

The Champagne Bottle

by
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INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A lovely, well-furnished home. At the end of a long hallway, there's a big window, the shades partly closed. The window is barred, an odd addition that takes away from the beauty of the house. On the right side, a staircase leads up to the second story and on the left, the living room awaits, in darkness.

The light from a full moon filters through the shades, casting shadows against end tables, small rubber plants and a mirror.

This house is intricately detailed and decorated.

All is quiet, until -

A SMALL CRY is heard. Then FOOTSTEPS. Two sets. Quiet at first. And then louder. PANTING, GASPING, and SWEARING.

A YOUNG HOOKER, twenty-five, bursts around the corner from behind the staircase from a connecting hallway. Her clothes are ripped and tattered, her hair dishevelled. She runs so quickly that she's gone in an instant.

And then all is quiet again. But only for a moment. A large, imposing man, THE MURDERER, appears from the same place and chases after the girl. He wears a black mask around his eyes and a large red cape. Blood red.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Through the threshold between the living room and hallway, the murderer can be seen dashing by. He stops at the foot of the stairs, looks around, and then dashes up the stairs.

The hooker is kneeling, squeezed between the fireplace and a corner. Shaking. Trying to keep quiet.

She waits just long enough to make sure the coast is clear, and then emerges from her hiding spot. She tiptoes across the room. She reaches the threshold, but can't find the courage to peek around the corner.

She takes a slow, deep, breath and is about to make a run for it when she's tackled. She CRIES OUT, a little too loudly, and tries to fight off the assailant.

She manages to break free and dashes into the -

HALLWAY

Before the hooker can get far she's tackled again by the same assailant. It's a YOUNG WOMAN, twenty-five, looking equally frightened and dishevelled.

They continue to brawl, unaware that above them, the masked murderer is soaring to the ground, his cape flapping around him. He pulls a knife from its sheath. The young woman catches the murderer out of the corner of her eye, and falls backwards out of the way.

The murderer lands on top of the hooker and stabs her repeatedly to death. The young woman shakily gets to her feet, unable to look away.

Once the hooker is dead, the murderer turns his head to look up at the young woman. He takes a key out of his pocket and tosses it to her. Then, he gets up, and disappears back down the hall.

All is silent.

The young woman moves to the dead hooker. She looks down at the body, but only for a moment. She turns around, and moves to the front door, which has been padlocked.

She removes the lock and opens the door to freedom.

INT. HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The study is on the opposite side of the staircase.

NICK, twenty-five, sits in a chair watching the young woman on a television screen. His eyes are keen, very focused. They never move from the screen.

Nick is dressed very plainly. He is so quiet, so still, that one could easily mistake him for a piece of furniture - part of the house.

NICK

Okay. Cut.

The house lights come on, illuminating a film set.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The young woman returns to the hallway and helps up the actress playing the hooker.

YOUNG WOMAN
Are you okay? Did I hurt you?

HOOGER
No, no. I'm fine. Jesus - even
after take five, you're still
scaring the shit out of me.

They both laugh.

The cinematographer, SETH, passes the girls and moves into the

LIVING ROOM.

He carries the film camera on his shoulder, and sets it down on the table beside him, a little too heavily.

Seth is tall, broad-shouldered stud; his bold and abrasive demeanor seems to mask his rugged handsomeness. When he moves, he makes himself as big as possible - an act of intimidation.

SETH
(sighing)
C'mon man. Do we have it?

Nick doesn't answer, still in his own world, eyes locked on the television screen.

The three actors and a few other crew members enter during the silence - MYRA - the sound recordist, TAYLOR - the lighting technician and MAX - the assistant director. They're all around Nick's age.

A few more moments of silence pass, and the others start to get impatient, fidgeting.

SETH (cont'd)
Nick!

Nick snaps to attention, and looks up at the group. He looks at Myra last, who smiles reassuringly.

Myra is a fiercely-intelligent, striking film student with a considerable bust. She's full of pizzazz and warmth. The life of any - and every - party.

NICK
Yeah. We got it. That's a wrap.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAYS - DAY

A big smile lights up Nick's face as he carries a small pile of film canisters. He pushes his way through an endless sea of STUDENTS, all of whom seem to be walking against Nick.

Nick bumps into a few students and apologizes, his smile never fading. He turns into a smaller, empty hallway.

INT. DARKROOM - DAY

Only Nick's silhouette can be seen as he finishes developing the first roll of film. Water and chemicals can be heard pouring down a drain and soon after, Nick flips on the lights.

The room is small, contained. There are four sinks for students to use.

CUT TO:

LATER.

The film has dried. Nick pulls a foot of frames off the hanger and holds it up to the light.

He slowly looks at each individual frame - one moment after another contained in a tiny little box.

INT. TELECINE ROOM - DAY

SUPER OVER BLACK: NO WAY OUT

The super continues to stay in view but becomes part of the background as more of the room is revealed. Soon, it is discovered that this super is actually part of Nick's raw footage, being projected onto a screen.

With enough room for no more than two, the telecine room is even more claustrophobic than the darkroom.

Nick sits comfortably in the corner, watching his raw footage as it is recorded. As actual scenes begin to roll, Nick smiles.

(REAL) SUPER: THE CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE

INT. HALLWAYS - OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM - DAY

Nick approaches the classroom, wearing a small film camera (for photography) around his neck. A small number of the FILM STUDENTS are already waiting.

Nick stops and frowns as he surveys the students but finally smiles with relief when he spots TIM. Tim is friendly - extremely likeable - and completely innocent. He always has a smile on his face. Nick approaches him.

NICK

Hi, Tim.

TIM

Nick, hey! How'd the shoot go?

NICK

It went great. I believe I have everything I need.

TIM

Maybe he'll pair us up next time. I hear you run a pretty tight set.

Nick smiles at the compliment, but shyly.

NICK

I don't know about that...

The classroom door opens and the professor, FRANK, stands in the threshold. He's tall and gangly and his hair is slightly unkempt. Often times he's off in his own world - thinking about one project or another.

FRANK

Hey, everyone. Come in.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

A small, dark classroom with one large table is surrounded by Frank and the fifteen film students. Only two are female - Myra and KENDRA, a head-strong, arrogant, powerhouse.

Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho is projected on a screen at the front of the classroom. The infamous shower scene plays through.

The students pretend to watch. They tap their pens, doodle - Kendra twirls her hair - anything to distract them. Only Myra seems to be invested in what's going on.

In the film, the camera moves out of the bathroom, towards the end table in the bedroom with the newspaper containing the \$40,000.

NICK (O.S.)
Right there.

The film is paused and Nick steps in front of the screen, facing the class.

NICK (cont'd)
This is one of Hitchcock's most important images in Psycho. It's a critical moment for the audience, where we realize that Marion Crane wasn't killed for profit. We later learn it was a result of sexual desire -

Seth snickers - barely audible. It distracts Nick's attention for only a moment.

NICK (cont'd)
Norman Bates wasn't after the 40,000 dollars. He wanted to repress his sexual desire because -

Seth snickers again, louder this time. Nick turns to him.

NICK (cont'd)
Seth? What's up? Something you want to ask?

Seth exchanges a knowing glance with a couple other students, who try to hide their smirks. Seth looks up at Nick with an arrogant grin. He shakes his head.

SETH
No. No questions, your honour.

NICK
Did I interrupt you during your presentation? No, we all listened to your scholarly analysis of Wild Things, so the least you can do is listen to mine -

Myra smiles and Nick is cut off by Professor Frank.

FRANK
- Hey, guys. C'mon.

Nick refocuses his attention on his presentation.

NICK

As I was saying, it was never about gain, of any kind. It was always about maintaining an illusion.

INT. OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM - DAY

Class ends, and Nick is the first one out. Once he's a few feet from the room he stops and releases a big sigh. He lets his confrontation with Seth wash over him as the rest of the class starts to pass by.

Tim stops to join Nick.

TIM

Great job, Nick. You're always so thoughtful about this stuff.

Nick manages to force a smile.

NICK

Thanks. Hey - what are you up to right now?

But before Nick can continue, Seth passes by and squeezes Nick's neck. Nick recoils, instinctively swatting away Seth's hand.

SETH

Hey eu-nuch. Nice presentation, buddy.

Nick tries to ignore the play on words as Seth continues on.

SETH (cont'd)

Hey guys! Who's up for beers? No eunuchs allowed! You coming, Tim?

Tim and Nick exchange a silent glance. Tim looks back at Seth and the others, including Myra, and then back at Nick. Nick doesn't breathe as he waits for a decision.

TIM

Come with us. Forget about Seth. He won't bug you.

But Nick's already shaking his head by the time Tim finishes.

NICK

Don't worry about it. Go ahead. I have work to do anyway.

Nick puts on a brave smile and Tim smiles back, sympathetically.

TIM
I'll see you later?

Nick nods and Tim joins the group. As they take off, Seth looks over his shoulder, smirking maliciously at Nick. Nick quickly turns in the opposite direction and hurries away.

Myra looks over her shoulder and watches as Nick hurries off. She stops.

SETH
Myra - where are you going?

Myra glares at Seth.

MYRA
Fuck you, Seth.

INT. DORM AREA - DAY

Nick approaches his dorm room and fumbles to unlock it.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

Nick quickly enters, unintentionally leaving the door slightly ajar behind him.

The room isn't large, but it isn't a closet, either. There's enough space to comfortably fit a bed, a dresser, and a desk with a Macintosh laptop. A bathroom is attached.

Nick moves to the opposite side of the room by a window. He stands in silence for a moment, looking out at the world outside his window, and then begins to cry. At first, there are just silent tears but then Nick begins to sob.

After a moment, he covers his face with his hand, hiding his breakdown despite the lack of anyone else in the room.

Suddenly, the door pushes open slowly, and Myra appears in the doorway.

MYRA
Nick, I came to -

Nick still faces away from her, but Myra can tell he's crying.

MYRA (cont'd)
Oh, Nick.

Nick turns to her, his eyes red and his face tear streaked.
Myra moves across the room and wraps her arms around him.

CUT TO:

LATER - AFTERNOON

Nick and Myra sit beside each other on the bed.

MYRA
I'm sorry about Tim.

NICK
It's okay. I understand.

MYRA
He's still your friend. You can trust him.

NICK
Apparently not.

Myra shakes her head.

MYRA
Nick...

NICK
What is wrong with me, My? What am I doing wrong?

MYRA
Nothing. For whatever reason, those fuckheads already have their minds made up. Good luck trying to change a first impression. Believe me - it's not easy.

NICK
As if. They can't get enough of you.

MYRA
You don't think I've been pigeon-holed? I'm the girl that guys whack-off to after watching me make out with other girls. They can say whatever they want - I don't do it for them.

(MORE)

MYRA (cont'd)
Sometimes, I just want to get my
lady boner on without having a
cheering section.

Nick lets out a small laugh and playfully pushes Myra.

NICK
You love it.

Myra pushes him back.

MYRA
Fuck you. It's tough enough being
the only chick in film that guys
wanna' bone.

NICK
Not. What about Kendra?

MYRA
Oh please. Let's not talk about
uptight little bitches.

Nick rolls his eyes, continuing to play along.

NICK
Give me a break - you're not the
only one they want.

Like a magnet, Nick's words attract a dark look from Myra. Her demeanor has fallen drastically but Nick doesn't catch it, smiling instead.

Myra gets her emotions in check and smiles back.

MYRA
Good. Got you smiling again.

Myra lunges at Nick, taking him by surprise.

MYRA (cont'd)
Come here.

Myra wraps her arms around Nick and then lays his head on her chest.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SECOND FLOOR - HALLWAYS - DAY

Nick walks alone, carrying his things. He passes by numerous offices until he reaches one with an open door.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Professor Frank stares at his computer thoughtfully - as if in the midst of a critical decision. Nick knocks, and Frank looks up.

FRANK

Oh - hey Nick. Come on in.

Nick steps inside.

FRANK (cont'd)

Thanks for coming. Take a seat.

Nick sits.

FRANK (cont'd)

Is everything okay? Everything good?

NICK

Of course, Professor Frank.

FRANK

Seth didn't piss you off today?

NICK

Seth can't bother me if I don't let him.

Frank thinks about this, and sits back in his chair.

FRANK

Fair enough. But don't forget, the University does have a hassle-free policy.

Nick finally sighs, letting down his guard.

NICK

Sometimes I just feel like it would be easier to quit than deal with him. With all of them.

FRANK

Don't think like that. That's the last thing any of us want.

Frank grabs Nick's DVD off his desk and examines it -

FRANK (cont'd)

"Hidden Meaning in Psycho." Sure stimulated the class.

He laughs a little. Nick doesn't, stone-faced.

NICK
I don't care what they think. I
don't do it for them.

FRANK
Nick, can I be frank with you?

He laughs again at his own joke, but it quickly dissolves
when Nick doesn't even crack a grin.

FRANK (cont'd)
It was a joke, Nick.

NICK
Oh... I'm sorry.

FRANK
I'm Frank?... never mind. How's the
film? Everything turning out?

NICK
Yes. I'm very pleased. I developed
it this morning. Everything was
perfectly exposed.

FRANK
I wouldn't expect otherwise. As
usual, you're ahead of the game.

NICK
I just like to be organized.

FRANK
I just want to make sure you're not
killing yourself making this short
film... That's what the feature's
for.

NICK
The sooner I finish the short the
sooner I can start the feature.

A pause.

NICK (cont'd)
I'm sorry - I'm not exactly sure
why you called me here. I think
we're a bit all over the place.

FRANK
I just wanted to check up on you,
Nick. That's all.
(MORE)

FRANK (cont'd)
I respect you a lot. The whole
faculty does. You have a great work
ethic.

NICK
Thank you.

FRANK
But you need more than just work
ethic to make a great film, right?
Filmmaking's collaborative.

NICK
I know that.

FRANK
So how about trying to get to know
everyone? Go out for drinks. Talk
to them.

NICK
We don't have anything in common.

FRANK
There's more to friendship than
just your favorite films. Some of
them crewed on your film last
weekend, right?

NICK
They were only there because you
made them.

FRANK
Well, make it more than just a
class requirement, then.

NICK
Yeah, okay.

FRANK
I'm only telling you this because I
care. Just relax. Maybe it's time
for a break. Pay your folks a
visit.

Nick seriously considers it.

NICK
Yeah... Maybe I will.

INT. CAR - HIGHWAY

Nick drives - a camcorder, tapes, and a laptop rest in the passenger's seat.

INT. NICK'S PARENT'S HOUSE - PORCH - EVENING

Nick enters quietly. But still, his mother hears him from the kitchen.

SAM (O.S.)
Baby? That you?

NICK
Hi, Mom.

SAM (O.S.)
I'm in the kitchen!

Nick set's his things down and sets off down the hall.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

SAM stands at the stove, cooking. She's of average height, with short hair and a skinny frame. Sam sets her ladle down and approaches Nick with open arms.

SAM
Hi sweetheart. Welcome home.

They hug, Nick's arms slightly limp around Sam. He leans back a little as he hugs her, half-assing it.

Afterwards, she moves back to the stove.

NICK
Where's Alex?

SAM
Your father's around.

Just then, ALEX enters carrying business papers. Alex is Nick's height but with a bigger build. His eyes are locked on the papers and he walks past Nick and Sam, patting Nick on the shoulder.

ALEX
Hey, kid.

He continues on and out of the room without another word.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Alex, Sam and Nick eat dinner. Sam circles the table with a bottle of champagne and pours some for each of them. Nick eyes the champagne bottle as she does.

NICK

What are we celebrating?

SAM

You being home with us, sweetheart!
You know, I really wish you'd find
the time to visit more.

Sam sits and they all begin to eat.

NICK

I know. But being here... I'd just
get distracted.

SAM

I know how much you care about your
studies. But in the end, school...
is just school. Grades aren't
everything.

NICK

Mom, I'm taking my masters. I'm not
an undergrad anymore.

SAM

I know.

She ruffles Nick's hair a little.

SAM (cont'd)

But I worry.

Nick pushes her hand away.

NICK

You'd worry even if I lived at
home.

SAM

At least I'd be able to do
something about it. I feel so
helpless sometimes - not being able
to check up on my son who lives
less than half an hour away...

NICK

Even so, I'd barely ever be here.

Alex looks up from his meal for the first time.

ALEX

Don't tell me you're on a constant lockdown over there. I thought part of our agreement was that you'd meet some people, living on campus. You told us this wasn't going to be a repeat of last time.

NICK

That was before I knew how much there was to lose. Do you understand that my whole future could be effected by my film?

ALEX

Let's just forget about your future for half a second. What about your social life? Are you meeting people? Are you making friends?

Silence. After a few moments, Alex just shakes his head and resumes eating. Sam tries to break the tension -

SAM

What are you writing about these days? You said on the phone you were finishing a short?

Nick's eyes light up. He proceeds, tentatively.

NICK

Yeah. I finished shooting last weekend.

SAM

And how did it go?

NICK

Well.

SAM

I'm glad. You never told us what it was about...

Nick smiles, a little - hopefully.

NICK

You really want to know?

Sam sets down her cutlery.

SAM

What kind of question is that. Of course I care. Now, I can't promise I'll love it, but that doesn't mean I'm not at least interested.

NICK

Okay. It's about two people who are trapped inside a house. One's just a simple girl, and the other's a prostitute. And there's something evil after them. A man.

Nick pauses for a moment, testing the waters for rejection. But all he receives is open ears. Even Alex has stopped eating to listen despite the fact that his eyes are still fixed on his plate.

NICK (cont'd)

They start out working together. But eventually, they realize that only one of them can make it out alive. And then they turn on each other.

ALEX

That's depressing.

Nick stands, heartbroken, glaring at Alex.

NICK

I knew I shouldn't have said anything.

Nick leaves. Alex says nothing and Sam only looks on helplessly.

