

"SECOND TIME AROUND"

FADE IN

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY
IOWA CITY - SPRING - 1992

A writer's workshop class at the University of Iowa is in session. Outside the window, snow covers the campus by the river. The classroom is filled to about half capacity with a variety of students listening to Marshal, a 19 year old student, read the finale to his short story.

VIVIAN THORNBROOK, 28 year old, stunningly beautiful grad student sits at the desk in the front of the room dressed casually chic, wearing black rimmed glasses, and her hair tied back. She writes notes in the margins during Marshal's reading.

MARSHAL

There were more than enough
Demerol in the briefcase to last
us for the remainder of the trip
to Niagra Falls, approximately
1,723 miles away from Las Vegas,
but what were we to do in Niagra
Falls, post-Demerol? "You're
right." Dr. Malvolio said.

The SOUND of the TWISTING DOORKNOB interrupts the reading with the following CREAK of the DOOR opening. Walking in is CONNOR RANDALL, 21 year old student dressed in a mock casual chic. He tries not to make a distraction which is too late however, but he continues with his gentle steps. Marshal continues to read.

Connor takes a seat in the front row, off to the side close to the door and next to ALAN FELSON, a well dressed, clean cut student, organized at his desk and giving a leering look at Connor. Connor doesn't respond to Alan's look, but he feels it.

Connor opens his back pack, and takes out stapled copies of a short story. He also takes out a copy of Marshal's short story that he has covered with comments in red ink.

MARSHAL

I wasn't sure if he had meant to
say anything after that, or if I
was just accustomed to listening to
words follow 'you're right,' but as
Dr. Malvolio said nothing, I
expected nothing and we opened up
another bottle.

The class realizes the end of the story. Vivian gathers papers as Marshal takes a seat.

VIVIAN

Thank you, Marshal, for reading your short story.

(to the class room)

Comments?

The class room is silent. Connor looks over the class room, and see that it is silent. He begins to raise his hand. Vivian doesn't look at him, but looks over the rest of the class.

VIVIAN

Participation is part of your grade.

Suzy, a girl sitting next the window, who you can tell doesn't talk much, from her glasses, and the slouch in her posture, although upright, still slouches away. Her hand raises slowly from her elbow.

VIVIAN

Suzy.

SUZY

I liked it.

VIVIAN

What did I say first day of class?
You can't just say you liked it.
If you do, then say why?

SUZY

I liked it because...it was told very well.

FRED, sitting next to her, has been looking over the pages of the story wanting to say something, but unable to put a finger on it. As Suzy says these last words, he blurts out.

FRED

It was very descriptive.

VIVIAN

How so?

FRED

I don't know. I liked it, though.

VIVIAN

Someone else.

Vivian looks over the classroom, and looks over Connor, who is sitting in the front row, with his hand raised and looking back

over the classroom. He has something to say, but you can tell that he doesn't want to take talk time away from anyone else.

VIVIAN

Connor.

CONNOR

Sorry, I wasn't here to hear you read it, but I read it the other night and I understand the open-endedness of it, but I wasn't sure if I believed these characters. There was enough of them described in how they dressed and what clothes they wore, but I wasn't convinced on how they thought. As an artistic choice and in real life you can never understand any person, especially one on drugs, but I don't think that's what you wanted to do in this story. From the last line, "...I didn't know if I was just accustomed to listening to words follow 'you're right,' but as Dr. Malvolio, said nothing, I expected nothing..." I think this is a great start to open the story up and give it another layer with more of what fascinations these characters have on Demerol, although I think Dexidrene is the drug these characters are on, and dive into how they habitat Vegas. And the locations in Vegas.

(pause)

You ever been there?

He looks to Marshal, who is penning notes on his paper and doesn't want to look at Connor, but he shakes his head "no."

CONNOR

Maybe you could iron out landmarks with a map, or a travel guide, but I think it has potential.

VIVIAN

Connor, because you weren't here, we had to skip you, but the others should have their written critiques for you. We can spend the last few minutes in discussion.

CONNOR

Actually, I wrote something new.
Could I read it instead?

VIVIAN

Wouldn't you like a few minutes of
class discussion?

Connor rolls his eyes at the notion..

CONNOR

No, I can read their critiques.

VIVIAN

We'll run out of time.

CONNOR

It's only two pages.

ALAN

Whoah, an epic.

Connor hands out copies of his new story, to the students, who flip through the two doubled-spaced pages. Once every one has a copy, Connor moves to the front of the room and begins to read the story.

CONNOR

"Insightful," by Connor Randall.

The ornaments decorated the mission walls on the south end, with a fervor and gentle hostility that you couldn't take your eyes away from the figurines and alabaster mosaics. A collection of stones in the different shades of yellow caught his eye from what was in the greater picture a bull's head. The yellow stones, didn't fit right to him. He stared into them and saw what would come to be the image of paint revolving when it's stirred.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FLEA MARKET - LAST WEEKEND

Establishing shot of the Mission Flea Market on an afternoon crowded with people passing by the assortment of antique stands and objects trying to be sold as antiques.

The crowds of people move at a slow pace browsing, but there is a man stopped wearing sunglasses and standing, transfixed on a object. A woman looking away at something else, stands next to him.

CU of Connor gazing into the camera, removes his sunglasses.

The Mosaic as described by Connor's narration in the classroom with the shades of yellow.

The woman next to Connor turns and reveals the face of Vivian, with her hair tied back, also wearing sunglasses. She notices Connor is a daze.

CU of the grooves between the stones in the Mosaic.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - PRESENT

Connor continues to read to the class.

CONNOR

The layers of the golden color came alive in his mind, so vivid that he could feel this color being emitted as it painted the interior of his mind. As he thought of this, the sun itself was uncovered by a passing cloud and heated his face. He wondered if he was in a dream and if when he awoke, could he see the vibrance from this mental shade of yellow once again in real life?

Vivian follows along on the page but stops and leans back in her chair, removing her black rimmed glasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FLEA MARKET - LAST WEEKEND

Connor's voice is the only one heard, although we see the expressions of Connor and Vivian last weekend, representing the man and woman in the story. As Connor narrates the actions of the characters, Connor and Vivian from last weekend enact them.

CONNOR (V.O.)

"Wake up," she said nudging her arm against his ribs. "What are you thinking about?"

"I was thinking if I could imagine the color of the sun without ever seeing yellow before?" he asked her.

"What?" she said puzzled.

He tried to quickly explain to her, without having her dismiss it so quickly. "Think of it like this. Can you describe anything without sensing it first?"

She thinks about it.

He continues to try and validate the point. "If you've never ever been cut before, can you describe what a wound feels like?"

She thinks and this last question makes her shrug her shoulders.

"I guess not," she replied.

"You'd never be able to describe what it feels like to be kissed, if you haven't matched lips," he added.

She put her arms around his head and pulled him closer.

"You're rather insightful today."

The students followed along and in the silence, they look to the back of the second page to see if there's more. Class time's up.

Fred, who has his back pack packed and ready to go, places critiques on Marshal's and Connor's desk, leading the way as other students quickly flee. Connor walks back to his desk and gathers his things.

ALAN

Needs to be longer. Two pages won't sell.

Alan exits and so does everyone else. Connor and Vivian are left gathering their things, but both have sort of made it that way. Connor looks out of the door and sees everyone is out of sight and approaches Vivian's desk.

VIVIAN
You were rather late today.

CONNOR
Did I miss some in depth class
discussion?

VIVIAN
It doesn't make you look good,
showing up so late.

CONNOR
(imitating David
Lee Roth)
The only reason I showed up because
my T.A. wants to see me after school.
I got it bad, I'm hot for teacher.

VIVIAN
Don't bring up Van Halen, I was
eighteen when that song came out.

CONNOR
I was thirteen.

VIVIAN
Stop talking. I was thirteen when
London Calling came out.

CONNOR
I was thirteen when Combat Rock
came out.

VIVIAN
That doesn't make a difference.

CONNOR
How so?

VIVIAN
You missed the Clash when they were
'The Clash.'

CONNOR
I love the Clash.

VIVIAN
But you don't understand the Clash.

CONNOR
I understand you.

VIVIAN
You'd like to think so.

They inch closer together about to kiss.

CONNOR
Still on for later tonight?

VIVIAN
I can't. My old teacher is speaking here tonight.

CONNOR
Is he speaking before Grey Fuller?

VIVIAN
He is Grey Fuller.

CONNOR
(impressed)
Grey Fuller, Grey Fuller?

VIVIAN
The successful novelist, Rhodes Scholar, two time Pulitzer Prize winner...

CONNOR
Alright, I get the picture. He was your teacher?

VIVIAN
Yes. If you want to come, I'm not stopping you.

CONNOR
I don't like readings. It's just a bunch of people staring in awe of someone who's written something that the audience believes is amazing. Even if the work is good, they have no idea why it's good.

VIVIAN
Grey isn't like that.

CONNOR
(imitating a fan)
"I liked your book. Good description."

VIVIAN
You're just jealous.

CONNOR
Although, I could get over that.

VIVIAN
Then come.

Pause.

CONNOR
But we can't come together.

VIVIAN
Don't make this weird.

CONNOR
I'm not making this weird.

They look at each other and close in for a sweet kiss. They get close. As their gentle faces lean toward each other for a slight apology for the little argument, their lips touch and the door opens.

Marshal enters the room, not expecting anyone to be present and is surprised, just as Vivian and Connor have parted away and overreact with looks away, making the situation seem obvious, but they do their best. Connor breaks the silence with conference conversation.

CONNOR
(to Vivian)
You thought my piece was too Chekhov?

Marshal walks over to the side of the room where his seat was and picks up a organizer from under the seat.

VIVIAN
It's almost as if you're Chekhov
meditating on Chekhov. There's more
that you want to say.

Vivian watches Marshal and tries to judge what he knows or thinks he saw. She turns her head.

Connor watches Marshal and then continues.

CONNOR
One can still have a pretty decent
career messing up Chekhov.

Marshal finds his book and looks at Connor and Vivian, who looks away and they have steps a few strides apart from each other to

not lead on to anything. Marshal, not wanting to interrupt, tip toes toward the door, walking in between Connor and Vivian on his way out. The door closes once again.

VIVIAN
(to Connor)
Don't write about our weekends.

CONNOR
Nobody understood that.

VIVIAN
(getting upset)
It's easy for you to say. You're a bright, young male writer. You can do those sort of things.

CONNOR
Alright, I won't.

VIVIAN
Just one voice and.

CONNOR
I won't, I promise.

EXT. CAMPUS SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Vivian and Connor walk along the Iowa River, dressed in their winter coats. They walk with a pending silence in stride between them.

VIVIAN
So, are you going to come to the reading tonight?

CONNOR
Nah.

VIVIAN
It's not like we can't ever be at the same place.

Connor keeps walking.

VIVIAN
You could learn something from Fuller.

CONNOR
Just don't fall in love with him before the semester's over.

Vivian and Connor arrive at a bridge. She continues along the river and he descends upon the bridge as the wind picks up.

CUT TO:

CREDIT SEQUENCE:

"SECOND TIME AROUND"

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

LOS ANGELES - FALL - PRESENT DAY - 2002

Inside the large dining area of the Calabasas Country Inn, a decorated wedding reception is taking place. We can see this from the light inside reflecting out through a window onto the balcony, which is dimly lit. From the outside, the curtains reveal night has set in and a silhouette from a FIGURE has his back to us. Standing outside of the ballroom, the figure holds a drink in one hand and a lit cigarette in his other. We don't get a clear look at his face, but we can see that he is wearing a tuxedo, undone at the collar.

The way the figure looks in, is one of anxiousness, but trying to not appear as though one were anxious. The tuxedo-ed figure scans the different areas of the room.

From the inside, the shadowed figure's head is unnoticed by anyone else and lost in the overall picture of the party.

The figure finishes his drink and flings the ice from the glass over the balcony into a well decorated courtyard, but empty with shadows encompassing around the light shining from lampposts.

Looking in for someone, he sees the BRIDE and GROOM dancing in a circle on the dancefloor, as well as people broken into different groups in the corners of the room and at the tables, but none deserve any more attention than a glance.

He takes a drag off his cigarette and attempts to drink again from his glass, but realises that it is empty. OFFSCREEN, a WOMEN'S LAUGH is heard, and upon hearing this, the Figure's head comes out of the shadows to reveal CONNOR Randall's face, although ten years older, he looks a bit worse.

The LAUGH is from a WOMAN who is flirting and kissing with a MAN, now that they are out on the seemingly empty balcony.

Connor's eager look shifts to deadpan as the Woman and Man weren't who he was looking for. With a sigh, Connor shrugs his shoulders and finishes off his cigarette, dropping it into the ashtray littered with empty glasses.

Placing his glass among the glasses in the ashtray, he looks back into the ballroom and the sea of the crowd splits and off in the distance, VIVIAN THORNBROOK, the now 38 year old journalist for the literary review, Authority, and still stunningly beautiful. She is arm and arm with GREY FULLER, the 50 year old esteemed novelist, polished and neatly dressed.

Connor stares inside with a dejected expression.

Vivian, although too far away to be heard, laughs with her head falling back with joy.

