

THE NIGHTMARE MECHANICS

Pilot: "Three Dots and a Dash"

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TITLE OVER BLACK:

"A dream is what we hope to be. The nightmare is who we are."

FADE TO BLACK.

TEASER

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON TV: A black & white MILITARY DRAMA -- a GENERAL BARKS orders at his SOLDIERS.

Lit up by the DUSTY OLD TELEVISION in an otherwise darkened living room, a disheveled SULLEN MAN, late-50s, absently watches TV in his La-Z-Boy, mid-conversation ON THE PHONE.

Rain pours down outside. Cigar smoke wafts through the air.

SULLEN MAN
(on the phone)
We've got to be sure they're all
destroyed. Wiped from the reports.

He listens. Framed ARMY MEDALS adorn the wall behind him.

SULLEN MAN (CONT'D)
This never happened, understand?
It's over.

Listening, unshaven and with sweat stains on his shirt, the Sullen Man takes the last swig from his bottle of scotch --

SULLEN MAN (CONT'D)
Well then I guess that's something
we've both got to live with --

CREAK. A distant FOOTSTEP from elsewhere in the house.

He drunkenly sits up and steadies himself.

Listens. Intent. We hear the MUFFLED VOICE on the phone call out for him as he hangs up.

SULLEN MAN (CONT'D)
Hello?

There's a deep desperation behind his BLOODSHOT EYES.

He waits.

Nothing.

Falls back into the La-Z-Boy --

Another FOOTSTEP.

He sits back up.

SULLEN MAN (CONT'D)
Who's there?

No response. Silence except the TV SHOW CHATTER.

He waits. Nothing.

Exhales --

Suddenly, THE FOOTSTEPS cut through the silence. Slow and steady.

He frantically reaches for a BERETTA 9MM on his side table.

The footsteps get LOUDER.

Faster.

Closer.

The man aims his handgun towards the sounds as the FOOTSTEPS enter the room and STOP.

Hidden in the shadows, we don't see THE INTRUDER --

But it's clear the Sullen Man recognizes him.

The man drunkenly aims his gun at the Intruder.

INTRUDER (O.S.)
What good is that?

The Sullen Man does his best to control his PANICKED BREATHS.

He hesitates.

But reluctantly lowers the gun.

INTRUDER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I thought you stopped drinking.

The man does his best to control his PANICKED BREATHS.

SULLEN MAN
What do you want from me?

No response.

The Sullen Man narrows his desperate and bloodshot eyes.

SULLEN MAN (CONT'D)
(angrily)
You're not *real*.

CREAK. A single FOOTSTEP answers that. His panic grows.

SULLEN MAN (CONT'D)
 We were doing the right thing.
 Please. You know that's true!

CREAK. CREAK. The Intruder steps towards him --

SULLEN MAN (CONT'D)
 How many times are we going to do
 this?

INTRUDER (O.S.)
 As many as it takes.

SULLEN MAN
 (losing it)
 For what?! You want to kill me? Do
 it already!

INTRUDER (O.S.)
 It's not me who wants to kill you.

This registers.

INTRUDER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 You did this to yourself, Jordan.

SULLEN MAN
 IT WASN'T MY FAULT!

INTRUDER (O.S.)
 That's what I said, too. You keep
 telling yourself that.

Hysterical, the Sullen Man raises the gun --

SULLEN MAN
 LEAVE ME ALONE!

ANGLE ON: A small SECURITY CAMERA'S BLINKING RED LIGHT in the
 corner of the room as we hear a SINGLE GUNSHOT --

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE**INT. MORALES HOME - PORTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

ANGLE ON: A fading snapshot of CLYDE MORALES, 57, with HIS WIFE & THEIR TWO SONS -- the definition of a HAPPY FAMILY.

Rain PATTERS the window in a dark bedroom.

Moonlight partially illuminates the faded family picture tacked to a bulletin board, ripped up band flyers and old photos cover every inch of the cluttered bedroom walls.

The clock reads 12:47 AM.

A TEENAGER sleeps peacefully in his messy bed -- the younger son in the photo.

Suddenly, his breaths become quicker. Sharp. Almost painful.

He tosses and turns. Panicked HEAVY BREATHS.

This is **PORTER MORALES**, 17.

It's anything but sweet dreams for this kid.

Through the thin walls, we hear MUFFLED MUSIC --

INT. MORALES HOME - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: A drive ratchet as it CLANK-CLANK-CLANKS to bolt a pick-up truck's blackened motor mount.

Smoke wafts through the air. A staticy and HAUNTING PROTO-PUNK SONG (think Love's "Always See Your Face") plays on a shitty old AM/FM radio.

RANDY MORALES, 28, finishes tightening the bolts. His gentle eyes contradict a rough exterior...unshaven face, arms covered in tats --

ANNIE ELLIOT, 27, next to him in a t-shirt and cut-offs, puffs on a joint and passes it to Randy. Her deep empathy is evident in even her smallest action.

ANNIE

You going to be ready for bed soon?

RANDY

Sure. Yeah.

But Randy looks like he hasn't slept in months.

ANNIE

Tomorrow will be good for us, hon.
You need it. I need it. We can't
just stay home forever.

Randy turns down the beat-up radio on his overflowing tool shelf. Sounds of the RAIN OUTSIDE fill the ramshackle garage.

Annie stands up and hugs him gently.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

You can't keep beating yourself up,
it's not your fault --

An EAR-PIERCING SCREAM from inside the house cuts her off. Without missing a beat, Randy races inside.

INT. MORALES HOME - PORTER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Porter sits up on the edge of his bed, struggles to catch his breath. His shirt is drenched in sweat. He looks awful.

The door BURSTS open -- hallway light fills the room as Randy and Annie run in. They see Porter and stop. Take a moment.

PORTER

I'm fine.

This clearly isn't the first time, his eyes reveal the lie.

RANDY

You look like shit.

ANNIE

Randy.

He sits on the bed next to Porter.

RANDY

Was it the same as last time?

PORTER

It doesn't matter. It was a dream.

RANDY

You know you can talk to us.

PORTER

I'm fine.

RANDY

Sure.

Porter turns to him. Almost smiles.

PORTER

You want to talk about feelings or something?

RANDY

I love talking about feelings.

Randy grins. He looks up at Annie in the doorway and nods.

ANNIE

Let me know if you two need anything.

She leaves the brothers alone. Porter turns to Randy.

PORTER

I wish you would stop worrying about me all the time.

RANDY

If I didn't worry about you all the time I'd have to stop and look at my own problems. And I'm definitely not ready for that.

Porter laughs.

PORTER

(sincere)
How are you doing?

RANDY

You know. Shitty.

Randy puts his arm around Porter and holds him close.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Why don't you come up to the Constellations with us tomorrow? We need to get out of the house.

PORTER

Yeah. I don't know. School starts Monday. So --

RANDY

Exactly. It's your last day of vacation, I'm not going to let your entire Summer slip away.

PORTER

That's cool. I can't. I just --

RANDY

Call your stupid little buddy and your girlfriend, you're coming with us. This is not a request, you can't hide at home forever.

PORTER

She's not my girlfriend.

RANDY

Really? She should be.
(off Porter's look)
You've got to start living again.
We both do.

PORTER

It's weird to have you suddenly care about me.

The sudden jab throws Randy.

RANDY

I can't change what I did, Porter.

Porter nods. Unsure. Randy leans in.

RANDY (CONT'D)

It's going to get better. And one of these days, you're going to feel like yourself again. I promise. That doesn't mean forgetting about mom and dad but it does mean living your life. And I'm going to be right here next to you every single day to make sure you do.

PORTER

It was *him*, Randy. I saw him.

RANDY

I know. Me, too. Every time I close my eyes.

(beat)

Get some sleep.

Randy kisses his brother's forehead and walks to the door.

PORTER

What if dad's not...*you know?*

Porter looks up as Randy stops and turns to him.

RANDY
We talked about this.

PORTER
But how can you be sure?

Silhouetted in the doorway, Randy hesitates.

RANDY
(sternly)
If dad was alive, he'd have come
back for us by now.

Randy leaves. Alone in the darkness, Porter eyes a dusty OLD MILITARY-ISSUE FOOTLOCKER on the floor by his nightstand --

ANGLE ON: "LT. CLYDE F. MORALES" printed on the side.

