

CHANGES

Written by

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CHANGES

INT. EPIGEE CORPORATE MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

PHIL PEEBLES (41) and DAVE his manager are seated facing each other across Dave's big, managerial desk. The mood is tense.

DAVE

It was a tough call, Phil. But the decision came down from the top. It applies to everyone in the company, without exception - you, me, everyone, including Jackman himself. It's solid. There's nothing I can do.

PHIL

(Truly shocked)

Whoa, Dave, that's... Certainly, upper management can make exceptions without...

(Indicating himself)

I mean... There's always something.

DAVE

Not this time.

PHIL

(Dumbfounded)

But...

DAVE

You're not handicapped. There's no hardship. No special needs...

PHIL

Dave, it'll be a major difficulty for me, very major, a major hardship-

DAVE

Come on, Phil. It's going to be tough for everyone-

Phil shakes his head with an incredulous snort.

PHIL

(Temper rising)

But it doesn't make sense. How can you... do you agree with this?

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

It doesn't matter if I agree or disagree. It's a done deal. But if you must know, I do agree.

PHIL

How can you...

DAVE

The company can be far more productive with all employees co-locating. It's proven. The pandemic taught us that.

PHIL

But...

(Emotional appeal)

I just bought the house and spent a bundle on computers, Internet, setting it all up. I can be just as productive-

DAVE

I appreciate that, Phil, but how would it look to your reports if they all had to come back to the office and we let you work at home. Think about it. How could you be an effective manager?

Phil leans back. He's seeing red, unable to form the right words, think clearly.

PHIL

So, if I don't come back...

DAVE

You have to.

PHIL

(Tough guy)

What if I don't?

DAVE

Well...

The looks say it all.

INT. EPIGEE CORPORATE HALL - DAY

(CONTINUED)

START MAIN TITLE SEQUENCE

Phil leaves Dave's office and moves drunkenly down the high-tech hall toward the CAMERA in a state of utter disbelief. It wasn't supposed to happen this way, with the rug so effectively pulled out from under him.

Dave appears in his doorway, locates Phil wandering away from him. He signals to a plain clothes security person approaching his office, and points him to Phil.

The security person catches up with Phil and escorts him to the elevators, presses down. Phil turns to the person and stares with his mouth agape. The person smiles pityingly. The elevator comes and the person gently guides Phil in.

EXT. DOWNTOWN AFTERNOON TRAFFIC

Cars are packed in tight approaching the freeway ramp and there's Phil's Cybertruck, stuck like everybody else.

INT. PHIL'S CYBERTRUCK

His eyes are wide and staring with that same victimized look.

PHIL'S DRIVE HOME MONTAGE

HIGH ANGLE following the Cybertruck in heavy Seattle traffic over a brand new Lake Washington floating bridge, through clean, new high-density suburban towns, down a long, narrow, tree-lined rural highway and ending up in a shiny new subdivision with parks, a golf course and two-million-dollar compact ultra-modern homes.

EXT. PEEBLES DRIVEWAY

The Cybertruck rolls up the drive to Phil's upscale home, waits for the garage door to open and continues in.

INT. PHIL'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

WE LOOK around Phil's office. He did spend a bundle. Two elegant bookcases filled with tasteful, expensive-looking books and knickknacks frame a large window with a second-story view of a tree-lined fairway. There's even a high-end elliptical trainer and weight system.

A clean, shiny, mahogany desk holds two large monitors and a fancy keyboard.

(CONTINUED)

Behind the desk is a pricey Herman Miller ergonomic chair. Inside the chair is Phil. He sits as if he's part of the furnishings - comatose, staring, eyes focused on nothing, waiting, his world having been upended.

Phil remains in this state as WE TIME-LAPSE gradually from early afternoon to evening. The lights are off in the room, so WE SEE Phil's world darken, until he is silhouetted against the moonlit trees out his window.

END MAIN TITLE SEQUENCE

As a door flies open O.S., sending in a sharp blast of light from the hall. A woman's voice...

WOMAN (O.S.)

Oh, there you are. What are you
doing up here in the dark?

She SNAPS on a light. Phil comes to life and turns to her. She's SAMANTHA, his wife - the same age as Phil, currently blond, neurotically thin.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

(Slowly)

What are you doing up here-

PHIL

Sorry. I was, uh...

BEAT.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Well, dinner's ready.

She leaves.

INT. PEEBLES DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Phil is seated at the head of the table, opposite Samantha. Twin boys (MATT and DREW) sit opposite each other next to them. They're barely 16, dark, attractive, thin, trouble.

They are digging into bowls of food in the center. It's quiet.

NOTE that throughout the following scenes in the Peebles house, small things magically change: a knickknack moves or disappears, furniture change position or change altogether, pictures on the wall move, change completely. The changes are subtle at first, then become more obvious, but the family is so focused on their own issues, they don't notice.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

(Mild concern)

I was planning on making our favorite seafood salad today but I couldn't find the bags from the store.

PHIL

(Still in a fog)

What do you mean?

SAMANTHA

I bought everything, came home, and put the bags on the counter. I thought. But then they weren't there.

PHIL

Did you check the car?

SAMANTHA

Yeah. I looked everywhere. No sign of them. Even went back to the store.

Phil stares at Samantha, trying to process the bag incident.

MATT

When are you guys leaving?

Everyone turns to Phil.

PHIL

(Mouth agape)

Leaving?

MATT

I thought you were going up to the cabin.

Phil looks at Samantha, cocks his head.

SAMANTHA

(To Phil)

Remember? We were going up after work Friday?

He doesn't.

PHIL

Oh yeah. Um, well. We could do that. Sure.

The twins flash each other sinister smiles.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
Are you feeling ok?

PHIL
Who, me?

SAMANTHA
Who else?

PHIL
I don't know. The twins?

SAMANTHA
They're fine. You seem... off.

PHIL
(Fake smile)
I'm not off. I'm on.

The twins SNICKER.

PHIL (CONT'D)
(To the twins)
What?

MATT
Nothing.

More SNICKERING.

SAMANTHA
Don't listen to them. They're being
silly.
(To Matt)
Silly twins.

Phil half-smiles.

INT. PEEBLES ENTRY WAY - NIGHT

The front door opens, revealing the wealthy suburban street,
well-lit by LED streetlights.

EXT. PEEBLES FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Phil is looking out the front door. He's bare-footed, wearing
just his pajamas. He comes out and sits on the top porch
step, deep in thought, doesn't notice the two full shopping
bags next to him.

After awhile, Samantha's legs appear at the door.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
Phil? Phil honey?

PHIL
Yeah?

SAMANTHA
What are you... It's freezing.
Aren't you cold?

She approaches him.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
(Struck by lightning)
Good lord! My bags!

Phil turns.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
I was looking all over for these!
Where did you find them?

PHIL
(Shocked)
I don't... didn't...

SAMANTHA
But...

PHIL
You must've set them there.

SAMANTHA
I came in through the garage. I
never go this way.

She picks them up and turns.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Why don't you come in the house?
It's freezing.

PHIL
Sam.

SAMANTHA
Come on.

PHIL
We need to talk.

SAMANTHA
We can talk inside.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
Please, just sit.

SAMANTHA
I'm cold.

PHIL
Please.

BEAT.

SAMANTHA
Can I get a blanket at least?

PHIL
I lost my job.

That stops her. She puts the bags down and sits.

SAMANTHA
You what?

PHIL
I lost it.

SAMANTHA
That's impossible.

PHIL
That's what I thought too.

SAMANTHA
What did you do?

PHIL
I didn't do anything. It's all that
back-to-work bullshit.

SAMANTHA
That's it? Dave knows about your...

PHIL
Of course. He doesn't care. He's an
asshole. I told him I wouldn't do
it.

SAMANTHA
Oh, Phil.

PHIL
He was being totally inflexible.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
(Worried)
But...

PHIL
(Turning to her, patting
her knee)
But it's ok. It's ok. I don't need
that place. I can find something
else... better, closer to home.
There are plenty of possibilities,
start-ups - Redmond, Bellevue. I
just need to make a few calls.

BEAT

SAMANTHA
All those years...

PHIL
I know. We'll be fine.

She studies him as he looks away. Then, after a moment...

SAMANTHA
Where did you get those pajamas?

He looks down, confused.

INT. PHIL AND SAM'S BEDROOM - LATER NIGHT

The two are asleep. All is QUIET. Then, the WIND starts.

EXT. PEEBLES YARD - NIGHT

The WIND is light at first, but quickly grows, becoming more intense, punctuated by violent 60-mph gusts. In the pale light, tree branches twist and bend, autumn leaves tear off limbs in bunches. A metal trashcan falls over and blows across the yard. Anything light becomes airborne. Everything standing is knocked over.

Then, the wind dies down and the rain starts, growing from drips to torrents, creating instant pools in every low spot.

INT. PHIL AND SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam is sleeping. A clap of THUNDER shakes the house. She awakens, looks to her side. Phil is gone.

(CONTINUED)

She sits up and looks around the room, then gets out of bed. The sound of the heavy DOWNPOUR draws her to the window. She looks out at the rain pelting the earth, dancing on the pavement under the streetlight.

Then, she sees something else through the curtains of water. A tall, thin man dressed only in pajamas is standing on the sidewalk, head down.

EXT. PEEBLES STREET - NIGHT

Phil is standing, looking lost, every inch of him soaked through. He holds his hand out and watches the water pool in his palm.

An arm enters FRAME. It's Sam. She encircles him from behind. He turns to face her, closes his eyes and wraps his arms around her, reaches up and holds her head close to his.

They pull away. Then, Samantha looks down, once again confused about his pajamas.

FADE TO BLACK,
THEN IN ON:

INT. PEEBLES DEN - NEXT MORNING

LOW ANGLE PAST THE COUCH, out the sliding door. The foul weather has given way to a crisp clean dawn. The sun is rising, illuminating the more than ample backyard landscaping - garden islands, gazebo, walkways, bar-b-que, etc.

After a moment, a large Labrador retriever bounces into VIEW from around the couch and approaches US. It stops momentarily to pee on the expensive carpet, then continues on its way.

