT

Sam and Josh are parked on a street that overlooks the Valley East of Laguna Beach. They share a joint as Josh explains the specifics of the job.

JOSH

You don't have to do a thing. Just get in and get out. As quick as you can. Close your eyes and think of whatever.

Sam hands the joint to Josh.

SAM

What's your deal with Alyssa?

JOSH

Don't even...I'm there.

SAM

I wasn't sure.

JOSH

She wouldn't even fucking go out with until she was sixteen. I mean, that's not even a rule, just her own thing. She like figures things out on her own and then that's it.

A black Mercedes Benz pulls to a stop a ways down the street. Josh hands Sam a cell phone.

JOSH (CONT'D)

If this rings, run.

Sam is scared and it shows.

JOSH (CONT'D)

He already knows everything about what he can't do. You can tell him not to even look at you, if you want.

SAM

I'm thinking it's too weird now.

Josh pulls a baggie of grass and holds it out for Sam, who takes it and stuffs it in his pants pocket.

JOSH

It beats working.

Josh hands Sam the joint.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Inhale and get out.

Sam is quick to inhale, but slow to get out. Josh takes the joint and Sam steps out. He walks slowly to the Mercedes, opens the door and climbs in. Josh turns the CD on to Guster's "ALL THE WAY UP TO HEAVEN." Sam closes the door to the Mercedes. 'He said to only look up, he said to never look down, down is where we came from...' It's an odd song sung in a happy tempo; a whistling refrain overtakes the lyrics as Josh inhales. 'He said to hope for the best and take a load off my chest. Soon, I could be happy, and go all the way up to heaven and go all the way back home.'

With the music loud, Josh misses the police car as it stops behind him without the lights. Too late for a getaway, he fumbles for his cell phone and tosses the joint out the open window. The OFFICER approaches the Porsche with his hand on his gun.

OFFICER

What did you toss into the brush?

Josh furtively presses send on his cell phone as he faces the officer with a guilty face.

JOSH

Nothing.

'He said I might need his help, no one gets high on themselves. I just seem so lonely; he's just trying to be nice and spread around his advice. I could be happy...'

OFFICER

Turn off the music!

As the music stops, the door to the Mercedes opens and Sam hops out with his pants around his ankles. The officer notices and walks towards the Mercedes. The parking lights flash red as the car starts and flees the scene. Sam yanks up his pants and leaps down the hillside, falling and rolling in the brush as the officer yells for him to stop. Josh starts his car, but the officer dissuades him from leaving by removing his gun. Josh turns off the engine.

JOSH

Oh, it's working now.

OFFICER

What did you toss into the brush?

Before Josh can feign innocence again, the brush starts to smolder. Busted.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Sam is spotted with weeds and dirt as he continues his way down the steep hillside holding up his pants. After he's sure he's safe, he sits down and rests his head in his hands. He starts to shake, frightened by his actions. He drops onto his back, buttons and zips his pants as he starts to cry. Slowly, he stops crying, but keeps staring up at the sky, which is loaded with stars and a full moon. Mesmerized by the brilliant night, Sam can't stop staring.

EXT. GEORGE'S SHACK - MORNING

George is removing the last of the windows, carefully prying it out of the casement as Robin pulls up in her Range Rover. She steps out dressed in Levi's, boots and a t-shirt, carrying a large bag.

ROBIN

Lunch.

She smiles and walks toward George, dropping the food sack on the patio table.

GEORGE

It's not breakfast yet.

ROBIN

I dreamed about your house last night.

GEORGE

Finished or unfinished?

ROBIN

It was perfect, George. Amazing. It was so real.

GEORGE

Didn't you once dream you could lick people well, though?

ROBIN

That wasn't a dream. That was Sam.

GEORGE

Oh...with his ear infection!

ROBIN

My tongue around the edge of his ear is what cured him.

George isn't quite sure how to take her comment. Finally, he points to the Garage.

GEORGE

Go in there and lick his attitude.

ROBIN

The antibiotics weren't working.

(beat)

It's what I believe, George.

George stares at Robin for a second before he nods.

GEORGE

You were wrong about the first year, you know?

It takes Robin a second to understand he's saying he loved her when they married.

ROBIN

I've been wrong a lot in my life.

GEORGE

Hindsight. It's like foresight without a future.

Robin almost smiles; George confessing love ten years dead.

ROBIN

I have three hours before I pick up Adam and Ryan.

(beat)

Where will I be most useful?

Robin glances around, assessing the best use of her time.

GEORGE

With your hands or your tongue?

ROBIN

You're not well.

Robin picks up a pile of splintered board and tosses them in the garbage bin. George nods...he's not.

LATER

Robin and George carry a twelve-foot beam from inside the shack and set it down on cinder blocks. Both look exhausted as they head back in for another beam. Sam saunters out of the garage in shorts, sits down on the patio chair and opens the sack his mother had packed for lunch. He pulls out a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and starts eating as George and Robin emerge from the shack with another beam.

GEORGE

Good morning.

Robin and George set the beam down and turn to Sam as they both wipe sweat off their faces. Sam chews his sandwich, ignoring them both.

ROBIN

I'm late.

Robin walks close to Sam, trying to capture his attention.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Ryan has a game later. He asked if you'd come and watch.

Sam glances up at his mother, just long enough to let her know he hates her, then drops the sandwich and walks back into the garage. A city inspector's car pulls to a stop on the street and BOB LARSON steps out with a clipboard. Robin passes him as she walks back to her Range Rover.

BOB

Mr. Stevens?

GEORGE

I've been dreading you.

Bob and George shake hands as Robin drives off.

BOB

Bob Larson. Do you happen to have an unenclosed toilet in close proximity to a kitchen?

GEORGE

A violation?

BOB

Oh, yes.

GEORGE

And if I enclosed it?

BOB

An exhaust system or a window is code.

GEORGE

A sink?

BOB

Allowed outside the enclosed area.

Sam walks out of the garage in long pants and a shirt.

SAM

Where is it?

GEORGE

A friend of yours is here.

SAM

Did you get through my pants?

GEORGE

I might have a solution.

George grabs his chain saw and walks to the garage with Sam and Bob in tow.

SAM

Where'd you put it?!

INT. GARAGE - AFTERNOON

George walks to an armoire and empties it. He grabs a hammer and bangs, pries and pulls the back off, then dumps the cabinet onto the floor.

SAM

I know you took it. I want it now!

George yanks the chain saw to a roar and fashions an oval cut a few feet deep on the cabinet base. He kills the saw, lifts the armoire and scoots it in front of the toilet.

GEORGE

Doors.

Bob grimaces as George opens the armoire, revealing the toilet inside.

BOB

I hate to ask about a window.

GEORGE

(to Sam)

I flushed it down the toilet.

SAM

No! Oh my God!

George jerk starts the chain saw again and fashions a small opening above the toilet, ripping through the studs, wire mesh, tar paper and stucco - fine dust invades the space like a storm. Bob coughs as he writes in his book. George kills the chain saw and sets it down as he surveys his work.

SAM (CONT'D)

If I had a gun, I'd kill you.

Bob seems fairly anxious to conclude his business.

BOB

I assume you'll fill the...uh, window,
with glass?

GEORGE

If that's what it takes.

SAM

What's in my pants is none of your
fucking business!

BOB

(a little rattled)

I would say you're in compliance.

GEORGE

I hope that makes the pain in the ass
that called you happy.

George is staring at Sam. Bob backs out of the garage.

BOB

You and me both.

With Bob gone, George walks to Sam and gets in his face.

GEORGE

Everything about you is my business.
What you smoke, what you swallow, what
you sniff, it's all my business.

Sam slams his fists against his own chest, maddened.

SAM

I've been using since I was twelve!
You're all so unbelievably stupid. You
didn't give a shit about anything I did
until now!

GEORGE

I'll apologize for everything but
today...Today I give a shit.

SAM

You're too fucking late.

GEORGE

The gloves on the table are for you.

SAM

You can't make me do a thing.

GEORGE

Sit down for a second.

SAM

No.

George gently guides Sam back onto the bed. Sam hops up mad.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'll call the cops if you touch me again!

George sets Sam back onto the bed, not so gently this time. Sam is less eager to hop up in defiance.

SAM (CONT'D)

Oh, so you're in the big shit now! Child abuse. People go to prison for what you just did to me.

GEORGE

My dad used to play a game. I never really understood what it was until after he was gone.

Sam appears immensely disinterested.

SAM

I was holding for someone. That wasn't even mine.

GEORGE

The game was to make me smaller than he was. No matter what. He could be almost invisible as a human being, but I had to be smaller. So if I got good grades, I was a pussy for not playing football. If I cut my hair for him, it wasn't short enough. If I shaved it, I looked like a psycho. I never won the game. Not once. And if he couldn't make me smaller with words...

Tears well in George's eyes. Sam is caught up enough in what his father has to say that he has to feign his lack of interest.

SAM

I'll have to pay him back.

GEORGE

I won't ever hit you.

(beat)

I don't want you smaller. I want you to be happy. You're not. Not here with me.

Not home with your mother. Not up in
Tahoe. Not alone. Not anywhere.

(beat)

You're what I was most of my life, Sam.
I see it in your eyes. In your sleep.
In your answer to everything. You're
barely alive.

SAM

I'm not even listening.