INT. NICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nick sits on his bed with his computer, busily working. The room is twice as big, and twice as nice, as his dorm room. Framed posters of Nick's favorite (original) films - Psycho, Friday the 13th, Halloween, and A Nightmare on Elm Street hang on the walls.

Nick puts the laptop aside and looks around the room at the posters. He gets up off the bed and moves to his five DVD racks. Side-by-side they contain over five hundred films.

Nick runs a finger along them and stops on Black Swan. He pulls it out of the rack.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alex and Sam sit on the couch watching television. Nick enters, holding the film close to his heart.

ALEX
We're gonna' watch a movie. You in?

NICK
I brought one down. I thought we could watch it.

Alex holds out his hand.

ALEX
Let's see.

Nick cautiously approaches Alex and hands him the film. Alex looks at it for less than a second before handing it back.

ALEX (cont'd)
Fuck no, not that one. No thanks.

Nick's heart sinks and he goes to leave. Sam jabs Alex in the ribs with her elbow.

ALEX (cont'd)
Hey-hey, I'm just kidding. We'll find something on TV, okay? Sit.

Nick joins them on the couch, all the while sceptical. Alex flips through the channels and stops on a game show.

ALEX (cont'd)
How's this? Something light?

NICK
Sure.

As Nick watches the television, it slowly begins to dissolve away. Nick begins to DAY-DREAM.

INT. KODAK THEATRE - NIGHT - DAY-DREAM

There is nothing but blackness. Then, from somewhere in the darkness, a film projector can be heard firing up.

Sounds of a crowd fade in along with images:

It's Oscar night and Nick's just been given the award for Best Picture. He makes his way to the podium, through a large crowd of people all trying to shake his hand.

Nick smiles, overwhelmed by emotion as he finally reaches the stage to accept his award.

Nick takes it in hand and pumps the air with it as he faces the crowd.

ALEX (V.O.)
You win, kid.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A different game show is on television and Sam is asleep.

NICK
What?

ALEX
I was having a staring contest with you. I thought you might have died you were sitting so still.

NICK
I was thinking about my film.

ALEX
Yeah, I figured.

Alex flips the channels, this time stopping abruptly on an Opera. A CASTRATO sings an aria.

ALEX (cont'd)
You know how that guy can sing so high?

NICK
How?

Alex leans over to Nick, his lips almost touching Nick's ear.

ALEX
They castrate him.

Alex makes a scissor motion with his middle and index fingers, right in front of Nick's face.

ALEX (cont'd)
Snip-snip.

Alex lets out a disgusting chuckle and leans away from Nick. Nick looks on at the television in horror as the Castrato hits an extremely high note.

INT. NICK'S ROOM - LATER

Nick sits at his desk, typing on his laptop. He enters an ordinary scene heading into a document: "INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT" but then stops, unsure of what to write next.

As he's thinking, low murmurs can be heard from the room above. Nick looks up in the direction of the noise.

A moment of silence. And then more murmurs. And giggles.

Nick gets up from his desk and takes a few steps away, eyes always locked on the ceiling.

More silence, and then faint moans. Nick bolts out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick reaches the bottom of the stairs and looks to the top. From his POV, the stairs begin to close in on him, beckoning him upwards.

Nick begins his ascent.

INT. HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

As Nick creeps in the direction of the noise, the moaning gets louder and louder. Nick stops outside of his parents' room.

The sounds of love-making are unmistakable.

When Nick realizes what's happening his eyes go wide. He backs away from the door and turns around.

And then everything in Nick's world begins to move in slow motion. He's as slow-moving as concrete, like he's in the type of dream where one is immobilized - running on the spot.

He tries to get away, but the further he does the louder and more overwhelming the noises become. Nick reaches the stairs and starts descending, holding onto the railing for dear life.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On one of the last steps, Nick trips and hits the floor. He pulls himself a few feet until he's able to get back on his knees.

He crawls the rest of the way to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick reaches the toilet and vomits. Slowly, the sounds and the dizziness stops, and everything returns to normal.

Pale and disoriented, Nick lies back against the wall, panting.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

The kitchen is empty except for Nick, who eats a bowl of cereal. Sam enters.

SAM
Good morning, Nick. How was your sleep?

NICK
Not good.

SAM
Oh? How come?

NICK
Stomach ache.

SAM
I have something for that. You should've told me.

NICK
I didn't want to wake you.

Sam fixes herself a bowl of cereal.

NICK (cont'd)
I'm going back today.

Sam freezes.

SAM
I thought you were staying the weekend?

NICK
I know. But I have to get back. Lots to do.

Sam sighs. She moves behind Nick and wraps her arms around him. Nick immediately freezes up, but allows Sam to hold him.

SAM

Alright...

(pause)

You try so hard. I just hope it
ends the way you want it to.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAYS - AFTERNOON

Nick speed-walks through the nearly-empty hallways, carrying his tapes. As he gets closer to his destination his pace quickens, the anticipation getting the better of him.

Nick finally reaches a room down the narrow hallway. He unlocks it and lets himself in.

INT. EDITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yet another small room with nothing but an editing suite and two chairs.

Nick sits, powers up the computer, and pops the first tape into the deck.

In a montage, Nick edits his film from start to finish.

Nick works very quickly and efficiently, his entire body moving like a well-oiled machine. The way Nick works is almost flawless as he clicks, drags, cuts and ultimately edits together the short film. There's a consistent flow from one action to the next.

Multiple days pass, as Nick begins to line up the audio files and work on color correction. His clothes change with each new day.

Finally the project is finished, and Nick waits as the DVD burns. When it finishes, the disk drive pops open and Nick grabs the disk.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAYS - DAY

Nick makes his way to class, unable to hide a smile of excitement from his face.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The end of Nick's film plays. The hooker is murdered and the girl escapes to freedom.

When she gets outside of the house she takes a few cautious steps back into the world. Then, she collapses to her knees and cries out, screaming at the top of her lungs in horror. The camera pulls away from her as she screams. The film cuts to black.

As the credits roll, the lights in the classroom come back on. The class gives their required applause.

FRANK

So, Nick. What do you think of it?
You happy with the way everything
turned out?

NICK

Yes, I am. I put a lot of myself
into this film, and I'm very
pleased.

Seth rolls his eyes, arms crossed. Frank turns to the class.

FRANK

Comments?

TIM

The plot was cool and all. But why
did she scream? Don't you think it
was a bit over-dramatic?

Nick struggles to maintain his composure, heartbroken by
Tim's betrayal.

NICK

No, Tim. She'd just been through a
terrifying experience. She blamed
herself.

TIM

It just doesn't seem like something
a normal person would do.

NICK

She wasn't herself. That's the
point.

KENDRA

I would've liked to see more of a
development between the girls. It
wasn't a mistake that they were
opposites, right? The virgin and
the hooker?

Nick nods.

KENDRA (cont'd)
I just think you could've taken
that dynamic even further...

Nick looks around the room, trying to gauge everyone's first impression. It's not good. If the students aren't saying it, it's sure showing on their faces.

FRANK
No more comments?
(waits a moment)
Thanks Nick. Consistent work. Okay,
who's next? Seth?

SETH
Sure.

Seth stands and exchanges a look with Nick, smiling as if he's already won. Nick lowers his head in defeat.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick sits in the same chair as before, in the empty office. Frank returns a moment later with Nick's folder. He sits.

FRANK
Okay, Nick. What can I say? Your
work's good. Your technique
especially.

NICK
Thank you.

FRANK
I just think your stories have been
lacking a little. It's not to say
your not passionate about them.
Clearly you are. I just think you
might not be channelling your
passion in the right way.

Nick looks down, away from Frank, like he's just been hit in the gut.

FRANK (cont'd)
Your latest work seems a bit
familiar. I think the others picked
up on it a bit with this last one.

NICK
Obviously they didn't get it.

FRANK

The premise was a little depressing, that's all. All they want is Hollywood. To be the next big obsession.

Nick looks back up at Frank.

NICK

I don't care what they want. What does mood have to do with it anyway?

Frank holds up his hands, trying to protect himself from Nick's passion and unpredictably.

FRANK

Nothing. Believe me, the film world could use some variation. I just don't know if you've honed your creative potential just yet. Perhaps you should try writing in a different genre for your thesis.

NICK

So I should write what you want? What they want?

FRANK

I'm saying you should liberate yourself, Nick. Break free of whatever's holding you back. Because, everything aside, it's clear that something is.

Nick stands and turns to leave.

FRANK (cont'd)

Nick, wait.

Frank reaches out and takes Nick's hand.

Everything falls into slow motion for Nick again, the nausea coming back. Nick slowly turns back to Frank, his voice becoming a slow drone.

FRANK (cont'd)

Nick? Are you alright?

Frank lets go of Nick and stands. He moves from behind the desk to aid Nick. The moment Frank lets go, everything returns to normal.

Nick steps back quickly, out of Frank's reach. Nick shields himself with his hands.

NICK
Please. Don't.

FRANK
What's the matter?

NICK
I have to go.

Nick leaves in a hurry.

INT. HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

As Nick flees, Frank steps out into the hall.

FRANK
It's really not personal, Nick!

INT. DORM AREA - DAY

Nick approaches his dorm room, but stops just short of it when he sees a picture of a naked woman taped to his door.

He hears laughing in the distance and whips his head in that direction. But by that time, the perpetrators are gone.

Nick's about to unlock his door when he sees that it's already ajar. He pushes it open and steps inside.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

To Nick's horror, more naked pictures of women have been taped everywhere. Some pictures even feature women together, kissing and touching.

Nick bolts to the nearest picture, tearing it down. He tears them all down, one after the other, until every last one is gone. All the while, Nick imagines female voices LAUGHING and COOING all around him.

Once the pictures are gone and disposed of, Nick begins to rapidly pack, tears pouring. He grabs a suitcase and madly throws whatever clothes he can find inside.

His phone vibrates and he sees that Myra is trying to call him. Nick tosses the phone aside and continues packing.

Once that's done, he slides his laptop into its case and the rest of his film equipment into similar bags.

And then, Nick finally stops. In his silence, he can hear his short gasps; feel himself shaking. He breaks down into sobs and kneels before the bed, crying into the blanket.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Nick stands at the far back corner of the classroom, eyes trained on the door, arms crossed. He watches as the other film students enter and take their seats, lost in their conversations.

Myra enters and when she sees Nick she runs over to him, taking his hands.

MYRA

Nick, I've been trying to call you.
I heard them talking about what
happened. I'm so sorry.

NICK

I'm leaving, Myra.

MYRA

No, Nick - please. You're just
giving them what they want.

Nick moves his face close to Myra's so that the others won't hear him.

NICK

All I wanted was to be left alone.

Frank finally enters and Nick moves to meet him. Myra tries to hold him back.

MYRA

Don't run away from this, Nick!

Nick pulls away from Myra and hurries over to Frank. Frank is completely consumed with his papers, not even looking to see where he's going.

NICK

Professor Frank.

FRANK

Nick, how are you?

NICK

I need to talk to you. I don't think I can -

FRANK

- Can it wait till the break? We're already late as it is.

Nick stops, and Frank takes the last few steps to the his spot at the head of the table. He finally looks up from his papers, engaging with the class.

FRANK (cont'd)

Okay, let's get started. We're falling behind. And it's not me. All of you need to get back on track. I know it's a lot of work but you can't lose sight of what's ahead.

During this, Nick's attention is diverted by a mysterious, eye-catching male student in the hall, looking lost with a slip of paper and books in hand. Finally, the male student looks in Nick's direction and their eyes meet for a short moment.

Their gaze breaks and the student reads the number on the door. He pockets the slip of paper and steps inside the classroom, knocking.

JASON

Hey. Sorry I'm late.

JASON, twenty-five, is a ridiculously attractive film student with a chiselled body and a seemingly-innocent smile. His lazy, messy hair only makes him more visually appealing.

Nick still hasn't stopped staring.

FRANK

Oh! Jason, I almost forgot. Everyone, this is Jason, a new transfer student from... where was it?

JASON

A shithole. Next to this place.

Laughter.

FRANK

Flattery. I can see you're a fast learner about how things work around here.

He winks, and ushers Jason over to the table.

FRANK (cont'd)

Jason may just give you all a run for your money. He's the first student in our program to ever be admitted late.

Jason sits, nodding and exchanging greetings. The only empty seat is next to Nick, and as Jason sits, his arm brushes against Nick's.

Nick's world slows again, his heart rate rising. Nick sees and hears every detail - the CRACKLING of the hair on his own arm as it stands on end, the SCRAPING sound of Jason's arm brushing against his.

Everything quickly returns to normal after Jason pulls away. Nick remains in a daze a moment longer before regaining his senses. He looks up and notices that Seth is eyeing Jason.

INT. OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM - HALLWAYS - DAY

Class has ended, and the film students have surrounded Jason outside the classroom, trying to penetrate the mystery behind the "new guy."

Nick finally steps out of the classroom. He sees Seth and Jason hitting it off and hurries away from the group. Jason, from inside the circle, spots Nick heading in the other direction.

Nick turns a corner and continues on alone. Moments later, Jason whips around the corner, jogging after him.

JASON

Hey. Hey!

Jason finally catches up with Nick and stops in front of him.

JASON (cont'd)

Taking off so fast?

NICK

Oh, sorry. I figured you were calling someone else.

JASON

You go to school with quite a few interesting people. I think I caught just about all their names... except yours.

NICK

Nick.

JASON

I'm Jason... the new guy.

He holds out a hand to Nick. Nick looks at it like it's a foreign object.

JASON (cont'd)

Don't be shy. Your prof made me out to be more of a problem than I actually am. I'm not out to steal anyone's glory.

Nick finally takes Jason's hand. Nick's world slows down once again and the handshake seems to last an eternity. Nick looks down at the handshake and then up at Jason.

But for the first time, Nick doesn't become nauseous. Instead, his heart beat intensifies. His lips part, his eyes close, and he experiences currents of pleasure.

Jason lets go and everything returns to normal. All is silent for a moment. Jason looks around, smiling a little, not sure how to continue the awkward conversation.

JASON (cont'd)

Don't tell me you're one of those closed-mouth types. You'll never fit in with the rest of these guys.

NICK

I don't think that's an issue.

JASON

Hey, no worries. We all have different types.

A pause.

JASON (cont'd)

I have to go now. More classes. Catching up is a bitch! But I enjoyed meeting you. Maybe even a little more than the others. What is it you like to do?

NICK

Make films.

Jason laughs.

JASON
What else, charmer?

Nick struggles to find another answer.

NICK
Watch films?

JASON
Of course. I should've known. Let's
go see one sometime.

NICK
Okay. You're not busy?

JASON
Busy? I just got here. Moving's
such a drag. I just want to have
fun.

Nick blushes and Jason checks his watch.

JASON (cont'd)
Fuck. I'll see around, okay?

Nick nods and Jason continues on. Nick watches him go, mesmerized. Seth appears and spots Jason and Nick. He grimaces and then storms off.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Nick enters, still in a stupor. On his bed lies all the things Nick planned on bringing with him - his suitcase, his film equipment and his computer. They're all arranged neatly and perfectly.

Nick finally approaches the bed and opens the suitcase. He begins unpacking. At first, he takes his shirts and pants out neatly but then begins to pull them out more quickly, tossing them aside in excitement.

Once the suitcase is empty, Nick pushes it off the bed and takes its place. He works up a smile as he looks ahead, lost in the details of his encounter with Jason.

And then, Nick begins to DAY-DREAM.

EXT. SUBURBIA - HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - AFTERNOON - DAY-DREAM

Blackness again until the film projector in Nick's mind begins to run.

Circa 1961, A middle-aged SUBURBAN HUSBAND, forty, is out on the front lawn watering the grass with a hose.

It's a glorious day, the sun out in all its brilliance and the heat just below scorching. A cloudless sky.

The husband shades his eyes as he waters. A moving van pulls into the neighborhood and onto the driveway of the house for sale next to the husband's.

First, from the passenger's seat, emerges a female, the NEW HOUSEWIFE, forty, with her YOUNG DAUGHTER. The daughter runs to the front door and the wife chases after her.

The NEW HUSBAND (forty), tall and extremely chiselled, moves to the front of the truck and calls after his wife and daughter. He laughs and shakes his head. Finally, he looks over in the suburban husband's direction and waves.

The suburban husband slowly lowers his hand, mesmerized by the beauty of his new neighbor. He drops the hose and slowly waves as the hose begins soaking the grass around his feet.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Inspired, Nick moves to his desk and opens a new document on his laptop. He begins to write, starting with the scene he just imagined.

Nick continues to write - word after word. Scene after scene until -

CUT TO:

LATER.

It's NIGHT. Nick's been writing for hours. There's a KNOCK at the door, and Nick - who hasn't moved his eyes from the computer screen - blinks, returning to reality.

He looks around the darkened room, and then at the clock. It's almost nine p.m. Nick looks at the page count at the bottom of the screen, which reads thirty-two.

He answers the door. Myra lets out a huge sigh of relief.

MYRA

Thank, God. You're still here.

Myra dashes over to Nick, beaming, and wraps her arms around him.

MYRA (cont'd)
What made you change your my mind?

An IMAGE of Jason pops into Nick's mind.

NICK
It was you.

MYRA
Aw, shucks.

NICK
You were right. Leaving would have only given them what they wanted. I'm staying. I'm going to make my film.

MYRA
Good. I saw your car a few minutes ago and I just wanted to make sure you were alright.

NICK
(smiles)
I am. I'm much better.

Myra smiles back.

MYRA
We still going out tomorrow?

NICK
Sure.

MYRA
Great. Bye, Nick.

She takes off and Nick closes the door behind her.

Nick lies down on his bed. He can't even fight to stay awake, his eyes falling closed.

INT. MYRA'S DORM ROOM - LATER

The only difference marking Myra's room from Nick's is the addition of a second, attached, bedroom.

Myra enters, still smiling and lost in thought. She stops, and after looking at her bed - warm and inviting - leaps onto the covers.

