

TB

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

by

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Based on his novel

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TB

FADE IN:

Our eyes open on a drawing. A child's drawing in crayon. We see a house nestled in green grass and a blue sky. Mom and dad and daughter smile next to a tree. Happy family.

CHILDREN'S SINGING (O.S.)

*Oh, Senor Don Gato was a cat
On a high tin roof Don Gato sat
He went there to read a letter
Meow Meow Meow!
Where the reading light was better
Meow Meow Meow!
'Twas a love note for Don Gato*

As we hear the children sing to an off-key piano, the image pulls back to reveal a wall with more drawings in crayon. For a moment, it looks like art class in elementary school. Until the image turns and reveals the hallway of a hospital.

INT. MAYVIEW STATE HOSPITAL - DUSK

As we wheel down the hall, we look up at doctors and nurses. We see parents carry toys to make the most of visiting hours. We finally enter our room. 503. Where we see...

A woman sitting next to a hospital bed. When she sees us, she forces a smile. This is our **MOTHER**, Leigh (44).

MOTHER

(directly to us)
Are you warm enough, honey?
(off our silence)
Mike... you think he's warm enough?

A man emerges from behind us. This is our **FATHER**, Mike (42), masculine, proud, scared. He nods.

FATHER

He's fine. He'll be fine.

A knock on the door. We turn to find **DR. DEBORAH BURTON** (48), a compassionate woman, enter in her white coat.

DR. BURTON

Mr. and Mrs. Kelmeckis... visiting hours are almost over. So, if we want to...

FATHER

Okay, Dr. Burton.
(to us)
You're going to like this, kid. A little touch of home to keep you company.

Dr. Burton wheels a cart in front of us. On top of it, we see a box with a red bow. They wait for us to open the gift. We don't. Finally, our father lifts up the box to reveal... AN OLD UNDERWOOD MANUAL TYPEWRITER. Mom smiles at us.

MOTHER

Remember when you brought this home? You were so happy. Remember last Christmas?

We say nothing. The silence is deafening.

FATHER

We'll be back tomorrow with your brother and sister. So, you take care, alright?

MOTHER

We love you, Charlie.

They smile. And leave. The door clicks. We follow them through the little window. Then, we move our gaze from the TYPEWRITER to a SHITTY WOODEN CLOCK that looks like it was made in high school shop class. We scan a nightstand of books, including TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, whose cover has been ripped in half and taped back together.

Finally, we turn to the window, and faintly, we can see our reflection in the glass. This is **CHARLIE**. A 16 year old boy. Behind his eyes, he's fighting. To get past the pills they give him. Fighting to wake up. Fighting to remember. The music begins under the sound of wind as we float...

... Toward the window ...

Quick Flashes of Charlie's life as a 3 year old boy. The cuts are visceral, vibrant gut shots. We see Charlie riding in the Christmas train at the mall. Walking naked down the street with a blue umbrella. Pointing to a watermelon in the grocery store, and saying, "Big pickle!" as his mom and a woman we will come to know as **AUNT HELEN** laugh.

... Through the window...

Charlie's life as a 7 year old boy. He sits in the family room with his **BROTHER**, 10, and **SISTER**, 9. The kids watch Saturday Night Live with Aunt Helen. The kids laugh!

... Past the tree...

Charlie's life as a 12 year old boy. Looking at old Playboys with his best friend **MICHAEL**. Seeing his brother throw a party. Michael finding condoms. Blowing them up like balloons. "This one tastes like mint."

... And into the Night Sky...

The sky envelops us in darkness. We are now inside Charlie's mind. We are now in... black... and our...

TITLE SEQUENCE

The guitar kicks into aggressive gear as we see the title - one word at a time...

THE PERKS OF **BEING** A WALLFLOWER

The titles end. The music drifts away. We move back from the night sky, back through the tree, the window, and into... The Past. A title card tells us this is One Year Earlier.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It is a neat and tidy little room. Few posters or books. **CHARLIE** is now 15. He is innocent, hopeful, very awkward, and likable to everyone but his classmates. He is the shy kid we never got to know in high school. He sits at his desk, writing a letter in pencil.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Dear Friend, I am writing to you because she said you listen and understand and didn't try to sleep with that person at that party even though you could have. Please don't try to figure out who she is because then you might figure out who I am, and I don't want you to do that. I just need to know that people like you...

Charlie reaches for his RC cola. It's empty. He gets up.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie passes by his sister's room. **CANDACE** is now 17 and a beautiful, type A, straight A priss. She's on the phone.

CANDACE

I talked to Ms. Einloth. Derek, you're Treasurer. We can really change things. Let's work at your house.

Candace sees Charlie and closes her door for privacy. Charlie moves to the living room where his dad watches a local Pittsburgh sports TV show. Mom reads a page turner and sips her white wine. After waiting for them to notice him...

CHARLIE

Mom, dad... I'm going to the kitchen. You want some chips or something?

FATHER
No, thanks.

MOTHER
Calories.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Okay.

He smiles. Waits a hopeful beat. Then, he moves to the kitchen and opens the fridge, bathing us in light.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The desk light is turned on. The new RC Cola is put down. Charlie sits at his desk, continuing his letter in pencil.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I just need to know that people like you exist. Like if you met me, you wouldn't think I was too weird. And maybe you would understand these things and want to be my friend. I hope it's okay for me to think that. You see, tomorrow is my first day of high school ever, and I am very afraid of going. But I really want to turn things around this year. Thank you for your time. Love always, Charlie.

Charlie looks at his reflection in the window glass and the tree behind it. The poor kid is terrified.

TITLE CARD OVER BLACK: **PART ONE**

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Welcome to the chaotic maze from Charlie's POV. SENIOR BULLIES make freshman boys hop down the hall like toads.

SENIOR BULLIES
Hop, freshman toads. Hop!

As seniors grab more victims, Charlie moves to the wall. A boy with HEAD GEAR is grabbed. Another with BRACES falls. Charlie looks at his blue schedule card. Help me!

SENIOR BULLY
There's another blue card. Get him!

Charlie quickly hides his blue card as VARSITY FOOTBALL PLAYERS pass him, all wearing their letter jackets.

LINEBACKER
Bitch, you got big.

NOSE TACKLE
Worked out all summer. Rock hard, dude.

At the front of the pack is **BRAD HAYS** (17), the quarterback. Brad has a confidence. He's that good looking, charismatic, and friendly. The big man on campus. Nice guy, too.

BRAD HAYS

Would you guys get a room?

They laugh. Charlie turns to the trophy case to avoid them and sees pictures of the State Champ USC Panthers. Brad Hays throws a touchdown. CHRIS KELMECKIS makes a tackle. Charlie smiles at this photo of his older brother. Glory days.

VOICE (O.S.)

You're Chris Kelmeckis's little brother, aren't you? You a freshman?

Charlie turns to a SENIOR GIRL. She looks at his blue card.

SENIOR GIRL

Your homeroom is near mine. Come on.

Charlie smiles. "Thanks." The girl smiles back. Then, her demeanor instantly changes into one of fierce, senior terror.

SENIOR GIRL (CONT'D)

So, hop, freshman toad! Hop! Hop!

Charlie hops down the hall as she screams. The bell rings.

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - MORNING

The kids pass back paperback copies of **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD**. Charlie opens his Trapper Keeper, takes a pencil out of the plastic pouch, and writes... "ENGLISH CLASS... DAY ONE."

SMART ASS FRESHMAN

(whispers)

Nice Trapper Keeper, faggot.

The kids around him laugh. Charlie's ears turn red. At the blackboard, the teacher writes his name... Mr. Anderson. But you can call him **BILL** (27). Bill is an idealist.

BILL

Okay, guys. Settle down. I'm Mr. Anderson. And thanks to Teach for America, I'll be your guide through freshman English. This semester, we'll be learning Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird. Genius book. Now, who wants to get out of the first pop quiz?

All hands go up. Except Charlie's.

BILL (CONT'D)

Surprise surprise. Alright. You can skip the quiz if you tell me which author invented the paperback book. Anyone?

The kids think. Bill paces the rows, offering clues.

BILL (CONT'D)

He's British. He also invented the serial, and at the end of the 3rd chapter of his first novel, he had a man hanging off a cliff by his fingernails. Hence, the term cliffhanger. Anyone?

FRESHMAN GIRL

Uh... Shakespeare.

BILL

Good guess, but Shakespeare didn't write novels. No. The author was...

Bill notices Charlie has already written... **Charles Dickens.**

BILL (CONT'D)

... Charles Dickens. However, if you and I went to a play in Shakespeare's time, it would have cost 4 pennies, which we'd put in a metal box. And when the box was filled, the ushers would lock it in the office. And that's where we get the term... anyone?

Charlie writes down **Box Office**, then looks up to find that Bill is staring at him. Waiting for him to raise his hand.

KIDS

"Office Depot!" "Office Supplies!"

BILL

Good try, but no. Anyone? Free "A" on anything but the final term paper.
(straight at Charlie)
Last chance.

Charlie looks down. He's not going to answer.

BILL (CONT'D)

The term is... Box office.

The kids groan. They should have known. Dammit.

BILL (CONT'D)

We have 4 months until the term paper. So, open to page 1, and let's begin.

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - LATER

The bell rings. The students chatter their way out of class. The last to leave is Charlie.

BILL

You should learn to participate.

Charlie stops and turns to find Bill approaching him.

BILL (CONT'D)

Why didn't you raise your hand?

(off Charlie's shrug)

They call you teacher's pet? Freak?

(off Charlie's nod)

Well, they say if you make one friend on your first day, you're doing okay.

CHARLIE

Thank you, sir, but if my English teacher is the only friend I make today, that would be very depressing.

Bill smiles. Charlie smiles back.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Mr. Anderson. I have my sister and her boyfriend, Derek. And my friend Susan. I'm alright. Thanks.

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Charlie goes down the lunch line with his sister and her boyfriend, **DEREK**, 17. Derek is such a pussy, the most masculine thing about him is his pony-tail.

CANDACE

Sorry. I can't eat lunch with you today. Derek and I have Earth Club.

CHARLIE

I could help.

CANDACE

Seniors only.

(barks to Derek)

What are you doing with a plastic spork?

DEREK

I don't want to bring back silverware--

CANDACE

You're Earth Club Treasurer.

Derek takes the silverware like a beaten dog. They move on. Charlie turns to the intimidating cafeteria. After a beat, he sees a friend. **SUSAN**, 14. He approaches and sits.

CHARLIE

Hey, Susan. I'm so glad to see you.
This place is crazy, isn't it? How's
your first day been so far?

In middle school, Susan was very nice. Over the summer, Susan got her braces off, grew breasts, and became pretty.

SUSAN

Charlie, you can't sit there.

CHARLIE

Oh, okay. I'll move down.

SUSAN

No. You can't sit with me.

Charlie is confused. A TOUGH JUNIOR (16) looks at him.

TOUGH JUNIOR

I think you heard her, dude.

CHARLIE

Oh. Okay, Susan. Sorry.

As Charlie moves away, he can hear them.

TOUGH JUNIOR (O.S.)

Who was that?

SUSAN (O.S.)

Nobody.

Charlie finds an empty seat at the end of a long table. He sits alone and begins reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

INT. SHOP CLASS - DAY

Charlie sits by himself, watching the freshmen boys laugh as a senior paints muttonchops on his face with a grease pencil. This is **PATRICK** (18), full of confidence, mischief, and so over high school. He is the class clown, performing a perfect imitation of the teacher, Mr. Callahan. Gruff voice.

PATRICK

Boys, the prick punch is not a toy. I
learned that in 'Nam back in '68.
"Callahan," the sergeant said, "put down
that prick punch and go kill some gooks."
I'm sorry - "Gook Americans." But I
thought I was invincible. And you know

PATRICK (CONT'D)

what happened? That prick punch killed my best friend in a Saigon whorehouse.

The laughter suddenly dies as the real **MR. CALLAHAN** (57) enters. He's furious. Muttonchop sideburns. Gruff voice.

MR. CALLAHAN

I heard you were going to be in my class. Are you proud being a senior taking freshman shop, Patty-Cakes?

PATRICK

My name is Patrick. You call me Patrick or you call me nothing.

MR. CALLAHAN

Okay... Nothing.

The class laughs. Except Charlie. He feels bad for Patrick.

MR. CALLAHAN (CONT'D)

Boys, unlike Nothing here, you know the value of safety first. This semester, we're making clocks.

PATRICK

Awesome! Clocks! I'm so glad I need to take this class to graduate!

MR. CALLAHAN

Everyone open your safety guides. Nothing... why don't you read first?

Patrick opens the book, then begins reading.

PATRICK

Chapter 1. Surviving your fascist shop teacher, who needs to put kids down to feel big.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Through thick office glass, we see Patrick plead his case to **MR. SMALL**, (58) the Principal. Mr. Small is bald, gray at the temples, and ironically tall.

PATRICK

But Mr. Small, he has flashbacks all the time! He's insane.

The image tracks back to reveal Charlie passing in the hall. He quickly glances at Patrick. And leaves.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - AFTERNOON

Charlie reads his copy of To Kill a Mockingbird as his Western Pennsylvania suburb rolls by. Hills. Trees. Aluminum siding adds color.

Out of nowhere, a SOPHOMORE BULLY grabs Charlie's book and begins throwing it around the bus, playing "keep away." Charlie's cries of "give it back" fall on deaf ears. Even when a MEAN JUNIOR GIRL rips the cover in half.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Charlie enters his house with his book cover torn in half. He climbs the stairs, passing a wall of family photos including his parent's WEDDING PHOTO. Charlie's mom smiles next to her maid of honor and sister, Charlie's AUNT HELEN.

Charlie turns to the living room. Charlie's mom is crying as she watches Oprah. She wears her Jazzercise outfit. Workout was done hours ago. At the commercial, she turns, and GASPS.

MOTHER

Oh. Honey. I didn't hear you come in.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry. Are you alright, ma?

MOTHER

Yeah. Good. Good.

(points to TV)

Sad one. How was your first day?

That look on her face. She so wants him to be happy. So...

CHARLIE

It was great.

MOTHER

Yeah!? You make any friends?

CHARLIE

Susan and I had lunch, and she met these cool kids over the summer. Hilarious.

MOTHER

I always liked Susan.

CHARLIE

Yeah. You want to get Dairy Queen, ma?

MOTHER

(re: her hips)

Calories. But I got you chipped ham.

Charlie smiles. Off to the kitchen.

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Charlie watches his mom make a sandwich.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Dear Friend, I know a lot of kids hate their parents. Some kids get hit. Or caught in the middle of wrong lives.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Charlie watches his dad come home from a long day. Weary. Charlie's mom comes up and hugs him.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

For me, as much as I don't know them, I can't help but love my parents very much. My mom cries a lot during TV programs, but never much in real life. My dad works hard and is grouchy. That's why I don't tell them the bad things anymore. I've worried them too much already.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie is busy at his desk, finishing his letter.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

But just so I say it to someone, high school is even worse than middle school. I really need to stop being shy and make a friend soon. Wish me luck.

INT. CHARLIE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family is seated around the table. Candace's boyfriend Derek is their special guest.

FATHER

God bless this food that we are about to receive. We thank You for this bounty in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

After the choruses of "Amen" and crosses...

CHARLIE

Mom, can I have some more milk?

FATHER

Does she look like your legs?

As Charlie sighs and gets up...

DEREK

Mmmm. This chicken paprikash is delicious, Mrs. Kelmeckis.

Charlie's father rolls his eyes, then reads his sports page.

MOTHER

Thank you, Derek. It's Charlie's favorite. He was a little nervous about starting high school, so I made it.

FATHER

You feel a little silly being nervous now, huh, champ?

CHARLIE

Yes, sir. I sure do.

Charlie returns the milk to the fridge. Then, he quickly sits, hoping someone will change the subject.

FATHER

I told you. Just give 'em a smile and be yourself. That's how you--

CANDACE

"--make friends in the real world."

FATHER

You're cruisin' for a bruisin'.

DEREK

Freshman year is tough, but you really find yourself.

FATHER

(deep eye roll)
Thanks, Derek. Pass the salt.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Charlie's father and mother watch the hockey game. Charlie passes by them with ice cream on his way downstairs.

MOTHER

Could you be a little nicer to Derek?

FATHER

I'm sorry. The kid's a pussy. I can't stand him.

Charlie moves to the entry hall. He looks through the screen door to the porch where Derek gives Candace a mix tape.

DEREK

I made this mix for you. The cover is hand-painted.

Candace kisses Derek's cheek goodbye. As Derek walks to his car, Candace comes back to the house. Before the screen door slams shut, she hands Charlie the mix tape. Autumn Leaves.

CANDACE

Charlie, do you want this?

CHARLIE

Are you sure?

CANDACE

He makes me one every week.

INT. CHARLIE'S BED ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie sits on his bed, taping his To Kill a Mockingbird cover back together. Autumn Leaves rotates in his cheap boom box. Air Supply's "All Out of Love" finishes. And then...

The first notes of The Smiths "Asleep" begin. As Morrissey sings, Charlie turns. Transfixed. As if Morrissey is singing only to him. Charlie gets up and walks out of frame.

After a beat, we find Charlie again. He sits in front of the radio, cross-legged, chin resting in his palms. At home.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

We see the Bethel Park quarterback fall back and float a 10 yard pass to the wide receiver on the wings. Out of nowhere, the safety closes the gap and intercepts the ball. This is Charlie's brother Chris. The fans and cheerleaders scream.

CHEERLEADERS

*Be Aggressive. B-E Aggressive.
B-E A-G-G-R-E-S-S-I-V-E!*

The image moves to Charlie, age 14, standing at the fence with his best friend, **MICHAEL**. Charlie is different around Michael. Happier. More outgoing. As for Michael, people see his intelligence and glasses and think he's a geek. But he's not. He's confident. A bit haunted. And cheering!

CHARLIE

Go Chris! Go! Go! Go!

