

INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS



VELOCITY



ESCAPE



ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY BY RUDI O'MEARA



ESCAPE VELOCITY

Written by

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Inspired by True Events

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I/E. CAR/PARKING LOT - DAY

Two TEENAGERS stare out at us through the dirty windshield of a hand-me-down 1970s BMW.

The girl in the driver's seat, MADDIE O'LEARY (16, thick mascara, piercing eyes), grips the steering wheel hard. Black nail polish.

Next to her, a much younger-looking boy, JONAS LANG (16, pale, awkward, bookish), sits with his shoulders slumped. Slack-jawed and shell-shocked.

By the looks of it, they've both just seen something they'd rather forget. Only Maddie hides it well.

MADDIE
Bullshit. Them showing that to us.

JONAS
I... I can't believe it.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS EARLIER

Inside a crowded classroom, a ragtag collection of PUNKS, NERDS, CHEERLEADERS, LETTERMEN sit staring at an oversized television on a black metal rolling cart.

SUPER: TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 1986, 10:28 AM

Jonas is in the front row, eyes glued to the screen. Maddie sits a few rows back, looking bored out of her mind.

On the screen we catch a glimpse of what appears to be the Space Shuttle, blasting skyward.

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)
(over the TV)
Good spiral program, Challenger.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)
(also over the TV)
This is the first use of launchpad
39B since the old Apollo days...

The Space Shuttle Challenger continues ripping further upward into the blue.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
...and the Skylab mission.

The Challenger finishes its roll - flying steady and true. Majestic.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
It's been chilly in Florida
overnight. Icicles formed on the
launchpad.

Up front, Jonas swivels his head back toward Maddie. She points two fingers to her mascara-smudged eyes, then to the screen. And then she flips Jonas the bird.

Jonas turns back to the television.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
NASA engineers were concerned the
icicles may have broken off after
launch and damaged the--

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)
(cutting in)
Challenger, roll throttle down to
65%.

Jonas grips the black vinyl edge of his desk.

COMMANDER SMITH (O.S.)
Confirm. Three good fuel cells,
operating normally.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)
(after a second)
It's always amazing to hear how
quickly the Shuttle moves...

The view on-screen shifts to a tight, bouncy, blurry close-up of the Shuttle in profile.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
...as it's already more than four
nautical miles down-wind...

And then it happens.

The Shuttle is unexpectedly engulfed in a massive scarlet fireball that fills the screen.

A collective GASP goes up through the classroom as we slowly DRIFT away from the television and back toward Jonas' face.

His mouth is agape, his eyes wide.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
My god. There's been an explosion.

The billowing flames and smoke reflect in Jonas' eyes. Not a peep from the rest of the class. Just stunned SILENCE.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

I can see a solid rocket booster
has broken away...

Suddenly, a pale hand with black nail polish reaches in and grabs Jonas by the collar. Bracelets JANGLE.

MADDIE

(from behind)

C'mon, nerd. Show's over.

Jonas - his eyes still glued to the screen - barely seems to notice as she drags him up and out of his seat.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

I need a fucking drink.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR/PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Back in the parking lot again, Maddie reaches roughly past Jonas - popping the glove box open and rummaging inside.

JONAS

I don't... I can't...

Jonas trails off - still staring out the windshield. The sky outside (just like it was at the Cape) is impossibly blue.

MADDIE

Like any of us need to be more
traumatized.

She finally pulls out a flask of cheap-looking vodka - twisting the cap off and taking a prodigious gulp.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

I mean...
(her throat burning)
...I saw "The Day After"...
(still burning)
...and fucking "Holocaust"!

She thrusts the bottle toward Jonas. He barely acknowledges it. It's almost as if we can still see the fireball flickering in his eyes.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Hmm?

No response. She punches his shoulder with the fist holding the bottle. Vodka sloshes the sleeve of his t-shirt.

JONAS
(barely audible)
Gone? Just like... that.

She punches him again. More sloshing. He barely notices.

MADDIE
Fine, more for me.

She takes another huge swig. Outside, SHELL-SHOCKED KIDS are commiserating at the edge of the parking lot.

Maddie caps the bottle.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
Wusses.
(beat)
Think they'll get the news on the
boat?

Maddie shoves the bottle back into the glove box and SLAMS it shut.

The sound seems to rouse Jonas - snap him out of it.

JONAS
(distantly)
Huh?

MADDIE
On the boat.

Still nothing.

With the same hand, Maddie reaches for the column - giving the key a hard twist and starting the engine with a VROOM!

MADDIE (CONT'D)
The lame-ass cruise.

Maddie GRINDS the car into reverse, backing up swiftly without even looking.

SQUEAL! She pulls out, leaving a faint blue cloud of smoke.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
The stupid fucking honeymoon!

Behind them, as the smoke settles, we see a rust-dotted Volvo pull out and quickly duck in behind them.

In it sits a solitary SHADOWY FIGURE. A middle-aged man by the looks of it. He sports a shaggy, grown-out buzz cut, sunken eyes, and a graying unkempt beard.

Someone seemingly giving urgent but cautious chase.

JONAS

Oh, god. That's right...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - EARLIER

Maddie and Jonas stand close together but miles apart on a jagged section of concrete while their recently married parents (his second, her third) wave from an idling taxi.

Jonas's mom, CAROL (early 40s, fine-featured and frazzled) shouts from the rear window:

CAROL

Now, you two take it easy on each other. Okay?

Maddie's dad, HERB (early 40s, thinning hair, thick mustache) leans in next to Carol - eyes on Maddie.

HERB

(to Maddie)

It's only two weeks. And I want you on your best behavior. Take your brother with you to school until he's saved up to fix the Brat.

Maddie GROANS - crossing her arms.

HERB (CONT'D)

No drinking. No stealing. No parties. No Mitch.

(beat)

You hear me? No Mitch!

Maddie looks to the sky. *Always with the lecturing...*

HERB (CONT'D)

Good. Now, remember - we're all in this together. As a family.

The driver puts the taxi into gear. KA-CHONK!

CAROL

That's right. We're a family now!

The taxi begins to pull out.

CAROL (CONT'D)
 (toward Jonas)
 Love you, my monkey.

Jonas looks away, mortified, as the taxi pulls away.

HERB
 And remember...

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Still driving, Maddie reaches into pocket on her flannel shirt for a pack of cigarettes.

MADDIE
 (mockingly)
 My monkey...

She shakes a cigarette out and nips it between her lips.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 (muffled)
 I shoulda run away months ago!

KA-THUMP, KA-THUMP, she barrels over a couple of speed bumps without even slowing down.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 Now I'm your free fucking
 babysitter AND your stupid
 chauffeur for two fucking weeks?!

She GRINDS the car into third and deftly slams the cigarette lighter in.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 When're you gonna get that piece of
 shit fixed anyway?

Jonas again draws a breath to answer - but then freezes again, blushing, knowing he has no idea.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. JONAS'S CAR - WEEKS EARLIER

Jonas is at the wheel of his nearly-new Subaru Brat (you know, the one with the plastic seats in the back bed) wearing what appears to be a rented, light blue tuxedo.

Next to him sits a kindly-looking PASTOR. While Jonas talks, his eyes are fixed on the pastor - not on the road.

JONAS

So, anyway. Montag, he lives in an
oppressive society that attempts to
eliminate all sources of...

Eyes ahead, the pastor gestures feebly toward the windshield
before: BANG! The Subaru rear-ends an idling Mercedes.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Maddie grins devilishly at the memory. Jonas silently fumes.

MADDIE

Can't believe your mom's parents
gave you that lame-ass car.

She slows at the parking lot exit. Through the rear
windshield, we see Volvo do the same.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

And then you fucking totaled it!
While you still had your permit!

Maddie looks both ways, signaling.

JONAS

(distantly)
Where are we going?

MADDIE

And on the day of the wedding!
(to herself)
Worst. Wedding. Ever.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Jonas and Maddie sullenly follow their soon-to-be-remarried
parents down the aisle toward the same pastor.

Now though, the pastor is wearing a foam neck brace over his
black and white collar.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Maddie smirks, grinding the car into first.

MADDIE

What would Freud say?

JONAS

It's not totaled. It just needs a new engine.

The lighter POPS. Lit.

MADDIE

Dude, that's literally what 'totaled' means.

JONAS

(changing the subject)
Where are we going?

Punching the accelerator, she grabs the lighter - lifting the glowing ring to her waiting cigarette.

MADDIE

Anyfuckingwhere but here, goodie two shoes evil nerd stepbrother.
(inhaling)
Anywhere but here.

The car peels out onto an ice plant lined, seemingly brand new street brimming with SoCal McMansions.

JONAS

But Mom said--

Through the smoke-shrouded rear windshield, we watch as the rusty Volvo tumbles out after them.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Mom?! I'll have you know, until she came along and sent me to fucking deadbeat camp...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERENITY CAMP, GATE - MORNING

The doors to a dusty yellow school bus slam shut and the bus pulls out - leaving Maddie standing alone in front of the main gate to a high-desert camp for 'wayward' children.

She drops her army surplus shoulder bag (likely full of contraband). It lands with a heavy THUD.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Maddie takes a squealing right through a yellow light and heads toward a freeway overpass, still talking:

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 Before that, Dad and me were just
 fine!

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A younger looking (less goth) Maddie sits next to her recently widowed father on a threadbare avocado green couch.

They're both sobbing while holding lit cigarettes and watching a black and white re-run of "Old Yeller".

A shredded pan of Jiffy Pop glints on the coffee table before them. Half-empty glasses of whiskey and red wine reflect the flickering screen.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Back in the car, Maddie takes an almost comically long drag from her cigarette. NEW ORDER kicks in on the tape deck.

Next to her, Jonas feebly waves a hand before his face - trying to find some fresh air.

JONAS
 (correcting)
 Dad and I.

Maddie turns and stares at him - as if daring him to continue. His eyes dart from hers to the windshield while she runs another red light.

Folding, he turns and cranks down his window. Car horns BLARE in the distance.

Maddie ashes her cigarette in the brimming tray.

MADDIE
 And then you two had to go and
 wreck it for us.
 (self-correcting)
 Dad and I.

The smoke is finally clearing inside the car. Behind them, we can still barely make out the Volvo - still giving chase.

JONAS
 (under his breath)
 Dad and me.

MADDIE
Well, Jesus kid...

SQUEAL! KA-THUMP! KA-THUMP!

Maddie blasts through another intersection and barrels uphill, headed west.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
...which the hell is it?

Beat. Nothing from Jonas.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
HMM?!

JONAS
Depends. Would you say 'wreck it for I'? No. You'd say I had to go and wreck it for you. I mean me. I mean you. Wreck it for me.

MADDIE
(grumbling)
Nerd.

JONAS
(timidly)
Where are we going?

Maddie SIGHS, clearly done being tethered to this weirdo.

MADDIE
Somewhere classy for a change.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BULLY'S STEAKHOUSE - DAY

Maddie's car pulls up to a brick-clad, old-school steakhouse with a jet-black awning adorned with silhouettes of racehorses in white - a Del Mar institution.

She throws the car into neutral, pulls the handbrake, kills the engine, and leaps out the driver's side door.

Jonas steps slowly out the passenger door, trailing smoke.

JONAS
Not this dump.

MADDIE
Yep. This dump. Best bar in town.

JONAS
But we're not even legal.

MADDIE
But I'm...
(locking her door)
...a regular.

In the distance (a few spaces down Highway One), the rusty Volvo from earlier slides into another parking spot. Neither of them notice.

Maddie heads for the door.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
Plus, Mitch's the bartender.

Jonas struggles to keep up - tapping his shoulders as if suddenly realizing he left his backpack full of books back at school.

JONAS
I thought your dad said--

MADDIE
(throwing open the door)
He did. But who cares? We broke up.

JONAS
You did?

MADDIE
Yeah. But we're still friends...

She shoves him into the waiting pre-lunch-rush darkness.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
...with benefits.
(beat)
Like all the well gin I can take.

KA-THUMP! The door closes behind them.

We linger momentarily on the sidewalk outside as RANDOM PASSERSBY crisscross the frame.

After a second, the solitary figure from the Volvo steps up, pacing nervously.

He looks at his watch, runs a hand through his hair, and waits. Something about him seems instantly familiar - as if we've somehow seen him before.

After a second - still pacing - he takes a deep breath, and then pushes his way through the door.

INT. BULLY'S STEAKHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The place is stunningly dark. Vampire lair dark. Like, the only place in this sunny little beach community where a monied carnivore can smoke a few Cohibas in peace.

A TEENAGED HOSTESS steps up. Her blonde ponytail is the only reminder of the blazing sunshine outside.

TEENAGED HOSTESS
Table or bar?

The shadowy figure points toward a banquette opposite the bar.

SHADOWY FIGURE
(slight German accent)
Table. For one.

TEENAGED HOSTESS
Lunch?

He nods distractedly - his eyes furtively taking in Jonas and Maddie already seated at the far end of the sparsely-populated bar.

Apparently no one seems to notice (or care) that they're both obviously minors.

TEENAGED HOSTESS (CONT'D)
(gesturing)
Here you are.

The shadowy figure slides into the banquette.

TEENAGED HOSTESS (CONT'D)
Know what you'd like to drink?

SHADOWY FIGURE
Diet Pepsi?

TEENAGED HOSTESS
Be right back with your menu.

She turns to go and we glide with her - toward the bar.

INT. BULLY'S STEAKHOUSE, BAR - CONTINUOUS

Beyond Jonas and Maddie, a tiny wall-mounted television is replaying the Challenger disaster repeatedly on mute.

Drying a pint glass with a dirty bar towel - eyes on the television - MITCH (mid-20s, surf-bleached hair, a stoner's bloodshot eyes) mutters under his breath:

MITCH
Dude, that's fucked up.

Maddie, nursing a pro-bono well G&T, nods.

MADDIE
Uh-huh.

MITCH
You saw it happen, like, live/live?

Jonas nods, drinking what appears to be a Shirley Temple.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Dude, that's fucked up.

MADDIE
(chomping ice)
Yeah, you said that already.

She sets down her nearly empty glass with a BANG. Mitch spins to grab it and (discretely) fill it back up.

MITCH
(to Maddie)
Who's the, uh, kid?

MADDIE
New stepbrother. Mitch, Jonas.
Jonas, Mitch.

Mitch nods Jonas' way coolly. Jonas tries to repeat the gesture (eyes on the television).

MITCH
So your mom's the one sent Maddie
to Animal Farm camp for criminals?

Jonas looks to Maddie briefly - 3/4 'I'm sorry' and 1/4 'I can't believe he can read'.

Mitch slides Maddie a second topped-off drink.

MADDIE
Supposedly I deserved it.

MITCH
Yeah, well...

DING! DING!

From somewhere off, a short order cook signals that someone's order is up. Mitch turns to fetch it.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 ...after all you've been through.
 (beat)
 Dude, that's fucked up.

Jonas lets his eyes drift back up toward the TV while Maddie stabs at the lime in her drink with a tiny red straw.

In the distance, the shadowy figure scans his menu - eyes still surreptitiously glued to Jonas and Maddie from across the room.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Together, Maddie and Jonas drive up Highway One with the windows down and the sunroof open.

JONAS
 I should be in SAT prep right now.

Outside, the surf is perfect - glistening. The sky, still cloudless, is slowly leaning toward dusk.

Early Smiths BURBLES over the car stereo.

MADDIE
 Fuck that. They probably sent everybody home anyway.

Maddie, glassy-eyed, drives confidently on - fully in possession of her faculties and looking just a bit softer. More open. Willing to engage.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 Home. What a concept.

Maddie takes a hard right, heading east.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - DUSK

Maddie's car pulls back up to the same stucco tract house from earlier - only now we notice a tarp-covered, totaled Subaru Brat parked alongside the garage.