Myra lies back and looks up at the ceiling. Soon after, she undoes her belt and unzips her tight jeans. Then, she slides two fingers down into her underwear and begins to pleasure herself.

She begins to moan quietly. A picture on the dresser, opposite the bed, catches her eye. It's of her and Nick. Myra focuses on it and continue to pleasure herself.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

My? That you?

Myra ignores her, and DEANNE - a hot blonde Myra's age - enters from the adjacent bedroom soon after. She smiles at Myra, completely unphased by the display.

DEANNE

Thought I heard you come in.

MYRA

Hey, baby.

Deanne slowly begins to approach the bed.

DEANNE

You having fun without me?

MYRA

Just getting warmed up.

Deanne stops just before the bed. The two gaze hungrily at each other and then Deanne pulls off her shirt with one quick motion.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - BATHROOM - MORNING

Nick takes a cold shower. He finishes, and grabs his towel. Nick ensures the towel is tightly wrapped around his waist before stepping out.

There's no need to wipe the mirror - there is no steam. Nick quickly, but thoroughly, brushes his teeth. He rinses his mouth out and when he stands straight he looks at his wet torso in the mirror.

He looks closely at himself, at every uninhibited line on his body. He touches his arm - the one that Jason's arm touched, and Nick VISUALIZES this event.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jason takes his seat beside Nick in slow motion.

Not only do Nick's hairs stand on end as Jason's arm brushes his, but the sound of the tiny hairs is LOUD and SHARP.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - BATHROOM - MORNING

Nick comes out of his trance and shamefully pulls a shirt on, concealing his naked body. He does so quickly and turns away from his reflection.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Frank and the students sit around the table.

FRANK

I know I don't have to tell you that all art is subjective. Filmmaking included. The camera captures two things at once - what's physically in the image, and all the subtleties contained within.

On the whiteboard, Frank writes and talks -

FRANK (cont'd)

Context. Subtext.

SETH

That's a bit... subjective.

Seth snickers at his joke and a few others join in.

FRANK

Why?

SETH

Because context and subtext are always debateable. You and I might think completely different things about any film.

FRANK

Sure. But isn't that the point of watching a film? Trying to sort it all out?

SETH

That's bullshit. It's like writing from theme.

(MORE)

SETH (cont'd)
Characters embodying some bigger
meaning... It's pointless.

NICK
No, it's not.

Nick speaks so softly that his comment is almost missed.

FRANK
Nick?

NICK
It's not pointless.

Nick meets eyes with Seth and they stare each other down,
Seth challenging Nick to defy him.

NICK (cont'd)
Without theme you have nothing.
(to Frank)
Didn't you tell us that film is
meant to represent, not reproduce?

FRANK
Actually, that was Mr. Bill
Nichols, but I'll gladly take the
credit.

Frank smiles.

FRANK (cont'd)
I do, however, tend to agree with
Nichols on that one...

SETH
I guess... If you want to be bored.

NICK
Isn't that a little subjective,
Seth?

Jason, who's been watching the whole thing, smiles at Nick's
sarcasm and hides it behind his hand.

SETH
Come on, Nick. People don't go to
theatres to be intimidated. This
isn't Europe. People don't go to
art cinemas. You can't argue with
entertainment, but you can always
argue theme.

FRANK

Now-now. You gave your opinion,
Seth. Nick's just giving his.

SETH

All I'm saying is that you can't
really prove that a film even has a
theme.

NICK

There's always a theme, Seth.

FRANK

Okay guys, let's move on.

Frank addresses the class as a whole, again.

FRANK (cont'd)

Just as personal taste is
subjective, so are themes.
Christian Metz wrote about the
screen as a mirror. He said that
when we watch films, we project
ourselves onto the screen. We see
are lives flash before us, at
twenty-four frames per second.

INT. HALLWAYS - OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM - DAY

Class ends, and the film students pile out of the classroom.
Nick heads off towards the dorms.

Myra stops at a water fountain and takes a drink. When she
finishes, she looks around for Nick, and spots him a ways
down the hall. She moves after him but just as she's about to
call his name, Jason intercepts him.

Myra stops in her tracks. She can't make out the
conversation, but soon after Nick and Jason take off
together.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

Nick and Jason stand in line at a coffee house.

JASON

Why are you a filmmaker, Nick?

Nick's eyebrows furrow.

NICK

Why? You think I shouldn't be?

JASON

No, no. I was watching you today.
Your little debate with Seth...

NICK

I don't want to think about it. I
can't believe I fell for it. He
always plays these games with me
and I don't usually fall for them.

JASON

I think you held your own. I liked
what I saw.

NICK

What did you see?

JASON

Passion. More than I've seen from
any of the others.

NICK

Thanks.

They reach the counter. A FEMALE BARISTA greets them.

FEMALE BARISTA

Hi there.

JASON

Hey. A grande vanilla latte, and...

He turns to Nick.

JASON (cont'd)

What's your pretentious filmmaker
drink?

A pause as Nick is put on the spot.

NICK

The same.

Jason pays and the two continue on. They wait for their
coffee.

JASON

You drink coffee, Nick?

NICK

Tea. If I'm sick.

JASON
You never answered my first
question.

NICK
Why I'm a filmmaker?

Jason nods and waits for an answer.

NICK (cont'd)
It suits me, I think. It's that
moment, right after developing the
first roll of film. You hold it up
to the light and there it is...

JASON
What?

NICK
That image. Thousands of them. All
contained to their own little
frame. Everything's right there.
And it can grow into anything.

JASON
Wow. And you say you don't fit in?
I don't get it.

A MALE BARISTA sets their coffees on the counter.

MALE BARISTA
Two grande vanilla lattes.

They take their coffees. They move to the corner of the
coffee house and sit across from each other in lounge chairs.
Nick looks down at his coffee.

NICK
What is this?

JASON
You really don't drink coffee. It's
your standard latte. The drink kids
bought in the eighties to get laid.

NICK
What?

JASON
Something a friend told me once.

They take a sip and exchange a glance. Nick tries to hold
out, but quickly looks away.

JASON (cont'd)
So, what the hell did you do to
piss everyone off?

NICK
It's always been hard for me to
talk to people. I lived at home as
an undergrad. So when I got here, I
forced myself to meet people. I
went to parties. I drank.

JASON
And then you stopped?

NICK
Yeah. It was uncomfortable. I
couldn't handle it. All the...

Their eyes meet.

NICK (cont'd)
Chaos. Everybody changes when
they're drunk.

JASON
And when did all the hostility
start?

NICK
When I stopped going to parties,
they stopped talking to me. Seth
and I used to hang out all the
time. Now he's leading the charge.

Jason just stares at Nick, dumbstruck.

JASON
Really? That's it?

Nick narrows his eyes defensively.

NICK
What else would it be?

Jason sits leisurely back in his seat, pondering.

JASON
I dunno. Just seems like a weird
reason to burn bridges. Everyone
has interests. Why wouldn't they
try to know yours?

NICK
Now you're sounding like Frank.

A moment of silence passes between them.

NICK (cont'd)
You're lucky. I've never seen them
so interested in anyone before.
There's usually no impressing them.

JASON
Well, maybe they've just never met
anyone exciting. Not including
yourself, of course.

NICK
Yeah, maybe. But you... You're like
an exotic import to them.

Nick smiles, basking in the warmth of a real conversation.
But the smile quickly fades as a realization dawns on him -

NICK (cont'd)
And you shouldn't ruin it being
seen with me.

JASON
That's crap, Nick. High school's
over. I don't care about that.

Nick stands.

NICK
Subtext doesn't just exist in
films. The way I'm seen is easily
transferable to you.

Jason doesn't know what to say. Nick smiles bravely and then
turns to leave.

JASON
Hey.

Nick turns back around.

JASON (cont'd)
You still owe me a movie.

Nick nods and then exits, leaving Jason with his thoughts.
Jason lets out a big sigh.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Nick drops his unfinished latte in a garbage can and
continues on his way.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUING

Jason pulls out his cell and speed dials #2.

JASON

Seth! What's up? You busy tonight?

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Nick sits at his computer typing. Myra opens the door a little ways.

MYRA

Nick?

Nick stops and turns to her.

NICK

Hey, Myra. Come in.

Myra enters cautiously, unsure of how to proceed. A moment of silence follows. Myra diverts her attention to a framed photo on the desk. It's a duplicate of the one Myra used for 'inspiration'.

Myra picks it up and smiles.

MYRA

I have this same picture.

Nick takes a moment to look.

NICK

That was a great day.

MYRA

What are you working on?

NICK

Take a guess.

Myra just smiles. She moves over to Nick and sits on his desk.

MYRA

You missed our date.

Nick's eyes go wide.

NICK

Shit, you're right. I totally forgot.

MYRA

Didn't you see me after class?

Nick tries to hide his guilt.

NICK

No, I don't think so.

MYRA

Oh... well it's fine. I saw you with Jason. Did you go out?

NICK

Yeah. Just for a coffee.

MYRA

Since when do you drink coffee?

Nick makes an "ugh" sound, scrunching his nose.

NICK

Never again, I'll tell you that.

MYRA

Well I'm glad you've made a new friend.

Myra slides off the desk and heads for the door. Nick returns to typing. Myra stops at the threshold and, after a moment, turns back around.

MYRA (cont'd)

Do you like him?

NICK

Jason?

MYRA

Yeah.

NICK

Sure. I can't really be choosy in who I'm friends with if you haven't noticed.

MYRA

No. I mean - do you *like* him.

Nick stops typing - mid sentence - and turns.

NICK

What are you asking me, Myra?

MYRA

You know me. I'm a pretty open-minded girl, Nick. If there was anything you wanted to tell me, you know you could.

Nick thinks for a moment. Just as he's about to say something, he stops himself and turns back to his work. He resumes typing.

NICK

I'm good. But Mr. Suburbia, on the other hand... he sure has some things he needs to get off his chest.

Myra looks on at Nick hopelessly and with sorrow, but manages to hide it behind a smile.

MYRA

Please tell me that's not what you're calling him.

NICK

Oh, God - no! Archetypal purposes only.

MYRA

Good. Well, I'm off. No more blowing me off, you hear?

NICK

Pinky swear.

Myra leaves, closing the door behind her.

Nick continues working and IMAGINES the scene as he writes.

INT. NEW HOUSE - THE LIBRARY - DAY - DAY-DREAM

The film projector in Nick's mind is running, ticking away somewhere in the distance.

The beautiful two-story mini-mansion is well-decorated with very sexualized paintings and statues spread throughout the room.

The new husband - JAY - leads the suburban husband - NICHOLAS - into the room. Nicholas' mouth falls open at all the unexpected sexual imagery.

They stop at two couches, situated on either side of a coffee table.

NICHOLAS

You've turned this house into a completely different place. The last couple to live here wasn't nearly as liberal.

Jay smiles and sits. Nicholas follows his lead.

JAY

Well, I guess they weren't very exciting people, then.

NICHOLAS

What about your daughter? Isn't she curious?

JAY

Of course. The truth is, we never stop being curious. The earlier the better.

NICHOLAS

What do you tell her?

JAY

The truth. Sex is nothing to be ashamed of, Nicholas, at any age.

Jay looks over Nicholas' shoulder. Nicholas turns to follow his eye line. Jason is standing in the doorway, smiling coyly.

Suddenly, Nicholas has been replaced with Nick. Nick looks around, as if he can't remember how he wound up in 1961.

He turns back around and now Jason has taken Jay's spot on the couch. Except this time, Jason is completely naked. He's smiling just as coyly.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Nick slams his laptop shut, almost horrified with his writing.

He carefully reopens his laptop, almost afraid of what he'll find. He looks to the bottom of his document and sees that it has ended with Jay's last line of dialogue. Nothing else from Nick's day-dream has made it onto the page.

Nick takes a moment to go over what just happened. Finally, he closes his laptop and grabs his phone. He dials but gets Jason's voicemail.

JASON (V.O.)

You've got Jason - recently relocated. If you're not in the New York area, chances are there's nothing I can do for you. And if you are... Well, I probably still can't help, so leave me alone, okay?

A small laugh from Jason and then the BEEP.

NICK

Hey, Jason - it's Nick. I'm sorry about earlier. I got nervous... Don't really know why. But about that movie. I'm in, okay? -

INT. JASON'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A shirtless Jason listens to the rest of the message.

NICK (V.O.)

- Just pick a time and I'll be there. Okay, bye.

Jason smiles and pockets the phone.

SETH (O.S.)

Who was that?

JASON

Don't worry about it...

Seth lies on Jason's bed in nothing but his undies - tied up S&M style. He fails to hide his nervousness.

SETH

Are you sure about this?

Jason smirks again, this time at Seth's expense.

JASON

Stop being a little bitch.

Jason slips out of his jeans.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAYS - DAY

Nick walks through the halls. He turns a corner at the same time as Seth and they crash into each other. Seth jumps back, completely startled.

SETH

Watch it...

But his heart's not in it. In fact, Seth appears completely lost in thought - detached, even. Seth and Nick exchange a quick glance, giving Nick enough time to spot the bruises on Seth's wrists.

But then the moment's gone, and Seth speeds away. Nick watches him go and soon after, Myra takes his place.

MYRA

Hey, buddy. What you looking at?

Nick turns to her and smiles.

NICK

Nothing. What's up?

MYRA

Absolute boredom. How about we make up for yesterday?

Nick doesn't answer.

MYRA (cont'd)

C'mon...

Nick avoids her gaze.

MYRA (cont'd)

What is it?

Just then, Jason joins them.

JASON

Hey guys.

Myra can barely hide her distaste.

MYRA

Not much, Jason.

JASON

Nick, ready to go?

Nick continues to avoid Myra's gaze, unsure of how to handle the awkwardness.

JASON (cont'd)
Oh... am I interrupting something?

NICK
No.

JASON
If you have plans that's cool. I'm
not greedy.

Jason and Myra both look at Nick, waiting for a decision.
Nick looks helplessly between the two.

NICK
Tomorrow night, Myra. I promise.

Myra shakes her head.

MYRA
Fine. Whenever you can fit me in.

She storms off without another word.

INT. MUSIC STORE - DAY

The small music store is fairly crowded, except for an area
at the back where Nick and Jason stand, flipping through the
Classical Music/Score sections.

Jason, on the Classical side, looks up at Nick, who looks
through scores.

JASON
What you looking for?

Nick doesn't look up.

NICK
Philip Glass.

JASON
Oh yeah?

NICK
He's my favorite.

JASON
Mine too.

Nick looks up at Jason.

NICK
Really?

JASON
When it comes to scores, anyway.

Nick smiles and returns to searching. He reaches the "G" section.

NICK
Typical.

JASON
What?

NICK
They don't have him. Not a section or anything.

JASON
What did you expect from an HMV?

An EMPLOYEE stocking a shelf ten feet away turns to Jason and glares.

JASON (cont'd)
Sorry.

Jason and Nick continue to browse.

JASON (cont'd)
So, what's up with Myra? How long have you known her?

NICK
Since I started here. About a year, I guess.

JASON
You like her?

NICK
You don't, do you?

JASON
I don't have a problem with her. But then again I'm not friends with her either. She just strikes me as the type of girl that's friendly with everyone.

NICK
That's just Myra being Myra. She likes to be liked.

JASON

I find that people like that are never really your friend. They're always too busy being someone else's that they never have time for you.

NICK

Aren't you friends with everyone?

Jason shakes his head.

JASON

I don't think so. I'm friendly with the others but for the most part, we're not friends. You're my number one, Nick.

Nick looks up at him again. A small smile works its way onto the corner of his lips. Nick blushes a little as Jason smiles back.

Jason returns to his browsing and grabs a CD.

JASON (cont'd)

Hey, look what I found.

Jason holds out a classical Philip Glass album. Nick is momentarily stunned by its existence.

JASON (cont'd)

Sometimes they don't know where to put these guys. The ones that jump back and forth. This one's not a score, I guess. I don't know if you have it...

Nick shakes his head and takes the album.

NICK

I don't. Thank you.

JASON

Just what you were looking for.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT - MONTAGE

From out of the closet, Nick pulls a jacket and slides it on. There's a knock at the door and Nick moves to answer it.

NICK

Coming, Myra.

But instead of Myra, Jason waits on the other side.

NICK (cont'd)

Jason.

JASON

Myra coming over?

NICK

Yeah, right away.

JASON

Let's go out for drinks.

NICK

I can't. You know I promised Myra yesterday.

JASON

So blow her off. She'll still be around tomorrow.

Nick struggles to say no to Jason.

NICK

I can't. I already did once.

JASON

Are you really going to have more fun with her than with me?

Jason puts a hand on Nick's shoulder. No nausea or slowness. Surprised, Nick looks at the hand and then back at Jason. Jason flashes a winning smile. He sees Nick's resistance begin to crumble.

JASON (cont'd)

I didn't think so.

Jason pulls Nick out the door. As they move towards the stairs, Nick pulls out his cell phone and begins to text. Just as they disappear out of view, Myra enters from the stairwell at the other end of the dorm area.

When Myra reaches Nick's room she knocks and waits. She knocks again.

MYRA

Nick?

She receives a text from Nick: "Have to take a raincheck. So sorry!" Myra lets out a shocked laugh.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Nick returns, smiling to himself - head in the clouds. He sits at his desk and opens his computer, which immediately DINGS. A notice pops up at the bottom of the screen with the heading - "Myra's Birthday".

Nick's eyes go wide when he sees it.

NICK

Shit.

Nick opens Facebook and types Myra's name in the search box. However, nothing comes up. Nick frowns and adds 'Denham', which finally yields a link to Myra's page.

Nick opens the profile, and immediately notices the "Add Friend" button, which suddenly seems to overwhelm the rest of the page.

Nick bursts out of his chair and runs for the closet. He throws it open and rummages through it until he finds Myra's neatly wrapped present. Then, he runs for the door.