MICHAEL

Woooo! Charlie, your brother is awesome!

Charlie's brother - number 47 - gets tackled. Brad Hays puts on his helmet and rushes onto the field. The fans cheer.

CHARLIE

Dad hopes he'll play for the Steelers someday.

MICHAEL

Where is he going to college in the Fall?

CHARLIE

Notre Dame if he can get the grades.

Michael smiles. Then, he looks around. He seems nervous.

MICHAEL

Hey... can I ask you something a little gay?

CHARLIE

Sure.

MICHAEL

Does this shirt look alright?

Charlie studies Michael's short-sleeved green izod.

CHARLIE

It's fine. Why?
(off Michael's reluctance)
Why, Michael?

MICHAEL

I'm going to ask Susan to go with me tonight.

CHARLIE

No!

MICHAEL

We kissed twice today.

CHARLIE

Oh, my God! Where?

MICHAEL

Gym. Mo-Dracula almost caught us.

CHARLIE

Why didn't you call me?

MICHAEL

I don't know. I'm freaking out. What do you think she'll say?

CHARLIE

I'm not sure. (thinks) No. She'll say yes. Two kisses? Definitely yes.

MICHAEL

Thanks, Charlie. God. There she is.

We see Susan back then. Flat chest. Braces. Blue eye shadow. 8th grade awkward beautiful.

CHARLIE

I'll go get nachos to give you privacy.

Michael groans. Charlie passes Susan, who smiles friendly.

SUSAN

Hey, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Hey. You want nachos?

SUSAN

They stick in my braces.

CHARLIE

Oh, right. Forgot. Ice Cream Sandwich?

She nods. Charlie smiles and walks to the concession stand, so nervous for his friend. He grabs an ice cream from the cooler, then turns to the overweight "Panther Booster" Mom.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Coke and nachos, please, Mrs. DePalma.

The overweight "Panther Booster" mom gives him the grub. Charlie puts down 5 dollars. Then, he turns to find...

Michael and Susan at the fence... holding hands. Charlie smiles at his two friends. So happy.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

Back to the present tense. A little colder. The sky darker with blue. Charlie stands with his coke and nachos, looking at the same fence, filled with the new crop of 8th graders, hitting each other's arms to see who flinches first.

Charlie then turns to the bleachers and sees SUSAN sitting with the Tough Junior and some of his guy friends. They're encouraging her to drink more booze from their hidden flask.

Charlie puts down his 5 dollars for the same overweight "Panther Booster" mom, one year grayer. A few more pounds.

PANTHER BOOSTER MOM

How's your brother liking Penn State?

CHARLIE

Pretty good. Dad thinks he's going to be made first string soon.

PANTHER BOOSTER MOM

Be sure to tell him we're all pulling for him, alright?

CHARLIE

I will, Mrs. DePalma. Thank you, ma'am.

EXT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL STADIUM - LATER

Charlie wanders above the bleachers, looking for a seat. He's about to sit by himself when he sees Patrick, cheering his head off. Some immature SENIOR GIRLS pass, taunting.

SENIOR GIRLS

Hey, Nothing. Hey, Nothing.

PATRICK

Suck it, virginity pledges!

Charlie wants to go over there so badly. After driving himself crazy sitting up and down twice, he approaches.

CHARLIE

Hey, Patrick.

PATRICK

Hey! You're in my shop class, right?
How's your clock coming?

CHARLIE

My dad's building it.

PATRICK

Yeah. Mine looks like a boat.
(off Charlie's awkward silence)
You want to sit down or are you waiting
for your friends?

CHARLIE

No. I'll sit if that's okay.

Patrick motions for Charlie to sit. Charlie sits. Elated.

PATRICK

Thanks for not calling me "Nothing" by
the way. Endless nightmare. And these
assholes think they're being original.
(screams at field)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Let's go Panthers! Come on offense! Be Aggressive! PASSIVE Aggressive!

Charlie looks at the field. A 5 second silence that feels like a year. Think of something to say. Anything.

CHARLIE

So, uh... you like football?

PATRICK

Love it.

CHARLIE

Then, maybe you know my broth--

PATRICK

Hey, Sam.

Charlie looks up. Standing there is the prettiest girl he's ever seen. **SAM** (17) would make every mother proud and every father nervous. She is alive, adventurous, and a world class flirt. Great attitude. Great taste.

SAM

Hey. I finally got hold of Bob.

PATRICK

Party tonight?

SAM

No. Bob's still trying to shag that waitress from the Olive Garden.

PATRICK

He's never tossing that salad.

SAM

How are we doing?

PATRICK

2nd and 7. Come on, Brad!

SAM

(about Charlie)
And who's this?

Patrick looks at Charlie, then turns back to the field.

PATRICK

This is... I have no idea.

CHARLIE

Uh... Charlie... Kelmeckis.

PATRICK

Kelmeckis! No shit! Your sister dates
Pony Tail Derek, doesn't she?

CHARLIE

Is that what they call him?

SAM

Awww. Leave Pony Tail Derek alone. He
breaks my heart.

PATRICK

(spot on imitation)

"Oh, Candace. Keep stroking it. I'm so
close. Get the hemp butter!

(coming)

The environment!"

SAM

Ignore this jerk. It's nice to meet you,
Charlie. I'm Sam.

Sam extends her hand to Charlie. Every nail a different
color. They shake. Then, Sam grabs a nacho. Zoinks!

PATRICK

So, what's the plan, Sam? You want to go
to Mary Elizabeth's house?

SAM

Can't. She got caught watering down her
parent's brandy with iced tea.

PATRICK

That's so gay. I'm sorry.

SAM

Let's just go to Eat 'n Park.

PATRICK

(turns to Charlie)

Hey... we're going to Eat 'n Park after
the game if you want to come.

Charlie nods just as Brad Hays tosses a touchdown pass. The
fans go crazy. Especially Patrick. Charlie smiles.

EXT. EAT 'N PARK - NIGHT

The Panther faithful are out and cheering.

INT. EAT 'N PARK - NIGHT

The place is packed. Patrick lights up a cigarette while Charlie sits across from him in a booth and eats pumpkin pie. Sam drinks coffee. They're all excited.

CHARLIE

I think The Smiths are my favorite.

SAM

Are you kidding!? I love The Smiths!
The best breakup band ever.

PATRICK

(whispers to Charlie)
She would know.

SAM

(after hitting Patrick)
What's your favorite song?

CHARLIE

Asleep. It's from Louder Than Bombs. I
heard it on Pony Tail Derek's mix tape.

PATRICK

That works on so many levels.

CHARLIE

I could make a copy for you.

SAM

Thanks. What about Ide's? You love
Ide's, right?

CHARLIE

(never heard of it)
Yeah. They're great.

PATRICK

Not a band, Charlie.

SAM

It's an old record store downtown.
Things sound so much better on vinyl.

PATRICK

I used to be popular before Sam got me
some good music. So, watch out, Charlie.
She'll ruin your life forever.

CHARLIE

That's okay.

Brad Hays, the quarterback, passes with his posse. Taunting.

NOSE TACKLE & LINEBACKER
Hey, Nothing. Hey, Nothing.

PATRICK
Oh, let it go! Jesus!

Sam laughs. She loves watching Patrick get riled up.

SAM
So, Charlie... what are you going to do
when you get out of this place?

CHARLIE
My Aunt Helen said I should be a writer,
but I don't know what I'd write about.

SAM
You could write about us.

PATRICK
Yeah. Call it Slut and The Falcon. Make
us solve crimes.

Sam laughs. Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE
You guys look happy together. How long
have you been boyfriend and girlfriend?
(off their laughs)
What?

PATRICK
We're brother and sister.

CHARLIE
But you don't look alike.

SAM
He's my step-brother. My mom finally
left my worthless dad and married his
nice dad 3 years ago.

PATRICK
But Sam's not bitter. Make no mistake.

SAM
Absolutely. I'm not a bulimic. I'm a
bulim-ist.

They laugh. Charlie has no idea what's so funny, but he
laughs anyway.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sam's old truck stops in front of Charlie's house, and Charlie gets out of the truck. The music blares.

PATRICK

Thanks for paying, Charlie.

CHARLIE

(so eager)

No problem. Thanks for the ride. Hey... maybe I'll see you around in school?

SAM

(distracted - to Patrick)

God, would you turn that down? You're going to make us deaf. Bye, Charlie.

PATRICK

Bye, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Okay. Bye.

Charlie waves as the truck leaves. The look on his face. The happiness from one night of company.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Charlie enters the house, excited to tell someone his news. He runs up the stairs to find the living room empty. He hears the TV playing downstairs in the basement.

INT. DOORWAY TO BASEMENT - NIGHT

As Charlie approaches, he hears muffled sounds of fighting.

DEREK (O.S.)

I'm sorry. I can't do anything about it. Please talk to me.

CANDACE (O.S.)

Maybe your mom and I should have a "drive us to our hair appointment" contest. Then, I could spend a Saturday with you.

DEREK (O.S.)

There's nothing I can--

CANDACE (O.S.)

Do you always want to be a mama's boy?

DEREK (O.S.)

I am not a mama's--

CANDACE (O.S.)

Every time I go to your house--

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie slowly turns the door knob, wanting to stop the fight. As he enters the room, he sees Derek's neck is red. Silent, dangerous angry. Candace keeps leaning into him.

DEREK

Just stop. Please--

CANDACE

-- your mom says, "Don't go to Columbia with Candace. Go to Pitt, Derek. Mommy needs you to stay at home because she can't drive herself." She's only 51. And what do you say? Nothing. Like a little bitch dog. That's what you--

SNAP! Out of nowhere, Derek brings his fist across her jaw. It's not a movie punch. It's a real punch. Dead sound. And after it, silence. Candace turns and sees Charlie. It sobers her up. Charlie moves at Derek. Candace stops him.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

Charlie, don't. Just leave.

CHARLIE

But--

CANDACE

I'll handle this. Don't wake up mom and dad. Promise me.

She moves him out of the room and closes the door.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie sits at his desk. So disturbed. He hears a car start outside. He moves to his window and looks down at Candace and Derek near his car. Derek is crying. Candace comforts. After a beat... they kiss.

INT. ENTRY HALL - NIGHT

Charlie moves to the stairs as Candace enters. They whisper.

CHARLIE

What are you doing?

CANDACE

Look, I egged him on. You saw it. He's never hit me before. I promise he'll never hit me again.

CHARLIE

Like Aunt Helen's boyfriends?

A silence passes between them. Then...

CANDACE

Charlie... this is Pony Tail Derek. I
can handle him. Will you trust me?
Please, don't tell mom and dad.

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The Homecoming Dance is in full swing. Brad Hays and his football pals cheer their victory as girls adore them. The gym is packed. The dance music is awful. But not as bad as the clothes and hair. God bless everyone.

Especially Charlie. He's alone at the wall, dressed in his Sunday suit. To us, adorable. To himself, in living hell.

Charlie watches his sister, slow dancing with Derek. As happy as she looks, Charlie still isn't sure if he did the right thing. After a beat, he turns away.

That's when he sees Sam and Patrick at the punch bowl. Sam wears a girl scout uniform. Patrick is in a tux. They're talking with a group of their fellow alternative kids.

The song ends to applause. It's immediately followed by a pulsing, hard guitar punk song. Perfect for dancing.

SAM

Oh, my God. They're playing good music.

PATRICK

Holy shit. They are.

SAM

Come on!

Charlie watches Sam and Patrick run to the center of the floor and show this stiff crowd what dancing is. It starts slow. "So over it" hand moves. A little shoulder. And then, the best of swing. 30 seconds of genius.

Charlie takes a breath. Then, he tries desperately not to look like he's dancing toward them as he dances toward them. He bobs his head like a dork. And once he gets close...

PASSING SENIOR

Nice dancing, short bus.

Charlie goes into his shell. Until Patrick defends...

PATRICK

Henry, I can't wait until the reunion
when you're a bald, fat dentist whose
wife hasn't touched it in a year.

The senior tries to think of a comeback. He can't. So...

PASSING SENIOR

Screw you, Nothing.

Patrick smirks. Charlie can't believe someone stuck up for
him. Charlie looks at Bill, his English teacher, with the
other chaperones. Bill smiles and waves.

EXT. BOB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The party rages inside this McMansion in the rich part of
town. Patrick and Sam, with Charlie tailing, approach.

SAM

God, it's freezing.

PATRICK

But you wore that toasty girl scout
uniform. It's not like you're trying too
hard to be original.

SAM

Piss off, Tennessee Tuxedo.

Sam does the secret knock... Queen's "We Will Rock You."

CHARLIE

Are you sure it's okay that I come?

SAM

Of course. Just remember, Charlie...
Bob's not paranoid.

PATRICK

"He's sensitive."

The door opens, revealing **BOB** (20). Bob was the cool high
school kid, who never quite left. He's stoned so often that
people can't tell the difference anymore.

BOB

Sam... that waitress from the Olive
Garden is a bitch. Will you marry me?

SAM

Only if I have Patrick's blessing.

BOB

Do I have your blessing, Patrick?

PATRICK

Hell, no. You're an alcoholic who goes to the culinary institute.

BOB

Touché.

INT. BOB'S BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The music floats. Charlie's eyes our guide. As Sam goes upstairs with Bob, we see a girl look at us from the bong and smile... revealing braces. The smoking caterpillar.

You can almost smell it. Stale beer and cigarette smoke and booze on a girl's breath. High school parties. The room is packed with kids pounding robitussin and playing quarters.

Patrick lights up a cigarette. He spots two friends. **MARY ELIZABETH** and **ALICE** (both 17). Mary Elizabeth is smart, a little overweight, and extremely bossy. Alice will figure out that she's a lesbian in college. Right now, she just likes movies and is Mary Elizabeth's "beta female."

PATRICK

Ladies, this is Charlie's first party ever. So, I want nice, meaningful blow jobs from both of you.

MARY ELIZABETH

You're such a brat.

PATRICK

Where the hell did you go?

MARY ELIZABETH

The dance was boring.

PATRICK

We looked everywhere for you.

MARY ELIZABETH

Cry me a river.

PATRICK

How is it that you got meaner since becoming a Buddhist?

Patrick takes a can of Iron City Beer from Mary Elizabeth.

SAM & BOB (O.S.)

Look who's here!

The party turns and Charlie sees Brad Hays, the quarterback, enter with Sam and Bob. Patrick approaches them. Charlie sits on the beat up couch next to the girls. He's shocked.

CHARLIE
Is that Brad Hays?

ALICE
Yeah. He comes here sometimes.

CHARLIE
But he's a popular kid.

MARY ELIZABETH
(offended)
Then, what are we?

Charlie tries to think of something, but he can't. The girls turn to each other, ignoring him. Charlie watches Patrick and Brad go upstairs with Sam. Bob approaches with a tray.

BOB
Hey, Charlie. Would you like a brownie?

CHARLIE
Thank you. Normally, I go to Eat 'n Park, and I'm really hungry.

BOB
Then, take two. It's a family recipe.

Bob smiles. Charlie bites into the brownie. The image goes up into the smoke like an inhale.

INT. BOB'S BASEMENT - LATER

After a beat, the music changes, and the image exhales back down to Charlie, who is now... baked out of his mind. The whole party surrounds him now, pissing themselves with laughter as this shy kid talks and talks and talks.

CHARLIE
High school is bullshit. The cafeteria is called the Nutrition Center. And people wear their letter jackets even when it's 98 degrees out. And why do they give out letters for marching band? That's not a sport, and we all know it.

MARY ELIZABETH
This kid is crazy.

ALICE
I know.

Charlie looks at Mary Elizabeth with her new wave haircut as Sam walks into the room.

CHARLIE

And Mary Elizabeth, I think you'll regret your haircut when you look back at old photographs. I'm sorry. That sounded like a compliment in my head.

SAM

Bob, did you get him stoned? God dammit!

BOB

Come on, Sam. He likes it. Ask him.

SAM

How do you feel, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I just really want a milkshake.
(off the room's laughter)
Why is that funny? I don't understand you people.

SAM

Come on. We'll get you a milkshake.
(to Bob)
I still think you're an asshole.

INT. BOB'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam turns on the light. It's so bright, Charlie doesn't know what to make of it. Wow! He points at an empty pizza box.

CHARLIE

I used to call pizza crust "pizza bones."
(off her smile)
Sam, you have such pretty green eyes, but the kind of green that doesn't make a big deal about itself. You know?

SAM

Okay, Charlie. Calm down. We'll get you that milkshake.

CHARLIE

What a great word. Milkshake. It's like when you say your name over and over again in the mirror, and after awhile, it sounds crazy. Milkshake. Milk-shake.

SAM

I take it you've never been high before?

CHARLIE

Me? No. My best friend Michael. His dad was a big drinker. So, he hated all

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

that stuff. Parties, too. But he loved Susan. Braces and all. They were great.

SAM

Really? Where is Michael tonight?

CHARLIE

Oh, he shot himself last May.

Sam turns around. Shocked silent. Charlie is just stoned.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I kind of wish he'd left a note. You know what I mean?

(off her sad nod)

Where's the bathroom?

SAM

Up the stairs.

CHARLIE

Thank you, Sam. You're so nice.

Charlie wanders off. Sam watches him go.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Charlie looks at himself in the mirror.

CHARLIE

Charlie. Charlie. Charlie. Weird.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Charlie wanders. He is about to go downstairs when he stops. In the master bedroom down the hall, he sees feet facing each other. The image moves up to reveal Patrick and Brad Hays... kissing. Charlie laughs. Tripped out of his mind.

CHARLIE

Wow.

PATRICK

Is that you, Charlie?

BRAD HAYS

(nervous)

Who is that kid?

PATRICK

He's a friend of mine. Relax.

Patrick approaches.

CHARLIE

This is such an interesting night.

PATRICK

Listen, Charlie. Brad doesn't want people to know...

CHARLIE

Why?

PATRICK

He's scared... wait, are you baked?

