

ACCORDING TO PLAN

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE - DAY

Picturesque suburbia. Wood frame houses. Kids on bikes.

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE / COVINGTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

DANTE, 13, writes in a notebook while perched in an oak tree in the back yard. His rail thin body rests comfortably in a nook of branches. Spring bloom provides him privacy.

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE / CEROTA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

CARLY CEROTA, 16, practices soccer dribbling in her back yard. Glistening sweat, she's an attractive, talented player.

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE / COVINGTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dante looks up from his notebook. Clearly, this set of branches was chosen not only for comfort but for the view.

Dante watches Carly nail a kick into her practice net. She pumps her fist. Her t-shirt clings to her sweaty body. For a teenage boy, it's an attractive sight.

Carly retrieves the ball. A PLOP sound makes her look around. Dante, self-conscious that she's looking, adjusts himself. He peers across his yard for the source of the sound.

Dante spies his grandfather, NATE, 83, portly with glasses too big for his face, tossing a rock at a wood fence.

Nate stands by the fence, stares into space. He looks at the rock he just threw, then into the sky again. Looks confused.

Carly, flustered, gathers her ball and walks into her house. Dante closes his notebook, scampers down.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

KEN COVINGTON, 46, paces in front of floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking downtown St. Louis. He looks dapper and professional. Reads from an iPad as he speaks.

Three OLDER LAWYERS nod, engaged by his presentation. He's animated and focused and has them just where he wants them:

KEN

In summary, if I'm put onto the Androstar defense that I can utilize my years of experience and technical abilities to represent this firm in exemplary fashion under the national media spotlight.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

(from speaker phone)

Mr. Covington?

Buzz kill. Ken's shoulder's fall at the distraction.

KEN

We're in a meeting.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

I'm sorry to interrupt. It's your nephew. He said it was important.

Ken looks at the partners. Whatever momentum he had is gone now. He moves toward the door. The partners rise.

KEN

Very sorry about this. I'll follow up with each of you this afternoon. I really want this.

INT. LAW FIRM / KEN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ken punches the speaker button, peels off his blazer.

KEN

Dante?

INTERCUT BETWEEN KEN AND DANTE

DANTE

Hey.

Ken freezes, eyes ablaze at Dante's relaxed tone. As Ken speaks, he collects himself, gathers files and arranges his desk. A consummate multi-tasker.

KEN

I was just pulled from a career-changing meeting for something 'important.' And I get 'Hey.'

DANTE

It is important. Not urgent.

KEN
(sighs)
What's important but not urgent?

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clearly Dante's writing nook. Books, supplies and dog-eared notebooks fill the area. There's also a worn copy of "Treasure Island." Dante wanders with his cell.

DANTE
It's Pops.

That stops Ken cold. He settles, gives his full attention. On his desk we see a picture of a younger Ken graduating law school. A younger Nate proudly stands next to him.

KEN
Is he okay?

Dante looks into the backyard, watches Nate with curiosity.

DANTE
I... I guess he's okay. Right now he's just standing in the back yard looking at something. But earlier he threw a rock at the fence, then he just started staring again.

KEN
Was he trying to hit something?

DANTE
No. He just tossed it, looked around. Now, he's just staring.

Ken neatly adjusts his files, clearly desires order.

KEN
Okay. I'll be home in a few hours. I appreciate the call but next time, if it's not urgent -- please leave a message that it's important that I call back as soon as I can.

DANTE
Yes, sir.

Ken punches off speaker and gathers his materials. He puts his blazer back on, heaves a determined sigh and heads out into the bustling hallway of the firm.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / BACKYARD - DAY

Dante walks up to Nate.

DANTE

Pops?

NATE

(after a long beat)

Summer's a-comin'. Gonna need to
plant some flowers out here soon.
Yessir. Somethin' pretty. Need
somethin' for that shade spot too.

Nate punches a finger where the rock landed. Dante moves next to Nate, who looks surprised to see Dante.

NATE (CONT'D)

Dante -- what are you doing here?

DANTE

Umm... Uncle Ken wanted me to see
how you were doing.

NATE

What? I'm doin' perfectly fine,
thank you. Go in there and tell him
to mind his own business.

DANTE

Well, he isn't--

NATE

--And while you're in there, you
can tell your Grand Momma that I'm
gettin' mighty hungry.

Dante stares at Nate. Something isn't right.

NATE (CONT'D)

Well? Go on!

(grumbles to himself)

How I'm doin'. Such nonsense.

Dante looks confused. He rushes into the house.

INT. LAW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ken is poised to knock on the open office door of one of the partners we saw in the conference room.

Ken steps into the doorway and his cell CHIRPS in his coat pocket. Annoyed, he looks at the screen.

Exasperated, he backs out of the doorway, ducks into an empty office. The partner ends his dictation, looks for Ken.

INTERCUT BETWEEN KEN AND DANTE

KEN

Dante? What's going on?

DANTE

Sorry, but Pops is really acting weird. I checked on him after we talked and he got all upset... like we're spying on him or something. Then he wanted me to go ask Grand Momma to get dinner fixed.

KEN

Oh, brother. Did you say anything?

DANTE

I didn't know what to say. She's been dead two years now.

Ken nervously paces the floor.

KEN

All right. Just let it be, but keep an eye on him. I'll be home soon.

Dante looks out the window. Nate approaches the back door.

DANTE

Pops is comin'. I better go. Bye.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Nate looks around, as if he's lost something. Shakes his head in confusion and enters the house.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dante throws the phone on the table as Nate enters.

NATE

Who you talkin' to?

DANTE

Uncle Ken. He was asking if I had finished my homework.

NATE

Have you?

DANTE

Oh... almost. Just writing my journal entry for the day.

At that, Nate joins Dante, seems genuinely interested.

NATE

A journal? What kind of journal?

DANTE

For English. We write something daily. It can be about anything. Usually I make up stories about detectives or crime-fighters or superheroes. Mysteries. I like stories about good versus evil.

NATE

I see. And does good always win in your stories?

DANTE

Yeah.

NATE

Wish that's how it always worked in real life. The reality is that good and evil are equal combatants. Lot of times the battle doesn't quite go the way you think, or want. Not always a fair fight, either.

DANTE

What do you mean?

NATE

Well... evil doesn't play by the rules. With evil, you think you know how things are gonna turn out. Life is going great, everything is perfect and the sun is smiling on you, but then--

WHAM!! Nate SLAPS the table. Dante jumps.

NATE (CONT'D)

You find yourself out of a job. Or you get cancer. Or you see a life you've built with someone crumble into nothing...

Nate's voice trails off. He looks past Dante as if something or someone is behind him. Dante turns and looks. Nothing.

NATE (CONT'D)

But I think sometimes evil has to be used to produce something good.

(off Dante's look)

Remember the story about Moses? The Pharaoh's people had to endure disease and famine and death of the Egyptians' firstborn before he let Moses lead the slaves out of Egypt.

DANTE

So good still wins in the end, then, right?

NATE

In the end, I suppose it does. But getting to the end sure can be a bitch sometimes.

Nate laughs, which gets Dante giggling. Nate gets up.

NATE (CONT'D)

I'm happy to see you writing, son. Does this old heart proud.

Nate walks away. As he goes--

NATE (CONT'D)

Maybe you can write a story about your old Pops one day, and how I saved the day!

Dante watches him leave. He twirls a pen in his hand. Wheels turning. His eyes dart about. Inspired, he begins to write.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CRACK. The unmistakable sound of a hit baseball emanates from the television. Dante watches a Cardinals game.

Ken enters, carrying a bag of fast-food under one arm and his briefcase slung over the other.

He sets the food out on the dining room table, calls over his shoulder to Dante who still hasn't moved from the couch.

KEN

Don't hurt yourself getting up too fast. It's not like I worked all day and brought home your favorite.

DANTE
Wainwright's in a jam. I'll be
right there.

KEN
Where's Pops?

DANTE
Upstairs.

Another CRACK of the bat. Dante groans. Ken peers at the television, shakes his head and saunters up the stairs.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / NATE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ken pops into the doorway.

KEN
Pops, I brought home dinner...

Ken's eyes land on a large, bulging duffle bag in the middle of the room. Nate sits calmly, dressed nicely.

NATE
Well, I guess we can eat before we
leave but then we better get going.

Ken pulls up a chair, settles in. He's done this before.

KEN
Where we going?

NATE
Sakes alive, boy. You forget again?

KEN
You know me, Pops. Couldn't tell
you what I had for breakfast today.
How 'bout you? What'd you do today?

Nate checks his wallet, gathers papers from his desk.

NATE
Got packed. You goin' like that?

KEN
(examines his suit)
Nah. I'll change after we eat.
Let's talk about this over dinner.

Ken leads Nate by the arm. Nate reacts to Ken's touch as if he just noticed his presence.

NATE

What are you doing here?

For all his troubles, Ken has the patience of Job.

KEN

Well, I do live here. You hungry?

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DINING ROOM - LATER

Half-eaten dinners in front of them. Dante watches the Cardinals game from a distance. Ken reviews work.

NATE

(laser sharp)

Ken, I'm grateful that you brought dinner home. It was delicious, but we're wastin' time here. I really think we should get going.

KEN

(not looking up)

Soon, Pops. Where we going again?

Nate SLAPS the table again. Hard. Dante's eyes slowly pull from the television. Ken gently lays down his paper.

NATE

I've got to get to New Orleans.

KEN

New Orleans? You just moved here. Why rush back? The house hasn't even sold.

NATE

It's where my treasure is.

KEN

Your treasure.

NATE

Ken, I didn't let my students at Tulane answer my questions by repeatin' my statements and I'm not inclined to let you get away with this stallin' technique. We can talk on the way. Now, let's go.

Nate stands, buttons his sport jacket and opens the front door. Dante rises. Ken nods for him to go watch TV.

KEN
Your duffle. It's upstairs.

NATE
Bring it out. I'll be in the car.

Nate leaves. When the door closes, Dante rushes to the window, watches Nate wait by the car and stare into space. He turns to Ken.

DANTE
Told you. Acting crazy all day. But then -- just like that -- he's got it all together. Sharp as a tack.

Ken looks through the window, shakes his head as he watches Nate check himself out in the car side mirrors.

KEN
He used to be so strong. My hero, you know? And now? Well, life seems to have gotten the best of him.

DANTE
I dunno. At his age, maybe *he's* gotten the best out of *life*.
(beat)
Wonder what the treasure is.

KEN
Treasure? There is no treasure.

DANTE
But what if he's telling the truth? What if it's like... gold. Gold doubloons! How sweet would that be?

KEN
Pops was a professor, not a pirate, Dante. You've been reading too much Robert Louis Stevenson. But you know what *would* be sweet? You heading to bed. I'm going to go bring your grandfather in.

DANTE
What if he's like this tomorrow?

KEN
Then we'll deal with it tomorrow.

DANTE
But shouldn't we take him to a doc--

KEN
A doctor can't fix what's ailing
him. Now go on, get to bed.

Dante opens his mouth to counter, then heads toward his room.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Nate leans over Ken's stylish car, examines something on the hood. Ken approaches, hands in pockets.

KEN
Whatcha doing, Pops?

NATE
Look at this--
(points to hood)
Bird shit! Don't you know that can
ruin the paint, son?

Ken looks at the hood, shrugs.

KEN
I'll take care of it this weekend.

NATE
Damn right you will.

KEN
How about we call it a night? It's
late. I've got a busy day tomorrow.

NATE
So go to bed! Or do you need me to
come tuck you in?

INT. CEROTA HOUSE / CARLY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Typical teenage girl's room. Carly sits on her bed, scrolls through her phone. She observes Nate and Ken in the Covington driveway from her window, scoots over for a better view.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

KEN
Will you just come inside, Pops?
Seriously, you're going to get the
neighbors all worked up.

Nate suddenly points up at Carly.

NATE
You mean like her?
(yells)
Didn't your parents ever teach you
to mind your own business?

Carly looks horrified, falls back into her bed.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nate and Ken watch Carly disappear from view. Ken, whistles, motions for a technical foul, waves Nate inside.

KEN
I've gotta 'T' you up on that,
Pops. Inside. Hit the showers.

Nate looks around. Suddenly seems lost. He studies his hands, collects himself with a deep breath, then marches inside.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ken SLAMS the front door. Nate goes upstairs, calls out:

NATE
Don't think I've forgotten, Ken!

KEN
Forgotten what?

NATE
The bird shit! Get it off!

He disappears up the stairs. Ken shakes his head, turns on the TV. Loses himself in the baseball game.

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE / CEROTA HOUSE - DAY

Carly exits her car, grabs her soccer travel bag from the backseat. Dante switches his backpack to the other shoulder, slows his stride, nods to Carly. An 'A' for effort in 'cool.'

CARLY
Hey, Dante.

Dante overcompensates. He stops, simply stands and stares. He takes 'paying attention' too far. Carly grows uncomfortable under his overly-attentive gaze and steps toward her house.

DANTE
Soccer practice?

Carly, in her uniform, with her bag, now walks with purpose.

CARLY
Nothing gets past you.

And she walks away with a parting wave.

DANTE
Well, see you around.

Dante hikes up his backpack, trudges on, mutters to himself.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dante continues to berate himself in mumble until he plops his backpack down in an eerily quiet house.

DANTE
(beat; calls)
Pops, you upstairs?

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / NATE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dante peeks in. It's empty. Bed made. No duffle bag.

DANTE
Pops?

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Dante races around, checks by the fence, near the trees.

DANTE
Pops?!

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Nate has the duffle bag in one shopping cart and tries to navigate a second cart toward the automatic door. Too narrow.

Finally, a customer exits, sees his struggle and attempts to assist with one cart. He takes control of the cart holding the duffle and Nate gets defensive, tries to tug it back.

The automatic door has opened and closed several times and a MANAGER steps outside. He gently guides Nate inside.

