

"Schenectady, New York" by Charlie Kaufman

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Adele, 40, in t-shirt and sweats, mixes a bowl of instant oatmeal, puts it in the microwave.

RADIO VOICE

... a Labor Day luncheon today --

OLIVE (O.S.)

Mommy! Done!

RADIO VOICE

-- at Stuckey Hall --

ADELE

Okay!

RADIO VOICE

-- in downtown Schenectady --

Adele leaves the kitchen. Caden, also 40, enters as she's leaving. He's dressed in a ratty terrycloth robe.

CADEN

Morning.

ADELE

Morning.

We follow Adele into --

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Olive, 4, sits on the toilet. Adele enters, rips some toilet paper off the roll and proceeds to wipe Olive. The phone rings in the kitchen.

ADELE

Caden, could you get that?

CADEN (O.S.)

It's Maria. I'm not getting it.

ADELE

Ugh. Caden!

Adele looks at a bright green smear on the toilet paper.

ADELE (CONT'D)

That's weird.

The phone stops ringing.

OLIVE

Is something wrong with my poop?

ADELE

No, honey. It's just green. Maybe you ate something green.

MARIA'S VOICE

Hi, it's me. Where are you? I'll try you on your cell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLIVE (CONT'D)

I didn't! What's wrong with me?!

A cellphone rings in the other room.

ADELE

Honey, I have to get this. You're going to be fine.

OLIVE

But, Mommy --

Adele runs into --

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She rifles through her purse, grabs her cellphone, answers.

ADELE

Hey.

(laughing)

Oh, wiping Olive's butt. No.

Caden is pouring himself a cup of coffee. He sips it and stares out the window. It's raining.

ADELE (CONT'D)

You're kidding! Holy fuck!

Caden exits with his coffee, annoyed about the phone call.

CADEN

I don't feel well.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Caden walks by the bathroom. Olive is staring into the toilet bowl. Adele can be heard chatting in the background.

OLIVE

Daddy, my poop is green.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Caden enters the bathroom, looks into the bowl at the green feces and smeared toilet paper. He seems freaked out.

OLIVE

Am I going to be okay?

CADEN

Of course, honey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLIVE

Did you have green poop when you were little?

CADEN

I'm sure I did, honey.

OLIVE

Am I going to die?

CADEN

No, of course not. You probably ate something green.

OLIVE

I didn't! I didn't eat green!

CADEN

It'll be fine, sweetie. I'll be back in a minute.

OLIVE (O.C.)

(calling)

Is poop alive?

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Caden steps out the front door in his robe and bare feet and hurries down the driveway in the rain. He picks up the newspaper and heads back inside. A middle-aged man, similar in appearance to Caden, watches him from across the street.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Caden sits at the kitchen table with his coffee. Adele is still on the phone.

ADELE

No way! Okay. Yeah.

Caden pulls the newspaper out of its plastic bag. It's the New York Times for Friday, October 14, 2005.

ADELE (CONT'D)

All right. I'll see you then.

Adele clicks off her cellphone. Caden looks at a photo.

CADEN

Harold Pinter died!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

4.

ADELE
(uninterested)
Yeah?

CADEN
Oh wait. No, he didn't. He won
the Nobel Prize. Good for him.

OLIVE (O.S.)
Mom!

ADELE
What?!

OLIVE (O.S.)
Do you need to come look at my poop
again?!

ADELE
No, Olive, it's fine. Just flush.

OLIVE (O.S.)
What if it's alive? What if I kill
it? It's green! Like plants!

ADELE
It's not alive, honey.

The toilet is flushed.

OLIVE (O.S.)
Everything's alive. Everything
grows big. That's how you know.

CADEN
God, remember that production of
The Dumbwaiter I did at Albanyfest?

Olive enters.

ADELE
I have your oatmeal, honey.

OLIVE
I want peanut butter and jelly.

ADELE
Olive, c'mon. You told me oatmeal.
This isn't a restaurant.

OLIVE
I don't want oatmeal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Adele growls, grabs the bowl of oatmeal, dumps it in the sink.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Mommy! I'm sorry!

Caden continues to look at the front page.

CADEN

They found Avian flu in Turkey. In the country Turkey not turkeys. It's in chickens.

Adele is making a peanut butter sandwich for Olive.

OLIVE

Can I watch TV till school?

He turns on the TV for Olive and goes back to his paper. A cartoon cow talks to a cartoon sheep.

COW

There is a secret, something at play under the surface, growing like an invisible virus of thought.

The sheep nods. Caden pours himself some more coffee, opens the milk carton to pour some in, then sniffs at the spout. He checks the date on the carton. It's October 20.

CADEN

Man. Milk's expired.

He goes back to his paper.

COW

But you are being changed by it.

The sheep nods. Adele puts a peanut butter sandwich in front of Olive.

ADELE

Here. Now you better eat this.

OLIVE

I will.

CADEN

The first black graduate of the University of Alabama died. Vivian Malone Jones. Only 63. Christ.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Adele stares out the window at the rain.

CADEN (CONT'D)
Stroke. Ugh.

OLIVE
What's stroke?

INT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Caden is in the dentist's chair, a bloody bib around his neck. The dentist, in surgical mask, probes his open mouth, calls out numbers to an assistant, who records them.

DENTIST
2, 2, 1. 3, 4, 2. 3, 4, 4.
(to Caden)
Family coming for Thanksgiving?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Caden shaves. A faucet explodes and smacks him in the forehead. He is sent staggering backwards with a yelp, into the far wall, his razor flying and blood pouring from a jagged cut above his right eyebrow. Off-screen, we hear the pounding footsteps of someone running toward us. Half of Caden's face is covered with shaving cream. Rivulets of blood intermingle with it. Water shoots out where the tap was, spraying the mirror, which is splattered with blood. Adele dressed in heavily paint-splattered clothes, hurries in and takes in the scene: the wet, the mess, the blood.

ADELE
Jesus! Caden! What the fuck -- ?!

Olive, in a nightgown, stands quietly in the doorway, her curled toes clenched. She holds a large stuffed owl.

CADEN
Um. I was shaving and --

ADELE
My God! Jesus! Look at your head!

Dumbly, Caden tries to look up at his forehead, then squints nervously at himself in the mirror.

CADEN
It looks bad, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADELE
(to Olive)
Honey, don't look.

Olive turns around.

ADELE (CONT'D)
(to Caden)
Put pressure. Press. Press!

CADEN
Do I press above or below it?

ADELE
I don't know!

Caden sits on the toilet, presses a towel to his head. Adele squats, goes into a spasmodic coughing fit, finishes, opens the cabinet under the sink, pushes her arm through bottles of cleaning products, old sponges, old toothbrushes, toilet paper rolls and other junk to the shut-off valves.

ADELE (CONT'D)
I can't turn it! It's gonna flood!

Olive hugs the owl tightly and it speaks.

OWL
Whooo. Whooo. Whooo are you?

ADELE
I can't -- Oh wait, got it!

Adele turns off the water. Olive looks back into the room.

OLIVE
Mommy, Daddy has blood.

ADELE
I know, honey.
(through coughs)
We're taking him to the doctor.

OLIVE
Dr. Woodman?

CADEN
Stitches, you think?

Adele squints anxiously, lifts the towel, and looks at the wound. It's gruesome. She gets pale and light-headed.

CADEN
Oh my God. It's bad, right?

ADELE
Stitches. It'll be okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OLIVE

Are we going to Dr. Woodman?

ADELE

No, honey. Dr. Woodman is a children's doctor.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Caden sits on a metal table. The room has some meager Christmas ornaments. A doctor stitches Caden's forehead. Caden squints into the bright light the doctor uses to see his work. In the background we hear another patient.

PATIENT (O.S.)

(crying)

Please, please, please...

Caden sees a nurse shoving a tube far up into a man's nose. Another nurse wipes away the blood leaking out his nostril.

CADEN

Will there be a scar?

DOCTOR

Likely. I'll do my best to minimize it but I'm not a plastic surgeon. Usually we have one on call.

CADEN

I don't want a scar if it's possible.

DOCTOR

Yes. We don't generally get people asking for them. Although sometimes. It's odd. We'll do what we can. Substantial slice you have. Like a mud flap.

The sewing is seen in detail. The off-screen patient continues to whimper.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

That fellow is annoying. He's in here every week.

The doctor finishes his work on Caden.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

There. I think that should --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks at Caden's eyes, turns off the bright lamp and looks again. He turns the lamp back on and looks once more.

CADEN

What?

DOCTOR

Nothing, maybe.

The doctor feels Caden's pulse, then listens to his heart. He presses hard against the glands in Caden's neck.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Changes in bowel movement?

CADEN

Not really. Maybe it's --

DOCTOR

Color of stool?

CADEN

A little more yellow than usual.
Maybe it's a little loose. I
mean I -- What's going on anyway?

DOCTOR

I'd like you to see an
ophthamologist.

CADEN

A neurologist?

DOCTOR

What? No, an ophthamologist. I
said, ophthamologist.

CADEN

Oh.

The doctor stares blankly at Caden for a long moment, then looks suspiciously in Caden's ears.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Adele drives and coughs spasmodically. The car swerves a bit. Caden has a bandaged head and a prescription in his hand. Olive, in her car seat, sings. Caden sees revelers in winter coats and party hats outside a house. They blow noisemakers and yell "happy new year!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

10.

OLIVE
(singing)
It's a beautiful day and the sun is
shining and yellow --

Caden's cellphone rings. He looks at it.

CADEN
My parents.

Adele and Caden exchange glances. Caden puts the phone away.

OLIVE
And the world is too big to
understand and today is Tuesday and
--

(speaking)
Mom, is today Tuesday?

ADELE
No, it's Friday, honey.

OLIVE
(singing)
And today is Friday and...

Olive's singing continues but goes under.

ADELE
So what exactly did he say?

CADEN
My pupils weren't properly dilating
and, um, not doing the opposite
either. Jesus, what is it called --

ADELE
Constricting.

CADEN
Yeah. Constricting. It makes me
nervous. It's something bad.

ADELE
The bump to the head?

CADEN
He doesn't know. Maybe. He said
he doesn't think so. But maybe.
But he doesn't know. But --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ADELE
Okay. I got it. Jesus.

CADEN
Sorry. I'm a little anxious.

OLIVE
Did you have to get a shot, Daddy?

CADEN
No, honey.
(to Adele)
I feel like it's the beginning of
something awful

OLIVE
Do I have to get a shot?

CADEN
What? No. Of course not.
(pause, to Adele)
This is really fucked timing.

ADELE
Caden.

CADEN
Sorry. Bad timing.

OLIVE
Did you tell him I have green
poop?

ADELE
Remind me to call the
plumber, would you? I need a
to-do list.

CADEN
(realizing)
I have rehearsal! Fuck!

OLIVE
How many years till I have to get
more shots?

ADELE
Not for a long time, honey.

Caden pulls out a cell phone and dials.

OLIVE
A million years?

ADELE
Remember Dr. Woodman said
after the last vaccination --

OLIVE
Dad, what's a plumber?

CADEN
He's the man who --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ADELE
Or woman, Dad.

CADEN
Right. He's the man or woman
who fixes sinks and toilets
and... do you know what pipes
are?

OLIVE
No.

CADEN
(into phone)
Hey, Jim. I know. I'm sorry. I
had an accident. No, I'm okay.

OLIVE
Like to smoke out of?

CADEN
Different kind of pipe.
(into phone)
Just run lines. I'll be there
soon. 'kay.
(hangs up)
Houses have pipes. They're, like,
tubes and they're behind walls and
under the floor everywhere and --

Olive begins to whimper in horror.

ADELE
What's wrong, baby?

OLIVE
(hushed anxious whisper)
Every-single-where?

CADEN
It's okay. They just carry water
to and from sinks and bathtubs and
toilets. It's like in your body
you have veins and arteries and --
what are those other things?

ADELE
Capillaries.

CADEN
And they're filled with blood --

Olive is crying in earnest now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OLIVE
I don't want blood. I have blood?

ADELE
(to Caden)
What are you doing? Jesus.

CADEN
I'm trying to explain plumbing.

ADELE
Well, stop it.
(to Olive)
It's okay, honey.

OLIVE
(weeping)
I don't want blood. Will it hurt?
Will it hurt, Daddy?!

CADEN
No, honey, you're fine.

OLIVE	CADEN
I don't want blood! I don't	(holding head)
want blood! I don't want	I can't do this now.
blood...	

ADELE
You don't have to worry, baby. You
don't have blood.

CADEN
Well, that's not true.

ADELE
Caden, stop it.

CADEN
I don't think you should tell her
she doesn't have blood.

ADELE
Just stop it!

Olive cries. Adele coughs. Caden stares out the window.
It's dark but his pupils are pinpricks. Two men on the
street kiss.

INT. OPHTHAMOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

An ophthalmologist examines Caden's eyes. An eyeglass calendar on the wall is open to March 2006.

CADEN
Thanks for getting me in right away.

OPHTHAMOLOGIST
Hmm.

CADEN
What is it?

OPHTHAMOLOGIST
Not sure. Nothing maybe.

The ophthalmologist touches Caden's eye repeatedly with a small probe.

CADEN
Is it the bump to the head?

The ophthalmologist write in Caden's chart, then:

OPHTHAMOLOGIST
No. Could be. But I think we need to get you to a neurologist. Nothing urgent.

CADEN
A neurologist?

OPHTHAMOLOGIST
Yes, A brain expert.

CADEN
I know what a neurologist is.

OPHTHAMOLOGIST
Fine. I just thought from the way you asked --

CADEN
I didn't hear you. I thought maybe you said urologist. What do I need to see a neurologist for?

OPHTHAMOLOGIST
For a look-see. The eyes are part of the brain, after all.

CADEN
That's not true, is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OPHTHAMOLOGIST

Why would I say it if it weren't true?

CADEN

It just doesn't seem right.

OPHTHAMOLOGIST

Right, like morally correct? Or right as in accurate?

CADEN

I'm not sure. Accurate, I guess.

OPHTHAMOLOGIST

Hmm. Interesting.

The doctor writes in Caden's chart.

INT. THEATER - DAY

Caden sits in the almost empty theater, talking on his cell. A few people with note-pads are scattered around. On stage very realistic horse stables house animatronic horses. A naked young man stands on stage.

CADEN

No, I can't hear you.

VOICE

(bad signal)

... flik... that was....

Pleh... wiggitt....

Unhealthy... nid...

CADEN

Look, let me --

An animatronic horses lumbers creakily toward the young man.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Gotta go, Dad. Talk to you later.

He hangs up the phone.

NAKED ACTOR

(in terror)

Eyes! ... White eyes -- never closed! Eyes like flames -- coming -- coming! God seest! ... No! ...

(quieter)

No more. No more, Equus.

The naked actor picks up a sharp pick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAKED ACTOR (CONT'D)

Equus ... Noble Equus ... Faithful
and True ... Godslave ... Thou --
God -- Seest -- NOTHING!

The actor stabs the horse in the eyes with the pick. Blood spurts from the horse's eye sockets drenching the young man. The horse writhes in agony. More horses come from the stable and the naked young man stabs their eyes out, too. Blood everywhere. Neighing and whinnying, sobbing from the boy. One of the horses rears up and falls over, knocking the other horses over, too, like dominoes. Their legs move uselessly as they lie on their sides.

CADEN

Ok, ok, stop! David, what's happening here?

DAVID

(looking back from seat)
Sorry, Caden. Hold on.

David runs on stage to deal with the mess.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Andy? What just happened?

CADEN

It's too late in the game to be having these problems, David.

ANDY

(running in from wings)
Shit. I don't know.

DAVID

I know, Caden. I'm sorry.
We'll get it. Andy?

CADEN

Please.
(to naked actor)
That was good, Tom.

NAKED ACTOR

Yeah? I was trying something different. I was crying differently.

CADEN

I saw that. I like it.

Caden meets the naked actor at the foot of the stage. Behind them a group of technicians are lifting horses and testing their movements with radio-control devices.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Maybe try thinking of blinding the horses as a metaphor, as Alan saving them from having to see the evil of the world.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NAKED ACTOR
Kind of a perverted altruism?

CADEN
Yes. Let's try it and see.
(calling)
How long, David?

DAVID
I think fifteen. Andy?

ANDY
Fifteen tops.

CADEN
(to naked actor)
Why don't you get cleaned up,
Tom, and we'll go again.

Tom exits. Caden rubs his temples, then heads to the back of the house, pulling out his cell phone. He exits the theater.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Caden passes the box office. Hazel, 35, sits inside, reading a novel. She looks up, smiles warmly, and waves.

CADEN
Hi, Hazel.

HAZEL
Hi, baby. Where you off to?

CADEN
(holding up cell phone)
To find a signal.

HAZEL
Signal's good here, oddly.

She pats her lap in a friendly manner.

CADEN
(smiling)
That is odd.

HAZEL
I know! Cell phones, they're
crazy!

CADEN
(chuckles)
See you in a few.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL
(back in her book)
Yup.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

Caden has the phone to his ear. He's squinting in the bright sunlight.

CADEN
Hi. I need to make an appointment
with Dr. Scariano.
(pause)
My pupils don't work.

INT. THEATER BOX OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Hazel reads the first page of Ulysses. She looks up and sees Caden standing outside the box office window watching her.

HAZEL
I keep reading the first line.
It's a good line, I think. But I
don't know much about literature.

CADEN
Maybe you need another book.

HAZEL
I'm trying to better myself, Caden.
Recommend me something. You're a
genius; you must've read nearly a
dozen books.

CADEN
Exactly twelve. Have you read
Kafka?

HAZEL
Um, I've read his name. A lot! I
swear!

CADEN
His whole name?

HAZEL
Okay, not his entire name. Heinz?

CADEN
(laughs)
You should try The Trial, maybe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL

If you say so, I will. Can't wait till Wednesday. I'm so excited to see it.

CADEN

I hope you like it.

HAZEL

It's pretty impossible that I won't, you know. I mean...

She trails off, shrugs. They smile at each other. Caden exits. Hazel looks down at her book, re-reads the first sentence, then closes it.

EXT. SCHENECTADY STREET - DAY

Hazel walks downtown. A guy eyes her from a bus shelter. A man is beating up another man in the distance. Hazel enters a bookstore through a door covered with smudged fingerprints.

INT. CADEN AND ADELE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Caden sits on the toilet. He finishes, looks in the bowl. His bowel movement is dark and loose.

INT. CADEN AND ADELE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adele lies in bed asleep. Caden switches on a small white-noise machine. It plays ocean waves. He climbs into bed.

CADEN

I think I have blood in my stool.

Adele looks over, half asleep.