CHARLIE

"Like a cake." That's what Bob said. And how you can't have 3 on a match because they would find us. And everyone laughed, but nothing is funny.

(off Patrick's laugh)

You're doing it, too.

PATRICK

Okay, Charlie. I need you to promise that you won't tell anyone about me and Brad - especially your brother. This will be our little secret. Alright?

CHARLIE

Our little secret. Agreed.

PATRICK

We'll talk later.

CHARLIE

Good. I look forward to that big talk.

Patrick laughs, goes back to the room, and closes the door.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie enters. Sam hands him the shake. He sips. Thinks.

CHARLIE

Oh, my God, Sam.

INT. BOB'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

As Charlie drinks his milkshake obsessively, Patrick walks downstairs. Sam whispers in Patrick's ear.

CHARLIE

Isn't this milkshake outrageous, Alice? It's even better than the first one.

ALICE

It sure is.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry for what I said about your hair, Mary Elizabeth. I get it now.

MARY ELIZABETH

Thanks, Charlie.

Sam finishes telling Patrick what Charlie said about Michael. Patrick turns to look at Charlie. He feels bad for the kid. Sam nudges him, and Patrick raises his beer.

PATRICK

Everyone. Raise your glasses to Charlie.

Charlie looks up. A little paranoid. Everyone is staring.

CHARLIE

What did I do?

PATRICK

You didn't do anything. We just want to toast our new friend.

(off his look)

You see things. You keep quiet about them. And you understand. You're a wallflower.

Charlie dries his sweaty hands on his pants. So anxious.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

CHARLIE

I didn't think people noticed me.

PATRICK

Well, we didn't think there were any cool people left to meet. So, everyone...

SAM & EVERYONE

To Charlie.

Sam raises her glass, prompting the party to do the same. They all drink. Sam approaches him. A knowing smile.

SAM

Welcome to the island of misfit toys.

Charlie smiles and the soundtrack comes rushing up loud.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT./INT. SAM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

The truck speeds on Highway 279 toward the Fort Pitt Tunnel. Patrick drives. Sam cranks the radio, blaring "The Tunnel Song". The Star's anthem, "Your Ex-Lover is Dead" is our prototype for tone.

SAM
My God. What is this song!?

PATRICK
I don't know.

SAM
Have you heard it before?

CHARLIE
Never.

SAM
(light bulb)
Wait! Let's go through the tunnel!
Charlie, give me your coat.

PATRICK
Sam, it's raining.

SAM
No. It's perfect. Go!

PATRICK
You're the boss.

Sam puts on Charlie's coat and climbs through the window to the flat bed. She grips the flood lights to steady herself.

CHARLIE
What are you doing?

PATRICK
Don't worry. She does it all the time.

SAM
TURN IT UP!

Patrick turns up the volume and drums on the steering wheel.

PATRICK
I can't wait until it snows. I love
doing doughnuts.

CHARLIE
You know, I get my license in December.

PATRICK

You're getting a license freshman year?

CHARLIE

I was held back a grade when I was little. So, maybe when I get it, we can do doughnuts together?

PATRICK

You bet, Charlie.

SAM (O.S.)

THE TUNNEL'S COMING! LOUDER!

He cranks the music. Charlie gets this look on his face.

PATRICK

What?

CHARLIE

I feel infinite.

We go behind the truck. Rising as Sam lets go of the flood lights and puts her arms in the air. The image moves to Charlie's point of view, rising from Sam's feet up her soaked, shivering legs. Past the band-aid on her right knee. And his jacket. To Sam's face, covered in rain. She looks down. Into the camera. Right at us. For we are now...

Charlie, looking up at Sam, so in love with this free-spirit. So happy to have friends. Happy to be alive. The song ends as the car disappears into the tunnel.

The image turns on its side, and it looks like the kids are driving down the rabbit hole. And we are in...

BLACK

TITLE CARD OVER BLACK: **PART TWO**

INT. HOSPITAL LAB - AFTERNOON

The sound is thick and muted as Charlie watches himself being backed out of the MRI machine. Like a tunnel. He sees the smooth white plastic. The hum of the magnets. His legs look so long to him. He sees the reflection of the computer in Dr. Burton's glasses. Charlie closes his eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Charlie lies on his bed. He opens his eyes. He looks down at his legs. They look so long to him. He's still in his homecoming suit. He smells his sports jacket. Mmmmm. Sam.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
(singing - poorly)
*Live through this and you won't look
back. Live through this and you won't--*

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Charlie speaks on the phone as he paints a mix tape cover.
The painting is of Sam and Patrick going through the tunnel.

FEMALE VOICE
Kid, you can't sing.

CHARLIE
I know. But it was on your radio station
last night. I have to find that song.

FEMALE VOICE
We're a college. We don't keep playlists.

CHARLIE
But I need it for my best friends. I'm
putting it on a mix tape.

FEMALE VOICE
I'm sorry.

CHARLIE
Is there anyone else I could talk to?

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

We move past *To Kill a Mockingbird*, resting on Charlie's
newly dubbed "Shelf of Fame" to his desk. Charlie looks at
the autumn leaves as he writes a letter in pencil. The song
playing in the boom box is Air Supply's "All Out of Love."

CHARLIE (V.O.)
Dear Friend, I'm sorry I haven't written
for awhile, but I've been trying hard not
to be a loser.

As the lyrics begin, Charlie unabashedly lip-synchs...

AIR SUPPLY
*I'm lying alone with my head on the
phone, thinking of you 'til it hurts.*

Charlie turns to find his father staring at him. After a
mortified silent beat...

FATHER
Your brother's on.

INT. CHARLIE'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Charlie watches his brother and the Penn State Nittany Lions on TV. Charlie's father gives Charlie a strange look, then goes back to building his clock for shop class.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

For example, I am trying to participate like Mr. Anderson said by listening to Sam's collection of big rock ballads and thinking about love. Sam says they are kitschy and brilliant. I agree.

INT. BILL'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

As the students file out of class, Bill hands him a beat up copy of The Great Gatsby. Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I am also studying extra books outside of class. Mr. Anderson is grading my papers on a college level. But he said don't worry. I already have an A in his class. These grades are just between us.

INT. GYM CLASS - BOYS LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Charlie finishes changing his clothes under a towel. Some FRESHMAN BOYS approach him near the gym lockers.

SMART ASS FRESHMAN

Did you already do the term paper on To Kill a Mockingbird?

Silence. They grab him. The gang of freshman boys dunk Charlie's head in a toilet and flush it. A vicious swirly.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I have also started to grow my hair longer for style. It's only inconvenient on swirly days.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Charlie turns from the lunch line with The Great Gatsby on his tray and a wet head. He looks at Sam, Patrick, Mary Elizabeth, and Alice at their table. He sits with them.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

My favorite time, though, is lunch because I get to see Sam and Patrick. We spend the time working on a fanzine about music and The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Mary Elizabeth is in charge of it as well as the local Rocky Horror floor show.

INT. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

The xerox spits out copies of PUNK ROCKY! Halloween Issue!
The group collates while Mary Elizabeth yells.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Mary Elizabeth is really interesting because she is a Buddhist and a punk, but somehow she always acts like my father at the end of a "long day."

MARY ELIZABETH

Upper left hand corner! Jesus, Alice!

Alice starts pulling out the staples. Grumbling.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Her best friend Alice loves vampires and wants to go to film school. She also steals jeans from The Gap. I don't know why because her family is rich, but I'm trying not to be judgemental. Especially since I know what they all did for Patrick last year. Alice called every night when things were hard, and Mary Elizabeth did his homework when he was too messed up. Patrick never likes to be serious, so it took me awhile to get what happened. I heard most things from Sam.

Patrick grabs Mary Elizabeth's ass. She smacks him. Brat!

[Note: The following sequence will come from Charlie's POV of Patrick and Brad's activities over a weekend.]

INT. GYMNASIUM - AFTERNOON

Friday's pep rally. Brad stands on the gym floor, leading the chant of "*Panthers!*" Patrick cheers from the stands.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

When they were juniors, Patrick and Brad were at a party. They were playing quarters with some girl named Heather, and when she left, they got drunk. Patrick said they were really nervous...

EXT. SQUID LOUNGE - LUNCH

Patrick smokes and makes fun of himself. Charlie cracks up.

PATRICK

"You're in Mr. Brosnahan's class, right?"
"Have you ever been to a Pink Floyd laser light show?" Then, he says, "Are you

PATRICK (CONT'D)
ever serious?" And I said, "I'm serious
right now." I was so awesome.

Patrick kisses Sam all over her face. Sam laughs like crazy.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Brad and his buddies study their SAT Prep books. Charlie shifts his gaze to Patrick, studying for the SAT's with Sam.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
They ended up fooling around right there
in the basement. But Monday in school,
Brad kept saying, "Man, I was so wasted.
I don't remember a thing."

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

Brad throws a 45 yard touchdown strike. The Panther faithful cheer their heads off. Especially Patrick.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
This went on for seven months.

INT. BOB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Post-game party. Everyone cheers Brad. Especially Patrick.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
Finally, they had this big party at
Patrick and Sam's house with the less
than popular crowd. Brad got really
drunk and went to Patrick's room. They
had sex for the first time that night.

Patrick and Brad close the door to the master bedroom.

INT. ST. THOMAS MOORE CATHOLIC CHURCH - MORNING

Charlie sits with his family in itchy church clothes. He turns to see Brad with his father and mother. Proper family.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
When they were done, Brad said he loved
Patrick. Then, he started to cry. No
matter what Patrick did, Brad kept
crying. And saying his dad would kill
him. And saying he was going to hell.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - FOOD COURT - DAY

Charlie stands against the wall, looking at Brad and Patrick. Patrick is with Sam. Brad is with his football buddies.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Brad's drinking got so bad that his parents sent him to rehab for the summer. When he got out, Brad called Patrick. He said he missed him, but they had to keep it a secret. Especially from his dad. I asked Patrick if he felt sad that he had to keep it a secret, and he said no because at least now, Brad doesn't have to get drunk or stoned to love him.

They approach each other, and just when it looks like they'll speak, they... simply... PASS EACH OTHER WITHOUT A WORD.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - SUNSET

The image moves from a picture of Sam in Charlie's sister's old yearbook over to Charlie... finishing his mix tape.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I think I know what Patrick means because I love Sam. It's not a movie kind of love either.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - SUNSET

Halloween Night. The little kids are out trick or treating. Sam, Patrick, and the gang pull up in Sam's truck.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I just look at her sometimes, and all I want is what's best for her. And unlike most people, I can't pretend I know what that is. I just hope it's me.

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - MIDNIGHT

The Rocky Horror faithful are out tonight! Charlie watches Sam perform Janet from The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Sam mimics Susan Sarandon perfectly. Especially the body.

SAM

(lip-synching as Janet)
*Oh! I feel released. Bad times deceased.
My con-fid-ence has increased. Reality
is here! The game has been disbanded--*

As Sam finishes, she winks at Charlie. Then, arriving regally as Frank 'n Furter in full drag is... Patrick.

PATRICK

Whatever happened to Fae Wray? That delicate, satin draped frame? As it clung to her thigh, how I started to cry 'cause I wanted to be dressed just the same.

Patrick is a rock star. He approaches Charlie. Putting his ass in his face. Charlie is freaked out and laughing!

He stops laughing when the orgy begins between Patrick, Alice (as Magenta), **CRAIG** (21), an art student with a model's body (as Rocky)... and of course... Sam. Charlie watches Sam until he can't take his lust (or guilt). He turns away and sees Brad, alone in the back. Charlie smiles.

INT. KING'S COURT BACKSTAGE - LATER

The music continues as Charlie sneaks looks at Sam, who's chatting with Alice and Bob (dressed as Riff Raff). Mary Elizabeth (dressed as Columbia) walks by in a huff.

MARY ELIZABETH

Guys, pick up your God damn costumes!
I'm your stage manager, not your maid!
And Patrick... rehearse your dancing!
You're totally out of sync.

PATRICK

(shuffling)
Yes, massa... Patrick gonna dance for
Mary Elizabeths real good.

ALICE

That's racist.

PATRICK

Glad you're paying attention.

Charlie sees Patrick approach Brad, standing by himself.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Craig is having a party in Squirrel Hill.
You wanna pick up some O's fries and go?
(off Brad's discomfort)
I'll pick them up and meet you there?

Brad nods. Charlie turns to see Alice and Sam walk into the girls room to change their costumes. The door swings. For a brief moment, we see Sam unsnap her bra.

INT. CRAIG'S LOFT APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Charlie sees a photo of Sam's naked back. Very arty. Very black & white. Charlie's lust (and guilt) are now at 11. He hands the photo to Alice and gets some wine.

ALICE

It's gorgeous, Craig. What did you use?

CRAIG (21) is impressive to high school kids. He's a little pretentious. But his art school life. His red wine. His loft. Wow. Right now, he holds court in the "wine line".

CRAIG

Color film, but black and white paper for the printing. My professor gave me an "A", but for the wrong reasons. Most of them are idiots. You'll see when you get to college. How were your SAT's?

ALICE

(worried)

1150. I think I'll get into NYU.

CRAIG

That's great, but watch it. Most of those film schools are factories.

MARY ELIZABETH

(cruel to Alice)

1490. Harvard. Face!

Charlie sees Sam on the fire escape. Pittsburgh shines in the background. Charlie approaches and hands Sam some wine.

CHARLIE

Here you go. So, you don't have to stand in line.

SAM

Thanks, Charlie.

She sips. Lost in thought.

CHARLIE

Are you okay?

SAM

Yeah. Sorry. I'm not very social tonight. I got my SAT's back. Oops.

CHARLIE

You can take them again.

SAM

Yeah, but if I'm going to Penn State main campus, I have to do a lot better. I wish I would have studied freshman year. I was such a mess.

CHARLIE

I'll help you study for the next one.

SAM
Will you? Thanks, Charlie.

Charlie summons his courage. He hands her the mix tape.

SAM (CONT'D)
What's this?

CHARLIE
Just a mix tape. It's about that night
in the tunnel.

SAM
Get out. You sweetie.

Sam hugs him. Charlie can smell the perfume on her neck.

CHARLIE
I couldn't find that song we heard in the
tunnel. I'll keep trying. Promise.

SAM
Don't worry about it. These are great.
Ooo... Wild Horses. I love that song.

CHARLIE
I put on The Rolling Stones and The
Sundays versions. Side A and B.

SAM
Nick Drake. The Shaggs. You have great
taste, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Really?

SAM
Way better than me as a freshman. I
listened to the worst top 40.

CHARLIE
No.

SAM
I did. But then I heard this old song.
Pearly Dew Drops Drop. And I thought
someday I would be at a party in college
or something. And I'd look up and see
this person across the room. And from
the moment I saw them, I'd know it was
going to be okay. You know what I mean?

CHARLIE
(devastated in love)
Yes.

SAM

Then, I'd walk across the room, and the first thing I'd say is, "Where have you been?" And from that moment, we'd love each other the way she sings that song. Like your word... infinite. I mean, why should other people get to be happy all the time? We could be those people. All of us. Don't you think?

Charlie takes a deep breath, and then, shaking, says...

CHARLIE

Sam... will you go with me?

SAM

Of course I will, Charlie.

Charlie blinks. It was all in his mind.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you think we could all be happy?

CHARLIE

Yeah. You'll get into Penn State, Sam. We'll all be happy someday.

INT. CRAIG'S LOFT APARTMENT - LATER

The tape revolves in the stereo, playing a beautiful ballad. Charlie watches Sam sway to his music like a serenade. Like she is dancing with him. But she isn't. A wider angle reveals that she is slow dancing with... Craig.

Charlie is 15 year old CRUSHED. No filter. Just feeling. Alice and Mary Elizabeth approach with Patrick and Brad.

PATRICK

I love your new jeans, Alice. Very stolen.

ALICE

Thanks. So, what do you think? Sam have a chance with him?

PATRICK

I don't know. He is 21.

ALICE

I hope it works out. Craig would be a big step up from her last boyfriend.

MARY ELIZABETH

No, shit. What a loser.

PATRICK

I just hope she stops playing dumb with these guys. I keep telling her... don't make yourself small. You can't save anybody.

Craig dips a smiling Sam as the song ends.

SAM

You want some wine?

CRAIG

Sure. Thanks.

Sam goes into the kitchen. Craig approaches Charlie.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Man, your mix is morbidly sad, kid.
Let's hear something less emotional, huh?

Craig grabs a record from the pile and slaps it down.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Sam tells me you want to be a writer.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

CRAIG

That's great. Just don't let the education system ruin your voice.

CHARLIE

Okay.

ALICE

Don't you write poetry, Craig?

CRAIG

No. I don't. Poetry writes me.

Charlie picks up Craig's worn copy of On the Road.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Kerouac changed my life.

CHARLIE

Yeah, my English teacher just gave this to me.

Craig isn't used to people not buying his brand of douche. He pauses. Then, simply moves to Sam. The music starts. Charlie's heart breaks as he watches Sam hug on Craig.

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

In a mirror image, Candace hugs on Derek near the lockers. Charlie closes his own locker and moves down the hall.

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - MORNING

The bell rings. The students clear out. Charlie puts his On the Road paper on Bill's desk.

BILL

That was fast. How do you think you did?

Charlie shrugs. Bill smiles. A beat of silence. Then...

CHARLIE

Mr. Anderson... can I ask you something?

(off his nod)

Why do you think nice people choose the wrong people to date?

BILL

Are we talking about anyone specific?

Charlie nods. Bill looks straight at him. Not preaching. Coming from a history of personal experience and pain.

BILL (CONT'D)

Well, Charlie... we accept the love we think we deserve.

CHARLIE

Can we make them know they deserve more?

BILL

We can try.

Bill hands him his new book, A Separate Peace. "Little Drummer Boy" by Bing Crosby and David Bowie begins.

INT. EAT 'N PARK - MORNING

The song continues as Charlie watches an OLD WAITRESS take down Halloween decorations. He sees Sam enter the diner. He fixes his hair, then pretends to read his SAT PREP BOOK.