INT. GROCERY STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Nate peers at the Manager's name tag, sizes him up.

NATE

Listen... Calvin Edson, Manager, I need you to watch my cart for a few minutes. I gotta pick up some things for my trip.

CALVIN

Sorry sir, we don't watch carts. Why don't you leave it in your car.

NATE

It's got bird shit on it.

CALVIN

I'm sure it'll be fine.

NATE

Just watch the damn bag. Took me an hour just to find this place, now do you want my business, or not?

A few customers turn to the scene. Nate's wild eyes stare down Calvin. After a long beat, he takes Calvin's silence for acceptance and shoves off. Calvin peers at the duffle.

Nate moves away, pulls groceries into his shopping cart. Calvin fumbles with the identification panel by the handle.

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE / CEROTA HOUSE - DAY

Dante sprints to the door. BANGS hard. He's greeted by a less than enthusiastic Carly, freshly showered, drying her hair.

DANTE

Any chance you or your parents have seen my Pops?

CARLY

They're not home. Where's your uncle?

DANTE

He's at work. Some kind of hearing. No cell phones allowed in court.

CARLY

Should I call the police?

DANTE

No. No.

(beat; looks around)

Help me try to find him?

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE - DAY

Dante and Carly walk, looking in yards and driveways.

CARLY

He was getting in your Uncle's
business last night. They have a
big fight or something?

DANTE

No, that was a... misunderstanding.

CARLY

Is he on medication or anything?

DANTE

No, he's fine... I think.

CARLY

Hold up.

Carly points to a car stopping up the street. Calvin parks,
lifts Nate's duffle bag out of the back. Nate exits the car,
grabs his duffle bag and walks toward his home.

Calvin retrieves a grocery bag from the car and trails Nate.
Carly and Dante jog up to catch them in the drive way.

DANTE

Pops! Oh my gosh! Where were you?

Nate fixes a look on Dante like that was a ridiculous
question. He glares at Carly then proceeds inside as if
nothing unusual was happening. Calvin extends the bag.

CALVIN

He was short two-thirty five. Any
chance you can make good on that?

Dante taps empty pockets. Carly produces a dollar.

CARLY

All I got. Thanks for bringing him.

Calvin takes the dollar, shrugs like he had no choice and
glances at Nate peering at them from inside the window.

CALVIN

He okay?

DANTE

He's... he's fine. Thanks again.

Calvin shuffles to his car. Carly and Dante share an awkward moment. Dante can't seem to speak without the drama at hand.

CARLY

Well, guess I'll see you around.

She walks to her driveway. Dante watches, grows anxious not wanting to let the moment pass. He blurts:

DANTE

Hey, Carly.

(beat; she turns; waits)

I owe you one.

She shrugs casually. Whatever. Dante grumbles under his breath again as he stomps inside.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / KITCHEN - LATER

Nate drops the grocery bag on the island. Several items spill out. Nate curses, collects them. Dante enters, distraught.

DANTE

I spent an hour looking for you!

NATE

Why? I'm right here.

DANTE

But you weren't when I got home!

And you didn't let anyone know

where you were.

Nate throws drinks in the fridge, SLAMS the door.

NATE

Why should I do that? You know how
old I am, boy? Do you?

Dante shakes his head.

NATE (CONT'D)

Eighty-three goddamn years old!
Some days I feel like a hundred and
three! I'm a grown man and people
think I owe them an accounting of
every minute of my life!

(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)

Let me tell you something, Dante. I joined the Army at nineteen because I was tired of my parents telling me what to do every day! Went over to Korea, got wounded twice--

Nate lifts his shirt, shows bullet scars on his stomach. Dante makes a face -- he didn't need to see that.

NATE (CONT'D)

--and lost three toes to frostbite at the Chosin Reservoir. When I came home I worked my ass off at Princeton to get my doctorate and even harder to get tenure at Tulane, so I think I've earned the right not to have to ask permission to walk out of my house whenever I want! You have a problem with that?

Dante's eyes grow wide. He runs out of the house.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Dante scrambles up the oak tree to his writing spot. He heaves deep, calming breaths. Nate appears, spots Dante.

Dante watches Nate approach, then freezes as he hears a familiar WHOOMP. Then another. Across the fence, he spots Carly kicking into her practice goal.

NATE

Dante! Get down from there!

Carly's attention is drawn to the fence line. She spots Dante in the tree. Their eyes meet. Dante's shoulders sag.

It's hard to tell if Carly is amused or saddened. She addles to the fence, drops out of Dante's view.

NATE (CONT'D)

Dante... I'm sorry, son. I don't know what came over me... It's just... I don't seem to be myself lately. Wish I could tell you why. Maybe chalk it up to being an old man with an old way of behavin'. Maybe it's... something else.

DANTE

You scared me today. I didn't know what to do when you weren't here.

(MORE)

DANTE (CONT'D)
Didn't know where to look or how to
get in touch with you! You need a
cell phone, you know?

NATE
I don't need the government
tracking me wherever I go.

DANTE
Well, at least *they* would know
where you are.

NATE
Look, I said I was sorry. Now get
down from that tree!

DANTE
Uh-uh.

A stern look from Nate.

DANTE (CONT'D)
I mean... no, sir.

NATE
I see. Well, what's it gonna take
to get you down here, then?

IN CARLY'S BACKYARD -- Carly leans looks through the slats in
the fence at Dante, who stares with determination at Nate.

DANTE
You go to the doctor.

NATE
A doctor? Why? I feel fine!

DANTE
You said you haven't felt like
yourself lately. And you've been
forgetting things. AND a couple of
days ago -- you asked me to go tell
Grand Momma to get dinner ready.

NATE
I did?

DANTE
Yes, sir.

NATE
(mumbles low)
Grand Momma... what on earth...

DANTE
So, will you go?

Nate looks around. Sticks his hands in his pockets. Resigned.

NATE
Maybe. Not promising anything.

Dante climbs down. Nate heads to the house. As he goes--

NATE (CONT'D)
(calls to Carly)
I see you over there. Pokin' your
nose in our business -- again.

Carly collapses against the fence. How does he do that?

EXT. LAW OFFICE - NIGHT

Ken pulls his keys out, approaches his car, the last to leave for the day. He reacts to his phone vibrating. Hurries.

INT. KEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Ken settles behind the wheel, reads a text:

INSERT TEXT ON PHONE: "Pops nowhere to be found again. Out looking now. Covered the usual spots."

Ken slams the car into gear, barrels out of the lot.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Nate sits calmly on the bench, feet propped on the duffle bag. He's alone, seems coherent and relaxed.

Dante jogs around the corner, literally passes Nate's bench. Only out of the corner of his eyes as he checks yards with a flashlight does he spot Nate.

His narrow beam of light pans back, ends up square on Nate's face. Nate blocks the light from shining in his face.

Dante sighs, grabs his phone, texts a message, saunters to Nate's bench. He collapses next to Nate, tired from running.

NATE
(after a long beat)
What are you doing here?

INT. KEN'S CAR (MOVING) - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ken's knuckles squeeze the wheel. Tension thick. Nate sits calmly in the passenger seat. Dante looms in the back.

KEN
I'm done, Pops. I'm a patient guy,
but this can't keep happening.

Nate gazes at the stars. Oblivious. This just fuels Ken's fire. He manages through gritted teeth:

KEN (CONT'D)
You know I'm about sick of this
selective listening crap.

More gazing from Nate. Ken's grip tightens. Dante reacts to the veins bulging on Kenrick's forehead and leans forward.

DANTE
Please, Pops. You did say maybe.

On that, Nate turns, nods. Indeed he did. He nods again.

NATE
Okay, then. First thing tomorrow.

KEN
You're kidding, right? Tomorrow?

NATE
If it's a problem, then --

KEN
--Well, tomorrow's a Saturday, but
I'll make it work for Monday, okay?

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE / CEROTA HOUSE - NIGHT

Ken's feet stab at the pavement. Dante lingers behind him, stealing glances at Carly's toned legs disappearing into her night shirt. Ken checks on Nate sitting in the car.

KEN
(hands her papers)
I drew up a quick authorization
letter. All his info is here. I
really wish I could be there but I
have court in the morning and I
want him to keep this appointment
while he's agreeable.

Carly nods, skims the papers, bounces eyes off Dante.

CARLY
So, maybe what? Two, three hours?

Ken shakes out of his thought process, opens wallet.

KEN
Right. For your time. Gas.

DANTE
Parking.

Ken shoots him a look. No help. He digs deeper. Carly smiles at Dante. He beams for Carly then sours for Ken.

KEN
(hands her cash)
Here's fifty. Get some lunch too.

CARLY
(takes cash)
Thanks, Mr. Covington.
(direct to Dante)
You'll have him ready at ten? I'll
pick you guys up. G'night.

She closes the door. Ken and Dante return to the car.

KEN
Wish I could've made fifty bucks a
day when I was 16.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DANTE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dante has the Cardinals game on the radio. He writes in his journal, pen moving fast, trying to keep up with his mind.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / NATE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nate lays on his bed, studies a map of New Orleans. As he folds out the portions, a slip of loose leaf paper slides free. It has hand-written notes and sketches.

Nate places it on the folded map, studies it closely.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ken paces, gesturing while he talk to himself, obviously rehearsing a prepared argument. The Cardinals game is on mute on the television. He is struck by an idea, writes it down.

EXT. FRANKLIN DRIVE - DAY

HONK. Carly peers at the Covington house. Motor running.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nate is dressed well, seems sullen but resigned. Dante grabs his journal and a paperback, rushes to the door.

He's about to wave and hurry Nate but he glimpses the serious tone in his grandfather's eyes and simply walks up, smiles, takes Nate's hand and they walk out of the house together.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. WILLISTON, 60, cherubic yet stately, closes his chart and clasps his hands over his belly. Nate squirms across from him. He keeps looking at the folder, hoping to see results.

DR. WILLISTON

Mr. Covington, I'm sure you don't want me to sugarcoat things. Let's start with some obvious things. Little heavy in the waistline but I see that as a sign of character.

Williston taps his belly, grins. It's lost on Nate who stares at the folder. Anxious. Williston presses on.

DR. WILLISTON (CONT'D)

Your blood pressure is pretty high. We'll need to put you on some medicine for that. That's manageable. Same with your cholesterol. It's off the charts. We need to get that down. You a smoker by any chance?

Nate eyes are fixated on that folder.

DR. WILLISTON (CONT'D)

Mr. Covington?

NATE

What?

DR. WILLISTON

I asked if you were a smoker.

NATE

Used to be. About fifty years. My wife made me give it up.

(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)

She saw on the news that the Marlboro Man died. Threw every pack out of the house that day.

DR. WILLISTON

Good for her.

NATE

I still sneak a cigar every once in awhile in the backyard when no one's around.

DR. WILLISTON

Uh-huh. You drink?

NATE

If you mean alcohol, then yes. Goes well with the cigar.

Williston studies the folder, then closes it.

DR. WILLISTON

Been forgetting things lately? Find yourself doing things out of character for you?

NATE

What do you mean?

DR. WILLISTON

Like forgetting your wife has passed away? Planning a trip to New Orleans for...

(reopens folder)

...some buried treasure?

NATE

My son been talkin' to you? That no good son of a--

DR. WILLISTON

Now hold on, sir. He provided that info to my nurse because he thought it might be relevant.

Nate looks away, embarrassed.

NATE

I'm not some lunatic. I'm not going to let you send me off to some high-priced mental institution.

DR. WILLISTON

Don't intend to. But I want to send you to a neurologist to run more tests. MRI, EKG, some blood work.

NATE

I don't need a bunch of tests from some overpriced specialist hack to tell me I'm a broken down old man!

Williston leans back, levels a serious look across the desk.

DR. WILLISTON

Maybe you are just getting old. But your symptoms could be emblematic of something more serious, and I think you owe it to yourself to check it out.

INT. MEDICAL TESTING CENTER - MORNING

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Nate's body slowly disappears into an MRI machine. Anxiety scribbled on his face. His fists clench.

A number of EKG electrodes are attached to Nate's chest as he walks a treadmill. He labors immensely. Breathes hard. A bored technician sits nearby, watches the scan machine.

Blood being taken from Nate's arm. He winces.

Slowly dresses in a waiting room. Sad and helpless.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nate and Ken enter. Dante reads, jumps up as they enter. Nate ignores Dante, heads directly to his room.

DANTE

What did you find out?

KEN

Not certain yet, but the doctor thinks it's early onset dementia.

DANTE

So, what do we do?

Ken lands heavy on the sofa, rubs his temples. Long day.

KEN
I'm working on it, Dante.
(glances at Dante's book)
Jekyll and Hyde again. Seriously?

DANTE
Yeah, sorry. I should be getting
stoned, playing video games all
day. I've gotta step up my game.

Ken grins, rises, pulls Dante from the sofa.

KEN
That's right, Badass. Let's go.

DANTE
Where?

KEN
You'll find out.
(calls upstairs)
Pops, come on down.

EXT. ICE CREAM SHOP - DUSK

Old-fashioned scoop shop. Umbrellas on picnic tables outside.
Nate, Ken and Dante finish off ice cream sundaes.

NATE
Surprised you let me have that,
Ken. After all those tests and all.

KEN
Despite what you might think, I'm
trying to do right here, Pops. Now,
I've got an idea and I want you to
hear me all the way out before you
start kicking and screaming. You
too, Dante. I bought the ice cream.
I get the floor for five minutes.

Nate makes a show of wiping his mouth. He sets aside his dish
to give Ken his full attention. Dante digs into his scoops.

KEN (CONT'D)
Ok. Dr. Williston feels that you
should be accessible to some
medical care on a regular basis and
you've flat out told me that
assisted living and a nursing home
are off the table, so I'm left with
very few options. I can't work from
home and Dante can't drive.
(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)
You don't need a full time nurse
but you might need to get help
quickly on days when I'm not
available. You both with me so far?