INT. MYRA'S DORM AREA - NIGHT

Nick shuffles as quickly and as quietly as he can down the hall and up to Myra's dorm. He knocks, and hides the gift behind his back.

Finally, the door opens and an indignant Myra crosses her arms. Nick smiles meekly and reveals the gift.

NICK

Happy Birthday?

MYRA

Is that a question?

NICK

I didn't forget. I swear. Today's just been one big cluster.

Myra's says nothing, still unconvinced.

NICK (cont'd)

I had everything planned out. I was going to surprise you this morning - take you out for brunch. I had this gift picked out like three weeks ago.

MYRA
How sweet. Right before Jason
arrived. What a coincidence!

Myra rolls her eyes and disappears in the room, leaving the door open. Nick follows her in.

INT. MYRA'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

NICK
I know I've been spending a lot of
time with Jason. I realize that
I've practically been ignoring you
and I'm sorry.

Myra turns back to him, her indignation starting to falter.

MYRA
Yes, you have been.

NICK
I know how it feels. More than
anyone. I really am sorry, Myra.
I'm just not used to having someone
who wants to spend time with me
more than anyone else.

MYRA
I'm that person too, Nick.

NICK
But you have the others. You have
everyone you could ever want.

MYRA
If only that were true.

Nick takes a step closer and hands her the gift.

NICK
Please. Just open it and then you
can resume hating me.

Myra sighs and takes the gift.

MYRA
For the record, I don't hate you.

She sits at the foot of the bed and Nick joins her. A smile from Nick becomes infectious and, soon, a small grin begins to form on Myra's face.

Myra excitedly rips open the present.

MYRA (cont'd)
Oh, my God - you did not!

Out of the box, Myra pulls expensive sunglasses.

MYRA (cont'd)
Holy shit, Nick! How did you afford this?!

NICK
It doesn't matter. I saw the way you looked at them last summer. They'll look great on you.

Myra tries them on, overjoyed. She wraps her arms around Nick.

MYRA
Thank you.

NICK
And if there's any way I can make it up to you...

MYRA
Come hang out with us tomorrow night!

NICK
Where?

MYRA
Here! Please, Nick! A few drinks, a few games!?

NICK
Who's all coming?

MYRA
Just a few people you don't know. And then a few people you do.

Myra tiptoes around the latter. Nick starts to catch on.

NICK
And who would that be? Seth?

MYRA
Yes, word is that he'll make an appearance.

Myra can sense Nick's hesitation.

MYRA (cont'd)
C'mon, Nick. I promise - Seth's
going to be more concerned with the
girls he's lined up for me than
with you.

NICK
Or with overcompensating.

MYRA
Please come over? You said you
wanted to make it up to me.

Myra flashes a winning smile of her own and Nick realizes
he's been cornered. He sighs in defeat.

INT. NICK'S ROOM - EVENING

Nick puts the finishing touches on his semi-formal wear - a
tie is added to a white shirt/black vest combo and jeans.

Once he's finished, he checks himself in the mirror. Once
he's satisfied, he takes a deep breath and heads for the
door.

INT. ANOTHER DORM AREA - NIGHT

MUSIC can be heard coming from inside Myra's room. Nick
knocks and moments later Myra answers it. She blows an
extendable noise-maker into Nick's face.

MYRA
Come on in, party animal!

Myra ushers him in.

INT. MYRA'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick is immediately overwhelmed by the loud sounds of
PARTIERS. There are a few unfamiliar faces, but true to
Myra's word, many of them are fellow film students. They
stand in small groups, mingling over drinks.

Nick looks around.

NICK
Where's Jason?

MYRA
He couldn't make it.

Myra strolls over to the drink table where an assortment of sodas and alcohols are arranged in no particular order.

MYRA (cont'd)
What are you having?

NICK
Actually...

Myra returns to Nick.

MYRA
Have something, Nick. Look around.
Try and find one sober person.

Nick accepts the challenge but it appears everyone carries a drink of some kind.

MYRA (cont'd)
Relax. You want to get back in the
good books? Take my advice -

Myra slips a red solo cup into Nick's hand.

MYRA (cont'd)
- Don't be empty-handed.

Nick takes the drink and sighs a little, trying to relax. He smiles.

NICK
Better not be beer...

Myra smiles, mission accomplished.

MYRA
That's the spirits.

Myra winks. Then, she turns to Seth, who rummages in a drawer nearby.

MYRA (cont'd)
SETH! For fuck's sake, they're
right there in the drawer!

SETH
Got 'em!

Seth stands straight and closes the drawer, brandishing a deck of cards. His smile fades when he sees Nick. But, when he spots Nick's drink -

SETH (cont'd)
Hey, man.

Nick, almost too stunned for words, manages to speak -

NICK

Hey.

Seth turns back to Myra as she approaches him, an excited grin on her face.

MYRA

Hey everybody! Seth found the cards! You know what that means?

Myra, Seth and Nick wait for a response -

PARTIERS

SOCIABLES!

CUT TO:

LATER.

Time passes as the game of sociables ensues.

1. a King is picked.

MYRA

Boys!

The men drink. Nick takes a small sip.

2. Seth picks a card.

SETH

Sevens! One!

The numbers continue in ascending order around the room with the traditional "fuck you" and reversal of directions at all numbers that include a '7' or that are multiples of '7'. Eventually the counting reaches Nick -

NICK

Fuck you...

The partier next to Nick is too slow to react.

PARTIER #1

FUCK!

He laughs and pats Nick on the back playfully. Nick's eyes go wide for a moment until he realizes it's all in good fun. Nick smiles a little, feeling welcome.

The others order the partier to "drink."

3. Nick picks an Ace of Spades.

ALL BUT NICK
SOCIABLES!

They all drink. Nick takes a pretend sip which goes completely unnoticed.

4. The next partier picks a '6'.

PARTIER #2
Never have I ever!

MYRA
Everyone gets three strikes!

The partiers each hold up three fingers and Nick follows suit.

PARTIER #2
Okay, okay, let me think. Never
have I ever gotten caught by my
folks.

Myra and a few others drink and put down a finger.

PARTIER #3
I never slept with two people in
one night.

Again, Myra drinks, this time with a few different partiers. Another finger down.

SETH
Myra - you little slut!

MYRA
Awe, baby - did you think I was
saving it for you?

They all laugh. Nick remains quiet as he watches everyone interact. Myra catches Nick's solitude out of the corner of her eye.

SETH
Never have I ever kissed a another
girl.

Groans from most of the group.

MYRA
WHAT! Way to end it, Seth! You got
other plans or something?

Everyone but two of the females and Nick drink. Suddenly, all eyes are on Nick.

MYRA (cont'd)
Nick - you out of booze?

Nick shakes his head. Seth laughs in surprise.

SETH
What!? You're kidding me.

Nick says nothing, the judgemental eyes turning his body rigid with fear. Everyone is quiet now - too embarrassed, for Nick, to speak.

MYRA
Hey guys, give him a break.
Everyone gets to have their first time.

Myra turns to Nick.

MYRA (cont'd)
Want to make yours tonight.

Seth and Nick exchange a glance. Seth smiles.

SETH
Yeah, c'mon guys! Let's show the man some support!

Everyone begins to chant Nick's name as Myra begins to inch her way slowly towards Nick.

For Nick, Myra's journey takes an eternity. Slow motion plagues his mind once again and the sounds of music and cheering become lost in the sound of his heartbeat.

Just as Myra's about to lay one on him, Nick stands and everything returns to normal. The cheering stops.

NICK
I'll be right back.

Nick runs off to the bathroom and playful jeers begin to rise from the partiers. Myra sits still, quiet and sombre.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nick enters and quickly shuts the door as the chatting resumes - as if nothing ever happened.

Nick leans over the toilet and vomits, but the sounds of music and voices are loud enough to drown it out. When Nick finishes, he flushes and washes his face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Only Myra senses Nick's return and he waves her over. Once they're alone -

NICK
Hey, I think I'm going to take off.

Myra's eyes fill with disappointment and sadness.

MYRA
What?

NICK
I'm sorry.

MYRA
No, Nick - please stay!

But Nick's already on his way out. Seth watches as Myra follows after him. Eventually, Myra stops - giving up on the chase.

MYRA (cont'd)
Thanks for coming...

But the sound of the door closing cuts her goodbye short. Myra stands still a moment but soon after, she forces a smile and returns to the group.

MYRA (cont'd)
Who's turn?

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Nick enters and immediately receives a chill from an open window. Nick closes it and shivers a little. He moves to the bed and, after pulling off his jeans, climbs under the covers, curling up for warmth.

CUT TO:

LATER.

Nick is fast asleep. At the foot of the bed, a SHADOWY FIGURE looms over him.

The figure slips out of their shirt, and the CLINKING of a belt buckle follows as the figure loses the jeans.

The figure climbs into bed and Nick only awakens when arms slide around him from behind.

FEMALE VOICE

Hey, babe.

Nick LEAPS out of bed and falls to the ground. He pushes himself back along the floor as the woman approaches him. Nick's hand connects with a floor lamp and he desperately reaches for the switch. He finds it and illuminates the room.

Myra stands before Nick in her bra and panties. She slurs her words a little.

MYRA

Sorry to wake you.

NICK

What the hell are you doing?

MYRA

You still owe me that kiss.

NICK

Please leave.

MYRA

What's wrong, Nicky?

NICK

Don't call me that.

Nick manages to stand. Myra reaches for her bra strap.

NICK (cont'd)

Wait. Myra!

The bra comes off. Nick is horrified.

MYRA

This is the first time you've seen them, isn't it?

Nick doesn't answer and Myra continues to approach.

MYRA (cont'd)

It's okay.

Myra reaches for Nick's belt. With lightning speed - and surprising strength - Nick grabs Myra's arms and holds her back.

NICK

NO!

Myra still doesn't get it.

MYRA

(swooning)

C'mon, Nick. Don't reject me.

She leans in again but this time, Nick throws her away. Myra hits the floor hard.

NICK

I said no!

Myra finally comes to her senses, and realizes (literally) how low she's stooped. She is meek now, the temptress gone.

MYRA

Nick...

NICK

I want you to leave.

Myra stands and approaches Nick again.

MYRA

Let me stay. You can have me any way you want.

Myra's desperation only further infuriates Nick.

NICK

I don't want you!

Myra returns the emotional slap in the face, but this one leaves a mark on Nick's cheek. When she realizes what she's done, Myra begins to cry.

They exchange one last look and then Myra quickly dresses. She flees from the room, slamming the door behind her.

Nick stands completely still for a moment, unsure of how to proceed. Finally, he musters up the strength to return to bed, moving slowly and carefully.

Nick climbs back under the covers, and he passes out before his head hits the pillow.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Most of the class, including Jason, have found their seats as the remaining students filter in. Jason keeps his eye on the door.

Myra enters, looking weathered and pissed all at once, and begrudgingly takes the seat next to Jason.

JASON
What the hell happened to you?

MYRA
Fuck off.

JASON
Nick on his way?

She finally turns to him, stone-faced.

MYRA
I don't think he's coming.

Myra turns away.

MYRA (cont'd)
Who the fuck cares anyway.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - LATER

Nick, still in bed, lies on his back, having a staring contest with the ceiling. He doesn't move, seemingly petrified.

A knock at the door startles him, and Nick sits upright.

NICK
Who's there?

JASON
It's Jason, bud.

INT. OUTSIDE NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

SHUFFLING can be heard followed by the RUFFLING of clothes. Soon after, the door opens and Jason is greeted by an unkempt Nick.

Jason smiles, on the verge of laughter.

JASON

Well - now I know why you didn't show today. Did you and Myra have a sip of the same roofie-colada last night?

Nick looks over Jason's shoulder, anxious and on the lookout for possibly intruders. Jason catches the distress in Nick's eyes.

JASON (cont'd)

Nick, what's up? Everything cool?

NICK

Not at all.

JASON

Want to tell me about it?

Nick stands back and Jason enters.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick locks the door.

NICK

I wish you would've been there last night...

JASON

Where?

NICK

At the party... For Myra?

Jason just gives him a blank look. Nick puts it together.

NICK (cont'd)

So, she didn't invite you. Of course. Myra had a thing at her place last night.

JASON

Didn't get the memo.

NICK

Well you didn't miss anything. Believe me.

JASON

Something happened at the party?

NICK
Not at the party...

INT. HALLWAYS - LATER

Jason bounds down the hallway, his strides making him an imposing character.

He turns down the film hallway and into the -

EQUIPMENT ROOM.

The room is split into two sections - at the back, the 'employees only' section containing the equipment, and the entrance where rented film equipment waits to be picked up by students.

Jason moves to the desk and grabs a 'sign-in book'. He thumbs through it and when he finally stops -

JASON
Gotchya.

Jason returns the book and leaves.

INT. HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Jason continues on and turns off into another branch of the film hall. He finally reaches the editing suites and knocks on one of the doors.

No answer.

Jason knocks again. Then, from inside -

MYRA
Just a fucking minute!

Finally, the door opens and Myra appears on the other end.

MYRA (cont'd)
What do you want?

JASON
Can I talk to you a sec?

Before Myra can answer, Jason pushes his way in -

MYRA
Hey!

INT. EDITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason lets the door fall shut behind him.

MYRA
I have this time booked asshole.

JASON
I'm not here for the suite. I'm
here for Nick.

Myra's eyes flare.

MYRA
Well, in that case...

Myra reaches for the knob.

MYRA (cont'd)
Get the hell out -

Jason grabs Myra and throws her up hard against the door. She
cries out - a mixture of surprise and pain.

JASON
Listen up, bitch. I heard what
happened last night. It's not going
to happen again, understand?

MYRA
FUCK YOU!

Myra tries to fend him off with a head-butt but Jason dodges
and only throws her harder against the door.

JASON
Nick has a big decision ahead of
him, and when it comes time to make
that choice, you're not going to be
in the picture. Got it?

Myra, shaking, fights back tears.

JASON (cont'd)
GOT IT?

MYRA
Yeah. Got it.

JASON
Fantastic.

Jason lets her go and Myra scurries away. Jason reopens the
door.

JASON (cont'd)
Best of luck.

Jason leaves a frightened Myra. She bursts into tears.

INT. UNIVERSITY - COFFEE SHOP - DAY

SUPER: One Week Later

Nick sits alone at a table. He takes small sips of a vanilla latte but his brow furrows a little with each sip. Myra joins him at the table, looking thin and pale.

MYRA
Hey, Nick.

NICK
Myra... You look...

MYRA
I haven't been sleeping.

NICK
Where have you been the entire week?

MYRA
My dorm, mostly. Things haven't been good.

NICK
What's happened to you?

In the distance, behind Nick, Jason walks by. His cheery facade fades when he sees Myra.

MYRA
You still seeing Jason?

NICK
Yeah, now and then.

MYRA
Seems like a lot more often than that.

NICK
Are you mad at me, Myra?

MYRA
Why would I be? I mean - it's not like you've been blowing me off for the past month.

Nick lowers his head.

NICK
It's been hard... Being around you.
Since that night.

MYRA
But it's easy being with him?

Nick looks back up at her.

NICK
Jason a good guy, Myra. He's kind.

For the first time, a crooked smile works it's way onto Myra's lips.

MYRA
Kind. Right.

NICK
What is it about him? Why can't you
like him? Why can't you see what I
see?

Myra checks the coast and after confirming that no one is listening in, she leans in close to Nick.

MYRA
(low tones)
Nick, he scares me.

NICK
Why would he scare you?

Myra struggles to confide - her secret *and* the thought of confessing eating away at her with equal measure.

MYRA
I don't know. It's just the person
he is. He's the kind of guy who's
friends with everyone.

NICK
That's funny. He said the same
thing about you.

Myra doesn't seem to care as she continues dropping hints.

MYRA
It's the way he looks at people.
He's thinking. He's always
thinking.
(MORE)

MYRA (cont'd)
People like that, when they want something, they don't stop until they get it.

NICK
Okay? Thanks for the warning?

MYRA
I'm just saying that maybe you should be careful about who you're friends with.

Nick's eyebrows narrow.

NICK
Yeah? Well it's not like I have many options.

Myra patience starts to evaporate as the anger begins to seep in.

MYRA
Whose fault is that?

NICK
What?

MYRA
Who stopped speaking to who? Who stopped going out and socializing?

Nick just sits in silence, a vessel for Myra's abuse. Her voice begins to rise, all thoughts of Jason long gone.

MYRA (cont'd)
I gave you a chance to patch things up but you just ran away. You know what they all say about you behind your back, Nick? That you're conceited. That you think you're better than all of us.

NICK
Us? I thought you were on my side.

MYRA
You don't get it Nick. There are no sides. There's normal people and then there's losers. And it seems like you're committed to being a loser.

NICK
Thanks Myra. That feels great.

MYRA

I trying to help you. Wake up,
Nick. You're not the only one with
issues. But yet, you're the only
one who keeps cutting himself off.

Myra stands abruptly and starts to walk away. Nick can hardly believe what's going on. Fuming, he bursts out of his chair, knocking it over.

NICK

Sorry I wouldn't fuck you,
sweetheart!

Myra stops dead in her tracks. The whole room is now silent - Nick has now captured everyone's attention. Jason watches from a ways off, out of sight.

NICK (cont'd)

You want to know what I really
think?

MYRA

Not really.

NICK

Aww, c'mon - you had your turn. I
think you're all a bunch of stuck
up little bitches who won't grow
up.

Nick's second outburst surprises Myra, shocking her out of her 'pity me' act and reigniting the indignant hard-ass within.

NICK (cont'd)

Look around. We're not undergrads
anymore. Didn't you get the
message? Frat parties are over!
Didn't you get enough girl-on-girl
action the first time around?

MYRA

You're a real dick.

NICK

What's the real problem here? Let's
be honest.

Unlike Nick, Myra can sense the eyes on her. She does her best to maintain her authority -

MYRA

My problem is that I don't understand why you're spending so much time with him!

NICK

Why do you care?

