

BABY TEETH

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EXT. WESSELL FAMILY HOME – DAY – DREAM SEQUENCE

SLOANE WESSELL (late 20s), fiercely independent but terrible at being alone, stands at the fence gate of a quaint family home, peering through a hole in the wood into the backyard.

EXT. THE HOUSE – DAY – DREAM SEQUENCE

Through the hole she sees a HOUSE – or what's left of one. Paint faded. Front door, stairs, windows – all in pieces. A broken porch swing lodged in the deck below.

Next to the house rests a decaying old cemetery.

Even on this sunny day, light stops at the front door frame. Inside is absolute darkness.

TOM WESSELL (early 40s), a gentle giant, rocking a long ponytail and tattoo sleeves on both arms, stands in front of the door frame facing away from Sloane.

TOM

Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with this?

He collapses on the porch, limp. A beat, then his body slowly rises, suspended in midair, before being pulled into the darkness within.

INT. SLOANE'S APARTMENT BEDROOM – NIGHT

Sloane's eyes open suddenly. She sits up, using her fingers to trace the tear-stains on her face.

SLOANE (PRE-LAP)

I know, Mom...

INT. SLOANE'S APARTMENT MAIN ROOM – MORNING

Her shoebox apartment looks like it's missing half of its stuff – TV stand but no TV, toaster but no microwave, paper but no printer. A CARDBOARD BOX sits by the front door.

An expansive collection of potted plants litters windowsills, tables...basically anywhere not occupied by something else. A light breeze rolls in through an open window.

She's on the phone with her mother, CAROLINE WESSELL (early 60s), hard to connect to and cares a little too much.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

I just...why can't you move in with a friend? Can you even afford to stay in this apartment by yourself?

SLOANE

Thank you for your concern. But I'm fine. Need a new microwave, though.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

If you come visit you can have our old one, it's just in the garage collecting dust. It might need a new dish...in any case, you should come visit. It's been a while.

Sloane stands to look out the window at her modest view of Brooklyn. In between two buildings across the street is a nice sliver of Manhattan.

SLOANE

It hasn't been that long. I've been busy, and now the...
(struggling to say it)
...breakup.

Between the buildings a construction crew starts on another building. Soon it will overtake her view. Sloane frowns.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

And, like you said, now I've gotta worry about my rent.

Caroline is quiet on the other end.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

You there?

CAROLINE

You know the Mitchells are moving out soon.

SLOANE

Yeah.

CAROLINE

I know they missed having you at the funeral.

SLOANE

I wanted to come. I couldn't take off.

CAROLINE

I remember. Just would've been nice to have you there.

SLOANE

(exasperated)

Mom...what do you want me to say...

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Nothing. I'd just like to see you. That's all. I miss you. And Dad's garden misses you!

Sloane softens. A JACKHAMMER starts across the street and she shuts the open window.

SLOANE

I miss you too. I'll visit soon, I promise.

Unbeknownst to Sloane, a BOOK on a HEAVY WOODEN SHELF bolted above her couch starts to inch toward the edge.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Okay, sweetie. Give my best to...uhh, I mean...

SLOANE

Smooth. She's coming later to pick up the rest of her stuff. Should I say you were thinking of her?

THUMP! Sloane whips around at the sound. The book lays on the floor. She approaches with hesitation.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Oh, knock it off! Got your pepper-spray?

She picks it up, brow furrowed.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Sloane?

SLOANE

What? Sorry. Did you say pepper-spray? Jesus, Mom. Nina's coming over. For support. Not because I need a bodyguard.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Okay. Good. Can never be too sure. Sometimes people surprise you.

SLOANE

Yeah. Right. Okay Mom, I gotta go.
Talk to you soon.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Okay, be safe. And think about when
you want to visit.

SLOANE

I will.

She turns the book over, curious, before standing on her couch to replace it gingerly back on the self.

INT. SLOANE'S APARTMENT MAIN ROOM – LATER

Sloane talks to someone outside her front door, entire body tense. She gives one last wave before closing the door. She's alone, finally free of the cardboard box.

The construction crew now gone for the day, Sloane reopens the window before picking up a small WATERING CAN.

With the attention of a horticulturist, she bounces around her cramped apartment, WATERING and EXAMINING each plant in depth for any issues. It's an intimate and cathartic process.

Her work complete, she flops on her couch and closes her eyes as a breeze rustles the curtains, stirring a FRAMED PHOTO on the same shelf. Or is it the wind...

Suddenly the frame TUMBLES off the shelf again, hitting her head en route to the floor. She recoils in pain.

SLOANE

FUCK.

Still rubbing her smarting head wound, she reaches down and picks it up, her scowl softening.

In the photo, YOUNG SLOANE (12) and Tom stand in front of a quaint GARDEN, covered in dirt but all smiles. The glass is SPLIT down the middle, separating them.

DING! A new TEXT distracts her. She sets the frame down and pulls out her phone to find a message from NINA (late 20s, the overbearing mom-type friend).

NINA (TEXT)

Are you sure you dont want me to
come over?

SLOANE (TEXT)
All good I have my pepper-spray lol

NINA (TEXT)
Ok Im coming over

SLOANE (TEXT)
Jk she just left
(then)
Im ok really I was kidding!!!

She leans her head back against the wall and closes her eyes.
Takes a deep, cleansing breath.

Without warning, the shelf above her PULLS FREE from the wall
and HURTLES toward her head—

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD — DAY — FLASHBACK — 2007

CRUNCH! A pile of mulch is lifted to reveal Young Sloane, her
mouth covered in BLOOD.

She holds the dirt in her fist, the familiar GARDEN behind
her as she rummages in her pocket until she finds what she's
looking for: one BLOODY BABY TOOTH.

Young Sloane places it in the grave reverently and fills it
with soil, spit shining a ROCK with her bloody spit before
placing it carefully above the mound.

She stands and admires her work as an ARM wraps around her
and pulls her close. She looks up at her father, TOM, and
smiles, hugging him around the waist.

Tom begins to recite the *Mourner's Kaddish*, the Jewish prayer
to honor the dead.

TOM
(in Hebrew)
Glorified and sanctified be God's
great name throughout the world
which He has created according to
His will.

In front of them are 19 meticulously aligned ROCKS, the soil
freshest where she just placed her most recent tooth.

Her TOOTH CEMETERY.

TOM (CONT'D)

(in Hebrew)

May He establish His kingdom in
your lifetime and during your days,
and within the life of the entire
House of Israel, speedily and soon;
and say, Amen.

YOUNG SLOANE

Amen.

DING! The chime of a doorbell rings over the rest of the prayer. Once, then again, angrier and angrier until...

INT. SLOANE'S APARTMENT MAIN ROOM – NIGHT

The furious rings of a doorbell rouse Sloane from her daze. Slowly she rises, clocking the shelf and its contents scattered around her.

A HAND reaches out and she barely manages to grasp it and stand. She looks up into the eyes of a bespectacled ELDERLY MAN (late 70s), his face emotionless and dressed plainly.

He gestures toward the door and its never-ending ringing. Sloane nods and stumbles to it, fumbling with the handle and eventually managing to pull it open.

Whatever is on the other side brings a genuine smile to her face. She steps outside into the hallway...

EXT. THE HOUSE – DAY – CONTINUOUS

But instead, she steps onto the porch from her dream, the apartment door now replaced by darkness. She starts to laugh.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY – NIGHT

In the real world, she stands outside her apartment, sobbing uncontrollably. Her hair and face are drenched in BLOOD from a GASH across the top of her head.

A WOMAN her age (this must be NINA) is crying and yelling at her, trying to get answers, but all Sloane can hear is a high pitched buzzing. Sloane continues to sob, unable to respond.

Nina fumbles to dial the right three numbers on her phone when the buzzing cuts to silence.

Without warning, Sloane stops crying, stone-faced, before collapsing on the ground. Nina is frozen in place, horrified.

TITLE CARD: BABY TEETH**INT. NINA'S CAR — DAY**

Sloane, TRAVEL PILLOW around her neck and head BANDAGED, sleeps peacefully against the window of a well-kept SEDAN.

"Daughters" by John Mayer drifts from the radio as Nina sings along, drumming on the steering wheel.

NINA

(sotto)

*Oh, you see that skin?
It's the same she's been standing
in
Since the day she saw him walking
away
Now she's left cleaning up the mess
he made*

Sunlight bleeds through the tree cover onto Sloane's face. She stirs and rubs the sleep from her unbandaged eye, revealing a MEDICAL BRACELET on her wrist. Nina jams on, oblivious.

SLOANE

(groggily)

What the hell?

Startled, Nina snaps into action and turns the radio off.

NINA

Shut up. He calms me down. But
also...please don't tell anyone.
How...how are you?

Sloane checks her phone. 4:32pm. 4 missed calls from Mom. She pockets it.

SLOANE

I can't believe I'm doing this. I
would've been fine recovering in my
apartment.

NINA

That's not what—

SLOANE (CONT'D)

—not what the doctor said.
You're doing the mom thing
again!

NINA (CONT'D)

Oh, so now it's overbearing to not
want your friend to die.

Sloane flips open the vanity mirror to inspect it.

SLOANE
You're so dramatic, it's barely—

She turns her head, revealing a spot of blood on the bandage. Grimacing, she shuts the mirror and slumps in her seat.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
My plants are gonna die.

NINA
Oh my God, anything else you wanna complain about? We're almost there so get it out now.

SLOANE
I'm serious, I'm worried they'll die!

NINA
I'll water them.

SLOANE
Fine. Is Hunter pissed?

NINA
Oh, yeah. He was really excited to meet the wedding planner.

SLOANE
Ha ha. Fair enough.

NINA
I don't think he'll ever recover. You know, kind of like if you were alone and bleeding out in your apartment right now.

Silence. Too far. Without looking, Nina pushes the power button on the radio and cranks the volume. John Mayer's soothing voice fills the car once more as she rocks out.

NINA (CONT'D)
*So fathers be good to your
daughters
Daughters will love like you do
Girls become lovers who turn into
mothers
So mothers be good to your
daughters too*

The two burst out laughing, until Sloane clutches her head in pain. Nina puts a hand on her shoulder for support.

GPS NAVIGATION (V.O.)
 Turn left onto Oak Ave. Then, your
 destination will be on the left.

Sloane looks out the window, still reeling from pain.

I/E. NINA'S CAR / THE LOT - DAY

They drive down the familiar street, passing a cemetery and an EMPTY, OVERGROWN LOT next to it. Sloane's eyes linger on it as time slows.

In the middle of the lot stands the same Elderly Man from her apartment *staring directly at her*.

Sloane yelps in surprise and Nina slams on the breaks.

NINA
 JESUS! What's wrong?

Sloane searches the lot, but it's empty once more.

SLOANE
 Sorry, I think I'm psyching myself
 out a little.

Nina rubs Sloane's back.

NINA
 It's okay.

Sloane turns to Nina, almost sheepish.

SLOANE
 Do you want to drive around for a
 little first? Maybe get some food?
 I...I need a little more time
 before we go in.

NINA
 (smiling)
 Sure. I've always wanted to see the
 town that fucked you up.

Sloane returns the smile weakly as Nina drives off.

I/E. NINA'S CAR / MITCHELL FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

Down the street they drive past another house with a crew of MOVERS and a MOVING TRUCK parked in the driveway. Sloane shifts uneasily.

EXT. MITCHELL FAMILY HOUSE – DAY

Nina's car disappears down the street as the Movers close the gate of the truck. A SHIRTLESS MAN mows his lawn next door as the front door to the house opens.

From within comes MARTY MITCHELL (late 50s), a New Balance Dad Meme personified. He's got a tough exterior, but he's actually a big softie.

He watches the Movers clamber into the truck, waving them off as his son, BENTLEY MITCHELL (late 20s), joins him outside. He's smart and intense, but lately he's been losing his way.

The two watch the truck drive away, leaving the street quiet. Marty snaps a few terrible pictures on his phone, pulling Bentley in for an unflattering selfie in front of the house.

They take in the house a final time as Marty squeezes his son's shoulder. Bentley leans in for a beat then pulls away.

BENTLEY

See you there?

MARTY

Right behind ya.

Bentley hops into his car as Marty turns his attention down the street toward another house, where a WOMAN stands at her front door. This is Caroline Wessell, Sloane's mother.

The two wave at each other before Marty gets in his car.

INT. MARTY'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM – DAY

They're in Marty's new digs, an uninteresting but comfortable single bedroom apartment. Bentley brings a box labeled PHOTOS over to the couch while Marty unpacks in the other room.

He opens it and pulls out the top frame wrapped in bubble wrap. It's a family photo from a cheap photo studio.