Connor takes a deep breath and begins his descent toward the ballroom's entrance, but as he gets closer to the door, his steps become less and less empowered. The MUSIC becomes louder from inside and Connor stops to hide next to the curtains outside the door.

Leaning against the wall, he HEARS the VOICES of JURY and TRIAL, mid 40's, the harsh and bitter literary critics for Authority.

Connor can't help but hear them their exaggerated laughs and fruitful denouncements of accomplished authors as Jury and Trial walk over without ever seeing Connor.

JURY

Chandler was at best a has been.

TRIAL

Carver was a has been, Chandler was a hack.

JURY

Carver was....I don't know what.

TRIAL

Carver didn't know what Carver was.

A beat.

JURY

Did you see Grey Fuller?

TRIAL

He was great, but key word is "was."
I hear he's dying.

JURY

No, he's writing a "How to Write Fiction" Book. If he were writing his memoirs, he'd be dying.

TRIAL

Who's that girl in the red dress
he's with?

JURY

Vivian Thornbrook. She does the
author interviews and biographies
for Authority.

TRIAL

(unimpressed)

Oh, right. The press pieces.

JURY

She dabbles in nonfiction as well.

TRIAL

Where's the fun in that?

JURY

How about Connor Randall?

TRIAL

I think he left already. He looked
like been to hell.

JURY

Like he'd been sitting through one
of his own readings. It's a good
thing he only writes short stories.
Anything longer would be a feat of
a decathlete.

TRIAL

I hear he is writing a novel.

JURY

Please. What's he got himself
into that for? You can fake short
stories, but you can't fake a novel,
or what would probably just be fifty
pages for him.

TRIAL

Twenty-five.

They laugh a bit with their snooty tones. Connor's face rises
from the shadows, but stands back.

JURY

What was his collection called?

TRIAL
(sarcastic intrigue)
The sappy one?

JURY
(laughs)
The one that was such a break from
the others.

Connor, looks away, a bit dejected, stares at the courtyard for a beat, and begins to walk to the balcony entrance to the ballroom, where the sounds of MUSIC, CROWD NOISE, are louder and Connor, reluctant in his stride, enters the ballroom.

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stopping for a second, he looks over at Vivian and Grey, as the sea of people, closes in and obstructs the view of them. Connor, walks the opposite direction, toward the Bride and Groom. The Groom is Alan Felson, 31 year old literary agent of Connor's and a number of other clients. Alan and Connor were childhood friends, who have remained friends, but are opposite in the way they live their lives.

Alan and his bride are preparing for a picture taken with family. Alan's aunt, a spry old woman has her arm around her nephew. Alan's uncle is operating the camera. Connor stops by to shake hands at an arm's length.

CONNOR
Congratulations, Alan.

ALAN
You're not leaving, are you? We
haven't had a chance to talk yet.

CONNOR
I'll talk to you later.

ALAN
Come on.

CONNOR
I gotta run.

His uncle is all set to take the picture as the ready light flashes on the camera.

ALAN
(serious)
Get in the picture.

Connor turns and the picture is a bit chaotic, but a reception picture nonetheless.

Alan turns to his new bride and kisses her, and then grabs two glasses of champagne off of a table, handing one to Connor and pulling him along.

INT. BALLROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alan and Connor sitting at a table on the outskirts of the ballroom. Connor is silent.

ALAN

What's going on?

CONNOR

Nothing. I ran out of things to tell you at Wedding #1.

Beat.

ALAN

It's because she's with Grey.

CONNOR

(ambivalent)

She is?

ALAN

I know you too well. There's no reason she shouldn't want to be with an accomplished writer.

CONNOR

Did you have to invite them?

ALAN

I represent them as well.

A beat.

ALAN

How's the novel?

Connor doesn't answer.

ALAN

Is it good?

CONNOR

It's a work in progress.

ALAN

The publishers aren't footing you an advance for some experiment. They want something that will sell. You're short stories are great, but in ten years you've never written anything longer than six pages.

CONNOR

(correcting)

Never sold anything longer than six pages.

ALAN

So what's that mean?

CONNOR

I've written pieces longer than six pages.

ALAN

Where are they? I'm sure, they'd sell.

CONNOR

It's not about money.

ALAN

It better be, at some point.

(pause)

Don't take it personally, but this artistic integrity wall is just a weak excuse for denying reality. I've known you too long for that.

Connor drinks his champagne.

ALAN

If it's not about money, you can talk to the publishers about the novel, because I don't want to keep them off your back.

CONNOR

I hear you.

ALAN

They want at least two hundred pages, and they want it soon. The advance isn't guaranteed forever you know.

CONNOR

I'm on it.

ALAN

And it wouldn't hurt if you got over her too?

CONNOR

I am.

ALAN

(laughs)

Yeah.

Walking over to Alan and Connor is DENISE, Alan's six year old daughter from his first marriage.

DENISE

Daddy, is this almost over?

ALAN

Don't you want to say hello to Uncle Connor?

DENISE

He comes over all the time.

Alan gives her a parental look.

DENISE

(labored)

Hello, Connor.

CONNOR

(mocking her)

Hello, Denise.

ALAN

(to Denise)

You're going to stay with Connor when me and your step-mommy go on our honeymoon.

DENISE

Don't remind me. All he does is sit at a computer, reading the same books over and over. I don't even think he's reading. He just stares at pages.

ALAN

It's not nice to stare at people, when they're working.

DENISE
There's nothing else to do. He
doesn't even have a television.

ALAN
Television is bad for you. You can
read--

DENISE
Okay, I get it.

Alan's name is called out over the crowd and he is waved over.

ALAN
(to Connor)
Remember. Get over it.

Connor shakes his head at Alan.

DENISE
Are you still wrapped up on that
girl?

CONNOR
She's a woman.

Denise rolls her eyes.

Connor stares out at the sea of people and sees Vivian again,
standing next to Grey. He has an idea.

CONNOR
Denise, want to do me a favor and
I'll get you a t.v. to watch all
you want next week?

Denise eyes light up to the notion of watching t.v.

DENISE
I'm listening.

CONNOR
(whispering)
Do you see that woman in the red
dress?

INT. BALLROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Vivian and Grey are carrying on a conversation with a circle of
people, well dressed and distinguished looking members of the
literary community. Denise walks up to Vivian and taps at her

arm. Vivian, after a beat, notices Denise and smiles at her.

VIVIAN

Hello.

DENISE

I have a message for you.

VIVIAN

What's the message?

DENISE

You have to come with me.

VIVIAN

Who's it from?

DENISE

You'll find out.

VIVIAN

You can't tell me?

DENISE

Do you want to hear it, or not?

Vivian is puzzled by Denise's messengers skills, but accepts the invitation. Denise leads the way as Vivian follows and then Grey begins to follow as well. Denise stops and looks at Grey.

DENISE

He can't come.

VIVIAN

Why not?

DENISE

The message isn't for him.

Vivian smiles and shrugs her shoulders at Grey, who smiles at being rejected by the little girl.

GREY

I'll wait here.

Vivian nods and follows Denise who sighs at the work she's had to put into getting Vivian to follow her. Denise walks to the entrance of the balcony and stops. Vivian stops and looks at her.

VIVIAN

What's the message, sweetie?

Denise points out to the balcony.

DENISE
Out there.

VIVIAN
What's out there?

DENISE
The person with the message.

VIVIAN
Who?

Denise sighs one last time, tired of playing this game. She signals for Vivian to come closer to listen to her.

DENISE
Relay a message for me.

VIVIAN
(confused)
Okay?

DENISE
Tell Connor, next time, a t.v.
won't be enough.

VIVIAN
(realizing)
I will.

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Vivian slowly walks out to the railing of the balcony where a champagne glass rests on the railing of the balcony. She peers over the courtyard and into the corners of the shadows. She hears the man and woman laughing as they flirt at kiss off in the shadows down the way.

As she looks down at the couple, Connor gently steps up behind her and nestles his chin into the side of her neck. Feeling Connor's breath her neck, her head slightly twists back and she falls into him. She turns around and looks into the ballroom, and then leads Connor, pushing him against the outside wall of the ballroom out of view. Their mouths hover next to each other before Vivian pulls away.

VIVIAN
You had to bribe a little girl?

CONNOR
You looked busy. Let's get out of
here.

VIVIAN
I can't.

Connor continues to massage her arms as Vivian relaxes.

CONNOR
(referring to
their affair)
How serious is this?

VIVIAN
Is it you or me telling the story?

CONNOR
How about you.

Vivian just smiles not disclosing an answer.

CONNOR
How serious are you and Grey.

VIVIAN
I'm happy with him.

CONNOR
What about me?

She smirks and moans a little at his touch.

CONNOR
I've been writing.

VIVIAN
Everyone's waiting for the novel.

CONNOR
Who's everyone?

VIVIAN
Everyone. When will it be done?

CONNOR
When it's done.

Connor and Vivian look at each other, and then...

GREY (O.S.)
Vivian?

A bit startled, Vivian and Connor start up anonymous small talk with Connor. Grey is in the doorway.

VIVIAN
I think that those are good ideas,
but you might want to raise the
conflict and add layers to the
relationships sooner.

GREY
Vivian.

VIVIAN
(turning)
Yes, Grey. Hello.

Grey, looking at Vivian and at Connor, whom he hasn't met before.

GREY
(referring to Connor)
Is this the message?

VIVIAN
No. This is Connor Randall. He is
one of Alan's best young talents.
He's a prolific short story writer.

GREY
Grey Fuller.

Grey and Connor shake hands. Connor gives him a firm hand shake and then walks a few steps to the railing to pick up the glass of champagne.

GREY
Do you two know each other?

CONNOR
She taught my workshop class back
at the University of Iowa. I was
just asking her a few questions on
a storyline.

Beat.

VIVIAN
Grey, you've written a book on
fiction writing.

GREY

A "How to." After you write so many novels, it just becomes a formula. I thought I'd share it.

VIVIAN

This is going to be Connor's first novel.

GREY

First is the toughest. You can't seem to get over the pretensions inside of you. No one knows the mental endurance it takes and give up before they've really even started.

CONNOR

It's coming along fine.

A beat.

GREY

You wrote that collection, Chestertons, right?

CONNOR

Chesterfield Looking Glass.

GREY

Kind of cryptic.

CONNOR

A little.

GREY

There's a lot you could emphasize with one paragraph of your story.

CONNOR

(harsh)

I know what I can and can't do.

VIVIAN

He's just trying to offer advice.

GREY

Your transition from short stories to novels is going to need a stylistic advance. If you want, I could forward you a copy of my book.

CONNOR

No thanks. Don't need it.

(shifting subjects)

I'm doing a reading at Woodbury in
a few weeks.

Grey yawns and takes a deep breath, where upon exhaling, he
COUGHS violently and has to stifle the cough in his chest with
great pain.

GREY

The air in this city just doesn't
want to leave you alone.

Grey coughs again.

CONNOR

That's what gives it its charm.

VIVIAN

Grey, darling, we must be going.
It was nice to see you again Connor.

CONNOR

It's mutual.

Vivian and Grey exeunt, arm in arm, Grey still nursing his
breaths. Connor doesn't turn to watch them as they leave, and
takes out a cigarette instead, lighting it as he stands at the
railing. He smolders in a thought as he looks out over the
barren courtyard.

Tip toeing over, Jury and Trial couldn't help but watch from
afar. They try to act innocently.

JURY

Connor Randall. How are you?

TRIAL

Was that Grey Fuller?

Connor doesn't respond.

TRIAL

I'm interested what do you think of
his work. I've been thinking of
doing a reflective piece on where
writing has turned in the past
twenty five years. His novel,
Courage Relentless, changed what
most people think when they read the
"I" narrator.

CONNOR

Did you ask "most people," or did you just assume what they think?

JURY

It's what they should think. His first novel was such a fantastic piece of work. I'm wondering how a writer can make such a fine piece of literature and then turn to such labored works afterwards.

CONNOR

You've never written.

TRIAL

He's the editor for the esteemed Authority.

CONNOR

Esteemed, huh?

(pause)

I'm not talking about a collection of demonstrative words thrown into sentences used in an act of masturbation in hopes to get off by throwing a disapproving eye at a piece of work that they have no comprehension of how it comes to be. Have you ever written anything?

JURY

No.

CONNOR

Then you wouldn't know that the first thing a writer doesn't do is 'make.' They 'describe,' and if you haven't even walked that path to know how long of a road it is to achieve something half as great as Courage Relentless, then you have no soap box to stand on.

(pause)

And of his work since, if you dismiss it as labored, then it just shows how far off you think you are in life and where you actually are.

(pause)

Is he that good? He's better.

Jury and Trial exeunt.

CONNOR

And I could never be as good.

Connor finishes the champagne in his glass and after a beat, throws the glass out into the emptiness. As one would likely hear a crash or thud, the SOUND and IMAGE BRIDGE instead to...

ECU of ICE CUBES CLINKING against the inside of a GLASS.