Maddie bumps her way up the driveway, throwing the car into neutral and cutting the engine.

Both Maddie and Jonas open their doors - almost in-synch.

JONAS
You wouldn't really, like, run
away, would you?

MADDIE
Would? Will!

Maddie slams her door shut with a BANG.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
Watch me.

Jonas does the same with his door - trying to one-up her.

JONAS
You know, my backpack's still in
Mrs. Watterman's room.

Maddie turns and heads for the front door.

MADDIE
So?

JONAS
So, how the heck am I supposed to
do your homework?

Maddie grins.

MADDIE
Aw, fuck it.

She stabs a key into the lock on the front door.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
People died today.

She throws the door open - holding it for Jonas.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
The least we can do is pay our
respects.

JONAS
By doing what precisely?

Maddie steps in behind him.

MADDIE
By living a little.
(beat)
Imprecisely.

She's about to close the door behind them when she notices the rusty Volvo from earlier. It slows to a stop a few doors down.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
(to herself)

Hmm.

Maddie slams the door shut with a loud KA-THUMP!

CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jonas stands on the terracotta tile floor watching as Maddie makes a beeline for their parents' copiously-stocked bar.

JONAS
Haven't you had enough already?

She pauses, surveying the bottles - perhaps weighing which ones they could top-up or easily procure refills for.

MADDIE
Enough is never enough.

She reaches out and pulls up a full bottle of Absolut and two glasses.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
C'mon.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, POOLSIDE - LATER

The sun having long since set, Maddie and Jonas sit on the edge of the pool dangling their feet into the shallow end.

There's an open cardboard box of greasy delivery pizza between them. And the bottle of Absolut is half-empty.

MADDIE
(slurring slightly)
Bullshit.

Jonas reluctantly lifts his glass. It's mostly OJ.

JONAS
No, it's true.

MADDIE
Like punched you/punched you?

Jonas takes a sip, nodding his head gravely.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 In, like, the stomach?
 (incredulously)
 While you were fucking driving?!

JONAS
 Yeah. Learning. To drive.

MADDIE
WHY?!

JONAS
 (shaken, reliving it)
 I dunno. She just kept shouting:
 "Center your lane! Center your
 lane!"

MADDIE
 What the fuck does that mean?

Jonas closes his eyes, his cheeks going flush. Trying and failing to hide his anger and shame.

JONAS
 I couldn't defend myself... I
 couldn't...
 (beat)
 We never talked about it. I never
 said anything.

Maddie grabs a slice, ripping into it like a tigress.

MADDIE
 Dude, your mom is fucked up!

Jonas, his eyes still closed, seems like he wants to disagree but can't.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 No wonder you crashed that piece of
 shit! If that's what she thinks
 teaching you to fucking drive is!

Jonas opens his eyes.

JONAS
 (defending his mom)
 Yeah, but, she's the one who stuck
 around for me. You know? Didn't run
 out. Didn't bail like my dad.

MADDIE
And you really don't even, like,
remember him... at all?

Jonas exhales slowly.

JONAS
Well, I've seen pictures.

Beat.

MADDIE
(shaking her head)
Lame.

Still clutching what's left of her slice, Maddie abruptly leaps to her feet.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
C'mon.

INT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Careful not to spill a drop (and sounding perhaps for the first time like the vodka might be loosening his tongue), Jonas follows Maddie up the stairs to the second floor.

JONAS
No, it flipping sucks! Growing up as, like, the supposed man of the house. Pumping all the gas all the dang time. Always expected to--

Clutching a different bottle of vodka, Maddie reaches the top step and takes a hard right toward the master bedroom.

MADDIE
Man of the house? You're only a kid!

JONAS
Where are we going?

Reaching into her pocket for her cigarettes, Maddie pads her way barefoot down the hall.

MADDIE
You like asking that, don't you?

INT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

With Jonas reluctantly following her, Maddie crosses the bedroom and heads for the sliding glass doors to the upstairs balcony that faces the street.

JONAS

We're not supposed to be in here.

MADDIE

Maybe you should consider saying
ixnay to the rulesnay a little more
often, little Mr. Perfect.

JONAS

What's that supposed to mean?

He flicks on a light switch. Maddie kills the lights with a second switch near the door.

MADDIE

You make me look bad.

She unlocks the door, sliding it open, and strides out toward one of the two deck chairs bathed in moonlight.

EXT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, BALCONY - NIGHT

CRICKETS and the DIN of the distant freeway fills inky blue darkness with life.

Maddie shakes out a cigarette and lights it - her eyes cast down to the street below.

JONAS

I shouldn't have said anything.
This is why I don't drink!
(ashamed and angry)
We're all in this together?! A big
happy family?! I don't even... I
don't even know you. Or your dad!

An overlong second ticks by. Maddie doesn't know exactly what to say back. A first.

Her eyes are still glued to the street.

JONAS

Why does it all have to be so--

MADDIE

Quiet.

JONAS

Huh?

Maddie wheels back around toward him, pointing back down toward the street with her lit cigarette.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
(hushed)
Who the fuck is that?

Jonas does a tipsy double-take.

JONAS
(confused)
What?! Who?

Maddie exhales, blowing smoke.

MADDIE
(whispering)
Dude in the Volvo.

She gestures for him to come join her behind the railing.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
I think he followed us. Like, from
school.

Jonas sets his glass down, standing and squinting.

JONAS
What are you talking about? Why did
you get me DRUNK?!

MADDIE
Shhh!

She takes a drag and points again.

In the harsh light of a nearby streetlight, we can make out
the form of the rust-covered Volvo from earlier.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
Followed us into the bar. Sat at a
booth behind us. Pasty. Beard.
Perv-y looking.

JONAS
I don't...

A brain flash washes across Maddie's face.

MADDIE
I got an idea!

She turns and run-walks through the open sliding glass door,
and into their parents bedroom - disappearing.

After a second, Jonas (drunk and bewildered) follows.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, ENTRY - MOMENTS LATER

Back down on the first floor, Maddie stands with her back to the front door - with a 45mm pistol in one hand!

JONAS

Whoa, whoa, whoa. No! NO!

MADDIE

Keep your voice down! It's not even fucking loaded.

Jonas tears his hair out, pacing and hyperventilating.

JONAS

WHY is there GUN in this HOUSE?!

MADDIE

Shhh! It's Dad's.

(waving the gun)

Okay, we charge him. Tell him to get the fuck outta here before we call the fucking cops!

JONAS

No, no. Wait. Wait!

He freezes, his mind racing.

JONAS (CONT'D)

We tell him they're already on the way! We already called 'em!

Maddie nods - a moment of actual agreement. Another first.

MADDIE

Right! Smart.

(beat)

Ready?

JONAS

(exasperated)

What the heck kinda family is this now?!

Maddie grips the gun, reaching for the doorknob.

MADDIE

(calmly)

Says the son of Mrs. passenger seat Muhammad Ali. Nice.

CLICK. The door opens. And Maddie ducks out with Jonas hot on her heels.

EXT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maddie and Jonas sprint through the shadows and toward the waiting Volvo.

Clutching the gun, Maddie is in the lead.

In the distance, in the light of the streetlight, we can see the car's driver scramble, startled.

The car's headlights FLASH. The horn briefly BLARES accidentally. Maddie lowers the pistol with two hands like an old pro.

MADDIE

I don't know who the fuck you think you are, but we're fucking ON to you - dickwad!

The shadowy figure rips off what appears to be a pair of headphones, fumbling with something on the dash.

Maddie advances slowly, still training the gun on the sad, befuddled spectacle of a harried middle-aged man bumbling trapped inside his shitbird sedan.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's right asshole! Get the fuck outta here!

His eyes trained on the pistol, the man slowly lifts both hands meekly and shouts:

SHADOWY FIGURE

(muffled, accented)

I mean you no harm! I mean you no harm! Put down the gun!

Jonas squints toward the car. Through the steamed-up windows we can barely see the man's face.

CRANK! CRANK! CRANK! The man furiously lowers the driver's side window.

MADDIE

Hands where I can fucking see them!

SHADOWY FIGURE

(louder, desperate)

Please, please...

Maddie steps between Jonas and the car, protectively.

SHADOWY FIGURE (CONT'D)
I've made a terrible mistake.

MADDIE
I'm giving you THREE fucking
seconds!

Inside the car, the man lowers his hands.

SHADOWY FIGURE
You, the both of you, are in
terrible danger.

Behind Maddie, Jonas cocks his head.

SHADOWY FIGURE (CONT'D)
(pleadingly)
Jonas, please...

MADDIE
(back toward Jonas)
You know this fucker?!

Jonas clutches his drunken head with both hands as if to
squeeze himself sober.

JONAS
I don't... no.
(then, toward the car)
Should I?

SHADOWY FIGURE
Yes, Jonas. It's me.

All the color instantly drains from Jonas' face - like he's
seen a ghost.

MADDIE
Listen, I don't give a fuck who you
are. Three!

SHADOWY FIGURE
(still to Jonas)
We must get you out of here.

MADDIE
Two!

SHADOWY FIGURE
There is no time to waste.

MADDIE
 (waving the gun)
 Two and a HALF!

SHADOWY FIGURE
 Just let me explain.

Jonas steps slowly out from behind Maddie.

MADDIE
 Two and a THIRD!

SHADOWY FIGURE
 (toward Maddie)
 Please, put down the gun.

Jonas gently places a hand on Maddie's shoulder.

SHADOWY FIGURE (CONT'D)
 They will be here any minute.

Jonas stiffens. Finally we clock it - the resemblance.

SHADOWY FIGURE (CONT'D)
 I need to get the both of you away
 from here. Now.

JONAS
 (barely audible)
 Dad?

Maddie does a stunned double-take.

MADDIE
 Dad?!

Jonas lowers his hand toward Maddie's gun, pressing it down and away.

JONAS
 Dad.

The shadowy figure nods slowly. Jonas turns to Maddie, his hand (and his voice) trembling:

JONAS
 Put it down.

MADDIE
 (yanking the gun back)
 Dude, it's not even FUCKING...

BANG!

A single bullet rips through the half-open driver's side window - miraculously missing the man in the car, but immediately shattering the entire windshield!

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 (weakly)
 ...loaded?

Lights inside nearby houses flicker on. Shards of glass tumble from the hood of the car and onto the street.

The man inside the car - indeed Jonas' estranged father GERRY (late 30s) stares back in stunned disbelief.

MADDIE
 (to Jonas, urgently)
 House. Now.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gerry stands beside the dining room table letting his eyes wash over Jonas like a long-lost prize - a welcome mirage.

GERRY
 Look at you. How you've grown.

Jonas, keeping his distance, paces again - frantically.

JONAS
 I don't... how can--

GERRY
 (tenderly)
 I would recognize you anywhere.

Maddie thunders back into the room without the gun - but with a thick coil of rope.

JONAS
 (stunned disbelief)
 It's not... not possible.

GERRY
 It is. Jonas, it's me.
 (in subtitled German)
 Dein Vater.

Jonas barely notices the rope in Maddie's hands.

Cutting between them, she drops the rope and roughly shoves Gerry into the nearest chair.

MADDIE
Prove it, motherfucker.

Gerry nearly falls over backward.

JONAS
(to Maddie)
What... what are you doing?

MADDIE
Tying him up, dumbass!

JONAS
Why?

MADDIE
Are you kidding me?!

Jonas stops pacing.

JONAS
(still to Maddie)
Wait a minute! Why is there a
LOADED gun in this house?!

She bends to one knee and starts tying. Gerry awkwardly rights himself, not saying a word.

MADDIE
(moving fast)
So that my dad can take the easy
way out when all this goes to shit.

JONAS
What?

MADDIE
(up, to Gerry)
You! Prove it!

Maddie yanks the rope around Gerry's ankles tight for emphasis.

GERRY
(to Maddie)
Listen, that is not necessary. We
don't have time. We have to get
away from here, now!

MADDIE
Don't make me fucking gag you!

Maddie wrenches his right arm back behind his back. Gerry tries to lock eyes again with Jonas.

GERRY
 (to Jonas)
 You were eight pounds, thirteen
 ounces. When you were born.

Maddie grabs his other hand - tying them together at his
 wrists.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 The best day of my life. The only
 good day since.

Jonas is trying and failing to evade Gerry's gaze. Maddie
 keeps tying, swiftly.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 Columbia Hospital. September 22,
 1968. A Sunday. 11:01 PM. Doctor
 Stoddard, if I remember.
 (beat)
 You have a mole below your right
 knee.

Maddie starts wrapping Gerry's torso tight.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 You have two dents. In the top of
 your head. Above your temples.

Jonas slowly lifts a hand to his head, finding both dents.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 From the forceps.

Gerry smiles weakly at the memory (while Maddie continues
 tying him to the chair with surprising skill).

GERRY (CONT'D)
 You looked so... funny. With your
 pointy little head. My little man.

MADDIE
 Enough! Why are you fucking here
 you fucking deadbeat?!

Gerry's faint but tender smile fades.

GERRY
 I've made a terrible mistake.

MADDIE
 (still tying)
 Yeah, you did. You fucking ran out
 like all the rest, dirtbag!

Jonas clenches his fists at the thought. *Yeah, you did!*

GERRY

No, that's not... yes, but--

Maddie stands, done - like a calf roper at a rodeo.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Please, Jonas.

MADDIE

Talk!

Gerry draws a breath.

GERRY

(toward Jonas)

You saw. What happened. Today. With
Challenger.

(beat)

What if I told you...

Gerry clears his throat.

GERRY (CONT'D)

...it wasn't an accident?

Maddie balks.

GERRY (CONT'D)

(still to Jonas)

And that it was all my fault.

Maddie rolls her eyes. Drawn as if by a tractor beam, Jonas turns and moves to pull a chair out across from his father.

Maddie stops him.

MADDIE

(to Jonas)

Nope.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, POOL - PRE-DAWN

Together, Maddie and Jonas have somehow lugged a chair-bound Gerry out onto the lip of the sun-bleached fiberglass diving board at the far end of the pool.

MADDIE

(to Jonas)

What?! I saw it in a movie once.

GERRY
 (frantic)
 This is madness! Please, I'm
 telling you...

The pool lights are on - casting strange, rippling shadows
 across Gerry's face as he bobs ever so slightly up and down.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 Your lives are in danger! All our
 lives are in danger. And many,
 many, many more! We must get out of
 here!

Maddie and Jonas stand on opposite sides of the deep end,
 arms crossed. Teenage inquisitors.

MADDIE
 (dubious)
 Uh-huh.

GERRY
 Untie me, this instant!

MADDIE
 Or what? You'll send us to our
 fucking rooms? C'mon, dude. Make it
 snappy. I'm fading.

He swivels his head toward Jonas. In the sky, we can already
 pick up the faint hints of dawn.

GERRY
 Fine. Fine!

Gerry's mind is racing. *Where to begin? Where to begin?*

GERRY (CONT'D)
 I... I... I have two critical
 patents for ground-based satellite
 communications.

MADDIE
 (bored)
 Big deal.

JONAS
 (surprised)
 You do?

Gerry STAMMERS.

GERRY
 Doesn't matter. Listen, when your
 mother left me--

Gerry pauses, seeming nervous that he's slipping closer to
 the edge of the board with every syllable.

JONAS
Left you? You left us!

GERRY
(nodding)
After your mother cut me off... cut
you out of my life.

Jonas looks away.

GERRY (CONT'D)
I lost everything. Everything!

MADDIE
Fuck this.

GERRY
(ignoring her)
I was in a bad way. Broke.
Discharged. Unemployed. Threatened
with deportation. Or worse. And
then this man...
(spitefully)
...Captain William Howard Hughes,
Junior.