ADELE

The stool in your office?

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Hazel is on line with a copy of the The Trial. The man behind her cranes his neck to see the book in Hazel's hand.

MAN IN LINE

Kafka.

HAZEL

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN IN LINE

Are you trying to impress people?

HAZEL

What?

MAN IN LINE

Why don't you just read what
you're really interested in?

HAZEL

That's a fucked-up thing to say.

MAN IN LINE

My uncle died yesterday. Just like
that. Fifty-one years old. Brain
Aneurysm. Blood poured out his
ears. That's reality. The rest of
this -- it's crap. Read what you
want.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Caden and Adele sit across from Madeline, 40's, their
therapist. Silence. Adele has a coughing fit.

ADELE

I'm feeling this sort of antipathy.

CADEN

Toward me?

ADELE

(pause)

Yes. Toward you. I'm sorry.

CADEN

I've been trying, Adele.

ADELE

It kind of bugs me. The trying.

CADEN

Jesus. What should I do?

ADELE

The trying seems so needy.

CADEN

All right, I won't try ever again.
Okay?

ADELE

(to Madeline)

Now, see, I'm honest and that's
what I get.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

What? I'm being amenable. I'm --

ADELE

No, you're not. Oh, fuck you, Caden.

CADEN

(to Madeline)

See?

INT. MEDICAL LAB - DAY

Caden is getting an MRI. It's deafening.

INT. CADEN AND ADELE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adele sleeps. Caden lies in bed listening to the ocean sounds on his noise machine. A man peers in the window.

INT. THEATER - DAY

Technical rehearsal. Psychiatrist's office set, an exact replica of Madeline's office -- but much bigger. The actor playing Dysart, in costume, says his lines and does his blocking without feeling. Caden watches from the audience.

ACTOR (DYSART)

That night, I had this very explicit dream. In it I'm a chief priest in Homeric Greece. I'm wearing a wide gold mask, all noble and bearded, like the so-called mask of Agamemnon found --

CADEN

Stop! Where's the mask?

VOICE

Jammed. Sorry.

CADEN

Fix it! Jesus, c'mon!

Running sounds on the catwalk. Caden sighs, picks up his newspaper. It's open to the obituary section. He reads about the death of Farise Jouen. A children's book author. He notes her age, the cause of her death: blood clot in her lung. He looks at the photos of her: one young, one middle-aged. She has a kind face. He tears up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE
Okay, Caden.

CADEN
David, start with "all noble.."

ACTOR (DYSART)
... all noble and bearded...

A gold, bearded mask descends on fishing wire from the fly-space. It stops in front of the actor's face.

ACTOR (DYSART) (CONT'D)
... like the so-called beard of
Agamemnon found at Mycenae. I'm
standing by a thick round stone...

A stone slides out from stage right, stops next to the actor.

ACTOR (DYSART) (CONT'D)
... and holding a sharp knife.
(pause)
Oh, Christ, come on. Caden!

Fuck! CADEN Sorry. VOICE

A knife descends on fishing line too quickly from the fly space. It nicks the actor on the top of the head.

ACTOR (DYSART) (CONT'D)
Shit.

The actor grabs the knife and continues.

ACTOR (DYSART) (CONT'D)
In fact, I'm officiating at --
(blood trickles down)
Shit. Shit! Is it bad?

CADEN
Somebody get the first aid kit.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

Caden sits on the steps, drinks coffee. He watches as Hazel pulls into the parking lot, gets out of her car.

Hey. HAZEL Hey. CADEN

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN
It's a nightmare in there.

HAZEL
Sorry. So I'm reading The Trial.

CADEN
Yeah? You like?

HAZEL
Love. I'm such an idiot for not
knowing about this book.
(conspiratorial whisper)
It's famous, it turns out.

CADEN
You're not an idiot.

Pause.

HAZEL
Then you say, in fact, you're very
bright, Hazel. And I love your
eyes.

CADEN
In fact, you're very bright, Hazel.
And I love your eyes.
(pause)
Then what do I say?

HAZEL
I can't say what then you say.

CADEN
Why?

Pause.

HAZEL
Cause it's dirty.

INT. CADEN AND ADELE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Caden enters. The plumber is working on the sink.

PLUMBER
You can go ahead. Won't bother me.
I've seen everything.

CADEN
Um, it's okay.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

The studio is a mess, the floor covered with paint. Adele, in her paint splattered clothing, works on a tiny canvas, an inch square. She paints with a single-hair brush while looking through a magnifying glass. Caden pokes his head in.

CADEN

Can I pee in the sink?

ADELE

Um, yeah, I guess.

Caden pees in the sink in the corner of the studio. His urine is amber. He finishes and peeks over Adele's shoulder, through the magnifying glass at the painting. It's an amazingly detailed and angrily colored painting of a woman in a state of profound despair, screaming to the heavens, while standing in a field of flames. It seems like a much larger painting, full of wild, painterly, violent brushstrokes.

CADEN

It's gorgeous, Ad.

ADELE

Thanks. How was rehearsal?

CADEN

Awful. We have five hundred and sixty lighting cues. I don't know why I made it so complicated.

ADELE

It's what you do.

CADEN

Yeah. Anyway, we got through it. I think you'll be impressed.

ADELE

Oh, I can't go tonight.

(off his look)

I'm sorry. I've got to get two canvases ready to ship by tomorrow.

CADEN

But it's opening night.

ADELE

I would go if I could.

ADELE (CONT'D)

I've got to finish everything.
Everything needs time to dry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Fine.

ADELE

Plus, we put off taxes again. It's the 14th! I'll be through tonight and I'll go tomorrow. Okay?

CADEN

I have to get ready.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Caden is on the toilet. The plumber works on the sink. Caden sneaks a glance at his bowel movement. It's black.

PLUMBER

Bad color. I see a lot of shit. Black's a bad color for shit.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

The theater is full. Caden stands nervously in the back of the house. The lights dim. Hazel looks back from her seat at Caden and mouths the word "yay." He smiles. The curtain rises on a dark stage. The actor playing Alan can barely be made out standing center-stage and nuzzling the face of a horse. Soft barnyard sounds. On the side walls of the house, murky, black and white films are projected. On the left it's wild horses running. On the right it's a woman crawling on hands and knees. Downstage left a lighter illuminates the face of Dysart, with babdaged head. The cigarette lit, he extinguishes the lighter and fades back into murky silhouette.

ACTOR (DYSART)

With one particular horse, called Nugget, he embraces. The animal digs its sweaty brow into his cheek and they stand in the dark for an hour -- like a necking couple.

The horse and Alan continue to nuzzle in silence for a long time. There's a cough in the audience. Caden watches tensely from the back of the house.

ACTOR (DYSART) (CONT'D)

And of all nonsensical things -- I keep thinking about the horse! Not The boy: the horse, and what it may be trying to do.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACTOR (DYSART) (CONT'D)
I keep seeing that huge head
kissing him with its chained mouth.

Alan and the horse kiss passionately. The audience is rapt, lasciviously so. A man adjusts his crotch. Caden relaxes.

INT. RESTAURANT BACK ROOM - NIGHT

The cast party is in full swing. The opening was a success. There's lots of drinking. Caden chats with Claire, the young actress who plays Jill. Hazel watches from across the room.

CLAIRE
(scrunching her nose)
Ugh, I hated myself tonight. Plus
I'm so bloated and enormous.

CADEN
No. You looked great. You were
great. I was very pleased.

CLAIRE
I thought Tom was amazing!

CADEN
Yeah. Absolutely.
(squints suddenly)
Sorry. I have a bit of a headache.

CLAIRE
(kisses his forehead)
I just want to thank you for
everything. You've been absolutely
brilliant and it's going to be
miserable going ahead without you.

CADEN
I'll be around. I'll check in.

She gets teary, gives him a kiss on the cheek.

CLAIRE
God, I'm such a baby.

She just looks at him and smiles and nods.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
I'm going to get drunk.

CADEN
Ok, Claire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She backs away and gets lost in the crowd. Caden massages his temples. Suddenly Hazel is next to him.

HAZEL

I figured I'd better get in fast.

CADEN

Hey!

HAZEL

I loved it! And, by the way, Claire is trouble. And not terribly bright.

Caden laughs.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Just wanted you to know the word on the street.

CADEN

So you liked it?

HAZEL

Are you kidding? I cried for like fifteen minutes after. I loved every minute of it. Except Claire. I thought she was weak.

CADEN

Easy on the eyes.

HAZEL

Oh, Caden, not you, too.

He laughs. They sip their drinks.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Where's el wife-o?

CADEN

Had to work. Her Berlin show is in two weeks. We're going to spend like a month there.

HAZEL

Ah.

CADEN

Ah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAZEL

Ah.

(pause)

I'll miss you.

CADEN

Yeah, me too.

HAZEL

You're going to miss you,
too?

CADEN

Yeah, that's it.

HAZEL

(pause)

Why do I like you so much?

CADEN

I don't know.

HAZEL

(sighing)

Me neither. It must be that you're
married. Do you get high, my
friend?

CADEN

Y'know. Sometimes.

HAZEL

You want to now? With me?

CADEN

Where?

HAZEL

In my car.

CADEN

I don't know.

HAZEL

Come on, it's a party.

CADEN

I get kind of ... *something* when
I'm stoned.

HAZEL

What does *something* mean?

CADEN

I don't know. Bothered?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAZEL

What does bothered mean?

CADEN

Y'know... Horny.

HAZEL

And me with a station wagon and all. Could be dangerous.

CADEN

(laughing)

Yeah, it really could.

HAZEL

You're absolutely zero fun.

CADEN

You know I wish I could.

HAZEL

Jesus, I like you. I'm going.

CADEN

You're not staying for the reviews?

HAZEL

I know it's brilliant. I don't need to read some dope with elbow patches telling me.

She smiles, gives him a hug, and heads toward the door.

INT. HAZEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Hazel drives down a dark street. People watch her passing car from various windows. There's a run-over dog, lit by a streetlight, glistening on the side of the road.

EXT. STREET - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Hazel studies the dog. It's a bloody, gutty mess, squashed flat. Against all odds, it's still alive. Its head is lolling. She bends down to pet it.

HAZEL

You're not going to make it, baby.

INT. HAZEL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hazel takes off her make-up. She watches herself blankly in the mirror. She somewhat erases without eye make-up. The run-over dog is sleeping in a box on the floor.

INT. RESTAURANT BACK ROOM - NIGHT

The party has thinned out. The remaining people are sitting around a table, drinking. Claire, next to Caden, rests her head, sleepily drunk, against his shoulder. Caden studies a series of lumps under the skin of his arm.

CLAIRE

What are you going to do now?

CADEN

I'm going to Berlin for a month for my wife's show. Then I don't know.

CLAIRE

I wish I was your wife or a wife or had a wife. Or was German even. I'm so lonely with none of those things.

A man walks in with a bunch of newspapers.

CADEN

Yay or nay?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Hazel gets out of her car and walks up to a neat little house on a street of neat little houses. Faint swirls of smoke escape from the windows. She rings the doorbell. The button is hot; Hazel pulls her finger away.

INT. HOUSE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

The rooms are hazy. The realtor coughs a little. Hazel surveys the scene.

HAZEL

It's nice. The house is on fire?

REALTOR

Yes, that's why they decided to sell. Very motivated. Which is good for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL

What's the square footage?

REALTOR

About twenty-two hundred. Not including the partially-finished basement

HAZEL

Well, I live by myself.

REALTOR

It's a perfect size for someone alone. Too much space would make you feel more alone.

HAZEL

I like it, but I'm a little concerned about dying in the fire.

REALTOR

That's a personal decision, how one prefers to die. Would you like to meet my son? Derek?

Derek, 40 and scruffily handsome, appears around a corner.

DEREK

Hey, Mom.

REALTOR

Derek's living in the basement since his divorce. If that's okay.

HAZEL

Hi, Derek.

INT. ADELE AND CADEN'S LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Caden enters. Tax stuff spread on the floor. Two wine glasses on the coffee table. He hears chatting.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Caden enters. Adele sits at the table across from Maria, 50. They are drunk and eating popcorn.

ADELE

Hey.

CADEN

Hey.

MARIA

Hi, Caden.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Hi. It's late.

ADELE

Maria came over to keep me company
and we lost track. How'd it go?

CADEN

We're a hit. Reviews are great.

ADELE

Great.

MARIA

That's great, Caden! Good
for you!

CADEN (CONT'D)

Yeah.

ADELE

I'll see it tomorrow. Tonight!

Adele and Maria laugh.

MARIA

I'd love to see it, too.

ADELE

Can we get a ticket for
Maria?

CADEN

Um, yeah, probably. I'm anxious to
know what you think, Ad.

Adele smiles, exchanges a look with Maria.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Are you stoned?

ADELE

A little. I mean, are you happy
with it?

CADEN

Yeah.

ADELE

Then it doesn't matter what I
think.

MARIA

Absolutely! It's all about your
satisfaction, Caden.

INT. CADEN AND ADELE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Adele snores lightly. Caden is in bed with eyes wide open. The synthesized waves of the sound machine crash. He focuses on the sound. He hears someone walking on the beach.

INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM - MORNING

A slightly bedraggled Caden waits anxiously.

INT. LAB - MORNING

Caden is naked and shivering as he stands in a darkened room and his body is bombarded by bluish pinpoint lights.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Caden and Olive walk along. Caden holds an Income Tax envelope. His face has pustules on it.

OLIVE

What's wrong with your face, Daddy?

CADEN

It's pustules. It's called sycosis. Spelled differently than psychosis, but it sounds the same.

OLIVE

Oh. Okay, pretend we're fairies. I'm a girl fairy and my name is ...
(making it up)

La-ru...lee. And you're a boy fairy and your name is Teeterree.

CADEN

Ok.

OLIVE

What's my name again?

CADEN

La-ru-lee.

OLIVE

No. I said ... La-ru-la.

CADEN

La-ru-la.

INT. POST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Caden and Olive are at the back of the long line of people.

OLIVE

Pretend we fight each other. And I
say stop hitting me or I'll die.
And you say okay, but you're
fibbing. And you hit me again.

CADEN

Okay.

OLIVE

Okay. Let's go. Hit me.

They pretend to hit each other. Olive makes hissing and
roaring noises. She stops.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

Okay. You have to stop hitting me
now or I will die.

CADEN

Okay.

He stops.

OLIVE

No! Pretend you're fibbing!
Remember?

He mock hits her again. She falls.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

Now I have to die.

(beat)

Pretend you say you don't want me
to die.

CADEN

I don't want you to die.

OLIVE

(compassionate whisper)
But I have to.

CADEN

But I'll miss you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLIVE

I have to. And you'll have to wait
a million years to see me again.

Caden tears up at this and tries to conceal it.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

And I'll be put in a box. And all
I'll need is a tiny glass of water.
And lots of -- tiny pieces of
pizza. And the box will have
wings, like an airplane.

CADEN

Where will it take you?

OLIVE

(thinks)

Home.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Performance in progress. Caden sits between Adele and Maria
and an elderly couple. He glances over at Adele's stony
face. Maria is drunk and blurry.

ACTRESS (CLAIRE)

(gently)

Take your sweater off.

ACTOR (TOM)

What?

ACTRESS (CLAIRE)

I will, if you will.

He stares at her -- a pause. She lifts her sweater over her
head. He unzips his sweater. They remove their clothing.

ACTOR (ALAN)

You're ... You're very ...

ACTRESS (CLAIRE)

So are you...

(pause)

Come here.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Caden and Adele drive in silence. Maria sits in the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN
I just --

ADELE
I don't know what it matters
what I think.

CADEN
Because your opinion is --

ADELE
It was good. It was well
done. It was very ... well
done. Very successful.

MARIA
Oh, I thought it was wonnnderfull!

CADEN
(to Adele)
But?

ADELE
Nothing. But nothing.
(pause)
I can't get excited about restaging
someone else's old play. There's
nothing personal in it.

CADEN
I put my soul into that thing.

ADELE
Do you really believe that tripe?

CADEN
It's not tripe. Jesus.

ADELE
Ok, fine. Y'know, you're right.
Whatever. But it's not you. It's
not anyone. It's not real.

CADEN
People love it. People come out
crying, saying their lives are
changed and --

ADELE
Great. Be a fucking tool of
suburban blue-hair regional theater
subscribers. But what are you
leaving behind? We don't have
forever. You act as if you have
forever to figure it out.

CADEN
Why are you being like this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Adele has a coughing fit.

ADELE

I'm not being like anything.

CADEN

You're mad at me and I have no idea why. Are you seeing someone else?

ADELE

Is that your entire frame of reference for relationship problems?

CADEN

No. I don't know. It's a stressful time. Our shows. The whole health thing.

ADELE

Oh, you're fine.

CADEN

Anyway, I think the trip will be good.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Caden, Adele, Maria, and the elderly couple sit at a table. Everyone is on their best behavior.

CADEN'S MOTHER

The acting was wonderful. So.. so.. realistic.

CADEN

Thanks, Mom. I'm glad you guys could come.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caden and Adele are in bed. Caden listens to the sound machine and hears footsteps in the sand, closer now.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Caden, in shorts and t-shirt, tiptoes past his parents, sleeping on the fold-out couch.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Adele sits at the kitchen table with Olive. Adele drinks coffee and talks on the phone. Olive eats cereal and watches a cartoon. Caden enters. Olive doesn't look away from her show. A cartoon jackal talks to a man who looks like Caden.

JACKAL

When you are dead there is no time.
The world is a lifeless rock.

Caden pours a cup of coffee, sits down at the table.

CADEN

I have hives.

Adele continues to talk on the phone.

ADELE

No, I know. Exactly.

Caden picks up the newspaper. It's dated May 25th, 2006. He flips through, finds the obituaries and starts to read. Martin Wicks, an engineer, died at 45 of colon cancer.

ADELE (CONT'D)

Ok. All right. Yeah. Ok, bye.

Adele hangs up the phone, looks at the paper.

CADEN

I have hives. Who was that?

ADELE

Maria.

CADEN

Right. It's been a few hours since you two spoke.

ADELE

Caden, I think I want to go to Berlin with just Olive.

Caden looks up.

ADELE (CONT'D)

I think it would be good for us.

Silence. Caden's father appears in the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN'S FATHER
Morning, kiddos.

CADEN
Christ. Is this about last night?

Caden's father smiles, nods, and exits.

INT. CADEN AND ADELE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is littered with newspapers and dirty dishes. Caden sits on the couch, stares into space. He picks up a tube of ointment and rubs it on his rash. He takes some pills.

Later: Caden watches TV. A commercial: diffused images of people flying kites, having picnics, watching sunsets.