Nate nods, an encouraging teacher, prodding a student on.
Dante finishes his ice cream, unsure where Ken's headed.

KEN (CONT'D)
The day you went to see Dr.
Williston. The Cerota girl, Carly
drove. What if I ask her--

DANTE
Yes!

Ken's eyebrows raise. That was a little too fast.

KEN
--to stay--

DANTE
Uh-huh!

Ken tries to maintain focus. What's going on here?

KEN
--at the house during the day until
we see how your meds help you?

NATE
You're hiring a babysitter for me?

KEN
Hardly, Pops. Think of her more
like your personal assistant. She
can drive, help with appointments
and shopping. Take you places.

NATE
Like New Orleans!

Dante turns - Ken waves him down, look into Nate's eyes.

KEN
Like the grocery store. Barber
shop. You know what I mean.

Nate deflates. Dante's body language is ten times more
animated and energized now and it's not the sugar high. Ken
leaves a tip, pats Nate's shoulder as they file out.

KEN (CONT'D)
I've already cleared it with her
parents. Now, we've got to work out
the terms. Trust me on this, Pops,
I think it works for everyone.

DANTE
I agree. I don't see a down side.

Ken playfully shoves Dante toward the car door. Kids!

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / STREET - LATER

Ken slows to turn in the driveway. Dante looks out the window to see: Carly in an animated argument with her PARENTS in the driveway. He starts to roll down the window when--

KEN
Not your argument to hear, Dante.
If she wants you to know what it's
about she'll tell you...
(low; to himself)
Just hope it's something that
doesn't interfere with my plan.

Dante reluctantly powers the window back up. He watches as Carly's parents storm inside, leaving Carly to sit on the porch with her face in her knees, sobbing.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Dante hangs behind as Nate and Ken stroll to the house. Ken looks back, sees Dante staring over at Carly. He starts to say something, then reconsiders and goes inside with Nate.

EXT. CEROTA RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Dante slowly eases into Carly's yard until he's ten yards away. Stands there awkwardly, trying to decide his next move.

CARLY
What do you want?

DANTE
Um... nothing, really. Just wanted
to see if you were okay.

Carly raises her head, wipes the tears away.

CARLY

Would you be if your parents told you they were going to Paris for their anniversary and leaving you all alone for almost two weeks?

The words strike Dante like daggers. He turns quickly on his heels, dashes away. Carly instantly realizes her mistake.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Dante? Dante, I'm sorry!

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / KITCHEN - MORNING

Nate reads the paper at the table. Dante gulps down milk, watches Carly keenly. Shorts and a tight fitting T-shirt scream for his attention. Ken shows Carly the fridge.

KEN

Fridge is stocked with pretty much anything you need. I've left fifty dollars there on the counter in case of an emergency. And speaking of emergencies...

(hands her his card)

Here's my office and cell numbers. But DO NOT call unless it really is an actual emergency, like Pops fell down a well or something.

NATE

I could just go ahead and die now if that would help.

KEN

Maybe next week. I've got too much going on to deal with arranging your funeral right now.

NATE

Don't want one anyway.

KEN

I've got to go. See you tonight.

Ken walks out. Dante and Carly's attention shifts to Nate. His face hangs low over as he scans the sports section.

CARLY

Why don't you want a funeral? You know? Where people can cry and remember them. I read somewhere it helps with closure.

NATE

If they remember me and start
cryin', then what's the point?

DANTE

I wish I could remember my parents.
I don't even remember the service.

Carly hangs her head. Sheepish as she remembers her words.

CARLY

That's so sad. But don't you have
pictures or videos of them that you
can look at every once in awhile?
Help you at least stay connected?

Nate clears his throat. Loudly. Dante stares at Nate.

DANTE

No. They were all burned up--

NATE

-- I thought we had an agreement
that we were not to speak of that
in this house.

DANTE

I don't see why I can't talk about
how my parents died! About why I
don't have any memories of them!

NATE

Talking about what happened doesn't
bring them back. Just keeps
stirring up the past.

DANTE

But I want to know, Pops. Knowing
who they were will help me learn
who I am.

Nate sighs. He suddenly finds the backyard view interesting.
Carly gets Dante's attention, prompts him with a look.

DANTE (CONT'D)

I want you to tell me about my
parents. Anything. Please.

Nate stands, walks over to the window. No response.

NATE

You remember that day I told you
that in real life, good and evil
are equal combatants?

(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)

How lots of times the battle
doesn't quite go the way you want?
Life ain't fair, Dante. Now's not
the time to get into it. We've got
company.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / BACKYARD - DAY

PLOP. A tray of lily bulbs are set down in the dirt near the spot where Nate threw the rock at the fence. Dante and Carly dig in the dirt, preparing the soil.

Nate sips a lemonade in a lawn chair, basks in the glow of supervisor. Dante and Carly kneel together, planting.

Dante steals looks at Carly as they brush arms and hands, working together. Carly wipes her brow, oblivious to him.

NATE

Not too close. They need room.

Dante and Carly plant bulbs further apart, filling in the base with soil and water. Nate inspects their work.

NATE (CONT'D)

Ms. Cerota. Since we're going to be
spending time together, I'd like
you to understand my rules.

Dante sighs. Buzz kill. Carly stops working, turns to him.

CARLY

Rules, Mr. Covington?

NATE

Dante?

Dante's shoulders fall. He heaves a resigned sigh.

DANTE

You need to read something,
practice something and learn
something every day.

NATE

And?

DANTE

And share it with someone by the
end of the day.

NATE

And?

DANTE
(mumbles; barely audible)
Finish well.

Nate leans back, happy for his point to be delivered.

Carly slowly packs dirt around the bulbs. Her body language clearly showing her second thoughts at this gig.

NATE
Dante, since this is Ms. Cerota's
first day, perhaps you'd like to
start. What are we doing today?

DANTE
Planting lilies.

NATE
Which closely resemble?

DANTE
Fleur-de-lis.

Carly kneels attentively, part overwhelmed, part inspired.

NATE
So maybe this evening, Ms. Cerota
can share a little of what she's
read, learned and practiced today.

Nate toasts himself and chugs a deep drink of lemonade then wanders to another part of the yard. Dante pats the soil, avoids Carly's gaze. When Nate is out of earshot, she fires:

CARLY
This is summer break. I am not
doing that everyday.

DANTE
Don't worry. He'll forget he even
said it. This looks pretty good.

Dante sits back, rather proud of how the arrangement looks. Carly watches him, seems to see him differently now.

CARLY
Finish well? What's that all about?

DANTE
It's on of Pop's favorite sayings.
Think he gets it from the Bible.
Luke something or another. Don't
lay the foundation for something
without intending to complete it.
(MORE)

DANTE (CONT'D)
Otherwise people will just mock
you. So it doesn't matter--

NATE
(from across the yard)
...How you start, or how you get
there, as long as you finish, and
finish well.

Carly and Dante look up, surprised to be overheard. Carly
returns to the lilies.

CARLY
So what's this flare dooly, anyway?

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DANTE'S ROOM - DAY

Dante pulls one of notebooks off the shelf. This one is a
story book, complete with illustrations. He turns pages
rapidly. Carly sits on his bed, looks around.

Dante finds the page, turns, catches a breath a bit when he
finds Carly, in all her glory, relaxing on his bed. He
stutter-steps toward her, offering the book.

DANTE
Ever watch the New Orleans Saints?

CARLY
Only when they play the Rams.

DANTE
Their helmet decal is a symbol
mostly associated with the French
monarchy.

Carly turns pages holding a story and illustrations by Dante.
She glances around the room, listens to him speak.

CARLY
How do know all this stuff?

DANTE
I read a lot. Sometimes Pops does
remember his rule and I have to
learn something quick.
(beat)
By the way, it's really cool that
you're doing this. I mean, I know
you're getting paid, but Uncle Ken
just... well, sometimes even when
we want to do the right thing, it
blows up in our faces, ya know?

Carly puts down the book, holds a smile on Dante. The kind of smile that only popular guys ever get with Dante around.

CARLY

You're a cool kid, you know that?

She bounces up, heads downstairs. Dante clutches his book, sits on the bed. It'll take a while for the glow to fade.

INT. LAW FIRM / KEN'S OFFICE - DAY

BUSBY SAXTON, 65, distinguished with his graying hair, sits on a couch. Ken sits next to him. Calm, collected.

BUSBY

Haven't seen you at the club. It's like you're hiding from us.

KEN

Been preoccupied at home. Father has some... health issues, and moved in with me.

BUSBY

I see. Well, it's certainly a difficult choice to make, isn't it? The life of a litigation attorney versus the life of a family man...

KEN

I don't think I'm making that choice at all. I'm here well after everyone has--

BUSBY

--Regardless, I'm seeing a disconnect at work lately that is a bit disconcerting.

(beat)

I'm giving the AndroStar case to McMillan.

Ken's shoulders collapse. Along with his heart.

KEN

Why are you doing this, Buzz?

BUSBY

This is a billion dollar toxic tort case, Ken. Blake lives and breathes that shit. It consumes him.

(MORE)

BUSBY (CONT'D)

He'll probably be dead by the time he's fifty, but he'll be busting his ass 24/7 making sure that he's milking the case for every dime it's worth. And if he wins it, so much the better.

KEN

(desperate)

Buzz, c'mon! I've been doing the due diligence on this case for at least six months now. I've handled all the major discovery and put it on a tee and for what? So Blake take over and ring up a ton of fees? I don't deserve to be thrown to the sidelines like this!

Busby's mood turns serious. He gets up, stands over Ken in an imposing manner.

BUSBY

You're not going to the sidelines, Ken. There are plenty of other cases for you to head up. In fact, I want you to go to New York to handle the Graystone deposition.

KEN

The Graystone case? Seriously? This is such bull--

Ken stops, tries to hide his displeasure, but isn't doing a very good job. Busby's eyebrows arch at the body language.

BUSBY

There a problem?

KEN

It's a two-bit depo. Most of their testimony we already know from discovery. We could easily settle this case, and turning it into a fishing expedition isn't going to help the settlement cause. This is crap, Buzz. It's associate work.

Busby's lets out an exasperated breath.

BUSBY

Who cares if it's a fishing expedition? It's billable hours, and a lot of them. Just do it!

He SLAMS the door behind him. Ken slumps, dejected.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Ken wipes down the hood of the car. Nate lugs a box out of the garage, carries it with two hands toward the house.

KEN

No birdshit. Happy now? Hey, where you going with that?

Nate props the box against the house while opening the front door. He struggles to keep it balanced on his knee.

NATE

Where's it look like I'm goin'?
Jeez, try to at least sound like a lawyer.

Ken scoots over to help him but Nate's balance falters and the box spills it's contents over the doorway area.

In seconds, items from decades of Nate's life in New Orleans spread out between the two men. Photos, certificates, a Deed, Marriage license. One prominent item on top - A leather book.

Nate's hand caresses the cover as if touching a loved one. Ken allows him his moment. Squats beside him.

Nate slowly opens the book. Inside, meticulously preserved inside laminated sleeves are hand-written letters to Nate in feminine script. The signature reads: Love always, Mabel.

KEN

Sorry, Pops! Her birthday is...

NATE

...Tomorrow.

KEN

Tomorrow. We had a deal about that box. Maybe this weekend it goes back? It makes you -- challenging.

NATE

Well, I'm sorry if creating this life you now have makes you feel... challenged at times. After all you have a trip to New York to prepare for. I'm sorry.

KEN

Pops. C'mon.

With the box and its contents properly re-packed, Nate disappears inside. Dante steps to the doorway.

DANTE

You didn't forget, did you?

KEN

No. It's just... work has me out of sorts lately. I'm not thinking ahead. Anticipating his triggers. Can you make sure he puts that stuff away when I'm gone?

DANTE

Why? He's not hurting anyone.

Ken simmers. Once again, his decisions being questioned. Tired from a long day of defending, he gives Dante a sour look and pushes past him toward his bedroom.

KEN

Forget it. Take him to New Orleans too. What the hell do I know?

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DANTE' ROOM - NIGHT

Dante scribbles furiously in his notebook.

DANTE (V.O.)

'You're a cool kid, you know that?'
She said through perfect pursed lips. It was an invitation and I was ready for it. Striding to her side, stroking her cheek so that she knew her message was received loud and clear, I leaned down.

Dante's pen pulls up, waves as he strokes his chin. Mischievous grin growing. He eyes the bed where Carly sat.

NATE (O.S.)

Dante!

A notebook was never closed faster. Dante buries it in his other books, answers his door. Nate bounds in with the box.

He sets the leather book aside, shows Dante a picture of himself, much younger, kissing Mabel's cheek. It looks like a corny newlywed photo but Nate's fingers circle the border.

NATE (CONT'D)

We got it wrong. The lilies were further from the fence.

Dante's mind is back on his fictional conquest of Carly in the notebook. He shakes his head, tries to focus.

DANTE

So, we'll move them, Pops.

NATE

Ok. I'll get my flashlight.

Nate marches to the door. Dante sits up, sharpens his tone.

DANTE

Not now. Tomorrow.

Nate stops. He stands for a long beat, almost evaluating Dante's sanity. Long enough for his eyes to well up.

NATE

What is it with you people?

(long beat)

You don't get it or you don't care,
one of the two. Either way, you're
setting yourselves up to fail.

Dante rubs his eyes. Long day. He settles onto his bed.

DANTE

First thing in the morning, Pops.
Carly will be here after her
parents leave for the airport.

Nate gently replaces the photo in the box, carefully lays the leather book on top of it. He carries his box from the room.

NATE

We're not promised a tomorrow.

Nate trudges from the room. Dante turns over in his bed, eyes darting around. Something in that resonating with him.