GEORGE

You know that great thing, though? Is
that change can be so constant you don't
even feel the difference until there is
one. It can be so slow that you don't
even notice that your life is better or
worse, until it is.

(beat)

Or it can just blow you away. Make you
something different in an instant. It
happened to me.

George walks to the garage door as he wipes his eyes. He
stops and turns back around to face Sam.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Build this house with me.

George walks out leaving Sam on the bed to think.

EXT. GEORGE'S BEACH SHACK - AFTERNOON

George gathers a pile of splintered boards and tosses them
into the dumpster. He works while Guster sleeps.

LATER

The sun is fierce, low on the horizon with a heat that
distorts the distance. George is sweating and shirtless as
Sam walks out of the garage with the gloves on and stands
staring at his father. After a beat, George notices him.

SAM

I have to pay back what you flushed down
the toilet.

(beat)

I want ten dollars an hour...then I'm
done.

George nods. He points out the roofless shell of a shack.

GEORGE

It all has to come down before we can
start again.

(beat)
Knock it down.

George picks up a sledghammer and hands it to Sam. Sam hoists the hefty hammer and with some true effort, slams it on a sideboard. He slams again and again as George picks up a slightly smaller sledgehammer.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I hated this house from the second my father cheated everyone and put it in my name.

George takes a good hard whack at the wall, knocking a huge hunk of it down. Sam stops to watch.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Twenty years of hating what you live in...what you are. This is the end of it, Sam. I'm gonna build something of me here that I can be proud to give to you.

SAM
Don't. I don't want it.

George YELLS as he lands the hammer into the wall again. Sam is alarmed by his father's blatant rage.

GEORGE
Do whatever you want with it. I don't care. All I want from you is for you to remember we built this house together.

SAM
We haven't build shit. You're just tearing down your father.

GEORGE
Try it. It feels good.

George strikes another blow to the house joined with a MAD WAIL. Sam starts low, a whisper of a scream, but quickly builds, soon rivaling George in volume as he pounds away. This soul letting, cleansing ritual is both impelling and frightening to watch. Tom and Barbara, Colleen and her maid step out of their houses, drawn and perplexed by the guttural noise.

INT. RYAN AND ADAM'S ROOM - MORNING

Both boys are asleep as Robin enters and wakes them with the drop-and-bounce-back-to-your-feet-from-the-mattress method.

ROBIN
It's morning, sleepyheads!

They both wake with a groan. Robin leaps onto Adam and tickles him to life.

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Robin is quickly finishing a breakfast of oatmeal and fresh fruit with Adam and Ryan, who are still dressed in pajamas.

RYAN

Why do we have to get up and eat with you this early?

ROBIN

I just thought it would be nice.

ADAM

Are you going to see Sam again?

ROBIN

I thought I might stop by.

RYAN

All day again?

ROBIN

Not all day. I'll be home after lunch.

Robin stands and dumps her dishes in the sink.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You can go back to bed...or Lois might let you go swimming.

ADAM

I wanna be with you today.

ROBIN

Oh, honey. There's not much to do there. I mean, it's all work.

ADAM

We can work.

Robin focuses on her sons, both of whom seem willing to work.

ROBIN

Ryan, would you rather swim or work?

RYAN

Can we really help build a house?

Peter walks in, surprised by everyone being up.

PETER

Why is everyone up so early?

EXT. GEORGE'S SHACK - MORNING

George is knocking away the forms used to pour the foundation. Sam walks out of the garage with a towel; he shields his eyes from the morning sun as he watches his father work. Without make-up or a nose ring and with the black dye gone from his hair and the polish from his nails, Sam is a handsome kid. George looks happy, laying bare the foundation that will hold his home. Sam walks to Alyssa's house, unseen by his father.

INT. ALYSSA'S ENTRY - MORNING

Colleen is walking with Sam toward the stairs.

COLLEEN

If she's not up, you can use my shower.

SAM

Thank you.

COLLEEN

You're here early today.

SAM

We're getting out of the ground today.

Sam looks fairly excited as he rushes up the stairs.

INT. ALYSSA'S HALLWAY - MORNING

Sam stops at the door and KNOCKS.

ALYSSA (O.S.)

Huh?

SAM

I can use your mom's.

ALYSSA (O.S.)

I'm okay.

INT. ALYSSA'S ROOM - MORNING

Alyssa is curled up in bed, cuddling a stuffed bear as Sam walks in and closes the bedroom door behind him.

ALYSSA

Were you with Josh when the cops arrested him?

Alyssa sits up in bed, holding the sheet to her chest.

SAM
(nervously)
Not really. No. Kinda. He got busted?

ALYSSA
His parents took his car. They're making
him ride a bicycle the rest of the
summer.

Sam can't help but like that.

SAM
Really?

ALYSSA
He asked me to tell you that you owe him
a hundred dollars.

SAM
He can peddle over anytime he wants to
for it.

Sam breaks into a full-on smile.

ALYSSA
This is serious! I don't have my
license. He was my ride.

SAM
I'm sorry. I'm just here to shower.

Sam walks into the bathroom; before he closes the door, he
faces Alyssa with another smile - she tosses her bear at him.

EXT. GEORGE'S SHACK - MORNING

George is prying off the last of the boards when he's hit
with a pain that takes him to his knees. He drops the
crowbar and sits down in the dirt as Guster walks over to
comfort him. George takes deep breaths and closes his eyes
as he tries to gain control over the pain.

INT. ALYSSA'S BATHROOM - MORNING

The doorknob jiggles, jiggles and turns; Alyssa opens the
door and walks in dressed in a t-shirt and panties. Once
again Sam jumps and jams his elbow to the frosted glass as he
partially opens the shower door.

SAM
Is this like a past time with people? Go
away!

Alyssa sets a tiny screwdriver on the vanity.

ALYSSA

I've seen lots of people. It's not a big thing for me.

SAM

Hand me a towel. I'm getting out.

ALYSSA

I'm coming in.

SAM

I don't want you to!

ALYSSA

We're not gonna do anything.

SAM

Why are you so stupid?

ALYSSA

Why are you so uptight?

SAM

I don't even...what do you mean? I don't even know what that means.

ALYSSA

It means I'm gonna shampoo my hair and stay out of your way.

SAM

Hand me a towel. Hand me a towel.

Sam is anxious. Alyssa takes off her t-shirt and pulls down her panties before grabbing a towel; she hands it to Sam as she forces her way into the shower. Barely visible through the frosted glass, Alyssa wets her hair as Sam stares in her direction. The towel drops to the tiled floor.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

George is curled up in bed, the prescription bottle and a glass resting on a table. He's holding onto his side, still in some pain. A HONK gets Guster BARKING outside.

EXT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

Ryan and Adam run to Guster with glee as Robin steps out of the Range Rover with a large covered basket and a boom box. She sets the basket and radio on the patio table and searches for George, ending up at the entrance to the garage.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

George has hidden the prescription bottle and is sitting on

the bed as Robin walks in.

ROBIN

I thought you'd be up with the sun.

GEORGE

My stupid back.

Robin sits down on the bed next to George, concerned.

ROBIN

Do you need anything? I'll go to the pharmacy. I have some Demerol at home.

GEORGE

No, I'm...thanks. I took something.

Robin runs her hand down George's spine.

ROBIN

Where's Sam?

GEORGE

He won't use my shower. I don't get it.

Outside, Adam and Ryan are each calling Guster.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You brought your kids?

ROBIN

I kind of said that maybe they could do something. Help. I'm sorry. They really wanted to come. I really wanted to come and they wanted to be with me. I don't think they'll be too much trouble.

GEORGE

I'll find something that won't kill them.

ROBIN

Or wound. Let them keep their eyes and fingers.

GEORGE

You're a good mother.

Robin smiles. With some effort, George stands.

ROBIN

Do you need help?

GEORGE

I think so.

Robin stands and wraps her arm around his waist and he drapes his arms over her shoulder as they walk out of the garage.

ROBIN

I woke up this morning at three and couldn't fall back asleep. Everyday I think I see more of Sam than I've seen in years.

ADAM (O.S.)

Sam!

EXT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

Adam runs with abandon to Sam and Alyssa as Robin helps George to a patio chair.

SAM

Hey.

Adam runs into Sam with a hug, then steps back.

SAM (CONT'D)

What's that for?

ADAM

Mom said I should.

SAM

Oh.

ADAM

I would have anyway.

Sam appears awkward as he rests his hand for a second on Adam's shoulder.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Who are you?

ALYSSA

Who are you?

ADAM

I'm his brother.

ALYSSA

I'm his friend.

Adam views her suspiciously as they walk across Alyssa's grass to the patio.

ADAM

Mom says we can build a house.

ALYSSA

Hi, Mr. Nelson.

GEORGE

Hi, Alyssa.

SAM

Hi, Mom.

ROBIN

Good morning.

It's clear that Robin is falling in love with her son again.

ALYSSA

Hello.

Alyssa extends her hand to Robin and they shake.

ROBIN

You're so nice to let Sam use your shower.

ALYSSA

He's got a standing invitation.

Sam instantly flushes red.

SAM

Hey, Ryan.

Sam walks to Ryan, who's been standing back from the group.

RYAN

Hey.

Sam drapes his arm over Ryan's shoulder and together they walk to the foundation.

SAM

So, you wanna build a house?

RYAN

If we do, will it stay up?