EXT. MORALES HOME - DAWN

A calm mist floats through the working class neighborhood on the outskirts of nowhere, better known as Bishop, California.

The garage door of a dilapidated track house opens. Bars on the windows, a dying lawn. Randy's worn-down F-250 ROARS out.

Porter hangs on in the cargo bed.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - NICK'S BEDROOM - DAY

ON TV: A tense and scary SURVIVAL HORROR video game (think "Silent Hill").

NICK MERRILL, 17, a happy-go-lucky kid with a naively trusting nature plays intently.

HONK HONK. He doesn't blink. Keeps playing. HOOOOOOOONK.

ON TV: The game's MONSTER-LIKE CREATURE, known as a KILDREAD, hunts Nick's avatar.

NICK'S MOM (O.S.)
Nicholas! Your friends are here.

NICK
What?

HOOOOONK. HOOOOOONK.

NICK'S MOM
Your friends' are here!

NICK
I can't hear you, Ma. What?

ON TV: The KILDREAD obliterates Nick's avatar.

Nick sees he's "dead."

NICK (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Stupid Kildread.

HOOOONK! He turns and looks out the window. Sees the F-250.

NICK'S MOM
Your friends are --

NICK
Ma! I gotta go, my friends are
here. Love you!

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nick runs out and hops in the cargo bed with Porter.

NICK
Dude! I missed you! So glad you
finally want to do something --
(catches himself)
I mean, how are you holding up? Are
you...you know...you okay?
(beat)
Hi. Dude.

He hugs Porter. Tight. Porter LAUGHS and pushes him off.

PORTER
You've been good? Sorry I've been
off the radar --

NICK
Stop! You do what you've got to do.
I'm same old, same old forever.

From the cab, Randy SHOUTS to them.

RANDY
Where's your girlfriend's place?

NICK
You have a girlfriend since when?

PORTER
Nevermind. Let's just go.

RANDY
Call her, dweeb!

NICK
You don't have a girlfriend. Who?

PORTER
(to Nick)
He's talking about Ginny.
(to Randy)
Who is *not* my girlfriend!

ALL
Call her! Call her!

PORTER
You guys --

ALL
CALL HER!

PORTER
Fine! Stop embarrassing yourselves.

Porter takes out his cell phone and hops out of the truck.

RANDY
Where are you going? You stay right
here and call. We're family.

Porter looks mortified. But he stays. Dials. Waits. Nick,
Randy & Annie watch. Proudly. Porter flips them off --

PORTER
(on the phone)
Hi, um, Ginny? It's...yeah. Hi. So,
we're going up to the lakes at the
old base and I was thinking, maybe
if you wanted to join...you know...
(listens)
Really? Okay. Cool. See you soon.

He can't help but smile.

INT. GINNY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

GINNY POTTS, 17, a rich kid raised to be polite and pleasing,
zips her backpack. Her hint of a smile quickly fades when --

She hears her PARENTS YELL at each other in another room.

Alone in the kitchen, she listens. Totally over it.

She grabs her backpack and heads for the door.

GINNY
 (to herself)
 Bye, mom. Bye, dad. Love you, too.

She leaves. The SHOUTS ECHO off the walls of the extravagant but otherwise empty house.

EXT. GINNY'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

The nice part of town.

Randy's dirt-caked F-250 pulls up.

Porter watches Ginny walk down, her family's mansion looms behind her.

RANDY
 Better wipe that goofy look off
 your face before she gets here.

As they exchange HELLOS, Ginny hops into the back of the truck and sits next to Porter. Close.

EXT. BISHOP, CA - MAIN ROAD - DAY

The truck radio BLASTS as they drive the main drag, equal parts dusty Old West nostalgia and leftover '60s kitsch.

The F-250 turns off the main road and barrels out of town, towards the sprawling Sierra Nevada mountains to the west.

EXT. THE SIERRAS - DAY

They drive through awe-inspiring forests. Away from civilization, into the wilderness.

Randy swerves the truck onto a dirt side-road.

EXT. FOREST - ABANDONED BASE - GATE - DAY

ANGLE ON: A rusty bullet-ridden sign -- *"WARNING! U.S. Air Force Installation. Unlawful to enter the area without permission. NO TRESPASSING."*

The sign hangs off a towering barricade of barbed-wire fence that weaves through the lush forest. Completely out of place.

Randy pulls up and parks in a secluded area nearby.

The gang hops out and gathers their picnic gear.

PORTER

(to Ginny)

Don't worry, we used to sneak up here all the time after they tore everything down.

Porter pulls back a part of the rusty fence that has long since been cut and they enter --

EXT. THE CONSTELLATION LAKES - LATER THAT DAY

A secluded cluster of small, breath-taking mountain lakes and ponds shimmer in the early morning sun.

Hidden in the wilderness are relics of the long-since abandoned military installation --

A razed-building foundation, an overgrown runway and a decaying air raid siren lost among the trees.

They have the entire area to themselves. Randy and Annie set up a picnic area, Nick tears his shirt off and leaps into the lake, more belly-flop than dive. Huge splash.

RANDY

Love that Olympic caliber precision.

NICK

I hear your insult, Randall, and I'm ignoring your insult because we both know it says more about you than about me.

But as the others settle into the afternoon, Porter sits on the corner of an old concrete building foundation.

Takes it in. Preoccupied.

Ginny joins him on the foundation.

GINNY

You coming in?

PORTER

Yeah. It's just...being here...it's a lot.

GINNY

Is this your first time out since...?

PORTER

My dad used to work up here.

She studies him for a moment, then slyly takes his hand.

GINNY

That's nice you can come here to
feel a connection.

He nods. She squeezes his hand, supportive. They sit in
silence for a long moment.

GINNY (CONT'D)

(distracting him)

Come on, I'll race you across.

Ginny runs into the lake. He can't help but awkwardly laugh.

GINNY (CONT'D)

You're going to lose, Morales!

Porter notices Randy and Annie watching him watch Ginny.
Annie shoos him in after her. Proudly.

He runs over and dives in.

They race across the lake. The others CHEER.

It's close but Ginny wins. Soaking wet and out of breath,
they smile at each other -- a definite connection...

EXT. THE CONSTELLATION LAKES - FIRE PIT - NIGHT

Sparks and crisp embers float into the night air. They're
gathered around the fire pit. A tinny ROCK SONG plays on a
handheld radio. Beers and CONVERSATION.

RANDY

Dad got relocated about the time
Port was born, that's when we moved
to town. But we weren't allowed to
come up here to the lakes until
after they tore the base down.

GINNY

So you never saw where your dad
worked. Do you know what he did?

NICK

It sounds like some top secret Area
51 alien shit.

PORTER
He was a psychologist.

NICK
Or that.

ANNIE
So this was a government psych
ward?

NICK
For aliens?

GINNY
That would explain why you're here.

NICK
That would explain why you're here.

She rolls her eyes.

PORTER
Dad studied the effects of war on
soldiers. He said he was working on
a new way to heal them.

NICK
I bet he had access to crazy drugs.

RANDY
He was a psychologist, dumbass, not
a psychiatrist.

PORTER
It's a machine. He's building a
machine that he says can help
soldiers, that can cure PTSD.

RANDY
You don't know that. You have no
idea what was really going on up
here. Just because you read some of
dad's gibberish in his journals --

PORTER
Dad's always trying to help people
and this is his ultimate --

RANDY
Was, Porter. He *was* trying to help
people. So much so that sometimes
he forgot his own family.

Annie nudges Randy. Porter eyes him.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Whatever it was. He failed. The program got shut down and he was fired. Why do you think mom and dad were fighting all the time?

ANNIE

Randy.

RANDY

He needs to know. He can't keep living in the past.

PORTER

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

(beat)

Whenever dad worked late --

RANDY

Which was always.

PORTER

-- he'd tell me he could watch us sleeping from up here, that he could see the town in the valley below, so that no matter what, he'd always be watching over us.

RANDY

It was a nice fairy tale to put you to sleep.

PORTER

Was not.

RANDY

Look around. Can you see town? This job took something from dad that he never got back.

Randy notices Porter looks hurt. Softens.

