

GENUINE

by

Mike Kalvoda

Mike@GoodCerberus.com
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#945255

BLACK SCREEN. WE HEAR THE CRIES OF A NEWBORN MALE.

BEGIN OPENING CREDITS.

FADE IN

DEEP CENTER SCREEN, A TINY IMAGE EXPANDS INTO FRAME.

MITCHELL -- the Newborn Male -- in a hospital incubator.

Alone. **CRYING.**

DISSOLVE TO:

THE TINY IMAGE EXPANDING INTO THE FRAME.

Mitchell -- two years old, dark features -- in a nursery playroom.

Alone. **CRYING.**

DISSOLVE TO:

THE TINY IMAGE EXPANDS INTO FULL SCREEN.

Mitchell -- four years old -- sits on the window ledge of an orphanage.

Alone. Rocking himself in auto-stimulation.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DONLEVY'S MASTER BATHROOM - DAY

JOHN DONLEVY -- mid-30s, mild-mannered -- holds his sobbing wife, **LIN** -- accomplished, Thai.

On the counter lays a home pregnancy test: negative.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC/CHANGING ROOM - DAY

A motherly **NURSE** draws the curtains and exits.

Shy, Lin unbuttons her blouse.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC/RECEPTACLE HATCHWAY - DAY

John opens the patient-side door. He leaves a specimen vial.

A **MALE LAB TECH** opens the lab-side door. He takes the specimen vial.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC/SPECIALIST'S OFFICE - LATER

John holds Lin's hand. A **SPECIALIST** studies the Donlevy's results -- then eyes John.

Lin looks out the window, **SEEING** a **YOUNG COUPLE** push a stroller.

EXT. DONLEVY'S CAR/HIGHWAY SHOULDER - LATER

Overlooking Lake Champlain. Inside, Lin holds an inconsolable John.

Cars pass.

INT. DONLEVY'S MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lin sleeps. John removes his earplugs and tiptoes out.

INT. DONLEVY'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John scrolls his phone.

INSERT: JOHN'S PHONE

Surrogacy sites.

INT. DONLEVY'S KITCHEN - DAY

John's holds up his phone. Lin argues.

An exhausted beat.

INT. DONLEVY'S STAIRWAY - MOMENTS LATER

John and Lin scroll his phone.

INSERT: JOHN'S PHONE

Adoption agencies.

INT. SAFE HAVEN - DAY

SANJARI -- 40s, compassionate -- and **MARIELA**, an adoption assistant -- show John and Lin **PHOTOS OF INFANTS**.

INT. DONLEVY'S HOME OFFICE - LATER

WORKMEN remove furniture. An **INTERIOR DESIGNER** shows a new sound-proofed window to John and Lin.

John answers his phone. Lin waits.

EXT. DONLEVY'S HOME OFFICE - TIME LAPSE

Inside, John and Lin wait.

Outside, seasons pass.

INT. ILLINOIS HOMEOWNERS CREDIT UNION - DAY

Lin helps **CLIENTS**. An **ASSISTANT** motions to the phone.

Lin answers -- resurgent.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Sanjari leads an excited John and Lin. They **SEE** Mariela on a park bench.

Beside, Mitchell sits.

END OPENING CREDITS**EXT. DONLEVY'S HOME - NIGHT**

CRICKETS.

INT. DONLEVY'S MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

John removes ear plugs and drinks a glass of water. He **SEES** Lin sleeping.

INT. DONLEVY'S HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

John shuts the stairway door.

He looks at photos hanging on the wall.

INSERT: PHOTO FRAMES

A black and white: young Lin with her deceased parents.

Mitchell's (unbeknownst to him) adoption picture.

A family portrait: Mitchell is now eight years old.

INT. MITCHELL'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John looks in.

Mitchell sleeps under a purple bedspread. He's surrounded by little league memorabilia and a keyboard with pianist awards.

John **SEES** the window **LEAK OUTSIDE AIR**.

EXT. DONLEVY'S HOME - MORNING

In an upscale neighborhood.

INT. DONLEVY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lin **HUMS**, scrambling eggs. She **HEARS PIANO PLAYING**.

INT. DONLEVY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Side by side, John and Mitchell **PLAY "FRERE JACQUES"**.

At the door, Lin records on her phone.

Sensing her, they start playing badly.

They all **LAUGH**.

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

Lin pulls into a parking spot.

JOHN, MITCHELL
(singing)
Frere, Jacques? Frere, Jacques? Dor
me vous? Dor me vous?...

INT. MALL/FIRST FLOOR - LATER

The family waits for a crowded scenic elevated to descend.

MITCHELL
What are we doing?

JOHN
Momma and Dad need weather
stripping for the windows.

LIN
Dad can't sleep if it's noisy.

The family holds Mitchell's hand and enters. **SHOPPERS** follow.

INT. MALL ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ascending. Mitchell takes in the view.

LIN
You didn't share the shopping list.

JOHN
You asked me to get Mitchell ready,
remember?

LIN
I'll do it.

Lin grabs John's phone. John lets go of Mitchell's hand.

INT. MALL/FOURTH FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Lin and John exit, fighting over the phone. Doors close.

JOHN
Mitchell!

INT. MALL ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Descending. Separated, Mitchell panics in an animalistic fit.
He **REPEATEDLY POUNDS** the safety glass.

INT. MALL ESCALATOR - CONTINUOUS

Lin and John race down.

INT. MALL ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Doors open. Shoppers enter, their strange faces looking down.

Mitchell fights his way out...

INT. MALL/FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

... into the arms of John and Lin. Mitchell **SOBS UNCONTROLLABLY.**

INT. MALL ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

An **ELDERLY WOMAN** notices a crack in the safety glass.

MITCHELL (V.O.)
 What is a family? A family is
 everything to me. I love my Momma
 and Dad very much...

INT. DOUGLAS ELEMENTARY/HOMEROOM - DAY

"Awards Day: Welcome Parents" is written on the white board. Mitchell reads his essay to **CLASSMATES** and **PARENTS.**

MITCHELL
 ... They are genuine. They gave
 birth to me. They are honest. They
 would never lie to me. A family is
 true. If they were lost in the
 woods, I would find them. They are
 the reason why I live. If anything
 happened to them, I don't know what
 I would do.

Lin looks at John. **APPLAUSE.**

Mitchell sits beside **DAVEY DIRK** -- awful kid, rotten tooth.

DAVEY DIRK
 (whispering)
 Hey Donlevy, ever wonder why you
 don't look like your chink mom?

Mitchell **SEES** Davey smirk.

INT. MINIVAN - LATER

Lin and John upfront. Troubled, Mitchell rides in the back.

LIN
 Momma and Dad liked your essay.

JOHN
Mitchell?

Mitchell looks out the window.

Lin and John trade looks. *It's time for "The Talk."*

INT. DONLEVY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Lin and John on the love seat. Mitchell sits on an ottoman.

JOHN
We love you, Mitchell. More than we
love ourselves. You're our son.

LIN
Try to understand. Your Dad and I
waited until you were ready.

JOHN
I never knew my biological dad. Do
you know that word?

Mitchell shakes his head.

JOHN (CONT'D)
He gave birth to me. But he ran out
on Grandma when I was your age. I
don't call my biological dad "dad".
(beat)
My real dad -- your Grandpa --
married Grandma after that. I wish
you could have met them.
(beat)
We're like that, Mitchell. A
family. We'll always be a family.
Momma and me couldn't biologically
have a child of our own. That's why
we adopted you.

No visible reaction.

LIN
None of this changes that we love
you.

JOHN
Mitchell?

INT. MITCHELL'S BEDROOM - DUSK

Mitchell **PLAYS "FRERE JACQUES"**.

INT. DONLEVY'S MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lin and John listen.

Mitchell **STOPS PLAYING**.

EXT. MUNICIPAL SOFTBALL COMPLEX - DAY

Illinois Homeowners Credit Union vs. Champlain Tree Service.
Chainlink separates **LITTLE LEAGUERS** from Parents.

A **COACH** -- college-age, black -- wears a Malcolm X hat.

COACH
Donlevy, you're up.

No response.

COACH (CONT'D)
Wake up, Donlevy. That's your name,
isn't it?

Mitchell tosses a wooden bat to home plate. He **SEES** John and Lin grab first row seats.

SLOW MOTION

A **PITCHER** underhands the ball.

Mitchell swings.

The bat **SHATTERS** on impact.

A projectile splitter flies through the air.

John's applause stops as he **SEES** the splinter spin towards his eyeball.

John shields himself. The splinter **SLASHES** John's wrist.

Unaware, Lin celebrates Mitchell's hit. She grabs John's wrist -- then **SEES** the blood.

END SLOW MOTION

His back to them, Mitchell rounds first base.

INT. DONLEVY'S MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

Lin puts a bandage on John's wrist.

LIN
Shouldn't've gotten so close.

They **HEAR** "FRERE JACQUES".

INT. MITCHELL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The **KEYBOARD PLAYS PRE-RECORDED MUSIC**.

INT. MITCHELL'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The sink fills with scalding water.

Shirtless, Mitchell wipes the mirror. He **SEES** his trimmed nails.

Mitchell plunges his hands into the sink.

A beat.

He pulls out. His hands are red -- the nails longer.

He embraces himself, digging his nails into his back.

Blood runs down his skin.

INT. DONLEVY'S MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

John removes ear plugs and drinks a glass of water. He **SEES** Lin sleeping.

INT. DONLEVY'S HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

John looks at photos hanging on the wall.

INT. MITCHELL'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John looks in.

Mitchell's bed is made. His keyboard is gone.

INT. DONLEVY'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Concerned, John **SEES** the stairway door is closed.

He opens it.

A **VIOLENT BACKDRAFT** from the downstairs inferno rushes out, instantly engulfing him.

INT. DONLEVY'S MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lin awakens to **SEE A ROLLING WALL OF FIRE**.

EXT. DONLEVY'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

The second floor **EXPLODES**.

Lin is **BLOWN OUT THE WINDOW**.

EXT. DONLEVY'S STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Chaos. **NEIGHBORS** hurry towards the blast.

In the opposite direction, Mitchell walks. He clutches a suitcase and the keyboard.

A police car intercepts him.

TWO OFFICERS get out.

Mitchell walks toward them.

They wait.

BEHIND MITCHELL, THE BACKGROUND DISSOLVES TO --

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Mitchell -- **MORPHING** into ten years old -- walks toward the bench.

A **JUDGE** and **LAWYERS** wait.

Mitchell walks toward them.

BEHIND MITCHELL, THE BACKGROUND DISSOLVES TO --

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Mitchell -- **MORPHING** into twelve years old -- walks towards his cell.

CORRECTIONS OFFICERS and **FELLOW DELINQUENTS** wait.

Mitchell walks toward them.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER/CELL - MOMENTS LATER

Sterile, sparse. The **DOOR SHUTS** behind him.

Mitchell sits on his bed.

Beat.

He rocks in auto-stimulation, moving in and out of shadow. With each rocking, he **MORPHS** in age.

Fourteen years old.

Sixteen.

Eighteen.

A genial but calculating twenty-one.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

A **GAVEL POUNDS**.

CUT TO:

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER/CELL - DAY

The **DOOR UNLOCKS**.

CUT TO:

INT. SAFE HAVEN - DAY

Mariela hands a photo to Sanjari.

INSERT: PHOTO

Eight year-old Mitchell's back, covered in fingernail wounds.

BACK TO SCENE

Sanjari adds the photo to a file, closing it.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALFWAY HOUSE - DAY

Undetectable amid modest homes. **A PIANO PLAYS "HALLELUJAH"**.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A banner reads "Repay. Repair. Rebuild." **RESIDENTS** listen to Mitchell play an untuned piano.

Case workers **GERRY-ANNE** -- 55, spirited Tar Heel -- and **JULIO** -- late 20s, stocky -- proudly observe.

Mitchell finishes. **APPLAUSE**.

GERRY-ANNE

Oh, Mitchell! You've come so far!

EXT. MITCHELL'S BACHELOR APARTMENT - DAY

Gerry-Anne, Julio and Mitchell haul moving boxes.

INT. MITCHELL'S BACHELOR APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Exposed toilet. Hot plate.

JULIO

It isn't much.

GERRY-ANNE

But it's a start -- a new start.
Songbird's gonna wake you bright-eyed.
You're gonna walk down to the temp place.
They know all about your music-playing.
Honey, you're gonna get your life back.

Embraces.

Gerry-Anne and Julio exit.

Mitchell **SEES** his full backpack.

EXT. MITCHELL'S BACHELOR APARTMENT - DAWN

BIRDS CHIRPING. Mitchell exits, backpack full -- keyboard sticking out.

He heads down the sidewalk.

EXT. TEMP AGENCY - LATER

Not yet open. **HIS BACK TO VIEW**, Mitchell waits outside.

An 18-wheeler pulls over. Mitchell gets in.

INT. 18-WHEELER - CONTINUOUS

LEIF -- 40, ex-biker, cat in the back -- welcomes Mitchell.