ANNOUNCER
Flurostatin TR allows you to go on
with your life while facing the
challenges of chemotherapy. Ask
your doctor if it's right for you.

He feels the bumps on his arm, which have grown.

INT. BOX OFFICE - DAY

Caden leans on the counter chatting with Hazel. Her crushed dog sleeps on the floor in a box.

HAZEL
We should get a drink. Be fun.

CADEN
It'd be weird.

HAZEL
I like weird. I like you. See?

He doesn't say anything.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Anyway. I don't want to make you
uncomfortable. I just thought it
would be a fun diversion. Okay, I
do want to make you uncomfortable.

CADEN
(laughs)
Oh, Haze. I wish I could.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL
You can, Cade. You can!

CADEN
I have an appointment.

HAZEL
Crease.

CADEN
What do you mean?

HAZEL
It's just a word. Don't get all bent out of shape.

CADEN
I won't. Sorry.

INT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The masked dentist probes Caden's mouth.

DENTIST
3, 3, 3. 3, 3, 5. 3, 4, 3. 3, 4,
4. 5, 3, 3. 2, 4, 3.
(to Caden)
You've got some fives this time.
It's looking bad. Keep with the
flossing. We'll see in six months.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Caden sits across from Madeline.

CADEN
I'm lonely.

MADELINE
Anything else?

Caden notices Madeline's feet in too-small shoes. There are visible blisters and band-aids on her feet.

CADEN
I'm hurt.

MADELINE
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

It's important what Adele thinks of my stuff. And it's like a knife when she's dismissive. On some level, I think she's right when she says I'm not doing anything real.

MADELINE

What would be real?

CADEN

I don't know. I'm just kind of faking my way through. Now I'm afraid I'm going to die. They don't know what's wrong with me. I want to do something important. While I'm still here.

MADELINE

Yes, that would be the time to do it. I have a book that might help you get better.

CADEN

Better? Really? I'd like that.

MADELINE

It's called Getting Better.

CADEN

Who wrote it?

MADELINE

Me.

(goes to full bookcase)
All of these.

CADEN

Wow. I never knew that.

MADELINE

Wow. yes, wow. Wow indeed.
(finds the book)
Here you go.

Caden takes the very thick book, flips through it, catching words and snippets here and there: Clairaudience ... vaginal juices... The echo began ... Plumbing ... Cats eat rats ... Me who am as a raw nerve ... Crease ... The Uncreating Word...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Oh. It's forty-five dollars.

INT. CADEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Caden finds a website online for Madeline Gravis. Amazing graphics. She is touted as one of the foremost psychologists in the world, a sought-after public speaker, advisor to world leaders. Her book Getting Better has sold millions of copies and is translated into fifteen languages.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The doctor studies a file while Caden watches him closely.

DOCTOR

It's a bit of a mystery.

CADEN

What should I do?

DOCTOR

We'll keep testing. In the meantime, wear sunglasses during the day. I'll write some scrips for the night sweats, rashes, lower extremity swelling, and sycosis.

INT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The dentist probes Caden's mouth. The Hygienist writes the numbers.

DENTIST

5, 5, 5. 5, 5, 4. 4, 5, 5.

(to Caden)

It's much worse. I'm going to recommend a periodontist. He --

HYGIENIST

Or she, Doctor.

DENTIST

No, it's a he. This one.

HYGIENIST

Oh. I was just... sorry.

DENTIST

He will probably suggest some gum surgery to close up those pockets.

INT. CADEN AND ADELE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Caden is on the phone. His legs are elevated and his pant legs are rolled up, revealing swollen, discolored calves.

CADEN
I'm looking for... I'm sorry, I
don't speak German.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Caden sits by himself in a booth, reading the self-help book.

VOICE
... the most fundamental aspect of
being truly alive is living in the
present moment.

Caden tries to be in the present moment. Someone screams far away.

INT. BAR - LATER

Caden nurses a beer. He seems unwell. Hazel plops down across from him. She has a smudge of soot on her nose.

CADEN
Hey! Thanks for meeting me.

He points to his nose. She wipes at the soot on hers.

HAZEL
God, I'm delighted. Thought you'd
never ask. You did ask, right?

CADEN
I didn't want to be alone.

HAZEL
Who does?
(pause)
You don't look like you feel well.

CADEN
I'm going through some things.

HAZEL
You want to tell me about it?

CADEN
I can't really.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL

Ok. Tell me something else.

CADEN

You tell me something.

HAZEL

Um, I bought a really nifty sweater today. On sale. Fifty dollars reduced from three hundred!

CADEN

What color?

HAZEL

Teal. Cashmere. So very, very soft. You must feel it sometime.

CADEN

What do we do with all this, Hazel?

HAZEL

I don't know.

(after a moment)

We fuck? We continue to sort of flirt? You divorce your wife and marry me and I make you happy for the very first time in your life and all your symptoms disappear?

(beat)

We call it a day?

(beat)

Don't choose the last one. I just said that one for effect.

CADEN

Do I have to choose at all?

HAZEL

No, I suppose not. Choosing is not your strong suit. You want to come over to my place, Cotard?

CADEN

Um ...

HAZEL

I'm won't let you off the hook by saying "never mind" this time.

CADEN

Adele is only on vacation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAZEL

She hasn't called you since she left. You've left countless messages. It's been a year.

CADEN

It's been a week.

HAZEL

(stares at him, then:)
I'm going to buy you a calendar.

Caden rips a cocktail napkin into little pieces.

CADEN

Okay, just for one drink.

Hazel smiles and stands. Caden watches her ass as she turns to leave.

INT. HAZEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Hazel drives. Caden follows in his car. We see him in her rearview mirror, seemingly peering into her car. Hazel hikes her skirt and causally begins to play with herself with her right hand.

INT. HAZEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Haze fixes drinks, mixes them with her right index finger. She hands Caden one.

CADEN

I really can't drink very much because of my condition.

HAZEL

Caden's mysterious condition. Well, have one sip, anyway.

CADEN

Did you put something in it?

HAZEL

Would you like me to have? A little love potion, perhaps?

CADEN

Sure, why not?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL
If that's what it takes, consider
it done. Poof! Love potion.

Caden laughs and takes a sip.

CADEN
It's good.

She takes a sip of her drink. Caden drinks some more of his.

HAZEL
Does it make you want to kiss me?

CADEN
Yeah. Kind of.

HAZEL
Tell me why?

CADEN
Um, I feel a lot of longing.

HAZEL
Hmm. Beg a girl, why dontcha.

CADEN
Um, okay. Please, Hazel, let me --

HAZEL
On your knees.

CADEN
What?

HAZEL
I'd like you to beg me on your
knees for a kiss. Just for fun.

Dumbly, Caden gets down on his knees.

CADEN
Why am I doing this?

HAZEL
(smiling warmly)
For fun, baby.

CADEN
You'll help me forget my troubles?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAZEL

Oh, kiddo, you don't even know.

CADEN

I have a wife.

HAZEL

You have me. And I adore you.

INT. HAZEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caden and Hazel have violent sex. Hazel watches Caden's contorted, straining face. They finish explosively. He collapses. They lie there heaving. Caden starts to cry.

HAZEL

What? What is it?

CADEN

I don't know. I'm sorry.

HAZEL

What?

CADEN

I'm just so confused. I'm sorry.
I'm really sick. I think I'm
dying. I have a kid. I'm married.

HAZEL

Oh, Jesus. Oh, fuck me.

CADEN

I'm sorry. It's terrible, I know.

HAZEL

Yeah. I just thought this might
change things

CADEN

(still crying)
I had a good time. You're a very
nice person. Really.

HAZEL

That is just the wrong thing to say
right now, Caden. You should go.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Caden is on the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

48.

CADEN
(crying)
I'm so glad I finally got you.

ADELE (PHONE VOICE)
(scratchy and far-away)
Hello?

CADEN
So... how is everything?

ADELE
Who is this?

CADEN
It's Caden! How is everything?

ADELE
Caden?

CADEN
Yes. I look forward to seeing you
and Olive on the 12th.

ADELE
I better go. There's a dinner.

CADEN
Ok. Have fun --

The connection is lost. Caden sits there, looks at the 2007 tax form in front of him, goes into convulsions. He manages to grab the phone, his hand flopping all over the dial.

OPERATOR
911. What's the problem, ma'am?

CADEN
I'm sick.

OPERATOR
We're out of ambulances, miss, but
we'll send a taxi. Please wait in
front of your house.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Caden sits crammed in the back of a cab with three other sick people. The guy next to Caden is bleeding profusely from his nose, and holds a handful of balled up tissues to his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

49.

DRIVER

You were supposed to be a woman.

CADEN

I was supposed to be?

DRIVER

Well, no matter. I get almost the same money either way.

Blood drips out of the man's nose onto Caden's shoulder. The cab pulls into a loading dock area. There are filthy dumpsters back here, piled high with used bandages.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

(pointing to door)

Go through there. Don't touch any garbage. Especially those of you with open wounds.

CADEN

I think I'll just go home. I'm feeling better.

DRIVER

You have to register. You called 911. You're on record. If you don't go in, I get fined. And I'll fucking hunt you down and kill you.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Caden waits on a plastic chair in a dimly lit hallway, his beat-up suitcase at his feet. The man sitting next to him has a missing ear and reads a very old Vogue.

NURSE

Mr. Bartram?

The Vogue man is led down a corridor. Caden picks up the stained magazine. He flips through and opens to a spread about his wife. She seems glamorous. There are photos of her in Berlin, her work, her flat. She is the toast of the art world. There are photos of her with a man named Heinz Wittgart and also with Olive, who seems somewhat Nazi youth now.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Mr. Cotard?

He looks up, having forgotten where he was.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE (CONT'D)

Follow me, please.

Caden grabs his suitcase and follows the nurse down a dismal hallway: gurneys against the dirty walls, empty wheelchairs. A skinny man with a camera takes a flash picture of Caden. A few nurses drinking coffee out of paper cups eye him. There's a puddle of vomit on the floor. They arrive at the end of the hall. A doctor pokes his head out of a room. He is studying a file and doesn't look up.

DOCTOR

Mr. Cotard?

INT. SMALL EXAMINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The doctor never looks up from the files.

DOCTOR

You've had a seizure of sorts.

CADEN

What does that mean?

DOCTOR

There seems to be some synaptic degradation.

CADEN

It's serious?

DOCTOR

We don't know but yes.

They both sit there in silence for a long while.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

It's not a good thing.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

It's winter. Caden waits in line, holding a big wrapped box.

POST OFFICE CLERK

Next.

Caden approaches the counter. The clerk wears a Santa hat.

CADEN

I want to send this to my daughter
in Germany.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Caden sits on the couch, wheezing and reading a dictionary entry for the word "crease." The definition is "n. a fold." He squirts artificial saliva in his mouth.

INT. PERIODONTIST'S OFFICE- DAY

Caden is having periodontal surgery. It's bloody.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Caden, with swollen lower face and bleeding mouth, approaches the box office with a gift-wrapped box. Hazel looks up. The damaged dog barks.

HAZEL

Be quiet, Squishy.

CADEN

Hi.

HAZEL

Caden, I have no interest in being yet another woman you feel guilty about.

CADEN

Okay. Bye. Thank you anyway.

INT. CADEN'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Caden reads Getting Better:

VOICE

One must live in the eternal present. This requires an openness to all experience.

A fax starts to come in. Caden watches as the words appear, fuzzy as if there is some interference in the process.

Caden -

Olive wanted me to ask you not to read her diary. She left it under her pillow by mistake.

INT. OLIVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

A pre-schooler's room. Caden lifts the bed pillow and finds kid's diary. He studies it, then puts it back. There's a knock at the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Caden opens the front door. A man stands there.

CADEN

Yes?

The man hands an envelope to Caden, who opens it and reads the enclosed letter. The man watches as Caden reads. Finally Caden finishes.

CADEN (CONT'D)

It seems to end mid-sentence.

The man pulls the stuck pages apart. Caden reads again for a long time, without any emotion.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Madeline's feet are swollen and bloody.

CADEN

So I just got this MacArthur Grant last night.

MADELINE

Oh, Caden!

CADEN

Yeah. A lot of money.

MADELINE

Do you know what you're going to do with it?

CADEN

A theater piece. Something big and true and tough. Y'know, finally put my real self into something.

MADELINE

Oh, Caden!

CADEN

The MacArthur is called "the genius grant." And I want to earn it.

MADELINE

That's wonderful.

(CONTINUED)

CADEN

Oh, I wanted to ask you, how old are kids when they start to write?

MADELINE

Varies.

CADEN

Could a four year old keep a diary?

MADELINE

There's a brilliant novel written by a four year old.

CADEN

Really?

MADELINE

Little Winky. By Horace Wood.

CADEN

Cute.

MADELINE

Hardly. Little Winky is a virulent anti-semite, who works in a gin mill during prohibition. The story follows his initiation into the Klan, his introduction to the pornographic snuff industry and his ultimate degradation at the hands of a black ex-convict, with whom he embarks on a homosexual affair.

CADEN

Wow.

MADELINE

He killed himself at five.

CADEN

That's horrible.

MADELINE

He would've written so much more had he lived. There's a wonderful book about him. They developed a method to figure out what he would've written had he lived to ten, twenty, thirty, etcetera. Kind of like when they computer-age a photo of a missing kid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CADEN
Is that possible?

MADELINE
Which part?

CADEN
Any of it. Why did he kill himself?

MADELINE
I don't know, why did you?

CADEN
What?

MADELINE
I said, why would you?

CADEN
Oh. I don't know.

INT. OLIVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Caden paces nervously. He sits on Olives bed and jimmies open her diary with a screwdriver. He reads:

VOICE
Dear Diary. Thank you for being my new best friend. My name is Olive Cotard and I am four years old. I like chocolate ice cream and --

INT. TOY STORE - DAY

Caden looks at the toys.

VOICE
-- my favorite color is pink.

CLERK
Can I help you?

CADEN
I'm looking for a Christmas present for my daughter.

CLERK
How about this?

The clerk holds up a pink box with a picture of a nose on it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Yes. Okay.

INT. DINER - DAY

Caden sits with Hazel. She seems somewhat distant. His nose runs and he scratches the pustules on his face.

CADEN

The idea is to do a massive theater piece. Uncompromised, honest --

The food arrives.

CADEN (CONT'D)

I was wondering if you would want to work on this project with me.

HAZEL

In your box office?

CADEN

No. Like as my assistant.

HAZEL

Um... what would you pay?

CADEN

I don't know. I'd pay you a good salary. I just want to know if you'd be interested.

HAZEL

I'm not sure I can work with you.

CADEN

I really want to normalize it, Hazel. I think we'd have fun and it would be very helpful to me to have your support in this.

He swallows some food then chokes a bit. She watches him.

CADEN (CONT'D)

I miss you.

She stares at him.

INT. CRAMPED REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

Caden, beads of sweat on his forehead, sits with a group of actors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tom and Claire from the production of Eggs are among the group. No one speaks. Finally, Caden clears his throat.

CADEN

We'll start by talking. We'll be honest and out of that a piece of theater will evolve. I'll begin. I've been thinking a lot about dying lately.

CLAIRE

You're going to be fine, sweetie.

CADEN

I appreciate that, Claire, but --

CLAIRE

Well, you are. You poor thing.

CADEN

The thing is, regardless of how this particular thing I'm going through works itself out, I will be dying. So will you.

CLAIRE

Caden!

CADEN

So will everyone here. And I want to explore that unflinchingly. Theater is the place to look at the fundamental aspects of our lives.

There is a long silence as everyone looks uncomfortable.

CADEN (CONT'D)

We are all hurtling toward death. Yet here we are, for the moment, alive. Each of us knowing we will die; each of us secretly believing we won't.

Nobody says anything for a long moment.

CADEN (CONT'D)

That's what I think anyway.

INT. CADEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caden is in bed, reading Olive's diary. The noise machine is on "ocean" and the person walking in the sand is closer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE

Dear diary. Germany is wonderful!
I like it much more than the United
States. So many friends here. My
new dad is great and handsome.

Breathing and unintelligible muttering can be heard on the machine. Caden gets up and puts his ear near it. He grimaces in pain for a moment, then it seems to subside. His mouth bleeds. He dials the phone.

HAZEL'S ANSWERING MACHINE

It's Hazel. Leave a message.

CADEN

Hi. I haven't heard from you so I
thought I'd say hi. Hi, Hazel!

He hangs up, embarrassed. The muttering on the sound machine is closer. He grimaces once more, recovers, then dials again.

CLAIRE (PHONE VOICE)

Hello?

CADEN

Hi, Claire, it's Caden.

CLAIRE (PHONE VOICE)

Hi! I was just thinking about you!

CADEN

Yeah? Um, I was calling to say hi,
chat about today maybe.

CLAIRE (PHONE VOICE)

Sure. Yes. Of course. I thought
it was an auspicious start.

CADEN

Nah. Anyway. Do you want to get a
drink or something? It's late so --

CLAIRE

Yeah! Yeah yeah yeah!

INT. QUINCY'S - NIGHT

Caden waits in a booth, nursing a martini, watching people walk in, but not Claire. After a bit, Hazel enters with Derek from the burning house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She's laughing and doesn't see Caden. He slinks back into the booth. They sit at a table not far from Caden, who can hear their conversation.

HAZEL
(giggly)
Stop!

DEREK
I'm just asking.

HAZEL
You are so obnoxious!

DEREK
You're so obnoxious.

HAZEL
Yeah, well, you find it awfully charming. My obnoxiousity.

DEREK
Obnoxiousity is not a word.

HAZEL
You don't want to cross me.

DEREK
I don't?

HAZEL
No. Because you like me so much.

DEREK
True. I like your obnoxiousity.

HAZEL
And my use of the word
"obnoxiousity."

DEREK
Yes.

HAZEL
Mmm. You're delicious in your
acquiescence.

Claire enters, looks for Caden. She spots Hazel first.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Hi, Claire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAIRE
Hi....!

HAZEL
Hazel.

CLAIRE
Of course. Hazel. I knew that!
Duh! The box office.

HAZEL
Yes, I'm the box office.

CLAIRE
How are you?

HAZEL
Wonderful! You?

CLAIRE
Fine, thanks. I was supposed to
meet Caden here. You know Mr.
Cotard, right?

HAZEL
Yes, I recall Mr. Cotard.

Hazel looks around now, too. Both spot Caden at the same
time. He smiles and waves.

CADEN
Oh, hey.

He gets up and approaches Hazel's table.

HAZEL
Hi, Caden.

CLAIRE
Hi, Caden.