MONTAGE

A BLINK 182 SONG BLASTS from the boom box on the patio table. Ryan and Adam slather paint remover on five old painted doors. They work with gloves and brushes and appear meticulous in their application. Alyssa and Sam nail and bolt the corner posts to the rim joist as Robin and George work on the stick framed door deck. While George is moving a little slower than usual, it appears that the pain is nearly gone. As the song ends, Robin rushes

toward the radio.

ROBIN

I brought a few of my own.

RYAN

Someone stop her!

Robin runs to her car and retrieves a few CD's. She slips the CD in and we HEAR John Hiatt's "DISTANCE." It's a slow, soft song that brings a smile to George's face.

GEORGE

It's been a while.

ROBIN

This was my very first slow dance.

ADAM

Did you know him before you knew Dad?

ROBIN

Since seventh grade.

GEORGE

Tell him how you made me fall in love with you.

ROBIN

I smiled at him.

GEORGE

Watch out for the smile, boys.

Robin's body moves slightly to the music as she smiles. George grins. The boys aren't sure what to make of the advice. 'You are the beautiful love (my lover), I am the distant shore (so far away). There is so much to uncover (love's hiding). What is this distance for? What is it for?

ROBIN

Who's up for a dance?

Robin glances around for any takers, finally focusing on George.

ADAM (O.S.)

Just don't hug me too tight.

Adam walks to his mother and they hold hands as they dance. Sam sits down to watch. George wears a smile that wipes the last of the pain from his face.

ADAM (CONT'D)

That's all you get. I'm busy today.

Adam backs away and grabs his paintbrush. Robin stops dancing as she focuses on George.

ROBIN

Let's see if you've gotten any better.

GEORGE

Oh, I'm worse. Much, much worse.

Robin waits to see how worse. George finally walks to her and takes her in his arms. He must have been better than this. The waltz smooths out as they dance closer, holding tighter. "We fill the air with silent stares. But still, no one there, we are strangers." Alyssa decides it's time to go.

ALYSSA

I'll see you tomorrow.

Sam watches Alyssa walk away, but he's quickly drawn back to his mother and father dancing. Ryan appears anxious, unsure of the music and George.

RYAN

When did you fall in love with my dad?

The dance stops. George lets go of Robin as she focuses on Ryan.

ROBIN

When I found out I was pregnant with you.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Sam is on the pull out bed, listening to music through headphones. We HEAR a flush, the armoire doors open and George walks out of the cabinet, washes his hands, turns off the light and drops into bed. A nightlight stuck in a socket above the bed casts a dull blue light over the room. Sam takes the headphones off. After a long silence:

SAM

I took some of your Vicodin.

GEORGE

I know.

(beat)

Why?

SAM

I like how it feels not to feel.

George turns onto his side to face his son.

GEORGE

I know the feeling.

SAM

How do you become something you're not?

GEORGE

What would you like to be?

SAM

What I'm not.

GEORGE

What are you now?

SAM

Nothing.

GEORGE

That's not true.

SAM

See, that's the thing...I am what I say I am.

GEORGE

I know parts of who you are.

SAM

What do you know about me?

George drops back onto his back. He takes his time to answer.

GEORGE

When you started first grade and your mom went to work, it was so she could save for an apartment. But then she met Peter and skipped the idea of renting.

SAM

He's got nothing to do with me.

GEORGE

I couldn't imagine how I could compete with him for any part of you. So, I didn't. He wanted you to have his last name...I let him even take that.

SAM

He was a prick when I was six, and he's a prick today.

George turns onto his side to face Sam again.

GEORGE

I wish you had told me then.

SAM

I'm telling you now.

GEORGE

I gave up on you.

SAM

I'd be in Tahoe having fun if you had given up.

GEORGE

What would you be doing now?

SAM

Getting high, I guess.

GEORGE

If I asked you to stop, would you?

SAM

I haven't used anything for two days.
I'm trying.

GEORGE

I'm proud of you, Sam.

SAM

Don't be. And hide whatever that new drug is you have. I like it.

Sam turns away from his father and puts his headphones on.
The music bleeds through the headphones in a muffled rumble.

GEORGE

I put a gun to my father's head once.

George's voice is soft - there's no chance Sam can hear.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Have you ever thought like that? I've been thinking...watching you work. How much do you hate me?

(beat)

He was passed out.

Just screaming at my mother before.

About nothing. Under-cooked meat. I went back to my room... put the barrel close to his ear and chickened out again. Not my dad. Hid in my room. Not even me.

(beat)

Of course it was a BB gun. But it still

would have hurt like hell.

Sam notices his father's mouth moving and takes off the headphones.

SAM

Are you talking?

GEORGE

I was just thinking about my mom. She wouldn't leave him. I remember one time she made us dinner wearing sunglasses. I mean it was dark outside and in. But we never talked about it.

SAM

Sun glasses?

GEORGE

To hide a black eye.

SAM

Why wouldn't she leave?

GEORGE

I think she was terrified of living with him...but maybe even more terrified of life without him.

SAM

I would have killed him.

GEORGE

Everything would have been better if you had. You'd have liked your grandmother. And there'd be a girl out there that'd have her mother. I remember reading about her in the paper. They couldn't find her father and her mother was dead. I still feel guilty about that.

SAM

Do you ever wish you had done it?

George thinks about that for a second.

GEORGE

I loved him too much.

SAM

After everything he did to you and your mom?

GEORGE

After everything.

SAM
That's so weird...

Sam slips his headphones back on. George nods...it is.

EXT. DAVID DOKOS' HOUSE - MORNING

Guster is squatting on the lush lawn of the mansion taking a dump. David bursts out from his house, rushes to his black Mercedes and tries once again to run over Guster. No such luck. Guster moves on to another lawn as Mr. Dokos drops over the curb and drives off down the street.

EXT. GEORGE'S BEACH SHACK - AFTERNOON

In the late June afternoon, with a clotted cloud sky, Robin, Adam, Ryan, Sam, Alyssa and George work at building a house. Adam and Ryan are staining the interior doors they stripped days earlier. George and Sam carry large wood beam to the foundation and slip it into the pocket mortise of the laminated beam that spans from pier post to pier post. Robin grabs a drill and screws the cast-in tie down to the wood beam. Alyssa is sawing a rafter in half as her mother walks across the grass with a huge basket of food.

COLLEEN
Is anyone hungry?

LATER

With MUSIC playing in the background, everyone is packed around the patio table eating pasta and drinking lemonade.

ADAM
I like the color I'm making the doors.

GEORGE
The absolute best color I've ever seen in my life.

Adam lights up, pleased to be praised.

RYAN
How many bedrooms will your house have?

GEORGE
Three.

ADAM
Will Sam live with you or us?

GEORGE
With you.

It's a quick response that draws Robin's attention. Sam lightly bops Adam on the head.

SAM

So put your plans of my room in the trash.

ADAM

I don't think Dad wants you home.

ROBIN

Adam, that's not true!

RYAN

Yes, it is.

ROBIN

Would you stop being ridiculous? Your father wants Sam home as much as I do.

Sam starts laughing. George smiles. Sam can't stop laughing.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

It wasn't meant to be...

Sam and George stand at exactly the same time and walk back to the house. Without a word, they work together as they continue to frame the house. Suddenly George turns back to the pack of people at the table and loudly proclaims:

GEORGE

I love you!

That's it. He goes back to work as Sam glances at him, amused. Adam and Ryan are surprised and it shows on their faces. Robin smiles.

INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Robin's in bed reading as Peter emerges from the bathroom in pajama bottoms.

PETER

You know what I've decided?

Robin glances up from her book to Peter's hairy chest.

ROBIN

To shave your chest?

PETER

We should take a vacation.

Peter grabs his pajama top and slips it on as he climbs into

bed. Robin sets her book down.

ROBIN

The biggest waste of time since television.

PETER

Do you remember anything I've said that wasn't negative?

Robin takes long enough to think that Peter forges on.

PETER (CONT'D)

Just the two of us.

It takes Robin a few seconds to answer.

ROBIN

I'd love to drive through New England in the Fall.

PETER

Sooner than the Fall.

He closes in on her, kisses her cheek.

ROBIN

After the kids are back in school.

PETER

Lois will stay with them. Or we can pawn them off on your parents.

Out of reasonable excuses, Robin opts for the truth.

ROBIN

I'm helping George build his house.

PETER

What?

ROBIN

I've been helping for the last few days. Weeks. Sam's working. I told you Sam was working. I mean, he really is.

PETER

Good. That was the plan. We couldn't stand him and George needed help.

As true as it is, this still irritates Robin.

ROBIN

I can't go right now.

PETER

You can't go because of Sam?

ROBIN

We haven't been away together for three years. What difference does a few months make?

PETER

You can't go with me because of Sam?

ROBIN

Sam is working at something for the first time in his life. Once in a while he even talks to me. I want to be around for that.

PETER

So am I, Robin. I'm working at something, too. I'm even talking. Do you want to be around for it?

Peter is intense, close up, not giving her breathing room.

ROBIN

I don't know.

Robin whispers her answer. Peter pulls away and settles down on his back. Robin doesn't move for the longest time. Finally, she eases onto her back and turns out the light.

PETER

I was talking about our marriage.

ROBIN

I know.

Silence finishes the conversation.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - MORNING

With an extended plate and overhung rafters, the frame takes its form; rooms are roughed in; windows are framed; two gable dormers distinguish the common-rafter roof in the front and a frame for a balcony juts out over the ocean in back. Robin and Adam are locking in and hoisting the sheets of plywood on a pulley system up to Ryan and George, who are stripped down to shorts - George is thinner than ever.