MYRA

Because now I'm second citizen with you and I don't understand why.

NICK

It's not always about you.

MYRA

I spent time with you because I genuinely liked you, not because I pitied you. Isn't that what you think? That deep down, the only reason someone would be your friend is because they feel bad for you?

NICK

Please - don't feel bad for me, Myra. I don't need it, and I don't need you.

MYRA

You know, you don't have to keep being the pretentious dick that nobody likes. You can be whoever you want. Change your attitude, Nick.

Myra storms off.

NICK

You want me to make a choice Myra? Well I choose him!

Myra stops again, but only for a moment. She fights back tears and continues walking. And then, Nick is all alone. Only now does he realize that everyone around is watching. The attention overwhelms Nick who rushes off.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - LATER

Nick throws open in the door and stumbles inside. Disoriented by blurred vision, Nick tries to make it to the bed but fails. He passes out, and everything goes black.

CUT TO:

SHORTLY AFTER.

A faint voice brings Nick back to consciousness -

JASON

Nick? Hey buddy - wake up.

Slowly Jason comes into view, hovering over Nick.

NICK

What happened?

JASON

I think your blow-up with Myra had a few side-effects. Let me help you up.

Nick finds the strength to raise his arm and wrap it behind Jason's neck. Jason lifts Nick and as he carries him to the bed, Nick's dizziness fades.

Everything becomes clear.

JASON (cont'd)

That better?

NICK

Yeah.

Jason sits beside Nick.

NICK (cont'd)

How did you get here so fast?

JASON

I followed you. I saw what happened.

NICK

I'm so embarrassed. What is wrong with me?

JASON

What's wrong with *you*? What the hell is wrong with *Myra*? What a bitch!

NICK

I've never been that angry with someone in my entire life.

JASON

Who could blame you? Who the hell does she think she is - putting on a big show in front of everyone? But you know what - I can't really say I'm surprised. She's been like this since the day I got here.

NICK

Like what?

JASON

She's a people-pleaser, Nick. I told you. She gets her high from sucking the life out of people.

NICK

But it works. People want to be around her.

JASON

Sure they do. She tricks them into believing they're getting something out of it, but the only one that really does is her.

Nick struggles to accept Jason's critique.

JASON (cont'd)

I know you've seen it too. Jesus Christ - you saw it firsthand. When things are good, they're great. But when she's not getting what she wants...

NICK

What she wants...

JASON

What?

NICK

Nothing. Sometimes I think you and Myra are reading off the same script.

Jason frowns, confused.

NICK (cont'd)

Never mind.

JASON

What are you thinking?

NICK
I'm thinking that any chance I had
of patching things up with the
others is gone.

JASON
Nick, you need to stop worrying
about the friends you *could* have
and starting thinking about the
friends you *do* have.

NICK
Who do I have Jason?

JASON
You have me.

Jason slides his hand over to Nick's but Nick pulls his away
out of habit. He smiles.

NICK
Thanks.

JASON
So, what's it going to take to get
you to forget about all this?

NICK
Time.

JASON
What about that movie you've been
promising me?

Nick looks over at his desk. A draft of his script is open on
his laptop, and papers are scattered around it. The papers
are pages of the same script - littered with possible changes
and corrections.

Nick looks back - sees Jason's pleading puppy-dog-eyes.

INT. CINEMA - NIGHT

Nick and Jason have the best seats in the house, three-
quarters of the way to the back and dead center. Jason's
hands are busy with popcorn and a soda. Nick is completely
still, consumed with the film.

ON THE SCREEN

A frightened YOUNG WOMAN runs through narrow, claustrophobic hallways. Concrete everywhere, and very dim. She's constantly checking over her shoulder, but no one's there.

Finally, the young woman sees an exit sign at the end of the hallway. Freedom. She picks up speed and bursts through the doorway into an

EMPTY BALLROOM.

It's even darker here. In fact, the only thing visible is a large antique mirror being illuminated in the center of the room.

As the young woman takes this in, the door closes and locks behind her. No going back.

She creeps towards the center of the room and stops in front of the mirror. She gasps, seeing a completely different woman in the reflection: hair color, eye color, nose shape - all changed. The woman touches her face, familiarizing herself with a stranger.

Now the woman in the reflection is the one standing in front of the mirror.

Suddenly, in the mirror, a shadow fills the void of space behind the woman. Her eyes go wide. And then, the woman is attacked from behind and shoved through the mirror.

BACK IN THE CINEMA

Jason cries out at the moment of attack, spilling his popcorn and practically leaping out of his chair.

He looks over at Nick, in shock, laughing. Nick doesn't even notice, eyes locked on the screen. Jason puts his popcorn aside and looks around. The theatre's not even half full, a wealth of space around the two of them.

Jason reaches out and touches Nick's knee. This catches Nick's attention. Jason begins to massage Nick's leg, moving his arm back and forth. Jason has forgot all about the movie, his complete attention now solely focused on gauging Nick's reaction.

Jason slowly moves his hand closer towards Nick's groin. Nick lays his head back against the seat, looking up at the ceiling as he lets out a quiet gasp of pleasure.

Everything around Nick slows down. The sounds of the film (the ensuing brawl) are replaced with the sounds of his rising blood pressure. The ceiling above Nick begins to blur as Jason's hand gets closer to Nick's groin.

Nick is about to pass out. But just before that moment arrives, Nick gently bats Jason's hand away. Nick resumes watching the film and a small smirk curls Jason's lips. Jason resumes watching as well.

But the film has ended and the credits start to roll. The rest of the audience begins to leave, but Nick and Jason remain. They exchange a long glance, and then Nick stands to leave.

EXT. CINEMA - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Nick and Jason walk towards Jason's car. Nick keeps his hands in his coat pockets - out of reach.

JASON

Man! I can't believe she was the same girl who got kidnapped! How the hell did she go the whole film not knowing who she was?

NICK

Denial. She wanted to see herself the way she was before the abduction. Before the surgery. Her captor forced her to see herself for who she truly was.

JASON

But why only at the very end? Why *that* mirror?

They reach the car, and stop.

NICK

It wasn't the mirror. It was the trauma. The whole experience he put her through again. In the end, she wasn't who she wanted to be. She was his vision.

Jason is starting to catch on.

JASON

His creation...
(thinks about it)
Wow. That's deep.

They climb into the car.

INT. JASON'S CAR - UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jason pulls the car to a stop outside of the university. There's an awkward moment of silence, and then Jason makes a move - he reaches to put his arm around Nick's shoulder.

But Nick instinctively pulls away. Jason laughs.

JASON
Why so jittery?

NICK
I'm just a little uncomfortable.

JASON
Why? Don't you trust me?

Jason takes Nick's hand. Nick looks down at his hand, and then back up at Jason.

The film projector in Nick's head starts up and a DAY-DREAM begins.

INT. JAY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - DAY-DREAM

This day-dream is silent.

Nicholas and Jay are alone in the house. They laugh together, hysterically, share a cigarette, and drink.

Jay notices their glasses are empty and motions Nicholas to the bar. There, side-by-side, Jay refills his own drink and then Nicholas'. He takes a step closer to Nicholas; they're now face-to-face.

Jay lingers there a moment, trying to tempt Nicholas into kissing him. But before anything can happen, Jay puts his drink aside and leaves the room. Nicholas watches him go, a battle between desire and reason overwhelming his mind.

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - DAY-DREAM

Jay's already unbuttoning his shirt when Nicholas enters. Nicholas stops in the threshold as Jay majestically undresses - seductively taking his time.

Jay slowly approaches Nicholas and takes his hand. Their eyes lock, but Nicholas is able to resist the sexual tension, and quickly leaves.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. JASON'S CAR - NIGHT

NICK

I do. It's just, I barely know you.
That's all.

Jason smiles and moves in for a kiss.

JASON

Then get to know me.

Nick turns away.

NICK

I'm going to be a little busy this
week. Between the party and
tonight, I've gotten off track. I
have a script to finish.

Jason sits back in his seat, the rejection eating away at him.

JASON

So basically you're M-I-A for the
week?

NICK

Yeah.

A long pause as Jason fights to keep his true thoughts contained. Finally -

JASON

Fine. See you in class.

Without another word, Nick gets out of the car. Before he can close the door behind him -

JASON (cont'd)

You really need to have some fun,
Nick. Let go. Start living.

Hanging on Jason's words for only a moment, Nick closes the door and walks away. Jason pounds the dashboard.

JASON (cont'd)

Fuck.

Jason looks out the window and watches Nick leave, his face grim now.

JASON (cont'd)
Don't walk away from me...

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

Sleeping soundly, Nick suddenly awakens. He sits up and looks at his laptop, resting quietly on the desk.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER.

Nick sits down at the desk powers up the laptop.

The next week passes in MONTAGE as Nick completes the first draft of his script, and rewrites it:

1. The first day passes as Nick writes heavily, passing the ninety-page mark.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

2. The next day, Nick sits in his spot before class starts, watching Jason fraternizing with everyone else, completely ignoring him.

Nick realizes that he's all alone.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

3. Day three, Nick finishes the first draft, typing "The End" at the bottom. He smiles.

INT. UNIVERSITY - STUDENT CENTER - DAY - MONTAGE

4. The next day, Nick walks alone through the student center and past a small coffee shop. Jason watches Nick from above, perched in hiding on the second floor.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

5. Day five, Nick edits the first draft: he highlights portions and erases them; he adds lines to different places.

INT. UNIVERSITY - STUDENT CENTER - DAY - MONTAGE

6. The next day, Nick walks through the student center again. He stops in his tracks, however, when he sees Jason sharing a coffee with Seth. Nick quickly takes off before he can be noticed but unbeknownst to him, Jason catches him out of the corner of his eye.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT - MONTAGE

7. Day seven, Nick makes final changes to the script.

This blends into -

8. Day eight, where Nick finally prints out the finished copy.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAYS - DAY

Nick makes his way to class, script in hand. He bumps into Jason along the way.

JASON

Watch it! Oh, hey Nick.

Jason doesn't give Nick another moment of his time and continues on to class. Nick hurries after Jason, falling into step with him.

JASON (cont'd)

You finish your script?

NICK

Yeah, it's done. And yours?

JASON

I finished it. It's crap.

NICK

That's too bad. I'm sorry we couldn't meet up this week.

Jason ignores him and continues on, but Nick stops him, taking his arm.

NICK (cont'd)
Really.

JASON
Why are you talking to me? You
don't like me.

NICK
I do like you.

JASON
Why do you keep shoving me off,
then?

NICK
I don't know. I haven't had a real
friend in a long time. I'm not used
to it.

JASON
You shouldn't be so afraid of
people.

NICK
I know. You're right. Let me make
it up to you.

Jason warms up to Nick.

JASON
There's a party on Saturday. Wanna'
go?

Nick pauses, but when he sees Jason beginning to doubt him -

NICK
Sure. I'd love to.

From across the hallway, Seth watches the Jason and Nick. His
eyes fill with rage.

JASON
I'll pick you up, okay?

NICK
Sure.

Jason pats Nick on the back and Seth takes off in a fury.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - SATURDAY NIGHT

Nick stands in front of the mirror, stiffening his hair with gel. He slowly looks himself over, and then sprays himself with cologne.

He looks himself over once more, and pulls the zipper all the way up on his sweater. Unhappy with his appearance, Nick removes the sweater, dropping it on the floor beside him. He grabs a thin pull-over sweater and chooses it instead.

This one has stripes running width-wise - black, grey, white and purple, in this order.

Just then, Nick's cell phone VIBRATES. Nick opens it and receives a text message from Jason: "Change of plans. Meet you there. 1235 Fleet Street."

EXT. FRATERNITY HOUSE - STREETS - NIGHT

Nick pulls his car up to the curb and gets out. He walks the short distance to the frat house and stops just short of the door.

He hesitates a moment, looking up at the noisy house - full of potential danger. Nick fights his fears and enters.

INT. FRATERNITY HOUSE - PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

The place is crowded with PARTIERS who overwhelm the loud music with their chatter.

Nick awkwardly tries to navigate through the crowds, desperately searching for Jason.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUING

Nick enters the living room.

And then he sees COUPLES. Everywhere. Kissing each other. Touching each other. One MALE PARTIER even has his hand up a FEMALE PARTIER's mini-skirt.

Nick stumbles back, horrified, and his world falls into slow motion. He covers his eyes and treks onward but at an agonizingly slow pace, unable to escape the horrors around him.

His face reddens and his blood pressure quickens the longer Nick witnesses the sexual acts.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nick escapes from the living room and everything returns to normal. Nick is just catching his breath when across the room, he sees Jason and Seth making out. Nick's eyes go wide, his jaw dropping in horror. He flees to the kitchen just as Jason notices him.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

There are only three PARTIERS in the kitchen. Nick pants heavily and moves to the window and opens it, breathing in the fresh, untainted, air.

As he calms down, he notices a single card on the windowsill. He picks it up - it's an Ace of Spades. Nick flips it over - the card has the same backing as those used at Myra's party.

Nick hears footsteps behind him and whips around. Jason stands in the threshold.

NICK
What the hell, Jason?

Jason flashes his typical, winning smile.

JASON
What? It's a party.

NICK
Is that why you couldn't pick me up?

JASON
No. Seth and I didn't come together.

He smiles again, coyly. The few remaining people - drinks topped off - leave.

JASON (cont'd)
Relax! Sit down. Have a drink.

Jason pulls out a chair for Nick and grabs one for himself. Nick reluctantly moves to the table, setting the card down on the counter. He sits opposite Jason.

JASON (cont'd)
I've been talking to Seth, lately.

NICK
I've noticed.

JASON

Oh? Jealous?

NICK

Sympathetic. I don't imagine Seth's much company.

JASON

You two really hate each other, don't you? I didn't get it at first, but now I think I'm starting to understand why.

NICK

It's not just Seth. It's everyone. I've told you that.

JASON

I know. And the more I hang around you, the closer I get to figuring it out.

NICK

What's your diagnosis, Freud?

JASON

The very first thing I ever noticed about you, was how alone you were. I figured it was because you were a square. Never going out, never talking to anyone. But it's not that, is it?

Nick - arms crossed - is tight-lipped now, refusing to say a thing. Jason spots an unopened champagne bottle on the counter beside them, and grabs it. He examines it, rolling it around in his hands.

JASON (cont'd)

You're a lot like this champagne bottle. All tightly wound. Compressed.

NICK

I don't know if I understand.

JASON

You see, the champagne bottle doesn't have much of a life. It needs what's inside because without it, it's useless. As soon as the champagne's gone, the bottle gets tossed out.

NICK
Are you the champagne then?

JASON
Partly. The champagne is everyone
in your life - the other film
students, every *other* student,
maybe even your parents.

A pause.

JASON (cont'd)
Who's in control of your life,
Nick?

Nick doesn't know how to answer.

JASON (cont'd)
Just like the bottle, you're
controlled by what's inside.

Jason starts shaking the bottle.

JASON (cont'd)
When you shake the bottle, the
pressure starts to build. And
eventually, when there's enough
pressure, something's got to give.

Nick has been put into a trance by Jason and the bottle. Now,
Jason places the bottle between his legs. He gently works the
cork with his thumb.

JASON (cont'd)
You can try to resist the pressure,
Nick. But eventually, you'll have
to give in.

NICK
And what if I don't?

Jason smiles, and then moves in for a kiss. This time, Nick
doesn't fight it. Jason stops just before their lips meet,
and he hovers there.

Suddenly - Jason pops the cork. It goes whizzing past Nick
and hits the wall behind him. Nick practically jumps out of
his seat.

Jason pulls away from Nick as champagne starts to spill over
the head of the bottle. Jason wraps his mouth around the head
and swallows a mouthful of champagne. He puts the bottle
aside and wipes his mouth. Smirking, he stands and leaves the
kitchen.

Nick shakes a little as he sits, completely immobilized by what *almost* happened. Finally he finds the strength to stand.

EXT. FRATERNITY HOUSE - STREETS - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Nick stumbles back to his car, almost tripping on his way. He gets into the car, barely able to fit the keys in the ignition.

He pulls away from the curb.

INT. DORM AREA - NIGHT

Nick braces himself against the wall as he approaches his room, still dizzy.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nick enters, and looks at himself in the mirror. His face is flushed, his eyes vacant. Nick looks at his reflection - sees what he's wearing. It's not enough. He picks the first sweater up off the floor. He puts it on and zips it up tight.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nick climbs into bed, pulling the covers up to his neck.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The class sits around the table, minus Myra. Under Nick's eyes, bags are starting to show.

FRANK

I've started reading your scripts. They're not bad... But that's what rewrites are for. We'll meet again once I'm finished. See you guys tomorrow.

The students start to pack up until -

FRANK (cont'd)

Oh! One more thing. Titles, guys. Lots of untitled scripts. Figure out some names. It's alright if they change. But I want you to take ownership.

The students continue to pack up and leave.

FRANK (cont'd)

Nick?

Nick approaches Frank.

FRANK (cont'd)

Where the hell has Myra been? She's away more than she's here.

NICK

I don't know, sir.

FRANK

Well, if you see her, please remind her that this is a *graduate* degree.

NICK

I will.

Nick leaves.

INT. HALLWAYS - OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM

Nick stops when he notices Jason is waiting, smiling coyly. Nick dashes away but Jason chases after him.

JASON

Nick!

Jason finally catches up, forcing Nick to slow.

JASON (cont'd)

What the hell man? You avoiding me now?

NICK

Jason, we have to stop seeing each other.

JASON

What?

NICK

I really have to start thinking about my film. It needs to be perfect.

Jason just shakes his head, smiling to cover his annoyance.

JASON

Nick, I've heard this excuse already. What's your problem?

Nick hesitates a moment, assessing whether or not to answer truthfully.

NICK
You scare me, Jason.

Jason is genuinely shocked - but he just hides it behind another smile.

JASON
Why?

NICK
When I'm with you, I feel...
uncomfortable.