CADEN (CONT'D)
Hi, Hazel. Hi, Claire.

HAZEL
This is Derek.

CADEN
Hi, Derek.

CLAIRE
Hi, Derek.

DEREK
Hi.

CADEN
How's everything, Haze... ul?

(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CLAIRE
But that's what's so
refreshing. I mean, how much
prepackaged ...

HAZEL
... cryptology...

CLAIRE
... theater can we take as a
country? Y'know?

CADEN
Yeah, I guess I want to try to
fight that in my small way.

CLAIRE
I'm proud of you.

HAZEL
Ptolemy was the first to
divide the day into 24
equinoctial hours...

CLAIRE
So tell me what you want from me?

CADEN
Hmm?

CLAIRE
From my character.

CADEN
Oh. Well, I'd like to develop it
over time, figure out what you
think, kind of build it together.

CLAIRE
That sounds fun.

HAZEL
... hairstyle called a beaver
tail. It was a kind of a
loop of hair, flat, hung down
over the nape of the neck.

CADEN (CONT'D)
Yeah.

CLAIRE
You seem distracted.

HAZEL
Also called the banging chignon.
Popular in the mid 19th century.

CADEN
No. Maybe a little tired. And I
have these health issues.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CLAIRE
It's late.

HAZEL
... and the jet, it exploded,
and she was sent plummeting
...

CADEN (CONT'D)
Um...

CLAIRE
Well, we can talk more
tomorrow maybe.

CADEN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.
(pause)
When I get tired I have to remember
to breathe. It's a new thing. My
autonomic functions.

CLAIRE
Poor darling. It's fine.

CADEN
I'm just ...

CLAIRE
(grabbing his hand)
Shh. Shh. Shh. Shh. Shh.

Claire leads Caden past Hazel and Derek, deep in
conversation, heads close together.

HAZEL
And Whitrow says, "If a mind is
regarded to be a memory-based
process of integration..."

EXT. SCHENECTADY STREET - NIGHT

Caden and Claire walk. It's bitterly cold. They pass a store
window advertising a Presidents Day sale. The female
mannequins are dressed as Lincoln and Washington. Caden
glances at their star-spangled bikini-bottomed crotches.

CLAIRE
My mother died last night.

CADEN
My God. That's awful. I'm so
sorry. What are you doing out?

CLAIRE
I couldn't deal with my sisters.

CADEN
What happened to her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

Oh, this is me. She fell. Slipped in her bathroom. Hit her head. It actually split in half. Horrible.

They stop at a small hatchback.

CADEN

In half?

CLAIRE

Yes. Well, it was nice seeing you.

CADEN

I'm so sorry. In half?

CLAIRE

It's okay. It's life. It's --

Claire's face contorts into a horrifying, paralyzed grimace.

CADEN

What is it? What?

She silently weeps with a gaping mouth. Caden awkwardly embraces her. She remains stiff.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Do you want me to drive you home?

She shakes her head "no."

CADEN (CONT'D)

Is there anything I can do?

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Caden sits with Claire and a large congregation. She rests her hand on Caden's.

MINISTER

... joined the accounting firm of Beller-Panck. There she met Ralph Keene. They fell in love, married, and in ten months their first child, Claire was born.

The minister's voice goes under.

CLAIRE

(crying whisper to Caden)
I used to be a baby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

64.

CADEN

I'm so sorry.

CLAIRE

I was a baby girl with hair of spun gold, the prettiest baby anyone had ever seen. One day the townsfolk, who were jealous of my beauty, decided to kidnap me.

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY

Claire and Caden watch her mother's casket put in the ground.

CLAIRE

There they kept me for ten years, forced to do all their cleaning and cooking.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Curtains drawn, the room glows with afternoon sunlight. Caden sits on the bed. Claire enters naked from the bathroom, brushing her teeth and talking.

CLAIRE

There was a knock at the door.

CADEN

God, you're beautiful.

CLAIRE

(sits on bed next to him)
It was a bearded old man.

Caden can hold out no longer. He kisses her. They fall back on the bed. He kisses her all over as she continues to tell the story. Her voice becomes irresistibly melodious.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

He said to me, "young lady, I have in my satchel a ring. The person who possesses it will have all the magic of the forest sprites."

CADEN

I have to fuck you. I have to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE
(spreading her legs)
"You can have this ring if you
promise me one thing." "Anything,"
I whispered in his ear.

Caden and Claire are having sex now.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
He said, "There is just one other
thing. You must never tell anyone
what it is you promised me. If you
do, you will die."

INT. CLAIRE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Claire sits on the toilet and pees.

CLAIRE
When all the townsfolk died
horrible, humiliating deaths, I was
reunited with my family. And I
lived happily ever after, doing
good with my new powers.

Caden cries and rests his head on her thigh.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Why are you crying, honey?

CADEN
I'm in love with you.

Claire smiles, strokes his hair.

CADEN (CONT'D)
I have problems, Claire. I'm still
attached to my wife. I'm still
attached to Hazel.

CLAIRE
We'll work everything out.

EXT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Caden and Claire move boxes into the building from a U-Haul.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Caden stands in line with a big gift-wrapped box addressed to
Olive Cotard. The clerks behind the counter wear Santa hats.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

Actors spread around. Caden sits at a table. Hazel, next to him with a notebook, drums the fingers on her left hand. She wears a wedding ring. Caden glances at it.

CADEN

Okay, let's start. Claire?

Claire gets on her knees and holds her stomach as if in great pain. She screams and smacks her belly. An actor dances up to her. She springs up and pounces on him, beating him.

ACTOR

Karen, please!

CLAIRE

Why did you do that to me?
You vicious son of a bitch
whore!

ACTOR

Let me tell you about my head,
about what's going on in my head,
Karen. My head has things about it
you don't understand.

CLAIRE

I see no head. You have no
head! You have no --

ACTOR

Shut up! Shut up, you
goddamn whore! When I was
little --

CLAIRE

No! When I was little --

A third actor runs up to them.

THIRD ACTOR

I'm dying! I have no time left.

The actor continues, his voice going under.

HAZEL

(to Caden)

What the hell is this?

CADEN

I -- We're exploring death.

HAZEL

Jesus, Caden, it's bad.

CADEN

I didn't hire you to be negative.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL

Why did you hire me? I'm curious.

CADEN

Okay, hold it everybody. Let's stop and try work some things out.

HAZEL

Good luck.

CADEN

Hazel, stop it.

Caden approaches the actors.

CADEN (CONT'D)

This is a city, populated with millions of people.

ACTOR THREE

An unnamed city?

CADEN

Sure, Dan. I need to work with you individually to develop your characters. Then we'll place them in the community. Over time I'll bring in more residents, until we finally have an actual city in here. Trevor, let's start with you. Everybody else, go off and work up life stories.

The actors scatter, except for Trevor. Claire glares at Caden as she walks off.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Trevor, tell me about your character.

INT. CLAIRE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Claire chops vegetables. Caden feeds a baby. Christmas decorations are up.

CLAIRE

There's a difference between favoring me and pretending we've never met. I mean, we had Ariel, I think people know we've fucked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN
That's not the point.

CLAIRE
Apparently not.

CADEN
We'll talk about your character
after we get Ariel to bed. Okay?

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Claire sits on the bed and seems almost in a trance. She looks haggard and her cheeks are tear-stained.

CLAIRE
She's 52. Divorced with three kids, no child support. A minimum wage job at a diner. Her kids' clothes are threadbare. She was seeing this guy for a while, Nicky, a pharmacist. He beat her.

CADEN
Tell me a childhood story.

Claire thinks for a moment.

CLAIRE
When she was seven --

CADEN
Tell me as her..

CLAIRE
When I was seven granny died. She was in the hospital forever. Every time I saw her she was skinnier. Riddled with cancer. I remember her gray tongue poking out of her mouth to lick her dry, rubbery lips. I wanted her to die. I was bored. I am so ashamed.

Claire cries. Caden tries to hug her. She pushes him away. The baby starts to cry.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Check on her.

INT. ARIEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caden sits on a tiny chair, thumbing through a magazine. Ariel sleeps in a crib. Claire weeps off-screen. He sees an article entitled "Flower Girl", featuring a photo of a naked Olive, smiling, her body covered from neck to ankle in tattoos of blue and yellow and flowers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The article begins, "Ten year old Olive Cotard of Berlin is the first child in history with a full body tattoo..." Caden stares in disbelief. Claire pokes her head in. Her eyes are red.

CADEN

I have to go find my daughter.

CLAIRE

Your daughter is right here.

CADEN

My real daughter.

CLAIRE

What?

CADEN

My first daughter. Olive.
I've got to find her.

CLAIRE

Don't come back here if you go.

CADEN

She's tattooed!

CLAIRE

(revealing massive tattoo
on back)
Everyone's tattooed!

CADEN

I've never seen that before.

CLAIRE

You have responsibilities here.

CADEN

I'll be quick. I'll do it quick.

CLAIRE

Everyone's Tattooed, you fuck!

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Hazel drops off Caden. Her neck is gritty with soot.

CADEN

Thanks, Hazel.

HAZEL

I hope I see you again.

CADEN

I'm just going for a few days.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

It's dark and most people are sleeping. Caden reads Getting Better.

VOICE

You must be quiet and listen. The world explains itself to you when you do.

Caden tries to sit quietly.

MADELINE

Hi there!

He sees Madeline sitting across the aisle. She is sexy in make-up and a tight dress.

MAD

When you cancelled, it freed me up. So I'm traveling, too!

CADEN

I'm not sure I'm getting the book.

MADELINE

It's still affecting change. You're almost non-recognizable now.

CADEN

I always thought there'd be someone just for me, a woman, and if I didn't find her it would be my fault.

MADELINE

Huh. I'm sexy. Maybe you like me? I mean, we're out of the office now.

CADEN

Um, maybe. You look pretty. But are you the special one for me?

MADELINE

I could be. I could be very nice to you.

Madeline spreads her legs a bit and smiles at Caden.

EXT. BERLIN STREET - DAY

Caden wanders a dirty storefront street looking for an address. He finds it. An art gallery. He enters.

INT. GALLERY - DAY

The walls are hung with hundreds of Adele's tiny paintings.

CADEN

I don't speak German. I was --

GERMAN WOMAN

Yes, I may help you, Mister?

CADEN

I'm looking for Adele Cotard.

GERMAN WOMAN

Yes. We must not give addresses or other personal informations.

CADEN

I'm her husband.

GERMAN WOMAN

You are not her husband which is named Frederic.

CADEN

No. Well, we're separated, so --

GERMAN WOMAN

Leave your name on my notepad page.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - NIGHT

Caden sits nursing a coffee and reading Getting Better.

VOICE

Here is a photo of my vulva. Do you like it?

Caden looks at a photo of a vulva. Maria approaches and sits down.

CADEN

You're here, too?

MARIA

I live with Adele and Olive and Frederic and Uschi and Britt.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA (CONT'D)

What the fuck kind of filth are you reading?

CADEN

I want to see my daughter.

MARIA

They sent me.

CADEN

They? And who the fuck are Uschi and Britt?

MARIA

They decided it's not time to see you yet.

CADEN

I can't believe Adele got her tattooed like that.

MARIA

I did that. Olive's my project.

CADEN

She's a four year old. You stay the fuck away from her.

MARIA

She's ten now. And she's my muse.

Caden stares at her for a moment, then lunges. He punches her repeatedly as she tries to get away. She throws a punch which connects with the side of his head and knocks him down. She hurries off.

CADEN

What'd you do to my family? What'd you do to my daughter?

MARIA (IN GERMAN)

Screw you, Caden. Faggot! FAGGOT!

She turns down an alley. Caden, a half-block behind, hurries to the alley. She's not there. He walks through, looking for her. It's dark with trash cans and garbage. He spots a pile of unopened gift-wrapped boxes next to the trash. They are the Christmas and birthday gifts he sent Olive.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Caden wanders. The park is crowded with young people. He sits on a wall and watches the goings-on. An ethereal young woman with a thermos sits near him. She fixes herself a cup of coffee. Caden watches. Eventually the woman speaks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELINE TWO (IN GERMAN)

Are you a German man, Mister?

CADEN

No. I'm American.

MADELINE TWO

Ah. I'm French. Do you speak it?

CADEN

No. Sorry.

MADELINE TWO

No matter. I speak English pretty okay. You are here on holiday?

CADEN

I'm here on the end of my life, I think.

MADELINE TWO

Oh, that's terrible. For real?

CADEN

I don't know.

MADELINE TWO

Is it all right that I talk to you?
I don't hope to be a nuisance.

CADEN

It's fine. It's nice to be talked to. I haven't had much of that.

MADELINE TWO

My name is Madeline.

CADEN

I know someone else named Madeline.
It's a pretty name.

MADELINE TWO

Thank you. It is very ordinary.

CADEN

Not to me. My name is Caden.

MADELINE TWO

Ah. I came here to escape a little from my life. But I have been not escaping very much. I think I will go home soon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CADEN

What do you do at home?

MADELINE TWO

I'm studying cinema. To be a director, maybe.

CADEN

Ah. I'm a theater director.

MADELINE TWO

Oh yes? How wonderful!

CADEN

It's sort of meaningless. I mean, for me. Not for other people.

MADELINE TWO

To me it is important. I think this is because it is so corrupt. People starve for something of worth. They don't even know they do not eat real food. But the moment they taste real food they will know.

CADEN

Yes, I think you're right.

MADELINE TWO

Eh, sometimes I talk rubbish.

CADEN

That's not rubbish.

MADELINE TWO

I see the world moving in fast motion and there are so many moments not observed. If they are not observed, they do not create change. I'm sorry, my English is limited. It's difficult for me to say how I feel.

CADEN

I understand. It's quite profound, actually, what you are saying.

MADELINE TWO

Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CADEN

Yes. Can I buy you some real food,
if we can find it?

MADELINE TWO

(laughing)

Yes. Okay. Sure.

Caden watches her adjust her skirt, carefully pour the remainder of her cup of coffee back and screw the cap on. She looks up at Caden and smiles.

MADELINE TWO (CONT'D)

May I take you somewhere I
discovered. It's quite delicious.

EXT. NARROW OLD STREET - DAY

Caden and Madeline Two walk along. She has a slight limp.

MADELINE TWO

This street I found by following a
stream of water trickling along the
gutter.

They enter a small, dark cafe.

INT. CAFE - DAY

It's empty and messy. Dirty dishes on some of the tables.

MADELINE TWO

(off Caden's reaction)

No, it's very good.

Madeline Two chooses a table and they sit.

MADELINE TWO (CONT'D)

They are slow. But we are on
holiday. Well, I am. You are on
the end of your life. So maybe I
should see if anyone --

CADEN

No, no. I like waiting.

Madeline Two smiles.

MADELINE TWO

It smells good, yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Yes.

There's a silence during which Caden watches Madeline Two breathe and blink. He studies the freckles on her face. She scratches her chin. Eventually a heavy woman comes out with two bowls of soup, places them in front of Madeline Two and Caden. The woman recognizes Madeline Two, smiles at her.

MADELINE TWO

Dankeshein.

CADEN

Dankeshein.

The woman nods and exits.

MADELINE TWO

There is no menu. They serve what they have.

Madeline Two tastes a spoonful of soup. Her face registers her pleasure. Caden watches her.

MADELINE TWO (CONT'D)

Wonderful. Kartoffelsuppe.

They eat their soup in silence, in complete enjoyment. Madeline Two looks up.

MADELINE TWO (CONT'D)

I want to make a movie of these moments. Small ones. Like when you noticed my limp. How much I loved that moment. I knew certainly you would see it. I knew it wouldn't be right away. I waited. My nerve-endings were electric. At first you thought you were wrong because it is so slight.

CADEN

Yes.

MADELINE TWO

When you knew it was real you wondered what happened to me. It made you sad. And it awakened a tenderness you have not felt in a long while. Yes?

CADEN

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADELINE TWO
For this reason I love my limp.

CADEN
Will you tell me how you got it?

The German woman comes out with two plates.

MADELINE TWO
I don't think so.

GERMAN WOMAN
Jagerschnitzel.

MADELINE TWO
Dankeshein.

CADEN
Dankeshein.

The German woman smiles and leaves. Madeline Two sniffs the food. She sighs contentedly, and cuts into her food. Caden watches her chew. She looks up, smiles.

MADELINE TWO
You are kind to watch me chew.

CADEN
I don't know.

MADELINE TWO
There is so much obstacle between us. Do you ever think about distance between people?

CADEN
I do.

MADELINE TWO
Everyone I pass on the street, they hate me or lust me or don't see me at all. There is so rarely a true moment of connection.

Caden looks into her eyes. She looks down at the table.

MADELINE TWO (CONT'D)
You can't force it.

CADEN
I'm sorry. I was just trying.

MADELINE TWO
I'm very young and you're very old but we're both still here, on the planet right now. That's special.

EXT. COBBLESTONE STREET - DAY

Caden and Madeline walk and chat. Madeline is slightly ahead of Caden and walking backwards, gesturing animatedly.

MADELINE TWO

There is an expression in French.
Profil Perdu. It is a face more
than half turned away from the
viewer. Like this.

(demonstrates)

To me this such a beautiful
mysterious thing.

Caden smiles. A car speeds down the street, hops the curb
and hits Madeline, throwing her against a storefront. The
driver hurries out of the car. Caden runs to her side.

CADEN

(looking around)

Ambulance? Hospital? Someone?

A shopkeeper on a cellphone calls for an ambulance.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Madeline? Can you hear me?

MADELINE TWO

Yes, I can hear okay. I don't
think my ears got hit.

CADEN

It's going to be fine.

MADELINE TWO

No. I don't feel at all well.

CADEN

Well, yes...

MADELINE TWO

Besides I can see the world change
now. I know that means I am dying.

CADEN

What is it changing into?

MADELINE TWO

(thinks)

Stone.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Caden sits. Madeline approaches and takes the seat next to him. She barely acknowledges him.

CADEN
I need to see you.

MADELINE
You had your chance.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY

Caden watches passersby. He takes photographs and notes.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

It's massive, empty, old, and dirty. Caden inspects it with Hazel and a real estate agent.

REALTOR
Heart of the theater district.

CADEN
It's an amazing space. We could really get at the truth here.

HAZEL
I love it, Caden. You need to get it. It could've been our place if things turned out differently.

INT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The dentist probes Caden's mouth.