INT. CONNOR'S APT. - LATER THAT NIGHT

Connor pouring what's left of a pint of Jim Beam over the ice cubes. He is still smoking a cigarette. He sits down in a chair in the living room. His place is cluttered. Newspapers litter the coffee table and books lie half opened on the couch and pieces of paper with notes on them are scattered about. At his desk, handwritten notes and printed drafts covered with red pen written notes cover where the keyboard would be in front of the monitor.

Connor reads different passages from different books, and his leg shakes from edginess to think of an idea. He turns to a smaller notebook kept apart from the rest, where he jots down thoughts and phrases of things he'd like to remember. He takes the little note book and reads some of the notes and then takes the pen and jots down: Silencing silences and continues to write a thought.

After a few lines he stops writing, and is not pleased with what he wrote. He opens his drawer and takes out a PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLE.

He pour the pills into the palm of his hand. There are BLUE PILLS and RED PILLS.

CONNOR

Blue is calm, red is coma.

He takes one red and one blue pill as he sits on the couch. Trying to get comfortable, he throws the pills in his mouth, washes them down with Jim Beam and shuts his eyes on the couch. His body goes limp.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

As part of a creative workshop, DARRYL and ANNA, actors 30 years old each, read the dialogue from a piece as ED, mid-40's, reads the prose from the piece being acted out as a cold read. Darryl and Anna sit across from each other following along and feeling the emotional tension of the scene.

ED (O.S.)

Never once was he afraid to saying the words of his confession of love to this woman, but he feared more than again what he had just said, but didn't want to let on. He had given himself up and was at her mercy. Believing her to be kind, she was still human and would, in her best interests, hold back from saying what she knew he had wanted her to say. At a time in her past, she had thought of love for him and wasn't adverse to it, but it wasn't something she could consider. His desperation was not hers and she wasn't sure if she wanted to share his romanticism.

ANNA

"What do you want me to say?"

ED

He was praying for words in the silence, but soon prayed for silence with her coming words. A silence or mere notion to forget what had been said, but he knew that wouldn't happen.

ANNA

"I understand all the time we spend together, but I think that you..."

DARRYL

"You don't have to say anything more. It was stupid to say."

ANNA

"It's not stupid to say. It's a nice thing to hear, but I think this. . ."

DARRYL

"Isn't the right time."

ANNA

"It's not the right time."

And end scene. The players flip through the remainder of the pages and get up from the stage.

ED

Great stuff, Connor. What's next?

Connor sits in the front row, with a copy of the manuscript, covered in notes, that he is still completing an idea on the opposite side of the page.

CONNOR

We'll see.

Ed checks his watch and notes how late it is.

ED

Alright everyone, see you next week.

The theater has about fifteen actors, directors and writers of all backgrounds in the workshop. They gather their things together. Darryl throws the strap of his duffle bag over his head and walks over to Connor.

DARRYL

Connor, this chapter's like those short stories.

Connor is thinking and gets nervous when he speaks about his work. He doesn't say anything and kneels down to put his notebook in his worn leather briefcase.

As he thinks of a response, he notices someone else looking at him. A few rows back, he sees Kate Molson, a twenty-one year old senior at Woodbury College, staring at him. Slightly embarrassed that he catches her staring, she quickly gets her things and leaves.

DARRYL

This guy is just like the other guy. Caught up over the woman he can't have and can't seem to let go.

CONNOR

(slightly annoyed)

What of it?

DARRYL

I'm just trying to get at the character.

CONNOR

(conceding)

All inspiration comes from the same well.

DARRYL

I know this is for a novel, but say someday you sell it and it becomes a movie, would you have a say in who plays the lead?

CONNOR

You should stick to theatre.

DARRYL

Plays aren't covering rent. Can you spot me for coffee tonight?

CONNOR

I can't make it this week. I've got to babysit a friend's kid.

DARRYL

Alright. And next time around, if you want to give me pages a few days earlier, I can understand the character better.

CONNOR

Next time.

CUT TO:

CU of 1972 Sears 13" Black and White television screen flipping through the same four channels.

INT. CONNOR'S APT - LATER

Denise, sitting at an arm's length from the television adjusts the rabbit ears to fix the picture, and turns the knob for a new station. She squints to make out the picture.

The door unlocks and Connor walks in to see Denise having to work to watch t.v.

CONNOR

Hello, Denise.

DENISE

Where did you get this?

CONNOR

I got it for free.

DENISE

Out of the trash?

CONNOR
You wanted a t.v.

DENISE
I wanted cable.

CONNOR
Specifics, Denise. Did you eat?

No answer.

CONNOR
Hey, sore eyes.

DENISE
Huh?

CONNOR
Did you eat?

Denise shakes her head, without turning her eyes from the t.v.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Connor and Denise sitting at the table, eating microwavable dinners. Denise is watching the t.v. from afar. Connor studies his plate, and gets up to get another drink. He walks to the cupboard.

He pauses for a second and looks back at Denise watching t.v. He opens the cupboard and pours himself a shot of Jack Daniels into his glass.

As he walks back to the table, he notices the answering machine light blinking.

CONNOR
Did someone call?

DENISE
Yeah, someone called.

CONNOR
Who?

DENISE
Some girl.

Connor presses the button on the answering machine and Vivian's voice is heard.

VIVIAN
(answering machine)
"Connie, hi. I know you won't be
home 'til late, but call me when
you get in."

Connor takes the phone and walks out of the kitchen into the
bedroom, dialing the phone number on the way.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor speaks to Vivian on the other end.

CONNOR
Vivian. It's me. I just got your
message. I was at workshop tonight.
Uh-huh. No, I completely understand.
Of course, I'm here. Tonight? Sure,
I'll wait up.

Connor hangs up the phone and takes a deep breath. His posture
lightens up. He walks back into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Connor starts to straighten up the place a bit.

CONNOR
Alright, time for bed.

DENISE
Nope, I don't think so.

CONNOR
Well, I do think so.

DENISE
You said I could watch as much t.v.
as I wanted. Well, I still want
to watch t.v.

Connor's eyes roll.

DENISE
Specifics, Connie. Specifics.

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - LATER

Opening the door, Connor sees Vivian a bit distraught, as if
she's been doing a lot of thinking. Connor ushers her into the
apartment which he straightened up a bit. The clutter is off
the coffee table and Denise is nowhere to be seen.

The bedroom door is closed and the faint light of t.v. glows flickers from underneath the door and the FAINT SHOUTING from a COP SHOW is heard from behind the door.

Vivian takes a seat at the couch.

VIVIAN
I hope it's not a bad time.

CONNOR
No, not at all.

VIVIAN
Is someone else here?

CONNOR
I'm babysitting Alan's kid while he's on his honeymoon. Would you like something to drink?

VIVIAN
No thanks. That's the last thing I need.

A beat. Vivian and Connor sit at the couch in an awkward silence.

VIVIAN
The reason I'm here is about something that happened between Grey and I.

CONNOR
Uh-huh.

VIVIAN
It's hard to explain where we were going before, but now it's not as difficult.

She stops and doesn't know how to phrase it.

CONNOR
Did you two break up?

Vivian's look is ambiguous. What's she's about to say is hard for her to put into words.

DENISE (O.S.)
The reception in your room is terrible!

CONNOR
(calling; to Denise)
Why don't you try sleeping?!

DENISE (O.S.)
I told you specifics.

Denise has walked into the living room and without hesitation invites herself over to the couch. Vivian recognizes her from the wedding, and tries to make small talk.

VIVIAN
Thank you for the message the other night.

DENISE
I wish it were something to be thankful for.

Connor is annoyed, but wants to isolate the situation.

CONNOR
You're not setting the ears right on the t.v.

DENISE
You do it.

Connor quickly leaves to the bedroom and Denise takes a seat on the couch.

DENISE
So what's your story?

VIVIAN
Story?

DENISE
Usually, between people over 25, they have stories of where they are in their lives, especially in their love lives, or lack there of.

VIVIAN
(defensive)
How do you know I'm over 25?

DENISE
I'm being kind by saying 25.

A beat.

VIVIAN
I'm seeing someone.

DENISE
The old guy with glasses?

VIVIAN
Grey, yes.

DENISE
Is it serious?

VIVIAN
I'd like to think so.

DENISE
Does he think so?

VIVIAN
Yes, he does.

DENISE
How do you know?

VIVIAN
A woman can tell these things.

DENISE
How?

VIVIAN
One day when you're over 25, your
woman's intuition will kick in.

CONNOR (O.S.)
What did you do to the antennae?!

DENISE
(smugly)
What are you doing here tonight?

VIVIAN
Connor and I are just friends.

DENISE
Does Connor think so?

VIVIAN
Yes.

Denise drops her shoulders and rolls her eyes.

VIVIAN
You don't think he does?

DENISE
Well...

VIVIAN
How do you know?

DENISE
A girl can sort of tell these
things.

Connor rushes from the bedroom back into the living room.

CONNOR
There, all better. Cops is
almost over.

DENISE
(teasing; to Connor)
I know something you don't know.

CONNOR
Go away.

Denise sticks her tongue out at him in defiance before leaving back into the bedroom and closing the door. Connor is anxious to get back to the conversation he was having with Vivian.

VIVIAN
Connor. You are a fantastic
writer. I think so and so does
Grey. Your book will be something
amazing, I'm sure because it's
coming from you.

CONNOR
Why is this about me all of the
sudden?

A beat as Vivian prepares to speak.

VIVIAN
I can't do the interview with you
about your book.

CONNOR
Why not? It'll be done in a couple
months.

Beat.

VIVIAN

Grey asked me to co-author his memoirs.

CONNOR

That won't take all your time.

VIVIAN

He's moving to Tuscon.

CONNOR

Good for him. The air's cleaner. He'd fit right in with the senior crowd...

VIVIAN

He wants me to go with him.

(pause)

And I want to go with him.

Vivian watches Connor as she says these last words, knowing that they have hurt him, but she had to tell him. Connor sits there taking this in. He is silent and doesn't even seem to breath.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT OF GREY FULLER'S BOOK SIGNING - 1992

At the end of a long line to a table, Grey Fuller, 40 years old, signs copies of his book, Courage Relentless, smiling at each person who greets him.

Connor stands in the back of the line, looking up ahead in line.

Vivian meets Grey who responds to her looks, and then remembers her name. They strike up a small conversation.

EXT. AUDITORIUM - LATER ON

Outside the entrance to the auditorium, the crowd has thinned out and Grey is standing outside, smoking a cigarette by himself. Vivian walks up to him. She looks at him with adoration.

Around the corner, Connor peeks around the side of the building, noticing that Vivian is making a move. He slides into a closer shadow to hear what they're saying.

GREY

You're writing though?

VIVIAN

I think I may end up doing magazine work.

GREY

It's a living.

VIVIAN

But it's not like you. Your work, it's the work of a surgeon.

Grey's smile radiates with charisma.

Connor covered in jealousy, turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - PRESENT DAY - LATE NIGHT

Through the open bedroom doorway, the rickety television flickers light onto Denise, who sleeps two feet away from the screen on the bed. The light from the television and the light coming in from the screen door illuminates a silhouette around Connor, who sits motionless on the couch with a drink in his hand.

At the table he has separated the pills to reds and blues. He takes a blue and a red, leans back, finishes drink and closes eyes.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

The same players, Darryl, Anna and Ed, performing as before in the same positions as before. Ed is in the background as Darryl and Anna look at each other in the foreground of the stage.

ED (O.S.)

She was leaving before he could say anything. What he never said in ten years just fell through the floor and he didn't know what to say. He supposed there wasn't anything he could.

ANNA

"I know what must think." What must? Isn't it "what you must?"

Connor reads along in the audience. He has more of beard and a look of working too hard. He yawns.

CONNOR

Yes. Sorry, it's a bit sloppy.
Fix what you can.

ANNA

"...what you must think, but it's
something I have to do."

ED (O.S.)

It was only after she left, after
he'd lied down to listen to himself
and tried to make it fit together.
All he could come up with was. . .

DARRYL

She never saw me. The man I knew I
could be. Maybe she only stuck
around to see if I could become
that figure. I can't stop thinking
of where I went wrong, but I can only
come up with the million things that
I never did, never said.

After a beat, the actors walk from the stage and gather up their
things. Anna's bag a few seats away from Connor.

ANNA

(to Connor)

What I don't get is why should she
want to stay with this guy?

CONNOR

I know. It's a rough draft. There's
a few layers still.

ANNA

I'd say more than a few. It's a
wounded male fantasy.

Connor finishes packing his worn leather briefcase and checks to
see if he's forgetting anything. As he looks under his seat, he
looks up and sees Kate, staring at him from a seat a few rows
back.

She stares with a half smile and then realises from Connor's
glance that she's staring. Kate gets up and gathering her
things quickly and leaves.

Connor looks back to Anna and Darryl who are ready to leave.

CONNOR

Coffee tonight?

DARRYL
Just for a little bit.

ANNA
I shouldn't. I've got a call back
at seven.

CONNOR
Come on, keep me company for a bit.

INT. CAFE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Anna is running through her lines with Darryl at the table and Connor is in his own little world as he writes furiously. He drinks his coffee without even looking up from the page. The notes are covering the page in red ink, but are done so in an organized fashion to show that he is making progress. Connor attempts to drink, from his mug, but realizes that it is empty.

CONNOR
Is that waitress coming around?