RANDY (CONT'D)

I'm just saying he did what he could. It was nice.

GINNY

Maybe it's not a fairy tale. Maybe there's an overlook or something somewhere else on the base?

RANDY
 Sure. Maybe.
 (gets up)
 Let's put out the fire and go home.

GINNY
 We can at least look around,
 where's the harm in that?

RANDY
 Maybe next time, it's getting late.

Ginny grabs the flashlights.

GINNY
 Who's coming?

Nick stands up. Nods. Porter hesitates.

RANDY
 This is ridiculous.

Porter pushes himself up.

PORTER
 It's the last day of vacation, I'm
 not going to let the entire summer
 slip away.

RANDY
 Cute.

Nick, Porter and Ginny scan the tree line with their
 flashlights as they head towards the forest.

Annie leans over to Randy.

ANNIE
 It'll be good for your brother.

Randy looks reluctant.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 It'll be good for *you*.

EXT. FOREST - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Flashlights illuminate the dark forest. It's a bit creepy.
 Ginny leads the way. Randy looks conflicted.

GINNY
 Keep an eye out for more concrete.

RANDY

All the buildings were back by the lakes. They didn't go out this far.

GINNY

Have you seen another fence?

NICK

Huh?

GINNY

It means we're still on the base property, which means there still might be *base property*.

Nick throws Porter a confused look. Porter shrugs.

ANNIE

(to Ginny)

You know you're pretty cool for a rich kid, Ginny.

PORTER

Annie, come on.

(to Ginny)

She didn't mean that --

ANNIE

Yes I did! It's a compliment.

GINNY

It's fine. You're pretty cool for an old lady.

They LAUGH.

PORTER

Guys, over there!

Porter shines his light on a STEEP ROCK-FACE that rises above the trees. It's quite a climb.

EXT. FOREST - CLIFF - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

The moon is bright. At the top of the rock-face, a CLIFF juts out of the dense forest.

The gang climbs onto the overlook. They take in the view --

ANGLE ON: A stunning vista. The town is nestled in the valley below, lit up in the distance.

PORTER

This must be where dad was talking about. This is where he stood.

Even Randy softens a bit.

Ginny shines her light on a RUSTY BARBED-WIRE FENCE climbing up the nearby mountainside -- a *NO TRESPASSING* sign hangs.

ANNIE

We're at the edge of the base.

GINNY

Why would it go all the way out if there wasn't something here?

PORTER

I bet dad's building was nearby.

RANDY

Okay, enough of this. Let's get back to town before we get lost.

But Porter ignores him. He follows the fence down the opposite side of the cliff. Deeper into the forest --

ANNIE

Port, be careful.

RANDY

Quit messing around, let's go!

Porter climbs down the rock-face, *opposite of the side they climbed up*. Slowly, cautiously hanging onto his flashlight.

The ground is at least twenty feet below.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Get up here before you kill yourself.

One nervous step at a time, Porter lowers himself down. Determined.

PORTER

What if Ginny is right?

RANDY

So dad used to come up here, who cares?

PORTER

Maybe he was trying to tell us something.

For a moment, this registers with Randy.

RANDY
Have you lost your mind?

PORTER
Come on --

Suddenly, Porter loses his grip, his flashlight tumbles and he SCREAMS as he slides down the rest of the way --

EXT. FOREST - BASE OF THE CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

SMASH! Porter CRASHES hard onto the forest floor at the base of the cliff.

Up above, the others SHOUT for him.

He pushes himself up. Wipes off the dirt. Looks around.

PORTER
I'm okay.

He searches in the dark for his flashlight as the others scramble down the cliff.

ANGLE ON: A glimmer of light -- the flashlight fell into a crevice at the base of the cliff.

Porter reaches in to get it when something grabs his attention. His eyes go wide.

He pushes aside THICK TANGLED OVERGROWTH -- there's a hint of SOMETHING METAL UNDERNEATH.

RANDY (O.S.)
Don't make me come down there and get you!

Porter moves the remaining overgrowth aside --

PORTER
(to himself)
Holy shit.

Built into the cliff, concealed behind the overgrowth and hidden in a crevice by a LARGE ROCK is a RUSTY MILITARY-STYLE STEEL DOOR.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOEXT. FOREST - CLIFF - NIGHT

Everyone looks over the edge. Searches for Porter.

NICK

Dude! You coming back up or what?

PORTER (O.S.)

Guys! Check it out!

Ginny and Nick share a look and scurry down together.

RANDY

No, no! What are you doing?

PORTER (O.S.)

Come on! I found something.

Annie looks to Randy and mouths "sorry" as she follows the others down the hillside.

RANDY

Seriously?

Reluctantly, Randy slides down behind them.

EXT. FOREST - BASE OF THE CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

They gather around Porter.

RANDY

Happy now, moron? We're going to have to walk all the way around to get back up --

Porter shines his light into the crevice, behind the rock.

RANDY (CONT'D)

So what? I don't see any --

Porter moves his light to perfectly hit THE HIDDEN DOOR.

For a long moment, no one speaks.

RANDY (CONT'D)

That's...interesting.

ANNIE

Um. What the hell is it?

NICK
A super secret, super cool door.

They turn to each other. Astonished. Even Randy.

GINNY
Whatever this is, someone sure
wants to keep it hidden.

PORTER
Come on. Help me.

They push aside the remaining overgrowth. GRUNT and GROAN as they struggle to move the large rock hiding the door. They finally REVEAL THE SECRET DOOR.

NICK
Dude. Aliens. I'll bet you guys
anything.

RANDY
You don't have anything.

NICK
Whatever.

Porter tries to open the door. No luck.

Ginny points to a vertical slit by the handle. *Not a normal keyhole.*

GINNY
Looks like it needs some sort of
weird key.

RANDY
We should ask Chief Kresge, maybe
he knows about it.

ANNIE
Could be a outpost of some sort?

PORTER
This is where dad worked.

RANDY
You don't know that.

NICK
Dudes. Clearly, it's an alien --

ALL
Shut up, Nick!

Something catches Porter's eye. He leans in. Inspects the vertical key-slit. He wipes off the dirt to reveal a SMALL SYMBOL etched into the metal -- THREE DOTS AND A DASH.

GINNY

What is that?

RANDY

Who knows. Military gibberish.

NICK

I'm telling you guys, it's --

They look at him -- *don't even say it.* He doesn't.

PORTER

It means victory.

NICK

Uh. What?

PORTER

It's Morse Code.

RANDY

Right. And how do you know that?

PORTER

Dad told me. I don't know why I remember it but I know I've seen it somewhere before.

That hangs as the others take it in.

RANDY

We'll tell Kresge all about it in the morning and go from there. But right now we better get moving, it's not safe out here at night.

PORTER

But he'll just call the Air Force --

RANDY

This is not a debate.

As the others turn and leave, Porter lingers an extra moment, curiously eyeing the three dots and a dash.

INT. MORALES HOME - PORTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: The DUSTY FOOTLOCKER on Porter's floor.

He picks it up, throws it on the bed and wipes the dust off.

Opens the lid. Inside is a mess of his father's belongings. A lifetime of keepsakes, scraps of memories. Porter sits on the edge of his bed and digs through: Photos, love letters, and notes. His father's dog tags. He stops at a BROWN LEATHER NOTEBOOK and flips it over --

Scratched into the cover are THREE DOTS AND A DASH.

Porter flips through the pages, a mess of his father's barely legible notes and sketches. He pauses for a moment on a SERIES OF DESIGN SCHEMATICS for some type of machine.

Porter skips to the LAST PAGE.

Scotch-taped to the inside cover is an odd THIN METAL OBJECT.

A key...

He tears it out.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MORALES HOME - NIGHT

The garage opens. Randy's truck quietly rolls out, engine and lights off. It silently rolls down the street.

Alone in the driver's seat, Porter REVS the engine --

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Curled up in his bunk-bed, Nick SNORES. Fast asleep.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK! He jumps up. Startled. Out of breath. Looks around, confused. Turns to the window and SCREAMS --

ANGLE ON: Porter in the window -- motioning him outside.

INT. GINNY'S HOME - TV ROOM - NIGHT

The room is lit by the TV. Ginny sleeps peacefully on the couch. Her cell phone VIBRATES and she wakes up. Answers.