LEIF
Where ya headed?

MITCHELL
Home.

Leif shifts into gear.

EXT. SAFE HAVEN - DUSK

Dwarfed by the Chicago skyline. The L-Train passes.

INT. SAFE HAVEN - CONTINUOUS

5:30. Mariela leaves for the day.

MARIELA
Night, Sanjari.

SANJARI
Good night, Mariela.

Sanjari closes up.

Suddenly, she **SEES** Mitchell standing over her.

MITCHELL
I didn't mean to startle you.

SANJARI
The office closes at five-thirty.

MITCHELL
I need to locate my birth parents.

SANJARI
Sir, by law, our files are sealed.
Do you have a court order?

MITCHELL
No.

SANJARI
Then I am sorry.

MITCHELL
They're right behind you.

SANJARI
Are you certain we are the agency
who handled your adoption?

MITCHELL
You're the last one.

He exits.

INT. SAFE HAVEN/HALLWAY OUTSIDE - LATER

6:00. Sanjari locks up.

She steps inside the elevator.

INT. SAFE HAVEN/ELEVATOR SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The car **DESCENDS TOWARDS VIEW**.

INT. SAFE HAVEN/ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Sanjari **JANGLES KEYS**.

Through the open roof, Mitchell jumps down behind her.

INT. SAFE HAVEN/ELEVATOR SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The elevator stops.

INT. ELEANOR'S TENEMENT - DAY

CLASSICAL MUSIC ON CD. Twenty-year old furnishings and
amethyst samples. **ELEANOR** -- old 40 -- sits in the shadows.

Outside the screen door, Mitchell double-checks the address.

Their eyes meet.

MITCHELL
Eleanor K. Morris?
(beat)
I'm Mitchell Donlevy.

ELEANOR
Hello, Mitchell Donlevy.

LATER

Eleanor brews tea. Mitchell looks at piano-top photos. The pictures don't go beyond her collegiate years.

MITCHELL
You've always played?

ELEANOR
Not for a long while.

MITCHELL
Do you have any other photos --

ELEANOR
Not for a long while.

She hands him a stained mug.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Stopped telling the stamp people I was moving. Still get mail. Phone company charges six dollars a month for an unlisted number. Still get calls. A gal likes her privacy.

Mitchell smiles.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I look at you, I don't see me.

She looks at the photos.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I was twenty. He was thirty-nine, a Ph. D. My music was better with him. Chopin's "Raindrop Prelude in E Minor". Liszt's "La Campanella". Rachmaninoff in C Sharp Minor. I told him I was pregnant. He put twenties in my hand, kissed my forehead, then traipsed back to his pregnant wife and kid. I used the side door of a family planning clinic.

(beat)

This daddy doctor clamped my legs. Exposed my person. Shoved a tube up inside me. At three months, I felt you move. And in me, next to you, I felt another boy.

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

That daddy doctor stopped.

(beat)

I couldn't do that to twins. Fraternal's are 1-in-90. Identical? I was that one in 285. I played music every day. Ate right, slept right. The positions were right, but you were both premature. Your brother came out first. Somehow, the umbilical cord got tangled around his neck. They kept trying to hand you to me. I remember cars going by two stories below, and a construction site next to the building.

He **SEES** an unusual -- and unmistakable -- piece of amethyst.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Your father gave me that.

MITCHELL

Amethyst. That's my birth stone.

ELEANOR

I suppose it would be yours, too.

He grabs it, striking her in the abdomen. Eleanor gasps, unable to scream.

Mitchell pours his tea into a vase. **CHEMICAL REACTION.**

He selects a CD. The **STEREO PLAYS RACHMANINOFF IN C SHARP MINOR.**

She reaches for the amethyst. He picks it up.

MITCHELL

I couldn't help but notice. The birth certificate doesn't list the father.

ELEANOR

Sk-sk... Skoltak...

MUSIC CRESCENDOS. He raises the amethyst for the final blow.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - DAY

A traditional two-story on Lake Michigan. An SUV and Jaguar convertible are parked by a weathered Ford Ranger.

A cottage is in the rear. An extended pool house lays behind.

Off to the side, **RICHARD** -- 60 -- helps son **K.C.** -- 25, blue collar -- sweat a small transplanted oak tree.

K.C.

Little more to the left, Dad.

Richard pushes on the trunk. K.C. tamps down the soil.
Richard's wife, **VIRGINIA** -- 50s, classy -- observes.

RICHARD

What do you think, Virginia?

VIRGINIA

I don't think you went deep enough.
(off their glare)
I'm sure it's fine.

At a patio table, daughter **TRACY** -- 20, semi-confident, always long sleeves -- works on a genealogy chart. The family cat, **WALTER**, sits in the chair next to her.

MIRIAM -- 80, refined, wearing a Grandmother's ring and tailored blazer -- walks over from the cottage.

TRACY

Hey Grams, take a look?

MIRIAM

That would be favoritism. You may submit your chart with the rest of the class.

TRACY

I don't want to let you down.

MIRIAM

Tracy, the only times we let down others is when we are not true to ourselves.

From inside, **GERAN** -- K.C.'s eight year-old son, Mixed Race -- runs out with markers and a sign.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Where do you think you're going?

GERAN

I wanna show them my sign!

Geran holds up a family reunion sign.

MIRIAM

That is very nice. You may show them after they finish.

Geran plops down. He quietly colors.

TRACY
Hello? Favoritism?

Tracy's **PHONE RINGS**. The caller ID shows "Brian". She hits "decline".

MIRIAM
Who was that?

Tracy shrugs, resuming her work.

TRACY
Nobody.

The tree in place, K.C. and Richard follow Virginia to the patio.

GERAN
Dad, look at my sign!

K.C. barely glances at it.

K.C.
Great.

VIRGINIA
Geran, that looks wonderful!

K.C. wipes his sweat, tossing the rag on the table. Tracy and Miriam are repulsed.

MIRIAM
Kendrick Charles Skoltak.

K.C.
Sorry, Grams.

He picks up the rag.

TRACY
So gross.

K.C.
That's what happens when you work
for a living.

TRACY
Just because I don't get dirt under
my nails doesn't mean I don't work
hard.

K.C.
How hard is it to get an "A" in
your grandma's class?

MIRIAM
It is extraordinarily difficult.

A tense beat.

RICHARD
Let's start the afternoon, shall
we?

Richard walks inside. The family follows, leaving K.C. alone.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/COMMONS - LATER

Richard parks the SUV. He, Miriam and Tracy get out, blending with **STUDENTS** passing beneath Weber Arch -- two white pillars linked by a crescent. In the distance, the L-Train passes.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

An old building. Richard starts up five winding flights of stairs to the English Department.

TRACY
No time for coffee?

RICHARD
Henrietta set up a call with
Davidsen.

MIRIAM
Richard, are you publishing again?

RICHARD
That's up to Davidsen. It's a first
draft dissertation.

Sunglasses on, Mitchell watches the family say goodbye.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/PICK-STAIGER HALL - MOMENTS LATER

CLASSMATES pass convex, pointed-glass windows. Miriam and Tracy enter.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/PICK-STAIGER HALL/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Tracy **SEES BRIAN** -- 19, Type-A fratboy, buzzed -- waiting at the top of the stairs.

MIRIAM

Tracy?

TRACY

See you inside, Grams.

Miriam glances at Brian, then enters the auditorium.

BRIAN

You didn't pick up.

TRACY

I've got nothing to say to you,
Brian.

He grabs her by the wrist. She winces, breaking his grip.

BRIAN

God! I barely touched you.

She enters the auditorium. The **CLASS BELL RINGS**.

Brian heads to the restroom -- walking passed Mitchell.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/PICK-STAIGER HALL/RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alone, Brian relieves himself at a urinal.

The door opens.

Wearing sunglasses, Mitchell puts on sanitary gloves and looks around. He walks to a paper towel dispenser, feeling bolts.

Brian flushes and heads to the sink.

Mitchell struggles to remove the dispenser from the wall.

Brian washes his hands.

BRIAN

Dude, hold up. You gotta pull from
the bottom.

Brian helps loosen the dispenser into Mitchell's hands.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Now do you mind telling me what --

Mitchell **SLAMS** the dispenser into Brian's head.

He uppercuts Brian with it. Unconscious, Brian's body rag-dolls backwards through a stall door. Brian bounces off the toilet and crumples to the tile.

Mitchell props a still-breathing Brian over the toilet. He steps out from the stall, closing the door behind.

Mitchell reattaches the dispenser to the wall.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/PICK-STAIGER HALL - LATER

Miriam lectures to a packed house.

MIRIAM

In lieu of a final exam, passing or failing this quarter will be determined by the genealogy assignment: the "family tree".

Mitchell enters discreetly. He scans the crowd, **SEEING** Tracy.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

To reiterate, do not exercise your moral barometers. These charts are not to be edited. It is not relevant that your uncle is an alcoholic and you no longer refer to him as your uncle. He is your mother's brother, and therefore is your uncle. Genealogical tables break down lineage, not the breakdowns within family units.

Mitchell walks behind the top row.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Family is the weave work of society. No loose thread is to be disregarded, no matter if we disagree with its design. Family may be an earned term to some, but we use the established definition. That definition categorizes, divides, separates, unites and provides order...

Mitchell sits several rows behind Tracy. Miriam turns, sensing movement.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

... it provides order, stability...

Miriam scans faces. She spots Mitchell.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
... connection.

He smiles.

Then -- **COMMOTION OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM.**

MALE STUDENT (O.S.)
What the fuck?!

Heads turn.

MIRIAM
Remain seated --

The **MALE STUDENT** charges in.

MALE STUDENT
Someone fucking call 9-1-1!

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/PICK-STAIKER HALL - LATER

Students gathers. **PARAMEDICS** load Brian's gurney into an ambulance. Tracy looks to Miriam, who disapproves.

Tracy gets inside. As the Paramedics close the door --

BRIAN
(to Tracy)
This is your fault.

Miriam watches the ambulance drive off.

DUSK

Miriam sits on the steps, smoking. She checks a text message.

INSERT: MIRIAM'S PHONE

Richard: "Brian stable -- ironic, huh? Family with Tracy."

BACK TO SCENE

Sunglasses on, Mitchell approaches.

MITCHELL
You see what happened earlier?

MIRIAM
You are the young man who has been
"auditing" my class.

MITCHELL
Not officially.

MIRIAM
I gathered.

MITCHELL
The waitlist's really long.

MIRIAM
To answer your question, no. I did not see what happened during my three o'clock.

MITCHELL
It's a lot more peaceful now.

MIRIAM
Did you miss regular enrollment?

MITCHELL
I got here late. I tutor piano at Lutkin Hall.

MIRIAM
I loved the piano.
(off him)
I have rheumatoid arthritis.

MITCHELL
Is that genetic?

MIRIAM
Yes. Why do you ask?

He **SEES** her ring.

MITCHELL
Two stones. Two grandchildren?

MIRIAM
You are perceptive. Perhaps I ought to trade you out.

Miriam offers him a cigarette.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Do you smoke?

MITCHELL
No.

He takes one.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/SHAKESPEARE GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

Miriam and Mitchell stroll.

MIRIAM

When I teach, faces blur. Not yours.

MITCHELL

I guess I have one of those faces.

MIRIAM

That is not the reason. You show interest -- profound interest. You ought to join the family.

Mitchell is taken back.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Come by my office. My colleague also offers Sociology 303.

MITCHELL

I want your class.

MIRIAM

We use the same syllabus.
(off his hesitation)
Young man, what is your name?

MITCHELL

Mitchell... Donlevy.

MIRIAM

Why was that difficult to tell me?

His feelings are raw.

MITCHELL

Because that name belongs to a man who wasn't my father.

She simmers in regret.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Don't apologize. "No loose thread is to be disregarded, no matter if we disagree with its design."

A misstepped beat.

MIRIAM

Pardon, my family is waiting for me.

She starts back passed a noticeably sick tree.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/PICK-STAIGER HALL/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

A freshly-waxed floor. He follows her, but stops.

MITCHELL

Family comes first... That's the
greatest gift.

She turns to **SEE** him crying.

MIRIAM

I do apologize.
(beat)
Take off your glasses.

She steps forward. He doesn't.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

They will hurt your eyes, dear.

She unmask him.

She looks into his eyes.

He grips her wrist. Startled, she pulls back.

MITCHELL

Don't leave me.

MIRIAM

I have to go.

MITCHELL

Please don't leave me!

His grip tightens.

Miriam turns toward the auditorium.

MIRIAM

Take your hand off me!

In a surge of abandoned rage, Mitchell yanks her wrist snack-
back 180 degrees.

SLOW MOTION

Miriam fatally propels across the floor and through the
convex, pointed-glass windows.

END SLOW MOTION

EXT. CHICAGO MERCY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Establishing.

INT. CHICAGO MERCY HOSPITAL/WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Virginia plays trucks with Geran. K.C. sleeps. Richard holds Tracy. A **NURSE** approaches.

NURSE

Skoltak?

