THE
SPECTACULAR
NOW

by

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Based on the novel by Tim Tharp

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OVER BLACK, we hear a teenage voice:

    VOICE (O.S.)
    "Question number two. Describe a challenge, hardship or misfortune you have experienced in your life.

FADE IN:

1  INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM – AFTERNOON

EXTREME CLOSE UP on a single BEAD OF SWEAT. The skin it belongs to is out of focus.

    VOICE (O.S.)
    What have you learned from this and how has it prepared you for the future?"

The lone bead of sweat begins its slow descent.

RACK FOCUS on the bead of sweat to REVEAL the “skin” is actually a beer bottle.

And then we SLOWLY PULL BACK to show who the voice and beer belong to: SUTTER KEELY, 18, boyishly handsome, killer smile. He takes a swig of the beer, staring at a college application on his computer.

As he thinks about the answer, we get a glimpse of Sutter’s room. A small desk. A twin bed. Clothes on the floor. Decorations include a baseball pennant from some minor league team and a framed photo of the Rat Pack.

BACK ON Sutter, staring down the application. An idea comes to him. He starts to type.

    SUTTER (V.O.)
    “Dear... Dean of Admissions... My name is Sutter Keely and up until yesterday I had the best fucking girlfriend in the world.”

2  INT CASSIDY’S HOUSE / BEDROOM – DAY

CASSIDY (18, blonde, small town beautiful) takes off her shirt, revealing her voluptuous body. She’s on top of Sutter, who lies on his back on the floor. Sutter looks up at her, can’t believe how lucky he is.

3  INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM – AFTERNOON

Sutter types.

    SUTTER’S VOICE
    I know I probably shouldn’t say “fuck” right there but I’m sorry, I have to.
INT CASSIDY’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - DAY

Naked, Cassidy grinds on Sutter. Getting into it. Her eyes are closed. She’s in control.

SUTTER’S VOICE
She’s tremendous. High definition. And so damn beautifully fat. Like, in a good way. You know what I mean? Immaculate proportions. I dated Cassidy two months longer than anyone else. It was magic.

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Sutter stops typing. Takes another drink.

SUTTER (V.O.)
Shit. I’m getting ahead of myself. Let’s start at the beginning.

EXT CONVENIENCE STORE / PARKING LOT - MORNING

Sutter pulls into the parking lot of a suburban strip mall off the highway. There’s a vast openness in every direction. The horizon unsettlingly far away.

SUTTER (V.O.)
Like all great stories, mine begins with a breakfast burrito...

Sutter gets out of his car and notices, in front of the store, a YOUNG KID (8), kicking a rock.

SUTTER
Hey little man, you ok?
(no answer)
Shouldn’t you be in school or something?

The Kid shrugs. Sutter nods to him as he walks:

INT CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Sutter goes to the soft drink counter and pours himself a Big Gulp of 7UP. The Kid follows him inside. As the Clerk rings Sutter up, the Kid sheepishly tugs on his shirt.

YOUNG KID
Can I borrow a dollar?

SUTTER
What do you need a dollar for?

YOUNG KID
Three Musketeers.

SUTTER
How bout a tasty breakfast burrito? On me.
YOUNG KID
And a Three Musketeers?

SUTTER
(laughs; to the Clerk)
You heard the man.

EXT CONVENIENCE STORE / PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

Sutter and the Kid exit the store. Sutter has his Big Gulp. Kid has his breakfast. Sutter is about to walk away when he realizes -- this Kid isn’t going anywhere.

SUTTER (V.O.)
I was already late but I couldn’t just leave him by the side of the road.

Sutter motions for the kid to get in. As Sutter heads to the driver’s side door we can't help but notice the flask in his back pocket.

INT. TREE LINED STREET / SUTTER’S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Sutter drives and Walter sits next to him. Barren branches on the tree-lined streets.

SUTTER
Where to my good man?

WALTER
Florida.

SUTTER
(surprised)
Florida?

WALTER
To see my Dad.

This effects Sutter, who turns to look at the Kid.

SUTTER
What’s, uh, what’s he doing there?

WALTER
He was fighting a lot. With my Mom. She made him leave us.

SUTTER
No shit, dude! High five!
(off his confused look)
Same thing happened to me and my sister!

WALTER
Really?

SUTTER
Mm-hmm. I was 8 or 9. Just like you. My Dad was the best...
Sutter takes out a flask, pours some of its contents into his Big Gulp. Takes a sip.

SUTTER
You’re really going, huh?
(off his nod)
Well good for you, kid. I think that’s very brave.
(beat)
Got any money?
(he doesn’t)
Cash? Credit cards...? You know Florida’s pretty far, right? What if you get hungry?
(he shrugs)
Well you’re gonna need food, aren’t you?!

WALTER
I could hunt it.

SUTTER
Ha. That’s true. You could hunt it.
(beat)
You got a gun? Knife? Fishing rod.

Walter starts to realize the obstacles.

SUTTER
Hmm... Not sure you’ve thought this thing through all the way, have ya?

Walter sinks back in his chair, defeated.

SUTTER
Don’t be sad, little man.

But Walter is sad. Sutter’s heart breaks for this kid.

SUTTER
Tell you what. Let me drive you home. And tomorrow, if you still feel like skipping town, you call me. Day or night. We’ll make a run for it, the two of us. What do you say?

Walter thinks about this a beat. Two beats. And then he nods. Good plan. They slap five again. Sutter smiles, feeling magnanimous. Takes another big sip. CUT TO:

EXT WALTER’S HOUSE - LATER

OMITTED
Sutter knocks on the door. No answer. He can hear loud, angry music blaring from inside.

**SUTTER (V.O.)**
So thanks to Walter, I’m late to pick my girlfriend up for school.


**SUTTER**
Shit.

Sutter looks for another way in. Seeing a gutter he boosts himself up towards Cassidy’s 2nd story window.

**SUTTER**
Cass!

The window opens and Cassidy’s head appears.

**CASSIDY**
Sutter?! What are you --

But then he loses his grip, disappearing from the frame.

**SFX: CRASH!**

Sutter lies on the ground, having fallen hard from the tree limbs above. Cassidy comes out in a huff. What the hell? She looks over at the Big Gulp on the ground. Sutter sees what she’s looking at. Shrugs. We hear:

**SUTTER (V.O.)**
I’ll be honest with you. Sure. I enjoy a drink from time to time.
INT SUTTER’S BEDROOM

OMITTED

INT/EXT. HIGH SCHOOL / PARKING LOT - MORNING

Sutter parks his Mitsubishi Lancer. He takes a swig from a flask before walking into school.

SUTTER (V.O.)
It’s like a hobby for me. A pleasant diversion from all the annoying responsibilities that come with being a kid. Things like:

EXT HIGH SCHOOL / TRACK - DAY

The class runs laps around the track. We see Sutter in the middle of the pack running backwards, smiling. Kids crack up at his antics.

SUTTER (V.O.)
Gym class.

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / DINING ROOM - DUSK

Sutter’s family sits at the table. Mom SARA, sister HOLLY, Holly’s husband JOE who is in mid-story. Sutter seizes the opportunity for a quick drink.

SUTTER
Xmas Dinner.

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Back on Sutter, at his desk, as he continues typing:

SUTTER
This essay.

ANGLE ON a framed picture by his bedside, showing Sutter (5) on the shoulders of a HANDSOME MAN, his father. Sutter takes another sip. Continues.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE 1 / BACKYARD - NIGHT

Sutter reveals, from beneath his T-shirt, a keg tap. PARTYGOERS cheer and applaud. Sutter is the man.

SUTTER (V.O.)
People talk about the “dangers” of drinking, how harmful it is... Nobody talks about the good stuff. How much fun it can be. How good it feels.

INT. PARTY HOUSE 1 / KITCHEN - LATER

Sutter does shots with friends, including Cassidy.
Sutter standing on a couch leading the room in a cheer.

Sutter diving into a pool fully clothed. Partygoers follow him in. Over which we hear:

SUTTER (V.O.)
When I’m drinking, it’s like I can see another dimension to the world. Words and ideas I never knew I had come flying out of me. I’m funny, compassionate, in love with everything.

Sutter typing.

SUTTER (V.O.)
And it’s not like I’m some toothless derelict drinking by himself late at night. I’m 18. This is what I’m supposed to be doing.

Sutter takes another swig. Confident now. He continues:

Sutter sits on the couch, rubbing his injuries. Cassidy paces as she reprimands Sutter.

CASSIDY
Do you even remember what we talked about?

SUTTER
(no idea)
Of... course I do.

SUTTER’S VOICE
I had absolutely no idea what she was talking about.

Cassidy’s lips move as she continues but all we hear is:

SUTTER’S VOICE
She’s always saying something or other and I try to listen, honest to God, but I mean... look at her.

CASSIDY
It’s the last time I’m gonna say it.

SUTTER
I...’m with you. 100 percent.

CASSIDY
Promise?
SUTTER
Cross my heart, hope to die.

Cassidy tries to stay mad at Sutter but it’s virtually impossible. He throws her that smile and her resolve crumbles. They quickly undress and start getting into it. Sutter looks up at her. Can’t believe how lucky he is.

SUTTER (V.O.)
What can I say, I’m a romantic. I am in love with the feminine species. It’s a shame you only get to pick one, but since that’s the rule, I was very grateful for the one I had.

EXT CLARKE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL / FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Home of the Plainsmen.

SUTTER (V.O.)
Well the next day, it all went to shit.

ANGLE ON Sutter, who stands by the entrance with his best friend RICKY (18, undersized, uber-awkward looking). Sutter points to a girl. Ricky shakes his head no.

SUTTER
Colleen Marshall?

RICKY
Way too tall. I’d look like her son.

SUTTER
That’s it. I’m tired of your excuses. Tonight’s the night.

RICKY
What night?

SUTTER
The night I get you some action.

INT/EXT. SUBURBAN STRIP / SUTTER’S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Cars zoom by as Sutter and Ricky drive extra slow with the windows down, scoping left and right for something or someone to perk up the evening. It may be “Downtown” but there’s little to do. Ricky pulls out a blaze and lights it. Sutter sips from his Big Gulp.

RICKY
I don’t know about this.

SUTTER
Relax.

From behind the car, headlights flash. Sutter squints through the rearview. See two girls waving excitedly. Sutter smiles.
RICKY
What is it?

SUTTER
Potential.

The girls’ car pulls up alongside him. Driver is BETHANY, the passenger TARA.

TARA
Just the man we’ve been looking for.

SUTTER
Hi Tara. Bethany.

TARA*
Know where we can score some beers?

SUTTER
(smiles, does he ever)
Step into my office ladies.

EXT SUBURBAN STRIP / SIDE STREET - MAGIC HOUR

Sutter pops the trunk, revealing a large cooler filled with booze. The eyes of the girls light up.

TARA
My hero.

SUTTER
Bethany, you know Ricky don’t you?

EXT LAKE SIDE - DUSK

Sutter helps Ricky and Bethany get on a small boat.

SUTTER’S VOICE
It takes me all of 30 seconds to get them alone.

SUTTER
Shit, I left my phone in the car.

RICKY
I have --

SUTTER
(hinting)
No dude, don’t worry about it. You guys go ahead. I’ll run back and get it.
(to Tara)
Tara, come with me.

As the boat floats away Sutter winks at Ricky, who’s now “trapped” on the boat with Bethany. Ricky looks at Bethany and can only shrug. Back with Sutter and Tara:
SUTTER
(pulls phone of his pocket)
Whaddaya know?

TARA
(realizes)
You’re terrible.

SUTTER
They make a cute couple, don’t they?

EXT/INT STREET NEAR LAKE / SUTTER’S CAR – LATER

Sutter and Tara drinking. An old classic on the radio.

TARA
I can’t wait to get out of this place.
Can we put on some something --?

SUTTER
No I like this.

Tara thinks this strange but doesn’t say so. Soon after they hear a CAR careen into the parking lot. Sutter and Tara turn. It’s Cassidy, storming out of the car. Mad.

SUTTER
(upbeat)
Hey Cass --

Sutter goes to give Cass a hug but she pushes him off.

CASSIDY
Kendra said she saw you with Tara.

SUTTER
Uh, yeah, the girls wanted some beers so--

CASSIDY
I asked you to do one thing for me. One. And you still couldn’t do it.

SUTTER
What are you so mad about? What thing?

CASSIDY
I asked you to put someone else’s feelings before your own. For once in your life!

SUTTER
Wait a sec. That is what I’m doing!

CASSIDY
Oh please --

SUTTER
Ask Ricky. I’m just here to --
CASSIDY
You’re the most selfish person I’ve ever met.

SUTTER
Are you hearing me? I’m doing this for Ricky. I’m completely unselfish.

Cassidy sees Tara in the car, beer in hand. Tara looks away, like she knows she was doing something wrong.

CASSIDY
You’re a lost cause, Sutter.

SUTTER
Cass, you gotta believe me --

CASSIDY
We’re done.

SUTTER
Cassidy!

It’s too late. She gets in the car and drives off. Sutter stands there. Buzzed enough to not be upset. Yet.

EXT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

We’re back with Sutter. He looks up from the page. Thinks for a moment, and then continues writing:

SUTTER (V.O.)
A misunderstanding. No big deal. She’d come around, right? Well listen to this. Fucking last night...

INT. SUBURBAN STRIP / SUTTER’S CAR - AGAIN

Sutter drives. He nips from the flask.

EXT. SUBURBAN CUL DE SAC / PARTY HOUSE 2 - NIGHT

INT. PARTY HOUSE 2 - MOMENTS LATER

Sutter wanders through the place looking for Cassidy. The house is huge and expensively decorated. He sees some flowers in a vase in the hallway. Takes one out. Continues on his way. Occasional partygoers high-five him as he walks but he’s in no mood to be social right now. And then he sees her. Sitting on the couch, playing with the hair of MARCUS WEST (18, tall, lanky, athletic).

SUTTER
Well this is unexpected.
Cass and Marcus turn. Cassidy is surprised to see him.

CASSIDY
What are you doing here?

Knowing he’s lost her, Sutter hides the flowers behind his back.

SUTTER
You got a haircut.

CASSIDY
Yeah I... seemed like a good time for a change.

SUTTER
Goddamn stunning, that haircut.

MARCUS
Is he drunk or something?

SUTTER
Well if drunk equals A, and something equals B, let’s just say the answer is... definitely not B.

Marcus looks at Sutter with a touch of sympathy.

MARCUS
Look man, I know this is awkward. Maybe we should talk outside--

SUTTER
Marcus West! Speaking to me?! What an honor!