DENTIST
5, 4, 5. 5, 5, 5. 4, 5, 5. The surgery hasn't helped, Caden. I think you might lose some teeth.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

It's been scrubbed. There are small squared-off "apartment" areas, with actors in each, going about their days. A couple sleeps in a bed in one, in another there is a conversation between people over dinner at a kitchen table, a man watches television alone in one, etc. There are at least fifteen different configurations of people with a reel-to-reel tape recorder in each set-up. Caden walks from one to the other, eavesdropping on conversations. Hazel follows behind, taking notes. She is visibly pregnant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Good. This is good.

(quietly)

I can't believe you got pregnant.

HAZEL

Fuck you, Caden. What was I supposed to do? At my age.

Caden stops at Claire's apartment. She is ironing and watching a daytime soap, which is a closed-circuit TV. The actors in the soap are across the warehouse in another apartment. Ariel sits in a highchair and plays with a bowl of Cheerios. She is about two and a half.

ARIEL

Daddy!

CADEN

Daddy can't play now, Ariel honey.

CIAIRE

Daddy doesn't live with us anymore, baby. He had to move out to find himself.

Claire shoots daggers at Caden and goes back to ironing.

INT. WAREHOUSE - EVENING

People pack up to leave. Caden and Hazel go over some notes.

CADEN

You want to grab some dinner and finish this stuff up?

HAZEL

Derek and I have Lamaze.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Caden sits in the fluorescent car, reading the paper. He looks at an ad for a movie called A Moment in Time, starring Dakota Fanning and Haley Joel Osment. The ad says it's the first movie made by a computer, simulating what filmmaker Madeline D'Useau would've made had she lived.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Caden sits in the empty theater watching a 25 year old Fanning and a slightly older Osment sitting in a cafe.

FANNING

You are kind to watch me chew.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OSMENT

I don't know.

FANNING

There is so much obstacle between us. Do you ever think about distance between people?

OSMENT

I do.

FANNING

We will be together always.

Caden's leg starts to shake uncontrollably.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT

A doctor examines Caden's shaking leg. Eventually the doctor looks up.

DOCTOR

Don't know.

CADEN

What's the next step?

DOCTOR

Tests? It's hard to say. I mean I can't argue with further testing.

CADEN

Do you think Dakota Fanning is sexy. I mean, she's old enough for me to think that, right?

DOCTOR

She's hot, yes.

INT. CADEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Caden pulls Olive's journal from under his pillow and reads from somewhere in the middle.

OLIVE'S VOICE

(with German accent)

How I love Maria! She is so much more of a father than Caden ever was, with his drinking and drug abuse, his unfortunate body odor and rotting teeth. I could only loathe him and perhaps pity him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLIVE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
*But Maria! Is it just the Electra
 Complex that makes me dream of
 someday being her bride?*

Caden blots his sopping brow and gums, then sniffs under his arms.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Caden, now walking with a cane, approaches an apartment door. It's number 15K. He knocks.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Yes?

CADEN

It's me.

ARIEL (O.S.)

Daddy, Daddy!

CLAIRE (O.S.)

What, Caden?

CADEN (CONT'D)

I want to come back. I want to
 take care of you and Ariel.

There's silence then the door opens. Claire is crying. Caden hugs her. Ariel hugs Caden's good leg.

ARIEL

Why does you have a cane, Daddy?

CADEN

I need one now, sweetheart.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caden and Claire are in bed having sex. The man with the notebook stands on the fire escape and peers in. Ariel stands silently in the doorway and watches. The phone rings. Claire cranes her neck and looks at the clock. The man with the notebook and Ariel both step out of view.

CLAIRE

It's 3:30.

Caden answers the phone.

CADEN

Hello? What's wrong? Oh my God!
 Okay. Okay. Oh my God!

Caden hangs up. Claire kisses Caden's neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

Let's get back to it, darling.

CADEN

My father died.

Claire kisses him on the neck.

CLAIRE

That's terrible.

CADEN

His body was riddled with cancer. He didn't even know.

CLAIRE

It's okay, baby. Let me make you feel better.

Claire begins kissing her way down Caden's chest.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Caden, Claire, and Ariel, stand with Caden's mother as a child-sized coffin is lowered into the ground.

MOTHER

There was so little left of him.

INT. CADEN'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Crowded with mourners. People chat and eat. Claire and Caden, on the couch holding hands, chat with a fat lady.

CADEN

Excuse me, I have to use the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Caden sits on the tub ledge and dials his cell phone.

CADEN

Hey.

HAZEL (PHONE VOICE)

Hi.

CADEN

I had to talk to you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL

Yeah? What's going on?

CADEN

Um, my father died.

HAZEL

Oh no. Oh, Caden. I'm so sorry.

CADEN

Thanks. I know.

HAZEL

Are you at your mom's?

CADEN

Yeah. With Claire and Ariel.

HAZEL

Oh. I see.

CADEN

I'm back with Claire.

Pause.

HAZEL

Yes, I got that.

CADEN

I'm sorry.

HAZEL

What are you sorry about? You don't owe me anything.

CADEN

I don't know. You got quiet. I thought I should say something.

HAZEL

You thought you should say something. That's lovely.

CADEN

What am I supposed to do, Hazel? I have a kid with her. You're having a kid with Derek.

HAZEL

You're not supposed to do anything.

CADEN

I really miss you.

(CONTINUED)

HAZEL

Yeah, I guess that's what happens
when you have a kid with somebody
else. Did you have sex with her?

CADEN

Hazel...

HAZEL

I'm asking you a question.
Did you have sex with her?

CADEN

Yes.

HAZEL

I have to go. I'm sorry about your
dad.

CADEN

Hazel, please don't go. I can't
bear it if you go.

HAZEL

I have to. I'm going out. I have
to get ready. Everything's fine.

CADEN

I have to use a cane now.

(pause)

Okay. Take care.

HAZEL

You too.

Hazel hangs up. Caden sits there.

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Caden walks by a Salvation Army Santa ringing his bell.
Suddenly the Santa claws spastically at his beard. He rips
it off revealing a tortured, blue face. He gasps for air,
and dies.

INT. CADEN AND CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

Caden and Claire are sprawled out on the couch watching TV.
Christmas decorations on the wall behind them. Claire is
switching channels quickly and restlessly.

CADEN

Wait, wait. I want to see that.

Claire switches back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 CLAIRE
This?

 CADEN
Yeah.

 CLAIRE
Oh, man. For fuck's sake.

 NARRATOR
Is this perhaps the greatest
painting ever painted?

On the TV screen is a dark dot on a white wall. The camera
moves slowly in to the dot.

 NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Let's have a closer look.

The camera gets closer and the dot gets bigger. It becomes
identifiable as an image. An urban street scene. Hundreds
of people on a crowded street. People walking. People
hanging out of windows. People driving cars, delivering
packages. It's astoundingly detailed and at the same time
painterly. Seemingly careless splashes of colors define
light and shadow. Each person seems to be suffering and
struggling as he or she goes about the mundane business of
living. It's a heartbreaking portrait of humanity.

 NARRATOR (CONT'D)
This amazing work by the artist
Adele Lack is no larger than the
head of a pin, yet contains the
pain of the universe.

Caden turns off the TV.

INT WAREHOUSE - DAY

A rehearsal in progress. The shells of apartment buildings
have been built. The actors, who previously had been spread
out on the floor of the warehouse, are now perched on
scaffolding in various apartment spaces. Caden surveys the
scene by climbing up and down ladders. It's difficult to
manage with his cane. Hazel sits at a table on the floor of
the warehouse, communicating with caden by headset, as she
nurses an infant and jots down Caden's notes.

 CADEN
 (whispering into headset)
Antoine needs to be real.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINGED:

CADEN (CONT'D)

I'm not getting anything....Tell David, not to do that thing with his head. It's a habit and it's not the character. I want Joanne without make-up from now on. She's hiding behind it. It's fiction. I can't fucking see her face at all.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

The actors are now gathered around Caden's table.

CADEN

I didn't believe anything today. So starting tonight you're all to keep character journals. You will write in the first person, everyday. Include biographical information, random thoughts, letters your character might write. I want you to follow your person when you're not rehearsing. Watch how he or she moves, interacts, orders a hamburger, fucks. God is in the details.

INT. CLAIRE AND CADEN'S KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

Caden reads Olive's diary.

OLIVE'S VOICE

My period has come. I didn't even know what was happening. Terrified, I felt a wetness between my legs. Maria explained to me now I am a woman. And being a woman is wonderful with Maria.

Caden cries.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Caden looks out the window at the dark sky. The man next to him has wild, manic eyes and talks to himself.

WILD-EYED MAN

Needle, Nickel, Eat a pickle.

(to Caden)

Why do you smell? It's rude of you to smell like that.

EXT. BERLIN STREET - DAY

Overcast. Caden wanders. Walls are plastered with posters of "Flower Girl." It's Olive, early 20's, very sexy and almost naked. There is an address and a date. Seems to be some sort of concert.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Caden waits on a long line behind a bunch of men.

Later: Caden gives the doorman a ticket.

INT DARK SMALL ROOM - NIGHT

Caden sits by himself in a cramped space. A light switches on behind scarred Plexiglas. Olive stands there naked. She sings Lydia the Tattooed Lady. Caden tries to get her attention by banging on the glass but she can't see him or chooses not to. The doorman enters and beats Caden up.

INT. CADEN AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Caden, bruised, lies in bed while Claire hurries past, getting dressed.

CLAIRE

Caden, get out of bed.

CADEN

I'm depressed. My head hurts. I think I'm dying. Olive is a freak show and they won't let me see her.

CLAIRE

The cry of the North American Caden.

CADEN

Y'know, I'd just like a little sympathy now and again.

CLAIRE

I'll save my sympathy for the eight million people with the avian flu, the starving in Africa, the hurricane victims in Puerto Rico, etcetera.

CADEN

Since when do you care about any of that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

I care a lot! I care all the time!

CADEN

Ugh. I'm going out.

ARIEL

Why do Daddy be sad now?

He pulls himself out of bed and limps to the dresser. She looks at the bald spot on the back of his head.

CLAIRE

We have rehearsal in an hour!

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

It's snowing. The neighborhood seems abandoned and overgrown. Caden drives slowly by Hazel's burning house. He parks down the block and watches it. Soon Hazel and Derek walk their baby by in a stroller. Derek says something and Hazel laughs delightedly. Caden is in agony. He rolls down his window.

CADEN

Hazel!

Hazel and Derek turn.

HAZEL

Caden, what are you doing here?

CADEN

Sorry. Can I talk to you? Please?

Hazel kisses Derek, whispers something in his ear. They share a giggle. Derek waves at Caden and pushes the baby into the burning house. Hazel approaches Caden's car.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Tell me what to do.

HAZEL

Caden, everyone has to figure out their own life. Y'know?

CADEN

I want you to look at me like you used to.

HAZEL

Oh, Caden, I can't anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

(crying)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I screwed everything up. I don't have any courage. I'm sorry.

HAZEL

It's okay. I'm okay.

CADEN

I don't want you to be okay. I mean, I do but it rips my guts out.

HAZEL

I'll always be your friend. I'll help you through any way I can.

CADEN

I'll help you through, too.

HAZEL

Caden, I'm fine. I have to get ready for work. I'll meet you there. Okay?

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Caden stands with his cane before the group of seated actors. Hazel nurses her baby in a seat behind him. The actors wait patiently as Caden finishes up a coughing fit.

CADEN

I won't settle for anything less than the brutal, horrible truth.

ACTOR THREE

Caden, when are we going to get an audience in here?

CADEN

And I'm not excusing myself from this either. I will cast someone to play me. He will delve into the murky, cowardly depths of my lonely, fucked-up being.

The actors glance uncomfortably at Claire and Hazel.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

The actors are up in their apartments living their lives. Caden is in the far corner of the space, at a little sectioned-off area. There are a half-dozen actors sitting on folding chairs outside the partition. They all resemble Caden. Hazel leads one of the actors around the partition.

HAZEL

This is Marcus Reynolds.

Caden shakes Marcus's hand. Marcus gives Caden his headshot and resume. Caden puts it down on a pile without looking at it. They sit.

CADEN

I don't care what you've done.

MARCUS

(slightly guilty)

I haven't done anything.

CADEN

I mean, I don't care about your resume.

MARCUS

I've been Off-Broadway. Seven shows.

CADEN

Blah blah blah blah blah.

Caden stares at Marcus. Marcus looks uncomfortable.

MARCUS

You want me to do a scene?

CADEN

There are no scenes.

MARCUS

Oh.

CADEN

I'm looking for the truth. That's all. Can you deliver that?

MARCUS

(beat)

I did Hamlet at LaMama.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

I don't care. I don't have time.
I'm dying. We need to get a move
on here. C'mon, c'mon!

MARCUS

Um... so, anyway, but...

Caden continues to stare. Finally:

CADEN

Thank you, Marcus.

MARCUS

Okay, thanks.

Marcus gets up to leave. Hazel follows him around the
partition to the actors.

HAZEL

Sammy Barnathan?

Sammy Barnathan stands. He is the man with the note pad
we've seen following Caden. Hazel turns and heads around the
partition. Sam follows. He has no resume. Caden stands.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

This is Sammy Barnathan.

SAMMY

I don't have a resume or picture.

CADEN

I don't care.

SAMMY

I've never worked as an actor.

CADEN

Good. Tell me why you're here.

SAMMY

I've been following you for ten
years.

CADEN

I see. I thought someone was.

SAMMY

I know almost everything about you.
This is a way to remove the almost.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Caden stares at Sammy. Sammy stares back. There's fear in Caden's eyes but he doesn't drop his gaze.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

The truth will set you free, Caden
Maurice Cotard.

Caden stares at Sammy. Sammy transforms effortlessly into Caden. He begins with a coughing fit.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Okay, Hazel, I don't think we need to talk to anyone else. This guy has me down. I'm just going to cast him right now. Then maybe you and I can get a drink and we can try to figure this thing out between us. What went wrong, what we can do to fix it. Why I cried. I've never felt about anyone the way I feel about you, Hazel. And I want to fuck you until we merge into one being.

CADEN

(beat)

Yes, okay. You've got the part.

Sammy nods and exits. Hazel follows him with her eyes.

HAZEL

He's good, Caden. He's going to change the whole equation here.

CADEN

Please don't fall in love with him.

HAZEL

I only have eyes for you, dear.

INT. WAREHOUSE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Caden limps with his cane and a backpack toward the men's room door. His eyes are rheumy. He pushes open the door.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is filthy. Flies buzz. The urinals are covered with slime. Caden enters a stall, pulls down his pants, and sits. He strains. When he is done, he looks at his stool. It's gray. He wipes and flushes, pulls up his pants and exits the stall. Sammy stands there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMMY

I've never seen gray before.

CADEN

It's new.

Caden places his backpack on a sink. He looks at himself in the mirror. A stall door opens and Sammy steps out. They just stand there in silence.

SAMMY

I know it's pill time. You don't need to hide from me, schmuck.

Caden opens his pack and pulls out a baggie full of pills. He takes them, one-by-one. Sammy watches and counts. When it's over, he speaks.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

You're missing your Fosonex.

CADEN

No.

SAMMY

Check your bag.

Caden pulls out books and notebooks and a sweater. The pill falls out of the sweater onto the grimy floor.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Fosonex, 2.5, mg.

Caden picks the pill up off the floor. It's got grime on it.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Take it. It's important. Swallow it with the floor scum on it. Do it.

Caden looks at Sammy and swallows the pill.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Good boy.

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

Caden exits the warehouse with Claire and Ariel, who is now 5. Sammy trails. There is a long line of people waiting to find out about tickets for the show.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN
When is it opening?

CADEN
When it's ready.

They move on, passing poor people waiting in line for food distributed from a military truck. There are sick people being herded into a bus marked "Quarantine." The guards wear surgical masks.

CADEN (CONT'D)
I was thinking of calling it
Simulacrum. What do you think?

CLAIRE
I don't know what it means.

A hovercraft glides down the street with searchlights.

CADEN
How about The Flawed Light of Love
and Grief?

CLAIRE
I'm not sure.

Sammy jots something in his book.

INT. CADEN AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caden and Claire have sex. Sammy watches from the fire escape. They finish and Caden glances out the window. Sammy doesn't try to hide this time. He just stares.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - LATER

Caden and Sammy watch the city: fires in the distance. Human wailing. Occasional explosions. Claire pokes her head out.

CLAIRE
I'm going to work in my journal.
You guys need anything?

CADEN
No, thanks.

SAMMY
No, thanks, Claire.

CADEN
Claire? I want you to drop your
study of Mrs. Kranstein.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

Caden --

CADEN

I want you to play yourself.
Sammy's going to move into your
apartment set as me.

CLAIRE

It's just that I've made such
enormous strides as Jocelyn and --

CADEN

As the vision becomes reveals
itself, we all have to be willing
to adapt, honey.

SAMMY

It'd be my honor to play your
husband, Claire. You're an amazing
actress. I saw you in Bernarda
Alba last year at The Roundabout.

CLAIRE

Yeah? That was a fun play.
Emotionally tough, but really
fulfilling working with all those
amazing actresses. Okay, I'm going
to start thinking about myself.

Claire exits.

SAMMY

Start, huh?

Caden chuckles.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Why did we leave Adele, Caden?

CADEN

She left us. You know that.

(beat)

I wanted to be adored and to adore.
You know? Adele isn't the type.

SAMMY

Amazing artist though. The best
living artist. There's no one who
stares the truth in the face the
way she does. And a sweet pussy,
too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CADEN

I don't know where she is anymore.

A strange dirigible flies very low overhead.

SAMMY

She's in New York. The Met's doing a retrospective.

He hands Caden a slip of paper.

CADEN

Why are you giving this to me?

SAMMY

I want to follow you there. I want to see how you debase yourself to get back in her good graces.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Dark, deserted part of town. It's raining and the wind blows wet leaves. Caden finds the address: an old, narrow, very tall, very dark building. There's a light on in a window on the top floor. He approaches the tenant buzzers and buzzes 31Y. The name on the apartment is Capgras. The door buzzes.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The elevator is at the end of a narrow, dimly lit hall. There's a piece of looseleaf paper with the handwritten note "Death in family. God relieve our grief." tacked to it.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

It's small. The walls are panelled with ancient, scarred wood. Caden presses "31." The doors close; the elevator ascends, swaying and creaking. The doors open on 17; nobody gets on. As they begin to close:

FAINT FARAWAY VOICE

Hold it. Hold it, please.

Caden reaches for the "door open" button but doesn't press it. The doors close and the elevator continues its shaky ascent. The doors open on 31 and Caden exits.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sound of the elevator descending. Caden heads down the long hall, looking at apartment numbers. He gets to the end and is only at 31J. He turns and heads back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The elevator is ascending again. As he passes the elevator door, it opens and a very old, feeble-looking man or woman steps out.