JASON
You're such a goddamn mystery.

NICK
I'm trying to be honest with you.

JASON
No you're not. Is it because you're
a virgin? I don't care about that.

NICK
What do you want from me?

JASON
Really? I'm a horny college
student, what do you think I want?

NICK
I'm not gay.

JASON
(laughs)
C'mon, Nick. I'm not stupid.

NICK
I'm not!

Jason's still not buying it.

JASON
Okay...

NICK
I don't want to talk anymore.

Nick continues on alone.

JASON
Why are you always running away?

Jason's blood starts to boil and he follows after Nick.

INT. DORM AREA - MOMENTS LATER

About halfway down the hall, Nick hears footsteps and stops. He turns and spots Jason at the end of the hall.

For a moment, they both remain still, Jason staring Nick down. But when Jason starts walking quickly towards Nick, Nick runs the rest of the way to his room.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick shuts and locks his door. He backs up against the door, barricading it.

INT. DORM AREA - CONTINUING

Jason shows up and gets as close as he can to the door.

JASON
Grow some balls, Nick! Stop being
such a pussy!

Giving up, Jason shakes his head and walks off.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

Nick doesn't move from the door until Jason's footsteps have completely faded away.

Finally, Nick opens the door and checks the hallway. The coast is clear.

LATE AFTERNOON.

Nick sits at his desk, working. His laptop, now sitting open on the bed, has been replaced by numerous papers - his script, shot lists, and finally prop lists - which Nick currently works on.

To the long list of necessary props, Nick adds "knife."

Just then, two voices can be heard in the next room. Nick instantly stops, becoming completely still. He raises his head, and looks at the wall ahead of him.

The noises continue - whispers and moaning. Love making.

Nick slowly stands, wheeling his chair back. He reaches out towards the wall. Just as he's about to touch it a bed can be heard banging against the wall - frightening Nick. He jumps back and listens helplessly as the voices intensify and become louder.

And then Nick falls into the dizzying slowness. Nick imagines the voices becoming louder and louder until the entire room is shaking. But this time, Nick tries to fight it, squeezing his eyes shut and his hands into fists. He lets out a low grunt as he fights it.

And it works. Everything returns to normal.

Nick's stomach churns and he runs to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick lifts the toilet seat and bends over the bowl. He fights the urge to vomit, panting heavily. Finally, he forces it back down and slams the toilet seat shut, just as the female climaxes.

Nick stands and looks at his pale face in the mirror. And then he notices a shadow in the background. He focuses on it and sees that it's Jason - standing in the bedroom by the bed. Watching.

Nick whips around and catches Jason just as he disappears towards the door. Nick stops for only a moment, but by the time he makes it into the

BEDROOM

The door has opened and closed. Nick rushes to the door and opens it. The hallway is empty.

Nick quickly closes and locks the door again, lost in thought as he tries to sort through everything.

INT. ANOTHER DORM AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

Nick walks with purpose, his eyes focused. He reaches Myra's door and knocks. When there's no answer, he knocks again, this time rapidly.

Finally, Myra opens the door. Her hair is unkempt and there are bags under her eyes.

NICK

Myra?

MYRA

What do you want Nick? I don't want to see you.

She goes to close the door.

NICK

Please, wait. You were right about Jason.

This grabs her attention, and she reopens the door.

MYRA

You're finally seeing it. I'm glad.

NICK

I need your help to find out who he is.

MYRA

Unfortunately, I'm done trying to help you. Last time I tried being your friend I ended up with bruises.

NICK

What?

Myra's tough exterior begins to crack, the anger leaving her eyes and Myra starts to close the door again. This time, Nick holds it open and Myra lets him.

NICK (cont'd)

He's everywhere, My. Everywhere I go, he's there.

MYRA

Okay, listen. I have one piece of advice for you. You can take it or leave it. There is no other alternative.

Nick waits.

MYRA (cont'd)

Stop seeing him. But do it in a way that won't piss him off. You don't want to see him mad.

NICK

What does that mean?

MYRA
Just be careful.

NICK
Being careful isn't helping! What
is it you're not telling me?

Myra's bottom lip begins to tremble.

NICK (cont'd)
What has happened to you?

MYRA
Nothing. I just haven't been myself
lately.

NICK
Are you coming back to class? Ever?

MYRA
Who's asking?

NICK
Frank...

A pause as Myra waits for Nick to continue. When she realizes
he's done listing names -

MYRA
Take care, Nick.

Myra closes and locks the door. Nick thinks for a moment and
finally has an epiphany.

INT. UNIVERSITY - FILM OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

SHEILA, a fifty-year-old secretary, sits behind a desk,
working busily at her computer when Nick enters.

NICK
Sheila, hi.

Sheila's eyes don't move from the computer.

SHEILA
Hello, Nick.

NICK
Professor Frank suggested we get to
know the people we'll be working
with on our films.
(MORE)

NICK (cont'd)
Since Jason's so new, I thought I
could take a look at his
transcripts. See where he's from.

SHEILA
I can't show you that Nick. Even if
I could, there are no transcripts.

Suddenly, Sheila stops typing, her eyes widening.

NICK
What? Frank said he was a transfer
student.

Sheila finally turns to him, trying her best to mask her
mistake.

SHEILA
He is. We just never got one,
that's all.

NICK
How did he get in without a
transcript? I thought a diploma was
a minimum requirement?

Sheila checks her watch.

SHEILA
Nick, if you want to know about
Jason why don't you ask him? I'm
late for lunch. Is there anything
else you need?

Nick doesn't answer at first, hoping Sheila will slip again.

NICK
No.

He leaves.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The next day, still mulling everything over, Nick sits at his
seat waiting for class to start.

Jason enters, wearing a sweater with a high school logo and
name on it.

INT. NICK'S CAR - HIGHWAY - LATER

Nick takes an exit into a small town.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAYS - DAY

Nick navigates through at least fifty HIGH SCHOOL students, many of whom wear similar sweaters as Jason. Nick enters the school library.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Nick searches the shelves of the library until he finds the Yearbook section. He grabs a few, ranging from six to eight years previous and then sits at an empty table.

In the earliest yearbook, Nick flips to the photos of the graduating class. He skims through them and, dissatisfied, he puts it aside.

In the next yearbook, Nick skims through the graduating class again and finds Jason's picture. Jason smiles at the camera with a mixture of seduction and danger.

Nick's about to close the book when a face at the bottom of the same page catches his eye. It's Seth, looking just as smug.

NICK

Shit.

A FEMALE LIBRARIAN appears behind Nick, her eyes narrowed suspiciously.

LIBRARIAN

What are you doing here? This library is for students and teacher's only.

Nick quickly stands and moves past her to leave.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick bolts down the empty hallway. He turns a corner, and soon after he enters -

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick jumps right into it -

NICK

You have to pull Jason from my group.

FRANK

Nick? I'm sorry? What's the matter?

NICK

I want Jason out.

FRANK

I thought you two were friends?

Nick only shakes his head profusely. Frank doesn't seem to realize the seriousness of Nick's situation.

FRANK (cont'd)

Why don't you sit down. Explain to me what's going on.

Nick sits.

NICK

I just feel like they're closing in on me and I have no control over what they'll do.

FRANK

Who?

NICK

The other students. Everyone! It's like they've formed this secret society and now they're out to get me.

FRANK

Nobody's out to get you. Nobody wants to sabotage you. Let's talk about what's really bugging you.

Frank waits, but when Nick doesn't answer -

FRANK (cont'd)

Why is it so hard for you to be friends with these people?

Put on the spot, Nick gives it some real thought. He sighs, starting to relax a little.

NICK

We're just so different. We don't want the same things.

FRANK

What do you want?

NICK
I just want to live my life.

FRANK
What do they want?

Nick avoids Frank's gaze.

FRANK (cont'd)
Better yet, what is it they want
from you?

Their eyes meet again.

FRANK (cont'd)
Because that's the issue isn't it?

A couple tears run down Nick's cheeks.

NICK
I'm not the person they want me to
be. I don't know what to change or
how to change it.

FRANK
You don't have to change a thing,
Nick. Staying the way you are won't
make Jason, or Seth, or anyone else
ruin your film.

NICK
It's not just the film. It's my
whole life. I don't want to change,
but I feel like it's already
started. And I can't stop it.

FRANK
What's changing?

Nick struggles to find the right words.

NICK
I can't explain it. I just feel
different. My mind's starting to
play tricks on me. I'm confused,
wanting things I've never wanted
before...

Frank looks on, knowing there's only one way to resolve this.

FRANK
Okay. I'll pull Jason from your
group.

NICK

Thank you.

Frank nods. Nick stands to leave.

FRANK

Try not to worry about all this.
Think about your film. It's what
you're here for, right?

Nick nods.

NICK

Yeah.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT - MONTAGE

A montage of Nick's pre-production begins.

1. Nick enters cautiously, as if he's seeing the place for the first time. In the darkness it looks lonely and isolated.

Nick flips on a light and moves further into the heart of the room. He stops in the middle and looks around, trying to decide what to do next.

He moves to his desk and slides an empty bulletin board out from behind it. On the top of the bulletin board "Week 1" is written in marker. Nick hangs the board on the wall near his bed and attaches six different labels ranging from "Day 1" to "Day 5."

Next, he grabs a pile of flashcards from his desk - labelled with scene numbers, descriptions, and cast and prop details. After spreading them out on his bed, he begins to pin them up under the five day-headings.

INT. UNIVERSITY - COSTUME DEPARTMENT - DAY - MONTAGE

2. Nick approaches the front desk where an elderly lady, JEAN - mid-sixties - is sewing buttons on a blouse.

NICK

Hi, Jean.

JEAN

Nick! Where have you been? We've
been waiting for you! You're
usually the first one here!

Nick smiles.

NICK

I know. It's my fault. But I've brought some designs for you to look at.

He hands her a few pages with pictures from the web - suburban sixties wear, middle-upper class suits, dress shirts, skirts; everything in whites, beiges and greys.

JEAN

A period piece. Sixties?

NICK

That's right.

JEAN

The age of sexual revolution. Quite an interesting time.

Nick tries to hide his discomfort.

JEAN (cont'd)

Shouldn't be difficult at all. We'll get started right away.

NICK

Thank you.

The montage intercuts with Jason's life.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT - MONTAGE

3. Jason and the other film students, minus Nick, sit around a table, laughing and drinking and, ultimately - *slacking*.

INT. UNIVERSITY - SMALL MEETING ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

4. Nick and a male actor his age, LANCE, sit across from each other. Lance auditions for Nick while a camera inconspicuously records it in the background.

LANCE

(from the script)

You're not like most people around here, are you? There's something different about you.

INT. COSTUME DEPARTMENT - FITTING ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

5. Lance tries on the costume, which has been designed for the Nicholas character, while Nick evaluates. Jean spins Lance around for the full effect.

NICK

They look wonderful, Jean.

INT. DUPLEX APARTMENT - NIGHT - MONTAGE

6. At another party, Jason wanders aimlessly through crowds of people. He stares at the front door, waiting for something, or *someone*, interesting to walk in.

But the door remains closed.

INT. FILM SET - MORNING - MONTAGE

7. Alone in the early hours of the morning, Nick prepares the last-minute details for his first day of shooting: he puts the coffee out where it's easily accessible, he lays out all his production papers, and finally switches the house lights on.

Soon after, the cast and crew begin to filter in. They include Lance, BRAD (playing Jay), and Seth - who particularly looks less-than-pleased to be there.

The montage ends.

CUT TO:

LATER.

Production is underway. Seth runs camera, once again, and Nick sits in his chair watching the screen.

In Jay's house, he and Nicholas stand beside a bar, each holding a glass of white wine.

LANCE (NICHOLAS)

You're not like most people around here are you? There's something different about you.

BRAD (JAY)

Could be. Or maybe you've just been around here too long. We're not all carbon copies.

LANCE (NICHOLAS)
Why did you invite me here?

BRAD (JAY)
I thought you could use some excitement. Half the time you look like you're asleep. Pretending to be awake.

LANCE (NICHOLAS)
You make it sound like I'm bored with my life.

BRAD (JAY)
Are you?

Both performances are all wrong. Lance's tone is a bit too pleasant instead of inquisitive and Brad is over-acting - laying on the seduction too heavily.

Nick shakes his head.

NICK
Cut. Keep rolling. Can we take it one more time?

Lance and Brad nod and settle back into character. Once they're ready -

NICK (cont'd)
Action.

They run through the first two lines of dialogue with the same performances.

NICK (cont'd)
Okay. Let's cut it there.

Everyone's eyes are on Nick, waiting for direction. Nick looks around nervously.

NICK (cont'd)
Let's try it one more time.

BRAD
Don't you have any suggestions?
What do you want?

Nick looks around the room at everyone, and realizes they're all secretly wondering the same thing. Nick lowers his eyes in defeat.

NICK

I... I don't know. Let's take a break.

Nick gets up from his spot, and walks a few paces away to the snack table. He grabs a bottle of water and cracks it open, taking a large gulp. Seth moves up beside him and grabs himself a bottle.

SETH

They're overacting, Nick.

NICK

Yeah, I know that.

SETH

Then tell them. Stop being a pussy.

NICK

Like you care what happens to me.

Seth lets out a small, annoyed, laugh. He shakes his head at Nick's obliviousness.

SETH

You always have to make it so hard...

Seth walks away.

NICK

What is that supposed to mean?

SETH

Forget it.

Nick watches him go, more confused than ever. Then, he returns to his seat. Lance approaches him.

LANCE

Nick, can we keep moving? I've got somewhere to be tonight.

Lance's comment does nothing to brighten Nick's spirits.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Nick enters and drags his feet to bed. He falls onto it face first and lies still. Suddenly, Nick's phone rings and he sits up to answer it.

NICK

Hello?

SAM
Now, I know that's not my son.

NICK
Hey, mom.

SAM
Are you alright? You don't sound well at all.

NICK
I'm exhausted, mom. I was shooting all day.

SAM
You never told me that. You're supposed to tell me these things. Did it go well?

NICK
No, it was awful. I've barely started and it's a disaster already.

SAM
Just relax, sweetheart. You have plenty of time to get it right. Maybe you just need a little time off. When are you coming home again?

NICK
I don't know. Soon, maybe...

SAM
Well, your father and I miss you. No matter what happens with this film thing you'll always be our son.

Nick fights to hold back his retort. Instead -

NICK
Thanks, mom. I'll call you in a few days.

SAM
Okay, dear.

They hang up. Nick goes over the conversation in his head for a short moment -

NICK
Film thing...

- before moving to his desk. Hanging above the desk is a wall calendar. Nick grabs a red marker and gladly draws a line through the current day.

CUT TO:

ONE MONTH LATER.

The calendar month has changed, and lines have already been drawn through the days that have passed.

INT. UNIVERSITY - CLASSROOM - DAY

The disk drive on a DVD player opens and a disk is inserted. At the front of the room, Jason closes the drive and turns to the class, looking exhausted.

JASON

So, this isn't really where it needs to be. I shot it a week ago. Basically, Greta's uploading the video she made of herself when she decides to... well, you'll see.

Frank dims the lights. On the screen,

JASON'S FILM IS PROJECTED.

A woman in her mid twenties, GRETA, sits at a computer in a lavish little apartment. The walls are covered with black velvet curtains and there's a canopy bed in the middle - also black. A camera rests on a tripod at the foot of the bed.

Greta wears very little: a bra, underwear and a thin shall around her shoulders. All black.

On the computer screen, a video is being uploaded to Greta's personal website. The site is decorated with provocative pictures of her and the title reads: "See Greta in Action".

The upload completes.

Greta starts panicking, immediately filled with regret. She quickly backs away from the computer and, in a rage, pushes the camera and tripod to the ground.

She moves to a mirror and looks at her reflection. Disgusted with what she sees, she pulls the mirror off the wall and smashes it.

Greta moves to the bed now and sits. She pulls a picture frame off the nightstand and holds it in her lap, silently looking at it. The picture is of her as an innocent teenager. Tear drops hit the frame.

Greta is crying. She returns the picture to the nightstand and takes a bottle of prescription pills from the drawer. She opens it and swallows all the pills.

She lies down, waiting to die. The image dissolves; hours have passed. Greta remains in the same position, but has died; her face is pale and her eyes are still, glazed over.

Greta's website is still open on the laptop. At the bottom of the page, the counter - which is at zero - receives its first hit.

Greta's eyes open.

The video cuts to black, ending.

THE CLASS

Vigorously applauds. Everyone but Nick, whose arms are crossed. As the applause continues whispers of surprise and amazement can be heard between a few students.

Frank brings up the lights.

FRANK

Well for something that was only
shot a week ago, you sure put
together a damn good rough cut.
Well done.

The applause dies.

FRANK (cont'd)

Well, I believe that's everyone.
Leave your scenes with me on your
way out.

INT. HALLWAYS - OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM - DAY

Jason exits the classroom and heads off. Nick is not far behind.

NICK

Jason!

Jason stops and waits for Nick.

JASON
Hey, buddy. What'd you think?

NICK
A week? Really?

JASON
What can I say? I guess I work well under pressure.

NICK
You undermined your scene on purpose. You downplayed the whole thing just so they'd think it was better than it actually was.

JASON
Well, whatever the case, it worked. Can't say the same for yours.

Nick glares at Jason.

JASON (cont'd)
I'm sure it'll be great. You have loads of time. Keep working at it.

The rest of the class joins them.

SETH
Jason! We're going for drinks.

Nick is sandwiched between Jason and the other students, enemies on all sides.

JASON
I gotta' run. Good luck.

Nick tries his best to stand his ground. Jason heads off with the others while Nick struggles to keep his composure.

INT. EDITING ROOM - DAY

Nick has fallen deep in to the editing process. He's currently cutting together the scene with Nicholas and Jay at the bar.

He goes through the close ups, but again they're all wrong. In one instance, Lance messes up his lines. In another, Brad unknowingly moves out of frame and the camera awkwardly readjusts to follow him. In a third, Lance looks into the camera by mistake.

