

SCENE MISSING

BY

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Based mostly on a true story... mostly.

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TITLE CARD: Once upon a time, there was a girl...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP- DAWN

A young woman stands at the rooftop's edge, her back to us, pink hair cascading over her shoulders. Beyond the barrier wall, a technicolor sunrise illuminates the scene. The bright blue sky transitions into pink clouds, reminiscent of watercolors spilling across a canvas.

From the sky, two giant hands belonging to someone young extend towards her. They grasp her arms, lifting them towards the sky revealing the young WOMAN as a doll.

INT: KITCHEN- NIGHT

The camera pulls out as the hands exit the frame revealing the scene to be a miniature set on a kitchen table, an 8mm camera sat behind it. Toy cars line the table in front of the painting of the majestic sunrise over the rooftop as if it were a small drive-in movie theater.

The giant hand moves back into the frame, quickly turning the 8mm camera on and off again to capture the one frame of the doll as she stands triumphantly in front of the colors before her.

CUT TO:

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM- DAY

JOHN, a 31-year-old emaciated and bearded man, wakes from a dream in his hospital bed.

Suddenly, a film slate moves into the frame just over him.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Camera.

CAMERA MAN (O.S.)

Camera rolling.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Sound.

BOOM OPERATOR (O.S.)

Sound rolling.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Action.

The slate claps and glides out of frame while JOHN squints against the glaring camera lights above him. He surveys the room, dazed and confused.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

John? Do you know where you are?

JOHN looks up directly into the camera.

JOHN

Are we making a movie?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

You're in the hospital.

JOHN squints trying to make out the figure behind the blinding camera lights. In a mirror behind him, the DIRECTOR sits in the shadows next to a film camera. This is JAY.

JOHN

Who the fuck are you?

JAY

It's me. Jay. You don't remember me?

JOHN

... no.

He may be lying.

JAY

I'm the filmmaker. I've always been the filmmaker and I'll always be the filmmaker. You should know, I've always been here.

JOHN

The filmmaker of what?!

JAY

The movie.

JOHN

The movie?

JAY

This movie.

JOHN
About what?!

JAY
You, you drunk! And now that you're
off the sauce, maybe it won't be so
sad. You went way off script with that
whole alcoholism thing.

JOHN
(Alarmed)
I'm fucking crazy.

JAY
Can you try that again, but this time
with a little more emphasis on
"crazy"?

JAY smiles wickedly.

JOHN's eyes move to the camera filming him and he covers his
face with his sheet.

JOHN
(Genuinely upset)
This is a terrible movie!

JAY, a pink-haired woman donning a film crew headset and
wearing a golden button-up shirt stitched with various cloud
patterns, rushes into the frame, laughing. Her colors reflect
a sunset... or sunrise. She leaps onto the bed above JOHN,
the two in stark contrast. She rips the sheet from his face.

JAY
ACTION, MOTHER FUCKER!!!

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: SCENE MISSING

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE- DAY

JOHN, looking healthier, sits across from a COUNSELOR, a
heavier set-southern woman. His older sister SUZY, a 37-year-
old basic white girl with a hint of 80s hairband groupie,
sits with him as she sips her Starbucks coffee. A mirror
hangs on the wall behind them, JAY and her CAMERA MAN in the
reflection. She sits in a chair where the fourth wall would
be, watching the scene unfold.

The COUNSELOR reads from JOHN's file.

COUNSELOR

It says here you used to be a
filmmaker.

JOHN

Film student. It was just my major.

COUNSELOR

Well now you have a chance to chase
some realistic dreams.

JAY gasps in offense from the mirror as JOHN tries to ignore
her.

JOHN

Yeah. Okay. I'll try that.

COUNSELOR

Now what did Yoda say about trying,
Mr. Filmmaker?

JOHN

Honestly, the only reason I don't have
an answer to this is because it's such
an unexpected line of questioning.

COUNSELOR

Try not!

JOHN

I won't.

COUNSELOR

Drink, you will not.

JOHN

Not, I will?

JAY

CUT! Who wrote this crap?

COUNSELOR

Okay then! So, you have your
resources.

The counselor slides over some pamphlets.

COUNSELOR

And you have a safe place to go?

JOHN
I'll be staying with my dad.

Distressed, JAY consults the script in her lap.

JAY
That's not in the script!

JOHN whips his head towards JAY in the mirror, his eyes wide with irritation.

SUZY and the COUNSELOR, witnessing his strange interaction with the mirror, look at each other.

COUNSELOR
You okay, hon?

JOHN
Is it normal to hallucinate after you get sober?

JAY
Dick!

JOHN
(To JAY)
SHHHSH.

COUNSELOR
Do you need psychiatric services?

JOHN returns to the conversation and shakes his head.

COUNSELOR
Are you hearing voices honey? Cause we can help with that. We can give you someone else to talk to besides dem voices in your head. His name is Jesus Christ.

SUZY
(Flustered)
He's fine. It'll be fine.

JOHN
Jesus!

COUNSELOR
Amen!

SUZY

What?!

JOHN

Every time you say it's going to be fine, it's not FINE.

SUZY

It will be... fine.

JAY

This isn't fine.

JOHN whips his head towards JAY again, aggravated that she won't shut up. He quickly turns back to the COUNSELOR and SUZY as he realizes their growing concern over his behavior.

JOHN

Fine, it will be.

The COUNSELOR hands JOHN his one-month chip as he begins to gather his things.

COUNSELOR

Bye now. Y'all have blessed and sober days ahead. God grant me the serenity and all that.

Once alone, the COUNSELOR'S smile immediately fades. She sits back down shaking her head as she pulls another file.

INT. CAR- DAY

JOHN sits in the passenger seat while SUZY places some bags in the back of the car.

We can see JAY in the reflection of the rear-view mirror as she sits in the backseat with the BOOM OPERATOR and a CAMERA MAN.

JAY

We're going the wrong direction here with you staying with your dad.

JOHN

(Quietly)

You're so interested in making a movie, this should give you some good material.

JAY

I'm not interested in SAD endings.
It's bad choices like this that lead
to them.

JOHN

Yet here you are.

SUZY enters the car, sitting down in the driver's seat.

SUZY

Were you talking to yourself in here?
Are you hallucinating?!

JOHN

(Sarcastically)

I was reciting the serenity prayer.

SUZY rolls her eyes and begins to drive.

JAY

Tell her this is a bad idea.

JOHN glares into the rear-view mirror at her.

SUZY

This isn't a good idea.

JAY

Ah ha!

JOHN sighs.

JOHN

I'll be more comfortable there.

SUZY

How will you be more comfortable
there?!

JOHN

All of my shit is there.

SUZY

And so is dad! This isn't going to be
the same. You're not drinking anymore,
so now you'll need to deal with his
shit sober.

JOHN
(Frustrated)
Where else am I going to go?!

The car falls silent as SUZY does not have an answer to provide him. She sighs deeply.

SUZY
(Hesitant)
You can stay at my house.

JOHN
The last time I was there, your husband asked me if I was bringing random "gay dudes" over when you guys were asleep.

SUZY
You were.

JOHN shrugs.

JOHN
He's a homophobe.

SUZY
And so is Dad!

JOHN
That's the homophobia I grew up with. Additionally, I despise your husband.

SUZY begins to protest but then stops as she rethinks her response.

SUZY
I despise him too, actually.

JOHN
Why don't you divorce him, then?

SUZY
Because dad would lose his shit! I need peace and quiet.

JOHN rolls his eyes.

JOHN
(Dryly)
That's a really good reason.

EXT. MOBILE HOME- DAY

The car pulls up to a dilapidated mobile home. JOHN looks through the passenger side window, a heavy look in his eyes.

SUZY walks to the back of the car and pulls out his bags, walking them up to the porch, practically tip toeing as she gets closer to the front door. She does a quick sprint back to the car.

JOHN

You're not going to say hi to Dad?

SUZY

Fuck no.

JOHN begins to exit the car as SUZY rushes him out.

SUZY

Bye brother!

He looks at her blankly and hesitates before shutting the door.

SUZY

Don't fucking drink!

SUZY does a quick wave resembling a salute and drives off as JOHN walks up to the dilapidated mobile home.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

JOHN enters the house. It's dimly lit, and the air is filled with dust. His DAD's recliner is empty. A bottle of Jack Daniel's and a shot glass sit on the table next to it.

INT. BEDROOM- DAY

JOHN sits his bags down in his room. The walls are adorned in old movie posters. His bed is unmade and trash litters the floor.

JOHN steps forward and hears crumpling under his foot. He reaches down and picks up an old photograph; a younger JOHN sitting next to a bearish young man who is obscured through water damage on the photograph.

JOHN fixates on the photo, sadness falling over his face. His eyes glaze off as he begins to focus on the swirly cotton candy clouds and city lights in the background of the photo, the emotions in him beginning to hint at something like

nostalgia.

His eyes continue to drift off the photo towards the mirror across the way. JAY stands over his shoulder in the reflection with the CAMERA MAN and BOOM OPERATOR. JOHN jumps.

JOHN

Jesus!

JAY

What?

JOHN

Do you have to be on me like that?

JAY lifts up a script in her hands and flips through a few pages. She stops on a page, reads through it and then looks back to JOHN.

JAY

Yes.

JOHN takes a step away from her, aggravated.

From the other room, he can hear the front door open. Someone lets out a raspy cough and then the door shuts again.

JOHN's look grows heavier as JAY glares towards the hallway.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

JOHN enters the living room.

His DAD stands at the counter pulling off his boots. He's Hank Hill come to life, but drunk. His body sways as he tries to balance on one foot while removing his last boot.

JOHN

Hi.

His DAD barely nods and then almost falls over as his boot falls to the floor.

DAD

(Slurring)

Hi.

DAD braces himself by the arm of the recliner and settles himself slowly into it. JOHN starts to walk back towards the hallway.

JOHN
I'm going to go unpack.

DAD
Wait a minute.

DAD pours a shot, the bottle clacking loudly against the glass table.

DAD
I wanna talk to you for a minute.

JOHN stops at the hallway and turns around to face him.

DAD
Sit down.

JOHN braces himself and sits down on the couch across from his DAD. DAD takes his shot and immediately prepares another shot.

DAD
You think I'm an alcoholic.

JOHN
I didn't say that.

DAD
Well, I'm not. I'm not like you. I can quit when I want to.

He takes the shot. JOHN watches him set the glass back on the table and then quickly away.

DAD
We almost lost you. We lost your mom 6 months ago.

JOHN remains quiet, avoiding the subject.

DAD
She'd be really proud of you.

DAD pours another shot. JOHN's eyes follow the whiskey pouring into the glass with a mix of discomfort and longing.

JOHN crosses his legs and sits back as he tries to get comfortable but continues to fidget as he watches his DAD take the next shot.

DAD
Don't sit like a sissy.

Embarrassed, JOHN uncrosses his legs and looks forward, avoiding eye contact with his DAD.

DAD
Where was I? We lost your mom 6 months ago. She'd be proud of you.

DAD pours another shot. JOHN turns his face slightly away to hide the tears beginning to well up in his eyes.

DAD
Dammit. Where was I?

INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

DAD is passed out in his recliner with a bible clutched in his arms as FOX News screams about gender neutral bathrooms on the television. JOHN is still on the couch, exhausted.

Realizing that his dad is finally passed out, JOHN carefully reaches for the remote and turns off the television.

DAD
(Loudly)
Huh-uh!

JOHN freezes. DAD trembles a bit and then settles back into unconsciousness.

JOHN carefully places the remote back on the table. The remote clacks on the glass. DAD stirs and then settles once more. JOHN quietly moves towards the hallway.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN enters his room. In the reflection of the mirror, JAY sits with her CAMERA MAN where the fourth wall would be from our current angle. JOHN looks to her disapprovingly. JAY stands, approaching him from behind. As she passes his shoulder, she enters the frame, having pierced the fourth wall. JOHN looks a bit stunned, turning his glance behind him (at the camera).

JAY collapses on the bed, thumbing through her script. She begins writing notes into it with a pencil.

JOHN
How do you do that?