WE FOLLOW it across the room and up the stairs to the second floor.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL - CONTINUOUS

The dog makes its way purposefully to one of the bedrooms. Then, it pushes open the door with its nose and enters.

INT. TWIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The twins are asleep in their twin beds on opposite sides of the room. The dog enters and jumps up on Matt's bed. Then, it makes itself comfortable, lying across his legs.

(CONTINUED)

Matt awakens with a start and stares at the dog. Then, he frees his legs and hops out of bed, runs to his brother and shakes him.

MATT
Wake up, asshole.

Drew awakens, flailing his arms.

DREW
What the fuck are you doing?

MATT
(Pointing to the dog)
Look.

DREW
What?

MATT
Just look.

Drew shakes his head and focuses.

DREW
What's that?

MATT
It's a fucking dog.

The dog is smiling at them. It hops off the bed and comes over, wanting some attention.

DREW
What are we supposed to do?

MATT
I don't know. I think it wants to be petted.

They do. The dog reacts favorably. Then, it turns and heads toward the door and looks back. The twins take the hint and get up. The dog continues out the door, and the twins follow.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL - CONTINUOUS

The twins follow the dog out the door and down the stairs into the den.

INT. PEEBLES KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The dog leads the twins into the kitchen off the den. Then, it walks out of view behind the kitchen island and returns holding an empty dogfood bowl in its mouth. It approaches the twins, sets the bowl down and looks up at them.

They turn to each other.

MATT
Should we get mom?

DREW
I don't know. What would she do?

MATT
Panic. Scream.

They SNICKER.

DREW
That might be fun.

MATT
For another time maybe.

The dog YIPS impatiently. The twins try to SHUSH it. Matt opens the fridge and looks inside.

MATT (CONT'D)
Do you think it likes fish?

DREW
Sure, why not.

Matt brings out a package of cooked seafood, unwraps it and drops chunks into the dog bowl. The dog immediately inhales the fish and looks up for more. Matt shrugs and drops a few more chunks into the bowl.

DREW (CONT'D)
Wasn't Mom saving that for the salad?

MATT
Yeah. But if we give it to the dog, we won't have to eat it.

DREW
I like your way of thinking.

Drew looks in the fridge for more ideas. Opens a leftover container, smells it, makes a face and dumps it in the bowl. They stop and watch the dog consume the pile of food.

(CONTINUED)

The dog finishes and looks up.

MATT

Now what?

INT. PEEBLES BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The basement is roughly finished with barebones furnishings. The twins enter from the stairs, followed by the dog. They walk down a short hall and open the last door. Then, they enter the room to get the dog to follow and close the door.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM

It's a spare room with a made-up bed and attractive, unused furniture. The dog immediately jumps up on the bed. Then, the twins scramble to open the door and squeeze out before the dog figures out what they're doing.

INT. BASEMENT

As they close the door on the dog...

MATT

Get some water. It'll need water.

DREW

Fuck you. Get it yourself.

MATT

Why should I do it?

DREW

This was your idea.

MATT

So? The dog needs water. Do you want it to fucking die of thirst?

DREW

Get it yourself.

MATT

I'm not going to get it. It was my idea to feed it and bring it down here. Why should I do all the work?

DREW

Blow me.

Drew heads back up the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

MATT
Blow yourself.

Matt waits a moment by the door, then follows Drew up, muttering "fuck" under his breath.

EXT. FRONT YARD BY THE STREET - LATER

HIGH ANGLE POV from the second story bedroom window. The twins are waiting on the sidewalk with their backpacks on, as a school bus stops next to them. The door opens and they get in.

INT. PHIL AND SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phil is standing at the window watching the twins O.S. He turns in with that lost look, wearing different strange pajamas and a robe.

INT. PHIL'S HOME OFFICE

Phil is sitting in his Herman Miller, staring at the monitor.

It's an empty email message. He clicks in the To: line and types, "Johnson Butterly." Then, he clicks in the body and pauses. Then, types, "Dear Johnson". Backspace. "Dear Mr. Butter-" Backspace. "Hey Johnson." Backspace. "Hi John." Backspace. "Johnson."

He removes his hands from the keyboard and leans back, drops his head.

His CELL PHONE RINGS. He picks up.

PHIL
(on phone, Distracted)
Hi.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
(On phone)
Hi. I'm at breakfast with June and Janice. (BEAT) I snuck out early. Hope I didn't wake you. How're you doing?

PHIL
I'm fine.

He's not.

(CONTINUED)

He stands and wanders around the room, studies a family photo of him with Samantha and a 4-year-old girl. The girl is holding his hand. He touches her image tenderly.

SAMANTHA

The twins off?

PHIL

Yeah.

SAMANTHA

Have you decided what you're going to do today?

PHIL

I don't know. Send out email, make some calls.

He continues wandering, plays with knobs on the elliptical, and slides a cabinet door open on a bookcase. He runs his hand over 5-6 small bottles of expensive liquor.

SAMANTHA

Good. You'll be fine as long as you keep busy, don't allow yourself to get all... consumed by it.

PHIL

Don't worry about me. I got plenty to do.

SAMANTHA

Good. I'm going to play nine holes and be back this afternoon sometime. Please don't worry about this-

PHIL

(Raising his voice a bit)

I'm not going to worry about it.
I'm fine.

He pulls out the Macallan, breaks the seal, grabs a glass on a shelf and pours a couple fingers.

SAMANTHA

Because you can't get anything done if you're stressed.

PHIL

I'm not stressed.

She can hear it in his voice.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
(Not so sure)
I hope so. See you later.

PHIL
Yeah.

He hangs up and sits with the glass.

INT. PHIL'S HOME OFFICE - LATER

Phil is sitting in his chair, head rolled to the side, asleep. The open bottle of Macallan on the desk is down a few shots.

We hear distant SCRATCHING O.S., light at first, then growing. Then, we hear YIPS, then, a BARK.

The sounds awaken Phil. He sits up and listens. A YIP, a BARK. He stands and looks around. The sound intensifies. It's coming from the heater duct.

INT. FIRST FLOOR

He's wandering around in the den. It's not coming from the dining or living rooms. The garage? He opens the door. Not there. The sound seems to be coming from all over now. He gets an idea.

INT. PEEBLES BASEMENT

He enters from the stairs. The SCRATCHING and BARKING seem to be coming from down the hall. He listens, then opens the guest room door and looks in.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM

It's empty. He steps in, looks around. Then, he sniffs and makes a face. It's dog poop - a significant amount from a dog about the size of a Labrador retriever, but no dog to be seen.

INT. PEEBLES BASEMENT

He is waiting by the closed door. No more barking.

INT. PEEBLES DEN

He is turning slowly, listening for barking. Nothing.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL

He comes up the stairs and turns into...

INT. PHIL'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Phil immediately looks up and freezes.

Sitting, facing him with a big smile is the retriever. The dog comes over to Phil, sits and lifts her right paw. Phil stares at it a moment. Then, he reaches down and shakes the dog's paw. He even smiles a little.

INT. COTTAGE LAKE HIGH SCHOOL HALL - DAY

The hall is flooded with students in their lockers, moving between classes, TALKING LOUDLY. The school is a modern, high-end structure - the kind you find on the affluent eastside.

WE FIND the twins making their way slowly TOWARD US. They pass a tall, beefy FOOTBALL PLAYER getting stuff out of his locker.

FOOTBALL PLAYER
(Calling)
Hey.

The twins stop and turn toward the sound. He's looking at them, twice their size.

FOOTBALL PLAYER (CONT'D)
Are you the guys having the party
Saturday?

Their mouths drop.

MATT
Uh, we are guys and we're having a,
uh, get-together.

FOOTBALL PLAYER
(Mildly threatening)
Am I invited?

(CONTINUED)

MATT
(Feeling the threat)
We, uh, not explicitly, but it's an
open invitation, so...

FOOTBALL PLAYER
(Friendly now)
Cool. Me and some of the guys are
thinking of coming over after the
game.

MATT
Oh, that's nice.

FOOTBALL PLAYER
You got beer?

MATT
Well, it's pretty much bring your
own alcohol.

FOOTBALL PLAYER
Cool.

MATT
Yeah.

He slings his backpack over a shoulder and takes off in the
opposite direction. The twins watch him leave.

DREW
(Alarmed)
Do you know that guy?

MATT
Never seen him before.

They continue walking.

DREW
How did he know about the party?!

MATT
(Getting steamed)
Oh, I don't know. You don't think
it maybe could've had something to
do with that email you sent out?!

DREW
I invited like 10 people.

(CONTINUED)

MATT

And they each sent the email to 10 people, and they sent it to 10 people...

DREW

How do you know? You don't know.

MATT

Well, somehow the whole fucking football team got the message!

DREW

Don't look at me.

MATT

We got some serious shit to deal with now, asshole.

DREW

Fuck you.

A SHORT FRESHMAN corners them.

SHORT FRESHMAN

Hey, are you the guys having the party?

MATT

(To Drew)

What the fuck!

SHORT FRESHMAN

Can I invite some friends?

The twins shove him out of the way and continue on.

EXT. PEEBLES BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Phil has purchased a ball launcher and is playing catch with the dog. The dog runs back to him with the ball and politely drops it. He launches it again and the dog runs after it.

INT. PEEBLES DEN - CONTINUOUS

Samantha is holding a bag of groceries, watching Phil out the slider, not sure what to make of the scene. She opens the slider and steps out on the deck.

EXT. PEEBLES BACKYARD

SAMANTHA
(Worried)
Phil?

He turns to her with an unexpected smile.

PHIL
Sam. Hi.

SAMANTHA
What's uh...

PHIL
It's a dog.

SAMANTHA
I see.

She watches as he launches the ball and the dog takes chase.
She turns and heads back into the house, confused.

INT. PEEBLES KITCHEN

She sets the bag on a counter and removes a loaf of artisan bread, keeping a wary eye on Phil outside.

She opens the fridge and looks through the contents, then panics. She frantically checks all the produce drawers, containers, looks everywhere.

She closes the door and checks around the kitchen counters, then notices Phil standing in the den with the dog.
Something's changed.