NICK
Why are you looking into the
camera?

Lance does it again. Nick slams the mouse down.

NICK (cont'd)
Stop looking into the fucking
camera!

Nick surprises himself with his outburst. As the room returns to silence, Nick becomes aware of just how cooped up he is. How alone. Unable to continue, he shuts the computer down and leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE OF EDITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick hasn't gotten far before he runs into Frank.

FRANK
Nick! What a coincidence. I was
just thinking - we still haven't
met to talk about your progress.

NICK
I know.

FRANK
What are you doing now? Do you have
a moment?

Nick looks down the narrow hallway, realizing there's no escape.

NICK
Sure.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick and Frank sit in their usual spots.

FRANK
What did you think of Jason's
scene? I noticed you were the only
one not part of the thundering
applause.

NICK
It was fine. Not really my taste.

FRANK

(shrugs)

Well to each his own. So, I know you've already gotten well into your film, but I hope I can still be helpful. Everything going alright with shooting?

NICK

Yes, it's fine. It was a bit rough with the actors at first, but it's getting better.

FRANK

Glad to hear it. Now for the ugly part, where I give you suggestions, you turn them down, and I try not to be heartbroken.

Frank chuckles. Nick doesn't. Frank's smile quickly fades.

FRANK (cont'd)

Jesus, that was another joke, Nick. Are you immune to humour or are my jokes just that awful?

NICK

Sorry. Just under a lot of pressure.

FRANK

Filmmaking is difficult. I stand by what I said before. Your film has a lot of potential. But looking at the whole thing, there's just a few things I want to say.

Frank grabs a copy of Nick's script and flips through it, mumbling to himself. He finds the page he's looking for - notes are written in the margins in red ink.

FRANK (cont'd)

Ah, the murder thing. I like it, but it seems just a bit unmotivated.

NICK

Unmotivated? Isn't it obvious? Nicholas feels pressured. He won't give in to Jay but he still has to deal with what he's feeling.

FRANK

Yeah, yeah, I got that. But it's a little predictable. American Beauty - that's what I kept thinking of. I think what would make the murder more effective is if they've slept together first.

Nick stares dangerously at Frank, his eyes full of malice.

NICK

What?

FRANK

The motivation would be there. He's ashamed, regretful. And better yet, he's concealing a secret life.

Nick can't look Frank in the face anymore. He retreats into his self-consciousness.

NICK

Stop it.

Frank realizes Nick is upset.

FRANK

Nick?

NICK

This whole place is obsessed... with sex! Everyone! That's all anyone cares about.

FRANK

Nick, these are just suggestions -

Nick stands.

NICK

What do I have to do to be good enough for you!

FRANK

Good enough? All I'm saying is that there's a sexual element to all horror films. The knife is a phallic object. It's unavoidable.

NICK

(shakes his head)

No.

FRANK
Let's be honest. This script is
about you. Nicholas? We're not
complete idiots.

Nick thinks Frank has made a slip, like Sheila did.

NICK
We?

FRANK
The other's have been talking. Jay?
Jason? It's okay if your film is
personal.

Finally, everything is making sense to Nick.

NICK
You're all in this together. You
brought him here - all of you!

FRANK
Brought who?

NICK
Jason. You wanted me to trust him.
That way he could destroy it.

FRANK
Nick, listen to what you're saying!

NICK
What is it about him that drives
everyone so mad!

Nick violently braces his hands on Frank's desk, leaning
menacingly over top of him.

NICK (cont'd)
How did he get here?! He's never
been to another school! He has no
degree!

Slightly intimidated, Frank pushes away from the desk and
stands. Frank's face is becoming red now.

FRANK
That is none of your business!

NICK
Why am I even wasting my time with
you?!

FRANK

Excuse me?

NICK

Taking advice from a washed-up nobody.

FRANK

Who do the hell do you think you are?

NICK

You had one good film. And what good was it? To get you a job here?! You haven't made a film for years!

Frank's trying to hold back tears now, his bottom lip quivering. He knows that Nick's right.

NICK (cont'd)

You know what you are? You're a failed filmmaker.

Nick is in complete control now. He is so powerful, in fact, that his words have frozen Frank to the spot. Like magic. The only part of Frank that moves is his bottom lip.

Nick lingers for only a moment longer. He leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE OF FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Nick tears down the hallway, determined. His dark eyes never falter.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUING

Back in his office, Frank breaks down into tears, collapsing into his chair.

INT. JASON'S DORM AREA - DAY

Nick approaches Jason's room and knocks. He waits only seconds before knocking again and when there's still no answers, the knocking becomes pounding.

JASON

(from inside)

What?! What!? What the fuck!

Jason opens the door and stops dead in his tracks.

JASON (cont'd)

Nick?

Nick throws himself at Jason powerfully, rather than helplessly. They start kissing, but Jason quickly falls behind as Nick takes the lead. They move inside.

INT. JASON'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They kiss a moment longer before Jason can't keep up anymore. Jason pulls away and for a moment and the two stand face-to-face in each other's embrace.

Jason smiles but this time, there's no antagonism behind it.

JASON

Finally.

They start violently kissing again, making their way to the bed. Jason gets the upper hand and throws Nick down on it. He mounts Nick and is about to pull off his shirt when Nick takes Jason by surprise, flipping Jason underneath him.

Nick strips Jason of his shirt, instead, and then quickly pulls off his own. Jason goes to undo the buttons on Nick's jeans but Nick grabs both of his arms and pins them down on the bed.

They kiss again for a few moments and *then* Nick lets Jason undo his buttons. After Nick's jeans are unbuttoned, Jason flips Nick down onto his back and yanks off Nick's jeans. Jason tosses them aside and then rips off his own jeans next, not even giving Nick a moment to return the favour.

Once the jeans are tossed aside, Nick and Jason move onto their knees in the middle of the bed and kiss again, wrapping their arms around each other, feeling every inch of each other's naked bodies.

Jason turns Nick around before he can even anticipate the move. Nick is surprised to see himself in the reflection of a mirror and for just a moment, Nick is taken out of the affair. He sees himself in his underwear, sees a nearly-naked Jason behind him.

But Nick forgets about the mirror when Jason starts kissing and biting his neck. Softly moaning, Nick leans his head back until it rests on Jason's shoulder.

Still kissing Nick's neck, Jason slides a hand from Nick's chest all the way down his body and into Nick's underwear. As Jason massages Nick's groin, Nick looks at himself in the mirror again.

As he continues to be pleased, Nick's mind flashes to a scene from his film:

INT. NICHOLAS'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - DAY-DREAM

Jay (the one from Nick's initial day-dreams - Not Brad) is tied to Nicholas's bed, in nothing but his underwear.

(The original) Nicholas approaches him with a knife.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. JASON'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

Nick returns to the affair. But only for a moment -

INT. NICHOLAS'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - DAY-DREAM

In the exact same scene as the previous day-dream, Nicholas approaches Jay with a champagne bottle this time - the same one from the party Nick attended with Jason.

Nicholas breaks the long end of the bottle on a table and continues towards Jay, the jagged edges of the bottle gleaming in the light.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. JASON'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

NICK
(whispering)
That's it.

In the heat of the moment, Jason doesn't even hear. Nick lets himself be taken over by Jason once and for all. Nick's moaning becomes louder and louder. He climaxes.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Nick awakens, face flat on the pillow. He lets out a muffled groan and after a few more moments gets out from under the covers. Nick realizes he's wearing nothing but the same underwear from his affair with Jason.

Nick looks around the room, as if someone or something should be there, but isn't.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Nick gets out of the shower, a towel wrapped around his waist. He moves to the mirror - wipes away the steam.

He looks himself over. And then he stops, exchanging a glance with himself. Something dawns on him and he quickly leaves the room.

He returns moments later with his camera. He hesitates only a moment before snapping pictures of himself. Completely random, and unmeditated ones. He just keeps taking pictures.

He stops, but only for a moment - just long enough to remove his towel. Then, the pictures continue.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Dressed now, Nick grabs his script and production notes off his desk.

INT. NICK'S FILM SET - DAY

Nick strides onto the film set, arms swaying confidently, eyes keen and focused. The set is still dressed as Jay's living room.

Everything's ready: the lights are on, the camera is on its tripod, but the cast and crew stand in the corner chatting. Nick claps twice, loudly.

NICK
Guys, let's go!

Nick startles them to silence. They turn to Nick, trying to keep their surprise from showing.

NICK (cont'd)
Get moving.

The cast and crew snap into action, moving into position. Nick strides towards the actors.

NICK (cont'd)
Before we start, we have to reshoot a couple things.

BRAD
What!? We're already behind!

NICK
Brad, relax. It's just the wide
shots.

SETH
I don't know how much better it's
going to get, Nick.

Nick doesn't even bother facing Seth.

NICK
It's not the acting Seth, it's the
props. They're not drinking wine
anymore.

SETH
Why the hell not?

Now Nick turns to Seth and approaches him with enough force
to cause Seth to take a step back.

NICK
Because we finally have a title.

CUT TO:

A CLOCK.

It dissolves two hours into the future.

INT. FILM SET - DAY

Production is still underway. The set is now dressed for
Jay's bedroom.

The camera rolls. Nick watches the screen - sees Brad
approach Lance with a broken champagne bottle. Brad is in his
underwear, tied to the bed. His face full of fear, he
repeatedly pulls at his binds, struggling to break free.

There is a lack of fire in Lance's eyes - the fury, the
blinded rage, isn't registering on camera. When Lance gets to
the bed -

NICK
Cut. Let's do it again.

As Lance sighs, Nick stands and approaches the bed.

NICK (cont'd)
Okay, Lance. The emotion's not
coming through. You look
indifferent, not angry.

Lance crosses his arms.

LANCE
What is it you want me to change?

Without wasting a moment, Nick gladly accepts Lance's
challenge.

NICK
When you're approaching Brad, think
about what it would feel like if
he'd just killed someone you loved.

LANCE
What are you talking about?

NICK
Jay stole from you. It doesn't
matter if its a loved one or your
manhood. What matters is that
revenge is the only solution.

LANCE
I still don't see the comparison.

NICK
Fine. He's taken something away
from you - just think about it that
way. But ground it in something
angry. Something that fills you
with rage.

Lance slowly lets down his guard, nodding in agreement.

LANCE
Okay. Yeah, I've got it.

NICK
Great.
(to all)
Back into position.

Nick returns to his seat.

NICK (cont'd)
Sound.

SOUND RECORDIST
Speed.

NICK
Camera.

SETH
Rolling.

NICK
Slate.

The ASSISTANT DIRECTOR moves in front of the camera with the slate.

AD
Eighty-B. Take 2.

He slams the slate, and then moves out of the way.

NICK
Action.

This time Lance nails his performance, executing exactly what Nick asked for: His eyes are wide, full of malice; his entire body shakes as if he's about to explode; and his grasp is tight on the bottle - there's no turning back.

When Lance gets to the bed -

NICK (cont'd)
Cut. Excellent guys!

SETH
(sarcastically)
Wow. No complaints, Mr. Director?

Nick's smile quickly fades and he stands, facing Seth.

NICK
I know it's hard, Seth, not being the center of attention. Having to work on someone else's film.

Seth takes a step towards Nick, trying to intimidate him, but Nick stands his ground.

SETH
Nope. Just yours.

NICK
That's right. Mine. This is my film. So why don't you shut up, and do your job. Because I don't want you to be here either.

Complete silence. All eyes are on Nick and Seth.

NICK (cont'd)

Got it?

Seth says nothing, for just a moment, trying to maintain his authority.

SETH

Yeah. Sure, Nick.

NICK

Good.

(to all)

Alright, let's get Brad's close-up.

INT. DORM AREA - NIGHT

Nick returns to his room with his papers in hand. Jason waits for him outside his door.

JASON

What happened last night? You were in and out of there like a man on fire.

NICK

I had to film this morning.

Jason only pretends to care as he looks dreamily at Nick. Nick opens his door and steps inside.

JASON

Can I come in?

NICK

No. I don't think so. I'm going home tomorrow. Leaving early.

JASON

I can work with that. I'll be in... and out.

Jason smiles and takes a step towards Nick but is held back.

NICK

This isn't going to be a regular thing. Nothing's changed.

JASON

You have.

NICK

This is college, Jason. Try not to act so surprised.

Nick closes the door, leaving Jason alone with a bruised ego.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

Nick, with his back against the door, waits in silence - listening intently.

INT. DORM AREA - CONTINUING

Jason, dumbstruck, takes off without another word.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

Nick listens as the sounds of Jason's footsteps fade, a small smile creeping onto the corner of his lips. The smile makes him look almost like Jason.

Once all is silent, Nick moves slowly across the room, revelling in his small victory.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick continues into the bathroom. The smile hasn't faded. Nick slowly strips of his clothing until he's completely naked. He runs his hands all over his body, but he's completely unaffected by his touch.

It's an exploration, not a means of pleasure.

INT. SETH'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Seth sits cross legged on the bed, going over his script. He finishes scribbling on the final page and sets it aside.

In the quietness of the room, Seth takes a moment to look around. His unguarded eyes, having nobody to impress, begin to well up a little.

Seth sighs. But moments later, a knock at the door snaps him out of his funk and he answers it.

Jason stands on the other side, just about ready to blow.

JASON

Hey.

Jason enters without waiting for an invitation.

SETH
What are you doing here?

JASON
I came to see you.

They look at each other for a moment, and then Jason kisses Seth. It only lasts a moment before Seth pulls away.

JASON (cont'd)
What's the matter?

SETH
It's just... I thought after last time...

JASON
You thought what?

SETH
The way we left it... I thought it was a one-time thing.

Jason smiles, back in control.

JASON
I could never do that to you baby.

Seth smiles, reassured, and they begin kissing again. They fall onto the bed.

SETH
Just be gentle this time, okay?

JASON
I'm all yours.

EXT. STREETS/NICK'S PARENT'S HOUSE - MORNING

Nick's car drives down a small street congested with multiple cars parked on both sides. Nick pulls the car into the driveway besides his parents' car, and gets out.

INT. NICK'S PARENT'S HOUSE - PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Nick opens the front door, silhouetted against the bright daylight. He closes the door behind him and lets his bags fall to the floor.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Nick enters and immediately spots a note on the kitchen counter. It reads: "Hope you had a nice drive. See you tonight - Mom."

INT. PORCH - EVENING

Sam and Alex enter.

SAM

Nick?

Silence.

ALEX

Where are you, pal?

Still nothing.

SAM

Maybe he's napping.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Upon entering, Sam immediately jumps in surprise. Nick sits on a counter across from them, finishing off an apple.

Sam opens her arms and moves to Nick.

SAM

Sweetheart, you scared me. Why didn't you say anything?

Nick tosses the apple across the room, past Sam and Alex. It hits the garbage. He hops down and hugs Sam.

NICK

I knew you'd find me.

During the embrace, Nick and Alex lock eyes. Alex looks less-than-amused at being ignored.

ALEX

You could have said something.

Nick pulls away from Sam and approaches Alex.

NICK

Hey, dad.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alex sits with Sam, his arm around her as they watch television. Nick sits alone on an armchair, writing on a pad of paper.

The television program ends and Alex shuts off the television. Sam yawns.

ALEX
Ready for bed, Sammy?

SAM
I think so.

They stand, and Sam moves over to Nick, kissing his forehead.

SAM (cont'd)
Night, sweetheart.

Nick's eyes don't move from the paper.

NICK
Night.

Sam and Alex have almost gone when Nick stops them -

NICK (cont'd)
(stops writing)
I made a friend.

Alex turns.

ALEX
Really?

NICK
Yeah. Just thought you should know.

Alex's face brightens.

ALEX
That's great, kiddo. I'm glad.

NICK
Good.

Sam and Alex leave. After a moment, Nick resumes writing.

INT. NICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nick is asleep when he's awakened by sounds of love making. It takes Nick a moment to realize what's going on but once he does, he dashes out of bed.

He stops in the middle of the room, momentarily paralyzed by the sounds. Nick moves to the mirror. The moment he stands before it, Nick's world goes into slow motion.

Nick focuses on his reflection. He tries closing his eyes as the noise (and his heart beat) intensifies. But it doesn't work.

NICK

Come on.

Nick shakes the mirror, attempting to shake himself back into normality, but this fails as well.

NICK (cont'd)

Come on!

Finally, Nick tries touching himself - one hand goes up underneath his shirt, and the other down his pants. Everything returns to normal.

The instance it has, Nick bolts from his room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick runs from his room and up the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Nick runs down the hall and bursts into his parent's room.

INT. SAM AND ALEX'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam cries out and Alex swears. Nick doesn't stop until he's at their bedside.

NICK

Can't you two be any fucking quieter!

Alex flips on a table lamp while Sam hides her body under the covers.

ALEX

Get out of here you little shit!

NICK

Every time I'm here. Every time! Do you even care if I hear you?

ALEX

This is our house! Who do you think you are?

NICK

I'm your son. Does that mean anything?

ALEX

Get out of here before I beat your fucking head in.

SAM

Alex, stop.

NICK

And there's typical, mom. Lying there. Completely useless.

SAM

Nick!

Alex pulls on his sweats.

NICK

Dad's serious now.

Alex stomps over to Nick until they're face to face. Alex clenches his fists and Nick opens himself up to his father - making him an easy target.

NICK (cont'd)

C'mon, dad, hit me! Knock out every little thing you hate about me!

Alex can't bring himself to hit Nick. He unclenches his fists. Then - he breaks down into tears, taking Nick by surprise.

ALEX

Why couldn't I have had a normal son?

NICK

Excuse me?

ALEX

You must think I hate your guts.
But when you were born - when I
held you - I'd never felt so much
love in my life.

Nick just listens, stunned.

ALEX (cont'd)

When you were young, you told us
everything. You were happy. But
then you started growing up, and
something changed. You got to
middle school and suddenly, that
light just went away.