SAM

Hey, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Hey, Sam. I didn't see you come in. You want to do word wealth drills?

Sam sits. They open their books. And in a quick passage of time, we see them study next to Halloween decorations. Then,

Thanksgiving decorations. And finally, Christmas decorations as the snow begins to fall outside.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The song continues. Charlie's mom and sister unpack the ornaments as Charlie and dad assemble the plastic tree.

CHARLIE

Hey, dad. Can I have 30 dollars?

FATHER

(old joke)

20 dollars? What do you want 10 dollars for?

CHARLIE

Sam is doing secret santa. It's her favorite thing. Please.

Charlie's father reaches into his pocket and hands Charlie a bill. It's a fifty. Dad winks, in a great mood.

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Lockers are opened by Charlie. Sam. Patrick. Wrapped gifts are deposited. Mischief smiles. Lockers closed.

EXT. SAT TESTING CENTER - MORNING

As the snow falls, Patrick and Charlie escort a nervous Sam past the SAT Testing sign in the parking lot. Just before she goes in, she turns and chokes herself for laughs.

INT. BILL'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

Bill hands Charlie a gift as the last student files out. Charlie rips open wrapping paper and sees a copy of The Catcher in the Rye. He smiles at Bill as the bell rings.

BILL

It was my favorite growing up. Have a great Christmas break, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You, too, Mr. Anderson.

INT. SHOP CLASS - DAY

Mr. Callahan, the shop teacher, looks at Charlie's dad's amazing clock. He hands Charlie an A on a piece of paper.

MR. CALLAHAN

Excellent work, Charlie. First rate job.
(off Charlie's guilty nod)
Alright, Nothing. Let's see it.

Patrick gets out of the way of his SHITTY WOODEN CLOCK - the same one from Charlie's hospital room.

PATRICK

If you fail me, you get me next semester.

EXT. SOUTH HILLS VILLAGE SHOPPING MALL - NIGHT

The song continues as Sam's truck flies through the snow, doing doughnuts in the empty parking lot. Patrick drives, screaming at the top of his lungs. Charlie and Sam cheer.

PATRICK

Woo! C Minus! It's over! It's over!

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The gang watches as Sam unveils her final SAT score. She got a 1010. They clap. It's a great moment.

EXT. POST OFFICE - MORNING

The snow falls as Sam kisses her Penn State application. She makes Charlie kiss the application. Patrick french kisses the application. Charlie holds the blue mailbox open. Mary Elizabeth and Alice do a tribal chant. Sam takes a deep breath and puts the application in the mailbox.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DUSK

We see Charlie's little boom box making a mix tape. The two cassettes run. "Little Drummer Boy" is just about to finish when the side runs out of tape and snaps off.

CHARLIE

Crap.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DUSK

Charlie hears the familiar sounds of the TV coming from the family room. He doesn't knock. He just opens the door.

CHARLIE

Candace, do you have any tapes I could borrow?

Charlie stops when he sees Derek on the sofa, alone.

DEREK
(friendly)
Candace's in the bathroom, but I have a
blank somewhere in my backpack.

Charlie stares at him for a tense second. Then...

CHARLIE
That's okay. Thanks anyway, Derek.

EXT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A huge house in the richest section of the township. The snow falls as Charlie rings the door bell, carrying a sack of presents. The door opens to reveal, **SAM'S MOM** and **PATRICK'S DAD**, both 50. Both very nice. Kind of hip - for parents.

SAM'S MOM
You must be Charlie.

PATRICK'S DAD
The kids are in the games room.

INT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - GAMES ROOM - NIGHT

The TV plays Christmas specials on mute. "The Island of Misfit Toys" lament their fate until Santa approaches. Sam bounces past the TV. She wears a Santa Hat like a hot elf.

SAM
No more applications! No more SAT's!

Music blares. Mary Elizabeth rips open her final present.

MARY ELIZABETH
5 pairs of Gap blue jeans. Hmmm. I
think my secret santa is... Alice.

PATRICK
My God. How did you know?

Alice holds up a receipt. Mary Elizabeth is moved.

MARY ELIZABETH
You actually paid? I'm so touched.

Bob pours everyone brandy. The kids look ridiculous, drinking it. But they don't feel ridiculous.

CHARLIE
Your parents let you drink?

PATRICK
One night a year. I love divorce guilt.

CHARLIE

Where's Craig?

SAM

He went home to Connecticut. He'll be back for New Year's Eve.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry we won't see him tonight.

Sam nods, then turns. Charlie is delighted. No Craig.

SAM

Who's next!? Who's next!?

PATRICK

Patrick's turn!

SAM

Alright, big brother by 3 weeks. Who's your secret santa?

PATRICK

Okay. This is tough. I have received a harmonica, magnetic poetry, a book about Harvey Milk, and a mix with The Smiths "Asleep" on it... twice.

Charlie starts snickering. He can't help himself.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

The mix had a note apologizing that Santa still couldn't find the tunnel song. The note was in Charlie's handwriting. So, dude... I'm stumped. I mean, it's such a gay collection of presents that maybe I sent them to myself. But I'm going to have to go with... drum roll... Charlie.

Charlie holds up his hands. Yay! They all cheer. Charlie hands him a scroll with a red ribbon on it.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

So, what's my final present? Lyrics to Asleep?

CHARLIE

No. It's a poem my friend Michael gave me. I think you'll love it.

PATRICK

Thank you. That's very sweet.

Patrick is genuinely touched. Charlie smiles.

SAM

Alright, Charlie... it's your turn.

CHARLIE

Okay. Uh... I have received socks, pants, shirt, and a neck tie. I was ordered to wear them all tonight. So, I guess my secret santa is Mary Elizabeth.

PATRICK

Why do you say that?

CHARLIE

Because Mary Elizabeth bosses people around sometimes. Sorry.

Charlie feels bad. They all crack up. Mary Elizabeth sulks.

PATRICK

(sarcastic to Mary Elizabeth)

Yes, we're all as shocked as you are.

(back to Charlie)

Anyway, you'll be fascinated to know that your secret santa is actually... me.

CHARLIE

You got me clothes? Why?

PATRICK

Because great writers used to wear suits all the time, didn't they? So, go to the bathroom, put this on, and emerge a star.

He hands him a box. Charlie gives Sam a sack of presents.

CHARLIE

Hand these out while I'm gone.

MARY ELIZABETH

You only get presents as secret santa. That's the rule.

PATRICK

You're such an asshole. Gimme!

Sam hands out the presents. As the group rips them open, Sam looks at hers. An old 45 record of The Beatles classic "Something" with a card. She reads the card as Alice looks at a book about Martin Scorsese with the inscription.

ALICE

"Alice, I know you'll get into NYU."

(turns to Mary Elizabeth)

What did you get?

MARY ELIZABETH

40 dollars.

(reads card)

"To print Punk Rocky in color next time."

Bob blows soap bubbles into the air. Stoned. Mesmerized.

BOB

He knows me. He really knows me.

Sam finishes the card. Holds it to her chest. Very moved. Then, they all get silent and turn to the bathroom door.

SAM

Come on out, Charlie.

They all chime in. "Let's go, young man!" Charlie opens the door dressed in his suit. Like the best of English mods in the 60's. For those of you who know the book, this is the cover. Charlie poses tough. They all clap. It's magic.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

We hear the music play downstairs. The door opens, bathing the room in light. Sam's room is so cool. A shrine to music. A xerox that says "The Beatings Will Continue Until Morale Improves." Virgin Mary icons. Snow globes. Kitsch.

CHARLIE

Where are we going?

SAM

It's a surprise.

CHARLIE

Is this your room? It's so cool.

SAM

Thanks.

Sam points to a large box with a red ribbon on her desk.

CHARLIE

You got me a present?

SAM

With all that help on my Penn State application? Bet your life. Open it.

Charlie lifts up the box and sitting there is **THE OLD UNDERWOOD TYPEWRITER** we saw in the hospital. He smiles.

SAM (CONT'D)

Patrick and I went to the same thrift store. The gifts kind of go together.

CHARLIE

I don't know what to say.

SAM

You don't have to.

Sam goes over and types. "Write about us sometime." He smiles and types back. "I will." They look at each other. We can hear a lovely ballad playing downstairs.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm sorry we can't celebrate your birthday with you.

CHARLIE

That's okay. I'm just sorry you have to go visit your dad.

SAM

I'm in such a great mood, I don't think even he could ruin it.

CHARLIE

Yeah?

SAM

I feel like I'm finally doing good.

CHARLIE

You are.

SAM

Me? When I met you, you were this scared freshman. And look at you in that suit. You're like a sexy English school boy. I saw Mary Elizabeth checking you out.

CHARLIE

(innocent laugh)

No.

SAM

Innocent. Worst kind of guys. Never see you coming. And parents love you. Extra danger.

CHARLIE

Well, it hasn't worked so far.

SAM

Come on. You've never had a girlfriend?

CHARLIE

No.

SAM

Not even a 2nd grade valentine? Really?
Have you ever kissed a girl?

CHARLIE

No. What about you?

SAM

Have I ever kissed a girl?

CHARLIE

(laughs)

No! Your first kiss...

Sam gets this strange look in her eyes. A little haunted.

SAM

My first kiss? I was 11. His name was
Robert. He would come over to the house
all the time. He said I was beautiful.

CHARLIE

Was he your first boyfriend?

SAM

He was my dad's boss.

Just when Sam might have gone to a dark place, she smiles.

SAM (CONT'D)

But you know something? I can be the
last person in my family who's broken. I
mean, I used to sleep with guys who
treated me like shit. And get wasted all
the time. But now... I feel like I have
a chance. Like I don't have to feel ugly
for the rest of my life. Or be stupid.
I could even get into a real college.
And you know what made me think that?

CHARLIE

What?

SAM

That card you wrote me tonight.

CHARLIE

It's true. You can do it.

SAM

How do you know?

CHARLIE

My Aunt... she had that done to her, too.
And she turned her life around.

SAM

Really? She must have been great.

CHARLIE

She was my favorite person in the world... until now.

Sam smiles. She's very moved.

SAM

I know that you know I like Craig. But I want to forget that for a minute. Okay?

CHARLIE

Okay.

SAM

I want to make sure that the first person who kisses you loves you, Charlie. Okay?

CHARLIE

Okay.

SAM

I just want it to be fair to somebody. Okay?

Charlie nods. And with that, Sam leans over and kisses him. It starts softly, then Sam wraps her thin arms around him. Holding on for lonely life. When the song crescendos, and they part, Charlie and Sam look at each other. Finally...

SAM (CONT'D)

I love you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I love you, too.

EXT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The porch lights are as golden as Charlie feels right now. We see the gang wave to each other and hug.

GANG

"Merry Christmas!" "Good luck at your dad's!" "See you at New Year's!"

Patrick approaches Charlie.

CHARLIE

Have fun at your mom's house.

PATRICK

Thanks. And Charlie... since you were born on Christmas Eve, I figure you don't

PATRICK (CONT'D)
get a lot of birthday presents. So, I
want you to have this. From the heart.

Patrick lays his SHITTY CLOCK from shop class on top of the typewriter. Charlie laughs. Patrick winks.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
See you at New Year's.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Charlie walks down the path to his house with his typewriter and clock. His mother opens the door.

CHARLIE
Look what I got, mom!

She smiles. Charlie follows her in. The door closes.

[Note: the following sequence will blend the past and the present seamlessly. For ease of clarity, whenever we see Aunt Helen, it's a memory of Charlie as a 7 year old.]

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The door opens to reveal Charlie's mom and AUNT HELEN entering the house. Little Charlie stands at the photo wall near the stairs with his brother and sister. They're in their Sunday clothes. There are balloons. And streamers.

LITTLE CHARLIE
Welcome home, Aunt Helen.

AUNT HELEN
Oh. Look at you all, dressed so nice.

Aunt Helen kneels down and straightens little Charlie's tie.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Charlie takes off his tie. He opens his bedroom door.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Little Charlie leaves his bedroom and looks down the dark hall. He tip toes and peeks his head around the corner where he finds... Aunt Helen. She's smoking at the table. Weeping

silently. Charlie walks up and holds her hand. The one with the old wrist scars. She cries harder at his kindness.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLIE'S STREET - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Charlie fills a brown paper bag with sand and plops a candle into it. He lights the candle, making the bag glow like a beautiful lantern. He looks down his street where families are out with their kids, doing the same luminaria ritual.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLIE'S STREET - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Aunt Helen and the kids finish their luminaria bags. Aunt Helen lights up the candles. They glow.

AUNT HELEN

Charlie, can you see it? The luminaria is a landing strip for Santa Claus.

The image goes wide. All of these bags glowing. The street is magic. Aunt Helen rattles her keys.

AUNT HELEN (CONT'D)

Keep an eye out for him with your brother and sister. I'll be right back.

LITTLE CHARLIE

It's my birthday. Where are you going?

AUNT HELEN

I just got a new job, and I have some money to spend on people I care about.

LITTLE CHARLIE

Am I people?

AUNT HELEN

Maybe.

LITTLE CHARLIE

Tell me where you're going. Pleeeeeeease.

AUNT HELEN

Okay. It'll be our little secret.

She bends down and whispers into his ear. Then, she musses his hair and gets in the car.

LITTLE CHRIS & CANDACE

What did she say? Where is she going?

CHARLIE
I'm not telling.

Charlie looks as Aunt Helen's old car drives away, through the landing strip for Santa Claus.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Charlie looks out his window at the little kids and families setting up luminaria. He smiles. A knock on the door. The door opens, revealing Charlie's mother.

MOTHER
Hey.

He smiles. She joins him at the window. They look at the luminaria together. After a beat, Charlie smiles...

CHARLIE
Mom, do you remember when Aunt Helen sat on Santa's lap at the Mall and asked for a new Ford Mustang?

Charlie's mother laughs. And nods.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
She was really turning her life around, wasn't she? We can all do that, right?

Charlie's mom smiles and tucks his hair behind his ear.

CANDACE (O.S.)
Mom, they're here!

CHARLIE
I'm sorry you lost your sister, ma.

MOTHER
Come on. Let's make this the best birthday ever.

CHARLIE
Okay.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens, revealing Charlie's dad.

FATHER
Look who's here!

He moves out of the way, and standing there is Charlie's older brother, **CHRIS KELMECKIS** (19). Chris is handsome, charismatic, and an all around winner.

CHRIS
Come here, little sister.

CANDACE
Hey, Chris.

Big hug. Chris smiles big and "son flirts" with his mom.

CHRIS
Ma, you're so thin!

MOTHER
10 pounds on Weight Watchers.

CHRIS
You're a catch, ma!

Big kiss. When he lets go, he sees Charlie. The two just smile at each other.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Charlie... look at your hair.

CHARLIE
Oh, right. It is longer, huh?

Chris punches Charlie's arm. Charlie punches back.

INT. CHARLIE'S DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie looks at his 16 candles as his family sings.

FAMILY
*Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to
you! Happy birthday, dear Charlie.
Happy birthday to you!*

Charlie blows out his 16 candles.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The wind blows out a candle in one of the luminaria bags. The suburb is quiet. Not a creature is stirring. Except...

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie sitting at his desk, looking at the luminaria.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Charlie wanders through the quiet house. He turns the corner where he finds... Chris sitting at the table. He's lit by a couple of candles and the blinking lights of the Christmas Tree. He's surrounded by left overs. Charlie sits.

CHARLIE

Hey.

Chris chews and swallows. Famished. They both whisper.

CHRIS

Hey. God, I missed mom's cooking. You have no idea how good you have it. I'm actually tired of eating pizza.

Charlie smiles. Takes a fork. Enjoys some leftover cake.

CHARLIE

How are you liking school?

CHRIS

Not bad. I'm no brainiac like you or Candace. But I'm doing okay.

CHARLIE

Okay? You're playing in the Rose Bowl.

CHRIS

You've been watching?

CHARLIE

Of course.

Chris musses Charlie's hair. Thanks.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I think you could play for the Steelers someday.

CHRIS

(shrugs)

I doubt it. But if I do, you know what I'm doing with my first check? Giving it to dad. We have an assistant coach who played hockey against him in Ohio. Do you know how close dad came to being pro?

CHARLIE

No.

CHRIS

Coach said he was an incredible goalie until he got hurt. I called dad to ask about it. You know what he said?

CHARLIE

What?

CHRIS

"Who gives a shit? It's all just stories someday. And we all become someone's dad."

Charlie laughs. Then stifles it. Chris laughs. Chris changes his tone. Cautious.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

How are you feeling, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Good.

CHRIS

You know what I mean. Is it bad tonight?

CHARLIE

No.

CHRIS

You don't have to lie to me.

CHARLIE

I'm not lying. I promise. I've been doing good all year. I'm not picturing things. And when I do, I can shut it off. I'm not thinking too fast at all.

CHRIS

Mom told me you have good friends now. You can talk to them if it gets bad again, right?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Especially Sam. I'm going to ask her to be my girlfriend at New Years. I think the time is right.

Chris smiles at his kid brother. Their mom enters.

MOTHER

What are you two talking about?

CHRIS

We're talking about how great our mother looks.

MOTHER

10 pounds on weight watchers.

CHRIS

I know. We're proud, ma.

She sits with them. Takes a carrot. And the three settle into a night of snacking.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Christmas morning. Charlie looks at his dad open a gift. A used VHS tape of the "1991 Stanley Cup Champion Penguins".

CHARLIE

You like it, dad?

His father nods. Charlie smiles. We hear the church organ.

INT. ST. THOMAS MOORE CHURCH - MORNING

Chris playfully shoves Charlie as the family moves down the line to receive Holy Communion at Christmas Mass. Charlie's father takes the sacrament. Charlie is next. He stands before the PRIEST. The Priest makes the motion of the cross with the communion wafer. He places it in Charlie's hand. Charlie brings the sacrament to his mouth with his fingers...