JAY
(Blankly)
I walk through the fourth wall.

They look at each other. JAY waves her hand towards the fourth wall. JOHN looks behind him.

The camera cuts to another angle leaving JOHN staring at the wall that's no longer the fourth wall.

JAY
It's over there now.

JAY points behind her (at us) and returns to her script.

JAY
It's called editing. Go back to film school.

JOHN sighs and begins to unpack his bag.

JAY
Or just stay here and continue to watch your dad drink himself to death. Unhappily ever after.

JOHN
Well, you're the "filmmaker". So do what you do, and film make my way out of it.

JAY
All of those stories you used to come up with... the GOOD ones? That was us! We made that shit. THIS? This is all you.

JOHN
Weird... I don't remember making anything that was good. And I don't remember you hovering around my back. Because YOU are an alcohol induced HALLUCINATION.

JAY
(Dryly)
But you're not drunk anymore.

JAY smiles coyly. JOHN pulls out his bottle of Ativan from his bag and begins reading the side effects.

JAY

What the fuck ever. I've always been here, watching. And I see EVERYTHING. Your inner dialogue. Your intrusive thoughts.

CUT TO:

INT. DISCO- NIGHT

JOHN dances on a disco dance floor to "More Than a Woman" dressed as Stephanie from the film "Saturday Night Fever".

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN's eyes widen in embarrassment as he remembers the intrusive thought. JAY laughs condescendingly.

JAY

Oh yeah. You know the ones.

JOHN ignores her and continues to fold his clothes.

JAY

You just broke your own fourth wall with that poison you drank. So... here I am. Sitting on your right shoulder whispering... stop with the bullshit.

JOHN

Who's on the left?

JAY squints her eyes mockingly as she searches his left shoulder.

JAY

A man. Making man decisions.

JOHN

I need a drink.

JAY

There's one of those man-cisions.

JOHN turns away and begins smashing his folded clothes in drawers filled with piles of unfolded clothing.

JAY

Disclaimer; these other three walls?
(MORE)

JAY (CONT'D)

They won't break. They'll just get tighter.

JAY huffs and tosses her script on to the floor.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN lies in bed facing the edge, his eyes looking down to the script lying on the floor. He rolls his eyes. Something rustles behind him, and he turns to look.

JAY sits on the floor rummaging through the closet.

JOHN

What the fuck are you doing?

JAY

Going on a trip down your memory lane.

JOHN grows concerned that she may see something he doesn't want her to.

JOHN

Get the fuck out of there!

JAY squeals as she pulls out a rag doll that looks like a Night of the Living Dead Jesus.

JAY

Joshua!

JOHN

Who?

JAY

JOSH-U-A. You don't remember Joshua?!

JOHN

(Maybe lying)

No. I don't remember that. That had to belong to my sister.

JAY

Jesus Christ!

JOHN

Zombie Jesus?

JAY climbs into the bed next to JOHN as she continues to pour excitement over the rag doll.

JAY

No, Jesus Christ! With an exclamation point at the end. It's just the title. 1978. Stop motion animation. Directed and written by Alan Smithee. Tagline: A young woman's life is turned upside down when she becomes romantically involved with the resurrected corpse of a drifter who captivates everyone he meets with his kindness; the same kindness that got him murdered in the first place. Rated R for queer themes and offending Christians. You loved this shit when you were a kid! You used to flick his heart shaped button nipples all of the time!

She pulls down the doll's tattered robe revealing a heart shaped button nipple sewn on its chest. She flicks it as she laughs excitedly. JOHN's eyes widen in horror.

JAY

You hid ALL of your shame in the closet!

JAY lays down in the bed and cuddles the doll as she settles in. JOHN's horror intensifies as he realizes she intends to sleep in the bed.

JOHN

Comfortable?!

JAY

(Sarcastically)
Ecstatic.

JOHN turns in the bed, placing a pillow over his head.

JAY twists her feet uncomfortably under the blankets. She pulls the blankets back and finds a photograph stuck to her foot. She peels it off. It's the same photograph JOHN fixated on earlier.

JAY

Why do you still think about him?

JOHN looks over at the photo in her hand and then quickly away.

JOHN

I think about what an asshole he is.

JOHN becomes still, staring out into the space in front of him in discomfort.

JAY's eyes drift off to the same portion of the photo JOHN fixated on earlier; pink swirling clouds against a blue sky and a city hiding underneath in the background. She becomes lost, daydreaming into the image. Something meaningful to her is in it.

Music begins to play, something like the first few notes of "On a Clear Day", but softer.

JOHN
Can we not with the music?

JAY scoffs and the music abruptly stops.

JOHN closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP- DAY

A younger JOHN and FOSTER sit on the barrier wall of a roof overlooking a whimsical sunset as fog blankets the city below. FOSTER remains obscured by the light behind him reducing him to almost a shadow.

FOSTER sits down a bottle of tequila and takes JOHN's hand. He holds it, his thumb brushing over the top as he smiles softly. JOHN returns the gesture, forgetting the whimsy before him.

JAY (O.S.)
Do you ever think about going back?

JOHN (O.S.)
To Foster?

JAY (O.S.)
No. To the city. You loved it because it felt like being up in the clouds when the fog would roll in, which was often. The way the wind would dance with your hair... and it wasn't... here.

JOHN (O.S.)
Foster never liked the city.

JOHN only sees FOSTER; the clouds, the color and the whimsy

reflecting in FOSTER's eyes as they look into JOHN.

JAY (O.S.)
You loved it, though.

JOHN (O.S.)
I don't remember why.

The camera pulls back to reveal...

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- NIGHT

... a giant drive-in movie theater screen with the image of JOHN and FOSTER sitting on the roof projected onto it.

JOHN sits in an old convertible in the middle of the parking lot as he watches the scene unfold. He drinks from a bottle of tequila as he watches himself and FOSTER on the screen in front of him, the color draining out of the skyline behind the screen into black and white. The only color left illuminates from the screen in front of him.

JOHN (O.S.)
(Whimpering)
He took my hand like it belonged to him.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN begins to cry as he becomes vulnerable, his femininity unmasking itself within his posture and voice.

JAY empathetically rests her head into the back of his, her pink hair falling over his face as if it were his. She carefully places her hand on the back of his shoulder as he expresses himself authentically.

JOHN
And it was so small in his hand. And it held on tighter than his and then he just let it go.

INT. KITCHEN-DAY

JOHN makes coffee. His beard is longer showing some months have passed.

A boom mic hovers close to his face. Startled, JOHN jumps and then glares to the BOOM OPERATOR standing nearby.

JOHN
Jesus! Can I have one fucking second
alone?!

His DAD stumbles into the connecting living room across the
way.

DAD
Who are you talking to?!

JOHN
(Embarrassed)
... myself.

His DAD looks at him judgmentally and then sits down in his
recliner. He turns on FOX News, the newscaster screaming
about gender neutral bathrooms.

JOHN winces at the noise.

DAD reaches into his pocket and pulls out two twenty-dollar
bills. He holds them out towards JOHN, who hesitates.

DAD
Bring me in a package of cigarettes
and one of them twenty-dollar bottles
when you come in.

Annoyed, JOHN takes the money and then returns to his coffee.

His DAD pulls his whiskey bottle out from under the coffee
table and pours a shot. JOHN's eyes follow the bottle and
then quickly dart back to his coffee as he attempts to avoid
the craving.

JOHN
It's a little early, don't you think?

His DAD becomes suddenly agitated, his face curling in anger.

DAD
Let me ask you something. Do you think
I'm an alcoholic?

JOHN
You always ask me that. Do you?

DAD
I sure the fuck don't.

JOHN freezes, stunned by the sudden change in tone. He

quickly finishes stirring his coffee and begins to cross the living room as quickly as he can without appearing panicked.

DAD

Wait a minute. Sit down, I want to talk to you.

JOHN pauses at the hallway, his anxiety increasing.

JOHN

I have to get ready for work.

DAD

I worked my entire life for your mom and you kids. Someday when you have your own wife and your own kids, you tell me you're not having a couple of drinks.

JOHN

I don't want a wife and kids. And I can't drink.

DAD

(Aggressively)

Well, you sure could have fooled me the past ten years on the drinking part, but you've just about got me convinced on the rest, sissy.

His DAD takes the shot and slams the glass onto the coffee table, the glass surface slightly cracking from the force. He then turns the volume up on the television.

JOHN meekly enters the hallway towards his room, passing a portrait of his pretty mother hanging on the wall. She smiles warmly in the photograph.

JOHN turns his head away from it as he passes.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- DUSK

JOHN stands behind a concession stand with his manager, KATHY. The concession stand is a fully stocked bar with a small candy display and a popcorn machine on top of the counter.

In the reflection of the mirror that backs the alcohol shelf, JAY stands behind JOHN and KATHY, her mouth agape.

JOHN
Jesus Fucking Christ.

JAY
Jesus Fucking Christ.

KATHY
Amen.

JOHN
I didn't expect... any alcohol.

KATHY
Yeah. I probably don't need to bother showing you the popcorn machine. The customers like to drink more than anything.

JOHN
The customers that drive in... and then out again?

KATHY
(Dryly)
Well, yeah. It's a drive-in.

KAREN, a patron, approaches the counter.

KAREN
(Agitated)
Excuse me?!

KATHY and JOHN turn to greet the WOMAN, KATHY's face anticipating a confrontation.

KATHY
Hi, how can I help you?

KAREN
We brought our kids to this movie and there's a...

KAREN lowers her voice.

KAREN
(Whispering)
... tranny in the film.

KATHY gasps mockingly.

KATHY
(Whispering)
You don't say?

KAREN

You need to put disclaimers on your films that aren't family friendly. Or don't show them. Word of mouth is pretty powerful.

KATHY

This isn't a family friendly establishment. It's "disclaimed" on the 21 and over sign.

KATHY pours a beer from the tap and then slides it to KAREN.

KATHY

For the kids' trauma.

KAREN knocks the beer over the counter, spilling it, and storms off. KATHY looks at the mess, unfazed.

KATHY

And that was the section on how to NOT treat our patrons.

JOHN

So, where's the section on how?

KATHY

Just call me on the walkie.

She hands him a rag. He begins to clean the spill.

KATHY

You do that really nicely. Well, seems like you have a handle on this.

KATHY picks up the can off the counter and takes a drink.

KATHY

Also, no drinking.

JOHN

I don't think you'll need to worry about that.

KATHY

That's what the guy you're replacing said.

JOHN

I'm two months sober.

KATHY

Oh shit.

JOHN

It's fine.

KATHY

That's what the guy you're replacing said. You staying at New Beginnings?

JOHN

I was.

KATHY

Did you know a guy named Mark?

JOHN

Until he relapsed.

KATHY

That's the guy you're replacing.

JOHN

Oh shit.

KATHY

Final lesson. Don't be Mark.

JOHN and KATHY stand silently, looking at one another.

KATHY

I assume you already know how to make the drinks.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- NIGHT

JOHN leans on the counter watching the end of the movie. JAY is behind him in the reflection of the mirrored alcohol display, her face dreamy with a half-smile as she watches as well.

On the screen, a woman stands with her arms outstretched before a vast and whimsical skyline as the music swells climatically.

JOHN looks behind him and sees JAY lost in the projected celluloid, her eyes watered over with tears. He turns back to the movie and rolls his eyes.

JAY

That was beautiful.

JOHN
If by beautiful, you mean terrible,
then yeah. Beautiful ending.

JAY
(Offended)
It was a happy ending!

JOHN
She ended up alone.

JAY
Did you even watch it? Do two
characters have to end up together to
have a happy ending?

JOHN looks back to the screen as the image fades to black and
the credits begin to roll, something personal in his eyes.

JAY
You missed some important scenes.

JOHN
(Resentfully)
I was busy mixing drinks.

JAY
Listen. It wasn't about the guy or her
relationship with her dad. It was
about her finding herself. She
pretended to be someone else so the
guy would love her, and her dad would
accept her. But in the end, she
realized she was just suppressing the
things she once loved most about
herself. So, she stopped doing that
shit. She found herself. That was the
point.