MADDIE
(mockingly)
Howard Hughes? Like, tissue boxes
for shoes peeing in milk bottles
Hughes?

Gerry ignores this, trying to draw Jonas' eyes back to his.

GERRY
(rapid-fire)
A command and control analyst of
surveillance systems at Kirkland
Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New
Mexico. Testing space-based weapons
systems and training officers on
how to remotely destroy rockets
malfunctioning after launch.

Looking spent and still dubious, Maddie pulls up a deck
chair and slumps into it. Jonas stays standing, still
looking away. Gerry turns back toward Maddie.

GERRY (CONT'D)
He was sent to the Netherlands in
1983 to work with NATO on AWACs and
disappeared. Went AWOL.

MADDIE
 (to Jonas)
 Are you getting any of this?

Jonas seems to be spinning out. Beyond his depth.

GERRY
 He's a defector working with the
 Soviets. To level the playing
 field.

Jonas wheels back around toward his father.

JONAS
 (angrily)
 So, what, you stroll back in here
 after more than a decade--

Maddie sits forward - looking angry Jonas.

GERRY
 (cutting him off)
Listen! Your life is in danger.
 Both of your lives are in danger!

Maddie makes jibber-jabber hands toward Jonas.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 After I got fired, he recruited me.
 I needed the money. A lifeline.
 Anything.

MADDIE
 (aiming for cocky)
 And, so you blew up the fucking
 Space Shuttle? Because, of course.

Gerry draws an exasperated breath, eyes on the water. Both kids stare at him. Maddie's false bravado begins to crumble.

GERRY
 They did, yes. They destroyed
 Challenger.
 (full of regret)
 With my help.

MADDIE
 Bullshit.

Gerry lifts his head back up.

GERRY

(back to Jonas)

I didn't think they would do it. I didn't think it would work. That it was even possible. But they took my tech - my code - and they did it.

(gravely)

And they know I know they're going to do it again.

JONAS

But... why us? Why now? Why here?

GERRY

They threatened to take you... to kill you... to keep me from telling the world.

MADDIE

Telling the world what?

GERRY

That the Space Shuttle is a military vehicle - not some peacetime scientific endeavor.

Maddie stands again, her armor back up.

MADDIE

Fuck this.

GERRY

The whole program - every single bit and bolt - was designed with one purpose in mind.

(somberly)

Surveillance. Getting spy satellites into orbit faster than the Soviets.

MADDIE

Give me a fucking break.

GERRY

And, today, with my assistance, the Soviets...

Gerry trails off as if realizing anew the depth and gravity of his crimes.

Maddie blows it off.

MADDIE
 (toward Jonas)
 Shoulda gagged him.

GERRY
 Please, I'm telling you the--

Maddie lifts a hand - cutting him off.

MADDIE
 (still to Jonas)
 Kitchen. Now.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jonas (now seemingly 100% sober) stands in the kitchen, pacing again. Above, florescent lights BUZZ.

Maddie shakes a couple of pills out of an amber bottle and dry-swallows them swiftly.

Gerry is presumably still out on the diving board in the diminishing darkness trying to somehow wriggle free.

JONAS
 I don't know! I don't know!

Maddie shakes the pill bottle Jonas' way.

JONAS (CONT'D)
 What are those?

MADDIE
 Ritalin. To stay awake.

She shakes the bottle again.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 Only nice thing your mom ever did
 for me.

JONAS
 What?! No!

Maddie pockets the bottle, whips out a cigarette, and leans against the avocado green dishwasher.

MADDIE
 Listen, don't tell me you believe
 that stupid fucker. He doesn't even
 look like you!

JONAS
 (a little hurt)
 He doesn't?

MADDIE
 No!
 (beat)
 Well...

She pushes off toward Jonas, grabbing him by his shoulders to stop him from pacing.

JONAS
 Why'd you have to go and shoot out
 his stupid windshield?

Ignoring this, she lifts a hand to his head - pushing it through his hair until she finds the dents.

MADDIE
 Forceps, huh?

JONAS
 Yeah.

She bends to grab his right pant leg, yanking it up. Just as Gerry said, there's a small brown mole just below Jonas' kneecap.

MADDIE
 Doesn't mean shit.

JONAS
 Maybe he's right! Maybe we really
are in danger. Maybe--

Maddie shoves Jonas' pant leg roughly back down.

MADDIE
 I can take care of myself.

JONAS
 Yeah, right. Annie Oakley.

She crosses her arms - clenching the cigarette between her teeth.

JONAS (CONT'D)
 (boy-splaining)
 A sharpshooter who starred in
 Buffalo Bill's...

MADDIE
 I know who fucking Annie Oakley is!

She spins away, both hands on the tile counter.

JONAS

Maybe this is, like, my chance. To finally, I dunno, get to know him. See who he really is.

MADDIE

Jesus!

Maddie turns back toward him. Out the window behind her, the sky is still subtly brightening.

The two of them lock eyes. It's as if they're both seeing each other for the first time.

JONAS

I'm not gonna just sweep everything under the rug like my mom, you know? Pretend like it never happened. Like he's not right out there, tied to a flipping chair!

Maddie exhales slowly - as if trying and failing to find a snarling, witty retort.

JONAS (CONT'D)

Sometimes you have to face your problems, right? Like, find 'em and fix 'em, like, once and for all.

Jonas turns toward the kitchen door.

MADDIE

Stupid Dale Carnegie bullshit.

Jonas pushes the door open.

JONAS

You know I'm right.

Jonas pauses.

JONAS (CONT'D)

And, heck, you wanted to run away? Well, here's your chance.

As Jonas disappears, Mattie HISSES through her cigarette:

MADDIE

Fuuuuuuuck.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - DAWN

With Jonas carrying a hastily-packed backpack over one shoulder, Maddie leads the way down the driveway - toward her car wearing her green army surplus shoulder bag.

Gerry (now untied) follows - schlepping a heavy-looking metal attache case.

MADDIE

You pay for gas, food, lodging if we need it. And I expect twice my normal allowance, in advance.

GERRY

What?! No!

JONAS

Where are we going?

Maddie thrusts a key into the lock on the trunk - popping it open and dumping her bag in while locking Gerry in her gaze.

GERRY

(toward Maddie)

I told you. I'm broke!

JONAS

Where are we going?

Maddie slams the trunk closed.

GERRY

Los Angeles. Pasadena.

Jonas heads for the passenger side front door, shaking off his backpack.

GERRY (CONT'D)

A young reporter I've been...
corresponding with... she's ready
to go to her boss with the story.
He's the one who exposed the Bay of
Pigs--

MADDIE

Corresponding with?

GERRY

She can protect you while I try to
track them down.

Gerry taps the oversized metal briefcase with one hand.

GERRY (CONT'D)

With this.

Maddie steps past Gerry, toward the driver's side door.

MADDIE

(to Jonas)

Tell me your deadbeat dad isn't taking us to L.A. for some fucking hook-up.

GERRY

Listen to me.

She unlocks her door, pulling it open roughly.

GERRY (CONT'D)

A Titan III rocket carrying an experimental nuclear-powered satellite is slated for launch from Vandenberg Air Force Base at midnight tonight. If I don't stop it, thousands will die.

JONAS

Nuclear?!

Shaking her head, Maddie ducks inside the car.

GERRY

If they're successful again, the entire base and hundreds of miles in every direction will be uninhabitable for decades.

Gerry juggles the attache case with one arm and reaches for the door handle. It's locked. He tugs at it again. Jonas is still processing what his father just said.

GERRY (CONT'D)

She will take care of you while I take care of the rest.

Maddie reaches over to unlock Jonas' door. He slips in quickly, shoving his backpack to the floor.

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - DAWN

With Gerry still standing outside, Maddie turns to Jonas.

MADDIE

Did he say nuclear?

JONAS
(gravely)
Uh-huh.

GERRY (O.S.)
(still from outside)
Please, Jonas. Hurry.

MADDIE
(to Jonas)
Dude.

She searches Jonas' face. He nods.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
Fine. It's your funeral.

She reaches back, popping the lock to Gerry's door.

In the distance, we can barely make out an anonymous WHITE SEDAN parked just a few feet behind Gerry's Volvo (the one with the shattered windshield).

Maddie, distracted, doesn't clock it. Gerry doesn't either, as he pulls the rear door open and gingerly slides his attache case in across the backseat.

GERRY
Just before the Challenger, four
Russian spy trawlers suddenly
departed the area. NASA knows this.

Gerry ducks into the car.

GERRY (CONT'D)
NASA knows that the Soviets knew
their ships would be in the middle
of the debris field!
(beat)
Now the rest of world needs to
know. Something has to be done. And
if I don't do it, no one will.

BANG! He slams the door shut and Maddie starts the car -
throwing it into reverse and backing out of the driveway.

I/E. WHITE SEDAN - DAY

As Maddie's car peels out, a man with a well-manicured mustache, jet-black hair, and the empty eyes of a snake tracks the BMW from the passenger seat.

This is CAPTAIN WILLIAM HOWARD HUGHES, JR. (mid-30s) a seemingly mild-mannered jigsaw puzzle of a man. His voice is equal parts milquetoast and menace.

HUGHES
 (to the driver)
 Keep with them. Keep the device in-
 range. And continue transmission.

Nodding, the driver starts the car.

HUGHES (CONT'D)
 (over his shoulder)
 And tell Blankenship to raze the
 place. But keep it convincing.

An unseen passenger doesn't say a word from the backseat as the car slowly pulls out.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

With Maddie holding a lit cigarette out her window, the car speeds up an on-ramp and into the sparse, early morning traffic headed north.

The sky outside is a vivid, smoky scarlet.

Behind Gerry, we see the white sedan make a slow right and glide up the same on-ramp and onto the freeway.

No one in the car seems to notice the sedan following them.

JONAS
 (loud)
 So, uh...

From the back seat, Gerry replies:

GERRY
 (loud over the wind)
 Yes?

JONAS
 Why?

GERRY
 Why what?

JONAS
 Why'd you leave?

Gerry squints, both arms on his attache case.

GERRY
I'm sorry?

JONAS
Mom and me. Why did you leave us?

GERRY
Jonas, please. This isn't the time.

At the wheel, Maddie makes a sudden, aggressive lane change.

MADDIE
(into the rear view)
Fuck that. He deserves to know.
Hell, even I wanna know now.

Gerry resignedly slides the silver case to the seat beside himself and draws a pained breath.

GERRY
Your mother and I... we were just
too... young. Not ready. We
wanted...

Gerry turns toward his closed window. Outside, it's a new day dawning.

GERRY (CONT'D)
...we wanted different things.
Wanted each other to be different
people. People we weren't. I wanted
a wife, a partner, support. She
didn't need any of that. Not then,
probably not even now.

Gerry shifts his gaze toward Maddie's face in the rear view.

GERRY (CONT'D)
(toward Maddie)
Sorry.

Maddie takes a deep draw on her cigarette.

MADDIE
(blowing smoke)
No prob, dude. Can't stand the
bitch myself.

GERRY
Do you always have to swear so
much?

Maddie flicks ash out the window.

MADDIE
 Damn straight.
 (to Jonas)
 Your turn.

JONAS
 What?

MADDIE
 (doing Jonas)
 Where are we going?

Gerry (seeming relieved to change the subject) reaches across himself and pops open the attache case.

GERRY
 Just head north on the 5 to the
 110. Once we're close, I'll tell
 you more.

Maddie gives Gerry a mock salute with the hand holding her cigarette.

MADDIE
Jawohl herr kommandant.

Next to her, Jonas shifts in his seat - looking like he wants to get back to the earlier conversation.

Behind him, Gerry pulls what looks to be a hand-held antenna out of the case. He extends the handle and then unfurls the antenna's metallic dish.

JONAS
 What is that?

Not answering, Gerry carefully slides the dish to the base of the rear windshield and then nips a pair of headphones out of the case.

GERRY
 It's funny. When you were born, I
 thought you were part of me - that
 you were me. Mine. I would do
 anything to protect you.

He lifts one ear cup to his head, reaching into the case to twist a few knobs and dials as if he's tuning a radio.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 But then I realized. You're not me.
 You're nothing like me. Not in the
 slightest.

Pausing, Gerry pulls the headphones all the way on.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 And that's a good thing. For us
 both.
 (over-loud, to Maddie)
 Stick to the speed limit. We can't
 risk getting pulled over.

Maddie looks to Gerry, then to Jonas. Jonas is clearly wounded by what his father just said.

MADDIE
 (to Jonas)
 This fucking guy.

Jonas looks away. Gerry acts like he can't hear them.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 Your dad's a fucking terrorist and
 your mom makes my life a living
 hell.

Jonas nods painfully toward his window, away.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 Shoulda stolen more than eighty
 fucking bucks.

INSERT MONTAGE:

As the sun rises, blazing overhead, we watch via a series of QUICK CUTS as the light blue BMW trundles northbound:

...Passing military helicopters flying an early morning training mission over the beach at Camp Pendleton...

...Blasting by the gleaming mega-malls along an immaculate stretch of freeway threading through Orange County...

...Weaving in and out of traffic below a giant passenger jet on approach to an unseen airport...

...Cutting through the increasingly thick, sickly brown haze hanging over the sprawling Los Angeles outskirts...

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Still at the wheel, Maddie lets her eyes drift to the dash. Next to her, Jonas still stares out his closed window.

In the back, Gerry fiddles with more nobs inside his case - still wearing his headphones.

MADDIE
 (re: the briefcase)
 World's lamest Walkman.
 (beat)
 Mind switching?

JONAS
 (distantly)
 No.

MADDIE
 Plus, we need gas.

Jonas nods, his mind elsewhere.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 (signaling)
 Just don't, you know, rear-end
 anybody this time, huh?

Jonas finally turns back toward her. She's got him back.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

With smog hanging low among dessicated palm trees in the distance, Maddie stands at a pump - filling up.

Jonas stretches.

MADDIE
 Coffee and, I dunno, like a donut
 or something?

JONAS
 Should I get something for him?

MADDIE
 A milk bottle? To piss in?

Grinning, Jonas turns and heads toward the snack bar.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 And remember. Receipts!

She points toward Gerry, still in the back.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - LATER

We're back on the road - back on the 5. Jonas is driving (careful not to let his eyes wander too far).

Maddie's got a steaming Styrofoam cup in one hand and a pre-packaged bear claw in the other.

Early 80s Cure THRUMS over the cassette deck.

Gerry is still in the back - worlds away.

MADDIE
(her mouth full)
This is actually pretty fucking good.

Jonas reaches a hand down toward the console, pulling up a half-wrapped package of Twinkies. He struggles to get one of the Twinkies out.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
Easy there, crash test dummy.

Jonas whips his eyes back up to the road.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
You do know all those things were made in, like, 1967.

Jonas grins - carefully shimmying the Twinkie out and taking a huge bite. For a second, he lets his eyes drift toward his still preoccupied father in the rear view.

JONAS
(his mouth full)
So, um, whatever, uh, happened to your mom anyway?

Maddie looks away, clutching her coffee. Jonas washes the bite of Twinkie down with some milk.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Now that you know all about my effed up family and all.
(swallowing)
It's only fair.

MADDIE
(after a second)
She moved. To San Francisco.

Jonas lets his eyes slide her way, swallowing.

JONAS

And?

Maddie hesitates.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - DUSK

A woman in a sheer blue dress - MADDIE'S MOM - stands on the handrail of the Golden Gate Bridge. A thick wall of fog breezes swiftly by before her.

All alone, the young woman slowly lifts an ivory hand from the bright orange coil of cable to her right - and steps wordlessly into the abyss.

Not so much as a scream and she's gone.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

In the passenger seat, Maddie's face is frozen, masking even a glimmer of emotion.

