

VITA

by

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INT. HEALTH CLUB - INDOOR RACQUETBALL COURTS - DAY

A game between two men, VINCENT and PHILIP, both late 20s. Competitive, athletic, and fast-paced. They trade points, then Philip wins two in a row.

Vincent comes up a bit lame after the last point, walking gingerly on his left ankle.

PHILIP
You okay, Vin?

VINCENT
Yeah, I'm fine.

Philip watches Vincent for a moment, then prepares to serve.

PHILIP
Okay. Game point.

Vincent nods grimly. Philip serves. Philip wins a long rally with a low shot to the corner. Vincent hits his racket lightly against the floor in frustration, then turns to Philip and smiles.

VINCENT
Almost had you, Phil.

Philip grins.

PHILIP
Almost.

Vincent walks to Philip. They shake hands in mock formality.

VINCENT
Good game.

PHILIP
You too.

They walk to the door. Vincent noticeably favors his left ankle going over the door frame.

PHILIP

You sure you're okay?

VINCENT

Yeah, I just rolled it a little. I can deal with it.

Philip is also bit slow exiting the court. Vincent grins.

VINCENT

Are you sure you're okay?

Philip shakes his head.

PHILIP

I'm getting too old for this.

INT. HEALTH CLUB - HALL - CONTINUOUS

Vincent LAUGHS as they turn to their left and walk along the row of courts.

VINCENT

Too old? You're a month older than me.

PHILIP

That makes all the difference. Besides, I think you're getting younger. You didn't move like that when we were in college.

Vincent LAUGHS.

PHILIP

Don't get ahead of yourself though. I've got the experience.

VINCENT

Yeah Phil, one month's experience. It shows.

PHILIP

You got that right. I'm a crafty veteran. I'm wily.

VINCENT
Whatever that means.

PHILIP
Hey, you still haven't beaten
me yet.

VINCENT
Yet. It's just a matter of
time, Phil. You know you've
lost a step.

Philip LAUGHS and shoves Vincent playfully.

PHILIP
I'm still one step ahead of
you, Vin, and that's all that
matters.

They reach the end of the hall and turn the corner.

INT. HEALTH CLUB - DAY

Philip and Vincent exit the men's locker room, now in
collared shirts and slacks. Vincent's wife, MAGGIE, late
20s, enters and walks toward them.

MAGGIE
Hi sweetheart! Hi Phil.

She gives Vincent a two-second close-mouthed kiss.

PHILIP
Hey Maggie.

VINCENT
Hi honey. How was your day?

MAGGIE
Oh, the usual.

She hugs Philip, then turns back to Vincent.

MAGGIE
How was the game?

Philip smiles wryly.

PHILIP

The usual.

Maggie LAUGHS and puts her arm around Vincent.

MAGGIE

Oh, Phil. You know it won't last.

She squeezes Vincent and he puts his arm around her.

MAGGIE

I'm just going to hop on the elliptical for a bit. Are you going home?

VINCENT

Yeah, I'll drop my stuff and come back to get you for dinner...say, in an hour?

MAGGIE

Perfect.

She kisses Vincent again.

MAGGIE

See you soon. Love you.

VINCENT

I love you too. Have fun.

They separate and Vincent joins Philip.

MAGGIE

Bye Phil.

Philip turns and waves, then Vincent does the same as Maggie watches him go. The exit the club to-

EXT. HEALTH CLUB - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

PHILIP

So I guess I'll be watching the game alone tonight then.

VINCENT

Sorry. But you know Phil, if you just settled down with your own lucky lady, you wouldn't have this problem.

PHILIP

Who says I have a problem?

Vincent looks at Philip, grins, and half-rolls his eyes.

PHILIP

Okay, okay. So we still playing Wednesday?

VINCENT

Same time, same place. Don't expect to get lucky again.

PHILIP

I never do. I'll see you Wednesday.

VINCENT

Enjoy that game.

PHILIP

Enjoy dinner.

They walk to their respective cars. Vincent throws his gym bag in his trunk and gets in.

INT. VINCENT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Vincent pulls out of the parking lot. The car radio PLAYS.

EXT. VINCENT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Vincent drives through the streets of a small city and stops at a red light. The light turns green, he pulls into the intersection, and a car to his left runs its red light and slams into Vincent's side door. The car door crumples inward, the airbag deploys, and Vincent slumps forward, unconscious.

INT. PHILIP'S SUV - DAY

The same song PLAYS from the previous scene. Roll title and credits as Philip drives.

EXT. PHILIP'S SUV - DAY

It is late evening and raining. Philip drives through the same small city, parks in front of a bar, and turns off the ignition. Silence.

TITLE OVER:

One Year Later

The sign above the bar reads "The Station." Philip enters.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

The Station is a dark, modern, upscale establishment. It is early and there are only a few patrons inside.

Philip looks around, sees Vincent sitting in a wheelchair at a table near the back of the bar, and walks up to him.

PHILIP

Hey Vin.

Vincent somberly nods a greeting. Philip leans down and hugs Vincent, then sits down across from him.

PHILIP

You holding up okay?

VINCENT

I guess so.

PHILIP

The police have any leads?

VINCENT

No. Not really. They're still saying it looks like a burglary gone wrong. Someone after her jewelry.

Silence. A WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

What can I get you guys?

VINCENT

Scotch. On the rocks.

The waitress turns to Philip.

WAITRESS

And you?

PHILIP

The same, I guess. Thanks.

WAITRESS

Okay.

She walks away.

VINCENT

So what's new with you?

PHILIP

Not too much.

Silence. Philip looks out into the bar, then back at Vincent.

PHILIP

Vin, I'm so sorry about...
everything.

Vincent nods slowly.

VINCENT

Thanks.

Silence. Vincent looks out into the bar and speaks softly.

VINCENT

Why did this happen, Phil?

PHILIP

What? You mean Maggie? I
don't know. Things just...I
mean sometimes these things-
who knows? It's just bad-

Vincent shakes his head.

VINCENT

No, not Maggie. Everything. I mean Maggie too, but first the accident, my legs, this chair, then Maggie...All of it. Why did it all happen like this?

PHILIP

I don't know. You can't cont-

VINCENT

That's what I mean. I can't control it, I can't control anything...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Vincent lies in bed, eyes closed. The bed is the only one in the small room. He wears an oxygen mask, an IV tube runs into his arm, and the usual hospital monitors surround him.

Vincent opens his eyes, and tries to sit up but cannot. His breathing becomes strained and the effort shows on his face. Two blurred figures, Maggie and a male DOCTOR, are visible through the frosted window of the door to the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

MAGGIE

How is he?

The doctor gestures to a chair behind Maggie.

DOCTOR

Please sit down.

MAGGIE

No, just...Just tell me.

DOCTOR

Your husband suffered multiple injuries to his spinal cord.

He is paralyzed from the waist
down.

Maggie catches a sob.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry.

Maggie starts to cry. The doctor puts a hand on her
shoulder reassuringly.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - DAY

Their drinks sit in front of them.

VINCENT

Look, I'm not mad at God or
anything like that. I don't
think I really even believe
in God...I don't know...It's
just...first my accident, then
Maggie's...death...

Vincent looks out into the bar and shakes his head, then
looks back at Philip.

VINCENT

I just feel...like I've had the
wool pulled over my eyes my
whole life. I mean, why did I
even bother? What made me
think that I could ever do
anything with my life in the
first place?

PHILIP

What do you mean?

VINCENT

You've heard of the wheel of
fortune, right? Not the game
show, I mean. The concept.

PHILIP

Yeah. You mean like in Shakespeare. That your luck was attached to a big spinning wheel. When you were on top, your luck was good, but the wheel would keep turning, and soon enough you'd be on the bottom again.

VINCENT

That's right. You could go from being on top of the world to lower than whale shit in one spin of the wheel.

Silence.

PHILIP

Vin...That's not the way the world works.

VINCENT

No. If only it were that regular. That predictable. But things don't even always spin from good to bad and back up to good again. Fortune isn't turning a wheel—she's shooting craps with your fate.

PHILIP

That's not what I meant.

VINCENT

And sometimes she just gets on a cold streak and there's nothing you can do about it.

Silence. Vincent sips his drink. Philip plays with his glass.

VINCENT

You know, there's this dream I've been having for a while

now, over and over. I'm lost at sea in a storm, and I'm caught in a whirlpool. A maelstrom. It's got my legs, my body, and I'm hanging on for dear life with my hands, clutching at this rope that just runs off into the darkness to who knows where. And I just know I can't let go. Not only because I'll drown, but because...because I'm not supposed to—I don't know why. It's almost as if I don't even think to do it. Or maybe in the dream I just can't. But I can feel the current tugging at me the whole time, like I'm on one of those medieval torture racks, and it's pulling on me so hard it feels like I'm going to tear in half. But still I don't let go.

Silence for a moment.

PHILIP

So what happens?

VINCENT

Nothing. I wake up. I guess at some point I just can't take it anymore.

PHILIP

That sounds...awful.

Vincent waves his hand to dismiss the apology.

VINCENT

It's okay. I just happened to remember it now.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Vincent watches TV in bed. A female NURSE and her young male ASSISTANT enter.

NURSE

Hello Vincent. Time for us to turn you again.

Vincent nods silently. The nurse and assistant stand on the right side of his bed. They bend his right knee until his foot is flat on the bed, and hold him at his shoulders, hips, and knee.

NURSE

Okay. One, two, three.

On "three," they gently roll Vincent onto his left side. They hold him there for a moment.

NURSE

And back, two, three.

They slowly roll him to his back and straighten his right leg.

NURSE

Want to try to sit up?

Vincent nods. The nurse nods her head toward the opposite side of the bed, and the assistant walks around.

NURSE

Grab our arms. One, two, three.

Vincent grabs on to the forearms of the nurse and her assistant as they reach their free hands around to support his back. On "three," they slowly help him into a sitting position as Vincent grunts with exertion. He closes his eyes and a sick look passes over his face.

NURSE

A little dizzy?

Vincent nods, eyes still closed.

NURSE

Okay, give it a minute.

They support him in a seated position for a moment.

NURSE

All right. Down, two, three.

They gently lower him back to the bed. Vincent's eyes remain closed the whole time.

NURSE

Anything else you need?

VINCENT

No.

NURSE

Okay.

She and her assistant walk out of the room. Vincent remains lying in bed with his eyes closed.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Philip and a male DOCTOR help Vincent out of his hospital bed and into a wheelchair. Maggie stands aside while the two men help Vincent, then goes to him and puts her hand on his shoulder once he is seated. Philip stands over Vincent.

PHILIP

How's that, Vin?

Vincent shrugs and mutters incomprehensibly.

