

INT. A PLANE - DAY

GRAY DANSLINGER, a somewhat chubby businessman, sits in a seat leafing through the Skymall magazine. He notices a small box that projects slides of comic book pages. He scans the barcode with his phone. A STEWARDESS turns on the intercom.

STEWARDESS:

We are beginning our descent into Reagan National now. Please fasten your seatbelts and ensure seat-backs and tray tables are in the upright and locked position. The weather is a lovely 65 degrees.

WITHERSPOON:

So you see what I'm saying about product 8871? Maximum sell-through.

GRAY:

Sure.

WITHERSPOON:

It's a terrible thing being the best: So many get stuck in second place.

GRAY:

Was I-?

WITHERSPOON:

Well, it was never a close race, Gray.

GRAY:

You're probably used to that. People never want to get close to you.

EXT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - DAY

We focus on a dying tree, propped up by a cross-section of wooden planks. We pull back to find DANA DANSLINGER, a tan and blonde suburban housewife, inspecting the house. JUDY SAMSON, another blonde suburban housewife, is holding a dog on a leash. It is urinating in DANA'S yard.

JUDY:

Did you get any damage, Dana?

DANA:
I think the car is dinged up.

JUDY:
What about that tree? Looks ready
to keel over.

DANA:
Gray keeps that for sentimental
reasons.

JUDY:
Has Jerry Vail reported on the
storm yet?

DANA:
I called the station as it was
happening. I'm sure it will be on
soon.

JUDY:
And you're out here missing it?

DANA:
I Tivo'd it.

JERRY DANSLINGER, the 8 year old son, rushes out of the
house.

DANA:
You slow down, young man!

JERRY:
I've got to meet Mike and Tom at
the gas station.

DANA:
You're going to get fat from all
that candy and soda.

JUDY:
Children don't get fat, Dana.

DANA:
Could you please have your dog shit
somewhere else?

JERRY:
(stunned)
You said a bad word.

DANA:
Go. Go play with your friends.

JERRY needs no convincing. As he runs off, GRAY pulls up in his sedan. He gets out and inspects DANA looking at the house.

GRAY:
Did something hit us?

More neighbors, JEROME and CINDY, have appeared at the edge of the yard. JEROME holds a can of beer.

JEROME:
Hail storm. They're saying it's just a five block radius.

GRAY:
Damn, that's strange.

JEROME:
Hand of God, man.

GRAY:
(suspicious)
Is that some sort of threat?

JEROME:
I hear Radio Shack lost a whole shipment of batteries on the loading dock.

GRAY:
(softly, to himself)
I am a man of means and ambition.
I have built a tolerably propitious relationship with the world.

JEROME:
You say something, Gray?

GRAY:
No.

JEROME:
I think that tree's about to go.

GRAY:
It's not my fault.

JEROME takes another drink of his beer.

DANA:
The window in the tool shed broke, Gray.

JEROME:
I know a good glass man.

GRAY'S eyes narrow with pure hatred.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - EVENING

DANA is cooking dinner. GRAY sits in a recliner in the living room, arranging bottles of pills on the end table. He has a line of pills laid out before him. DANA looks in from the kitchen and sees this. She rolls her eyes. The sound of FOOTSTEPS DESCENDS THE STAIRS. It is ROBERT, their teenage son.

ROBERT:
Mom, whatever you're cooking, it smells horrible.

DANA:
(to GRAY)
Are you going to let him talk to me like that?

GRAY:
Robert, please address your mom as "mother."

DANA tosses a pot holder at him.

GRAY:
What did I do?

ROBERT:
I don't want to start a fight, but-

GRAY:
Run while you can. She'll have the water boiling in a minute and that can scar.

ROBERT rushes back upstairs. GRAY scoops the pills up and begins to swallow them. DANA re-enters from the kitchen, waving a spatula.

DANA:
And it's not just how you two team up against me.

GRAY:
What team?

DANA:
We should be the team. Not you and Robert!

GRAY:
I'm in pain.

DANA:
Oh, the old war wound?

GRAY:
Yes.

DANA:
Gray, you hurt your knee playing tennis. Four years ago. You haven't done anything since then.

GRAY:
I go to work.

DANA:
You walk to the rail station. That certainly doesn't hurt your knee. But you're practically on crutches every time you see the doctor.

GRAY:
I am a man of means and-

DANA:
Oh, good lord. Save your damn speech, Gray.

GRAY:
It's in my head. It's my interior monologue.

DANA:
Try providing for your family.

GRAY looks around the room.

DANA:
And before you even say it: The god damn coffee table.

GRAY:
It was impractical.

DANA:
It was a marble beauty with a quartz overlay.
(MORE)

DANA: (cont'd)
And it was a steal at that price.
It matches the couch and-

GRAY:
I'm not a cash machine.

DANA:
But you are a machine.

GRAY:
What does that mean?

DANA:
(mocking robot voice)
Does not compute.

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - SAME TIME

ROBERT is on the phone with BEVERLY D'ANGLIO, his pseudo-girlfriend.

ROBERT:
So I think they should have another child. It's what the family needs. For balance. Then we would have three children, each 8 years younger than the next. My mom is going to enter menopause soon and she won't have anymore eggs. That's why I'm slipping carrots into her cooking.

INT. BEVERLY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

BEVERLY is a gothy girl and her room reflects this. It is mostly black and dead flowers are thumbtacked to the walls.

BEVERLY:
Why carrots?

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - SAME TIME

ROBERT:
I heard somewhere that they make semen more potent. Just trying to help my dad out. He doesn't wear boxers.

INT. BEVERLY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

BEVERLY:
You really spend that much time
thinking about your parents having
sex?

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - SAME TIME

ROBERT:
Sometimes. I'm more concerned with
the end result than the actual act,
if that makes sense.

INT. BEVERLY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

BEVERLY:
How many times do you think your
mom has had your dad's cock in her
mouth?

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - SAME TIME

ROBERT:
That's repulsive.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - SAME TIME

DANA:
Because those pieces *appreciate*,
Gray. I'm surprised you don't
understand investments. You should
be thankful I'm here to guide you
to-

GRAY:
I would break my foot on that
thing. That's why you want it. To
see me in traction.

DANA:
Yeah. You're absolutely right. I
want a husband in so much pain that
he's addicted to painkillers. You
want some wine with your pills?

GRAY:
I'm not whining!

They stop and look at each other.

DANA:
Where is Jerry? Did he ever come home?

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - EVENING

GRAY stands at the door, his jacket on. DANA is talking to ROBERT at the foot of the stairs.

DANA:
And don't worry, it's probably nothing. If he comes back, call me. Do not call your father's cell phone because he doesn't know how to answer it. When the police get here, give them Jerry's school photo. His new school photo, not last year's. He had different hair then and his nose was more up-turned. And call me if the Smalls or the Gulockners call.

ROBERT:
What do I do if he comes back?

DANA:
Call me. I already told you that.

ROBERT:
But should I call the police and-

DANA:
I'll handle it. Call me right away if he comes back.

ROBERT:
But what if he wants to leave again?

DANA:
Keep him here and call me.

ROBERT:
Do I have permission to hit him if I need to?

INT. GRAY'S SEDAN - MINUTES LATER

GRAY has started to go under the fog of the painkillers. He is disoriented and sleepy.

GRAY:
What are we looking for again?
Lost dog?

DANA:
Your son, Gray.

GRAY:
Maybe we should boil our water.

DANA:
Are you okay to drive?

GRAY:
Absolutely not.

DANA:
Let me drive, then.

GRAY:
No. It makes me uncomfortable to
be a passenger when I'm not sober.

DANA begins to run the window up and down, staring out the side as they drive.

GRAY:
Maybe we should split up.

The window stops in mid-rise. DANA stares hard out the window and then closes her eyes. She is suddenly full of rage.

DANA:
Okay. But you get the best damn
lawyer you can find because I will
take you to the cleaners.
Everything was brought into that
house by me. I'll take the kids,
I'll take every dime. You'll move
back in with Doris.

There is a pause.

GRAY:
I meant we should split up to find
Bobby.

DANA:
He prefers Robert now and we're
looking for Jerry anyway.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - SAME TIME

ROBERT is talking to DEPUTY DANIELS.

ROBERT:
He was going to the gas station to
play with some friends.

DANIELS:
Okay. And that was Tommy Smalls
and Michael Gulockner?

ROBERT:
Yes. Why? Are they missing too?

DANIELS:
They haven't been heard from.

ROBERT:
You don't think-

DANIELS:
They're boys. They're probably
shooting off fireworks in the
woods. They'll come home, they
always do.

ROBERT:
Can I ask you something?

DANIELS:
You can see my gun with your eyes,
not with your hands.

ROBERT:
No, I mean- Well, that's cool.
But what I wanted to ask was, is
there a limit to how much you
should masturbate?

DANIELS closes his metal clipboard and looks ROBERT in the
eye.

DANIELS:
If blood comes out or you get a
rash, take a few days off.

ROBERT:
What do you use? For clean up, I
mean. I used to use socks. I
would flush them down the toilet
after I was finished.

(MORE)

ROBERT: (cont'd)
I got the whole system backed up
and my parents had to pay a plumber
to come over and snake the drains.

DANIELS:
Well...don't do that.
(beat)
I'm not sure why you're talking to
me about this. Don't you know what
boundaries are?

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - EVENING

GRAY and DANA are just walking in the door. ROBERT is
leafing through a magazine.

DANA:
So? No word?

ROBERT:
The cop said-

DANA:
Don't say cop, it's disrespectful.
Say officer.

ROBERT:
I think he was a deputy.

DANA:
I don't care. Do you think Jerry
Vail would refer to an officer as a
cop?

ROBERT:
Anyway, he said that you can't file
a missing person's report for 24
hours.

GRAY:
Jerry is not missing. He's with
his friends.

DANA:
Well where are they, Gray?