JOHN
Is that going to be your point? For
me? In your "movie"? I don't know if
the last ten years told you anything,
but I'm clearly not interested in
finding myself.

JAY
You just sounded like your dad right
now.

JOHN ignores her and begins cashing out his drawer.

JAY

I know you think fixing things with Foster would fix this phase of "sad" you're going through. But he wasn't great. He literally would refer to you as his girlfriend. He didn't mean that as a compliment. AND he's an alcoholic.

JOHN

I'm an alcoholic.

JAY

You're a recovering alcoholic. He's not. He's not your happy ending.

JOHN

Oh, thank you! I'm found, now! Okay?! Here I am. Sober, with a wasted life and alone like that fucker up there on the screen! There's your movie! Roll credits!

JAY

That's not how my movie ends.

JOHN

OK, well, thank you for your patronage.

DICK, another patron, walks up to the counter visibly drunk.

DICK

Talking to yourself, man?

JOHN

We're closing up.

DICK

Not before you pour me another shot of tequila.

DICK sets his glass down on the counter. JOHN picks up the bottle, his eyes fixated on it as he pours the glass. DICK sets down a \$5 bill and takes the shot, slamming the empty glass down when he's done.

JOHN

It's \$6.

DICK tosses one more dollar down.

DICK
Here's your tip; The sun doesn't set
for those who ride into it.

The MAN laughs condescendingly as he leaves.

DICK
Faggot.

JOHN looks at DICK as he walks off, visibly upset. He picks the bottle up to put it back but hesitates as he looks longingly at it.

JAY
That's not how my movie ends, either.

JOHN places the bottle on the shelf, and then pulls down a bottle of whiskey.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

JOHN's DAD is passed out in his recliner as FOX News screams about gender neutral bathrooms from the television. He is clutching what looks like a bible close to his chest.

JOHN carefully places the new bottle of whiskey down next to the empty one on the table. As it softly clacks, JOHN freezes, his eyes moving to his DAD. JOHN waits a moment and when his DAD doesn't stir, JOHN slowly and quietly makes his way to the hallway.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN sleeps in his bed as JAY lays asleep next to him, cuddling her zombie Jesus doll. It is quiet.

Suddenly there is a small crash outside the bedroom door and the sound of stumbling.

DAD
(From the hallway)
Shit!

There's another moment of silence before DAD clumsily knocks on the door. JOHN doesn't stir. The doorknob begins to jiggle. When it doesn't give, DAD forces the door open, falling over into the room. He clumsily gets back up on his feet.

DAD
(Drunk)
John!

JOHN sits up, startled. He looks up apprehensively to his DAD who stands in the doorway, wavering.

DAD
I want to talk to you for a minute!

JOHN
I'm in bed.

DAD
I said I want to talk to you for a minute!

JOHN
I heard you and I told you I'm in bed.
Can this wait until tomorrow?

DAD slams the door, breaking it through the other side. JOHN freezes, his eyes on the broken door.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

JOHN meekly stops at the foot of the hallway. DAD is digging around in the seat of his recliner.

DAD
(Angrily panicked)
What did you do with it?!

JOHN
What did I do with what?!

His DAD sighs having found his missing bible buried in between the back of the recliner and the cushioned seat. He quickly opens it checking for something inside. He sits back down, tucking the bible between his leg and the arm of the recliner

DAD
Stay out of my things!

JOHN
I do.

DAD
Sit down a minute. I want to talk to you.

JOHN
About what? It's 1 a.m.!

DAD
I've worked my entire life for your
mom and you kids...

JOHN
(Interrupting)
You're like a broken record!

DAD
(Screaming)
I'M NOT AN ALCOHOLIC!!! I can quit if
I want to, unlike your sissy ass!

Dread falls over JOHN. DAD stares at him, his face enraged.
He aggressively picks up the bottle and begins pouring
another shot.

JOHN
I'm going to go back to bed.

DAD
You sit your ass down!

JOHN becomes still as his DAD takes the shot.

DAD
I've worked my whole life for your mom
and you kids.

JOHN grows more uncomfortable as his DAD pours another shot.

DAD
And you don't give a shit! You don't
give a shit about me. You didn't give
a shit about your mom!

JOHN
Of course I did!

DAD
The fuck you did. You won't even look
at that picture of her on the wall,
there.

His DAD motions to the picture on the wall. JOHN refuses to
look over to it, tears beginning to collect in his eyes.

DAD
Look at her!

JOHN
What do you want me to do? CRY about
it every day?!

DAD
Oh, I cry about it every day?!

JOHN
You drink about it every day.

DAD stands and storms up to JOHN, slapping him hard in the face.

JOHN looks to him, stunned. Slowly, he starts to turn to leave the room, but his dad grabs him by the wrist.

DAD
I SAID SIT THE FUCK DOWN!

DAD throws JOHN onto the couch by his wrist and hovers over him with a hand raised. JOHN pushes his DAD back by planting his foot into his chest. DAD grabs JOHN's leg and twists him into the floor, JOHN's head hitting the corner of the table on the way down. JOHN screams out in pain as the empty bottle of whiskey falls to the ground next to him.

DAD
GET UP!

DAD yanks JOHN up by the collar of his shirt. He tries throwing him back onto the couch but JOHN yanks back, falling back into the floor.

DAD
I SAID GET THE FUCK UP!

JOHN raises his leg to shield himself again, his DAD grabs onto it and pulls him across the floor. JOHN grabs the empty bottle of whiskey as he slides across the carpet.

DAD
YOU GONNA FIGHT ME LIKE A GIRL??!!

JAY
(From behind DAD)
I will.

The other bottle of whiskey that is still full crashes over

DAD's head, shattering over his skull. Whiskey and a drop of blood trickle down DAD's face as he begins to lose consciousness. DAD collapses over JOHN revealing JAY behind him, holding the broken neck of the bottle.

She trembles with anger.

JOHN shoves his DAD off of him and looks towards JAY. Both of them look stunned.

JOHN
What the fuck are you?

JAY
I'm just the filmmaker.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN scrambles across his room, grabbing handfuls of clothes and smashing them into his duffel.

JAY stands in the reflection of the mirror, glaring through the broken door to the hallway. JOHN's DAD is visible on the floor in the living room.

JOHN
(Panicked)
Is he dead?!

JAY
(Dryly)
I don't think so. He's doing some weird twitching thing.

JOHN
Oh my god!

JAY
Get your stuff. Let's go.

JOHN grabs his duffel, his eye catching the photo of him and FOSTER on the ground. He hesitates and then quickly picks it up, sticking it in his jacket pocket as he exits the room.

INT. VW VAN- NIGHT

JOHN drives. JAY sits in the backseat in the reflection of the rear-view mirror.

JAY
I'm sure he's fine.

JOHN
What the fuck am I going to do?

JAY looks out the car window, thinking.

JOHN
How did you do that?

JAY
How did I do what?

JOHN
(Frustrated)
How did you assault my dad?!

JAY
I raised the bottle and then I lowered
it in a quick motion.

JAY chuckles softly and then immediately turns her attention
back to the window.

JOHN
I'm absolutely fucking crazy.

JAY
Your dad was an obstacle in your
character development.

JOHN
Where am I even going?!

JAY thinks a moment as she looks out the window. The sun
begins to rise through the dusty brown air outside.

JAY reaches over to JOHN's jacket pocket and pulls out the
picture of FOSTER and JOHN. Her eyes fixate on the whimsical
clouds and city in the background, her face with longing and
her head filling with an idea.

JAY
Go to the city.

JOHN sighs disapprovingly.

JAY
Go to the city. You can...

She hesitates but needs a lure.

JAY
... see Foster.

The van falls quiet for a long moment.

JOHN
That's practically a thousand miles.
This van is not making it fifty.

JAY
Go to the train station.

JOHN
You didn't like the "Foster ending".

JAY sighs anxiously.

JOHN
Did you sigh anxiously?

JAY
I was changing my mind. Go to the
train station.

JOHN
This is fucking insane. You sound like
you're not sure that's a good idea.

JAY
We could go back and watch the
alternate ending with you in jail.

JOHN
There's a jail ending?!

JAY
No, because you're going to go to the
train station.

INT. TRAIN- DAWN

JOHN enters the train as the loudspeaker is announcing departure. All of the passengers, who are all elderly except for a YOUNG WOMAN with a guitar, are already seated.

JOHN sits next to a window in the back. In the reflection of the window next to him, we can see JAY sitting by his side. She looks at him from the reflection and smiles reassuringly.

JAY
 (Softly)
 Action.

JOHN and JAY look to the front of the train. All the passengers turn around in their seats, looking back at JOHN. JOHN smiles awkwardly but as they continue to stare, his smile fades as he begins to notice that the passengers are actually film crew that are filming him.

The YOUNG WOMAN begins to strum a soft version of something like "Somewhere Only We Know" on her guitar.

Through the window in the back of the train, the train station can be seen receding in the distance as the train departs. The skyline in the back is a dusty and smoggy cloud.

EXT. TRAIN-DAY

HELICOPTER VIEW:

The sun rises above the train. The yellow and barren landscape surrounds the train as it travels through. Over time, the yellow recedes into a lush green. The train begins to weave under tall trees that softly rustle in the wind as it approaches a city nestled in the trees in the distance

EXT. BAR- DAY

JOHN walks down one of the streets in the city. He stops at a bar with a giant neon sign that reads "1969", He looks up to a window of an apartment above the bar, memories flooding him.

JOHN
 I need a minute.

In the reflection of one of the bar windows, JAY looks to him from over his shoulder disapprovingly.

JOHN
 Like, dissipate into the nether or
 whatever you do. I need a minute!

JOHN enters the bar. She does not follow.

INT. BAR- DAY

JOHN looks nervously around the empty bar. 60s and 70s decor garnish the room, and disco music plays softly from a back room. A BARTENDER dressed like a hippy stands behind the bar,

her back turned as she stocks the shelf. JOHN nervously approaches the bar and sits down on a stool.

BARTENDER
What can I get you, hon?

JOHN
Just a coffee.

The BARTENDER turns around at the sound of his voice. As her eyes fall on him, she freezes, the two standing with silence between them.

JOHN
Hi Bonnie.

BONNIE shakes her head.

BONNIE
John Fucking Buford.

Hesitantly, BONNIE walks around the bar and up to JOHN. The two hug awkwardly.

BONNIE
It's been a while.

BONNIE pulls away, an obvious resentment hidden under her smile. She walks back behind the bar and picks up a bottle of tequila and a shot glass.

BONNIE
The usual?

She sits the shot glass in front of JOHN and begins to pour.

JOHN
It's a little early, don't you think?

BONNIE stops half pour and looks at him with an expression of confusion.

BONNIE
Do you think it's a little early?

JOHN
I'll just have the coffee.

BONNIE
You're kidding?

JOHN
No. Just the coffee.

BONNIE caps the tequila and begins to pour a cup of coffee, guilt flushing over her.

BONNIE
Holy shit. I'm sorry. I didn't know.

BONNIE hands him his coffee and leans in on the bar. Her coldness melts with a warm smile.

BONNIE
How long?

JOHN
Eight months.

BONNIE
That's fantastic.

JOHN
I'm sorry I didn't say goodbye.

BONNIE nods, accepting the apology.

BONNIE
But you said hello again. What are you doing here?

JOHN
I ran away from home.

JAY (O.S)
You can't "runaway", you're 32 years old.

JOHN looks to the mirror that backs the alcohol display and sees JAY sitting next to him in the reflection. She glares at him.

JAY
How many scenes do we need of you surrounded by alcohol?

BONNIE turns around to see what he's looking at.

BONNIE
You good?

JOHN
(his eyes still on JAY)
I'm just hungover after ten years of
drinking.

EXT. BAR- DAY

JOHN and BONNIE sit at a wooden bench outside of the bar with a couple of coffees. JOHN smokes a cigarette as BONNIE stands behind him doctoring the wound on his head.

BONNIE
This is pretty bad, but I think you'll
live.

JOHN flinches as she applies alcohol to the wound.

BONNIE
That's a pretty long trip just to get
away from your dad.