EXT. FOREST - BASE OF THE CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: Flashlights flicker on the hidden door.

Porter, Ginny & Nick approach. They exchange looks. Equal parts nervous and excited.

NICK

Are you sure this is a good idea?
Your bro is going to kill us if he
finds out we snuck back up here.

PORTER

He doesn't get it. If we tell
Kresge, he'll alert the military
and just like that, this is going
to be off limits.

GINNY

Pretty sure it already is.

PORTER

For real off-limits.

Porter slides the key into the slit.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Hey Chief, we found a secret door
on the old base, is it cool if we
explore for a bit?

He turns to them. Ginny and Nick look to each other. They
nod. *Good point.*

PORTER (CONT'D)

If my dad worked here, I want to
know what's inside.

They share a look. Together, they push the door. But it won't
budge. Porter jiggles the key. Push. Nothing. Then --

CLICK. It worked. Porter pushes the door. *It opens.*

Dirt falls off as Ginny shines the light through the dust and
into a deep, dark tunnel. For a long moment, no one speaks.

GINNY

So... Do we have, like, a plan?

Porter shakes his head.

GINNY (CONT'D)

Cool, just wanted to make sure
we're all on the same page.

INT. BUNKER - TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Flashlights scan the concrete walls of a TIGHT PASSAGEWAY as
the trio cautiously enters.

NICK

This is some serious black-ops shit
like that mountain in Colorado.

GINNY

What mountain in Colorado?

NICK

I read something somewhere about a
mountain in Colorado.

PORTER

Cool story, Nick.

They walk deeper into the long tunnel, until they reach a
THICK DOOR with a large metal lock like a bank vault.

GINNY

Whoever built this sure didn't want
anyone to get in.

PORTER

Or out.

For a moment, that sinks in. They hesitate.

NICK

What exactly do you know about this
machine your dad was building?

Porter reaches for the door. He spins the CREAKY metal wheels
and pulls the thick, reinforced steel door open.

Nick shines the light ahead. The tunnel leads to --

INT. BUNKER - MACHINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dripping water ECHOES throughout the CAVERNOUS CHAMBER.

They shine their lights around -- the room is the size of a
basketball court. Empty except for a flipped over desk, empty
file cabinets, a few office chairs and in the middle: A
MASSIVE MECHANICAL SQUARE OBJECT.

Porter cautiously approaches. Hard to see in the dark -- it's
about 25 square feet. Like a small room within the room.

GINNY

Careful.

PORTER

If you guys want to turn around, I
totally get it.

Ginny notices a LARGE WINDOW on the wall covered in something. She wipes her fingers along the glass and a film comes off. She inspects it and shows them her fingers -- they're covered with a REDDISH ASH.

NICK
What is that?

She shines her flashlight through the glass and into what appears to be a CONNECTED OBSERVATION ROOM.

GINNY
Who knows, but the walls are covered in it.

NICK
Great. Obviously a good sign.

Porter shines the light on the huge object in the center. Difficult to see in the low light, its walls covered in *rusted metal cylinders, pistons, valves, knobs & turbines*.

They gather around it. Study it. It's bizarre, no question.

PORTER
Don't touch anything.

NICK
No shit.

GINNY
Why would they leave this here?

NICK
In case you missed it, someone really wants *here* to stay hidden.

Porter walks around to the other side of the object.

NICK (CONT'D)
What if this is an alien ship?

GINNY
Then you finally have a way home.

NICK
You think just because you're a girl, I don't have a comeback.

PORTER (O.S.)
Guys.

GINNY

I think you don't have a comeback
because you don't have a comeback.

PORTER (O.S.)

Guys.

NICK

What about if I said --

PORTER

Guys!

Porter peers through a space between the twisted discord of
metal joints --

They walk around and join him. They peer inside -- their eyes
fill with WONDERMENT as Porter shines the flashlight into the
middle of the machine where --

A glowing DARK-RED ORB floats at its core.

*Housed in a glass casing unit inside the mechanical room,
this is unlike anything they've ever seen.*

For a long moment, all three are at a loss for words.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Listen.

It's pin-drop quiet except for a DEEP PULSATING SOUND
emanating from the orb.

NICK

(whispers)

Told you guys. Aliens.

But all three are mesmerized.

PORTER

I've seen this in my dad's journal.
The designs... *This is his machine.*

GINNY

The PTSD thing?

Porter steps closer. The PULSE grows LOUDER.

PORTER

Maybe. It's complicated, my dad's
notes are hard to follow. But this
is *it*. This is his life's work.

Another step. It gets LOUDER. Porter stops.

PORTER (CONT'D)
It's like it senses we're here.

NICK
Uh, what?

Porter reaches inside the object --

GINNY
Porter, stop.

-- he reaches out to touch the orb. As if he *has* to.

NICK
Dude!

They grab him but it's too late -- *his hand touches the orb and the glowing fades and it disappears. SILENCE.*

NICK (CONT'D)
You broke it --

Suddenly, the entire room RUMBLES --

WHOOSH! A dark-red current pulsates throughout the room, a blindingly bright light shoots out from the machine.

But almost instantly, the orb returns to it's original state.

A return to near-silence. Deep breaths.

GINNY
Everyone okay?

Nick nods. Shocked but unharmed.

NICK
That was *in-sane*.

GINNY
Porter? You okay?

ANGLE ON: Porter's eyes. Dazed. He's trembling. Like he's somewhere else completely.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. BUNKER - MACHINE ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: Porter's eyes. Distant. Wide. Open.

Until he finally BLINKS.

Ginny and Nick lean in. He stops trembling.

NICK
You okay, dude?

Ginny gently puts her hand on his back.

Porter turns to them.

Deep breath.

PORTER
I saw something.

GINNY
What do you mean?

PORTER
Something was in there. Someone. I
can't explain it.

NICK
Uhh...you're creeping me out, dude.

PORTER
I *felt* it.

He looks to Ginny. Concerned.

GINNY
Hey. It's okay. We're right here.

PORTER
(snaps himself out of it)
You're right. I'm sure I was just
imagining things.
(serious)
Maybe this was a bad idea.

They take one last look at the machine and hurry out.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Porter drives them down the deserted main street. Exhausted.

NICK

So do we call the cops?

PORTER

And say what?

NICK

I don't know, dude, that's why I'm asking. This is my first time finding a secret who-knows-what in a mountain. We can't ignore it.

GINNY

What about Annie and your brother?

PORTER

Randy will murder me if he finds out we went up there without him.
(turns to them)
Can we keep this between us? Just until we figure things out.

They nod in nervous agreement.

INT. MORALES HOME - PORTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Porter's room. Dark except for the slit of light sneaking in from the hallway through the cracked door. The only sound is the WIND outside.

He's asleep. Still in the same clothes.

Suddenly, there's REPETITIVE METALLIC TAPPING at the door.

Porter rolls over.

TAP. TAP. TAP.

He wakes up. Listens.

TAP. TAP. TAP.

PORTER

Randy? Hello?

No response but the TAPPING continues.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Annie?

Nothing. TAP. TAP.

Porter sits up. Alert. Cautiously, he walks towards the door. Grabs a baseball bat.

The TAPPING GETS LOUDER. He looks nervous as hell.

WHOOSH! Suddenly, a SHADOW bolts across the slit of light from the hallway.

Porter freezes. Silence. Only the heavy breaths from Porter as he reaches the door. Opens it.

INT. MORALES HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The hallway is empty, lit by a lone bulb at the other end.

TAP. TAP. TAP.

Porter follows the sounds. He passes another room and peeks inside -- Randy and Annie are asleep in each others arms.

Continues down the hall and down a short flight of stairs.

Cocked and READY TO SWING the bat as he reaches --

INT. MORALES HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The living room. Almost pitch black.

TAP TAP TAP. Close now. From somewhere in the same room.

He zones in on the sound, in the corner. Hard to tell what's there. Shadows. Darkness.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Two down, two to go.

Porter spins towards the voice --

Searches. Scans the room until --

Something grabs his attention.

It looks like there's something in the corner --

He narrows his focus --

Is that...EYES?

Suddenly, he sees it -- a TALL SCRAWNY MAN in the shadows is STARING DIRECTLY AT PORTER.