GRAY:
(suddenly alive)
And with GREAT fortitude, I have
managed to remain a valuable asset
to-

DANA:
 (to ROBERT)
 God damn it, he's speaking Chinese
 again.
 (to GRAY)
 We don't care about your speech,
 Gray! I don't know what the hell
 you have in your head, but we're
 not interested!

GRAY is shaken. ROBERT tries to console him.

ROBERT:
 It's a good speech, dad. She's
 just upset.

DANA:
 Has anyone called?

GRAY:
 That speech will save this family
 one day. You mark my words.

DANA:
 Robert. Has anyone called?

ROBERT:
 I think grandma called.

DANA:
 Which one? Fat Grandma or Smokes
 Grandma?

ROBERT:
 Well, I'm not sure it was her. It
 might have been a prank call.

GRAY:
 Was it...dirty?

DANA:
 Gray! What a thing to say!

GRAY pulls his sportcoat over the bottom half of his face
 like Dracula. DANA throws up her hands in exasperation and
 storms upstairs.

INT. THE DANSLINGER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

DANA sits on the bed and turns on the television. It is on
 the Channel 9 Nightly News, with anchorman JERRY VAIL. He is
 a pompous jerk with feathered hair and teeth too-straight and
 white.

JERRY VAIL:

Leaving over a dozen homes damaged, the cost estimated in the thousands. We go now to Mike McReady in our Channel 9 Super-Storm Watch Center. But first, I want to say that I love you, Dana.

DANA bolts up and stares at the screen.

JERRY VAIL:

I would like to bathe you in milk and then retire to the bed, which will be covered with rose petals and surrounded by a dozen scented candles. Do you like pumpkin spice, Dana? It's my favorite.

The phone RINGS, pulling DANA out of her daydream. She answers it.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - SAME TIME

ROBERT and GRAY sit, staring at the television, not talking. There is a SCREAM from upstairs.

INT. GRAY'S SEDAN MINUTES LATER

DANA is hysterical, weeping uncontrollably. ROBERT is text-messaging in the back seat. GRAY just stares at the road ahead.

GRAY:

Well, it might not be him. It could be a mix up.

DANA:

(sobbing)
I know it's him.

GRAY:

You don't know because-

DANA:

I KNOW.

GRAY:

Don't give me that mother's intuition bullshit, okay? Because that time Robert fell off his bike and cracked his clavicle, I didn't even have so much as loose stool.

DANA sobs harder.

GRAY:
Robert, tell your mother she's
wrong.

ROBERT:
Why did I have to come with you?

GRAY:
Because we're a family. We do
things together.

ROBERT looks up from his phone. He looks back down, shaking his head.

INT. THE HOSPITAL - LATER

DANA rushes into the emergency room lobby yards ahead of GRAY and ROBERT. Her mascara is running down her cheeks and she is dabbing at her nose with a tissue. DANIELS is waiting for them.

DANA:
Where is he?

DANIELS:
Come sit down, Mrs. Danslinger.

DANA:
Oh my god.

GRAY and ROBERT have finally made it to the door.

DANA:
Tell me now.

DANIELS:
I think you need to sit down and
have a glass of water. Mr.
Danslinger, would you-

DANA collapses to the ground. The three men rush to get her up on her feet again. She is carried to a chair and sat down. She comes around and begins sobbing again. DANIELS pulls GRAY aside. They converse briefly and then GRAY walks back to DANA, his stride unsteady.

DANA:
What did he say? Is it...?

GRAY:
(a long pause and a sigh)
I have to go identify the body.

DANA becomes hysterical again. ROBERT does not know how to comfort her so he walks away, towards the vending machines.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDORS - MINUTES LATER

DANIELS leads GRAY to the hospital's morgue.

DANIELS:
That kid of yours. He's, uh, well,
he's, you know, got some issues.

GRAY:
He's a teenager. No different from
you or I.

DANIELS:
I wouldn't say that. What I mean
is, he doesn't seem to have
boundaries. I hope you don't take
offense, I just thought you should
know he said some inappropriate
things to me. Unsolicited.

GRAY:
What kind of things?

DANIELS:
Take this left, here. He told me
about the socks in the pipes.

GRAY:
Oh, everyone knows about that. I
put it in the Christmas newsletter.

DANIELS stares at him as they walk.

INT. THE HOSPITAL - LATER

DANA sits in the lobby, listening to another officer talk about what the police know.

OFFICER:
The three of them were struck by a
drunk driver on Rural Road 12. He
was apprehended a couple miles down
the road after plowing into a tree.

GRAY appears in the lobby. DANA looks to him with her hopes slightly up, still, but his face says it all. She breaks down again. GRAY comforts her, wrapping an arm around her and resting his head against hers as she sobs. DANA is chanting a sort of mantra.

DANA:
Why, God? Why, God? Why did you
have to take my son? Why, God?

GRAY:
Now all we've got is the broken
one.

DANA begins to collect herself. She pulls a compact out of her purse and looks in the small mirror. She tries to wipe away the mascara streaks.

GRAY:
Leave it, Dana. It doesn't matter.

DANA:
It *does* matter. Jerry Vail could
be coming. I don't want him to see
me like-

She breaks into sobs again.

INT. A FUNERAL HOME - DAY

GRAY sits before LARSON, the funeral director. He is older than GRAY and displays a quiet professionalism. He wears a very nice suit.

GRAY:
And all the time I'm refining The
Speech. I'm sure it will save the
life of everyone in the fam- But
it doesn't. I couldn't look at my
dead son and give that speech to
him. That wouldn't bring him back.
You know?

LARSON:
Words are powerless in the face of
death.

GRAY:
I changed clothes before I came
here.

LARSON:
You look very nice.

GRAY:
My wife made me. I was going to come in Dockers and a polo shirt but she said, "Put on a shirt and tie. Put on a suit."

LARSON:
Do the same for the funeral.

GRAY:
Oh, yeah, sure. But that's staying with me. "Put on a shirt and tie." I don't know why that's there. I can't shake it. It just won't leave.

(beat)
Why? Why is it important what I wear today? This isn't the funeral. No one is going to see me. Except you.

LARSON:
Except me.

GRAY:
And why do I have to make a good impression on you when I come to pick out my son's casket?

LARSON:
(expansively)
Grief does strange things to people. Perhaps your wife is trying to maintain a sense of normalcy. What you wear is not for my benefit, it is for hers.

GRAY:
Do you have a grief counselor here?

LARSON:
Not on staff. But I can give you some names.

GRAY:
It's not for me, it's for her.

INT. JERRY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

ROBERT and BEVERLY are laying in bed, fully clothed. Loomer by My Bloody Valentine is playing softly on the stereo.

ROBERT has a bloody nose and is staunching the flow with a tissue. He is also cut above the left eye and bruised beside it.

BEVERLY:
But why did the fight happen?

ROBERT:
I don't know. He was looking at me weird and I didn't like it.

BEVERLY:
So you hit him?

ROBERT:
Does it look like I hit him? He hit me.

BEVERLY:
What did you say to him?

ROBERT:
Who keeps track?
(beat)
Thanks for coming over.

He sees fresh cuts on her arms.

ROBERT:
You're doing that again, huh?

BEVERLY:
Now and then. When I need to.

ROBERT:
But why do you do it?

BEVERLY:
I don't know.

ROBERT:
You don't do things for no reason.
You had a reason.

BEVERLY:
But I don't know what it was. I don't know why you got in a fight today; do you?

There is a pause.

ROBERT:
I guess now we look alike.

BEVERLY:
 (self-conscious)
 We don't look anything alike.
 You're not ugly like me.

ROBERT:
 I just meant that now we've both
 got blood on us.
 (beat)
 I think you're very pretty.

BEVERLY:
 (laughing it off)
 Right.

ROBERT:
 I do. Especially when you're not
 bleeding.

BEVERLY:
 Would you want to have sex with me?

ROBERT:
 We can't.

BEVERLY:
 I can be really quiet.

ROBERT:
 No, I mean- This is Jerry's room.
 I'm not allowed to have girls in my
 room.

BEVERLY looks around the room in silent awe.

ROBERT:
 What? What is it?

BEVERLY:
 It's creepy. Being in your dead
 brother's room.

INT. THE DANSLINGER BEDROOM - SAME TIME

DANA is on the phone with Channel 9.

DANA:
 I want to be interviewed by Jerry
 Vail.
 (beat)
 Yes, one of them was my son.
 (beat)
 No, one of the two that died.
 (MORE)

DANA: (cont'd)

(beat)

Well, why not?

(beat)

It has tons of human interest.

(becoming upset)

Listen to me, god damn it. I've earned this. It's not how I wanted it to happen, I never saw it like this, but this may be my only opportunity. I'm grieving and I need to meet Jerry.

(beat)

F you, lady.

She disconnects the call. She places the phone back in its cradle on the nightstand. She notices a family portrait in a small frame by the phone. She pushes it to the floor.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME EVENING

The family sits at the dinner table, one seat conspicuously absent. They are having eggs.

ROBERT:

Why are we having eggs for dinner?

DANA:

They were on sale.

ROBERT:

You hate eggs. You said it's a chicken abortion.

DANA:

They had a really good deal on them. I got two dozen.

ROBERT:

Does this mean we'll have dinner for breakfast?

DANA:

You eat what you want, okay? I'm finished.

GRAY:

Finished with what?

DANA:

This.

GRAY looks from DANA to ROBERT and the back to DANA.

GRAY:
This? This table? This china
pattern? This conversation?

DANA pulls the napkin from her lap and slams it down on her plate. She stands and walks out of the room.

ROBERT:
What's wrong with her?

GRAY:
It's hard to say. I don't think
I'm qualified.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - MORNING

DANA is at the dinner table, eating a grapefruit. She wears a facial mask and is dressed in an frumpy nightgown, her hair in rollers. GRAY stands at the refrigerator, trying to command his hand to open it.

DANA:
I told Robert that you would pick
him up from practice.

GRAY:
He has practice?

DANA:
Yes.

GRAY:
I didn't know that.