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Ken walks out, suitcase in one hand, briefcase in the other. Nate and Dante follow. Ken throws them in the trunk.

A HONK across the way. Carly is in her driveway as well. She waves half-heartedly as her parents drive away.

KEN

(to Carly)

Your parents going somewhere?

CARLY
Yeah. Paris. Without me.

Ken suddenly looks panicked.

KEN
So... wait. Are you still able--

CARLY
I'll be over. Same as always.
(under her breath)
Sucks for me...

Ken breathes a sigh of relief. As he opens the car door--

KEN
I'm going to New York for a few
days. Nothing's changing about our
arrangement otherwise.
(to Dante)
Carly will be around most of the
day, Dante, but when she's not, I
expect you to look after things.
Best behavior, understood?

DANTE
Yes, sir. When will you be back?

KEN
Four days at most.

NATE
Four days? Well, don't rush back on
our account. Hope we aren't all
dead from boredom from you not
being around to brighten up our
miserable lives. Have fun!

An eye roll from Ken. He waves and climbs in the car.

NATE (CONT'D)
(to Dante)
Where's he going, anyway?

DANTE
New York, remember? For his job?

Nate stares blankly. As the car pulls away, whatever wheels
still in Nate's mind appear to turn. He looks across to the
Cerota residence, sees Carly make her way to the front door.

NATE
Ms. Cerota!

Carly stops, sighs, exasperated.

CARLY

Mr. Covington, you can call me
Carly. I don't mind.

She walks over to join them. She wears soccer shorts and a T-shirt but still appears radiant to Dante.

NATE

Just a sign of respect to treat you
like the young woman you are.

Carly didn't expect that. A hint of a smile breaks.

CARLY

So, what did you want?

NATE

Ever been to New Orleans?

DANTE

Um, Pops, what are you--

NATE

Dante, you know better than to
interrupt two people engaged in a
conversation. So... Carly, is it?
Have you?

CARLY

Once. When I was maybe five or six.
My parents took me on a riverboat
ride. That's about all I remember.

NATE

So how'd you like to go back? Say,
tomorrow?

CARLY

What?

DANTE

She can't drive us down to New
Orleans! She's barely sixteen.

CARLY

Um, excuse me, I'm sixteen and a
half and I've driven on the
interstate quite a few times.

NATE

So it's settled then. Today we celebrate my wife's birthday and tomorrow we'll go to New Orleans to recover my treasure!

DANTE

I just don't think that's a good idea, Pops. Maybe we should--

NATE

You sound just like your Uncle Ken, you know that? You said you wanted to learn about your parents, right?

DANTE

Yeah, but..

NATE

Then the sooner we get to New Orleans, the sooner you'll get to learning what you want to know.

Nate turns and heads inside.

NATE (CONT'D)

Now, who wants birthday cake?

CARLY

It's eight-thirty. A little early for cake, isn't it?

NATE

It's never too early for cake!

Carly and Dante can only watch him leave. Madness!

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DINING ROOM - DAY

"Happy Birthday Mabel" is barely discernible atop the remains of the cake but crumbs from three large pieces fill plates.

NATE

Your parents have left you to make responsible decisions. You've obviously earned their trust.

CARLY

I guess.

NATE

So, if you would drive us to New Orleans, you wouldn't need to check with them or with my son, because the adults have trusted you to do what you think is right.

CARLY

I...guess.

NATE

You would be paid for your time and gas of course. Dante, how much money do you have?

Dante's eyes go wide. He chokes on his cake a little.

DANTE

What? How much what?

NATE

Money. We need to pay Ms. Cerota.

CARLY

Carly.

NATE

Of course. As I was about to say, Dante, Ken keeps my check book and won't give me money lately for some reason, so you'll have to bank our adventure until I can get my treasure. Then, we'll settle up.

Dante pushes crumbs with his fork, waffles under the heat of Carly's gaze. She seems to expect an answer.

DANTE

Maybe two hundred bucks.

Carly settles back, enjoying the process of being courted. Nate seems disappointed the young boy hasn't offered more.

NATE

We will make it worth your while.
There's a treasure, after all.

Nate collects plates, winks at Carly as he collects hers.

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dante plays Carly in FIFA 14 on the video game console. They're animated, side-by-side on the sofa. During a lively exchange, they brush bodies. Retract. Instantly awkward.

WHOMP. They both turn. Nate drops his overstuffed duffle bag at the base of the stairs, then climbs the stairs again.

Dante works the defender in goal for a penalty kick. Carly works the striker, eyes Dante's awkward sudden silence.

DANTE

You...eh...gonna do it?

CARLY

Maybe.

DANTE

(too quickly; excited)

You're considering it?

CARLY

You'd give up every penny you have,
just so he can see his old house?

DANTE

And find his treasure.

CARLY

You know there's no treasure.

DANTE

He says there is. Plus, if it's the
only way I'll get to learn more
about my parents, then, yeah, I'd
gladly give up every penny I have.

CARLY

OK then. Stop me on this shot and
I'll do it.

Dante pauses the live action on the game screen. He turns, locks eyes with Carly. Awkwardness gone. Now it's on!

DANTE

You swear? I stone you here, we go?

CARLY

Think you can do it? That's a lot
of pressure.

Dante and Carly turn again. Nate delicately lays the box with the book and photos by the duffle bag, climbs the stairs.

Dante claims his controller, focuses like a laser on the screen. Carly smiles, charmed by his determination.

Carly releases the pause button. Game action resumes on screen. The soccer player dekes, lines up a shot -- FIRES!

EXT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / DRIVEWAY - MORNING

THUMP. An SUV trunk shuts. Car doors open. Nate slides in the front seat, Dante in the back. Carly stewes behind the wheel.

INT./EXT. SUV / HIGHWAY ENTRANCE - MORNING

The SUV sits at the highway entrance. A line of cars wait behind. An anxious look on Carly's face.

DANTE

What are you waiting for? I thought
you could drive on a freeway!

CARLY

I can!...
(beat)
But I've never done it without my
dad with me.

NATE

You need me to tell you how to
drive? Yell at you when you're
drifting into someone's lane?

Carly stares blankly at Nate.

NATE (CONT'D)

MOVE IT!

Something snaps. She guns it, peeling rubber. She merges into traffic, just avoiding a huge pickup truck. Horns BLARE.

INT./EXT. SUV / HIGHWAY - LATER

Carly grips the wheel tightly. Her brow tightens as cars zoom by. In the back seat, Dante studies the GPS map on his phone.

DANTE

You need to take the exit for 55.

CARLY

I thought we were already on 55.

DANTE

No, we're on 70. 70 becomes 55, but you have to be in the right lane.

CARLY

The far right? Or the middle right?

Nate sits idly by, seemingly oblivious to the discussion. Carly eases the SUV up against an 18 wheeler. Dante looks up nervously at the vehicle. Nate continues to stare into space.

SERIES OF SHOTS --

-- They pass a sign which reads 'CITY LIMITS: ST. LOUIS'

-- A large barge travels down the Mississippi River. Nate finds it fascinating. Dante notices, writes in his journal.

-- Nate and Dante snack on Cheetos and soft drinks.

EXT. INTERSTATE REST STOP - DAY

The SUV pulls in. Carly races out of the car into the bathroom. Nate and Dante leisurely stroll to the men's room.

NATE

This is the third stop in three hours. At this rate, we'll be in New Orleans sometime next year.

They come across a big map of Missouri. Dante stares at a big star on the highway and "YOU ARE HERE" in red block letters next to it, showing how little progress they've made.

DANTE

It'll be worth it, because of the treasure, right?

NATE

Assuming we get there... then yes, trust me, it'll be worth it.

DANTE

(as he enters restroom)
Since we have time, why don't you start telling me about my parents?

Nate holds the door, give Dante a curious look.

NATE

I'm not going to talk to you about your parents in some strange men's room in the middle of nowhere.

INT./EXT. SUV / HIGHWAY - LATER

Dante in the passenger seat. Nate stretches out in the back.

CARLY

It's 1:15. Can we stop to eat?

Nate picks up a sack from the floorboard. Digs around. He pulls out a jar, offers it to Carly, who waves him off.

NATE

We have Cheetos. And peanut butter.

CARLY

I mean *real* food. A burger. Fries.
You know -- healthy stuff.

NATE

I would think you need something
healthy to cure that bladder
infection you have. Lord alive,
stopping every ten minutes to pee.

CARLY

Stop exaggerating!

Everyone rides in silence for a moment, then--

CARLY (CONT'D)

Okay, I do have to go again! But I
am hungry!

DANTE

Yeah, Pops. I could eat something.

NATE

Okay, fine! But something quick.

Dante checks his phone.

DANTE

There's some restaurants up ahead
in about five miles.

CARLY

Awesome. Didn't want to have to pee
in a bottle. Could get messy.

Dante's eyes widen. Was she kidding? Nate looks disgusted.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Hello? JK!

Dante breathes a sigh of relief.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

The SUV pulls off the freeway and into a fast food joint.

INT. BURGER BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Carly and Dante eagerly scan the menu posted above the counter. Nate looks restless, he glances at his watch.

NATE

No reason we can't be on the road
in ten minutes. Let's eat and run.
I don't want what they sell here.

Nate plops into a booth, drums the table with his knuckles.

DANTE

I better stay with him. Get me a
cheeseburger and fries?

Carly nods, approaches the counter. She leans forward, places their order. A PUNK, 20, leers at her toned, tanned body.

After Carly pays, she leans against the counter, faces the tables. Punk nods to her. She grimaces, looks away. Gross.

AT DANTE AND NATE'S BOOTH

Dante scrolls Google Maps. He jolts upright at incoming TEXT.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Crap. It's Uncle Ken.

Nate leans forward, instantly drawn to the screen.

NATE

Don't answer it.

DANTE

What? He'll worry.

NATE

He'll see where we are.

DANTE

He can't see where we are from a
text... I'll take care of it.

(texts his words)

Hey, Uncle Ken! We're at Carly's
soccer game. Everything's good.
How's New York?

Dante beams. Nate strokes his chin, awaits a reply text.

AT THE COUNTER

Carly shuffles uncomfortably under the gaze of the Punk who seems to be growing irritated that Carly's not smiling back.

CARLY
(calls over counter)
Can you make that to go? We've
gotta get back on the road.

Punk glowers at Carly now -- not used to getting his way.

AT DANTE AND NATE'S TABLE

Dante excitedly shares his screen when a return text appears.

DANTE
(reads text message)
Glad to hear you're getting Pops
out. Busy day ahead. I might be in
New York but I'm really just in a
conference room. Have a good day.

Nate sighs, relieved. Dante chuckles, loving the adventure.

AT THE COUNTER

Punk's had enough. He saunters toward her as the counter clerk delivers Carly's bag of food. She grabs it, walks.

The Punk steps in front of her, blocks her path. He smirks. She looks past him, Nate and Dante are talking. Oblivious.

PUNK
Pretty thing like you shouldn't be
out here all alone.

CARLY
Excuse me. I have to go.

She tries to side-step him. He blocks her again. Advances.

PUNK
Not so fast, baby.

Carly bites her lip. Dante and Nate do not see any of this. She clutches her bag tight, locks eyes with her captor.

CARLY
What do you want?

PUNK
You know what I want...

BOOM! Carly expertly delivers a striker's kick to the Punk's groin. He doubles over, howling in pain. Carly scurries past.

CARLY
(runs past booth)
Car! Now!

And she dashes out. Nate and Dante double-take, get up. Bewildered, they follow her out, only now see the Punk.

EXT. BURGER BARN - CONTINUOUS

The three hustle into the SUV. Nate lags behind, climbs in as the Punk exits. Carly peels out as the Punk runs after them.

I/E. SUV / HIGHWAY - LATER

Dante devours his burger. Nate slurps soda. Carly cautiously eats one fry at a time, pays attention to the highway.

NATE
Want me to drive? I'm a good
driver. Never had an accident.

CARLY
Ever get a ticket?

Nate seems offended by the question.

NATE
Lots of people get tickets for all
sorts of reasons. Doesn't make them
bad drivers.

CARLY
How many?

NATE
You want me to drive or not?

Carly looks in the rear view to gauge Dante's reaction. Dante starts to shake his head -- Nate looks his way and Dante suddenly finds something outside interesting.

CARLY
Maybe... later.

I/E. SUV / MEMPHIS HIGHWAY - LATER

The SUV creeps along a bridge crossing the Mississippi. Construction snarls traffic.

DANTE
Pops, tell me about Korea.

Pops fixates on the river. Ignores the question.

DANTE (CONT'D)
Is it too awful to talk about?

NATE
Awful to talk about. Awful to hear.

DANTE
But you showed me your wounds the other day. Told me about your missing toes because of frostbite.

NATE
I did? Why in the world would I do something like that?

Dante shrugs. Nate stares at the line of cars ahead.

CARLY
I'm interested too, Mr. Covington. My father was a helicopter pilot in the Gulf War. He was shot down once -- three soldiers died. He won't go near a helicopter now.

NATE
(nods knowingly)
War is a helluva thing. Makes men 'fraid of stuff that wouldn't scare a kid. I can't stand being cold ever since Korea.

Dante, delighted to get some tidbit of information out of Nate, starts writing in his notebook.

DANTE
How cold was it?

ON NATE -- he looks out the window. In the reflection, we see a much younger Nate. Snow falls around him.

NATE
Chosin Reservoir was colder than you could possibly imagine. Snot would freeze before it left your nostril. You'd wind up with icicles in your beard. You'd try to move dead bodies from around your foxholes and their limbs would snap off like twigs off a bush.

Carly winces at the visual.

NATE (CONT'D)
Couldn't light a fire 'cause the
Chinese would start sending mortar
and sniper rounds as soon as a
flame got lit.

Nate closes his eyes. Rubs his forehead.