INT. ALYSSA'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Sam is showering as Alyssa walks in from the bedroom and joins him; no protest is voiced this time around.

INT. SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

Alyssa smiles at Sam as she grabs a wash cloth and slathers it with liquid soap.

SAM

What's the point of this?

ALYSSA

Does everything have to have a point?

SAM

It's freakish. I don't get it. I'm not really supposed to touch you, but I can look.

Alyssa faces Sam as she washes her body with the cloth.

ALYSSA

Are you sure you're totally into guys?

SAM

What are you talking about?

ALYSSA

Josh said...

SAM

I'm not gay.

Sam glances down at himself; Alyssa looks too.

SAM (CONT'D)

I mean, hello!

They both look up.

ALYSSA

I was wondering.

SAM

You're driving me crazy! Do you know what it's like trying to jack-off in an armoire?

ALYSSA

Not really.

SAM

You're off, you know? You're way, way off.

ALYSSA

I thought I was helping you.

SAM

It would help me if I could kiss you.

ALYSSA

No, I don't...NO. I thought we were just friends.

SAM

What you think, you know, doesn't have much to do with reality. I mean, I hope I'm not the first to say that about you.

ALYSSA

Okay, but then we'll just be friends. Okay?

SAM

Okay. I guess.

Sam stands still, unsure of his next move.

ALYSSA

Have you ever even kissed a girl?

Sam appears shocked she would even ask; he hasn't, but she's not supposed to know that. Alyssa makes the move, closes the distance and kisses him. Apart, it appears to be something they enjoyed. Sam wraps his arms around her, presses himself against her and kisses her again.

After a few seconds of making out, Sam jerks once, then again as he backs away. Alyssa grimaces as she glances down.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Oh, yuck!

Alyssa steps into a corner of the shower as Sam turns around and rests his forehead on the tile.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

You're scrubbing the shower down.

EXT. GEORGE'S BEACH SHACK - AFTERNOON

George and Sam are on ladders, reinforcing a window opening on the second floor with a 2x4 spline. Ryan and Adam are flat on their backs on the grass with Guster between them, dog-tired. Robin is at the grill with hamburgers as Alyssa prepares the table for dinner.

ALYSSA

You must have a really great husband.

Robin glances up at Alyssa.

ROBIN

Why is that?

ALYSSA

Just, I mean, well, you're here every single day.

ROBIN

He's at work while I'm here.

ALYSSA

I guess I'd just be jealous if I were him.

ROBIN

Well, he doesn't need to worry.

ALYSSA

If my kids and my wife were always at an ex-husband's house, I'd worry.

ROBIN

He's not the type to worry.

Robin is slightly pissed at Alyssa grilling her; she flips the hamburgers and calls out:

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Let's eat!

INT. WEBBER'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Music is playing softly in the background. Peter is sitting alone in a chair with a drink in hand. After a bit, Lois walks in holding a can of Pledge and a rag.

LOIS

I'd be glad to fix you something.

PETER

No, I'm fine.

Lois nods and walks away. For all the presence of the room, Peter looks small and frayed in it - lost in his own house.

EXT. GEORGE'S BEACH SHACK - AFTERNOON

Lunch is over. Adam is wrestling with Guster on the lawn. Robin is taking money from her purse as George hands Sam the keys to his truck.

ROBIN

Nothing R, okay?

RYAN

Enough for drinks, popcorn and candy!

ADAM

And video games after!

ROBIN

Home after.

(to Sam)

Will you come in and say "hi"?

Sam shrugs, takes the money and keys as Ryan and Adam rush close to him.

ADAM

Do we have to take her?

The three boys turn to watch as Alyssa, now dressed in a dress, walks across the lawn to join them.

SAM

Definitely.

It's literally frightening how beautiful Alyssa can look; with her tan and white dress, Sam shutters.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Josh is peddling down the highway on his bike, sweating in the full afternoon sun.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

George is hewing a beam as Robin watches from a chair.

ROBIN

I should go.

George stops and wipes the sweat from his forehead.

GEORGE

Maybe you shouldn't come everyday.

ROBIN

No. Why? I like to be with Sam.

GEORGE

It's just that there's less that Adam and Ryan can do anymore.

(beat)

I'd hate to have them bored.

Robin stands and walks to George.

ROBIN

I know they're not much help, but they love coming here, George.

GEORGE

How much time do they get to spend with their dad?

ROBIN

What is it with this? They wouldn't spend less time with Peter if they lived here! He has no time!

Robin walks away, then back - she's frustrated.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Do you know Alyssa thinks something is up with us? She's giving me crap about being away from Peter and now you're trying to do the same thing! What no one seems to realize is that Peter isn't there! He's not there! And when he is, he isn't!

(beat)

So, if you don't want me here, or you don't want my kids here, just tell me, George. I'll stop coming. But it won't be because of Peter. It'll be because you asked me to stop. Say what you need to say, because I'm not leaving until I hear it.

GEORGE

I'd rather you not be here.

In the distance, on the street, Josh peddles past on his bike.

ROBIN

I thought we were helping.

GEORGE

I can hire workers to help me.

Robin nods, gathers her things, walks to her car, climbs in and drives off.

EXT. COLLEEN'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Colleen is standing in the entry, talking to Josh.

COLLEEN

You can come in and wait if you'd like.

JOSH

What friends did she go with?

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Robin pulls right back to where she was parked and parks again. She steps out of the car talking.

ROBIN

Nothing is going on with us, is it?

GEORGE

Going on?

ROBIN

When I picked you up from the train station...what you said.

GEORGE

What did I say?

ROBIN

That thing about I was the most, you know, beautiful person you had ever known. What was that?

GEORGE

That was the truth.

ROBIN

You've never said that before.

GEORGE

I'll say a lot of things I've never said before. It's habit.

ROBIN

It sounded like a pick-up line.

GEORGE

I can't pick you up.

Robin sits down, weighted by the reason.

ROBIN

I'm married.

GEORGE

You bit my finger.

ROBIN

If I weren't married?

George wants to answer quickly, dismiss the impossible and move on, but emotion catches him off-guard. He forces a smile.

GEORGE

Let's not do this, okay?

ROBIN

I need to know.

GEORGE

You need to know what? Do I still love you?

Robin is surprised by the question. She nods her head.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Absolutely. There's not a doubt in my mind that through all my anger...my ego, I was faithful in my love for you. From seventh grade on.

Robin raises her eyebrows - what a revelation.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

That I made you doubt it, that I withheld it...that's the greatest mistake of a life full of mistakes.

(beat)

But the truth doesn't set us free, Robin. I can say it as many times as you can stand to hear it. And all that does, the only thing, is remind us that love isn't enough. Not even close.

Tears well in Robin's eyes as she stands.

ROBIN

I should go.

George nods - she should. Robin walks to her car, opens the door; she faces George before climbing in. George walks into the garage.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

George rummages through his sock drawer. Pulls out a folded sock and opens it - the prescription bottle drops to the floor. He fills a glass and swallows three pills.

INT. ROBIN'S ENTRY - LATE AFTERNOON

Robin opens the door and heads straight for the kitchen.

PETER (O.S.)

All I am is what I have.

Robin jumps and searches for the voice. Peter's sitting alone in the living room.

PETER (CONT'D)

That sounds pathetic, doesn't it?

ROBIN
What are you doing home?

PETER
I always felt I could never marry you
without first showing you what a fabulous
life you could live despite me.

Robin takes a few steps into the room.

ROBIN
You never really trusted me.

PETER
You live a fabulous life, Robin.

ROBIN
Despite you.

PETER
I never asked for more.

ROBIN
That's the problem.

PETER
Please don't leave me.

Peter stands and walks to her. Robin doesn't respond.

PETER (CONT'D)
Where are the kids?

ROBIN
Sam took them to a movie.

PETER
I'll be in the bedroom.

Peter takes her hand and kisses her cheek before walking down the hall. Robin stands still, trying to assess the exchange.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

In a bedroom we don't quite recognize, two people are in the throes of making love under a silk white sheet.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Oh God!

It's hard to tell whose voice that is - Robin's?

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

George is in bed, awakened by a KNOCK.

GEORGE
I fell asleep!

Alyssa walks in, closing the door behind her.

ALYSSA
Sam's dropping Adam and Ryan off.

George is slightly out of it with oral morphine; he tires to sit up, but settles for propping up his head.

GEORGE
Can you keep Sam straight?

ALYSSA
He's not gay. I found out purely by accident, believe me.

GEORGE
I mean drugs.
(catching up)
I thought you said he was?

ALYSSA
He wouldn't use around me. I don't like any of it.

GEORGE
You're a good girl.

ALYSSA
I need to ask you something, Mr. Nelson.

Alyssa walks over and lies on the bed beside George.

GEORGE
You have to ask like that?

ALYSSA
I want you to try something with me, okay?

GEORGE
I've taken a lot of morphine. Oral morphine...for my back. Can I wait till I can say no and sound convincing?

Alyssa leans forward and kisses him; it's a real kiss that lasts a lot longer than it should. And when it's over:

ALYSSA
Did you feel anything?

GEORGE

Maybe your tongue...I don't know, my mouth is numb. Why did you do that?

They both stare up at the ceiling.