He opens a drawer and pulls out a very small steak knife.

GRAY:
Why do they make them this small?

DANA:
(without looking up)
For kids.

GRAY:
But isn't that dangerous? To make
a child-sized knife? Why, that's
like giving them-

DANA:
A baseball bat or a BB gun or a
hockey stick...

GRAY:

Okay, you're right. But I think the risk of being stabbed over dinner should be minimized as much as possible. I won't let you have a knife at the table if you're drinking.

DANA snatches up the grapefruit and tosses it at GRAY, striking him in the back of the head. GRAY slowly turns to her and then, with no explanation, begins to dance a weird jig. DANA grasps her serrated spoon tightly. GRAY stops dancing and begins to wash his hands while HUMMING a tune.

GRAY:

What is that? I know that song, but what is it?

DANA:

It's from that video game that Jerry played.

GRAY:

You know, that cop told me that Robert has boundary issues.

GRAY wipes his hands on a paper towel, still on the roll.

GRAY:

He's such a weird kid.

DANA:

He has a weird father.

GRAY:

You think he'll ever get married?

DANA:

Please dispose of the paper towel you have used.

GRAY:

What practice do I have to pick him up from? Is he in the school band? On the wrestling team? Does he sing? Have you ever heard him sing?

DANA:

Have you?

GRAY:

Have you seen him dance?

DANA:
Has anyone?

GRAY:
What should I wear to the funeral?

DANA:
Something nice.

There is a pause.

GRAY:
You know, I can really remember
something about the day I left for
Houston.

DANA:
(flipping through the
newspaper)
Yeah?

GRAY:
Jerry came in the kitchen and said
he needed twelve dollars for the
school food drive.

DANA:
Mmmmmmm.

GRAY:
It was one of those moments where
your mind comes to a complete stop
because the information can not be
processed as offered. Twelve
dollars for the food drive. Do
they donate the money? Do you have
to buy food from the cafeteria to
donate? Was Jerry going to stop at
a grocery store and spend twelve
dollars on canned foods? I still
can't figure out the twelve dollars
for the food drive. Are you even
listening to me?

ROBERT enters the kitchen. He is wearing Wonderbread
packages as slippers.

ROBERT:
Can I go over to Beverly's after
practice? We're working on
something.

GRAY:
Drug deal?

ROBERT:
That's a good one. No, we're building a small fusion reactor in her father's workshop. We're going to extort the government.

GRAY:
That's holding them hostage.

ROBERT:
You can't, like, kidnap the government, man.

GRAY:
Good point.

ROBERT SNAPS HIS FINGERS and, a split second later, the phone RINGS.

GRAY:
How in the hell did you do that?

ROBERT:
It's good to be the king.

GRAY:
Did you actually do that? Did you make the phone ring?

ROBERT:
You want to know who it is?

DANA:
Will one of you please answer that?

GRAY:
No way. The kid's a sorcerer. Not going near it.

ROBERT:
I know who it is and it's not for me.

DANA lets out a SIGH and then stands and answers the phone.

DANA:
Yes, who's calling?
(beat)
Oh, of course. How is he doing?
(beat)
Why would I want to come there?
(beat)
Really?
(small beat)
(MORE)

DANA: (cont'd)

REALLY?

(beat)

Oh my god, you're the best. I will come right away.

INT. THE HOSPITAL - LATER

DANA, in knockout dress and heavy makeup, knocks on the door in the intensive care unit. DIANNE GULOCKNER looks up from a paperback romance novel. MICHAEL GULOCKNER is intubated and in traction. The heart monitor BEEPS REGULARLY.

DANA:

Has he been here yet?

DIANNE:

No.

DANA:

(indicating MICHAEL)

How is he?

DIANNE:

(voice heavy with emotion)

The doctors said that one of his lungs has collapsed. He wasn't breathing for several minutes and they're waiting to determine the degree of brain damage. His spleen was ruptured so they had to remove it. My little boy is-

(she gets too choked up to continue)

DANA:

I'm so sorry for you, Dianne. Will he ever...

DIANNE:

They don't know.

(beat)

It's so much easier for you. Yours is gone. I have to sit here and watch mine fight for life with every breath. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. This is a tragedy.

DANA:

Yes, it is. Are you sure that Jerry Vail is coming to interview you?

DIANNE:
Well, they said they're sending
someone. They asked me to be here
between noon and four.

DANA'S face constricts.

DANA:
So you don't know for sure that it
will be him?

DIANNE:
Well, I just assumed-

DANA:
F your assumptions!

DIANNE:
(shocked)
Dana-

DANA:
No. How dare you? To say that
things are easier for me because my
son was KILLED? How f-ing dare
you!

DIANNE:
I said I was sorry.

DANA is storming out already. DIANNE calls her name after
her.

INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

ROBERT is seated facing three men: PRINCIPAL WHITE; VICE
PRINCIPAL AKIN; and COUNSELOR TROY.

TROY:
We want to extend a hand in a time
of need.

ROBERT:
I'm okay.

TROY:
Mrs. Trieger says you failed your
biology test yesterday.

WHITE:
Have you been sleeping okay,
Robert?

ROBERT:
I think that's a personal question
and I don't feel obligated to
answer it.

TROY:
What about your shoes?

We pan down to the Wonderbread packages.

ROBERT:
I thought I might try out a new
sport. Combine track with
swimming. Wear these things and
run on the water.

The three exchange a glance. TROY leans in.

TROY:
Do you think you're Jesus Christ,
Robert?

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

ROBERT is at his locker, busily cramming books into his
backpack. BEVERLY approaches him.

BEVERLY:
So what did they say?

ROBERT:
They said, uh, they said that I
don't have to worry about my grades
this year.

BEVERLY:
For real?

ROBERT:
Well, they worded it better. They
said it's not an excuse to goof off
or anything, but I won't fail if I
perform poorly. They said they
want my best effort and will take
care of me.

BEVERLY:
Holy shit! That's like winning the
lottery or something.

ROBERT:
I know. So I'm dropping out.

BEVERLY:

What?

ROBERT:

Fuck them. They wanted to bring my mother in here to talk about my attitude problem.

BEVERLY:

You just got a free pass for the year and you're going to drop out. You've got some kind of problem.

ROBERT:

(turning on her viciously)
Fuck you too, then!

BEVERLY:

So that's it? You'll just walk away?

ROBERT:

I don't need this shit. I'll go dig ditches and in a couple days we can throw my brother in one. I'm out.

BEVERLY:

Hold up. Talk to me.

ROBERT:

It's a waste of time. There's nothing to say anymore.

BEVERLY:

You know what you said about your dad? How he doesn't feel any of this?

ROBERT:

I'm not a drug addict like he is. I feel things.

BEVERLY:

Sometimes you do, sometimes you don't. Which is it?

ROBERT:

What do you want from me?

BEVERLY:

What do you feel right now?

ROBERT:
Nothing. My life is neither good
nor bad and I don't feel anything
about that.

BEVERLY:
But you just said you feel things.
You feel angry?

ROBERT:
No point.

BEVERLY:
Yes, there is.

ROBERT:
I don't have the energy.

BEVERLY:
You're mad as hell. You just got a
free ride, so you're going to crash
the car. That's anger.

ROBERT:
Just lay off.

BEVERLY:
Put your books back.

ROBERT:
Why are you always on my case?!

BEVERLY:
Because you're not living right
now. You're on the other side.

ROBERT grabs her shirt at the shoulder and pushes her up
against the wall of lockers.

BEVERLY:
That's right. Fucking own it.

ROBERT realizes he's laid his hands on her in an aggressive
manner and lets go.

BEVERLY:
Just because your feelings are
unpleasant doesn't mean they're
bullshit.

ROBERT slams the locker door shut.

INT. THE DANSLINGER BEDROOM - TWO DAYS LATER

GRAY is knotting a tie in front of the mirror. DANA is already dressed, has been up for hours, and is ironing the slacks that GRAY will wear. She notices a battery charger sitting on a chair near the bed.

DANA:
What is this?

GRAY:
(without looking at her)
This is a necktie. I have to put a knot in it.

DANA:
Don't tell me you're taking the camera to the funeral.

GRAY:
(still knotting)
Why wouldn't I?

DANA:
This is a funeral, Gray. It's not a graduation party. It's not a bar mitzvah. We're not going to a wedding.

GRAY:
A lot of our family will be there. I want to get pictures of everyone.

DANA:
So save it for the wake after the burial. They'll all be in here eating our food.

GRAY:
I want to get a picture of the casket going into the-

DANA:
Stop it!

He finally turns to face her.

GRAY:
What?

DANA:
Why won't you take this seriously? We are burying our son today.

GRAY:
Well we wouldn't if I had my way.

There is a tense pause.

DANA:
You never mentioned cremation.

GRAY:
No, I did not. That's not what I'm
talking about.

DANA violently overturns the ironing board. GRAY is rocked
by the sudden violence.

DANA:
You think this is my fault!

GRAY:
Well I'm not the one that let him
go running all over the county with
his friends.

DANA:
So you're admitting it?

GRAY:
I'm just saying, it wasn't my
fault.

DANA:
It was a f-ing accident!

GRAY:
Life is an accident. His life was
an accident. That was your fault
also.

DANA:
You are so low. I can't believe
you would throw this in my face.

GRAY:
What do you expect? You let our
children run wild AND NOW HE'S
DEAD!

DANA:
I let them live in the real world.

GRAY:
Where is the real world? Look at
this house.
(MORE)

GRAY: (cont'd)

Look at our two cars when most of the world has blisters on their feet. Look at our pantry full of food when half the world goes to bed hungry. This isn't real life, this is a god damn protective bubble!

DANA:

If it's so safe in this place, why did Jerry have to die?

GRAY:

(turning back to the mirror)

Because you let him. You were a bad mother.

Smoke has begun to rise from the carpet where the iron is laying on it. GRAY notices it. He rushes to unplug it but DANA blocks him.