MATCH CUT TO:

We move in closer to Charlie's fingers in his mouth. When he takes his hand out, we no longer see the communion wafer. We see... a tab of LSD. The music rushes up. And we are in...

INT. BOB'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

New Year's Eve. Charlie closes his mouth. He looks down the hall of the smoky room where Craig has his arm around Sam.

CRAIG

I was home for three weeks, and my dad's girlfriend was so crazy... it made me realize what a great girl Sam was. She always listens. She's always cool. I couldn't ask for a better girlfriend.

Charlie turns to Mary Elizabeth, who's also dosed.

CHARLIE

How long does it take to work?

EXT. BOB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

About 45 minutes. The sound is muted thick. Slight echoes. Charlie shovels the snow. Crunch. Fascinated by his breath making fog. Sam comes outside. She's worried about him.

SAM

Hey, Charlie. Shoveling snow, huh?

CHARLIE

I have to get this driveway clean. Then, I have to congratulate you for being happy. You deserve it.

SAM

You said that an hour ago.

CHARLIE

Was that tonight? Oh, God. I was looking at this tree, but it was a dragon, and then a tree--

SAM

Don't freak out. Calm down. Look up. Do you see it?

She points. Charlie looks up. Sees the stars.

SAM (CONT'D)

We're in a glass snow globe. And those amazing white stars are holes in the black glass of the dome. And when we go to heaven, the glass breaks away, and there is nothing but a whole sheet of star white, which is brighter than anything but doesn't hurt your eyes.

Charlie looks. The sky bends like a globe. He can see it. Every time he breathes, the sky ripples.

CHARLIE

Sam, you ever think that if people knew how crazy you really were, no one would ever talk to you?

SAM

All the time. So, you want to put on my glasses? They'll protect you.

CHARLIE

Okay.

Sam puts her arm around his shoulder. Protecting him. Charlie looks through her glasses. The world bends.

INT. BOB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The world unbends as Charlie takes off the glasses. He sees Brad and Patrick laughing. Kids play guitars. Their arms in unison. Mary Elizabeth passes, tripping out of her mind.

MARY ELIZABETH

Nobody here is serious.

Charlie looks up the stairs and sees... Sam and Craig making out. Craig passionately tugs at her bra, then carries her to the bedroom. Charlie looks away. The holes in the linoleum pattern are faces. He sees a pair of scissors. Grabs them.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

We hear Sam and Craig having sex in the next room. Moaning.

SAM (O.S.)

I love you, Craig.

Charlie looks at his own face in the mirror. One eye is completely dilated. The other normal. He picks up the scissors and starts cutting off his own hair.

INT. BOB'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Charlie sits at Bob's father's old-fashioned desk and writes a letter in pencil. We can see the words, "Dear Friend..."

ALL (O.S.)

10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1. Happy New Year!

EXT. BOB'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

Charlie walks down the road under a streetlight. Silhouette. The road is icy. Charlie falls on his ass.

EXT. POST OFFICE - NIGHT

Charlie opens the mailbox and puts his envelope in it. Then, he lays down and makes a snow angel. The stars begin to move, and then Charlie gets the "spins". He closes his eyes.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Little Charlie looks at his birthday cake with 7 candles. A knock on the door. Charlie's mother bounds down the stairs.

MOTHER

Helen? Did you forget your keys?

Charlie's mother opens the door, revealing a **POLICEMAN**. He whispers something to her. She begins crying. He turns to see Charlie in his party hat. 7 years old and confused.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. POST OFFICE - MORNING

16 year old Charlie opens his eyes. He sees a **POLICEMAN** approaching. Charlie looks around and realizes it's daylight. Somehow, he fell asleep. Freezing near a blue mail box. He looks up at the policemen, and then...

CHARLIE
It's all my fault.

With those 4 words, Charlie collapses leaving us in...

BLACK

TITLE CARD OVER BLACK: **PART THREE**

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

The Emergency room is bustling on New Year's Day. Charlie sits next to Candace. He's wrapped in a grey blanket. Freezing. He watches his parents talk to the **POLICE** and **DOCTORS** through the door. The sound is underwater.

FATHER
He used to wander off when his Aunt died.
We finally had to...

MOTHER
He spent some time in a hospital when he
was seven.

DOCTOR
Then, I'd bring him to a psychiatrist.
He could be having a relapse.

POLICEMAN
Excuse me, folks. With all respect to
your son's mental history, let's not rule
out the possibility of drug abuse here--

On that, a **NURSE** comes over and closes the door. Click. Charlie looks over at his sister, who shakes her head.

CANDACE
You are so screwed.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie looks up as the POLICE, DOCTORS, and his PARENTS tower over him. He is terrified and does what any kid would do. He lies his ass off.

POLICEMAN

Did your older friends pressure you?

CHARLIE

No one pressured me into anything. I would never do drugs, officer. Never.

POLICEMAN

Then, how did you happen to be passed out on the ground at 6 in the morning?

CHARLIE

Well, um... I was feeling really tired, and uh... feverish. And it was hot inside. So, I took a walk to get cold air. And I started to feel faint. And I started seeing things. So, I passed out. But I wasn't on drugs. I swear.

He waits to see if this worked. And then, unexpectedly...

MOTHER

(worried)

You're seeing things again, Charlie?

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

On the TV, we see Penn State is tied at 7 in the Rose Bowl. Charlie's family is on pins and needles around him.

CHARLIE

But I don't need a psychiatrist. It was one night. I'll be okay. I swear.

FATHER

You're doing so well in school this year. The doctor will help you sort things out.

Charlie looks over at Candace for moral support.

CANDACE

Do you want me to fix your hair?

INT. THERAPIST'S WAITING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Charlie sits in the waiting room. He feels terrible.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry I worry you so much, ma. I won't again. I promise.

VOICE (O.S.)

Charlie Kelmeckis?

Charlie and his mom look up to find... **DR. DEBORAH BURTON**, the doctor from the beginning of the movie.

DR. BURTON

Hello, Charlie. I'm Dr. Burton. It's nice to meet you.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The water RUNS. Charlie looks at the new bottle of prescription antidepressant and anxiety pills. Wellbutrin. He thinks, then puts a pill in his mouth and swallows.

EXT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - MORNING

The tires squish the grey slush as the busses pull into the dreary parking lot. School is back in session.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Charlie shakes off the snow, then takes off his overcoat to reveal... he's wearing his suit from Secret Santa. All the kids stare. Charlie realizes he made a terrible mistake.

CHARLIE

It was a Christmas present.

INT. BILL'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

Charlie sits in the back row as Bill hands back the book for the semester... The Great Gatsby. The Smart Ass Freshman looks at Charlie writing in his Trapper Keeper.

SMART ASS FRESHMAN

Nice look, faggot. Didn't know Stevie Wonder was cutting hair these days.

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The lights of Rocky Horror flicker on Charlie's face. He sees kids push on a chapel to create the illusion of moving it to the sky. Charlie turns to Brad, sitting next to him.

BRAD HAYS

(for the 10th time)
Charlie, you're not schizophrenic.

CHARLIE

But they said in health class--

BRAD HAYS

They say that about LSD to scare you.

CHARLIE

Are you sure? I've seen those kids bef--

BRAD HAYS

I'm sure. Now, you gotta stop sitting next to me.

Mary Elizabeth approaches Brad. They whisper.

MARY ELIZABETH

Brad, I have an emergency. Craig flaked again. I need a Rocky.

BRAD HAYS

Are you nuts? There are people out here.

After a beat, Mary Elizabeth looks at Charlie.

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Mary Elizabeth stands in front of Charlie. Throwing his costume together. Gauze. And a gold bathing suit.

CHARLIE

I don't know about this, Mary Elizabeth.

MARY ELIZABETH

You'll do great. Take off your clothes. We have to put on your costume.

CHARLIE

(panics)

But I don't know all the words!

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - LATER

Patrick (as Frank 'n Furter) watches Bob (as Riff Raff) cut the gauze off of Rocky, revealing...

Charlie

... as he growls like Frankenstein. He looks so panicked and adorable, his friends can't stop smiling. Especially Mary Elizabeth. Rocky's big song, "Sword of Damocles," begins. Charlie dances, having no idea what is going on.

CHARLIE

(awful lip-synch as Rocky)

The sword of damocles is hanging over my

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

*head! And I got the feeling that
someone's going to be cutting the thread!*

Mary Elizabeth watches Charlie's little butt in the gold undies. Patrick follows Charlie for support. Whispers.

PATRICK

*You're doing great. Now, whatever
happens, don't get a boner.*

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

"Touch-A, Touch-A, Touch Me" is in full swing. Sam grabs Charlie's hands and rubs them all over her breasts.

SAM

*Ah! Touch a touch a touch me! I wanna
be dirty! Thrill me. Chill me. Fulfill
me! Creature of the night!*

Charlie thinks it couldn't get worse. But he's...

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - LATER

Wrong! "Rose Tint my World" is ending. Charlie and Sam mime the groping orgy in the swimming pool with Patrick and Alice. Sam is too sexy for words. Charlie is dying.

SAM

God bless Lily St. Cyr.

PATRICK

*My my my my! My my my my! I'm a wild
and an untamed thing! I'm a bee with a
deadly sting.*

As Patrick kicks ass, Sam helps Charlie join the kick line. Charlie finds his rhythm and he smiles at her. For a moment, it feels like it's just the two of them.

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - LATER

The cast bows. Sam and Patrick lift Charlie up on their shoulders. Everyone applauds. Especially Mary Elizabeth.

EXT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - BACKSTAGE - LATER

Charlie is surrounded on all sides. Sam gives him a huge hug. He couldn't be happier until... Craig opens the door and rushes into the building.

MARY ELIZABETH

Oh, Craig. Great! Right on time!

CRAIG

Sorry.

SAM

Where were you?

CRAIG

My professor had me working late. I called. Didn't you get the messages?

Moment's over. Sam walks off, upset, and Craig follows. Charlie sees Mary Elizabeth lugging costumes.

CHARLIE

Hey, Mary Elizabeth. You need some help?

EXT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The snow falls. That bracing February cold. Charlie helps Mary Elizabeth carry the costumes outside to her car.

MARY ELIZABETH

Thanks for being the one human being I can count on in this world.

CHARLIE

Sure. Maybe I could join the cast as an alternate or something?

MARY ELIZABETH

We're filled up now, but they'll need people after we leave for college. I'll put in a word.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

They put the box in her trunk. Snap it closed. We can't help but notice the "Keep Your Laws Off My Body" bumper sticker as Mary Elizabeth tries her best to flirt.

MARY ELIZABETH

Charlie... have you heard of the Sadie Hawkins dance?

CHARLIE

The one where the girl asks the guy.

MARY ELIZABETH

Yeah. That one.

CHARLIE

I've heard of it. Yeah.

Silence. Awkward. Clueless. Eternity.

MARY ELIZABETH

Well, it's totally stupid and sexist. It's like "thanks for the crumb." And normally, I'd blow off the dance since they suck torture. But it is my last year. So, you want to maybe go with me? God, this is stupid.

CHARLIE

You want to take me?

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm sick of macho guys. And you looked really cute in your costume. So, what do you think?

Noise distracts them both. It's Sam leaving the theater with Craig and the gang. Craig's arm wrapped around her. Charlie looks at them, then turns to Mary Elizabeth, and smiles.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ding dong. Charlie's dad opens the door for MARY ELIZABETH. Charlie straightens out his church suit. So nervous.

FATHER

You must be Mary Elizabeth. It's so good to meet you.

MARY ELIZABETH

You, too, Mr. Kelmeckis.

FATHER

(shit eating grin)
Charlie tells me you're a Buddhist.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Mary Elizabeth stand next to Candace and Derek.

FATHER

Charlie, move closer to Derek. That's it. Okay, kids. Big smile. 1-2-3...

Cheese! White flash. The picture of 4 kids. Smiling big.

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Charlie and Mary Elizabeth slow dance to the worst love song in history. Sweaty palms. Awkward. Hands on hips. Horror.

Charlie looks around the gym. He sees Alice dancing with her date, an EFFEMINATE GOTH KID (17). We'll never meet him, but he'll make us laugh once.

Charlie then watches Patrick dance with Sam. He follows Patrick's gaze across the floor to Brad, who dances with a SENIOR GIRL (18). Charlie sees the boys look at each other. For one moment, it's like they're dancing together.

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - LATER

Mary Elizabeth is at the punch bowl with the gang. Charlie sees Sam, standing by the wall, looking sad. He approaches.

CHARLIE

Are you having a good time?

SAM

Not really. How about you?

CHARLIE

I don't know. This is my first date, so I don't know what to compare it to.

SAM

Don't worry. You're doing fine.

Charlie joins her at the wall. Mary Elizabeth gives them a quick, jealous look.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry Craig didn't come.

SAM

Yeah. He said he didn't want to go to some stupid high school dance. Can't say I blame him.

CHARLIE

I don't know. If you like it, he should come.

SAM

Thanks, Charlie. Have a beautiful first date. You deserve it.

CHARLIE

I'll try not to make you too jealous.

He said it to cheer her up. Sam smiles weakly and leaves. Charlie watches as she passes Candace, dancing with Derek.

INT. MARY ELIZABETH'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

We see a corkscrew cut into the cork of a wine bottle. After a couple of turns - POP! Mary Elizabeth smells the cork.

MARY ELIZABETH

Mmmm. Now, let it breathe.

Mary Elizabeth gets up from the antique sofa where Charlie sits nervously. He looks around. Mary Elizabeth's house feels like no one has ever lived there. Opulent. She turns on the gas fireplace with a remote control. Roar!

CHARLIE

This is sure a nice house.

MARY ELIZABETH

Thanks.

CHARLIE

Um. What does your dad do?

MARY ELIZABETH

Sports medicine. Mom sells real estate.

CHARLIE

That's nice.

Mary Elizabeth drops the needle on a vinyl LP. The Platters. "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." She dances over to Charlie.

MARY ELIZABETH

Don't you love old music?

(off his nod)

Good. Because I made you a mix of it.
I'd love to expose you to great things.
Like Billie Holiday and foreign films.

She pours the wine. Charlie looks at the bottle.

CHARLIE

This looks Fancy.

MARY ELIZABETH

Yeah. My dad collects wine, but he
doesn't drink. That's weird, isn't it?

CHARLIE

I guess. Where are your parents?

MARY ELIZABETH

Their club is hosting a cotillion or
something. They'll be gone all night.

Charlie looks around. Heart beating.

CHARLIE

That's sure a nice fire.

MARY ELIZABETH

Yeah. After I'm done being a lobbyist, I
want to move to a place like this in Cape
Cod. That sounds nice, doesn't it?

Charlie nods. Mary Elizabeth puts her hand on his chest.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Your heart is beating like crazy.

CHARLIE
Is it?

MARY ELIZABETH
Here. Feel it.

She puts her hand on his. Moves it to his chest.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Charlie?

CHARLIE
Uh-huh?

MARY ELIZABETH
Do you like me?

CHARLIE
Uh-huh.

MARY ELIZABETH
You know what I mean.

CHARLIE
I think so.

MARY ELIZABETH
Are you nervous?

CHARLIE
A little.

MARY ELIZABETH
Don't be nervous.

CHARLIE
Okay.

She slowly moves his hand to her dress strap. It falls off her shoulder, revealing her bra. He looks at her cleavage, mesmerized. She leans in for a red wine kiss. She guides his hand under her bra. He feels her bare breast. Wow.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

For a quick moment, Charlie imagines he is touching Sam's breast in Rocky Horror. Broken by...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MARY ELIZABETH'S BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Elizabeth slowly moves his hand away. Charlie blinks.

MARY ELIZABETH
Charlie, do you think I'm pretty?

CHARLIE
I think you're very pretty.

MARY ELIZABETH
Really?

CHARLIE
Really.

Content, she lays on his chest. Peaceful. The image begins high on the ceiling and slowly moves down to Charlie's face.

MARY ELIZABETH
I didn't know how it was going to go tonight, but it was really nice, huh?

CHARLIE
Yeah.

MARY ELIZABETH
I can't believe it. You of all people.
I just can't believe you're my boyfriend.

We land on Charlie's face. "What?" And then, we hear the GARAGE DOOR OPEN.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Oh, shit! My parents!

The mad scramble for clothes begins.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary Elizabeth's car pulls in front of Charlie's house. Charlie gets out. Wanting to say he's not her boyfriend. Not knowing how. Charlie watches her blow him a kiss and drive away. His stomach already filling with acid.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Dear Friend... I'm sorry I haven't written for awhile, but things are messy.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Sam, Patrick, and Alice are seated around the table. Mary Elizabeth has her arms around Charlie. Smothering him.

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm in my bra, and the garage door opens. And I'm scrambling to get my shirt on before my folks came in. Right, babe?

Charlie nods, tortured.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I probably should have been honest about how I didn't want to go out with Mary Elizabeth after Sadie's, but I really didn't want to hurt her feelings.

MARY ELIZABETH

Show them the Billie Holiday CD.

EXT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Ash Wednesday. Charlie exits the bus with the cross of ashes on his forehead. Mary Elizabeth rushes up. She thinks his ashes are a smudge. She cleans it.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

You see, Mary Elizabeth is a really nice person underneath the part of her that hates everyone. And since I heard that having a girlfriend makes you happy, I tried hard to love her like I love Sam.

MARY ELIZABETH

Can you believe it's almost our two week anniversary?

CHARLIE

I know.

INT. MULTIPLEX MOVIE THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT

A double date. While Craig and Sam buy the snacks, Charlie turns to Mary Elizabeth.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

So, I took her on double dates.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Do you like butter on your popcorn?

MARY ELIZABETH
Vegans can't eat butter.

INT. MULTIPLEX MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

As the movie lights flicker, Charlie tries not to see Craig kissing Sam. Or feel Mary Elizabeth's sweaty hand.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
And I tried not to mind that she loves to hold hands even when her hands are sweaty. But after awhile, I couldn't. And I had to admit something really upsetting. But ever since Sadie's...