ALYSSA

When you dated my mom, I saw you kiss her once. You looked like such a good kisser.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

It's the couple making love again; this time we're close enough to make out Colleen's face underneath Josh, who is working with speed, if not exact precision.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

My mother would die.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Let's shut up and not kill her.

COLLEEN

Oh my God!

INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Peter has changed and is on the bed; his head propped up by pillows; he stares blankly at the door.

INT. ROBIN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Robin is sitting alone in the living room, in the same spot Peter had been sitting earlier.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EVENING

Alyssa and George are still beside each other in bed.

ALYSSA

It's not what I was expecting.

GEORGE

What did you think it would be?

ALYSSA

I don't know...
(realizing)
More like when I kissed Sam.

Alyssa sits up in bed.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

More like that.

She stands and grabs his big toe.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Thanks for your time.

Alyssa waves goodbye and leaves. George is confused by it all.

INT. COLLEEN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Josh looks as though he's been struck by a hammer as he lay on his back with his mouth slack. Under the sheet, low down, Colleen is swallowing her pride and showing off her technique. A sudden blaring noise, AN ALARM, pierces Josh's throaty groan. Colleen jumps off the bed, the sheet still haunting her head.

COLLEEN

Oh my God! Get dressed! Get dressed!

INT. COLLEEN'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Alyssa closes the French door she entered through and rushes to the alarm panel as the siren blares.

INT. COLLEEN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Colleen and Josh are frantically pulling on clothes as the noise throws them off balance.

INT. COLLEEN'S KITCHEN - EVENING

With the ALARM OFF, Alyssa walks to the entry.

ALYSSA

Mom!?

INT. COLLEEN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Josh has pulled on his underwear backwards; only speed counts.

INT. COLLEEN'S ENTRY - EVENING

Alyssa glances around before heading up the stairs.

ALYSSA

Hello?

INT. COLLEEN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Without a knock, Alyssa opens the door. The room is empty, but the bed is messed.

ALYSSA

Mom?

COLLEEN (O.S.)

Here, honey!

Alyssa walks to the master bath, following the voice.

INT. COLLEEN'S BATHROOM - EVENING

Colleen is standing above Josh, who is bent over on his knees, with a plunger in the bath.

ALYSSA

I completely forgot. I'm so sorry, Josh.

(beat)

What are you doing?

Josh's face is flushed red and beaded with sweat.

COLLEEN

I put him to work.

ALYSSA

What's wrong?

It takes a second for Colleen to realize that Alyssa is talking about the plumbing.

COLLEEN

I couldn't get it to go down.

ALYSSA

And why was the alarm on?

COLLEEN

Oh...I set it to see if it would work.

ALYSSA

You'd better call and cancel.

COLLEEN

Oh God, we don't want the police!

Colleen is anxious as she rushes out. Josh stands and wipes the sweat from his forehead.

ALYSSA

What's going on?

Josh fumbles and fidgets, finally finding a way out.

JOSH

What's the deal with you and Sam?

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Robin is fixing dinner as we hear the front door open. Adam is talking as he rushes into the kitchen.

ADAM

I got to play one video game for three hours straight!

Ryan enters right behind him.

RYAN

Wouldn't you move to another one if the one you were playing made you look stupid?

Robin checks the entry to the kitchen - no Sam.

ADAM

That's how you get things right is to always try and never give up. Huh, Mom?

ROBIN

I guess it depends on what you give up on.

Robin's face lights up as Sam walks into the kitchen.

SAM

There were no PG's. So I just gave them money to play games.

ROBIN

Can you stay for dinner?

SAM

Depends on what I'd give up on.

Robin opens the oven and shows Sam a platter of lasagna.

SAM (CONT'D)

It looks like a trap.

Robin turns to Adam, excited at having Sam stay for dinner.

ROBIN

Go tell your father we're eating.

RYAN

Dad's home, already?

ROBIN

In the bedroom.

Adam takes off in a run as Sam walks to the sink and washes

his hands before grabbing a stack of plates for dinner. He arranges the five on the table and then heads back for utensils as Adam runs back in.

ADAM
He's not there.

ROBIN
He's here. Check the bathroom.

ADAM
I checked everywhere. He's not there.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

Guster's at the door, whining. George and Sam are asleep.

INT. COLLEEN'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Colleen is sitting alone at the kitchen table, drinking coffee as Alyssa walks in.

ALYSSA
What are you doing up so early?

COLLEEN
I couldn't sleep last night.

ALYSSA
I'm supposed to be mad at you, but I'm not.

Colleen is trembling as Alyssa pours herself a big bowl of Lucky Charms.

COLLEEN
Why? What do you mean?

ALYSSA
Uh...using Josh like that.

Alyssa eats her cereal as Colleen bursts into a confession.

COLLEEN
I will never forgive myself. Never, Alyssa. I know I took advantage. It's inexcusable. Oh, God. I should have my head examined.

Alyssa looks confused as she swallows her Lucky Charms.

ALYSSA
He said you asked him to tighten your toilet seat, too. That's so uncool.

Colleen quickly nods.

COLLEEN

I won't do it again. I swear.

Alyssa keeps an eye on her mother as she continues on with her cereal.

EXT. DOKOS HOUSE - MORNING

Guster is taking a dump on the immaculate lawn. David Dokos rushes from the house dressed in a suit and picks up the shit with a gloved hand and heaves it at Guster as the dog trots back to safety. Tom and Barbara, the old early walkers of the street, stop and watch as David picks up more crap and tosses it onto George's driveway. He notices Tom and Barbara.

DAVID

Mind your own fucking business!

Tom and Barbara stay silent as David Dokos walks back into his house and slams the front door shut.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - LATE MORNING

Josh is in eleventh gear on his ten speed peddling like a demon for the Beck's house.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

Robin pulls to a stop and Ryan and Adam run from the Range Rover to Sam and Alyssa, who are helping an ELECTRICIAN (DALE) install the outside boxes and sockets.

ADAM

Dad's disappeared!

RYAN

He was there and then he wasn't!

Sam faces his mother as she walks toward the house.

SAM

He hasn't called?

ADAM

Who are you?

Robin shakes her head "no" to Sam. Dale turns to face Adam.

DALE

I'm the electrician.

ADAM

I'm the builder!

Sam turns back to finish what he was working on as Alyssa grabs Adam with a hug.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

George is swallowing two pills as Robin knocks on the half open door, opening it all the way in the process.

ROBIN

Is your back still killing you?

GEORGE

I didn't think you'd come today.

ROBIN

I kept thinking about it, what you said... I hope you were trying to keep me away fro the sake of me.

GEORGE

No. Mostly me.

ROBIN

Peter left me yesterday.

GEORGE

Left you?

ROBIN

No goodbye. No fuck you. No 'Are you in love with George?'

GEORGE

What did he say?

ROBIN

'I'll be in the bedroom.'

Robin walks to George and holds on to his shirt.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I couldn't walk in there.

(beat)

So he left.

She rests the side of her head against his chest. He kisses her hair. Outside, a hammer beats a reminder that they're not alone. The ocean drowns the sound long enough for Robin to kiss George's chin; and in that instant, the instant where everything but the touch washes away, George kisses Robin with such punch that it knocks them onto the bed. They continue to forget everything as they roll with the punch.

SAM (O.S.)
Dad, Dale needs to know..

Sam stops at the jamb of the open door as his mother and father scramble to their feet from the bed.

GEORGE
I had a kink in my...

As George falters, Robin feels compelled to complete the lie.

ROBIN
Back. Neck. Back.

GEORGE
What?

SAM
The door was open.

ROBIN
(a quick confession)
I don't know what I'm doing.

SAM
I wouldn't let Adam or Ryan see you doing it.

GEORGE
It won't happen again.

George and Robin are flustered, embarrassed by being caught, something Sam clearly relishes.

SAM
Dale wants to know if we should run an outside outlet for Christmas lights with a switch inside?

GEORGE
Absolutely.
(beat)
Have him put it on a separate line. At Christmas, we'll pact it so full of lights, we'll make God wear sunglasses.

Sam laughs, grabs the door and closes it on his parents. Robin slumps, truly embarrassed.

ROBIN
I could die.

GEORGE
So could I.

George touches Robin's chin, draws her head up. He stares at her, afraid to say what he needs to say.

ROBIN

Are you going to kiss me?

GEORGE

It's not my back that's killing me.

Robin furrows her brow, not understanding. George surrounds her head with his hands and kisses her forehead.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Adam and Ryan are helping Dale run the electrical lines; Alyssa and Sam drill screws into the second story floorboards. MUSIC is playing loud on the radio.

ANOTHER VIEW

Josh stops peddling quite a distance from George's house and gets off to search for Alyssa. Only seeing Adam, Ryan and Dale, Josh pulls out his cell and dials.

INT. COLLEEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Frustrated and anxious, Colleen slips off the dress she's wearing and tries another one as the phone RINGS.

EXT. GEORGE'S STREET - MORNING

Josh is standing behind a tree, talking on his cell phone as he stares at George's house.

JOSH

I don't see her.

(beat)

Please just open the door when I knock.

He slips the phone back in his pocket, hops back on the bike and makes a beeline toward Colleen's house.

ALYSSA (O.S.)

Josh?

Busted, Josh has no choice but to join Alyssa.

JOSH

I was hoping...you could..you know. Go for a ride?

Alyssa and Sam are leaning out the framed second story window.