JOHN sits hesitantly a moment as he ponders responding.

JOHN
I came to see Foster.

BONNIE
I didn't think you'd want to see him.
He's not here anymore. He moved out
shortly after you.

JOHN
I know.

BONNIE
What do you hope will happen when you
see him?

JOHN
The same thing I came here to see you
for. To tell him I'm sorry.

BONNIE
For leaving?

JOHN
For being drunk.

BONNIE
He was drunk too.

JOHN
Then for not being who he wanted.

BONNIE
And who is that?

JOHN
Anyone who's not me.

BONNIE finishes cleaning the wound and sits down next to him, putting her arm around him as he fights back a tear.

BONNIE
I wouldn't have been so hurt all these years after you left if I didn't think you had some kind of wonderful in you.

JOHN
I don't think I would have been drinking if I had thought that.

BONNIE hesitates.

BONNIE
I didn't tell you this, but he still stops by on Friday nights. Foster. I didn't tell you that.

JOHN
There's something else. I've been... seeing things.

BONNIE sits quiet for a moment, surprised by the confession.

BONNIE
What kind of things?

JOHN
I haven't said it out loud to anyone.

BONNIE
You can tell me.

JOHN hesitates for a long moment, unsure if he wants to hear it out loud.

JOHN
A pink haired girl named Jay who says she's directing me in a movie. And I occasionally see film crew walking around.

JOHN looks up to see the BOOM OPERATOR holding a boom mic in the reflection of the bar's window. JAY sits in a chair next to her CAMERA MAN where the fourth wall would lie.

JAY
You're in the fucking shot again,
Mike!

MIKE
So are you!

JAY
I'm always in the shot!

MIKE dips out of the reflection.

BONNIE
You're fucking with me?

JOHN
I'm not. I'm really for reals seeing
this stuff. Possibly as we speak.

BONNIE
Is she telling you to do anything bad?

JOHN
She's the one that told me to come
here. So maybe.

JOHN drifts away somewhere in thought.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP- DAWN

JAY stands in front of a whimsically cloudy sky as her pink hair flows in the wind, the colors almost bleeding into the pink hues of the swirling clouds before her. A CAMERA MAN films her.

JOHN (O.S.)
The first time I saw her was in a
dream. I was making a movie, but
then...

The CAMERA MAN turns the camera towards the fourth wall, presumably JOHN's POV.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAR- DAY

JOHN's eyes gaze through the screen at us and then quickly dart away in embarrassment.

JOHN

I woke up and she was still there.
Like a hangover. And I kept expecting
her to just fade out like the rest of
the garbage in my head. But she's
still there. Like a little imaginary
stalker.

JOHN looks towards the window of the bar and sees JAY in the reflection, her eyes locking onto his as if she's his own reflection.

BONNIE

You have an imaginary friend?

JOHN scoffs, embarrassed at the thought.

BONNIE

An imaginary friend while you recover
is not the wildest thing. Maybe she's
your way of working through things.

JOHN

I'm 32.

JOHN hesitates, knowing what he's about to say sounds crazy.

JOHN

She was the one that hit my dad in the
head with a bottle. Not me.

BONNIE

Like a ghost?

JOHN looks at her questionably.

JOHN

I don't even know what to do with
that.

BONNIE

I have a friend that can do a reading
for you.

JOHN looks at her skeptically.

JOHN

I don't know that I buy into all of that, Bonnie.

BONNIE

You have a better idea?

JOHN

No. I'm kind of crazy right now, so I don't.

BONNIE

Crazy people don't think they are crazy. Where are you staying?

JOHN

There's a hostel a couple of blocks up.

BONNIE

Absolutely not. Your room in the apartment above the bar is still empty.

JOHN

That's so nice of you but I couldn't.

BONNIE

Hey, you're staying here. It's no bother. I won't take no for an answer.

JOHN nods.

BONNIE

Just stay the fuck away from my booze.

He nods again.

BONNIE

It's good to have you home.

INT. APARTMENT- DAY

BONNIE leads JOHN into his old room. Old movie posters adorn the walls like his room at home. He looks around the room, his eyes falling on familiar things as he slips somewhere between sadness and nostalgia in his mind.

BONNIE

I'm like a mom whose kids went off to college. I didn't change anything

(MORE)

BONNIE (CONT'D)
after you two left.

JOHN sets his bag down as he continues to gaze around the room.

BONNIE
I'll let you get settled.

Once alone, JAY breezes past JOHN to one of the windows, almost knocking him down.

JOHN
Jesus Christ!

JAY stops at the window, staring out and suddenly quiet. Like a painting, a rooftop lies on the other side, a majestic sky hanging over it. Pinks and blues bleed in like watercolors throughout the composition of it. Her eyes fall over it as she slips somewhere between nostalgia and longing in her mind.

She opens the window and steps out onto the rooftop patio. She walks to the barrier wall where she becomes still, entranced by the spectacle before her.

JOHN looks out the window to her, perplexed that this figment of his imagination is so genuine in the emotions that she suggests.

INT. APARTMENT- DAWN

JOHN wakes in the bed. He looks over to the window and can see JAY still on the rooftop, sitting on the barrier wall before the sky.

He looks around the room as memories continue to reel through his mind until his eyes fall on the nightstand next to him. He reaches over and picks up the picture of him and FOSTER. He looks upon it, hopeful.

The camera pulls back to reveal...

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- NIGHT

... he is in a movie on a giant drive-in movie theater screen.

A convertible car sits in front of the screen, a younger JOHN and FOSTER sitting in it. This JOHN leans over and lays his head on FOSTER's shoulder.

JOHN

You don't like the movie?

FOSTER chuckles as he shifts uncomfortably under the weight of YOUNGER JOHN's head on his shoulder.

FOSTER

You know I don't like chick flicks.

YOUNGER JOHN sits back up, embarrassed.

JOHN on the movie screen looks up from the picture, his eyes piercing through the screen to the younger versions of himself and FOSTER. Troubled, he rolls over the other direction in the bed and puts a pillow over his head, hiding from it.

The camera pulls back to reveal...

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- NIGHT

... JAY sitting in the convertible watching YOUNGER JOHN and FOSTER sitting in the drive-in theater on the screen. Or maybe it's that she is sitting somewhere in the back of JOHN's mind like a distant memory.

A cellphone can be heard ringing somewhere in the movie theater lot.

AUDIENCE MEMBER (O.S.)

Shh!!!

INT. APARTMENT- MORNING

JOHN wakes from a dream to the sound of the cellphone. He reaches over and picks it up from the nightstand, tiredly turning it towards his face.

The caller ID reads SIS.

JOHN's eyes widen in panic as he quickly presses the button on the side of the phone to silence it. He lays back in bed for a moment. The phone buzzes with a voicemail. Hesitantly, JOHN flips the phone open and places it close to his ear.

SUZY

Where the fuck are you?! Call me back.

The phone clicks.

Noise of dishes clacking from the other room draws JOHN's

attention.

INT. KITCHEN- MORNING

JOHN peeks around the corner and sees BONNIE at the stove cooking and laughing as she talks with CLYTIE, a classy looking woman bigger than life, who sits at the kitchen table. CLYTIE's gown femininely drapes her less feminine frame.

BONNIE

We didn't wake you, did we?

JOHN shakes his head. CLYTIE looks up warmly at him.

CLYTIE

Pleasure.

BONNIE

I forgot to tell you that we usually get together for breakfast on Thursdays. I'm sorry if we woke you.

JOHN

I was just getting up.

BONNIE

Sit down! There's some coffee on the table and there will be some breakfast here shortly.

CLYTIE pulls out a chair for JOHN. He hesitantly takes it. She then sets a cup of coffee in front of him before taking back her seat.

BONNIE

This is my friend, Clytie.

CLYTIE puts her hand out to JOHN and delicately takes his.

BONNIE

She's the friend I was telling you about.

CLYTIE smiles warmly at JOHN, turning his hand over and looking at his palm, his hand small in hers.

JOHN glares at BONNIE for springing the psychic on him. She returns the gesture with a nervous grimace.

CLYTIE

You have very delicate hands.

BONNIE

She means that as a compliment.

JOHN smiles politely as he slowly takes his hand back to sip his coffee.

BONNIE

Clytie, this is my old roommate and one of my oldest friends, John. Aspiring filmmaker, extraordinary writer...

JOHN shakes his head.

JOHN

Film student. Past tense. And extraordinary is more than a stretch.

BONNIE glares at him and then breaks into a warm smile.

BONNIE

... and eight months sober as of yesterday.

CLYTIE

That's really lovely. Congratulations!

CLYTIE continues to search JOHN as she sips her coffee. JOHN grows increasingly more uncomfortable as she continues staring at him.

BONNIE sits JOHN's plate down in front of him and squeezes his shoulder.

BONNIE

Let's take this to the patio.

EXT. ROOFTOP- MORNING

JOHN, BONNIE and CLYTIE sit at a table on the roof finishing their breakfast, a giant blue sky draped behind them.

BONNIE paints CLYTIE's nails.

BONNIE

There you go, hon.

CLYTIE
Beautiful work, as always.

BONNIE
Charmer.

CLYTIE
C'mon John. Let's get those pretty
hands a layer of paint.

JOHN
Oh, no thanks.

BONNIE
C'mon. You're in the city now.
Integrate.

CLYTIE switches seats with BONNIE. BONNIE takes JOHN's
hesitant hand and begins to brush his nail with a bright blue
polish.

BONNIE
We'll do a boy color.

CLYTIE
A "boy" color?

BONNIE
My apologies, my dear. A less feminine
color.

CLYTIE
Blue can be feminine.

BONNIE
Not as feminine as you my lovely. John
here loves blue, because it reminds
him of the sky on a clear day.

JOHN
Do I?

BONNIE
You did at one time.

JOHN
I don't remember him.

BONNIE frowns at how joyless the sentence falls from JOHN's
mouth.

JOHN looks out towards the edge of the roof to find JAY still sitting there with her CAMERA MAN. The CAMERA MAN turns the camera to JOHN as BONNIE continues to paint his nails. JAY looks over her shoulder, a coy smile curling from the corner of her mouth. JOHN glares at her, shaking his head as he mouths something like "GET THE CAMERA OFF OF ME".

CLYTIE

(Singing)

On a clear day...

JOHN

... you can see forever?

CLYTIE

That's the one, Mr. Filmmaker.

JOHN

Mr. EX Film Student. I had my career in alcoholism.

BONNIE

He's being modest. He's extraordinarily talented. And he has ALWAYS loved making movies. Do you remember that film you made when you were a kid? Of the pretty sky over the rooftop and the girl dancing on it?

JOHN

(Maybe lying)

I don't.

BONNIE

Well, I do. It was beautiful.

JOHN's phone begins to ring again. He pulls it out with his free hand and sees DAD on the caller ID. He panics, silencing the phone and sitting it down on the table.

BONNIE

Everything okay?

JOHN

(Lying)

Yeah, it's fine.

CLYTIE takes JOHN's free hand and turns it over, brushing the surface of his palm with her finger.

CLYTIE

Let's see about that. C'mon John,
let's go on a little trip.

CLYTIE places her finger at the bottom of his palm and begins to slide it up slowly along the lines in the surface. As she is distracted by the lines of his hand, JOHN looks to BONNIE with a furrowed brow. BONNIE smiles apologetically.

CLYTIE

Think of these lines like frames on a film reel. These are all the scenes of your life laid out from start to finish. This break here... there's a scene missing.

JOHN

A scene missing?

CLYTIE takes her eyes off of JOHN's hand and studies his eyes again, looking hard as if she sees something in there.

CLYTIE

You're going through a big change
right now.

JOHN nods, his eyes fluttering away to no place in particular as he begins to sense that she can see something in him that he wants to keep hidden.

CLYTIE

You're lost in that change, not sure where you are going. No direction, no one telling you how to move forward. You've been looking back at scenes in your life, just trying to catch a clue on how to move forward to the next. But you missed a part. And you seem to be stuck on one scene in particular. A lost love?

JOHN nods, embarrassed.