MADDIE
(end-of-story)
It didn't work out.

Jonas takes a breath to ask a follow-up. But then he notices she's still looking away and thinks better of it - centering his eyes again on the road ahead.

In the back seat, Gerry lifts one headphone.

GERRY
Remember, look for the 110. To
Pasadena.

Jonas nods. Gerry puts his headphones back on - eyes back into the briefcase.

MADDIE
(to Jonas)
This is bananas.

Maddie takes a swig of coffee and then reaches forward, ejecting the tape in the deck, flipping it over, shoving it back in roughly, and hitting play.

Echo and the Bunnymen CUES up, low.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
You know that right?

Jonas hesitates.

JONAS
Yeah?

He takes another bite of the Twinkie. Outside, malnourished, sun-scorched palm trees bleed by.

MADDIE
Well, you were the one who wanted to meet him.

JONAS
(defensively)
What would you have said? To your mom. If you could talk to her again.

Maddie's cheeks flush with anger - emotion she's trying (but failing) to smother.

MADDIE
I'd probably... I'd probably tell her to fuck off for ruining Dad's life. Ruining my life.

Jonas nods. A brief silence.

JONAS
I used to think it'd all be, like, better with him, you know?

MADDIE
A little less punchy, maybe.

JONAS
But, you're right. He doesn't even look like me.

Maddie nods - the last bite of her sticky bear claw pinched between her thumb and forefinger. Still, Gerry's not even listening. Or so it seems.

Outside, the smog is getting thicker.

MADDIE
Screw that shit.

She washes the last bite of bear claw down with a gulp of lukewarm coffee.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
He bailed. Fuck him.

The two of them sit staring out the windshield at the road buzzing by.

JONAS
You know what's weird?

She gestures around in the air ahead of her. *All of it?*

JONAS (CONT'D)
Mom and I actually, like, ran into his parents once. My grandparents.

Maddie narrows her eyes.

JONAS
Randomly. In, like, a Target. In Boulder. Before we moved.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. TARGET, CHECKOUT AISLE - DAY

Standing next to an obviously younger-looking Jonas inside the harsh, plastic-y, florescent glare of a suburban Target store is a much more youthful Carol.

JONAS (V.O.)
I'd asked Mom for, like, a new basketball or something. And, in the check-out aisle, she started acting all... weird.

Behind them, in the next aisle, stands an older couple. They're both slightly stooped and they exude a chilly, old-world, Eastern European air.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Dropped a bunch of change all over the counter.

On cue, Carol spills the contents her change purse across the entire bagging area.

YOUNG JONAS turns to her, mouthing:

YOUNG JONAS
(in-synch with the V.O.)
What's wrong?

YOUNG CAROL, clearly flustered, scrambles to collect her change - mouthing in time with Jonas' voice:

YOUNG CAROL
 (still Jonas' V.O.)
 It's... your grandparents.

She wags her head discretely over one shoulder - toward the older couple.

YOUNG CAROL (CONT'D)
 (still Jonas' V.O.)
 Karl and Meta. Your father's
 parents.

Young Jonas turns slowly around.

MADDIE (PRE-LAP)
 Wait a minute. What?!

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jonas is still at the wheel - still trying to keep his eyes fixed squarely on the cars up ahead.

MADDIE
 What the fuck were they doing
 there?!

JONAS
 I don't...

Jonas' eyes slip toward his father's reflection in the rear view mirror.

JONAS (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 I don't know.

BACK TO:

INT. TARGET, CHECK-OUT AISLE - MOMENTS LATER

Young Jonas slowly twists his gaze toward the older couple. KARL (60s, stern and imperious), his grandfather, takes absolutely no notice.

JONAS (V.O.)
 Turns out, they'd been living,
 like, seven miles away from us for,
 like, years and years.

But, the minute Young Jonas turns around, the welcoming face of META (60s, rugged but kindly), his grandmother, flushes with recognition. Long-stifled affection.

JONAS (CONT'D)

And I had no idea. Mom neither, I guess.

Young Carol lets her pocketbook fall, still empty of change, onto the checkout counter - busted.

Meta pushes quickly past her husband, rushing toward her first-born (long-estranged) grandson.

Young Jonas seems frozen. She wraps him up in her arms.

JONAS (CONT'D)

When I was little, they'd send me something every Christmas. Some scratchy wool hat or a cheap-ass picture book about space. Things I'd never ask for in a million years.

Meta smothers Young Jonas in kisses as his mother turns and makes eye contact with Karl - her ex's father.

Barely sublimated resentment simmers on both sides. They're obviously not over the moon to see each other again.

JONAS (CONT'D)

Always with the same note. To Jonas with love, *Omi* and *Opi*.

(beat)

From literally the next town over.

MADDIE (PRE-LAP)

Dude.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Maddie stares at Jonas while Gerry, still fixated on the attache case in the back, seems to ignore them entirely.

MADDIE

Then what?!

JONAS

Then we, uh, we went to that, uh, snack bar thing. By the exit.

BACK TO:

INT. TARGET, CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Over shitty coffee and microwaved frozen pizza, Young Carol and Young Jonas sit opposite Jonas' grandparents.

It's a truly weird tableau - made somehow endearing by Meta's hands (which lovingly clasp those of her bewildered grandson).

JONAS (V.O.)

Before we left, Mom told them I could go spend, like, a weekend with them. Didn't even ask me. And I didn't even know these people!

Young Carol looks mortified beyond belief. Usurped.

MADDIE (PRE-LAP)

Your mom is whack.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jonas is still driving. Maddie's clearly not buying his story entirely - but she's hooked anyway.

Something in Gerry's presence has changed. He's still got the headphones on. But his eyes say he's definitely listening in.

JONAS

So, I went to their house.

(beat)

Well, more like apartment. Place was a dump. They didn't have much money, I guess.

MADDIE

Uh-huh.

JONAS

Maybe he's right. Maybe the reason my mom was so weird at Target was because, like, she did cut me out of their lives. And them out of mine. You know...

Jonas wags his head subtly back toward Gerry.

JONAS (CONT'D)

...like he said.

MADDIE

Hmm.

Jonas lets his eyes drift momentarily from the road.

JONAS

(hushed)

But that's not the only thing.

MADDIE

Go on.

JONAS

(somberly)

Well...

BACK TO:

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DUSK

Young Jonas, alone, is standing before a tall, worn wooden bureau inside Gerry's parents' apartment - in a dimly-lit, threadbare bedroom.

All the dresser drawers are closed. But the top is lined with framed photographs - including one of Jonas as a baby.

JONAS (V.O.)

It was weird. There I was. As, like, a baby.

In the dim light of the adjacent hallway, he rummages through the photographs - all mostly black and white.

JONAS (CONT'D)

And my dad. As a kid.

Far off, the sound of Meta cooking dinner can be heard. Pots and pans CLANG. Spoons SWIRL. Vegetables SIZZLE.

JONAS (CONT'D)

And whole bunch of other people I didn't even recognize.

Standing on his tiptoes, Jonas reaches to the back of the bureau top - for a large portrait in a silver frame.

JONAS (CONT'D)

Cousins. Aunts. Uncles I'd never met.

He carefully pulls the large portrait closer, making sure not to knock over any of the other photos.

JONAS (CONT'D)
 Like, a whole world of people I was
 a part of. In ways I'd never really
 even imagined.

But, as soon as the portrait hits the light emanating from
 the hallway, he nearly drops it.

The photo in the frame is of a DAPPER YOUNG NAZI OFFICER.

The skull and crossbones, the swastika - it's all right
 there adorning the uniform of his grandfather, Karl.

Suddenly, from down the hall, a VOICE:

KARL
 (heavy German accent)
 Jonas?

Young Jonas, petrified, hastily scrambles to place the
 portrait back where he found it.

To his left, down the hallway, Karl approaches slowly. Jonas
 looks like he's about to jump out of his skin.

Karl pauses. We still can't quite make out his face. His
 expression is a mystery.

KARL (CONT'D)
 So now you know.

Young Jonas STAMMERS.

After a second, still shrouded in darkness, Karl continues:

KARL (CONT'D)
Kommen Sie. Come. I will tell you
 the story.

From the blackness, he reaches a hand forward. For a second
 it looks less like a welcoming gesture and more like the
 beginnings of a Nazi salute.

MADDIE (PRE-LAP)
 Fuck, dude!

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Now stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic, Jonas clutches the
 steering wheel - eyes forward. Still, Gerry looks into the
 device - eavesdropping.

JONAS

(quietly)

I didn't know what to do. I thought I wanted to know these people. But then, all I wanted to do was run. Get the hell out of there. Escape.

Maddie pads her pockets for her cigarettes.

MADDIE

Okay, A, Why on Earth did your mom let you stay there in the first fucking place?!

JONAS

I dunno. Maybe she didn't know?

MADDIE

Bullshit. And, B, Who keeps a picture of themselves as a fucking NAZI on their fucking dresser?!

JONAS

Accidental Nazi.

In the back seat, Gerry finally pulls off his headphones.

GERRY

(from the backseat)

Is that what he told you?

Jonas seems stunned - like he'd almost forgotten Gerry was even there in the first place. He nods.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Of course he did.

(scornfully)

Accidental Nazi? No such thing.

He sets the headphones down and pushes the case away.

GERRY (CONT'D)

He was in the *Leibstandarte*.

Hitler's personal guard.

Jonas lets his eyes linger on the mirror a bit too long.

GERRY (CONT'D)

(to Jonas, calmly)

Watch out.

Jonas taps the brakes just in time.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Wore a sash with Hitler's name
embroidered into it on one arm
permanently. Like a badge of honor.

Gerry nonchalantly points toward the windshield.

GERRY (CONT'D)
There. The 110.

Jonas signals, not saying a word.

MADDIE
You're telling me--

GERRY
Even worse. He was a trombone
player. In Hitler's personal band.
Playing *der Führer's* greatest hits
while the world burned.

Jonas switches lanes, still unable to speak.

GERRY (CONT'D)
In the end, he was captured by the
Russians and held for cheap labor
until the war was well over. Long
after I was born. Eventually he
escaped and walked all the way back
to Germany while your *Omi* was stuck
on a train somewhere in Ukraine
trying to find him and claim him.

Jonas searches for words - any words.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Alright. Take the next exit.

Looking white as a sheet, Jonas simply nods. Maddie slowly
pulls out a cigarette, rolling it between her fingers
nervously.

GERRY (CONT'D)
A word of advice, not that you
asked. But the men in this family,
we have a way of...

Gerry's eyes slide back down toward his open attache case.

GERRY (CONT'D)
...being drawn into circumstances
with ramifications beyond our
comprehension.

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)
 (gravely)
 Like moths to a flame.

Gerry just lets this sit there in the air while Jonas weaves his way onto the 110.

MADDIE
 Great. Duly fucking noted!

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BUNGALOW - MORNING

Gerry, Jonas, and Maddie stand alone on the porch of a small craftsman bungalow not saying a word.

Gerry lifts a hand to knock. But, as he does, the door slowly CREAKS open all on its own.

Maddie is about to say something, but Gerry lifts a finger to his lips and cautiously pushes the door the rest of the way open.

INT. BUNGALOW, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gerry anxiously surveys the place before cautiously stepping inside.

The whole house is a ransacked mess. Smashed plates. Overturned chairs. Clothes and papers strewn everywhere.

Unable to mask her fear, Maddie simply stands on the deck wagging her head side-to-side. *Let's get the fuck...*

GERRY
 (hushed)
 No...

Jonas steps in behind his dad - wading through the detritus.

JONAS
 Who did this?

Gerry wheels back around.

GERRY
 Shhh.

MADDIE
 (still from the deck)
 Uh-uh. Nope.

Gerry runs both hands through his beard, his eyes wide - a man betrayed yet again.

Jonas pauses, noticing a small pad of paper sticking out from beneath the lip of a small, overturned table.

He bends to pick it up. And Maddie finally crosses the threshold - surging quickly toward Jonas.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 (hushed)
 Don't touch--

Jonas tilts the notepad to one side and we can barely see the impression of letters written earlier on the missing top sheet. Maddie sees it too.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 (under her breath)
 Shit.

She spins - spying a spray of scattered pens and pencils on the debris-strewn floor.

She pushes down her sleeve and lunges out - scooping up a pencil with her flannel-covered hand and then angling it toward Jonas and the pad.

Gerry steps closer. As Maddie rubs the lead of the pencil back and forth across the notepad.

Soon, we see the outline of a series of urgently scrawled capital letters emerge:

NRO / ~~KGB~~

The letters KGB are roughly crossed out.

Gerry reaches out and gently pulls the notepad from Maddie's fingers - pocketing it.

GERRY
 Go.

MADDIE
 What?

JONAS
 (barely audible)
 What does it mean?

Gerry turns and sprints for the door.

GERRY

Now.

He leaps through the doorway out onto the porch, disappearing. For a second, Maddie and Jonas just stand there, ankle-deep in trash.

Maddie drops the pencil.

JONAS

How'd you know how to do that?

MADDIE

Movies, dude.

Outside, on the street, we hear a car door SLAM shut. And then the horn HONKS twice.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

If you wanna bail, I'm 100% down.

Jonas turns, wagging his head side-to-side.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Because, I've got the keys...

She pads her pants pocket.

JONAS

I think he needs us.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Gerry is at the wheel - frantically bobbing and weaving through northbound traffic.

Maddie is in the passenger seat. Jonas is in the back.

MADDIE

What were you saying about the fucking speed limit?!

GERRY

(ignoring her)

How could I have been so stupid!?

JONAS

What did they do to her?

MADDIE

And who the fuck are 'they' anyway?

Gerry yanks the wheels suddenly to the right - cutting across three lanes of traffic.

JONAS
(straining)
What is NRO?

Someone in the next lane HONKS. Something about the sound jolts Gerry back to his senses. Outside, a sign for the 101 blasts by.

GERRY
(quickly)
The National Reconnaissance Office.
Part of the Department of Defense.
They design, build, launch, and
operate...

He pauses, looking as if something in his mind has finally clicked into place. And it's not good news.

GERRY (CONT'D)
(to himself)
It's not the Soviets.

MADDIE
Yeah, we got that part!

GERRY
(urgently)
NASA didn't design the Space
Shuttle. NRO did.

Maddie turns back toward Jonas.

GERRY (CONT'D)
They haven't been infiltrated by
the KGB. They're the ones
destroying their own satellites...
on purpose!

MADDIE
(to Jonas)
Hmm?

Jonas looks at her blankly. Maddie spins back toward Gerry.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
(to Gerry)
Where THE FUCK are we going?!

Gerry lifts one hand from the wheel, flipping his wrist over to look at his watch.

GERRY
 (gravely)
 Vandenberg. Before it's too late.

CUT TO:

I/E. WHITE SEDAN - DAY

A few cars behind Maddie's, the white sedan makes the same bend toward the 101.

HUGHES
 (calmly)
 Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity.
 (to the driver)
 Do not lose connection with the device.

FADE TO:

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

Somewhere near Ventura, Maddie and Jonas stand with their backs to the stucco wall of a freeway rest stop. Their eyes are on her car. Gerry's nowhere to be seen.

MADDIE
 Ditch him?

Jonas stares off into the distance.

JONAS
 What do you think's in the case?

MADDIE
 Like I care.

JONAS
 Some sort of computer?

MADDIE
 I bet it's a fucking bomb. I bet he's really the one we're after here.

JONAS
 No, he's not.

MADDIE
 Know what your problem is?

JONAS
 Enlighten me.

MADDIE

You're too fucking gullible. Buying this whole cock and bull story, hook, line, and sinker.

She pats her pockets again for her cigarettes.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Plus, who cares about that jerk? He left you. Boohoo. Fuck him!