NATE (CONT'D)
And those bugles... and whistles.
Those were the worst. Damn, I hate
hearing those things now.

CARLY
What do you mean?

NATE
We were situated on a ridge,
surrounded by the Chinese Army. For
three days, just before sunrise...
you'd be in your foxhole, trying to
sleep, and you'd hear a whole mess
of bugles in the distance, then
whistles. Next thing you know,
flares were lighting up the sky
like the Fourth of July. You'd look
down the hill and it was if someone
had kicked over an ant pile. Waves
of Chinese soldiers rushing up the
hill.... so bunched together you
didn't even have to aim your rifle.
I could close my eyes and hit an
enemy target dead on... my God,
there were so many of them...
bodies three, four deep all around
my foxhole. Started using them as
sandbags.

Dante stops writing. Nate wipes his eyes. A protracted
silence looms. Carly pats Nate's shoulder. Visibly shaken,
Nate recoils in terror.

He turns away, embarrassed. Stares out the window. Silence as
they continue down the highway.

INT./EXT. SUV / HIGHWAY - LATER

POP MUSIC blares from the radio. Carly sings along. Dante
drums with his pen between writing in his journal. Nate looks
annoyed, reaches over and turns down the sound.

NATE

What is this prattle?

Carly gives Nate a strange look.

CARLY

Seriously? Beyonce. Like the biggest star there is in music right now.

NATE

(scoffs)

That's not music.

DANTE

Sure it is, Pops. Beyonce is our generation's Ella Fitzgerald. Justin Timberlake is our Frank Sinatra.

NATE

Then I weep for your generation.

CARLY

C'mon, you have to admit she's talented. And hot.

NATE

Hot? Billie Holliday was hot. She didn't have to flash her boobs or shake her derriere to show how talented a singer she was.

CARLY

But today it's all about the total package -- Beyonce's got the dance moves, the charisma, and oh my gosh, her voice is crazy insane.

NATE

I'll give you insane. Lena Horne. She had a voice that was like syrup on pancakes. And sultry? Mmmm. Made my heart beat just a little faster when I listened to her sing. Used to make Grand Momma jealous. Tell you what. You go and listen to Lena Horne's "I've Got Rhythm". One of the best songs I've ever heard. Then we'll compare it to whatever song of --

DANTE

Done.

Nate turns, looks at Dante in the back. Eyebrows raised.

LATER

"I've Got Rhythm" plays over the car stereo. Nate leans back in his seat, eyes closed. Smile a mile wide. His head moves in motion with the beat.

Carly is mesmerized. The voice. The brass band. Fingers tap on the steering wheel with the beat. Dante picks up the tune quickly, hums along.

CARLY
That's dank.

NATE
Sorry?

DANTE
Dank's a good thing, Pops.

Nate smiles. A smug sense of satisfaction.

The SUV continues down the interstate as the orchestra hits a crescendo.

INT./EXT. SUV / HIGHWAY - LATER

Carly checks out the gas gauge.

INSERT: The needle approaches "E."

CARLY
Need to pull over soon for gas.

Dante ignores Carly, continues writing in his journal.

DANTE
Pops, where did my parents meet?

CARLY
Yeah, did they meet in college or
at work or what?

Nate fixes a look on Carly meant to say "this is none of your business." She returns her focus to the road.

NATE
High school. Then kept dating at
the University of Mississippi.

DANTE
My parents went to Ole Miss?

NATE

University of Mississippi. Against my better judgment, mind you. He had a free ride at Tulane. But he wanted to be with your mom, so off he went. When a fool's in love, nothing you tell them is going to make much sense.

CARLY

What were their names?

DANTE

Issac and Ruth. That I do know.

NATE

Two good Biblical names.

Dante scribbles their names at the top of blank page in his journal as he repeats them softly to himself:

DANTE

Issac and Ruth.

He checks the GPS on his phone.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Gas station coming up in one mile.

EXT. GAS STATION / ENID LAKE - DAY

Carly pumps gas. Dante stretches his legs while squinting into the sun. Nate butterflies his arms, stretching.

He gazes at Enid Lake running along Interstate 55. A large bank runs alongside it with inviting shade trees.

Dante writes on his Issac and Ruth page. Carly enters the gas station to pay. Nate's gravitational pull steers him to the water. He steps quietly toward the banks.

EXT. BANKS ALONG THE LAKE - MOMENTS LATER

Nate appears, a smile spreads across his face, as if he just opened a Christmas gift.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Dante punctuates his last entry with a happy thrust of his pen and carries it to the back seat. He plops the journal onto the empty seat -- the sight of it causes sudden panic --

DANTE

Pops!

Dante scrambles. He runs the perimeter of the lot, peers around, terror escalating with every step until he screams:

DANTE (CONT'D)

POPS!

Carly runs out of the gas station, sees Dante beside himself.

CARLY

Oh my God, he took off?

DANTE

He was here. Then he wasn't.

CARLY

Men's room.

Dante runs to check. Carly looks around. No sign of him.

INT. GAS STATION MEN'S ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Dante bursts in. Empty. Breathlessly, he backs out and continues his search.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Carly pulls the car around, swings open the door for Dante.

CARLY

We'll cover more ground driving.

DANTE

No. He's gotta be close.

At 13, emotions hit quickly, adventure or not, and Dante huffs. A borderline meltdown. Tears form. Carly, charged with adrenaline and protective duty, cuts the engine, exits and firmly grips his shoulders.

CARLY

Like you said, he's gotta be close.
We'll find him. Understand? We'll.
Find. Him.

Dante settles. She glances around, which direction to try.

CARLY (CONT'D)
I got lost on the beach once. The lifeguards told my parents to walk with the wind. People are less likely to walk into the wind.

EXT. ENID LAKE / SHORE - DAY

Nate slips off his shoes and socks, pulls up his pants legs like a kid and walks down the bank of the lake.

He extends his arms, twirls, not a care in the world.

EXT. ROAD SIDE / LAKE BANK - CONTINUOUS

Dante looks right. Carly looks left. Together they hurry along, looking for Nate.

Dante reacts to his phone. A incoming text from Ken reads: Home yet? Dante wipes his perspiring brow, almost whimpers.

Carly urges him on.

CARLY
Tell him we're on our way.

DANTE
But shouldn't we find--

CARLY
Just do it. Otherwise, he's gonna keep bugging.

DANTE
(calls loud)
Pops!

Carly shoves him with a shush.

CARLY
Don't go calling attention to us.
Last thing we need are cops.

DANTE
But we're gonna find him, right?

Carly jerks Dante's arm. His legs almost shoot out from under him but he resets his balance, follows Carly's gaze.

CARLY
We just did.

She points. Fifty yards away, Nate, barefoot, approaches the lake near a woodsy area. The shoreline is a mishmash of dead branches and rocks. With kid-like curiosity, he dips his feet in the water. As he does, he just misses stepping on --

EXT. LAKE / BANK - CONTINUOUS

-- a timber rattlesnake, coiled and slithering near the edge of the lake bed. It blends in perfectly with the rocks.

Carly and Dante walk quickly over to where Nate is standing. As they make their way over, Carly grabs Dante's shoulder.

CARLY

No yelling. Don't want to startle him. He might fall over in the water. Just be casual.

They watch as Nate successfully skims a rock on the water.

DANTE

Good one, Pops.

Nate turns, surprised to see them. Looks back over the water.

NATE

This is nice. Quiet. Good for fishin'. Have to bring Grand Momma here sometime. She loves to fish...

Dante winces at the mention of his late grandmother. Nate rocks from side to side, continues staring over the water. Dante slips off his tennis shoes, wades out to Nate.

DANTE

Pops, c'mon. We need to go.

NATE

Never enough time for the things you want to do when you're my age.

Dante takes Nate's arm, leads him back. As they reach the shore, Nate has difficulty navigating the rocky terrain. Dante focuses on helping his grandfather. In doing so, he misses seeing the rattlesnake to his right.

A HISSING. Then, a RATTLE. Dante quickly looks around. But it's too late. The snake strikes, hits Dante above the ankle.

Dante HOWLS in pain, falls back into the water. Carly spots the snake, SCREAMS. The snake slithers away.

Nate and Carly help Dante onto the grass. Dante tries to hide tears from Carly, but it's no use. The pain is too much.

CARLY

It's okay, Dante. Let me see.

She spies two small bite marks on Dante's ankle.

NATE

Gotta get him to a doctor.

(to Dante)

Can you walk?

Nate tries to help Dante up, but Carly stops him. She poised, collected. Impressive for a sixteen year old.

CARLY

I worked at a camp in the Ozarks last summer, and one of the things we learned about was snake bites. Rule one is stay calm. Rule two is don't walk on it. Gets his blood pumping and circulates the venom or something. So we need to carry him to the car. Rule three is... is...

(flustered)

Dammit! I can't remember rule three! What is rule three? Think!

NATE

Is it to remember Rule One?

Carly shoots Nate a look. Dante GROANS, clutches his leg.

CARLY

I'll get his upper. Grab his legs.

Carly hands Dante his shoes, then they lift him. Carly wraps her arms under Dante's, cradles his neck and back against her chest. Dante blushes. Suddenly, he's forgotten about the pain. They move slowly to the SUV.

Carly and Nate pile Dante into the car. She peels out of the parking lot and races onto the interstate.

I/E. SUV / HIGHWAY - LATER

Nate looks anxiously into the back seat. Dante is on his phone, pulling up a hospital's location on his GPS. Carly checks him out in the rear view mirror.

CARLY

How you feelin'?

DANTE

Leg hurts somethin' awful.

Carly frowns, hits the accelerator. They exit off the main interstate, down Highway 32. A vast expanse of farm land frames the road. Nate spots a herd of cows on the ground.

NATE

Cows laying down. Gonna rain soon.

Carly gives Nate a questioning look.

NATE (CONT'D)

You'll see.

They pass a sign: "CHARLESTON CITY LIMITS."

DANTE

Turn left up here. Half mile up.

Carly makes a sharp turn. Dante almost sails through the floorboard. Nate spots the emergency room, points ahead.

NATE

There she is.

Carly whips into the area for emergency patients. She comes in hot though and bangs her car into a concrete barrier pole.

CARLY

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!! Shit!

EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - SECONDS LATER

Carly scampers to view the damages. Grimaces at the dent. Nate strolls forward, joins her for an inspection.

NATE

Did I mention I've never had an
accident?

Carly sneers at him. Their gaze is interrupted by Dante:

DANTE (O.S.)

Little help back here?

The back door is kicked open wider. Carly and Nate assume their carrying positions and take Dante into the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Carly speed browses a magazine, taps her leg nervously, chews her lip. Nate reaches over -- firmly stops her shaking leg with his hand and calmly turns over his newspaper.

Carly looks out the window. A steady rain beats against the pane. Behind his paper, Nate smiles.

NATE

Told you it was gonna rain.
(Lays down his paper)
The cows never lie. Well, except
when it's gonna rain.

Nate laughs at his own little joke. Carly can only shake her head at this strange, strange man.

INT. HOSPITAL / EMERGENCY ROOM - SAME TIME

Dante watches a NURSE tend to his bite. She's younger. Cute.

He clears his throat, tries to draw her eyes to him.

DANTE

It's nothing really. Won't stop my
pro tryout for the Cards.

Bite treated, the nurse moves on, not acknowledging him. Dante leans back. Anguished - How do guys do this with women?

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - SAME TIME

Nate turns a page of the paper. Carly's leg starts up again like a beaver. He steadies it again.

When she squirms, he speaks without looking at her.

NATE

You could have had that accident
anywhere. Another car backed into
you at McDonald's. It was raining
and you skidded into a telephone
pole. "But just think, Mom and Dad,
what if I had been speeding? Think
how bad it could have been!"
Parents are a forgiving lot,
especially when it comes to their
little girls. Now -- I believe the
word Dante told me is -- 'chill.'

Carly looks halfway relieved. She's about to respond when -- Her attention is diverted as a door opens. Dante appears. Smiling.

DANTE
If you guys still wanna carry me
around, I'd be okay with that.

Carly and Nate ignore the suggestion, head through the auto double doors. Dante trails behind, hurries to keep up.

DANTE (CONT'D)
Or not. Either way. Wait up!

INT. CARLY'S SUV - MOMENTS LATER

Carly heaves a heavy sigh as she pulls her door closed. Nate stretches. Dante leans forward from behind, adrenaline going.

CARLY
(fights off a yawn)
Where to now?

Dante scrambles to open the GPS app on his phone but stops as soon as Nate announces --

NATE
A hotel. Need to call it a day.

Dante and Carly look at him. Relieved.

LATER

The three pull into the parking lot of a mid-sized MOTEL. Nothing fancy, but fits the bill for these tired travelers.

Something like Beyonce's "Irreplaceable" wafts from the radio. Nate pats his hand on his knee in time. Carly catches him. Smiles. Nate nods his appreciation of the song.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Three tired bodies slog out of the office, trudge toward the rooms. On their way, they pass a pool.

NATE
So, we're about five hours from New Orleans. We get up and on the road by seven, we're treasure hunting by one at the latest.

Nate eyes the '18' on their key card, opens the door to '18.' Dante trails him inside, clutching his journal. Carly spies the pool. She gazes at it with longing in her eyes.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Nate spreads out on one double bed, covers his face with his hand. Dante exits the bathroom, mouth filled with toothpaste.

NATE

Dante, get some Advil from my bag.

Dante spits, chuckles, brings Nate his travel kit.

DANTE

Here's your 'bog.' That a New Orleans thing?

Nate rummages blindly in the bag, oblivious to his comment. Dante scoops up his journal, sees Carly through the curtains. She's sitting by the pool, legs curled up under her chin.

EXT. MOTEL / POOL AREA - NIGHT

Dante eases behind Carly, watches her fixate on the water, shimmering under the moonlight. It's quiet and serene.