DOCTOR

You'll probably have to control it mechanically—at least some of the time—for the first few months, but after that you should recover enough strength to wheel yourself around.

Vincent looks at the floor.

PHILIP

I give him a week. After that, we won't be able to keep up with him, right Maggie?

Maggie forces a smile and nods. She squeezes Vincent's shoulder.

MAGGIE

That's right, honey. Everything's going to be okay.

She blinks away a tear. Silence.

DOCTOR

I'll give you some privacy. Excuse me.

He exits. Maggie sits down on the bed behind Vincent and rubs his shoulders gently.

PHILIP

I bet you can learn to play racquetball in that thing.

VINCENT

I guess. It's not the same though.

PHILIP

No, I know it's not the same, but—

VINCENT

No, you don't know.

Silence. Maggie stops rubbing Vincent's shoulders.

VINCENT

I'm sorry.

PHILIP

It's okay.

VINCENT

No, I didn't mean it. I'm
just...tired. Sorry, Phil.

He smiles weakly. Philip nods. Silence.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

PHILIP

Vin, I can't even imagine how
hard all this must be for
you...

Vincent shakes his head.

VINCENT

Let's not talk about that
now.

PHILIP

Okay.

Silence.

VINCENT

I just...I don't know. I feel
like...

PHILIP

It's okay.

Vincent looks out into the bar and nods.

VINCENT

It's all so clear in my head.
Everything I feel. Everything
I want to say. But then...

He touches his fingertips together, then brings his hands
apart in a "poof" motion. He looks at Philip

VINCENT

I don't know. There's this
game I picked up recently.
It...makes sense to me, I guess.

PHILIP

How do you play?

VINCENT

It's a card game, kinda like War.

PHILIP

Okay.

Vincent reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a deck of playing cards.

VINCENT

It's called Vita. There are 54 cards in the deck: the normal 52 plus two Jokers. The goal is to win all the cards.

He takes the cards out of the box and begins to shuffle them.

VINCENT

Each card has a point value. Aces are one; kings are thirteen. Jokers are negative one.

Vincent deals the cards to Philip and himself.

VINCENT

Each player gets half the cards. Then we each draw the top card from our deck and look at it.

He draws the top card from his deck. Philip does the same.

VINCENT

Now we have a choice to make. If I feel confident in the strength of my card, I can choose to do nothing. But if I think my card is weak, I can elect to draw cards from

my deck until I find a better one.

PHILIP

Okay.

VINCENT

But each additional card I draw counts as minus one. So once I settle on a card, the value of that card is its face value minus the number of cards drawn. If I draw a Joker, I automatically have negative one and I can't draw any more cards. If I'm drawing cards and my best card's value goes to zero, I can't draw any more cards.

Philip nods and turns over his card.

PHILIP

Okay, I have a five. So I'm going to look for something better.

He begins to draw cards, placing each one face up next to his five: four, eight, Jack.

PHILIP

Okay, a Jack. So that's eleven, minus the three cards I've drawn, gives me eight. I'll stick with that.

Vincent turns over his card.

VINCENT

And I have a nine. I'll stick with that. Once we're both satisfied with our cards, we show them, and the player with the highest value wins all the cards. So in this case, I would get your four cards.

PHILIP
Right. Got it.

VINCENT
We keep playing until one of
us has all the cards.

Philip nods.

PHILIP
Okay.

Vincent collects the cards and begins to shuffle them.

VINCENT
Ready?

PHILIP
I think so.

VINCENT
Then let's play.

Vincent deals.

EXT. AMBROSE COLLEGE DORMITORY - DAY

Maggie, 18, struggles to open the dormitory door and carry a small refrigerator inside. She sets the refrigerator down and looks around for help. She sees Vincent, 18, walk by.

MAGGIE
Hey, can you give me a hand?

Vincent stops and looks at her.

VINCENT
Sure.

He walks up to her.

MAGGIE
Thanks a lot. What's your
name?

VINCENT

Vincent. What's yours?

MAGGIE

I'm Maggie. It's nice to meet
you Vincent.

They shake hands.

VINCENT

You too.

He picks up the refrigerator. Maggie holds the door open
for him and he carries it into—

INT. DORMITORY - CONTINUOUS

VINCENT

Where to?

MAGGIE

My room's on the second
floor. Do you mind?

VINCENT

No, no problem.

He starts to carry the refrigerator up the stairs. Maggie
follows him.

MAGGIE

You need a hand?

VINCENT

No, I've got it.

They reach the top of the stairs.

MAGGIE

Mine's the last room on the
right. Number 220.

VINCENT

Okay.

They walk down the hall.

MAGGIE

Where are you from, Vincent?

VINCENT

Providence. You?

MAGGIE

Boston. Here's my room. You can just set it down anywhere.

Vincent enters and puts down the refrigerator.

MAGGIE

Thanks a lot. I could have been out there all day.

VINCENT

No problem.

MAGGIE

You need a hand with any of your stuff?

VINCENT

No, I've got it. Thanks though.

MAGGIE

Sure. Well I better get the rest of my things. I guess I'll see you around. Where do you live?

VINCENT

Clark Hall. 334, I think.

MAGGIE

Okay, I'll come visit you. It was nice meeting you, Vincent. Thanks again.

VINCENT

You're welcome. See you around.

MAGGIE

Bye.

Vincent exits. Maggie looks around her room at her belongings littering the floor.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - DAY

A spacious white-walled room with a few massage tables and various therapy equipment. A female THERAPIST, 20s, stands alongside Vincent in his wheelchair. Maggie watches from a chair by the wall.

THERAPIST

Okay Vincent, now we're going to work on getting up and over a curb. I want you to roll forward slowly, and then when you're ready, just lean back a little and give a quick push forward to get your front wheels off the ground.

Vincent nods. The therapist steps back. Vincent wheels forward and lifts his front wheels about an inch off the ground before they come crashing back down.

THERAPIST

All right. That's not bad, but you're going to need to get about four inches high to clear a curb. Let's try again. Just push a little more sharply with your hands.

Vincent turns around and rolls in the opposite direction. He lifts his wheels four inches off the ground and holds it for a full second before falling back down. He smiles slightly.

THERAPIST

Good. Now let's try the real thing.

The therapist lays a thick, black, rectangular, plastic mat on the floor a few yards behind Vincent's chair.

THERAPIST

Okay, just like before. Pop that wheelie just before you hit the mat. Then, once your wheels clear the mat, lean forward and give a big push to get yourself over the curb.

Vincent turns around and wheels toward the mat as the therapist follows. He does not lift his wheels high enough and his footplates slam into the mat. He starts to fall forward out of the chair, but the therapist puts her arm in front of Vincent's chest and catches him.

THERAPIST

Not bad. You just need to get those wheels a little higher. Let's try it again.

The therapist wheels Vincent a few yards away from the mat and Vincent slowly turns around to try again.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vincent supports himself by his arms on parallel bars. The therapist stands next to him.

THERAPIST

Good. One more time.

Vincent walks down the bars with his hands. Sweat drips from his face and he grunts in exertion. Maggie and the therapist walk alongside him, the therapist giving encouragement, Maggie watching intently.

Vincent reaches the end of the bars and drops down to support himself with the bars under his armpits, then slumps to the mats on the floor below him. He lies back, closes his eyes, and breathes deeply.

EXT. THERAPY BUILDING - DAY

Maggie helps Vincent out of a foldable wheelchair and into the front seat of her car. She folds the chair and puts it in the trunk, then gets into the driver's seat.

INT. MAGGIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Maggie buckles her seatbelt and smiles at Vincent, who stares out his side window.

MAGGIE
You did really well today,
honey.

Vincent turns to her, nods, and smiles faintly.

VINCENT
Thanks.

MAGGIE
Can you tell you're getting
stronger?

VINCENT
I think so. It's just that
curb. I still can't get it
yet.

Maggie smiles.

MAGGIE
You will though. You're almost
there.

Vincent nods and looks out the front window.

VINCENT
Yeah...

Maggie reaches across and squeezes his shoulder. He turns to look at her and she kisses him.

MAGGIE
You will.

She smiles and holds his gaze an extra second, then turns and starts the car.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The noise inside the bar has increased as more people have come in.

Vincent and Philip continue to play Vita. Having both used all the cards in their decks, they shuffle their captured cards for the next round. Their decks are about even. Play continues.

VINCENT

Do you know the biggest
problem with democracy, Phil?

Philip looks up from his cards.

PHILIP

No. What is it?

VINCENT

Apathy. Most people don't
care enough to vote. Did you
know that in Australia it's
illegal to refuse to vote?
They actually have to compel
people to exercise their
right to free choice.

Philip nods.

PHILIP

I can believe that. I mean
how many people vote here?
50%? 60%? In a presidential
race?

Vincent draws cards until he is satisfied.

VINCENT

And what does that tell you?

PHILIP

Probably that there's a
problem with the system.
People feel like their vote
doesn't matter. What good is
it to vote Green or

Libertarian or whatever if you know they're just going to get crushed by one of the big parties?

Philip draws cards.

VINCENT

Yeah, you're right. Democracy is supposed to put all the power in the hands of the individual, but then we elect a president and just sit back and let him go for four years. How much political power do you or I really have? One vote out of tens or hundreds of millions every few years?

They play their cards. Philip wins and scoops up the cards.

PHILIP

So what are you saying? That government has gotten too big? That's not news.

They each draw their top card and look at it.

VINCENT

But freedom of speech is still a right. Freedom to vote is still a right. And yet what do people do at election time—these people who've had little to no say in the way their lives are affected for the past year or more?

Philip nods.

PHILIP

Nothing.

VINCENT

Exactly. They sit on their hands and do nothing. Do they vote? No. Do they protest? No. But behind closed doors everyone likes to complain about how the government is giving them a raw deal. Yet would any of them really change the status quo?

PHILIP

I don't know.

VINCENT

The average person on the street—if you told him that he alone could pick the next president, would he do it?

PHILIP

Probably not.

VINCENT

Of course not. And do you know why? Because he doesn't want that responsibility. He doesn't want that burden of having to think, to act, to choose.

Silence. They play out the hand. Vincent wins.

VINCENT

It took me a while to figure out why my injury was so hard on Maggie. Of course she loved me and felt sorry for me. But I always thought there was something more.

Vincent draws a card and looks at it. Philip watches him.

VINCENT

All of a sudden, she couldn't depend on me any more. All of

a sudden, I had to depend on her.

PHILIP

Vin...

VINCENT

Just like that, she was...free. She didn't need me anymore. Or maybe she needed me but I couldn't help her. And now she had to help me.

PHILIP

I know it was hard for her, Vin. And for you, too. But she loved you.

Vincent nods and sips his drink. He looks up at Philip.

VINCENT

I know. And now she's dead...murdered...