DANA:

Let it burn! Let the f-ing house burn to the ground if you hate it here so much!

GRAY pushes past her and pulls the plug. He grabs the iron and places it on the windowsill.

GRAY:

What has gotten into you?

DANA wipes tears from her eyes.

DANA:

Do you even have to ask?

GRAY:

Clean yourself up. Don't ruin today.

He picks up his slacks and walks into the bathroom.

EXT. CEMETERY DAY

About 30 people stand and watch as JERRY'S casket is lowered into the ground. Each of the family members drop a scoop of dirt onto the lid.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - EVENING

The house is a wreck. Detritus of the wake litter the entire home. GRAY is patrolling with a trash bag to clean up. ROBERT and DANA are talking in the dining room.

DANA:
No. Absolutely not.

ROBERT:
It's my life. I'll do what I want.

DANA:
You may think you're an adult already but you're not. And as long as you live under our roof-

ROBERT:
Then I'll move out.

DANA:
You'll move out?

ROBERT:
Yeah. Ted's older brother needs a new roommate. I already applied for several jobs and I've got a map of the bus routes downtown.

DANA:
What do you think you're doing?

ROBERT:
I'm doing what's right for the family. Jerry's gone, so-

DANA:
That's right, Jerry is gone. So you should be here for your family.

ROBERT:
It's too much pressure.

DANA:
What pressure?

ROBERT:
"Brush your teeth. Clear your plate. Take out the trash. Get good grades." It's all on me now. You have no other successors. And I don't want to be that guy.

DANA:
Gray! Gray, did you know about
this?

GRAY:
(walking into the room)
What is it now?

DANA:
Your son wants to drop out of
school and work at McDonald's.

GRAY:
Well, I think that's his choice.

DANA:
How many pills have you had?

GRAY:
My knee hurt a lot. I carried the
casket.

DANA:
This is not acceptable.
(turning back to ROBERT)
You do not get to make these
choices. We decide important
things as a family. And this is
not acceptable.

ROBERT:
Yeah, you said that.

DANA:
Gray, will you please help me?

GRAY:
Remember what Dr. Slydell said.
The grieving process is different
for each person.

DANA:
I'm not going to have my only son
throw away his life for no good
reason.

ROBERT:
I have my reasons.

DANA:
Like what?

ROBERT:

Like, I don't want to live with you anymore. All you do is cry. And dad doesn't do anything. He has no emotion at all.

DANA:

That's because he's always full of painkillers!

GRAY:

I am not.

DANA:

(offhanded)

Oh, please, Gray, you're whacked out of your gourd.

(back to ROBERT)

You are going to stay in school and get good grades and go to an Ivy League school and have a great life.

ROBERT:

It's not fair!

DANA:

I know it's not. What happened with your brother wasn't fair either. But in ten years, when you're working some hedge fund and making six figures, you will be glad that I forced you to live an unfair life.

ROBERT:

Yeah, what happened to Jerry wasn't fair and the guy that did it is going away for twenty years. I get to serve a ten year sentence following your plan for me. Hey, you want to see something? You want to see something?

ROBERT reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small automatic pistol.

DANA:

Give me that right now.

He puts the pistol up to his head and pulls the trigger. There is no shot fired. A flame springs up from the top of the gun. It is a replica lighter. ROBERT laughs maniacally and DANA falls backwards into one of the chairs.

ROBERT:
How about that?

DANA:
Gray, talk to him. He's your son.

GRAY:
I think you were more involved in
the birth than I was.

DANA covers her eyes with her hand.

DANA:
(still covering her eyes)
I'm going to count to ten. When I
get to ten, I will open my eyes and
I want you both to be somewhere
else. I don't care where you are
but you can not be here. I don't
want anymore arguing tonight and I
don't want anyone making choices
about anything. I just want peace
and quiet so that I can watch Jerry
Vai- the news.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - MORNING

GRAY sits in a wooden chair staring out the window. DANA
quietly and cautiously creeps down the stairs to find him.
He is drinking cocoa.

DANA:
It's so cold. Why don't you turn
the heat on?

GRAY looks up at her. He lets out a SIGH.

GRAY:
I'm damned, aren't I?

DANA:
What do you mean?

GRAY:
(with a small laugh)
What I said at the hospital.

DANA:
Oh, it's all a blur.

GRAY:
(long pause)
I said that now we're stuck with
the broken one.
(very remorseful)
I blew it.

DANA:
I don't know what you're talking
about. But I'm sick of it.

GRAY:
I'm trying to communicate. You
said that I don't do that enough.

DANA:
But bringing up the past-

GRAY:
No, this is important. I wonder,
sometimes. What life would be like
if we hadn't married.

DANA:
Now you're hurting my feelings.

GRAY:
Good! I'm glad.

DANA:
Why are you so wretched?

GRAY:
Think back to college. Do you
remember those days?

DANA:
Yes.

GRAY:
You're the cute young drama major
and I'm the debate team co-captain.
There was so much ahead of us. Did
you think we'd end up here?

DANA:
It's a lovely home.

GRAY:
There's no love in it anymore.

DANA:
(long pause)
When was there ever?

GRAY:

(wrapped up in himself)

We were going to change the world. Not like the hippies had tried, levitating the Pentagon or whatever, but we were going to do it. We were going to fix things and get it right. I just don't know what it was all for.

DANA:

You know something very interesting?

GRAY:

What?

DANA:

I caught Robert listening to some of our albums. The vinyl ones.

GRAY:

Yeah?

DANA:

The Replacements, REM, those albums we keep in the garage. I didn't know he would like them. I didn't know we could pass down a piece of ourselves.

GRAY:

I'm not sure I want to. Wasn't the goal to give them a better life?

DANA:

Is the cocoa still warm?

He looks down into his cup.

GRAY:

I'll be damned for all eternity for what I said about him. How could I say that about my own son?

DANA:

He can be a pill. Remember what he did last night with that f-ing lighter gun?

GRAY:

(offering the mug)

Do you want this? I can't finish it.

DANA:
I hoped it was real when I realized
it wasn't. That was the part that
scared me the most. So I'm damned
too.

GRAY:
I'm sure he was just-

DANA:
Should we watch him closer? Like a
suicide watch?

GRAY:
I'll talk to him about it.

There is a SOFT KNOCK at the door. DANA goes to answer it.
She finds 8 year old FERGUSON standing on the doorstep, his
mother's car parked in front of the house.

DANA:
Ferguson?

FERGUSON:
Yeah.

DANA is unsure. She notices he is holding an arm behind his
back.

DANA:
Did nobody tell you that-

FERGUSON:
I know about it. I came here to
say...I'm sorry.

DANA:
You're sorry?

FERGUSON:
For your loss.

DANA is touched.

DANA:
Thank you.

He pulls his arm from behind his back. He is holding a
plastic shopping bag.

FERGUSON:
They're army guys. Jerry left them
at my house.

DANA takes the bag. Before she can say thanks again, he sprints off back to his mother's car. DANA waves at the car and the horn BEEPS once, then drives away. DANA walks back to the living room to find GRAY has lined his painkillers up on the windowsill. There is more than the usual amount, what looks to be a deadly amount. But she says nothing. She walks up to JERRY'S room and lays the bag on his bed. She straightens the comforter a bit. As she exits the room, she sees a light on under the door of ROBERT'S room. She KNOCKS on the door.

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM - SAME TIME

ROBERT is laying on his back, staring at the ceiling. When he hears the KNOCK, he grabs a book and opens it randomly and then calls out

ROBERT:

Enter.

DANA:

Are you already up?

ROBERT:

Yeah.

DANA:

Did you sleep?

ROBERT:

Yeah.

DANA:

(unsure)

Did you want to talk to someone?

ROBERT:

Just want to read my book.

DANA:

Okay.

She shuts the door. She hears the CLICK of the light being turned off.

EXT. BEVERLY'S HOME - DAY

It is a small duplex, noticeably less expensive than the DANSLINGER home. ROBERT sits patiently on a bench on the porch. A golden retriever lays its head in his lap and he idly strokes it.

The door opens and MR D'ANGLIO, an alcoholic with grubby clothes, steps out. He sees ROBERT waiting.

MR D'ANGLIO:
You're that kid.

ROBERT:
Yeah, that's what I go by.

MR D'ANGLIO:
Smartass.

BEVERLY pokes her head out the door.

BEVERLY:
Robert?

ROBERT:
I go by that too.

MR D'ANGLIO pulls his baseball cap down and drunkenly weaves his way to the mailbox.

BEVERLY:
You shouldn't be here.

ROBERT:
I know about your dad. Not bothered.

BEVERLY:
I'm not embarrassed.

ROBERT:
Sure you're not.
(beat)
It doesn't matter. You think I like friends meeting my dad?

BEVERLY:
At least he wears a suit.

ROBERT:
He pops pills all day. Did you know that he hasn't shown any guilt over what happened to Jerry?

BEVERLY:
Why would he be guilty?

ROBERT:
I can't forgive- I mean, my dad can't forgive-

BEVERLY:
Let's take a walk. I wanted to get
out of the house anyway.

They begin to walk down the street.

BEVERLY:
You were saying you can't forgive.

ROBERT:
I didn't mean to.

BEVERLY:
But you did.

ROBERT:
I meant my dad. He can't forgive
my mother.

BEVERLY:
But you said "I". You said "I
can't forgive."

ROBERT:
Jesus, get off my back.

BEVERLY:
You think you're so horrible, don't
you?

ROBERT:
Well, I'm certainly not good enough
for them.

BEVERLY:
You think you're shit, huh?

ROBERT:
No. Well... It's too much energy.

BEVERLY:
Bullshit. You're having a
realization and you don't like it
so you say it's a waste of time.

ROBERT begins to outpace her.

BEVERLY:
Just going to outpace me until you
can't hear me?

ROBERT:
What do you want from me?

BEVERLY:

I want you to get through this.
Stop. Hey, stop.

ROBERT pauses and she catches up.