TRACY

I'm Tracy Skoltak.

NURSE

The phone call is for Richard Skoltak.

The family is bewildered.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

Miriam -- makeup concealing facial cuts -- lays in state. Richard and Virginia do a **FINAL VIEWING**.

RICHARD

She died alone. While we doted on the boy who abused my daughter.

VIRGINIA

Richard. It was an accident.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Tracy sits alone.

The front door opens...

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

K.C. holds Geran. Virginia reviews guest book signatures.

VIRGINIA

Lloyd and Shirley were here. Troy and Rashaan.

K.C.

The reunion got an early start.

He sets down Geran.

K.C. (CONT'D)

Okay, you're getting heavy. Go sit
by Grandpa.

They **SEE** Mitchell -- emotional -- approach the casket.

GERAN

Who's that?

VIRGINIA

I don't know. Should we?

Mitchell moves to sign. Virginia hands him the pen, reading.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Have we met?

MITCHELL

I knew Dr. Skoltak through
Northwestern.

VIRGINIA

Her students and colleagues have
been wonderful. I'm Virginia.

A reverential moment.

MITCHELL

Hello, Virginia.

VIRGINIA

This is my grandson, Geran.

MITCHELL

Hello, Geran.

VIRGINIA

That's his daddy, K.C.

K.C. gives her a look.

K.C.

I'm her son.

K.C. and Mitchell trade stares.

MITCHELL

Hi.

VIRGINIA

Father, come meet one of Miriam's
students.

Mitchell **SEES** Richard approach.

Richard puts a hand on Mitchell's shoulder.

RICHARD
Thank you for coming.

MITCHELL
Thank you... for having me.

Mitchell shakes his hand.

K.C. watches. Something is off.

K.C.
Dad.

They turn to **SEE** a **FUNERAL DIRECTOR** close the casket.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
At this time, we'll proceed to
internment. We request the family
ride behind the coach.

Virginia eyes Mitchell -- then Tracy.

VIRGINIA
Tracy, honeypie?

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

Mitchell hovers as Richard, K.C. and Geran get into a limousine. Virginia hands Tracy keys.

VIRGINIA
There's a social afterwards at the
Dean's Mansion. You don't have to
attend.

TRACY
Dad doesn't want me there.

VIRGINIA
Don't say that. It's up to you.
(to Mitchell)
Did you come alone?

MITCHELL
I was going to ride share.

VIRGINIA

Ride with my daughter. Tracy, this is Mitchell, one of Grams' students.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

At this time, we'll proceed to the memorial garden.

Put on the spot, Tracy gets into the SUV.

Virginia smiles at Mitchell.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Tracy turns on her headlights. A **KNOCK** on the window.

Tracy unlocks Mitchell's door. He gets in.

Tracy drives.

MITCHELL

Music?

TRACY

Knock yourself out.

He finds a **STATION PLAYING PIANO: "TIME TO REMEMBER"**.

Tracy softens.

Mitchell looks straight ahead.

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The SUV joins the procession at a stoplight.

In mid-turn, the limousine pauses for traffic.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Tracy stares at Richard in the limousine.

MITCHELL

I wish there was time for coffee.

Tracy turns to Mitchell.

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The procession continues, funeral flags flying.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/NORRIS UNIVERSITY CENTER/STARBUCKS - LATER

Tracy and Mitchell sit. A **SLOVENLY EMPLOYEE**, 21, cleans.

TRACY

Welcome to Norbucks.

MITCHELL

As in Northwestern and Starbucks?

TRACY

Norris Center. You know about
Primal Scream: everyone gathers the
Sunday before finals?

He shakes his head.

TRACY (CONT'D)

You've missed out on a lot.

MITCHELL

I got to audit your grandmother's
class. You were close, weren't you?

His directness startles her -- as does his sincerity.

TRACY

She willed you to be like her.
Well, she tried to.

MITCHELL

I'm sorry.

TRACY

You've got nothing to be sorry
about.

(beat)

Eighty years old: still teaching.
She stuck around hoping we'd do a
class together. I failed her.

MITCHELL

You were one of her best students.

TRACY

I mean the last time I saw her.

Mitchell absorbs.

TRACY (CONT'D)

You know, she lived with my parents and me since I was little.

MITCHELL

And your brother.

TRACY

K.C. secretly dropped out of high school to support some psych ward case he knocked up. She took off after she had the baby. Then K.C. showed up with a son.

MITCHELL

How'd your parents take it?

TRACY

Mom raised my nephew like he was her own. Dad never got over K.C. hiding a son for a whole year. Dad has this thing about absolute honesty.

Mitchell lets it all sink in.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Excuse all this. It's caffeine and lack of sleep.

MITCHELL

It's alright.

TRACY

K.C.'s the fuck up in the family. At least I'm not the watchman who let the Trojan Horse in.

(beat)

What about your family?

MITCHELL

There was no family.

TRACY

No family?

MITCHELL

(resolute)

I was adopted.

SLOVENLY EMPLOYEE

I gotta close. You two gotta leave.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/NORRIS UNIVERSITY CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

They walk towards the SUV.

TRACY
Hope I didn't weird you out.

MITCHELL
No.

TRACY
My Mom didn't? Playing matchmaker?

MITCHELL
I didn't get that.

TRACY
Didn't want you to think she was trying to set us up or something. I don't want or need that.

MITCHELL
Tracy, I rode with you. We talked.

TRACY
Okay, good. I mean, the whole timing's off anyway. Funeral. Family reunion.

MITCHELL
When is that?

TRACY
Not sure. Mom's sending out invitations. Why?

MITCHELL
You're right. You don't need or want something like that.

He keeps walking.

TRACY
Wasn't I taking you home?

MITCHELL
It's the other side of Chicago.

TRACY
I'd like to see where you live.

He points to her phone.

MITCHELL
 Try Find My Friends.
 (beat)
 Would you like to see where I
 tutor?

TRACY
 When?

MITCHELL
 Week nights. Lutkin Hall.

TRACY
 How about Monday?

He nods. Curiously incomplete, she watches him walk away.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/L-TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

Crime-worn. Mitchell waits.

INT. L-TRAIN - LATER

Graffitied. A few sketchy **PASSENGERS**. Mitchell is unfazed.

EXT. MITCHELL'S BUNGALOW - LATER

Adjacent to an auto repair shop. **GANGBANGERS** leave Mitchell alone. He unlocks the door.

INT. MITCHELL'S BUNGALOW - CONTINUOUS

Small, bare. A workout bench. Naked, Mitchell **RECORDS LISZT'S "LA CAMPANELLA"** on the keyboard.

The **KEYBOARD PLAYS IT BACK**.

Mitchell stares at the unusual piece of amethyst.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - NIGHT

Tracy parks the SUV by K.C.'s truck and goes inside.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Understated and tasteful. A baby grand piano the centerpiece. Tracy walks through. K.C. watches TV, eating junk food.

K.C.
How was your date?

TRACY
How's Mom and Dad's food? Mom and
Dad's electricity?

K.C.
Hey. I help out. I've got my own
company --

TRACY
I pay rent!

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tracy passes Richard, doing laundry. She enters her room.

RICHARD
Anything for the wash? No?

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/TRACY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dirty clothes are scattered. Tracy stares in the mirror.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - MORNING - TIME LAPSE

CLOSE ON the transplanted oak tree. A green leaf starts to
lose its chlorophyll.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/KITCHEN - DAY

Richard cooks breakfast. Geran "helps". Virginia starts
invitations.

VIRGINIA
Which version are you on with
Davidsen?

RICHARD
Oedipus? The final draft.

VIRGINIA
I thought you were doing changes?

RICHARD
First, I write the final, then I
pay Henrietta to downgrade it into
rougher form. I turn those in;
their editors request revisions.

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

They keep their jobs, I maintain autonomy.

(to Geran)

Sweetie, you're getting eggshells in the bowl.

VIRGINIA

Father, how do you feel about postponing the reunion?

They look at each other.

RICHARD

Wouldn't it be more work than not postponing?

VIRGINIA

I can coordinate. The caterer. Photographer. The grounds.

RICHARD

K.C. does a good job.

VIRGINIA

He always does. But a reunion right after a funeral? What's protocol?

RICHARD

Catholics attends a lot of funerals.

(to Geran)

Sweetie, don't pick out the eggshells with your fingers.

Tracy enters.

TRACY

Would it be okay if I brought someone home?

They look at her. Richard softens.

RICHARD

Only if he does his own laundry.

TRACY

For, like, dinner.

RICHARD

Who?

TRACY

No one. But if I met someone.

RICHARD

"Someone".

TRACY

Yeah.

VIRGINIA

I think that would be a wonderful idea.

RICHARD

We'll discuss on the carpool home.

TRACY

I'm staying on campus later.

RICHARD

With "someone"?

Tracy leaves. Virginia swats Richard.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL - NIGHT

A foliage-covered 1940s building.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/PRACTICE ROOM HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tracy passes **MUSIC STUDENTS**.

She **SEES** a poster advertising a Chicago Symphony Rachmaninoff retrospective.

She spots Mitchell through the muted glass in a module. He finishes tutoring **LIZETTE** -- junior high age.

Tracy watches, noting a stainless steel metronome, ticking.

Mitchell **SEES** Tracy. Lizette exits.

MITCHELL

Flatten those fingers next week.

LIZETTE

Thank you, Mr. Donlevy.

TRACY

Looks like Northwestern's expanding enrollment.

MITCHELL

Lizette's the choir director's daughter.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/PRACTICE MODULE - CONTINUOUS

Tracy enters. Mitchell closes the door.

TRACY

You know, you're not far from Dad's office. University Hall.

MITCHELL

English Department?

TRACY

He's Chair.

MITCHELL

Have a seat.

She sits on the bench, facing him.

He gestures for her to 180. She does.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Knock yourself out.

TRACY

I haven't done this in a while.

MITCHELL

When something comes back to you, you feel it.

From behind, he lifts her hands onto the piano.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

We hear music before we're born.

TRACY

Wish I could remember what was playing.

He places his hands over hers, almost touching.

MITCHELL

I do. Some people don't remember their childhood. I remember mine. And everything before...

He leans.

Tracy shies away, hitting an **AWKWARD NOTE**.

TRACY

Sorry.

Mitchell lays his hands on hers.

MITCHELL
Is this okay?

TRACY
It's okay.

His fingers above gently press hers below, manipulating hers.

TRACY (CONT'D)
Is it supposed to tickle?

MITCHELL
Relax. Let it take you back.

Slowly, her **PLAYING** of "YOU" grows confident, beautiful.

She marvels.

TRACY
I can't believe it.

He closes his eyes, feeling the music.

She looks at him -- drawn to him.

Her sleeves droop into the keyboard, affecting her playing.

Mitchell opens his eyes, gently pushing her sleeves back.

Tracy stops playing and recoils.

Startled, Mitchell looks at her.

MITCHELL
He did something to you.
(off her)
Brian.

TRACY
No.

MITCHELL
You can trust me.

Again, his directness startles her -- as does his sincerity.

TRACY
Not here...

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The **DOORBELL**. Virginia answers, beaming. Richard ushers Mitchell inside. Walter looks on.

VIRGINIA
It's nice to see you again,
Mitchell.

RICHARD
Here, let me take your coat.

MITCHELL
Such a lovely home.

VIRGINIA
Thank you. Tracy!

MITCHELL
Oh, you have a piano.

LATER

Richard listens as Mitchell **PLAYS "A BEAUTIFUL DREAM"**.

Tracy **SEES** Virginia smile at her, and rolls her eyes.

Enthralled, Geran walks closer.

Mitchell shows off. Geran lights up.

Mitchell **SEES** Richard happy -- they trade smiles.

Mitchell slides over. Geran sits. Mitchell **PLAYS CHOPSTICKS**.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)
Watch my hands. Do what I'm doing.

Geran does -- naturally.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)
You've got it.

The **FRONT DOOR SLAMS**. Everyone turns to **SEE** K.C.

K.C.
Truck was giving me problems.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/DINING ROOM - LATER

All seated, winding down a formal meal with wine. K.C.'s arms are on the table, watching Geran watch Mitchell.

VIRGINIA

Richard and I picked out this china
for our wedding.

Tracy is embarrassed.

RICHARD

Virginia did. I nodded.

VIRGINIA

Mitchell, you have quite a gift.
How long have you been playing the
piano?

MITCHELL

I started when I was Geran's age.
(to Richard)
He's got natural talent. If you're
interested, I could tutor him.

K.C. waves for Mitchell's attention.

K.C.

How much?

MITCHELL

Free of charge. I have full use of
Northwestern's practice modules. He
can develop at his own pace, like I
did at his age.

K.C.

These modules -- what are they?

MITCHELL

State of the art. Soundproof --

K.C.

They supervised? People watch?

An uncomfortable beat. Mitchell nods. Tracy brow-beats K.C.

GERAN

Can I?

K.C.

The hell do I care.

Richard **SCOFFS**. Virginia forces a smile.

VIRGINIA

I was wondering when that piano
would turn out to be more than an
expensive knickknack.