Bentley's mother, MOLLY (late 50s) is not looking good, but she still manages a warm smile. Everyone looks uncomfortable — Bentley inexplicably has his hands in his jacket pockets.

MARTY

Your mom paid for that with a coupon.

Bentley's startled out of the memory. Marty stands over him.

BENTLEY

What?

MARTY

She paid for the studio time with a coupon. At least part of it.

BENTLEY

Hm. It's not a very good photo.

MARTY

Well, you get what you pay for, I guess.

Bentley smiles. That makes Marty smile, too.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Thanks for helping with the move. Dinner's on me tonight.

BENTLEY

How generous.

MARTY

Smart ass.

INT. MARTY'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM – LATER

A lifetime of memories in front of him. Bentley eyes a photo of a YOUNG BOY and a familiar YOUNG GIRL in front of a garden. This is Young Sloane and YOUNG BENTLEY (12).

He digs the last one out from the bottom of the box and peels off the bubblewrap, revealing a much older photo.

A smiling family, the house behind them is unremarkable but quaint, with a porch swing adorning the front. To the right a small, well kept cemetery.

Confused, Bentley flips over the worn frame and pops the picture out. An inscription on the back reads "The Ivolgin Family, 1958" in faded pen.

INT. MARTY'S APARTMENT BEDROOM – LATER

Marty's stuffing clothes in a dresser as Bentley walks in.

BENTLEY

Hey, Dad? Do you recognize these people?

Marty turns and takes it from Bentley. His face darkens.

MARTY

No clue.

BENTLEY

I think this was that old house
down the street that was torn down.
See the cemetery on the right?

He inspects it again before handing it back to Bentley.

MARTY

Hm. Could be. This was in with the
rest of the photos?

BENTLEY

(nodding)
So these people aren't family?

MARTY

Well, they're a family. Could be
ours. I just don't know.

Marty eyes his sterile living space.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I'm hungry now. You hungry?

Marty exits and Bentley glances at the photo one more time.

MONTAGE OF HOMETOWN – DAY

- A dinky MAIN STREET with very little storefront appeal and a new apartment complex across the street.
- An old TAILOR SHOP and a new apartment complex next door.
- The drabest POST OFFICE imaginable...with a brand new apartment complex next to it. You get the idea.
- A busy block that somehow has at least six gas stations.
- A shopping center with the newest chains.
- Another with an aging PRODUCE MARKET at one end, a CHINESE BUFFET at the other, and empty storefronts in the middle.
- A high school football field that holds 2,000 people.
- Working class neighborhoods.
- Upper-middle class neighborhoods.

END MONTAGE

INT. OLGA'S DINER – LATER

Nina pays at the counter of a podunk diner, every brand of gum imaginable at her fingertips as Sloane paces behind her.

SLOANE

Do you wanna see the liquor store
that never carded us?

Nina turns away from the till.

NINA

Sloane.

SLOANE

What?

NINA

Stop it!

SLOANE

Stop what?

NINA

Oh my God, this is ridiculous.

Sloane's shoulders fall.

SLOANE

Fine. We can go.

Nina takes her receipt from the cashier, nodding in thanks.

NINA

(to Sloane)

We have to eventually, right?

Sloane shrugs. Nina eyes her.

SLOANE

(deep breath)

I know. It'll be fine.

Nina squeezes her shoulder.

NINA

It'll be fine.

EXT. OLGA'S DINER – NIGHT

Sloane and Nina exit as Marty and Bentley enter. Sloane locks eyes with Bentley as he appears to recognize her, but it's too dark to be sure.

She quickly averts her gaze and hustles away, leaving Bentley completely thrown off.

MARTY (PRE-LAP)
Bentley!

INT. OLGA'S DINER - LATER

Both Marty and a WAITER eye Bentley expectantly.

BENTLEY
Uhh...turkey club.

They both hand over their menus and the waiter leaves.

MARTY
You alright?

Bentley's eyes drift to the front counter.

BENTLEY
I think so. Long day.

He shakes it off.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Excited to get settled into the new place?

Marty smiles at Bentley's deflection but doesn't push him.

MARTY
It'll do. Your mother would've hated it.

Bentley shifts uncomfortably. Marty searches their surroundings for conversation.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Hm. No kids.

Bentley cases the diner to confirm.

BENTLEY
Yeah, guess not.

MARTY
That's weird, right?

BENTLEY
Why would that be weird?

MARTY

Just kinda figured there'd be at least a few here causing problems.

BENTLEY

Why?

MARTY

(shrugging)

Seems like a place kids would loiter.

They sit in an awkward silence.

MARTY (CONT'D)

When she was younger, your mother and Caroline spent Saturday nights at the movie theater downtown.

BENTLEY

Really?

MARTY

Mhm. A group of them would mess around outside until the cops showed up.

BENTLEY

I can't picture her like that.

MARTY

Yep, she had a real rebellious streak.

BENTLEY

You never went?

MARTY

Not really my scene. But, hey, it all worked out in the end, right?
(sighing)
It drove her parents crazy, though. Funny. How things change. I wonder when kids stopped going there.

BENTLEY

They still go there, I think. But probably to see a movie.

MARTY

Smart ass.

(beat)

Hey, maybe Percy knows.

BENTLEY
Knows what?

MARTY
Where kids loiter now!

Bentley snorts.

BENTLEY
Percy definitely doesn't know where
the cool kids hang out.

MARTY
(shrugs)
If you say so.

BENTLEY
Is he gonna help you unpack
tomorrow?

MARTY
(shaking his head)
Said he had a big test coming up. I
sent him the pictures I took today.

BENTLEY
Oh. That's a bummer. Do you want me
to come over? I took off work the
rest of the week in case you needed
any help.

MARTY
If you want. No pressure though.

The waiter steps in with their food and departs. Marty points
at his empty glass and goes to ask for a refill but the
waiter's long gone. Bentley looks at his turkey club.

BENTLEY
I had a turkey sandwich for lunch.

Marty smiles, reaching across the table to swap their plates.

DISC JOCKEY (PRE-LAP)
Hey folks this is Mike over at
90.7: *The Underground*.
(effect deepens his voice)

I/E. BENTLEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Bentley drives down an empty road, the radio tuned to a local
station as an overenthusiastic DISC JOCKEY rambles.

DISC JOCKEY (O.S.)

Tonight, we're playing our favorite game. We have a word in mind and we want you to send us your best song suggestions based on that word. Got it? Easy enough. Today's word is "Tooth" – throwing it back to 2016 and the song "Toothbrush" by DNCE off of their self-titled album.

The word "tooth" grabs his attention.

DISC JOCKEY (CONT'D)

It's also in honor of a nasty root canal I had last week that my dentist said was "one of the worst he's ever seen"—

Bentley kills the radio.

I/E. BENTLEY'S CAR / INTERSECTION – NIGHT

He reaches an intersection, lost in thought.

EXT. THE HOUSE – DAY – FLASHBACK – 2007

Young Sloane stands on the porch of The House, mouth covered in blood.

I/E. BENTLEY'S CAR / INTERSECTION – NIGHT

Green light. Bentley flips his signal on and makes the turn.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY FOYER – NIGHT

A knock at the door, unanswered. Another knock, no response. Very slowly the door creeps open and Sloane peers in.

SLOANE

Mom?

No answer.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Mom? You there?

Still nothing. Sloane steps inside, followed close behind by Nina. She walks down the short hallway into the kitchen.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY KITCHEN – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Also empty save for a homemade CAKE in a glass CAKE DISH that reads "Welcome Home Sloane!" in icing. Sloane smiles before turning toward the living room.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY LIVING ROOM – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Sloane steps in and jumps, startled by Caroline, asleep in a reclining chair. Sloane smiles and steps forward to wake her up, then stops. Caroline's sleeping a little too still.

Concern sets in as Sloane reaches out to wake her up. Time moves in slow motion, hand extending closer and closer to Caroline's body.

A large snore confirms she's alive. Sloane jumps, then sighs with relief, leaning forward to gently pull the blanket up to her mother's chin. She backs out of the room.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY KITCHEN – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Joining Nina back in the kitchen, the two look at each other expectantly, speaking in hushed tones.

SLOANE

Oh, right. This is my house. Okay, come on, I'll show you your room.

NINA

You're not gonna say hi to her?

SLOANE

She's sleeping. If I wake her up it'll be a whole thing. I'll just wait until tomorrow.

NINA

That's a fun way to continue avoiding confrontation.

She looks past Sloane into the living room and sighs.

NINA (CONT'D)

Whatever. I can't tell you what to do. I'm not your mom.

SLOANE

Nice. Not gonna work.

She exits. Nina glances at Caroline again before following.

INT. SLOANE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sloane shuts the door and drops her bags, finally alone.

Her room is neat and without personality. The only thing not perfectly tidy: a stack of unopened JUNK MAIL on her desk, all addressed to her. She rolls her eyes.

She crosses the room and opens the closet - it's overflowing with everything Caroline removed. Sighing, she shuts it.

Sloane unzips her bag, pulling out the photo that fell on her head. She sets it on a shelf next to the same picture of Young Sloane and Young Bentley that Bentley unpacked.

She smiles at it, then looks out the window, lost in thought.

EXT. THE LOT - NIGHT

Bentley looks out at the same lot from earlier. He ignites his phone's FLASHLIGHT, foot hovering over the tall grass before he commits and enters.

He shines the flashlight over the grass, slowly combing the area. Something catches his eye - in the center there appears to be a small patch of grass cleared.

Bentley brushes aside the overgrowth to reveal an area about a foot in diameter completely cleared of grass. Looking around, it appears to be in the direct center of the lot.

Bending down to inspect it further, something with a shine in the center of the circle catches the light.

Bentley digs at the dirt around it until it comes free. He picks it up and rolls it around his palm.

It's a BLOODY BABY TOOTH.

SLOANE (O.S.)

Hey.

Bentley whips around, startled.

BENTLEY

Hey.

SLOANE

Didn't expect to see you here.

BENTLEY

Didn't expect to see you at the diner.

He stands up and dusts himself off, pocketing the tooth in his JACKET. He gestures to her head wound.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Are you...okay?

SLOANE
Shelf fell on my head.

BENTLEY
Damn.

SLOANE
Yeah.

BENTLEY
But you're...good?

SLOANE
I'm here, so...

BENTLEY
Fair enough.

Bentley kicks at the undergrowth around them.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Do you ever think about The House?

SLOANE
No.

BENTLEY
Never?

SLOANE
No, Bentley, I don't. Does that surprise you?

BENTLEY
I guess just because of...y'know.

SLOANE
(stone-faced)
Might be time to let go of the past.

He smiles. Still the same ol' Sloane.

BENTLEY
Yeah. You're probably right. Well, we moved out today, not sure if your mom told you. So... probably won't be back here too much.

SLOANE

Oh. Wow. I didn't know that was today.

BENTLEY

Yeah. Speaking of, I should probably head out. Gotta help him unpack tomorrow.

SLOANE

Of course. Okay. Well, it was nice to see you. I'll be in town a while because of—

(gestures to her head)
—if you want to hang out or something?

BENTLEY

Sure. Sounds like a plan.

He walks past her to his car. She mulls it over for a beat before turning to catch him at his car.

SLOANE

Hey, Bentley?

He turns back.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about your mom. I wanted to take off work, but—

BENTLEY

Sloane. It's okay. Let go of the past, right?

SLOANE

Yeah, I guess.

BENTLEY

Say hi to your mom for me.

SLOANE

Sure. Same to your dad and Anna.

BENTLEY

It's actually Percy. He goes by Percy now.

Sloane fumbles, taken by surprise.

SLOANE

Oh! Oh, that's awesome. Good for him. Well, hi to Percy then.

BENTLEY

Will do.

And with that, he gets in the car, turns it on, and drives away. Sloane stands where Bentley stood, frustrated and sad.

In the darkness a bush rustles and Sloane jumps. Spooked, she hustles out and heads home.

INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT BEDROOM – NIGHT

The entire apartment is bare bones — only the necessary furniture and a few personal objects. Almost as if he could pick up and move home at a moment's notice.

Bentley sets the photo on the NIGHTSTAND before crashing on his bed. He pulls out his phone and scrolls mindlessly for a beat before he stops, then opens a new text to Percy.

This is Bentley's brother, PERCY MITCHELL (early 20s), who recently began transitioning. He's a quick-witted button pusher. Also the family gossip.

BENTLEY (TEXT)

Guess who's back in town

Percy starts typing back almost immediately.

PERCY (TEXT)

i refuse to guess. tell me

BENTLEY (TEXT)

Sloane

PERCY (TEXT)

ooohhhh shit! how'd that go?