CASSIDY
Oh God, Sutter...

MARCUS
Come on man, let’s go out to my car.

SUTTER
Thank you Excellency, but that won’t be necessary. I am a fair-minded individual who thoroughly understands the meaning of the phrase ‘kicked to the curb.’

Sutter bows, struggling to keep his balance. Backs away.

SUTTER
I bid you both a pleasant evening.

Marcus wants to stop Sutter from leaving but Cassidy puts her arm out.

CASSIDY
Let him go. He drives better that way.
SUTTER
(still backing away)
Thanks for the vote of confidence,
beautiful! You are the most understanding
woman... in everything but love.
Arrivederci!

Sutter turns with a flourish and stumbles away.

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM – AFTERNOON

Sutter finishes the essay in a flurry.

SUTTER (V.O.)
Unbelievable, isn’t it? You want
hardship, misfortune, well there you go.

JUMP CUTS:
- Sutter getting dressed for the evening.
- Sutter drinking some more.

SUTTER (V.O.)
A lesser man might get depressed about
it. Sit in his room, have a good cry. Not
Sutter Keely. Don’t count me out just
yet, Dean of Admissions. It’s another
day, and the night is just getting
started. So forget Cassidy, forget exams,
forget these pointless college
applications. Fuck the past, fuck the
future... all that matters is the here
and now.

- Sutter looking at himself in the mirror, psyching
himself up for the night ahead.

SUTTER (V.O.)
I’m Sutter Keely and I say... it’s time
to be alive.

Music up: Sutter’s laid back “go-to” music.

INT. DOWNTOWN STREET / SUTTER’S CAR – NIGHT

Which continues over Sutter driving, two hands on the
wheel. But it’s just not right for the mood he’s in. He
changes the station. Once. Twice. Until eventually he
finds something loud, propulsive, perfect. He starts
drumming a bit to the loud music. Psyching himself up.

EXT DOWNTOWN / BAR 1 – LATER

Sutter gets turned away by a BOUNCER. Pretends it doesn’t
bother him.
Sutter ambles along down the promenade. Takes a nip at his flask. All around him, YOUNG COUPLES stroll past. He tips his imaginary hat at a BUSKER playing acoustic guitar on the street.

Sutter turned away from another bar. Now getting frustrated. Sees a sign for a bar across the way and the best part -- no bouncer.

Sutter spots a table full of COLLEGE GIRLS at the crowded bar. Decides to approach.

Ladies... I’m 18 years old and I just got dumped by my girlfriend. Will someone, anyone, please have a drink with me?

A beat. The Girls are delighted to meet him!

- Sutter and the Girls do a round of shots. Then another. They love this kid.
- Sutter dances between two of the Girls. They play with his hair, pinch his cheeks. Innocent fun.

Sutter and the Girls are leaving. We quickly realize they’re not leaving together. As they walk away Sutter yells after them.

I love you!

The Girls look back and laugh -- he’s so cute.

I love everyone!

But the Girls keep walking.

Cruising – windows down, wind in his face, radio on. Drunk and feeling much better now.

You are holy! You are beautiful! Down with the king! Down with the motherfucking--

SMASHCUT TO BLACK.
EXT. SUBURBAN STREET / FRONT LAWN - MORNING

FEMALE VOICE
Um... hello...

A face.
Or, at least, a head. Female. Completely in shadow from the bright morning sun and thus impossible to make out.

Sutter, who has clearly spent the night passed out on the ground, looks up, disoriented. Puts his hand up to see who it is.

And we see her. Sutter’s age but looking younger. Pale with freckles and glasses. Her hair is strawberry blonde and her eyes the color of a public swimming pool. Her name is AIMEE FINECKY.

AIMEE
You’re alive.

When she talks it’s like she just discovered her voice.

AIMEE
I thought maybe you were dead.

Sutter blinks a few times.

SUTTER
I don’t think I’m dead... Where the hell am I?

AIMEE
You’re in the middle of a yard. Do you know who lives here?

SUTTER SITS UP. LOOKS AT THE UGLY PINK LITTLE HOUSE.

SUTTER
Jesus, I must have gone to sleep. Hey, where’s my car?

AIMEE
Is it one of those?

Sutter looks at the nearby parked cars. None of them his.

AIMEE
You don’t live in this neighborhood. Do you, Sutter?

SUTTER
You know my name?
AIMEE
We go to the same school... You wouldn’t remember me.

SUTTER
No... of course I do. You’re um...

AIMEE
Aimee. Aimee Finecky.

SUTTER
Right. Aimee. I was about to say that. (standing)
What time is it, Aimee?

AIMEE
6am.

SUTTER
Are you coming back from a party or something?

AIMEE
I’m on my paper route.

She motions to the white pickup truck that’s pulled over. We see the back is filled with papers.

AIMEE
It’s really my mom’s paper route but she went to the casino last night with my step-dad. She hasn’t come back yet.

SUTTER
You need some help?

AIMEE
I can manage.

SUTTER
No I’ll help you.

AIMEE
You don’t have to --

SUTTER
Aimee, you’re driving round the neighborhood, I gotta find my car. I’m thinking we can help each other out. Whaddaya say?

Off her look:

36

INT SUBURBAN STREET / AIMEE’S TRUCK – MOMENTS LATER

Aimee drives and Sutter throws papers while looking for his car. After throwing some, we can tell Sutter isn’t nailing this. Aimee shyly suggests:
AIMEE
Try aiming ahead of the driveway.

Sutter absorbs that. Tries it. He’s impressed with the results. Aimee smiles at him. CUT TO:

LATER. Aimee and Sutter continue throwing.
SUTTER
I didn’t realize newspaper throwing was such big business. You must reel in some cash.

AIMEE
My mom does.

SUTTER
And you get nothing?!

AIMEE
I get an allowance.

SUTTER
An allowance? That doesn’t sound fair. I mean, you do all the work.

AIMEE
Well yeah but... she pays the bills... most of them.

SUTTER
Most of them?! Aimee, she’s your mom!

(off her shrug)
Aw man, I don’t know. Sounds to me like a pretty raw deal, this paper route. If I were you, I’d say something.

A sad smile comes over her face. Standing up for herself is the last thing Aimee ever does. Sutter feels bad for her, decides to change the subject. Throwing more papers:

SUTTER
I’m getting the hang of it, aren’t I?

AIMEE
You’re a natural.

SUTTER
You should have seen me back in Little League. I had this booming arm. Watch this.

(throws right on target)
Look at that! Are you impressed? I had the gift, Aimee. That’s what my Dad used to say. Probably could have gone pro if I stuck with it.

AIMEE
So what happened?

SUTTER
Hmm?

AIMEE
Why didn’t you stick with it?
SUTTER

(beat)
Wait... I think I see something...

CUT TO:

36A   EXT SUBURBAN STREET / LAWN - MOMENTS LATER   36A
Aimee and Sutter stand over Sutter’s Mitsubishi which is parked in the middle of a lawn.

AIMEE
What’s it doing on the lawn?

SUTTER
That is a very good question.

Aimee laughs.

AIMEE
Well... thanks again. For helping me.

SUTTER
(motioning to all the papers)
Whaddaya mean? We’re not done yet!

AIMEE
Oh you don’t have to --

SUTTER
Hey it’s the least I can do. Besides, I’m enjoying myself.

The light flips back on in her eyes. A beat.

AIMEE
Should you move your car first?

SUTTER
Yes. Good idea.

Sutter jumps out to move his car. Aimee waits. Smiles.

INT SUBURBAN STREET / AIMEE’S TRUCK - LATER

Now they’re having fun delivering the papers. Aimee launches another that lands right on the doorstep.

SUTTER
(explosion sound effect)
Direct hit!

They share a laugh. It’s nice.

SUTTER
We make a good team.

AIMEE
You think so?

Sutter catches the look on Aimee’s face. She’s beaming.

SUTTER
You know what, Aimee Finecky? I had a pretty rotten night last night until you came along. We should get lunch sometime.
AIMEE
How bout Monday?
SUTTER
Oh...k Monday it is. We can relive our greatest triumphs of newspaper delivery!

Aimee smiles at him. It’s nerdy but endearing. Sutter feels great about this.

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / KITCHEN – LATER THAT MORNING

A modest house. In the kitchen Sutter finds his mother, SARA (40s, faded beauty) already up and dressed in her work clothes. She moves in and out of the room as she readies for the long day, barely looking at her son.

SARA
You’re up early.

SUTTER
I uh...

SARA
(not listening)
They have me on a double shift... again.

Sutter heads up to his room.

SARA
Dammit Sutter.

Sutter stops in his tracks. Uh-oh. Sara comes out of the utility room holding her uniform.

SARA
Didn’t I ask you to hang this for me? Look how wrinkled this is?

That’s what she’s mad about?

SARA
It would have taken you two seconds to hang this up and help me. Is that too much to ask?

SUTTER
I’m sorry, I just --

SARA
It’s not like I ask you to do so much around here. Christ. (shakes head; almost to herself) Sometimes you act just like your father.

Sutter’s face suggests that’s alright with him. Like a tornado, Sara passes through one last time.

SARA
I may not be back in time for dinner. There’s leftovers in the fridge. Or if you want, call your sister --
Sutter clearly hates that idea. Starts to walk off.

SARA
Sutter.
   (he turns)
Next time I ask you do to something...

Sara doesn’t finish. She just shakes her head. And with that she’s out the door.

SUTTER
   (to no one)
I love you too.

INT SUTTER’S BEDROOM – LATER THAT MORNING

Sutter lays in his bed, looking up at the baseball pennant. Thinking. Music plays softly in the background. He still hasn’t slept.

EXT CONVENIENCE STORE – THE NEXT MORNING

Ricky and Sutter emerge. Big Gulp in hand, Sutter is back to his relaxed self.

RICKY
...who knew dinner and a movie would cost 30 bucks?

SUTTER
Pretty much anyone who’s ever been on a date.

RICKY
Oh but the best part is... she didn’t even care, dude! She paid for the popcorn and everything. She’s just... mmm.

SUTTER
You kiss her?

RICKY
Check.

SUTTER
Tongue action?

RICKY
Double check.

The boys high five. Sutter looks at Ricky and smiles. Likes seeing him happy. Knows he had a hand in it.

SUTTER
Where to for lunch today?

RICKY
Aren’t you eating with what’s her name?
SUTTER
Shit. That’s right.

RICKY
I gotta tell ya Sutter. Aimee Finecky? Strange choice for a rebound.

SUTTER
She’s not a rebound.
   (off his look)
   She’s not!
   (another look)
I have no interest in dating Aimee Finecky. I think she’s nice, is all. Maybe too nice. Listen to this. Her mom has her throwing newspapers at 5am, 6 days a week, schooldays and all. Mom keeps all the money, pays half the bills, and Aimee never says a word about it!

RICKY
That sucks.

SUTTER
It’s bullshit’s what it is.

RICKY
So where do you come in?

SUTTER
I can help her.

RICKY
Oh, here we go. Sutter to the rescue.

SUTTER
She just needs a little confidence is all. Who better than me to bring it out of her?

RICKY
So... you don’t want to nail her?

SUTTER
Dude, what is wrong with you?

INT HIGH SCHOOL / MR ASTER’S CLASSROOM - DAY

MR. ASTER (50s, beard) solves a geometry problem on the chalkboard. The bell rings and students begin to leave.

MR. ASTER
Sutter, a word?

SUTTER
Uh... actually I have to --

MR. ASTER
Have a seat, Mr. Keely.
Sutter really doesn’t want to have a seat but there’s not much he can do about it.

MR. ASTER
Noticed you didn’t turn in the homework.

SUTTER
(suddenly animated)
And I have a really good reason why, Mr. Aster. You’re not even gonna believe --

MR. ASTER
Stop talking.

SUTTER
Yes sir.

MR. ASTER
Sutter, I only want to see you succeed. You know that, don’t you?

SUTTER
Sure I do.

MR. ASTER
And if you fail... that means I fail.

SUTTER
I know, Mr. Aster. And believe me, I will get it together. From here on in.

MR. ASTER
I wanna believe you.

SUTTER
(standing)
Well you should. I’m turning a corner, I —

MR. ASTER
Let’s see you answer this.

SUTTER
Sorry?

MR. ASTER
(handing him a sheet)
If one of the acute angles is 2 times as large as the other, what’s the measure of the two angles?
(no idea)
Siddown, I’ll show you.

Sutter is a deer in headlights.

INT HIGH SCHOOL / HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sutter emerges from Aster’s class, super late to meet Aimee. He races through the hallway on his way to:
INT HIGH SCHOOL / LUNCHROOM - DAY

Sutter enters, looking all around for her. Just as he thinks he’s missed her, there she is. Standing alone by the lunch line. Waiting.

SUTTER
I’m so sorry --

AIMEE
You came!

SUTTER
Well of course I did. Why wouldn’t I?

Sutter takes in the scene (only the lamest of the lame eat in the lunchroom).

SUTTER
You actually eat here?

AIMEE
Isn’t that what it’s for?

SUTTER
Well yeah but nobody ever... I mean, I’ve never...
(not wanting to insult)
What’s good, I’m starving?

INT LUNCHROOM - LATER

Sutter and Aimee at the table.

AIMEE
That’s crazy! How fast were you going?

SUTTER
20, 25 miles per hour.

AIMEE
And you just jumped out of the car?

Aimee is hanging on every word.

SUTTER
There was snow on the ground. I didn’t think it would hurt.

AIMEE
That’s amazing.

SUTTER
Look at you, you’re such a great listener. Ok, now you go.

AIMEE
Um... well, I remember... sophomore year. When you wore that mascot head to gym class and wouldn’t take it off...
SUTTER
Oh yeah.

AIMEE
That was so funny.

SUTTER
Yeah, no, I mean, stories about you.

AIMEE
I don’t have any stories.

SUTTER
Of course you do. Everyone does.

AIMEE
Not me.

SUTTER
Come on. What’s your thing?

AIMEE
My thing?

SUTTER
Yeah, like... what do you love? What do you want to be known for? Larry Rourke’s the stoner. Greg Jacoby’s the rich kid. We all have a thing.

AIMEE
(beat; thinks)
I’d like to think there’s more to people than just one thing. You know?

Sutter smiles, impressed. At which point, Aimee’s equally awkward friend KRISTAL approaches.

KRISTAL
He finally got here, did he?

AIMEE
Hi Krystal.

SUTTER
(standing like a gentleman)
Krystal, hey, Sutter Keely.

KRISTAL
I know who you are. Come on Aimee. French Club. They’re waiting for us.