K.C. grabs a beer from the fridge.

K.C.
Where ya from, Mitch?

MITCHELL
It's Mitchell. Champlain, Illinois.

K.C.
I think we know Champlain is in
Illinois. Your family's there?

MITCHELL
Not anymore.

The family glares at K.C. He brushes it off, leaving.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)
Tracy tells me you're having a
reunion.

VIRGINIA
We are! There's so much left to do.

MITCHELL
When --

GERAN
You guys want to play a game?

TRACY
Sure. Help me clear the table.

Mitchell starts removing plates. He **SEES** a sealed invitation
to the family reunion.

RICHARD
You don't have to do that.

LATER

All play an older version of "Life". Geran spins the wheel
and moves his car.

GERAN
"Buy Office Building. Pay
\$100,000."

RICHARD
He bought a whole building for
that? On a teacher's salary?

TRACY
Need another car, Dad?

Mitchell **SEES** Richard's colored pegs fall out. Richard spins.

RICHARD
I have landed on every conceivable
"conceivable" space.

VIRGINIA
Some people have their priorities.

TRACY
"Adopt a boy and a girl."

She and Mitchell glance at each other.

RICHARD
Five thousand dollar from each of
you for presents, thank you.

Mitchell spins. He moves his car.

MITCHELL
One, two, three... four.

He lands on "**REVENGE**".

TRACY
Who's it gonna be? Who's it gonna
be?

K.C.
Big surprise.

MITCHELL
Richard, let's go back.

RICHARD
I'm a family man!

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Baseball **PLAYS ON TV**. K.C. fights off sleep on the sofa.
Geran puts himself to bed -- good night kisses from Richard
and Virginia.

RICHARD
Good night, sweetie. I love you.

GERAN
Night... Mitchell.

He hugs Mitchell.

From the kitchen, Tracy is taken by this.

Mitchell **SEES** a dated **FAMILY PICTURE**. Off the glass, his **REFLECTION CREATES AN OPTICAL ILLUSION**, putting Mitchell in the portrait replacing K.C. -- and beside Richard.

RICHARD

We need a new family portrait.
Virginia pulled that one from the
lake house -- it's our retreat.
Miriam has an armoire there filled
with every photo the family has
ever taken.

MITCHELL

Your family... is complete.

Richard hands Mitchell a lone brandy snifter, escorting him to the back porch. K.C. watches.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME/BACK PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

In a rocking chair, a buzzed Mitchell sips a full brandy.

MITCHELL

Potent.

Richard sits, puffing a cigar.

RICHARD

Very smooth. You're not driving?

MITCHELL

No.

RICHARD

You'll have to excuse Kendrick.
He's a little rough around the
edges. A lot, actually.

(beat)

I look at him and his sister, and I
can't fathom two children more
opposite. "Fatherhood is an anomaly
where the created bears little
resemblance to the creator, where
connection is learned rather than
instinctual."

MITCHELL

Is that from a book?

RICHARD

It's my dissertation. I'm
publishing this spring.

MITCHELL
What's your inspiration?

RICHARD
"Oedipus Rex".

MITCHELL
Father and son, strangers on the
same path. I'd love to read it.

RICHARD
You flatter me.

MITCHELL
I would never do that, sir.

Tracy steps out from the door -- how long has she been there?

RICHARD
Tracy, I've been boring your
friend.

MITCHELL
No, not at all.

Richard smiles and puts out his cigar.

RICHARD
Good night, Mitchell. I hope to see
you again.

He heads inside. Tracy pours his brandy into her coffee.

She sits on the railing, staring out across Lake Michigan.

MITCHELL
I like your family.

Her mind is elsewhere.

TRACY
Can I show you something?

MITCHELL
It's getting late.

TRACY
You said I could trust you.

An awkward beat.

TRACY (CONT'D)
It's in my room.

Hiding his nerves, he downs his brandy.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Nightlights. Mitchell follows Tracy passed closed doors. She disappears inside her bedroom.

He stops. He senses someone watching.

It's Walter.

Tracy sticks her head out. Mitchell follows.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/TRACY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell enters.

TRACY
Close the door.

He does. Mitchell **SEES** Tracy's family tree assignment.

MITCHELL
You finished it. It looks...

Next to the assignment lay sharp objects: scissors, nail file, letter opener.

He **HEARS THE DOOR LOCK**. Mitchell turns to **SEE** her standing there, taking off her blouse.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)
Don't --

Tracy **REVEALS** self-inflicted cuts mapping her arms.

TRACY
What Brian and I had wasn't real.

She staggers onto the bed.

MITCHELL
You had too much brandy coffee.

TRACY
Don't leave me.

Reluctantly, he sits down.

MITCHELL
This is what... friends are for.

Now his brandy kicks in.

She looks into his eyes -- it's the same look in his.

Before Tracy can make a move, Mitchell embraces her.

She embraces him back.

A beat.

Their hands start to explore.

He loses consciousness.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/HALLWAY - LATER

Walter cleans himself.

A beat.

Slightly disheveled, Mitchell exits Tracy's bedroom. He closes the door behind him.

He looks around, then quickly leaves.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - NIGHT/DAY - TIME LAPSE

CLOSE ON the transplanted oak tree. The green leaf loses all its chlorophyll, dying into gold.

It falls from the tree.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - DAY

Halloween decorations up.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL/ENGLISH DEPARTMENT - DAY

Richard walks out of his office, approaching his secretary, **HENRIETTA** -- 60.

RICHARD

Thank you for sullyng my
dissertation.

HENRIETTA

I threw in a couple grammatical
errors and a typo. No extra charge.

RICHARD
Sending to Davidsen.

He gets out his phone.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
VenMo-ing you.

HENRIETTA
The cruise line thanks you.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Richard enters.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Richard finds Mitchell's name on a practice schedule board.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Richard **SEES** inside Mitchell's practice module. Avoiding Tracy, Mitchell completely focusses on Geran, who plays.

Tracy watches only Mitchell.

Richard notices.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL - LATER

The SUV is in the rear parking lot. Richard prepares to drive. Mitchell goes shotgun with Mitchell.

Tracy gives Mitchell a look, then rides upfront.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY - LATER

The SUV passes Lake Michigan.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Geran dangles a fob over his mouth, as if to swallow it.

MITCHELL
You could use that to let yourself
into practice when I'm not there,
or you could eat it.

RICHARD
Wait for dinner.

He reads a text message.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Definitely wait for dinner.
Virginia's dealing with caterers.

TRACY
I'll make brandy coffee after.

Mitchell freezes.

Richard mistakes the embarrassment for flirting.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - LATER

The SUV parks alongside K.C.'s truck and the Jaguar. Virginia greets everyone.

TRACY
K.C.'s home early.

VIRGINIA
Just his truck. It gave out this morning.

RICHARD
You'll have to excuse the house,
Mitchell.
(to Virginia)
We'll order in.

VIRGINIA
Actually...

They go inside.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Richard marvels. The place is clean. A delivery meal awaits.
MITCHELL'S KEYBOARD PLAYS THE RECORDED LISZT "LA CAMPANELLA".

RICHARD
When did you have time?

VIRGINIA
I didn't. Mitchell did while I was away.

MITCHELL
Before my tutorials. I hope that
was okay.

RICHARD
"Hope that was okay"? Yes!

VIRGINIA
And he vacuumed, dusted.

Mitchell lights candles.

MITCHELL
I hope everyone likes chicken kiev?

GERAN
I do! I do!

RICHARD
Mitchell, you didn't have to do
this.

MITCHELL
I wanted to.

Tracy looks at Mitchell.

TRACY
That was a nice thing you did for
them.

MITCHELL
And you.

The **FRONT DOOR CLOSSES**. K.C. enters.

K.C.
Had to take the L.

He stops short at the sight of Mitchell.

MITCHELL
No need to anymore. It was your
battery heads: a lot of sludge and
build-up.

K.C.
You went into my truck?

MITCHELL
I only wiped them down.

K.C.
You went into my truck?

VIRGINIA
Kendrick Charles Skoltak.

A begrudging beat.

K.C.
Thanks.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/DINING ROOM - LATER

Tracy and Virginia clean up.

VIRGINIA
Mitchell is very nice.

TRACY
I guess.

VIRGINIA
How are things going?

TRACY
Maybe I should ask you and Dad.

Tracy **SEES** Mitchell and Richard on the back porch.

VIRGINIA
Your father and I were friends
first.

TRACY
What changed it?

VIRGINIA
I did.

Tracy thinks.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/BACK PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Only Richard drinks brandy. Tracy enters.

TRACY
Mitchell, what were we playing the
first time?
(off him)
In the practice module?

MITCHELL
I don't remember.

TRACY
Something Russian.

RICHARD
Tchaikovsky. Rachmaninoff --

TRACY
Rachman-... that. Isn't the Chicago
Symphony doing a retrospective or
something?

RICHARD
You two should go.

TRACY
When are they doing it?

MITCHELL
Next Friday.

TRACY
That's the reunion.

An awkward beat.

RICHARD
What are you doing next Friday,
Mitchell?

For the first time, Mitchell looks at Tracy.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME/BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Geran's sign greets. A large tent covers the patio. Tables and strings of white lights abound. Lake Michigan shimmers in the background.

TUXEDO-ED SERVERS attend to mingling **RELATIVES**. Richard and Geran catch up with **LLOYD** and **SHIRLEY** -- 50s, "out there". Lloyd leans down, mussing Geran's hair.

LLOYD
Look at Geran! Aren't you knee-high
to a grasshopper!

RICHARD
How's Ottawa?

SHIRLEY
Good. Real good. Can't complain.

Mitchell walks in front of Tracy.

MITCHELL

Who's that?

TRACY

Aunt Shirley. She's Mom's sister.
Can't miss Uncle Lloyd.

Mitchell revels.

MITCHELL

All this family... thanks for
inviting me.

TRACY

Dad invited you.

K.C. chats with **TROY** and fiancé **RASHAAN** -- peers, classy.

TROY

Come visit us in Atlanta. The condo
reminds me of you guys' lake house.
It has an extra bedroom Rashaan
uses as an office. He's launching a
classmate app. Oh, and next summer,
we're getting married in Canada.
You're invited, of course.

RASHAAN

Cousin-to-be!

They greet Tracy. K.C. glares at her and Mitchell.

TRACY

Hey! You both made it!

TROY

(re: Mitchell)
Tracy found a friend.

TRACY

Sorry. My cousin, Troy. Cousin-to-
be, Rashaan. This is Mitchell.

RASHAAN

Friend, not family? You sure?

Rashaan stares at Mitchell.

RASHAAN (CONT'D)

You got the whole Skoltak thing
going. Deep eyes, Roman chin --

TROY

Stop.

K.C.

Trace, can I talk to you for a sec?

He pulls her away.

K.C. (CONT'D)

What's your boyfriend doing here?

TRACY

He's my friend. And Dad invited him, not that I have to explain anything to you.

K.C.

He's not family.

TRACY

Sometimes, that's what people say about you.

Tracy leaves a stung K.C.

NIGHT

A STRING QUARTET PLAYS SLOW MUSIC. Richard and Tracy dance among Relatives. Tracy **SEES** Mitchell and Virginia at a side table.

MITCHELL

Terrific reunion, Mrs. Skoltak.

VIRGINIA

Call me Virginia. You've been a real blessing to this family. You're pretty much one of us.

K.C. hears this. He **SEES** that Mitchell is moved.

MITCHELL

Thank you. Virginia.

A beat.

VIRGINIA

How's it going?

MITCHELL

... Fine.

VIRGINIA

Are you and Tracy getting along?

MITCHELL

We're friends.

Virginia tries to decipher.

Richard returns with Tracy. He extends his hand to Virginia, who joins him on the dance floor.

Tracy waits for Mitchell. He dutifully follows her to the floor, maintaining polite space.

TRACY

You okay?

Mitchell nods.

TRACY (CONT'D)

It means a lot, what I shared.
Trust starts with friendship.

MITCHELL

I value our friendship. I don't
want anything to get in the way of
that.

She notices Mitchell staring at Richard and Virginia, who exchange quiet, tender words.

A jealous K.C. watches as Richard smiles at Mitchell.

RICHARD

I've been hoping for something like
this, after Brian.

VIRGINIA

Not all women are attracted to men
who remind them of their fathers.

Their dance slows.

RICHARD

Leave the past in the past.

VIRGINIA

You and your absolute damned
honesty.

RICHARD

Not here. Not now.

A tense beat.

THUNDER.

Mitchell **SEES** clouds roll off Lake Michigan. The **MUSIC FINISHES.**

Richard beckons Tracy into the Pool House.

TRACY
Be right back.

Tracy heads inside with Virginia. Curious, Mitchell starts to follow when K.C. steps in his path.

K.C.
Family only.

K.C. disappears into the Pool House. Mitchell peeks in.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/POOL HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell **SEES** Lloyd and Shirley on a white cyclorama. A **PHOTOGRAPHER** snaps their portrait. Troy and Rashaan watch.