Nick begins to have trouble keeping his emotions in check. He
shakes a little.

ALEX (cont'd)

What happened to you? What happened
to my boy? Was it us?

NICK

Nothing happened to me. I grew up.

Alex wipes more tears away.

ALEX

Well... I wish you hadn't.

Nick remains opposite Alex for only a moment longer, in
complete shock. Then, he quickly turns and leaves, not
bothering to close the door.

Alex hides his head in his hands as more tears come.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Sam stands by the window, peering through the curtains as
Nick carries his bags to the car. He climbs inside without a
second thought and drives away.

Soon after, a sombre Alex joins her and guides her away from
the window.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Nick enters and closes the door behind him. He takes a step
forward but stops when he hears a CRUNCH.

On the floor, there's an unlabelled DVD in a case - now cracked. Nick picks it up.

He slides it into the DVD player and presses play on the remote, waiting for whatever secrets the disk contains.

It's a recording of Nick and Jason's affair. A hidden camera records their every move, almost straight-on.

Nick drops the remote in horror. He backs away from the television but can't stop watching. He sees himself - completely uninhibited, completely out of control.

Just as he's about to climax in the video, Nick suddenly begins to heave. He dashes to the -

BATHROOM

And vomits. Multiple times. Once he's finished he flushes, and moves back to the

BEDROOM.

Nick quickly removes the DVD and, with shaky hands, returns it to the case. Then, he chucks it across the room.

Nick wipes the sweat from his forehead and takes deep breaths.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAYS - DAY

Jason exits from a bathroom and Nick is immediately on him. He pushes the DVD case into Jason's chests, forcing him to take a few steps back.

NICK
What is this?

Jason grins - his typical coy smile.

JASON
I thought you might need a little
inspiration. Use it however you
like.

NICK
You filmed us!?

JASON
You caught me off guard. Had the
camera on for myself and forgot
about it. Complete accident.

Nick's eyes narrow as a burning question finally enters his
mind.

NICK
Who are you?

Jason's grin becomes a grimace.

JASON
Who am I? Who are you? You have no
idea who you are. Do you even know
why you came over that night?

Nick doesn't answer.

JASON (cont'd)
You're a fool, Nick.

Jason takes off, leaving Nick immobilized.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Nick storms inside, slamming the door behind him. He pounds
his fist against the door in anger, and then sets the DVD
down on his desk beside another one.

This one's marked "The Champagne Bottle - First Fifteen
Minutes". Nick looks down at both disks.

INT. CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

As the students enter, they pile their DVDs in front of
Frank. Nick is the last one in and receives no
acknowledgement from Frank.

Once everyone is seated, Frank stands. The passion has
disappeared from his voice.

FRANK
I guess we'll get started...

Frank grabs Nick's disk off the top of the pile and slides it
into the DVD player. Nick's affair with Jason appears on
screen.

Immediate gasps and outcries from the class. Phrases like "What the hell" and "Oh my God" can be heard from various students. Jason's eyes are wide, full of rage.

Everyone is too stunned to move, including Frank, whose arms hang limply by his sides.

It's been cut short - only a minute long - but even after the video is over, no one moves, or speaks. Nick moves to the front of the classroom so he can address everyone.

NICK

I can't say that's the reaction I expected.

Only more shocked looks.

NICK (cont'd)

Isn't that what you wanted? Come on guys, I did it. I had sex! I'm not a loser anymore, right!? That's why this whole thing started, isn't it? Because I wouldn't fuck anyone who was bored enough?

Nick looks around the room, taking in every face. Most students are clearly upset but Seth, surprisingly, is a little impressed, a small smile of approval on his face. Jason looks like he's ready to kill.

NICK (cont'd)

You're all in on this together.
(to Myra)
Isn't that why you convinced me something was up with Jason?

Myra's too astonished to speak.

NICK (cont'd)

And Seth. I'm aware you already know Jason. So let me ask you all - why him? Why bring someone here who is everything I'm not, who stands for things that I would never stand for?

Still, no one has the courage to respond.

NICK (cont'd)

I think I know. But guess what? You fail. You can't destroy me. This is my film. And nothing will get in my way.

FRANK
What are you doing, Nick?!

NICK
I'm taking control of my life!

And on that note, Nick storms out. After he's gone, all the bottled emotions inside of Frank explode. In a rage, he slams his fists on the table and bursts out of his chair.

FRANK
NICK!

INT. HALLWAYS - OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nick hurries away as Frank bursts out of the room. He chases after Nick.

FRANK
Nick! You're done! You hear me?!

This stops Nick dead in his tracks. He turns as Frank joins him.

NICK
What?

FRANK
I'll make sure the Head sees this.
Add that to everything you just
said to the class. To me. Consider
yourself expelled.

All the anger, all the power in Nick's eyes - in his body language - evaporates instantaneously.

NICK
No, no. Wait. Please.

Frank refuses to spend another second in Nick's presence and returns to the classroom. Unable to move, Nick stands in place, calling after Frank.

NICK (cont'd)
You can't do this. No. NO!

Nick lets out a small WHIMPER. He then throws his head back and cries out. It's a deep and powerful - from the gut. Nick falls to the ground as he begins sobbing. He lays his head on the floor.

An invisible perimeter has formed around Nick, and numerous UNIVERSITY STUDENTS try to stay as far away as possible as they move past him.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Nick pulls into the nearest spot.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Nick walks down an aisle. On display are various foam panels, perfect for sound proofing. Nick rips them off the shelves as fast as he can, taking as much as he can carry.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Nick enters, carrying many bags of foam panels as well as a hammer and nails.

He begins his project by ripping everything off the walls - posters, the calendar etc.

Then, he begins covering the walls with the panels.

Time passes as Nick continues his project.

Finally, Nick is finished. Every inch of the wall is covered. He is contained inside his room.

CUT TO:

NIGHT.

Nick lies in bed, asleep - but he awakens shortly after. It's the middle of the night.

Nick looks around the room - everything is so dark - like a crypt. Nick reaches to the wall beside him and feels the ribs of the panels - the bars of his prison.

INT. JASON'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Jason awakens and sits up, yawning and grumbling.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason showers.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - BATHROOM - CONTINUING

Nick stands in front of the mirror, arms braced on the counter. His face is very cold, very emotionless - dangerous, even.

Nick finally backs away from the mirror and leaves.

JASON'S BATHROOM

Jason continues showering, rubbing soap over his chest.

UNIVERSITY - HALLWAYS

Nick walks with purpose, a clear destination in mind.

JASON'S BATHROOM

Jason dries himself off as he steps out of the shower.

ANOTHER DORM AREA

Nick approaches Jason's room.

JASON'S BEDROOM

Jason, already wearing pants, pulls a shirt on just as there's a knock at the door. He answers it, and crosses his arms when he sees Nick.

A moment of silence.

NICK

You were right. I don't know who I am.

JASON

Why are you here? You completely embarrassed me.

NICK

I didn't think you got embarrassed. At least not about something like that.

Jason knows that Nick's got him there.

NICK (cont'd)
I've been sending you mixed
messages. I know that. Well, not
anymore.

Their eyes meet again. Jason wants to believe him but -

JASON
What is this? One last hurrah
before they throw you out?

NICK
Oh, I'm not leaving. And this time,
I won't be gone when you wake up.

Nick takes a step closer, and runs a hand down Jason's side.
Jason moves in for the kiss.

NICK (cont'd)
Not here. My place. Tonight.

Jason nods and Nick leaves.

INT. DORM AREA - DAY

Nick returns to his room but stops short when he sees Myra
sitting outside of it. She stands as he approaches.

MYRA
Hey.

NICK
Hi.

MYRA
I needed to see you.

NICK
Why?

MYRA
Because despite everything that's
happened, I still care about you.

Nick just shakes his head, out of reassuring things to say.

NICK
Myra...

Myra approaches him, tears already welling up.

MYRA
No, Nick - I have to say this.

Nick waits.

MYRA (cont'd)
You've said some cruel, malicious,
horrible things to me. But every
one of them have been true. I do
want people to like me. Sometimes,
I have trouble remembering why it
even matters. But when I'm
surrounded by them, when I know
that their eyes are on me... I
remember.

Compassion begins to work its way into Nick's eyes.

MYRA (cont'd)
But now - after everything - I
don't care. Not anymore. At the end
of it all, there's only one thing
left that still feels good.

NICK
What?

MYRA
You. I love you, Nick.

NICK
It's too late.

MYRA
Too late? For us?

NICK
For me.

Now the tears are overflowing, leaving Myra's cheeks stained.

MYRA
I don't understand.

NICK
I've made my choice. I'm going to
see Jason tonight. And then... it's
over.

MYRA
Nick...

NICK
I don't love you, Myra.

Nick moves past her and lets himself in.

MYRA

Nick!

Nick closes the door. Myra begins to sob.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Nick prepares for Jason's visit: he puts on some Jazz music and pours champagne into two flutes. As he pours there's a knock at the door.

INT. DORM AREA - CONTINUING

Jason waits in the hall. Nick opens the door moments later.

JASON

Hey.

Nick stands aside.

NICK

Come in.

Jason enters.

INT. NICK'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason stops to take in Nick's new room.

JASON

Whoa. What is all this?

NICK

Keeps the noise out.

JASON

Creepy.

Nick sits on the couch and Jason follows his lead.

JASON (cont'd)

Everything alright?

NICK

Of course. Why?

JASON

You just look... like you did the day I met you.

NICK
Which was...?

JASON
Sad. And alone.

A pause as Nick thinks about it.

NICK
So, it turns out I am leaving after
all.

Jason's heart drops.

JASON
But you were set on staying? What
changed?

NICK
After today, I don't think they're
going to let me stay.

Jason's not quite sure if he fully understands what Nick means. Nick stands, and moves over to the table with the champagne.

NICK (cont'd)
Before we celebrate, I have to ask
you something.

JASON
Okay.

NICK
How'd you get accepted here? What
did you say to convince them? You
have no degree.

Jason sighs, and lowers his eyes in embarrassment.

JASON
None of you were supposed to find
out. The faculty made an exception
for me.

NICK
Why? What made you so special?

JASON
I wrote a screenplay.

NICK
A screenplay?

JASON

A good one. Won a couple competitions. Sold it. It's being produced right now. I guess the school thought those were good enough credentials.

Nick is stunned, but also unsure of whether he can trust this. This isn't what he was expecting to hear.

NICK

I don't believe you.

JASON

You can check if you want. Google me.

Nick considers this as turns his back to Jason and drops something into one of the champagne flutes. It fizzes and dissolves. Nick carries the flutes over to the couch and rejoins Jason.

He hands Jason one. Nick says nothing, waiting for Jason to take a sip. He finally does.

NICK

Well, Jason, as much as I'd love to believe you, I'm having a bit of trouble.

JASON

What's the matter with you, man? You still think we're all after you?

Nick shakes his head, confidently.

NICK

No, not everyone. Just you. I was wrong to think the others were involved.

Jason looks over at Nick, puzzled as hell, but before he can say anything, his eyes waver. He starts to become dizzy. Everything around Jason slows down, the same way it does for Nick, until his vision finally fades to black, to nothingness.

CUT TO:

LATER.

When Jason awakens, he finds himself in nothing but his underwear, tied to Nick's bed.

He looks over and sees Nick sitting quietly in an armchair, waiting. Jason smiles, misinterpreting his situation.

JASON
Mmm. Kinky.

Nick stands and slowly approaches Jason. As Nick closes the gap, Jason spots the knife that Nick's carrying.

Finally realizing the seriousness of his predicament, Jason starts nervously tugging at his binds.

JASON (cont'd)
(under his breath)
Holy shit.
(louder)
What the fuck!

Instead of calling for help Jason just yells at the top of his lungs. Nick towers above him.

NICK
Don't you remember, Jason?

Nick taps the foam panelling with the tip of the knife.

NICK (cont'd)
Keeps the noise out.

JASON
What the fuck is going on!?

Jason tugs even harder, but the binds aren't loosened an inch. Nick bends over until he and Jason are face to face.

NICK
You are going to tell me why you're here to destroy me. To sabotage my film.

JASON
Nick! I'm not here to hurt you!

The blade gets closer and closer to Jason's face.

NICK
When you talked to me that first day... That wasn't a coincidence. It had already started - even then.

JASON
No! I talked to you because you
were interesting.

Nick stands straight again.

NICK
You're lying! No one talks to me!
You've been planning it all along.
Every step - every conversation!

JASON
I swear! It's not like that!

NICK
Than what is it!?

Jason hesitates, squeezing his mouth shut in attempts to keep his confession contained. Nick gets in Jason's face again, bringing the knife closer.

NICK (cont'd)
Why are you torturing me!?

JASON
I'm in love with you, Nick!

Nick's hand, the one with knife, falls limply to his side.

JASON (cont'd)
What does a guy gotta to get you to
like him!?

All the anger has left Nick's eyes. He appears to be in control of himself, at least temporarily. And for the first time ever, innocent tears are rolling down Jason's cheeks.

JASON (cont'd)
You think you're so worthless. That
no one could ever like you. I just
like you, Nick. Is that such a big
surprise? The things I've done to
try and get over you...

NICK
But you were always so... sure.

JASON
I'm just like everyone else. I
don't know how to get people to
like me. So I act like I'm
confident. People are attracted to
confidence, right?

NICK
I'm not attracted to anything.

JASON
Yeah, I can see that now. You could've saved me some time. Seth told me not to bother. He said he'd tried going after you once.

NICK
Seth?

JASON
Another surprise? Despite what a socially awkward idiot you are, people like you. Why is that so hard to believe?

Jason is striking deep chords with Nick - the ones tied to his major issues of intimacy.

NICK
Because I don't want a fucking relationship!

JASON
Neither did he! And neither did I, at first. It's college, Nick. People hook up.

NICK
Not me.

JASON
Why? What's your problem?

NICK
Stop saying that! Stop telling me I have a problem!

JASON
This is why people hate you, Nick! While they're all out having sex, you're making films. You wonder why you have no control over your life? Well, this is it!

NICK
I have control! I showed everyone what you really are!

JASON
The sex tape?! Really! You think a sex tape's going to destroy me?
(MORE)

JASON (cont'd)
I'm the victim here, Nick! You're
the one who's getting expelled.

NICK
Because of you! You've destroyed
everything I like about myself. I'm
disgusted with what I've become.

JASON
What you've become? You're a man
now. For the first time in your
life!

NICK
You don't control that.

JASON
Neither do you! That's the problem.
You're such a genophobic pussy who
can't even get his dick wet without
having a fucking meltdown.

There's a moment of silence, and Jason just shakes his head.

JASON (cont'd)
You have no idea how much you
effect the people around you. You
think you don't matter to anyone?
People care about you! And the ones
that do... would do anything for
you.

Nick thinks about it.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S DORM AREA - NIGHT

Myra walks quietly down the hall, head tilted forward and
eyes dark. In her hand, she carries a loaded gun. When Myra
reaches Jason's room she's about to knock when she realizes
it's been left open.

Myra pushes open the door open and steps inside, readying the
gun.

When she sees that the room is empty, Myra's rage boils over
and she begins tearing the room apart, yanking the blanket
off the bed, sliding everything off the dresser, kicking the
mirror in, and knocking the television onto the floor -
destroying it.

Myra lets out a yell and then finally collapses to the ground, sobbing. She looks at the gun - a strange and foreign object.

CUT BACK TO:

NICK'S DORM ROOM

The anger returns to Nick.

NICK

You think you're so important. Who are you without your dick? You think it gives you power? Let's just see. I am not going to let you control me anymore. I'm taking it back.

Nick approaches Jason again. Jason yells again hysterically, calling out for help - but to no avail. With his free hand, Nick pulls Jason's underwear down.

As Jason squirms like a mad man in a straight jacket, Nick looks down at him. Nick's world goes into slow motion and all sound fades away. The choice before Nick runs through his head over and over and his blood pressure quickens. Just as his heart rate is about to peak, Nick lets go of Jason and pulls away.

Everything returns to normal.

JASON

Don't do this Nick! Please!

But Nick's ignoring him now. He turns, takes a few steps away from Jason. The reality of everything he's done hits him full on now. A few tears run down Nick's cheeks.

NICK

I just want to be left alone...

JASON

Nick.

From the bed, Jason watches as Nick castrates himself. Jason cries out in horror, a long and drawn-out -

JASON (cont'd)

NO!

Nick throws the knife, and what he's severed, away and falls to his knees.

Suddenly, in Nick's mind, a film projector starts to whirl, and a succession of images are projected before him in the room (like a hologram):

1) Nick is in a tuxedo. He and Jason are getting married. They're both beaming. But suddenly, Jason morphs into a random FEMALE, who wears a wedding dress. The whole image dissolves to:

2) Nick and Jason sitting on a park bench. Jason holds a two-year-old on his lap while Nick cradles an infant. Again, Jason morphs into the same female who holds the same child. The whole image dissolves to:

3) A bed, situated so Nick has a view of the side. As an old man, Nick lies in bed dying. At his side is Jason, also old. Again, Jason morphs into the woman, now old as well. But then the woman fades away. The old Nick is alone. He turns his head, and looks directly into young Nick's eyes.

More tears from Nick. He falls over on his side, a pool of blood forming around him.

Jason, watching the whole thing, cries out again and uses all his strength to finally break free of his binds. He rushes over to Nick, who's almost gone.

Jason cradles Nick in his arms, sobbing.

JASON (cont'd)
Nick, I love you.

As the whirring of the film projector continues in Nick's head, his vision starts to darken. It's as if he's looking through a film camera - he sees frames, frames that surround and contain Jason.

But the frames begin to become more apparent and the whirring begins to soften; the projector is shutting down. The last few frames are clear and distinct along with the last clicks of the shutter.

And then the projector stops. All is silent. All Nick can see is darkness. He is gone.

JASON (cont'd)
I love you.

THE END.