BENTLEY (TEXT)

Fine i guess

PERCY (TEXT)

lmaooooo sounds like bad to me

BENTLEY (TEXT)

Why did i think coming to you was a good idea?

PERCY (TEXT)

:-)

Bentley tosses his phone on the bed and rubs his face in frustration. In between his fingers he sees a FIGURE in the corner of the room. He freezes.

Unable to take his hands down, he watches through his fingers as the shape of a MAN comes into focus, the faint moonlight from outside catching a pair of GLASSES.

The ELDERLY MAN.

With a shaky hand he reaches for his phone and fumbles with the flashlight, shining it toward the figure. It's empty.

Almost like a child, Bentley grabs his comforter and scrambles out of the room.

INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Bentley searches a CLOSET, tossing anything in his way out into the hall. Finally he strikes gold: an OLD NIGHTLIGHT.

Quickly, he plugs in the light and takes refuge close to it, rolled up in his comforter like a sleeping bag.

EXT. THE LOT / THE HOUSE - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

The lot where the house used to stand is empty. Sloane steps through the undergrowth, finding the cut out circle with the same BABY TOOTH Bentley excavated.

She bends down and starts to dig, trying to pull the tooth out but it's more imbedded this time. Eventually it starts to give, cracking and popping as the roots break.

Blood begins to flow from the broken roots as she loosens it, submerging her hands as she works, desperation mounting.

SNAP! It finally comes free.

She pulls it from the pool and stands. The small baby tooth sticks to her palm, her hands soaked in blood.

CLICK! The same sound of the gate closing behind someone. Sloane looks up, face to face with the HOLE in the GATE to her backyard.

Through that hole is the familiar HOUSE, her father standing on the porch facing away from her.

TOM

Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with this?

Tom collapses once more, then rises. He starts to levitate toward her and the doorframe—

INT. SLOANE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - MORNING - PRESENT

Sloane's eyes open, tears staining her cheeks. As she traces the lines, she clocks the muffled voices of Caroline and Nina. She throws off the covers and slips out of bed.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY FOYER - DAY

Sloane sneaks down the stairs and sits on the bottom step as Caroline and Nina chat in the kitchen down the hall.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

...I never liked that girl she was with, but now I'm worried about when she goes back and she's completely alone.

NINA (O.S.)

I'm only a few subway stops away—

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Oh, I know you'll be there for her, but you're getting married. She shouldn't be your responsibility.

NINA

I don't think of it like that. Just looking out for her.

CAROLINE

Well, you probably know better than I do at this point.

Sloane, fuming, pretends to stomp down the last few steps before rounding the corner to walk into the—

INT. WESSELL FAMILY KITCHEN - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Sloane struts in as Nina turns around, startled.

SLOANE

Morning!

Caroline smiles wide and crosses the room, arms outstretched.

CAROLINE

Oh, sweetie. It's good to see you.

The two embrace, Caroline careful to avoid Sloane's bandage.

SLOANE

Sorry we didn't wake you up last night. We were wiped so I figured we could start fresh today.

CAROLINE

Yes! Fresh! If only the cake I made was still fresh this morning!

She laughs an impossibly dry laugh. Sloane looks away.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Ah, well. But you're here now, that's what matters. Hungry? I made Nina some eggs, but I can whip up whatever you want. Kitchen's open for business!

SLOANE

Doesn't matter, I just gotta eat so I can take my meds. Which are in my suitcase...I think...

NINA

Outside pocket.

SLOANE

Yeah. There. Thanks.

Awkward silence. Nina stands and pushes her stool in.

NINA

I think it's probably time for me to hit the road.

Sloane's eyes go wide.

SLOANE

You're leaving already? But I just came down! Stay for lunch!

NINA

Sorry, I wish I could, but Hunter somehow convinced the wedding planner to meet today and the next opening is in like six weeks.

She turns to Caroline.

NINA (CONT'D)

Thanks for breakfast and for letting me stay over, Ms. Wessell. It was so nice to see you again.

Caroline gives her a hug as well.

CAROLINE

Oh, please, Nina. It's Caroline!
You know you're welcome anytime.
Thank you for bringing Sloane home
to me. And good luck with the
wedding planning! Let me know if
you want help with anything – I've
got nothing but time these days.

NINA

Don't tempt me! Don't you do it!

Sloane stands there uncomfortably. The two separate, smiling.

SLOANE

I'll walk out with you.

Sloane takes off. Nina follows suit, calling behind her.

NINA

Look for your save the date in the
mail!

CAROLINE

I will!

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY HOUSE – DAY

The two of them stand by Nina's car, silent.

NINA

How much did you hear?

SLOANE

Enough.

NINA

She just misses you—

SLOANE

Don't. Don't you dare try and play
mom with me right now.

NINA

Okay. I'm sorry.

Sloane ignores her.

NINA (CONT'D)

What do you want me to say? What do
you want to hear right now?

SLOANE

I want you to take me home! I want
this—

Sloane gestures to her head, eyeing the medical bracelet. She struggles to remove it as she talks.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

(grunting)

—to go away. But here I am.

NINA

Don't you ever get tired of running
away from everything?

SNAP! The clasp holding the bracelet opens.

SLOANE

Don't you ever get tired of trying
to fix me?

NINA

Sloane...

Sloane walks over to an empty trash can on the curb.

SLOANE

I'm not your responsibility.

She tosses the bracelet in and slams the lid shut.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Do you even like me? Or do you just
want to keep someone around who's
more fucked up than you.

Nina turns and opens her car and Sloane tries to stop her.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Nina. I'm sorry. That
was way too far.

NINA

I get it. It's been a rough couple
of weeks for you. But guess what?
You're not the only one with shit
going on. I mean, Jesus, Sloane, I
thought you were going to die.

Sloane steps back, faltering.

NINA (CONT'D)

You opened that door covered in blood, sobbing hysterically, and then passed out at my feet. Do you know how scary that was? No. It didn't even cross your mind. But the reality is: I'm not doing so great. And I have to go. Now.

She gets in the car. Sloane doesn't put up a fight.

NINA (CONT'D)

I hope you feel better. And I hope you figure things out with your mom.

Nina slams the door shut, then turns on the car and speeds off, leaving Sloane lost and alone.

She turns away, eyes lingering on the GATE to the backyard. The hole in the wood stares back at her.

Sloane shakes it off, turning back to the house and catches the blinds in the front window dropping.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY FOYER – DAY

Caroline toils in the kitchen like she wasn't just spying on her. Sloane enters, booking it back upstairs and slamming her door. Caroline walks into the foyer and looks up, sighing.

INT. SLOANE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM – DAY

A gentle knock at the door. Sloane doesn't stir, so Caroline invites herself in.

CAROLINE

Everything okay?

SLOANE

Love what you've done with the place. Reminds me of my hospital room.

CAROLINE

Very funny.

Sloane turns over and gives her a look through the bandages.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Do you want to talk about it?

SLOANE

No. And I saw you looking through the blinds.

CAROLINE

Okay. Sorry, I can't help myself. I was born a snoop.

SLOANE

It's not that you're a snoop, it's that you're a terrible snoop. You never put anything back where you found it.

CAROLINE

What, I was supposed to remember exactly where everything went?
(off Sloane's look)
Kidding! Just kidding...

Sloane rolls back toward the wall. Caroline steps to the bed, then pulls back.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I'll be downstairs if you still want breakfast.

She exits, closing the door behind her. The PICTURE of Young Sloane and Tom tumbles to the floor, but Sloane doesn't stir.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Bentley steps into a small but cozy library. A CHILD and his MOTHER enter behind and the child takes off, pushing past Bentley in his rush for knowledge. She hustles after him.

CHILD'S MOTHER

Sorry! Sorry sorry sorry.

Bentley smiles and waves her away and approaches the help desk, where a slightly overweight and very hairy LIBRARY ASSISTANT, STEW (late 20s) is focused on the computer.

He wears a T-shirt that reads "Keep Calm and Read On," but otherwise looks like a regular at a local dive bar.

STEW

Wow, I've been here three years and I don't think you've ever come to visit us once.

BENTLEY

First time for everything.

STEW

Yeah, I guess so. How's it going?

BENTLEY

Ah, you know. Moved my dad out of the house yesterday.

STEW

Oof. How'd was that?

BENTLEY

Fine, I guess. Actually, that's kinda why I'm here. You busy?

STEW

Nah, I've mostly been playing minesweeper.

Bentley peers at the screen; only one square in the entire board is selected and it was a mine.

BENTLEY

Tough break.

STEW

It happens. Drew's wrapping up story-time duty for the day so I'm all yours.

Stew points toward the general vicinity of the children's section. Bentley sticks his head around the corner.

Another LIBRARY ASSISTANT that looks exactly like Stew is surrounded by a group of enraptured CHILDREN.

The Child's Mother drags her son into the group and he finally settles. Drew gives her a smile and a wink.

Bentley turns back to Stew.

BENTLEY

I don't know how you guys do it.

STEW

I really like it. Beats the hell out of working at Garden Grove.

BENTLEY

What?

STEW

Garden Grove. Like the Cemetery.

BENTLEY
No, like, I know it's the Cemetery.
You worked there?

STEW
Oh, sure. Did I never tell you
about that?

BENTLEY
I think I'd remember if you did.

STEW
Yeah dude. Worked there a couple'a
years at least. Around when my dad
died. Buried the fucker myself.

Bentley's eyes go wide in horror.

STEW (CONT'D)
That came out bad. I did not kill
him.

BENTLEY
You buried your dad?

STEW
Yessir.

BENTLEY
Did they make you...do that?

Stew's laughs way too loud for a library. A few ELDERLY
PEOPLE reading at tables shoot him the stink eye.

STEW
Sorry, sorry folks! Back to your
learning, won't happen again.
(to Bentley)
No, I asked if I could. I was also
not the first request for that,
apparently.

BENTLEY
Huh. Sounds like it could be
cathartic, I guess.

STEW
I think it was. I brought a few
beers and took my time with it.
Least I could do for my old man.

He leans in, like he's about to tell Bentley a secret.

STEW (CONT'D)

Not sure what you believe, but I like to think he was there with me.

He moves in closer and Bentley leans in to meet him.

STEW (CONT'D)

I set a beer out for him while I filled the grave, y'know, share one more with him. By the time I was done, his bottle was empty.

BENTLEY

Really?

Stew pulls back and smiles.

STEW

I mean, honestly I probably just drank it and forgot. But it's a nice thought! Don't mention it to Drew, though. Freaks him out.

Bentley zips his lips and throws away the key.

BENTLEY

Your secret's safe with me.

STEW

Good. Now why the hell are you here other than to make me depressed?

BENTLEY

Sorry about that, uh, yeah.

He pulls out the PHOTO and hands it to Stew.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

There used to be this super old house on my street that was falling apart. They tore it down when I was a kid, but I was hoping there might be some information on the owner?

STEW

I don't think we'd have stuff like that unless it, like, burned down or something. Did it burn down?

Bentley shakes his head.

STEW (CONT'D)

Hmm...Drew might know—

Drew approaches from behind Bentley, wearing a T-shirt that says "Don't talk to me until I've had my Kafka."

STEW (CONT'D)

Well speak of the devil! Hey, Drew!
Look who showed up!

He squints until recognition dawns on him.

DREW

That can't be right. Bentley? In
the House of Knowledge? My eyes
must be playing tricks on me.

BENTLEY

Ha ha, very funny—

STEW

Bentley's looking for the history
of an old house that was torn down
when we were kids. Does the library
have records of stuff like that?

Drew takes the picture from Stew and inspects it.

DREW

Not that I know of...

BENTLEY

There's a name and date on the
back, too.

Drew pops off the back, his eyes wide at the inscription.

DREW

No. Way.

STEW

What?

BENTLEY

What?

Drew shows Stew the inscription. His eyes also widen.

STEW (CONT'D)

Ho—ly shit. That's gotta be Devin's
dad, right?

Drew puts frame together again.

DREW

What did he always say about that
house?

He deepens his voice like a grumpy old man.

DREW (CONT'D)

"Damn shame what happened to it. Town just left it to rot and then tore it down. Back in my day cigarettes were a nickel and we gave them to children."

STEW

That's pretty good, Drew.

BENTLEY

Sorry, wait...who's Devin?

DREW

Devin's a good friend of ours—

STEW

—Used to be a good friend of ours.

DREW

Right. Used to. He kinda went straight edge and cut us out. This was back during high school, before we were friends with you.

Bentley shifts uncomfortably.

BENTLEY

Oh. Sorry.

STEW

It happens.

BENTLEY

So his dad's still alive?

He hands Bentley back the photo.