OLD PERSON

I asked you to hold the door.

CADEN

I'm sorry. I pressed it, but I think it was too late. Sorry.

Caden continues to walk down the hall. The old person walks behind him. Caden looks behind him and smiles awkwardly.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Have a good night.

He picks up his pace, trying to be casual about it. He arrives at 31Y, glances over and sees the old person knocking feebly on a door down the hall.

OLD PERSON

Frances. Something's wrong with my nose. I need to go to the clinic. Something's terribly wrong.

Caden knocks on 31Y. No answer. He knocks again. Down the hall, the door opens and another old person steps out into the hall. This person examines the first old person's nose.

OLD PERSON #2

Oh yes. I see.

Old Person #2 squints over at Caden.

OLD PERSON #2 (CONT'D)

Are you Ellen? Ellen?!

CADEN

What?

OLD PERSON #2

(approaching)

Are you Ellen Bascomb? I'm to give the key to 31Y to Ellen Bascomb.

CADEN

(beat)

Yes, I'm Ellen.

Old Person #2 fishes a key out of the overcoat pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OLD PERSON #2

She said you should just go in and get started. She said, don't forget to change the sheets.

CADEN

Ok. Thank you.

Old Person #2 turns and heads back down the hall to Old Person #1, whose nose has started to bleed.

OLD PERSON #2

Oh dear.

Caden enters the apartment.

INT. 31Y - CONTINUOUS

An expansive and well-decorated place. Lots of books and Persian rugs. Caden looks around. It seems that someone was just here: there's a steaming cup of coffee on the kitchen table; the toilet is still running.

INT. 31Y BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Clothing strewn about. Caden picks up a pair of Adele's paint-jeans, sniffs the crotch. There's a handwritten note on the night table. He reads it:

ADELE'S VOICE

Hi Ellen. Be a doll and do the sheets and whatever is in the hamper. Oh, and pay special attention to the kitchen. We had a grape juice spill. Oy! Your money is under the toaster. Kisses, Adele. ps. bag of stuff in bedroom closet for Goodwill. You can have any of it you want.

INT. 31Y KITCHEN - LATER

Caden is on his hands and knees scrubbing the floor.

INT. 31Y BATHROOM - LATER

Caden scrubs the filthy toilet bowl.

INT. 31Y BEDROOM - LATER

Day is breaking. Caden folds laundry and puts it away. He spots the bag of clothing and goes through it. There are several blouses and skirts, a red beret, and some lingerie.

INT. 31Y KITCHEN - MORNING

Caden drinks a cup of coffee in the immaculately clean kitchen. He looks at the wall clock; it's eight. He sighs, stands, rinses out his coffee cup, takes the money from under the toaster, picks up his bag of clothes and exits.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

Caden exits. Several Latina and Eastern European cleaning ladies are exiting buildings simultaneously. They congregate at a bus stop. Caden joins them.

INT. BUS - MORNING

Caden is on the bus with the cleaning women. It seems to be in Queens. The bus stops and several women get off.

EXT. QUEENS STREET - MORNING

Caden wanders the street, enters an apartment building.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Caden studies the tenant names. He finds "Ellen Bascomb." She's in apartment 1RN.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Caden tries to unlock 1RN. His key does not work.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Go away!! Leave me alone!!

INT. CLAIRE AND CADEN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Claire is in her bathrobe, beside herself with anger.

CLAIRE

Where the fuck were you all night?

CADEN

I went for a walk. I had to think.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

All night? You smell weird. Are you wearing lipstick?

CADEN

No! What do I smell like? Like bad? Like an old person?

CLAIRE

I don't know. Like mold? I don't know. Like mold and skunk and ... cleaning products? Like you're menstruating?

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Caden is scrubbing himself raw in the shower.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

The actors are in their "apartments" and rehearsal is in progress. Caden, scrubbed raw, walks along the scaffolding followed by Hazel. They stop outside a space where Lloyd and Ron are engaged in conversation while Howard washes dishes and Ron stares out the window.

LLOYD

What? I can't hear you.

RON

Nothing.

LLOYD

Oh, just tell me what you said.

RON

I said I have a headache.

LLOYD

Well, that's news.

RON

Ugh. I'm going out to get some coffee. You want any?

LLOYD

No. Bring back paper towel.

RON

Yes, Ma'am.

Ron exits the apartment and heads toward the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Joanie, leave your apartment. Now!

Joanie runs from her apartment, practically bumps into Ron.

JOANIE

Oh, sorry.

RON

S'okay.

JOANIE

I'm in such a state. My mother's coming for dinner!

RON

No worries.

They walk together down the stairs.

JOANIE

You're in 5B, right?

RON

Yeah.

JOANIE

My name's Sarah.

RON

I'm David.

CADEN

Good, you guys. Take your conversation down to the store. See what happens.

Caden and Hazel climb the stairs and turn their attention to Sammy and Claire. She's in her underwear and getting dressed. He comes up behind her and rubs her ass.

CLAIRE

I don't like that guy you got to play you.

SAMMY

Sammy? Why? I think he's good.

CLAIRE

I mean, what is he really up to?

SAMMY

I don't know, but he's getting me in a fascinating way.

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE

I think you need to fire him.

SAMMY

I'm not firing him, Claire. He's the best thing in the show. Next to you.

CLAIRE

He's coming on to me, Caden. He's feeling my ass.

SAMMY

He's your husband.

Claire turns to the real Caden and screams.

CLAIRE

He's not my fucking husband! You are! What is wrong with you?

The actor underneath them pounds on his ceiling.

SAMMY

Good, Jimmy.

(to Claire)

It's for the play. We're getting at something real here.

CLAIRE

Ugh! I'm going to rehearsal.

She grabs her coat and storms out and down the stairs.

CADEN

That's great, you guys.

Sammy sits on the bed and puts his head in his hands.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Beautiful, Sammy.

SAMMY

Caden, time out? Can I talk to you for a second?

CADEN

What's up?

(CONTINUED)

SAMMY

I feel we need a Hazel in here.
There's a whole side of Caden I'm
not able to explore.

Caden looks over at Hazel. Claire watches Caden.

CADEN

I guess yeah.

HAZEL

I get to be a character? Hooray!

INT. ADELE'S BUILDING ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Caden rides up. The elevator stops. Old Person #1 gets on
with a big bloody bandage covering his nose.

OLD PERSON

Hello, Ellen.

Caden nods. They continue the ride in silence.

INT. 31Y BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caden looks at the unmade bed, an imprint of a female form in
the sheets. He touches it. It's still warm. He puts his
nose close to the part of the form at the crotch and inhales.
He gets a melancholy look on his face. He lies on his back
in the form. He sees a note on the night table:

ADELE'S VOICE

Hi Ellen. Crackerjack job last
night! Sorry, we're such pigs.
Would you do sheets again? Franz
and I had quite a fuck and it's all
musky and gross. Open some
windows. If you have time to
reline the cabinets, that would be
peachy. Kisses, Adele

Caden strips the bed.

INT. 31Y KITCHEN - MORNING

Caden sips coffee at the kitchen table. He's writing a note:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN'S VOICE

Hi Adele. Relined the cabinets.
Just wanted to let you know I won a
MacArthur Grant and I'm mounting a
play, which I think is going to be
truthful. Just wanted to let you
know. Best --

Caden hesitates for a moment, then signs it "Ellen."

INT BUS - MORNING

Caden rides the bus with the other cleaning ladies.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Caden and Hazel watch as Claire waits in her bathrobe in the
kitchen and Sammy enters the "apartment."

CLAIRE

Caden, what are you doing at night?
I have a right to fucking know.

SAMMY

I've been going to Adele's place.
And cleaning it.

Long pause.

CLAIRE

What?

SAMMY

I'm cleaning her apartment.

CLAIRE

I --

There's a knock on the door. Sammy just stands there.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Get the fucking door.

Sammy opens it. Tammy, playing Hazel, stands there.

TAMMY

Uh-oh. This looks serious. Am I
interrupting?

SAMMY

What's going on, Hazel?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMMY

Just wanted to tell you the girl
playing me is able to start today.

SAMMY

Oh, good. That's good.

CLAIRE

That's all we need around
here, two Hazels.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

Okay. I'll take that as my cue.

Tammy closes the door and leaves.

CLAIRE

Maybe you can clean her toilet.

SAMMY

Maybe I will.

CLAIRE

It's over, Caden.

SAMMY

Claire, no.

CLAIRE

I'm not talking to you.

Claire turns to Caden.

CADEN

I didn't say I was going to clean
Hazel's toilet. He did.

CLAIRE

But you thought it.

There's a silence. Hazel watches Caden closely.

CADEN

I thought it. But I didn't say it.

Claire packs up her stuff.

CLAIRE

I got an offer to do Two for the
Seesaw and I'm going to take it. I
want you out of the apartment.

Claire heads down the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

CADEN
Jesus. Claire! Please!
(pause)
I need to hire a Claire.

HAZEL
Would you really clean my bathroom?

CADEN
(beat, sadly)
Yeah.

HAZEL
God, Caden, it's all so fucked up.

INT. WAREHOUSE BATHROOM - DAY

Caden studies himself in the mirror. He pulls out the baggie of pills and starts downing them. When he finishes, he begins to weep. He digs in his bag, pulls out a sponge, gets on his hands and knees and begins scrubbing the floor.

INT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

Caden, wearing a pair of magnifying glasses that flip up and down, enters a crowded gallery of people wearing similar glasses. The paintings are microscopic. Museum visitors use the special glasses to study the paintings. There's a wall painted with the inscription "Small Miracles: The Paintings of Adele Lack" with biographical info under. Caden squeezes his way to the wall to look at paintings. He sees one of an African female genital mutilation ceremony; a horrible, gory battle scene; people dying in an infirmary; a woman weeping over the grave of a child; a masked militia shooting people on the street; a man raping a woman. He comes to a wall titled: "Women I Know." He sees a self-portrait of Adele, a portrait of Maria, a portrait of a teenaged Olive, naked and covered in tattoos. Then he comes to a portrait entitled "Ellen Bascomb." He steps back for a second, unable to look. The people behind him are impatient. Finally he flips the glasses and studies the painting. Ellen appears to be a chubby, 30 year old white woman. Her mousy brown hair is tied back in a kerchief. Other than that she is naked and spreading her vulva for the viewer. She has a kind face and what appears to be an appendectomy scar.

INT. CLAIRE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Caden moves boxes. Claire sits at the kitchen table with an actor. They are rehearsing lines from Two for the Seesaw.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN
This is the end of my stuff.

Bye. CLAIRE Bye. ACTOR

Caden heads out the apartment door.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Caden enters the apartment next door and closes the door.

INT. CADEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

It's filled with boxes. Caden hears laughter coming from next door. He puts his ear against the wall to listen.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Caden exits his apartment with his backpack and cane. He limps past Claire's place and hears laughter inside.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Caden exits the building, crosses the street, and looks up, trying to see in Claire's window. He sees her walk by, then nothing.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Caden sits with Hazel at a table facing the giant, open apartment building structure. An actress plays Claire. She sits at the kitchen table of her apartment with an actor playing the actor. They both hold scripts and read from Two for the Seesaw. Sammy is in the apartment next door, his ear pressed to the imaginary wall, pretending to try to hear. The apartment is filled with boxes. Caden looks troubled. Tammy sits to the side of Hazel and studies her. Every once in a while, Hazel self-consciously glances over at Tammy, who does not avert her gaze.

CADEN
This is a lie!

Caden paces. The actors stop what they're doing and sit with their legs dangling off the edge of their apartments, waiting for instructions. Caden limps off to the stage designer's office. The designer looks up from his drafting table.

CADEN (CONT'D)
Wall it up.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Caden stands across the street from the walled-up apartment building, an exact replica of the real one. He looks up at Claire's lighted window. He's pleased.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Caden walks along the street across from his building. Claire's light is on. He enters the building.

INT. CADEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Caden tries to sleep on the floor surrounded by boxes. He listens to the sound of Claire having sex next door. He turns on his white noise machine. The man walking on the beach is speaking.

MAN ON BEACH

I'm coming for you. I'm coming for you. I'm coming for you.

Caden gets dressed.

INT. 31Y BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caden sits on the bed and reads a note from Adele:

ADELE'S VOICE

Hi Ellen. Great job last night. Oh, and good for you about your grant! Listen, I fixed up the walk-in as a sort of bedroom if you want. We'd love to have you and you wouldn't have to schlep all the way to Queens and back. Just a thought. Kisses. A.

INT. WALK-IN CLOSET - NIGHT

There's an unmade cot in the corner and a few cardboard boxes marked "Stuff for Olive." The "Olive is crossed out and replaced with "Ellen."

INT. WALK-IN CLOSET - LATER

The boxes are empty and Caden is finishing making the bed. The room is decorated in a very girly manner. Pink bedspread and dust ruffle on the bed. Girly lamps and furniture. Girly prints on the walls.

INT. 31Y BATHROOM - NIGHT

Caden washes Adele's underwear in the sink.

INT. LAST ROOM ON THE RIGHT - EARLY MORNING

Caden sleeps on the cot. He wakes up and takes a moment to register where he is. He sees a note on the night table:

ADELE'S VOICE
Morning sleepyhead! You looked so peaceful, couldn't bear to wake you.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Sammy, walking with a cane, exits his apartment building set and walks down the street. Caden and Hazel follow across the street. Sammy passes people, nods hello to some. He stops at a newsstand and buys a paper. Caden and Hazel continue to follow. The set seems to go on forever. Eventually Sammy arrives at a warehouse that looks exactly like the warehouse they are in. He enters.

INT WAREHOUSE SET - CONTINUOUS

Inside it looks exactly like the warehouse, including a duplicate city set. Sammy dumps his pack on the table where Tammy sits.

SAMMY
Morning, Haze.

TAMMY
Hi, Caden. How was your night?

SAMMY
Okay. Yours?

TAMMY
Eh. Philip was colicky. I was up all night.

Caden looks over at Hazel for confirmation. She nods, slightly freaked out.

CADEN
Sorry.

SAMMY
(to Tammy)
Sorry. Everybody here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMMY
(looking at clipboard)
Sammy's not here. Ron called and
said there's some subway problem.

Jimmy rushes into the warehouse.

JIMMY
Sorry. Sorry, sorry, sorry.
(at collapsible table)
Sorry, Caden. I overslept.
(sweetly)
Hi, Hazel.

TAMMY
Hi, Sammy.

SAMMY
(to Tammy)
Sammy likes you.

Caden looks at Hazel. She nods.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
Hazel, could you get everyone
situated? I need to speak to Will
about some new sets.

Sammy pulls some Polaroids out of his backpack.

TAMMY
Yeah.

Sammy heads toward the set designer's office.

CADEN
Oh, shit. I need to do that, too.
Haze, could you stay here and keep
an eye on things for a bit.

HAZEL
Yup.

Caden rushes out the door of the warehouse set.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Caden, Polaroids in hand, hurries into the Will's office.

CADEN
Will, I need you to build this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

112.

Caden hands Will shots of the exterior and interiors of Adele's building and of apartment 31Y.

WILL

Will do.

CADEN

That should be your name. Will Do.

Will chuckles politely.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

Caden sits at his desk. There is a group of slightly overweight women waiting on folding chairs on the other side of the partition. Hazel ushers one in. She's a ringer for the painting of Ellen.

CADEN

Hazel, what do you think of this as a title? Unknown, Unkissed, and Lost.

HAZEL

Eh. Caden this is Millicent Weems.

CADEN

Hi, Millicent. Have a seat.

She does.

CADEN (CONT'D)

How are you at cleaning?

MILLICENT

I'm very, very good at it.

CADEN

Because this part requires a lot of it. You'd play a cleaning lady.

MILLICENT

I played the Egga the cleaning lady in Hedda Gabler at the Roundabout.

CADEN

Great.

MILLICENT

And Mrs. Dobson in Scrub-a-Dub at the Pantages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

You're very close to what I've visualized for this character.

MILLICENT

I'm glad to be what you've visualized.

Millicent and Caden study each other.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CITY STREETS - DAY

Caden heads to the warehouse set. He passes shopkeepers, pedestrians, a guy sweeping the street.

CADEN

Good work, everyone.

Nobody acknowledges him. Caden enters the warehouse set. Tammy sits alone at the card table. There's activity on the street and movement can be seen in various windows.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Where're Sammy and Hazel?

Tammy jerks her head to the left. Caden sees that Sammy has Hazel with her back against a wall. They are talking intimately. Caden approaches.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Hey, Sammy, what are you doing?

Sammy and Hazel look over casually.

SAMMY

Hi, Caden. I'm being you.

CADEN

What do you mean?

SAMMY

You like Hazel; I like Hazel.

CADEN

This Hazel doesn't exist for you. If you want to like a Hazel, like that one.

Caden points indicates Tammy.

TAMMY

That's what I tried to tell him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL

Aw, no harm, no foul, Caden. It's
Equity break anyway.

(loud)

Ten minutes, everybody!

The actors playing the people on the street immediately stop what they're doing. Other actors pour out of the apartment buildings and shops, lighting cigarettes and talking on cell phones. Sammy goes off.

CADEN

Hazel.

HAZEL

What?

CADEN

You don't like him, do you?

HAZEL

Kind of. He reminds me of you.

CADEN

I'm me. I'm here. You don't need
someone to remind you of me.

HAZEL

Don't worry, Caden. I like you
more. I do. Sammy's just fun.

CADEN

I'm fun.

HAZEL

Oh, sweetie. No you're not.

Caden's cell phone rings. He answers it.

CADEN

Yes?

VOICE

Is this Caden Cotard?

CADEN

Yes.

VOICE

This is Officer Mark Mellman of
Schnectady P.D.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CADEN

Yes?

VOICE

I'm sorry to inform you, your mother has been the victim of a home invasion.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A funeral is in progress. Caden stands there with Tammy and his father as his mother's coffin is lowered into the ground. The coffin is banged up and crumbling.

INT. CADEN'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Lots of mourners. Caden sits on the couch with Tammy.

CADEN

Was my father standing with us?

TAMMY

I don't know what he looks like.

CADEN

He's dead. My looks dead, I guess.

TAMMY

Probably wasn't him then.

CADEN

Thanks for coming with me, Tammy.

TAMMY

It's okay.

CADEN

I asked Hazel but she was busy tonight and you're the next best thing. I mean, it isn't that you're the next best thing but because you play her, it feels comforting to me. Does that make sense? Although the thing is offstage you're nothing like her. You play her very well though.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

116.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Did Hazel mention what she was doing tonight because I called her house before we left and her husband said she wasn't going to be back till late and I thought that was weird because she told me Philip was sick.