DARRYL
She left for the night.

CONNOR
Anyone need more coffee?

Anna shakes her head "no."

ANNA
You working late?

CONNOR
Of late.

Connor gets up from his seat with his coffee mug and walks to the counter. The only waitress is at the end making small talk with a regular. Connor waits, but doesn't press. He stretches his neck and feels the aches of lack of sleep.

The waitress comes over and takes his mug. Connor waits.

From behind Connor, the thud of an empty coffee mug is heard against the countertop. Connor nonchalantly turns and sees Kate. She looks at the waitress, but she looks out of the corner of her eye to see if she's been noticed by Connor.

CONNOR
Kate, right?

KATE

Connor.

CONNOR

Working on something?

KATE

Yeah. I've got a paper to write.

CONNOR

What's it in?

KATE

Literature of the 1880's.

CONNOR

Shelley and Godwin?

KATE

That's what they call literature.

CONNOR

By literature, they mean not Dickens.

KATE

I guess.

The waitress at this time has filled both of their mugs of coffee. Connor takes a sip and begins to walk away.

CONNOR

Good luck.

KATE

I really liked what you wrote tonight.

CONNOR

Yeah?

KATE

It's nice to know that a man thinks like that.

CONNOR

It is fiction.

KATE

Even if it is fiction.

Connor smiles.

CONNOR

Did you want to come over? I mean
if you're still studying, some
friends from class and I are over
there.

Connor looks over to the table and see that Darryl and Anna have
gathered things and wave as they depart from the cafe.

CONNOR

(rambling)

My friends were over there, now I
guess I'm alone and if you want to
come over, I could use the company.

KATE

All right.

Kate smiles in acknowledgement. She walks a few steps to her
table and grabs her back pack and notebook off the cafe's booth.
Connor waits for her and then escorts her to his table, trying
not to spill a drop of coffee.

They sit down. Connor quickly picks up his pen to write, but
feels the look of Kate. He looks at Kate who looks away and
runs through her notebook to do something. Connor closes his
notebook with his pages in the notebook. He relaxes and drinks
from his coffee. Kate feels his look and stops what she's
doing.

She looks at him, and feels embarassed that Connor's not writing
and she feels bad for interrupting him.

KATE

It's me, right?

CONNOR

(pleasantly surprised)

Yes.

KATE

Should I go to a different table?

CONNOR

Not unless you want to.

KATE

It's just that I've interrupted you.

CONNOR

No, yeah, no. That's good. I've
been writing all night.

KATE

I noticed. Not that I was spying.

They share a nervous smile.

CONNOR

Let's talk.

Beat. Sharing nervous smiles again.

KATE

My teacher said I should read your stuff. Or he said, if you want to read a well-constructed plot, read Orwell, but if you want to read something beautiful, read Randall.

CONNOR

Short stories are hard to find.

KATE

I read them though. Our writing teacher, gave us "Insightful" to read. He said he knew you.

CONNOR

Who's that?

KATE

Marshal Tellen.

CONNOR

(recollecting)

We had a class back at Iowa. He's in L.A., too? He wrote these wild Thomspon-esque tales always set in Vegas.

KATE

He still does.

CONNOR

The thing was that he'd never been to Vegas.

KATE

I know what you mean.

CONNOR

What's that?

KATE
It's in "Insightful." "A writer has
to have had a cut to know what a
wound feels like."

CONNOR
That's right.

KATE
Is that what tonight's piece was about?

CONNOR
What do you mean?

KATE
Has she left?

Connor turns away with shyness, not expecting the question and not so bluntly. Connor fidgets out of nervousness and Kate knows she's hit a touchy area and feels bad and goes back to writing in her notebook. They sit there with the air of awkwardness.

EXT. RUNNING TRACK - DAY

Connor and Alan are jogging laps, talking.

ALAN
And then what happened?

CONNOR
Nothing. Conversation dulled again
and then she left.

ALAN
Did you get her phone number?

CONNOR
No, I felt too awkward.

ALAN
How do you think she felt?

CONNOR
What are you talking about?

ALAN
Young college student comes up to
you, tells you how much she loves
your work. She threw herself at
you. She's thinking 'why didn't he
ask for my phone number?'

CONNOR

No, she's not. It wasn't like that. She liked my writing. It was small talk.

ALAN

She wanted you to ask her out. A blind man could have seen that.

CONNOR

I'll see her again.

ALAN

You missed your opportunity.

CONNOR

I was thrown offguard.

ALAN

Even if you do see her again, she won't want to talk to you. It's code. You're a basket case.

CONNOR

It's not like that. I'm mysterious.

ALAN

A mysterious basket case.

CONNOR

It's not like that, okay?

A beat.

ALAN

The novel's going well, though?

CONNOR

Real well. Extremely well.

ALAN

It's not about Vivian is it?

Connor shakes his head as Alan jest.

ALAN

Let me know when it's done.

CONNOR

When you're engaged a third time, let me know.

ALAN
Marriage part two is going smoothly.

CONNOR
Denise taking to her stepmother?

ALAN
Yup.

A beat.

ALAN
Did she really say if you want to
read something beautiful, read
Randall?

Connor agonizes.

CONNOR
All right, I blew it.

ALAN
You'll get the next one, Connie.

INT. WOODBURY COLLEGE - DAY

Backstage to the reading, Alan carries a bottle of water and is a bit on edge asking everyone that is walking by if they have seen Connor. Everyone says they haven't seen him, or "Connor who?"

Connor is in the foreground, hidden by a curtain as he watches the backstage area and the audience. He is visibly weakened, which makes his movements, more forced and expressive.

Connor looks out at the audience and sees college students, teachers, faculty, and also, Vivian and Grey sitting down observing the stage and reading a program.

CONNOR
Is she trying to twist the knife in
the open wound?

Connor shows more nervousness as he leans against the wall. He steps out to the backstage area, looking for an exit.

As he walks down a hallway, Alan calls his name out offscreen.

ALAN (O.S.)
Connor!

Connor stops, but doesn't turn around. Alan finally catches up to him and looks at his unkempt appearance.

ALAN

What the hell happened to you?

CONNOR

She's trying to hurt me.

ALAN

How so?

CONNOR

She's moving to Tuscon.

ALAN

Who?

CONNOR

Vivian.

ALAN

So?

CONNOR

She's moving with Grey.

ALAN

Yeah, you told me. I don't know how that's bad. I think it would be better if she left. You've lost it.

CONNOR

They're sitting out there.

Alan looks out into the audience and sees Vivian and Grey and everyone else present to see a reading.

ALAN

I'm going to cancel this.

CONNOR

Please.

ALAN

You can't handle this.

CONNOR

Damn right I can't.

Alan begins to walk away, but Connor stops him briefly.

CONNOR

Let me have some of your water.

Alan gives him the bottle and hurries offscreen to speak to whoever he needs to speak to. Connor stays back in the hallway, taking deep breaths as he leans against the wall.

As Connor wallows in self-pity, he takes a look at himself in the reflection from a classroom door's window. He tries to fix his hair and straighten his shirt.

Connor's shaking a bit and he checks his pockets and pulls out a PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLE. He empties the three pills left from the bottle, two red and one blue. He begins to reach for one of the red, but his hand is shaking too hard and after thinking for a second, he throws ALL THREE into his mouth and takes a long swig of water from Alan's water bottle. He feels the water run throughout his system and he has ceased to hyperventilate.

After a long beat, Alan comes back, calm and collected.

CONNOR

What'd they say?

ALAN

You're cleared. Just go home, get some rest and we'll try it again some other time.

CONNOR

It was that easy?

Alan is reluctant to say anything more, and Connor hears SPEECH from the MICROPHONE in the Auditorium, but it is MUFFLED. Once the microphone's speech ends, there are CLAPPING and CHEERS.

CONNOR

They're clapping because I'm not reading?

ALAN

I had to improvise.

Connor rushes down the hallway and makes it to the vantage point backstage, he was at earlier, and the crowd is still clapping as Grey Fuller is putting on his reading glasses at the podium and the Speaker hands him a couple books. Grey looks at the titles of the books given to him.

GREY

Excuse me, I wasn't expecting to get up in front of a packed house today.

The crowd laughs at his candid behavior.

GREY

I'm touched you had my books with you.

Connor seethes.

Alan standing beside him, watching as well. Connor jolts his head as the number of pills has begun to hit his nervous system. He forces his eyes to blink and tries to show anger at Alan. After a beat, he blinks his eyes and believes himself to be thinking clearly.

CONNOR

I packed that house. I want to read.

ALAN

You can't.

CONNOR

The hell I can't. Tell them I'm back.

Connor looks a bit woozy.

ALAN

I said you were sick. Which isn't far off. Have you been drinking?

CONNOR

Well, I'm better.

ALAN

It's too late.

Connor starts his authoritative ascent to the stage, as Alan grabs him and tries to hold him back, but in the process, they wrestle and Alan ends up tearing Connor's shirt some. Connor makes a visible appearance at the back of the stage as Grey has begun a speech of fiction writing.

The CROWD MURMURS, and Connor acknowledges the crowd with a head nod. Grey continues to speak, until he notices that the MURMUR is only increasing and he turns around to see Connor.

Connor walks up to Grey and they have a conversation at the microphone on the podium. Trial and Jury are seen in the front row, enticed by what's happening.

GREY

They said you were sick.

CONNOR

I'm better.

GREY

Are you sure you don't want to rest up?

CONNOR

I don't want to disappoint the students.

The students show no reaction. Alan walks to the microphone.

CONNOR

My agent, Alan Felson, everybody.

Alan puts his hand over the microphone to prevent everyone else from hearing the conversation between those at the podium.

ALAN

Thanks for the intro, dipshit. Grey, I'm sorry, but I had no idea he was going to come out here.

GREY

That's alright. If he wants to read.

CONNOR

That's right, I want to read.

ALAN

You're not even prepared.

CONNOR

I've written things. I can read them, can't I?

ALAN

It's your ship to sink.

CONNOR

I've had enough of you.

ALAN

Burn yourself.

Grey and Alan exit from the podium and Connor collects himself and looks out at the audience. He sees the packed house and the student's look of confusion and waiting. He looks over and sees Vivian who is like the rest, although she holds one hand close to her face, as if one were watching a train wreck, and not

wanting to watch, but unable to turn away. He looks over at Grey and Alan at the side. Alan shakes his head.

Connor stands there as if the air has left his lungs and the caps have fallen out of his knees. He braces himself on the podium and lets out a goofy laugh. His speech has slowed a half step.

CONNOR

Hello, Woodbrook.

Silence.

CONNOR

Woodbury. I'm sorry. Hello, Woodbury. My name is Connor Randall. I've written a few things in my day. I'm not nearly as distinguished as Grey Fuller, who almost was my fill in today, but I've made it back. Gee, was it a heck of a commute on the the 405 today, or what? Sorry for being late. I got a flat tire, and the alarm didn't go off and I had some bad take out last night and then this uh....thing happen. I don't want to bore you with excuses, because that's not good writing. Writing is without excuses. Put up or shut up.

(pause)

Maybe I should just read? Can I have a copy of the collection?

Connor proceeds to dig his own grave and Alan demonstrates just that with a shovel charade and a deadpan look from the side of the room.

Connor motions to the Speaker in the front row for a copy of one of his short stories. The Speaker, surprised, throws his hands up without knowing he needed to bring anything.

CONNOR

They don't have any copies of my stories. They have every Grey Fuller novel, but that's all right. Does anyone have a short story collection from the last five years? Anyone?

If there were crickets in the audience, they wouldn't have a

short story collection either.

Connor's eyes close and he sways against the podium, looking almost as if he's going to fall over, then catching himself and swaying the other direction like a pendulum.

CONNOR

You know, I think...

Connor wipes the sweat from his forehead. When he attempts to put his hand back on the podium he misses the edge, and he comes crashing down, knocking his head against the podium.

Grey and Alan rush to the podium and Alan, realizing the situation, laughs it off, gets him on his feet and hurries Connor out of there.

ALAN

(to Grey)

Take this one. He's a fighter, but he's ill.

Grey obliges and comes to the podium. The audience has turned to watch Alan walk Connor out of sight. Grey attempts to save the situation as instructed by Alan. He looks at the audience. Vivian is making her way out of the row, stepping passed people in effort to get to the backstage.

GREY

Connor Randall is a fighter, but he's got the flu. He tried to be a trooper, but you can't argue with an upset stomach.

EXT. WOODBURY BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

In a secluded alley, right outside of the exit where Connor would have left from, Alan braces Connor on the wall and takes a look at him. He is sweating, and his left eyebrow is red and beginning to puff up. Alan talks to him. Connor is woozy.

ALAN

Breathe. Air is good.

CONNOR

Air is good.

Alan takes out the water bottle from his pocket and unscrews the lid with one hand. He gives him the bottle.

ALAN

Water is good.

CONNOR

Water...

Alan flings the water out of the bottle and across Connor's face. His eyes brighten for a second. Connor almost falls over again, and Alan catches him and in doing so, feels the capsule box in his jacket pocket. He takes the bottle out, shakes it, and hears nothing.

ALAN

Damnit, Connor. Red or Blue?