PHIL
What do you think of the name
Forest Whitaker?

She's worried and panicked.

SAMANTHA
I... don't know.

PHIL
Remember that movie Ghost Dog?

SAMANTHA
Not really.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL

The ghost dog was played by Forest Whitaker. I thought it would be a fitting name.

SAMANTHA

Where, um...

PHIL

You know, this dog is just what we needed around here. She's friendly, intelligent, well-trained, except for the poop she left downstairs.

He reaches down and pats the dog on the head.

SAMANTHA

Poop?

PHIL

Don't worry. I cleaned it up. It's not the dog's fault. When you got to go, you got to go.

(To the dog)

Right?

WOOF.

SAMANTHA

Phil?

He looks at her. She searches for the right words.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

So, we have a dog?

PHIL

Forest Whitaker.

They hear SNICKERING and turn. The twins are standing in the entry to the den, listening in. They still have their backpacks on.

SAMANTHA

Do you guys have anything to do with this?

MATT

Forest Whitaker is a really stupid name for a dog.

PHIL

Too long?

(CONTINUED)

MATT
And stupid.

PHIL
Well, do you have any suggestions?

MATT
I can think of a million names that are way less stupid.

SAMANTHA
Can I say something?

PHIL
What about just Forest?

SAMANTHA
(Forceful)
Can I say something, please?!

She has their attention. Nothing comes out. They wait.

PHIL
I put the dog's food and water by the door to the garage. If it's in the way-

SAMANTHA
(Full panic)
The seafood is gone!

The twins trade looks.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
The seafood and the lettuce and the mayonnaise and the onions and the celery and the cucumbers and the dill, basically all the ingredients I bought yesterday for the seafood salad. Two bags of groceries, gone. How could it all just go? I put it in the fridge last night. And I got some fresh bread today to go with it. And it's gone. So, I'd like to know what happened.

She refers to the twins, starts to get weepy. Phil comes over and holds her.

PHIL
It's ok. We can go to Subway or something.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
You don't understand.

PHIL
What?

SAMANTHA
Listen to me. Are you listening?!

She has their attention.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Things keep disappearing! I'm not making this up! They're here one minute and then they're gone. My golf clubs disappeared this morning and I found them in the utility room.

PHIL
These things happen.

SAMANTHA
No, they don't. No! These things don't just happen. Things don't just disappear for no reason!

PHIL
There must be a-

SAMANTHA
What! What would be the reason?

PHIL
Maybe you misplaced the-

SAMANTHA
I didn't just misplace a head of lettuce, an onion, mayonnaise!
(Mimicking herself)
Oh gosh, here's that lettuce I misplaced. Crazy me. I'm always leaving my lettuce in the car or the front porch.

The twins SNICKER. She gets serious, quiet.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Phil, do you know where your car key is?

PHIL
It's in my-

(CONTINUED)

It's gone.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Well, it was in my pocket this
afternoon.

SAMANTHA
How do you know?

PHIL
I went to Pet World, got dog food
and-

SAMANTHA
See?!

INT. REDD'S EATERY - NIGHT

A crowded family restaurant with a cartoon bird theme. The
four are seated in a booth, waiting for their food.

MATT
Ok, so maybe we did give the dog
some of the seafood. It was hungry.

Samantha turns to him, shooting daggers.

SAMANTHA
I knew it. It had to be you guys.
You're always up to something.

The twins appear to be contrite, possibly concerned.

MATT
But we didn't touch the lettuce or
mayonnaise or any of that other
shit. I swear.

DREW
The dog wouldn't eat it.

MATT
(To Phil)
And I didn't take your key fob.

PHIL
I know.

MATT
It just appeared in my shoe. I
swear I don't know how it got
there.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
These things happen.

SAMANTHA
No, they don't.

PHIL
How do you explain it?

SAMANTHA
I can't.

PHIL
(Losing it)
Things happen, so they happen. You know. You can't say things don't happen if they do, just because you don't think they should, or you don't want them to. If they happen, they happen!

SAMANTHA
So you don't think something funny's going on?

PHIL
I didn't say that. I'm just saying, you have to be realistic.

SAMANTHA
What is that supposed to mean?

PHIL
Whatever happens, happens.

The food comes. They're stunned into silence, as the waiter serves them food they obviously didn't order. Samantha gets a massive plate of nachos topped with guac, white goo and steaming taco meat; Phil gets a banana split; the twins get Caesar salads.

WAITER
Will there be anything else?

The four poke at their food. It's all very foreign to them.

PHIL
(Barely able to speak)
I'm sorry. This isn't what we ordered.

(CONTINUED)

WAITER
(Checking the ticket)
Macho nachos, banana splitsville,
and Hail Caesar salads with extra
anchovies. It, it's what you
ordered, sir. See?

The waiter shows Phil the ticket.

PHIL
Yes. But that's not what we
ordered. I ordered a BLT, and they
wanted burgers. It's all wrong.

WAITER
I see. Just a moment.

The waiter steps away to talk with a guy wearing a manager's
outfit.

PHIL
I swear, if one more thing goes
wrong...

MATT
(Grossed out)
Anchovies?!

PHIL
I know.

DREW
Gross.

PHIL
They can't get away with giving us
food we clearly didn't order.

SAMANTHA
(Sarcastic)
But Phil. What happens happens,
right?

EXT. PEEBLES DRIVEWAY - DAY

The Cybertruck is parked in the driveway, while the family
loads it up for the trip to the cabin. Matt puts the last
suitcase on the bed and Phil closes the hatch. Then, Phil
gets in the driver's seat.

Samantha approaches the twins, rightly worried about leaving
them alone. Forest Whitaker is standing by them.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

Alright, you two. We'll be back
Sunday afternoon sometime. You guys
are in charge.

MATT

(Lying smile)

Don't worry. We'll probably just
sit around and play games.

SAMANTHA

Well, I don't expect you to stay in
the house the whole time. You can
do whatever you want, within
reason. Just... Well, you should
know the rules by now.

DREW

We know the rules.

SAMANTHA

(Not so sure)

Good. I hope you do. We'll be
checking in. No funny stuff.

MATT

We know.

The twins smile.

DREW

Have a nice trip.

MATT

Yeah, don't do anything we wouldn't
do.

SAMANTHA

Funny.

They lighten up a bit. Samantha senses a bum's rush.
Hesitates. Then, she gives them each a quick hug, shoots a
sideways glance at the dog and gets in the passenger seat.
The car backs into the street and they all wave and smile.

The car zooms off. The twins stop waving and smiling and turn
to each other.

MATT

We got some serious shit to deal
with.

DREW

Maybe we should cancel.

(CONTINUED)

MATT
How the fuck can we do that?

DREW
If it was summer we could have it
outside.

MATT
But it's not, obviously.

It starts raining. They head for the house.

MATT (CONT'D)
Shit. They're going to fucking
trash the house and I'm not going
to feel like cleaning it and you're
going to be fucking useless.

DREW
You got that right. Let's make them
stay in the den. We'll block off
the living room and the rest of the
house.

Matt stops Drew with an aha moment.

MATT
Hey, better yet, the basement!

DREW
Yeah. What could they destroy in
the basement?!

DREW (CONT'D)
We'll just like keep the door
locked and make sure everyone stays
down there.

MATT
Yeah, that'll work.

DREW
Yeah!

MATT (CONT'D)
Yeah!

They high five with enthusiasm, and then immediately realize
they broke character and look away from each other.

EXT. CYBERTRUCK DRIVING

All is good. The clouds have parted, momentarily allowing
some sun in, as the truck makes its way up the interstate to
Snoqualmie Pass.

INT. PHIL'S CYBERTRUCK

As Phil and Samantha drive. She's studying his face.

SAMANTHA
How are you doing?

PHIL
You keep asking me that.

SAMANTHA
Well?

PHIL
I'm fine. I'm doing fine.

SAMANTHA
No, you're not.

PHIL
Well if you already knew the
answer, why are you asking me?

SAMANTHA
I want to help you.

PHIL
I can't be helped. I just need to
figure it out.

SAMANTHA
What out?

PHIL
What I'm gonna do with the rest of
my fucking life.

SAMANTHA
Our lives.

PHIL
Our lives.

SAMANTHA
Maybe this trip is just what you
need. To help you let go, get
unstressed. What do you think?

He softens.

PHIL
You're right. This might be just
what I need.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
See. I'm helping you.

A quick smile.

EXT. CYBERTRUCK DRIVING

They drive through the little town of Roslyn and on to the narrow highway that leads up a few thousand feet through dense lodgepole pines. The paved road ends and the Cybertruck slows as it negotiates a single-lane dirt road. Patches of snow begin to appear on the sides of the road, as the sunlight fades.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

The cybertruck pulls up in front and they hop out. It's cold. They rush up the porch steps and swing the front door open wide.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Samantha switches on the light, expecting to find everything just as it's supposed to be. But it's not. Their panicked expressions say it all. The furnishings are completely different and weird, walls a distasteful color, decorations unrecognizable, design obviously not to their liking. They freeze, too dumbfounded to speak.

They step cautiously into the room, as if entering a foreign land. They move past the strange furniture, reach out and touch unknown fabric and surfaces. It feels real, but it can't be.

They look at family pictures on a shelf. One shows the family on a fishing trip they never took, another, some stranger's birthday, another, the 4-year-old girl seen earlier sitting on the strange couch, wearing her underpants like a hat. It's them alright, but the locations, the events depicted, none of them are real.

They turn to the kitchen. More surprises. They move slowly past the alien counters and stove. Then, they flick on a light and turn to the small bedroom - all different and creepy.

INT. CYBERTRUCK - NIGHT

The two are huddled under a blanket, close together in the truck, staring out the front window, still in shock.

(CONTINUED)

They've opened the new bottle of wine and are taking slugs directly from the bottle.

PHIL

Well, somebody must have moved into our cabin. They took all our stuff out and moved their stuff in. They got the address mixed up or something. I mean, that's the way it looks, right?

SAMANTHA

But who would do such a thing? It's crazy. And what about those pictures?