CLYTIE

Now that's not missing, is it? You seem to remember that pretty clearly and it's not teaching you anything you don't already know.

JOHN

What's the missing scene, then?

CLYTIE

I don't know because it's missing. And I get a sense that it's missing because you cut it yourself and dropped it to the bottom of a sea of alcohol. And because you cut it, all this...

CLYTIE gestures broadly in his direction.

CLYTIE

... it doesn't make any sense.

JOHN ponders being offended.

JOHN

So, what do I do?

CLYTIE slides her finger back down the line of his palm past the break and stops right just beneath it.

CLYTIE

You need to talk to your ghosts.

BONNIE gasps.

BONNIE

He has been seeing ghosts.

JOHN whips his head towards JAY who is still at the edge of the rooftop. JAY rolls her eyes at the suggestion.

CLYTIE

Ghosts are not quite what you're thinking. A ghost is just a memory fading in the darkness of that hole in the middle of the film reel. That hole in the middle of you. Listen to it before it's missing in that darkness as well.

JOHN

What if the ghost is sarcastic and argumentative?

CLYTIE

Then you're not listening. LISTEN.

JOHN

Who is she?

CLYTIE
I can't tell you.

JOHN
Why not?

CLYTIE
It would spoil the ending.

CLYTIE says no more and takes a sip from her coffee. JOHN sits back, more perplexed than before they started.

BONNIE
All done.

JOHN pulls his hand back and looks at his nails. Little swirls of a pink cotton texture dance with the blue base, like clouds in the sky. Panic flushes JOHN's eyes.

CLYTIE
Bonnie, that's beautiful.

JOHN
(Panicked)
You snuck pink in there.

BONNIE
(Singing)
On a clear day...

CLYTIE
(Singing)
You can see forever...

BONNIE
Let's do the other hand, so it'll match.

JOHN
Oh, I don't know about that.

CLYTIE
(Sternly)
Put your hand on the table.

JOHN does as he's told. He looks to CLYTIE apprehensively. She winks back at him and continues to sip her coffee.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM- NIGHT

Barbara Streisand sings "On a Clear Day" on a small

television in the corner of the room. JOHN sits at a dresser facing a mirror, a bottle of nail polish remover and some cotton balls in front of him. He dips a cotton ball into the neck of the bottle and then takes the cotton ball to one of his nails. In the reflection of the mirror, JAY slides in next to him quickly.

JAY

Don't do it!

Startled, JOHN drops the cotton ball.

JOHN

I'm seeing Foster tomorrow. I don't want to be "prettied" up.

JAY

It's not like he's the "manliest" thing. Sleep on it.

JOHN

Why do you care so much about how my nails look?

JAY

Why do you? They're so pretty! It makes me sad to see you just wipe it away for a boy.

JOHN looks at the color on his nails.

JAY

You're going to hurt Bonnie's feelings.

JOHN

(Sighs)
Goddammit.

JOHN gets up from the dresser and crawls into the bed. JAY continues to talk to him from reflection of the dresser mirror as she begins brushing her hair.

JOHN

They make ghost brushes?

JAY

(Sighs)
Make up your mind. Hallucination, or ghost?

JOHN
 (Sighs)
 I don't fucking know.

JAY
 You're always in a terrible mood.

JOHN
 I'm a homeless man wearing pink nail
 polish and having a conversation with
 air.

JAY
 Have a little whimsy. Something to
 balance out that aesthetic of laziness
 you have. The unkempt beard... the
 six-year-old tee-shirt. The ratty ass
 mop on your head. I don't understand
 why you accept this type of mess as
 your identity. Be original. Stand out.

JOHN
 You just described that doll you sleep
 with.

JAY looks over to the zombie Jesus doll on the bed and
 becomes offended.

JAY
 He is sunshine! You are a
 personification of depression.

JOHN
 He's a fictional character.

JAY
 (strangely serious)
 You're a fictional character.

JOHN
 I'M a fictional character?!

JAY gets up from the dresser and climbs into the bed.

JAY
 Yes. You're like that tree in the
 middle of the forest. If you fall when
 I'm not around, you don't make a
 sound.

JAY tucks herself in as the movie on the television ends. The

room falls quiet.

JOHN

Is that what you were doing on the rooftop last night? Coming up with terrible story arcs?

JAY looks to the window leading to the rooftop, longing in her eyes. The quietness of the room sits between them for a few seconds, just short of uncomfortable silence. Her demeanor changes.

JAY

Do you remember the rooftop?

JOHN

Yeah, it's literally right outside the window.

JAY

(Irritated)

No. You on the rooftop. Years ago.

JOHN

With Foster?

JAY

(More irritated)

No. Before you invited him out there with you.

JOHN

I don't.

JAY

I spent my whole life sitting in a drive-in movie theater watching you on a screen and wondering what it would feel like on your side of it.

She sighs, something genuinely emotional in her words.

JAY

Except that day on the rooftop. I could FEEL that. THAT was a movie moment. You, being you, where no one could see you. Dancing above the clouds. Nothing but forever in front of you. You were happy. Long before Foster.

A tear falls down her cheek as she continues to look to the sky through the window, seeing something deeper than the stars.

JAY

You can fit a lot of things into
forever when you just let go and
really look.

JOHN falls silent. He lays back in bed as her words linger with him.

JAY

Do you see it?

JOHN looks towards the window, only seeing the night sky.

The camera pulls back to reveal...

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- NIGHT

... that the scene of JOHN and JAY is being projected onto a giant drive-in movie theater screen. Another JAY sits in the convertible car in the lot watching as the scene plays out. Or maybe it's that she is sitting in some distant memory in the back of his mind.

On the screen in front of her, JOHN's eyes pierce the fourth wall, searching. He seems to become embarrassed, his eyes fluttering to somewhere else.

JOHN

(On the movie screen)

I don't think I see what you see.

JAY

(On the movie screen, sadly)

I don't think you do, either.

The image of them on the screen burns up in the projector. Bright light floods the screen, slowly fading into a mix of blues and pinks mixing together like watercolors in front of JAY in the convertible.

A giant hand reaches out from the corner of the screen towards JAY as if she were a small doll.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM- MORNING

JOHN wakes from a dream as the cellphone begins buzzing on the nightstand. He reaches for it. The caller ID reads "SIS".

JOHN throws the phone across the room.

JOHN
Fuck off!

The phone crashes against the wall, the plastic face of it breaking away as it falls to the floor. JOHN heaves angrily as JAY sits up in the bed.

JAY
Wow.

BONNIE (O.S.)
Are you okay?!

JOHN
Yeah! I dropped my phone.

BONNIE (O.S.)
You sure you're okay up there?

JOHN
Yes, I'm good!

BONNIE knocks lightly at the door and then gently cracks it open. She looks over to JOHN, concern on her face. JOHN looks blankly at her and then fakes a smile.

JOHN
Good morning.

BONNIE melts into a smile back.

BONNIE
Good morning. How did you want your coffee?

JOHN
I'll take it without the psychic reading.

INT. BAR- NIGHT

A small crowd populates the bar. JOHN sits alone at the end of the counter, his eyes nervously fixated towards the door. The bell rings as it opens and panic shoots across JOHN's eyes.

A patron enters, holding her scruffy little dog close to her chest. JOHN let's out a delayed breath.

BONNIE sits down a glass of water in front of JOHN and squeezes his hand.

BONNIE
You okay?

JOHN
(Lying)
Yeah, I'm good.

BONNIE
I absolutely love that you're a
terrible liar. I'll be back.

BONNIE walks down the length of the bar to tend to a patron.

JOHN's eyes turn nervously to the door again as it chimes, more patrons who are not FOSTER entering. He turns back around.

Across from him, JAY also watches from the reflection of the mirrored alcohol display.

Behind the most recent crowd of patrons, she sees FOSTER hidden in the back, barely visible in the shadows. JOHN's eyes catch FOSTER in the reflection, but FOSTER remains obscured by the patrons in front of him. JOHN whips around in his seat.

FOSTER begins to enter the bar and then freezes as his eyes fall upon JOHN sitting at the end of the bar. In a panic, he quickly turns, JAY's angry eyes following him through the windows as he disappears down the street. JOHN, unsure if it was FOSTER he's just seen, turns back around in his seat.

JAY
You sure you want to do this?

JOHN
(Surprised)
Are you kidding? You're the one that
suggested I do this.

JAY
What if he doesn't show up?

JOHN sits quietly for a moment, surprised by JAY's sudden break in support.

JOHN
Why did you bring me here?

JAY falls silent like a scorned child.

JOHN

You told me to come here. But I keep getting this feeling that you have some other agenda. What is it?

The bell rings as another random patron enters the bar. JOHN looks nervously over to the door. He then looks towards the bar at BONNIE who is passing out drinks. BONNIE looks to him, then to her watch, and then back at JOHN as she shrugs her shoulders.

JOHN

I need some air.

EXT. BAR-NIGHT

JOHN sits on a bench outside smoking a cigarette.

BONNIE comes out and sits down next to him, putting her arm delicately around his shoulder. She sighs and doesn't say anything.

JOHN

That sounds like... bad.

BONNIE looks at him a moment, hesitating.

BONNIE

Foster texted me.

BONNIE pauses again, searching for words that will soften the blow.

BONNIE

He's not coming.

JOHN

Do you see him here on Saturdays?

BONNIE

He saw you inside as he was walking in... so he left.

JOHN quickly looks down the street but sees no one. He sits silently as the words set in.

BONNIE

I didn't tell you this, but he walks down that way. Three blocks and then a
(MORE)

BONNIE (CONT'D)

right.

JOHN

(Disappointment heavy in his voice)

Thanks. I didn't hear it.

BONNIE

Do you want me to sit out here with you?

JOHN

No, I'd kind of like to be alone right now.

BONNIE nods and squeezes his shoulder before going back into the bar.

JOHN sits motionless. Rain begins to fall, covering the street with a reflection of the bar.

JOHN

For fuck's sake.

In the reflection of the wet pavement's surface, JAY sits next to him. She looks to him, helpless.

A HOMELESS MAN approaches. He stops next to JOHN, offering him a bottle of tequila as he can see that he is sad. JOHN shakes his head at the HOMELESS MAN, who then sets the bottle down by JOHN's feet.

HOMELESS MAN

You have a better night, my friend.

The HOMELESS MAN pulls a smaller bottle out of his jacket and begins walking down the street as he drinks from it.

JOHN stares at the bottle at his feet, longingly. JAY begins to grow angry.

JAY

Fuck this.

JAY gets up and begins walking down the street, only visible in the wet surface. JOHN's eyes follow, perplexed.

JOHN

Where are you going?

JAY walks out of the frame.

JOHN watches as she disappears down the street. He looks back down at his feet, noticing the bottle is gone. He then rises, walking briskly after JAY.

EXT. STREET- NIGHT

JOHN walks quickly down the street trying to catch up to JAY, who is now visible above her reflection. She holds the bottle of tequila in her hand by its neck.

JOHN

Jay?! JAY! Where are you going?

JAY does not answer and picks up her pace as she turns around the corner. JOHN walks faster, turning the corner to see a longer street. At the end of the street, a dimly lit figure walks into the darkness. JOHN stops, squinting his eyes to focus.

JOHN

Foster!

JAY begins running towards FOSTER with the bottle. JOHN gasps in panic and begins running after JAY. As JAY gains traction on FOSTER, she screams out.

JAY

HEY, ASSHOLE!

JOHN reaches JAY, pushing her out of the way as FOSTER turns around. JAY falls to the ground and out of the frame.

JAY

UMP!

FOSTER freezes, facing JOHN only a few feet away.

FOSTER is disheveled and swollen from years of alcohol abuse. He sways where he stands, his eyes bloodshot and vacant. JOHN silently gasps at the sight of him.

FOSTER's eyes fall on the bottle in JOHN's hand. JOHN looks down and realizes that he's holding it, not JAY.

FOSTER

Were you going to hit me with that?

The bottle slips from JOHN's hand, the glass shattering against the pavement.

FOSTER's eyes fall on JOHN's painted nails. Self-conscious,

JOHN quickly places his hands into his pocket.