SAM

On the handlebars or your shoulders?

ALYSSA

Are you afraid of heights?

Sam walks away from the window and goes back to work.

JOSH

Not really.

ALYSSA

Can you help us out?

JOSH

My parents cut my allowance off. Without a car, I'm totally screwed.

ALYSSA

George is paying Sam ten dollars an hour.

Sam sticks his head back out the window.

SAM

Hey, I can get you three hundred cash for two hours.

ALYSSA

What?

Josh is fuming as he stares at Sam.

SAM

It's just a joke. A stupid joke.

JOSH

I could use the money.

Sam turns away from Josh. George walks out the garage as he wipes his eyes.

ALYSSA

Hey, George! I recruited some help for the roof!

George walks to Josh and extends his hand.

GEORGE

George Nelson.

JOSH

Josh.

Adam races to George with a hug - something unexpected. Adam rushes back to work as George breaks into a smile. Alyssa

rushes down the stairs and straight into George's arms.

ALYSSA

Me too!

George is still smiling as he tucks a strand of Alyssa's hair behind her ear. Ryan sort of saunters over to George with his hands sunk deep in his pockets. Without asking, George wraps his arms around Ryan with a hug. Afterward:

RYAN

I just wanted to know where Mom was?

GEORGE

Oh. Sorry.

RYAN

It's okay.

GEORGE

She needs to be alone, I think.

RYAN

Because Dad left?

GEORGE

She's a little sad, is all.

RYAN

I don't even care if he ever comes back.

Ryan walks back to Adam, who's been standing still, listening.

GEORGE

Josh, you look like you could use a hug.

JOSH

No...I'm okay. I'm okay.

George is too quick with his hug. Josh is stiff as a board. Sam looks pissed as he walks away from the second story window and resumes screwing the floorboards. George sets his eyes on Dale as he opens his arms wide.

DALE

Don't even think about it.

George walks toward Dale with his arms still extended.

GEORGE

Well, they got me started.

DALE

I swear to God, I'll use these wires and

shock you so bad your tongue will turn
black.

Adam and Ryan are excited as George closes the distance.
Finally, Dale drops the harmless wire and takes off in a run.

INT. COLLEEN'S KITCHEN - LATE MORNING

Colleen is pacing the kitchen in a silky dress we haven't
seen before. Finally, she grabs the phone.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

George is propped up on the chaise lounge next to the patio
table where everyone has dropped their crap. Sam and Josh
are sheeting the roof with tarpaper. Robin is still in the
garage. One of two cell phones on the table begins to RING.

DALE

Would you get it for me?

Dale is in the middle of wiring a box.

JOSH (O.S.)

Just let mine ring!

GEORGE

I guess... I don't know.

George picks up the offender, unsure whose phone it is.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hello?

INT. COLLEEN'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

COLLEEN

(into phone)

Where are you? You're driving me crazy,
waiting like this. I want you in me now!

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

George nearly drops the phone; he sits up straight.

GEORGE

(into phone)

Colleen?!

INT. COLLEEN'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Colleen sits down, panicked.

COLLEEN

(into phone)
I..I..I.. George?!

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

George holds the phone out and examines it for a second.

JOSH (O.S.)
Is it mine?!

GEORGE
God, I hope not.

DALE (O.S.)
That's not mine.

JOSH (O.S.)
Oh, shit!

Josh trips, slips and slides off the roof to the ground below as Alyssa lets out a loud SCREAM.

INT. COLLEEN'S KITCHEN - LATE MORNING

Colleen tosses the receiver as though it were a ball on fire.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Everyone, including Robin, is circled around Josh, who is sprawled on the ground.

JOSH
I'm okay. I'm fine. Maybe I'll go home.

ADAM
Is that bone sticking out?

ROBIN
Don't move!

GEORGE
I'm an idiot to have you up there.

JOSH
No. It's my fault.

An ambulance is HEARD approaching. Colleen runs from her house - she's now dressed more appropriately in Levi's and a blouse.

COLLEEN
I heard a scream!

JOSH
If I could just stand up.

ALYSSA

Josh fell.

Colleen stops a few feet short and covers her mouth with a trembling hand.

GEORGE

I think he might have broken a leg.

The ambulance silences the siren as it turns onto the cul-de sac and stops in front of George's house.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - EARLY AFTERNOON

Robin, George and Sam are sitting at the patio table as Ryan and Adam play catch with Guster.

GEORGE

Two ribs, a finger, a leg, a bruised kidney and a mild concussion aren't bad considering he landed on brick.

Neither Robin nor Sam attempts a response. Finally:

ROBIN

I better get the kids home.

GEORGE

Not a perfect day.

Robin stands. George stands because Robin's standing. Without warning, Robin begins to cry again. Ryan and Adam stop playing ball. Sam studies her before finally lowering his eyes. With her kids looking on, George stands still, hesitant to comfort her. There's a moment where all that there is, where the only thing seen or heard is Robin's pain. After an awkward amount of time, she wipes her eyes, wipes her nose, crosses around the table to Sam and kisses the top of his head, then his cheek. Without a word, she walks to her car and climbs in; Ryan and Adam quickly join her in the car.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

George is brushing his teeth, dribbling and foaming over the only sink in the garage. Sam is propped up in bed with Guster, dressed on top of the sheets, fingering through a stack of CD's. He glances over at his father twice before speaking.

SAM

You look like shit, lately.

George spits and rinses, facing Sam as he wipes his mouth.

GEORGE

You look better than ever.

SAM

I don't think Mom cares that much that my...that Peter left.

GEORGE

She seemed upset.

SAM

What's wrong with your back?

Sam tries to look slightly less interested than he is by continuing to flip through the CD's. George sits down.

SAM (CONT'D)

I mean, do you need to have surgery on it or what? Because those pills you're taking are for a lot of pain. And you're going through them quick.

GEORGE

Are you taking them still?

SAM

No, but I count them. In a sock isn't new, you know?

This is not easy for George; he fumbles a bit before answering.

GEORGE

I'm having a problem with cancer.

Sam stops flipping though the CD's.

SAM

I don't know what that means. What kind of problem?

GEORGE

The kind where there isn't really an answer.

SAM

I still don't know what that means.

GEORGE

I wanted you here so we could have a few months together. Maybe everything happens for a reason. Something bad to force something good.

Sam looks somewhat panicked.

SAM

What? Are you dying?

This is not easy for George; he fumbles a bit before answering.

GEORGE

I'm having a problem with cancer.

Sam stops flipping through the CD's.

SAM

I don't know what that means. What kind of problem?

GEORGE

The kind where there isn't really an answer.

SAM

I still don't know what that means.

GEORGE

I wanted you here so we could have a few months together. Maybe everything happens for a reason. Something bad to force something good.

Sam looks somewhat panicked.

SAM

What? Are you dying?

George nods his head.

SAM (CONT'D)

And you told Mom today?

GEORGE

Yes.

Sam whacks the CD's off his stomach; they scatter across the floor. Guster scoots off the bed in a panic.

SAM

Fuck you! You knew you were dying from the start!

Sam bounds out of bed in a rage.

GEORGE

We're all dying from the start.
(beat)

I just got picked for Advanced Placement.

SAM

You lied to me!

GEORGE

I would have lied to me if I thought I'd believe it.

SAM

This was all for your sake, wasn't it? Having me here? Trying to get me to like you.

GEORGE

I never tried to get you to like me.

(beat)

I tried to get you to love me.

SAM

Well, congratulations! You fucking pulled it off!

Sam storms out of the garage.

INT. COLLEEN'S ENTRY - NIGHT

Colleen pulls a robe around her nightgown as the doorbell RINGS again and again. She flips on a light and opens the door. Sam backs away from the door as he talks.

SAM

Is Alyssa here?

COLLEEN

It's midnight. What's the matter, Sam?

SAM

Nothing. My dad's dying. I really need to talk to Alyssa.

ALYSSA (O.S.)

Sam?

Alyssa is leaning over the upstairs railing. Sam walks up the stairs as Colleen closes the door.

EXT. BEACH - EARLY MORNING

Sea lions romp on a rock offshore as gulls circle above. The sun sheets the morning on the water that's blinding.

INT. ALYSSA'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Alyssa is under the covers holding onto Sam, who is still

dressed. Both are asleep.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - EARLY MORNING

George is in bed in pain. A prescription bottle is open beside him and pills are scattered on the sheet. A KNOCK on the door forces George to gather the pills and hide the bottle.

GEORGE

It's open.

Kurt the cop opens the door dressed in civilian clothes.

KURT

It's my day off. I thought I'd help with the plumbing.

GEORGE

I need you to do me a favor.

KURT

(concerned)

God, you look like crap, George.

GEORGE

I want you to find someone for me.

EXT. COLLEEN'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Colleen walks out her front door straight to her neighbor's house. After a bit of RINGING and a bit of waiting, Tom (of the walking Tom and Barbara) answers the door in a bathrobe.

COLLEEN

Does your son still own a company that builds houses?

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

Dale is wiring with Adam and Ryan helping. Kurt, Robin and Colleen are setting up and sealing the plastic plumbing pipes. Two new men (GREG and MIGUEL) are on the roof, finishing up where Josh fell down. MUSIC is playing on the radio. George is asleep on the chaise lounge. Alyssa walks across the grass and stops to stare at George. Tears well in her eyes. Alyssa continues on to the house and walks up the stairs.