DANTE

You okay?

CARLY

My parents are in Paris. My friends are all at camp and I'm a dot on a Mississippi road map.

DANTE

"We are all travelers in the wilderness of this world, and the best we can find in our travels is an honest friend."

Carly turns, faces him with a blank stare.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Robert Louis Stevenson. He's my favorite writer. No matter what, I'm glad you're here.

He pulls a chair next to her. They watch the water together.

CARLY

You are one strange, sensitive,
little dude, you know that?

Dante deflects that with a chuckle, fumbles with his journal.

DANTE

Thanks ... I think.

(long beat)

You know, this might seem like a
weird question, but... do you have
a boyfriend?

Now, Carly chuckles. She rubs her eyes, keeps facing forward.

CARLY

It is a weird question, but not for
the reasons you think... Let's not
go there. Sensitive topic.

DANTE

Ah, so there is a guy. He just
hasn't come around yet.

Carly turns, gapes at him. Astounded and embarrassed.

CARLY

How did you get that from that I
said?

DANTE

I pay attention. So what's his
deal?

Carly rises, stretches, uncomfortable delving into this.

CARLY

Who knows? Who cares? I'm tired.

Dante rises, anxiously runs his hands around his journal.

DANTE

He'll come around. If he's smart.

Carly is about to break into a smile but they turn at the
door to Room 18 flinging open and Nate falling down.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Dante and Carly rush to him, help Nate inside. As soon as
they get him settled, Nate rubs his eyes, looks up.

NATE

What are you two fussing over?

Dante straightens, double-takes with Carly.

DANTE

Pops, you just fell down opening the door. Are you hurt?

NATE

I'm fine.

Dante instinctively reaches to touch Nate's forehead but Nate slaps his hand away.

NATE (CONT'D)

I said I'm fine!

He rises, moves back to his bed, lays down, facing away. Carly nods with her head toward the door.

CARLY

Huddle up.

(low; as Dante joins her)

He's playing us. Wants us to keep going so we get to that treasure.

DANTE

(low; conspiratorial)

You think.

Carly nods, grins at her adversary, enjoys a good challenge. She pulls back the covers of the other twin bed. Nate snores.

Dante stands awkwardly, watching Carly pull her legs under the covers and spread out in the bed.

His arched eyebrows raise even higher as she whips her hair free and settles against the pillow. Then, like the splash of cold water it's intended to be, she pulls the covers up.

Dante's eyebrows, shoulders, hopes and dreams fall noticeably. He looks at both beds. Filled. A desk chair remains. He's frozen. Unsure what to do. Carly tilts up.

CARLY

What?

DANTE

Nothing. Just not tired.

He opens his journal, huddles over it, tries to look busy, scribbles in his journal but his eyes dart. Mind racing.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Dante's forehead rests against the page. He sleeps, sitting at the desk. Suddenly, the WHOOSH of the curtains parting turns the dark room into a showroom for brilliant sunshine.

NATE

Rise and shine. Up and at 'em.
Today is the day!

Nate chuckles to himself, pats his belly, duffle bag by the door. Slowly, Dante stirs awake. Carly barely lifts her head.

EXT. NEW YORK HOTEL - MORNING

Ken rolls his suitcase to the curb, waves for a taxi. A perturbed look on his face. FLETCHER, eager young lawyer dashes out of the hotel, clearly flustered.

FLETCHER

I just got your text. You're
leaving now?

KEN

I never should have let Buzz force
me into coming. You've got this.

FLETCHER

Are you sure? There's a lot of
money in this case.

KEN

And you can handle it. You don't
need a babysitter, but I've got
some people at home that do and if
Buzz has a problem with that...

(To a cab that slows then
leaves)

...Kiss my ass.

(to Fletcher)

...then he can kiss my ass too. My
flight gets into St. Louis around
one. Call me after the Graystone
depo then have your assistant put
in conference time for both of us.

(after another cab blows
past him)

Screw this.

Ken steps out on the street and literally walks in front of
an available cab who SCREECHES to a halt just in time.

INT. CARLY'S SUV - DAY

Nate grows restless in the back of the car. He fidgets, seems to be fighting off a nasty headache. He groans occasionally.

Carly glimpses him in the rearview as she drives. She gets that same challenging grin on her face, nods to Dante.

CARLY
(sotto whisper to Dante)
Watch this.
(loud for Nate to hear)
Really sorry about this, but I need
to stop to pee again.

Dante grins, looks back. Nate massages his temples. Oblivious to her statement. Dante's face turns concerned. Carly argues:

CARLY (CONT'D)
He is so playing us.

Dante taps something into his phone, scrolls, grows more concerned. He reads, peeks at Nate, grows visibly upset.

DANTE
Pops, you have a bad headache?

NATE
Killer, son.

DANTE
When you fell back at the hotel,
you said you felt numb, right?

CARLY
Dante! What--

DANTE
Shhhh. Pops, do you feel dizzy?

Nate rolls his head back and Dante goes into panic mode.

CARLY
What?!! What're you reading?

DANTE
I think he's having a stroke! Crap,
we've gotta find another hospital
before it's--

CARLY
A stroke? Seriously? Holy crap!

DANTE

Hospital.
(speaks to his phone)
Get me directions to the nearest
hospital.

Carly grips the wheel tight and presses down on the accelerator. All business. Dante watches Nate. Stressed.

INT. AIRLINE - DAY

Ken sits on the plane, strapped and ready. As the flight attendants pass, checking on passengers, he shoots a text to Dante.

INSERT TEXT: "Coming home early. Hope we can have dinner together."

He hits 'Send' and turns off his phone as an overhead DING warns passengers to turn off their devices.

INT./EXT. SUV / HIGHWAY - DAY

Carly races down the highway at a dangerous speed. Tension etched on her faced. Zips in and out of traffic.

Dante has climbed into the back seat with Nate. Nate tries to mumble something, but can't get the words out.

DANTE

Pops! I don't understand! What are
you trying--

CARLY

Oh, no!

DANTE

What??

CARLY

Highway patrol! Damn it!

Dante looks back, sees the patrol car rapidly approaching. The lights flip on.

DANTE

No, no, this is good!

Dante rolls the back window down. He leans out, waves at the patrolman to pull alongside.

INT. HIGHWAY PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

OFFICER MULLINS, 37, stern looking, sees Dante hanging out the window. Mullins is suspicious. Gets on the radio.

MULLINS

Dispatch, this is Bravo 4-9.
Pursuing a Toyota SUV on 55,
Missouri license Tango Charley X-
Ray, 3-8-niner. Request plate check
and possible backup.

DISPATCHER (O.S.) (RADIO)

Copy, Bravo 4-9, standby.

INT./EXT. SUV / HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Carly looks back - the patrol car stays in pursuit.

CARLY

Should I pull over?

DANTE

No! Every minute counts here! Keep
going!

CARLY

But I don't want to be arrested!
I've already wrecked the car!!

Dante points to the inside of the car, tries to gesture the need for help, but is unsure of how to do it. Carly, frustrated, gets in the act as well. She puts her arm out the window and waves Mullins to come up.

INT. PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Mullins is agitated. He hits the siren. BLURP! The dispatcher comes back on.

DISPATCHER (O.S.)(RADIO)

Bravo 4-9, vehicle is registered to
a Trey Cerota, address in St.
Louis. Clean record. Over.

Mullins chews it over. He spots Dante put two hands together like a kid about to pray, but instead Dante looks like he's pleading for help. Mullins shakes his head, hits the gas.

He pulls up cautiously on Carly's right. Spies Nate in the back seat. He appears unconscious. Mullins rolls down his window, turns off his siren.

INT./EXT. SUV / HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

DANTE
(yells)
Officer! We need help! My
grandfather is having a stroke!

Mullins looks over to Carly. She tries to maintain focus on the road while simultaneously pleading with Mullins.

Mullins instinctively goes into first responder mode.

MULLINS
Okay! Follow me, and I'll get you
to a hospital! Put your flashers on
and stay right behind me!

Mullins pulls in front of Carly and they take off.

Nate briefly opens his eyes, looks to Dante. He struggles to speak, but only mumbled, incoherent words filter out.

Exhausted, Nate closes his eyes.

DANTE
I... I don't understand! Pops!

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU - LATER

Nate lies in a hospital bed. Several machines hooked up to various parts of his body. A NURSE comes in, checks his vitals. Nate doesn't respond. Eyes closed, mouth drooped.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dante slumps in a chair. Stares at his phone. Carly watches the world go by out the window.

CARLY
How did I let you talk me into
this? We should never have come
down here!

DANTE
I... I'm sorry. I thought it was
just going to be a quick up and
back trip. Something fun.

CARLY
My parents are going to freak!

Dante checks his phone. Buries his head in his hands.

DANTE
It just keeps getting worse!

CARLY
What?

DANTE
Uncle Ken is coming home early!
(beat)
I've gotta tell him what's
happened. Talk about freaking out.

Dante types into his phone, as Carly continues to sulk.

EXT. LAMBERT - ST. LOUIS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - ESTABLISHER
Sunny day. A jet hits the runway. Taxis to the gate.

INT. AIRPLANE - AFTERNOON

Ken turns on his phone. Numerous PINGS, one after the other, follow. He notices several missed calls from Dante, then a text.

INSERT TEXT: "Uncle Ken -- call right away -- emergency!"

Ken hits the speed dial number for Dante.

INT. LAMBERT - ST. LOUIS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

From a distance, we see Ken at a window overlooking the airport tarmac. Obviously agitated. People wander by, give him curious looks. He turns off the phone in a huff, sits in a chair and pulls out his laptop.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN: Ken searches for a one-way ticket to Jackson.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU ROOM - LATER

Dante stands by the bed, holds Nate's hand. Unresponsive. Carly rubs his arm for a moment, then turns away.

INT. AIRPLANE - LATE AFTERNOON

Ken forces his tall frame into a cramped seat on a commuter plane. He makes another call to Dante.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Dante sips on a soft drink. Carly texts on her phone. Dante's phone goes off. Caller I.D. shows Ken's name.

DANTE
Uncle Ken?

INTERCUT BETWEEN KEN AND DANTE

KEN
I'm on a puddle jumper to Jackson.
Scheduled to be at the Jackson
airport at 6:30 p.m. I'll take a
cab to the hospital. Any change?

DANTE
Not that I can tell. They let us in
for a little bit, but he's still
unconscious.
(beat, then blurts out)
I'm really, really, sorry. He was
just so determined to get to New
Orleans and he--

KEN
They're closing the door to the
plane. Don't have time to discuss.
I'll see you in a little while...
(beat)
Dante, it's going to be okay.

Dante turns off the phone. Carly spots tears in Dante's eyes.
She wraps him up in a hug. The tears come in a cascade.

EXT. JACKSON HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A cab pulls up to the front entrance to the hospital.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU WAITING ROOM - LATER

Ken enters the waiting room. Dante spots his uncle and can't
run fast enough across the room to hug him.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU ROOM - LATER

The three stand around Nate's bed. Ken grasps his father's
hand, sits on the side of the bed.

KEN
Hey Pops. Just wanted you to know
I'm here...

Dante holds his notebook. Ken can't help but smile at the earnest exhaustion on his face. Truly through the wars.

KEN (CONT'D)
Couldn't resist a story, huh?

DANTE
He was so bent on showing us. And I
thought maybe I'd get to learn
something about my parents.

Ken turns to Carly. Just as spent emotionally but for different reasons. Her eyes are glazed over.

CARLY
It's better when the police sirens
are in front of you rather than
behind you, right? I mean, NBD, but
seriously? I should be in Paris.

Dante rubs her shoulder, opens his notebook.

DANTE
We've got some time. What do you
say, Uncle Ken?

KEN
Well, we have nothing but time.
Have a seat...

Dante and Carly sit. Dante writes periodically.

KEN (CONT'D)
At one time, sirens were behind
your Dad. He broke into some homes,
stole some cars...

Dante stops writing, closes the book.

DANTE
Okay, then. So how'd the Cardinals
do last night?

Carly shoves him, nods to Ken, fixes Dante with a stern look that says 'Be respectful.' Ken smiles at their bond.

KEN
Anyway, one night, he broke into a
house, thought the owners were
gone, but ...
(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)
Owner fought back and ended up
dead. He spent the next ten years
in prison.

Dante's eyes glaze over.

CARLY
(rises; paces)
And we're done. Oh my God. Can
story time be over right now?

She strokes Nate's arm. He's unresponsive under the tubes.
Dante is lost. His eyes blank. Ken rubs his eyes. Haggard and
exhausted. Nate looks like the best of the group.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU WAITING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Dante sleeps on a sofa. Carly flips through a magazine as she
talks on the phone. A baseball game on the TV in the corner.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nate's breaths under the oxygen mask are labored. Ken stares
at the parking lot. The weight of the world on his shoulders.

VOICE (O.S.)
Mr. Covington?

Ken turns. DR. ELIZABETH HU, 39, Korean, stands at the
doorway. She crosses to Nate's bedside. Checks vitals.

KEN
Yes?

DR. HU
We performed several tests on your
father. It's evident that he has
suffered a massive stroke, which on
its own is bad enough. But the
cardiologist assigned to your
father also is showing an 85%
blockage in the arteries to his
heart. Not a good combination.

KEN
Got it. He's not in good shape. So
what's your prognosis?

Dr. Hu clears her throat, gathers her thoughts. Concerned.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU WAITING ROOM - LATER

Ken wanders in, coffee in hand. Carly waves him over. He sits down. Dante still sleeps on the sofa. Ken looks over at Dante, notices the gauze bandage on his leg.

KEN
(points at leg)
What happened to him?

CARLY
What? Oh... Oh! That. He was bitten
by a rattlesnake.

KEN
What?? When did... How--
(stops himself)
You know what? Doesn't matter. I'm
guessing you were a big help
afterwards, and he's okay, and
that's all that matters.