Porter jumps back. BREATHES rapidly.

Terrified.

The man menacingly holds a CROW BAR.

Porter is unable to move. Terror in his eyes --

PORTER
What do you want?

TAP. TAP. TAP. The man TAPS the crow bar against the wall --

SCRAWNY MAN
Two down, two to go.

He TAPS harder. Harder. Until --

CRACK! The man SMASHES a hole in the wall.

Porter lunges at him. Swings the bat wildly. Porter goes for the man's head --

SMASH! But he hits the wall instead --

The scrawny man is gone.

Panicked, Porter scans the room.

Empty.

FLASH! The lights flip on and Randy and Annie race into the living room. Take it in --

Porter is alone. THE WALL IS DESTROYED. And it sure looks like Porter did it.

RANDY
Porter. What are you doing?

Porter turns to him. Tears in his eyes.

PORTER
He was here. He was standing right in front of me. Howard West was in our living room!

RANDY
Howard West is in prison for the rest of his life.

PORTER
He was here!

Annie runs to Porter and holds him. He SOBS into her arms.

RANDY
This can't happen every night,
Port. It's getting worse.

PORTER
This was different.

RANDY
It was just another dream. Maybe
it's time we saw a professional.

PORTER
He was taunting me. Us. He said *two
down, two to go.*

This hits home with Randy but he hides it well.

RANDY
No one is here. It's just us.

Randy joins them. The three sit close, comforting each other.

But suddenly Porter notices something -- a faint layer of REDDISH ASH on the carpet where the man was standing -- he instantly recognizes it from the bunker.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Howard West is never getting out.
We have to leave him in the past.

INT. BISHOP HIGH SCHOOL - ART CLASS - DAY

ANGLE ON: A rough sketch of the scrawny man's face.

Porter sketches "Howard West." Next to him, Nick struggles to stay awake, falling asleep on his blank sketch-pad.

PORTER
Did you get any sleep?

NICK
Couldn't get a wink.

Nick nearly nods off. At the front of the class, the ART TEACHER, 40s, notices.

ART TEACHER
Mister. Merrill.

NICK
 (sits up, alert)
 Huh? Yeah. I love it. It's got a
 real...unique point of view.

The class GIGGLES.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Good hue. Interesting composition.
 Great example of a modern,
 traditional, abstract
 expressionism. You really *feel* the
 expression.

The teacher is extremely unimpressed.

More CHUCKLES from the other students as Porter's phone
 VIBRATES. He slyly checks it.

ON HIS PHONE: A text from Ginny, "Need to talk. Roof in 10?"

ART TEACHER
 Please go on, Mr. Merrill. Explain.

NICK
 You can't explain art, Ms. Seitz.

Porter raises his hand.

ART TEACHER
 Would you like to help your friend,
 Mr. Morales?

PORTER
 Can I run to the bathroom? Please.
 (whispers to Nick)
 Sorry, man.

EXT. BISHOP HIGH SCHOOL - ROOF - DAY

Ginny sits on the roof of a secluded building on the edge of
 school, hidden from the main buildings.

Wearing a HOODIE with hood up, she looks concerned.

Porter climbs up a ladder behind her and sits down.

PORTER
 What's up?

She turns to him -- clearly something is off.

PORTER (CONT'D)

You okay?

GINNY

Promise you won't think I'm crazy?

PORTER

Believe me, I'm not one to judge.

GINNY

Something is wrong with me.

(hesitates)

As long as I can remember, I've had this recurring dream, an anxiety dream, where I just keep chopping my hair off and I never stop.

PORTER

I have one where it's like I'm running in quicksand. What's so quick about sand anyway?

She cracks a smile at his lame joke.

GINNY

I've got one like that, where I'm running from a white hyena. But my feet won't move, like they're in concrete. And just when it's about to get me, I always wake up.

PORTER

Well, that's just weird.

She laughs. They share a silent moment.

Her laughter subsides --

GINNY

Last night, I had the hair dream --

Ginny takes off the hood -- her previously long hair is now a short, choppy pixie cut.

GINNY (CONT'D)

But this time it wasn't a dream.

Porter looks taken aback.

PORTER

You look --

GINNY

Awful, I know --

PORTER

Beautiful.

(beat)

Wow. You look beautiful.

For a brief moment, she can't help but smile. And he's not lying, she looks great -- prom queen gone punk rock.

GINNY

I thought I was dreaming. I *know* I was dreaming. But I just kept chopping it off. I couldn't stop.

She grabs what's left of her hair.

GINNY (CONT'D)

I don't sleep walk. And I don't care about my stupid hair but I feel like I'm losing my mind --

Something registers with Porter, she notices the change in his expression.

GINNY (CONT'D)

What? What is it?

PORTER

Howard West, the guy who --

She nods knowingly.

PORTER (CONT'D)

He was in our house last night. Flesh and blood. Swear on my life.

GINNY

What? Are you serious? I don't get it...he escaped? Are you okay? Randy and Annie?

PORTER

We're fine. We checked this morning, he's still locked up in San Quentin. Has been for three months. But...

(beat)

Last night, he was in our living room.

GINNY

I don't understand.

PORTER

Me neither. But we're not crazy. We both had dreams...*nightmares*...that weren't --

GINNY

Our dreams, they're *real*?

He doesn't have a good answer for that.

GINNY (CONT'D)

But why? How? Did it happen to Nick, too? Have you talked to --

Suddenly, sounds of a HUGE COMMOTION grab their attention.

They get up and race across the roof. On the quad below, they see a FLURRY OF STUDENTS and in the middle of them --

Nick.

PORTER

Shit.

EXT. BISHOP HIGH SCHOOL - MAIN QUAD - CONTINUOUS

GIGGLING STUDENTS run out of the main building, beneath a "Welcome Back!" banner --

They join a LARGE GROUP OF STUDENTS already gathered on the quad. The teens LAUGH and point --

A very frustrated PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN, 49, no nonsense and ready for action, pushes her way through the crowd.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN

Calm down! Back to class, everyone!

She shoves her way through the throng of students until she reaches Nick -- BUCK NAKED AND BELLIGERENT.

NICK

So what? I'm naked. We're all naked underneath! You're all in my head!

The Principal grabs him but he pulls away. Confidently.

NICK (CONT'D)

It's cool, Mrs. Sussman, I've got this under control.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
Put your clothes on Mr. Merrill!
(to the students)
Back to class!

Other TEACHERS pour out and try to break up the crowd.

NICK
I control this world! You're all in
my head!

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
Whatever you're on, young man, I'm
going to see to it that you're
properly punished.

NICK
For what? For being free? This is
my world! I'm the king! I am the
king! Bow to King Merrill!

As they reach the edge of the crowd, amidst the COMMOTION,
Ginny and Porter share a scared, knowing look.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. BISHOP HIGH SCHOOL - MAIN QUAD - DAY

ANGLE ON: A growing CROWD OF STUDENTS laugh at Nick as they CHANT "KING MERRILL! KING MERRILL!"

But Nick laughs, too. Milking it. He points to a HECKLING FOOTBALL JOCK --

NICK

You think that uniform makes you cooler than me, Todd? Pffft. It doesn't make you cool, it turns you into a number! Your ability to catch a ball doesn't make you special, you insecure overcompensating asshole!

He turns to the GIGGLING CHEERLEADER on the Jock's arm --

NICK (CONT'D)

Not so fast, Sandra. Your ability to catch balls doesn't make you special either!

The crowd ROARS. Nick points at a NERD laughing --

NICK (CONT'D)

You're no different, Clayton! You're putting on an act just like the rest of them. Punks, jocks, nerds, normal kids, weirdos... You're all just conforming to someone else rules. You're all just slaves to the system, rats stuck on the wheel, you're all --

Porter and Ginny push through the crowd. Porter grabs Nick.

NICK (CONT'D)

What, dude?!

Ginny turns to Principal Sussman.

GINNY

Mrs. Sussman, we can explain. He's not on drugs. Please, we'll calm him down. Give us a chance?

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
Someone better or I'm calling the
police.

Porter pulls Nick away from the crowd.

They HECKLE and throw scraps of lunch at him as they escape.

PORTER
Nick! Snap out of it!