He looks out into the bar for a moment, then back at Philip.

VINCENT

But what that must have been like for her—set adrift like that. Free from dependence. What a burden that must have been...How could she have been happy?

SERIES OF SHOTS - FOOTBALL GAME

-- INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - STANDS - DAY -- Both wearing navy blue Ambrose College sweatshirts, Vincent and Philip—who carries two plastic cups of beer—find their seats in a handicapped section behind one endzone.

VINCENT

Not bad.

PHILIP

Yeah, not bad at all.

It is a sellout, with almost all FANS wearing Ambrose blue.

PHILIP

Wow, I've never seen this many people here before.

VINCENT

Well it's been a while since we've played a top 10 team. And over twenty years since we played State.

PHILIP

This is great. I just hope we don't get blown out.

VINCENT

Yeah. I think we have a chance though. I mean it's a long shot, but...

PHILIP

You're right. They can do it.

-- FIELD -- State wins the coin toss and elects to receive; STATE RETURN MAN returns the kick for a touchdown, quieting the crowd except for a small contingent of State fans behind the opposite endzone.

-- STANDS --

PHILIP

Fuck.

VINCENT

Hey, we'll get it back.

PHILIP

Yeah, you're right.

-- FIELD -- State kicks off; AMBROSE RETURN MAN stopped at his own 25 yard line; Ambrose handoff for 15 yards.

-- STANDS --

PHILIP

There we go!

He high-fives Vincent.

-- FIELD -- AMBROSE QUARTERBACK sacked, fumbles, and STATE PLAYER returns it for a touchdown.

-- STANDS --

PHILIP

Goddamnit.

VINCENT

What's going on out there?

-- FIELD -- State piles up points and leads 45-7 at halftime.

-- STANDS -- Several Ambrose fans head for the exits.

PHILIP

Do you want to leave? This is painful.

VINCENT

No, let's stay. At least one more quarter. You never know.

PHILIP

Yeah, you're right. You want another beer?

VINCENT

Sure. Thanks.

Philip leaves to buy the beers.

-- FIELD -- Ambrose scores a touchdown on a long pass down the middle of the field to begin the second half.

-- STANDS -- Remaining fans CHEER halfheartedly; Philip returns and hands Vincent a beer.

VINCENT

Thanks.

PHILIP

Hey, maybe you were right.

VINCENT

Yeah, we'll see.

-- FIELD -- Ambrose intercepts a pass and returns it for a touchdown.

-- STANDS -- Crowd CHEERS a little louder now; Philip shakes Vincent by the shoulder.

PHILIP

You were right! They're almost back in it!

Vincent smiles slightly.

VINCENT

Maybe, maybe.

-- FIELD -- Ambrose starts to come back but State makes it hard for them; the score seesaws: 45-28, 48-41, 51-41.

-- STANDS -- Philip and Vincent celebrate every Ambrose score and are devastated when State responds.

-- FIELD -- Game winding down; Ambrose third down on State's goal line; quarterback sneak results in a pile on the goal line.

-- STANDS -- Crowd holds its breath, waiting for a signal from the OFFICIALS.

PHILIP

He's in. He's in.

-- FIELD -- REFEREE throws up his arms for a touchdown.

-- STANDS -- The crowd goes wild.

PHILIP

Yes!

He and Vincent celebrate, SHOUTING almost incoherently; the score is 51-48 to State with 2:03 remaining.

VINCENT

We need to get this onside kick.

PHILIP

Yeah. Not enough time to kick it to them.

-- FIELD -- Ambrose onside kick; State recovers.

-- STANDS --

PHILIP

Well, that's it. They just need to run out the clock now.

VINCENT

Yeah. Almost had them. Good comeback.

-- FIELD - A State handoff for three yards, then another; the clock counts down from 1:13; a third handoff and an AMBROSE LINEBACKER strips the ball.

-- STANDS -- Philip jumps out of his seat, as do several other fans.

PHILIP

Fumble!

-- FIELD -- AMBROSE PLAYER dives on the ball and the referee signals Ambrose ball.

-- STANDS --

PHILIP

Yes!

VINCENT

It's not over yet!

-- FIELD -- Ball at the Ambrose 32 with 33 seconds left; Ambrose short pass to their own 40; another pass to the

State 40, where Ambrose quarterback spikes the ball with 3 seconds left.

-- STANDS --

PHILIP
Holy shit, I can't believe
this. They might do it. This
is incredible!

Vincent can barely contain the smile on his face.

-- FIELD - Ambrose quarterback lofts a long pass down the sideline toward the endzone.

-- STANDS -- Philip and fans in front of them stand, blocking Vincent's view; Vincent tries but cannot see the field; a growing MURMUR of anticipation from the crowd.

PHILIP
He's got a man...He's got a man...

Suddenly, the entire stadium erupts in a giant ROAR.

PHILIP
Yes! Yes! He caught it!

Philip jumps up and down. The crowd goes wild all around them. Philip leans down and shakes Vincent's shoulders.

PHILIP
He caught it! Did you see
that? Unbelievable!

Vincent stares silently at the backs of the celebrating fans in front of him. A FAN to Philip's left bumps into him accidentally, and they face each other and high five, both YELLING ecstatically. Vincent continues to stare straight ahead without moving.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

The parking lot is packed with CHEERING fans.

PHILIP
That was the best game I've
ever seen. What a comeback.

Philip helps Vincent into his SUV.

PHILIP
You all right, Vin?

Vincent nods silently, not looking at Philip. He stares out the window as Philip closes the door.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

There is a counter against one wall and a small table in the middle of the room. Maggie stands at the counter as Vincent wheels past.

Vincent accidentally brushes against a small stack of papers on the counter, scattering them to the floor.

VINCENT
Damn it.

He leans over the arm of his wheelchair, gathers most of the papers, and replaces them on the counter, but some have fallen under the table where he cannot reach them. Maggie sees him struggling and walks over to him.

MAGGIE
Here, let me help you.

Vincent continues reaching for the papers. Maggie puts her hand on his shoulder.

MAGGIE
Don't worry about it. I'll get them.

She starts to squat down. Vincent keeps trying to reach the fallen papers and bangs his shoulder against the table. A vase of flowers on the table falls over and breaks.

MAGGIE
Damn it, Vincent! Why couldn't you just let me get them?

Vincent glares at the floor. Maggie squeezes his shoulder while still squatting next to him.

MAGGIE
Just let me help you.

VINCENT
I don't want your help.

MAGGIE
What?

VINCENT
I said I don't want your help. I don't want you to treat me like I can't do anything. I'm not helpless! I don't need your pity!

MAGGIE
Vin, please...

VINCENT
Let go of me.

He shakes his shoulder loose of her hand and wheels away. Maggie stands up and watches him go, fighting back tears.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Maggie leans over the sink and looks at herself in the mirror. Her eyes are puffy, her face red from crying. She dabs her nose and eyes with a tissue, takes a deep breath, and smiles at herself in the mirror.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Maggie? Maggie? Where are you?

Maggie's head sinks. She sniffles and her shoulders heave as she fights back silent tears.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - DAY

The therapist stands behind Vincent's chair. The simulation curb is on the ground in front of Vincent.

THERAPIST
Okay, we still have some work to do on this one. Remember:

lean back, quick push, and
then one more big push to get
all the way over. Let's see
it.

Vincent rolls himself toward the mat. He lifts the front
wheels of his chair, but not high enough to clear the mat.
The therapist catches him as he starts to fall out of his
chair.

THERAPIST

Not quite. Let's do it again.

The therapist wheels Vincent a few yards away from the mat.
Vincent does not turn around, but instead stares off into
space. The therapist turns Vincent's chair around to face
the mat.

THERAPIST

Come on. Let's go.

Reluctantly, Vincent gives his wheels a push. The chair
rolls forward, but Vincent stops pushing. The therapist
does not follow him, but watches as Vincent rolls slowly
forward. He bumps into the mat and stops. Maggie watches
silently in the background.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Vincent shuffles his deck. Philip has a slight lead.

PHILIP

Vin, I know it must have been
hard for both of you. But you
can't...

Vincent nods slowly, a blank look in his eyes.

VINCENT

It was...

He glances at Philip, then looks away again.

VINCENT

I think it took her more time
to adjust than me.

He looks at Philip.

VINCENT

You were a big help to her.

Philip avoids Vincent's eyes and nods.

PHILIP

It lasted longer with her.
She just didn't know how she
could help, and that crushed
her.

VINCENT

Did she want to leave me?

PHILIP

She said that once.

Philip fidgets with his drink, then takes a sip.

PHILIP

I don't think that's what she
really wanted. She just
didn't know what else to do.

Vincent nods slowly.

VINCENT

But she learned to live with
me eventually. Whatever you
said to her...whatever you
did...it helped her.

Silence. Philip looks away and plays with his top card,
then looks at it and draws another card.

PHILIP

Ready?

VINCENT

Yeah.

They turn over their cards. Philip wins 10-8. He collects the cards. Vincent sips his drink. Both men draw new cards. Philip sticks with his. Vincent draws a second card, then a third and a fourth.

VINCENT

Damn.

He turns the card over: a Joker. Philip scoops Vincent's cards toward him.

PHILIP

Sorry.

Vincent shakes his head.

VINCENT

You can make all the right choices, play the odds perfectly, and then, bam, you turn over a Joker and it all goes to hell.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Maggie sits alone at a table for two. Philip walks over, hugs Maggie, and sits down across from her.

PHILIP

Sorry I'm late. Were you waiting long?

MAGGIE

Five minutes. Don't worry about it. How are you?

PHILIP

I'm fine, thanks. How are you? How's Vin?

Maggie looks out the window.

MAGGIE

I...I don't know. We're managing, I guess...

PHILIP

Maggie, you really should—

Maggie looks back at him, waves one hand and shakes her head to silence him. She looks down and snuffles, then looks back up at Philip.

MAGGIE

No, no, we're okay. We'll be all right.

She forces a smile.

MAGGIE

What about you? How's Jenn?
What's it been—a month now?

Philip nods and smiles.

PHILIP

Five weeks actually, but who's counting? No, it's going really well. She really likes the theater. Plays, musicals, everything. We've seen it all.

He chuckles softly.

PHILIP

I'm becoming cultured.

Maggie forces a smile.

MAGGIE

That's great, Phil.

She snuffles and looks down at her hands, which are folded on the table. Silence.

PHILIP

Maggie?

Philip puts his hand on Maggie's arm.

PHILIP

Come on, Maggie. Talk to me.

She looks up at him and sniffles again.

MAGGIE

I don't know what to do anymore. About Vincent. He's not the same. I still love him, but...I've been thinking about leaving him. I don't want to, but I don't know how to help him. I don't know what else to do.