Carly smiles sadly. She curls her legs up under her chin.

KEN (CONT'D)
We really need to get you home. Let
me check on flights to St. Louis
tomorrow. You can get a cab home
from the airport. We'll drive your
car back for you.

CARLY
That's really nice of you, but... I
kind of want to be here right now.
My parents are gone and my friends
are scattered for the summer. All
this, weird as it seems, has been
kind of an adventure for me the
past couple of days.

KEN
I'll bet.

CARLY
I still get paid though, right?

Ken laughs. At this point, it's all he can do.

EXT. JACKSON HOSPITAL - MORNING

Parking lot is half empty. Ken sits on a bench. He watches people enter and exit. Most of them unhappy souls.

Next to him, his dad's notebook. He flips through it. Drawings, phone numbers, lots of random items. He stops on what appears to be a MAP.

It's a crude rendition, but he recognizes several key points: His dad's house, a big oak tree in the back yard. Around the edges are several numbers, none of which are instantly familiar: 221, however, is circled several times. The letters "BB" written along the side.

Ken traces his fingers on the map. A hint of smile appears on his face as he closes the notebook. He goes inside.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU ROOM - DAY

Nate's breathes, still under the oxygen mask. Ken enters. Dr. Hu updates Nate's data on her iPad.

DR. HU
It's fine to wait, but he won't
know you're here.

KEN
Yes, he will. Thanks, anyway.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Shower water runs. Dante stirs, sees that the bathroom door is open enough to glimpse at the mirror, not yet fogged over.

Behind the frosted glass, Carly soaps, rinses, repeats. Dante slips out of bed, creeps toward the bathroom.

He tip-toes to the open door, positions himself against the doorway, obtains premium positioning for a secret view.

Dante waits, pans across, sees his notebook. As his eyes settle on it, his mischievous look dissolves to serious.

He quietly pulls the bathroom door completely shut, scoops up his notebook and settles at the room's desk.

The shower water drips to a halt. Dante writes in his book.

DANTE (V.O.)
Son. Wow, I can't even imagine.
Well, I have to -- it's what I do
when I write -- imagine -- but, one
day you'll read this and you'll
know it's from your Dad. You won't
have to wonder about me -- You
won't have to ask anyone else.
(MORE)

DANTE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You'll know it was me and you'll
know everything about me. Son --
Man, I just can't get used to that.
Anyway, in life you'll make choices
every day. Some good. Some bad.

The bathroom door opens and Carly emerges. Hair wet but she's
dressed and the warm smile she gives Dante melts his heart.
He returns an engaging smile, reverts to writing.

DANTE (V.O.)
Make the ones you'll write about
later more often than the ones you
will never tell anyone.

CARLY
Your Uncle is meeting his brother
and sister at the hospital. He said
we should grab breakfast.

Carly waves two twenties with a grin.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

MARTIN COVINGTON, 51, and CANDACE OSGOOD, 48, Ken's brother
and sister, navigate the parking lot after exiting a cab. The
fact that they get out of the cab by different doors is only
the tip of the iceberg. These two personify "The Bickersons."

CANDACE
Really? A ten dollar tip? I'll go
up and open the door for us -- that
ought to net me five at least.

MARTIN
You'd have tipped him \$5 if you
came alone. What do you care how I
spend my money?

CANDACE
Oh, don't confuse the issue. I do
not -- repeat -- do not care how
you do anything.

MARTIN
And never have. You just need
something to complain about.

They approach the doors. To make a point, Martin allows her
to go first. Candace glares at him.

CANDACE

Can't even open a door for a lady.
No wonder you never married.

MARTIN

I thought you were gonna earn your
five dollar tip by holding the door
for me?

CANDACE

Pops will ream you good for not
acting like a gentleman.

MARTIN

Pops will...

Then, it hits. The doors are still closed and they settle into silence, both brought back to why they're here. Somber faces take over. They both reach for the door simultaneously.

INT. HOSPITAL / ICU ROOM - DAY

Dr. Hu has left Ken alone with Nate. Ken lifts Nate's hand, connected to machines by tubes, and allows his fingers to fall onto the map he studied outside, trying in some small way to have Nate point him in the right direction.

Nate's right index finger falls onto a point on the map near the large oak tree, where an "X" is marked. Ken half-laughs, and nods as if to say "okay, you win," when--

A small RUCKUS in the hallway outside Nate's room. Ken looks up, groans. It's just Martin and Candace. He collects the notebook and places it in a briefcase.

Candace enters first, rushes past Ken and to her father.

CANDACE

Daddy!

She wraps the unresponsive Nate in a hug. Tears in her eyes.

Martin enters, shakes hands with Ken, then wraps him up in a long bear hug. He goes over to Nate, tries to wedge his way into a hug with his dad. After a moment, he looks to Ken.

MARTIN

So what's the latest?

KEN

(shrugs)

The neurologist says he's had a
massive stroke.

(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)

Top that off with severe blockage
in his arteries and you've got bad
news no matter how you spin it.

Martin studies the monitors surrounding the bed.

MARTIN

Vitals look somewhat stable. That's
improved since you brought him
here, I take it?

Ken nods. Candace suddenly is in Ken's face.

CANDACE

What are you doing with him down
here to begin with? He's not in any
condition to be traveling!

KEN

He was perfectly fine last week.

CANDACE

Fine? I thought you told us he had
been diagnosed with Alzheimer's!

MARTIN

Early onset dementia. There's a
difference.

CANDACE

What do you know? You're just an
anesthesiologist.

MARTIN

Still makes me a doctor.

KEN

(exasperated)

Okay, enough of this, you two...
Can I get a non-argumentative
response to this question: How long
are each of you in town?

MARTIN

Couple of days, unless the
situation changes dramatically.

Ken looks to Candace, who eyes Martin with contempt.

CANDACE

Two days? That's it? I'm sure Pops
would love to know you're jumping
ship at the first opportunity.

MARTIN

If he could hear you, I'm sure he'd be on my side.

Ken just shakes his head. Picks up his briefcase and phone.

KEN

Dante and a friend of his are having breakfast. I'm going to have them pick me up and we're going to be gone for the entire day.

CANDACE

Where do you think you're going? We just got here!

KEN

Exactly. I've been here almost 36 hours straight. I've got a business matter to attend to, and Dante and his friend will be with me. I don't need to be here to referee your little bicker sessions.

Martin starts to protest but Ken puts up a hand, walks out.

CANDACE (O.S.)

But where are you going?

Ken gives a half wave as he texts on his phone.

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - LATER

Dante has a plate stacked with waffles and bacon dropped in front of him. Carly goes for a single pancake and fruit. She looks in semi-disgust as Dante plows into his food.

Dante barely looks up from his plate. He's ravenous.

DANTE

Oh my God. This is awesome. I may get seconds. Thanks, Uncle Ken!

CARLY

Gross. Seriously, how can you eat all that?

DANTE

I'm almost fourteen and a guy. I could probably eat a large breakfast burrito after this.

CARLY
Please stop talking now.

Dante's phone PINGS. He looks down in between bites.

DANTE
(with a full mouth)
Uncle Ken.

CARLY
Couldn't understand a word.

Dante swallows a huge mouthful of waffles. Reads the text.
The biggest grin ever appears on his face.

DANTE
Yes!!

CARLY
What?

DANTE
Eat up! We're going to New Orleans!

EXT. JACKSON HOSPITAL - LATE MORNING

Carly pulls in to the lot. Ken climbs into the back seat.

INT. CARLY'S SUV - MOMENTS LATER

Carly and Dante lean over the front seat, await an update.

KEN
Let's just go before I change my
mind or strangle my siblings.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

Carly's SUV exits the highway under an arrow directing
traffic to New Orleans.

CARLY (O.S.)
Reese Witherspoon's from New
Orleans. Did you know that?

DANTE (O.S.)
Random...

CARLY (O.S.)
Oh, so because Nate's not with us,
you're not learning something
everyday? Slacker.

KEN (O.S.)
I don't think he had in mind
Legally Blonde trivia.

DANTE (O.S.)
What's Legally Blonde?

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREET - DAY

Carly's SUV navigates the neighborhoods. Carly, Dante and Ken's heads pivot as they take in the city around them.

INT. CARLY'S SUV - DAY

CARLY
So this is where you would've grown
up if...

She lets her voice trail off, regretting where that points.

KEN
Hey, things work out as they
should. We're all together because
Pops saved the day back then. Let's
remember that.

EXT. NATE'S STREET - DAY

The SUV rolls to a stop in front of a nice middle-class house with a 'For Sale' sign in the front yard. The home has the replacement look of newness given its neighboring homes.

A spacious, well-landscaped back yard. An oak tree in the back corner just like in the map.

EXT. NATE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Carly and Dante hop around, join Ken as they exit the car. They gaze at the home like it's a puzzle to be solved.

Ken pulls out the map. They look at it, then back up at the house, wander toward the back yard.

KEN
So he says it's here somewhere.

CARLY

He also says his wife's still alive
sometimes so let's not hop on that
boat just yet, K?

KEN

(eyes map)

Well, it's not gonna be above
ground. Carly, go back to the car
and grab a shovel.

Carly pivots, dashes back, stops two steps later. She turns
with slow realization that hits them all at the same time.

CARLY

Shovel? I didn't bring a shovel.

EXT. NATE'S HOUSE / BACKYARD SHED - LATER

Dante runs his hands along the shed's roof lining, feeling
for a spare key. Carly checks under nearby stones, doing the
same. Ken tries to work the door handle, jimmy the lock.

DANTE

Isn't this breaking and entering?

KEN

It's his house. We can be here.

CARLY

And the cops will know that how?

KEN

Are you trying to draw the
neighbors' attention? Keep it down.

Ken, with one frustrated tug, rips the door open. A huge
CLANK resonates through the yard -- the trio freeze in place
for a moment but -- nothing. No one seems to have noticed.

CARLY

Yeah. But *I'm* the one drawing
attention.

CRUNCH.

EXT. NATE'S HOUSE / BACKYARD - LATER THAT DAY

Another CRUNCH. Dante spears the earth, starts a fresh hole.
Now, we see that several have been started and abandoned.

KEN (O.S.)
This is nonsense. Dante.

Ken wipes perspiration from his forehead. Carly sits nearby, her shirt soaked with sweat, studies the map.

KEN (CONT'D)
We've been at this for almost two hours, and all we have to show for it are a bunch of gopher holes. Let's fill them up and go grab something to eat.

DANTE
Just let me try a couple of more spots. I know there's something here. There has to be.

KEN
Forget it, Dante. It was the ramblings of a man who had lost the good part of his mind.

Ken stands, goes over to Dante. He reaches for the shovel but Dante doesn't give it up willingly.

KEN (CONT'D)
C'mon. Let's clean up and hit the road. We need to get you guys home.

Shoulders slumped, Dante trudges toward the house. Ken follows, the shovel dragging behind him. He looks back, notices Carly still studying the map.

KEN (CONT'D)
Carly, you coming?

She stands up. Holds the notebook out in front of her. Something's not right.

CARLY
(eyeing yard; then map)
Wait a minute...

She arcs her finger across an imaginary line, then reverts to the map and draws the same path. Then -- her brow arches. A light bulb going off in her mind.

She flips the map to the side, draws the same arc. Points.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Guys. I can't believe this.

Ken and Dante stop in their tracks.

KEN

What?

CARLY

We're looking at the map wrong!

Dante rushes over to see. Ken's curiosity is piqued as well. She turns the map back to its original position.

CARLY (CONT'D)

See? This is how we were looking at it before.

INSERT: A map shows a crude drawing of an oak tree, and an "X" to the tree's left.

CARLY (CONT'D)

But look at what we missed!

INSERT: Carly's finger points at the letters "BB" a little further to the left of the "X."

DANTE

Yeah, so?

Ken is suddenly struck by the reality.

KEN

I'll be damned. Whaddaya know?

Carly points to the right side of the yard where a bird bath rests in a group of azaleas.

CARLY

So the map should be turned on its side like so...

INSERT: The map is turned to show the "X" to the south of the oak tree rather than the west.

CARLY (CONT'D)

...and *voila!*

Dante looks at the map, gauges the distance about halfway between the tree and the bird bath. With anticipation, he shovels out the first spades of earth. Nothing. Even Ken registers disappointment.

KEN

(thinks)

Hold on. Stop digging in the yard. If this is drawn accurately, it won't be in the yard, it'll be in the garden.

Dante wipes his forehead, immediately begin a new hole between two azaleas. A couple of spades of dirt are removed, and then -- THUNK.

Metal hitting metal.

DANTE

Did you hear that?

Dante hits it with his shovel again. THUNK.

KEN

Geez Louise. I can't believe this.

CARLY

Shut the...

(catches herself)

...heck up.

Dante widens the hole as the others rush over. Soon, a handle appears. Ken reaches down, manages to pry a METAL BOX out of the ground. It's wrapped in cellophane.

The three can only stand there, gaping at the box as if they've excavated the Ark holding the Holy Grail. Ken carries it over to a small outdoor table and places it down gently.

KEN

Well, Dad, I guess I have to eat my words.

He removes the cellophane, unlatches the hinge, slowly opens the top.

POV FROM INSIDE THE BOX -- three heads appear over the opening.

Ken reaches inside the box, pulls out the contents. It mainly consists of envelopes and miscellaneous pieces of paper.

DANTE

What is all this?

CARLY

Looks like a big pile of nothin'.

Kendrik flips through the pile. Notes from Nate about his old job, a tax return from 2004. A stock certificate from the 1930's. The disappointment is palpable.

Ken shakes his head, picks up one last envelope. Studies the writing on the outside.

INSERT: The word "MAGNOLIA" in big block letters.

The envelope is taped shut. Ken tears the envelope open as--

DANTE

This is so disappointing. I
expected... I don't know, something
a lot more than this.