CONNOR

(dozing)

Red...blue...red.

Alan thinks of what to do, guides Connor over to behind the dumpster, and takes Connor's hand, and forcing Connor's finger down his throat to make him throw up, which he does behind the dumpster. In vomiting, Connor is back under his own weight.

Alan backs away and checks himself for water and vomit. Connor spits the vomit from his mouth and stands up. Alan hands Connor the water bottle with what's left of the water.

ALAN

Wait here. I'll be back with ice.

Alan opens the exit door and leaves inside. Connor swishes the little bit of water he could get out of the bottle in his mouth.

Tasting the bitterness of bile, he takes out a cigarette and lights it up. Connor shakes his head and doesn't look like a zombie anymore.

The EXIT door opens.

CONNOR

(thinking it's Alan)

Did I get any on your shoes?

Vivian comes out from behind the door. Connor stands up straight, but knows he's been licked. Connor speaks with a slow cadence, affected enough by the pills.

CONNOR

Oh, it's you.

VIVIAN

Are you okay?

CONNOR

Aside, from the public embarrassment, the personal agony and taste of stale bile resting in my mouth, I'd say I'm on the shinier side of okay.

VIVIAN

What happened?

Connor laughs to himself.

VIVIAN

Connor?

CONNOR

I think you were right in choosing Grey. Aside from being the best novelist in the last half of the twentieth century, he's a great guy, and saving my ass from turning this day into a hell of a failure.

VIVIAN

Who made it that way?

CONNOR

I can't be a part of your world. It's not that I blame for you, but I've never been able to say what I want around you and the way I just let it go on and fester inside of me has torn me up. It's torn me up that I can't be as good as Grey.

VIVIAN

That's not true.

CONNOR

I don't want to bury this any deeper. I hope that you and Grey have a perfect time in Tuscon, but I need to get over you and get on with my life. I have enough problems as it is.

(pause)

I'd give you a hug or shake your hand, but I'm emitting the puke vibe right now. Go inside and support Grey.

Vivian looks at him for a long second in a new light and goes inside.

Connor thinks of what he's admitted, takes a few drags from his

cigarette, and feels a bit better for saying them. The exit door opens again.

Alan walks out with a new bottle of water, and ice as he speaks on the phone in an animated conversation. He hands Connor a bag full of ice and Connor overhears Alan.

ALAN

No, he's not on drugs. He has the stomach flu. It was Indian food. It had something in it and. No, food poisoning can hit you up to 48 hours later. Didn't know that, huh? I don't care who you heard from in that audience. I'm standing right next to him now.

Alan covers the phone and talks to Connor.

ALAN

It's the publisher. One of his friends was in there and called him saying you flipped out in a drug induced haze. I don't know how he got that idea. Talk to him. Make sense and he won't pull the plug on the novel.

Connor shows uncertainty and takes the phone.

CONNOR

Hello? No. I thought I could make it. Uh-huh, I understand. No, of course not. It's going well. A month? It may take longer. Even a serious draft. I'm not trying to steal from you. Fine.

The other side had hung up first. Connor hangs up the cell phone and Alan waits for an answer, although Connor is thinking.

ALAN

The fuck did he say?

CONNOR

I've got three weeks, or nothing.

ALAN

You're a lucky son of a bitch.

CONNOR

I don't know if three weeks is enough.

ALAN
How much have you got?

CONNOR
I don't know.

ALAN
What do you mean you don't know?

Connor ignores Alan, and blinks to check his vision and looks at the ground.

CONNOR
I think I lost a contact.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

The same players, Darryl, Anna and Ed, performing as before in the same positions as before. Ed is in the background as Darryl and Anna look at each other in the foreground of the stage.

ED
She didn't have to say anything
and it was best that she didn't.
He had everything to say and
everything he had to say needed to
be said.

DARRYL
"It's me. I've mislead myself."

Connor, WEARING GLASSES, watches in the audience. His facial hair has almost a week's growth. He rubs his eyes and yawns, not of boredom, but of exhaustion.

DARRYL
"I've wanted to be by your side
and be with you, but I never took
a look at myself and judged with
any sort of objectivity. I thought
I was rational, but I can't be when
you're around."

ED (O.S.)
And she gave him a look he had
never seen before, but it was not
to last. She saw him lying there
against the fence. She turned and
walked away.

Packing up things. Darryl walks over to Connor.

DARRYL
The character has finally said
something.

Anna walks over to him as well.

ANNA
She could use a few lines. It's
still one-sided.

EXT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Connor and Darryl and Anna are exiting the theatre talking about the scene from tonight's reading. Connor is all packed and looking around, but not trying to be too obvious. Darryl and Anna are talking to themselves.

DARRYL
The way you held onto the pauses
during your dialogue added so much.

ANNA
Thanks. I knew exactly what was the
character was thinking.

CONNOR
You didn't see Kate here tonight,
did you?

DARRYL
Who?

CONNOR
The girl with brown hair, usually
sits in the back.

ANNA
No, but I wasn't looking for her.

Connor looks down the line of cars along the street.

MONTAGE:

EXT. CAFE - LATER

Long shot of Darryl and Anna and Connor sitting at table. Darryl and Anna carry on an involved conversation and Connor sits, gazing at the pages of his notebook.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor reading through pages of his manuscript with a sour look on his face. He scribbles notes and crosses out half of pages.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Pacing with a baseball bat to try and think, he walks by the CALENDAR that he has marked to establish a countdown.

ECU on the day after the last "X"ed out day on the calendar. It has "9" written on it.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Connor leaning on the balcony's edge, smoking a cigarette, thinking. He still wears his glasses ever since the reading.

After he takes a drag on the cigarette, the LENS from his GLASSES FALLS OUT and off the balcony.

His reaction is a delayed one, and before he can say anything...

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Connor, WEARING SUNGLASSES, walks through the rows of books, looking for a section. His motions are slightly paranoid and that of trying not to be seen.

He arrives at the "Writer's Help" section.

Scanning through the shelves, he comes to the book he was looking for. He picks it off the shelf.

He holds the book: "A WRITER'S FICTION" by GREY FULLER.

Connor holding the book, face down, walks to the check out line to pay for the book.

He waits, with a twenty dollar bill prepared to pay for the book in his other hand. The line is about five people deep.

From behind Connor, a HAND reaches for his elbow, and tugs at his jacket.

Connor turns to see Kate.

CONNOR
(surprised)
Kate.

KATE
Connor, what's with the sunglasses?

CONNOR

A contact fell out.

Connor takes off his sunglasses to show the discoloration from his fall at the reading.

KATE

(looking at his eye)

I saw you fall.

CONNOR

Yeah. So you were there?

KATE

You're over the flu, though?

CONNOR

Yup, a 24 hour ordeal.

KATE

What timing? What are you buying?

CONNOR

(hiding the book)

Oh, nothing. Nothing good, just a...

She turns her head to get a look at the title.

KATE

That's supposed to be a great help.
I don't much like his novels, but
it's supposed to be a great guide.

CONNOR

Courage Relentless was the work of
a surgeon.

KATE

Or a coroner. I think it's time
people looked at something else.

Connor smiles at her dismissal of Grey's work.

KATE

Are you having trouble?

CONNOR

No. I met him recently and I
thought I'd take a look at it.

They step closer to the check out as the line gets shorter.

CONNOR

What are you doing here?

KATE

I was in for coffee between classes.

CONNOR

Missed you last few weeks at the workshop.

KATE

I had to study for midterms.

Only one person left before him in line.

CONNOR

That lit class, right?

KATE

That and others. I actually am running late to my writing class as we speak.

Connor's turn is up in line and people are waiting behind him.

CONNOR

Well, let me get your phone number and maybe I can help you with your Lit midterms.

KATE

Okay, sure.

Kate has a pen in her hand.

KATE

Do you have something to write on?

Connor searches, but quickly gets the twenty dollar bill out of his hand and holds it on the book he was about to buy. Kate writes down her number and smiles as she leaves.

KATE

Bye.

CONNOR

Bye.

The people in line wait. Connor thinks for a second and realises, he can't give the twenty dollar bill up. He steps out of line and places the book on a stack of discount books near

the check out counter. He has a spark in his step.

ECU of Connor's Car door closing.

EXT. STREET PARKING - NIGHT

Connor's car door shuts, filling the last spot on the block of street parking for a considerable distance. Connor adjusts his GLASSES, which have been fixed. After closing the door, he walks to the curb and as he walks by, HEADLIGHTS shine on him, he looks and catches eyes with Kate, who is driving by trying to find a spot. Her window is down.

KATE

Where'd you park?

Connor points in the general direction.

CONNOR

I think there's some around the corner aways. It's kind of far, but it's what's left.

KATE

Everyone decided to park here tonight. Hold on, I'll be right there.

Kate starts to drive again and turns onto the corner street.

Connor follows her along the sidewalk at a regular stride. As he walks by, he sees a closed store window and checks his look in the reflection. He smiles and frowns, smiles and frowns to stretch out his face muscles. After a beat, he continues to walk, takes a deep breath and plays it cool.

Connor walks all the way down the street to Kate's car, that she is just getting out of after an arduous parallel parking squeeze. Kate locks her car and meets him at the sidewalk. Together, they walk back the way Connor came toward the coffee shop.

CONNOR

I thought I was going to be late.

KATE

I circled at couple times to see if I could catch someone leaving.

CONNOR

That's the risk.

KATE

I swear it takes just as much time
to find a spot as it does to drive
place to place.

Beat.

CONNOR

Did you say you were taking a
writing class?

KATE

Yeah, why?

CONNOR

If you want, I could read it.

KATE

That's okay.

Connor feels shot down.

KATE

I heard you used to rip people's
stories apart.

CONNOR

Who told you that?

KATE

Marshal.

CONNOR

He never had a concept of reality
in his work.

(pause)

It's honesty and I'm don't ever
try to be mean.

KATE

We'll see.

They enter the cafe, which is moderately full tonight, and from
the window, we can see them make their way to a table that two
other people were just leaving from. They sit down.

INT. CAFE - LATER ON

Connor and Kate each work in silence.

KATE

It's nice working with you.

CONNOR
Yeah?

KATE
It's quiet.

CONNOR
Do you want to talk about something?

KATE
No.

CONNOR
Then why break the silence?

KATE
I just thought I should say it was a
nice study date.

CONNOR
Is this a date?

KATE
A study date.

CONNOR
But not a date, date.

KATE
Did you think it was?

CONNOR
No. I just thought it was coffee.

KATE
And it is.

CONNOR
But it's not a date.

KATE
Right.

CONNOR
A date is dinner and a movie.

KATE
Exactly.

CONNOR
This is just coffee.

Beat.

CONNOR

Do you want to go on a date?

KATE

This is coffee.

CONNOR

I know, I was asking you out.

(pause)

Anna's and Darryl's play is next week and I was wondering if you wanted to go?

KATE

Sure.

(pause)

Connor, I need to tell you though. I'm kind of seeing someone.

CONNOR

Kind of?

KATE

It's been off again, on again.

CONNOR

Which again is it?

KATE

On.

CONNOR

Well, it doesn't have to be a date. It's just two people going to support actors in the workshop. No dinner, just the play.

Kate nods her head in agreement on the date.

INT. ALAN'S APARTMENT - LATER ON

Shot of the front door, and Denise enters the frame as she walks to the door.

DENISE

(calling)

He's on his way up, Alan.

Denise unlocks the door.

She runs back and hops onto the couch in the living room, just as her TV Program is coming back from commercial.

Alan walks from the bedroom area in the back of the apartment.

ALAN
(to Denise)
It's bedtime, kiddo.

DENISE
Specifics, daddy-o, specifics.

Denise doesn't respond and before Alan can say anything to Denise, Connor enters with an air of indignation. He's mystified and acts as though he's been having this conversation all night. Connor can't think of the words.

Alan looks at him confused.

CONNOR
She's seeing someone.

ALAN
Vivian?

CONNOR
No, Kate.

ALAN
Kate?

CONNOR
Kate, Kate.

ALAN
(realising)
Right, Kate, Kate.

CONNOR
And she decides to tell me this now, right after I asked her out.

ALAN
You asked her out?

CONNOR
And she said "sure," and then a pause.
(demonstrating pause)
And "I should tell you something."

ALAN
That's the way they do it.

DENISE (O.S.)
Who?

ALAN
(to Denise)
Watch the t.v., sweetie.

CONNOR
You mind if I just crash here, my
car's over on Sunset.

ALAN
That's like four miles from here.
How'd you get here?

Connor looks through the cabinents in the kitchen for a bottle of Cutty Sark. After finding it, Connor gets two glasses and sits at the table.

CONNOR
I was out for a walk. You know,
people just stare at you if you
walk more than two blocks in this
town.

Connor pours two drinks. He sips from one. Alan just looks at him.

ALAN
Why are you here?

CONNOR
To talk about tonight, about the
date, the date that wasn't a date
and the date that isn't going to
be a date.

Beat. Alan collects his thoughts and takes a seat at the kitchen table.

Alan is about to say something, but Connor refers to the untouched drink on the table.

CONNOR
Share in my sorrow for a second.