NICK
It's cool, dude, this is a dream.
(to the crowd)
You're all living my dream.

PORTER
It's not. This is very, very real.
You need to stop.

NICK
Of course you think it's real,
you're in my mind.

PORTER
I'm not messing around, Nick!

NICK
Dude, why so intense --

SMACK! Porter PUNCHES Nick in the arm. Hard.

NICK (CONT'D)
Ouch! What the --

SMACK! SMACK! He smacks him across the face.

NICK (CONT'D)
Dude! What the...

It sets in. *This is real.*

NICK (CONT'D)
Oh shit.

Nick suddenly looks very embarrassed.

Behind them, the ENTIRE STUDENT BODY ROARS with laughter and
CHANTS "KING MERRILL!"

NICK (CONT'D)
Shit, shit, shit.

Ginny grabs his clothes and brings them to Nick.

As he hurriedly pulls his shirt over his head --

*Ginny and Porter both notice that it's lightly dusted with
THE SAME RED ASH FROM THE ROOM.*

Principal Sussman approaches sternly.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
I want you three in my office
immediately.

They nod in agreement and head towards the school offices.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN (CONT'D)
(sighs to herself)
And it's just the first day.

INT. BISHOP HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Porter, Ginny and Nick sit nervously in the drab principal's office. Mrs. Sussman paces in front of them.

Nick looks especially mortified.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
I'm not sure what to think right
now. You're three of our best
students. What do you have to say
for yourselves?

NICK
I... I...

GINNY
He sleepwalks. He's embarrassed
about it but sometimes it happens.
Just never at school.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
Is this true, Mr. Merrill?

Nick nods, going along with it. Feigns innocence.

NICK
Since I was a kid.

She studies them. Sizes them up.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
It's not going to be easy facing
your classmates for awhile.

NICK
Tell me about it.

He's very sincere. She takes pity on him.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
Okay. Why don't you two see that Mr. Merrill gets home safely and we'll start over tomorrow. Fair?

Ginny and Nick head out but Principal Sussman stops Porter.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN (CONT'D)
How are you? I'm sorry about everything that happened.

PORTER
I'm okay. Thanks for asking.

PRINCIPAL SUSSMAN
Give your brother my condolences. If you two ever need anything, my door is always open.

PORTER
Thanks, Mrs. Sussman.

She watches him leave.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

The trio walk through desolate empty lots on the edge of town.

Nick looks shocked, they've clearly brought him up to speed.

NICK
(total disbelief)
So wait a minute. You guys are saying that last night, both of you had dreams that were *real*? Dreams that weren't actually dreams?

They nod. Affirmative.

GINNY
They were real.

PORTER
We know it sounds crazy.

NICK
So that means...I just...I got...

PORTER

You just got naked in front of the entire school.

Nick looks mortified.

GINNY

And declared yourself King.

Speechless for a long moment. Extremely flustered.

NICK

I keep hoping I'm going to wake up.
I'm not, am I?

They shake their heads.

GINNY

If it makes you feel better, I overheard a couple girls saying you looked good naked.

NICK

Wait, really? You did?

She winks. But he can't tell if he she's lying.

GINNY

The ash on your shirt was on my bathroom sink after I cut my hair.

PORTER

And I saw it in our living room, too. Right where he was standing.

This sinks in. They walk in silence. Until --

Nick stops and throws his arms up. Baffled.

NICK

You guys! What the hell is going on? I mean, this is *in-sane!*

PORTER

Beyond insane.

NICK

Our dreams are *real* now? What what what?! I am so not cool with this.

They share a look. Nick does his best to pep up.

NICK (CONT'D)

You know what? Bright side! What if this was a one time thing? Like losing your teeth --

GINNY

Careful what you wish for.

Nick quickly checks. Phew. All teeth in tact.

PORTER

This must have something to do with my dad's machine.

They turn to him.

GINNY

What *exactly* does that machine do?

INT. MORALES HOME - PORTER'S BEDROOM - DUSK

ANGLE ON: The series of DESIGN SCHEMATICS in Porter's dad's notebook. We instantly recognize the RED ORB.

PORTER (O.S.)

According to this, he calls that red light "the Engine."

Sitting next to each other, the trio study DETAILED DRAWINGS in his dad's notebook.

PORTER (CONT'D)

I've poured over these for months, hoping to find...something. None of it ever made much sense. Until now.

Their eyes follow Porter's finger to a sketch of the LARGER MACHINE that was in the room --

PORTER (CONT'D)

So that big thing we saw, it's apparently some type of a containment unit. According to his notes, dad calls it "the Cage."

NICK

The Cage? That's comforting. What's it a cage for?

GINNY

Look at this.

She points to a sketch of a HUMAN-FIGURE WITH A SKULL & CROSSBONES DRAWN IN ITS HEAD.

NICK
And that is...?

PORTER
I think that's supposed to be the PTSD. The nightmare, whatever is in the patient's head.

NICK
Huh?

In the notebook, Ginny's finger follows an arrow that leads from the figure's skull & crossbones across the page to a LARGER SKULL & CROSSBONES CONTAINED IN "THE CAGE."

GINNY
So from here...to *here*. The Cage.

PORTER
Right.

Nick looks at them like they're crazy.

In the notebook, Ginny's traces another arrow that leads to a similar sketch of skull & crossbones in "The Cage" but in this drawing the SKULL & CROSSBONES HAVE BEEN X'ED OUT.

GINNY
He was taking the nightmares *out* of their minds. Literally caging them.

Porter nods. Nick makes an even more confused look.

In the notebook, Porter traces a arrow to ANOTHER FIGURE, one that has a BIG SMILE IN PLACE OF THE SKULL & CROSSBONES.

PORTER
If the nightmare is real, if it's in the Cage...it can be destroyed.

Porter and Ginny share a look.

GINNY
And the PTSD is cured. Expunged from the subconscious.

NICK
Okay, I don't even know what expunged means --

PORTER
(to Ginny)
Exactly.

Nick shakes his head. Flabbergasted.

NICK
Huh? What!? Sorry if I'm not an expert at deciphering crazy person doodles but --
(turns to Porter)
Sorry. Didn't mean that. I'm just saying *what on earth are you guys talking about?*

Porter turns to him.

PORTER
My dad was working on a way to draw nightmares out of the subconscious and into the real world.

GINNY
So they could be destroyed.

Nick blankly stares back at them. For a really, really long time. Then...

NICK
(total disbelief)
What the fuck?

Porter and Ginny can't help but giggle.

PORTER
I know it sounds crazy. But can you explain what's happening to us?

NICK
Okay. Say that's true. Now what?

Ginny flips through the rest of the notebook.

GINNY
Maybe there's a solution in here?

PORTER
We started something up there.

NICK
Whoa, tiger. You mean *you* started something. I don't remember either of us touching that red orb thingy.

PORTER
If we're going to figure this out,
we have to stick together.

Ginny stops on a bizarre set of sketches of an EVIL-LOOKING
FACE -- DEEPLY CHILLING AND INHUMAN. Not of this world.

GINNY
Whoa. Who's this?

Porter and Nick look at the drawing.

NICK
Creepy as balls, dude. This is all
just getting a bit weirdo for me.

Ginny points to a word scrawled on the page: "*The Engineer.*"

GINNY
The Engineer? Of *what*?

They notice Porter staring at the sketch. Mesmerized.

NICK
You all right, dude?

PORTER
I recognize that face.

NICK
Um. Like from a monster movie or
something?

PORTER
I can't place it. But I know I've
seen I've seen it somewhere.

This hangs for a moment.

PORTER (CONT'D)
I guess it could be anything. My
dad was very private, he kept to
himself about a lot of stuff.

Nick flips through the rest of the book.

PORTER (CONT'D)
The last few months, something was
off. Not just because he lost his
job. Mom thought he was having an
affair, they fought all the time.
Maybe that face...I don't know.

Ginny sits next to him. Comfortingly.

GINNY

Hey. Maybe he just liked to draw.

Porter nods as Nick studies the book --

NICK

Chemical names. Dates, times. A few numbers. Some math stuff. Pretty sure we need a decoder-ring to make sense of anything in here, guys.

The contents of the footlocker are spread out on the bed. *No clues.*

PORTER

My dad kept this for a reason.