She shakes the pack realizing she forgot her lighter.

JONAS

Know what your problem is?

She doesn't even bother answering.

JONAS (CONT'D)

You go around acting so tough - with all the swearing and the drinking and the Ritalin...

MADDIE

Ah, that's right!

JONAS

...but deep down inside you're just a scared little freak somebody decided wasn't worth sticking around for either!
(deep breath)
Just like me.

She smiles severely, lifting an unlit cigarette to her lips.

MADDIE

That so, huh?

JONAS

I know what happened to your mom.

Her smile turns down. Her fists clench.

MADDIE

Don't you fucking say it.

He purses his lips.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Or I swear I'll fucking leave the both of you right the fuck here, right the fuck now!

JONAS

Of course you will. Because you're
just like her. You... quitter!

Gerry stumbles quickly out of the restroom behind them,
still zipping his fly.

GERRY

Ready?

Maggie looks like she wants to rip Jonas' head off. But part
of her realizes it's true. Leaving is quitting.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - LATER

Gerry is back at the wheel and Maddie and Jonas are sullenly
sulking in the front and back seats, respectively.

After a second:

JONAS

(dejectedly)

What's in the stupid case?

MADDIE

Don't get him started again with
the secret agent bullshit. Too many
goddamn acronyms.

Hands on the wheel, Gerry ignores this - casting his eyes to
Jonas in the rear view.

GERRY

Our secret weapon.

(beat)

A high-frequency COMINT scanner
that can pick up and triangulate
ground-based satellite
transmissions.

MADDIE

Ugh!

GERRY

(still to Jonas)

The early shuttle missions deployed
a fleet of geo-synchronous
satellites that allow for constant
transfer of data back-and-forth to
Goddard, JPL, the Cape, and
Goldstone.

He pauses, looking for a glimmer of comprehension.

GERRY (CONT'D)
A deep-space communications complex
in the desert near Barstow.

Still nothing.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Hughes used me to figure out how to
hack into that link - the link that
sends command line data back-and-
forth to every launch vehicle not
handled by *Kosmicheskaya*.

Maddie finally turns and stabs the cigarette lighter in.

MADDIE
Kosmicheskawhatnow?

JONAS
(from the backseat)
The Soviet Space Agency.

GERRY
Precisely!

Jonas shoots Maddie a 'so there' look. As if on cue, the lighter POPS out. Ignoring him, she lifts the lighter to her cigarette.

JONAS
But why? To do what?

GERRY (CONT'D)
(remorsefully)
To sneak a single packet of data -
four lines of code - into the
system without anybody on the
ground even noticing.

Maddie cranks her window down a hair, exhaling.

GERRY (CONT'D)
To build a bomb out of zeros and
ones. Once the code executes - once
the vehicle reaches escape velocity
- the self-destruct protocol
initiates.
(guilt-ridden)
Destroying everything - and
everyone - on-board.

Maddie GRUMBLES in disbelief again, loudly.

GERRY (CONT'D)

(ignoring her)

If I can triangulate the signal, I can find Hughes. And stop them from destroying the Titan. And then turn myself in.

JONAS

But, wait. Won't you, like, go to jail or something? Prison?

GERRY

(not answering)

The only problem is that the signal keeps bouncing. One second it's far off, near Vandenberg. The next it's right next to us. Right on top of us. Here.

MADDIE

Listen, dude. As far as I'm concerned you can fucking rot. I'm running on zero sleep, a hangover that could kill a water buffalo, no food!

Gerry's mind is elsewhere, working the problem.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

First you kidnap us...

GERRY

I did no such thing.

MADDIE

...then you take us to some stupid-ass house you probably ransacked yourself!

GERRY

What? No.

MADDIE

And now you wanna drag our asses to bumfuck nowhere so that we can help you blow up a fucking NUKE?!

Well, when you say it like that...

MADDIE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna need some fucking lunch first.

(all swagger)

Capiche?!

From the back seat, Jonas can barely repress a smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA BARBARA, TAQUERIA - DAY

The three of them (looking like the most oddly mismatched trio in town) sit at a circular stone table beneath a pale blue and white steel umbrella.

Gerry's case lies open on the table. We can't quite see into it. But it's a jumble of fuses, switches, and screens with a rudimentary keyboard.

MADDIE
(mouth full of taco)
Now, that's more like it.

GERRY
Please hurry. We don't have all--

MADDIE (CONT'D)
And try the green salsa. So good!!

Maddie loudly SLURPS an impossibly orange Mexican soda from crazed bottle with a red and yellow plastic straw. Jonas jams a chip into a small bowl of salsa.

Relenting, Gerry finally takes a bite of his taco.

MADDIE
So, what's the play here?

Jonas grins again. *Look at you...*

GERRY
Once we get close to Vandenberg,
the signal should stabilize. And
once they uplink the data - my code
- I should be able to--

Suddenly, from the case, a loud PING!

Gerry drops his taco. Bits of salsa and onions fleck his unkempt beard. He spins the case around.

GERRY (CONT'D)
That doesn't make any sense!

JONAS
(his mouth also full)
What is it?

GERRY

It's like they're right here.

Gerry slams his headphones back on - his wild eyes riveted to the case.

MADDIE

Like, here/here?!

GERRY

No.

Gerry looks around quickly, ripping the headphones back off.

JONAS

What?

Gerry jumps up, slamming the case shut.

GERRY

We have to go!

Maddie and Jonas stare at him dumbly. He reaches down and grabs the last of his taco - shoving it into his mouth.

GERRY (CONT'D)

(also with a mouthful)

Listen, for what it's worth, you're both right. And wrong.

(to Jonas)

You are too gullible. Believing your Opi's story.

(to Maddie)

And you. You're not a quitter.

(grabbing some chips)

You're smarter than you look.

(grabbing some salsa)

But the smoking and the swearing.

(pocketing the chips)

You don't need either.

He yanks the case off the table - snatching a napkin.

GERRY (CONT'D)

And you're both wrong, too. Nobody left anyone because they weren't worth sticking around for.

(wiping his face)

Life gets complicated. Grownups make mistakes. Hurt the people they love the most for all the wrong reasons.

Gerry tosses his filthy napkin down onto the table and hops back from the bench, turning to go.

GERRY (CONT'D)
It's not your fault. It has nothing
to do with you. Come.

Behind him, we notice the same white sedan from earlier parked two cars behind Maddie's.

Jaywalking toward the BMW, Gerry shouts back:

GERRY (CONT'D)
We're running out of time!

Maddie notices the white sedan for half a second.

MADDIE
Wait a minute...

JONAS
(standing too)
If you hadn't shot up his stupid
car, we'd be there by now.

He takes one last sip of his soda and turns to go.

Forgetting about the white sedan, Maddie stands. She pads her pocket for her cigarettes but then seems to think better of it.

CUT TO:

I/E. WHITE SEDAN - DAY

With Maddie and Jonas both crossing the street up ahead, Hughes nods to himself.

HUGHES
Excellent. Precisely as he said. A
moth to the flame.

Silence from his two companions.

HUGHES (CONT'D)
Save the final upload for when
they're on-site.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

With the car stereo BUZZING "Go!" by Tones on Tail, we watch as the car speeds through the bizarre spectacle that is the faux Danish village of Solvang.

Windmills. Gingerbread. Sausage gardens. Bakeries. All sweltering in the central coast sunshine.

Maddie is back at the wheel. Jonas is in the passenger seat. And Gerry's in the back seat wearing his headphones again.

MADDIE

This is why hobbies suck.

JONAS

Listen, um... I'm sorry about what I said. About your mom.

MADDIE

You'll know sorry when I show you sorry. Hitler youth.

GERRY

Quiet!

The faint green light emanating out of his case reflects in Gerry's eyes. Over his shoulder, we see the white sedan following them again - slowly and at a safe distance.

After a second:

JONAS

(quietly)

So, uh...

He trails off, eyes out the window.

MADDIE

Yeah?

Jonas hesitates. Maddie side-eyes him.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

What?

JONAS

(toward his window)

Was that, um, place as bad as they said?

Maddie SIGHS, clutching the wheel.

MADDIE
 (knowing the answer)
 What place?

JONAS
 The, uh, camp thing. You know...

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SERENITY CAMP, RESTROOM - NIGHT

Amid the BUZZ of fluorescent lights, Maddie (alone) kneels on the floor of a filthy restroom stall scrubbing the grime-covered tiles at the foot of a toilet with a toothbrush.

Her eyeliner has run. Her cheeks are flush and streaked with heavy black tears.

Behind her, we see a pair of cowboy boots sticking out from below the pressed cuffs of a pair of gabardine slacks.

Over Maggie's SCRUBBING, we hear the metronome-like SLAPPING of a wooden baton hitting a meaty palm over and over again.

CAMP WARDEN
 Flaming enthusiasm backed up by
 horse sense and persistence is the
 quality that most frequently makes
 for success.

Maggie looks for an instant like she's about to gag.

CAMP WARDEN (CONT'D)
 Missed a spot.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Maddie, with one hand on the wheel, turns her pack of cigarettes over and over again in her other hand - recoiling at the memory.

MADDIE
 Yeah. Worse. Way worse.

JONAS
 I'm sorry.

MADDIE
 Wasn't your fault. I stole the
 fucking money.

JONAS

Why?

MADDIE

For gas, dumbass.

Jonas looks over at her - as if realizing she really means it. *She is going to run away.*

JONAS

Still, I just... she shouldn't have done it. Mom shouldn't have--

Jonas looks away, back out the window - again not finding the right words.

JONAS (CONT'D)

(repeating Mitch)

Dude, that's fucked up.

Maddie barely represses a wry smile.

FADE TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - LATER

The sun is lower now, but Maddie is still behind the wheel. By the looks of it, they're getting closer to Vandenberg.

Bay Laurels bleed by instead of palms.

Gerry is still in the back, still wearing his headphones but now frantically typing on a keyboard inside the device.

MADDIE

(back, to Gerry)

Yo.

No answer.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Gerry.

Still no response. Only the CLACKING of keys.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

(to Jonas)

What kinda proper Nazi names their son Gerry?

JONAS

(to himself, defensively)

The other one's spelled with a 'J'.

MADDIE

Gerry!

Gerry rips off his headphones, annoyed.

GERRY

What?!

MADDIE

Never mind.

Gerry pops his headphones back on, eyes back into the case.

GERRY

Please, I'm trying to focus.

MADDIE

(back to Jonas)

Boy, your mom sure can pick 'em.

JONAS

It's not like your dad's a prince among men.

MADDIE

He's doing the best he can.

JONAS

Treating me like I'm some kinda threat all the time. Acting all hard.

(mockingly)

Clean your room! Do your homework, young man!

Maddie downshifts and slows to a stop at a flashing red light. To her right is a green sign indicating VAFB is about eleven miles to the west.

As the car comes to a stop, she looks back over one shoulder toward Gerry. He nods, lifting one ear cup off.

GERRY

The signal is still bouncing. Still echoing. Head west. Do a loop. Then we'll head back to town. Find a stable location.

Maddie SCOWLS, flicking the turn signal left.

In the rear window, the white sedan from earlier idles right behind them.

The light turns green. Maddie throws the car into first.

MADDIE
(toward Jonas)
How long'd you stay in-touch with
them again?

She accelerates, turning left.

JONAS
Who?

The white sedan follows.

MADDIE
Your fascist grandparents, dummy.

Maddie shifts into second, then third - speeding up.

JONAS
Just that one weekend.

MADDIE
Ooof.

Jonas looks away again. Still, nobody's noticing the white sedan obviously tailing them.

JONAS
They, uh, well... they just
disappeared. Left all of a sudden.
Moved away, I guess. No note. No
letter. No nothing.

MADDIE
Apple doesn't fall far.

Jonas nods toward the window.

JONAS
That was the last I ever saw of
them or heard from them. Ever.

SILENCE. Then:

MADDIE
Alright. We're even.

Jonas looks back at her, drawing a breath to speak. Instead, he just nods. A wordless acknowledgment of their burgeoning, previously unimaginable bond.

Maggie reaches a hand forward and turns up the volume on the car stereo, yawning.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
I don't think I've ever been this
tired.

JONAS
Yeah, me neither.
(nodding to the music)
Me neither.

As the car speeds on down a narrow road westward, the white sedan behind it slows, pulls onto the shoulder, and then does a quick u-turn back toward town.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILROAD CROSSING - DUSK

Maddie and Jonas stand leaning groggily against the trunk of the car at a railroad crossing near a white sand salt marsh.

In the distance, we can barely make out what appear to be launch towers and fuel tanks. A pair of helicopters circle above what is obviously the far-off airbase.

Gerry is busy climbing a shifting sand dune holding the case in one hand and the antenna in the other.

JONAS
I think you're right. This is
stupid.

MADDIE
Uh, yeah.

She pulls her pack of cigarette from her pocket - shaking it to assess how many she's got left.

After a second:

MADDIE (CONT'D)
I'd like to amend my answer.

JONAS
Huh?

MADDIE
About what I'd ask my mom.

Jonas looks to her, searchingly - and maybe a little surprised by her sudden candor.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 If I could ask her anything,
 anything at all, I'd just wanna
 know why she did it.
 (beat)
 And if it was worth it.

She pockets her cigarettes. In the distance, about halfway up the hill, Gerry pauses, spinning.

JONAS
 (after a moment)
 Man, what if you're right. What if
 he's the stupid terrorist?

Up the hill, Gerry lifts the hand-held antenna skyward.

JONAS (CONT'D)
 What if he's KGB?!

Maddie nudges Jonas with her elbow, pointing up toward the ridiculous spectacle of Gerry stabbing at the air like someone scouring the sky with a metal detector.

MADDIE
 KGB?! Dude, c'mon! We'll be lucky
 if this fucker doesn't murder us in
 our sleep. If we ever--

All of a sudden, Gerry rips his headphones off and scrambles quickly, frantically downhill, SHOUTING:

GERRY
 I have it! I have it! I...

He nearly tumbles ass-over-teakettle down the dunes.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 In town! They're in town! Go! GO!

Maddie and Jonas snap to attention.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 (breathlessly)
 I told you! TOWN! Hurry!

He throws open the rear passenger door and slides the case inside before popping it open and spinning it back around.

Inside the case we can finally clearly see a console with a bunch of dials, switches, and knobs.

At the top of the console are two flickering screens - one apparently an oscilloscope (full of peaking waveforms) and the other apparently a radar display (with a blinking dot).

GERRY (CONT'D)
 (gasping for air)
 I think they just...
 (wheeze)
 ...pinged Goldstone...
 (wheeze)
 ...again...
 (wheeze)
 ...to test the connection!

Maddie opens the driver's side door, keys jangling. For the second time, she seems like she can't quite mask her nerves.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 That way! They have to be somewhere
 within a two mile radius.

Closing the case, Gerry shimmies himself in - sweating.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 (pointing)
 Hurry!

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - SUNSET

KA-THUMP! KA-THUMP! The BMW bumps its way into a sparsely populated hotel parking lot and SCREECHES to a stop near the office.

A jet-age neon sign SPINS and BUZZES above.

Gerry leaps from the car, trailing sand.

GERRY
 Be right back. Keep watching!

He slams his door. Maddie and Jonas turn in their seats, watching the blinking light on the radar screen. The waveforms on the oscilloscope ebb and flow.

JONAS
 (to Maddie)
 This is really happening.

MADDIE
 What I said about him murdering us
 in our sleep still stands.

CUT TO:

INT. SHABBY HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Jonas sits on the edge of a single bed inside a rundown hotel room. Rust and turquoise colored comforters. A TV from the early 70s. Mass-produced oil paintings of sand dunes.

Maddie paces between Jonas and Gerry - who's seated at a desk wearing his headphones and jotting down notes.