TAMMY

She's going to dinner with Sammy.

CADEN

(calmly)

That's interesting.

TAMMY

He's supposed to like me.

CADEN

I'll have another talk with him. Can you excuse me. I need to use the bathroom.

Caden gets up and turns to leave.

TAMMY

Don't forget your phone.

CADEN

Thank you, Tammy.

Caden takes the phone and limps off.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Caden talks on his cell.

CADEN

Hey. What you up to?

HAZEL'S VOICE

In my car. Heading to dinner with Sammy.

CADEN

Why didn't you tell me that before?

HAZEL

Caden. I don't want to say things that are going to make you sad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

It mostly makes me sad that it
doesn't make you sad.

HAZEL

You want me to be sad that
someone's taking me out to dinner?
I don't know how to do that.

CADEN

I want you to be sad that we had
something really special and it's
going away!

HAZEL

It just happened, Caden. I didn't
plan it. You were with Claire.
This probably isn't going to go
anywhere, sweetie. I'm still your
girl.

CADEN

Oh, Haze. C'mon.

HAZEL

It's just dinner. He's got
stories! It just seems fun.

CADEN

He has stories about me!

HAZEL

Caden, I know everything about you
and it's all adorable. I love you
and I always will. So don't worry.
I gotta go, I'm there.

Hazel hangs up. Caden stands there for a minute.

INT. CADEN'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Caden sits back down next to Tammy.

CADEN

It's a long drive back. You want
to stay overnight?

TAMMY

Okay.

INT. CADEN'S MOTHER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The house has emptied out. Caden and Tammy straighten.

CADEN
Where'd you grow up?

TAMMY
Albany.

CADEN
Oh, yeah? Right near here. Did
you always want to be an actress?

TAMMY
Every girl wants to be a movie
star.

CADEN
Is that true?

TAMMY
I did. So I figure everyone does.

INT. CADEN'S MOTHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

There looks like there's been a horrible struggle. The bed
is covered with blood. Caden and Tammy stare at it.

CADEN
I thought someone would've cleaned
it up.

TAMMY
Who?

CADEN
I don't know! Someone. This is a
new situation for me.

INT. CADEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's a kid's room. Caden and Tammy stand there.

CADEN
This was my room. You can sleep
here.

TAMMY
Where will you sleep?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN
The living room couch.

TAMMY
Don't you want to sleep with me?

CADEN
Um...

TAMMY
It's just sex.

CADEN
Okay. If you think it's okay.

Tammy matter-of-factly gets undressed in front of Caden. He just stands there uncomfortably.

CADEN (CONT'D)
How can you be like that?

TAMMY
I get undressed every day.

CADEN
In front of someone is different.

TAMMY
I don't see why.

CADEN
Maybe because you have a beautiful body. Maybe that makes it easier.

TAMMY
I suppose it might. Do you want to fuck?

CADEN
I do. Do you.

TAMMY
It'd be fine.

Caden starts to cry.

CADEN
I'm sorry. I'm very lonely. I don't know what's wrong. I just -- I'm sorry. Can you understand? Do you understand loneliness?

(CONTINUED)

TAMMY

Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I feel okay mostly. Fucking might help.

CADEN

I'm sorry.

TAMMY

It's okay. I don't mind. Take your clothes off.

CADEN

You're very pretty.

TAMMY

Thanks.

CADEN

Sometimes I wish I were pretty like that.

TAMMY

You wish you were a chick?

CADEN

(long pause)

Sometimes I think I might've been better at it.

TAMMY

Interesting. It's kind of a drag in a lot of ways. You like guys?

CADEN

No. No. I like women. I only like women.

TAMMY

Well, I'm getting cold.

She climbs into bed.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

Take off your clothes.

Caden does, awkwardly and shyly. He then stands there naked. Tammy smiles sweetly at him.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

Pretty Caden.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CADEN

Thanks. Thank you for saying that.

TAMMY

Come to bed, Pretty Caden.

Caden turns off the lights and climbs into the twin bed with Tammy. She looks at his face, then kisses him.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

You taste good.

CADEN

I do?

TAMMY

Yeah, you do.

She kisses him again.

CADEN

You do, too.

TAMMY

Good.

They kiss again. Caden tentatively holds her waist, then slowly moves his hand down to her ass. She presses her body against his.

CADEN

It feels so good to touch you.

Her face so close to his, it's blurry, she smiles.

INT. CADEN'S CAR - MORNING

A residential street in Schenectady. Caden drives and Tammy sits in the front passenger seat.

TAMMY

What is attractive? How are attractive people treated, how do they feel? How do unattractive people feel, how are they treated? How do attractive people feel about unattractive people, how do unattractive people feel about attractive people? How do unattractive people feel about other unattractive people?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMMY (CONT'D)

How do attractive people feel about other attractive people? How do unattractive men feel about unattractive women? How do unattractive men feel about attractive women? How do attractive men feel about unattractive women? How do attractive women feel about unattractive men? How do old people feel about attractive people? How do attractive people feel about old people? This is my study.

Caden slows down.

CADEN

That's Hazel's house.

Caden points to the house with smoke seeping out the windows.

TAMMY

Huh. Do you think we should have a Hazel's house on the set for me?

CADEN

Um...

TAMMY

It would be verisimilitudinous.

CADEN

Yeah. I don't know. I have to speak to the fire marshal.

TAMMY

It would be very verisimilitudinous if you could.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Hazel drives a golf cart along a fake highway. Caden and Tammy sit in back. Hazel eyes them in the rearview mirror. They seem cozy. Hazel scowls. Technicians are on the side of the road putting in plants and trees.

CADEN

I think both of you are going to like this. Turn off here.

Hazel drives the golf cart down an exit ramp.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Hazel drives the golf cart down the street in a state of near completion. She stops in front of a replica of her house.

CADEN

Hank! Okay!

The house begins to smoke.

TAMMY

My house!

Tammy kisses Caden on the cheek and runs into the house.

HAZEL

Is there no end to your pussy kissing?

CADEN

It's verisimilitudinous. I'm thinking of that as a title.

HAZEL

Whatever. I've got work to do. Tell your girlfriend to get out here if she wants a ride back.

CADEN

She's not my girlfriend.

HAZEL

Give it a rest, Caden. I can smell her on your breath.

CADEN

(beat)

Tammy! We have to get back.

INT. WAREHOUSE APARTMENT HALLWAY SET - DAY

Sammy walks down the hall followed by Tammy. He stops at various doorways and listens to conversations or other noises within the apartments. They are followed by Caden and Hazel.

SAMMY

Jeremy is playing to us. Tell him he simply needs to talk to Donna. We'll hear what we hear.

Tammy takes down the note.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Sammy's explaining too much. Feels expository. Needs to be shorthand, like, "Jeremy big."

Hazel writes that down. They all continue down the hall.

TAMMY

Caden? Can we stop for a second?

CADEN

Sure.

TAMMY

If Hazel's in love with Sammy and Caden's in love with Hazel, there would be a dramatic confrontation, where Caden turns to me and says, "It's obvious he's a substitute for me." And I think then Hazel could have a good moment where she cries or gets angry. I'm not sure which, but it feels dramatically sound.

HAZEL

That didn't happen, Caden.

TAMMY

I think Hazel would do that, Hazel.

HAZEL

But Hazel hasn't done it, Tammy.

TAMMY

Caden? What do you think?

CADEN

I think we could try it.

TAMMY

Great!

HAZEL

Fuck. I'm going out for a smoke.

They watch her go. Caden turns back to the others.

CADEN

Let's try it. Maybe it could happen at the director's table.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Caden and Hazel sit at the director's table. The street life of the play is going on in front of them. There are now cars and buses driving on the street.

CADEN

Tammy was right. I don't understand why you're with Sammy.

HAZEL

He's nice. He's available. He fucks me without crying.

CADEN

That happened one time! You fucked him?

HAZEL

Yes! And you and I only fucked one time! I give you endless opportunities.

CADEN

What do you mean, he's available? Since when are you available?

HAZEL

Derek left. Because of you!

CADEN

When? How come you never told me?

HAZEL

I don't know, Caden. How come a lot of things? It's not like we can start fresh, like Sammy and I can. There's all this pressure on us. We're finally both free and there's all this fucking pressure.

CADEN

Fuck. I have to let the actor who plays Derek go. What is his name?

HAZEL

That's such a romantic response, Caden. I'm touched.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

It's not my response. It just
crossed my mind. We have enormous
budgetary concerns here.

HAZEL

Ugh. Forget it.
(looking in book)
Derak is played by Joe --

CADEN

Stop, okay. Just stop.

HAZEL

I don't like Tammy and she's
nothing like me. How can you like
her?

CADEN

She looks like you. And --

HAZEL

No she does not.

CADEN

-- and she offered to have sex with
me.

HAZEL

Was it good?

CADEN

I don't know. Yeah. It was nice.

HAZEL

Ugh.

CADEN

I'm just trying to be honest. It
was nice. Not earth-shattering.

HAZEL

Did you cry?

CADEN

No!

HAZEL

You're making progress.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CADEN

I cried a little before.

(long pause)

Hazel, you've been part of me forever. Don't you know that? I breathe your name in every inhalation.

HAZEL

Okay. That's a sweet thing to say.

CADEN

It's true. Literally. I hear it when I inhale.

HAZEL

Oh, Caden. Oh, fuck. What the fuck are we doing?

CADEN

I don't know.

Hazel latches her pinky around Caden's. Sammy has been watching the whole thing from behind a pillar. Caden glances at his watch.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Crap, Ellen's scene.

Caden and Hazel jump in the golf cart and drive off. Sammy punches the pillar and leaves a dent.

INT. ELEVATOR - ADELE'S APARTMENT BUILDING SET - NIGHT

Millicent, Hazel and Caden wait in the elevator. The elevator begins to ascend. Instead of the sound of motors, the sound of grunting men is heard. The elevator stops short and sways a little bit.

WORKER (O.S.)

Sorry, everybody!

Caden pulls off a wall panel, looks down the shaft. Five guys hold the elevator with a rope and pulley system.

CADEN

What's going on, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Sorry. We have a couple of new guys on today and we're not in sync yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Okay. Are we good to go?

JIMMY

Yup.

Caden replaces the panel. The elevator continues its ascent to the sound of grunting men. It stops. The doors open and Old Person (actor version) with bandaged nose gets on.

OLD PERSON

Hi, Ellen.

MILLICENT

Hello.

The doors close. The elevator ascends to the 31st floor. The doors open and Millicent, Old Person, Caden, and Hazel exit. The doors close. They walk down the hall. Old Person knocks on a door and is admitted by Old Person #2 (actor version). Millicent lets herself in to 31Y, closes the door. Caden and Hazel stand outside and listen. Silence for a while, then a vacuum cleaner. The vacuum cleaner turns off.

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

Oh, Hi, Adele!

ADELE (O.S.)

Hi, Ellen. How are you tonight?

Caden turns to Hazel.

CADEN

Did we hire an Adele?

Hazel shakes her head no.

ADELE (O.S.)

That's one of my blouses?

MILLICENT (O.S.)

Yes. I love it. Thank you so much.

ADELE (O.S.)

Good. Would you be a doll and handwash some of my delicates?

MILLICENT (O.S.)

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CADEN

You have the master?

Hazel hands him a key. Caden opens the door.

INT. WAREHOUSE - 31Y SET NIGHT

Caden finds Millicent vacuuming the living room.

MILLCENT

(surprised)

Oh, hi.

She turns off the vacuum cleaner.

CADEN

You were just talking to Adele?

MILLCENT

(perplexed)

No. Just cleaning.

CADEN

We heard you talking to her.

MILLCENT

The radio was on. Maybe that was it?

Caden stares at Millicent then begins to tear through the apartment, looking in every room. There's nobody there. He does find a sink full of panties soaking in detergent.

CADEN

(calling)

What's in the sink here, Ellen?

MILLCENT (O.C.)

(far away)

Panties!

INT. WAREHOUSE STREET - NIGHT

Caden waits on the stoop of the main apartment building. Lots of actors walk by. Hazel emerges from the building.

CADEN

Hey.

HAZEL

(eyes red from crying.)

Hey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

130.

She sits down next to Caden.

CADEN
How'd he take it?

HAZEL
Not well. I feel really lousy,
Caden. I just -- he's a really
nice guy, y'know? And I feel --

Suddenly there's a commotion and the actors on the street all
look up. Caden and Hazel join the crowd. Sammy stands on
the window ledge of his apartment set, nine stories up.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Oh fuck. Caden.
(calling)
Sammy! Sammy! Just stay right
where you are! I'm coming up!

SAMMY
There's nothing to talk about,
Hazel! This is not your fault!

HAZEL
Just stay where you are!!

Hazel rushes into the building set.

CADEN
Hazel's coming, Sammy! Just hang
on a minute!

SAMMY
You don't know anything about me,
Caden! I'm not even a man!

Sammy leaps. The actors below scatter. Sammy hits hard and
is dead. Blood everywhere. Hazel appears in the window of
Sammy's apartment and screams.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Sammy is buried. An enormous crowd there: all the actors
from the play, Caden and Hazel in front. Hazel weeps.

INT WAREHOUSE - CEMETERY SET - DAY

The actor playing Sammy is in the coffin. There's an
enormous crowd. Tammy plays Hazel and weeps. Caden and
Hazel watch from the director's table. Hazel has her head in
her hands. She looks over at Caden, imploringly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAZEL

Would you like to go to a movie or something with me, Caden? Just to distract ourselves?

CADEN

I'd like that.

HAZEL

There's that new Dakota Fanning film, made as that French chick would've made had she lived this long.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Caden and Hazel watch the film in the darkened theater. On the holographic screen a fiftyish blonde with big eyes is sitting in a darkened room.

FANNING

Everything is lost. I am without hope. I wish I had died when I was twenty and full of hope and passion and the wisdom of naivete. Fuck Me!

INT. HAZEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Caden sips a martini. Hazel is at the stove, stirring a sauce pan of something. The room is heavy with smoke. Caden and Hazel both sweat and cough.

CADEN

There's nothing to do?

HAZEL

No. I wouldn't have bought the place if I knew it was going to be this much of a problem. I mean, it can be fixed, but it's prohibitive. I barely notice it anymore. I'm sorry.

CADEN

We could get a place together. We could get a loft.

HAZEL

God, Caden, that sounds nice. I miss my daughter. Maybe she could come live with us.

(CONTINUED)

CADEN

Yeah. I miss mine. Dakota Fanning was good, huh?

HAZEL

Yeah. Although it's weird how when women get older they can't get romantic leads anymore. She's still an attractive woman.

CADEN

Yeah.

HAZEL

Anyway...

CADEN

Anyway.

HAZEL

Caden, I'm a bad person.

CADEN

No you're not.

HAZEL

I am. I should never... have gone out with Sammy. I was just trying to get to you.

CADEN

You can't cause someone to kill themselves. They have to have that mind-set to begin with.

HAZEL

I don't know. I'm so sad. I'm so ashamed of myself. My tummy is flabby. I'm old and I did bad.

Caden walks over to her and touches her shoulder. She turns and hugs him, burying her face his shoulder.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

CADEN

You have nothing to be sorry about.

HAZEL

Will you lie down with me, even though I'm old?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CADEN

If you're old, what am I?

INT. HAZEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The smoke is thick here and there are flames. Hazel, in a robe, walks around the room lighting candles. Caden watches from the bed.

HAZEL

I'm afraid you're not going to be attracted to me anymore.

CADEN

I will.

HAZEL

(re: candles)

There. That's nice, yes?

CADEN

Yes.

HAZEL

I like candles. These are vanilla.

She climbs into bed and snuggles up to Caden a little selfconsciously.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Oh, Caden. Oh, Caden. I wish we had this when we were young. And all the time inbetween.

(pause)

Y'know?

Caden kisses Hazel's forehead. She coughs and smiles up at him, then cranes her neck and kisses him on the lips.

CADEN

My heart aches so much for you.

HAZEL

We're here, Caden.

CADEN

I'm aching for it being over even now.

HAZEL

The end is built in to the beginning. That's the thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

134.

CADEN

You're just perfect.

HAZEL

I'm a mess. But we fit, don't we.

They kiss.

CADEN

It doesn't always happen for me now. Because of all the medication and everything.

HAZEL

I don't care. It's okay.

CADEN

I'm embarrassed. I just want you to know it's not you.

They are tender and quiet and intensely focused. The smoke in the room is dense. When it's over, they lie there quietly, with the occasional cough from both of them. Caden cries quietly.

CADEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

HAZEL

It's okay. It's different crying this time. I can tell. I'm crying, too. And I cried last time. After you left. I never told you.

Caden kisses her again.

CADEN

I have a title. The Obscure Moon
Lighting an Obscure World.

HAZEL

I think it might be too much.

INT. HAZEL'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Caden agitatedly paces through the dense smoke. He's crying hard. There's mumbling, quiet conversation coming from somewhere. He walks into --

INT. HAZEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hazel lies in bed. A medic hovers over her, swabs in her mouth and pulls it out black with soot.

MEDIC

Smoke inhalation, most likely.

Caden just nods his head for a long time.

INT. CADEN'S SCHNECTADY HOUSE - NIGHT

He lies in bed in the otherwise unfurnished room. There is mold growing on the walls. The white-noise machine is on. He hears man talking as he walks on the beach.

VOICE

I'm going to be there soon. I'm
going to be there soon. I'm going
to be there soon.

He opens his laptop and opens a program called "Predict-X." He types in "Had I not cried that night, what would my future with Hazel Pethig have been?" After a moment, a video game like simulation of Caden's life with Hazel appears. We see a montage of a wedding, honeymoon, moving into a loft, having sex, laughing, eating together, walking hand-in-hand, getting old together, dying simultaneously in each other's arms, being buried next to each other. The sound machine machine voice has been repeating its phrase throughout.

CADEN

When?

INT. BUS - DAY

Caden looks out the window. Maria drops into the seat next to him. He glances over, then looks back out the window.

MARIA

Olive wants to see you. God knows
why; the way you abandoned her.

CADEN

I didn't.

MARIA

She's had a fucked-up life with a
lot of issues, thanks to you.

CADEN

You're insane.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

136.

MARIA

She's dying, asshole. is that
insane enough for you?

A giant sells apples at a roadside stand.

MARIA (CONT'D)

She wants to say goodbye to you.
God knows why.

INT. BUS - DAY

The bus pulls off a NYC street up a ramp into a building.
It's dark and the bus goes up the twisting ramp.

BUS DRIVER

Columbia Presbyterian Hospital,
fifteenth floor. Final stop.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Maria leads Caden into the room. Olive, 40, lies in bed,
emaciated and pale. Maria and Olive speak only in German.