PHILIP

He's going to adjust to it all. It's just going to take some time.

MAGGIE

I don't know anymore. Nothing makes him happy. He doesn't want to see anyone—not his friends, not family...You've seen how he is. I tried to get him to see a therapist but he wouldn't do that either. I don't know if he even loves me anymore...

PHILIP

Of course he does. He just doesn't know what to do either. We just have to keep trying to get through to him.

MAGGIE

I can't. I'm just so tired. I can't do it anymore.

She closes her eyes.

PHILIP

Maggie...

Philip reaches up and puts his hand on Maggie's cheek and she leans her head against it. She brings her hand up and covers his, then pulls his hand to her mouth and kisses his

fingers slowly and gently. She opens her eyes and looks at Philip. He stares intently at her. She holds his hand near her face.

INT. AMBROSE COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

STUDENTS enter and sit down at a large wooden table. Maggie and Philip, both 19, sit next to each other. The students TALK amongst themselves until a PROFESSOR, 70s, shuffles in, sits down at the head of the table, and places a stack of books in front of him.

PROFESSOR

Good morning everyone.

A few students MUMBLE greetings. The professor takes a book from the top of the stack in front of him.

PROFESSOR

We'll begin today with Camus's
The Myth of Sisyphus.

He opens the book to a page marked by an index card and begins to read.

PROFESSOR

"All Sisyphus' silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is a thing. Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols...There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night...For the rest, he knows himself to be the master of his days.

Maggie shifts in her chair and looks around the room at the other students. Philip leans back in his chair and smiles. Maggie starts to raise her hand.

MAGGIE

Um, Professor...

Philip quickly leans forward, catches her arm before she can fully raise her hand, and gently pulls it down.

PHILIP

Shh...

He holds his finger to his lips, smiles, and winks at her. The professor pauses and looks up. Seeing no one's hand raised, he continues reading. Philip grins at the other students and they smile in return.

PROFESSOR

"At that subtle moment when man glances backward over his life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, in that slight pivoting he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which become his fate, created by him, combined under his memory's eye and soon sealed by his death. Thus, convinced of the wholly human origin of all that is human...he is still on the go. The rock is still rolling."

Maggie leans over and whispers to Philip.

MAGGIE

But he read this passage last time.

Philip grins at her.

PHILIP

I know he did.

MAGGIE

So why do you want him to read it again?

PHILIP

I happen to like Camus.

He returns his attention to the professor and leans back in his chair. Maggie stares at him for a moment, then shakes her head and turns her attention to the professor as well.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Class over, the students pack up their books and exit.

MAGGIE

So do you really like Camus or
were you just messing with
him?

PHILIP

You've read this stuff. It's
impossible to understand the
first time through.

Maggie stares at him. She smiles a little.

MAGGIE

Uh huh.

Philip smiles broadly.

PHILIP

I'm Phil, by the way.

He extends his hand and Maggie shakes it.

MAGGIE

Maggie.

PHILIP

It's nice to meet you, Maggie.

They pick up their books and exit into-

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

PHILIP

So have you started studying
for this test?

MAGGIE

No, I'm a little behind on the
reading.

She half-glares, half-smiles at Philip.

MAGGIE

Which is why I wanted to hear him go over something new today. Have you started?

PHILIP

Sorry about that. No, I haven't started yet.

MAGGIE

Figures. You don't seem like the studying type.

Philip acts hurt.

PHILIP

What does that mean?

MAGGIE

It means you seem like the kind of guy who never studies but always aces the test anyway.

PHILIP

I'm going to take that as a challenge. What are you doing tomorrow night?

MAGGIE

Nothing. Why?

PHILIP

Let's go get some coffee and maybe start studying a little.

Maggie smiles slightly.

MAGGIE

Seriously?

PHILIP

Of course.

MAGGIE

Okay. This should be interesting. I still can't imagine you studying.

Philip LAUGHS.

PHILIP

Well Maggie, prepare to be very impressed.

Maggie LAUGHS a little. They exit the classroom building.

MONTAGE - PHILIP AND MAGGIE'S AFFAIR

-- INT. PHILIP'S APARTMENT - DAY -- Philip and Maggie enter, kissing passionately; still kissing, Philip guides Maggie by her hips to-

-- INT. PHILIP'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY -- Philip lays Maggie on the bed and they undress each other as he kisses her neck and chest.

-- INT. RESTAURANT - DAY -- Maggie and Philip eat, TALK, and LAUGH at a table in the back corner of the restaurant.

-- INT. PHILIP'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY -- Maggie and Philip make love in bed under the sheets.

-- CITY - DAY -- Maggie and Philip stroll down the street holding hands and TALKING; they kiss in front of Philip's building and Philip goes inside.

-- INT. PHILIP'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY -- Philip lies under the sheets, as Maggie sits and buttons her blouse; she finishes and kisses him.

MAGGIE

Bye.

PHILIP

Bye.

Maggie exits. Philip lies back, smiling.

END MONTAGE

INT. PHILIP'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Philip's girlfriend JENN, mid-twenties, enters.

JENN

Hello!

INT. PHILIP'S APARTMENT - SHOWER - NIGHT

Philip is in the shower, smiling to himself.

JENN (O.S.)

Hello! Philip?

Philip's smile fades.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maggie enters.

MAGGIE

Hello!

Vincent wheels into the room.

VINCENT

Where were you?

Maggie takes off her coat and avoids his eyes.

MAGGIE

Sorry I'm late.

She hangs her coat in a closet by the door. Vincent stares at her for a second, then wheels away.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The number of other customers in the bar has steadily increased. Most of the tables around Vincent and Philip are now full.

Philip's deck is twice as big as Vincent's. Vincent waits for Philip to shuffle his cards.

VINCENT

How are you doing, Phil?

PHILIP

Me? I'm fine, I guess.

Philip finishes shuffling and draws his top card. Vincent does the same.

VINCENT

No, I mean...You and Maggie were really close in college. And even now, the three of us...

Silence. Philip draws a card and stares at it, then looks out into the bar. He nods slowly, then looks back at Vincent.

PHILIP

Yeah, of course. Of course I'm...I mean it's Maggie. But still, I can't imagine how hard it must be for you, Vin.

VINCENT

It's okay, Phil.

Vincent looks at his card. They play the hand. Vincent wins.

VINCENT

I guess you were right. These things just happen.

PHILIP

Yeah, but they shouldn't. Not to you. You didn't deserve this. Any of this.

Vincent looks at his top card.

VINCENT

I'm no saint, Phil.

PHILIP

Who is? I know I'm not. But still...

Vincent shakes his head and draws a card, then another. Philip looks at his card.

VINCENT

The universe isn't out to get me, Phil. I know that now. There's no such thing as karma. I'm not being punished for the things I did. Things really do just...happen.

Vincent turns over his cards. Philip does the same. Philip wins.

PHILIP

You don't think things happen for a reason?

Vincent looks at a new card, then looks up at Philip.

VINCENT

Sure they do. I'm in this chair right now because some drunk asshole ran a red light.

PHILIP

No, I mean...

VINCENT

I know what you mean. But no. I wasn't paralyzed so I could learn some lofty life lesson. What, do you think there's some big important message behind what happened to Maggie too?

PHILIP

No. No, I guess not.

VINCENT

No. Some fucking junkie
needed a score and she was in
the wrong place at the wrong
time. That's it. The end.

Philip looks out into the bar.

PHILIP

Yeah.

He looks back at Vincent.

PHILIP

You're right. I'm sorry.

Vincent nods. Silence. Philip sips his drink, then looks at his card.

VINCENT

Ready?

Philip nods and turns over a king. Vincent turns over a jack. Philip adds the cards to his pile.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vincent and Maggie are asleep in bed. A clock radio alarm BUZZES: 5:30. Maggie rolls over and turns off the alarm. Vincent does not move. Maggie shakes him by the shoulder.

MAGGIE

Come on, Vin. Time to get up.

Vincent MOANS and rolls away from her. Maggie gets out of bed and walks into the bathroom. She turns on the light and runs the bath. She returns to the bedroom.

MAGGIE

Let's go.

She helps Vincent—still half-asleep—into his wheelchair. She wheels him into the bathroom and helps him into the bath.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maggie helps Vincent get out of the bath and dress. Vincent wheels himself into—

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONT.

Vincent turns on the TV. The shower water RUNS audibly in the background.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie enters, having showered and dressed for work. She makes breakfast: toast, eggs, and coffee. The TV PLAYS from the living room.

MAGGIE

Vincent, breakfast!

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Vincent watches TV. Maggie walks up behind him, bends down, and puts her hand on his shoulder.

MAGGIE

Bye, Vin. Have a good day.

She kisses him on the cheek, and stands up. Vincent does not turn around.

VINCENT

Bye.

Maggie walks to the front door and exits. After a moment, Vincent turns off the TV and wheels into—

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A clock in the office reads 8:17. Vincent sits in front of the computer. He opens a file on the computer, and pulls a stack of papers out of the cabinet next to the desk. He begins to leaf through the papers, stops, carefully reads something on one piece of paper, then turns to the computer and begins typing.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Vincent is still in front of the computer. The clock reads 12:43. Vincent sets the stack of papers on the desk, and wheels into-

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vincent opens the refrigerator, takes out a plate with a sandwich on it, and puts it on the counter.

There is a long rod with a claw on one end lying on the counter, which Vincent uses to open a cabinet above the counter and take down a large bag of potato chips. He then carries the chips and sandwich to the kitchen table.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vincent finishes his lunch. He places the empty plate on the counter. He uses the claw to replace the chips, but struggles to get the bag on the shelf and knocks down a box of cereal, spilling it onto the floor.

Vincent throws the claw and bag of chips down. He stares at the cereal scattered on the floor for a moment, then leaves it and wheels into-

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONT.

With great effort, Vincent lifts himself out of his wheelchair and onto the couch. He lies on the couch, breathing heavily for a moment, then his breathing slows, his eyes close, and he falls asleep.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie enters. She hangs up her coat in the closet and walks into the kitchen. After a minute she returns to the living room. She stares at Vincent on the couch for a moment, then returns to-

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Maggie puts Vincent's sandwich plate in the sink and the bag of chips in the cabinet, and begins to sweep up the cereal.

INT. AMBROSE COLLEGE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Vincent, 20, is bent over a book. Philip and Maggie walk up behind him, Philip's arm around Maggie's shoulders.

PHILIP

All work and no play..

Vincent smiles but does not turn around.

PHILIP

I knew I'd find you here.
Come on, let's go. It's
Friday night.

He turns to Maggie.

PHILIP

He's taking 20 credits this
semester. He's insane.

Vincent turns around.