LLOYD
Next victims!

Behind the cyclorama, the Skoltaks empty their pockets and file on. K.C. **SEES** Tracy's phone. On impulse, he checks it.

INSERT: TRACY'S PHONE

Swiping the Find My Friends App. Finding Mitchell's number.

BACK TO SCENE

K.C. memorizes it.

VIRGINIA (O.S.)
Where's Kendrick?

K.C. appears, sitting by Geran and Walter. Richard glares.

RICHARD
Join the family.

PHOTOGRAPHER
The count of three, ready? One...

SNAP. SNAP. The family **LAUGHS.**

K.C. eyes Mitchell standing in the shadows.

CLOSE ON Mitchell's face. With each snap, each flash... he doesn't blink.

EXT. MITCHELL'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

LIGHTNING FLASHES. Cold rain falls.

INT. MITCHELL'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

In a muscle shirt, Mitchell bench presses, working out his aggression.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

He answers. It's K.C., drenched.

A long, tense beat.

K.C.
Pretty cold out here.

MITCHELL
I never told you where I lived.

K.C.
You know where I live.

Mitchell steps aside.

K.C. enters, taking off his wet jacket and ball cap. He sets them next to the amethyst.

K.C. (CONT'D)
You were a big hit over the weekend. All the relatives loved Mitchell.

MITCHELL
All of them?

K.C. forces a smile.

K.C.
We got off on the wrong foot. You and me should talk.

MITCHELL
"You and I."
(off K.C.)
"You and I should talk."

Mitchell leads him to the bench, peeling off the muscle shirt.

An alpha male moment.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)
You ever spot someone?

Mitchell lays on the bench. K.C. bristles, spotting the bar.

K.C.
Champlain, right? That's where
you're from?

MITCHELL
Greater Champlain.

Mitchell lifts the bar and begins his repetitions.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)
You dropped out, didn't you?

K.C.
Didn't like school. Or drama.

MITCHELL
Like with Geran's mother?

K.C.
I have parental rights.

MITCHELL
Your parents raise Geran --

K.C.
They help. My boy's dad is right
here.

Mitchell **SLAMS DOWN THE BAR.**

K.C. (CONT'D)
Mind if I work in?

K.C. takes the bench. Mitchell spots.

MITCHELL
Can you handle one-eighty?

K.C.
Give me another twenty.

Mitchell adds the weight. K.C. braces.

Up. Mitchell guides the weight. The bar goes down, pressing
into K.C.'s chest.

MITCHELL
Breathe.

K.C. pushes up, **GASPING**, not controlling the teetering weight. Mitchell intervenes.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Set it down.

Ignoring him, K.C. starts his repetitions, struggling.

K.C.

My kid likes you... my family, my Dad especially --

MITCHELL

Breathe.

K.C.

-- Last couple months... you've gotten to know them... But you don't know me.

K.C. brings the bar down. Mitchell watches him struggle to raise it. The heavy bar wavers inches above K.C.'s throat.

MITCHELL

You don't know me, either.

They trade stares. K.C.'s arms quiver.

His grip crumples, the bar dropping... but Mitchell catches it with both hands and easily racks the bar.

A beat.

Mitchell goes to the fridge, downing water.

Light-headed, K.C. sits up. He notices the amethyst.

INT. K.C.'S TRUCK - LATER

RAIN. Cluttered, unkept. K.C. makes a call.

INT. TROY AND RASHAAN'S CONDO/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Modern, fung shei. Troy and Rashaan play Scrabble. Troy answers his phone.

TROY

K.C.? What a surprise.

K.C. (V.O.)

Troy, I need a favor.

EXT. K.C.'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

A deluge. A stoplight turns from yellow to red.

INT. K.C.'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

K.C. waits.

TROY (V.O.)
You sure of the spelling?

K.C.
D-o-n-l-e-v-y.

INT. TROY AND RASHAAN'S CONDO/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Troy divides a diet soda. Rashaan launches his app.

RASHAAN
The app's in beta mode. But I checked a few years both ways, and expanded the search area. Nothing.

TROY
It's possible Mitchell is his middle name -- or he changed his name. He could've went to school somewhere else -- or didn't finish.

INT. K.C.'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

K.C. grows frustrated.

K.C.
Something's off. This guy shows up, saint act, charms Trace. He gets to Mom, my Dad. To them, he's like...

An unhealthy beat.

TROY (V.O.)
The perfect son?

K.C.
Yeah.

TROY (V.O.)
What about Geran?

K.C.
 The way my son looks at this guy...
 it's like the way this guy looks at
 my Dad.

TROY (V.O.)
 You're Mitchell's second family.

INT. TROY AND RASHAAN'S CONDO/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Words of wisdom. **SPEAKER ON.**

TROY
 We all have second families.

K.C. (V.O.)
 Why do you think we do?

RASHAAN
 For when the ones we were born into
 aren't there for us.

INT. K.C.'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

K.C. listens.

K.C.
 Thanks, guys.

RASHAAN (V.O.)
 Anytime.

TROY (V.O.)
 Yeah.

They hang up. The L-Train passes.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Still raining. **THUNDER.** K.C. closes the front door.
 In the shadows, he looks at family pictures.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/GERAN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

K.C. watches Geran sleep.

An **EXTREMELY LOUD BOOM** as...

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - CONTINUOUS

... **LIGHTNING STRIKES** the transplanted oak tree.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Richard, Virginia and Tracy scramble out of their rooms.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - CONTINUOUS

Tracy stops Geran at the front door. Richard, Virginia and K.C. hurry outside.

The transplanted oak tree is **CHARRED** -- split down the middle and burning itself out.

VIRGINIA
That almost hit us!

The family mourns the tree.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - MORNING

A **BOBCAT ENGINE ROARS** as its uproots the charred tree.

K.C. talks to Richard and Virginia.

Tracy walks out, ready for class. Geran carries sheet music.

K.C. tells Geran something, trying to take away the sheet music. Geran resists, tearful. K.C. points a warning.

K.C. and Tracy argue.

Richard and Virginia intervene.

TREE ROOTS start tearing out of the ground.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL - DAY

Tracy heads toward the entrance, navigating past Students. She turns, point blank into Brian.

TRACY
Hi...

A beat.

He grips the hand of his **SHY GIRLFRIEND** -- 18, resembling a younger Tracy -- and yanks her down the sidewalk.

The Shy Girlfriend looks back.

Tracy watches them go -- it's closure.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/CONCERT HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Tracy enters the performance area.

On stage, Mitchell **PLAYS BEETHOVEN'S "CHOPIN'S RAINDROP PRELUDE IN E MINOR"** on a Steinway grand piano.

He finishes.

TRACY

That was nice.

MITCHELL

I felt it.

(beat)

What are you feeling?

TRACY

Norbucks.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/NORRIS UNIVERSITY CENTER/STARBUCKS - MOMENTS LATER

Decorated for Thanksgiving. Distant, Mitchell snaps his stir stick into pieces. Tracy, confused, sits with him.

TRACY

What are we?

MITCHELL

Friends -- I thought.

(beat)

You said you didn't want or need anything more.

TRACY

I know what I said. But something happened between us -- something we're not talking about it.

MITCHELL

It's called too much brandy.

TRACY

It's still happening.

An awkward beat.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I see the way you look at me. I feel it. It's too late to just be friends.

MITCHELL

"Trust starts with friendship."

TRACY

I said that, too.

MITCHELL

If you're the only one who knows where I live, how come your brother stopped by last night?

TRACY

He what?!

MITCHELL

He made me feel like a stranger in my own home.

He jams stir stick fragments into his empty coffee cup.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

I've been good to you -- and your family. But K.C. disrespects everyone. He makes the situation awkward.

TRACY

Is that the one thing holding you back?

He doesn't answer.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Why do you care so much about my family?

MITCHELL

Because... they're genuine. I told you I was adopted. I told you what I grew up into wasn't real. It left wounds.

Tracy is touched.

TRACY

Would it be awkward if my brother were okay with this?

MITCHELL
... Okay with what?

TRACY
This. Us.

She looks into his eyes: he wants something he won't let himself have.

A beat.

He senses her pulling away.

MITCHELL
Please don't be confused.

TRACY
Then be who you are, Mitchell.

Awkwardly, she exits. Torn, he watches her leave.

SLOVENLY EMPLOYEE (V.O.)
Mitchell?

Mitchell **SEES** the Slovenly Employee is Davey Dirk -- rotten tooth and all.

They look at each other. Memories flood.

SLOVENLY EMPLOYEE
Shit. I thought they locked you away?

Memories rush back. He smirks.

SLOVENLY EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)
That's right! They locked your fucking ass up!

Mitchell abruptly leaves.

SLOVENLY EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)
Hey! I'm not your maid!

The Slovenly Employee grabs the cup. An **EXHALATION OF PAIN**.

His hand bleeds.

Out of the cup, sharp fragments of the broken stir stick jut out menacingly.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Windy. The SUV is parked. Tracy walks up and goes inside.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door **SLAMS HARD** in the wind. Tracy stomps down the hallway.

RICHARD (O.S.)
Tracy? Did you take the L?

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Cedar accents, astute. Tracy marches in. Richard looks up from a proofread draft of his dissertation.

RICHARD
I assumed you would stay later on campus.

TRACY
K.C. went into my phone.

RICHARD
What?

TRACY
K.C. went into my phone. He showed up at Mitchell's. Now Mitchell's acting like -- I don't know -- ... like he doesn't feel welcome here.

Richard sets down his dissertation.

TRACY (CONT'D)
If anyone shouldn't feel welcome here, it's K.C.

RICHARD
Kendrick makes mistakes.

TRACY
Then tell him to mess up his own life -- not mine!

RICHARD
Your brother is a member of this family.

TRACY

You know, whenever his name comes up, you say "your brother" -- you never say "my son". I mean, Dad, come on: your dissertation is on Oedipus.

(off him)

You look at Mitchell and K.C. and wish you could swap them out.

Richard glares at her.

RICHARD

Do not put me to the test.

TRACY

I really wish we were the family that Mitchell sees.

She storms out.

Upset, Richard goes to a liquor cabinet and pours himself a brandy.

He stares at it, not drinking.

Soberingly, Richard pours the brandy back into the bottle.
SNOW BEGINS TO FALL outside the window.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/TRACY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tracy lays on the bed, watching the falling snow.

She dials her phone.

SEVERAL RINGS.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/THE ROCK - CONTINUOUS

SNOW FALLS around the iconic painted boulder. Mitchell sits nearby, looking at his phone.

INSERT: MITCHELL'S PHONE

8:59 PM. Tracy calling.

The call disconnects.

BACK TO SCENE

Mitchell watches Students in the distance, gathered for the Primal Scream.

A beat.

Mitchell reaches into his pocket. He pulls out the amethyst.

INSERT: AMETHYST

Glittering in the night.

BACK TO SCENE

All at once, the Students **SCREAM IN UNISON**.

Mitchell watches in silence, **THEIR SCREAMS ECHOING**.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/LAKE MICHIGAN - DAY

Frozen over. The L-TRAIN ROARS BY.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/PICK-STAIGER HALL - DAY

Students settle. Tracy sips her Starbucks.

Someone tries to sit beside her, but she blocks them.

TRACY

This seat is taken.

The automatic doors close.

She looks around for Mitchell.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT

Final grades will be posted online.
Please refrain from calling,
emailing or begging me over quarter
break.

A **GRADUATE ASSISTANT** hands back Tracy's assignment.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

(subtly)

Miriam would be proud.

Tracy looks at her family tree.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/PRACTICE MODULE - DAY

Lizette **FINISHES PLAYING "YESTERDAY"**. She turns to a distant Mitchell.

He shuts off the metronome.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/PRACTICE HALLWAY - LATER

Mitchell walks through Student traffic. Rounding the corner, he **SEES** further down...

... Gerry-Anne and Julio talking to Lizette, who points back toward the practice module.

Mitchell ducks around the corner.

Alarmed, he runs out an emergency exit door.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/COMMONS - MOMENTS LATER

Mitchell tears across campus.

He **SEES** Geran heading towards Lutkin Hall.

UNSEEN by Geran, Mitchell diverts toward University Hall.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Mitchell runs up the five winding flights of stairs.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL/ENGLISH DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Henrietta clears her desk. Mitchell charges in, breathless.

HENRIETTA

Whoa! Where's the fire?

MITCHELL

I need to see Dr. Skoltak.

HENRIETTA

You need to make an appointment.

MITCHELL

Please, it's important. I'm a friend of the family.

HENRIETTA

Where've you been? Have a seat.

Mitchell **SEES** Richard in his office, twirling the phone cord.

Looking out to the empty corridor, Mitchell sits.

He notes the clock: almost closing time.

Mitchell's eyes dart between Richard in his office and the empty corridor.

The department door suddenly opens. **EVANGELINE** -- a portly professor -- waddles in.

EVANGELINE
(to Henrietta)
Ready for Turkey Day?

HENRIETTA
Can't get here fast enough.