Alan takes a sip from the glass on the table, something he hasn't done in awhile, from the grimace on his face.

ALAN

She said she was "seeing someone?"

CONNOR

She said she was "kind of" seeing someone?

Alan's hand drops on the table as if the entire discussion has changed, and gives Connor a look of "isn't it obvious?"

CONNOR

What?

ALAN

She's "kind of" seeing someone?
What does that mean?

CONNOR

I don't know.

ALAN

Nothing is what. I'm "kind of"
seeing every girl in this town.

DENISE (O.S.)

Am I "kind of" seeing every guy
in this town?

ALAN

No, honey. Watch your Cops.
(to Connor)
How'd she explain it?

CONNOR

It was "on again, off again."

ALAN

Of course it is. And she said
"on," right?

CONNOR

Uh-huh.

ALAN

Don't you see why?

Connor tries to give a look that he knows the answer, but really doesn't and wants to know, desperately.

ALAN

Because if she said she wasn't
seeing anybody, how does that make
her look?

CONNOR

Like nobody wants to see her.

Alan nods his head in agreement.

CONNOR

Pathetic. Like me. Nobody wants to see me.

ALAN

And who wants to be like you?

CONNOR

I sure as hell don't.

Connor takes a swig from the Cutty Sark and Alan does so again.
Connor takes a deep breath.

CONNOR

Thanks, I almost panicked.

Beat.

ALAN

No sweat. Just don't do this again. We're adopting a six month old baby girl.

CONNOR

Congratulations.

(pause)

She couldn't have kids?

ALAN

She didn't want to get pregnant.
She said it'd ruin her figure.

CONNOR

If that's what she wants.

ALAN

It's L.A.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

It's the opening night performance of Anna and Darryl's play. Darryl, dressed in a World War I Soldier's Uniform, belts out commands to a regiment of five soldiers, as the sound of explosions go off in the background. Anna is dressed in a torn up nurse's uniform, and a piece of uniform fabric tied around her head. She holds a dagger in one hand and .45 in the other.

DARRYL

Courage isn't something you wear,
it's something you possess. You
can't load it into a gun and you
can't throw it at the enemy. It's
something you must find inside you.

The SOUND of a LOUD EXPLOSION and a FLASH of LIGHT. Dirt and
Debris are thrown over the actors to the right side of the
stage.

DARRYL

We've got two ways we can handle
this situation. One is to fold
and throw in the towel, turn a
deaf ear to those who don't seem
to care and bow to the forces of
tyranny.

EXTRA #1

I can't hear chief.

DARRYL

Or two, gather up the gear, load
our pistols, and run on in firing
and blazing like a storm hell itself
couldn't handle. We don't have the
numbers, but do we have the courage?

ANNA

(German Accent)

ONWARD!

Anna leads the charge as the rest follow into a light show and
pyrotechno-laden show with smoke and charges blinding the
audience.

On a dime, all LIGHTS and SOUNDS stop and turn to silent
darkness. After a beat, CHOPIN FADES UP on a distant SPEAKER,
and the curtains draw closed.

The members of the audience share a stunned look.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THEATRE - LATER

An Exit door opens to the alley and Stagehands carry out parts
of the set, which are partially cinged. As they walk by,
Connor, Kate, Anna and Darryl stand just outside the exit.
Darryl is smoking a cigarette, still feeding off the high of the
performance.

KATE

That was so good.

ANNA

Yeah?

CONNOR

(thinking)

I liked it.

ANNA

I'm still seeing stars.

CONNOR

Anna, your performance caught me off guard. Initially, from just hearing about the plot of a German Nurse travelling back in time to seal a wound on an American soldier in the first World War was a bit lost on me, but I never for one second doubted you. The conviction in your words hit on every nerve. It's not that I didn't think you were a talented actress before, but I had only seen you in the cold reads at the workshop. And there it's just the unrevised ramblings, that I don't give you guys much to work with. But tonight, you were brighter than the lights.

Anna shows genuine appreciation for his comments.

Kate feels pressured to say something.

KATE

What he said.

ANNA

Thank you. Less pyrotechnics would have helped.

Anna tries to swipe something away from her eye, but didn't get it and is blinded.

KATE

You made her cry.

ANNA

I've got debris in my eye.

KATE
I'll help you get it out.

Anna and Kate walk into the theatre, leaving Darryl and Connor to talk.

DARRYL
You really liked it?

CONNOR
I'm not going to fuck with you.
You were there. You're energy was great. Nobody commends it when they see it, only when they don't see it, but it was there. The play was more of an excuse to put on a light show, but that's not on you.

DARRYL
That's Sven.
(pause)
Did you see anybody in the audience?

CONNOR
A casting director?

DARRYL
No, my mother. Of course, a casting director. I sent out so many flyers.

CONNOR
I don't know. But it's only opening night.

Beat.

DARRYL
You and Kate came together?

CONNOR
As friends.

DARRYL
Sorry to hear that.

CONNOR
We're on again/off again friends.

DARRYL
Off when she dumps the other guy, right?

CONNOR

Yeah.

INT. DRESSING ROOM (OF THEATRE) - MEANWHILE

Anna is checking her eye and hair in the mirror for the errant pieces of stage debris. Kate look at herself and hold her hair back in a pony tail in the dressing room mirror outlined by lights.

ANNA

What's with you and Connor?

KATE

We're friends.

ANNA

His decision?

KATE

I was seeing someone, but I didn't tell him it was over-over.

ANNA

Connor's a great guy.

KATE

I know. The way he talks is inspiring.

ANNA

And he doesn't lie to you. If he doesn't like something, he'll shy away, but if he likes something, he will let you know.

KATE

He's a bit awkward, but in a good way. I feel like he's thinks I'm not smart enough for him.

ANNA

It's nerves. He spends so much time to his writing, he lacks in suaveness, but then you know he's not hiding anything.

KATE

We haven't been able to talk about anything.

ANNA
He'll follow your lead.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Just outside the dressing room, Darryl and Connor wait, as Anna and Kate exit from the dressing room. All four stand in a circle, waiting for someone to say something.

DARRYL
Drinks?

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

An establishing shot of the Bar Sign and the Street.

INT. BOOTH (IN THE BAR) - LATER ON

"Lover's Rock" by the Clash plays on the bar's sound system as Darryl and Anna sit across from Kate and Connor. The pitcher of beer is less than half full. A WAITRESS delivers a round of shots in front of each person, including one for herself. Each person hoists the shot in the air for a toast.

CONNOR
Where're you from?

KATE
Boston.

DARRYL
Chicago.

ANNA
Houston.

WAITRESS
Phoenix.

CONNOR
To everyone who's not from L. A.

DARRYL
One night down, three weeks to go,
and to an agent waiting in the wings.

ANNA
To the appreciated support.

WAITRESS
A kind eye to those you love, and
a cold shoulder to those you hate.

CONNOR
To valiant performances of Sergeant
Cattle Ray and the Tex Connection
and Hilda, the craftiest nurse the
likes of time travel have ever...

KATE
(quoting Anna's
character)
"Onward!"

They all down the shots and feel the unpleasant burn and then
share smiles.

The waitress departs with the shot glasses.

Darryl and Anna share in a small conversation and so do Kate and
Connor. After a beat, Darryl and Anna leave to go to the
bathroom, leaving Kate and Connor alone.

CONNOR
This is music.

KATE
You like the Clash?

CONNOR
I love the Clash.

KATE
So do I.

CONNOR
Everyone can say that, but when
were you born?

KATE
'81.

Connor scoffs.

KATE
What?

CONNOR
You weren't even born before London
Calling and you were three when
Combat Rock came out?

KATE
So?

CONNOR

So? You can say that you love the Clash, like a lot of people can say they love thermodynamics or Disco, but you wouldn't know what you were talking about.

KATE

You were what twelve, when Combat Rock came out?

CONNOR

Thirteen.

KATE

(mocking)

My bad. You're right, you do understand the Clash.

CONNOR

In time you'll understand.

KATE

Didn't we first talk about experience in our first conversation?

CONNOR

(false bravado)

If I am not mistaken, you were praising my material, speaking of its beauty and emotional depth that touched a nerve inside you.

KATE

Hold on there.

CONNOR

(innocent)

It's not true?

KATE

Far from it.

CONNOR

Oh?

KATE

I said that my teacher told me if I wanted to read beauty, to read Connor's work.

CONNOR

And?

KATE

And I said that I read it, but what I didn't say was that I didn't find much beauty. A lot of whining.

CONNOR

Ouch.

Kate shifts moods, back to what she was getting at.

KATE

And our first topic of conversation, was is it possible to describe something without feeling it?

CONNOR

Uh-huh.

Half a beat.

KATE

Have you been able to write about getting over someone now that she's gone?

Beat. Listening to the music.

CONNOR

The first conversation I had with Vivian was about how old we felt. I was 21, talking about how I went home for a weekend and everything seemed to have changed after four years. She knew what I felt like. I was 21 going on 31, and now that I am 31, I can't seem to remember what happened to ten years.

(realizing)

That's a downer. But, she opens my eyes and had the hook in me. Now that she's gone, there's a transition period and it's nice to have new people to see things with. That's what time has taught me.

KATE

My ex-boyfriend never understood time. He still thinks he's seventeen.

CONNOR
Ex? or on again/off again ex?

KATE
That one.

CONNOR
I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked.

KATE
He's my ex.

CONNOR
(lighter)
Off again ex?

All the sudden, BAR'S SPEAKERS skip some and then land on "Train In Vain," by none other than the Clash.

CONNOR
The CD must have skipped.

A beat on the song as Kate and Connor listen to the song, who are both smile at the coincidence of the song skipping. Kate looks at Connor and then looks away as Connor looks at Kate.

INT. HALLWAY (KATE'S APARTMENT COMPLEX) - LATER

Kate and Connor walk down the hallway. Connor wants to say something, but just turns and says nothing, hoping that Kate will say something.

Kate turns to hear something from Connor, and wants him to say something.

Finally, as they near the door at the end of the hall, Connor breaks the silence.

CONNOR
With everything I've said tonight,
I think there has been some good
things said, some down right
depressing, but the downers carry
the most weight.

KATE
Sometimes it's best just to say it,
so you can forget about it.

CONNOR
I think you look great.

KATE

Do you want to forget that?

CONNOR

Not at all.

KATE

For someone who says he understands the Clash, you don't seem to stand up for much.

Kate wasn't trying to be mean, but the comments takes Connor offguard. Kate tries to compliment him.

KATE

I mean you think a hundred miles a minute and try to say every thought and come close to achieving that.

Connor squints his eyes more for pity.

CONNOR

Keep talking so I don't have to. If I say another thing, say "goodnight."

KATE

I think that this has been quite an evening. A stellar light show, good friends, great conversation, and fine dialogue. For a date, it would be more than enough to warrant a second date.

CONNOR

Was this a date?

Kate catches him.

KATE

Goodnight.

CONNOR

Goodnight.

Kate is about to close the door, but doesn't want the night to end.

KATE

Do you want to come in?

Connor thinks.

CONNOR
I don't think I should come in.

KATE
(pause of rejection)
Okay.

CONNOR
(trying to save himself)
Not that I don't want to. I want to.
A friend of mine said if you want a
relationship to last, don't sleep
together the first date.

KATE
This isn't the first date.

Connor convinces himself to try and think better of it.

CONNOR
Goodnight.

As she closes the door, she says.

KATE
Goodnight.

The door closes and Connor thinks to himself of how stupid his last words were.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Kate, leaning against the door, thinking.

INT. HALLWAY - JUST OUTSIDE

Connor almost puts his finger against the doorbell, but stops himself. He wants to go back in, but leaves the frame of the picture.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT

Kate still leans with her back against the door.

After a long beat, Kate stands on her own weight from the door and is about to walk into the living room of her apartment, but she hears a KNOCK at the door.

Anxious, she opens the door.

It's Connor.

CONNOR

The first date's over, right?

She pulls him in the entrance, kissing him and says.

KATE

It wasn't even the first date.

They kiss in a fury against the door for a long beat.

INT. TUSCON - LOFT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Next to an opened window, Grey and Vivian play Rummy on the hot desert night. Grey, unshaven, wears white cotton pajamas pants. His pale torso is hunched over as he holds his playing cards at arm's length with reading glasses on the edge of his nose.

Vivian, wearing the shirt to the white cotton pajamas, studies her cards for a second with her knee pulled up to her chest.

She stares out of the window into the SILENCE.

Grey finishes lining up his cards and discards after his turn. He waits for Vivian to move.

He CLEARS his throat and Vivian realizing it's her turn, nonchalantly takes a card and promptly discards it.

Grey studies her discard and looks at his cards.

INT. LOFT APARTMENT - LATER

Grey and Vivian sit at the table. Vivian is quite uninterested in the game and looks outside. Grey is still intent on his cards and double checks the cards face up in pairs on the table.

He puts down his last card and smiles. Vivian breaks from her stare outside. She doesn't have many pairs laid out in front of her. She drinks from a glass of water.

In her hand, she looks at three of a kind for tens and jacks. Instead of laying them down, she folds her cards and smiles at Grey, who smiles because he believes he's won.