Aimee clearly wants to stay but standing up to people isn’t her thing.

AIMEE
I forgot about French Club. I’m sorry.
No worries.
(an idea)
Hey Aimee, you ever have Aster for geometry?

Freshmen year.

Probably thought it was easy, huh?

Kind of.

Could you tutor me? I never know what that guy’s talking about.

Uh, sure, anytime.

Aimee writes down her number and hands it to him. Krystal doesn’t like this development one bit.

Thanks. I’ll call you.

Aimee nods, gets up to go, unable to hold back a smile. Krystal gives Sutter one last look before walking away. Sutter watches them go. Eats another tater tot.

The store has seen better days. Sutter finishes a sale.

It’s gonna look great on you.

CUSTOMER leaves passing the owner, DAN DEAN (late 30s, kind face) saying goodbye to his WIFE and CHILD at the door. Sutter watches them go. Once they’re gone:

Will you please just adopt me already?

Sorry bud, two’s my limit on mouths to feed. So where were we...

Cassidy.

Oh right. That’s a shame. I liked her.

When Dan is turned around, Sutter pours some whiskey into his soda can. Careful not to let Dan see this.
SUTTER
So did I.

DAN*
I kinda thought she’d be the one to yank you out of neutral.

SUTTER
Neutral? What neutral? I’m in overdrive.
(off his look)
What?

EXT. AIMEE’S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR – AFTERNOON

A small brick cube surrounded by a bare yard. Some shingles are missing from the roof and the original paint color has faded away. Sutter knocks.

CHILD’S VOICE FROM INSIDE
Aimee, your boyfriend’s here.

AIMEE’S VOICE (V.O.)
Shut up Shane.

The door opens. Aimee has put some effort into her looks this afternoon. Most notably, she’s wearing lipstick. He’d never say so but Sutter would rather she wasn’t.

AIMEE
Hi.

SUTTER
Hey there.

AIMEE
Come in.

Sutter follows Aimee inside.

INT. AIMEE’S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

We take in the total mess that is Aimee’s living situation. Clothes piled up, opened containers covering the tiny coffee table, VHS tapes scattered on the floor. Aimee’s little brother SHANE (11) plays an ancient video game system wearing shorts and no shirt.

AIMEE
This is Shane, my brother.

SUTTER
Hello Shane.

Shane flips Sutter the two-handed bird.

AIMEE
He just learned that.

SUTTER
Charming.
AIMEE

We can study in my room.

SUTTER

Lead the way.

Sutter follows Aimee down the narrow hallway. Notices more mess, some tacky wall hangings. Sutter catches a glimpse of Aimee’s step-dad RANDY, taking a nap in one room (dressed exactly like Shane). Finally they get to Aimee’s bedroom.

45B  INT. AIMEE’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS  45B

Sutter is expecting the worst but when she opens the door, it’s an awesomely neat and colorful place, clearly a sanctuary from the world outside. Sutter is impressed.

SUTTER

Wow, nice.

AIMEE

I like to keep it clean.

Sutter walks around the room, admiring. The back wall is a giant map of the Milky Way. There’s some pencil drawings and ceramic cats scattered about. On one wall is a massive bookshelf covered in notebooks and paperbacks.

SUTTER

You must really love reading.

AIMEE

They’re mostly science fiction. A few mysteries.


AIMEE

(apologetically)

I know it’s weird.

SUTTER

No that’s cool. Weird is good. I say “embrace the weird.” Why’s it backwards?

AIMEE

That’s how you read them. See?

She shows Sutter how it works. He’s impressed. Notices on the wall one of the pencil drawings -- an anime-style scene of a woman flying through space.

SUTTER

Is this you flying through space?

AIMEE

No, it’s, um... it’s nothing. Just this thing I like.
SUTTER
Who is she?

Aimee is embarrassed... but Sutter silently encourages her to answer.

AIMEE
Shirei Migoto. From the Gleaming Planet books. Stupid, I know.

SUTTER
If you like it, it’s not stupid. What makes her so special?

AIMEE
She’s the leader of the Neexo Ark. It’s up to her to escape the Dark Galaxy and find the Gleaming Planet star system.

SUTTER
(looking at another drawing)
I... see...

There’s drawings of the Commander everywhere.

AIMEE
(still shyly)
She’s kind of my hero... and stuff.

Sutter feels exceedingly bad for this girl right now.

SUTTER
You know what? You’ll be my hero if you can straighten me out on this geometry business.

They sit down and get situated. Sutter opens the book.

AIMEE
How much of this have you read?

Sutter looks up. Smiles. He hasn’t read a word of course.

45C
INT. AIMEE’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - LATER

They’ve been at it a while.

AIMEE
So, in this figure, angle 2 and angle 4 are...
(Sutter has no clue)
Complementary angles.

SUTTER
Complementary. Got it. Man, you’re a wonderful teacher, Miss Finecky.

AIMEE
So then, you understand?
SUTTER
Well... here's what I don't understand.
When will I ever need to know this stuff?
I mean, seriously. Vectors? Slopes?
Coplanar lines? Who gives a shit? Who
calculates slopes at their job?

Aimee laughs, can't argue with that. And then:

VOICE (O.S.)
Aimee! Come out here right now, will you!

The craggy voice belongs to Randy. Hearing it saps the
fun vibe of the room almost immediately.

RANDY’S VOICE (O.S.)
I thought you were going to get us some
milk.

AIMEE
I will!

RANDY’S VOICE (O.S.)
Do it now, crissakes. The hell has she
been doing all afternoon?

It's quiet for a beat.

AIMEE
I should really...

Aimee smiles her sad smile, starts putting on her shoes.

SUTTER
Yeah, sure. No problem.

The expression on her face is like her ship just crashed
back to Earth. Sutter feels terrible.

SUTTER
You know what, there's this party on
Saturday. I think you should go with me.

AIMEE
Me?

SUTTER
Yeah you. I'll come by and grab you. What
* do you say?

AIMEE
Um... ok?

SUTTER
Is that an answer or a question?

AIMEE
No, I mean, yeah, yes. I'd like that.
EXT CONVENIENCE STORE / COMIC BOOK STORE - DUSK 46

Sutter comes out of the convenience store with his Big Gulp. On the way to his car, he passes a comic book store. Sutter walks right by before stopping.

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT 47

Sutter finishes mixing a drink and sits down at his desk. We see a stack of Manga books which Sutter bought at the store. He puts his feet up, begins to read in reverse.

INSERT: elegantly drawn images from the books, the occasional caption about dreams, freedom, the future.

Sutter finds himself surprisingly captivated.

We hear the chime of an Instant Message. Sutter looks up from the book to his computer. He’s got a message from “CASSIDY210.” (Her icon is a seductive personal pic). The message just says “Hey.”

Sutter perks up. This is a nice, new development. He writes back... Sutter&7: “Hey.” (His icon: Sinatra). Takes a swig.

Her message: “How are you?” Sutter drinks some more. Writes back: “Fabuloso.” It’s quiet for a few beats. He scratches his head, thinking of the right thing to say.

But then he gets this: “I miss you.” Sutter’s eyes open wide. Writes back: “Will I see you at the party tomorrow?” Her message: “Think so.” Then, as Sutter is writing back, she sends: “Gotta go. Talk soon.” And signs off. Sutter returns his attention to the Manga but his mind is now very much elsewhere.

EXT. LAKE SIDE / PARTY SPOT - AFTERNOON 48 *


SUTTER
Sure you don’t want me to carry that?

Aimee looks at him like “why?” Oh well, he tried. As they walk towards the keg, pretty much everyone they pass says “Hi” to Sutter or slaps him five. He’s the king of these high school parties. At the keg he hands her a cup.

AIMEEE
Um, I don’t... really...

SUTTER
You don’t have to drink it. Just hold. Gives off the illusion you’re having fun.

*
Sutter looks around, spotting Cassidy in a group of partiers by the beach. He shrugs it off, turns back to Aimee.

SUTTER
See anyone you know?

AIMEE
I don’t really know a lot of people.

SUTTER
Well that, my dear, is about to change.

Sutter downs one drink, pours two more. Gestures for her to follow him. They walk over to Cassidy’s group.

SUTTER
Hey gang. Who needs a refill?

Sutter hands one to Cassidy who takes it.

SUTTER
This is Aimee Finecky.

Aimee shyly waves. Awkward nods all around. Sutter gets the impression everyone is waiting for some incident. Well he’s not going to give them one.

SUTTER
Everyone’s so serious tonight. How bout a joke? What do you call a fish with no eye?

(they wait for it)

A fsshh.

It takes a second but eventually Cass starts to laugh. The others join in.

SUTTER
Heard that from an 8 year old running away from home.

Sutter sees Cody standing next to Aimee. Gets an idea.

SUTTER
You’re a reader, aren’t you Cody? You ever read the Gleaming Planet books?

CODY
(cautiously)
One or two.

SUTTER
(to Aimee)
I meant to tell you. I started the first one last night. It’s really cool.

AIMEE
I know, right?!
I like the part where Shirei Migoto takes on the Cosmic Superlord. She fucks that guy up!

I love those books.

(of course he does)

Do you now...

Have you read “Solar Bull?”

Oh my god, I love Solar Bull!

Cody and Aimee start enthusiastically chatting about it. Feeling good about this, Sutter turns to Cassidy.

I don’t believe we’ve met, Sutter Keely.

Sutter extends his hand. After a beat, she shakes it, causing him to smile.

Don’t give me that smile.

I’m sorry. Can’t help myself.

Sutter extends his hand. After a beat, she shakes it, causing him to smile.

They walk back to the keg. Sutter gets another refill. So does Cassidy. He raises his cup to toast her. She hesitates but goes for it. Can’t help but be charmed by him – which is just when Marcus shows up.

Cassidy. Sutter.

Marcus.

I’d better get going Cass. You riding with me?

And she is. She takes his hand.

Good to see you, Sutter.

Off they go. Leaving Sutter alone. He looks back over at Aimee, expecting to still see her chatting with Cody. But she’s not. In Cody’s place is ERIK WOLFF (collar up, smarmy as hell) standing way too close to her too. Sutter doesn’t like this one bit.
SUTTER *(to Aimee)*
You all right?

AIMEE
Yeah, I’m just, you know, not used to drinking.

SUTTER
Let’s go for a walk.

Sutter grabs Aimee and helps her up.

ERIK WOLFF
Hey, man, what the --

SUTTER
Get lost douchebag.

Sutter takes Aimee by the arm. They walk off.
48A  EXT. LAKE SIDE / PARTY SPOT - SAME

OMITTED
Aimee and Sutter walk on a dirt path, far away from the rest of the revelers. He carries her windbreaker.

SUTTER
Hey, I’m sorry about Doyle. He’s a dick. I hope he didn’t --

AIMEE
No, we were just... we were just talking.

SUTTER
Wow. You’re hammered, aren’t you?

Aimee leans up against Sutter. Their shoulders touching. She looks at him and smiles. Sutter isn’t sure what to do so he takes a nip from the flask.

AIMEE
Can I try that?

SUTTER
This? No. This is serious stuff.

AIMEE
Just a taste.

Sutter hesitates but then hands it to her. She takes more than a sip and is immediately coughing and choking.

AIMEE
How can you drink this?

SUTTER
I’ve been at it a while. You know who gave me my first beer?

AIMEE
Who?

SUTTER
My father. I was probably... 6. We used to go to baseball games every Saturday and he would let me take little sips.
AIMEE
Did you get drunk?

SUTTER
Nah. But it sure felt nice and warm...

He smiles at this memory.

AIMEE
Where is he now... your father?

SUTTER
He’s an airline pilot. Flies all over the country.

AIMEE
That’s so cool!

SUTTER
He’s a cool guy. Can’t imagine what he was doing with my mom that whole time.

AIMEE
They’re divorced?

SUTTER
Oh yeah. She threw him out of the house a long time ago. But it’s fine. Believe me, he’s way better off.

Aimee takes another sip. Winces but doesn’t choke.

AIMEE
Sounds like we have the same mother.

SUTTER
How’s that?

AIMEE
Well for example... I got into college today. But there’s no way my mom will let me go.

SUTTER
You got into college today?

AIMEE

SUTTER
That’s, I don’t know what to say, Aim. Congratulations!

AIMEE
It doesn’t matter, though, cause my mom--

SUTTER
What’s your mom have to do with it?
AIMEE
Well she needs me. For the route and stuff. She’s alone all day, no one to help her --

SUTTER
Aimee. Hold on. Your mom will be fine. She’s a grown woman. You are going to Philly.

AIMEE
Yeah but --

SUTTER
No. No buts. Don’t you see? You’re this extraordinary genius but you’ve got all these people making you do stuff. It’s gotta stop.

AIMEE
How?

SUTTER
It’s easy. Stand up for yourself.

AIMEE
I don’t know how.

SUTTER
I’ll teach you. Here... have another swig.

Aimee takes the flask. Drinks another sip.

SUTTER
Now repeat after me. “Mom, get off my motherfucking back!”

AIMEE
What?!

SUTTER
Say it.

AIMEE
No! (beat; quietly)
Get off my back.

SUTTER
Dude, you’ve got to say it like you mean it. And the motherfuck is key. Trust me. “Mom...”

AIMEE
“Mom...”

SUTTER
“Get off my MOTHERFUCKING back, Mom!”
AIMEE
(beat)
“Get off my... fucking... back, Mom!”

SUTTER
Motherfucking.

AIMEE
Motherfucking back! Motherfucker! Aaaah!

SUTTER
Yes!

AIMEE
That sorta feels good.

SUTTER
I told you.

AIMEE
Get off my motherfucking back, mom. Stay out of my motherfucking business, Krystal.

SUTTER
Oh! Krystal got one. Who else?

AIMEE
I think that’s it.

SUTTER
How bout an ex-boyfriend? Fuck you ex-boyfriend!

Aimee clamps up. Sutter notices.

SUTTER
Come on. You can’t be 17 and not have one horrible ex-boyfriend you want to curse out.

(she doesn’t)
Nobody?

AIMEE
It’s not... guys don’t really look at me... like that. You know?

SUTTER
You’re crazy. Didn’t you see Erik Wolff hitting on you? And Cody Dennis?

AIMEE
They weren’t hitting on me.

SUTTER
Of course they were. You’re a sweetheart. I mean, look at you.
Aimee is not at all convinced. To convince her, Sutter takes hold of her chin, tilts it up, and plants a kiss on her. When it’s over:

AIMEE
Whew.

SUTTER
You’re damn right “whew.”