PHIL

(Remembering)

The pictures.

She picks up her phone and starts frantically searching for something.

SAMANTHA

You hate fishing.

PHIL

But that was me - standing there with the twins, holding up a dead fish.

SAMANTHA

And you were actually enjoying it.

PHIL

That makes no sense.

SAMANTHA

Should we call the police?

PHIL

I... Yes? What would they do?

SAMANTHA

Maybe someone's playing a joke on us.

PHIL

I don't think that's very likely. Do you?

She finds it. Freezes. She turns the phone around to show Phil.

(CONTINUED)

It's the picture of him with the twins and dead fish. She flips to the next picture, the three of them fishing in a rowboat. Next, a selfie of the family relaxing in the strange living room. Next, the 4-year-old girl sitting on the strange couch, wearing her underpants like a hat.

That changes the conversation. Samantha sets the phone down and takes a long pull from the bottle to help her think.

SAMANTHA

(Getting spacey)

Do you think it has anything to do with the missing bags and your keys? The thing with the wrong order at Redd's?

PHIL

You don't think they're related?

SAMANTHA

I don't know. I'm just asking.

Phil takes a swig. They're pretty wasted at this point.

PHIL

Okay. My opinion is... my opinion is random shit is happening that makes no sense and is completely out of our control.

SAMANTHA

If that's true, then what can we do about it?

PHIL

If that's true, there's nothing we can do, except watch it happen.

SAMANTHA

And pretend everything's okay.

PHIL

(With meaning)

Pretend. Sure, why not? It's better than trying to understand something that can't be understood.

SAMANTHA

(Waxing philosophical)

"Okay." What is it, anyway? It's so... relative, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
I suppose that's true. Pretending
is really the only thing we can
count on... at this point.

SAMANTHA
I really hate that couch.

INT. CYBERTRUCK - NEXT MORNING

The two are leaning against each other, sleeping after a
fitful night.

There's a KNOCK on the side window O.S. Another KNOCK. Phil
blinks awake and turns to the sound, which is amplified by a
terrific hangover. It's their gay neighbors, GENE and CARL
(early 60s) - rotund, cheerful, chatty.

GENE
(Smiling broadly)
Hey, is everything alright?

Phil rolls the window down, stretches his stiff neck.

PHIL
(Mr. Friendly)
Whoa. Hi Gene. Yeah. Everything's
fine.

GENE
Then, why did you sleep in the car?
Something wrong with the cabin?

PHIL
Well...
(He rephrases)
Now that you mention it,
everything's not alright.

GENE
(Worried)
Oh yeah?

PHIL
Yeah, it's the uh...

He makes eye contact with Samantha, then...

PHIL (CONT'D)
Come on, I'll show you.

Phil gets out and walks to the cabin with Gene and Carl in
tow.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL (CONT'D)
We pulled in last night around...
Hey, Sam when did we get here?

She gets out and follows.

SAMANTHA
I think it was around seven.

PHIL
Yeah, around seven. And we ran to
the cabin, freezing our asses off.
All we wanted to do was fire up the
propane heater and hop in bed. But
then, this...

He opens the cabin door and snaps on the front room lights,
expecting an immediate reaction from the two.

GENE
But then, what?

Phil turns to Samantha and they look at each other wide-eyed.
He takes a deep breath, then...

PHIL
Come on in. Want some coffee?

GENE
I'm good. You, Carl?

CARL
Maybe a splash.

The two waltz in and sit on the ugly couch, just like old
times. Samantha runs to the kitchen.

SAMANTHA
Cream? Sugar?

CARL
Nah, just the way nature intended
it.

GENE
So, what's the mystery?

PHIL
The mystery is...
(Vamping)
We couldn't get the damn heater
started.

(CONTINUED)

GENE

Why hell, that's because you have a heat pump. You don't have propane.

PHIL

(Pretending)

Oh, yeah. I knew it was something like that.

Gene gets up and walks over to the controls on the wall. Presses some buttons and the heater springs to life.

GENE

You just turn it on. Temperature's already set.

PHIL

Well that would explain it.

Samantha is figuring out how to work a coffee maker and the pods, jumping back when she presses a button that causes the top lid to pop up, unexpectedly.

GENE

Don't you remember last summer? Or was it two summers ago?

Phil pretends to try to remember. Gene sits.

CARL

Two, I think.

GENE

Anyway, you were all excited about your new heat pump, so you got me to come over and check it out. Remember?

(Studies Phil)

You wouldn't let me go until I agreed to buy one too.

PHIL

Yeah.

GENE

You don't remember?

PHIL

I think it's coming back to me now. Anyway, you know... do you know what the date is, offhand?

GENE

Today? The thirteenth, I think.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
What year?

GENE
What do you mean?

PHIL
Have you been noticing any strange things happening, lately? Like things missing or moving on their own...

GENE
Are you sure you're ok?

Samantha flies in and sits with them, smiling.

SAMANTHA
Coffee'll be ready in a jiff.

PHIL
Yes. I'm okay now. We're okay.
(To Samantha)
Aren't we, Sam?

SAMANTHA
"Okay." It's so relative.

They LAUGH. Gene and Carl aren't so sure.

INT. COUNTRY STORE - DAY

It's a small rustic joint, selling camping supplies and groceries. Phil is talking with a COMPLETE STRANGER behind the counter. Samantha is watching from a distance behind Phil.

COMPLETE STRANGER
(Big and friendly as hell)
Say, you and Sam need to come over one of these nights, and we'll dust off the old backgammon board.

PHIL
Sounds like fun. But I think we're going to be heading back Sunday.

COMPLETE STRANGER
Oh, too bad. I wanted to show you how the back deck turned out.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL

The back deck. Oh wow. That would be fun.

COMPLETE STRANGER

You were such a big help with it last summer. Can't thank you enough. Bring the kids?

PHIL

No, we left them back in Woodinville.

COMPLETE STRANGER

Oh darn. We got a second ATV, so the kids can all ride the trails behind the cabin.

PHIL

Oh darn. Well, maybe next time.

He looks at Phil with a frown.

COMPLETE STRANGER

Yeah.

PHIL

So, where did you say the uh...

COMPLETE STRANGER

(Confused)

It's back there where it always is. You know? You need help finding it?

PHIL

No, no. Back there. Of course. Duh. Sorry, I forgot. Thanks, uh...

Phil turns and approaches Samantha.

PHIL (CONT'D)

(To Samantha, so he can be heard by the stranger)

Honey, it's back there where it always is.

He takes her arm and whisks her down an aisle away from the complete stranger.

SAMANTHA

Why are we going this way?

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
Because this is where the can
openers always are.

SAMANTHA
(Pointing behind them)
But I thought...

PHIL
They aren't there now.

SAMANTHA
Who was that guy?

PHIL
Haven't the foggiest.

SAMANTHA
Are we pretending?

PHIL
Yes. We'll just have to look for
the can openers without his help.

SAMANTHA
I don't know if I can keep up.

PHIL
I think I see them.

They look through some random boxes - batteries, silverware,
mismatched gadgets.

SAMANTHA
Why can't we just ask him where
they are?

PHIL
Because he thinks we know.

SAMANTHA
But we don't.

PHIL
We're pretending.

SAMANTHA
Why?

PHIL
I really don't think asking him
will make things better.

(CONTINUED)

Samantha looks up and sees the stranger watching them at the head of the aisle.

SAMANTHA
He's looking at us.

PHIL
Don't look.

SAMANTHA
(Smiling, waving)
Too late.

PHIL
(Beginning to panic)
We have to keep searching.

The stranger approaches them slowly, with a confused look.

SAMANTHA
He's coming.

Phil scrambles, starts to paw furiously through the utensils. The stranger closes in. Samantha looks through items on the opposite side. Closer. Phil looks behind boxes, on every shelf, knocks stuff over. He's almost on top of them. Then...

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Got it.

She holds up a can opener, victoriously. The stranger stops and stares at them with a curious look.

PHIL
Whoa, found it.

They stand, smiling, proudly brandishing the opener.

INT. PEEBLES BASEMENT - NIGHT

The twin's Saturday night party is getting underway. Hip hop is rattling cheap speakers somewhere. A few teens are standing around the chip table, drinking beer. Things are sluggish, not the level of merriment the twins had envisioned.

The twins are slouching on a couch, drinking beer with Short Freshman and his girlfriend, who are sitting on another couch facing them. They stare at each other a moment, then...

(CONTINUED)

MATT

(No enthusiasm)
So, did you have any trouble
finding the place?

SHORT FRESHMAN

Nah. My mom Googled the address.

MATT

Any trouble finding your way back
here?

SHORT FRESHMAN

Just followed the signs.

MATT

Cool. Does your mom know you
brought the beer?

SHORT FRESHMAN

Not really. I hid 'em in my duffle
bag and told her I was spending the
night with friends.

MATT

Smart.
(Distracted)
Say, when you came in, did you
happen to see anyone else out
front?

SHORT FRESHMAN

No. I think we were the first ones
here.

MATT

Yeah. That makes sense.
(To Drew)
Hey, I'm going to do a little
scouting out front. See if any
guests are having trouble reading
the signs. Stay here and...
(Looks around at the
disappointing crowd)
Keep an eye on things.

Matt walks out the slider to the dark backyard.

DREW

(To Short Freshman)
So, is this your girlfriend or
what?

EXT. PEEBLES YARD - NIGHT

Matt walks out the slider and checks the sign taped to the door: "Party" with an arrow.

He walks along the back deck and through a gate leading to the side of the house. Notes another sign on the gate. He walks up the side of the house. As the front of the house comes into view, he slows, his heart stops.

The street and drive are filled with cars, parked every which way, and teens LAUGHING and TALKING LOUDLY in and around the cars and leading up the drive to the front door.

He panics. The front yard sign that was supposed to lead guests to the back has been tossed in the bushes. As he steps closer to the front door, the full extent of the party from hell is revealed.

He follows some LOUD girls up the steps and into the front entry.