VINCENT

It's not that bad. I can
handle it. Besides, they're
all really interesting.

Philip rolls his eyes to Maggie.

PHILIP

Yeah right.

VINCENT

You know you're in the
library, right? No talking.

PHILIP

No what? I can't hear you.

Vincent grins.

VINCENT

Nice try. I'm almost done.

He finishes reading the page and closes the book.

PHILIP

Finally. Let's go.

Vincent puts his books into his backpack.

PHILIP

Oh, I'm sorry. Vin, this is Maggie. Maggie—

MAGGIE

I know Vincent. You helped me move in freshman year. Do you remember me?

VINCENT

Of course. It's nice to see you again.

MAGGIE

It's nice to see you too. How have you been?

PHILIP

Come on, you two can catch up later. Let's get out of here.

Maggie smiles. She tilts her head at Philip and whispers:

MAGGIE

He's allergic.

A female student LIBRARY ATTENDENT walks up to them.

ATTENDENT

Excuse me...

PHILIP

I know, I know, we're leaving. I was just telling them to keep it down.

Vincent smiles and rolls his eyes.

VINCENT

Let's go.

Philip puts his arm around Maggie and the three of them walk silently out of the library, holding back laughter. The library attendant follows a few steps behind them.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vincent lies in bed, twitching and moaning softly in his sleep. Suddenly he wakes up and sits bolt upright, gasping and sweating. Maggie is sound asleep on the other side of the bed, facing away from him.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Vincent sits at the table in his wheelchair, eating cereal and reading the newspaper. Maggie makes breakfast at the counter. She turns to look at Vincent.

MAGGIE

You sleep okay last night? I thought I heard you get up.

VINCENT

It was just a dream.

MAGGIE

What was it about?

Vincent continues to read the paper and does not look up.

VINCENT

I don't remember.

MAGGIE

Well, it must have been something if it drove you out of bed in the middle of the night.

Vincent shrugs and continues to read.

VINCENT

I guess so.

Silence. Maggie spreads jelly on some toast.

MAGGIE

You have any plans today?

VINCENT

No.

MAGGIE

Vin, you really should try to do something. Get out of the house for a bit.

Vincent reads in silence. Maggie finishes making her breakfast. She carries it to the table and sits down.

MAGGIE

What about Phil? You haven't seen him in awhile.

VINCENT

He's busy.

MAGGIE

I'm sure he'd like to see you.

Vincent shrugs silently. Maggie sighs. Vincent smiles slightly, but quickly stops.

MAGGIE

Vin, I'm just saying...It would be good for you to do something, get out a little.

Vincent does not respond. Maggie shakes her head and starts to eat her breakfast.

INT. PHILIP'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Philip lies in bed under the sheets as Maggie sits on the side of the bed and buttons her blouse.

PHILIP

You okay? You've been pretty quiet today.

MAGGIE

Yeah, it's just Vincent. I still don't know what to do about him. He just sits there

all day. Doesn't go out,
doesn't see anyone.

She turns around to look at Philip.

MAGGIE
Maybe you could visit him.
That might help.

Philip looks away and nods slowly.

PHILIP
Yeah...I guess I could...

He turns to Maggie and smiles.

PHILIP
Of course. I'd be happy to see
him. It's been a while.

Maggie smiles.

MAGGIE
Thanks, Phil.

She leans down and kisses him.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Philip's deck is now three times as big as Vincent's. Both men draw cards. Vincent sticks with his. Philip draws three.

PHILIP
Okay.

He turns over his cards: a queen and three others.

PHILIP
Twelve minus three gives me
nine.

Vincent turns over his card: a nine.

VINCENT

Me too.

PHILIP

So now what?

VINCENT

It's like War. We each draw
new cards. Winner takes all.

Both men draw new cards. Vincent sticks. Philip draws three, stares at his cards for a moment, then draws three more.

VINCENT

Ready?

Philip nods. Vincent turns over a seven.

PHILIP

Unbelievable.

Philip turns over a queen, six, two, three, five, six, and eight.

PHILIP

Six. And I started with
eight.

Vincent gathers the pile of cards.

VINCENT

Luck of the draw.

PHILIP

Yeah, rotten luck.

VINCENT

Why did you draw?

He shuffles his cards. Philip's lead has shrunk to two to one.

PHILIP

I don't know. I wasn't
satisfied with what I had. I
didn't think it would stand

up. And then, once I started going, I just dug myself in deeper and deeper. Once I saw that queen I knew that was the best I could get.

Vincent nods.

VINCENT

I know exactly how you feel.

He straightens his cards.

PHILIP

Ready?

VINCENT

Ready.

They continue to play.

VINCENT

That's the difference between this game and War. In War, you don't have to decide. The cards decide for you. You just flip them over.

PHILIP

Yeah, it's a double-edged sword. I keep trying to calculate the odds. I need a statistician over here.

Silence.

VINCENT

Do you feel like that a lot? Like you wish someone could tell you what to do?

Philip shrugs and draws a card.

PHILIP

I don't know. Sometimes, I guess.

VINCENT

It would make things a lot easier.

PHILIP

Yeah, I guess it would.

They play out the hand. Vincent wins and collects the cards.

VINCENT

I mean, everyone has those moments, right? Big decisions. Not what kind of car to buy or whether to get lobster or steak for dinner, but real choices, like between something you know is right and something you want real bad even though you know it's wrong. Everyone has those, right?

Philip stares at his card.

PHILIP

Sure, of course. But so what?

He draws a card.

VINCENT

Well, what if you didn't have to make those choices—the big decisions—right and wrong and all that? Do you think a lion sits around and wonders about whether it's right to kill—and I mean violently murder—a zebra or a gazelle or whatever? Do you think a dog cares about which dogs he fucks? Of course not.

PHILIP

So you want to be an animal, is that it?

VINCENT

No, I didn't say that. But what if you didn't have to think about those kinds of things? You're faced with a big choice, someone tells you what to do, and you do it. No stress, no worries, none of that. Sure, you're not really making the choice, but so what?

Silence for a moment. They turn over their cards. Vincent wins and collects the cards. Philip sips his drink and stares at his deck.

PHILIP

It would sure make things a lot easier.

VINCENT

Yeah, it sure would.

Philip draws his top card. Vincent looks at his card, then up at Philip. Play continues.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Vincent watches TV in the dark. Maggie enters.

MAGGIE

Hello!

VINCENT

Hello.

Maggie turns on the light.

VINCENT

Where were you?

She hangs her coat in the closet.

MAGGIE

What?

VINCENT

Where were you? It's after eight.

Maggie steps out of the closet and goes through her purse.

MAGGIE

I was at work, Vin.

Vincent gets into his wheelchair and turns to face her.

VINCENT

You only work until five.

MAGGIE

I thought I'd work a little overtime today.

VINCENT

But you're salaried.

Maggie stops rummaging in her purse and looks up at Vincent. Silence.

VINCENT

Well?

MAGGIE

Vin...I...

VINCENT

Yes?

MAGGIE

Never mind. I'm sorry I'm late.

She heads for the kitchen. Vincent cuts her off.

VINCENT

No, Maggie, go on. Where were you all this time?

Maggie avoids Vincent's eyes, then sighs and looks at him.

MAGGIE

Look, Vin, I asked my boss a couple weeks ago if I could get some paid overtime. So I've started working late on the Miller project a few nights a week.

VINCENT

Really? That's it?

MAGGIE

Yes, Vincent. That's it.

Vincent continues to stare at her.

MAGGIE

What do you want from me, Vin? You've barely been back to work since the accident. We're still waiting on the insurance settlement. How do you expect us to pay rent, bills, all that stuff?

Vincent looks away from her.

MAGGIE

What do you want me to do? I'm trying to take care of you, of us...

Vincent looks down. Silence.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Vin. I didn't mean to...

VINCENT

No, it's okay. You're right.

Maggie goes to Vincent and crouches next to his wheelchair. She puts her hand on his arm.

MAGGIE

No, I shouldn't have said that. I didn't mean for it to

come out that way. Look, it's not a big deal. It's just until this settlement goes through. I don't mind.

Vincent nods but does not look at her. Maggie remains crouching for a moment. Then she pats Vincent on the arm and stands.

MAGGIE
I'll go start dinner, okay?

Vincent nods. Maggie exits to the kitchen. Vincent remains in the middle of the living room, staring at the floor.

EXT. AMBROSE COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Vincent, 20, walks across campus, a backpack slung over one shoulder. Philip, also 20, exits a building nearby and spots Vincent.

PHILIP
Hey! Vin!

Vincent turns around as Philip jogs up behind him.

VINCENT
Morning, Phil.

Philip is slightly out of breath.

PHILIP
Hey, Vin. I need a favor.

VINCENT
What can I do?

Philip puts his hand on Vincent's shoulder and they start to walk across campus.

PHILIP
Something's come up and I need to go home. Can you cover for me with Maggie? I was supposed to take her out tonight.

VINCENT

Sure, no problem. What's going on?

Philip looks around cautiously.

PHILIP

It's my ex. She's sick. She's in the hospital. But look, don't tell Maggie. I saw her a few times last summer—just as friends—but I never told Maggie about it. And now this...

VINCENT

I'm sure she'd understand.

PHILIP

Yeah, maybe. I don't know. I just don't want to hurt her. So please, don't say anything for now. I told her my parents need me to come home.

VINCENT

Okay.

PHILIP

Okay, great, thanks. I gotta run. I told Maggie you'd pick her up at six. I owe you one.

Philip turns and half-runs, half-walks across campus.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is a little family place. Maggie and Vincent sit at a table for two in a back corner.

They both eat pasta. Vincent cuts his pasta into pieces small enough to shovel with his fork, while Maggie swirls her uncut pasta around her fork. Maggie watches Vincent's technique and LAUGHS.

MAGGIE

Vincent, that's not how you eat pasta!

Vincent looks at her and smiles.

VINCENT

And how should I eat it?

MAGGIE

Like this.

Maggie makes a show of twirling the pasta around her fork. She puts it in her mouth and SLURPS up a loose strand, then smiles at Vincent.

MAGGIE

See? No cutting allowed.

VINCENT

So that's what I've been doing wrong all these years.

MAGGIE

Yeah, you're lucky I corrected you before it's too late.

VINCENT

Uh huh.

He smiles.

VINCENT

You have sauce on your chin.

MAGGIE

What?

She wipes her face with a napkin and sees the sauce on it.

MAGGIE

Oh. Whoops.

She smiles in mock embarrassment and they both LAUGH.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Maggie and Vincent watch the movie intently, the light from the screen flickering on their faces. Overly dramatic music PLAYS from the movie. They share a bucket of popcorn

between them, eating almost mechanically as the music grows more intense.