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Charlie touches Mary Elizabeth's breasts over her sweater.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I am tired of touching her boobs.

MARY ELIZABETH
Harder. No, lighter. No, hard--

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I thought maybe if she would just let me pick the make-out music once in awhile, we might have a chance.

INT. BILL'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

Charlie hands in a paper on Hamlet. Bill gives him Walden by Henry David Thoreau.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
And maybe if she didn't put down the books that Mr. Anderson gives me.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

The gang is there. Mary Elizabeth points at Walden.

MARY ELIZABETH
Walden? I read it in 7th grade. Snooze!

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Ring! Charlie grabs the phone. He looks at Patrick's shitty clock. 3:13pm. His voice can no longer hide his quiet rage.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
Or if she would stop calling me the minute I get home from school when I have

CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
absolutely nothing to talk about other
than the bus ride home...

He looks back at the clock. 6:17pm. And he is now a zombie.

MARY ELIZABETH
I didn't know you saw a shrink. Don't
get me started. I saw this one in middle
school. I lied to him all the time...

Charlie calmly puts down the phone and leaves the room. We
hold on the phone with Mary Elizabeth still talking.

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie is so miserable. His mom is sympathetic.

MOTHER
You have to break up with her, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Can I do that?!

Charlie's father leans back from the sofa and the Penguins.

FATHER
For Christ's sake... grow a pair!

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie returns. Mary Elizabeth is still talking.

MARY ELIZABETH
My mom has seen a shrink for 25 years.
It's made her more narcissistic--

CHARLIE
Um... Mary Elizabeth. Can I tell you--

MARY ELIZABETH
Charlie. Please, don't interrupt. You
know I hate that.

Charlie goes to his quiet place. Tick. Tick. Tick.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I know I should have been honest, but I
was getting so mad, it was starting to
scare me. I just wish I could have found
another way to break up. In hindsight, I
probably could not have picked a worse
way to be honest with Mary Elizabeth.

INT. CRAIG'S LOFT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Truth or dare. The gang is seated in a circle, passing around wine. Charlie sits between Mary Elizabeth and Sam.

BOB
Truth or dare?

PATRICK
Who are you talking to?

BOB
I dare you to kiss Alice.

PATRICK
(licks his lips)
Get ready, breeder.

As Patrick approaches an apprehensive Alice...

CRAIG
Mary Elizabeth? I heard you got into Harvard. Congratulations.

MARY ELIZABETH
Thank you.
(re: Charlie)
This one still hasn't gotten me flowers.
(to Charlie)
But I forgive you.

Charlie bites his cheeks. Sam looks a little depressed.

CRAIG
(to Sam)
Don't worry about Penn State. You're just wait-listed. It's no big deal.

PATRICK
Excuse me, everyone, but you're missing some hot "fag on goth" action over here.

Anticipation. Patrick plants the biggest kiss on Alice. Everyone applauds. Patrick licks her cheek like a dog. She smacks him. Ew! Laughter. Patrick looks for the next person. Charlie's heart pounds. Don't pick me! Please!

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Okay. My turn. Um... let's think...
Charlie! Truth or dare?

Silence. Thinking. Finally...

CHARLIE
Truth.

PATRICK

How is your first relationship going?

CHARLIE

It's so bad that I keep fantasizing that one of us is dying of cancer, so I don't have to break up with her.

PATRICK

Charlie? Truth or dare?

Charlie blinks. It was all fantasy.

CHARLIE

Dare.

PATRICK

Kiss the prettiest girl in the room on the lips.

(to the room)

Notice I said girl and not person because I'd smoke all you bitches.

Alice hits him. Laughter. Charlie thinks. He looks at Mary Elizabeth, then turns to Sam. Before Sam can even react... Charlie plants a kiss right on her lips. When he opens his eyes, he looks around, and realizes the magnitude of his fuck up. Everyone stares. After a horrible silence...

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(sing song)

Awk-ward.

Without a word, Mary Elizabeth just stands dignified and goes into the kitchen. Alice follows, but not before saying...

ALICE

Hey, Charlie. You want to know why we let you hang around with us?

PATRICK

Alice--

ALICE

You're like our little pet.

With that, Alice goes into the kitchen. Sam follows.

CHARLIE

Sam? I'm sorry. Sam?

SAM

What the hell is wrong with you?

Sam disappears into the kitchen. Charlie is devastated. He looks over and sees Patrick calming Craig down. Furious.

CRAIG

Get him out of here, Patrick.

EXT. CRAIG'S LOFT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charlie stands by the car. He feels awful. Panicky. Patrick emerges with the coats. Dangles the keys.

CHARLIE

I should go back inside and apologize.

PATRICK

Trust me. You don't want to go in there.

CHARLIE

But, I... I'm sorry... I didn't...

PATRICK

I know. Come on. I'll drive you home.

EXT. FORT PITT BRIDGE - NIGHT

Charlie's car crosses the bridge from Rt. 376. Quiet night.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Patrick drives while Charlie sits in the passenger seat.

CHARLIE

Did you know I was unhappy? Is that why you dared me to do that?

PATRICK

No. I was trying to get you a hand job.

Patrick hoped that would make Charlie laugh. It didn't.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Charlie, look... I hate to be the one to break this, but there's history with Mary Elizabeth and Sam. Other guys. Things that have nothing to do with you. But... trust me... it's best for everyone if you stay away for awhile.

CHARLIE

(crushed)

Oh. Okay. How long do you think?

Silence. Charlie looks over at Patrick, who wears a grave expression. It's going to be a long time.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm really sorry. I... uh... I've been listening to the Billie Holiday CD every night and--

MARY ELIZABETH (V.O.)

It's too late, Charlie.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie on the phone. His voice wavers a bit. Desperate.

CHARLIE

I know. I just feel so bad that I did that. But I get messed up inside like... I'm not there or something.

MARY ELIZABETH (V.O.)

Tell it to someone who cares.

CHARLIE

I know. I'm sorry. I just. We're all good friends, and I--

MARY ELIZABETH (V.O.)

Good friends? You mean the people I've known since kindergarten that you've known for 5 months? Those good friends?

CHARLIE

Oh. Yeah. I don't want us to ruin our--

MARY ELIZABETH (V.O.)

It's ruined. Okay? Stop calling everyone. Stop embarrassing yourself.

CHARLIE

Okay. I will. Goodbye, Mar--

Dial tone. Charlie hangs up the phone.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Charlie has that 16 year old throb in the pit of his stomach. He sees the gang at their lunch table. He moves to Candace.

CHARLIE

Candace, can I sit with you and Derek today? Please. Just this one day.

Candace doesn't say anything. She looks upset. She just gets up and leaves him sitting there, alone.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Moments later, Charlie follows Candace down the hall. Her back is to Charlie. She's not speaking.

CHARLIE

I really need your advice. Please, talk to me. No one will talk to me. Candace?

When he passes and faces her, his expression changes. He is no longer concerned about himself, but her. Without a word, Candace hugs her brother. And sobs. Charlie hugs her back.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - MORNING

We see fingernails being painted with mom's bright red nail polish. The fingernails belong to Charlie, age 3. The person painting them is Candace, 6. Her friends giggle.

LITTLE CHARLIE

I'm gonna get in trouble.

LITTLE CANDACE

No, you won't. I'll protect you.

Little Charlie looks at his hands with the red fingernails.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CLINIC - DAY

An ad for fingernail polish rustles when the door to the clinic opens, letting in the cold wind. Charlie snaps out of it and sees a couple enter the waiting room. Their eyes down. Charlie fidgets in his chair. He looks at the clock. 2:15. It's too much. He gets up and leaves the clinic.

INT. THE MALL - FOOD COURT - DAY

Charlie puts down 5 dollars and collects his nachos and coke. He moves to a booth and sits. He quietly watches a middle aged **SINGLE MOM** and her **LITTLE BOY** eating french fries. The Boy looks so happy. The single mom smiles. Got your nose!

EXT. PLANNED PARENTHOOD PARKING LOT - DUSK

The wind blows the snow around the parking lot. Charlie helps Candace into the back of the family's station wagon.

CHARLIE

I set up the blankets for you. Here.

Candace climbs under the covers. She doesn't speak.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I had to leave. I just couldn't sit in there. But we can stay out as long as you want. And I got you some food in case you get hungry. And...

She takes his hand. He stops when he sees she's crying. After a long beat...

CANDACE

You're a much nicer person than me.

CHARLIE

That's not true.

His kindness makes it worse for her. She cries harder.

CANDACE

I'm so sorry I didn't let you have lunch with me on your first day.

CHARLIE

I know. It's okay. Just try and rest.

Candace lays her head on the blankets. Charlie is surprised to find himself stroking her hair to comfort.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

We see the familiar sight of Saturday Night Live on the television. Aunt Helen smiles and points.

AUNT HELEN

Look, Charlie. She's fast asleep.

Little Charlie looks at Candace on the floor, asleep.

INT. CHARLIE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The front door opens. Charlie and Candace enter. Mom is at the stove. Dad sits in his chair, reading the paper.

MOTHER

Where were you two? Dinner's almost ready.

CHARLIE

Well, uh, we saw a movie in Robinson and got nachos.

MOTHER

Nachos? When!?

FATHER

Your mother cooked ribs, you know?

CHARLIE

We didn't get them until before the movie, and that was awhile ago.

MOTHER

What movie did you see?

CANDACE

Some dumb romantic comedy. Those ribs smell great.

FATHER

Well, wash up. I'm starving.

MOTHER

It's nice to see you and your brother spending time together again.

Charlie forces a smile to his mom. Then, he turns and watches Candace go up to their father and kiss his cheek.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie sits at his desk. He looks very guilty. He blames himself for everything. He needs to talk to someone. After trying to read twice, he dials the phone. One ring...

SAM (V.O.)

Hey, there. You've reached Sam. I'll be with my dad over Easter. So, leave a...

Charlie hangs up without leaving a message.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Charlie sits in the same position. It looks like he's barely slept. He begins typing. The keys up close and loud. Clak.

CLOSE UP TYPING: "Dear friend, I have not seen my friends for 2 weeks now. I am starting to get bad again."

Knock. Knock. Charlie's mom opens the door.

MOTHER

We're going to be late for Easter Mass.

CHARLIE

Okay, mom.

Charlie forces a smile, takes the paper out of the typewriter, balls it up, and throws it away.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. THOMAS MOORE CHURCH - MORNING

Charlie and his family sit in the pews for Easter Sunday. Charlie watches the PRIEST recite the Lord's prayer.

PRIEST

Our Father who art in Heaven. Hallowed--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ST. THOMAS MOORE CHURCH - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

7 year old Charlie watches the PRIEST recite the Lord's prayer. He looks at Aunt Helen's picture on the coffin.

PRIEST

--be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WESTMINSTER CHURCH - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

15 year old Charlie looks at the picture of Michael on his coffin. Charlie blinks and then sees his own photo there.

PRIEST

--will be done. On Earth as it is in--

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Bang. Bang. The pounding on the door snaps Charlie out of his trance. He takes his pill from the prescription bottle.

FATHER (O.S.)

Charlie, dinner. Let's go!

CHARLIE

Yes, sir. Be right out!

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Charlie opens the door wearing a fake smile. The family sits for Easter dinner. Charlie's mother hands him a card.

MOTHER
Happy Easter, Charlie.

Charlie smiles and opens the card, revealing a \$50 bill.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BOB'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

The \$50 bill is now on Bob's kitchen table. Charlie watches Bob groom and weigh some pot.

CHARLIE
Something is wrong with me, and I don't know what it is.

BOB
Don't worry. This will definitely take the edge off.

Bob slides over a dime bag full of weed.

BOB (CONT'D)
Hey, you hear from Patrick?

CHARLIE
No. He told me to stay away.

BOB
Oh, you don't know.

CHARLIE
(concerned)
Why? What happened?

BOB
Brad's father caught them together.

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MORNING

As kids open lockers and move to morning period, Charlie stares at... Brad, who looks like he was beaten within an inch of his life. A black eye. People whisper gossip.

SOPHOMORE GIRL (O.S.)
Some Lebo kids jumped him outside the O.

SOPHOMORE GIRL #2 (O.S.)
It was some black kids from North Hills. My brother told me.

SOPHOMORE GIRL (O.S.)
That's not what I heard.

Brad moves into the arms of **CHARLOTTE** (18), cheerleader cute. Patrick just turns away and closes his locker. Hurting.

INT. HALLWAYS OUTSIDE OF GYM CLASS - AFTERNOON

Charlie watches Patrick and Brad alone in a hallway. Patrick reaches out to comfort Brad. But Brad is too messed up. Without a word, Brad walks away. Leaving Patrick crushed.

CHARLIE
Are you okay?

PATRICK
Not now, Charlie. I'm sorry.

Patrick storms off.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Charlie sits at his table, alone. He watches Patrick leave the lunch line, passing a chorus of...

SOPHOMORE GIRLS
"Hey, Nothing." "Hey, Nothing."

Patrick says nothing. He's too sad to fight the mob today. He just moves to his table when the Nose Tackle sticks out his leg. Patrick falls on his tray. The kids laugh.

NOSE TACKLE
Oops. Sorry, Nothing.

Patrick smiles to himself, dusts off, and turns to Brad.

PATRICK
You going to do something?

BRAD HAYS
What are you talking about?

PATRICK
Your pet ape just tripped me. Are you going to say anything?

BRAD HAYS
Why would I?

PATRICK
You know why.

It's too far. Brad can feel people staring.

BRAD HAYS
This is pathetic. Your fixation on me.

Brad's friends laugh. Patrick's eyes narrow.

PATRICK

You want people to know how you really got those bruises?

BRAD HAYS

I got jumped in a parking lot.

PATRICK

Where? In Shenley Park? Do your friends know about Shenley Park?

BRAD HAYS

I don't know what kind of sick shit you're trying to pull.
(real warning)
You better walk away now... Nothing.

PATRICK

Fine. Say hi to your dad for me.

Patrick turns and leaves. And then, as an afterthought...

BRAD HAYS

Whatever... faggot.

Brad's friends laugh. Patrick stops and turns. Last chance.

PATRICK

What did you call me?

BRAD HAYS

I called you a faggot.

Patrick looks at Brad's friends snickering. Then, Patrick looks at Brad. Then, out of nowhere...

Smack.

Patrick throws a vicious right to the cheek. Brad pushes him back. And the two start fighting. Falling to the floor. Trying to kill each other. The cafeteria erupts in NOISE.

PATRICK

Say that shit again!

Brad's football buddies rise and peel Patrick off Brad. The cafeteria gets louder. The Nose Tackle holds Patrick up. More Noise. The Linebacker hits Patrick in the face.

SAM

Leave him alone!

NOSE TACKLE

Step off, fag hag.

Sam rushes up and the Nose Tackle pushes her down. She lands on her tail bone. Thud. Patrick gets hit a couple of times in the face. The kids cheer the fight. It's getting louder and louder with more and more noise. And then...

SMASH CUT TO:

Silence.

Charlie comes out from a blink. He calmly looks around. Almost slow motion. The faint sound of a heart beat. For a moment, he doesn't understand where he is. He looks up... all the kids are staring at him. Susan. Mary Elizabeth. Alice. They are all quiet. Afraid of him. Charlie looks at his hand, clenched in a fist. It is already covered with...

Blood.

Charlie's confused until he sees the Linebacker holding his broken, bloody nose. He's looking at Charlie...

Terrified.

The image pans over. The Nose Tackle is holding his knee. Charlie stands over them. He is disconnected. It's an out of body experience. He reaches out and helps Patrick to his feet. Then, he calmly turns and stares right through Brad.

CHARLIE

(icy calm)

If you touch my friends again, I'll
fucking blind you.

Brad is stunned. So is everyone... except Sam.

BLACK

TITLE CARD OVER BLACK: **PART FOUR**

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

We quickly look into the nurse's office where Patrick, the Nose Tackle, and the Middle Linebacker are being helped by the **SCHOOL NURSE** - 25 years on the job.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Charlie sits in the waiting room of the Principal's Office. He looks through the glass where Mr. Small talks to Brad. After a beat, he pats Brad's shoulder and opens the door.

SECRETARY

Sir, I need a moment...

The **SECRETARY** enters the office and closes the door. Leaving Charlie and Brad alone. Just as Brad is about to leave...

BRAD HAYS

Charlie?

CHARLIE

Yeah?

BRAD HAYS

Thanks for stopping them.

CHARLIE

Sure, Brad.

Brad doesn't look at him. He just moves on. The door opens to the principal's office. The secretary waves Charlie in.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie sits across from Mr. Small. A beat. And then...

MR. SMALL

(peppy - for laughs)

So, I think we should get you a guidance counselor. How's that sound?

EXT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Charlie exits the building. Kids stare at him. Then, look away. Charlie feels very lost until he sees... Sam. She smiles. It brings him back instantly. And then, gently...

SAM

How you doin', Charlie?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I keep trying, but... I can't remember what happened.

Sam can see he's afraid of himself. She nods, sympathetic.

SAM

Do you want me to tell you?

CHARLIE

(scared)

Yeah.

SAM

You saved my brother. That's what happened.

CHARLIE

So, you're not scared of me?

SAM

No.

CHARLIE

And can we be friends again?

SAM

Of course.

She hugs him. The minute she touches him, the numb goes away. And he begins crying. She wipes his tears and puts her arm around his shoulder. They begin walking away.

SAM (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's be psychos together.

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Mary Elizabeth looks at us because she wants us to know...

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm dating Peter now.

She motions to **PETER**. College. Glasses. Good looking-ish.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

He's in college with Craig. He's opinionated, and we have intellectual debates. You were very sweet, but our relationship was too one-sided. I know this is hard for you.

CHARLIE

I'm just glad you're happy.

Mary Elizabeth smiles and joins Peter. Charlie looks at his friends putting on costumes. He's happy until he sees...

Craig. Staring at him. One look that says, "They forget. I don't." We hear the opening of "I Can Make You a Man."