EVANGELINE
You having relatives over?

HENRIETTA
No. Nassau. Back second week of
December.

EVANGELINE
Jealous!

Evangeline smiles at Mitchell, who tries to conceal his anxiety. She disappears into her office.

He stands, walking to the exterior windows.

Below, Mitchell **SEES** Gerry-Anne and Julio approach University Hall.

An unnerving beat.

Mitchell turns, brushing past Henrietta and into Richard's office.

HENRIETTA
Hey!

**INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL/RICHARD'S OFFICE -
CONTINUOUS**

Mitchell locks the door behind him. Richard is caught off guard.

RICHARD
Mitchell!

Henrietta **KNOCKS ON THE DOOR**, her **VOICE MUFFLED**.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
Richard!

Awkward silence. Richard covers the receiver.

RICHARD
I'm on with my publisher.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
Richard! I told him to wait!

RICHARD
Mitchell, this is not a good time.

Mitchell looks sick.

Richard senses it.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
Richard --

RICHARD
Henrietta, it's okay.
(into phone)
I'll have to call you back.

Upset, Richard hangs up.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Talk, son.

A prolonged beat.

Mitchell thinks.

Out Richard's office window, Mitchell **SEES** the department door open.

Gerry-Anne and Julio enter, **VOICES MUTED**.

Mitchell shuts the curtain.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
May I help you?

GERRY-ANNE (O.S.)
We need to speak with Dr. Richard Skoltak.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
Do you have an appointment?

RICHARD
Mitchell, what is going on?!

A beat.

Mitchell gets teary.

Richard watches.

His desk **PHONE RINGS**.

Richard **SILENCES INCOMING CALLS**.

Mitchell breathes hard. Richard offers him a kleenex.

MITCHELL

I don't know where to begin.

RICHARD

Begin at the beginning.

Mitchell glances at the clock.

MITCHELL

It's difficult -- really difficult.

He keeps crying, buying time.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL/ENGLISH DEPARTMENT - LATER

Gerry-Anne and Julio wait.

They try to see who's in Richard's office.

EVANGELINE

Happy Thanksgiving.

HENRIETTA

You, too, Evangeline.

Evangeline leaves. Henrietta closes up.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)

I'll have to see you both out.

GERRY-ANNE

We can wait.

HENRIETTA

Sorry, you can't. Closing up for the holiday. Knowing Richard, he's going to be a while.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL/RICHARD'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Mitchell **SEES** Henrietta walk out with Gerry-Anne and Julio.

RICHARD
I sense where this is leading.

Mitchell swallows.

MITCHELL
I love... your family.

RICHARD
I know.

MITCHELL
You've invited me into your home.

RICHARD
You are welcome in our home -- in
no uncertain terms.

MITCHELL
I don't know what I'd do if
anything happened to you.

A reflective moment.

RICHARD
Very sweet.
(off Mitchell)
I also know K.C. makes you feel
like a stranger.

MITCHELL
Yes.

RICHARD
He makes the situation awkward,
doesn't he?

MITCHELL
The situation?

RICHARD
Yes, Mitchell, the situation.

Mitchell diverts.

MITCHELL
I think he's been hurt.

RICHARD
You don't have to apologize for
him. Kendrick abandoned his own
son. Were you aware?

A tense beat.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

He impregnated a young woman. He bore a child out of wedlock. He looked me square in the eye and lied -- and then that child became our family's matter.

Mitchell remains silent.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

A child needs a father who's going to be there. A family needs a member who is forthright and absolutely honest.

(off Mitchell)

Tracy doesn't need Brian. She needs you.

Richard waits.

MITCHELL

I've been a friend to her, sir.

RICHARD

I think you've been far more.

A beat.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I know.

Richard smiles.

MITCHELL

Sir, it's... private.

RICHARD

Son, I've shared private things with you. And I hope to share many more. At least, I would hope to. You wouldn't barge in, only to tell me you cared about my family --

MITCHELL

Geran.

Mitchell gets up to leave.

RICHARD

You gave him a key -- the fob.

MITCHELL

I did. But he's waiting --

RICHARD
He's practicing.

MITCHELL
He's alone.

RICHARD
Geran's a big boy.

MITCHELL
Let me get him and bring him home
for dinner. You and I can talk
there. Call your publisher --

RICHARD
Mitchell.

Mitchell stops.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
What you need and want, what my
family needs and wants... they are
the same thing?

Cornered, Mitchell nods.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/COMMONS - MOMENTS LATER

Already dark. Gerry-Anne and Julio walk with Henrietta, who
pockets keys.

Gerry-Anne stops, pulling out her business card.

GERRY-ANNE
Can I give this to you to give to
Richard?

HENRIETTA
I won't see him for several weeks.

Henrietta walks away. Gerry-Anne doubles back.

GERRY-ANNE
Catch up with you in the music
building.

Julio nods.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Anxiously, Mitchell starts down the stairs.

RICHARD (O.S.)
Davidsen left for the holiday!

Mitchell **SEES** Richard take his time, locking the English Department door.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Gerry-Anne approaches.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell continues down the stairs.

He looks back at Richard, who finally starts down.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Gerry-Anne is almost at the entrance.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell and Richard round the bottom stairs.

Richard heads toward the open rear entrance.

Mitchell **SEES** Gerry-Anne walk up the steps.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Gerry-Anne tries the doors: locked.

She **SEES** Richard leave, and **KNOCKS**.

She navigates the icy sidewalk around the building.

She reaches the parking lot.

Richard drives off in the SUV.

A beat.

Gerry-Anne disappears inside the open rear entrance.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Gerry-Anne ascends the winding stairs.

Her **FOOTSTEPS ECHO**.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/UNIVERSITY HALL/FIFTH FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Lights off. Gerry-Anne approaches the locked English Department.

She takes out her business card, about to slide it under the door.

A **HAND** grabs the card: Mitchell.

Gerry-Anne looks at him.

Suddenly, Mitchell scoops her up by the thigh and collar. He lifts her over his head.

Mitchell hurls Gerry-Anne over the winding stair rail.

Her body plummets head-first into the rail one floor below. Her neck implodes, chin flattened into her shoulders.

The force doubles back her body into itself the wrong way, like a jack-knife trying to close.

She bounces off each rail of each landing.

Her corpse crumples into the first floor below.

Mitchell stares down.

Gravely, he pockets her business card.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL - NIGHT

The **SOUND OF WINTER WIND ECHOES** down deserted hallways.

The restroom door closes to **REVEAL** Geran drinking from the water fountain.

He **HEARS A NOISE** coming from around the corner.

GERAN

Mitchell?

He looks around.

Geran hurries inside the practice module and **LOCKS THE DOOR**.

Julio appears from around the corner.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/PRACTICE MODULE - CONTINUOUS

Geran **PLAYS "CLAIR DE LUNE", SLIGHTLY OUT OF SYNC.**

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

Looking for a place to hide, Julio moves toward the restroom.

He watches Geran play.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Julio slips inside.

He peeks out the door, watching Geran.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/PRACTICE MODULE - CONTINUOUS

Geran **PLAYS MORE STEADILY.**

WE SEE the metronome is missing.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

From behind, Mitchell drives the tip of the stainless steel metronome into the soft spot at the base of Julio's skull.

A beat.

Mitchell pulls out the bloody metronome. Julio's corpse collapses to the floor in front of an open janitor closet.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/PRACTICE MODULE - CONTINUOUS

Geran **PLAYS CHORDS.**

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell rinses off the metronome.

Bloody water disappears down the drain.

He closes the door to the janitor closet and **BREAKS THE KEY** in the lock.

INT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL/PRACTICE MODULE - CONTINUOUS

Geran **FINISHES**.

A KNOCK ON THE GLASS.

Geran turns, **SEEING** Mitchell -- metronome to his side.

GERAN
Uncle Mitchell!

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/LUTKIN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Mitchell reaches for Geran's hand, guiding him down the icy steps.

MITCHELL
Careful.

GERAN
Your hand's all sweaty.

MITCHELL
That's one of the things about
being grown-up.

GERAN
When did you start being grown-up?

Bittersweet, Mitchell looks down at Geran.

MITCHELL
When I was your age.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/COMMONS - MOMENTS LATER

Mitchell and Geran walk towards the L-Station.

MITCHELL
I liked what you called me back in
the practice module, Geran --

GERAN
I can see the L!

MITCHELL
Yes, not far now. When we get home,
Dad will have dinner waiting.

GERAN
My Daddy doesn't cook.

MITCHELL
Grandpa, I mean.

GERAN
You okay, Mitchell?

MITCHELL
... Sure.

K.C. drives up in his truck. He parks and hops out.

K.C.
Geran, get over here! Get over here
right now!

GERAN
We're taking the L.

K.C.
Do as I say.

Geran looks to Mitchell, who nods.

He goes to K.C., who yanks him to his side.

K.C. (CONT'D)
You don't need his dumbass
approval.

MITCHELL
Hey!

K.C. grabs Geran's sheet music.

K.C.
What the hell you doing here? I
thought I told you no more piano.

GERAN
Daddy, no!

MITCHELL
What are you doing?

K.C.
Taking him away from you. Like I
wish I could take the rest of my
family away from you.

K.C. drags Geran to the truck.

GERAN
Uncle Mitchell!

K.C. starts swatting him.

K.C.
He's not your uncle!

Mitchell charges, grabbing K.C.'s arms.

K.C. (CONT'D)
You want a piece of this,
motherfucker?!

They grapple, slamming each other off the hood.

K.C. tries to land punches. Mitchell tries to restrain him.

Finally, Mitchell subdues K.C. in a full nelson.

MITCHELL
Are you done?

K.C.
Say "uncle"? Fuck you.

At the sound of Geran's **SOBS**, they both freeze. Mitchell slowly releases K.C.

Geran runs toward them, passing K.C. and burying himself in Mitchell's arms.

K.C. is stunned.

LATER

Hand in hand, Mitchell and Geran walk towards the L-Train.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/SHAKESPEARE GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

K.C. sits in the dying garden.

DISTANT LAUGHTER.

K.C. turns to **SEE** carefree Students strolling across campus.

A beat.

K.C. stares at the sick tree.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN/LAKE MICHIGAN - LATER

Frozen over.

K.C.'s truck drives slowly by.

EXT. SKOLTAK HOME - NIGHT

K.C. pulls in and parks.

He gets out.

He doesn't want to go inside.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

K.C. enters in silence.

INT. SKOLTAK HOME/DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

K.C. approaches.

Mitchell and the family eat off the wedding china.

Geran isn't touching his food.

K.C.

Geran.

Geran won't look at K.C.

Geran looks to Mitchell, who smiles reassuringly.

Geran forces himself to eat.

K.C. glares at Mitchell.

Tracy and Richard glare at K.C.

Geran chews and cries.

K.C. goes to the fridge, and takes out a beer.

VIRGINIA

Kendrick, no.

He looks at her, putting it back.

K.C.

So I'm the outsider now?

RICHARD

You are a member of this family.

K.C.

Am I "pretty much one of" you, too?

He points to Virginia and Mitchell.

K.C. (CONT'D)

That's what she said about him. Go ahead. Ask her.

Virginia puts her head down.

K.C. (CONT'D)

Mother?

A beat.

K.C. (CONT'D)

How many times have I sat at this table and eaten off your precious wedding china? Then Trace brings home this guy and --

RICHARD

Kendrick.

K.C.

It's K.C.: "a little rough around the edges -- a lot, actually."

Richard fumes to hear his own words used against him.

K.C. (CONT'D)

I'm not good enough for Kendrick. Not good enough to stay in school or raise my kid. What else am I not good enough for?

He leans in.

K.C. (CONT'D)

Say it.

K.C. looks to Tracy.

K.C. (CONT'D)

Then you say it. You're the one who calls me the fuck up.

Silence.

K.C. points at Mitchell.

K.C. (CONT'D)

He's the son you wanted, not me!

He pounds his fist on the table, breaking his plate. Virginia cries.

RICHARD

Is that what you want to do? To
make your mother cry?

K.C.

Mom...

He puts a hand on hers. She pushes it away, reaching for the broken plate.

K.C. (CONT'D)

Momma. I'll fix it.

VIRGINIA

You can't.

K.C. looks at Walter. The cat walks away.

K.C.

I'm sorry...

VIRGINIA

You want people to accept you. To
forgive you your past. To trust
you. You have to trust them.

K.C. looks at Mitchell.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

You have to trust them.

RICHARD

I think it would be best if we took
a change of pace. A retreat.

(at K.C.)

All of us.

A beat.

K.C.

Mitchell... if you're not doing
anything tomorrow for Thanksgiving,
come with.

Mitchell smiles.

Richard nods.

Richard looks at Mitchell.

Compelled, Mitchell interlaces his fingers with Tracy.

Richard smiles.

Confused, Tracy looks at Mitchell.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

BIRD'S EYE VIEW on the SUV, winding its way through the remote road.

Snow falls.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

The family is crowded in, asleep. Richard drives.

In the back seat, an anxious Mitchell can't sleep.