Sutter smiles. Aimee smiles back. So Sutter goes in for another one. Why the hell not? And as they kiss, CUT TO:

INT SUTTER’S BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Sutter’s asleep in his clothes from the night before. Food wrappers and a stray beer can are littered around the bed. The clock reads: 12:06pm. Sutter stirs. Moans. The hangover is upon him.

INT BATHROOM - DAY

Sutter showers. He leans against the wall, head in his arms as the water falls on him. He tries to remember the night before.

EXT. LAKE SIDE / PARTY SPOT - NIGHT

FLASH: Sutter and Aimee walk away from the party. Cassidy watching.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY
BACK TO Sutter in the shower. Remembering.

EXT. LAKE SIDE / DIRT PATH - NIGHT
FLASH: Sutter kissing Aimee, like we saw.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY
BACK TO Sutter in the shower. Ok, yeah, that happened.

EXT. AIMEE’S HOUSE - NIGHT
FLASH: Sutter helping Aimee to get to her front door.

SUTTER
Of course you’re going to the prom. I’ll take you.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY
BACK TO Sutter in the shower. Can’t believe he said that. Rolls back his head in disgust.
EXT. SUTTER’S PORCH - DAY

Sutter and Ricky hanging out, taking in the sun, their feet dangling in a small plastic kiddie pool.
RICKY
You made plans with her? Like, future plans?

SUTTER
It’s no big deal.

RICKY
It’s you making plans. You never make plans.

SUTTER
Relax, will you? I’m just trying to help the girl.

RICKY
Right I forgot. Sutter to the rescue.

SUTTER
Exactly.

RICKY
And if she falls for you, what happens then?

Sutter dismisses this as nonsense. Ricky holds his gaze.

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / KITCHEN – AFTERNOON
There’s a voice mail on Sutter’s cell. Presses play:

AIMEE’S VOICE
Sutter, hi, it’s, um, it’s Aimee. Wasn’t sure if we were studying tonight. Call me. If you want.

Sutter barely reacts to this. Walks to the fridge. There’s a note from Mom, something about working late and chicken in the microwave. Doesn’t react to that either. Goes straight for the liquor cabinet.

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM – AFTERNOON
Sutter sits in front of his computer, stirring a drink. Looks at the application essay he has written (“Describe a hardship...”) Sutter highlights the essay (from our opening) and deletes the whole thing. Is about to start over when he hears a DING: “CASSIDY210 is now online.”

Sutter opens the chat window. “Sutter&7” send her a message: “Hey, beautiful.” He waits for a response. Gets one: “Hello you...”

Sutter thinks about what to say next. Writes: “What are you doing? Let’s hang out.” Sutter debates sending that. Looks at it a few beats. Wills himself to hit send.

And there’s no response. One beat. Two beats. Now he’s nervous. Then it happens: “Come on over.” Sutter’s eyes light up.
INT MALL - NIGHT

OMITTED

INT CASSIDY’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

They pass Sutter’s Big Gulp back and forth, reminiscing.

SUTTER
Or the lightning storm?

CASSIDY
On your roof! Yes! That was amazing!
(beat; reflective)
I don’t know how many times I’ve ever
felt like that.

SUTTER
Isn’t often.

CASSIDY
But every time was with you.

Sutter smiles, leans in closer.

SUTTER
Actually I think I feel it right now.

CASSIDY
Stop it.

SUTTER
No I’m serious. When we’re together, it’s
like, we’re invincible. Like nothing can
touch us, like everything else in the
world - the problems, the
responsibilities - they all just
disappear.

Sutter looks right in her eyes. Cassidy looks down.

CASSIDY
I don’t want to lose you Sutter.

Sutter tenderly touches her cheek.

SUTTER
Then you won’t.

She looks back up at him. Deciding. And now they’re
making out. Clothes are coming off.

SUTTER
God you’re beautiful.

CASSIDY
Don’t talk.
Cassidy lies down. They continue kissing. Sutter moves to her neck. Suddenly her hands stop moving and her body freezes. Sutter is confused.

SUTTER
What’s the matter?

CASSIDY

SUTTER
What do you mean, ‘just go ahead’?

CASSIDY
Just do it.

She lies perfectly still with her eyes closed.

SUTTER
I can’t... I’m not gonna just do it. What’s wrong with you?

Sutter pulls away.

SUTTER
Are you thinking about Marcus?
(she says nothing)
Are you in love with him?
(still silent)
What about us? This afternoon?

CASSIDY
I’m like really confused right now. I mean, I don’t have fun with anyone like I do with you.

SUTTER
Exactly --

CASSIDY
But you can’t go around having fun all the time. Sometimes you have to be serious.

SUTTER
I am serious. I’m 100 percent serious.

CASSIDY
About what?

SUTTER
About... not being serious.

CASSIDY
Did you even apply to college yet?

He doesn’t answer. Cassidy looks at him “thought so.”
SUTTER
Hey, my Dad never went to college and now he’s, like, the number two real estate developer in Cook County. Who needs it? I have everything I need right here. A job. A car. A beautiful woman. You think beauty’s in some classroom? A text book? It’s here. It’s all around us.

CASSIDY
You’re drunk.

SUTTER
Yeah but I’m not wrong. You got to live in the moment, Cass.

CASSIDY
I want more than just... “moments.” I want --

SUTTER
What?

CASSIDY
A future.

Sutter looks away. Starts to get dressed. Disappointed.

INT. LAME LIVING ROOM - LATER

OMITTED

INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE HOUSE / DOWNSTAIRS

OMITTED

EXT HOUSE - BACK YARD - LATER

OMITTED

INT SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sutter comes in and sits at his computer. Again opens the college application window. The essay is now totally blank. He looks at the question. Quick glance to the pennant on the wall. Sutter takes a swig from the flask. Says out loud:

SUTTER
Fuck this.

And turns off the computer.

INT HIGH SCHOOL / HALLWAY - DAY

Crowded with kids heading in all directions. And then there’s Sutter. He strolls down the hall until he spots Aimee at a distance. Her back is turned. Sutter quickly turns down another hallway.
Sutter is walking to his Lancer when:

VOICE
Just who do you think you are?

It’s Krystal and she doesn’t look happy.

SUTTER
The King of Mexico.

KRISTAL
You’re not gonna joke your way out of this, Sutter. Aimee told me about the party by the lake.

SUTTER
And?

KRISTAL
And now you’re avoiding her.

SUTTER
I’m not avoiding her.

KRISTAL
Really? Have you seen her since the party? Have you even called?

SUTTER
How bout you get off my back?

KRISTAL
I knew she got that from you. Aimee said the same thing.

SUTTER
Did she? Good for her.

KRISTAL
No, it’s not good for her. Aimee’s isn’t like you, Sutter. She’s a sweet girl. She doesn’t need you causing problems in her life.

SUTTER
(walking away)
The only problem Aimee has is you bossing her around like she’s your personal assistant.

KRISTAL
(yelling after him)
You shouldn’t treat her this way.

SUTTER
(not stopping)
Whatever buzzkill.
INT/EXT. SUBURBAN STRIP / SUTTER’S CAR – LATER

Sutter drives around. Takes a drink from the Big Gulp. We can tell he’s thinking about what Krystal said. Rolls his eyes and makes a U-Turn.

EXT AIMEE’S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR – AFTERNOON

Sutter knocks. After a few moments Aimee appears. Surprised – and delighted – to see him.

AIMEE
I didn’t know you were coming over today.

SUTTER
Yeah, no, I wasn’t, but uh... I was driving around and I thought, ‘I don’t care how busy I am. I want to see how Aimee’s doing.’

(off her smile)
So... how you doing?

AIMEE
Good.

SUTTER
Good. Great. Listen, my sister is having a dinner for her swanky friends and I’m being forced to show --

AIMEE
You have a sister? I didn’t know that.

SUTTER
Yeah, well, we’re not really close. Anyway, would you wanna come with me?

AIMEE
Um... ok! When is it?

SUTTER
Ten minutes.

AIMEE
Oh. Uh... Sure! I’ll get my coat.

SUTTER
Let’s... leave the coat.

EXT HOLLY’S HOUSE – DUSK

Establishing.

INT HOLLY’S HOUSE / DINING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

ANGLE on HOLLY, Sutter’s sister, (25, heavily made up, dyed blonde hair, fake breasts and dressed to show them, jewelry glistening everywhere).
HOLLY
...and I said “could I get you boys anything else?” And he said, tell ‘em what you said honey.

Holly’s husband JOE (early 40s, confident without cause) sits to her right.

   JOE
I leaned back in my chair, puffed out my chest and I said... “You could give me your number gorgeous?”

The PARTY GUESTS (mostly OLDER MEN and their YOUNGER SECOND WIVES) like this. Sutter, at the other end of the long table, makes the “vomit” face to Aimee. She laughs.

   HOLLY
I had no idea he was a big fancy lawyer but I gave it to him anyway. And I sure am glad I did!

   JOE
Hasn’t worked a day in her life since.

Joe squeezes her leg. Holly pecks her husband on the lips. Aimee rolls her eyes at this. Signals for another top-off from the flask which Sutter provides out of view from the others.

   SUTTER
Wow. You guys sure are a breath of fresh air.

   HOLLY
Thank you Sutter.

   SUTTER
It’s rare to see such happy couples nowadays. Seems like everyone’s divorced.

   HOLLY
That’s not true.

   SUTTER
Isn’t it? My parents, (to Aimee) your parents, most of my friend’s parents --

   JOE
Kid’s got a point.

   SUTTER
Thank you Joe.

   AIMEE
Mine didn’t.

   SUTTER
(confused)
They didn’t? But I thought...
Aimee shakes her head no.

      HOLLY
    See Sutter. Not everything is doomed.

      AIMEE
  My Dad died.

That sucks the air out of the room.

      HOLLY
    I’m so sorry, honey.

      AIMEE
  Not your fault.

Aimee takes a drink. The guests shuffle in their seats.

      HOLLY
    What happened?

      AIMEE
  He was a great guy. He just... he had a... problem. Painkillers, mostly.

No one really knows what to say.

      AIMEE
  He tried to stop a bunch of times, but... One day my sister came home and he was just lying there. She had to close his eyes.

Joe winces. Aimee takes another sip. This time, she doesn’t flinch.

      AIMEE
  (to Sutter)
    Anyway, I don’t agree with you. About marriage. Mine’s gonna totally work.

      SUTTER
  Oh yeah?

      AIMEE
    I’ve thought it all out. We’re going to live on a horse ranch, my husband and I. I’ll work for NASA. And my husband... he’ll do something completely different. And we’ll offset each other. Like we’ll have some things in common but we’ll also have all these other dimensions that we bring to the relationship. And that’s how I know it’ll work.

Sutter is taken aback. Really impressed with her now.

      JOE
  (dismissive)
    Sounds like a dream.
AIMEE
(right back at him)
It’s good to have dreams. Don’t you think?

Aimee looks at Sutter, smiles. Sutter, still stunned, smiles back. Raises his glass.

SUTTER
To dreams.

EXT PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Where kids hang out cause there’s nowhere to go. Away from the party, Sutter and Aimee share a drink sitting on the roof of his car.

AIMEE
Did you mean what you said at the party?

SUTTER
Uh... which... thing --?

AIMEE
The prom.

SUTTER
(beat)
Well of course I remember that. Are you kidding? I wouldn’t forget something like that.

There’s an awkward pause.

AIMEE
Do you still want to go? I mean, if you don’t, I’ll understand.

SUTTER
What are you talking about? I totally want to go. I wouldn’t have asked you if I didn’t.

AIMEE
Really?

SUTTER
Sure. Can’t wait.

She looks at him and smiles. He smiles back. Starting to really like how happy he makes this girl.

SUTTER
(shutting off radio)
Come here.

They start to kiss. Sutter then stops. Takes off her glasses. Sets them on the hood. Kissing resumes. This lasts a few seconds before someone whistles at them from afar. Aimee and Sutter laugh.
In the hallway, Aimee kisses Sutter goodbye. Holds on to his arm for as long as she can as they part. Sutter goes one way, she goes the other. Ricky joins Sutter with a disapproving look.

**SUTTER**

It’s under control.

(Ricky shakes his head)

Hey, did it ever cross your mind that I might actually be attracted to her?

**RICKY**

No.

**SUTTER**

That’s cause you haven’t really looked at her. I’m telling you. You have to talk to her a while before you can really see her.

Ricky’s expression doesn’t change.

**SUTTER**

What am I doing that’s so wrong? Worst case scenario, I’m giving her some much needed boyfriend experience.

**RICKY**

That’s worst case scenario?

**SUTTER**

And besides, you and I both know, another month tops before she’s done with me and moves on.

**RICKY**

And if she doesn’t?

**SUTTER**

That would be a first then, wouldn’t it?

Fair point. Erik Wolff walks over.

**ERIK WOLFF**

Hey Sutter, Marcus was looking for you.

**SUTTER**

Marcus? What for?

**ERIK WOLFF**

I’ll let him tell you that.

Erik walks away, smiling maliciously. Sutter and Ricky look at one another, knowing that can’t be good.

**SUTTER**

In the clothing store.

Sutter is shadowboxing while talking to Dan at the shop.
...and he’s like yay big and I’m like yay big... so that’s bad. Plus, he’s fast. And his reach has got to be way out --

DAN
Sutter, what are you doing? You’re not a fighter.

SUTTER
Tell me about it!

DAN
So why’s he want to fight you?

SUTTER
I don’t know. He must think I’m still after Cassidy.

DAN
Is he right?

Sutter stops boxing (clearly winded). Takes a drink from his Big Gulp.

SUTTER
No. I mean -- we talk, a little. Online mostly.

(off his look)
Just cause I want to keep in touch with my ex doesn’t make me a bad guy. Does it?

DAN
You’re not a bad guy, Sutter. You just don’t have a real good grasp of the idea of consequences.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - AFTERNOON

Sutter turns off the lights, Big Gulp in hand. Marcus walks in.

VOICE
What’s up with you and Cassidy?

Oh shit, it’s Marcus. Here we go.

SUTTER
Look, man, I don’t want any trouble.

Marcus just stares Sutter down. Intimidating.

MARCUS
Tell me the truth.

Marcus gets right up in Sutter’s face. Sutter knows if this gets physical, he’s not gonna win.
SUTTER
Nothing’s up. We’re just friends. She’s moved on. I’ve moved on...

MARCUS
You’ve moved on?

SUTTER
(not convincingly)
I have.

MARCUS
Come on, man. Everyone knows you’d drop Aimee Finecky in a second if Cass would get back with you.