DREW

No, he actually just passed away not too long ago. He was super old, even when we were kids.

BENTLEY

Oh. Damn.

DREW

But maybe Devin knows something? That'd probably be more help than digging through old newspapers.

STEW

Do you think he'd be okay with us reaching out?

DREW

I mean, worth a shot. Kinda a weird request, though. What's this for?

Bentley smiles at the photo.

BENTLEY

My mom had this in her stuff. It probably doesn't mean anything, but, I just want to know why.

Drew nods.

DREW

We'll figure something out.

BENTLEY

(smiling)

Thank you guys for your help.

STEW

Maybe Devin's finally got the stick out of his ass and we can hang again.

DREW

Probably not.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY KITCHEN – DAY

Caroline preps food at the counter, clocking Sloane as she enters the room. Sloane eyes the door to the backyard.

CAROLINE

Hey sweetie. Need anything?

SLOANE

Is the kitchen still open for business?

CAROLINE

(smiling)

Absolutely. Anything in particular?

Sloane eyes the food Caroline's prepping.

SLOANE

Need any help?

Caroline smiles.

CAROLINE
Are you going to remember to set
the timer?

SLOANE
That was one time! I was like six!

Caroline shrugs.

CAROLINE
Tell that to my crispy lasagna.

SLOANE
I would. I'd say it to its face. I
don't care.

Caroline laughs and pushes a cutting board, vegetables, and a knife in her direction, then remembers her bandaged eye.

CAROLINE
Maybe you can stir for me.

Sloane smiles and crosses to the stove next to Caroline. They work in a comfortable silence, Caroline cutting as she stirs.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
You always were a better gardener
than a cook.

SLOANE
Dad was a good teacher.
(catching herself)
Not that you weren't—

CAROLINE
I know what you meant, Sloane. It's
okay.

They continue to work in a less comfortable silence.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Did you go somewhere last night?

SLOANE
What?

CAROLINE
I thought I heard the door last
night. After you came in.

Sloane's grip on her spoon tightens.

SLOANE
Just forgot something in the car.

CAROLINE
Sorry. None of my business.

Sloane relents, her shoulders falling.

SLOANE
No, it's okay. It's just weird
staying here.

CAROLINE
It's weird to have you back. But in
a good way. For me at least.

Caroline sets down the knife.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
You want to sit out in the garden
for a little?

Sloane eyes the door to the backyard again. The light outside looks warm and inviting until it fades, darker and darker until it resembles the absolute darkness within The House.

The sound of the GATE SLAMMING (or is it Tom collapsing?) JOLTS Sloane out of the vision. Caroline has a hand on her shoulder, concerned.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Sloane? Are you okay?

Everything's normal, the light shining once more. Sloane shakes it off and smiles at her.

SLOANE
Maybe later. I'm really hungry.

Caroline sees through it but smiles all the same.

CAROLINE
Of course. Later.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY HOUSE – DUSK

Sloane sits on the front steps of the house, watching the sun dip below the neighborhood. She pulls out her phone and opens a new text to NINA and hesitates.

DING DING! A bike bell chimes as two CHILDREN bike past, a BOY and a GIRL. The girl swerves into the boy, almost sending him tumbling.

BOY ON BIKE
Stop doing that! I'm gonna crash!

GIRL ON BIKE
Good!

Sloane smiles as they ride down the street and out of sight. She looks back to the empty message to NINA. After a beat she deletes her name and types in BENTLEY.

INT. MARTY'S APARTMENT – DUSK

Bentley screws in the last leg on a beat up KITCHEN TABLE.

DING! He pulls out his phone and smiles at the text, firing off a response before calling into the other room.

BENTLEY
Hey Dad? I might head out in a bit.
Unless you need me for anything.

Marty rounds the corner.

MARTY
Oh, you got the table all set up!
Great! No, I should be good. Thanks
for your help today, Bent.

They each take one side and righten it. Marty dusts off his hands as Bentley inspects the wood, running a hand over the words imprinted into the table from years of writing on it.

MARTY (CONT'D)
You hanging out with Sloane
tonight?

Bentley's eyes widen.

BENTLEY
How do you...
(gritting his teeth)
Ugh. Why do I tell Percy anything?

MARTY
(shrugging)
No clue. But I ain't complaining.
He keeps me in the know.

Bentley turns away, grabbing a chair and sliding it to Marty.

BENTLEY
(rolling his eyes)
Can we talk about something else?

Bentley pulls out the other chair, the kitchen set complete.

MARTY

Okay, fine. But we should get together. The four of us. I haven't talked to Caroline since the funeral.

BENTLEY

Yeah. Maybe.

He picks up the tools and empty boxes to make himself busy. Marty watches him with a sad smile.

MARTY

Just a thought.

INT. LIQUOR STORE – DUSK

Sloane sets two tallboys in front of a bored EMPLOYEE (40s), who scans and bags the items without so much as a glance.

She holds out a credit card to the employee. He looks at it, then up at her, his expression unchanging.

EMPLOYEE

I.D.?

Sloane wavers, then deflates, before shuffling in her wallet to pull out her driver's license.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE – DUSK

Sloane exits with two brown bags and gets into Bentley's car.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER – NIGHT

Bentley and Sloane stand against the wall drinking out of their brown bags. Neither look particularly comfortable.

SLOANE

Our mothers. Molly and Caroline. Here?

BENTLEY

Yep.

SLOANE

Wow. My mom was right, people really do surprise you sometimes.

BENTLEY

Yep.

The sip in silence.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

They took us to see so many movies here.

SLOANE

Mhm.

BENTLEY

That's so weird.

SLOANE

Mhm.

She wanders the area, as if searching for clues.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

So that's why we're here? Just wanted to reminisce about our teenage moms getting it on with horny teenage boys?

BENTLEY

Ew, come on!

SLOANE

Sorry.

Bentley sits down on the curb, deflating.

BENTLEY

I don't know. Wanted to see if I was missing something.

Sloane smiles and joins him.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

We were unpacking yesterday and...

He takes a beat, then changes course.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

Sorry. A lot going on.

Sloane gives him an encouraging smile.

SLOANE

It's okay, Bent. Don't stress.

A police car wails past the parking lot, no interest in them.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Guess they've got more important
things to do.

Bentley musters a smile.

BENTLEY
Yeah probably. Sorry we didn't get
arrested.

SLOANE
It's okay.

BENTLEY
Our moms would be ashamed.

Sloane scoffs and takes a slug as the sirens fade.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Are you even allowed to drink with
your head?

SLOANE
Allowed? What am I, a child?

Sloane finishes her can and crushes it under her foot.
Bentley laughs and she turns to him, incredulous.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
What?

BENTLEY
You're just so ridiculous.

SLOANE
Yeah, well. If the shoe fits.

They sit in silence.

BENTLEY
Want me to take you home?

SLOANE
(shrugging)
I guess.

He stands up, offering her a hand.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Fuck you.

She stands up on her own as Bentley laughs.

BENTLEY
So ridiculous.

I/E. BENTLEY'S CAR / MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Bentley hops in the car and pulls the door shut. As it closes, a FIGURE appears in the sideview mirror, though neither Bentley or Sloane notice.

Bentley turns the key and the car's lights come to life, *illuminating the Elderly Man.*

Neither of them notice as Bentley backs out and drives off.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

Inside the photo studio from the Mitchell family portrait, everyone else is already in position as Bentley approaches.

Not just in position, they're frozen. A moment in time. Marty, Percy, and a sickly Molly all smile at the camera.

Bentley smiles, then turns somber as he steps into his spot. He slips his hands in his JACKET POCKETS and puts on a smile.

The unseen PHOTOGRAPHER leans behind the camera, holding up THREE FINGERS For a countdown. The hand is WRINKLED and BONEY to an unsettling degree.

THREE.

Something about the Photographer seems familiar to Bentley.

TWO.

Just over the camera, Bentley can see the top of the man's wrinkled head and a pair of GLASSES. The Elderly Man.

ONE.

Bentley opens his mouth to scream as the flash goes off, and he freezes. Just like the rest of his family.

The Mitchells stand together, completely still as if they're in the photo. Forever trapped in the moment.

From behind the camera, the Elderly Man approaches. Bentley stands, unwavering and powerless, as the man reaches the Mitchell family.

He extends a boney hand out toward Bentley, eyes burrowing into his soul. The Elderly Man is inches from contact—

INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT BEDROOM – NIGHT

Bentley's startled awake, out of breath. He takes calming, deep breaths and rubs his face. When he pulls his hands away the silhouette of the Elderly Man *TOWERS OVER HIM*.

Bentley falls back in shock, tumbling out of bed as he grabs his comforter and runs into the hall.

INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT HALLWAY – NIGHT

Bentley fumbles with nightlight's switch, igniting it and closing his eyes tight.

EXT. THE HOUSE – DAY – DREAM SEQUENCE

Through the hole in the fence, Sloane watches as Tom collapses once more. Instead of rising on his own, the Elderly Man approaches from within the house. He bends and picks up Tom and carries him into the darkness.

INT. SLOANE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM – MORNING

Sloane's eyes open in panic and she jumps out of bed.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY HOUSE – DAY

Sloane slips out, closing the door quietly behind her. The *BLINDS* from a second floor window are pried open for a moment before falling back into place.

EXT. THE LOT – MORNING

Sloane stands at the threshold, exactly where Bentley stood a few days before.

DING DING! A bike bell rings out behind her. She turns, startled, but there's nothing there.

When she turns back around, *The House stands before her*.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

In front of her a nervous Young Bentley straddles his bike, squeezing the handlebar breaks like stress balls. A second bike sits on its side in the grass next to him.

After a long pause, Young Sloane spills through the darkness of the entryway, blood gushing from a missing front tooth.

YOUNG BENTLEY
Sloane! Sloane, is everything okay?
Are you okay?

As soon as she steps onto the porch she stops.

YOUNG BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Sloane, you scared me! What'd you
see?

She looks around, in a fog. Young Bentley drops his bike,
running up the steps to her.

YOUNG SLOANE
I lost my tooth.

YOUNG BENTLEY
Are you okay? What's going on?

YOUNG SLOANE
That was my last one. I lost it.

YOUNG BENTLEY
What? Sloane, what was in there?

YOUNG SLOANE
I don't remember.

YOUNG BENTLEY
What do you mean? It just happened!

YOUNG SLOANE
(frowning her brow)
I don't...I can't remember.
(beat)
We can't finish the garden.

She finally locks eyes with him - he's terrified.

YOUNG SLOANE (CONT'D)
Gotta tell Dad.

She sprints down the steps, hops on her bike, and takes off.

YOUNG BENTLEY
I don't understand, what's wrong?
Are you okay? Sloane!

He bikes after her, shaken.

YOUNG BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Sloane! Sloane!!

END FLASHBACK

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY HOUSE – DAY

Sloane sobs uncontrollably, eventually wiping away tears to find she's no longer in front of the lot.

She stands in front of the GATE to the backyard, eye level with the HOLE in the wood.

She catches a glimpse of the COLORFUL GARDEN before stumbling backward, disoriented and scared, and running into the house.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY FOYER – DAY

Caroline still preps in the kitchen. Sloane bursts in and runs upstairs, slamming her door. Caroline steps like she wants to follow, then pulls back.

INT. SLOANE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM – DAY

She collapses on her bed, sobbing again. As if on cue, the PHOTO of her and Tom tumbles off the shelf.

It hits the ground and takes a weird, almost deliberate bounce, skidding to a stop in front of the closet.

Sloane looks up from her bed, eyeing the photo and the closet. She rises slowly, picking up the frame and checking for more damage before placing it next to the mail pile.

She opens the closet and everything comes spilling out with a loud CRASH. Sloane digs through the mess, unearthing another family photo — this one has Caroline as well. She smiles.

INT. BENTLEY'S CAR – DAY

Bentley decompresses in his car outside his apartment. He pulls out his phone and opens a new text to Percy.

BENTLEY (TEXT)
you busy rn?

Again, Percy starts typing immediately.

PERCY (TEXT)
never too busy for my big bro <3

BENTLEY (TEXT)
gross

INT. ARCADE BAR — DAY

Bentley watches Percy play an intense game of PINBALL.

BENTLEY
How are your classes going?

PERCY
(focused on the game)
Fine.

BENTLEY
That's good. Got a favorite?

PERCY
Not really.

BENTLEY
Cool.

Bored, Bentley's eyes wander the bar, finding a COLLEGE GIRL trying very hard to non-verbally get Percy's attention.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Hey, I think that girl wants to—

PERCY
Don't make eye contact.

BENTLEY
What?

The ball rolls in between the two flippers and the game ends. Percy sighs and digs into his pocket for more coins.