BEVERLY:

I miss him too, okay? I used to
babysit him. He was a good kid.
And you don't have to go through
this alone. So tell me: How do you
really feel about your dad?

ROBERT:

He doesn't love me. But I don't
hate him or anything. I
understand. He's not all there.

BEVERLY:

Maybe you're not there for him.
Ever think of that?

ROBERT:

Why should I be-

BEVERLY:

Because that's what families do.
You take care of each other. And
that's why you feel guilty about
Jerry. Because you think you should
have been looking out for him.

ROBERT sits down on the sidewalk.

BEVERLY:

Tired?

ROBERT:

Yeah.

BEVERLY:

That's a big guilt to be carrying
around.

ROBERT:

Look: It's me! My dad loves my
mom. I know they both loved Jerry.
But they don't love me. I'm just a
problem for them.

BEVERLY:

Why would you say that?

ROBERT:
You don't live there. You're an
outsider looking in.

BEVERLY:
Don't you think you're an outsider
too? If they don't love you.

ROBERT:
It's like our family only worked
when he was here.

BEVERLY:
Then forgive them.

ROBERT:
For not loving me?

BEVERLY:
For not loving you as much as you
need. It's not your fault and it's
not their fault. It just happens.
You can pick your friends but not
your family.

ROBERT:
You know, last night I put a gun up
to my head in front of them.

BEVERLY:
For real?

ROBERT:
It was a lighter. One of those
lighters shaped like a gun. But
when I pulled the trigger, I was
praying that it actually would go
off. I thought I could wish it
into a real gun.

BEVERLY:
That's fucked up, Robert.

ROBERT:
I know. And I would only do it if
they were watching.

BEVERLY:
Why's that?

ROBERT:
I don't know.

BEVERLY:
Yeah, you do.

ROBERT:
(long pause)
Because I want them to feel guilty
about my death.

BEVERLY:
Right? Because you don't think
your dad feels guilty about Jerry's
death and you want him to know how
much it's hurting you.

ROBERT begins to cry. BEVERLY hugs him.

BEVERLY:
(still holding him)
Is this okay? Being affectionate
in public?

ROBERT:
Do you think I'm embarrassed by you
or something?

She kisses him on the cheek.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

ROBERT and BEVERLY walk.

BEVERLY:
So what now?

ROBERT:
I don't know. It's the weekend,
so...

BEVERLY:
No, I mean us. Are we a couple
now?

ROBERT:
I don't know. Do we have to have a
discussion about it?

BEVERLY:
Haven't you ever dated someone
before?

ROBERT:
For a couple weeks. And she just
told me we were dating so it was
easy to figure out.

BEVERLY:
Oh. Okay. Well, then, we're
dating. Be good to me.

ROBERT:
Sure.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

GRAY enters the office wearing a suit. WITHERSPOON is
pouring himself a cup of coffee.

WITHERSPOON:
Hey, Gray. I don't think your
first day back has to be a
Saturday.

GRAY:
Well, you know what they say about
the early bird. How are the third
quarter sales looking?

WITHERSPOON:
I'm covering three quotas.

GRAY:
Am I in the game at all?

WITHERSPOON:
If you were a horse, they'd shoot
you.

GRAY:
That bad, huh?

WITHERSPOON:
Where have you been? I've been
losing you.

GRAY:
I'm sorry. I'm a man of means and
ability-

WITHERSPOON:
It's all fine with me. I
understand what you're going
through.

(MORE)

WITHERSPOON: (cont'd)
 When my daughter's roommate
 overdosed- But see, she's a girl.
 That's college. That's the drug
 culture. It's different.

GRAY:
 Yes, but they gave you time.

WITHERSPOON:
 They gave me space to breathe
 again. You look like you need to
 come up for air. I can't go on
 selling your leads for you, you
 know. You need to start showing
 results.

GRAY wanders off in a drugged haze.

INT. THE SCHOOL - DAY

ROBERT sits in a stairwell with two others, FINN and KEROS.
 They are passing around a cigarette.

FINN:
 I didn't even know you smoked, man.
 Where do you get yours from?

ROBERT:
 (inhaling the cigarette)
 I'm really just starting out. Since
 I quit the track team.

FINN:
 Far out. What's this shit about
 the janitor's daughter?

ROBERT:
 You make it sound like that's her
 job too.

KEROS:
 No, man, it's just, you know, why
 her?

ROBERT:
 Why not?

KEROS:
 You got your ass beat by Tommy
 DiCillo last week. Isn't one
 beating enough?

ROBERT:
I fucked him up too.

FINN:
Bullshit.

ROBERT:
I did. I think I chipped a tooth.

FINN:
He was smiling the next day.

ROBERT:
Yeah, well, assholes never admit
defeat.

EXT. THE TRAIN STATION - DAY

GRAY hops on a commuter train.

EXT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - DAY

GRAY parks the car in the driveway and approaches the front door at the same time as ROBERT.

GRAY:
No track today?

ROBERT:
No work?

GRAY:
It's, uh...

ROBERT:
Yeah, it's very uh. Here, you got
this package.

GRAY is handed a small square box.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - DAY

DANA is watching a recorded episode of JERRY VAIL'S news program. She rewinds regularly to hear him pronounce words again. GRAY stumbles in.

DANA:
There's a banana in the fridge.

GRAY:
I think I'm going to get fired.

DANA:
I'll make some soup if you want.

GRAY:
Are you even listening?

DANA:
(standing and heading to
the kitchen)
I'm learning to let things slide.

GRAY:
This is our financial security
we're talking about!

DANA:
Just look the repo men in the face
and give them The Speech.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME EVENING

DANA, clad in a bathrobe, notices a light emanating from beneath the door to JERRY'S room. It changes from yellow to blue to red to green. She opens the door slightly to look in. GRAY sits on the floor, a small box projecting comic book slides onto the wall. GRAY is sobbing softly.

INT. THE DANSLINGER BEDROOM - LATER

GRAY has his pill bottles lined up on the nightstand. He is staring at the iron-shaped burn mark on the carpet. A clock is beeping. DANA enters.

DANA:
We never came to a consensus on
Robert. Suicide watch: Yes or no?

GRAY:
Forget that. Have you seen him
this last week? He's on cloud
nine.

DANA:
That's a lot of bottles, isn't it?

GRAY:
Three of them are empty.

DANA:
Then throw them away.

GRAY:
Would you love me more if I was thinner?

DANA:
What does that have to do with anything?

GRAY:
If I joined a gym, got toned up...would that make a difference?

DANA:
That is the dumbest thing you've ever asked me.

GRAY:
What about when you said you were pregnant with Jerry and I asked if it was mine?

DANA:
Well, I guess it is a close contest.
(beat)
No, it does not matter to me. I married you for better or worse and you've mostly given me better.

GRAY:
Because I think I would have trouble if you got all doughy like I have.

DANA:
That is a terrible thing to say, Gray. Especially after what I just said.

GRAY:
You have to choose the right people in your life. I think it's natural to want to be attracted to your mate.

DANA:
I'm so hurt that I can't even- Why would you say that?

GRAY:
Because I don't know if I've ever really loved you.

DANA:
F you, Gray.

GRAY:
But it means a lot to me that you
love me enough to put up with this.
(looking at her)
I do want to get better. I never
thought I'd get stuck in this.
(motioning to himself)

DANA:
What are you trying to say?

GRAY:
I want to stop taking the pills.

DANA:
Yeah?

GRAY nods. She walks to him and holds him in her arms.

DANA:
I guess a little more firmness
couldn't hurt.

He chuckles a little.

DANA:
Fatass.

They both start laughing.

INT. THE OFFICE - DAY

GRAY sits in his boss' office. He nods his head and then
exits the room. WITHERSPOON is waiting.

WITHERSPOON:
So. What did he say?

GRAY:
I'm up for review.

WITHERSPOON:
When?

GRAY:
Two weeks. He said to update my
resume.

WITHERSPOON:
Something good will come of it.

GRAY:
You think so?

WITHERSPOON:
Things happen for a reason.

GRAY:
No, they don't. Things happen to people and they aren't fair and there's no reasoning.

WITHERSPOON:
That's nihilism, Gray. Look, why don't you take the overflow of someone that isn't selling? You remember we used to complain about the burners here? Burning up a good lead just because they didn't want to buy the first package? We've still got plenty of them and they're throwing leads away.

GRAY:
I might need to do that.

WITHERSPOON:
If you stiff your own calls, you can always get lucky on theirs. I'd give you some of mine but, like I said, four quotas is my limit.

A passing secretary smiles at WITHERSPOON.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - NIGHT

The family is seated at the dinner table. There is, as always, a place set for JERRY.

GRAY:
Why do we do this every night?

DANA:
It keeps the family together.

GRAY:
Our zip code keeps us together. I meant this, this plate.

DANA:
It's for Jerry.

GRAY:
Okay, that's fine. I love a
memorial as much as anyone. But
why is there food on the plate?

DANA:
Don't start, okay?

GRAY:
There are people starving and we're
wasting food. Robert, tell me I'm
right.

ROBERT:
I think yours is a question with
many answers.

DANA:
Leave him alone, Gray.

GRAY:
Leave him alone? Am I picking on
him?

DANA:
He's at a disadvantage.

GRAY:
How so?

DANA:
(to ROBERT)
It's the withdrawal talking.

GRAY:
Bullshit!

DANA:
You see? You're all keyed up.
You're about to vibrate off your
chair.

GRAY:
I just want consideration for the
starving children of Africa. I'm
being, uh, magnanimous here.

DANA:
Did you add that word to your
speech?

GRAY sweeps his plate onto the floor.

DANA:
Why did you do that?

GRAY:
Because someone has to be alive in
this family.

DANA:
You're sweating all over my table.

GRAY hops up and kicks his chair over.

GRAY:
There.

They just stare at him. GRAY has a sudden pang of guilt.

GRAY:
I'm sorry. I don't know what- I
don't know. I just don't know.

He reaches over and retrieves the plate set out for JERRY.