Porter sets the key down as Nick gets to the last page --

NICK

(reading)

Gibbons. What's a gibbons?

Porter turns to him.

PORTER

What?

NICK

There's some tape in here. Look.

He hands the book to Porter. On the last page, the SCOTCH TAPE that held the key in dangles --

On it, scribbled in ink is one word that Porter missed when he took the key:

"Gibbons"

Porter studies it.

GINNY

Do you know what a gibbons is?

PORTER

Not what. *Who*. He's my dad's best friend. His mentor. They worked together up at the base.

NICK

Where is he now?

PORTER

He lives alone outside of town.

CREAK. The front door opens and they hear Randy and Annie's MUFFLED CONVERSATION through the walls.

INT. MORALES HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: A bag of HARDWARE supplies on the floor.

Randy patches the wall, Annie flips through TV channels --

ANNIE

Celebrities on a island?
Celebrities on a game show?
Celebrities and a psychic?
Celebrities fighting? What are you
in the mood for?

RANDY

Is there Celebrity Hari Kari?

Annie stops on a show --

ANNIE

Here we go, celebrities being
celebrities. Perfect.

Porter leads Ginny and Nick into the living room.

PORTER

I'll be back soon, just walking
Ginny home.

ANNIE

(to Ginny)
Nice haircut.

Ginny smiles.

RANDY

I'll give you a ride.

PORTER

That's okay. Thanks though.

RANDY

It's late. Let me drive you.

PORTER

That's okay.

Randy looks at him suspiciously.

RANDY

You trying to be sneaky?

Porter shakes his head. So do Nick and Ginny. Annie and Randy share a skeptical look.

ANNIE
What's up with you weirdos?

NICK
What's up with you, *weirdos*?

RANDY
Good one, King Merrill.

Nick looks thrown.

ANNIE
Word around town is you're not such a little guy after all?

NICK
Ha. Ha. Ha. You guys are...

They wait for his comeback.

NICK (CONT'D)
Whatever.

Everyone LAUGHS.

RANDY
Whatever you're doing, I've done.
Be home soon.

EXT. GIBBONS' HOUSE - NIGHT

A gentle mist floats though the night air, moonlight illuminates the ISOLATED HOUSE well outside of town.

One truck in the open garage. No lights on inside except the FLICKERING OF A TELEVISION.

Porter, Ginny and Nick walk up the driveway and stop.

NICK
How long since you've seen him?

PORTER
He used to visit all the time but then, I don't know...he stopped coming around. Maybe a year ago?

Ginny turns on the flashlight on her cell phone and they follow her up to the house.

GINNY

Let's hope he can help.

They walk silently up to the front door, the vast Sierra Mountain foothills spread out behind them.

Porter rings the DOORBELL. They wait. Nothing. He KNOCKS.

PORTER

Mr. Gibbons?

NICK

The TV is on.

GINNY

Maybe he's sleeping. Let's come back tomorrow.

Nick turns to leave. But Porter peers through the window.

NICK

Come on.

PORTER

(whispers)

Someone is watching TV.

NICK

Let him sleep, man, don't be --

Suddenly, PORTER JUMPS back from the window and stumbles off the porch.

Nick and Ginny turn to him -- Porter looks GRIM.

Ginny and Nick cautiously approach the window --

FROM THEIR POV: *Through the window, the faint glow of the TV FLICKERS on a DARK SILHOUETTE in the La-Z-Boy, but it's impossible to make out any features --*

BAM! *Suddenly a LOUD COMMERCIAL plays and the previously dim TV light FLASHES BRIGHT. We see the FIGURE in the chair --*

Slumped over in his BLOOD SOAKED LA-Z-BOY, the walls SPLATTERED WITH BLOOD behind him -- we recognize the figure as the SULLEN MAN: JORDAN GIBBONS.

DEAD.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**EXT. GIBBONS' HOUSE - NIGHT**

RED AND BLUE LIGHTS flash on Gibbons' house. THREE COP CARS and a half dozen POLICE swarm the property.

Porter, Ginny and Nick watch the COMMOTION from the outskirts.

One cop breaks off from the others and walks towards them.

CHIEF KRESGE, 59, a grey-haired brooding man who can communicate more with his intense eyes than words ever could.

He towers over them.

Deep SIGH.

They look up at him nervously.

NICK
We're sorry, Chief.

CHIEF KRESGE
For what, Nicholas?

NICK
I...um...I dunno.

The other two look at him. Idiot.

Kresge nods.

CHIEF KRESGE
So. Who wants to explain to me what you were doing out here in the middle of the night?

None of them can find the words.

He studies them.

Intently.

The tension mounts --

PORTER
He was my dad's best friend.

Kresge softens. Nods gently.

CHIEF KRESGE
Sorry, kid.

OFFICER LAM (O.S.)
Chief! We need you in here.
Something you should see.

Kresge waves to the officer and turns to the trio.

CHIEF KRESGE
Get home. Now. I'll be seeing each
of you tomorrow to talk about this.

They MUTTER "THANK YOUS" and hurry down the road towards town.

We follow Kresge, through the hustle and bustle of officers and lights --

INT. GIBBONS' HOUSE - NIGHT

OFFICER LAM, 27, meets him at the front door. She looks determined as she leads him through the house.

OFFICER LAM
What do you think? Gut.

As they pass GIBBONS' BODY --

CHIEF KRESGE
Gibbons was always a friendly face
around town. Shame to see him go
like this. But gun in his hand,
hole in his head? Suicide if I've
ever seen it.

She stops in the corner of the room by a bookcase --

OFFICER LAM
Look at this.

Hands him an OPEN BOX, he looks it over --

CHIEF KRESGE
A low-rent security camera?

OFFICER LAM
Forty-nine bucks online. The
receipt is still in the box, he
bought it three weeks ago.

He looks to her inquisitively.

OFFICER LAM (CONT'D)
Wait 'til you see the footage.

Kresge eyes the body across the room.

CHIEF KRESGE
If you're going to commit suicide,
why install a security camera?

OFFICER LAM
Exactly.

INT. GIBBONS' HOUSE - OFFICE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Lam leads Kresge into a roomful of OFFICERS huddled around a small CCTV MONITOR.

The other cops stand aside as Kresge leans down. Looks at the monitor. Lam stands behind him as he watches the FOOTAGE

Confusion grows in Chief Kresge's eyes.

CHIEF KRESGE
(bewildered, to himself)
No way.

EXT. GINNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Porter, Ginny and Nick stand at the bottom of the stairs.

PORTER
Keep your phones close. If anyone
has another...*real one*...we'll be
there.

They hug goodbye.

NICK
See you at school.

Ginny smiles.

GINNY
If my parents don't kill me for
chopping off my hair.

PORTER
We'll be all right. Promise.

The three of them share a look. Uncertain.

GINNY

Night.

Nick and Porter watch her walk up the stairs.

NICK

(whispers)

Dude. I think she likes you.

But Porter isn't paying attention, his eyes fixed on Ginny as she enters her house.

EXT. GINNY'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: An a few EMPTY BOTTLES of wine.

The kitchen is the only room in the house with the lights on.

Ginny's PARENTS, ROBERT & MARIE, both mid-50s, drink their wine in a tense silence.

FROM THE SHADOWS IN THE LIVING ROOM, Ginny watches them for a long moment. Hesitant. They look miserable.

Both turn as Ginny enters.

MARIE

Honey. Welcome home. How was your first day back?

(pointed, to Robert)

We'll continue this later.

Ginny can barely feign a smile and half-nods.

GINNY

Uneventful.

ROBERT

You missed dinner. Heat something up if you're hungry.

(turns to Marie)

Your mom and I were just dealing with some...personal matters.

GINNY

Sure. I'll be in my room.

MARIE

Hold on, young lady.

Marie looks her up and down, can't put her finger on it --

MARIE (CONT'D)

Did you do something...*different*?

She eyes her chopped hair but nothing registers with her parents.

ROBERT

Something is definitely different about you, I just can't place it?

GINNY

New shoes.

MARIE

That's it. They're...nice. They make you look very...*teenager*.

GINNY

(dumbfounded)

You know I'm 17, right?

Marie forces a FAKE SMILE.

But Ginny outdoes her with an even BIGGER FAKE SMILE --

That her mom hardly registers.