SUTTER
Everyone knows that? Well guess what... everyone’s wrong. Look, Marcus, trust me, ok. We hang out sometimes, we have fun, but I promise you, nothing’s going on between Cass and me.

Marcus continues to stare Sutter down. A beat. And then it’s Marcus who breaks the stare first. He looks down at his feet. Sutter realizes something -- he isn’t angry, he’s distressed.

MARCUS
Can I ask you something?

SUTTER
Oh...k.

MARCUS
Why can’t it be me she has fun with?

SUTTER
(beat; not expecting that)
What?

MARCUS
I’m not like you, Sutter. I don’t know how to make her laugh and stuff. I want to, I just... I don’t know what to do.

Sutter is thrown for a loop.

SUTTER
Dude... you’re Marcus West. Star athlete. Class President. What’s that charity you started?

MARCUS
The Hope Squadron.

SUTTER
The Hope Squadron, for fuck’s sake! You’re the man, Marcus! You don’t need my help.
MARCUS
The way she talks about you... it’s not
the same. I want her to like me like
that. And she doesn’t. I know she
doesn’t.

Sutter is stunned to see Marcus so distraught and
vulnerable. This is too weird.

SUTTER
Look, Marcus, you don’t want to be like
me. Ok? I make jokes and stuff but you...
you get shit done. You’re gonna change
the world. You guys are perfect together.

Marcus’s mood is slowly improving. Sutter is on a roll.

SUTTER
You just need to loosen up a bit. You’re
too tense.

MARCUS
Maybe.

SUTTER
Not everything has to be serious all the
time. See a movie. Maybe have a beer once
in a while.

MARCUS
That’s not for me, man.

SUTTER
I’m just saying... relax. Enjoy yourself,
you know? Live in the now.

Marcus sighs, taking it all in.

MARCUS
Thank you for talking to me like this,
Sutter. I appreciate it. I really do.

Sutter nods, feeling pretty good about the whole thing.
Marcus opens the door to go outside.

MARCUS
Hey Sutter!
(Sutter turns)
They’re wrong about you.

SUTTER
What’s that?

MARCUS
You’re not the joke everyone thinks you
are.

Sutter flinches, as if he just received the punch he was
expecting all along. Marcus leaves and we remain on
Sutter, thinking about that. CUT TO:
Sutter and Aimee sitting close together watching TV.

SUTTER
What do you think of the movie?

AIMEE
I’ve seen it before.

SUTTER
We can watch something else.

AIMEE
No I like it. Used to watch it with my Dad all the time. He loved this stuff.

SUTTER
My kind of guy.

AIMEE
You would have liked him a lot. He’s the one who turned me onto music and manga and stuff. He was cool.

Sutter puts his arms around her. Aimee likes the feeling.

AIMEE
What about you?

SUTTER
Hmm?

AIMEE
Do you miss your Dad?

SUTTER
Nah it’s cool.

AIMEE
He’s not flying back soon?

SUTTER
What?

AIMEE
You said he was an... airline pilot?

SUTTER
Um... yeah, exactly.

AIMEE
So... why can’t he fly to come see you?

SUTTER
I don’t know.

AIMEE
If my Dad was alive --
SUTTER
Why are we talking about this?

AIMEE
I’m just saying... you should see him, before it’s too late.

Sutter says nothing.

AIMEE
Maybe you can ask your mom --

SUTTER
(jumping up)
Goddamit Aimee! Will you shut up already? Jesus Christ.

Aimee’s face flushes red and she shrinks away. This is the first time Sutter’s gotten mad at her and it stings.

AIMEE
I’m sorry.

SUTTER
(realizing he snapped)
No, I’m sorry. You just... you kept going on and on --

AIMEE
(looking away)
I know. I don’t know what’s wrong with me.

SUTTER
(sitting back down)
Nothing’s wrong with you. I’m just... a little touchy about my Dad, ok. Come here. I’m sorry I yelled.

Sutter hugs her tight. He then lifts her chin to look at him. Then he kisses her. The mouth. The forehead. The eyelids. Kissing the tears away. It grows in intensity.

INT AIMEE’S HOUSE / BEDROOM — MOMENTS LATER

And now they’re on the bed, kissing, fondling.

AIMEE
Can we take off our clothes?

There’s no stopping it now. Sutter lifts off Aimee’s shirt. Aimee takes off her own bra. Sutter then takes his shirt off. Aimee helps him with his pants. It’s awkward but there’s a real romance to it. Sutter sees Aimee in a new light. And he’s amazed at what he sees.

SUTTER
Nudity looks awesome on you.
They get under the covers together. Feeling each other’s bodies. Aimee stops first. Reaching over to the night stand. She pulls out a condom.

AIMEE
Just to be safe.

Sutter is surprised. Girl’s got all the bases covered. Aimee helps him put the condom on. And then pulls him over towards her so he can be on top.

AIMEE
I like you so much.

SUTTER
You’re spectacular. You really are.

AIMEE
I’m so glad I met you.

SUTTER
I’m glad I met you too.

Slowly, tenderly, they begin to have sex. Sutter looks down at Aimee’s face. Her eyes are closed. It’s very different from sex with Cassidy but in a way it’s better. More intimate. More connected. Sutter is entranced.

INT AIMEE’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - LATER

They lie in bed together. Post-coital.

AIMEE
You’re incredible.

SUTTER
Nah. It’s easy to seem that way on your first time.
(Aimee looks away)
It was your first time, wasn’t it...?
Aimee?

Her silence says maybe it wasn’t.

SUTTER
I thought you said you never had a boyfriend.

Aimee sits up, pulls her knees to her chest. Chin down, looking very distraught.

AIMEE
I don’t want you to hate me.

SUTTER
Hate you? I won’t hate you. You’re unhatable.
AIMEE
It’s just something that happened... I was 14. I didn’t know anything about boys.

SUTTER
Ok.

AIMEE
Randy’s son Troy was sleeping over.

SUTTER
Randy? Step-father Randy?

AIMEE
(nods)
We all went to sleep and then I heard this knock on my door. It was. He said he couldn’t sleep and would I mind if he came in, talk for a while.

SUTTER
Of course he did.

AIMEE
He climbed in the bed. And started... saying all this stuff to me...

SUTTER
What kind of stuff?

AIMEE
You know. How warm I feel. How much he likes my mouth and my hair.

SUTTER
Smooth talker, this Troy.

AIMEE
No one ever spoke to me like that. It felt... I don’t know... special. So I just... let him do it.

(beat)
I should have known better.

SUTTER
How could you? You were 14.

AIMEE
I still should have known no 20 year old would actually like me --

SUTTER
20? Are you fucking kidding me?

AIMEE
And the worst part is... when we... finished... he couldn’t look at me. Drove away in the morning. Haven’t seen him since.
SUTTER
Oh man! That dude is king of the creeps. If I ever see that guy -- I can’t believe your mom stayed with Randy after that.

AIMEE
She doesn’t know.

SUTTER
What? You never... How could you not --

AIMEE
I’ve never told anyone that. Until now.

They both lie there quietly. Aimee puts her head on his chest. Sutter sits there thinking. Then he hears her.

AIMEE
You must think I’m awful.

SUTTER
I don’t think you’re awful. Why would you say that?
(beat)
Aimee don’t cry...
(beat)
I’ll tell you a secret. My Dad’s not a pilot. I’m not sure what he is. Or where. I just said that because... I don’t know... I don’t know anything about him. He’s been gone half my life and I... I guess I just miss him.

AIMEE
Doesn’t anyone know where he is?

SUTTER
My mom does. She refuses to tell me.

AIMEE
She can’t keep him from you. He’s your father.

Sutter looks away. Uncomfortable.

AIMEE
I’ll make you a deal. I’ll stand up to my Mom, if you stand up to yours.

Sutter looks at her. Aimee puts out her hand to shake.

AIMEE
What do you say? Deal?

Sutter hesitates. Then he just smiles, touches her face. Instead of answering he says:

SUTTER
You’re spectacular.
And then they lay together. She strokes his hair as he looks at the ceiling.

70 INT HIGH SCHOOL / AUDITORIUM - DAY

OMITTED

71 INT HIGH SCHOOL / HALLWAY - DAY

Sutter is walking to class when he hears:

VOICE

Sutter!

It’s Mr. Aster from inside his classroom. Sutter exhales.

71A INT. HIGH SCHOOL / MR. ASTER’S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sutter is seated. Aster hands him a homework assignment. A big red D+.

SUTTER

(upbeat)

It’s not an F.

MR. ASTER

I thought you were getting help.

SUTTER

I am.

MR. ASTER

Well now you need a C on the final or you fail my class.

SUTTER

I’ll try harder.

MR. ASTER

No you won’t.

That takes Sutter by surprise.

MR. ASTER

I don’t get you, Sutter. You’re a smart kid. Thoughtful. Do you even want to graduate?

SUTTER

(beat; thinks about it)

I’m not sure.

MR. ASTER

Excuse me?

SUTTER

I’m being honest with you. The truth is, I like it here. I like being young.

(MORE)
Everybody’s rushing me to grow up, move on -- **why**? What’s so great about being an adult?

Aster doesn’t know what to say.

**SUTTER**

Are you happy, Mr. Aster?

Aster is silent. Sutter shrugs. Takes his paper and goes.

EXT AIMEE’S HOUSE / FRONT YARD – MAGIC HOUR

Tuxedo-clad Sutter stands with Aimee’s MOM and Randy. Aimee’s Mom has the camera out and is readying to take some prom pictures.

**AIMEE’S MOM**

Randy, get in there with Sutter.

The two men pose for the picture. As odd a couple as you’re likely to see. Sutter pretends to be comfortable.

Finally Aimee comes out. She’s wearing the lipstick again, her dress is a pale yellow that doesn’t quite match her skin tone, and she’s done her hair up in a leaning tower of Pisa style do. An awkward girl trying too hard to look elegant. Sutter doesn’t care about that.

**SUTTER**

You look fabuloso.

**AIMEE**

Thanks. So do you.

They do the boutonniere/corsage exchange. Mom takes a few more. Randy loses interest, walks away. They say their goodbyes and they’re off.

EXT/INT. SUTTER’S CAR – MAGIC HOUR

Sutter’s car has been washed for the occasion.

**SUTTER**

Sorry I didn’t get you a limo.

**AIMEE**

That’s ok.

**SUTTER**

Let me make it up to you.

He removes a wrapped gift from the glove compartment. Aimee tears the paper off of the box. It’s a flask.

**AIMEE**

I love it!
SUTTER
And you’ll notice it’s already full.
(raising his flask)
To you, Aimee Finecky.

They toast. Aimee leans in to kiss him. When it’s over:

SUTTER
Ok then. Let’s go to prom!

EXT HIGH SCHOOL / GYM - NIGHT

INT HIGH SCHOOL / GYM - MOMENTS LATER

The prom is already in full swing and it’s very much like you’d expect -- DJ, punch bowl, padded chairs, white tablecloths. Sutter and Aimee arrive. Through Sutter’s eyes, the place sparkles. Aimee adjusts the straps on her ill-fitting dress. Sneaks a drink from her flask. Sutter takes her arm as they walk in.

People greet him as they always do when he shows up to a party. High-fives etc. Sutter and Aimee choose a half-empty table to sit at. Sutter pulls out a chair for her like a gentleman.

They sit and take it all in. There’s Ricky sitting with Beth. And there’s Cassidy, on the dance floor with Marcus. Her dress is amazing, showing off her body in the perfect way. Sutter takes a moment to watch but quickly returns his attention to Aimee. They toast drinks. Sutter can’t help himself, his eyes returning to Cass on the dance floor. Aimee eventually notices:

AIMEE
She’s a good dancer.

SUTTER
Hmm?

AIMEE
Cassidy.
SUTTER
Oh, yeah, I hadn’t noticed.

Aimee doesn’t push the issue. Sutter downs another drink. And so does Aimee. The song ends and Cassidy sees Sutter at the table. She walks over with Marcus.

CASSIDY
Why aren’t you dancing?

SUTTER
You know I hate this kind of music.

CASSIDY
Who cares? It’s the prom. Aimee, c’mon!

AIMEE
I’m not much of a dancer.

SUTTER
That’s why you got me. I can teach you some of my moves.

AIMEE
(taking a big sip)
I’m good right here. You two go ahead.

Sutter and Cassidy share a look.

SUTTER
You sure?

AIMEE
It’s fine.

Aimee takes out her flask and re-spikes the drink. Sutter hesitates, sizing up whether Aimee is telling the truth.

SUTTER
If you change your mind...

Aimee turns back around. Sutter shrugs. He and Cassidy head to the dance floor. Once they’re dancing:

CASSIDY
She looks nice.

SUTTER
She does.

CASSIDY
You’re not turning her into a lush are you?

SUTTER
You wanna dance or lecture me about Aimee?

CASSIDY
I wanna dance.
LATER. Sutter comes back with more punch. He sits down, kisses Aimee on the cheek. Aimee smiles. Seems like she means it. Then again, might be the alcohol. Sutter takes her hand and holds it at the table. He looks around the room. Sees Ricky and Beth having fun. Everything he sees makes him happy.

SUTTER
Amazing, isn’t it? All these kids. Dressed up, dancing, singing, falling in love... This is our night! St. Patrick’s Day for the young. Do you realize -- right now, this moment, this is as young as we’re ever gonna be. This is it. The spectacular now.
(beat)
God, I love these people.

The song ends and a new one begins, slower, more romantic. Sutter grabs Aimee and gestures to the dance floor. This time she doesn’t resist. They dance. She puts her head on Sutter’s shoulder.

AIMEE
I’m sorry I can’t dance like Cassidy.

SUTTER
You dance like Aimee. And that’s perfect.

We stay with them a few beats. A nice moment.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL / GALLERY - MOMENTS LATER

Sutter and Aimee walk outside.

AIMEE
We’re gonna miss the King and Queen.

SUTTER
Fuck it. We’re all Kings and Queens tonight.

AIMEE
That’s right! I’m the Queen.
(getting dizzy)
I need to sit down.

They take their seat on a bench. The stars are out tonight. It’s beautiful. Neither says a word for a second. Aimee starts to but stops herself.

SUTTER
What is it?
AIMEE
You have any more?

SUTTER
Uh, yeah, here.

AIMEE
(drinks)
I’ve been thinking... about the summer.
My sister said she could get me a job at
a book store.

SUTTER
In Philadelphia?

AIMEE
Uh-huh.

SUTTER
A book store’s perfect for you.

AIMEE
I know! And it’ll help pay for college.