DANA:
What do you think you're doing?

GRAY:
I can't very well eat my dinner off
the floor, now can I?

GRAY is shivering and sweating. DANA glares at him. ROBERT
stuffs his mouth to finish quicker.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER BEDROOM - DAY

GRAY sleeps in bed. DANA stands to the side, already dressed
for the day. She has a scowl on her face, she exudes
displeasure. After a few seconds of shooting daggers at the
sleeping GRAY, she slaps him in the face. GRAY awakes with a
start.

GRAY:
What the hell?

DANA:
I have errands to run.

GRAY:
And I have to wake up for that?

DANA:
I'm sick of you loafing around here
all the time. Why don't you go to
work?

GRAY:
There was a bomb threat.

DANA:
BS. I would have seen it on Jerry
Vail.

GRAY:
Fine, the building collapsed.

DANA:
I'm sick of your excuses for
everything.

GRAY:
I'm sweating out the pills, okay?
And it would be nice if I could get
A LITTLE BIT OF PEACE AND QUIET TO
SLEEP!

DANA:
Your son is not going to school
today.

GRAY:
Good. Kids learn more on the
street now anyway.

DANA:
Don't give me that! I am tired,
Gray. Tired.

GRAY:
So am I. But I can't even sleep,
apparently. What the hell is your
problem?

DANA:
You suck, okay? You really suck.

GRAY:
Well nothing's changed. I suck as
much now as I always have. So
there must be something wrong with
you, you cunt!

DANA straightens and begins walking away.

GRAY:
(after her)
Okay, I take it back. I'm sorry.
You're not a cunt.

GRAY stumbles out of bed and goes after her in his pajamas.

GRAY:
Hey, come on. Don't be mad at me.
I'm doing something really hard for
you.

She stops at the front door.

DANA:
And just so you know: It is NEVER
okay to call a woman that. Why
don't you try cleaning up a little
today, you piece of S. You look
and smell like crap.

And then she is out the door. GRAY makes his way to the kitchen through the dining room. He finds a plate of eggs and bacon sitting in front of his chair. ROBERT comes downstairs.

ROBERT:
You okay, dad?

GRAY:
Am I a piece of shit?

ROBERT:
Definitely. What happened with
mom?

GRAY:
Well, I was in bed, asleep. And
she slapped me in the face to wake
me up. For no reason. She was
angry I was sleeping.

ROBERT:
Wow, what a...

GRAY:
I know. So I called her a cunt.

ROBERT shakes his head, sadly.

GRAY:
What?

ROBERT:
You never call a girl that, dad.

GRAY:
Are you wearing eyeliner?

ROBERT:
No.
(small beat)
Maybe.

GRAY:
You think I should apologize?
Maybe get her some flowers?

ROBERT:
You'd be better off getting her a
new car.

EXT. THE TRAIN STATION - DAY

GRAY gets on a train.

INT. THE OFFICE - DAY

GRAY is in the bathroom, shivering and sweating, scooping water from the faucet onto his face. DRACOR, an old and distinguished looking man, enters.

DRACOR:
Forgive me, young man, but I'm
afraid you won't want to stay
around for this.

GRAY:
Huh?

DRACOR:
I took a potential client to the
restaurant of his choice, his
choice being an Indian
establishment. That does not sit
well with my gastrointestinal
system.

GRAY:
Aren't you Dracor?

DRACOR:
In the flesh. And who might you
be?

GRAY:
I might be the guy who needs your
help.

DRACOR:
We didn't speak in riddles in my
day.

GRAY:
I'm sorry. I've never met a legend
before.

DRACOR:
(indicating GRAY'S hands)
You're dripping.

GRAY:
Oh, of course. Sorry. I'm Gray
Danslinger. I work in the midwest
sector but I'm based-

DRACOR:
Here on the east coast.

GRAY:
Yes.

DRACOR:
Now I remember why I generally use
the executive facilities.

GRAY:
I didn't- I'm sorry, am I being
overbearing?

DRACOR:
You're not closing the deal, for
one. For two, I'm about to stink
up this joint and I advise you to
leave.

GRAY:
Can I have your extension? I would
like your help.

DRACOR:
Absolutely. It's 7510. Now, if
you don't mind, this calls for some
privacy.

GRAY:
Of course.
(beat)
(MORE)

GRAY: (cont'd)
Why aren't you using the executive facilities?

DRACOR:
I sold my key.

He pushes past GRAY and enters a stall.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - NIGHT

ROBERT and BEVERLY sit on the sofa, watching tv.

BEVERLY:
How is your dad doing with the pills?

ROBERT:
I couldn't say. Sometimes I'm not sure he's even off them. He seems more drugged than ever.

BEVERLY:
Maybe that's how he normally is.

ROBERT:
It's like he's drunk even when he's sober. I kind of miss him spacing out. Now he's just sort of angry.

BEVERLY:
Angry?

ROBERT:
Yeah. You know, "Why me? Why can't I have what I want?" All that shit.

BEVERLY does not respond.

ROBERT:
What? You feel like that?

BEVERLY:
Robert. Who doesn't feel like that?

ROBERT:
I don't.

BEVERLY:
You don't?

ROBERT:
No.

BEVERLY:
Oh, you don't, huh?

ROBERT:
No. Is it really that bizarre?

DANA enters the house and marches past them to the kitchen.

DANA:
Feet on the floor.

ROBERT:
It's not the 1950s, mom.

She keeps going.

DANA: (O.S.)
Is your friend staying for dinner?

ROBERT:
What are we having?

DANA: (O.S.)
Chili.

ROBERT:
Is there meat in it?

DANA: (O.S.)
Yes, but I promise the cow died of
loneliness.

BEVERLY:
It's okay. I've got homework to do
anyway.

INT. THE KITCHEN - SAME TIME

DANA:
(turning the heat up on a
burner and placing a pan
upon it)
Is that a yes or no?

ROBERT: (O.S.)
No, she's not.

DANA takes out a couple of GRAY'S pill bottles and pours a few into a bowl. She begins to grind them up.

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME - EVENING

The family is seated at the dinner table again. GRAY is a bit stoned.

GRAY:
I just don't know what it is. I'm
all numb now. Maybe I did
something to my back.

ROBERT:
Did you twist it? Did you jam it?

GRAY:
I don't know.

ROBERT:
Did you stretch it? Wrench it?

GRAY:
I can't think of any-

ROBERT:
Twist it? Sprain it? Maybe you
pulled it.

GRAY looks to DANA. She smiles back, scooping a bite into her mouth and chewing.

GRAY:
Okay, so you're mad about this
morning.

She remains silent, smiling at him.

GRAY:
It occurs to me that you didn't
even tell me why you wanted me to
get up. That whole thing got lost
in the, uh, unfortunate, uh,
namecalling, of, you know...

ROBERT:
Cunt.

GRAY:
Don't-

ROBERT:
Well that was what you called her,
wasn't it?

GRAY:
Yeah, but don't you-
(back to DANA)
I'm really sorry. I didn't mean
it. I've just been having a hard
time.

ROBERT:
Maybe you should get back on the
pills.

GRAY:
(to DANA)
What? Did you tell him about that?

DANA:
No.

ROBERT:
It's totally cool, dad. I'm fine
either way. If things are too
tough to get off now, there's
always later.

GRAY:
Have you ever done cocaine?

ROBERT:
Is that what you've been doing?

GRAY:
No. But have you ever? And don't
take the Fifth.

ROBERT:
(sighing)
No, dad, I have never done cocaine
and would not waste my time on any
of my friends if they did.

GRAY:
I don't need, like, the yearbook
answer here.

DANA:
Would you like another bowl, Gray?

GRAY:
Is it hot?

DANA:
And juicy.

GRAY:
 Okay. One more. Kind of a cold
 walk home today.

DANA stands and picks up his bowl and heads for the kitchen.

ROBERT:
 You don't think it's kind of weird
 that she's being nice to you after
 what you called her?

GRAY:
 You don't know how marriage works.
 Things even out.

ROBERT:
 You called her a cunt.

GRAY:
 She probably talked it out with her
 hair stylist this afternoon. She
 hasn't yelled at me. She hasn't...

GRAY slowly trails off and fades out of the conversation.
 ROBERT is mildly disconcerted.

ROBERT:
 Well, if I called Beverly that, I
 don't know. It wouldn't be good.

DANA returns with another bowl of chili and sets it down in
 front of GRAY. She smiles and runs her hand down his face.
 She heads upstairs clutching a half-full glass of wine.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE - DAY

GRAY is staring at a bit of dirt that has spilled over from a
 potted plant in his boss' office.

WELLSTONE:
 You were a comer, Gray. When we
 found you, we were so impressed we
courted you. And I think we've
 done right by you. You were next
 in line to head the division until
 you lost focus. I don't think I
 should have to take this to the
 board. Brandt would eat me alive
 if I told him you were staying.
 But I want to give you another
 chance because Witherspoon vouched.
 (MORE)

WELLSTONE: (cont'd)
He said you'll snap right out, and
I mean yesterday.

GRAY:
The loss of my son has hamstrung
me.

WELLSTONE:
Gray, we're not holding that
against you. But it's been three
months. You buried him. You put a
stone over the grave.

GRAY:
We didn't.

WELLSTONE:
What, he's an unknown soldier?

GRAY:
It takes at least six months to
have a headstone carved.

WELLSTONE:
Did you see the grief counselor?

GRAY:
I talked to...

WELLSTONE:
Herrod?

GRAY:
The undertaker, actually.

WELLSTONE:
If it helps, it helps. What I need
is for you to start selling again.
Look here. Look at your numbers.
They're in the toilet. You're
still here on the grace of
Witherspoon, the man raves about
you. You should get some guidance.

GRAY:
I've gotten some advice from
Dracor.

WELLSTONE:
Dracor?! He's a drunk!

GRAY:
He's helped me, uh-

WELLSTONE:

Souse!