FOSTER
You look well.

JOHN
I'm sober now.

FOSTER
Oh... good for you.

Silence sits between them.

FOSTER
I'm not.

FOSTER laughs awkwardly before the silence settles again.

JOHN
I can see that.

FOSTER
Why are you here?

JOHN
I came to see you.

FOSTER becomes more uncomfortable, anxiety flushing through him as he searches for a response.

FOSTER
Why? I'm really not that great.

JOHN
You used to be.

FOSTER
Not much has really changed, so I
don't see how.

John is speechless as he begins to realize the truth that hangs on FOSTER's words.

FOSTER
You always did look at things through
rose tinted glasses. I'm sorry you
came all this way just to see me.

They stand motionless in the rain as it pours down over them.

FOSTER
Your nails look real pretty, though.

JOHN's face tightens with anger.

JOHN
I'm sorry I came all this way to see
you, too.

FOSTER
(Offended)
Why even bother then?

JOHN
I came here to tell you I'm sorry. But
you helped me figure out that what I
really need is an apology from you.

FOSTER
For what?

JOHN
For wasting my fucking time.

FOSTER turns to leave.

FOSTER
That makes two of us.

JOHN
Sorry I impeded on your valuable
drinking time. I know how important it
is to you.

FOSTER swings back around striking JOHN in the face with his
open palm just as JOHN's DAD did days before. JOHN stares at
him in disbelief. FOSTER stares back at him, also stunned.

FOSTER
I'm sorry... I'm really s...

JOHN punches FOSTER square in the face before he can finish
his sentence. FOSTER falls to the ground, unable to maintain
his balance in his drunken stupor.

JOHN
I'm not!

FOSTER clumsily pulls himself up from the ground as he holds
his bleeding nose.

FOSTER
WHAT THE FUCK?!

JOHN
God! What was I thinking?! I loved
you!

FOSTER
Maybe you were just drunk!

The words linger between them. JOHN's demeanor shrinks into a sadness as he mourns something that he realizes never really existed.

JOHN
Well, I'm not anymore.

FOSTER
Congratulations.

FOSTER angrily turns and leaves. JOHN continues watching him as he disappears down the street, the rain pouring over him.

INT. APARTMENT- NIGHT

JOHN lays in bed, looking towards the window. JAY sits at the window staring out. Shadows of the rain falling on the glass are projected onto her face from the moonlight.

JOHN rolls away from her. He pulls out his broken phone and looks at a notification reading "2 UNREAD VOICEMAILS". Hesitantly, he opens the phone and places it next to his ear.

DAD
(On the voicemail)
You need to get your ass home now and
talk to me. Or you can talk to the
police. Your choice.

Pause.

DAD
(On the voicemail)
And bring me a package of cigarettes
when you come in.

The voicemail beeps.

VOICEMAIL
You have one remaining message.

The voicemail beeps again.

SUZY

(On the voicemail)

One; you need to let us know you're okay. Two; you need to come home and talk to dad. He won't stop blowing up my phone. I don't have time for his shit right now.

The voicemail beeps.

INT. APARTMENT- MORNING

JOHN packs his bag as JAY looks on from the window, her defeat matching his.

JAY

We don't have to leave.

JOHN

I don't want to stay here.

JAY

Do you want to be back at your dad's?!

JOHN

You're not even real, so I don't know why we're still having this conversation.

JOHN continues to pack his bag as hurt washes over JAY's face. BONNIE stops at the door and leans against the frame.

BONNIE

You don't have to leave.

JOHN

I don't want to be here right now.

BONNIE

Do you want to be back at your dad's?!

JOHN grows irritated as he's asked the same question a second time.

JOHN

I just need like two seconds to catch my breath.

BONNIE

I don't understand why you would want to catch it there.

JOHN

I don't have anywhere else to go.

BONNIE

Your sister?

JOHN

I feel like a burden when I'm there.

BONNIE

That has to be better than being at your dad's.

JOHN

(Frustrated)

I'm sad, okay??

BONNIE falls silent.

JOHN

I really want a drink right now. So, I just need something familiar. Just while I get through not being able to get through.

BONNIE

I'm not familiar? Being around your dad doesn't make you want to drink?

JOHN

Being around my dad reminds me not to!

They stand in silence for a long while, just past the point of it being uncomfortable.

BONNIE

At least you said goodbye this time.

BONNIE hovers a moment and then walks off silently. JOHN continues to pack.

INT. TRAIN- DAY

JOHN sits quietly next to a window in the passenger car. In the reflection of the window, JAY sits next to him.

JOHN stares blankly forward as a YOUNG WOMAN strums something

like "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" on her guitar a few rows down.

JOHN closes his eyes in defeat.

JAY looks at him and then to the shrinking city behind them, loss heavy in her own eyes. Tears well up as the pink clouded skyline sits transparent in the reflection of her face, slowly fading as the train travels away.

JAY takes her gaze off the city as it recedes into the distance. She looks to JOHN, sinking into his own despair. She softly lays her head on his shoulder.

EXT. TRAIN-DAY

HELICOPTER VIEW:

The train travels south as the greenery slowly recedes into dry, yellow flatland.

EXT. MOBILE HOME- DAY

JOHN's VW Van pulls up in the driveway. He shuts off the van. and looks up at the light in the window, hesitating to get out of the vehicle.

INT. MOBILE HOME- NIGHT

JOHN enters the living room. His DAD sits in his recliner, a half empty bottle of whiskey sitting next to him on the coffee table as FOX News angrily screams about gender neutral bathrooms on the television.

JOHN
(Quietly)
Hi.

His DAD doesn't look at him. Instead, he picks up his cellphone and begins to dial a number. JOHN makes his way back to his bedroom to unpack.

INT. MOBILE HOME BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN unpacks his bag as he hears a knock at the front door in the living room. He freezes, listening.

DAD (O.S.)
John?! C'mere a minute, someone's here to see you.

JOHN freezes apprehensively.

INT. MOBILE HOME LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

JOHN cautiously makes his way down the hallway. A POLICE OFFICER stands at the door looking at JOHN while another one examines his DAD's head wound. JOHN takes a breath and holds it.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Are you John?

JOHN stops at the hallway entrance and nods.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Your dad says you two got into a fight.

DAD
He attacked me!

POLICE OFFICER 1
Mr. Buford, we heard you the first time. I want to hear John's side.

POLICE OFFICER 2
Did you do this to your dad?

JOHN
(Nervously)
I was defending myself.

POLICE OFFICER 2
Did your dad hit you?

JOHN
He tried.

DAD
That's a goddamn lie!

JOHN
(Growing angry)
He did drag me by the ankle into the coffee table. More specifically, my head into the coffee table.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Were you two drinking when this happened?

JOHN
He was. I wasn't.

DAD
Ain't nothing wrong with that. If I
want to have a drink in my own home, I
can have a drink. I'm an American,
aren't I?

POLICE OFFICER 1 holds his hand out to silence his DAD again.

POLICE OFFICER 1
How often do you drink, John?

JOHN
I've been in recovery for 8 months.

POLICE OFFICER 1 sighs and turns to his DAD.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Mr. Buford, I want to try to be clear
here. I can see that you've had some
to drink tonight. But it's clear to me
that your son is trying to get sober.
Do you see how hard that might be for
him with you drinking in front of him?

DAD
It's hard for me when he's assaulting
me!

POLICE OFFICER 1
If we get another call out here, we're
not going to be happy, Mr. Buford. And
John... think about recovering
somewhere else if you can. Have a good
night, folks.

The POLICE OFFICERS leave, shutting the door behind them as
DAD stews in his recliner.

DAD
Well, I bet you thought that was
pretty funny, didn't you?

JOHN
If you ever try to touch me again, I'm
going to do more than break a bottle
over your head.

JOHN turns towards the hallway, leaving his DAD stewing in

his recliner.

JOHN
(Dryly)
Night.

DAD
Wait a minute...

JOHN stops and turns back around. DAD reaches into his pocket and pulls out a \$20 bill, holding it out to JOHN. JOHN hesitates and then walks slowly to him, taking the bill.

JOHN
What's this for?

DAD
If you're out tomorrow, why don't you stop and get me one of those twenty-dollar bottles.

JOHN stares at his DAD, perplexed.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN lays in bed, staring out into the empty air. JAY is fast asleep next to him. JOHN's eyes fall to the floor without destination.

The script's corner pokes out from a pile of clothes next to the bed. JOHN reaches down and pulls it closer to him, opening it and flipping through some pages. About halfway through, he notices a few pages ripped out, only the torn edges remaining. He continues to flip through to the end, the remaining pages blank.

INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

DAD is passed out in his recliner, his mouth agape. JOHN stands over his DAD for a moment, watching him. JOHN slowly moves his hand towards the bottle of whiskey on the coffee table and quietly picks it up, careful to not let it tap on the glass.

INT. BATHROOM- NIGHT

JOHN pours a shot from the bottle into a coffee cup and then sits the bottle down on the counter. He stares at himself in the mirror, takes a breath and then quickly tosses back the whiskey. He places the cup back onto the countertop with a loud clack, holding the whiskey in his cheeks as his eyes

water.

He groans and then spits the whiskey into the sink, immediately turning on the faucet and splashing water into his mouth. As he becomes still again, he spits the residual into the sink. Tears begin to fall down his face as a whimper trembles through his throat. He begins to cry.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN enters the room and immediately stops at the door. Across the way, JAY sits in a chair in the corner, looking at him, disappointed.

JAY

I can smell the whiskey from here.

JOHN huffs like a scolded child and climbs back into the bed. He lays there for a moment, motionless.

JOHN

Why did you make me go?

JAY

I wanted you to remember that you were happy before Foster.

JOHN

I was happy with him!

JAY pulls out the script and flips to page 70 where she begins to read.

JAY

Once upon a time in 1998, you met Foster at the 1969. Even though you lived in that apartment above the bar for a couple of years by that time, you had never touched a drop of alcohol because you hated how your dad was when he was drunk. But Foster was cute, and you were so self-conscious that he would see you... really see you... that you let him talk you into having a few with him to help you relax. By 2000, you were still having a few to chase that feeling of the first night because without the alcohol, he was just a depressed asshole, and you were full of regret for having given up everything for

(MORE)

JAY (CONT'D)

him. You left in 2001 after you two had a drunken spat and you finally stopped chasing that feeling. By then, you were chasing away the DTs... all the way to the hospital where you almost died. And it all started because of a stupid boy.

JAY closes the script and tosses it on the bed next to JOHN.

JAY

I didn't make you go. You wanted to chase that feeling again. I was trying to help you chase something else.

JOHN

Maybe you're a terrible director.

JAY falls quiet as she sits on his words, tears beginning to collect in the corners of her eyes.

JAY

Maybe I am.

JOHN begins to cry quietly. Overwhelmed, he suddenly sits up in the bed.

JOHN

What even are you?! Really?!

JAY

(Yelling)

I'm the missing scene! Me! Do you remember me?! No! You drank it all away! You suppressed everything! And you've suppressed everything for so long that EVERYTHING has just become this other thing that's not even you anymore, stashed away in the closet like forgotten junk!

JOHN looks to her, pleading.

JOHN

Just tell me, then! Who are you?!

JAY hesitates as tears fall down her frustrated face.

JAY

I can't!

JOHN
Why not?!

JAY
(Quietly)
That's not how my movie ends.

CAMERA POV:

JOHN looks directly into the camera from across the room. He wipes his face and then rises, moving quickly towards it.

JAY
What are you doing?

JOHN
I'm done making movies.

JOHN yanks the camera from the CAMERA MAN and tosses the camera into the closet.

INT. CLOSET-NIGHT

CAMERA POV:

The camera looks out into the room from where it rests in the closet. JOHN reaches up in the air and pulls down the boom mic, pulling MIKE into the shot. JOHN tosses the mic into the closet.

JOHN
Get the fuck out, Mike.

MIKE runs out of the room.

JOHN picks up the script and tosses it into the closet as JAY races for it from her chair.

JAY
No!

JOHN
I'm finished!