MADDIE
This is bullshit.

JONAS
What's taking so long?

GERRY
The signal. It's fluctuating again.
First here. Then there. Then back
again. I don't--

Maddie YAWNS, yanking the bottle of Ritalin from her pocket and unscrewing the top.

GERRY (CONT'D)
(re: the Ritalin)
Not here.

She offers some to Jonas.

GERRY (CONT'D)
He doesn't need that garbage.

Fuming, she screws the top back on, reaching for her cigarettes and shaking one out.

GERRY (CONT'D)
(brusquely)
Outside.

Maddie glares at him. Something has hardened in her again. Re-calcified. Her armor is back up.

MADDIE
(toward Jonas)
So, this loser shows up and he's,
like: "Nope, your granddad's way
more of a Nazi than you thought and
I'm a fucking terrorist". And
you're, like, "Okay how can we
fucking help?"

Jonas looks away. Maddie pockets the Ritalin.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Oh, and: "p.s.: You don't really need to talk about any of that other stuff like how you left me FOREVER unless you don't want to. And, sure, nuclear bomb? You got it. No fucking problem!"

JONAS

What do you want me to do?

MADDIE

I dunno, grow a pair?!

Gerry rips off his headphones.

GERRY

Enough!

He lifts his wrist, checking the time.

GERRY (CONT'D)

We only have three hours to launch.

MADDIE

Fucking goose chase.

Maddie swipes a book of matches from the ashtray on the dresser and pushes her way out the door - steadying the army surplus bag slung around her shoulder.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Always has been.

She rips out a match, strikes it, and SLAMS the door shut behind herself. We stay on Jonas and Gerry.

JONAS

Don't worry, she's all talk.

Gerry slips his headphones back on and swivels back toward the open case.

Beat.

JONAS (CONT'D)

You know, I just wanted someone to look up to. Like, teach me to shave. How to be a man.

Clearly hearing him again through the headphones, Gerry keeps his eyes glued to one of the screens inside the case.

GERRY

Trust me, you were better off
without me.

Suddenly, outside, we hear the familiar V-V-V-ROOM of a car starting up. Maddie's car.

Gerry's hand freezes. Jonas' eyes whip toward the door.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sitting inside her idling car with a lit cigarette dangling from her lips, Maddie grips the steering wheel.

MADDIE

(self-scolding)

What are you doing, you idiot?!
Falling for this lame-ass
conspiracy theory bullshit! Just,
GO already!

It's clear. She's steeling herself to make a break for it.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

That little freak - he doesn't care
about you. Neither of them do.
They're just using you like
everybody else. So fuck him. Fuck
'em both!

Up on the balcony, the door to Gerry's room flies open.
Jonas charges out.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Shit. Shit. Shit.

She hurriedly fumbles with the stick - trying to throw the car into reverse.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY/PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jonas freezes - eyes on Maddie's car as it GRINDS into gear and backs jerkily away.

JONAS

No. No. No. NO!

We follow him as he runs along the balcony, sprints down two flights of stairs, and stumbles out into the parking lot.

Up ahead, Maddie shifts into first and hits the gas. Jonas runs for his life, SCREAMING:

JONAS (CONT'D)
Don't you do it!

Maddie's car swerves hard left, barely missing the hotel sign, and Jonas LEAPS up onto the hood.

MADDIE
(from inside)
Get off my fucking car!

JONAS
STOP! STOP!

Maddie guns it across the sidewalk, over the curb, and out onto the street - where Jonas loses his grip, skids across the hood, and tumbles onto the pavement.

SCREECH!

Maddie slams the brakes. The car skids to a stop.

SILENCE mingled with the LOW RUMBLE of Maddie's engine.

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Maddie clutches the steering wheel again - afraid to look back. Her lit cigarette smolders.

Through the rear windshield, we see Jonas force himself up off the ground and run toward the car.

BANG! BANG! BANG! He slams his palms against the trunk.

JONAS
(from outside)
You fucking quitter!

Maddie throws the car into gear again. Ice-cold.

JONAS (CONT'D)
No, no! Wait. Wait! I need you! We
need you!

Jonas grips the trunk. Maddie hesitates.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Don't leave me here! Please. I
just... I believe him. I trust him.
We need to do this!
(pleading)
Run the heck away whenever you
want. I don't care. But, please.
Please help me! People are going to
die if you don't.

A pickup truck full of hay bales trundles slowly by - its WIDE-EYED DRIVER cutting them a wide berth.

Jonas lets go of the trunk and slowly approaches Maddie's door - his bleeding palms lifted in surrender.

MADDIE

(tears in her eyes)

I never asked for this. A fucking little brother. I just wanted to be left alone. To live my life my way, on my terms.

Jonas pauses at the window.

JONAS

I know. I know. I just...

(deep breath)

Please, don't go. Dad and me, we need your help.

Maddie still won't make eye contact.

MADDIE

(turning the tables)

Dad and I.

(beat)

And don't you ever, ever say I'm like her again. I'm nothing like her. Never have been never will be.

Jonas nods, exhaling. After a second:

MADDIE (CONT'D)

I take you there. I drop you there. End of story. I'm out of your life.

Jonas bends toward the window.

JONAS

What about... what about your dad?

Maddie loosens her grip on the wheel, inhaling.

MADDIE

(blowing smoke)

He'll be fine. Less to remember her by.

JONAS

Where'll you go?

Maddie looks away. The engine is still idling.

MADDIE

SF.

Jonas nods.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

(giving in)

Fuck! Fine, get in.

Jonas lets his scuffed shoulders settle.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

But don't get too comfortable.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - LATER

With Maddie still at the wheel, the car crisscrosses the darkened streets of downtown Lompoc to the co-mingled BEAT of early Depeche Mode and the PINGING from Gerry's sensor.

Dingy looking cafes, donut shops, and soft-serve ice cream joints dot both sides of the street.

In the backseat, Gerry's eyes are glued to his case. His face is lit by a pulsing green glow.

GERRY

(quietly)

Keep heading north.

Outside, a rundown high school bleeds by. A flickering sign reads: GO BRAVES.

GERRY (CONT'D)

The source of the first signal seems to be coming from...

Up ahead, we can see the neon sign for the Valley Drive-In - a 50s era theater on the outskirts of town.

The PINGING accelerates. Clearly, we're getting closer.

GERRY (CONT'D)

...there. Right there.

Maddie eases the car off the road, toward the ticket booth. In the distance, four different movies are playing on four enormous screens.

We see a marquee with titles and times pass by Jonas' window. The first one we can make out is "WarGames".

MADDIE
Of course.

Gerry turns the volume down, half closing the case as Maddie slows at the ticket window. A skinny CASHIER with teased blonde hair leans out the window.

CASHIER
You're too late. All the movies
already--

MADDIE
It's cool. We're here for the food.

The cashier squints Maddie's way.

CASHIER
Ten bucks. Four each for the grown-
ups. Two for the kid.

MADDIE
(smirking, to Jonas)
The kid...

Gerry fishes around in his wallet for a ten, handing it forward.

Maddie takes the ten and hands it to the cashier - who hands Maddie three ticket stubs, pointing.

CASHIER
Take your pick. Follow the prompt
on the thingies for which station
to tune into.

Maddie flashes her a thumbs-up and drives. Gerry reopens the case. The PINGING is so rapid, it's nearly constant.

GERRY
(closing the case)
Park anywhere. Split up.

JONAS
What?!

MADDIE
With pleasure.

GERRY
Something's here. Something's
definitely here.

He lowers the case to the floor. Maddie parks at an old speaker stand, cutting the engine.

Four movies FLICKER in the distance - casting strange reflections over every window, hood, and fender.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Look for an antenna. Like mine but bigger.

He pauses, reaching a hand back down into the case and pulling out a Xerox of two young men - one in an Air Force uniform and the other in a starched shirt and tie.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Or two men that look like this.

He flashes them the pictures.

MADDIE

Oh, now you show us?

JONAS

That's him? Hughes? The guy in the uniform?

Gerry nods.

GERRY

If you see them - if you see anything - don't DO anything. Just come back here and wait for me.

JONAS

Then what?

GERRY

Then we...
(beat)
...improvise.

Maddie grabs her shoulder bag, opens her door, and steps outside.

MADDIE

Terrific.

She slams her door, heading toward the three-story concession building at the center of the lot. From its tower, undulating beams of light animate the night sky.

Jonas opens his door.

GERRY

(to Jonas)

And don't let anyone get a good look at you, okay?

Jonas, seeming rightly spooked, nods and slams his door without replying.

Gerry takes a deep breath and opens his door.

EXT. DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

Clearly forgetting the edict to split up, Jonas jogs off after Maddie, trying to look nonchalant. Just two kids in search of popcorn and something sweet.

Maddie shifts her shoulder bag around to the back.

MADDIE

Thought he said split up.

JONAS

No way.

MADDIE

(after a second)

You still think this is real, huh?

Jonas nods.

JONAS

(knowing the answer)

Why San Francisco?

MADDIE

I just need to see it. See where she--

BANG! Out of nowhere, a CLEAN-CUT MAN in a nondescript gray suit (no tie) bumps headlong into Maddie.

He's clearly one of the men in the Xerox. But not Hughes.

CLEAN-CUT MAN

Oh, my goodness. I'm so sorry.

His affect is flat, almost robotic.

CLEAN-CUT MAN (CONT'D)

(oddly stiff)

I was watching the screen.

On the tall screen behind him, we catch glimpses of a very young Matthew Broderick wandering a beach at night next to an equally young Ally Sheedy.

MADDIE

(false bravado)

No prob, dude.

Jonas STAMMERS - his eyes riveted to the man.

CLEAN-CUT MAN

Well, again, sorry about that.

Running a hand down to her shoulder bag (as if to see if anything's missing), Maddie waves back.

MADDIE

All good.
(to Jonas, sotto)
Fuuuuuuck.

Jonas turns away, his mind reeling.

As the clean-cut man departs, he discretely lifts a finger to his ear and seemingly whispers something to his wrist.

Maddie grabs Jonas by the shoulder - yanking him with her toward the concession stand.

JONAS

(under his breath)
What do we do?! What do we--

MADDIE

Oh, shit.

Maddie lets go of Jonas, pointing indiscreetly to the roof of the concession building - where an incongruously large satellite dish points up to the stars.

JONAS

No, no, no. We gotta get Dad!

Maddie abruptly run/walks away - toward a door marked STAFF. Jonas dashes off after her.

JONAS (CONT'D)

(hushed)
What're you doing?!

Maddie pauses at the door, pushing it open a hair.

MADDIE

Improvising.

Adjusting her shoulder bag, she ducks inside. Jonas looks both ways, and then anxiously follows her in.

INT. DRIVE-IN, PROJECTION BOOTH STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

To the increasingly loud CLATTER of four giant projectors in the distance above, Maddie and Jonas wordlessly scale a narrow set of stairs.

The only illumination comes from bare bulbs in porcelain sockets every few feet.

As they reach the top, we see another doorway in the distance. Like the entrance, it's ajar.

Maddie mimes 'shhh' and moves toward the open door. Pausing to see if the coast is clear, she slowly lifts a hand and gently pushes the door open.

The CLACKING of the projectors is near-deafening.

INT. DRIVE-IN, PROJECTION BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The door opens to reveal a large octagonal room with four huge projectors BEAMING LIGHT out into the darkness.

And, at the center of the room sits a metal attache case identical to Gerry's. It lies open, casting a surreal glow across the worn wooden floor.

Jonas pushes past Maddie, surging toward the case.

JONAS

Oh, no! Is it--

Jonas bends to one knee. Maddie slows.

MADDIE

Wait. Don't touch it!

Jonas' eyes wash over it. On the green radar screen, we see two dots - nearly converging.

JONAS

(pointing)

It doesn't look the same.

On another screen inside the case, we can see a text display repeatedly flashing the words:

COMSAT SIGNAL RELAY: CONTINUOUS

Maddie narrows her eyes.

MADDIE

Wait a minute. Relay? Shit. What if we're the fucking relay?

(MORE)

MADDIE (CONT'D)

(beat)

No wonder the signal's been all scrambled! Maybe your dad's been tracking them tracking us! Sending the signal through us! Using his fucking thing as a--

Suddenly, the door behind Maddie BURSTS open - and the clean-cut man in gray surges in, covering her mouth with what appears to be a kerchief soaked in something.

Jonas leaps to his feet.

JONAS

Leave her alone!

The man backs away. Maddie tries to SCREAM, tries to struggle free. Instead, her body goes limp. Chloroform.

Jonas lunges forward. Maddie's bag falls to the ground with a THUD. And her father's pistol tumbles out, spinning across the floor and landing at Jonas' feet.

Jonas looks to the gun, then back to the man in the doorway - who steps backward, dragging Maddie with him.

All instinct, Jonas scoops up the gun - brandishing it wildly. The man slows.

CLEAN-CUT MAN

We should have killed you and your father ages ago.

He takes a half step backward, still lugging Maddie's limp body. Maddie's boots SQUEAK across the floor.

JONAS

Let her go!

CLEAN-CUT MAN

What's the magic word?

Jonas wags the gun side-to-side.

JONAS

Who are you people? What do you want?!

Perhaps noticing that Jonas' finger is nowhere near the trigger, the clean-cut man smiles.

CLEAN-CUT MAN

Why... world peace, of course.

And, with that, he spins and rushes out the door - rumbling swiftly down the stairs, taking Maddie with him.

JONAS
Shit. Shit. Shit!

Jonas tightens his grip on the gun (looking like a total amateur) and jolts forward, running for the door.

INT. DRIVE-IN, PROJECTION BOOTH STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

In a frenzy, Jonas runs down the stairs - aiming the gun to the ceiling like someone on TV.

Down below, the door to the outside SLAMS shut. Jonas skids to a stop, his chest heaving over the CLATTER of the projectors.

He takes the last few steps down to the landing slowly, closing his eyes, and pressing his ear to the door. Nothing. Just the DIN of the projectors, above.

Taking a couple quick breaths, he reaches down, grabs the doorknob with his free hand, and throws open the door.

No one's there. Just the same long line of IMPATIENT KIDS waiting to get to the concession counter.

Forgetting that he's holding a gun in his hand, Jonas stutter-steps forward - his eyes frantically scanning every parked car, every passing couple.

Then, he sees them - the man in the gray suit is dragging Maddie toward the white sedan. It's parked right at the foot of one of the towering movie screens.

Ducking down, Jonas sprints for the nearest parked car. And then he runs, crouched, as fast as he can - zigzagging his way from bumper-to-bumper.

Oddly, no one seems to notice that he's armed - until a tipsy redhead stumbles by and SCREAMS!

JONAS
Shhh. Shhh. Shhh! It's okay. It's--

The woman runs for the concession stand. Jonas looks up - just in time to see the man in gray toss Maddie's limp body into the driver's side rear door of the sedan.

The front passenger side door opens and Hughes steps out, brandishing a silenced pistol.

The man in gray slams the door shut after Maddie, and makes a move for the driver's side front door.

Jonas stands, raising his gun.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Stop! Let her go!

Hughes, his face betraying no emotion, levels his pistol directly at Jonas. KA-CHINK! KA-CHINK!

Two silenced shots WHISTLE by - one taking out the side mirror right at Jonas's hip. He leaps behind the next car over as the DRIVER inside the first car shouts:

DRIVER
HEY!

KA-CHINK! A third shot kicks up a cloud of dust right behind Jonas as he crawls on his hands and knees around the far side of the car.

With his back to the fender, Jonas sits GASPING - clutching the gun to his chest.

Up ahead, a door SLAMS and the white sedan starts. As the car PEELS OUT, Jonas leaps up again - holding the gun with both hands.