INT. PEEBLES LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

WE MOVE through his POV as he enters the room and makes his way slowly, around people, standing in groups, dancing, making out, lying on the floor. There must be 100, 200 guests, all having a really good time, TALKING LOUDLY over the LOUD MUSIC, smoking, drinking, ingesting any number of substances.

INT. PEEBLES DEN - CONTINUOUS

The chaos extends into the den and kitchen - more problematic than anything the twins could have imagined. They're jumping on the furniture, throwing things, eating stuff out of the fridge, spray-painting obscenities on the wall, using the dog ball launcher to play catch with Forest Whitaker.

And all this frivolity is taking a toll on the furnishings - muddy footprints tracked all over the nice white carpet, lamps knocked over, drinks spilled.

Matt stands by a wall in the den with a dazed expression. It appears he doesn't recognize anybody.

Then, a LOUD CHEER and WHOOPS from the living room. Matt turns.

INT. PEEBLES LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The beefy football player and his entire team, cheerleaders, girlfriends, and fans pile through the front door, holding cases of beer high. They make their way to the den in one long rowdy line.

INT. PEEBLES DEN

They shove Matt out of the way and flood in. They take over the kitchen island with their ill-gotten provisions and guests crowd in and grab cans and bottles.

Matt cowers against the wall.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON the iPhone FindMy app, as two icons track the whereabouts of the twins. They appear to be safely enclosed within a shape resembling their house.

Samantha is sitting next to Phil, watching the icons on her phone.

PHIL

See, I told you. They're probably watching a movie in the den.

SAMANTHA

That's not likely. They're probably doing something with girls.

PHIL

Well, so what. They're sowing their wild oats.

SAMANTHA

Well whatever they're sowing, I'm sure they're doing it with their muddy shoes on.

INT. TWIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door opens. Matt is standing in the hall looking in the dark room.

HIS POV, two strangers are having wild, messy sex on his bed.

He closes the door.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL - CONTINUOUS

Matt faces his door, at a loss for what to do. His phone RINGS. He looks. It's Mom. He runs to the bathroom, opens the door.

BOY ON TOILET (O.S.)

Hey!

INT. SECOND FLOOR BATHROOM

Matt rushes in, trying not to look at the strange boy, closes the door.

MATT

(To the boy)
It's ok. Pretend I'm not
here. I gotta take a call.
Seriously. And shut up.

BOY ON TOILET

A little privacy? What the
hell. Fuck!

He turns away from the boy.

MATT (CONT'D)

(On phone, smiling)
Hi Mom.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CABIN

Phil and Samantha on speaker phone.

SAMANTHA

(On phone, breezy)
Hi honey. Just checking in. What
you up to?

MATT

Not much.

Matt looks over to the boy, who's doing something with his right hand. He winces, shakes his head. The kid shrugs.

SAMANTHA

What do you mean, not much?

MATT

We're, uh, watching TV actually.

SAMANTHA

Are you with girls?

(CONTINUED)

MATT

Um, yes. Emma. You know Emma,
right? And I don't know the other
one's name.

SAMANTHA

Well, be careful. Okay? And take
your shoes off in the house.

MATT

We will.

SAMANTHA

And no funny business.

MATT

I swear there's nothing funny about
what we're doing.

SAMANTHA

You know what I mean.

MATT

Good-bye Mom.

SAMANTHA

Alright. Good-bye.

MATT

It was nice hearing your sweet
voice.

SAMANTHA

Funny.

Matt hangs up. He turns to the boy with a disgusted look.

MATT

Does your mom know you're doing
that?

He rushes out.

INT. CABIN

Samantha is sitting on the couch with that worried look. Phil
is looking through a cabinet in the kitchen.

PHIL

Whoever these people are they have
good taste in alcohol.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
Phil. These people are us.

PHIL
You think? I don't know.

SAMANTHA
Nobody has the same taste in
alcohol as us.

He walks back to the couch with a bottle of Macallan whiskey
and glasses.

PHIL
Well, I'm not going to try to
figure it out anymore.

SAMANTHA
Pretending?

PHIL
No more reality for me.

SAMANTHA
Don't you think we need just a
little bit, a tiny skosh?

PHIL
(He thinks)
Uhhh... No.

He pours two small glasses of whiskey.

SAMANTHA
But...

PHIL
Reality just gets in the way of
having a good time.

SAMANTHA
(Real surprise)
I've never heard you talk like
that.

They hold their glasses up.

PHIL
Well, these are special times.
Until we find a logical explanation
for all this, it's the new me.
Here's to the new us.

CLINK.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
(Not so sure)
Okay.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL

Matt descends the stairs slowly, taking in the breadth of the scene before him - kids crowded together, LAUGHING, YELLING, LOUD MUSIC, alcohol, every kind of mess imaginable.

And there's Drew entering from the basement door, followed by the basement guests. He's floored by what he sees, turns to Matt.

DREW
What happened?

MATT
Apparently, they didn't like our signs.

DREW
Do you know any of these people?

MATT
No. I've never seen any of them before.

DREW
Neither have I.

MATT
And it appears they don't know who we are either.

The twins step into the kitchen, where a beefy jock is shot-gunning a full can of beer, as his teammates CHEER him on. They watch him with blank, detached expressions. He finishes the can and crushes it on his forehead. Then, tosses it across the room into the sink.

INT. PEEBLES LIVING ROOM

With the same detached, crazed expressions, the twins move into the living room, where complete strangers are lounging on Mom's nice white sofa, passing a bong around, LAUGHING and spilling bong water and parking their feet on the glass coffee table.

Drew picks up a crystal vase containing decorative sticks. Looks around.

(CONTINUED)

Carries it carefully over to a bookshelf and sets it down. Then, a dog ball flies in from nowhere and smashes it.

EXT. PEEBLES DRIVEWAY - LATER

The twins are sitting on the front porch steps, their heads resting in their hands, as the party rages on behind them.

DREW
I don't get it. What happened?

MATT
You sent out email, dickhead.

DREW
I swear. I only sent it to seven people that we know. I swear.

MATT
Did you send it to the football team?!

DREW
Anyway! How could seven emails account for this? There's way too many people here. We don't know who they are. We've never even seen them before. They don't even go to our school!

A police SIREN adds to the cacophony. The twins look up.

MATT
Crazy shit is happening that makes no sense.

DREW
Like Forest Whitaker.

MATT
And the seafood salad.

The cruiser finds a path through the congested street and stops on the driveway, flashers blazing.

DREW
It's completely out of our control. We had nothing to do with it.

MATT
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

DREW
And there's nothing we can do,
except watch it happen.

MATT
And pretend everything's okay.

Two cops get out and march toward the front door.

DREW
I wasn't going to say that exactly,
but I suppose you're right.

They stop, facing the twins.

OFFICER
Do you know who's responsible for
this?

The twins stare at him a moment.

MATT
(All innocent)
No. We're just waiting for our mom
to pick us up.

The officer snorts, then goes into the house. The twins stand
and turn to watch what happens.

OFFICER
(Shouting to the crowd)
Alright! Listen up! People! I need
your attention!

The crowd quiets down a bit.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
I need to speak to the people that
are responsible for this. Please
step forward. Who is the
responsible party? The person who
owns this property.

No takers.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Ok, does anyone know who the
responsible party is? Come on,
somebody must-

Suddenly, an EXPLOSION and blast of flames from the kitchen
cuts through the chaos. Several people run into the living
room SCREAMING. One kid is on fire.

(CONTINUED)

The panic spreads rapidly and everyone starts SCREAMING and running toward the front door.

The twins step aside and watch helplessly as the crowd streams by them toward the street.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Phil is sitting on the ugly couch, studying a framed photo in his hands, as Samantha fusses in the kitchen.

ON PHOTO. It's the one of the 4-year-old girl. It's hard for him to take his eyes off of it. Then, finally...

PHIL
Sam, I'm going to go for a little
bike ride.

SAMANTHA
Ok, enjoy the sunshine while we got
it.

EXT. CABIN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Phil is riding his bike down a dirt road past vacation cabins, spaced-out randomly in the thick coniferous forest. It's sunny, but fairly nippy.

He passes by Gene's cabin. He's outside gathering firewood with Carl. Phil stops.

GENE
(Calling)
Morning Phil.

PHIL
Gene. Carl. Need any help?

GENE
No thanks. We got it.

He waves and continues on, passes by a few empty cabins, heads over a crest and then down into a sunny treeless area.

EXT. MEADOW

At the edge of the meadow, he happens upon a small, rustic cabin, which can better be described as a ramshackle hut. It has obviously been there for many years, but there's something about it that grabs Phil's attention. He stops and studies it, can't quite understand why he's never noticed it.

(CONTINUED)

A strange woman (26) comes out of the hut and makes her way to an old-fashioned brick well. She pours water from a bucket hanging over the well into a tin container and turns. She sees Phil and gives him a familiar wave. Phil waves back. She beckons him to follow her. Phil looks around and then gets off his bike and approaches her.

They go into the hut.

INT. STRANGER'S HUT

Phil has to duck to get through the low door opening. The one-room hut has sparse, austere furnishings - an old wooden table, wood stove, cloth door coverings. The whole thing is right out of a TV western.

The woman bends down and takes something out of the wood-fired oven. Then, she turns to Phil and holds it out.

It's a pan of big cookies. She nods. He smiles and takes one. He bites into it. It's soft and tasty. He closes his eyes and chews with delight.

She reaches over to a coffee pot on the stove and looks back. He nods. She pours him a big cup of steamy black coffee and sets it on the table. He sits and continues with the cookie, sips the coffee.

He can't take his eyes off her. She's beautiful, in a simple, uncluttered way. She takes a cookie, sits and nibbles on it. They continue this way in SILENCE, staring into each other's eyes, smiling.

EXT. RUSTIC CABIN - LATER

The woman is standing by the front door, waving to Phil O.S.

He is sitting on his bike, waving back, with a very serene expression. He turns around and heads back up the road.

EXT. CABIN NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

He passes by the same empty cabins, then Gene and Carl's. But they aren't there anymore. Phil stops and watches. Two strange men about Gene and Carl's age are stacking wood now. They wave to Phil. He waves back, tentatively. Smiles.