JOHN begins to close the door on JAY as she scrambles the script into her hands. She drops it, placing her hand on the door in an attempt to keep it open.

JAY
Please!

They both struggle with the door.

JAY

Please don't put me back in here!

JAY looks to him, pleading, the tracks of her tears matching his.

JOHN

GET THE CAMERA OFF ME!!!

He slams the door shut leaving the camera in darkness.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

All of the color has drained into black and white. JOHN stands with his hand against the closet door as the room falls quiet. He steps back, looking at the door as if he's hurt his own feelings.

INT. CLOSET- NIGHT

CAMERA POV:

JOHN opens the closet door again but is met with silence. He looks around the contents of the closet, finding nothing. Defeated, he slowly closes the door, leaving the camera in darkness once again.

INT. BEDROOM- DAY

A much grayer JOHN pulls some clothes out of one of his drawers, his world still drained of any color. He throws his clothes carelessly onto his bed and turns back towards the dresser, his eyes stopping on the closet door. He pauses and then takes a step closer to it. He reaches for the doorknob, pausing again briefly.

Slowly, he cracks open the door. He listens to the darkness within, but the room is met with silence. His face suggests sadness for a fleeting second before he turns back to the dresser and digs for matching socks.

INT. KITCHEN- DAY

JOHN makes coffee. DAD sits in his recliner across the way in the connecting living room, smoking a cigarette and watching FOX News scream about gender neutral bathrooms. Dust covers every surface, and the walls are soaked in nicotine.

DAD
(Sober)
I guess you gotta go to work today?

JOHN sighs silently to himself.

JOHN
After dinner.

DAD
What's the occasion?

JOHN
My sober birthday.

DAD
Sober birthday?

JOHN sighs as he repeats himself.

JOHN
My sober birthday.

DAD
(Trying to be funny)
How old are you?

JOHN sighs again.

JOHN
Twelve.

DAD
Huh.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

JOHN begins to cross the living room to head towards the hallway.

DAD
Wait a minute.

DAD reaches into his pocket and pulls out a twenty-dollar bill. He holds it out to JOHN.

DAD
Why don't you get me...

JOHN
 (Mockingly)
 ... one of them twenty-dollar bottles?

DAD
 ... a couple of packages of
 cigarettes.

JOHN takes the twenty.

JOHN
 No bottle today?

DAD
 I don't feel like it today.

JOHN hovers a moment, watching his DAD shift back into his chair with a little more trouble than usual. He notices his DAD clutching onto the bible he's seen him passed out with before.

As he begins to leave the room, his DAD stops him.

DAD
 John?

JOHN pauses, irritated.

DAD
 Love you.

JOHN is stunned by his DAD's sentiment but does not turn back around.

JOHN
 (uncomfortably)
 Love you, too.

JOHN exits the room as his DAD looks off to no place in particular, regret heavy on his face. He clutches the bible tighter as he struggles getting comfortable.

INT. RESTAURANT- NIGHT

JOHN sits at a table with MATT (basic white man), SUZY, BONNIE, and CLYTIE as a WAITER places a cake with twelve candles in front of him. The WAITER looks questionably to CLYTIE, who returns the gesture with a wink. He briskly walks off.

BONNIE and CLYTIE begin to sing happy birthday while SUZY

unenthusiastically mumbles it. MATT sits silent and uncomfortable, not knowing what to do with himself.

BONNIE
(Singing)
Happy birthday to you, happy
birthday to you, happy
birthday dear Johnny, no
tequila for you!

CLYTIE
(Singing)
Happy birthday to you, happy
birthday to you, happy
birthday dear John, no
tequila for you!

They all applaud except for MATT, who leans over to kiss SUZY. She presses her hand against his face.

SUZY
Fuck off.

JOHN goes to blow out the candles as CLYTIE's voice cuts sternly across the table.

CLYTIE
Huh uh.

JOHN freezes like a scolded child.

BONNIE
Clytie wrote a special sober birthday
horoscope for you.

SUZY sighs under her breath.

SUZY
Oh my god.

CLYTIE stands at the end of the table, pulling out a birthday card and opening it. SUZY leans over to JOHN.

SUZY
(Whispering)
She's got some manly hands.

JOHN glares at her.

CLYTIE
(Reading from the card)
I'm hoping you'll blush often today.
I'm hoping that on more than one
occasion, your blood will suddenly run
hot with some delightful discovery,
causing you to wobble and swoon and
shout "Wow!" Please, prove to me that
you're not jaded, John. Show me you're
(MORE)

CLYTIE (CONT'D)
 not too world weary to be insanely
 curious about everything. I beg you to
 let budding wonders flood all over
 you. I implore you to give yourself
 permission to be utterly surprisable.
 I dare you to not just crack open your
 wild heart... burst it open.

BONNIE coos as CLYTIE makes her way across the table, handing
 JOHN his card and hugging him.

CLYTIE
 Happy birthday, honey. Keep getting
 older with us.

JOHN
 Thank you.

CLYTIE
 Now you can blow out the candles.

SUZY's eyes are still fixated on CLYTIE's hands.

SUZY
 (Whispering)
 They're huge!

JOHN
 (Audibly)
 You know, you're becoming a real dick
 like dad!

The table becomes quiet. SUZY becomes self-conscious with all
 eyes on them.

JOHN blows out the candles.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT- NIGHT

JOHN smokes a cigarette while talking with BONNIE, both
 leaning up against BONNIE's car.

BONNIE
 I have to say, I was really worried
 when you left. Everyone I know fell
 right off that wagon.

BONNIE smiles warmly.

BONNIE
I'm really proud of you.

JOHN
Thank you.

BONNIE frowns at his lack of enthusiasm.

BONNIE
You should be proud, too.

JOHN forces a smile.

BONNIE
C'mon! Be proud! That's really something!

JOHN
(Distractingly)
One night is a short trip for such a long drive.

BONNIE
Yeah, I know. I'm sorry it's a quick visit. I have to be in LA tomorrow for Pop's birthday and Clytie talked me into a road trip after my flight got cancelled. I can't say no to her, I feel like if I do, some terrible thing she foresees is going to happen.

JOHN
Well... I'm glad you came. Even if it's just for the night.

BONNIE
We'll stop back by on our way back up. Maybe you can pack some bags in the meantime and then hitch a ride back home with us.

JOHN
Yeah, I mean... this is home too, though.

BONNIE
We're your home.

JOHN
Maybe someday. It's hard right now. Work. Dad.

BONNIE

Your dad is a dick. You may be sober now, but what's really changed outside of that in the past 12 years? You're still struggling with alcohol without touching it.

JOHN falls silent as he tries to justify it in his head.

JOHN

He's been okay. He was actually sober when I left today.

BONNIE

That's a plot twist.

JOHN

I'm pretty sure he's had the same bottle of whiskey hidden up in the cabinet for a few weeks. Barely touched. I sneaked a peek before I left tonight. He hasn't asked for a new bottle in a while.

BONNIE

Don't you get tired of having to sneak a peek to see if you're going to get some peace each day?

JOHN falls silent again knowing she is right.

JOHN

I'll give myself permission to be utterly surprisable.

BONNIE smiles softly at his reference.

BONNIE

Clytie will appreciate that.

She pauses.

BONNIE

I never said anything. But Clytie did ask me if you had made peace with your ghosts.

JOHN

(Embarrassed)

Yeah. I... I'm good in that department.

He fakes a smile. BONNIE looks at him with doubt.

BONNIE

It's okay if you're not.

JOHN

No, I'm good. That was just so long ago. It's just kind of embarrassing to talk about now, you know?

BONNIE

I get it.

They stand a moment with silence between them.

JOHN

How's Foster?

BONNIE

Do you really want to know?

JOHN shakes his head, silently agreeing to let it go. BONNIE smiles warmly.

BONNIE

He's okay.

JOHN nods as CLYTIE approaches from the restaurant.

CLYTIE

Bonnie, you're going to make the poor boy late. Say your peace and let's be off.

BONNIE

Get to work. We love you. I'll call you before we head back up.

BONNIE hugs him. CLYTIE cuts between the two and hugs him as well.

CLYTIE

Hold onto what I said.

CLYTIE raises an eyebrow at him before getting into the car.

JOHN watches the car drive off down the street, regret falling on him that he's not in the car with them.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- NIGHT

JOHN's van pulls up in the employee parking by the marquee outside. The marquee reads "JESUS CHRIST!".

JOHN
Jesus Christ...

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- NIGHT

Zombie-Jesus cosplaying patrons fill the lot, sitting in their cars that face the movie screen.

JOHN stands next to KATHY behind the concessions bar as KATHY gathers her things from behind the counter, a Red Vine hanging from her mouth.

KAREN walks up to the counter.

KAREN
Excuse me?!

JOHN
Hi, how can I help you?

KAREN points towards the movie on the screen.

KAREN
This is inexcusable.

JOHN, willfully ignorant, follows her finger to the screen, and then back again.

JOHN
"Jesus Christ!"?

KAREN
THAT is NOT Jesus Christ! There are really inappropriate scenes and I'm pretty sure they're suggesting John the Disciple is a tranny!

JOHN
I'm pretty sure they are, too.

KAREN
I want to speak to your manager.

KATHY puts on her jacket.

KATHY
Hi, I'm Kathy...

KAREN
I brought my grand babies to this!

KATHY
Tell it to the manager on duty. I'm
clocked out.

KAREN
Who is that?!

KATHY
Him.

JOHN
Hi, I'm John.

KAREN becomes more impatient.

KAREN
Who's here that's above you?!

JOHN points to KATHY as she straps on her purse.

JOHN
Her. But she's clocked out.

KATHY lights up a cigarette, angering KAREN more.

KAREN
I am really appalled at how I'm being
treated right now! You know, word of
mouth is pretty powerful!

JOHN
No it's not. You come in here every
year and say that but judging by the
way the lot looks...

JOHN gestures broadly to the lot.

JOHN
... word of mouth is not working out
for you.

KAREN
YOU CLEARLY don't care about your job!

JOHN
 I don't. I get paid seventeen dollars
 an hour in a management position. If
 it costs me my peace, it's really not
 worth it.

KAREN
 Unbelievable! PRICK!

KAREN storms off.

JOHN
 (Yelling after her)
 STOP BRINGING YOUR KIDS TO RATED R
 MOVIES!

KATHY
 Goddamn, John! Who hurt you?!

JOHN
 (Dryly)
 Everyone.

KATHY
 Look how far it's brought you. I feel
 like a proud mom, right now.

KATHY pats him on the shoulder.

KATHY
 Okay, have a good night.

JOHN
 I can't imagine it getting any better.

KATHY
 It won't.

JOHN
 Somehow it still beats going home.

KATHY
 Oh... that's really sad. Okay, see you
 tomorrow.

KATHY exits the concessions.

JOHN turns to the movie screen. On it, a zombie Jesus-like
 figure rises from the ground as voices scream around him.

VOICE IN MOVIE
 (Screaming)
 JESUS CHRIST!!!

INT. PROJECTOR ROOM- NIGHT

JOHN dumps a bag of trash into the can and then sits down in the chair next to the projector, lighting a cigarette. The room is dark except for the moonlight that falls over the space he is sitting in. He stares out to the blank movie screen in the empty lot.

A SCRUFFY MAN dressed in a zombie Jesus costume pokes his head into the dark room.

SCRUFFY MAN
 (Softly)
 Excuse me.

Startled, JOHN jumps a little in his chair and then turns around to face the patron.

SCRUFFY MAN
 I'm sorry for startling you.

JOHN
 We're closed.

SCRUFFY MAN
 I know. I'm waiting for my dad to pick me up. I just need the restroom if you don't mind. I'm sorry to bother.

JOHN looks at the SCRUFFY MAN hidden in the shadows and nods to his side.

JOHN
 There on the right.

SCRUFFY MAN
 Thank you.

The SCRUFFY MAN enters the small room off to the side and shuts the door. JOHN continues to smoke, looking out at the blank screen as we can faintly hear the SCRUFFY MAN urinate in the other room. There's a flush, sound of water running, and then the SCRUFFY MAN enters the projection room again. Rather than leave, he walks over to a seat across from JOHN.