Vivian puts her cards in a chunk on top of the discard pile as Grey tabulates the score. Grey goes to shuffle the cards and needs to put Vivian's hand right side up. Grey flips the cards and sees the two jacks.

Curious, he looks at her hand and sees the three of a kind that would have dramatically changed the score. Peeved at her charity, Grey looks to Vivian who is yawning.

GREY
Of course you're bored.

Vivian looks at Grey and sees him holding her previous hand.
She gives an annoyed look, her eyes rolling back.

GREY
(rising tumult)
If you don't want to play.

VIVIAN
You look happier when you win.

GREY
What am I, a child?

Vivian attempts to say something, but as Grey gets worked up, he begins to COUGH continuously and more violent. Vivian grabs her glass of water.

Grey coughs into his hand, and reaches for a white towel behind his chair. Still coughing, he finally gets the towel to his mouth, where the BLOOD he coughed into his other hand stains the white towel.

He eventually stifles the cough. Vivian runs her hand through his grey, thinned hair to help and calm him. When he's ready, he takes the glass of water from her and drinks.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Resting in bed, Grey and Vivian sit in bed with just a bedside lamp on and a fan blowing air on them. They sit above the sheets to battle the heat. Grey holds the towel in one hand and a glass of water in the other. He has a look of embarrassment and vulnerability as he looks away. Vivian is reading a book under the light.

GREY
We don't have to play cards anymore.

Silence as they sit there.

VIVIAN
It's not about the cards.

Beat.

GREY
What is it then?

VIVIAN
You don't need me here.

GREY
I want you here.

VIVIAN
But you don't need me.

GREY
Is this about what I need or what
you want?

VIVIAN
It's too soon for us to settle.

GREY
I have to settle.

VIVIAN
I shouldn't.

Beat.

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - LOS ANGELES - MORNING

In the early morning after, Connor sleeps in bed with Kate
nestled up next to him.

Connor's eyes open. His eyes register a thought that he runs in
his head. The idea has struck him to the point where he looks
around the room for something to write with. He sees a pen on
her nightstand on the other side of the bed. He has to get up.

Gently moving out of bed, he tries not to wake Kate. He walks
over to the nightstand and gets the pen. He searches something
to write on.

KATE
(waking)
Everything all right?

CONNOR
I need something to write on.

KATE
Were you just going to leave me a
note?

CONNOR
No. I need to write down ideas when
I wake up.

Kate reaches looks at the foot of her bed. From underneath her bed, she pulls out a journal and is about to tear a piece of paper out.

CONNOR

There we go.

Next to a candle, Connor takes the matchbook and writes a few words on the inside cover.

KATE

I've got a page if you want it.

CONNOR

No, I got it.

After a beat, he's finished.

KATE

What'd you write?

Connor hands her the matchbook, as he puts his pants on.

KATE

Not saying versus silence. Make
waves not oceans. Not Clash.
Second. Is it a haiku?

Kate hands him the matchbook. She gets up and walks into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate looks at herself in the mirror. She thinks about last night. She smiles, but can't convince herself she should have slept with him so soon.

She takes out her toothbrush and begins to brush her teeth.

She takes a deep breath and walks back into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor sits at the end of the bed in his pants, throwing his shirt over his head and putting on his shoes.

KATE

(mouthful of
toothpaste)

You're leaving?

Kate takes a seat next to Connor on the end of the bed.

CONNOR

I've got to finish the book. The draft is due Monday and I want to get it over and done with.

Kate looks a little dejected with his leaving, but Connor senses her uneasiness. He puts his hand on her knee and she looks at him.

CONNOR

Last night was the sweetness you find biting into a lush nectarine.

Kate smiles. Connor kisses her. Afterwards, he can taste the toothpaste on her lips.

CONNOR

Minty.

MONTAGE:

Connor walking to his car with a spring in his step and love of the overcast morning.

Kate sits at her desk, opening a textbook.

Connor continuing to walk, but has a second thought.

Kate reading, stops, having a second thought of her own.

Connor TYPING on the computer in his apartment in a controlled fury.

CU of his fingers moving in a motion of a concert pianist.

The sentences streaming on the monitor.

Connor's face watching the monitor.

Connor pauses for the first time. He begins to type the last line of the book.

The screen reads: "When she turned her head and the faint ring of tear circled her eye, he knew he'd lost something. He'd given her everything he used to hold out of reach from her. He'd said he'd loved her since they first said goodbye at midnight. He'd said he could be there for her and only her. Her tears kept her from saying anything. He said one last thing. "I hope that's enough."

Connor exhales and moves the computer mouse.

The monitor reads: "LOST ANGELES" by Connor Randall

The cursor deletes the title.

Connor gets up and paces around the desk. After half a beat, he returns and quickly types.

The screen reads: "WHAT A WOUND FEELS LIKE" by Connor Randall

Connor thinks and doesn't like that either as he presses the delete key in a fury.

After a beat, he types once again as if it were natural.

It reads: "SECOND TIME AROUND"

ECU Arrow click on "Print."

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The printer copies pages in the background. Connor walks from the computer into the kitchen. He opens the top cupboard and pulls out an unopened liquor bottle that has been sitting in the back shelf of the cupboard, covered in dust.

He wipes the dust off with his palm revealing the label of an expensive brand of whiskey.

He gets a glass, rinses it in the sink.

CU of ice cubes.

CU of whiskey pouring into the glass.

Connor holding the drink, realizing the novel is done. He is about to drink when the PHONE RINGS.

He lets the PHONE RING for the answering machine to pick up. He takes a drink.

CONNOR'S VOICE (O.S.)
Not here. Leave a message.

ALAN (O.S.)
Connor, give me a call when you--

Connor picks up the phone.

CONNOR
It's done.

ALAN
(monotone)
Good.

CONNOR
"Good?!" That's all I get. I
finally finish this book, after all
this time and all I get is "good?"
Who died?

ALAN
My aunt passed away.

Connor with a foot in his mouth expression.

ALAN
The wake is on Tuesday.

INT. ALAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The after-funeral reception. The crowd is wearing black and gather around the Alan's wife and the NEW BABY GIRL. Alan walks through the crowd and meets with Connor, who is standing in the back, adjusting his CONTACTS.

The widower, UNCLE JIM, and husband of the aunt, calls to make a toast to his wife. Everyone turns and pays him attention.

UNCLE JIM
I was married to Martha for 47
years. Last week, I spoke to her
when she was in the hospital. We
both knew what was going to happen.
I told her, "It's been 46 years."
She corrected me, "47, babe." I
said "That long?" And we laughed
a bit, but I told her seriously,
"It's been 47 years and I don't
regret any of them, but I feel that
throughout our marriage, I've
always had to do 75% of the work."
She took awhile to speak and I
could see her face change before
she said to me. "You know? I
always felt that I was doing 75%
of the work." That was the last
thing we said, and if you think
about it, that's what a marriage
should be.

Everyone raises their glasses and drinks to Aunt Martha.

ALAN
You haven't seen the baby.

CONNOR
It's too crowded. I'll see her later.

ALAN
The baptism is late next week.

CONNOR
There's never a dull moment with you.

Alan leaves and Connor walks over to get another drink. At the table, he meets Uncle Jim, who is getting a drink. He recognizes Connor.

CONNOR
Jim, I'm sorry about your loss.

UNCLE JIM
She had a great life. That's nothing to be sorry for.

CONNOR
I suppose not.

UNCLE JIM
You're Alan's friend, right?

CONNOR
Yeah.

UNCLE JIM
I remember you from his wedding?

CONNOR
Which one?

They laugh for a second.

UNCLE JIM
What do you do for a living?

CONNOR
I'm a writer.

UNCLE JIM
Yeah? Anything I'd've read?

CONNOR
Not yet. I finished my first novel.

UNCLE JIM
Congratulations.

CONNOR
Thank you.

UNCLE JIM
I've got a question for you.

CONNOR
What's that?

UNCLE JIM
I've been to a lot of funerals
lately and there's something I
don't get.
(pause)
"Ashes to ashes. Dusk to dusk."
What's that mean?

CONNOR
I think it's "dust to dust." I've
never thought about it myself.
(pause)
Everything passes, I guess. We're
all one, and no matter what happens
in life, in the end we're just dust
collecting with dust of once was
life.

UNCLE JIM
(smirking)
If I'd a known that earlier in life,
I would have done things differently.

Connor ponders on his words.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Connor walks in the kitchen and sees the view from the balcony.
He steps closer to the light from outside and stops to stand in
the doorway.

A woman, dressed in a white on black dress comes up from behind
him and grabs him.

Connor, surprised, turns. It's Vivian.

CONNOR
Vivian?

VIVIAN
Is that all I get?

CONNOR
What are you doing here?

VIVIAN
I'm a friend of Alan's. Thought I'd
come and see you say "hi."

CONNOR
Hi.
(pause)
Sorry, it's just you're the last
person I'd thought I see walking in
here today.

VIVIAN
Not the deceased?

EXT. BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

Vivian being guided out to the balcony by Connor.

CONNOR
What are you in L.A. for?

VIVIAN
I heard from Authority that you
finished the book.

CONNOR
(confused)
Yeah?

VIVIAN
I thought you promised me an
interview?
(pause)
Dinner, next week?

Connor smirks without knowing what to say.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Looking at the cover art pieces for the book, Alan picks out the one he likes, while Connor is wrapped up thinking about dinner with Vivian.

ALAN
Which one do you like?

CONNOR

She's doing this to really hurt me.

ALAN

Kate?

CONNOR

Huh? No, Viv.

ALAN

I thought you said you were over her.

CONNOR

But she's not over me.

ALAN

Give it a rest.

CONNOR

I've finally proved myself and she's realized that.

ALAN

My advice, if it counts for anything, is to forget Viv, and focus on Kate. You don't have a checkered history with her and if you can at least realize that, then you'd put your energy into establishing something meaningful.

CONNOR

She wants to do the interview.

ALAN

Do the interview with someone else.

CONNOR

She's come back for me.

Alan rolls his eyes.

ALAN

What are you going to do about Kate?

Connor is silent.

ALAN

She doesn't know Vivian's back?

Connor is silent.

ALAN

You're right. You're right. Vivian is back for you. She left one piece undone with you. She's seen that you are about to have a healthy relationship and she figures she might as well mess that up for you and finish you off once and for all.

Connor has heard enough.

CONNOR

You pick the cover.

Connor exits the office.

INT. CAFE - DAY

The Cafe is full of patrons and at a table, alone, Connor sits.

He writes in a zone without any recognition of the midday rush of the cafe. He finishes a page and without thinking is onto the next, writing a passionate thought.

People pass by his table. One person walks to his table and stops.

Connor notices in the periphery of his vision that someone is standing at his table. He looks up. It's Kate. Connor is surprised and doesn't know what to say. Kate smiles at him, but she shows a visible expression under her words of being slighted.

KATE

The book almost done?

CONNOR

Yeah. I finished it. This is something else I got started on.

KATE

I was stopping in for coffee. I thought I'd say "hi."

CONNOR

I meant to call you, but I got a little sidetracked.

KATE

That's okay. I should be going.

Connor tries to be genuine.

CONNOR

Do you want to read the book?

KATE

Sure. Do you have a copy?

CONNOR

I can get one. I'll drop it off.

KATE

Oh.

CONNOR

That's not what I meant. I had a great time the other night.

KATE

So did I.

CONNOR

Let's have dinner tonight.

KATE

I can't tonight. Tomorrow?

CONNOR

Tomorrow, I have a dinner with a magazine for the book. Day after?

Kate thinks for a second.

KATE

Sure.

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor is on the phone with Vivian. Connor is writing an address down.

CONNOR

You like your new place then?

Vivian is running through her planner.

VIVIAN

Yeah.

Vivian sees something she overlooked in the planner.

VIVIAN

I can't believe I forgot that.

CONNOR

What?

VIVIAN

Listen. Can we postpone the dinner a day?

CONNOR

(pause)

Sure.

VIVIAN

That helps my schedule out a ton.

Connor knows he has a dinner date with Kate, but he's compliant with Vivian.

VIVIAN

Is that okay?

CONNOR

Yeah.

VIVIAN

You can still pick me up at seven?

CONNOR

Sure.

VIVIAN

See you then.

Connor hangs up the phone and thinks of how he's going to spin the situation with Kate.

After a beat. He dials a phone number.

The phone rings.

CONNOR

Hello, Kate? How are you? Great. Listen, about dinner tomorrow? The interview with the magazine was pushed back a day. Is that all right? I'm sorry. Thanks for understanding. This weekend, definitely.

(pause)

If you want to stop by, I'll give you a copy. If you're in the neighborhood at lunch, sure.

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

Connor is writing in his apartment during the lunch hour. He hears a KNOCK at the door. He gets a copy of the book and walks to the door. He opens it and is surprised to see...

CONNOR

Vivian?

Vivian in sunglasses, invites herself in.

VIVIAN

I had to outrun someone for the last spot on the block.

(seeing his hand)

Oh, you have the book? Great. I realized on the phone that I'm going to do the interview with you about the new book and then after the fact remembered. I need the book.

CONNOR

That's funny. Well, here it is. I'll see you tomorrow, right?