MARIE

What I wouldn't give for the body I had when I was your age.

(turns to Robert)

Maybe I would have a husband who still loved me.

ROBERT

Come on, Marie! That's not fair. Let's not do this again --

Ginny stomps off down the hallway. They don't even notice.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

-- in front of Virginia.

She SLAMS her bedroom door.

INT. MORALES HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON TV: A SITCOM COUPLE fights, the LAUGH TRACK roars.

The room is otherwise dark. The hole in the wall has been patched. Annie and Randy are both asleep on the couch.

CREAK. The front door opens and Porter sneaks in.

He TIPTOES past them.

Down the hallway.

But Randy wakes up and sees Porter disappear into his room.

INT. MORALES HOME - PORTER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: The fading picture of Porter and Randy with their PARENTS tacked to a bulletin board.

Porter sits at his desk, a sadness in his eyes as he looks at his once happy family.

He's WIDE AWAKE.

Picks up his phone. Starts a NEW TEXT CHAIN with Nick and Ginny --

ON HIS PHONE: "You guys okay?"

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: A cell phone PHOTO OF NICK NAKED ON THE QUAD that someone posted to FACEBOOK.

Nick scrolls through the COMMENTS on his LAPTOP.

The disgust on his face grows with each one --

NICK
(reading)
*More like Burger King... The King
of Poop... King No-Dong...*

Next to his laptop, "NEW MESSAGE FROM PORTER" pops up on his phone but Nick doesn't notice, still reading the comments --

NICK (CONT'D)
King of Nick is a Fat Naked Idiot.
(to himself)
Now you're not even trying.

He sits back. Deep exhale. SHUTS his laptop.

Turns on the TV. But it's a HORROR MOVIE.

Nick quickly turns it off. Sits in silence.

Alone in the dark.

INT. GINNY'S HOME - GINNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sitting on the floor, Ginny leans against her door. Her parents' MUFFLED ARGUMENT echoes through the house.

She eyes the phone in her hand.

Types a TEXT. But hesitates for along moment before she...

Presses SEND.

INT. MORALES HOME - PORTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Porter's phone lights up. He grabs it --

ON HIS PHONE: The text from Ginny -- "Can I come over?"

Porter smiles as types a reply -- "The sooner the better."

From the other room, a DOORBELL CHIMES --

INT. MORALES HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Red and blue LIGHTS FLASH in the front window.

Randy gets up.

ANNIE

Cops?

He shrugs.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Is Porter home?

RANDY

He's in his room. Tried to sneak past us, probably had some beers with his dumb friends.

The doorbell CHIMES. Randy and Annie share a concerned look as he flips on the lights.

INT. MORALES HOME - PORTER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Porter cracks his door and peers down the hallway.

FROM HIS POV: Through the crack in the doorway, we see Randy open the front door. It's Chief Kresge. Their CONVERSATION IS MUFFLED. Suddenly, Randy motions towards Porter and --

Porter shuts the door. Leans against it. The room is dark.
Heavy nervous breaths --

BANG BANG! A knock on his door. Porter JUMPS.

RANDY (O.S.)
Get out here. Right now.

Porter steadies his breath. Opens the door. Through the crack, Randy gives him a stern look --

RANDY (CONT'D)
You've got some explaining to do.

INT. MORALES HOME - LIVING ROOM - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

ANGLE ON: A framed photo of the HAPPY FAMILY on the wall right above the patched hole. It's still off kilter.

Porter sits next to Randy and Annie on the couch. Chief Kresge and Officer Lam stand across the coffee table.

Kresge hesitates. Unsure. Deep steadying breath.

CHIEF KRESGE
What relationship did your father
have with Jordan Gibbons?

Porter looks nervously at the floor. Randy eyes him.

RANDY
He was dad's friend. They worked
together at the base. Why?

CHIEF KRESGE
I know what I'm about to say sounds
insane...but is there any reason
your father might have had to hurt
Lieutenant Jordan Gibbons?

They look at him. Confused.

RANDY
Of course not.

CHIEF KRESGE
No falling out? A work disagreement
that might have led to something?

RANDY
What are you getting at?

OFFICER LAM
(to Porter)
Why were you and your friends out
at Mr. Gibbons' tonight?

Randy throws a glare at Porter --

RANDY
Excellent question.

Porter turns to his brother apprehensively.

OFFICER LAM
Have you been before?

PORTER
(meekly nods)
My dad took us there years ago.

CHIEF KRESGE
Why go back tonight of all nights?

PORTER
(hesitant, quietly)
I don't know.

Porter looks down. Kresge and Lam share a look.

OFFICER LAM
Your parents, to the best of your
knowledge, passed away five months
ago, correct?

All three look up at the officers. Perplexed.

RANDY
To the best of our knowledge?

CHIEF KRESGE
We're just trying to put some
things together --

RANDY
(getting worked up)
You worked the case. You went to
the funeral. What are you saying?

Annie holds his arm, calms him.

CHIEF KRESGE
Technically, and I'm sorry to do
this, but since we never found your
father's body...

OFFICER LAM

It's never been officially ruled a
homicide.

This lands with Porter. He turns to Randy, a nervous
anticipation in his eyes.

RANDY

Get to the point, Chief, or I'm
going to have to ask you to leave.

Kresge nods and takes a PHOTO out of his jacket --

CHIEF KRESGE

Boys. Again, I apologize for
stirring up the past here, but I
don't know how else to do this.

For a long moment, he studies it before handing it to Randy.

CHIEF KRESGE (CONT'D)

We pulled this from security
footage taken last night.

Randy looks at it, Annie leans over --

CHIEF KRESGE (CONT'D)

That's the man we believe is
responsible for Gibbons' death.

-- *their eyes go wide.*

RANDY

That's not possible.

CHIEF KRESGE

I know. But I also know what I see
when I look at that photo.

Porter takes the photo from his brother and looks at it.
Utter CONFUSION fills his eyes --

And a hint of hope.

CHIEF KRESGE (CONT'D)

Tell me that isn't your father?

ANGLE ON: The PHOTOGRAPH of Gibbons, the Sullen Man, as we
saw him the night before. But now we clearly see "the
Intruder" and recognize him as PORTER'S DAD, CLYDE MORALES.

END OF ACT FIVE

TAG**EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - NIGHT**

Wearing her black hoodie low on her face, Ginny walks briskly down a sparsely lit road on the edge of town.

Her FOOTSTEPS ECHO through the night.

She looks over her shoulder. Paranoid.

Nothing.

Picks up the pace.

She passes one streetlight. Then another.

Looks over her shoulder.

Nothing.

She pulls her phone out of her pocket and types --

ON HER PHONE: A text to Porter, "Five minutes out."

GRRRRR. A menacing GROWL emanates from the darkness just past the streetlight's glow.

Ginny spins around.

The road is empty.

Silence other than her DEEP BREATHS.

She turns back but suddenly, something catches her eye --

In the trees, the PIERCING EYES OF A WHITE HYENA watch her.

For a stunned moment, Ginny doesn't move.

Suddenly, she breaks into a FULL ON SPRINT --

Her feet POUND THE PAVEMENT --

Ginny struggles to catch her PANICKED BREATH, sweat drips down her face --

She looks back --

Beneath the streetlight, the HYENA HOWLS at her.

Ginny breaks left and RACES towards a lit up baseball field --

Suddenly, the HYENA SHOOTS AFTER HER.

EXT. BISHOP HIGH SCHOOL - BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Ginny SPRINTS across her high school's rundown baseball diamond.

Behind her, the HYENA PICKS UP SPEED --

But suddenly, Ginny CAN'T LIFT HER FEET --

The HYENA RACES straight towards her --

Ginny desperately STRUGGLES TO MOVE but it's as if her shoes are made of concrete.

The HYENA CLOSES IN --

Ginny's every step is painfully impossible.

The HYENA LUNGES AT HER --

Terror fills her Ginny's eyes --

She SCREAMS --

ANGLE ON: In the shadows behind the dugout, as Ginny SCREAMS, we see SOMEONE WATCHING her from the darkness --

The CHILLING EMBODIMENT OF THE INHUMAN FACE we've seen sketches of in Porter's dad's notebook.

END OF SHOW