EXT. PEEBLES DRIVEWAY - EARLY EVENING

WIDE on the Peebles' big, happy house, as the last light of day is fading. The Cybertruck drives up and parks outside the garage. The hatch opens. Phil and Samantha get out, remove their suitcases from the trunk and close the hatch.

CLOSER. WE FOLLOW them as they pick up their suitcases and carry them to the house. They pause by the front door. Phil reaches out, turns the knob and swings the door wide open. He reaches in and turns on a light, REVEALING the interior.

Their POV. Everything is clean and shiny, just the way they left it.

They walk in.

INT. PEEBLES LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

WE MOVE in their POV through the perfect space, everything immaculate and where it's supposed to be. The crystal vase with the decorative sticks is dust- and smudge-free and resting elegantly on the glass coffee table. The white carpet practically glows with cleanliness.

INT. PEEBLES DEN - CONTINUOUS

They enter the pristine environment and look around in awe, surprised not to find the twin's usual mess. They are drawn to the kitchen island by a small glass vase sprouting a tidy bouquet of fresh-cut peonies. Then, behind them...

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)
Welcome home, guys.

They turn. It's twin girls (GIRL 1 and GIRL 2) - about 16, pretty, blonde, cheerleader-ready. Another shocker for Sam and Phil.

GIRL 1
I hope you guys had a chance to
decompress?

SILENCE with fake smiles.

GIRL 2
Do you like the flowers?

Sam and Phil turn to each other, unable to speak.

GIRL 1
Let me get your bags.

(CONTINUED)

The girls grab their bags and head up the stairs. Sam and Phil are speechless. They follow the girls up.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL

While the girls carry the bags to the master bedroom, Sam and Phil stop outside the twin's bedroom. They slowly push the door open and behold the interior.

INT. TWIN'S ROOM

Sam and Phil's POV from the hall. The room is no longer a pigsty. There are posters of G-rated teen idols tastefully attached to the walls. Everything is clean and tidy, beds made, walls painted pink. Each girl has her own neat desk, adorned with flower vases and stuffed animals.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL

They carefully close the twin's door and look up as the girls approach them, smiling.

GIRL 1
You guys hungry?

Sam and Phil are gobsmacked beyond belief. It takes Phil a moment.

PHIL
We uh... we uh...

Phil turns to Sam. Their eyes meet. Sam nods, a tentative agreement. They're ready to proceed with the game.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Yes. I believe we are.

GIRL 2
(Big smile)
Good.

INT. PEEBLES DEN - LATER

Sam and Phil are seated close together on the couch, holding aperitifs, and watching with awe and trepidation as the girls work methodically in the kitchen, CLATTERING and POUNDING.

SAMANTHA
(Privately, dazed)
I like them.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
They're nice... people.

SAMANTHA
I wonder where the boys are.

PHIL
Are you... how are you doing?

SAMANTHA
I don't know. I'm trying. I don't
know how far I can take this.

PHIL
Me either.

SAMANTHA
At some point, we'll need an
explanation. Don't you think?

PHIL
But for now, we just have to...

SAMANTHA
(Fake smile)
Yes.

Phil drinks his aperitif in one gulp.

INT. PEEBLES DINING ROOM - LATER

It's dark outside. The room has been dimmed and candles set up on the table with elegant place-settings. Phil is at the head of the table next to Samantha. They are looking toward the kitchen door, waiting for the next surprise. They have finished noshing on a fancy charcuterie in front of them. Phil takes one last bite. It's good.

GIRL 1 appears at the door, smiling, holding a big dinner plate with a lobster on it.

GIRL 1
Tada!

She enters the room followed by GIRL 2, holding an identical plate. They set the dishes in front of Sam and Phil.

GIRL 1 (CONT'D)
Lobster thermidor. Your favorite.

They stand there, waiting for the expected positive response.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA	PHIL
Oh my. I don't know what to say. Smells delish.	You shouldn't have. How did you... do this?

GIRL 2
We learned lobster last week.

GIRL 1
I hope you don't mind being our guinea pigs. Let us know if the seasoning is off.

The girls watch eagerly as the two take a bite and smile.

GIRL 2
Do you want more wine? We paired the lobster with a Chardonnay.

GIRL 1
The classic pairing.

GIRL 2
Do you think it's too... classic?

GIRL 1
I mean we could've gone out on a limb with a Sauvignon Blanc or even a Pinot.

GIRL 2
Not a Pinot.

GIRL 1
Yes Pinot.

GIRL 2
You and your Pinots.

GIRL 1
They go with any seafood in my opinion.

GIRL 2
Well, sometimes your opinion sucks, frankly.

GIRL 2 heads back to the kitchen. GIRL 1 follows.

GIRL 1
I wouldn't be so rash in blithely handing out opinions, sister. I know from a reliable source, that there are no hard and fast rules when pairing with lobster.

(CONTINUED)

GIRL 2
No, but there is such a thing as
taste, which you have demonstrated
often enough you don't have.

GIRL 1
Take that back...

They continue out of earshot. Sam and Phil look at each
other.

SAMANTHA
Is lobster a shellfish?

PHIL
I don't think so.

SAMANTHA
Well, if I die, tell them I enjoyed
it for a few bites, anyway.

PHIL
(Still chewing)
This is incredible.

SAMANTHA
I know. Are my lips swelling?

PHIL
You'll be fine. Who knows? Maybe we
don't have allergies anymore... or
get sick. Maybe we live forever.

SAMANTHA
What, like we died and this is some
kind of weird heaven or hell or
something?

PHIL
Never thought of that. But why not?

SAMANTHA
(Sinister smile)
I miss the twins. I really do.
But...

PHIL
I know.

SAMANTHA
They're okay, aren't they?

PHIL
As okay as we are.

(CONTINUED)

That seems to satisfy her for the time being. The girls come back in with their salads and sit facing them.

GIRL 1
What do you think?

They make YUMMY sounds and smile with their mouths full. Everyone smiles. It's a regular smile-fest and it goes on for an irrational length of time.

INT. PHIL AND SAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

The two are dressed for bed. Phil is looking in his closet, perplexed.

PHIL
(Curious)
All my suits are gone.

Samantha comes over, and checks through his clothes.

SAMANTHA
Hmm. More khaki, more casual, no dress shoes, only one sports coat...
(Checking the tag)
And it's from Penneys!

Shocked.

PHIL
My nice Hong Kong suits. What the hell. Now, everything is so...

SAMANTHA
Middle class. What do you think it means?

PHIL
Maybe I'm working at home and dressing more casually now.

SAMANTHA
(Trying to be positive)
I'll bet that's it.

His phone RINGS. He pulls it out of his pocket and looks at the screen. It's someone named Steve. He tentatively answers.

PHIL
(On phone, smiling)
Hello. Steve.

(CONTINUED)

STEVE (V.O.)

(On phone)

Hey, Phil. How was the weekend?

PHIL

Not bad.

STEVE

That's good. Say, umm, I have a favor to ask. Do you mind?

PHIL

Uh, sure.

STEVE

I hate to do this to you the last minute, but can I pick you up like a half-hour earlier tomorrow? I got to proofread my slides before the meeting.

PHIL

Sure. Uh, Steve. So, when would that be?

STEVE

Six-thirtyish?

PHIL

(Shocked)

Fuck. Yeah. Six-thirty. Why not? Sure.

STEVE

Thanks. I owe you one. See you.

PHIL

Yeah.

He hangs up.

SAMANTHA

What was that all about?

PHIL

(To Samantha)

It appears I'm carpooling tomorrow at six-thirty with someone named Steve.

SAMANTHA

Did he say where to?

Phil just stares at her.

INT. STEVE'S CAR - MORNING

Phil is squeezed between two large men (FRANK and STU) in the backseat of an economy car. STEVE and DICK are in the front. They are all pushing 50 and overly familiar with each other. Phil is busy trying to process.

DICK
(Squirming uncomfortably)
He said it was my prostate that's acting up.

STEVE
What's wrong with it?

DICK
It's too big or something.

STEVE
So you can't pee?

DICK
I can pee but it like dribbles out.

STU
I know someone who had that. They used this like cheese-grater thing to scrape shit out of his dick. He was in the hospital for two weeks. Peed blood for a month.

FRANK
Yeah and you can't stop dribbling after that. You have to wear a diaper or one of those piss bags.

DICK
How do you know?

FRANK
I know someone.

DICK
(Makes a face)
Just talking about it's making me want to pee.

STEVE
Can it wait?

Dick bears down.

STEVE (CONT'D)
How's your prostate, Phil?

(CONTINUED)

Not sure how to react.

PHIL
It's uh, you know. Not bad, I
guess.

STEVE
Peeing okay?

PHIL
I think so.

DICK
Any dribbling? Erectile
dysfunction? Problems ejaculating?

PHIL
Not that I know of.

DICK
Oh, you'd know it if you were
dribbling!

They all LAUGH.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE HALL - DAY

WE ARE PULLING Steve and Phil down the hall. It's a plain, no
frills working class hall with offices on both sides.

STEVE
We'll have to get you and Sam to
come over one of these nights for
dinner.

PHIL
Yeah, sure.

STEVE
How are the girls doing, anyway?

PHIL
The girls? They're uh... You know.

STEVE
They still on track for Georgetown?

PHIL
The university?

STEVE
(Chuckles)
Yeah, the university.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
Well, still on track, as far as I know.

STEVE
They're pretty special. I'm jealous.

PHIL
They sure are.

STEVE
Well, see you at ten.

Steve stops to turn into his office.

PHIL
Ten. Sure. Say, uh, Steve...

Steve waits for Phil to complete his thought.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Yeah. See you at ten.

Phil watches Steve enter his office, then continues down the hall, reading the names on the doors. It's a long hall. He's a little lost, starts to panic. Comes to an intersection and stops in the middle, turns around. He stops someone passing by.

PHIL (CONT'D)
(At a loss)
Say, uh, do you know where I might find, uh...

BEAT

GUY IN HALL
What is it, Mr. Peebles?

PHIL
(Surprised)
Oh, I was supposed to, uh...

GUY IN HALL
I think they're delivering it now.