Suddenly the music reaches a crescendo and the movie light flashes brightly. Maggie flinches in her seat. She jerks her hand out of the popcorn bucket, scattering a few pieces on both of them. Vincent looks at her and smiles. She LAUGHS and he joins her. They lean closer together and hunch down in their seats, trying to stifle their laughter.

EXT. AMBROSE COLLEGE - NIGHT

Maggie and Vincent walk through campus.

MAGGIE

You know, you never came back to visit me.

VINCENT

What?

MAGGIE

Freshman year. After you helped me move in. You never came back to visit me.

VINCENT

Visit you? I thought you were going to visit me!

Maggie LAUGHS.

MAGGIE

Oh right. I did say that, didn't I?

Vincent smiles.

VINCENT

You did.

MAGGIE

Well, see, the thing is...

VINCENT

This oughta be good.

MAGGIE

No wait, I... Okay, I got nothing.

They both LAUGH.

MAGGIE

So can you ever forgive me?

VINCENT

Well...it has been two years..
Okay, yeah I suppose I can let you off the hook.

Maggie feigns relief.

MAGGIE

Oh, thank you so much.

They both LAUGH. Smiling, they walk in silence for a moment before stopping in front of Maggie's dormitory.

MAGGIE

Thank you, Vincent. I had a really great time tonight.

VINCENT

You're welcome. So did I.

MAGGIE

I'll have to ask Phil to stand me up more often.

She LAUGHS. Silence for a moment.

MAGGIE

Well, goodnight. Thanks again.

She kisses Vincent on the cheek and enters her dorm.

VINCENT

Goodnight.

Vincent lingers for a moment, then walks away.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie and Philip stand near the counter, both drinking coffee.

MAGGIE

...and they told me I couldn't exchange it, so I said "what do you expect me to do? I didn't realize..."

Philip stares off into space with a blank look.

MAGGIE

You haven't heard a word I've said.

Philip quickly looks at Maggie.

PHILIP

No, I'm sorry. Go on. You were trying to exchange it but...

Maggie waves her hand and shakes her head.

MAGGIE

Never mind. Forget it. You obviously have something on your mind. What's going on?

PHILIP

It's nothing.

MAGGIE

No, tell me.

PHILIP

Well...I broke up with Jenn the other day.

MAGGIE

Oh, Phil, I'm...I mean...

Philip smiles weakly.

PHILIP

You don't have to say anything. I know it shouldn't mean anything to you. And even for me, it's not a big deal. I should have ended it when I started seeing you.

MAGGIE

Phil, I never...

PHILIP

No, I know you knew about her, and you said you didn't care. It's really a good thing though. I wasn't being fair to her.

Maggie nods.

MAGGIE

Yeah, I guess not.

PHILIP

But it made me think...I mean, she must have known something was going on by the end—I was always sneaking around, making up excuses for why I couldn't see her...I'm relieved it's over, just so I don't have to deal with all the secrecy anymore. But that's what it's like—what it's been like this whole time—for you and Vincent.

MAGGIE

I guess so. I don't know if he suspects anything. I've been telling him that I'm working late now.

PHILIP

But still...I mean, God, Maggie, he's my best friend.

And he's your husband—you
still love him, don't you?

MAGGIE

What are you saying, Phil?
You want to end this?

PHILIP

No! No, Maggie, of course
not. You're the best thing in
my life...I just keep thinking
about what we're doing to
him...

MAGGIE

I know. You're right. But
what can we do?

Philip shakes his head and looks off into space.

PHILIP

I don't know.

MAGGIE

Well...we could tell him.
Maybe—

Philip quickly looks back at her.

PHILIP

No! Maggie, we can't.

MAGGIE

Phil, we can't keep it from
him forever. He's going to
find out sometime.

Philip shakes his head vehemently and sets his coffee mug
down hard on the counter.

PHILIP

No, Maggie. Think what it
would do to him. He's been
through so much. And he's my
best friend. I couldn't let
him know about us. I couldn't
do that to him.

MAGGIE
We're already doing it to
him.

Philip looks down and speaks softly.

PHILIP
I know, I know. But if he
doesn't know...

He looks up at her.

PHILIP
Don't worry. I'll think of
something. But we can't tell
him.

MAGGIE
Are you sure? There doesn't-

PHILIP
We can't tell him.

Silence. Philip looks at Maggie for a moment, then looks
out the window. Maggie nods and speaks softly.

MAGGIE
Okay.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Vincent's deck is slightly bigger than Philip's. Philip
shuffles his deck.

Vincent looks out into the bar and speaks softly.

VINCENT
Do you think I drove her
away, Phil? Was this all my
fault?

PHILIP
I know it was hard on her,
Vin. Your injury and all. But

you can't blame yourself.
Everyone makes their own
decisions.

VINCENT

Do you really believe that?

Philip sets down his shuffled deck.

PHILIP

Yeah, of course. We're the
only ones who can act for
ourselves.

VINCENT

But there must be things that
influence our decisions. We
don't live in a vacuum.

PHILIP

Of course there are. But the
final decision is always our
own.

Silence for a moment. Philip sips his drink.

PHILIP

Look, Vin. You can't do this
to yourself. You can't keep
asking yourself "what if?"
Thinking "if only I hadn't
gone to a movie that day, if
only I had taken Maggie with
me, if only I had left my
wallet at home and had to go
back to get it, then maybe
Maggie would still be alive."
Yeah, all right, maybe she
would. Or maybe it wouldn't
have mattered at all. Maybe...

Philip falls silent and looks out into the bar.

VINCENT

What?

Philip looks back at Vincent and lowers his voice.

PHILIP
Maybe you'd be dead too.

Silence.

PHILIP
I'm sorry.

Vincent nods, looking down at the table.

PHILIP
Look, what I'm trying to say
is that these things aren't
just completely random.
Everything that happens is a
product of individual
decisions. You decided to go
to a movie. Maggie decided to
stay home. This...burglar...
decided to break into your
house at that time. They're
all choices. Everyone
controls what they do.

Silence. Philip draws a card.

VINCENT
But what if they don't?

PHILIP
What?

VINCENT
Like all those people who
don't vote. What if people
don't make any choice at all?

PHILIP
That's still a choice.

Vincent smiles slightly.

VINCENT
Yeah, I guess you're right.

Silence. Play resumes. Vincent wins the hand.

VINCENT

Phil?

Philip draws a card and looks at it.

PHILIP

Yeah?

VINCENT

How did you know I was at a movie?

Philip looks up.

PHILIP

What?

VINCENT

When Maggie was...during the burglary. How did you know I was at a movie?

PHILIP

I don't know. I guess you told me. Or someone else did.

He looks back at his card. Vincent stares at Philip for a moment, then nods.

VINCENT

Right. I guess so.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Philip and Vincent watch a football game on TV.

PHILIP

You still follow the Cowboys?

Vincent watches the game and does not look at Philip.

VINCENT

Not really.

Both men look at the television.

PHILIP

They're having a great year.

Vincent nods.

PHILIP

What are they now—eight and three?

VINCENT

I don't know. Something like that.

Silence.

PHILIP

How's Maggie?

Vincent quickly looks up at him, then looks down.

VINCENT

She's fine.

PHILIP

What has she been up to? I haven't—

VINCENT

I think she's cheating on me.

PHILIP

What?

VINCENT

I think she's having an affair.

Silence. Philip stares at Vincent for a moment, then glances furtively around the room.

PHILIP

How can you tell? Has she said anything?

Vincent shakes his head.

VINCENT

I just know. I can tell.

He looks up at Philip.

VINCENT

She's not the same. When she's around me, it's like she's not even there, like she's...hollow.

PHILIP

Have you said anything?

Vincent shakes his head. He looks down and is quiet for a moment. Then he looks up at Philip.

VINCENT

I'm mad at her, of course. I can't believe she would do this to me. But this guy— whoever he is...

He pauses and looks down, then looks intently at Philip.

VINCENT

He's even worse than her. What kind of man does this? What kind of man...to someone like me...to a cripple...I would give anything to know who he is. It would almost be worth it to make him look me in the face, to...

PHILIP

To what? What would you do to him?

VINCENT

What he deserves. This is a man I could never forgive.

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie and Philip stand close together by the kitchen counter. Philip strokes Maggie's hair and kisses her lightly on the forehead.

PHILIP
You're beautiful, you know
that?

Maggie puts a hand on Philip's chest and looks down.

MAGGIE
I need to tell you something,
Philip.

PHILIP
What's wrong?

MAGGIE
I think I want to leave
Vincent.

She looks up at Philip.

PHILIP
What? And then...?

MAGGIE
What do you mean "and then?"
And then we can be together.

Philip takes a step back.

PHILIP
What about Vin?

MAGGIE
What about him? I don't care.
I can't deal with him anymore.
It's too much...

Maggie starts to get choked up but recovers.

MAGGIE
I want to be with you.

PHILIP
Maggie, he's my best friend. I
can't do that to him.

MAGGIE

What about me?

Philip looks away from her. Silence.

PHILIP

I think we should end this.

MAGGIE

What?

Philip looks her in the eyes but then looks down.

PHILIP

I don't think we should see
each other anymore.

Maggie takes a step back.

MAGGIE

But we...I don't understand...Why
are you saying this?

Philip grabs her upper arms gently.

PHILIP

He's my best friend, Maggie.
And he's your husband. He
needs us. Think what this
would do to him. After the
accident...

Maggie's eyes start to tear up.

MAGGIE

But...

PHILIP

I don't want to lie to him
anymore. I don't want to
betray my best friend. Maggie,
I love you, but...I love him
too.

Maggie starts to cry. She shakes away from Philip and turns
her back on him. Philip reaches out to comfort her.

PHILIP

Maggie...

She turns to face him and throws his hands away.

MAGGIE

No! I can't do it. I can't go back to him. Do you know what he's like now? I can't live with him anymore!

She advances on Philip. He reaches out to grab her arms.

PHILIP

Maggie, please...

Maggie shakes away and starts to hit Philip over and over in the chest.

MAGGIE

No, I won't let you do this! You fucking coward! I don't care about him anymore! Why don't you just tell him the truth?

Philip tries to control her arms but can't. She keeps hitting him, driving him back into the counter.

PHILIP

Maggie!

MAGGIE

I know! I'll tell him! You coward! I'll tell everything!

Philip pushes Maggie away for an instant.

PHILIP

Maggie, no! You're not going to say anything!

Maggie advances toward Philip again.

MAGGIE

Yes, Philip! Yes I am!

Maggie again begins to hit Philip. Philip's hand gropes the countertop behind him. There is a large sharp kitchen knife on the counter near his hands.

MAGGIE

I'll tell him everything!
Then you won't have to be so
scared to lie to him!

PHILIP

Maggie!