PERCY
We went on a few dates.

BENTLEY
Good for you!

PERCY
I guess. I told her I wasn't
interested in seeing her again
but...well, you have eyes.

Bentley steals another glance. She's still there.

BENTLEY
She's persistent.

PERCY
That's one way to describe her.

Percy launches the ball, back to focusing on the game.

BENTLEY

Any other...prospects?

Percy breaks concentration, letting the ball fall again.

PERCY

Okay. Enough. Why are you here?

BENTLEY

What do you mean?

PERCY

I mean, you don't do "surprise visits."

BENTLEY

Maybe I do. Now. Maybe I do now.

PERCY

Okay. Why now?

BENTLEY

Why'd you tell Dad about Sloane?

PERCY

He told you I told him? Ugh, I can't tell him anything.

BENTLEY

Percy!

PERCY

Oh come on, Bentley. We're just glad you guys are talking again.

BENTLEY

Shut up.

Percy throws him a look.

PERCY

Okay, fine. How's dad?

BENTLEY

Good.

(beat)

I was helping him unpack yesterday and I found this old photo Mom had of someone else's family.

PERCY

So?

BENTLEY

I don't know. Don't you think it's a little weird? Why would she have a picture of some random family.

Percy shrugs and turns back to the game.

PERCY

I guess we'll never know.

Bentley's quiet for a long time.

BENTLEY

(almost inaudible)
I found the family.

PERCY

Huh?

A SECOND COLLEGE GIRL walks by Percy.

SECOND COLLEGE GIRL

Hey Percy, still on for tomorrow?

Percy turns and smiles.

PERCY

Oh, absolutely. Wouldn't miss it!

He goes back to the game. Bentley eyes the first College Girl, now fuming. She storms out of the bar in a huff.

PERCY (CONT'D)

You should come stay over sometime.
I think you'd like the bars—

BENTLEY

I found the family. In the picture.

Percy stares at him. The ball falls for a third time.

PERCY

Like you found their names? Or,
like, what?

BENTLEY

A friend knows the son of the kid
in the picture.

Percy doesn't speak for a long time.

PERCY

That's a pretty fucked up way of
grieving. But, hey, you do you.

Bentley rubs his temple, frustrated.

BENTLEY

It's not...I'm fine. I was just curious.

PERCY

Okay! No need to get hostile.

BENTLEY

I'm not!—
(deep breath)
I'm not getting hostile.

PERCY

Okay, Bent.

Percy walks away from the machine, Bentley tailing behind.

BENTLEY

Why didn't you come say goodbye to the house?

Percy whirls around.

PERCY

I had a test to study for.

BENTLEY

That's really it?

PERCY

Does it even matter? Jesus, I lived there 18 years I think I saw the fucking thing enough! Honestly, Bent, none of this shit matters.

Bentley searches for words, but Percy's on a roll.

PERCY (CONT'D)

I don't get why you care so much about some stupid photo. You were always her favorite. Is that not good enough for you?

BENTLEY

Don't say that.

PERCY

It's true. I'm fine with it.

BENTLEY

Stop it!

PERCY

Honest question: if mom came back to life, do you think she'd even recognize me now?

BENTLEY

Jesus, Percy of course she would—

PERCY

This has been great. So glad you stopped by. I have to go to class.

Percy turns for the exit.

BENTLEY

Percy wait! Let me drive you!

PERCY

No thanks. Next time you want to "surprise visit" so you can dump all your shit on me...don't.

He storms out. Bentley watches him leave, crestfallen.

INT. SLOANE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM – DUSK

Everything from Sloane's closet is strewn about her room as she sorts through her life. In a box she finds a beaten HELLO KITTY RADIO and flips on the power, static pouring from the low quality speakers.

SLOANE

No way!

Extending the antenna and fiddling with the tuner, she eventually finding a faint voice and works the knob until—

DISC JOCKEY (O.S.)

Hey folks this is Mike over at 90.7: The Underground. Tonight on The Underground we're playing our favorite game again.

She sets the radio down and turns back to memory lane.

DISC JOCKEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We've got a word in mind and we want you to send us your best song suggestions based on that word. Got it? Easy enough. Today's word is "garden" in honor of rising star Phoebe Bridgers and her hit track "Garden Song" off of "Punisher."

Sloane picks up the photo of her and Tom gardening once more.

DISC JOCKEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Went on a first date last week to
Olive Garden. Don't think there's
gonna be a second one...anyway
we're looking for songs with the
word "garden" in it.

She flips the radio off and sits in silence, tracing the long crack in the glass. Her eyes drift to the garden before she stands and slips out of her bedroom, frame in hand.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD – DUSK

Sloane slips outside, closing the door quietly. She turns to the backyard and takes it in, gasping at the sprawling, impossibly vibrant garden that stands before her.

Uneasy, she inspects her mother's handiwork, frame held close. It's beautiful, though Sloane's face doesn't show it.

Eventually, she reaches a familiar spot, lifting up a large leaf to uncover a patch of soil, bare except for 19 meticulously aligned ROCKS. Her TOOTH CEMETERY.

She finds the one anomaly – an empty space at the end of the second row. She drops to her knees.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Turns out your father wasn't the
only one with a green thumb.

Sloane's eyes stay on the garden, gripping the photo tighter.

SLOANE

You did this?

CAROLINE

I thought you'd be thrilled to see
it wasn't dead.

SLOANE

I am. You did a great job. I barely
even recognize it. It looks great.

CAROLINE

I promise I didn't touch your tooth
cemetery, I know how important it
is to you.

SLOANE

I see, Mom. Thanks.

The answer dawns on Caroline.

CAROLINE
Sloane?

No response. Caroline's anger bubbles to the surface.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Look at me, Sloane!

Sloane turns, revealing a face wet with tears. Caroline nods.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay.

SLOANE
Mom...

CAROLINE
It's okay.

SLOANE
Mom, I—

CAROLINE
No, Sloane. It's okay. I get it.
Really. I tried. I've been trying.

SLOANE
That's not fair—

CAROLINE
No. It's not. Nothing's been fair.
I have been trying, and trying, and
trying, but you just wish your
father was here. Instead. I get
that now. Sometimes I do, too.

SLOANE
No, Mom. That's...of course not.

Sloane can't even look at her.

CAROLINE
I know it was hard. I was so lonely
when you left. And I missed him so,
so much. The garden helped. Every
time I looked at it I saw...I
didn't want that anymore. I wanted
to be able to look at it and
remember how much he loved it.

Caroline walks to a chair facing the garden, running a hand
across one of the armrests.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Molly used to come over and work on it with me until she got sick. And then she'd sit and watch while I worked. And then she died. And I felt it all over again.

She sighs, looking at her garden.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

But I kept working on it. I guess in the back of my mind, I thought if I worked hard enough you'd be happy to see it—

SLOANE

I am! I'm so glad it's not dead! It's just hard to wrap my head around...It was mine and dad's.

Caroline looks at her incredulously.

CAROLINE

Do you remember when you lost your first tooth?

SLOANE

Of course I remember.

CAROLINE

Before you lost it you kept saying you'd rather have a tooth than get a dollar from the Tooth Fairy. God, you were a funny kid.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD – DAY – FLASHBACK – 2007

Young Sloane hugs Tom as he recites the Mourner's Kaddish.

CAROLINE (V.O.)

You two were spending all your time out here, so I suggested you bury it in the garden. And you loved it. You wouldn't even let us clean the blood off of your face first.

Caroline watches from inside the house with a sad smile.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD – DUSK – PRESENT

Caroline sighs.

CAROLINE

Probably the last thing I did that you liked. And you didn't even know it was me. I'm tired, Sloane. I'm tired of competing with him.

Sloane's speechless. Still clutching the photo, she springs up and runs past her mom and into the house. Caroline breaks down as the back door slams shut.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY GARAGE – DUSK

Sloane throws open the garage door, almost manic as she digs through piles of junk until she unearths a set of HANDLEBARS.

She grabs both and pulls with all her might, pulling free her CHILDHOOD BICYCLE, rusted and on its last legs.

Everything around it caves inward, knocking over a MICROWAVE. The glass dish shatters from within, but she doesn't react as she throws a leg over and tries to pedal down the street.

EXT. THE LOT – DUSK

The wheels are now completely bent out of shape as the bike collapses around Sloane. She finally gives up and yells in frustration, picking it up and slamming it onto the asphalt.

She stomps the mangled frame as the DING! DING! DING! of the bike bell rings with each assault.

TOM (O.S.)

Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with this?

Sloane whips around in a panic, searching for her father, but the lot is empty. She steps away from the bike, still heaving with effort, before turning and running down the street.

EMPLOYEE (PRE-LAP)

I.D.?

INT. LIQUOR STORE – DUSK

Sloane stands across the counter from the same employee. She sighs, reaching for her wallet. It's not there.

SLOANE

Shit, I forgot it at home.

The employee reaches and takes back the tallboy.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Wait! I was here a few days ago, do you remember me?

EMPLOYEE

A lot of people were here a few days ago. And yesterday. And today.

SLOANE

Did they all have head bandages like this?

She points aggressively at her wound. The employee stares back at her, a brick wall. She lets out an exasperated sigh and starts toward the door before backtracking.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Does anyone else work here? Like someone older?

EMPLOYEE

Not anymore.

SLOANE

Oh.

Sloane clocks the wall behind him: a FRAMED DOLLAR BILL and a PHOTO of a FATHER AND SON standing behind the same counter.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Sorry to bother you. Have a nice night.

She backs out of the store, the employee watching her exit.

INT. BENTLEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Bentley drives home, sullen. His phone pings.

SLOANE (TEXT)

Can you come get me i'm at the liquor store

A small smile as he flips on his turn signal.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Bentley rolls up, headlights illuminating Sloane, knees pulled to her chest on a bench outside of the store.

INT. BENTLEY'S CAR - LATER

Sloane and Bentley ride in awkward silence.

BENTLEY
So...you wanna talk about it?

SLOANE
I don't know. Haven't decided yet.

BENTLEY
Fair enough.

A long pause as Sloane stares out the window.

SLOANE
Can we go to the cemetery?

BENTLEY
Sure.

EXT. GARDEN GROVE CEMETERY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Car headlights illuminate a sign: *Garden Grove Cemetery*.

Bentley and Sloane park before slipping through a gap in the chained gates.

EXT. GARDEN GROVE CEMETERY - MOLLY'S HEADSTONE - NIGHT

Bentley and Sloane stand in front of MOLLY'S HEADSTONE.

SLOANE
My mom hasn't decided if she's gonna be buried next to my dad.

BENTLEY
Really?

SLOANE
I think she's still kinda mad at him for the tattoos, since he couldn't be buried in a Jewish cemetery. I told her she'd be dead anyway so it wouldn't matter. She didn't like that.

BENTLEY
(laughing)
You're such a bitch.

SLOANE

Yeah, well, at least I'm not a pussy like you.

She gives him a playful shove and he smiles, then remembers where they are. Sloane's smile falls as well and she turns to Molly's headstone.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Molly.

BENTLEY

That's alright. She'd probably just be happy you're back.

Sloane turns away sheepishly.

SLOANE

I'm sorry.

BENTLEY

It's whatever.

A long pause.

SLOANE

You know that phrase "Don't speak ill of the dead?"

BENTLEY

Yeah.

SLOANE

Do you ever wanna?

BENTLEY

What do you mean?

She thinks a long time before speaking.

SLOANE

My parents were really good about not fighting around me. But I could always tell when they were because my dad would, like, pick me up from school and we'd be driving and then out of nowhere he'd be like "don't be stubborn like your mother when you grow up."

She laughs dryly.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

After he died I really took that to heart. Like I tried to change my whole personality because I wanted to make sure I wasn't like my mom.

She bends down and digs at two small ROCKS in the dirt.

BENTLEY

Sloane...

She pries them free and stands back up.

SLOANE

What?

BENTLEY

You're literally the most stubborn person I've ever met.

SLOANE

Exactly! It didn't even fucking work. I'm stubborn and I'm guilty about it. Thanks a lot, Dad.

She hands Bentley one of the rocks.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

It's so ridiculous because he was just as stubborn as her! Maybe even more than her!

She steps to the headstone and sets her rock on top. Bentley turns his rock over in his hand for a beat.

BENTLEY

I used to rub my eyes a lot as I was a kid when I couldn't go to sleep because I was bored and I liked seeing the weird shapes in the dark. And then I did it so much that I scared myself into thinking there were, like, monsters in the room with me.

Bentley laughs and shakes his head.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

And, for some reason, my mom's way to calm me down was to tell me that it was a ghost watching over me.

SLOANE

No way!