Carly nods in agreement as she watches Ken pull some papers out of the envelope. As he does, a KEY falls in SLOW MOTION out of the envelope and onto the glass top table. PINGS as it bounces into the air, then settles.

Dante scoops up the key, examines it.

DANTE (CONT'D)

A funny looking key.

Ken looks over. A hint of recognition.

KEN

A safety deposit box key...

Ken reaches over and snatches the key from Dante. Looks at the number engraved on the key head.

INSERT: The number "221" is clearly visible on the key.

KEN (CONT'D)

(scratches his head)

Pops, you're a surprise a minute.

Ken looks back at the paperwork in the envelope.

INSERT: A bank statement from MAGNOLIA BANK AND TRUST in the name of NATHANIEL COVINGTON and KEN COVINGTON.

KEN (CONT'D)

Oh. OH.

CARLY

What?

KEN

It's coming back to me now. How
could I have missed it?

DANTE

Missed what?

KEN

After Mom died and Pops started having his issues with his memory, I came down here and we set up an account at Magnolia with both our names on it so I could help him pay his bills, get spending money, that kind of thing. And then he had me put on as a co-signer of his safety deposit box in the event of an emergency.

CARLY

So what's in the box?

KEN

That I don't know. Never told me what he was putting in there. Never even gave me a key.

(checks his watch)

Dammit!

DANTE

What's wrong?

KEN

It's already five. The bank will be closed. We'll spend the night here, then go to the bank in the morning.

Carly suddenly gets excited.

CARLY

Bourbon Street!

DANTE

Yeah! I've never been!

KEN

C'mon guys, it's just one big boozefest. Wouldn't you rather go to a nice meal at Commander's Palace? A New Orleans institution!

DANTE

Uncle Ken, we've come all this way. I've been bitten by a snake. Carly wrecked her car. Pops had a stroke. We found buried treasure! We need to celebrate!

Carly turns on her best teenage girl pouty look.

CARLY

Please?

Ken smiles, throws his hands up in mock surrender.

EXT. GALATOIRE'S RESTAURANT - BOURBON STREET - EVENING

The three exit the famous New Orleans restaurant and stumble happily into the street, sated.

CARLY

Oh, my God. That was sooooo good.

(to Ken)

Thanks for the dinner. That was really nice of you.

DANTE

Yeah, thanks, Uncle Ken.

KEN

No problem. I still can't believe you put away 18 fried shrimp, fries, turtle soup and cheesecake.

CARLY

I know. Disgusting, right?

They make their way down Bourbon Street. Loud MUSIC BLARES, BARKERS try to cajole passersby. The three weave through the normal crowd of drunken revelers.

Ken suddenly stops in front of the FAT TUESDAY BAR, a non-descript beer hall. A live band plays near the front entrance as people stand around the bar, half-listening to the music.

CARLY (CONT'D)

We going in here?

KEN

(to Dante)

Your dad once played guitar in a jazz band. When he got out of college, they would play this joint on occasion.

Dante studies the bar intensely, makes his way over to the entrance. A huge BOUNCER suddenly appears in his path.

BOUNCER

Sorry, kid, gotta be 21 to get in.

Dante is disappointed.

KEN
(to bouncer)
Just looking. His dad's band used
to play here.

The bouncer shows no concern, only a lack of interest. Ken shrugs, ushers Dante away.

KEN (CONT'D)
It's just a bar, not a museum.
Nothing to see there.

Carly senses Dante's disappointment, gives him a sensitive rub on the back. They continue on down the street.

EXT. NATE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Ken pulls Carly's car into the driveway. They enter in the back door, which is still unlocked. Everyone is exhausted.

Ken drops down on a couch. Props his feet up on a coffee table. Carly stands in the hallway.

CARLY
I'm going to bed if that's okay.

KEN
Absolutely. Good night.

Dante watches her go. Ken notices the way he looks at her.

KEN (CONT'D)
Been a good day, hasn't it?

DANTE
Yeah, it's been cool.

KEN
She's a nice girl.

Dante nods, unsure where Ken's going.

KEN (CONT'D)
A little old for you though.
(off Dante's look)
Not that I'm saying there was
anything there. But she's the type
of girl you should aspire to.

DANTE
Shoot for the moon, right?

KEN

And if you miss you'll still land
amongst the stars.

DANTE

Such a weird saying. Good night,
Uncle Ken.

KEN

(smiles)

Good night, Dante.

INT. NATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM -- LATER

Dante lies in the dark, stares at the ceiling. Can't sleep. He climbs out of bed, goes to the window. Looks out at the house that now stands in place of his burned down home.

His face conveys a mix of emotions. After a few moments, he returns to his bed. He switches on the bedside lamp, grabs his journal from the night stand, and begins to write.

DANTE (V.O.)

(as he writes)

Dear Son. Today was an amazing day.
Been on a treasure hunt, ate
amazing food, shared some great
times with Uncle Ken and my new
friend Carly... Maybe one day I'll
introduce you to her. You'd like
her a lot, I know...

(beat)

I wanted to share something from
one of my favorite writers, Robert
Louis Stevenson. He once wrote: "An
aim in life is the only fortune
worth finding."

(beat)

I don't think I really understood
what that meant until today. You
live in the past, you'll always be
chasing what's right in front of
you... I've always wondered about
my past, thinking it made me who I
am today, but I was wrong. As I
think about the past few days, I
realize now that it's the family
and friends who have always been
there for me, who have molded and
shaped me as a human being.

Dante closes the notebook, places it back on the night stand.
The light goes out.

EXT. MAGNOLIA BANK BUILDING -- MORNING

ESTABLISH a four story building on the edge of downtown New Orleans.

Ken eases Carly's SUV into a parking spot.

INT. MAGNOLIA BANK BUILDING -- MOMENTS LATER

The three come through the front entrance. Ken wears a suit. Carly and Dante look a little out of place next to him in their shorts and t-shirts.

Ken crosses over to a desk, where a FEMALE BANKER (31) waits.

FEMALE BANKER

Good morning. May I help you?

KEN

Yes, I'd like to get into my safety deposit box.

Ken holds up the key. The banker nods, escorts them to another part of the bank.

INT. MAGNOLIA BANK - SAFETY DEPOSIT VAULT -- LATER

A large room with rows and rows of boxes of varying shapes. The banker leads them to the end of one row.

FEMALE BANKER

Let's see... 213, 219... here we go. 221.

She slips the bank's key into a lock, then Ken's key into the second lock. Turns both, then pulls out a medium sized box.

The banker leads them out of the vault to a private room.

INT. MAGNOLIA BANK - PRIVATE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The banker places the box on a table, heads for the door.

FEMALE BANKER

I'll leave you here to go through the box at your leisure. Just give me a buzz at extension 338 when you're ready to put it back.

KEN

338. Thank you. We will.

The door closes. The three of them can only stare at the box.

KEN (CONT'D)
Okay. Ready?

DANTE
Yes.

Carly instinctively grabs Dante's hand tightly. He's caught off-guard by the gesture.

KEN
No matter what's in here... no
disappointments. Just finding this
has been worth the effort, right?

DANTE/CARLY
Right/Damn straight.

Dante looks at Carly. Grins. Squeezes her hand.

CARLY
Oops.

The lid is lifted, and there are four things inside. Ken pulls them out one by one.

CU on a medium size box with the name "Candace" written on it. Ken sets it to the side. A second smaller white envelope with the name "Martin" on the front. Again, to the side.

Now, a third, much larger manila envelope. In big block letters, Nate has scribbled "FOR DANTE". Ken looks it over, then turns it over, hands it off to Dante.

KEN
For you.

Dante can hardly stand it. His hands shake as he takes the envelope and carefully opens the end. He turns the envelope upside down and lets the contents spill out onto the table.

KEN (CONT'D)
Sweet Jesus...

It is a veritable treasure chest of memories that flow across the table. Pictures of Isaac, of Ruth, from college and marriage, from the birth of Dante. A picture of a proud Nate holding his grandson as Mabel looks on. A picture of the house that burned, and of their gravestones at a cemetery.

But that's only the beginning. DVDs labeled "Isaac's graduation", "Band Performance," "Dante's first birthday." Letters to Mabel. Letters to his children.

And in the middle of all this collection is a letter, addressed to Dante. Carly picks it up, hands it to him.

Dante holds it with trembling hands.

DANTE

Dante: If you're reading this now, it's because I'm dead. Know how much I truly loved you, my boy, and why I never shared these things with you before. More than anything I wanted to protect you from your past so you could focus on your future... Your future is the only thing that's still in your control.

(beat)

Don't lose sight of it by looking only at what came before. Your...

He starts to read the next line, but it's too much to bear, and the tears begin to flow. Embarrassed at the show of emotion, he turns away. Let's the paper fall to the table. Carly picks it up. Finishes it for him.

CARLY

Your joy is where your real treasure lies. Thank you for being mine.

Ken smiles. Seemingly satisfied at the turn of events. Carly puts down the letter, goes to give Dante a much-needed hug. Tears in her eyes as well.

Ken gives the box one more look, notices a letter-sized white envelope clinging to the side. He pulls it out, examines it.

INSERT: More block lettering. "TO: KEN"

Ken slides the envelope open. He pulls out a letter, begins to read. What is written, we don't know. But eyes get misty. Embarrassed, he turns and wipes away the tears.

DANTE

Uncle Ken? You okay?

Ken nods. A weird mix of a smile and water-filled eyes.

KEN

Absolutely. Everything is perfect.

Ken stuffs the envelope in his coat pocket. The three look over the collection of items scattered about the table. It's almost too much to comprehend. Ken finally breaks the reverie.

KEN (CONT'D)
Okay, everything back in the
envelope. It's time to go.

Dante looks stunned.

DANTE
Are you kidding? I have to put this
back?

KEN
(smiles)
You *do* have to put it back in the
envelope. How else are you going to
get it home?

EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

The SUV motors along Interstate 55. They pass a sign:
"Entering Jackson City Limits."

EXT. JACKSON HOSPITAL - LATER

Ken parks outside. As they approach the front entrance--

KEN
Remember, let me deal with Martin
and Candace privately. Lots of
things to hash out and we don't
want a scene in front of dad.

INT. JACKSON HOSPITAL / ICU ROOM - LATER

Ken, Carly and Dante approach Nate's room. Martin greets them
with a big smile outside the room.

MARTIN
Glad to see you, little brother.
Pops will be as well.

KEN
What do you mean?

MARTIN
Go see for yourself.

The three rush into the room. Candace sits in a chair off to
the side reading the local newspaper.

They huddle at Nate's bedside, where Nate looks in amazement
at the collection of visitors around his bed.

He still can't speak clearly, but his facial expressions provide ample evidence of the joy to see them all.

Dante throws himself at Nate, enveloping him in a warm embrace. Carly takes Nate's hand in hers, caresses it softly.

CARLY

Thanks, Mr. Covington... this has been an AMAZING week. So cool.

Ken leans over the bed, a huge smile on his face.

KEN

(whispers)

Pops -- we did it. We found your treasure. Just like you said.

A tear appears at the corner of Nate's eyes. His drooping face won't let him smile, but one look lets you know that if he could, we would be grinning from ear to ear.

CANDACE

What's this you're carrying on about? A treasure? What kind of treasure?

(looks at Carly)

And who is this young lady?

Martin steps back into the room.

MARTIN

Candace, can you quit harassing people for just two seconds? Huh?

(beat)

Wait -- What about a treasure?

KEN

I'll explain later.

Nate looks to Dante, tries to speak. Dante leans in close.

NATE

Dan-ay.

DANTE

Yeah, Pops?

NATE

Finn...iss...welllll?

Dante beams. Even with the slurred speech, Dante completely understands.

DANTE

I did, Pops. I sure did.

An air of relief and happiness fill the room as the camera pulls back and out the door, leaving the inhabitants to show their unbridled joy at this blessed turn of events. We track further down the hall, the room fading from view, as we--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COVINGTON RESIDENCE / LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Dante sits on the couch, watches the television. On the coffee table in front of him, the many photos, letters, and clippings of his parents.

ON THE TELEVISION: Isaac cradles his newborn son in a hospital room as Ruth watches happily from her hospital bed.

The camera is placed on the hospital bed, and after a moment, it's picked back up, and now Dante is in a new pair of arms.

Dante smiles broadly as he recognizes himself in the arms of Nate. Nate mugs for the camera. Gives Dante a kiss. A very proud grandfather. The DVD ends.

Dante sits in silence, stares at the blank screen. Suddenly, he picks up his journal. Starts to write. Across the top of the page is written: "POPS SAVES THE DAY." Dante nods in satisfaction.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - AFTERNOON

SUPER: Six Years Later

Carly races down the field, takes a pass from a teammate and SLAMS a shot past a diving goalie.

Her teammates surround her with celebratory high fives and hugs. As she turns, her full uniform comes into view, and we see she now plays for DUKE UNIVERSITY.

She exudes an air of confidence as she trots down the field.

INT. LAW FIRM -- DAY

Ken takes a name plate, hands it to a contractor, who attaches it to the front door of a small office.

The sign reads: "COVINGTON LAW OFFICE." Ken smiles as the sign goes up, heads for his interior office.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Dante sits in a large library. He types away on a laptop. We zoom in on the screen, and see "TULANE UNIVERSITY" scrolled across the top of a web page.

Dante appears satisfied with what he's written, closes the laptop and packs up his things. He exits the library.

EXT. LIBRARY -- MOMENTS LATER

He leaves the building and he spots a FEMALE FRIEND. Yells at her to wait up. As he bounds down the steps of the library, we PAN to a large plaque installed by the front entrance, which reads:

"THE NATHANIEL AND MABEL COVINGTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY"

Dante and his friend walk off and disappear into a crowd of students. He's finished well, indeed.

FADE OUT.