MARIA

(kissing her forehead)
Hi, honey.

OLIVE

Hi, sweetie.

MARIA

This is him.

OLIVE

Hello.

CADEN

Hi, Olive. I've missed you so
much.

OLIVE

Maria, would you leave us?

MARIA

Are you sure?

Olive nods. Maria kisses Olive again on the forehead.

MARIA (CONT'D)

In heaven, my darling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria exits.

OLIVE
(broken English)
Forgive me but no longer remember
English. Speak German?

CADEN
No. I'm sorry.

OLIVE
I had hope you have learned.

Weakly, Olive points to a headset on her night table. She pantomimes putting it on. Caden puts it on. Olive puts on her own. There follows a slightly delayed and staticky translation, in an accented male voice, of everything Olive says, with a delay between what Caden says and Olive's response, as she listens in translation.

OLIVE (CONT'D)
I'm dying, as I'm sure Maria told
you. The flower tattoos have
become infected and they're dying.
So I am, as well.

Olive pulls down her hospital gown a bit to show Caden the now sickly and decayed flower tattoos.

CADEN
It's Maria. She did this.

OLIVE
Maria gave me reason to live once
you left us. The flowers defined
me.

CADEN
Your mother and Maria took you
away. I tried for years to find
you.

OLIVE
Maria told me you would say that.

CADEN
Remember our pretend games? How
could I ever leave you?

(CONTINUED)

OLIVE

I don't have time to argue, Caden.
I'm dying. I want to talk to you
about your homosexuality.

CADEN

What? I'm not a homosexual!

OLIVE

Maria said you would deny it.

CADEN

She's lying to you.

OLIVE

I want you to know I had the same
struggle. When I first fell in
love with Maria and we began to
have dirty, aching sex, I felt a
terrible confusion and --

CADEN

Maria is your lover?

OLIVE

Of course. She introduced me to
myself. To my vagina and to hers.

CADEN

You have no idea how evil she is.

OLIVE

I need to forgive you before I die,
but I can't forgive someone who has
not asked for forgiveness.

CADEN

I --

OLIVE

I need you to ask for forgiveness!

CADEN

(long pause)

Can you ever forgive me?

OLIVE

For what?

CADEN

For abandoning you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

OLIVE

"For abandoning you to have anal sex with my homosexual lover Eric."

CADEN

For abandoning you to be have anal sex with my homosexual lover Eric.

OLIVE

(long hesitation)

No. No, I'm sorry, I cannot.

Olive dies. Dead flower petals slip from her hospital gown. Caden sits there. Maria hurries rushes to Olive's side.

MARIA

Get out of here, you faggot.

Caden gets up and leaves.

EXT. NYC STREET - DAY

It's sweltering. Caden sits on his stoop, watches the world pass by. People are sick. People are angry. Some people wear gas masks. Government vehicles with strange symbols and gun turrets drive by. A woman walks a naked man on a leash. The man defecates on the sidewalk. A wild-eyed man in a white t-shirt and Santa hat attacks Caden. As he knocks Caden to the ground and wrestles with him, Caden sees the t-shirt has a little dot that's a painting from Adele's show. It's a moment in time, a street scene very much like the one Caden's in. In the painting, a man in a white t-shirt and Santa hat beats up a man who looks like Caden.

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY

It's pouring sleet. Caden kneels by Hazel's grave, weeping. He's badly bruised and feeble.

CADEN

My love. I know how to do the play now. It'll take place over the course of one day. Like Ulysses, the book you tried to read. Only the performance will be spread out over a month. Audience members will stay and wander the city for a month. The day will be the day before you died, the happiest day of my life. I'll be able to relive it forever. I have a new title: October 14th, 2044. It's for you.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Caden weeps inconsolably at the director's table, a new assistant next to him, a neat, efficient-looking young man named Michael. Hazel's dog, Squashy, sleeps on the floor. The scene in the play is dull. People walk back and forth aimlessly. Various passersby on the street have hacking coughs. Millicent walks by carrying a mop and bucket.

CADEN

I need a Caden. I need a Caden.

MILLICENT

Caden? I... I'd very much like to play Caden.

CADEN

Um...

MILLICENT

I know it would be non-traditional casting, but I think I'm right for it. I think I understand Caden.

CADEN

I don't understand him.

MILLICENT

Caden Cotard is a man already dead, living in a half-world between stasis and antistasis. Time is concentrated and chronology confused for him. Up until recently he has strived valiantly to make sense of his situation, but now he has turned to stone.

CADEN

Okay. That sounds good.

MICHAEL

She's right? I didn't see that at all.

INT. CADEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Caden drives and listens to Madeline on the radio, and holds a cellphone to his ear.

CADEN

Thank you for taking my call, Dr. Madeline.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN (CONT'D)

I've been trying to get in touch with you for a while. I want to recreate a single day and live in it forever. Is that possible?

MADELINE

It's more important to be a good man than a great man. The world is full of great men. We need more good men. Useful men. Decent workers.

CADEN

Do you remember me? I used to be your patient? My name is Caden --

MADELINE

No names! NO Names!

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Caden and Michael sit and watch the street scene in front of them. There seem to be many more homeless people now.

MICHAEL

Any thoughts for today's rehearsal?

CADEN

No. I don't know how to do this.

(beat)

I have a new title, maybe.

Infectious Diseases In Cattle.

MICHAEL

Huh.

(beat)

Okay, maybe we should just run it.

CADEN

Yeah. Okay. The title is about a lot of things. You'll see.

(pause)

Are you gay, Michael?

MICHAEL

Yes. I don't see what that has to do with anything.

CADEN

I'm just making conversation.

Millicent, dressed Caden-esque, emerges from the apartment building and heads down the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Let's follow Caden today.

CADEN

Yeah, sure.

Caden and Michael follow Millicent down the street as she affects Caden's persona. She enters the warehouse set.

INT. WAREHOUSE SET - STREET - NIGHT

Millicent sits down at the director's table. The actor playing Michael is there. Actors playing actors playing people on the street bustle around. Caden and Michael watch. Millicent surveys the scene.

MILLICENT

This is tedious. This is nothing.

Millicent enters the madness on the street. She whispers things to some actors, has longer conversations with others.

MICHAEL

(whisper to Caden)
What's she doing?

MICHAEL ACTOR

She's directing.

MICHAEL

There's too much directing. She's not getting the feel of you.

MILLICENT

Okay, people, let's run through it!

The scene comes alive. The camera snakes through the crowd seeing specific activity: a violent beating, a couple having an intense argument, a pickpocket, a lost little boy crying for his mother, a man seducing the boy into a car, a drug deal gone wrong, a homeless man coughing up sick-looking phlegm, a well-dressed woman squatting and peeing in an alley, a teenage girl shoplifting make-up. Soon it starts to rain. People on the street run for cover. A young man and woman in love walk happily through the rain, the woman opening her mouth to the heavens. Thunder rumbles. Caden looks up, surprised that such a system is rigged here.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Caden sits with Michael at the director's table and stares into space.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The actors are doing what they've always done, milling, walking to and fro. Millicent heads up the apartment building stairs.

CADEN
Millicent.

She turns. He waves her over.

CADEN (CONT'D)
That was ... spectacular.

MICHAEL
It really was! Delightful!

MILLICENT
Thanks.

CADEN
I'm out of ideas. I'm dead.

MILLICENT
Oh. I... could take over ... for a bit. Until you feel refreshed.

MICHAEL
Yes! Yes!

Caden remains silent.

MILLICENT
I think you're tired, Caden. All these years of creative work.

CADEN
I need to keep my hand in.

MILLICENT
Well, Ellen needs to be filled.

CADEN
Filled? You mean...?

MILLICENT
Her role. Just for a bit.

CADEN
(beat)
I do like to clean.

MILLICENT
Cleaning is decent, good work.

INT. WAREHOUSE - INT. APARTMENT 31Y SET - NIGHT

Caden enters. A horrible mess. Dirty dishes. Flies.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELLEN'S ROOM SET - NIGHT

Caden sits on the unmade bed and reads the note:

ADEL'S VOICE

Ellen -- You probably heard,
Olive, my daughter, has died. It's
a time of overwhelming grief. So
please forgive my mess; I haven't
been able to get out of bed. Until
today. Much affection, A.

Caden crosses to the window and looks up at the night sky,
even though it's clearly the ceiling of the warehouse. A
tiny plane flies by.

INT. WAREHOUSE - APARTMENT HALLWAY SET - NIGHT

Caden walks down the hall carrying a bag of garbage to the
incinerator chute, dumps it in, and turns back to apartment
31Y. Old Person #2 (actor version) is standing there.

OLD PERSON #2 (ACTOR)

Ellen?

CADEN

Yes?

OLD PERSON #2 (ACTOR)

Caden asked me to give you this.
You're to keep it in all the time.

Old Person #2 (actor) hands Caden a small black button.
Caden examines it. Old Person #2 (actor) points to his own
ear, in which he wears one. Caden sticks it in his ear.

MILLICENT'S VOICE

... I am touched by the sadness of
Adele's neighbor. So close to
death. Reminds me of my granny. I
should really call her. Remember
how Granny Bascomb bounced me on
her knee pretending to be a horsie.
I loved that so much. Say thank
you to Adele's neighbor.

CADEN

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD PERSON #2 (ACTOR)
(pause, listens, then:)
You're very welcome, young lady.

MILLICENT'S VOICE
Now say, have a very good day.

CADEN
Have a very good day.

OLD PERSON #2 (ACTOR)
(pause, listens, then:)
I will indeed.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELLEN'S ROOM SET - NIGHT

It's dark. Caden lies in bed, with his eyes open.

MILLICENT'S VOICE
... miss him. Why did he have to
get bored with me? Everyone gets
bored with me. I'm not very
bright. And since I put on that
weight, I don't get the looks I
used to. It's not that bad. Lots
of people have it worse. I've got
a job and place to stay. Adele is
nice to me. And so smart and
talented. I don't understand her
artwork, but that's just me. I
wish I'd gone to college. I feel
stupid around educated people like
Adele. Eric was too smart for me,
too. We didn't talk at all near
the end. I'd try to tell him about
my day and he'd get this far away
look in his eyes. I kind of felt
sorry for him; he seemed so
miserable with me. I guess --

Caden drifts off to sleep.

INT. SMALL KITCHEN - MORNING

A tenement apartment. Ellen, in a terrycloth robe, is at the stove making scrambled eggs. Toast pops from the toaster and she crosses to get it. She passes a mirror, glances at herself, seems momentarily surprised, pushes a wisp of hair behind her ear and continues to the toaster. Eric enters. He's an unhealthily thin middle-aged man. He doesn't acknowledge her, nor she him. He pours himself coffee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN
I'm making eggs.
(beat)
Is everything okay, Eric?

ERIC
Everything's everything.

INT. TENEMENT BATHROOM - MORNING

Ellen sits on the tub with a cup of coffee and stares out the window. There's a city park across the street and she watches kids play basketball. She begins to weep.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

It's spring and a ten year old girl watches her mother and she lays out a picnic on blanket on the ground.

MOTHER
Ellen, why do you look so serious?

ELLEN
I'm going to remember this moment
for the rest of my life, mama.
I'll memorize everything happening
right now and in exactly twenty
years come here with my daughter
and have exactly the same picnic.

MOTHER
Baby, that's the loveliest thing
I've ever heard.

INT. ELLEN'S TENEMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen lies in bed watching Eric sleep next to her.

ELLEN (V.O.)
There was supposed to be something
else. I was to have something. A
calm. A love. Children. A child,
at least. Children. Meaning. I
am always on the verge, never more
than a tiny shove from tears. I
can feel them in my chest now.
That squeezing pressure. And it
is so tempting to let go, but I am
afraid, the next time maybe, I will
never stop crying. I miss my
husband even though he is lying
here. He hates me. Oh God.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I have disappointed him and he
hates me. The one person who
should be able to see me and he
won't look. He will never look
again.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELLEN'S ROOM SET - MORNING

Caden lies on his back, and opens his eyes.

CADEN
(quietly, mournfully)
Eric.

Caden looks over. No note from Adele. He gets out of bed,
glances in the mirror, seems surprised by his reflection.

INT. WAREHOUSE - BATHROOM SET - MORNING

Caden sits on the toilet and pees. He wipes himself.

Caden brushes his teeth.

MILLICENT'S VOICE
I have to get that tooth checked.
I think there's something wrong.

Caden stops brushing and prods a tooth with his tongue.

INT. WAREHOUSE - INT. APARTMENT 31Y SET - MORNING

Caden vacuums the hall.

MILLICENT'S VOICE
My period is late this month. I
wonder what's going on. I'm
bloated. I wish it would come.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELLEN'S ROOM SET - NIGHT

Caden lies in bed reading a Judith Krantz novel.

MILLICENT'S VOICE
I can't believe she said that to
him! She's a slut, anyway.

He sticks a bookmark in the book, puts it on the night table,
turns off the light, and lies on his back with his eyes open.

MILLICENT'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Maybe I can ask Adele for a raise.
It's been three years.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILLICENT'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I do a good job. God, I'm so tired tonight. I'm getting old. I'm lonely here.

EXT. POND - DAY

An overcast sky. It's misty. The pond is very still. Ellen, in a heavy black coat, sits in an old row boat. Something pokes out of the water near her, then disappears. She leans over the edge to see and falls in. She sinks to the bottom. It's murky. She walks along the muddy bottom with no difficulty breathing. There's a small house; its windows aglow with firelight. Ellen enters. There's a man with blond hair. It's not underwater anymore.

ELLEN

Hi. I was walking by and --

BLOND MAN

It's okay.

He approaches and strokes her hair, gently puts an arm around her waist. She sighs and moves in to him. He kisses her. She touches his chest, which is now shirtless. Now they're on the floor of the cabin. It's stone and Ellen's naked buttocks are pushed against it as the man has sex with her. She wraps a leg around him. The man's face is close.

BLOND MAN (CONT'D)

Ellen.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELLEN'S ROOM SET - MORNING

Caden awakens.

MILLICENT'S VOICE

I remember the dream. I try to hold onto it. So lovely. If only my life. Who was he? Nobody I know. Yet I know him so well. Is he anywhere in this world. The man who says my name.

A tear forms in Caden's eye, falls down the side of his face.

MILLICENT'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Get up. Look at the night table for a note from Adele.

Caden gets up and glances at the night table. A type-written note:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALE VOICE

Adele died last night of lung cancer in her sleep. You may stay on if you like.

MILLICENT'S VOICE

Look shocked. Weep.

Caden looks shocked, then weeps.

MILLICENT'S VOICE

Go into the kitchen and --

The voice stops. Caden stops. He waits. Nothing. He takes out the earpiece and looks at it, shakes it, then slips it back in his ear. Nothing. He waits. In the distance he hears wailing and gun shots.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELLEN'S ROOM SET - NIGHT

Caden sits on the bed, still waiting.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELLEN'S ROOM SET - MORNING

Caden sits on the bed, his head slumped against the headboard, sleeping. Distant explosions wakes him. He opens his eyes and sits up straight, and waits. He taps his ear.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELLEN'S ROOM SET - NIGHT

Far away shrieks, weeping, cars crashing. Caden stands.

IN. WAREHOUSE APARTMENT HALLWAY SET - NIGHT

Caden exits apartment 31Y. Old person #2 (actor) stands in the hallway and faces away, unmoving. Caden walks past and nods. Old person #2 does not respond. Caden presses the elevator button.

OLD PERSON #2 (ACTOR)

There's nobody running it anymore.

Caden looks at Old Person #2 and nods.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

The unfinished, back-of-a-facade of the set is apparent. Caden walks down endless plywood stairs. The bowels of the building: cables, fake water pipes, electrical cords.

INT. WAREHOUSE - STREET SET - NIGHT

Deadly quiet, abandoned. Caden passes the occasional body on the street. Fires smolder in some buildings. The streets are flooded with sewer water. There is an area cordoned off with barbed-wire. Buildings are draped with massive tarps. Behind a fence are piles of bodies. Caden wanders until he arrives at the warehouse set.

INT. WAREHOUSE SET - STREET SET - NIGHT

Deserted here too. The same occasional fires, flooding, dead bodies. Caden walks, soon arriving at the warehouse set within the warehouse set. He enters.

INT. WAREHOUSE SET WITHIN WAREHOUSE SET - NIGHT

Another deserted street, more bodies, fires, floods. Caden panics. He pulls out his earpiece, shakes it, and puts it back. He walks. He arrives at the warehouse within the warehouse within the warehouse. He enters.

INT. WAREHOUSE WITHIN WAREHOUSE WITHIN WAREHOUSE SET - NIGHT

Deserted. Caden walks. He gets in a golf cart and drives through the deserted street sets. Soon he is at a beach set. He drives the cart on the sand. He sees footprints. He gets out and follows them. He sees a tall structure in the distance. As he gets closer, he sees it is a microphone on some sort of wheeled contraption. The footsteps end at the microphone.

CADEN

Nobody came. They said they were coming but they didn't.

(mouth to microphone)

Hello?

He spots a woman ahead walking with a suitcase. He hurries as much as he can with his limp, his weakness, his ancient body, to catch up with her.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Hello.

The woman turns. She's middle-aged, face radiating kindness.

CADEN (CONT'D)

Where is everybody?

WOMAN

Mostly dead. Some have left.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CADEN

Oh. Would you sit with me for a moment? I'm very tired. And lonely.

WOMAN

Yes, of course.

They sit on a log. The woman smiles at Caden.

CADEN

I feel like I know you.

WOMAN

I was the mother in Ellen's dream. Perhaps from there.

CADEN

Yes! That's it. Yes. You seem a bit older than I remember.

WOMAN

(chuckling)
That dream was a while ago.

He's silent. The woman touches his hand.

CADEN

I didn't mean to say you look old.

WOMAN

I know.

CADEN

I'm sorry the experiment didn't work. I wanted it to with all my heart. I feel I've disappointed you terribly.

WOMAN

No. No. I am so proud of you.

Caden starts to tear up.

CADEN

All I want is someone to see me, someone to look at me with kindness. To be the most special person in the world to just one person.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WOMAN

I know, baby. I know.

He looks at her tentatively. She's looking into his directly, clearly, kindly. She smiles.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You're going to be fine.

Caden starts to weep so hard he chokes. Strings of snot pour from his nose. The woman holds him and strokes his sparse hair. He looks out over her shoulder at the empty city at the far end of the warehouse. His rheumy eyes light up.

CADEN

I know what to do with this play
now. I have an idea. I think --

The screen goes black fast.

END