COLLEEN

He's been asleep for hours.

ROBIN

Is Sam okay?

ALYSSA

He won't leave my room.

ROBIN

Will he talk to me?

ALYSSA

No.

Robin accepts the answer. Slowly, they all return to work.

MONTAGE

The day is productive as we see the black drainpipes and the copper water runs coming together like a maze. The roof is shingled and the wiring is nearly complete. Whether awake or asleep, George spends the day in the chaise lounge.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATER

A city inspector's truck pulls to a stop and Bob Larsen steps out with a clipboard and a concerned look on his face. George is dozing on drugs.

BOB

You're not a plumber, Kurt.

Kurt finishes hooking in a plugged tee at a turn and stands.

KURT

I worked every summer with my dad. Check out what I've done.

BOB

It's not whether it's good or bad. You know that. It's whether your licensed.

Frustrated, Kurt glances around at all his good work before answering.

KURT

Are you still renting that illegal non conforming studio under your house for a thousand a month?

Bob opens his clipboard and checks a number of items off.

BOB

Okay. Looks good to me.

KURT

Oh, that's embarrassing. That was too easy. At least look around. I really did do it right.

BOB

That isn't why I'm here, anyway.

George wakes up and quickly hones in on Bob.

GEORGE

I've been dreading you.

Bob walks toward George as he talks.

BOB

Mr. Stevens. One of your neighbors is adamant your home has exceeded its approved height. He's filed to have construction stopped immediately.

GEORGE

It's thirty feet.

BOB

Well, if it is, we have a problem.

George stands, he appears slightly shaky.

GEORGE

I have the permit.

BOB

After your last extension request and with Design Review and the Board of Adjustment and the appeals to the city council, was there an amended permit?

GEORGE

To the patio and one north-facing window...

(suddenly realizing)

And six inches to the height.

George sits back down. Everyone emerges from the house to join George and Bob.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

David Dokos?

Bob nods.

KURT

Why do you let your dog crap on his lawn, day after day?

GEORGE

I don't let him. He just loves to.

COLLEEN

He'll make you tear the entire roof off rather than give you any satisfaction.

BOB

I'm afraid you won't be able to continue until this is settled. You can always go back and file an appeal.

GEORGE

That would take weeks.

BOB

Months.

ROBIN

Just so you know, we'll be here working tomorrow and every day after until this house is finished.

BOB

He'll call us again and then he'll call the police. He has an attorney on retainer.

ROBIN

Just so you know.

Robin turns and walks back into the house. Colleen, Alyssa, Adam and Ryan soon follow.

BOB

If he hears a hammer, he'll have you arrested.

Robin picks up the hammer and pounds a nail into a piece of wallboard. Dale, Miguel, Greg and Kurt walk back to the house and go back to work. Bob glances at George who shrugs.

INT. COLLEEN'S FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Colleen is watching the news as Alyssa walks in to say goodnight.

ALYSSA

I'm going to bed.

COLLEEN

Has he eaten anything at all?

Alyssa shakes her head "no" as Colleen flips on the TV.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

I'd be more comfortable if he slept in the guestroom.

ALYSSA

I'd be more comfortable if you hadn't slept with Josh. And George would be more comfortable if he weren't dying.

Colleen is embarrassed Alyssa knows the truth.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Comfort doesn't mean that much when just getting through the night is the goal, Mom.

Alyssa walks out. Colleen curls up and hides clutching pillows on the couch.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

George is shaking and sweating as he tries to crawl off the bed to his sock drawer. Guster wakes up and hops off Sam's bed to lick George on the face.

GEORGE

Please...I can't.

George is in real pain as he drops to the floor on his back. He winces and cries out as he pushes himself forward with his legs toward the dresser. George suddenly stops pushing; his legs slump flat on the concrete floor. His eyes flutter shut as Guster continues to lick his face.

INT. ALYSSA'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Alyssa is dressed, combing through wet hair when the sound of construction distracts her. She opens her window and sticks her head out. Suddenly excited, she pulls her head back in.

INT. ALYSSA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Sam is in bed as Alyssa speeds out of the bathroom.

ALYSSA

There are like twenty people working on your dad's house!

Alyssa bolts for the door, but stops short as she faces Sam.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

If it were my father, I'd wanna spend every second with him I had left.

Sam doesn't face her, doesn't even attempt to look up.

SAM

You hate your father.

ALYSSA

If he tricked me into loving him, is what I meant.

SAM

You'd hate him for the trick.

ALYSSA

Not if what he left me was real.

Alyssa leaves, closing the door behind her. Sam stays put.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Colleen is talking to Tom and Barbara as they stand to the side of the house where a throng of men assemble the house.

TOM

He pulled this crew off a tract in Newport. They're the best.

Robin pulls to a stop on the street and Adam and Ryan run out to gawk at all the workers.

ROBIN

What's going on?

COLLEEN

I hired some help.

ROBIN

Why?

ALYSSA (O.S.)

Mom?!

Colleen glances back as Alyssa runs to join the group.

COLLEEN

Atonement.

ALYSSA

Who are all these people?

ROBIN

Where's George?

COLLEEN

I think he's still sleeping.

ANOTHER VIEW

Robin walks to the garage door and KNOCKS. Guster barks. Robin KNOCKS again before opening the door.

INT. GEORGE'S GARAGE - MORNING

Guster is beside George on the floor. Robin rushes in and kneels down.

ROBIN

George!?

She presses her hand against George's cheek.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Wake up...You're still warm.

George's eyes flutter open. Robin leans down and kisses him on the cheek. George focuses on Robin; he tries to speak, stops, and tries again. Finally, in a weak voice, we hear:

GEORGE

Stop licking me.

INT. COLLEEN'S ENTRY - MORNING

Alyssa bursts into the house and rushes up the stairs.

INT. ALYSSA'S ROOM - MORNING

Sam is sitting on the edge of the bed as Alyssa enters.

ALYSSA

Your dad's going to the hospital!

Sam doesn't respond.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Come on!

Alyssa holds out her hand as we HEAR the ambulance approach.

SAM

I don't wanna go.

ALYSSA

He asked where you were! He wants you with him.

SAM

I don't wanna go.

Sam is nearly pleading, frightened to move. Alyssa walks out. The siren stops. The front door closes. Sam sits still.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The house is coming together incredibly fast with all the

workers. Tom and Barbara are supervising the crew. David Dokos whips around the corner in his black Mercedes and parks in his driveway, rushing over as he yells.

DAVID

Nothing is built until the Board of Adjustment hears the appeal!

David is searching for George, finally settling for Tom.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Where is he?

TOM

I should have reported you for tossing that piece of dog doo.

Tom's face is flushed; Barbara calms him by grabbing his arm.

BARBARA

Tom, let's not overreact now.

David Dokos stomps his feet and thrusts his fist into the air, as a child might if he were overreacting.

DAVID

I want this fucking piece of shit construction stopped now and I want that goddamn roof ripped off and lowered and I don't care if I have to spend a shit load of money to get it done!! I will do it!!!

Tom and Barbara simply stare at him in disbelief. David walks back to his house. Tom turns to his wife.

TOM

I want this house finished before he can stop it.

Tom rolls up his sleeves and walks toward the house to help.

INT. COLLEEN'S ENTRY - EVENING

Colleen and Alyssa walk into the house listless - both look tired and sad.

INT. ALYSSA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Alyssa enters the room, walks into the bathroom. Sam is gone.

ALYSSA

Sam?

INT. ROBIN'S FAMILY ROOM - EVENING

Adam and Ryan are sitting next to each other on the floor subdued, tossing a ball to Guster. The kitchen door opens and Peter walks into the family room. Adam is the first to notice but the last to react. Ryan stands as Guster barks.

RYAN
Guster, be quiet.

Peter has a growth of beard and is dressed in Levi's and a knit shirt - he doesn't look like himself.

PETER
Hey.

RYAN
Hey.

PETER
You got a dog?

RYAN
It's not ours. It's George's.

Peter nods.

PETER
I've missed you guys.

RYAN
Why?

Ryan is tough - not giving an inch. Peter stares at his sons, ashamed that the question could be asked. Adam stands and walks to this father, takes his hand.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I'll tell Mom you're here.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

George is asleep, looking dead with tubes in his arms. We HEAR a bit of the song by Warren Zevon, "MY SHIT'S FUCKED UP." 'Well, I went to the doctor/I said 'I'm feeling kind of rough'/He said, 'I'll break it to you, son, your shit's fucked up.'

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Sam is alone on the roof in the fading light, stringing party lights over the shingles and under the eaves.

INT. ROBIN'S FAMILY ROOM - EVENING

Robin couldn't look worse as she walks down the hall to the family room with Ryan. Peter is standing alone. Ryan joins Adam on the floor with Guster. Robin stops and stands ten feet from Peter.

PETER

I thought maybe... I know it's late...but
if you're hungry...

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - EVENING

The sun has set as Sam stands at the edge of the cliff trying to garner the courage to jump. After the sound of a wave crashing against the cliff, Sam closes his eyes and leaps off the edge of the earth.

INT. ALYSSA'S ROOM - EVENING

Alyssa is sitting on the edge of her bed as Colleen stops beside the open door.

COLLEEN

Are you doing okay?

Alyssa shakes her head "no". Colleen walks into the room and sits down beside her daughter. Alyssa rests her head on her mother's shoulder.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

Robin, Peter, Ryan and Adam are in the middle of dinner as Adam excitedly tries to explain all that he and his brother have accomplished.