The guy points down the hall to the right.

PHIL
Oh... good... the delivery.

GUY IN HALL
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
Great. Thank you.

The guy continues on. Phil turns and makes his way down the hall to the right. He looks ahead.

His POV. An office door is open at the end of the hall and workers are rolling in an office couch with end tables. Phil stops behind them and reads the nameplate by the doors - "Phillip Peebles, Manager Epigee Fulfillment Center."

His jaw drops. He follows them in.

INT. PHIL'S EPIGEE OUTER OFFICE

Phil enters a small office with a single desk and waiting area. The workers continue through another door, Phil follows. An admin CLARICE (30s) is typing. Without looking away from her screen...

CLARICE
(Dispassionate)
Morning, Phil.

He stops and turns to her, sees her name on the desk.

PHIL
Morning, Clarice.

CLARICE
Want me to print the notes for your
10 o'clock?

PHIL
Yes, please.

He starts to follow the workers, then stops.

PHIL (CONT'D)
(Making conversation)
So, how was your weekend?

CLARICE
Pretty good. How about you?

PHIL
We, uh... it was good, thank you.

CLARICE
Go up to the cabin?

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
(Surprised)
Yes.

CLARICE
It's so pretty over there this time
of year.

PHIL
It is.

CLARICE
Do any fishing?

PHIL
(Curious)
No. Not this time.

CLARICE
(Looks up, sarcastic
smile)
Too bad. I always look forward to
hearing your fishing stories.

PHIL
(Smiling)
Ha. Well... You'll be spared this
time.

He goes into...

INT. PHIL'S EPIGEE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Phil enters what is apparently his office. It's big enough
for a sizeable wooden desk, a wall of bookshelves and a
meeting area with a new couch.

He steps behind the desk and looks out a window that runs the
width of the room, providing a panoramic second-story view of
the fulfillment center floor, that runs back, what seems
like, half a mile. It's filled with a million tiny workers
and machines shuttling packages here and there - quickly,
efficiently.

He turns in and scans his office. He's tense, close to
panicking. A worker is facing him, holding out an iPad. He
takes the iPad and looks it over, presses an area that asks
for a signature, and hands it back.

The workers leave, closing the door behind them.

It's quiet now. Phil plops into the big chair behind his big
desk and takes a breath. He stares at the nice, clean desk.

(CONTINUED)

Takes a look out the window. Then, he leans the chair back and swings his feet up on the desk. It feels good.

INT. MEETING ROOM - LATER

A digital clock changes from "10:16" to "10:17."

Around a dozen office workers in shirtsleeves are seated casually around a mahogany table, waiting, looking over notes on their devices, speaking quietly.

Phil appears in the hallway, looking in a window behind one of the workers. His eyes are wide. He's frazzled. He opens the door and enters carrying his device and paperwork. The group turns. All eyes focus on him, as they wait for the word.

PHIL
Sorry, I'm late.

He looks around, notes that the only empty spot is at the head of the table, next to Steve. He makes his way toward it. The eyes track his every movement.

He stands there and takes his time organizing papers, while everyone watches and waits. He presses a key on his laptop and an agenda slide pops up on the screen behind him.

PHIL (CONT'D)
(Confidently making up stuff)
Alright, let's get started. I want to thank everyone for showing up today. We, uh, got a lot of important things to talk about that're vital to the future of our FC, as well as Epigee of course, and our customers and so on. I can't stress that enough. So... Steve, you're up.

He sits, Steve stands, taken aback by the brevity of the intro. He presses a button that changes the screen to a slide about PIT Worker Safety.

STEVE
Since we implemented the new PIT measures, we have seen a fairly substantial drop in associate complaints, especially involving bathroom breaks.

(CONTINUED)

He changes slides to one with pie charts pertaining to bathroom break times. Phil grabs a Danish, rocks back in his chair and peruses the slide with great interest.

STEVE (CONT'D)

As you can see we are fine-tuning the hiring protocols to place a greater emphasis on individuals who possess a more positive response to our BJ-4 questionnaire involving motivation around taking breaks and so on...

INT. CENTER FLOOR - LATER

Phil is walking the floor with four other managers, watching with great interest as workers sort packages and drive forklifts.

INT. PHIL'S EPIGEE OFFICE - LATER

Phil is seated behind his powerful desk listening to two managers in a heated discussion.

MANAGER 1

Phil, we have one chance to get this right. If we fail, the unions will be all over us.

MANAGER 2

I agree. But we can't rush into something that'll blow up in our face.

MANAGER 1

It's not going to blow up in our... Jesus, we've thought all this through a million times already. We need to go with the plan we have now. It's solid.

MANAGER 2

Just one more day, one day that's all I ask-

MANAGER 1

One day will give the union a chance to retrench and we'll lose all the ground-

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
(Standing, pointing)
Whoa, whoa, whoa. I get it. You
want immediate action. You want
another day. How about splitting
the difference, half a day?

MANAGER 1	MANAGER 2
The longer we wait, I don't know...	Well, I suppose. I'll have to see...

PHIL
(Pointing)
You have until EOD to resolve this.
Okay? And you, where did you get
that tie?

INT. PHIL'S EPIGEE OFFICE - LATER

- Phil is doing a little soft shoe, looking at activity out
his big window.

- Phil is lounging on the new couch, tossing peanuts in the
air and trying to catch them in his mouth.

INT. EPIGEE HALL - LATER

Phil is walking the halls, smiling and waving managerially at
passersby.

INT. PEEBLES KITCHEN - DAY

The fridge is open, filled to the brim with neatly organized
containers. Samantha is looking in. She doesn't recognize
anything. She opens a container. It's some brownish gourmet
goo. She smells it, turns her nose up, puts it back in.

She closes the fridge and turns to the island. Toys with some
of the odd-looking cooking implements hanging on the overhead
rack that didn't used to be there.

She's alone and lost. She steps into the den and turns to the
slider. There's Forest Whitaker, sitting, smiling at her. The
dog approaches Samantha and sits, raises her right paw.
Samantha smiles and shakes it.

EXT. PEEBLES BACKYARD - DAY

Samantha is playing catch with the dog using the ball launcher. The dog comes in with a ball and she kneels down and scratches her neck.

INT. PEEBLES DEN

Phil is watching her, smiling.

INT. PEEBLES DEN - NIGHT

The two are seated on the couch, holding their aperitifs, watching the girls make dinner.

PHIL

(Relaxed)

I got to say, this pretending thing is something else.

SAMANTHA

Meaning...

PHIL

I mean I'm managing a whole fucking fulfillment center! People are actually listening to me. All I have to do is make shit up and they dance around me like puppets. It's... it's the most fun I've had my whole fucking life. I swear.

SAMANTHA

Aren't you worried that they'll find you out?

PHIL

So what. What can they do? Fire me? I'm already fired! (BEAT) You should try it. Seriously.

SAMANTHA

I don't know. I don't know how far I can go with this.

PHIL

What have you always wanted to do?

SAMANTHA

Be a gourmet chef.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
Great! Do it!

SAMANTHA
Like when would I do that?

PHIL
Like now. Go over there and make
some gourmet food. Go on.

SAMANTHA
I don't know. They scare me.

PHIL
Why should they scare you? They're
your pretend daughters. It's your
kitchen.

SAMANTHA
I'm just not comfortable.

PHIL
What's the worst that could happen?

She watches the girls happily making food. It does look fun.
She stands and slowly musters the courage to approach her
strange daughters.

INT. PEEBLES KITCHEN

She watches them work for a beat, then...

SAMANTHA
(Hesitating)
What can I do to help?

GIRL 1
(Without looking up)
That's okay, Mom, we got it.

Samantha looks back at Phil. He gestures to urge her on.

SAMANTHA
(Charging ahead)
Can I... I want to do something.
Anything. I want to learn. Come on.
I'm bored. You guys can't have all
the fun.

GIRL 1 looks up at her.

GIRL 1
Are you sure?

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

Yeah. Come on.

GIRL 1

Okay, we're rolling the meat
filling up in these little
triangles.

SAMANTHA

Okay. What do I do?

GIRL 1 smiles and makes room for her to work.

INT. PEEBLES DEN

Phil downs his aperitif in one gulp, then hers.

INT. STEVE'S CAR - DAY

The five men are once-again driving to work. Phil is feeling
more simpatico now.

DICK

(Suffering again)
I'm just going to die.

STEVE

Please don't do that.

FRANK

Wait until you get to work, anyway.
Then, you can claim workman's comp.

PHIL

I didn't hear that.

STU

I think my dog's got what you got.
He's been scooting his ass on the
white carpet again.

PHIL

Anal sacs.

STU

You what?

PHIL

You got to express his anal sacs.

DICK

Yeah, that sounds like what I got.

INT. SAMANTHA'S CAR - DAY

She's driving the girls to school, pretending to be one of them. Girl 1 is looking for recipes online.

GIRL 1
Here's one: steamed sea-urchin
custard.

GIRL 2
Ooo, exotic.

SAMANTHA
Aren't those poisonous?

GIRL 2
No that's blowfish, and only if you
do it wrong.

GIRL 1
It says you're supposed to focus on
their edible gonads.

The three of them cringe with a loud, "Eeeooo."

GIRL 2
I wonder what the custard is made
of.

Again, "Eeeooo."

INT. FULFILLMENT CENTER FLOOR - DAY

Phil is huddling with Manager 1 and Manager 2 off to the side of the main work area, referring to a man huddling with his group 20 feet away. The man is dressed like a fulfillment worker, with his back to US.

MANAGER 1
(Sotto voce, intense)
Phil, just so you know, this guy's
only been union boss for a few
months but he's totally full of
himself and out of control.

MANAGER 2
He's the reason we haven't made any
progress. To him, it's just a
pissing contest - building himself
up at the expense of the people he
represents. A real turd of a human
being.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
I know the type.

MANAGER 1
So, keep in mind he doesn't have
the support of his rank and file.

MANAGER 2
He's all smoke and mirrors.

MANAGER 1
And he's going to try to cozy up to
you.

MANAGER 2
And take us all back to square one.