GRAY:

I think he would surprise you, if that's your opinion.

WELLSTONE:

He never made half his sales, Gray. He married a VP's daughter and now he's juiced in.

GRAY:

But-

WELLSTONE:

I know the stories. You think I don't know? I worked with Dracor in his prime. He was the team lead.

GRAY:

He invented the team system.

WELLSTONE:

Invented? He made a drinking game of it. He won every round.

(beat)

At this point, I have no other choice than to pass along a recommendation that you be demoted.

GRAY finally looks at him.

WELLSTONE:

It's a slap on the wrist. You'll be pulled off your clients and go back to cold calling and developing leads. You'll answer to Witherspoon. He vouched for you.

Air rushes out of GRAY.

WELLSTONE:

What, are you having a coronary?

GRAY:

I... It took me by surprise.

WELLSTONE:

Witherspoon's been selling with five hands while you've been drinking with Draco. My patience is at an end, Gray.

(MORE)

WELLSTONE: (cont'd)

I went to bat for you once, and only because of Witherspoon. Let him have the headache.

(staring at him angrily)

He saved your job, Gray. How about some appreciation?

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE - DAY

GRAY is walking briskly through the rows of cubicles. He seems to be lost. People are staring at him. Covering the phone, standing over the cubicle walls to watch him. He finally stops.

GRAY:

Okay. Okay, everybody. I'm in the weeds but they're not sending me packing. Everyone just calm down.

The other employees go back to their work, putting GRAY out of their minds.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME DAY

DANA is hanging a curtain rod over the window in the dining room. The sound of music can be heard faintly from upstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBERT'S ROOM SAME TIME

BEVERLY'S shirt is off but the bra remains. ROBERT'S shirt is also removed. They are kissing passionately. He tries to reach under the bra but she rolls away. He pulls her back and they kiss. He tries again with the same result. He begins to slide his hand down her pants.

BEVERLY:

If I wouldn't let you touch my tits, what makes you think you can do that?

ROBERT:

I don't know.

BEVERLY:
 Because that's like asking for a
 cup of sugar and then taking the
 whole bag.

ROBERT:
 Did you let Nelson Herwaltzer do
 it?

BEVERLY:
 I don't want to talk about that.

ROBERT:
 Why not?

BEVERLY:
 Because it's not important.

ROBERT:
 It is to me.

BEVERLY:
 I'm a virgin.

ROBERT stares at his elbow.

BEVERLY:
 Robert, I'm a virgin.

ROBERT:
 Okay.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME DAY

DANA has an ice mask on her face as she lays fully horizontal
 in the recliner. A BEEPING begins in the kitchen and she
 sits up. She turns on the television. JERRY VAIL fills the
 screen.

JERRY VAIL:
 Are the shoes you wear giving you
 Restless Leg Syndrome? A local
 doctor has a warning: The wrong
 footwear *can* harm you. We'll let
 you know what the damage might be
 at 5.

She turns the television off and reclines again.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME NIGHT

The family is eating dinner. GRAY is sweating again.

GRAY:
I can't eat this.

ROBERT:
Is it the pork?

GRAY:
I don't know. I just feel like I'm
going to be sick.

ROBERT:
Are you Jewish?

GRAY:
I'm Protestant, same as you.

ROBERT:
I don't think so.

GRAY:
You're not?

ROBERT:
I've been thinking about it a lot,
really. I don't believe in God.

GRAY:
Are you going to let him say that?

DANA:
I think he can make up his own
mind.

GRAY:
You're not even a little unsure
that there might be?

ROBERT:
It's not a sliding scale, dad.
Either you believe in God or you
don't. I don't.

GRAY:
Is this that girl talking?

ROBERT:
Just me talking.

GRAY:
You're really not going to say
anything to him?

DANA:
I don't feel the need. I like it
when a man makes up his own mind.

GRAY:
I don't know why this bothers me.

ROBERT:
I can't believe you still believe
in a God.

GRAY:
I feel I have a close relationship
with Jesus.

DANA snorts.

GRAY:
What? I can't have a spiritual
side?

DANA:
You can't even have a sensible
side.

There is a long and uncomfortable silence. ROBERT decides to
fill it.

ROBERT:
You see, I used to think that God
was great and Jesus died for my
sins and all that stuff you guys
told me. But it's a crock.

GRAY:
That's really stepping on toes.

ROBERT:
I'm not knocking belief. I would
love it if there was a God. I
would. Because the world would
have a purpose, a goal. I could do
right and get into heaven, rise
from my grave and walk with Jesus,
whatever. But since Jerry died,
that all just feels like crap.
Like it has nothing to do with
reality.

Another uncomfortable silence.

ROBERT:
And I'm not going to blame it on
Jerry dying because I had doubts
before that. He was a good
brother, you know that?

GRAY:
He was a good son.

ROBERT:
He was a great brother. I always
gave him a hard time, I would pick
on him when we were young, but he,
uh...

GRAY:
He loved you.

ROBERT:
That's right. He loved me anyway.

DANA:
And you loved him.

ROBERT:
Is that strange? That I loved my
brother?

DANA:
I don't think so.

ROBERT:
Because I think in this family, it
is sort of strange. We're all
miserable here. We don't love each
other, we're trapped by DNA and
inertia. And for me to lose the
one person I understood and was
cool with...

They stare at him, uncomfortable.

ROBERT:
And I know I'm probably hurting
your feelings, but I have to say
this to you. I don't love you like
I'm supposed to. And you don't
love me like you're supposed to. I
know that all your hopes were tied
up in Jerry but I'm your son too.
And it doesn't matter that I was
here first or that I'm the one
that's still here, he was the one
you loved.

(MORE)

ROBERT: (cont'd)
And that's just how it is. And I'm
not angry at you because of it.

GRAY:
We do love you.

ROBERT:
I know you want that to be true.
And I want that to be true. But
just giving me a house, giving me
food, that's not love. You don't
know anything about my life. You
called her "that girl" because you
don't know her name. We've been
dating for a month and you don't
know the name of my girlfriend.
Did you know I quit the track team?

GRAY:
You what?

ROBERT:
It was interfering with other
things in my life.

GRAY:
I didn't raise a quitter.

ROBERT:
You didn't raise anyone, dad.

ROBERT walks away.

GRAY:
What got into him?

DANA:
He's a teenager.
(beat)
But he might be right.

GRAY:
What, I've got to go to war against
my family now too?

She stands as well and picks up the two plates.

DANA:
We're not a family, we're strangers
that have been eating together.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE DAY

GRAY is making cold calls to potential clients. He seems very unhappy. WITHERSPOON knocks on his cubicle wall.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE DAY

WITHERSPOON now has his own office and GRAY is seated across the desk from him.

WITHERSPOON:

Okay, Gray, what have you got? Why are you sweating?

GRAY:

It's sort of an inner-

WITHERSPOON:

The humidity in this office is perfect. I had it inspected myself, first thing.

GRAY:

I don't know if it's the-

WITHERSPOON:

Where are you with the sales? You're not closing right? You're not allowed to close anymore.

GRAY:

I think I'll get one soon. I'm close.

WITHERSPOON:

Get one?! Jesus, Gray! You've been doing this two weeks and you haven't kicked up a single client?!

GRAY:

I'm not used to the format of-

WITHERSPOON:

It's a call! You have a list, you make the call! These people have money. They weren't picked out of the phone book, Gray. They have money, they're looking to buy!

GRAY:
I'm not allowed to talk figures
with the-

WITHERSPOON:
Figures, who said anything about
figures? I'm talking buttering
them up. They should be so soft by
the time you kick them up that
agents can eat them without
dentures. Can't eat corn on the
cob with dentures, Gray, but you
get some creamed corn and you're in
business. You know, I went to bat
for you. I put my ass on the line.

GRAY:
I appreciate it.

WITHERSPOON:
Don't appreciate; produce! I want
five escalations by the end of the
week. Any less and I'll consider
it a personal failure.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME EVENING

GRAY enters to find DANA, ROBERT, and BEVERLY (who is crying)
gathered around the television. He appears a bit frantic but
this sight stops him cold.

GRAY:
What? What is it?

ROBERT:
Good news. I died today.

ON THE TELEVISION

JERRY VAIL is explaining the crash of a school bus carrying
the track team. It lost control on a bridge and went over
the side, leaving no survivors.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER BEDROOM LATER

GRAY is undressing. DANA is already in bed.

GRAY:
What do you think?

DANA:
It's a miracle he was saved.

GRAY:
What's he going to do with his life
now? Marry that janitor's
daughter?

DANA:
We were given the second chance on
our second chance.

GRAY:
He's still controlling you.

DANA:
Controlling me?

GRAY:
Even now. He wants you to think
this is some kind of, I don't know.
A significant victory for us. The
truth is, there's no such thing.
Life is about losing by increments.

DANA:
What are you living for?

GRAY:
Living? I'm killing time, the same
as everyone else.

DANA:
You make choices.

GRAY:
I make choices all day, but none of
it matters. Your side, his side,
Witherspoon's side, it's all the
same. Everyone has ganged up
against me.

DANA:
Can't you see that this is bigger
than you?

GRAY:
You mean God?

DANA:

No, you ass. I mean this life. When we had these children, we agreed to take the bad with the good. And I won't say that accident was good but it should remind us how lucky we can be.

GRAY:

Lucky?! One of our sons died!

DANA:

And one is still alive. Why don't you care about him?

GRAY:

I care about the family.

DANA:

Then act like it.

GRAY:

I made a mistake when I blamed you for Jerry. And it was the worst thing I've ever said. And I only said it because I was hurt. But you are making too much of this!

DANA:

What do you want, Gray?

GRAY:

Want?

DANA:

Out of life. What do you want out of life?

GRAY:

I just want to be happy. I want us all to be happy.

DANA:

Well happiness isn't permanent. The whole point is to surround yourself with the people you can count on when you're not happy.

GRAY:

Now you're just trying to rub it in.