He **SEES** Richard looking at him and Tracy in the rearview mirror.

Compelled, Mitchell moves closer to Tracy.

Richard turns back to the road.

Mitchell **SEES** K.C.'s charging phone **LIGHT UP** with a notification.

He leans in to read it.

INSERT: K.C.'S PHONE

An email from Rashaan. The subject line: "**BACKGROUND CHECK ON MITCHELL DONLEVY: PLEASE READ.**"

BACK TO SCENE

He **SEES** K.C. asleep.

He **SEES** Richard driving.

Discreetly, Mitchell deletes the email.

TRACY (O.S.)
(whispering)
What are you doing?

He **SEES** Tracy looking right at him.

A beat.

MITCHELL

I was wondering how K.C. figured
out where I lived.

Tracy **SEES** their bodies touching. Mitchell doesn't move.

She **SENSES** his repressed attraction.

Tracy goes back to sleep.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - LATER

Seemingly driving forever.

The SUV turns off on a single-lane road leading to an A-frame cabin.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

An early 80s wooden structure with reinforced windows. A second floor balcony overlooks a massive, sprawling-branch tree.

A snowmobile shed adjoins. On the opposite side of the cabin, a dock leads to a frozen lake.

Richard parks. The family groggily gets out. Geran, awakened and fussy, is shushed in Virginia's arms.

Mitchell and K.C. unload the SUV as the others file in.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Rustic but remarkably comfortable with a sweeping lake view. An old piano sits, dusty, next to a wide-mouthed fireplace stacked with cords of wood. All shuffle in, Mitchell one-arming a roasting pan, suitcases in his other arm.

Richard hangs the SUV keys on a hook by the sink.

He smooths Geran's hair, who cries. Virginia transfers him to Richard.

RICHARD

We'll unpack in the morning.

VIRGINIA

Be up shortly.

They kiss.

Richard carries Geran upstairs as Virginia lights the pilot light on the stove. Virginia **SEES** Mitchell still holding the roasting pan.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Mitchell, sorry! Let me have that.

Virginia opens the lid to inspect the turkey. She slides the roasting pan into the oven, lighting the pilot.

Mitchell gazes around.

MITCHELL

Nice place, Virginia.

Virginia spots K.C. staring at them for using their first names.

VIRGINIA

That's very kind of you, Mitchell.
We haven't dusted since summer.

TRACY

I'll give you the tour tomorrow.
Let's go to bed.

Mitchell hides sudden alarm as Tracy leads him upstairs. K.C. follows with the rest of the suitcases.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell ascends the stairs, **SEEING** Tracy carry her bag into the middle bedroom.

Mitchell hesitates, then follows her. K.C. blocks him with a suitcase.

K.C.

You've got the attic.

Mitchell **SEES** the attic stairway. K.C. senses his relief.

Tracy comes out of the bedroom.

TRACY

I'll help you get settled.

A parting glance from K.C. as Tracy and Mitchell ascend the **CREAKY ATTIC STAIRS**.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Sparse but comfortable despite the low, angled ceiling. A blanket covers a large piece of furniture at one end. At the other, french doors lead to the deck overlooking the sprawling-branch tree.

TRACY

You gonna be okay up here?

MITCHELL

I'll be fine.

She lingers for an awkward beat.

TRACY

G'nite.

MITCHELL

Good night.

She descends the stairs, keeping her eyes on Mitchell.

He **HEARS THE DOOR CLOSE.**

Mitchell sits down on a single bed.

A beat.

He realizes the bedspread is purple: identical to the one he had as a child.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - LATER

The house is dark.

K.C. tries to get comfortable on the sofa.

The **CABIN CREAKS** and **SETTLES.**

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/ATTIC - LATER

Mitchell lays awake in the dark, staring at the tree. Its **BRANCHES SCRAPE THE WINDOW.**

The **ATTIC DOOR OPENS.**

Mitchell turns, closing his eyes.

Tracy cautiously ascends the stairs.

She **SEES** Mitchell's clothes draped over a chair. Tracy crouches at his bedside.

He doesn't stir.

She watches him, scanning his bare forearms, shoulders and upper torso peeking out from under the covers.

She **SEES** his chest rise and fall.

She gently hovers her hand over Mitchell's exposed flesh, exploring without touching.

UNSEEN BY TRACY, Mitchell grips the covers tightly.

His flesh breaks out in goosebumps.

Tracy smiles.

She turns to leave, but stops and smells his shirt.

She withdraws down the stairs. Mitchell doesn't open his eyes.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN - DAY

A quiet Thanksgiving morning.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Tracy walks out in pajamas. She **SEES** the attic door open, then smiles and hurries downstairs.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

In the kitchen, Richard and Virginia chop celery and mushrooms. Tracy enters.

TRACY
Happy Thanksgiving.

RICHARD
Happy Thanksgiving!

Tracy looks around, only **SEEING** K.C. asleep on the sofa.

TRACY
You guys seen Mitchell?

VIRGINIA

You just missed him. He took Geran
on a hike.

RICHARD

Perfect weather for it.

Tracy looks out the window: it's a beautiful day.

She pours a mug of coffee, setting it down next to K.C.,
startling him awake.

He sits up, groggy, and sips the coffee.

K.C.

Thanks.

Dismissive, K.C. clicks on an NFL game. Tracy gently takes
the remote, turning off the TV.

TRACY

How about a walk?

He looks at her -- she gazes at him, without judgement.

K.C.

Give me a few.

He downs his coffee.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN/DOCK - LATER

Tracy and K.C. stroll down the soggy planks.

TRACY

I can't remember it being this
cold.

K.C.

This? It's barely freezing.

(beat)

Remember that blizzard when we were
kids? We got snowed in and had to
slide down the balcony on those
metal suitcases. Now that was cold.

TRACY

What were we like, ten?

K.C.

Dad didn't even know how to change
the battery in the Buick.

TRACY

You did.

They sit at the edge of the dock. In the distance, a capsized canoe's stern juts out of the ice.

K.C.

Dad still hasn't figured out how to paddle a canoe.

TRACY

Summer spite.

He skips a rock across the frozen lake. It impacts.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Why are we so different?

He puts his hands inside his jacket.

K.C.

Nurse put me in the wrong incubator.

TRACY

Serious.

K.C.

I don't know. You're the one who called me the "recessive gene".

TRACY

Did I?

K.C.

Yeah.

(off her)

You're the sociology person. You tell me.

TRACY

Grams was the authority. Thing is, I've always aspired to be like her, or Mom. Or Dad.

K.C.

That's good.

TRACY

You've tried to be you.

Tracy skips a rock.

K.C.
Yeah, but I screwed up. A lot.

TRACY
At least you make your own mistakes. The times I get something right, it's like I'm doing it for someone else.

K.C.
No, you got it together, Trace. You're going somewhere, going to be kick-ass teaching that sociology shit.

TRACY
"Sociology shit?"

She smiles. He's sincere.

A quiet, comfortable moment.

TRACY (CONT'D)
Why don't you like Mitchell?

K.C. skips a rock. It breaks the surface.

K.C.
I think we're too alike. It's like I need to compete with him.

TRACY
Don't.

A beat.

K.C.
Do I make it awkward -- ?

TRACY
Yes.

K.C.
Really -- ?

TRACY
Yes.

K.C.
(off her)
I'm sorry.

TRACY

We got the whole weekend. Try to get along.

K.C.

This guy makes you happy?

TRACY

He would.

K.C.

Then I'll come around.

A brother-sister moment.

Tracy gets up from the dock when she **SEES** Mitchell and Geran go inside. She starts toward the cabin.

TRACY

Hey, Mitchell!

Mitchell enters quickly, not responding.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Richard wipes down crystal goblets. Virginia candies yams. Geran, coat half-off, loads his mouth with marshmallows.

Tracy enters, looking around.

TRACY

Where'd Mitchell go?

GERAN

(barely discernible)
Upstairs.

VIRGINIA

Geran, that's not nice.

RICHARD

Sweetie, why don't you play us something?

Geran drags himself to the piano. Tracey heads upstairs.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The **ATTIC DOOR CLOSES**.

Tracy stops, curious.

She walks up the rest of the stairs.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

DOWNSTAIRS, GERAN PLAYS "YESTERDAY". Tracy ascends the stairs, looking for Mitchell.

TRACY

You hiding from me or something?

She **SEES** him to the side of the blanket-covered furniture.

MITCHELL

I was seeing what this was.

She walks over, removing the blanket to **REVEAL** Miriam's armoire. Its large mirrored doors spill open.

Mitchell steps closer to **SEE** inside: a gold mine of family photos, bound letters and faded diaries.

TRACY

Grams'.

He is overcome at the sight of so much family history.

He reaches for a genealogy scrapbook. A black and white graduation photo of Miriam is embossed on a Northwestern University cover. The title gleams -- "Skoltak: A Complete Family History".

TRACY (CONT'D)

Her master thesis.

Mitchell opens the scrapbook. A hand-sketched family tree glitters with faux gem stones of birth months.

MITCHELL

All these names -- bound together
by nature and chance.

Tracy smiles.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Hundreds of faces belonging to
something bigger than themselves.

Instinctively, Mitchell turns to the last page.

INSERT: LAST PAGE OF SCRAPBOOK

A photo of Miriam and her **LATE HUSBAND**. They hold an **INFANT RICHARD** -- who has Mitchell's eyes.

BACK TO SCENE

TRACY

Married her college professor. Bit of a scandal -- teacher and student. They were friends first. They were together thirty-eight years.

He's unaware of her intensifying gaze.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I talked to my brother. No more awkwardness.

He looks into her eyes.

TRACY (CONT'D)

He said he's okay with us. Everyone's okay with us.

She moves closer, their attraction charged.

Torn, he takes a half step back.

She stops.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Everyone except you.

MITCHELL

Tracy, I'm really trying.

TRACY

"Trying" what?

MITCHELL

I think I need a brandy.

Tracy withdraws.

TRACY

I've felt your body against mine, your eyes on me when you think I'm not looking. You don't need a brandy.

(off him)

What are you not telling me?

MITCHELL

I just... want to be your friend.

TRACY

Even though we're attracted to each other. Even though you vacuum, fix trucks and teach piano.

MITCHELL

Yes.

TRACY

You don't try to be that good of a friend just to stay friends. Why?

A cornered beat.

MITCHELL

Why not?

TRACY

Not "why not", Mitchell. It's "why".

MITCHELL

I love... your family.

TRACY

But you don't love me.

MITCHELL

I can't... your Dad, he'd --

TRACY

It always comes back to my Dad. I invite you over, you end up with him on the back porch. When you and I slow dance, you look for his eyes, not mine. You don't want to be my friend. It's like... you want to be his son.

She waits for him to counter. But he stands silent, unknowingly unmasked.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I have feelings for you. But if you can't be real... if you won't be real, I can't be true to myself --

MITCHELL

(weakly)

Tracy...

She storms down the stairs.

Mitchell backs into the armoire. Letters and photos **AVALANCHE** onto the floor.

Alone, he rocks himself in auto-stimulation.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Geran **PLAYS "FRERE JACQUES"**. Tracy tears out the front door, past Richard and Virginia.

VIRGINIA
Tracy, honeypie --

The **DOOR SLAMS**.

They **SEE** -- out the window, on the dock -- Tracy going to K.C. Distraught, Tracy catches him off-guard. She cries into him. He -- awkwardly, then instinctively -- envelopes her.

RICHARD
Geran, please!

Geran **STOPS PLAYING**. Virginia turns to Richard.

VIRGINIA
Father.

Richard turns toward the attic.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Richard **KNOCKS** on the attic door.

RICHARD
Mitchell?

He opens the door and enters.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Richard ascends the stairs.

RICHARD
Mitchell, I'd like as word with you.

He **SEES** Mitchell -- coat on -- packing.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
It's a long weekend. And you're not going to find a taxi out here.

Mitchell turns to face Richard, who is taken back by his sickly appearance.

Richard motions to the bed. They both sit.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I don't know what happened between you two. But my daughter is upset. As you're a guest under my roof, perhaps you'd like to tell me what's going on.

Emotional, Mitchell turns to him.

MITCHELL

Can I show you something -- without you getting angry?

Richard nods, smiling curiously.

RICHARD

Of course.

MITCHELL

Absolute honesty, right?

RICHARD

That's right.

MITCHELL

And forthright?

RICHARD

Yes.

MITCHELL

"A family needs a member who is forthright and absolutely honest."

RICHARD

Mitchell.

Mitchell hesitates.

MITCHELL

I'm afraid.

RICHARD

Of what are you afraid?

MITCHELL

Afraid... that all this will cease to exist.

RICHARD
How is that possible? We've
practically adopted you.

The words of comfort open a raw nerve.

MITCHELL
It's like we're in the woods, and
suddenly, I can't find you.

RICHARD
I don't understand.

Mitchell anguishes.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Please, say what you need to say.

Mitchell takes a deep breath and reaches into his coat
pocket.

Richard waits.

Mitchell holds out a closed hand.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Show me.