BENTLEY

I know. So, obviously, being a dumb kid I kept doing it and scaring myself over and over again until my mom figured out that she might've made a mistake.

He steps forward and puts the rock next to Sloane's.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

But by then it was too late so she just got me a nightlight and called it a day.

SLOANE

Wow.

She turns to the headstone.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Solid fuck up, Molly. Bold strategy telling your kid that the monster in their closet is real and also watching them.

BENTLEY

I never got to ask her about what was going through her head when she came up with that.

Sloane puts her arm around Bentley and squeezes.

SLOANE

I know I already said it, but, I'm really sorry I wasn't at her funeral. I should've been there.

BENTLEY

It's okay, Sloane, really. Not gonna hold it over your head, you had your own shit going on. It's fine.

It sounds like he really means it. Sloane smiles.

SLOANE

Okay. I'm gonna go say hi.

Bentley nods as she turns and walks to the other side of the cemetery, picking up another ROCK as she goes.

EXT. GARDEN GROVE CEMETERY – TOM'S HEADSTONE – NIGHT

Sloane stands in front of a HEADSTONE for TOM WESSELL. She pulls out the PHOTO of her and Tom and holds it close.

SLOANE

Hey Dad.

As Sloane sets the new rock on the headstone, footsteps approach in the grass behind her and a shadow casts over her shoulder. Sloane continues to look at the grave, unfazed.

She stands for a long beat before shaking it off and smiling.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Okay, Bent, I'm ready—

She turns around there stands the Elderly Man once more. His emotionless face is terrifyingly close to hers. She screams out and falls, knocking her head against Tom's headstone.

BEGIN FLASHBACK – 2007**INT. THE HOUSE – FOYER – ???**

RUSTLING in the dark until a FLASHLIGHT ignites, illuminating Young Sloane in the decaying entrance of The House.

She inspects the dusty room. A staircase to left, every step broken. To the right, a hallway with rooms branching off.

Turning back to the front doorway, she finds a TEEN GIRL (15) in a classic '80s pullover *standing directly behind her*.

Young Sloane falls back and tries to scream but no sound comes out. The '80s Girl steps toward her, closer and closer, brandishing her own flashlight.

Young Sloane is unable to move, frozen in terror. 80's Girl is about to step on her chest, but when she does, it phases harmlessly through Young Sloane.

80's Girl continues on, completely unaware, as she controls her panicked breathing and stands, brushing herself off.

Young Sloane looks back to the absolute darkness in the front doorframe, almost like a portal. She turns back to 80's Girl and follows as she moves along the wall.

CLICK! Lamplight spills from the first room. '80s Girl kills her flashlight. Silence, then...

CREAK! From the same room comes the groan of an old ROCKING CHAIR. Steeling herself, '80s Girl inches forward.

THUNK! The wall they're creeping along SHAKES, showering them in dust. They wave it off, trying to stay cool.

CREAK! They inch closer. THUNK! Just a few more feet. CREAK! '80s Girl winces as the wood groans under her. THUNK! She reaches the doorframe and peers inside.

INT. THE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - ???

A side table contains a FRAMED PHOTO and a LAMP illuminating a dusty rocking chair with a copy of *The Big Sky* by A. B. Guthrie Jr. on the seat. The chair is still.

THUNK! The wall shakes again and the girls peer around the corner to find a section of drywall ruined from blunt force. On the floor a hammer rests amongst a broken bookshelf.

'80s Girl stands up slowly and steps inside, the room now silent. One step. Then another. CRUNCH! The third lands on a pile of BROKEN GLASS. The two girls wince, but all is still.

'80s Girl finally reaches the table and picks up the photo to inspect it, too preoccupied to notice two APPARITIONS appear.

Sitting in the rocking chair is a FEMALE APPARITION. See-through porcelain skin, she looks to have been no older than 40. She now holds the book in her hands.

Across the room is a MALE APPARITION, strong build and hammer in hand. They both stare directly at '80s Girl as Young Sloane calls out in vain, still mute.

'80s Girl finally looks up, coming face to face with the Female Apparition. She screams in terror, whirls around and bolts past Young Sloane to the exit, frame in hand.

INT. THE HOUSE - FOYER - UNKNOWN - ???

'80s Girl knocks over an END TABLE on her way out. Almost 30 years later, Young Sloane trips on it and crashes to the ground before scrambling through the doorway to follow her.

EXT. THE HOUSE - 2007

Young Sloane spills through the darkness of the entryway, blood gushing from a missing front tooth.

YOUNG BENTLEY
Sloane! Sloane, is everything okay?
Are you okay?

As soon as she steps onto the porch she stops.

YOUNG BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Sloane, you scared me! What'd you
see?

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY HOME - DAY - 2007

Young Sloane pedals for her life up to her yard. Bentley
calls to her down the street.

YOUNG BENTLEY
Sloane! What's going on! Sloane!!

She drops her bike on the lawn and sprints to the GATE to the
backyard, throwing it open and running inside. It slams shut
with a CLICK.

BENTLEY (PRE-LAP)
Sloane! Wake up, please! Come on,
Sloane, please!

END FLASHBACK

EXT. GARDEN GROVE CEMETERY - TOM'S HEADSTONE - NIGHT

Bentley kneels over an unconscious Sloane, her bandage
spotted with blood. Suddenly, she sits up with a start and
Bentley topples backward in surprise.

BENTLEY
Oh, thank God. Fuck, Sloane.

SLOANE
Wh...what?

BENTLEY
Are you okay?

SLOANE
...Bentley?

BENTLEY
It's me. I'm here. Jesus, Sloane, I
thought you were gonna die.

SLOANE
What's happening? Is he still here?

BENTLEY

Is who still here? I don't know,
you just started screaming. Is it
your head?

She clutches her head in pain.

SLOANE

Ow...

BELLOWING VOICE

WHO GOES THERE?

They jump at the sound of a voice behind them. TWO FIGURES
approach with FLASHLIGHTS, blinding Bentley and Sloane.

BELLOWING VOICE (CONT'D)

I SAID...WHO GOES THERE? Just
kidding, hey Bentley.

It's Stew and Drew. They both wave in unison.

BENTLEY

Jesus, what the fuck guys?!

DREW

Stew's idea. Not mine. I said we
should stay out of it.

STEW

He did, that's true.

SLOANE

Wait, Stew? And...Drew, right?
Didn't we go to school together?

STEW

Maybe.

Yes.

DREW

STEW (CONT'D)

We're librarians now.

DREW

(quietly)
Assistants.

BENTLEY

They helped me find someone that
used to live in The House.

SLOANE

Wait, The House?

BENTLEY

Yes. The House.

DREW

Oh, yeah. Devin said you can come by tomorrow, by the way. I'll text you the details.

STEW

(to Drew)

Did he say anything about us?

DREW

No.

(to Sloane)

Are you good? Can you walk?

SLOANE

I think so...

It's not easy, but she stands up. Drew and Stew spot.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Bentley, I can't go home. Can I stay at your place?

BENTLEY

I...I don't know if that's a good idea. Shouldn't you go to the hospital?

Out of options, Sloane pulls out her trump card.

SLOANE

I think your mom took something from The House that she wasn't supposed to. When she was a kid.

Bentley processes for a beat.

BENTLEY

A photo?

Sloane nods. Bentley continues to mull it over.

SLOANE

Please. I'm okay. I just can't go home yet.

BENTLEY

Okay. Fine.

SLOANE

Thank you.

She reaches to pick up the PHOTO and nearly falls over. Bentley catches her and she tucks it inside her jacket.

DREW
I don't think she can walk.

He turns to Stew, who scowls.

STEW
Fuck me.

EXT. GARDEN GROVE CEMETERY – MINUTES LATER

They ride in the bed of a GATOR as a GRAVEYARD WORKER drives.

STEW
Thanks for the ride, Vince.

GRAVEYARD WORKER
No problem, Drew!

Stew sits back, scowling again.

STEW
(sotto)
Fucking Vince.

Sloane leans over to Drew.

SLOANE
Do you work here?

DREW
Stew used to. Now we work at the library.

SLOANE
Right. Forgot.

On the other side of the gator, Stew leans over to Bentley.

STEW
I lied about the beer.

Bentley turns.

BENTLEY
What?

STEW
I lied. About the beer that I left out for my dad when I was burying him. I didn't drink it.

BENTLEY

Oh. That's okay.

STEW

I just didn't know what to do with something like that, y'know?

BENTLEY

Yeah.

(beat)

What was it like?

STEW

Honestly, it just felt like every other time we had a beer together.

BENTLEY

That sounds nice.

STEW

It was.

He looks down at his feet.

STEW (CONT'D)

But now it feels like he's in a better place and we're just... trying to make up for it.

BENTLEY

Trying to make up for it.

(beat)

Thanks for sharing, Stew. Sorry if I made you all depressed again.

STEW

It's good to talk about this stuff. And him. Vain old bastard.

They share a smile as Sloane watches from the other side. She pulls out her phone – too many missed calls and texts from Mom to count. Sloane opens the panicked messages to respond.

SLOANE (TEXT)

I'm ok. Staying over Bentley's. Talk tomorrow.

She hits send and opens a new message to Nina. Her fingers hover over the keyboard before she gives up and pockets it.

INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bentley helps Sloane into the apartment, setting his CAR KEYS by the front door.

BENTLEY
You can take the bed.

SLOANE
Always the gentleman.

INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

He helps her into bed, pulling the comforter over her. He smiles as her eyes already are drooping from exhaustion.

SLOANE
There's so much I have to tell you.

Bentley hesitates, then pulls the comforter up to her chin.

BENTLEY
I've waited this long. I can be patient.

Sloane yawns, slipping her hand from under the covers to point at her bandage.

SLOANE
I think I'm the patient.

He laughs and shakes his head.

BENTLEY
That's terrible.

He walks toward the door, turning back at the last second. Her eyes open ever so slightly.

SLOANE
Thanks for letting me stay. I know it's weird.

He works hard to get the words out before closing the door.

BENTLEY
Sure. No problem.

As soon as it clicks shut, Sloane pulls the PHOTO of her and Tom out and holds it close.

INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM / HALLWAY – NIGHT

Bentley stumbles to the couch, exhausted. His leg shakes nervously before he pull out his phone to too many missed calls and texts from Dad to count. The last text reads:

DAD (TEXT)

Please call me, Bentley. Percy told me everything and I just want to talk. – Dad

He tosses it to the floor, no longer comforting. The dark corner of the living room stares back at him, so he crosses into the hallway to lay next to the nightlight.

EXT. THE HOUSE – DAY – DREAM SEQUENCE

Sloane watches through the hole in the gate as Tom collapses. As before, the Elderly Man approaches from within the house.

He picks up Tom and carries him inside. After a beat he reappears and gestures, as if beckoning inside.

INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT BEDROOM – EARLY MORNING

Sloane's eyes shoot open, tears streaming down her face. Her eyes focus on the Ivolgin's family photo.

The Elderly Man *stands over her*, reaching out. But not to her...to the photo. Sloane screams, frozen in fear. He turns to her and, even in the darkness, she can make out his smile.

Bentley rips open the door, half asleep and panicked.

BENTLEY

Sloane? Are you okay?

Sloane looks back – he's gone. She breaks down.

SLOANE

I feel like I'm going insane. I keep seeing this...this creepy old man. Everywhere I turn. He's even in my fucking dreams.

Bentley's eyes nearly pop out of his skull. Sloane looks up at him, tears staining her face, and immediately understands.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Oh fuck no.

INT. BENTLEY'S LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Bentley and Sloane sit on the couch, staring at nothing. The photo of her and Tom sits on the kitchen table.

SLOANE

I just thought I've been
hallucinating him because of my
head. Like my brain was still...
broken? Or something. I don't know.

Bentley's lost in thought. Sloane stands and walks into the bedroom, returning with the framed photo. She sits on the couch and inspects it for the first time.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Bentley, I'm not ready.

BENTLEY

For what?

SLOANE

For whatever...this is.

She gestures to the photo before setting it on an end table next to her.

BENTLEY

I don't think we have a choice.

SLOANE

There's always a choice.

BENTLEY

Like what?

SLOANE

Maybe none of this is real.

BENTLEY

So we both just happen to be
hallucinating the same things?

SLOANE

Maybe.

Bentley props himself up on the couch.

BENTLEY

I knew this was gonna happen.

SLOANE

Knew what was gonna happen?

BENTLEY

You're gonna run away. Just like last time.

SLOANE

I never said that.

BENTLEY

It's pretty obvious. Hey, don't you ever get tired of running away from everything?

SLOANE

I'm tired of people asking me that. What about you? Don't you ever get tired of spending every day living in the past? Why are you still here? Why didn't you leave?