DANA:

I'm trying to make you realize-

GRAY:

I don't need to realize anything.
I'm not happy. I haven't been
happy in years. And no matter what
you or anyone else does, that won't
change.

(beat)

I'm losing on all fronts right now.
I don't have one thing to be happy
about.

DANA:

Why did you stay?

GRAY:

What?

DANA:

Why did you stay, if you're so
unhappy?

GRAY:

Because...

DANA:

You'll take the devil you know.
That's been you from day one. You
dated me to get to my roommate and
when you couldn't have her, you
decided to stick with me. When I
got pregnant with Jerry, I asked if
you wanted to keep it and you
delayed making a decision until it
was too late. And now you're at
the crossroads again and you want
to pretend like nothing has
changed. It HAS changed, Gray, and
I want you to actually make a
choice.

GRAY:

What choice?

DANA:

If you want to fix what's wrong or
let it just keep going.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE DAY

GRAY is again making calls in his cubicle. He has a board posted on one wall with a tally of 2 on it.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME DAY

DANA is vacuuming. The rug is spotless, she does it anyway.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE DAY

An assistant is leading GRAY back to WELLSTONE'S office. As he passes WITHERSPOON'S, he notices that WITHERSPOON looks pained. He gives a sad smile when he sees GRAY walking past.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE MOMENTS LATER

WELLSTONE:
Sit down, Gray.

GRAY does so.

WELLSTONE:
I don't like having talks about my employees' lives. So you can save that right now. I had high hopes for you, Gray. I thought we could put you in a lower-pressure role, you'd turn around and shine again. But you fucked us. No, you fucked Witherspoon. The man went to bat for you. And you fucked him.

GRAY:
Am I fired?

WELLSTONE:
What, I need to spell it out for you? You are bleeding the budget. You're not even generating ten percent of what you're taking home. Those numbers wouldn't fly at any company in America and especially not here. I gave you every opportunity.
(MORE)

WELLSTONE: (cont'd)
Bereavement leave, cut back your responsibilities, every opportunity. You did not live up to your potential and I think you know this started before the accident. I want you out of the building by five o'clock.

WITHERSPOON is waiting just outside the door when GRAY steps out.

GRAY:
I guess this is goodbye.

WITHERSPOON:
Come into my office for a second.

CUT TO:

INT. WITHERSPOON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

WITHERSPOON:
I'll give you a great recommendation, Gray. Don't worry about that.

GRAY:
(uncomfortable)
I guess you won after all.

WITHERSPOON:
That's bullshit, Gray. Nobody wins. You fell down today. You'll get back up again. And I'm here for you.

GRAY:
Like a friend?

WITHERSPOON:
We've always been friends.
(beat)
Whatever you need. Anything.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL DAY

BEVERLY and ROBERT sit under the bleachers of the football field. Looking out at the field, there are flowers and wreathes bundled in spots on the track.

CUT TO:

I/E. GRAY'S SEDAN SAME TIME

GRAY drives. No music plays. He is dazed. He finally arrives at a federal prison.

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL PRISON LATER

GRAY is standing in front of a glass partition, a FEMALE OFFICER opposite him.

FEMALE OFFICER:

I'm sorry, sir, but you have to be on the list.

GRAY:

I just need to see him for five minutes.

FEMALE OFFICER:

If you're not on the list-

GRAY:

He killed my son.

She does not react.

GRAY:

He killed my son and I have to know why. Can't you do that for me?

FEMALE OFFICER:

There's really nothing I can do.

GRAY:

I've never even talked to him. I saw him at the preliminary and he wouldn't look me in the eye. Can't you give me that? Can't you let me look him in the eye?

FEMALE OFFICER:
I would if I could but it's out of
my hands. DOC regulations.

GRAY:
I lost my job today.

FEMALE OFFICER:
I'm sorry to hear that.

GRAY:
Don't be. It was a terrible job.
But it worked before. It all
worked. And I have to hear his
voice. I have to have him look at
me and apologize. Can't you do
that? Why won't you do that for
me?

She glances around furtively.

FEMALE OFFICER:
Maybe I made a mistake and your
name was in the computer after all.

GRAY breaks into a smile. The tension drains from his body.

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL PRISON LATER

GRAY sits in a chair at a table, the room only half full. A small, slim man in an orange jumpsuit is led in. He spots GRAY and his face drops. He sits down, careful to avoid eye contact.

GRAY:
You know who I am?

HERWITZ:
Yeah, I know who you are.

GRAY:
And you know why I'm here?

HERWITZ:
No.

GRAY stares at him, rage building as HERWITZ will not make eye contact.

GRAY:
Look at me.

HERWITZ:
I'm sorry for what happened. The kids shouldn't have been on that road after dark.

GRAY is at a loss. The silence forces HERWITZ to go on.

HERWITZ:
I'm paying for it, dude. It wasn't my fault but I'm paying for it. And there's nothing you can do to me that hasn't already been done.

GRAY:
Yeah?

HERWITZ:
My wife left me. I couldn't go to my mom's funeral. My sister sends me ten dollars a month but won't talk to me. I will never get a good job again or... It's over, man. My life is over.

GRAY stands.

HERWITZ:
It shouldn't have happened. None of it should have happened. But the sky fell on me too, dude.

GRAY lunges at him, tackles him to the ground. GUARDS break up the fracas and drag GRAY from the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. FEDERAL PRISON LATER

GRAY is hustled to the outside gate by OFFICER GRANT.

GRAY:
I can find my way from here.

GRANT:
Hold up a second.

GRAY:
I'm sorry. I am. I shouldn't have-

GRANT:
You smoke?

GRAY:

Do I?

GRANT:

Because I'd like a cigarette right now and if it looks like you made me have one with you-

GRAY:

Yeah, okay.

GRANT lights up two and hands one to GRAY.

GRANT:

You know, I never want to do that. What you just did.

GRAY:

Why not?

GRANT:

I hate these guys. They are liars and thieves and they hit their wives and kids. They stab each other for no damn reason. But I don't want to hit them.

GRAY:

Why not?

GRANT:

I don't know. Maybe because if you're so low that you have to stab a man because he called you a name, you don't need to be pushed any lower.

(beat)

Mr. Danslinger?

GRAY:

Yeah.

GRANT:

It's easier to be hard on someone when you don't know how hard they already have it. I know what Herwitz did and I know who you are. But that don't give you no right. What the state's doing to him evens it out.

GRAY:
(tosses his cigarette on
the ground and steps on
it)
I wish I could believe that.

GRANT:
There's an Eastern thing about how
if you take a man's life, you get
all his failures and none of his
success for the rest of your days.
And if you lose someone you love,
your sins are erased if you let
their light continue in you.
You're square with the house.
Don't go making new regrets.

GRAY:
If you guys hadn't pulled me off
him...

GRANT:
How are things at home?

GRAY stares elsewhere.

GRANT:
Because what you're doing in there
is easy.

GRAY:
Easy?

GRANT:
You think it's harder to walk away
from a child than to raise it?
You're doing the hard work. Hate
is easy. Love takes work.

He drops his cigarette and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER HOME EVENING

GRAY slumps his way into the home. ROBERT is perched precariously on a stool on the stairs, trying to change a light bulb. BEVERLY is watching with much discomfort and concern.

GRAY:
What are you doing?

ROBERT:
The light is out.

GRAY:
That's not safe.

ROBERT:
I know. But we couldn't fit the
ladder on the stairs.

GRAY:
Have your mom call someone.

ROBERT:
Dad, I can change a light bulb.

GRAY:
You'll break your neck.

ROBERT:
I can't be killed.

GRAY:
Get down from there!

DANA appears at the top of the stairs.

DANA:
Why is there yelling?

GRAY:
He's risking his life to-

DANA:
Oh, he'll do what he wants.

She turns to leave.

GRAY:
I lost my job today.

DANA:
You lost your job?

GRAY:
I quit. I couldn't take it
anymore. I hated it.

DANA:
Can you get it back?

GRAY:
No. I don't know.

DANA:
Who will provide for this family?

GRAY:
I will.

DANA:
Gray, why don't you come up here
and talk about it?

GRAY starts up the stairs and then stops when he gets to the stool.

GRAY:
You should really let me do it,
Robbie.

ROBERT:
You're not half as agile as I am.
You'll be in traction.

BEVERLY:
Maybe you should listen to him.

ROBERT:
I'm fine. Just hold the stool
steady.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DANSLINGER BEDROOM MOMENTS LATER

DANA is in front of the mirror, applying cold cream to her face. GRAY shuts the door after he enters.

DANA:
Are you having a mid-life crisis?

GRAY:
I think... I think you're more
beautiful than when I married you.
And you were a knockout then.

DANA:
(suspicious)
Thank you, Gray.

GRAY:
No, don't do that. Don't play down
my feelings. I love you, Dana!
I've made all the mistakes, I've
done everything wrong. And you're
there for me anyway.
(MORE)

GRAY: (cont'd)
And if I don't tell you now how I
really feel...I might lose you
forever.

DANA:
You haven't.

GRAY:
I want to make things right. We're
dysfunctional, I know that. You
think I've been self-medicating
because it's a kick? A thrill?
But that's not real. This is real.
This love, this family, it's a real
thing.

There is a LOUD THUMP from outside the room. They both rush
for the door.

ROBERT:
I'm fine. Just fell against the
wall.
(looking up at the light)
I'm almost tall enough. I need a
few more inches.

GRAY:
Let me give you a hand up.

GRAY positions himself so that ROBERT can be half on the
stool, half boosted by GRAY's palms.

ROBERT:
I can get it. Don't let go, dad.

GRAY:
I won't.

ROBERT:
Almost there...just a few more
seconds...

BEVERLY has a piece of broken mirror on a chain around her
neck. She is slowly moving it, absentmindedly, the light's
reflection sliding around DANA'S face. DANA smiles. We pull
back to see this scene. ROBERT boosted by GRAY, DANA
smiling, a jagged piece of light slowly moving across her
face.

THE END