SUTTER
Have you talked to your mom yet?

AIMEE
No but I will.

SUTTER
That’s excellent. I can’t think of
anything better.

AIMEE
Come with me....

Sutter doesn’t know what to say to that.

AIMEE
I’ve looked into it. You can take classes
at the junior College. We’ll both get
jobs downtown. Have you ever seen the
Liberty Bell? I’ve only seen pictures but
it looks amazing.

SUTTER
(beat)
Wow. That’s... that’s some plan. You’ve
really done your homework.

AIMEE
And best of all my sister says there’s
tons of vacancies in her building cause
of the economy and stuff. They’re not
expensive at all. We could move at the
end of June. Together.

Sutter remains dazed, silent.
AIMEE
Sutter... what do you think?

Looking at Aimee, Sutter knows there’s only two possibilities. Break her heart -- or just go with it.

SUTTER
I think... that’s a terrific idea. Best I’ve ever heard.

Aimee embraces him. They kiss. We can tell what she can’t: Sutter is not convinced about any of this.

INT HIGH SCHOOL / GYM – MOMENTS LATER

Sutter and Aimee walk back into the room. Aimee is ecstatic. Sutter looks pained now. The joy of the buzz completely sucked out of him.

The prom itself seems to be equally pallid. The room has thinned out. The glitter is crumbling. The lame decorations are half on the ground. Depression threatening, Sutter makes his move.

SUTTER
This is ridiculous.

Hops up on the riser and grabs the mic from the DJ.

SUTTER
Can I have everybody’s attention?

The music stops. There’s a little feedback from the mic.

SUTTER
Come on people, let’s pick this party up. This is our night.

Some people yell out “woo Sutter” etc. Aimee is by this point too drunk to shout. Others are less enthusiastic.

SUTTER
How bout I add a little class to the evening?
(clears his throat)
A 1 and a 2 and a 1 2 3...
(sings)
“We’re dancing at the prom. We’re singing at the prom. We’re, um, la la da da da da.”

Sutter doesn’t have the next line. The crowd starts to turn on him.

SUTTER
Shit. Um... “Hey it’s a party.”

Somebody yells “Sit down!”

SUTTER
You sit down. Dickhead.
Other kids start shouting too. “Go back to rehab!” Etc. Mr. Aster runs over to put a stop to it.

MR. ASTER
Alright Mr. Keely, that’s enough.

SUTTER
I’m just warming up.

MR. ASTER
I said that’s enough.

SUTTER
This is our night, Mr. Asterhole, not yours.

Some people cheer the dig – but not everyone.

MR. ASTER
That’s it, your prom’s over.

SUTTER
Fine. We’ll take this party elsewhere.

Sutter drops the mic on the ground. Hops off the riser. Stumbles a little but covers it up well enough. He still thinks he’s under control but the stares from his classmates say otherwise. Sutter pays them no mind. Cassidy runs up to him.

CASSIDY
You have to take Aimee home.

SUTTER
Cass where you been?

CASSIDY
In the bathroom with your girlfriend. She passed out on the floor!

SUTTER
Ouch. Was it my singing?

CASSIDY
This is not a joke Sutter.

SUTTER
Ok, ok, I’ll take care of her.

CASSIDY
Do you even know how?

SUTTER
Hey, this is none of your business, Cass.

AIMEE
Stop!

Aimee comes out, walking at a bit of a tilt, covered in vomit, angry.
AIMEE
Get away from him.

CASSIDY
I was just trying to --

AIMEE
I know what you were trying to do. You were practically... dancefucking!

SUTTER
Whoa.

CASSIDY
Aimee --

AIMEE
Stay away from him, you fat bitch.

At which point Aimee winds up and slaps Cassidy across the face, hard. This surprises everyone, even Aimee.

After a beat, Aimee tries to steady herself against a table, the nausea returning. Before she realizes, she’s vomiting again onto the floor. Sutter rushes to her aid.

SUTTER
Can you sit up? Are you cut? Come on, let’s get you up in this chair.

He lifts her up, gently. Anyone still watching the scene (which is most people) groan at the sight.

AIMEE
I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.

SUTTER
Don’t be sorry. It’s the prom, things happen at the prom.

Sutter sees Cassidy still giving him that look, the same one he got a thousand times as her boyfriend.

AIMEE
I’m such a mess.

SUTTER
You’re beautiful. Let’s get out of here.

And with Cass watching, as he helps her out of the room:

AIMEE
I love you, Sutter. I love you so much.
And this is like a gunshot to Sutter. Of all the things to happen tonight, that one stings the most.

HOLD A FEW SECONDS AND THEN FADE IN:

INT CLOTHING STORE - AFTERNOON

Sutter rings up a customer -- Erik Wolff.

SUTTER
Nice-looking suit.

ERIK WOLFF
Present from my pops. You should have seen him when I got into Dartmouth. Guy was in tears.

Sutter doesn’t say anything.

ERIK WOLFF
You pick a college?

SUTTER
Yeah.

ERIK WOLFF
Which one?

SUTTER
(beat)
F.U.

ERIK WOLFF
Nice. Go Gators.

Once he’s gone, Dan appears in the doorway to the back.

DAN
Sutter --

Dan gestures for Sutter to follow him into the back.

INT CLOTHING STORE - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sutter sits across the desk from Dan.

DAN
You’ve probably noticed we’re not too busy these days. And because of that... well, I can only keep one clerk. (Sutter nods, waits for it)

You know I like you, Sutter. More importantly, the customers like you. So I think you should be the one I keep.

SUTTER
That’s excellent, Dan. Thank you! You won’t regret it.
DAN
Hold on a sec. I’ve given this some hard
thought, and the only way I can let you
stay is if you promise me, 100 percent,
that you’ll never come in here loaded
again.

Sutter is taken aback. Never thought Dan was on to him.

DAN
I’m serious. Not even a light buzz. And
if you do, one time, I’m gonna have to
let you go. Do you understand?

SUTTER
I do.

DAN
Can you promise me, Sutter?

Dan looks Sutter in the eye. Sutter holds his gaze for a
beat, then laughs to himself.

SUTTER
You’ve got me there, don’t you, Dan? You
know I can’t promise that.

Dan looks at Sutter, disappointed, hoping he’ll
reconsider. Knows he won’t.

DAN
I appreciate your honesty.

SUTTER
I’m always up front with you.

Sutter, proud of himself, rises to shake Dan’s hand.

SUTTER
It’s been a pleasure working for you Sir.

Dan stares at him a beat. Then shakes his hand.

DAN
I guess... if I was your dad, here’s
where I’d give you a lecture or
something... ‘bout what you’re doing to
yourself.

SUTTER
You know what, Dan... If you were my Dad,
you wouldn’t have to.

INT/EXT. CLOTHING STORE - AFTERNOON

Sutter leaves, loosening his tie on the way out. Feeling
pretty good until:

CASSIDY
Can we talk to you for a minute?
Cassidy stands on the sidewalk.

SUTTER
Who’s we?

She points to a parked car. Marcus and Ricky are inside.

INT. CLOTHING STORE / MARCUS’ CAR – LATER

Sutter sits next to Ricky in the back. Marcus and Cassidy are in the front. They all look at him.

SUTTER
Please tell me this isn’t one of those, ‘We’re worried about your drinking’ intervention type things.

RICKY
We know you better than that.

CASSIDY
It’s more like an Aimee Finecky intervention thing.

SUTTER
What are you talking about?

MARCUS
You’re hurting her, man. Don’t you see that?

SUTTER
I’m hurting her? How am I hurting her?

CASSIDY
We never once saw her drink before. Now she’s drunk between classes. Hungover all the time --

MARCUS
You got her suspended from school, dude.

SUTTER
I didn’t --

RICKY
Who brought the flask to the prom?

SUTTER
I --
(exhales to suppress his growing agitation)
Excuse me. Can I ask a question? Since when do any of you give a shit about Aimee Finecky?

They look at each other.

MARCUS
That’s not the point --
SUTTER
Sure it is. You don’t know her. You don’t know shit about her. You look at Aimee and all you see is this little mouse who should keep quiet and hide in the corner. Well that’s not what I see. I see someone whose dreams are as big as all of yours put together. Someone who can stand up for herself now. I did that.

RICKY
So you’re some kind of hero then?

SUTTER
As a matter of fact --

RICKY
Fuck off, Sutter. You’re not a hero. You’re just using her... to keep from dealing with your own shit.

SUTTER
Really Richard. One girl gives you the time of day and now you’re an expert --

RICKY
Fuck you.

SUTTER
Fuck you!

CASSIDY
Guys. Cool it!
(beat; to Sutter)
Can we talk for a minute? Alone?

Sutter and Cassidy lean against the car. Silent at first.

CASSIDY
It’s a nice night.

SUTTER
I’ve had better.

CASSIDY
This was my idea. So don’t blame the guys. We just want what’s best for Aimee.

SUTTER
And that’s not me?

CASSIDY
It could be. Maybe. If you tried.

Sutter stands there for a moment without saying anything.
SUTTER
If you really have this vast knowledge about me and relationships, then you’d know I don’t need to break anything off. She’ll take care of that soon enough, just like you did.

CASSIDY
And you think that was easy? Say what you want, but you’re the one who made it clear we didn’t have a future. And I get it. That’s you, that’s who you are. But Aimee’s different. You’re her whole world. She thinks there’s a future with you and there isn’t.

SUTTER
What makes you so sure?

CASSIDY
What do you mean?

SUTTER
I mean maybe there is one. A future. Maybe the two of us are moving in together.

CASSIDY
What?

SUTTER
Yup. It’s all set. Her sister got us a place up in Philly. Leaving right after we graduate.

CASSIDY
You can’t be serious.

SUTTER
As a heart attack. Just gave my two weeks notice to Dan.

(beat; Cass is shocked)

Guess you don’t know everything, do you Cass?

And with that, Sutter (mimicking Shane) flips the double bird to his friends and gets in the car. Cassidy watches him drive off, shocked.

EXT HIGH SCHOOL / PARKING LOT - DAY

Sutter and Aimee walk towards the parking lot. Some kids laugh and point. One shouts “Puke-a-Reena!” Sutter wants to get in the guy’s face.

AIMEE
It’s ok. Come on.

SUTTER
Where are we going?
Aimee pulls him towards his car. She takes out the flask.

    AIMEE
    We’re celebrating.

    SUTTER
    You sure you wanna --

    AIMEE
    I did it. I talked to my mom.

Sutter is surprised.

    AIMEE
    I just walked in, shut off Nancy Grace, and I told her. It’s my life and I’m not going to let that her stand in my way.

    SUTTER
    And it worked?

    AIMEE
    It was ugly at first. She tried to guilt me into staying but I refused to back down. I just said, look, if I can afford it, I’m going and there’s nothing you can do about it.

    SUTTER
    That’s amazing! I’m so proud of you!

    AIMEE
    I’m proud of myself! Cheers.

    SUTTER
    (beat)
    Cheers.

They drink.

    SUTTER
    Wow Aim, you’re like my hero.

    AIMEE
    It wasn’t so bad. You’ll see.

    SUTTER
    Hmm?

    AIMEE
    When you do it.

Sutter looks away.

    AIMEE
    We made a deal.

    SUTTER
    Aimee --
AIMEE
You can do it Sutter. I know you can.

Sutter isn’t so sure.

AIMEE
Repeat after me. “I’m calling my Father, mom.” I want to motherfucking call him!”

Sutter stares at Aimee. Aimee holds his stare. Smiles.

INT HOSPITAL / ER - NIGHT

Sara works behind the Front Desk charting into a computer. Sutter takes a deep breath and walks in through the automatic doors. Sara sees him. This is a surprise.

SARA
What’s wrong?

SUTTER
Nothing. I, uh, I want to ask you something.

SARA
What is it?

SUTTER
It’s about Dad.

SARA
(not again)
Sutter --

SUTTER
I just want to talk to him.

SARA
We’ve been over this. It’s not a good idea --

SUTTER
Why not?

SARA
I don’t need a reason, do I?

SUTTER
He’s my father --

SARA
Well I’m your mother and you live under my roof.

SUTTER
I wish I didn’t.

The conversation is attracting the attention of some CO-WORKERS. Sara, embarrassed, thinks before responding.
SARA
I know that, Sutter, but that’s the way it is.

SUTTER
You can’t keep him from me.

SARA
(quiet but stern)
Sutter... this is my job. We’ll talk about it later, Ok?

A standoff. One that Sutter will lose.

SUTTER
No wonder he left you.

And with that, Sutter grabs a handful of mints from the jar on the counter. Storms off.

EXT HOLLY’S HOUSE / PATIO – DAY

Sutter sits on the patio with Holly, who, as usual, is overdressed for the occasion. Sutter watches with amusement as she fusses with food and drinks.

HOLLY
How do you like the way we’ve re landscaped back here? Joe and I planted-

SUTTER
That’s nice, yeah. So like I said on the phone, I wanted to talk to you about Dad.

HOLLY
Why do you want to dredge that up?

SUTTER
Dredge? Come on, Holly. Dad’s not something you dredge. He’s great. Remember how he used to tell us stories out in the tent in the backyard?

HOLLY
That was mostly you.

SUTTER
Well, you remember our vacation in Mexico? He had us going up to people and asking ‘em ‘Where can we find the belt buckle museum?’ or ‘Why is there no artichoke ice cream?’ It was hilarious.

HOLLY
It was embarrassing.

SUTTER
People thought it was funny. They loved us.
They loved you because you were little and cute.

But the guys loved you. They thought you were a hot little muchacha.

Holly remembers, then smiles.

He did know how to make friends, didn’t he?

Damn right he did.

They sit in silence for a moment.

Do you know happened? Between him and Mom?

He cheated on her.

That’s her version...

You think it’s a lie?

I’m not saying she’s lying. I’m saying there’s two sides to every story.

Sutter --

Think about it. She won’t let us see him. Won’t say where he is --

Let’s talk about something else. How’s your friend, how’s Aimee?

-- won’t even give us his number. You gotta admit, it’s suspicious.

Holly’s face shows that she’s thinking about it.

I tried asking Mom but she refuses. Will you ask her for me?

(off her look)

Please, Holl.
HOLLY
(beat)
I don’t have to ask. I know where he is.

Sutter looks at her, expectantly. She goes inside for a moment. When she returns she hands Sutter a slip of paper. Sutter looks at a phone number, then at his sister. Psyched!

SUTTER
Thanks, Holl. You’re the best!

Sutter jumps up to go.

HOLLY
Sutter!
(he turns, beat)
Come by for lunch sometime. Ok?