VIVIAN

You want to get a bite to eat?

CONNOR

Not hungry.

VIVIAN

You have anything in the place?

CONNOR

I don't get out much.

VIVIAN

Alright. I guess I can go.

Connor opens the door and Kate is in the doorway about to ring the doorbell. She's surprised and there is an awkward silence.

KATE

Connor.

CONNOR

Kate.

VIVIAN

Connor?

CONNOR
(to Vivian)
So you have the book.

VIVIAN
Aren't you going to introduce me?

Connor smiles.

VIVIAN
(to Kate)
Vivian Thornbrook.

KATE
Kate.

VIVIAN
I must get going. Dinner tomorrow.
(to Kate)
It was nice to meet you.

Kate smiles and Vivian leaves.

Connor looks at Kate, who is smoldering.

CONNOR
She was just stopping by for the
book.

KATE
Seems to be a popular thing.

CONNOR
Let me get you a copy.

Connor runs back into the apartment and has a fresh copy.

KATE
Don't lead me on.

CONNOR
I'm not. I didn't know she was
stopping by today.

KATE
Don't lie. You're having dinner
with her.

CONNOR
I have an interview with Authority.

KATE

You have an interview with Vivian.

Kate takes the book and leaves.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Candle lit restaurant, low key. Connor and Vivian sit at a table in the back. Vivian wears a skirt and has a tape recorder that she will use to record the conversation for the magazine interview. Connor is visibly nervous, fidgety, although trying not to be.

She checks the mic and presses record.

VIVIAN

First novel. Thoughts?

CONNOR

It's everything I thought it would be and there were millions of things I wouldn't know, but would discover.

VIVIAN

Such as?

CONNOR

I don't know. An inner story that I get out of writing, a catharsis.

VIVIAN

Inspiration for it? The sophisticated love interest?

Connor leans over and stops the tape.

CONNOR

What's this all about, Viv?

VIVIAN

It's an interview.

CONNOR

I know. Let's keep it that way.

He takes his hand off the tape recorder. She collects herself and presses the record button.

VIVIAN

So who were your influences in the writing game?

He quickly stops the recorder before she's finishing the question.

CONNOR
I'm seeing someone now.

VIVIAN
Kate. Congratulations.

CONNOR
That's right. She's quite something.

VIVIAN
I'm sure she is.

CONNOR
She's not you.

VIVIAN
She couldn't be.

CONNOR
I'm over you. I'm not going to be your pawn anymore.

VIVIAN
I made you the writer you are, so stop riding your high horse. You wouldn't have any material if it weren't for me.

CONNOR
No, I'd've have something better and a lot sooner.

Beat.

VIVIAN
I don't want to fight. I didn't come to fight.

CONNOR
This is too sensitive.

VIVIAN
We're adults. Let's act like them.

Vivian starts the recorder again.

CONNOR
Did you come back for me because Grey fell asleep?

She stops the recorder.

VIVIAN
It's over between Grey and I.

CONNOR
Good for him.

For the first time, he sees her visibly hurt.

She holds back a tear and turns the record button on again.

CONNOR
(sour tone)
There was Chekhov and Hemingway, but
there's always that one teacher. She
showed me the root of my weakness.
And it's a pleasure to have Vivian
Thornbrook sitting across from me
tonight.

She can't hold back any more tears. She is crying. He feels
bad as he reaches over and turns the recorder off.

CONNOR
Sorry.

VIVIAN
What am I doing? I've thrown away
Grey. I'm thirty-eight, oh God.
What have I done?

CONNOR
(consoling)
It's not over.

He massages her hand to comfort her.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT - MEANWHILE

Kate is on the phone with a girlfriend. She has a glass of wine
in one hand. Her eyes are red and her speech is rampant.

KATE
I'm so stupid. He thinks I'm some
floozy, who he can knock on the door
and sleep with. The woman in the
book is her and I can't compete with
her. She's sophisticated. I'm
nothing. She's got him by the balls
and I'm just a one night stand.

INT. CAR (CONNOR'S) - LATER

Connor is dropping Vivian off at her apartment complex.

VIVIAN
I'm sorry if I ever lead you on.

CONNOR
No, you didn't. It was me. And it's
water under the bridge.

They stare into each other's eyes and lean in close to kiss.

They kiss.

Connor pulls away and doesn't know what to think.

CONNOR
I don't know why I did that.

VIVIAN
It was nice.

CONNOR
I should get going.

Vivian looks at him and takes his hand. She massages it and brings it to her mouth. She kisses the top of his hand.

She moves his hand to her leg and guides it up her inner thigh between her skirt.

Connor sees looks at her, looking at him.

VIVIAN
Would you like to come up for the
night?

CONNOR
Just the night?

She nestles her cheek into his neck.

VIVIAN
The novel is the work of a surgeon.

Connor remembers hearing her use that line with Grey. He takes his hand back.

VIVIAN
Connor?

Beat.

EXT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Connor is driving and listening to the radio. He switches stations and the Clash's "Straight to Hell" comes on. He doesn't know how to read the song in his life, but he listens.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Connor is at Kate's door. He waits and after a beat. The door opens a crack with the chain still attached.

Kate looks through the crack in the doorway.

CONNOR

Can I talk to you?

KATE

Vivian send you away?

CONNOR

That's what I want to talk to you about.

KATE

Couldn't you call to break it off with someone?

Kate shuts the door.

CONNOR

Can I come in, please?

Connor hears nothing behind the door.

CONNOR

I should have told you Vivian was doing the interview. I didn't because I didn't want you to think that I was still hung up on her and wanted to secretly be with her. Things became messed up and you're hurt because I keep falling into this trap of hers. I become this sap that I don't want to be, and that's why I'm here. I wanted to tell you that and that you were right.

After a beat, the door opens still with the chain latched.

KATE

Right about...

She waits for his response.

CONNOR

I don't understand the Clash. I
can say that I love their music a
hell of a lot, but I am not the
Clash.

The door closes and the CHAIN UNATTACHING is HEARD. Kate opens
the door fully, but blocks the doorway as to not let Connor in
just yet.

CONNOR

Vivian wanted me to be with her, but I chose to
come and see you tonight.

They look into each other's eyes. Her hair is over her face.

Connor's hand moves the hair from her eyes.

She slowly moves her head next to his and they hold their necks
close together. Kate smells his neck and notices the scent of
Vivian. She is repulsed, and steps away.

KATE

Screw her, screw me. Two in a night?

CONNOR

(pleads)

Nothing happened.

KATE

Sure. You weren't with her, and
you didn't fuck her. Just thought
you come by to a college girl's
place late at night and get her too.

CONNOR

It's not like that. I came here
because I wanted to tell you I'm
falling for you.

KATE

You got me into bed once.

CONNOR

No, it's not like that.

Connor steps toward her, she begins to close the door.

KATE

Please leave.

Connor attempts to say something, but Kate continually stops him.

KATE

Goodnight.

Frustrated, Connor leaves with his hands on his head.

Once the door shuts, Kate begins to cry.

MONTAGE:

"Straight to Hell" FADES UP again on the Soundtrack over the following scenes.

INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Alan and Connor talk in Alan's office. Alan is lining up a ten foot putt and Connor sits with his head back on the leather sofa next to the window.

ALAN

That's rough. Remember to shower next time around.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

The night workshop with Anna and Darryl performing a scene from another writer's work. Connor sits in his seat. He looks to where Kate always sat. The seat is empty.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Kate's writing class is in session. Marshal, 29 years old, wearing a courduroy suit jacket with leather padded elbows, calls on students.

Kate sits near the window with an expressionless face.

MARSHAL

Anyone like to comment on Kate's story?

STAR, 19 year old feminist, wears an outfit with as many colors as her hair has. She itches the four earrings in her left ear before raising her hand.

STAR

I can see these characters. This man, or excuse of one, was thought to be different, but just played the wounded relationship card to get into bed with the female protagonist. Her agony is over how giving she is and accepting of men, when in the end they yearn for an excuse to have sex.

MARSHAL

Anyone else?

STUART, student, leans back in his chair with his arm propped on the desk. Marshal presumes he has his hand raised to speak.

MARSHAL

(to STUART)

Yes?

After a moment of surprise, he thinks.

STUART

Good description.

Kate's been looking out the window.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Establishing shot inside of the church. Alan, his wife and Denise stand next to the priest. Extended family and close friends align in the pews, standing and watching.

CU of the adopted baby girl's face with water rushing over her face for the baptism.

Connor is near the back of the rows of family. He watches the child cry.

INT. CHURCH - LATER ON

After the baptism in the Reception Hall of the church, everyone gathers around the baby. Alan's wife is rocking the baby in her arms. She sees Connor and hands the baby to him. Connor holds the baby girl up and looks into her eyes and she looks back at him. Their expressions, or lack there of, mirror slight confusion.

INT. APARTMENT

Connor on the phone, pacing in his kitchen.

CONNOR

Kate, this is Connor. I want to talk to you. Maybe I should have called sooner, or maybe this is too soon, but I want to talk to you. I don't know why we can't talk to each other. I'd like to know you and read some of your work.

(pause)

The reading is tomorrow and I would very much like for you to come. So please come. Tomorrow morning. Nine o'clock.

EXT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Rain is falling. There is a poster made up promoting the reading of Connor Randall and the signing of Second.

EXT. ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Just outside the entrance, people are gathered in anticipation to hear the reading of Connor Randall. The circles of the literary public have come, as well as friends of Connor. Anna, Darryl and Ed, from the workshop are in a conversation. Jury and Trial sight see in the corner of the crowd. Denise is arguing with her father, Alan about something and then there's Connor.

Standing underneath the edge of the awning, Connor watches the rain fall out on the campus. He wears his GLASSES and his look is reserved, calm, collected, experienced. He drinks a bottle of water.

Walking up to him is Vivian. She has a seductive smile on her face, but Connor doesn't turn to see her. He has seen it before.

VIVIAN

All set?

Connor doesn't say anything.

VIVIAN

You don't have to ignore me. I'm a person just like you. I don't know if you've taken any time to realize that the past few days, but I can wait for you until you do.

Alan walks up to them.

ALAN
Am I interrupting anything?

VIVIAN
I was just going inside.

Vivian exits.

ALAN
We got a copy of your work this time.

Alan laughs, but Connor remains stolid.

ALAN
You've got a winner here. I hope you know that.
(pause)
You called her, so if she doesn't come to you, it's her loss. Don't beat yourself up over this one.
(pause)
Even if she doesn't come, there's tons of other girls who'd love to sleep with a novelist.

Alan checks his watch. The crowd ushers inside.

Alan walks away as Anna, Darryl and Ed walk up to Connor. They are anxious and nervous for him.

DARRYL
We were thinking, Connor. What's the next one going to be?

This strikes Connor as amusing. He smiles.

Alan returns and walks over to Connor, pulling at his arm.

ALAN
It's time.

Connor is about to follow him, when he sees something and he stares.

Rather soaked, wearing a trenchcoat and glasses as she tries to outrun the rain is Kate, who is about to make it to the entrance, when she looks up and stops. She sees Connor.

Connor looks at Kate.

She looks at Connor for a beat in the rain and then turns and runs away.

Alan pulls at Connor's arm, but Connor breaks free and takes a few steps before Alan calls.

ALAN

Connor!

Connor stops and turns around looking at Anna, Darryl and Ed standing next to Alan.

CONNOR

(referring to actors)

Let them read it.

With that Connor is off to catch up with Kate.

EXT. CAMPUS - MOMENTS LATER

Kate continues to walk at a brisk pace. He catches up with her.

CONNOR

You came.

KATE

Don't ask me why.

CONNOR

Why?

Kate's pace picks up a bit faster. Connor follows along.

CONNOR

I want to talk to you.

KATE

So talk.

Connor heads her off, to try and stop her, but she veers off in another direction.

CONNOR

And I want you to talk to me.

KATE

That's new.

CONNOR

Exactly. I'm new, and I want you to see that.

KATE
You're missing your reading.

CONNOR
I don't care about that.

Walking next to Kate, Connor speaks trying to break the tension.

CONNOR
I've been to weddings and not
known what 'until death do you
part' meant. I've been to funerals
and not known what ashes to ashes
meant, and I've been to baptisms and
don't understand the water part.

She stops.

KATE
What's that mean?

CONNOR
I'm slowly seeing that I've been
present at all these events and I
didn't quite know why. I was there,
but never apart of them, apart of
who they were for and I want to be.

KATE
What about her?

CONNOR
She's the reason I became a writer.

Kate looks at the ground.

CONNOR
You're the reason I want to stay one.

Kate still contemplates, and looks up still not convinced.

CONNOR
I want another chance to have coffee
with you.

Beat.

KATE
Why should I trust you?

Beat.

CONNOR

(beat)

Because I need some new material.

Kate breaks a smile for the first time, but is quick to stop herself.

She turns and begins to saunter away at a slow pace. After a few steps she stops. She turns a bit and looks at Connor.

KATE

Let's get out of the rain.

Connor walks up to her and Connor takes her hand. They walk together down the sidewalk of the campus without any rush as people scurry by them to get out of the downpour. Connor and Kate just continue to walk.

THE END