INT. KING'S COURT MOVIE THEATER - LATER

Rocky Horror flickers on the screen. We see Tim Curry as the immortal Frank 'n Furter as the crowd yells.

CROWD

Describe the Two Coreys!

FRANK 'N FURTER

A weakling weighing 98 lbs will get sand in his face when kicked to the ground.

As the song continues, Charlie watches the stage show. After a beat, he turns to his left, and we reveal that sitting next to him, dressed in his street clothes, is...

Patrick

They both look at some guy from North Allegheny perform Frank 'n Furter. The guy is nothing compared to Patrick. Patrick looks sad with his bruises and bandages. Finally, quiet...

PATRICK

Hey... you wanna get out of here?

CHARLIE

Sure, Patrick.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Patrick offers Charlie some pot. Charlie waves his hand. "No, thanks." Then, the keys fumble around. Find the ignition. The engine starts. Patrick looks bleary-eyed.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The car pulls away. We see it recede into the distance and turn a corner. Out of sight. A quiet beat.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The image is as scattered as Patrick is right now. He runs through a red light. All manic.

PATRICK

I'll tell you something, Charlie. I feel good. You know what I mean? High school is over in five weeks. I'm going away to college. Things'll be better there. You know what I mean? They have to be.

CHARLIE

They will be.

PATRICK

You really think so?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

PATRICK

Thanks, Charlie.

Patrick hands Charlie a brown paper bag. Charlie looks in.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Maybe tomorrow I'll take you to this karaoke place downtown. And this club off the strip. They don't card. And the Shenley Park scene. You gotta see that one time.

CHARLIE

What do poppers do?

EXT. ST. CLAIR COUNTRY CLUB - 18TH GREEN - NIGHT

The car doors open. Charlie and Patrick stumble out, high as balls. Giggling. They walk from the parking lot to the 18th green of the golf course. Patrick opens a bottle of schnapps.

CHARLIE

Are you really not going to play Frank anymore?

PATRICK

Honestly, does it matter who plays Frank at the Kings Court in Pittsburgh?

CHARLIE

No. I guess not.

PATRICK

Oh, my God. My life is officially an after school special. Son of a bitch!

Charlie dies of laughter.

CHARLIE

It kind of is.

PATRICK

I would try to drink myself to death, but self-destruction only works if people are paying attention.

More laughter. They arrive on the green. They drink.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Hey, you hear the one about Lily Miller?

CHARLIE

I don't know.

PATRICK

I thought your brother would have told you. It's a classic.

CHARLIE

Maybe.

PATRICK

So, Lily comes here with this guy who was the lead in all the musicals. Parker. And this was going to be the night they were going to lose their virginity. She packed a picnic. Stole some wine. And they're just about to 'do it' when Parker realizes he forgot the condoms. They're both naked. They love each other. So, what do you think happened?

CHARLIE

I don't know.

PATRICK

They did it doggie-style with one of the sandwich bags!

They start laughing and screaming.

CHARLIE

NO! God!

PATRICK

Yes! Hell yes! They're engaged now! So, come on. Let's keep the train rolling. Suburban legends.

Patrick points to Charlie, who thinks...

CHARLIE

Uh. Well... there was a girl named Second Base Stace. She had breasts in the 4th grade--

PATRICK

Mosquito bites. Promising. Go.

CHARLIE

And she let some of the boys feel them.

PATRICK

That's it? That's your suburban legend? Did you at least cop a feel? Of course not. You probably wrote a poem about her self-esteem and listened to "Asleep."

CHARLIE

Fine! You tell one.

Charlie laughs and hands the bottle back. Patrick smiles.

PATRICK

Okay. Uh... there was this one guy. 3 dollar bill gay. Guy's father. Didn't

PATRICK (CONT'D)

know about his son. Comes down into the basement when he's supposed to be out of town. Catches his son with another boy. He starts beating him. Not a slap kind. A real kind. A belt kind. His boyfriend says, "Stop. You're killing him." And the son just yells "Get out." And finally... the boyfriend just did.

Patrick stops. Gripped by sad. He can't shake. He drinks.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

So, the guy - he has a girlfriend now, don't you know? He's cured. Because it's a choice, right? And in 3 months, she's going to think she's too fat because he won't touch her. And he's going to start drinking again. And I'd do anything to stop it, but I can't. Why can't you save anybody?

CHARLIE

I don't know.

The drunk is catching up. Patrick is getting sloppy.

PATRICK

Forget it. I'm free now, right? He's someone else's problem. I can date a non-closeted guy. I could meet the love of my life any minute now, right? Things'll be different. I mean, I'm free now, right? Did I say that already?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

PATRICK

I just need to meet a good guy.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

Patrick looks at him. Charlie has never seen him so vulnerable. Patrick pauses, then hugs him. And after a beat... Patrick kisses Charlie on the mouth. Unsure of what to do, Charlie lets it happen. His eyes open the whole time.

A moment, then Patrick starts to cry. Drunk, grieving cry. He can't help it. Can't stop it. Charlie holds his friend. And we leave them, the township lights small in the distance.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Patrick's car stops. Charlie gets out. He and Patrick exchange a sad smile. Charlie watches Patrick drive away.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie sits on his bed. He says nothing. He just stares at Patrick's SHITTY WOODEN CLOCK. Something bothering him.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Charlie stops at his locker. He starts to put away books. When suddenly, there is a commotion. Charlie turns. A lot of kids are rushing down the hall. One FRESHMAN GIRL approaches this other FRESHMAN GIRL.

FRESHMAN GIRL

Hey... did you hear what happened?

The image pushes in on Charlie. Terribly worried.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF SHOP CLASS - DAY

Charlie pushes through a flock of students, clogging the hallway. He's panicked. So worried that something happened to Patrick. His intense worry turns to shock when he sees...

All The Shop Tools Painted Pink

The shop teacher, Mr. Callahan, stands at the mixer, which holds a can of paint with prick punch holes. He is furious.

FRESHMAN GIRL

Last year, they filled the pool with grape kool aid. But this is the coolest senior prank ever.

As the students gawk, Charlie thinks to himself. And smiles.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Charlie approaches Patrick sitting with the gang.

CHARLIE

Patrick, did you do that to Mr. Callahan's shop class?

PATRICK

No. (beat) *Nothing* did it.

With that Patrick smiles shit-eating big.

INT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The three amigos come into the house, laughing.

PATRICK

I think I'll ask Alice to prom.

CHARLIE

Isn't she still dating that goth kid from Sadie's?

SAM

That ended when he asked to drink her blood. Serious.

PATRICK

That's so gay, I'm sorry.

SAM

Is Pony Tail Derek taking your sister?

CHARLIE

He broke up with her awhile ago, but then he changed his mind and asked her. I don't know if she'll go.

SAM'S MOM (O.S.)

Samantha?

SAM

One second, mom.

SAM'S MOM (O.S.)

Sam... now.

SAM

God, what did I do this time?

INT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - GAMES ROOM - AFTERNOON

Sam's mom holds up an envelope. We see the Nittany Lion logo on the return address.

SAM'S MOM

Penn State.

She hands Sam the envelope. Sam holds it. Pins and needles.

SAM

It's thin. That's bad, isn't it?

PATRICK

Just open it, Sam.

SAM

I did my best, mom.

SAM'S MOM

I know, baby. Just open it.

Sam opens the letter. She reads. Tears instantly well up in her eyes. She leaves the room and walks down the hall.

SAM'S MOM (CONT'D)

Hey, Sam. It's okay. You can transfer out of CCAC in a year. I know how hard you worked. Sam.

Sam's mom follows Sam to the kitchen and puts a comforting hand on the shoulder. Patrick picks up the letter.

CHARLIE

What's it say?

PATRICK

(reading)

"We will require you to take our summer session at the main campus immediately following your high school graduation."

CHARLIE

What does that mean?

PATRICK

She got in, Charlie.

They look back where Sam holds her mom and sobs with sweet relief and sweeter redemption. Charlie and Patrick cheer!

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Times Square has nothing on these seniors. Charlie watches the gang on their last day of high school ever. When the clock hits 10 seconds to 3pm, all the seniors chant...

SAM & COMPANY

10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2...

PATRICK

Oh, my God, get me the hell out of here!

They all begin to cheer. Sam and Patrick hug. Charlie and his sister even exchange a smile and hug.

ALL

1!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ST. CLAIR COUNTRY CLUB - 18TH GREEN - SUNSET

A brilliant sunset. We see them as Charlie sees them. In silhouette. Running up a hill. After the sun.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Dear Friend... three days ago, my sister and friends had their last day of high school ever. And I remember them running and happy. I still have another half week of school. I don't know who plans these things. Probably the person who named the cafeteria the nutrition center.

INT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - SUNSET

Prom night. The antique limo is so garish, it's great. Charlie snaps pictures with Sam's mom and Patrick's dad.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

The next day, they all went to prom. Mary Elizabeth took her boyfriend Peter.

Charlie takes a picture of Mary Elizabeth and Peter, arguing.

PETER

Just because you're talking the loudest doesn't mean you're winning the argument.

Mary Elizabeth laughs. The image turns to Alice and Patrick, who is Puttin' on the Ritz dashing in his Mod Suit Tux.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Patrick decided to take Alice.

PATRICK

You're so touching it tonight.

ALICE

Gross.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

And then there was Sam...

The image moves to the front of the house where Sam emerges. She wears a vintage flapper dress from the 20's. Radiant.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I've looked at her pictures a hundred times since that night. Not because she was beautiful. But because I like to see how happy she was before she knew.

Sam joins Craig wearing his tux. They kiss for the cameras.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

They were in a hotel suite after prom. I don't know who said what first, but they all got drunk, and the truth came out...

INT. LIMOUSINE - SUNSET

Champagne is opened. People laugh and cheer. Charlie keeps taking pictures. Sam snuggles up next to Craig.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Basically, Craig has been cheating on Sam the whole time. And when I say cheat, I don't mean he got drunk once and felt bad about it. There were several times. Drunk and sober. And I guess he never felt bad. At least that's what Patrick was able to figure out.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - SUNSET

The limo drops Charlie off in front of his house. As the limo pulls away, Sam blows him kisses like Marilyn Monroe.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I tried to call, but Patrick said Sam was feeling low, and they'd see me at graduation.

INT. DOORWAY TO BASEMENT - SUNSET

Charlie approaches the basement. He opens the door to reveal... Candace. In her pajamas. Not going to prom.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I know people might think that I'd be happy because maybe I could be with Sam someday without Craig there. But I don't know how you can be happy watching someone you love hurt that much.

They sit and watch a movie. Candace puts her head on his shoulder. Charlie turns his camera around on them. Snap!

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

We see the picture of Candace and Charlie. The envelope from the 24 photo place. All the pictures of Sam.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

So, I keep thinking about the happy girl in these pictures. And wondering if Sam will still look like that. I would give

CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

anything if she would. Even if it meant I never got to see her again. I would trade that. Just to see one last time that happy girl running after the sun.

Two photos. Sam happy at prom. Candace in her pajamas.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - AFTERNOON

The marching band plays "Pomp and Circumstance" as the seniors collect their diplomas. Candace. Mary Elizabeth. Alice. Patrick, who bows revealing the "Nothing Hates You" on top of his cap. And Sam, who has "Penn State or Bust" on top of her cap, but still looks sad. The tassels are moved to the other side. The caps are thrown in the air! Hooray!

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

The festive atmosphere continues. The crowd is excited, making graduation party plans. Charlie's mom and dad fawn over Candace with the video camera. Charlie turns to his brother, Chris, back from State. Chris has a beard!

DAD

(so proud)

2nd in your class. You should see the footage I got. You're a movie star.

Candace hugs her dad. Charlie turns to find Derek helping his mom into her Mercedes. He then sees Brad with his buddies and "girlfriend" Charlotte. They pose for their parents including BRAD'S FATHER, who smiles proudly.

Charlie then watches his friends with their parents. Patrick hugs his dad. Charlie finally finds... Sam. They see each other across the lot. She gives a weak smile. They approach each other. And without a word, they hug. Finally...

PATRICK

Come on. Group photo!

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm so tired of my picture being taken.

PATRICK

(vamping)

Me, too. It's so shallow.

The parents line up their cameras. "Cheese!" Snap.

INT. UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MORNING

The photo now hangs in Charlie's locker. Charlie puts his windbreaker away and closes his locker. The halls are loud.

INT. BILL'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

Bill walks through the class. The kids pass their copies of The Great Gatsby up to the front, where Bill collects them for next year's freshmen. The class is buzzing loud.

BILL

Please, pass up your copies of The Great Gatsby. And guys, I know it's the last day, but dull roar, huh? I want to thank you for a great year and wish you luck on your summer vacations. Now, who will be reading books for pleasure this summer?

Without thinking, Charlie raises his hand. He is the only one. He is now embarrassed. But Bill is proud.

BILL (CONT'D)

Very good, Charlie. Who else?

Bill returns to collecting books. Charlie looks at the Smart Ass Freshman who tormented him all year. After a beat...

SMART ASS FRESHMAN

Faggot.

INT. BILL'S CLASSROOM - LATER

The last of the kids exit the classroom. Charlie walks down the aisle and looks at Bill. For a moment, they're silent.

BILL

Last day.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

Charlie nods. Bill looks a little choked up.

BILL

So, I was thinking... next year, when I'm not your teacher anymore, maybe I could still give you books. You could write one of those books someday.

CHARLIE

(fragile belief)
Really?

BILL

Really.

Charlie is quiet. Then...

CHARLIE

You're the best teacher I ever had.

BILL

Thank you.

He gives Bill a quick, shy sideways hug and leaves. The next group of students file into class. Bill smiles to himself.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Charlie moves his tray down the lunch line. He turns and looks at his gang's table in the corner... empty.

Charlie sits in his seat. He is alone. He pushes his Tater Tots around the tray. He watches his old friend Susan bring her Junior Boyfriend a coca-cola. It feels so long ago.

INT. HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

The kids clear out their lockers by throwing their old papers on the ground. Charlie puts his in a backpack. He turns to a SKINNY KID at the locker next to his. He summons courage.

CHARLIE

Last day of school. Pretty crazy, huh?

SKINNY KID

Yeah.

CHARLIE

We never really talked. I'm Charlie.

Charlie extends his hand. The Skinny Kid doesn't take it.

SKINNY KID

I know.

With that, the Skinny Kid leaves. Charlie puts the pictures of graduation in his Trapper Keeper. He closes his locker.

The last image we see is Charlie walking over papers, tests, and knowledge thrown on the floor like trash. Papers fly in the air. Slow motion. Charlie looks up at the clock on the wall. 5 seconds to 3pm. It silently ticks. 5-4-3-2-1...

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DUSK

We move from Sam's typewriter on Charlie's desk to Charlie, dressed in his secret santa suit. He is still. Silent.

Lump in his throat. After a moment, he picks up a wrapped present from his bed and leaves the room. We stay in his empty room. A sense of something unsettling.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Dad... can I stay out late?

FATHER (O.S.)
What for?

CHARLIE (O.S.)
It's Sam's going away party. Please.

MOM (O.S.)
We're taking Chris shopping early tomorrow. So, bring your key.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Thanks, mom.

The image rests on Patrick's shitty wooden clock. It's 7 o'clock. Piano music begins. Quiet. Beautiful.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. GAMES ROOM - NIGHT

The grandfather clock reads 9:30pm. The piano continues. The room is festive as the kids sign each other's yearbooks. Charlie sees Sam smile at old photos. He misses her already.

CUT TO:

INT. GAMES ROOM - LATER

10:28pm. Charlie doesn't know where the time keeps going. The piano continues as he watches Sam open wrapping paper to reveal... a Penn State bra and panty set. The group cheers. Alice hands Sam an envelope. Sam opens it.

SAM
A New York subway map?

ALICE
End of September. You and Mary Elizabeth will stay in my dorms at NYU.

PATRICK
I'm proud you got in, Alice. Now, you can steal from the real Sak's 5th Avenue.

Charlie watches Sam pick up his present. She carefully peels the tape to reveal that Charlie gave her... all of his books. She holds *To Kill a Mockingbird*, then looks up at him. They lock eyes and do not speak. A tender moment. Broken by...

PATRICK (CONT'D)

That's beautiful, Charlie... but Sam doesn't really like to read.

Thank God for Patrick. Everyone laughs. The piano ends.

EXT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - LATER

The bug light is on at the front porch. Charlie watches Sam give hugs to Alice, who is trying to keep from crying.

SAM

Don't cry. You're coming here tomorrow morning to see me off, right?

MARY ELIZABETH

I can't even look at you, Sam. I'll see you tomorrow morning.

SAM

Okay. Goodnight everybody!

ALL

"We'll see you tomorrow morning."
"Goodnight, Sam." "'Night, Patrick."

They look at Patrick, who's passed out on the couch. With the Nittany Lions panty on his head. They smile and leave. Sam looks at Charlie, who's ready to say goodnight. Then...

SAM

Will you stay and help me pack?

CHARLIE

Sure.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The pictures are down. The dressers empty. The suitcase is open on the bed. Charlie watches Sam fold clothes and put them in her suitcase. He has promised himself he will not cry. Even when she packs away his Beatles 45 of "Something."

Instead, he looks at her and tries to remember every detail. Her long hair and green eyes and sound of her voice.

SAM

Thanks for staying up with me.

CHARLIE

Sure.

After a silence...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You know, my brother said Penn State has a restaurant called Ye Olde College Inn. You have to get a grilled stickie on your first night. It's a tradition.

SAM

That sounds like fun.

CHARLIE

Yeah. Pretty soon, you'll have a whole new group of friends, and you won't even think about this place.

SAM

Yes, I will.

Sam smiles. Charlie smiles back. Sam comes across photos from prom. Craig smiles from a week ago. Between the suitcase and trash can, she picks trash.

SAM (CONT'D)

I had lunch with Craig today.

CHARLIE

Yeah?