ADAM

And we got to take all the old paint off
all the doors and then George taught us
how to stain everything and he even let
me choose the color I liked best! And he
said he loved me!

RYAN

We did a lot of the wiring too.

ADAM

With Dale. Oh, and I got to drill a hole
into a board to put the wire through!

PETER

I've never heard you so excited about
anything.

ADAM

Maybe you can come help us too?!

PETER

I'd like that.

Peter glances at Robin.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sam is still wet as he walks down the hall. We HEAR more of the Warren Zevon song. 'I had a dream/Ah, shucks, oh, well/Now it's all fucked up/It's shot to hell.'

INT. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Sam enters the room as a NURSE scurries to catch up.

NUR

I'm afraid no one's allowed in here now.

SAM

He's my dad.

Sam is staring at George, who is either asleep or unconscious. The nurse finally relents and walks out. Sam sits in a chair beside the bed and begins to cry. Slowly, George's arm slides out beyond the railing of the bed, his hand open. Sam does his best to stop crying.

SAM (CONT'D)

I brought you something.

Sam pulls out a pair of sunglasses from his shirt pocket. George shakes death and drugs away as he manages to open his eyes.

GEORGE

(weakly)

I don't wanna go, Sam.

SAM

Here.

Sam gently slides the sunglasses over his father's eyes; he rushes to the window and pulls the curtains back.

SAM (CONT'D)

Can you see?

Sam walks back to the bed and pulls it toward the window, stretching the cords and tubes to their limit. He grabs the remote and raises George's head. Off in the distance, against the backdrop of an endless black ocean, George's house is seemingly on fire with lights. Pain can't stop a smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's almost done.

George takes hold of Sam's hand with his own. They continue to stare at the lit house holding hands.

INT. ROBIN'S ENTRY - NIGHT

The door opens and Robin, Adam, Ryan and Peter are greeted by Guster, who bounces around like a wired rabbit.

ROBIN
Go brush your teeth and get right into bed. It's late.

Adam runs to Robin for a kiss, then grabs Peter with a hug.

ADAM
Goodnight.

PETER
Goodnight.

Adam runs up the stairs, Guster right on his heels. Ryan is staring at his father.

RYAN
Do you know anything about building a house?

PETER
No.

RYAN
I guess I could teach you some things.

PETER
Okay.

Robin sneaks a quick kiss on Ryan's cheek as he heads for the stairs. After he's gone, Robin turns back to Peter.

ROBIN
I hardly recognize you with a beard.

PETER
That was my plan...to be hardly recognizable to you as me.

ROBIN
I feel in love with George again.

Peter nods, something he already knows.

PETER
I'll see you tomorrow.

Robin nods. There's a moment where it's clear that Peter doesn't want to leave and Robin doesn't want him to leave, but after the moment passes, Peter walks out and Robin sits down at the base of the stairs.

INT. ALYSSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Colleen and Alyssa are asleep together on the bed.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Sam is up on a ladder, pounding copper nails into cedar shingles that face the house. Alyssa runs across the grass.

ALYSSA
Where are you?!

SAM
Floating to Catalina.

ALYSSA
What?

Sam steps off the ladder. Alyssa wraps her arms around him. Sam removes sleepy bugs from Alyssa's eyes before he kisses her. A police car stops in front of the house and Kurt steps out. Alyssa and Sam turn to face him.

KURT
He said he heard hammering.

SAM
Who?

Before Kurt can answer, David Dokos storms out of his house and trudges toward them talking.

DAVID
My attorney is driving down from Newport Beach. If I hear one more nail being hammered, I swear to God before this is all over I'll end up owing this house!

As Sam is staring at David Dokos, a hint of recognition crosses his face.

KURT
Mr. Dokos says that your father missed his height envelope by six inches.

ALYSSA
He wants the entire roof taken off and lowered.

SAM

Wait a minute.

A wave of fear rushes through David Dokos that's instantly visible.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you drive a black Mercedes?

DAVID

No.

Sam figures out why we knows David Dokos - from the aborted blowjob in the black Mercedes.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I'm going back to my house to wait for my lawyer.

David starts to leave, but Sam stops him with:

SAM

Are you sure we need lawyers?

David's face is sheet white as he forces himself back around.

SAM (CONT'D)

Because all we're really talking about is six inches, right?

DAVID

Are you threatening me?

KURT

What are you talking about?

SAM

I'm sixteen years old. I'm underage. How could I possibly threaten you?

David Dokos stares at Sam for a long time before glancing at Kurt and his police uniform for just a second.

SAM (CONT'D)

Would you like to help us finish the house, Mr. Dokos?

DAVID

Yes, I would.

KURT

What the fuck?

SAM

Everything happens for a reason. That's

what my dad said.

KURT

Then you tell me, what just happened?

SAM

The payoff.

Sam walks back to the ladder and hammer, leaving Kurt and Alyssa confounded. David takes a step back.

DAVID

I'll just...change clothes.

Sam pounds in another shingle as David walks quickly back to his house.

INT. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

George is unconscious as Robin enters and sits down beside him with a video camera.

ROBIN

I found the last time you were happy.

Robin adjusts the viewfinder and presses play on the camera. George doesn't wake up. On the tiny screen, we see a younger George in the ocean, his arms wrapped around six-year old Sam; he shields Sam from the waves and kisses his son's hair. Robin rests the camera on the bed as the video continues to play. She takes hold of George's hand and begins to weep as she presses her head on his chest. An envelope with Robin and Sam's name on it rests on the nightstand beside the bed.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Twenty men along with Tom and Barbara, Alyssa and Colleen, Sam and David Dokos are painting; installing windows, floors or cabinets as the house begins to take its final shape.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Peter stops and steps out of his car as Adam and Ryan race for the house.

ADAM

It's almost done!

Sam walks out the front door.

SAM

Do you guys feel like painting?

ADAM

What color?

SAM

Red.

ADAM

I love red! That's my favorite color!

Adam and Ryan walk into the house as Sam focuses on Peter, who keeps his distance.

PETER

You don't look like you.

SAM

Either do you.

Peter glances down at his work clothes.

PETER

I thought I might be able to help, but it looks like you have all you can handle.

SAM

Do you like red?

Peter nods, hesitates for a moment before walking up the driveway to Sam.

INT. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

George's bed is empty, stripped of everything. Robin is still sitting in a chair beside the bed, a letter resting on her lap. A NURSE stops at the door.

NURSE

Are you sure we can't call anyone?

Robin shakes her head "no". The nurse moves on.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

From the outside, the house is finished: windows in, doors on, roof shingled. The sun drops behind the house, causing a halo of bright light to envelop it.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Most of the workers have gone home, because most of the work is done. All the floor are hand-scraped cherry; huge beams and wood planks lend a strength to the ceiling. The kitchen cabinets are in; the bathrooms are complete. Sam, Ryan, Alyssa, Adam and Peter are the only ones left. Outside, we hear a car pull to a stop.

ADAM

Mom!

Adam and Ryan run down the stairs. Peter stops cleaning a brush and walks to the window as Sam stands still.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Adam runs to Robin and meets her mid-yard with a hug.

ADAM

When does George get to come see his house?

ROBIN

It's so beautiful.

Adam and Robin are staring at the house. Ryan can see the strain on his mother's face.

RYAN

Is George okay?

All Robin can do is shake her head "no".

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Sam backs away from the window. Peter turns to face him. Standing straight as he can, being as brave as he can, tears well in Sam's eyes as he softly shakes. Peter walks to Sam and wraps his arms around him.

GEORGE (V.O.)

I always thought of myself as a house. I was always what I lived in. It didn't need to be big. It didn't even need to be beautiful. I just needed to be mine. I became what I was meant to be. I built myself a life. I built myself a house.

Sam clings to Peter, completely lost in sorrow.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Adam and Ryan have their arms wrapped around their mother as we pull back and watch the sun set the sky off in dazzling hues of orange and red.

INT. RANGE ROVER - ONE WEEK LATER

Robin is driving with Sam beside her in a low-middle income neighborhood in Santa Ana. Sam is holding the letter.

ROBIN

You're sure about this?

SAM

Yeah.

ROBIN

You could keep it and rent it out?

SAM

This is what he wants.

ROBIN

I read the letter. You read the will.
He wants you to keep it. To live in it
some day.

SAM

Then maybe this isn't what he wants, but
this what he was hoping for.

(beat)

Maybe it's what I want.

It's clear to see that Robin's proud of Sam's decision. She checks an address on a piece of paper and pulls to a stop. Sam steps out of the car, holding the letter.

EXT. SANTA ANA APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Sam is shaking slightly as he walks up the cracked concrete walk to the door. He RINGS the bell.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Twenty-one years ago, my father crossed a
double-line. He changed my life and the
life of a little girl forever with that
mistake. I just can't stop thinking
about her.

A WOMAN in her mid-twenties opens the door in her wheelchair.

WOMAN

Hello.

Sam is very nervous as he reaches in his pocket and pulls out a set of keys.

SAM

My father built you a house...

The woman is confused as Sam holds out the keys.

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - MORNING

The house is majestic in its setting among the trees and grass, on the jagged just of rock that accepts the constant crash of ocean against it with a solid permanence. This is where, if you were a house, you would want to be built.

THE END.