He stands, rubbing his sore neck.

BENTLEY

I didn't want to. And then my mom got sick. So I couldn't.

She stares him down.

SLOANE

You're lying.

BENTLEY

What?

SLOANE

Why are you lying to me?

BENTLEY

I'm not lying to you.

Sloane stands and stares into Bentley until he caves.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

You left.

SLOANE

I left?

BENTLEY

Yeah. Or has it been too long that you forgot? And then the next time I see you you're in the diner pretending you don't even know me.

She steps forward, frustration building.

SLOANE

So what? Stay here forever and take turns watching our parents die until we die, too? That was your plan?

BENTLEY

You're right, dying alone is definitely the better option.

She's right in his face now.

SLOANE

Fuck you.

BENTLEY

Just because you killed your dad so you're the only one who's allowed to grieve. I forgot.

Sloane stumbles backward, knocked off balance by his words.

SLOANE

What did you just say?

BENTLEY

Come on, Sloane. That's what this is all about, right? He had a bad heart. If it wasn't you, something else would've. But that doesn't fit your fucked up little pity party.

SLOANE

How fucking dare you. You had your mom for so much longer than me.

Sloane steps forward again.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

But it's not enough. It'll never be enough. Your mom's dead. Welcome to the club.

BENTLEY

Are you sure? You didn't come to the funeral so how can you be sure?

This hits Sloane hard.

SLOANE

You said it was okay!

BENTLEY

Obviously it's not okay, Sloane!
You couldn't even be bothered to
show up to her fucking funeral!
After everything!

Bentley throws up his hands.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

Whatever. Doesn't matter. You'll be
back in New York soon anyway and
then we'll never have to see each
other again.

SLOANE

SHUT UP!

Sloane grabs her FAMILY PHOTO from the table and throws it at him. It sails wide, knocking the IVOLGIN PHOTO off the table.

The Ivolgin frame takes a bad bounce off the wall, cracking the glass. Sloane rushes to her picture and picks it up gingerly, the glass now completely shattered.

Bentley watches her, disturbed, as the *Ivolgin photo begins to rise off the ground behind her.*

Bentley can't find his voice as the shadow of the frame crosses Sloane's face. She looks up at what appears to be two foot INDENTS in the carpet — like someone's standing in front of her.

She looks up further as the frame lifts higher and she scrambles backward, mouth agape.

The lights in the apartment begin to flicker as the wrath of the entity becomes apparent.

From Sloane's hands her family photo begins to RISE. She clings to it, lifting off the ground until she lets go and falls back to earth.

Both her and Bentley watch it rise until it's FLUNG ACROSS THE ROOM, punching straight through a glass cabinet.

The Ivolgin photo, still suspended, is gently guided back to safety, the indents in the carpet marking the entity's path to the table. It's set down carefully and placed upright.

And with that, the foot indents disappear, leaving Bentley and Sloane to stare at where they once were.

Out of her stupor, Sloane rushes to the wreckage of the cabinet, the frame now completely destroyed. She SLICES her palm on a SHARD OF GLASS, staining the photo with BLOOD.

BENTLEY
Jesus, Sloane!

Sloane grimaces but soldiers on as Bentley rushes to grab a towel for her bleeding hand. Before he can offer she pushes past him and down the hall to the front door.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Sloane? Sloane wait!

She grabs his CAR KEYS and throws open the front door, slamming it behind her. Bentley chases after her and opens the door again, but she's already getting into Bentley's CAR.

INTERCUT - INT. BENTLEY'S APARTMENT / BENTLEY'S CAR - MORNING

Sloane fumbles with the keys in the ignition as Bentley stops at the doorframe. She finally turns the car on and the two lock eyes, both hurt but incompatible in their pain.

She throws the car in reverse and speeds away from Bentley. Sloane fights her sobs while she drives, turning angry and punching the steering wheel.

INT. BENTLEY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The front door swings shut as Bentley shuffles back into the living room, lost and alone. He clocks the Ivolgin Photo, just where the invisible ENTITY left it.

DING! Bentley's phone calls out from the floor where he dropped it the previous night. It's a text from DREW:

DREW (TEXT)
20 Church Lane. I told Devin you were doing research for a book. I think he bought it. Hope you find what you're looking for!

Bentley lets the phone fall back to the ground, dejected, when a loud KNOCK AT THE FRONT DOOR makes him jump. He turns, excited at Sloane's return.

Bentley flings open the door to find Percy, ready to knock again. He stares, confused, as Percy clocks the bad vibes.

PERCY
Hey, Bent...you okay?

Bentley look's past him at Percy's CAR, parked where his was moments before, before addressing Percy.

BENTLEY

What's up? Did Dad send you?

PERCY

No. He doesn't know I'm here.

BENTLEY

Oh. Then why are you here?

PERCY

(shrugging)

I didn't like how we left it yesterday. So...yeah. Figured I'd stop by. In case you were planning something unhinged before I saw you again.

Bentley fumbles his words, surprised.

BENTLEY

Oh. I, uh...thanks. Thanks for coming. I'm glad you're here.

They share a small smile.

PERCY

So...where's your car?

Bentley eyes the Ivolgin Photo, then back to Percy.

BENTLEY

Can you drive me somewhere?

PERCY

Uhh, sure. Where are we going?

BENTLEY

20 Church Lane.

INT. BENTLEY'S CAR - MORNING

Sloane drives angry, still working through her feelings. She finally pulls over on a quiet street and tries some calming breaths, but it doesn't help much.

She punches the center console, accidentally turning the RADIO on, before recoiling in pain and clutching her hand.

DISC JOCKEY (O.S.)
 Hey folks this is Mike over at
 90.7: *The Underground*. I'm filling
 in for Pauly right now who's out
 for his daughter's Bat Mitzvah –
 Mazel Tov Michelle – so you already
 know I'm gonna play my favorite
 game. You know the drill: we've got
 a word and we want your song
 suggestions based on it. Got it?
 Today's word is "daughter" in honor
 of Michelle and Pauly. Let's kick
 things off with one of my all time
 favorite John Mayer songs,
 "Daughters" while you send in your
 best suggestions.

Sloane perks up as the song starts to play. Her breathing
 steadies and she closes her eyes. Eventually, she opens a new
 text to NINA on her phone, and starts to type.

INT. IVOLGIN FOYER – MORNING

A KNOCK on the front door of a modest ranch house. DEVIN
 (early 30s), all business, appears from down the hall to open
 the front door for Bentley and a confused Percy.

Whatever personality he had when he hung out with Stew and
 Drew is long gone.

BENTLEY
 Hi, Devin? I'm a friend of—

DEVIN
 You must be Bentley.

He eyes up Percy.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
 I wasn't told this was a field
 trip.

BENTLEY
 Oh, sorry. This is my brother, he's
 helping me with my research—

DEVIN
 Fine. I don't really care.

He gestures to enter. They oblige as he calls down the hall.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
 KYLE! CAN YOU COME HERE!

After an excessive amount of stomping KYLE (35) appears, Nintendo Switch in hand. Definitely not the breadwinner of the family based on how he takes care of himself. He plays until the last second and looks up.

KYLE
What's up?

DEVIN
(gesturing)
This is Bentley and his brother – he's a friend of Stew and/or Drew looking for some info on Dad's old house. Can you show him where we keep all of Dad's junk in his bedroom? I have some work to do.

Kyle eyes the two of them as Devin did.

KYLE
Yeah, sure.

Kyle turns back down the hall, already back to his Switch. Bentley looks to Devin.

BENTLEY
They say hi by the way.

His facade dips for a moment, then the wall comes back up.

DEVIN
Tell them I say hi back.

Bentley nods as Kyle's voice echoes from down the hall.

KYLE (O.S.)
Are you coming?

INT. HUGO IVOLGIN'S BEDROOM – DAY

Equally as modest as the entryway – a dresser, a lamp, and an unmade hospital bed shoved in a corner. They look for the treasure trove as Kyle turns to leave, eyes on the game.

BENTLEY
Wait!

Kyle turns back, annoyed.

KYLE
Closet.

They turn, noticing the small closet tucked away. Bentley crosses the room and opens it, causing mass chaos as everything comes spilling out onto the floor.

Kyle pauses his game as Bentley kneels at the pile.

KYLE (CONT'D)

What do you guys want with that house, anyways?

BENTLEY

I'm doing research on...well, I found a picture of your dad and his parents with my mom's stuff after she died. Trying to figure out why she'd have it.

Bentley hands Kyle the framed photo. He softens.

KYLE

Wow. I don't think I've ever seen him as a kid.

He traces his father's face with a finger.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I don't think there are a lot of pictures of him from around then. Or my grandparents.

SLOANE

Why?

Kyle pulls out his phone and takes a picture of the photo before handing it back to Bentley.

KYLE

Both of my grandparents died in that house around...probably around when this picture was taken. Carbon monoxide poisoning. He only lived because his window was stuck open or something.

BENTLEY

That's awful.

KYLE

(shrugging)

Yeah. I wish it didn't consume his entire life until last week. But hey, it is what it is. I guess.

PERCY

What happened last...
 (the answer dawns on him)
 Oh. My bad.

No one knows what to say.

KYLE

Sorry. That was a lot. Good luck
 with your search.

He ducks out of the room, leaving them speechless.

I/E. BENTLEY'S CAR / THE LOT / THE HOUSE – DAY

The Shirtless Man is mowing once more as Sloane pulls up in Bentley's car. She looks to the lot and something distracts her from the road.

THUNK! The car collides with something in the street, but she's too busy furiously trying to undo her seatbelt.

She throws herself out of the car and rounds it, past the mangled remains of her rusted CHILDREN'S BIKE under the wheels of the car and to the edge of the lot

The House is there.

It looks as it did when Young Sloane went in 15 years ago, broken and mangled but upright.

And standing on the porch is Tom.

TOM

Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with
 this?

He collapses on the porch, limp. For a moment, all is still.

SLOANE

Dad? Dad! DAD!!

Just as in her dream the Elderly Man, HUGO, steps from the darkness, lifting his body. Hugo looks at Sloane and smiles.

Without thinking, Sloane chases after them as Hugo pulls his limp body into the darkness. She attempts to close the gap, but she's not fast enough.

Tom and Hugo disappear inside, quickly followed by Sloane.

INT. IVOLGIN GUEST BEDROOM – LATER

Everything is spread out on the floor. Random knick knacks, old photographs, dusty books, letters from lover(s).

Bentley pulls out the remainder from the closet and appears to strike out again, when something catches his eye: a children's picture book.

Smiling, he traces over the title: *Snowflake Bentley* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin. He turns to Percy.

BENTLEY

Remember this?

Percy rolls his eyes.

PERCY

Of course. How could I forget the book that literally had your name in the title?

BENTLEY

Shut up. Not my fault they picked the name.

PERCY

I guess.

They sort in silence for a beat.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Whenever mom read that to us she always harped on how every snowflake was unique.

BENTLEY

And we were her snowflakes.

PERCY

One corny motherfucker.

They both laugh.

BENTLEY

Yeah. Pretty lame.

Percy busies himself sorting through Hugo's memories.

PERCY

I should've been there when you guys moved out.

BENTLEY

Hey.

Percy turns to him.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

It's just a house.

Percy nods and smiles. Bentley flips through the book when a small card stuck between pages falls into his lap.

Bentley sets the book down atop a pile of others and picks the card up – it's a FUNERAL PRAYER CARD for HUGO IVOLGIN.

His eyes go wide as he reaches down and, with a shaky hand, picks up the card.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

Oh my god...

PERCY

What's up?

He turns the card to Percy — *it's the Elderly Man.*

PERCY (CONT'D)

So? What about him? He's all over the place here.

Percy digs through his pile and pulls out an old PHOTOGRAPH of the same man a few decades younger. Serious as always.

BENTLEY

How did I miss that?

Bentley digs in the back of the closet and pulls out a scrapbook, more recent than the rest. He flips through, the memories, filled with Devin and Kyle...and Hugo.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

Drew said that Devin's dad had died recently...I didn't even think about it...so that's why all of this just started...

PERCY

Bentley? You good?

Bentley locks eyes with him, but talks to himself.

BENTLEY

He just wants it returned. But how do we do that?

PERCY

Maybe...just put it back in the lot? Like bury it like a final resting place or some shit? Maybe that's good enough.

BENTLEY

Maybe.

EXT. THE HOUSE – DAY – FLASHBACK – 1982

The familiar darkness from within the house beckons.

A TEEN BOY dressed in 80's GARB straddles a bike just outside the property line of The House, watching the doorframe.

From within the darkness appears 80's Girl, running down the steps, smiling with a WILD LOOK in her eyes. In her hands is a familiar PICTURE FRAME.