SUTTER
I will. I promise!

Holly watches him go, a little apprehensive.

INT SUTTER’S BEDROOM – DAY

Sutter listening to music alone. He fixes himself a drink. Downs it. Takes a deep breath. Then takes out a piece of paper on which there is a phone number. Sutter picks up the phone. He seems nervous. Dials. (Behind him in a corner, we see Aimee’s windbreaker).

After a few rings a deep, masculine VOICE answers.

TOMMY (O.S.)
Hello?

SUTTER
(tentative)
Um.... Dad?

TOMMY (O.S.)
I think you got the wrong --

SUTTER
It’s me, Sutter.

TOMMY (O.S.)
(perks up)
Sutter!? No shit, kiddo! How you doing?

SUTTER
I’m alright.

TOMMY (O.S.)
Good. Good. You sound like a man now. You still playing baseball?

SUTTER
What?
TOMMY (O.S.)
You were a heckuva pitcher back in the
day. Small for your age but what an arm.

Sutter is overcome with emotion but he sucks it down.

SUTTER
You remember that?

TOMMY (O.S.)
Sure, son, sure I do. Still throwing?

SUTTER
I, uh, no. Not really.

TOMMY (O.S.)
How’s your Mom and Holly doing?

SUTTER
They’re good, Dad... Real good.

TOMMY (O.S.)
That’s great. That’s... tremendous.

And then silence for a beat.

SUTTER
Listen, Dad, I, uh, I was thinking... could I come see you sometime...?

TOMMY (O.S.)
Of course you can. Come on over! How’s
Friday?

SUTTER
Oh, uh, really?

TOMMY (O.S.)
Come by at like 3 o’clock. Maybe we’ll go
to a game or something.

SUTTER
(cloud nine)
That would be... really?! That would be
great.

TOMMY (O.S.)
Tremendous. See you then --

SUTTER
Hey, uh, Dad... where do you live?

Sutter and Aimee speed down the highway, filled with
excitement. Music on, windows down, feeling good. Sutter
sips from the Big Gulp. Aimee looks through the recently
released High School Yearbook.
AIMEE
How much further is it?

SUTTER
Another three hours or so.
(beat; sincere)
Hey Aim... thank you.

AIMEE
For what?

SUTTER
I wouldn’t have done this without you.

He grabs her hand. She holds his, touched. Smiles. Sutter looks at the road again. Anticipation building.

INT/EXT. DAD’S HOME / SUTTER’S CAR – AFTERNOON

Sutter and Aimee pull into a parking area in front of a row of townhouses. The whole place looks very poorly cared for.

SUTTER
(checking slip of paper)
Here we are.
(beat)
I think I need that shot of vodka now.

They take a couple of shots. Then a couple more. Sutter looks at her. Nods. It’s time to do this thing.

EXT/INT. DAD’S HOME / SUTTER’S CAR – MOMENTS LATER

Sutter rings the doorbell. After a few moments he rings again. After the third ring the door opens. TOMMY KEELY, (late 40s extremely handsome but in a worn, creased way.)

TOMMY
What can I do for you?

SUTTER
(confused)
It’s... me.

Tommy stares blankly at him.

SUTTER
Sutter.

Tommy hears this. He takes it in, cocks his head a little, squints at the kid in the doorway.

TOMMY
Sutter?

Could it really be his little man?

SUTTER
Hi Dad.
Tommy looks him up and down again. Then shakes his head, bemused. A big smile comes over his face.

TOMMY
Sutter! Holy hell! Of course. Man, what am I thinking? Good to see you buddy.

Tommy shakes Sutter’s hand. No hug. Sutter doesn’t even notice, over the moon at seeing his hero in the flesh.

TOMMY
And who is this striking young lady?

SUTTER
This is Aimee. My girlfriend. Aimee, this is my Dad.

He takes Aimee’s hand, then kisses it. She blushes.

TOMMY
Tommy. You have immaculate taste in the ladies, don’t you?
(winks at her)
Just like his old man.

Tommy smiles at Sutter. This is followed by an awkward silence. Tommy doesn’t yet invite them in.

TOMMY
Man it’s good to see you.

SUTTER
You too Dad --

TOMMY
Listen, I was on my way to meet some friends of mine but now that you’re here, let’s all go together. What do you say?

SUTTER
(looks at Aimee; she shrugs)
Um... ok.

TOMMY
Great. You take your car and follow me there. It’s just up the road.

Tommy gets in his beat-up Wagoneer. Sutter and Aimee head back to the Mitsubishi. Once inside:

AIMEE
Another shot of whisky, doctor?

SUTTER
Stat.
INT LARRY’S BAR – AFTERNOON

A dark, dirty little bbq joint. The BARTENDER and some of the REGULARS greet Tommy when he enters, much like Sutter’s friends when they see him. After a few hello’s:

TOMMY
Everybody... this here is my son, Sutter.

Everybody welcomes Sutter with raised glasses and pats on the back. Tommy seems proud. Sutter and Aimee are elated. When they reach the end of the bar the bathroom door opens and out comes ROBERTA (45, short dress, trashy). Tommy is surprised to see her.

TOMMY
Well if it isn’t the most beautiful woman in the state.

ROBERTA
Last week you said “the country.”

TOMMY
Did I?

Tommy smiles at her. Winks.

ROBERTA
Aren’t you gonna introduce me to your friends?

TOMMY
Where are my manners? Roberta... I’d you to meet my son. The amazing Sutter Keely. And his ladyfriend Aimee.

Sutter beams. Roberta moves right up to him.

ROBERTA
Get your good looks from your mother, did ya?

Roberta kisses Sutter on the cheek and walks away.

TOMMY
(watching her go)
Ain’t she somethin’? Let’s get us some drinks!

INT/EXT. LARRY’S - MOMENTS LATER

Tommy sits with Sutter and Aimee at a corner table. Sutter and Aimee drink beers. Nobody’s minding.

TOMMY
... and after that I moved to Key West. You guys ever been down there?
(they haven’t)
You don’t know what you’re missing. Key West, now that is the life, boy.

(MORE)
Sunsets like a butterscotch sundae with swirls of strawberry mixed in, melting into the ocean. Everyone with a drink and a smile.

Tommy grins, and so does Sutter.

SUTTER
Sounds perfect.

TOMMY
It was.
(beat)
Wish you could have been there kiddo.

SUTTER
So how come you left?

TOMMY
Ran out of dough is why. Would have stayed there forever if I could, believe me.

Tommy looks in the direction of Roberta, who is sitting at the bar chatting with other men. His stare lingers.

SUTTER
Hey how bout some music?

TOMMY
That’s a great idea. You take care of that. I’ll go get us a refill.

Tommy gets up and walks over to the bar. Sutter goes to the jukebox with Aimee.

AIMEE
You OK?

SUTTER
Never better.

She squeezes his arm and smiles back. Sutter finds exactly what he’s looking for on the jukebox. A song begins to play. They go back and sit down.

ANGLE ON Tommy, new pitcher in hand. On his way back to the table, he stops and whispers something in Roberta’s ear. She eyes him flirtatiously.

Tommy sits back down. Sutter smiles, expecting Tommy to react to the music.

SUTTER
(beat, proud)
Pretty good, huh?

Tommy barely reacts, surprising Sutter.
SUTTER
Don’t you like this song?

TOMMY
Eh, this was always your mother’s thing.

This is news to Sutter. It’s a bit of a shock. His only response is to take a large drink of his beer.

SUTTER
But it’s... fun. I can’t imagine Mom ever having fun --

TOMMY
Are you kidding? When we first got married... boy was she something. Nobody was more fun than that woman.

Again, Sutter is stunned.

SUTTER
So... what happened?

TOMMY
(still looking away)
What do you mean?

SUTTER
What happened... between you two?

Tommy had been watching Roberta this whole time. He turns to look at Sutter and says:

TOMMY
(takes another drink)
Things don’t work out sometimes.

Sutter processes. Aimee watches him, growing increasingly concerned. And then:

SUTTER
You know she blames you for everything. Won’t even let us talk about you.

Tommy does not seem the least bit surprised.

SUTTER
I defend you though. I always defend you.

TOMMY
Thanks, kiddo. I appreciate that.

(beat) Wasn’t all my fault.

SUTTER
Right. Two sides to every story.

TOMMY
Damn straight.
SUTTER
And whatever happened, she still shouldn’t have kicked you out of the house.

TOMMY
Oh she didn’t kick me out.

What?

TOMMY
I left.

Sutter can’t believe it. Tommy sees the look on his face.

TOMMY
I had to. I mean, I did want to be there for you. Man, did I ever want that. You guys were more important to me than anything in the world. But... well... things between your mother and I just got to be so... uncool. Guess I wasn’t cut out to be a family man, not in the traditional sense anyway.

Tommy laughs. The room is now spinning for Sutter. Tommy sees his face.

TOMMY
You know how it is. One thing leads to another... the girls don’t mean anything.

SUTTER
Girls? Like, more than one?

TOMMY
(shrugs)
Not like I kept a running tally. But hey, I don’t live in the past. I live in the now. That’s what it’s all about.

Sutter looks like he might throw up. Tommy sees Roberta get up and leave the bar. Tommy jumps up.

TOMMY
I’ll be right back. Settle the tab for me, will ya?

Um --

TOMMY
Thanks bud. You’re a miraculous marvel.

And with that he heads outside. Sutter watches him go.

AIMEE
Sutter?
But he’s just sitting there, staring out the window at Tommy, who’s now pressing up close to Roberta, whispering in her ear. She laughs and playfully pushes him away.

AIMEE

Sutter.

Sutter snaps back to attention. Opens his wallet to pay Tommy’s bill. He only has a few bucks. He looks to Aimee with embarrassment.

AIMEE

Don’t worry about it --

SUTTER

I’m sorry --

AIMEE

Don’t be --

Tommy comes back inside.

TOMMY

(winks)
So Roberta’s had a few too many drinks. Think I’d better give her a ride home. If you know what I mean.

SUTTER

Oh... Um... do you want us to follow you?

TOMMY

I got it covered. Won’t be more than an hour.

SUTTER

Why don’t we come with you? We’re not doing any--

TOMMY

You guys head on back to my place. I’ll be right there I promise.

The bad feeling growing, Sutter tries one more time.

SUTTER

Dad, we came all this way...

Tommy smiles at his son. Puts a hand on his shoulder.

TOMMY

And I’m real glad you did, kiddo... Real glad. See you in a few!

INT/EXT. DAD’S HOME / SUTTER’S CAR – DUSK

Sutter and Aimee sit parked outside Tommy’s house. Sutter takes a big hit from his flask.
SUTTER
We should probably head back.

AIMEE
It’s only been a few hours. We can wait --

Sutter angrily turns on the ignition, pulls away.

INT. LARRY’S / SUTTER’S CAR - NIGHT

ANGLE ON SUTTER in the driver’s seat. The car is not moving. And he is totally silent.

REVEAL what Sutter is looking at: his father, right back at the BBQ/bar. Tommy tips back the last of his beer and laughs at something one of his buddies said.

BACK TO SUTTER. Frozen. Aimee doesn’t know what to say. Without a word, Sutter composes himself. Drives away.

I/E. HIGHWAY / SUTTER’S CAR - CONTINUOUS

We stay with them in the car. The silence continues. Sutter looks like he’s about to burst. Aimee watches, expecting an explosion any moment. She puts on the radio, tuning until she finds a baseball game. They listen for a few moments. Sutter angrily turns it off.

More silence. Sutter takes a long swig. Finally:

AIMEE
I’m sure he wanted to come back --

SUTTER
Aimee --

AIMEE
You saw her. She was in no condition to drive.

SUTTER
Please --

AIMEE
I bet that’s what happened. If it wasn’t for her, he would have come right back.

SUTTER
Sure, and if he hadn’t cheated on mom then we’d still be a family and I’d be president of my Sunday school class and you and I would ride silver stallions to Pluto.

This shuts her down. Sutter glances over, feeling bad for snapping. Takes a deep breath and another drink.

AIMEE
Maybe we caught him on a bad day...
SUTTER
And maybe that’s just who he is. Huh?
Maybe he’s been like that since day one.
Just a selfish, lowlife, motherfucking
asshole!

Sutter shakes his head in disgust at himself. Aimee stays silent. Until:

AIMEE
Sutter.

SUTTER
What?!

AIMEE
I love you.

Sutter exhales. Not what he wants to hear right now.

AIMEE
Did you hear me?

Sutter still won’t engage.

AIMEE
I love you.

SUTTER
Stop saying that.

AIMEE
Why?

SUTTER
Because --

AIMEE
I want you to hear it. I love you.

SUTTER
You’re wrong.

Aimee bristles at this. But Sutter has been waiting to say it. Can’t stop now.

SUTTER
Come on, Aimee, you don’t love me. You’re just... drunk and you’re... grateful... someone came along and showed interest in you.

AIMEE
Don’t say that, Sutter. Don’t try to mess this up --

SUTTER
Mess what up? What do you think this is?

At which point a loud horn blares from an oncoming car.
All this time, the car has been swerving slowly into the other lane. Sutter quickly rights the wheel and the car fishtails in the other direction. With no seatbelt on, Aimee slips down into the floorboard as Sutter struggles to regain control.

The car sideswipes a concrete abutment before Sutter is finally able to wrestle it to a stop in the high grass off to the left, facing the wrong way (passenger door closest to the road).

When the dust settles:

AIMEE
(poeing up from the floor)
Are you alright?

SUTTER
What?

AIMEE
Are you ok?

SUTTER
You’re asking me that? Jesus Christ, Aimee, no! I’m way fucking far from ok.

AIMEE
(moving in for a hug)
Thank god you’re not hurt.

SUTTER
(pushing her off)
What is wrong with you?! I nearly killed you and you wanna hug me?

AIMEE
I wanna make sure you’re --

SUTTER
You need to run, Aimee. You need to get as far away from me as you possibly can.

AIMEE
No.

SUTTER
They’re right about me. Everyone’s right.

AIMEE
Sutter, what are you --

SUTTER
Get out of the car.
AIMEE

No!

Sutter leans over and opens the passenger door.

SUTTER

Get out of the fucking car!

Aimee doesn’t move. Tears start to fall from her eyes. She bites her lip and finally gets out.

Aimee stands there. On the side of the road, the door still open.

AIMEE

I’m sorry.

SUTTER

Jesus Christ, Aimee, what are you sorr--?

But he doesn’t get the rest of it out. She’s hit! Knocked off of her feet by the blow of an approaching car. She goes down hard.