She continues to hit him. Philip's hand finds the knife on the counter and closes on the handle.

MAGGIE

Yeah, that's right, you
coward! I'll tell him!

Philip pushes Maggie away with one hand and brandishes the knife with the other.

PHILIP

Maggie, stop!

But Maggie moves forward again just as Philip raises the knife in front of him.

MAGGIE

I'll tell him my-

Maggie's eyes widen suddenly and she chokes and gasps. She looks down to see the knife embedded in her stomach. She clutches at her stomach, takes a step back, eyes wide and staring at Philip, then falls to the floor, dead.

Philip stands over Maggie's dead body, the knife still protruding from her stomach. He stumbles back against the counter in horror. He picks a folded dish towel up off the counter and dabs at sweat beads on his forehead with a trembling hand. His breath is short and shallow, but he forces himself to take two deep breaths. Then he takes the towel and walks unsteadily into-

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

There is a wooden jewelry box on the dresser. Philip, still quite pale, opens the box with the towel, removes Maggie's jewelry, and puts it in his pants pocket. He returns to-

INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Philip puts Maggie's cell phone in his pocket and wipes the counter clean with the towel. Avoiding the blood around her body, he squats down, removes the knife, wipes it clean, wraps it in the dish towel, and puts it in his jacket pocket. A tear rolls down his cheek and he wipes it away. He walks out of the apartment, closing the door behind him with his jacket sleeve covering his hand.

INT. PHILIP'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie and Philip, both 21, sit on Philip's bed.

MAGGIE

I need to tell you something,
Philip.

She stares at her hands folded in her lap.

PHILIP

Sure, what is it?

MAGGIE

Vincent is going to BU for
grad school next year.

PHILIP

I know, he told me. That's
great.

MAGGIE

Right. The thing is...I'm going
with him.

She looks up at Philip.

MAGGIE

We're moving in together.

Philip looks down and nods slowly. He looks quickly up at Maggie.

PHILIP

That's great Maggie. I'm...

He looks down again. Maggie puts her hand on his thigh.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Phil.

Silence.

MAGGIE

You okay?

Philip nods. He looks up and smiles faintly.

PHILIP

Yeah, actually I am. You know how I feel about you. But if it's not me, then I'm glad it's Vin. That's how I'd want it. I know you loved us both and...

MAGGIE

You don't have to-

Philip puts his hand on hers.

PHILIP

I know. It's okay.

He removes his hand from hers and she slides her hand off his leg.

PHILIP

I guess I should be hurt. And I am a little-I won't lie. But at the same time...

He looks down for a moment and then looks back up at her.

PHILIP

Maybe I always knew it would end up like this. And now

that it has, it's like it
happened already—some time
ago. Part of me is upset, but
part of me just feels...
relieved, like I was
expecting it to be harder.

He looks down and shakes his head.

PHILIP

I don't know. Does this make
any sense?

He looks back up at her. Maggie smiles and shakes her head.

MAGGIE

No. And yes. Maybe a little.

She leans over and hugs him.

MAGGIE

This isn't the end for us,
right?

Philip smiles a little.

PHILIP

No, of course not. We'll
always be close—all three of
us.

MAGGIE

Okay, good.

She hugs him again.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Vincent's deck is now twice as big as Philip's. Both men
sip their drinks between hands.

VINCENT

You said that our decisions
are affected by other things,

but that the final decision
is always our own.

PHILIP

That's right.

Vincent draws his top card and looks at it. Philip does the
same.

VINCENT

But how much do those outside
influences affect us? 50%?
75%?

PHILIP

Well they affect us, sure. We
base our decisions on
reasons. Sensible people
don't do things just because
someone tells them to,
without any good reason.

VINCENT

What if they're coerced?

PHILIP

That's different.

VINCENT

What if they're manipulated?

PHILIP

Like how?

Vincent draws two cards.

VINCENT

I don't know. I'm just
wondering: if people only
make decisions based on good
reasons, then how do bad
things happen? I mean take
the Holocaust, for example.
How the hell does that happen
if people only act on good
reasons?

PHILIP

Because there are evil people
in the world.

VINCENT

But was every German evil?
The Holocaust couldn't have
happened without them.

PHILIP

No, but...They were coerced.
Either they sided with Hitler
or they went to the
concentration camps too.
Besides, there was all that
propaganda. You know, blaming
Jews for Germany's downfall
and whatnot.

VINCENT

So they were manipulated.
Hitler preached German
national pride and everyone
bought in.

PHILIP

Yeah, I guess so.

VINCENT

And then, little by little,
the nobility of the German
spirit became the
extermination of the Jews,
and all those proud and noble
Germans followed right along.

PHILIP

Well, I'm sure they were
threatened as well.

VINCENT

But how many millions of
Germans were there who could
have stood up to Hitler?

PHILIP

Yeah, but he had the military too.

VINCENT

And they were all perfectly loyal to him?

Philip fidgets with his top card.

PHILIP

I don't know.

VINCENT

Think about it, Phil. Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia: is there any way for a dictator to hold power without the consent of the people?

PHILIP

Consent as in fear? As in not wanting to be tortured, executed in a public square, sent to concentration camps and gassed?

VINCENT

You're right. Those people had a choice between freedom and life. They chose life at the expense of freedom.

PHILIP

But how many people wouldn't do that? Not everyone is brave enough to face death that way.

Vincent smiles.

VINCENT

Now you're getting it. So what would you do Phil? What would you do, faced with that terrible choice between freedom and life? How much do you really value your freedom?

How much do you really value
that burden?

Philip slides back in his chair. Vincent sips his drink and smiles.

VINCENT

Those people bought into
their dictator's message—
whatever it was—because they
realized that what's even
more frightening than any
dictator is the total chaos
and anarchy that threaten
from the world outside their
control.

He leans forward and lowers his voice.

VINCENT

And so they were all ignorant
and happy, blissfully
ignorant of the truth they
had unwittingly discovered:
that life is meaningless and
capricious, and beyond the
grave there is only death.

CEMETERY - DAY

It is a cool and rainy day. A PASTOR stands behind Maggie's casket and delivers the eulogy in a quiet voice. Philip looks down at his hands folded in his lap.

PASTOR

"The race is not to the swift
or the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise
or wealth to the brilliant or
favor to the learned; but time
and chance happen to them
all..."

Vincent sits next to his and Maggie's PARENTS. He stares at the ground a few feet in front of him. The scene fades into—

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

Philip, Maggie, and Vincent, all 20, exit the Ambrose College football stadium. Maggie walks between Vincent and Philip with an arm around each man's shoulders.

VINCENT

Maggie, you could not play college football. You would get killed.

MAGGIE

Yes I could. I'm tough! A year of stuffing my face and lifting weights and I'd be all set.

PHILIP

Or you could just flash the other team and run around them while they stare at you.

Maggie pushes Philip away playfully.

MAGGIE

Quiet you!

VINCENT

No, that wouldn't work. Too many pads to take off.

Maggie pushes Vincent away.

MAGGIE

Hey!

PHILIP

All right then, it's settled. Let the training begin. Tomorrow morning, 6 AM, tackling practice followed by timed pad removal.

Maggie runs at Philip and jumps on his back, wrapping her arms around his neck and shoulders. Philip playfully tries to shake her off but is laughing too hard. Vincent watches them, shaking his head and smiling.

RETURN TO:

CEMETERY - DAY

The pastor continues the eulogy.

PASTOR

"No man knows when his hour will come: as fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them."

He pauses briefly and looks up from the scripture.

PASTOR

And so we mourn the tragic passing of Margaret and the evil times that befell her, yet we take solace in the thought that her worldly sufferings are no more and she rests now in eternal peace.

CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

The funeral service ends. The mourners approach Maggie's parents and Vincent to offer their condolences. Vincent and Maggie's attorney, FRANK, late 50s, shakes Vincent's hand and leans down to speak to him.

FRANK

Vincent, I'm so sorry for your loss.

VINCENT

Thank you, Frank.

FRANK

There is still the matter of Maggie's estate to be settled, plus her life insurance—when you're ready of course.

VINCENT

Thanks, Frank. I'll stop by
tomorrow morning.

Frank clasps Vincent's hand again and leans in to hug him with his left arm as Vincent does the same. He stands up and walks away. Philip steps up to Vincent. He sniffles slightly.

PHILIP

I'm so sorry, Vin.

Philip leans down and hugs Vincent.

VINCENT

Thank you. Thanks for coming.

They release the hug. Philip starts to stand but Vincent holds on to his shoulder.

VINCENT

Can we talk sometime soon?
Alone?

Philip nods.

PHILIP

Whenever you want.

VINCENT

Tonight. At the Station.

PHILIP

Of course.

He hugs Vincent one more time, then stands and walks away. Vincent watches him go for a moment, then turns to the next well-wisher.

RETURN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

It is late. The bar begins to empty out as the remaining patrons finish their last drinks.

Vincent scoops several cards off the table and adds them to his substantial pile of winnings. Having exhausted their cards, both men shuffle their decks. Vincent nods at Philip's deck, which has only a few cards remaining.

VINCENT

How many you got left, Phil?

Philip counts his cards and grimaces.

PHILIP

Four.

Vincent nods solemnly.

VINCENT

Well?

PHILIP

Okay.

Both players draw their top card and look at it. Vincent grins slightly. Philip draws a card.

VINCENT

I'll help you out, Phil.

He turns over his card, a nine. Philip nods and turns over his two cards, a six and a seven.

PHILIP

Guess I'll need some luck.

VINCENT

Looks that way.

Philip turns over his next card, a ten.

PHILIP

Eight. Not enough.

Slowly, he turns over his last card and looks at it. Then, very slowly, he lays it face up on the table. It is a Joker.

VINCENT

Sorry, Phil. It happens.

Philip nods slowly, staring out into the empty bar, and sits back in his chair.

PHILIP

Yeah.

Vincent gathers Philip's remaining cards and adds them to his pile. Silence for a moment. Vincent straightens the deck.

VINCENT

You know, I had that dream the other night. The maelstrom.

Philip looks back at Vincent.

PHILIP

What happened?

VINCENT

I let go.

Vincent slips the cards back into the box and puts the box in his jacket pocket.

PHILIP

And then what?

VINCENT

Nothing. I just...floated away on the current. And then I woke up.

Philip nods slowly and looks down at the table. Vincent finishes his scotch and looks at his watch.

VINCENT

All right. I'd better go. I need to take care of some things tomorrow morning.

Philip looks at Vincent, then nods and looks off into space.

VINCENT

You staying?

PHILIP

Yeah.

He pauses for a moment and then looks at Vincent.

PHILIP

No, I'll give you a ride.

VINCENT

Okay.