80's Boy breathes a sigh of relief as she throws her arms around him, nearly tackling him off of his bike.

INT. WESSELL FAMILY KITCHEN – DAY

The loud RUMBLING of a COFFEEMAKER stirs Marty from his memory. He sits at the island as Caroline makes him a cup.

MARTY

Bentley missed out on the whole "teenage rebellion" thing. Guess it had to happen at some point. Half of his DNA is Molly's, after all.

CAROLINE

And Sloane's the opposite. She started when Tom died and hasn't looked back since.

MARTY

Quite a pair, those two.

CAROLINE

Mm. At least they're talking again.

MARTY

Agreed.

CAROLINE

Molly would be thrilled, I'm sure.

MARTY
I'm sure she would be.

CAROLINE
How's the new place?

MARTY
Sucks.

CAROLINE
(chuckling)
Sucks?

MARTY
Yeah. Sucks. I should've never sold
the house.

CAROLINE
I think you made the right call.
Living alone in an empty house is
tough. Not that I'd know or
anything.

They share a smile.

MARTY
It's good to see you, Caroline. I'm
sorry I didn't call sooner.

CAROLINE
Nothing to be sorry about. I
could've called, too. So I'm sorry.

MARTY
Nothing to be sorry about.

Caroline sets a cup of coffee in front of Marty and takes a
seat next to him.

CAROLINE
It's good to see you too, Marty.

DING! A message on Marty's phone interrupts. He reads a new
text from PERCY and then turns to Caroline, scared.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
What is it?

MARTY
We should probably go.

Caroline furrows her brow, confused...

I/E. PERCY'S CAR / THE LOT / THE HOUSE - DAY

Bentley white knuckles the steering wheel as Percy looks at the message he just sent to DAD.

Without warning, Bentley slams on the brakes.

PERCY
OW! Fuck, Bentley!

Bentley ignores him, already out of the car. He runs up to his car, still running and front door ajar. Confused, he turns it off and closes the door, turning toward the street.

BENTLEY
Sloane?

He rounds the car and his heart stops at the bike.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ!

He gets on his knees to inspect it, and remembers.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK - 2007

Young Bentley peddles behind Young Sloane, but she's too fast for him.

YOUNG BENTLEY
Sloane! Sloane!!

EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY

As if on cue, the winds change around Bentley. With a shaky breath he looks up to The House, standing once more.

On the porch, Hugo beckons him in with a smile on his face.

Bentley runs to the bottom of the steps but stops, just as he did all those years ago. He can only watch, horrified, Hugo disappears inside.

Percy catches up to Bentley, confused.

PERCY
What's going on? Is that your car?

Bentley turns to Percy.

BENTLEY
Can you...it's right...there...

Percy glances around. From his perspective they're standing in an empty, overgrown lot.

PERCY

What? What are you saying?

Bentley turns back to the house, then to Percy one last time. He pulls him in for a hug.

BENTLEY

Mom would be so proud of you.

He runs back to the car and grabs the photo, before running past a bewildered Percy.

PERCY

Bentley? Bentley you're scaring me!

Bentley takes off up the steps just as Caroline and Marty jog to the lot, as fast as their aging bodies allow.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

SLOANE!

MARTY (O.S.)

BENTLEY!

But it's too late, he steps into the darkness and...is gone.

DARKNESS – UNKNOWN

The pressure mounts, like ears that won't pop on an airplane.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY HOME – DAY

Sloane stands motionless, eyes squeezed shut from the intensity of the darkness. When she finally opens them, she's once again standing in front of the HOLE in the GATE.

Her breath catches as she peers in and from her view she can barely make out a MAN on his knees working in the garden. It's Tom, no question.

Almost rabid, she paws at the gate, managing to undo the lock and throws it open, sprinting inside. The gate slams closed with a CLICK.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO – DAY

The same pressure disorients Bentley. He rubs his eyes and opens them, once again standing in the portrait studio.

And again, Marty, Percy, and a sickly Molly all smile at the camera, completely motionless. Frozen in time.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD – DAY

Sloane runs to Tom, as he works the soil. She tries to speak, but no sound comes out.

SLOANE (SILENT)

Dad?

TOM

Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with this?

He turns, the smile on his face falling.

TOM (CONT'D)

Oh my god, Sloane, what happened??

Sloane's mouth is covered in blood. Feeling the warmth, she puts a finger to an empty space in her row of teeth as Tom rushes to her and calls into the house.

TOM (CONT'D)

CAROLINE! GET THE FIRST AID KIT!

She wipes away fresh tears, smearing blood across her face.

SLOANE (SILENT)

I'm...I'm okay...

She dissolves into a fit of hysterics.

TOM

It's okay, sweetie, just tell me what...what...hap...happened...

Tom falters as he groans and stumbles back before collapsing, writhing in pain.

SLOANE (SILENT)

No, no, no, no, no....

Sloane rushes to grab him before he hits, but – THUD – she's too late. She looks around for his body but it's gone.

His body is gone from the ground by the time she's on her knees. She frantically search the bare floor, sobbing.

TOM (O.S.)

Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with this?

Startled, she falls backward from her knees and sees Tom, kneeling at the garden once more. She scrambles upright.

He turns and addresses where she was standing when she came in, talking to nothing.

TOM (CONT'D)

Oh my god, Sloane, what happened??

He rushes over to the same spot. Sloane watches from a few feet away as he exams the air.

TOM (CONT'D)

CAROLINE! GET THE FIRST AID KIT!

Sloane falls to her knees as the memory replays.

TOM (CONT'D)

It's okay, sweetie, just tell me what...what...hap...happened...

She looks away as – THUD – he collapses. A moment of silence before it starts all over again. A locked groove.

TOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with this?

INT. PHOTO STUDIO – DAY

Bentley's eyes linger on Molly before landing on his empty spot. He turns around, but there's only the camera, no Hugo in sight.

He takes one last look at his family before walking behind them and stepping into his spot. He gives his best, award-winning smile, but even that wavers ever so slightly.

From behind the camera, THREE BONY FINGERS are raised.

THREE.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD – DAY

Sloane lays in the grass, heaving now, barely able to breathe as she has a silent panic attack.

THUD! And he's back. Over and over again.

TOM

Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with this?

INT. PHOTO STUDIO – DAY

Bentley keeps up the smile as Hugo counts them down. A tear escapes and runs down his cheek.

TWO.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD – DAY

She pulls out the photo of the two of them, torn and blood-stained. She holds it close as she struggles to breathe.

TOM

It's okay, sweetie, just tell me
what...what...hap...happened...

INT. PHOTO STUDIO – DAY

Bentley slips a hand in his pocket, brow furrowing at something foreign inside. Time slows as he pulls out the object, revealing the BLOODY BABY TOOTH from the lot.

His eyes widen and he turns just as Hugo's last finger falls.

ONE.

Before he can press the shutter, Bentley HURLS the FRAMED PHOTO toward Hugo and the camera. With inhuman reflexes, Hugo CATCHES IT.

As Bentley throws the frame, the tooth slips out of his hand and skitters across the floor. It rocks and then settles, until a small SLIT opens in the ground and swallows it.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD – DAY

Sloane's still heaving now, barely able to breathe. She starts to gag, unable to catch her breath, coughing and choking until she spits something into her palm.

She stares in horror that twists to a laugh.

Sloane holds it up to the light – it's the BLOODY BABY TOOTH. She holds it out to Tom, speaking through shallow breaths.

SLOANE (SILENT)

Look, Dad.

She manages to pull herself up, crawling over to Tom to show him the tooth.

TOM
 Hey, Sloane, mind helping me with
 this?

He turns and looks at her, or through her – it doesn't
 matter. She kisses his forehead.

SLOANE (SILENT)
 I love you.

TOM
 Oh my god, Sloane, what happened??

He takes off toward her memory as Sloane finds her way to the
 TOOTH CEMETERY, one plot of land left.

TOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 CAROLINE! GET THE FIRST AID KIT!

She scoops up a small PILE OF MULCH from the end of the
 second row and takes one last look at her bloody tooth before
 dropping it in the hole and covering it.

TOM (CONT'D)
 It's okay, sweetie, just tell me
 what...what...hap...happened...

She picks up one final rock and shines it with her bloody
 spit. Across the yard, Tom collapses and convulses.

She places the rock on top and...all is still.

Sloane waits longer than she needs to, but it's obvious. He's
 gone. She stands over her Tooth Cemetery and bows her head
 before reciting the Mourner's Kaddish.

SLOANE
 (in Hebrew)
 Glorified and sanctified be God's
 great name throughout the world
 which He has created according to
 His will.

A tear slips off of her nose and lands in the cemetery.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
 (in Hebrew)
 May He establish His kingdom in
 your lifetime and during your days,
 and within the life of the entire
 House of Israel, speedily and soon;
 and say, Amen.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Bentley stumbles away from his frozen family and attempts to compose himself. He searches for an exit in vain, pounding on the walls until a WRINKLED HAND reaches out to him, resting gently on his shoulder.

SLOANE (V.O.)
 (in Hebrew)
 May His great name be blessed
 forever and to all eternity.

Bentley whips around, surprised to find Hugo extending the Ivolgin family photo out to him. He eyes him warily.

Hugo still betrays no emotion, but he no longer appears threatening. Just a feeble old man in need of closure.

SLOANE (V.O.)
 (in Hebrew)
 Blessed and praised, glorified and
 exalted, extolled and honored...

Bentley turns back to his family, still frozen in place. His sickly mother, more tired than should be possible. Finally, he relents, turning and reaching for the frame.

SLOANE (V.O.)
 (in Hebrew)
 adored and lauded be the name of
 the Holy One, blessed be He...

As soon as he touches it—

INT. THE HOUSE - FOYER - ???

CREAK! THUNK! CREAK! THUNK!

Bentley rubs his eyes and opens them slowly, the lamplight from the other room spilling in and illuminating the foyer.

SLOANE (V.O.)
 (in Hebrew)
 beyond all the blessings and hymns,
 praises and consolations that are
 ever spoken in the world; and say,
 Amen.

CREAK! THUNK!

Bentley takes a deep breath and steps toward the light.

INT. THE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - ???

Bentley steps in, faltering as he sees the apparitions for the first time. Hugo's mother sits in her chair as his father stands at the wall, both staring at Bentley.

SLOANE (V.O.)
 (in Hebrew)
 May there be abundant peace from
 heaven, and life, for us and for
 all Israel; and say, Amen.

This time, Young Hugo stands, unmoving, in front of both of them. In his hand is a glass cup.

SLOANE (V.O.)
 (in Hebrew)
 He who creates peace in His
 celestial heights, may He create
 peace for us and for all Israel...

Bentley approaches cautiously, the floorboards groaning with each step as he nears the side table.

SLOANE (V.O.)
 (in Hebrew)
 ...and say...

The apparitions look on, unwavering, as Bentley extends the frame and places it on the table.

EXT. WESSELL FAMILY BACKYARD - DAY

Sloane looks at the Tooth Cemetery one final time.

SLOANE (V.O.)
 Amen.

She turns and exits the garden. A moment later, the gate CLICKS shut.

INT. THE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - ???

THUNK! THUNK! The book and the hammer fall to the floor as Hugo's parents fade away.

Bentley turns to Young Hugo and gives a knowing nod to the apparition before it, too, fades away. CRASH! The glass cup falls to the floor and shatters.

He picks up the hammer and book and sets them on the table before he switches off the lamp, engulfing the room in darkness.

EXT. THE HOUSE - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

Bentley steps onto the porch where, for the first time, the street looks in its prime. The cemetery is manicured and the entire neighborhood is bathed in golden hour light.

SLOANE (O.S.)
I'm sorry I didn't come to the funeral.

Bentley turns to find Sloane rocking on the porch swing. He smiles and joins her. They swing in silence for a long beat.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
I didn't think you'd want me there. After everything.

BENTLEY
That's bullshit and you know it.

SLOANE
Yeah, well. What can I say. I'm stubborn. And a bitch.

He gives her a "knock it off" look and leans on her shoulder.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Found my tooth.

BENTLEY
That's good. Took you long enough.

SLOANE
Shut up.

Bentley looks off toward setting sun, lost, as it begins to dip below the horizon in double-time.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Looks like it's closing time.

She nudges him as he drifts away.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Hey.

He sits up.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

It's time.

She stands and holds out an arm. He mulls it over before standing and taking her arm. They walk inside together.

EXT. THE LOT - DAY

Sloane stands next to Bentley in the center of the empty lot, eyes closed.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Sloane!

Opening her eyes, she can't help but smile.

CUT TO BLACK

CREDITS