Behind him, Matthew Broderick and Alley Sheedy flee the beam of a helicopter's spotlight.

Jonas runs toward the departing sedan, trying to pull the trigger. But nothing happens. The safety's still on.

Click. Click. Click. Nothing. She's gone.

The driver in the car with the missing mirror leaps out his door - and then, at the sight of Jonas holding the pistol, ducks back in.

Jonas starts sprinting back toward Maddie's car.

JONAS
No. No. NO!

BANG! He runs headlong into Gerry.

GERRY
(eyes on the gun)
What are you doing?! I told you...

JONAS
They have Maddie!

GERRY
What?!

JONAS
Come ON!

He grabs Gerry by his shirt - dragging him with him toward the concession stand.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. DRIVE-IN, PROJECTION BOOTH - NIGHT

Gerry and Jonas stand staring at the open attache case on the floor in the middle of the room.

GERRY
(to himself, gravely)
A relay.

JONAS
What does it mean?

Gerry bends to one knee, looking like a man defeated.

GERRY
Of course.

JONAS
What does it mean?!

GERRY
The signal... the code... it's
already been sent...

JONAS
I don't understand!

Gerry runs his hands through his unkempt beard.

GERRY
...by us. By me.

Gerry slowly stands.

GERRY (CONT'D)
(resigned)
It's over.

Jonas STAMMERS. Lost and confused, he can't find the words.

GERRY (CONT'D)
It's too late.

JONAS
Please, Dad. Maddie. They have
Maddie!

GERRY
(distantly)
A lone man, acting alone...

His eyes drift to the device at his feet.

GERRY (CONT'D)
It's done, Jonas. I failed. We
failed.

JONAS
There has to be a way!

Gerry looks away - his eyes empty.

GERRY
They've already uploaded the
data... my data... via my device.
With my signature. My location. Me.

He kicks the device at his feet.

GERRY (CONT'D)
The self-destruct sequence will run
automatically - destroying the
vehicle and the satellite.

JONAS
We have to GO!

Jonas reaches out and grabs his father by the shoulders,
pulling him with him toward the door.

Gerry's eyes drift back to the gun still in Jonas' hand.

GERRY
Oh, Jonas... I'm so sorry.

JONAS
(ferociously)
Save it!

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - NIGHT

With Jonas at the wheel, the car zooms away from the drive-
in. Gerry is in the back - staring into his open case.

GERRY
 (distantly)
 They were just trying to lure me
 here. So that I would take the
 blame. The fall.

JONAS
 Where are they?! Where are they
 taking her?!

GERRY
 I have no idea.

JONAS
Dad!

Gerry slowly closes the case.

JONAS (CONT'D)
 There's gotta be something you can
 do!

His eyes darting back-and-forth to the road ahead, Jonas
 dumps the contents of Maddie's shoulder bag out onto the
 empty passenger seat.

His free hand rummages desperately through Maddie's
 cigarettes, her wallet, and the same pint of cheap vodka
 from earlier as if looking for a clue - something to use.

GERRY
 This is all my fault.

Jonas pulls out a dogeared paperback copy of Ray Bradbury's
 "Fahrenheit 451".

JONAS
 No, Dad. It's my fault. We gotta
 call the cops! Tell NASA. Give up.
 Turn you in!

With one hand, Jonas cracks the book open looking like he's
 about to cry. Every page is covered in hand-written notes.
 Maddie's notes. The notes of an unexpectedly avid reader.

JONAS (CONT'D)
 Dammit, Dad. We need to DO
 something! Anything!

Through the windows, the high school from earlier bleeds by.

GERRY
 Wait a minute. Stop.

JONAS
What?!

GERRY
Stop!

Gerry points toward the school.

GERRY (CONT'D)
There! The school.

Jonas SQUEALS a hard right - up and into the empty parking lot.

GERRY (CONT'D)
If I can hack back in, I might be able to upload an updated protocol.

Jonas slams on the brakes. Gerry's eyes flare.

GERRY (CONT'D)
It would have to ping the source to confirm!

JONAS
What are you talking about?!

Gerry throws open his door.

GERRY
There's a third device. A fail-safe. If I can get back in, I can find them. Find her. Stop it all.

Gerry steps out, carrying his attache case.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Leave the gun here.

Jonas slowly open his door and steps outside, unarmed.

EXT. LOMPOC HIGH, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Moving swiftly and silently, Gerry crosses the parking lot, headed toward the main entrance. Jonas falls quickly in behind him - slinking from shadow-to-shadow.

JONAS
(hushed)
Why here?

GERRY
Shhh.

Gerry bends past the main entrance and around the corner. Jonas follows.

EXT. LOMPOC HIGH, OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Running along a bank of tall windows, Gerry scans the each room they pass like a man on a mission.

Pausing, he leans closer to the glass, peering inside. Then, nodding to himself, Gerry lifts the attache case and uses it to smash in a windowpane.

CRASH! Glass goes flying.

Jonas freezes, stunned. Barely hesitating, Gerry reaches his free hand in and unlatches the window - tilting it open.

GERRY
(barely audible)
Here.

Gerry bends his knee toward Jonas.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Up.

Jonas nods, stepping onto his father's knee and pulling himself over the sill and into the room.

Then, turning back around, Jonas pushes the window wider and reaches a hand down toward his father.

Gerry waves him off - handing Jonas the case instead and pulling himself up and in all on his own.

So far, no alarms. No sign of anyone at all.

INT. LOMPOC HIGH, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Gerry spins around, spying an old steel desk littered with papers - and a hulking desktop computer connected to the plastic phone cradle of a massive dial-up modem.

GERRY
Perfect.

Gerry sprints over toward the desk, running his hands across the keyboard and monitor - looking for the power switch.

Jonas stands by the window, still holding the attache case.

JONAS
Wait a minute. Hold on.

Gerry finds the switch, flicking it on. The screen FLASHES to life.

JONAS (CONT'D)
If those guys aren't KGB... if they're...

Gerry starts opening and closing every drawer on the desk.

GERRY
(distractedly)
...NRO.

JONAS
If they work for the fucking government...

GERRY
Language.

JONAS
...why would they take Maddie? Why would they shoot at me?!

Gerry slides out a metal tray above the drawer below the modem - revealing a single taped-down sheet of paper.

GERRY
I told you, these are bad people.

Gerry runs a hand over the sheet of paper. On it are scribbled a series of words in pencil.

All but one word is crossed out: PASSWORD

Gerry swivels quickly back to the keyboard, typing.

GERRY (CONT'D)
(quickly)
They're so-called patriots. Think they're doing the people's business. Destroying their own satellites to keep a level playing field.

The screen before Gerry is a flurry of flashing type. Jonas slowly crosses the room carrying the attache case - like a moth drawn to the flame.

GERRY (CONT'D)
With the Soviets.

JONAS
But that doesn't make any sense.

Gerry pauses, turning back around toward Jonas.

GERRY
 (impatiently)
 Any technological imbalance between
 the US and the USSR could trigger
 all-out thermonuclear war. And our
 satellites - NROs satellites - are
 miles and miles ahead of the
 Soviets'.

Gerry wheels back around to the screen, typing.

On the monitor before him we see:

MONITOR: GOLDSTONE DEEP SPACE NETWORK.
 LOG IN PLEASE.

GERRY: INQUISITOR

GERRY (CONT'D)
 Leaps and bounds ahead.

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED BY SYSTEM.
 YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 The Soviets will never catch up
 without... help.

The computer screen goes blank. He starts typing again.
 Again we see:

MONITOR: GOLDSTONE DEEP SPACE NETWORK.
 LOG IN PLEASE.

GERRY: SPECTATOR

MONITOR: IDENTIFICATION NOT RECOGNIZED BY SYSTEM.
 YOU HAVE BEEN DISCONNECTED.

The screen goes blank again.

JONAS
 (leaning closer)
 It's not working.

GERRY
 They've overridden all of my
 credentials. Of course.

Gerry hits a few more keys and the modem BINGS and BONGS
 again. The screen fills again with code.

JONAS
What now? What now?

GERRY
There is a different way.

MONITOR: GOLDSTONE DEEP SPACE NETWORK.
LOG IN PLEASE.

Gerry pauses, fingers hovering. He looks briefly over his shoulder - at Jonas.

GERRY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about your *Omi* and *Opi*.

Jonas narrows his eyes. Gerry's fingers still hover.

GERRY (CONT'D)
I made them leave. Break ties.

Jonas STAMMERS.

GERRY (CONT'D)
For my mother's sake. She loved you
so much. Her heart was broken when
Carol took you away.

JONAS
Now? We have to talk about this
now?!

Without another word, Gerry turns back to the keyboard and slowly types one word:

GERRY: JONAS

Suddenly, the screen comes alive again with a cascade of barely discernible commands and data. They're back in.

Jonas stares at the screen - not even noticing that he's setting the attache case down on the desk.

GERRY
(tenderly)
You were always my purpose. My
future. My light. When I lost
you...

Leaning closer to the screen, Gerry starts banging out code.

GERRY (CONT'D)
...I lost everything.

Jonas takes a few steps back - letting his eyes slide to the windows. Gerry looks to him, as if trying to read his emotions.

GERRY (CONT'D)
For what it's worth.

Jonas is a turbulent sea below the surface.

JONAS
(haltingly)
But why... why couldn't you just...
come back... like a normal person?

Gerry hits the RETURN key - wheeling back around.

GERRY
You're right to be angry. You have
every right to hate me.

JONAS
I don't... I don't hate you.

GERRY
I do.

Gerry swivels again toward Jonas - pointing at the case.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Open it.

Jonas fumbles with the case - popping it open and spinning it toward his father.

GERRY (CONT'D)
You need to know. Leaving you was
the biggest mistake of my life.

BING! The oscilloscope FLICKERS to life.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Without you...

WHOOSH! The radar arm WIPES across the darkened screen.

GERRY (CONT'D)
...everything I should have been
vanished.

BLINK! BLINK! BLINK! Three green dots appear on the radar screen - all three devices.

Jonas grins like his dad's a frigging genius. Gerry's face falls.

GERRY (CONT'D)
No, no. That can't...

He leans closer to the screen. BLIP! The third dot is further off - seemingly to the west.

GERRY (CONT'D)
That can't be right. That's directly inside the debris field. On the base.

Gerry sits back from the screen - eying the office they're in like it's a cage, a trap, a prison.

JONAS
Is that where Maddie is? Is that where they have--

Gerry cuts him off, SLAMMING the case closed and hitting the power button on the computer.

Without the glow of all three screens, the room feels cavernous. Oppressive.

GERRY
Time to go.

CUT TO:

INT. MISSILE SILO - NIGHT

Slumped in a chair at the center of a vast, bunker-like concrete silo, Maddie struggles to keep her head upright as the man in gray ties her down.

MADDIE
(sounding drunk)
Dude, you missed a spot.

The man in gray cinches the rope tighter around Maddie's torso - just like she did to Gerry earlier.

In the distance, Hughes sets the third case down on a nearby table and opens it - shouting to someone far off in the shadows:

HUGHES
Hurry. We only have minutes.

The figure in the shadows tosses Hughes something. He catches it awkwardly.

HUGHES (CONT'D)
And the access code?

The unseen figure - a woman by the sound of it - answers back:

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN
(heavy Russian accent)
827-4691.

HUGHES
Excellent.

Hughes clips what appears to be a small surveillance camera to the top of the open case - not bothering to notice that the radar screen inside the case now shows three blips.

He runs a cable from the camera to a port on the device inside the case and wheels back around.

MADDIE
(slurring to the shadows)
So, you must be the chick who was
supposed to take care of us.

The MYSTERIOUS WOMAN (30s) steps out of the darkness.

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN
(still heavily accented)
They may never find my body, but
they will find your fingerprints.
(menacingly)
And his. Especially his.

The man in gray pulls Maddie's arms behind her back.

MADDIE
(slurring)
Fuckin' Natasha Badinof over here.
Thought you were supposed to be
some sort of reporter.

The mysterious woman pauses, grinning coolly.

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN
(in flawless English)
Let me run that up the flagpole
with my editor at The Times.

Hughes is busy aligning the camera toward her.

HUGHES
Enough.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

(slurring)

Ah, I get it. The old switcheroo.
Make buddy boy think it's not the
fuckin' KGB when it is all along.
Blame it on the American spooks.
The so-called good guys.

The man in gray gives the rope around her wrists a firm tug.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Ow, man! Chill.

(beat)

Listen, I don't care what you're
into - whose ax you're trying to
grind. Who you're trying to fuck
over. Just lemme go. I swear I
won't tell a soul.

Behind her, Hughes steps away from the camera and the case.

HUGHES

Gag her. Wheels-up in five.

CUT TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - NEARING MIDNIGHT

Jonas is back at the wheel - driving like a maniac. White
knuckles.

Gerry is in the passenger seat up front, balancing the case
(open again) on his lap.

JONAS

What do you mean, kept an eye on
me?! How?

GERRY

Left here. Left here. LEFT!

Gerry braces as the car SQUEALS through a hard left and
bounces over a pair of railroad tracks.

Not another car is in sight.

GERRY

From a distance. I just wanted to
make sure... be certain you were
okay. Alright.

JONAS

Like a spy?!

Jonas presses the accelerator. Gerry lifts a nervous hand to the dash.

GERRY

Like a father. These people,
there's no telling what they'll do.

His mind racing, Jonas speeds up.

GERRY (CONT'D)

There were so many times I wanted
to see if you'd recognize me.
Notice me. See me.

(switching gears)

As soon as we find her, as soon as
she's safe, I need you to leave.
Get as far away as you can as fast
as you can. North.

JONAS

No way. I'm not fucking leaving
you!

GERRY

(still bracing)

Jonas, please. It doesn't suit you.

JONAS

What?

GERRY

Swearing.

The needle on the dash is nearing 70 MPH. As the car blasts toward a desolate four-way stop.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. Right. RIGHT!

Like a sleepwalker awakened, Jonas pulls the wheel hard right - and the car barely misses a leaning telephone pole.

Jonas shakes his head to clear the cobwebs.

GERRY (CONT'D)

(pointing)

There.

Through the windshield, we see a gated checkpoint. The door to the guard booth is open - and a single UNIFORMED MAN is sprawled out on the ground below it, unconscious (or dead).

GERRY (CONT'D)
(to Jonas)
Don't look. Close your eyes.

Jonas doesn't. Instead, he stares at the man on the ground.

Beyond the gate stands a huge man-made berm surrounding a tall rusted steel blast door. The door appears to be open.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Turn off the engine. And the
lights. Coast.

Jonas hits the lights and cuts the engine - coasting away from the guard booth and coming to a stop in the moonlight.

JONAS
(a whisper)
Now what?

Gerry closes the lid of the tracking device and pulls Maddie's pistol off the dash.

GERRY
She has to be in here.

JONAS
How many of them are there?

GERRY
Doesn't matter. They'll be long
gone by now.

JONAS
How do we stop it?

GERRY
I don't... I don't know.

Jonas stares at him blankly.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Just find the girl and go. I'll
take care of the rest. Trust me.

Gerry locks eyes with his son.

GERRY (CONT'D)
You'll have to try.

He opens his door and steps outside - leaving the attache case behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. MISSILE SILO - CONTINUOUS

The two of them run from shadow-to-shadow toward the hulking steel door to the decommissioned silo. Only Gerry is armed.

Up ahead, a faint yellow GLOW emanates through the gap in the blast door.

Slowing, Gerry gestures for Jonas to run for the far side of the door. He reluctantly obliges.

Gerry bends left, and scrambles up the grassy berm next to the door to get a better view.

Gerry gestures with the gun for Jonas to slow down and stay low. He does.