Philip finishes his drink. They both throw some money on the table, then Philip stands and they move toward the door, exiting to-

EXT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Philip helps Vincent into the passenger seat of his SUV, then carries his wheelchair to the trunk.

INT. PHILIP'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

In the front seat, Vincent puts on gloves, then removes a hypodermic needle from his pocket. Philip gets in the driver's seat and leans forward to turn on the ignition. Unseen, Vincent raises the needle toward Philip's neck.

SERIES OF SHOTS - COLLECTED FLASHBACKS

-- INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY -- Philip and a doctor help Vincent into a wheelchair as Maggie watches.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Why did this happen,
Phil?...Why did it all happen
like this?

-- INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - DAY -- Vincent hand-walks the parallel bars as Maggie and the therapist walk alongside him.

VINCENT (V.O.)

I just feel...like I've had the
wool pulled over my eyes my
whole life. I mean, why did I
even bother?

-- INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY -- Vincent and Philip watch the final play of the game; Philip and the fans in front of them stand, blocking Vincent's view of the field.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Fortune isn't turning a wheel—
she's shooting craps with your
fate. And sometimes she just
gets on a cold streak and
there's nothing you can do
about it.

Vincent stares at the backs of the fans in front of him as Philip and the other fans celebrate.

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY --
The papers are scattered on the floor, the vase broken;
Vincent shakes loose of Maggie's grasp and wheels away.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Did she want to leave me?

-- INT. CAFÉ - DAY -- Maggie and Philip sit at table for two, talking inaudibly.

PHILIP (V.O.)

She said that once...I don't
think that's what she really
wanted. She just didn't know
what else to do.

Philip puts his hand on Maggie's cheek and she kisses his fingers as they stare into each others' eyes.

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY -- A muffled cell phone's RING.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Whatever you said to her...
whatever you did...it helped
her.

Vincent enters, finds the phone in Maggie's purse, sees Philip's name on the screen, and listens to the message.

PHILIP (O.S.)

Hey, it's me. Just want to
make sure we're still on for
dinner tonight. Call me back.
I love you. Bye.

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIV. ROOM - DAY --

VINCENT (V.O.)

Do you know the biggest
problem with democracy, Phil?

Vincent watches TV; Maggie walks up behind him, kisses him
on the cheek, and exits through the front door; Vincent
turns off the TV and wheels into-

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY --

VINCENT (V.O.)

It's apathy. Most people
don't care enough to vote.

Vincent sits in front of a computer looking at an April
calendar on top some papers; he buys an airplane ticket to
St. Andrew's over the internet; the clock reads 12:43, and
Vincent sets the papers on the desk and exits the room.

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIV. ROOM - DAY --
Maggie stands at the front door of the apartment.

MAGGIE

Vincent? Are you ready?

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APMT. - BEDROOM - CONT. --

VINCENT

I'm coming.

At the dresser, Vincent unlocks Maggie's jewelry case.

VINCENT (V.O.)

The average person on the
street—if you told him that he
alone could pick the next
president, would he do it?

Vincent wheels into-

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONT. --

VINCENT (V.O.)

Of course not...he doesn't want
that responsibility, that
burden, of having to think, to
act, to choose.

Vincent removes everything from the kitchen counter, except
for a sharp kitchen knife and a neatly folded dish towel.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Vincent!

Vincent wheels into-

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APMT. - LIVING ROOM - CONT. --
Maggie waits for him.

VINCENT

Let's go.

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - DAY -- Alone in
the apartment, Maggie talks to Philip on her cell phone.

MAGGIE

...As soon you can. I just
dropped him off at a movie..
Yeah, I know. It's the first
time he's been out of the
house alone for months...I love
you too. Bye.

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY --
Maggie and Philip stand near the counter, drinking coffee.
The towel and knife are behind them on the kitchen counter.

VINCENT (V.O.)

But what if you didn't have to
make those choices—the big
decisions—right and wrong and
all that?

MAGGIE

Phil, we can't keep it from him forever. He's going to find out sometime.

Philip shakes his head vehemently and sets his coffee mug down hard on the counter.

PHILIP

No, Maggie...He's my best friend...I couldn't do that to him.

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - LIV. ROOM - DAY --
Philip and Vincent watch a football game on TV.

VINCENT

I think she's cheating on me.

They continue talking inaudibly.

VINCENT (V.O.)

You're faced with a big choice, someone tells you what to do, and you do it.

VINCENT

What kind of man does this? I would give anything to know who he is. It would almost be worth it to make him look me in the face, to...

PHILIP

To what? What would you do to him?

VINCENT (V.O.)

If people only make decisions based on good reasons, then how do bad things happen?

VINCENT

What he deserves. This is a man I could never forgive.

-- INT. VINCENT AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY --
Maggie and Philip stand by the counter, talking inaudibly;
Philip holds Maggie's arms, then Maggie shakes away and
starts to hit him.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Those people had a choice
between freedom and life...What
would you do Phil? What would
you do, faced with that
terrible choice? How much do
you really value your freedom?
How much do you really value
that burden?

Philip tries to control Maggie, but can't, and she keeps
hitting him, driving him back into the counter.

MAGGIE

I know! I'll tell him! You
coward! I'll tell him
everything!

Philip's hand finds the knife on the counter.

PHILIP

Maggie, stop!

Philip pushes her away and starts to raise the knife.

MAGGIE

That's right, I'll tell him
my-

Maggie steps forward as Philip raises the knife, stabbing
her in the stomach and killing her.

VINCENT (V.O.)

And so they were all ignorant
and happy, blissfully
ignorant of the truth they
had unwittingly discovered:
that life is meaningless and
capricious, and that beyond
the grave there is only
death.

Philip takes the knife and Maggie's cell phone and exits the apartment.

-- EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY -- Philip, Maggie, and Vincent exit the Ambrose College stadium—Maggie with an arm around each man's shoulders—talking and laughing inaudibly.

VINCENT (V.O.)

You know, I had that dream the other night. The maelstrom...I let go.

PHILIP (V.O.)

And then what?

The scene fades into—

-- INT. BAR - NIGHT --

VINCENT

Nothing. I just...floated away on the current. And then I woke up.

RETURN TO:

INT. PHILIP'S SUV - NIGHT

Philip looks up and his eyes widen suddenly when he sees the needle. Before Philip can make a sound, Vincent stabs him in the neck and presses the plunger. Philip gasps softly. His eyes close and his head slumps forward.

Vincent pockets the needle, gets out of the car, and begins to crawl toward the trunk.

EXT. FRANK'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Frank's office is in a high-rise in the city.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Frank sits at his desk with Vincent opposite him in his wheelchair. Frank looks through the papers on his desk.

FRANK

Well, that should do it.
Everything's been transferred
to your account, all of
Maggie's wishes have been
taken care of...

He looks up at Vincent.

FRANK

Anything else I can do for
you?

Vincent stares out the window.

VINCENT

No, that's it.

He looks at Frank.

VINCENT

Thanks, Frank.

FRANK

You're welcome.

Frank stands up and takes a folder off his desk.

FRANK

Here's your copy of all the
records and statements.

Frank hands the folder to Vincent. Vincent wheels toward
the door as Frank walks alongside him.

FRANK

Again, my condolences. Let me
know if there's anything more
I can do for you.

Vincent stops at the door and looks up at Frank.

VINCENT

I will. Thanks a lot.

They shake hands.

FRANK

Take care of yourself,
Vincent.

VINCENT

You too, Frank.

Vincent wheels out the door and down a hallway. Frank watches him go until he turns the corner at the end of the hall.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The elevator doors open and Vincent emerges. He wheels across the lobby and out the front door to-

EXT. FRANK'S OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A van and a DRIVER wait for Vincent outside. The van has a mechanical platform that lifts Vincent in his wheelchair into-

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

The driver gets in. He looks in the rearview mirror at Vincent.

DRIVER

Going to the airport, right?

Vincent nods while looking out the window.

VINCENT

Yes.

The driver starts the van and pulls away.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

A sign on the airport building reads "International Airport."

INT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

An AIRPORT EMPLOYEE wheels Vincent from the seating area at a gate onto the jetway leading to the airplane. A sign over the desk at the gate gives the flight information,

including the destinations, which are listed one above the other: "Miami, St. Andrews."

INT. AIRPLANE - CONTINUOUS

The airport employee wheels Vincent down the airplane aisle and helps him into his seat. Vincent stares out the window without moving and with a blank look on his face as the other PASSENGERS board the plane.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

SERGEANT MCCARTHY, male, 50s, sits at one of several desks in a large open room. DETECTIVE NELSON, male, early 30s, approaches and sets a folder on McCarthy's desk.

NELSON

Forensics came back on the Leonard case, Sarge.

McCarthy opens the folder and leafs through the papers inside.

NELSON

Not much there. Blood's all hers. No prints anywhere. The usual hair and fibers, and we lifted a couple footprints, but nothing to give us any leads.

McCarthy nods slowly, still leafing through the folder. Nelson waits a moment before speaking.

NELSON

I can't see it any way besides a burglary.

McCarthy GRUNTS noncommittally. Nelson waits.

NELSON

You still like the husband though, huh?

MCCARTHY

Nine times out of ten.

He finally looks up at Nelson.

MCCARTHY

Guy catches his wife in bed with another man, there's a fight, and she winds up dead.

NELSON

I know Sarge. But...

MCCARTHY

Yeah I know. The guy's a fucking cripple.

He shakes his head. Nelson nods slowly.

NELSON

No wheel tracks anywhere near the body. The whole thing's too clean. No way he coulda done it.

McCarthy nods slowly.

MCCARTHY

I know. I just don't like it.

Nelson half-sits, half-stands against McCarthy's desk. He looks out into the room.

NELSON

Guy even insisted his wife was faithful when we questioned him.

MCCARTHY

Wouldn't he?

NELSON

Yeah I know. But there just doesn't seem like any way it could be him.

McCarthy nods and sits back in his chair. Nelson remains leaning against the desk, staring out into the room. Silence.

Across the room, DETECTIVE WALLACE, female, late 20s, hangs up the phone at her desk. She stands and walks toward McCarthy's desk.

WALLACE

Just got a call, Sarge. Patrol found a body downtown. Young guy in the front seat of his SUV.

Nelson stands up abruptly. McCarthy SIGHS, leans forward, places his hands on his desk, and stands slowly.

MCCARTHY

Let's go.

RETURN TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Vincent continues to stare out the window with a blank look on his face. The scene begins to fade until only the outline of Vincent's face is visible, and finally even this outline disappears as the scene shifts to-

ISLAND OF ST. ANDREWS - BEACH - DAY

The sky is overcast and Vincent sits on the beach in his wheelchair facing the water. The only sound is that of the waves gently breaking on the shore.