SAM

He told me I was right to break up with him. And he was sorry. But they were just words. And I'm driving away from Permanti's and talking to myself in the car... you ever do that?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

SAM

And I'm saying, "I'm going to work hard. I'm going to make a great life." But it didn't matter how many times I said it. I couldn't stop crying. And feeling so small. Just asking why.

CHARLIE

Why what?

SAM

Why do I and everyone I love pick people who treat us like we're nothing?

He says it sober. Without judgement.

CHARLIE

We accept the love we think we deserve.

Sam lets it sink in. Then, she turns to him.

SAM

Then, why didn't you ever ask me out?

Charlie didn't expect that. He is silent. Heart pounding.

SAM (CONT'D)

After the whole Craig thing happened.
Why didn't you?

CHARLIE

Because you were sad... and I, uh, I
didn't think you wanted that.

SAM

What did you want?

CHARLIE

I just want you to be happy.

SAM

Charlie, don't you get it? I can't feel
that. It's sweet and everything, but you
can't just sit there and put everybody's
lives ahead of yours and think that
counts as love. I don't want to be
somebody's crush. I want people to like
the real me, not what they think I am.

CHARLIE

I know who you are, Sam.

SAM

No, you don't.

Charlie gets quiet. Then, trying to keep his composure...

CHARLIE

I know I'm quiet, and uh, I should say
things more, but uh... the night I met
you... I - uh - I hadn't really talked to
anyone outside of my family in 5 months,
and you - uh - kind of saved my life. Do
you know what it's like to live in
silence for 5 months?

SAM

Yes. I do.

CHARLIE

I know. That's why I love you.

She starts to tear up. So, does he.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

And uh... if you knew the things that were in my head most of the time, you'd know what it really meant. How much we are alike. How much we've been through the same things. And you're not small. You're beautiful. And do you know what I thought when we went through the tunnel together?

SAM

What?

CHARLIE

Where have you been?

Something breaks in Sam. It hangs in the air for a brief moment. Charlie's heart pounds. He moves his hand across the bed. Fingertips. Both of them. They can't look at each other. They kiss. Soft at first, then passionate. They sit on the bed. Sam takes Charlie's hand under her shirt. Charlie feels her skin. It's so beautiful. It's all so beautiful. Sam reaches for Charlie's belt buckle. Unfastens it. And reaches into his pants. Touching him.

We see it in close. The hand in Charlie's pants. The image moves up the arm. To the shoulder. To the face. It is not Sam touching Charlie. But...

Aunt Helen

AUNT HELEN

Don't wake your sister.

BACK TO REALITY

It hits Charlie like freezing water. But the memory only registers like a small blink of his eye.

SAM

What's wrong, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

SAM

Did I do something? Oh, God. Do I look ugly?

CHARLIE

No. You look beautiful, Sam.

With that, he kisses her again. And they fall onto her bed and out of our sight.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

The clock reads 4:30am. We see Sam asleep in the bed. We move over to Charlie on the ledge of her bay window. He looks tired and numb. He watches Sam, peaceful. He goes over to the bed and lies on top of the covers. In his tennis shoes. He buries his face behind her neck and curls up next to her. Like a child would. And tries to sleep.

EXT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - MORNING

It's like a dream for Charlie. Thick sound. He watches Sam hug Alice and Mary Elizabeth goodbye. They're all crying.

SAM

Don't cry. You'll make me cry. I'll call all the time.

MARY ELIZABETH

Promise.

SAM

And we'll all see each other in New York.
Don't cry.

Charlie can't take it. He watches Patrick lock the U-Haul. Then, he turns back as Mary Elizabeth and Alice part ways. And Charlie locks eyes with... Sam.

They take a moment. And then they come together to hug. Sam whispers. He holds her tighter and whispers back. We don't hear them. It's private. She kisses his cheek and smiles.

Charlie watches Sam climb into her truck with Patrick. Sam's Mom and Patrick's Dad climb into the U-Haul. And everyone waves as the two cars begin to drive away.

MATCH CUT TO:

QUICK FLASH... Charlie waves goodbye to Michael after the football game as his mother takes him away.

QUICK FLASH... Aunt Helen's car drives away through the landing strip for Santa Claus.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. SAM AND PATRICK'S HOUSE - MORNING

Sam's truck turns at the stop sign. And disappears.

MARY ELIZABETH

Charlie, you want to come to Eat 'n Park?

Charlie turns. They're all crying. He's not. He's numb.

CHARLIE

No, thank you. I need to go home.

MARY ELIZABETH

You okay?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Just tired. Goodbye, guys.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING

Charlie walks down the street. Strangely calm. His eyes far away. As he thinks. As he remembers. The images and memories are short, violent bursts. If you've never had an anxiety attack, this is how it feels.

QUICK FLASH. Little Candace is asleep on the floor as Saturday Night Live plays on the television.

AUNT HELEN

Look, Charlie. She's fast asleep.

BACK TO PRESENT. Charlie walks toward us on the sidewalk. We see him through a long lens. His image fractures. We see him in different planes of the image. He's beginning to break apart. He begins to cry. And fight himself.

CHARLIE

(to himself)

Stop it.

QUICK FLASH. 7 candles on the cake. Little Charlie hears the bell. Ding dong. The door opens to reveal a policeman.

BACK TO PRESENT. We see Charlie fracturing. The pieces scattered. Out of focus. Lost.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Stop crying. It's not there.

QUICK FLASH. Little Charlie looks at his crying mother. The policeman kneels down and hands Charlie a wrapped present. It's a 45 record. "Something" by The Beatles.

BACK TO PRESENT. Charlie enters his house. He passes the photo wall on the stairs. He covers his face. See no evil.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Stop it, you baby.

QUICK FLASH. Charlie gives the 45 record of "Something" by The Beatles to Sam at Christmas.

BACK TO PRESENT. Charlie sits on his bed. He holds his head. Trying to stuff the pictures back in his brain. Hear no evil.

QUICK FLASH. 14 year old Charlie and Michael sit on the same bed one year earlier on a sleepover.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You stopped taking your pills?

MICHAEL

Why should I take them? My dad is the crazy one. Not me.

BACK TO PRESENT. Charlie's falling to pieces.

CHARLIE

Stop crying, you baby.

QUICK FLASH. Little Candace paints Little Charlie's nails. Then, she turns to Little Michael.

LITTLE CANDACE

Okay, Michael. Your turn.

QUICK FLASH. Derek hits Candace. Candace goes into the doctor's office of the abortion clinic. Charlie sees the little boy eating french fries with his mother in the mall.

BACK TO PRESENT. Charlie's mouth covered. Speak no evil.

CHARLIE

Stop crying, you pussy.

QUICK FLASH. More images of violence. Patrick hits Brad. And Charlie remembers what he's blacked out. We see him in the cafeteria. Terrifying. He breaks the Linebacker's nose. And bashes in the Nose Tackle's knee.

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

BACK TO PRESENT as Charlie looks at the refrigerator door. Breathing shallow. Beginning to have a full blown anxiety attack. Charlie turns from the refrigerator to the KNIVES.

QUICK FLASH. Charlie looks at his hand, covered in blood. Charlie walks up the stairs in Michael's house. He sees blood under the door. He opens the door.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

We see Candace hanging out with her girlfriends. Her friend's MOM comes onto the sun porch.

FRIEND'S MOM

Candace... your brother's on the phone.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Candace casually picks up the phone.

CANDACE

Hello.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Hey, Candace.

CANDACE

Charlie?

CHARLIE

Sam and Patrick left, and um, I just can't stop thinking something.

CANDACE

What?

CHARLIE

That the little boy eating french fries with his mom at the mall is going to grow up and hit you.

Candace looks like she got hit with ice water. She knows her brother. She knows this voice.

CANDACE

Oh, God.

CHARLIE

I've tried to stop thinking that, but I can't. And I don't know how to stop him.

Candace covers the phone.

CANDACE

Call the police and send them to my house.

CHARLIE

I should have told mom and dad. I could have made him stop hitting you. It's all my fault.

CANDACE

No, it's not. It's mine.

CHARLIE

Candace, I don't know where I am.

CANDACE

I know you don't, but I do. I know.
I'll find you.

CHARLIE

I'm crazy again.

CANDACE

You're not.

CHARLIE

I try not to be, but I am. I wasted your
time. I'm sorry I waste everyone's time.

CANDACE

You don't. Charlie, mom and dad will be
home with Chris any second.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, but I can't do this anymore.
Please, don't make me do this anymore.

CANDACE

Do what? Charlie...

Dial tone.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

We begin in the kitchen. Quiet. Still. We see the straight
A's on the refrigerator. And the photos of the family. And
quietly, we hear the sounds of Saturday Night Live on TV.

We move to the living room where 16 year old Charlie sits on
the sofa. His back to us. We can only see his hair. He's
watching the television. The television isn't on. The door
opens to reveal... The Policemen. Entering the house.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Aunt Helen is about to leave through the landing strip for
Santa Claus.

LITTLE CHARLIE

It's my birthday. Where are you going?

AUNT HELEN

I just got a new job, and I have some
money to spend on people I care about.

LITTLE CHARLIE

Am I people?

AUNT HELEN

Maybe.

LITTLE CHARLIE

Tell me where you're going. Pleeeeease.

AUNT HELEN

Okay. It'll be our little secret.

She bends down and whispers into his ear.

AUNT HELEN (CONT'D)

I'm going to buy your birthday present.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

CRASH! Aunt Helen's car skids in the snow and is leveled by a semi truck.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

We see Charlie's reflection in the window. The door opens slowly and his psychiatrist, Dr. Burton, enters. She finds him laying in bed. His back turned. He has been crying.

DR. BURTON

Charlie?

CHARLIE

Where am I?

DR. BURTON

You're in Mayview hospital.

This news hits Charlie hard. He begins to panic.

CHARLIE

You have to let me out. My dad can't afford it.

DR. BURTON

Don't worry about that. We'll let you out when you're ready.

CHARLIE

No. I saw them when I was little. I don't want to be a Mayview kid. Just tell me how to stop it.

DR. BURTON

Stop what?

CHARLIE

Seeing it. All their lives. All the time. Can you make me stop seeing it?

DR. BURTON

Seeing what, Charlie?

Charlie breaks.

CHARLIE

There is so much pain. And I don't know how to not notice it.

DR. BURTON

What's hurting you?

CHARLIE

No! Not me. You. Them. And everyone. It never stops. Do you understand?

DR. BURTON

You can see everyone all the time?

Charlie nods. Crying.

DR. BURTON (CONT'D)

What about your Aunt Helen?

Like cold water. What was tears is now confusion and soon to be anger. Dr. Burton is gentle to this cornered animal.

DR. BURTON (CONT'D)

Can you see her?

CHARLIE

Yes, she had a terrible life. But... I mean, what am I supposed to say to you now? You know... she was turning her life around and--

DR. BURTON

You said some things in your sleep.

CHARLIE

I don't care.

DR. BURTON

Charlie, if you want to get out of here, you have to--

CHARLIE

She was a fat fucking junkie. Is that what you want to hear?! She was fat and horrible and crazy and I killed her. And I don't care what you or anyone says. If

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

she bought me one present like everybody else, she wouldn't be dead! You want to help me? Make me not know that! Because I can't take it anymore. I don't want to kill myself! Please make me not crazy.

DR. BURTON

If you knew how many kids felt that way. If you saw what I've seen in my offices for 20 years, you'd know.

CHARLIE

Know what?

DR. BURTON

That you're not crazy.

Dr. Burton senses he desperately wants to believe her. So...

DR. BURTON (CONT'D)

Will you let me help you?

Charlie cries and nods.

DR. BURTON (CONT'D)

Okay. Now, tell me what was the last thing you saw before you blacked out?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

The sun creeps through the windows. We can hear birds outside. The intercom is quiet. Charlie is alone. He looks at Sam's typewriter. "Dear Friend" is already typed.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I was in the hospital for two months. I won't go into detail about all of it. Some things are very private. But I will say there were some very bad days. And some unexpected beautiful days.

He looks up and sees his mom and dad in the doorway. Charlie waves. Exhausted. Having been through so much.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

We see Charlie watching Dr. Burton speak to his parents.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

The worst day was the time my doctor told my mom and dad what happened.

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Charlie, Chris, and Candace sit on the old sofa near the snack machine. Just playing cards. Spending time.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

The best days were those when I could have visitors. My brother and sister always came for those until Chris had to go to training camp. He's going to be first string this year, which is great. And my sister told me she met a nice guy at her summer job. I don't know why, but that helped me more than anything.

Candace hands Charlie a new book... The Sun Also Rises. He reads the inscription. "Get well soon. Mr. Anderson."

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Charlie looks at the drawings on the wall. A house is nestled in green grass and a blue sky. A butterfly on a flower. A puppy dog. Fire trucks. All done in crayon.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

The time it started to feel like everything could make sense was the day I thought about Aunt Helen as a little kid like the ones my doctor talked about.

Charlie sees a LITTLE GIRL get a gift from a SOCIAL WORKER.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

My doctor said we can't choose where we can come from, but we can choose where we go from there. I asked her how she knew, and she said she knew because she was one of those kids.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

The suitcase is on the bed. Charlie's clothes are folded and put in by his mom. Charlie picks up his old typewriter.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I am not the way I am because of what happened. And I don't believe anyone is. I think we are what we do with it. I know it's not all the answers, but it was enough to start putting pieces together.

INT. ADMISSION DESK - AFTERNOON

His luggage is on the ground. His mother signs the release forms with Dr. Burton. Charlie looks down the hall at the social worker and the sweet little girl.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

When they released me, my mom took me to my favorite place. And it was so nice to sit with her.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Charlie sits with his mom, having fries.

CHARLIE

You want some?

MOTHER

It's only 2 points. Why not?

He smiles. She takes the food. In silence. And then...

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Remember when I used to take you here when you were little and had a fever?

Charlie smiles and nods. He looks up. Sees her crying. Then, takes her hand. One gesture. All forgiveness.

CHARLIE

It's okay, ma.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DUSK

Charlie's room looks different than he remembered. He puts down the typewriter. The shitty clock. The Sun Also Rises as the first book on his newly minted shelf of fame.

INT. CHARLIE'S DINING ROOM - DUSK

The family is around the table. Charlie looks at them all. He's so happy to be home. His dad reads the newspaper.

FATHER

God damn Penguins. I think they're allergic to God damn defense.

CHARLIE

What do the players call a puck again?

FATHER

A biscuit.

CANDACE

Don't you mean a "God damn biscuit?"

FATHER

You're cruisin' for a bruisin'.

They smile at the banter. Ding dong. Charlie's mom gets up.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DUSK

The door opens to reveal Patrick, smiling.

PATRICK

Can Charlie come out and play?

Charlie's mother smiles. Charlie smiles, too. Especially when he sees... Sam. Standing next to Patrick. Her hair a little different. Her eyes alive and happy.

INT. EAT 'N PARK - NIGHT

The gang of three sit at their booth. Sam and Patrick have their coffee. Charlie has his smiley cookie. Like always.

SAM

That first night, I had grilled stickies. It was so good. You have to visit in the Fall. We'll have some. Okay?

PATRICK

Sorry, Sam. Charlie has a breakdown scheduled for October.

Charlie laughs. Sam smiles. After a beat...

SAM

Well, can I tell you something? I've been away for two months. It's another world. And it gets better.

CHARLIE

Really?

SAM

Yeah. And did you hear? My roommate Katie has the best taste in music.

Sam puts a cassette tape down on the table.

CHARLIE

What's that?

SAM

I found the tunnel song.

Charlie looks at Sam and Patrick, who smile.

SAM (CONT'D)
Let's drive.

EXT. EAT 'N PARK - NIGHT

The three of them leave the restaurant and jump into Sam's truck. Patrick snaps on his shades like a bad ass.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I don't know if I will have the time to write anymore letters because I might be too busy trying to participate. So, if this does end up being the last letter, I just want you to know that I was in a bad place after Michael died, and I overheard a girl talk about you to her friend.

INT. SAM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

The three of them climb in. Patrick in the driver's seat. Charlie in the middle. Sam the passenger.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
And it helped me. Even if you didn't know what I was talking about. Or know someone who's gone through it. It made me not feel alone. Because...

EXT. HIGHWAY 279 NORTH - NIGHT

The three friends are flying down the highway in Sam's truck. The music blaring. The wind making their hair dance.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I know there are people who say all of these things don't happen. And there are people who forget what it's like to be 16 when they turn 17. I know these will all be stories someday. And our pictures will become old photographs. And we'll all become somebody's dad.

With Sam's help, Charlie climbs through the little window into the back of the truck. The tunnel approaching.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But right now, these moments are not stories. This is happening. I am here. And I am looking at her.

Charlie looks at Sam, moving her head to the music.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And she is so beautiful. And Patrick is so alive. And we are in the tunnel.

We see Charlie in profile. The night sky behind him until...

INT. FORT PITT TUNNEL - NIGHT

... they enter the tunnel, and we realize just how fast they're driving. The white tiles of the tunnel whiz by at blinding speed. A perfect night. A perfect drive. Flying.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

And as the tunnel song plays, I can see it. This one moment when the wind rushes by, and your hair becomes ocean waves. And you are listening to that song on that drive with the people you love most in this world.

As the ever elusive part of the tunnel song kicks in...

STARS

Live through this and you won't look back.

Charlie applauds. Sam cheers. Patrick smiles.

STARS (CONT'D)

Live through this and you won't look back.

Patrick absent-mindedly lip-synchs the words. Charlie holds Sam's hand to steady himself on the back of the truck.

STARS (CONT'D)

Live through this and you won't look back.

Charlie lets go of Sam's hand and stands in the back of the truck. The wind on his face. He is free.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

And in this moment, I swear we are infinite.

As the final chorus blasts over the speakers, Charlie holds his arms in the air. The weight of the world gone. If only for a moment. This one moment. As the truck flies out of the tunnel, and we finally see the city. A million lights like white stars in a glass dome. We are in Heaven.

FADE OUT.