Shielding his eyes to block the light, Gerry tries to peer through the slit. Nothing inside is clearly visible.

He slides back down the berm, crosses the beam of light and gestures for Jonas to follow him. He does.

Then, with one hand, Gerry counts silently down from five. At zero, the two of them run together into the breach.

INT. MISSILE SILO, LOADING BAY - CONTINUOUS

From inside the blast door, we watch as Gerry and Jonas skid to a stop, squinting.

The space itself is vast - all pockmarked concrete, rusted I-beams, severed bundles of cable, and corroded ducting.

Gerry (his eyes adjusting), lowers the gun.

Ahead of him sits Maddie - tied to the chair in the center of the space and lit from above by a pale beam of light.

Her mouth is duct-taped shut. And her eyes are wide.

Behind her sits the open case with the small security camera affixed to it. On the camera, a red light blinks.

Maddie SCREAMS. But the sound is muffled by the tape. Jonas pushes past his father and runs toward Maddie. Gerry grabs him by his collar.

GERRY
(hushed)
Wait.

Suddenly, one of the screens inside the device flickers and fills with a pixelated close-up of Hughes' face.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 (toward the screen)
 HUGHES! It's over!

On-screen, Hughes smiles condescendingly.

HUGHES (O.S.)
 (on-screen)
 Not quite, but close.

Gerry pulls Jonas behind himself protectively - tightening his grip on the pistol.

HUGHES (CONT'D)
 Not until the world knows, once and for all, that you - and you alone - are responsible for all of this.

GERRY
 Show yourselves!

Slowly, Gerry and Jonas push further into the space - toward Maddie (who's still SCREAMING from behind her gag).

HUGHES (O.S.)
 (smiling)
 Come now, surely you must know we're hundreds miles away by now.

Gerry and Jonas continue their wary advance - eyes on the security camera. The light above the lens is still BLINKING red.

HUGHES (CONT'D)
 Speaking of, who brings children to the center of what's certain to be the most deadly domestic nuclear incident in American history?

Gerry slows again.

His eyes fall to a small display next to the screen with Hughes' face on it. Repeatedly scrolling across the display are the words:

SELF-DESTRUCT PROTOCOL CONFIRMED

Gerry looks up gravely - realizing they're far too late.

HUGHES (CONT'D)
 I mean, I know you were a terrible father. But still...
 (grinning maniacally)
 ...this really takes the cake.

JONAS

Why are you doing this?!

Hughes' eyes seem to shift toward Jonas.

HUGHES (O.S.)

Just like your father. A hapless,
naive fool to the bitter end.

Still tied to the chair, Maddie twists and tugs - SCREAMING again though the duct-tape.

HUGHES (CONT'D)

Generational trauma... it's a
bitch.

On-screen, Hughes lifts his watch. And the monitor FLICKERS twice and goes dead. Hughes disappears. All that's left is his disembodied voice echoing over a tiny speaker:

HUGHES (CONT'D)

You have four minutes and forty-
eight seconds.

(beat)

Be seeing you...

The blinking light above the camera lens suddenly goes from red to green. Recording. Collecting evidence.

Jonas surges toward Maddie. Gerry lunges toward the device - yanking the camera from the top of it and smashing it to the ground.

Jonas RIPS the tape off Maddie's mouth. Maddie SCREAMS:

MADDIE

There's a fucking access code!

She wags her head toward the shadows that the mysterious Russian woman emerged from earlier.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

That way! I dunno where it goes.

827... 4691.

(beat)

Jesus, that fucking HURTS!

JONAS

Are you okay?! Did they hurt you?!

He runs his hands down her shoulders to the ropes binding her to the chair.

MADDIE
(still groggy)
No, no! I'm fine. Just, dosed.

Gerry slips the pistol into his belt and starts working with Jonas at the ropes binding Maddie to the chair.

GERRY
I'm so sorry I--

MADDIE
Creepy motherfuckers! And that chick you were trying to pawn us off on.

Gerry pulls back.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
Fucking KGB, dude. 100%!

Jonas gets Maddie's hands free.

GERRY
(urgently)
You need to get out of here. Both of you. Now!

Gerry pulls the pistol back out, quickly checking the clip.

MADDIE
Hey, that's mine!

GERRY
(to Jonas)
Get her to the car! Get as far north as you can! As fast as you can! Do you hear me?

JONAS
No. Wait!

GERRY
We don't have time! If I can get to the pad, I can trigger an abort before--

JONAS
I'm not leaving you!

Gerry turns toward the darkened tunnel in the distance.

GERRY
Jonas, listen...

Holding the gun in one hand, Gerry spins back around and grabs his son by both shoulders.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 Your Opi. He had a saying.
 (beat)
 If you don't look back, there's no
 running away. Only moving ahead.
 (forcing a smile)
 Thank you for looking back. For not
 giving up on me.

Gerry pulls away, turning to run.

GERRY (CONT'D)
 (loud)
 Now, go! Run! I'll find you!

Jonas finally gets Maddie free. She leaps to her feet.

And, without another word, Gerry disappears into the darkened distance. Jonas, his mind reeling, just watches - frozen again to the floor.

Maddie turns to Jonas.

MADDIE
 Grown-ups and and their fucking
 rules.

After a second, she too sprints for the tunnel.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
 C'mon!

Jonas, looking like he can't tell whether to laugh or cry, takes off after her.

INT. MISSILE SILO, TUNNEL COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

With the sound of Gerry's FOOTFALL echoing out ahead of them, Maddie and Jonas run full-bore down a series of corrugated steel tunnels lined with cables and ducts.

Dim lights dangle from above at odd intervals.

JONAS
 (already winded)
 Nice job. With the code.

MADDIE
 (also winded)
 My mind's a steel trap when I'm
 three sheets to the wind.

Jonas nearly trips over a bundle of cables strung across the floor.

JONAS

I found your book. Fahrenheit.

By the sound of it, Gerry is already way far ahead of them.

Maddie leaps through tall circular doorway - the door is unlocked. The keypad beside it blinks: CODE ACCEPTED.

MADDIE

Like I need you too help me with my homework!

Suddenly - from way off down the tunnel - we hear the voice of LAUNCH CONTROL droning over the P.A. system:

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)

This is Launch Control. Standby for power transfer.

Jonas skids to a stop. Maddie picks up the pace.

LAUNCH CONTROL (CONT'D)

T-Minus two minutes and counting.

MADDIE

(over her shoulder)

Jesus, dude. Let's GO!

Jonas, his mind still reeling, picks up the pace.

In the distance, all we can make out is Maddie's silhouette streaking through each beam of light.

Still no sign of Gerry.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

(in the distance)

Oh, man! Shit! Shit! Shit!

INT. MISSILE SILO, TRANSPORT HUB - CONTINUOUS

Maddie spins around inside a vast circular hub at the end of the tunnel. The space is cavernous - and lined with at least eight identical exits.

MADDIE

Which way?! Which way?!

Jonas stumbles into the space behind her. Every syllable ECHOES.

JONAS

Where the heck did he go?

Jonas wheels around - searching for the right tunnel - when the voice of Launch Control BOOMS again:

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)

Goldstone this is Ground Control.

We have all systems go. Repeat, all systems go.

The sound REVERBERATES off of every surface - seemingly coming from each of the possible exits.

MADDIE

That is not good!

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)

T-minus 60 seconds.

Jonas stops dead in front of one of the exits. From it we can barely hear the SLAP, SLAP, SLAP of Gerry's feet.

JONAS

This way! This way!

Without a second thought, he sprints off after the sound. Maddie jolts off after him.

INT. MISSILE SILO, ACCESS STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Leaping out of the tunnel, Jonas enters a rectangular concrete structure housing a rusted steel staircase.

About three flights up, we can hear the BANG, BANG, BANG of Gerry's feet on the stairs.

JONAS

DAD! DAD!

BOOM! A door slams shut from above. Then:

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)

T-minus 30 seconds.

Jonas starts climbing - leaping two stairs at a time. Maddie follows, gasping for air.

EXT. LAUNCHPAD - ON JONAS

Bursting through a heavy steel door, Jonas skids to a stop.

In the distance stands the base of a hulking Titan III rocket. Steam billows amid spotlights. Towering exhaust cones shower SPARKS.

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)
Ten. Nine...

JONAS
DAD!

Gerry, in the distance, skids to a stop - aiming the pistol toward a tall silver tank.

GERRY
No, Jonas! No!

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)
Eight. Seven...

JONAS
Dad!

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)
Six. Five...

EXT. LAUNCHPAD - ON GERRY

Gerry turns away - lifting the pistol. Behind him, Maddie emerges from the doorway behind Jonas.

GERRY
(taking aim)
It's too...

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)
Four...

GERRY
...late.

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)
Three...

Gerry pulls the trigger.

BANG!

LAUNCH CONTROL (CONT'D)
Two...

EXT. LAUNCHPAD - ON JONAS

A single bullet rips from Gerry's gun - streaking through the shower of sparks and striking the silver tank.

JONAS

NO!

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)

One.

BOOM!

A massive EXPLOSION blows the tank to shreds - sending a billowing orange fireball rippling out across the launchpad.

It instantly engulfs Jonas' father in a fiery plume.

And the shock wave knocks Jonas and Maddie backward through the open door behind them and into the concrete stairwell.

INT. MISSILE SILO, ACCESS STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

The door SLAMS shut - blocking the flames. Over the P.A. system an URGENT VOICE booms:

LAUNCH CONTROL (CONT'D)

Pad abort! Mission abort! Repeat!
Mission abort!

In a tangled heap, Maddie and Jonas struggle to get back to their feet as a second deafening EXPLOSION rocks the launchpad, just outside.

LAUNCH CONTROL (O.S.)

Critical systems failure. Repeat.
Pad abort. Pad abort!

His ears bleeding, Jonas stands.

JONAS

Dad?!

He reaches out toward the door and instantly recoils from the heat.

Gerry, the father he never knew, is gone.

JONAS (CONT'D)

DAD!

Maddie, her hair singed and smoldering, pushes herself up off the ground and wraps her arms around Jonas - pulling him away from the door.

MADDIE

No, Jonas. No, it's over.

JONAS
But he was just--

BOOM! A third smaller EXPLOSION rocks the pad, outside.

JONAS (CONT'D)
He was just right there.

Maddie turns Jonas slowly around - locking eyes with him. A single tear runs down his cheek. Again, there are no words.

She pulls him closer - and, together, they limp away from the door and down the stairwell. Toward safety.

SLOW FADE TO:

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - PRE-DAWN

From high above, we see Maddie's car speeding along a desolate stretch of Highway One - headed north as the first hints of sunrise color the sky.

The car makes a slow bend to the left - toward the sea.

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - SAME

Back inside the car, Maddie guns the accelerator. Her eyes dart sideways, toward Jonas in the passenger seat.

They're both covered in soot. And he's sobbing uncontrollably - finally wholly unable or unwilling to hide his emotions. A boy and a man all at the same time.

Maddie reaches a hand over, covering his heaving chest protectively - like a mom at a sudden stop. He looks down at her hand and, still sobbing, wraps his arms around hers.

FADE TO:

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - DAWN

Billowing bright white bands of vapor swirl through tall orange light stanchions and thick bundles cable spanning the desolate Golden Gate Bridge.

On an empty section of walkway, Maddie and Jonas - having cleaned up but only a slightly - stride slowly side-by-side through the mist.

As the fog slowly begins to lift, the two of them slow.

JONAS
(quietly)
Is this it?

Together, they turn toward the railing. It's the spot - the place where Maddie's mom jumped to her death.

Maddie nods silently - a single tear slicing through the grit on her cheeks like a bead of mercury.

Still, not another soul is in sight.

JONAS (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

She nods again - looking unsure.

Finally, a band of blue opens up behind them.

And the two of them stare silently into the abyss for a long moment before:

JONAS (CONT'D)

C'mon. Let's go home. We're in this together.

Jonas reaches up and drapes his arm over Maddie's shoulder.

Surprisingly, she doesn't recoil - and, together, they step away from the railing and walk back across the swiftly brightening bridge.

FADE TO:

I/E. MADDIE'S CAR - DAY

We're back inside Maddie's car as the hills of the central coast recede in the distance. The sky outside is a vibrant, impossibly vivid blue. Just like it was at the Cape.

Maddie is back behind the wheel. Jonas sits right beside her, watching the Pacific streak by.

After a second:

MADDIE

You know, I got an idea.

SILENCE.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Maybe Mitch's dad can help us get that piece of shit car of yours fixed on the cheap.

(beat)

The Brat.

Jonas lifts the back of one hand to his face - rubbing the last bits of soot from his eyes.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

So that I don't have to keep
driving your sorry ass to school
every goddamn day.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - DAY

Suddenly, we're back in front of the same suburban tract house from earlier - the one with the wrecked Subaru Brat out front.

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

Standing on opposite sides of the car, Maddie and Jonas work to untie the ropes binding the tarp to the car's roof.

JONAS

Can't believe your dad...

The lines loosened, Maddie YANKS the tarp off the roof of the car like a magician yanking a tablecloth clear.

MADDIE

...our dad...

Behind them, a tow-truck backs slowly up the driveway toward the smashed front end of the Subaru, BEEPING.

JONAS

...is even letting Mitch within 100
yards of this place.

Mitch (from earlier) leans his head out the driver's side window - with one hand on the steering wheel, backing in.

MADDIE

And he's not even armed!

Jonas grins. *Thank god!*

Behind him, a heavysset man in a blue jumpsuit sporting surf-baked hair and a walrus mustache - MITCH'S DAD - signals for his son to stop.

Mitch puts the truck in park, throws open his door, jumps out of the cab, and lopes over toward the bashed-in hood.

MITCH
 (re: the car)
 Dude, that's fucked up.

Still on opposite sides of the car - but now on the same side in almost every other way - Jonas and Maddie swap a quick, silent smile.

JONAS
 (to Maddie)
 Yeah, what he said.

And with that, we slowly CRANE UP and into the blindingly bright, early-spring sunshine blasting down through the swaying palm trees just overhead.

FADE TO BLACK.

THEN INTO:

ALL SUPERS PRESENTED OVER ARCHIVAL VIDEO FOOTAGE --

SUPER 1: A few months later, on the very same launch pad, another Titan III exploded moments after takeoff.

OVER: Grainy footage of another TITAN ROCKET being blown to bits just after launch, right over Vandenberg.

SUPER 2: Then, on May 3rd, 1986, a Delta rocket was destroyed seconds after launch from Cape Canaveral.

OVER: Shaky footage of a DELTA ROCKET bursting into flames right after launch from the Cape.

SUPER 3: And then, on May 30th, an ESA Ariane rocket blew up over French Guinea - showering the jungle with debris.

OVER: Lo-fi video footage of an ARIANE ROCKET exploding high above the verdant jungles of French Guinea.

SUPER 4: All of them were carrying high-tech surveillance satellites. Thankfully, none were nuclear-powered.

FADE TO:

EXT. SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO - MORNING

Through fog, we see a now gray-haired Hughes leave a tiny mid-century split-level house.

SUPER 5: Even after a clear cause was identified for the Challenger Disaster, a few reporters stayed on the case.

Hughes is wearing sweatpants and a 49rs jersey, not a uniform. Just another suburban schmuck taking out the trash.

SUPER 6: And thanks to them, the Air Force finally tracked Hughes back down again and took him back in.

Hughes hefts a bulging trash bag into his bin and turns - clocking an unmarked sedan across the street.

SUPER 7: Arresting him for desertion. On June 6, 2018.

Two men in Air Force uniforms step out of the car. Hughes slows, not turning back around.

SUPER 8: His current whereabouts are unknown.

FADE OUT.

ROLL END CREDITS --

To the tune of "Kid" by The Pretenders.

THE END