SCRUFFY MAN
 Do you mind if I wait in here with
 (MORE)

SCRUFFY MAN (CONT'D)
you? It's a bit dark out there.

JOHN hesitates and squints his eyes, trying to make out details of the SCRUFFY MAN as he's hidden in the shadow.

JOHN
You look like you might be a bit old
to be scared of the dark.

The SCRUFFY MAN smiles as he begins to walk towards the door.

SCRUFFY MAN
You're probably right. I'm sorry to
bother you.

JOHN
It's fine.

The SCRUFFY MAN walks back to the seat and sits down. He leans into the moonlight with his hand extended.

SCRUFFY MAN
I'm Joshua.

JOSHUA looks to be the spitting image of the zombie-Jesus doll that JAY slept with every night.

JOHN
You've got to be fucking with me.

JOSHUA
I'm not.

JOHN
You look insanely like him.

JOSHUA points to the blank screen.

JOSHUA
Like Joshua?

JOHN
Yeah, zombie Jesus.

JOSHUA
That's just the name of the movie.
It's just Joshua. I really appreciate
you letting me wait in here.

JOHN continues to stare at him.

JOHN
Like, insanelly like him. Like, if he
weren't a puppet.

JOSHUA chuckles and then sits back, relaxing into the chair.

JOSHUA
It's nice to meet you, John.

JOHN
I didn't tell you my name.

JOSHUA points to JOHN's name tag.

JOHN
Oh...

JOSHUA
So... truth be told, I didn't come up
here because I'm afraid of the dark.
But I do get afraid for people in it.
I thought I'd come sit with you until
I had to go.

JOHN
Oh... well that's...

JOSHUA
Creepy?

JOSHUA flashes a cheesy smile through his zombie make-up.
Stunned at the sight of JAY's doll come to life, JOHN is lost
on a response.

JOHN
... very kind of you but you don't
have to sit up here with me. I do this
every night.

JOSHUA
I don't mind. I have a very good ear.

JOHN
Oh... no. I'm just unwinding.

JOSHUA
You seem a little blue.

JOHN
No, I'm fine.

JOHN's eyes meet JOSHUA's. JOSHUA's face grows soft with concern as JOHN falls quiet.

JOSHUA

It's okay. You don't have to share if you don't want to.

JOHN

I was just thinking about an old friend.

JOSHUA

Jay.

JOHN falls quiet again, stunned.

JOHN

What did you say?

JOSHUA smiles to JOHN, somehow warmly even though he looks like zombie.

JOSHUA

She wanted me to show you something.

JOSHUA reaches into a satchel around his shoulders and pulls out a film reel. He stands, placing it in the projector and then switches the power on. He sits back down as the black and white projector room fills with flickering color.

On the screen, JAY sits in a small convertible in front of what appears to be a drive-in movie screen, a rooftop overlooking whimsical pink clouds swirling into a deep, blue sky projected onto it.

A giant hand reaches down towards JAY and pulls her out.

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

The camera pulls back to reveal a large painting of a whimsical sky just past a rooftop. The painting acts as a drive-in movie theater screen in front of toy cars, all filled with dolls representing the audience.

Soft music begins to play on a piano, something like "On a Clear Day".

A YOUNG JOHN places the JAY DOLL up next to the painting and then sets a small 8mm camera behind the entire scene. His MOM enters the frame and begins painting on the whimsical sky.

The music begins to swell as YOUNG JOHN begins to animate the JAY DOLL in front of the camera, turning the camera on and quickly off again to capture each frame. She dances against the image of the painting, appearing to dance on the rooftop depicted within. JOHN's MOM adds to the painting frame by frame as well, animating the clouds to swirl on the canvas.

Little quick frames of YOUNG JOHN flash on the screen, the doll and himself interacting with each other between time lapse and real time. The JAY doll dances in his hand as he projects into her; the two are one in the same.

As the music softly comes to an end, the JAY doll ends her dance with her arms spread out to the imaginary sky before her. JOHN stands behind the doll, the same colors reflected in his eyes as hers.

INT. PROJECTOR ROOM- NIGHT

The light from the screen reflects on the tears falling down JOHN's face. The film reel winds down as the colorful light drains into black and white.

JOSHUA

Do you remember her? And the
"rooftop"?

JOHN trembles, his breath shaking.

JOHN

Yes.

JOSHUA

She remembers you.

They sit a long moment in the darkness, JOHN's trembling breath the only sound audible as the memory comes flooding back to him.

JOHN

I called her Jay, because it was the first letter of my name. I cut and colored her hair and dressed her so that she would be mine. And I made movies with her.

JOSHUA

Why did you stop?

JOHN

My dad said boys didn't play with
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

dolls. He threw her in the trash. My mom dug her out and put her in a shoe box that she hid in my closet. She told me when I got older, I could go to the city and find my own rooftop there and keep making my movies. But I never did take that doll back out of the shoebox again. Because I was afraid that he would see me.

JOSHUA

Your dad?

JOHN thinks about it.

JOHN

... him too...

JOSHUA

... Foster.

JOHN sits a moment as the words settle inside of him.

JOHN

She's not real.

JOSHUA

None of this is "real". It's just one, big movie. You'll spend your whole life watching it. You're the writer. You've always been the writer and you'll always be the writer. So why not just write what you love?

JOHN

(Quietly)

I don't think I can.

JOSHUA looks at him with kindness and then stands, pulling the film reel back out of the projector. He places it back in his satchel and then puts his hand softly on JOHN's shoulder.

JOSHUA

It's really good to see you, Jay.

JOHN's breath stops as JOSHUA calls him by JAY's name.

JOSHUA exits the projector room. JOHN continues to stare out towards the blank screen, motionless.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

JOHN walks into his room and stops at the closet door. Hesitantly, he reaches for the doorknob.

INT. CLOSET- NIGHT

CAMERA POV:

JOHN OPENS THE CLOSET DOOR TO...

... forgotten junk.

He stands a moment with a look of despair.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

John starts to close the closet door. He then pauses as his gaze is drawn to the shelf above. He reaches up, rummaging through the clothes piled there, and retrieves a shoebox concealed beneath. He places it gently on the bed, sits beside it, and carefully lifts the lid. Inside, he finds the JAY DOLL his mother stashed away years before. He takes her out of the box as he peers into her plastic eyes, reflections of whimsical clouds painted into them.

INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

JOHN enters the living room holding the JAY doll and ready to confront his DAD with it. DAD lays in his recliner, gray and still.

JOHN

I want to talk to you a minute. Do you remember this?

He holds the doll up, but his DAD remains motionless.

JOHN

Dad?

The room remains silent.

JOHN's eyes turn to the Bible his DAD was clutching, which has fallen to the floor. An old photograph sticks out from the pages. John reaches down and picks it up.

It's an old black-and-white photo booth picture; his DAD, many years younger, sitting intimately close to another young man. He turns the photo over and sees a signature; "With love, Robert."

John silently gasps as his eyes turn back to his DAD whose face is frozen in regret.

EXT. PORCH- MORNING

JOHN sits on the porch step smoking a cigarette as paramedics wheel out his DAD, the sheet pulled up over his head.

PARAMEDIC 1

We're sorry for your loss.

JOHN nods to him as they wheel the gurney into the ambulance.

A car pulls up behind the ambulance. SUZY gets out, covering her mouth as she sees the paramedics placing the covered gurney into the vehicle. She talks to them in the background as JOHN continues to stare off in thought.

The ambulance drives off. SUZY hesitates a moment while she gathers herself and then approaches JOHN, sitting down next to him on the porch.

They sit in silence for a long moment, the only sounds between them are SUZY sniffing.

JOHN

The house was so quiet when I got home from work last night. I've never noticed it that quiet before. It was the first time that I can remember that I could hear myself think. And I thought to myself that even though it's been 12 years since I've had a drink, I wasn't in recovery until it was quiet enough for me to hear myself. It was only so quiet because he was gone.

JOHN hands her the photo of their DAD and ROBERT. SUZY holds her breath as she realizes what it may imply.

JOHN

We both lived under the weight of what he thought about us. Maybe he lived under the weight of what his dad thought about him, I don't know. But what a waste, huh?

The words resonate, SUZY's eyes still locked on the photo. She becomes quiet for a long moment.

She slowly slips her wedding ring off of her finger and sets it down with the photo next to her on the porch step. The two sit silently in solidarity.

INT. KITCHEN- DAY

JOHN pours his DAD's last bottle of whiskey down the drain of the kitchen sink and sets the empty bottle down on the counter. He looks at it, but this time, not longingly.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

JOHN picks up a duffel bag by the door. He holds the JAY DOLL and looks at her before stuffing her into a side pocket. He looks around the empty mobile home one last time, a hint of defeat and regret in his eyes as he looks upon the many years behind him.

From outside, a voice yells out.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Camera!

CAMERA MAN (O.S.)

Camera rolling.

JOHN freezes, listening by the door.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Sound!

MIKE (O.S.)

Sound rolling.

JOHN opens the front door.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- DAY

The front door of the mobile home leads to the drive-in movie theater lot. Everything is flooded in technicolor.

JOHN steps out of the black and white mobile home into the colorful display. Film crew scurry around, setting up their equipment as they prepare to shoot.

JOHN sits down his duffel and begins walking down the lot towards the screen. His eyes fill with tears as if he's seeing a long-lost friend.

He stops where two cords lay at his feet. He leans down,

picking up the two cords and then plugs them together. Camera lights placed around him power on. He continues to slowly walk towards the movie screen.

About halfway down, a DIRECTOR sits in a director chair next to the camera as a makeup crew works on him. The DIRECTOR turns to JOHN as the makeup crew departs, revealing himself to be an identical version of JOHN.

JOHN and the OTHER JOHN study each other, quiet and still.

OTHER JOHN

It's okay. You can leave me here.

The OTHER JOHN motions to the screen with his head. JOHN hesitantly turns and then continues to walk towards it.

OTHER JOHN

I spent my whole life sitting in a drive-in movie theater watching you on a screen and wondering what it would feel like on your side of it.

JOHN stops just feet before the movie screen and looks back to the OTHER JOHN, trembling as he recognizes the same words JAY said to him about the rooftop.

OTHER JOHN

Except that day on the rooftop. I could FEEL that. THAT was a movie moment. You, being you, where no one could see you. Dancing above the clouds. Nothing but forever in front of you. You can fit a lot of things into forever when you just let go and really look.

The OTHER JOHN motions once again to the screen in front of them as tears continue to collect in JOHN's eyes.

OTHER JOHN

It was never about the guy. Or her dad. It was about her finding herself. Do you see it?

"On a Clear Day" echoes softly somewhere in the distance.

JOHN passes parked cars in the lot as he continues to walk towards the screen. The patrons in the cars are all the people in his life including DAD, SUZY, FOSTER, BONNIE, and CLYTIE. They look past him, their attention locked on the

blank movie screen in front of them. Except for one car. This one has his MOM seated, her eyes on him as she gives him a loving smile.

Crewmen gather at the side of the screen and roll it off the lot like a giant set piece. From behind it, the edge of a rooftop overlooks a city blanketed in whimsical clouds that bleed in from the sky like falling watercolors. JOHN gasps.

JOHN trembles as he stares into his happy ending, tears beginning to stream down his face as realization falls over him. As the music swells in the sky around him, he reaches up and tugs on his hair, pulling it off like a wig...

... and reveals HERSELF to be JAY, HER pink hair falling down HER shoulders.

JAY pulls the beard off of her face and drops both the JOHN wig and JOHN beard to the ground, shedding the costume of a fictional character she's played too long.

With her eyes shut tight, she spreads her arms out to the majestic sky before her as tears continue to fall down her face.

The camera pulls back to reveal...

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER- NIGHT

... that the image of JAY standing before the painterly sky is being projected onto a giant drive-in movie theater screen.

On the movie screen, JAY opens her eyes, the colors of the sky flooding them instantly. She then turns her gaze bravely to us, her eyes piercing through the screen.

JAY

I see it.

A smile begins to break on her face.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: SCENE MISSING