Mitchell drops the amethyst into Richard's palm.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
What is this?

Richard stares at it, confused.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I don't...

Then the secret of the amethyst sinks in. Richard looks at
Mitchell, who stares back teetering between fear and hope.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
All this time.

MITCHELL
I thought if you knew me...

Richard stares in shock.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)
... if you liked me for what I was,
not who I am...

Richard turns away.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

What we need and want -- they're
the same thing.

Laboring over his reaction to the confession, Richard faces Mitchell.

RICHARD

I have a family.

MITCHELL

... I do, too.

A tell-tale beat.

RICHARD

You need to leave.

Mitchell is devastated.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Walk. Hitchhike. Take the
Navigator. I don't care.

MITCHELL

... How will you -- ?

RICHARD

Leave this house.

MITCHELL

Dad --

RICHARD

I am not your father.

Richard stands, staring at him.

Mitchell is violated to the soul.

A beat.

Mitchell exits in disgrace.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Apprehensive, Virginia and Geran wait at the table. Geran sits up.

GERAN

Uncle Mitchell?

Mitchell stumbles downstairs towards the door.

RICHARD (O.S.)

Let him go.

Shocked, they **SEE** a conflicted Richard on the stairs.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Let him go.

Virginia stares, wondering what's going on. Geran is heartbroken.

Mitchell -- betrayed, humiliated -- grabs the SUV keys and leaves.

Out the window, Richard watches Mitchell get into the SUV and drive off. He stares at the amethyst in his hand.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN/DOCK - CONTINUOUS

Tracy and Mitchell **SEE** the SUV disappear down the road.

Worried, they hurry inside.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Tracy and K.C. enter through the back, immediately sensing tension.

RICHARD

Sit down. I need to talk to everyone.

Virginia zeroes in on Richard.

K.C.'s **PHONE BEEPS**: a voicemail appears -- marked urgent. He moves to the door.

K.C.

Signal's bad in here.

RICHARD

Kendrick --

K.C.

It's important!

K.C. darts out the front door. Richard is flustered.

VIRGINIA

What's that in your hand?

Richard turns. She points to the amethyst he's holding.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN/DOCK - MOMENTS LATER

K.C. -- finally with a steady signal -- dials the voicemail.

RASHAAN (V.O.)

It's Rashaan. I expanded the search
on Mitchell --

TROY (V.O.)

Tell him he needs to call us back
as soon as he gets this!

K.C.'s countenance falls.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

K.C. enters, a troubled look on his face. The family turns.

RICHARD

Join us, son.

K.C. takes a step, then stops -- suspicious of Richard's
intimacy.

VIRGINIA

Richard.

Richard looks at Virginia, their eyes going to Geran.

K.C.

Geran, go upstairs.

GERAN

What's going on? Where's Mitchell?

K.C.

Get your ass upstairs!

Geran charges up the stairs. K.C. turns back to Richard.

RICHARD

Have a seat.

K.C.

I'll stand.

Richard hesitates.

K.C. (CONT'D)

You were saying?

Richard struggles to begin.

K.C. (CONT'D)
 Absolute honesty.

Richard glances at Tracy.

RICHARD
 I was thirty-eight. I had gone back
 for my Ph.D.
 (to Virginia)
 You didn't know yet you were
 pregnant with Tracy. I had to
 scrape for hours, for tenure... so
 I taught an extra class... that's
 where I met her... a music major...
 she had my child: a son.

An agonizing beat.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Mitchell.

Virginia stares. Tracy, nauseated, runs upstairs and **SLAMS**
 her bedroom door.

K.C. glares at Richard.

K.C.
 You son of a bitch.

Richard points at K.C., then lowers his hand.

RICHARD
 Understand I never... intended for
 this to happen. I arranged for her
 to take care of it.

VIRGINIA
 "Take care of it"?

RICHARD
 She went crazy. She went back on
 her word and had it.

VIRGINIA
 "It" is Mitchell.

RICHARD
 Never in my life could I have
 conceived of hurting any of you.

VIRGINIA
 And yet, here you are. The father
 who turned his back on not one son,
 but two.

RICHARD

God damn. I'm responsible. I made a mistake!

VIRGINIA

Which one is the mistake, Richard?

RICHARD

Enough.

K.C.

No. You don't get to say "enough".

The family stops -- out of breath.

Richard stands, the amethyst in his hand. He goes to the window.

VIRGINIA

What did you bring into this house?

Behind Richard -- out the window -- **WE SEE** Mitchell speed towards the cabin in the SUV.

Richard has no time to react as the **SUV EXPLODES THROUGH THE CABIN WALL**, driving the piano into him.

Glass fountains.

Furniture crumples.

The front end of the SUV fish-hooks the sofa, upending Virginia into the rafters.

The SUV takes out the stairs, clipping K.C., the force hurling him onto the hood.

The SUV keeps going, **SMASHING** through the lake view window.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN/DOCK - CONTINUOUS

GEARS REVVING, the SUV flies out of the cabin, landing in the snow.

Its momentum sends it sliding off-center down the dock. The tires plunge off the planks. K.C. is thrown thirty feet across the half-frozen lake.

The SUV tips grill-first, **SMASHING** into the sheet ice, propelling Mitchell through the windshield. The force dislocates the safety glass in one piece, cocooning him in a bloody, shard-ed windshield blanket.

METAL SHREDS as the vehicle breaks the surface, slowly sinking into the lake.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Catastrophic structural damage.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The dust settles.

With a struggle, the bedroom door opens. Tracy ventures out, keeping Geran behind her.

Immediately in front, Virginia's corpse is wedged unnaturally between rafter beams.

TRACY
(to Geran)
Don't look.

He obeys.

Tracy fights emotion.

She gazes down where the stairs used to be. In the devastation, Richard is half-buried between piano and bookcase.

He **SEES** her, trying to speak -- his eyes full of remorse.

She leans forward.

He fights to free his arm, pinned between piano and chest. But by doing so, he dislodges the gore-dipped amethyst plugging the mortal wound in his chest cavity.

Richard bleeds to death.

Tracy is in shock.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN/DOCK - MOMENTS LATER

Bruised and bloody, K.C. raises his head at the **SOUND OF SETTLING DEBRIS**.

He **SEES** Mitchell, already on his feet, trudging and slipping back towards the cabin.

Enraged, K.C. scrambles up -- charging towards and tackling Mitchell. Their bodies splinter the thin ice beneath them.

K.C. -- on top of Mitchell, one of his eyes now completely red with blood -- pounds away. With each punch, the back of Mitchell's skull smacks against the ice.

The increased pressure causes the ice to fracture further. K.C. pauses.

Mitchell seizes on the hesitation, kicking K.C. off of him.

K.C. stumbles back, the ice tipping under his weight and momentum. He plunges into the freezing water.

K.C. struggles for the ledge. Chunks of ice break off in his hand. Mitchell grips K.C.'s throat.

Mitchell stares at his half-brother with contempt before forcing his head under the surface.

K.C. struggles to break Mitchell's grip, but with hypothermia setting in, his frigid hands turn numb.

K.C. goes under.

Mitchell stares into the water -- his betrayed, violated face no longer recognizable.

Ten yards away, K.C pushes up through shallow ice, **GASPING** for air.

Mitchell stomps over, smashing the ice, forcing K.C. under.

Mitchell scans the lake, tracking K.C. beneath the ice.

A tense beat.

Mitchell waits.

K.C. doesn't come up.

Mitchell, his face now unmasked in blood, starts for the cabin.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Tracy is still in shock. Geran **SOFTLY SHRIEKS** behind her.

She turns to **SEE** Mitchell closing in.

She pushes Geran towards the attic door.

TRACY

Go. Go.

The floorboards are bent upward, preventing the door from opening all the way.

Tracy maneuvers Geran into the attic stairway.

She **SEES** Mitchell enter the cabin through the gaping hole in the lake view wall.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell **SEES** Richard, dead.

A moment of reflection.

Mitchell **SEES** Virginia, dead.

He **SEES** the missing stairs, and pulls down Virginia's corpse -- compromising the damaged rafter's integrity. **DEBRIS RAINS.**

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN/ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Another support beam collapses. The **CABIN SHUDDERS.**

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The dust settles.

Mitchell cautiously and swiftly ascends the growing pile of debris towards the second floor.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell reaches for Tracy.

The cabin shifts, beginning to collapse the attic stairs and walls under and around her as she tries to squeeze through.

Floorboards break in half, driven menacingly upward like sharpened spears.

She **SEES** Geran -- safe but unable to help.

TRACY

Geran, go!

The top of the attic stairs gives way. In **FULL VIEW OF TRACY**, Geran suddenly plunges through the floor and **OUT OF SIGHT.**

TRACY (CONT'D)

Geran!

The hole in the floor collapses shut with debris. **SICKENING PIANO NOISES BELOW** -- as if the instrument was crushed.

She **SEES** Mitchell keep coming.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The side of the cabin collapses, slamming the second floor into the sprawling-branch tree.

Its limbs **SMASH** through the attic.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Tracy fights her way past the stair rail and armoire.

She **SEES** the sprawling-branch tree just beyond the hole in the attic, and heads toward the safety of the tree limbs.

Standing at the edge of the exposed attic, Tracy realizes she's perilously high.

Mitchell appears on the second floor balcony below -- the limbs slightly within his reach. He leans over, grasping furiously at Tracy.

She jumps, dangling from a limb -- holding on for dear life, trying to climb higher.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The structure dangerously leans.

INT. A-FRAME CABIN/ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Items tip over and tumble across the room, falling towards the hole in the wall.

The armoire slides forward, **CRASHING** over.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Mitchell jumps onto a limb far below Tracy's.

He starts to climb higher, trying to shake hers and cause her to fall. The contents of the attic rain down around them.

She loses grip, barely catching another branch below. It nearly **SNAPS OFF**.

Around Tracy, more branches **BREAK AWAY**.

She looks down as they **SHATTER** against the icy snow below.

MITCHELL

He was my Dad before he was yours!

Mitchell lifts himself up onto the branch from which they dangle. He holds the sharp, splintered limb for balance.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

This family doesn't exist without me!

The armoire careens out from the attic, slamming into Mitchell's back -- driving him several feet into the sharpened branch.

His eyes bulge.

His body straightens as he **SEES** the tree limb skewered into his stomach.

Behind him, family photographs and letters flutter out from the armoire.

K.C. (O.S.)

Trace!

Tracy's grip slips from the branch. She looks down at a shivering and drenched-blue K.C.

K.C. (CONT'D)

Trace!

She locks eyes with Mitchell, who is forlorn.

K.C. (CONT'D)

Trust me!

An uncertain beat.

SLOW MOTION

Tracy lets go.

She plummets into her brother's arms. Tracy and K.C. wipe out into the snow.

Mitchell watches them hobble to safety. Bloody photographs flutter through the air, beyond his faint reach. He dies.

END SLOW MOTION

LATER

EMERGENCY VEHICLES surround the remains of the cabin.

EXT. A-FRAME CABIN/DOCK - CONTINUOUS

WE SEE the broken, bloodied ice of the lake fight between K.C. and Mitchell -- **TRACKING THE VIEW** to the now-overtaken canoe (**REVEALING** how K.C. escaped).

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A-FRAME CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The tragedy sinks in. Tracy watches **PARAMEDICS** pass with gurneys carrying the bodies of Richard and Virginia.

Wrapped in a blanket, K.C. **SEES STATE TROOPERS** pull through debris. They unearth the top of the piano to **REVEAL** Geran inside -- motionless.

A tense beat.

Geran coughs dust from his lungs.

K.C. **SOBS**. Tracy hesitates, then comforts him.

LATER

The paramedic helicopters fly away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHICAGO MERCY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Establishing.

INT. CHICAGO MERCY HOSPITAL/ROOM - NIGHT

Geran, K.C. and Tracy lay in separate beds. An **ELDERLY NURSE** collects untouched meal trays and exits.

Awake, K.C. turns to Geran, who faces away.

A beat.

Awake, Geran turns to **SEE** K.C.

A father-son moment.

They turn to **SEE** Tracy. She sleeps restlessly, having a bad dream.

K.C. and Geran look at each other.

They get out of bed. Hand in hand, they climb into Tracy's bed, flanking her.

K.C. smooths her hair.

Geran kisses her forehead.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW of them. **ON THE SOUNDTRACK: "RACHMANINOFF IN C SHARP MINOR"**.

Then, **WE SLOWLY ZOOM** towards Tracy's abdomen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRACY'S ABDOMEN - CONTINUOUS

In the vein of "Fantastic Voyage": the serenity and sanctity of the human body.

Tissue gives way to cells.

The **VIEW ENTERS** the blood stream.

Twisting through veins.

Reaching Tracy's womb.

Fluid and tubes part to **REVEAL** -- in the distance -- a first trimester fetus. It sleeps peacefully, illuminated like a cathedral in a post-storm sky.

CLOSE ON the tiny little female with a docile face.

Suddenly, the **EYES OPEN**.

FADE TO BLACK