Sutter freaks, jumping out of the car, running as fast as he can to her side. Aimee lies in the grass, face caked in mud, blood dripping from her scalp. She isn’t moving.

SUTTER

Aimee, oh fuck, Aimee. What have I done?

Sutter kneels over her, falling apart. Terrified.

SUTTER

Please, God, don’t do this. Oh please, fuck. I’ll do anything. I swear. I’ll never drink again just don’t let her go.

Finally Aimee opens her eyes. Seeing him, she still can’t help but smile. Then she collapses again.

SUTTER

Aimee!

INT HOSPITAL / ICU HALLWAY - LATER

Sutter waits, fidgeting, his right foot tapping nervously on the floor. Seems like he’s been there a while.

Finally a DOCTOR (40s, serious) leaves Aimee’s room. In the BACKGROUND we see Aimee’s Mom sitting at Aimee’s bedside. The Doctor approaches Sutter.

DOCTOR

The good news is she only suffered a minor concussion. There may be some dizziness so she should take it easy the next few days.
SUTTER

Yes sir.

The Doctor puts down his chart and looks hard at Sutter.

DOCTOR

She didn’t say much about what happened.

Sutter says nothing.

DOCTOR

I’ll give you a choice, kid. The cops or your parents?

INT HOSPITAL / WAITING ROOM / NURSE’S STATION – NIGHT

Sutter waits. Through the glass of the room behind him we can see Sutter’s Mom arguing with the Doctor. The voices are muffled but he can hear clearly enough.

DOCTOR

So you didn’t know where he was tonight?

SARA

What gives you the right to talk to me like that?

DOCTOR

I’m sorry if I sound harsh --

SARA

Don’t tell me how to be a parent! I work 15 hours a day to support my family.

DOCTOR

A lot of moms work hard, Sara – and their kids don’t drink and drive.

Sara is silenced by this.

DOCTOR

Your son is lucky. And so is his girlfriend. Not everyone gets a second chance.

Sara doesn’t respond. Sutter hasn’t moved an inch.

INT/EXT. STREET / SARA’S CAR – LATER

They drive silently. We stay on them for a while. Sutter looks at his Mom. She looks straight ahead. A mixture of anger and guilt on her face.

93

EXT. AIMEE’S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR – DAY

Sutter rings the doorbell. Aimee’s Mom answers and immediately hugs him.

AIMEE’S MOM

There he is! The hero!
SUTTER
(uncomfortable)
Hi Mrs. Finecky.

AIMEE’S MOM
Aimee’s in her room.

Sutter nods politely, heads past Randy to Aimee’s room.

INT AIMEE’S HOUSE / BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS
Aimee’s on the bed, reading. Sutter enters and sits on the end of the bed. He looks at her in her cast.

AIMEE
Should we talk about it?

Sutter’s face says he’d rather not.

AIMEE
I agree.

SUTTER
Aimee, I’m so sor --

She silences him with a kiss.

AIMEE
Let’s never speak of it again, ok? I don’t want anything getting in the way of Philadelphia.

She touches his face with her hand. Sutter looks pained.

EXT CONVENIENCE STORE – PARKING LOT – DAY
Sutter parks his car. Baseball game in the background. He’s about to go in to the 7/11 when out comes little Walter (from the first scene). Walter holds hands with his MOTHER while sipping from a Big Gulp. Sutter stares at the image, unnerved.

EXT HIGH SCHOOL / FOOTBALL FIELD – DAY
The Class of 2013 has just graduated. Most GRADUATES are with their FAMILIES, taking pictures, celebrating.

Sutter, in cap and gown, is alone. He leans against a tree and opens an envelope labeled “Diploma.” It’s empty. He’s not surprised.

Sutter looks up to find Mr. Aster watching him from across the way. He expects to see him gloat. But Mr. Aster isn’t gloating. He just looks sad and walks off. Sutter is thinking about that when:
AIMEE
Hello Handsome!

Aimee wraps her arms around him. Kisses his cheek. She’s never looked happier. She takes out her flask and spikes a drink. As she’s about to do the same for Sutter, he stops her. Not today. Aimee shrugs, takes a swig.

AIMEE
Is your family here?

SUTTER
I told them it was next week.

Aimee laughs. Sutter can’t help but smile at her. We see Krystal standing with her family. She waves Aimee over.

AIMEE
I should go say hi. Be right back.

She runs off. Sutter remains, alone for a beat. He sees Cassidy off with a group of classmates. They make eye contact — so much history between them. There’s a moment where she thinks about walking the other way. She makes a decision. Approaches, a sad smile on her face.

CASSIDY
We made it.

SUTTER
I guess we did.

CASSIDY
I’m glad, Sutter. I really am.

They stand there a beat. Neither really sure what to say.

SUTTER
So when do you leave for Texas?

CASSIDY
Oh, you haven’t heard? (beat) I’m not going to Texas.

SUTTER (surprised)
You’re staying here?

CASSIDY
Oh god no. No... (should she tell him?) I’m going with Marcus.

Sutter is taken aback.
CASSIDY
We talked about it and we just--

SUTTER
California?

CASSIDY
That’s right.

SUTTER
Cassidy.
(off her look)
Isn’t that a little... I mean... come on--

CASSIDY
What?

SUTTER
You’re really going?

CASSIDY
Yeah I really am.

Sutter takes that in. It doesn’t make sense.

SUTTER
Why?

CASSIDY
(beat)
That’s none of your business.

That shuts him down quick. Sutter looks at his shoes. Looks up, trying to recover, smiles.

SUTTER
Maybe I’ll come and visit some time.

CASSIDY
(beat, sadly)
I don’t know, Sutter. It’s not a good idea.

SUTTER
Oh.
(ouch)
Yeah, ok --

CASSIDY
I’m just --

SUTTER
No, that’s cool --

CASSIDY
I... you know... I’m gonna try and stay away from things that are bad for me from now on.
Sutter takes that in. And it hurts like hell. Cassidy is about to leave. But before she does, she hugs him. One last hug in case it’s forever. Then she turns to go. On her way:

CASSIDY

Sutter!

(he turns)

You’ll always be my favorite ex-boyfriend.

And off she goes. Sutter is alone again to think about all that. He looks over at Aimee, taking pictures with her Mom. She looks happy. Runs his fingers through his hair. A decision to make.

INT/EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

The bus to Philadelphia is already boarding. Aimee waits to the side, suitcase in hand. She’s nervous. Her mood is sinking. She checks her watch. The last passenger boards.

BUS DRIVER

Miss.

AIMEE

Just... two more minutes ok.

The Driver gets back on the bus. Aimee takes out her cell phone and dials. She waits nervously as it rings. But there’s no answer. And then she just starts to cry. The sadness overwhelms her. And then, just as quickly, she stops crying. She takes a few breaths, wills herself to be brave, picks up the suitcase and boards the bus.

As the doors close, and Aimee takes her seat, REVEAL Sutter has been watching this from a far. Tears in his eyes as well. His phone in his hand, unanswered. The bus drives off in the distance. He watches it go.
Driving. Trying not to be overcome with emotion. Silently convincing himself he’s done the right thing. And that he doesn’t need a drink.

He drives by a very seedy looking dive bar. He keeps driving. He looks in the rearview mirror, the bar still in view, beckoning.

INT SEEDY DIVE BAR - NIGHT

The lowest of the low. Dank, dark, and dusty. Two thuggish MEN play pool on a wrinkled table. Sutter sits at the bar next to a DRUNK in his late 60s. The BARTENDER has a wispy goatee and is missing some teeth. They’ve all been there a very long time.

SUTTER
Another round for the table.
(BARTENDER nods)
Thank you, Earl, thank you for serving me. This is better. Much, much better.

DRUNK
You’re a good guy, Sutter.

SUTTER
That’s what I think too. I agree.
(to BARTENDER)
Did I do the right thing?

BARTENDER
For you or for her?

The question doesn’t get to hang for too long as the Drunk chimes in.

DRUNK
You had to let her go! You had to save that girl.

SUTTER
That’s what I did. I saved her.

DRUNK
You’re not wrong. You’re a hero. You’re a King!

SUTTER
You’re exactly right!

DRUNK
Look at you, Suther. What are you 22, 23?

Sutter looks at the Bartender. Doesn’t want to answer.

DRUNK
Beautiful! You got your whole life ahead of you.
SUTTER
So do you, my man.

DRUNK
Not me. I’m old. My friends are gone. I’ve wasted all this time...

The Drunk trails off. Sutter lets those words wash over him as he watches the Drunk. Tries to shake off the uneasiness. CUT TO:

99A INT/EXT. SUTTER’S CAR – NIGHT

Swerving down the street.

100 EXT SUTTER’S HOUSE – NIGHT

Sutter’s Lancer takes the turn into the driveway too fast, crashing into the mailbox. Sutter exits the vehicle, leaving it half on the lawn.

SUTTER
(re: damage)
Shit.

A light turns on inside the house. Sara comes outside, pulling a robe around herself.

SARA
What the hell?
(seeing the mailbox)
Sutter!?

Sutter ignores her. Mom watches him stumble to the house.

SARA
Have you been drinking?

Sutter says nothing.

SARA
Jesus Christ! We just went through this. The hell is wrong with --

SUTTER
What do you care?

SARA
Excuse me?

SUTTER
You don’t care about me. You’ve never cared about me.

SARA
(stunned)
Sutter --

SUTTER
It’s cause I remind you of him.
SARA
What are you talking about?

SUTTER
That’s why you hate me. That’s why you can’t stand to look at me.

SARA
How can you say that?! You’re my son!

SUTTER
I’m his son too. We’re exactly the same.

SARA
You’re nothing like him.

Sutter won’t listen. He storms past her and walks inside. Mom follows.

100A
INT. SUTTER’S HOUSE / KITCHEN - NIGHT

She walks right past Sutter and into the kitchen. Sutter, about to climb the stairs, hears his mom rummaging in the other room. He stops. Mom reappears, handing him a piece of paper.

CU: the paper has an address on it.

SUTTER
What’s this?

SARA
Go to him. Then you’ll see.

Sutter looks at the slip.

SUTTER
I thought you didn’t --

SARA
I was trying to protect you from --

(beat)

I was wrong. Take this. Go see him. See for yourself how different you are.

Sutter is stunned by this.

SUTTER
I’ve already been.

Now it’s Mom’s turn to be surprised.

SUTTER
Holly gave me his number and... we drove there last week... You were right. He’s... you were right all along.

And Sara knows what Sutter is really saying.
SARA
You’re not your father.

Sutter tries to hold himself together but he can’t look his mother in the eye. Sara grabs him into a hug. Sutter allows it but doesn’t respond, not yet.

SARA
(beat)
Sutter listen to me. That man... that man’s never loved anyone but himself. His heart is this big. But you... you love everybody. You’ve got the biggest heart of anyone I know.

Sutter’s hit hard by this. Starts to lose his composure.

SARA
3rd grade, when Ricky was on crutches for a month. Who carried his books every day? Or when you were 10 and Rosemary Clark lost her mother. You invited her to live with us, said I’d be her new mom. Remember that? You’ve always been so special, Sutter. That’s why everyone loves you.

SUTTER
Nobody loves me Mom.

SARA
You’re wrong, Sutter.

And now Mom is crying too. Holds him tighter.

SARA
You hear me? You’re so very wrong.

And finally Sutter hugs back. He closes his eyes as they hold each other. Over her shoulder, we see him crumple the slip of paper in his hand.

INT. SUTTER’S HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT

A COMPUTER SCREEN. “Describe a challenge, hardship or misfortune you have experienced in your life.”

Sutter sits at his desk. Eyes still wet. Reads on.

“What have you learned from this and how has it prepared you for the future?”

Sutter stares at it a beat. And then he starts to write.

SUTTER’S VOICE
My name is Sutter Keely and I’m 18 years old... Compared to other kids, I haven’t had that many hardships. Not really. Shit’s happened...
Sutter pauses, deletes “shit” and replaces it.

**SUTTER’S VOICE**

Stuff’s happened, sure, stuff always happens... but the real challenge in my life, the real hardship... is me. It’s always been me.

ANGLE ON SUTTER, deciding whether to continue. He does.

**SUTTER’S VOICE**

As long as I can remember, I’ve never NOT been afraid.

101A **INT. TREE LINED STREET / SUTTER’S CAR - DAY**

Sutter behind the wheel. Walter riding shotgun. Sutter doesn’t look afraid. And then the Big Gulp in hand. He takes a sip.

**SUTTER’S VOICE**


101B **I/E. STREET NEAR LAKE / SUTTER’S CAR - NIGHT**

Cassidy angry with him, Sutter not knowing why.

101C **INT. PARTY HOUSE 2 - NIGHT**

Sutter catching Cassidy with Marcus on the couch.

101D **EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD / FRONT LAWN - MORNING**

The first time Sutter sees Aimee.

**SUTTER’S VOICE**

I thought if I kept my guard up, focused on other things, other people...

101E **EXT. WALTER’S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR - DAY**

OMITTED

101F **EXT. LAKE SIDE - NIGHT**

Sutter hooks Ricky up with Beth.

101G **EXT. LAKE SIDE / DIRT PATH - NIGHT**

Sutter coaches Aimee to shout and curse at the party;

**SUTTER’S VOICE**

...if I couldn’t even FEEL it... well then no harm would come to me.

101H **INT. PARTY HOUSE 1 - NIGHT**

Sutter drinking excessively. Goofing off.
SUTTER’S VOICE
I screwed up. Not only did I shut out the pain, I shut out everything. The good and the bad.

Sutter, peacefully in bed with Aimee.

The disappointment on Dan’s face as he lets Sutter go. *

Aimee’s bus pulling away.

Sutter and Mom hugging.

Until there was nothing.

BACK ON Sutter at his computer...

I’m not gonna do that anymore.

The future. Sutter empties his flask in the sink;

Sutter sitting at the kitchen table with Holly and Mom. Saying grace. All together.
It’s fine to just “live in the now.” But the best part about “now” is -- there’s another one tomorrow. It’s time to start making them count. Sincerely, Sutter Keely.

A beautiful, sparkling day on a beautiful college campus.

P.S. I don’t know if this was due a long time ago. Probably was. But that’s fine.

Aimee comes out of a classroom looking confident, secure. She says goodbye to friends and walks down the steps.

It may be too late for this essay...

And then she sees him. Standing there. Waiting for her. And he’s cleaned up too. Steady on his feet. Haircut.

...It’s not too late for me.

In his hand is Aimee’s ugly windbreaker.

What are you doing here?

You forgot your coat.

And before we ever know what happens next:

BLACK.