PHIL
Alright. I get it. Let's do this
thing.

Phil braces himself and leads his group over to the worker
group. Manager 1 gets their attention...

MANAGER 1
Gentlemen, I'd like you to meet
Phil Peebles.

Phil is all smiles, as he extends his hand. The man with his
back to US, turns to face Phil with a tough game face. It's
Dave (Phil's boss from the first scene.) Surprise!

DAVE
(Grabbing Phil's hand,
roughly)
Dave Basset.
(Intimidating)
You ready to talk?

Phil is stunned.

INT. PEEBLES KITCHEN - DAY

ON HANDS doing something with a partially disassembled sea
urchin in a bowl of water.

ON SAMANTHA, as she pulls her hands out of the water and
dries them on a towel. She studies the urchin, another
reminder of the cold, dead, strange world closing in around
her. She pushes the bowl aside. She's feeling very alone and
empty.

(CONTINUED)

She looks up. Her heart stops. Matt is standing across the kitchen island staring at her, very lost and frightened.

SAMANTHA
(Barely audible)
Matty?

MATT
(Same)
Mom. What's going on?

SAMANTHA
I don't know. Are you guys okay?

MATT
Yeah. Kind of. Where have you been?

SAMANTHA
You know. Around.

MATT
I miss you.

The tears come. Samantha moves around the island and grabs him. They hug, as if it's the last hug ever. But when she opens her eyes, she realizes that her arms are empty.

INT. PEEBLES DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As flames rapidly engulf a platter of chicken sitting on the table.

The girls, Samantha and Phil react when the Coq Au Vin flambe gets a bit out of hand. They smile.

The flames die down and the girls hop back to the kitchen, leaving Samantha and Phil at the table. There's an awkward silence. Sam can no longer muster a fake smile.

SAMANTHA
He was there, Phil. In my arms. It was his smell. A mom knows her son's smell. It was him.

PHIL
I believe you. You don't have to explain.
(Trying to be optimistic)
At least we know they're alive, right? That's a good thing. We'll find them.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

How?

PHIL

Well... we'll figure it out. We just need to be positive. And keep trying.

SAMANTHA

(Taking a few beats)

No. Phil, this just isn't right. I need for it to stop. I know you're having a good time with it but I'm just not. I can't...

She gets a little shaky. He covers her hand.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I need to go back to the way things were. This isn't normal. Pretending isn't normal. I just get used to the way things are and they change. Things keep changing. It's not right. And that's not going to work for me. It's just not.

(Turning to face him)

Have you seen Forest Whitaker lately?

PHIL

The dog?

SAMANTHA

Have you?

The girls come back in with their salads, ending the conversation.

GIRL 2

You guys haven't started your Coq Au Vin. Is something wrong?

PHIL

I'm sorry. No, we were just...

GIRL 2

It'll get cold.

She comes over and plates up their food. Phil holds on to Samantha's hand and they look in each other's eyes. Samantha motions with her head to the floor next to Phil.

He looks. Forest Whitaker is now a Yorkshire Terrier, sitting by Phil, waiting for a handout.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

Therapist JONATHAN CRISP (30s), thin, dark, black-frame glasses, is sitting in a comfy office chair across from Samantha and Phil on his couch.

SAMANTHA

Well, I think we might be crazy.

JONATHAN

(A smirk)

Both of you?

SAMANTHA

I think so.

JONATHAN

(It wasn't a joke)

I see. What makes you think that?

She looks at Phil, takes a deep breath.

SAMANTHA

Well, you're not going to believe this, but...

JONATHAN

Try me.

SAMANTHA

Well, things keep changing... all around us. Major things. At first I thought it was the things themselves that were changing, but now I'm thinking it might be... us. In our minds. Like we're hallucinating or something.

JONATHAN

Can you be more specific?

SAMANTHA

I brought bags of groceries home and they disappeared. Actually, they sort of moved on their own to different places and then disappeared.

The therapist's mind starts to wander.

JONATHAN

Hmm.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL

Tell him about the cabin.

SAMANTHA

We went to our cabin in Eastern Washington and everything was different. The furniture, the walls, the appliances, the heater, everything was different, vastly different. Not our stuff at all. Like strangers moved in and changed... everything.

PHIL

And our boys...

Samantha is hit hard. The therapist takes note.

PHIL (CONT'D)

(With difficulty)

We came home from the trip and they were gone and twin girls were in their place.

SAMANTHA

And we've never seen them before, but they talk to us like we're their mom and dad.

PHIL

(Taking her hand)

That was the worst change. And then there's the job I have that I don't know how I got.

SAMANTHA

And people keep changing and his dog became this little terrier thing.

They look to him for some direction. The therapist is having difficulty wrangling all this information.

JONATHAN

Well... first lets not use the term "crazy." Shall we? There are more specific terms that are less stigmatizing.

They nod.

(CONTINUED)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Second, it doesn't sound like a
mental illness, per se, because
mental illnesses typically affect
individuals, not multiple people at
the same time. So...

They need more. He's at a loss.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Let me ask you this. Do you feel
crazy?

INT. THERAPY CLINIC UNDERGROUND GARAGE - DAY

Samantha and Phil exit the elevator into the garage and walk
down a short aisle of parked cars. They're feeling defeated
after the session.

PHIL
Maybe it's how we explained it.

SAMANTHA
Seemed pretty clear to me.

PHIL
It doesn't sound like he thinks
we're crazy. But he didn't come
right out and say it.

SAMANTHA
He didn't say anything really.

PHIL
Do you want to try again next week?

SAMANTHA
Not much point in that. Do you have
any ideas?

Phil stops and looks around, confused.

PHIL
I'll think about it. There has to
be... I mean other people must've
had... the same... Where the hell
is it?

SAMANTHA
What?

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
 (Losing it)
 The car! Where's the car! It's
 pretty hard to lose a Cybertruck.
 Where the hell...

SAMANTHA
 I don't see it. Try the pressing
 the key thing.

He does. They hear a BEEP-BEEP and see a flash of light and turn.

PHIL
 Oh no! No!

The sound came from a puny, fire-engine red Chevy Bolt.

PHIL (CONT'D)
 This can't be happening.

They walk over to it and stand, facing it. Phil is out of his mind.

PHIL (CONT'D)
 What is this thing?! What the hell!

SAMANTHA
 It's a Chevy-

PHIL
 (Extremely distraught)
 I know what it is! I know
 exactly what it is! It's not
 my fucking car! Why is it
 beeping? Why is it fucking
 pretending to be my car?!
 This can't be happening! This
 can't be happening!

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
 Phil. Phil. Honey, relax.
 It's just a car. It's just a
 car. We will be fine with the
 Bolt.

He's gone mad, paces, keeps repeating "This can't be happening," "It's not my car," etc. Samantha starts looking through something on her phone.

He plops down on the hood with his head in his hands. Sees something. Looks up. Jonathan has appeared, facing them with a very serious expression.

JONATHAN
 Hey, how long have you had the
 Bolt? I've been hearing a lot of
 good things-

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
It's not my car!

JONATHAN
I see. Is this one of those changes
you were-

PHIL
Yes! This and a million other
fucking annoying changes. You see
it, right? The car? An hour ago it
was a Tesla Cybertruck, now it's a
fucking whatever this is.

SAMANTHA
Chevy Bolt-

PHIL
I know what it is!

SAMANTHA
Look.

She shows him a picture on her phone.

The picture shows Phil and the girls smiling, posing in front
of his brand new Chevy Bolt.

Phil is devastated, buries his face in his hands.

JONATHAN
Can we talk?

INT. JONATHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jonathan lives alone in this industrial, bare-brick-wall,
converted loft in Georgetown, south of Seattle. It's quiet,
echoey and dark.

Samantha and Phil are nursing espressos, sitting on barstools
around his kitchen island, as he paces, talking a mile a
minute on a caffeine high.

JONATHAN
(An ironically shocking
story)
To start with, I just want to give
you a heads up. I could disappear
at any time.
(He's serious)
That's right.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

I could just up and vanish in front of your eyes, in the middle of a sentence, out of the blue, without warning. Sound crazy? Who knows. Maybe it is. That's just sort of my "thing." Your thing appears to be stuff around you changing, while you remain the same. Is that about right?

PHIL

I'd say so.

JONATHAN

We all have our own "styles."
Disappearing and reappearing is what I do. Any time, anyplace.
(Makes an explosion sound)
It can really fuck with your head.
Let me tell you.
(to Samantha)
Is that too strong?

SAMANTHA

No, no. I shouldn't be drinking coffee this late, anyway. It's fine.

Setting it down.

JONATHAN

Because I can add some water and make an Americano out of it.

SAMANTHA

No, I'm good.

PHIL

So you disappear?

JONATHAN

And reappear in some crazy new environment. It seems this "phenomenon" manifests differently for each individual. Except now, in your case it's manifesting the same for both of you. Go figure. That's a first, for me anyway. I tell you, every time I encounter someone with the "phenomenon" it's different. Lots of unique manifestations.

He finishes his coffee, grabs their cups and carries them to the sink.

(CONTINUED)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

By the way, if today's session seemed a bit pointless, that's because it was. Sorry. I was instructed by the board not to talk about this with patients. It might put people off.

PHIL

That's crazy.

He grabs a stack of loose pages and sets them in front of Sam and Phil.

JONATHAN

If it's not some textbook mental illness we can bill an insurance company, we can't talk about it.

He sits on a stool and points to the stack of paper.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

These are pictures of some of the people I've encountered.

Sam and Phil leaf through the pictures.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

One of them has something like out of body experiences. This one keeps misplacing the same objects over and over. She wakes up in different strange places. In her case, she gets completely lost and no one knows her - like reverse amnesia, where weeks pass by. But unlike the real amnesia or schizophrenia or some mental illness, I can't really tie any of their symptoms to a documented disorder. If they hear voices, there's no evidence of psychosis, for example. They really are hearing real voices but can't see the people the voices are attached to-

He disappears. No sound or visual effects. He's just gone. Sam and Phil look around for him. After a moment he reappears by the window. He looks around to get his bearings. Then, he walks back to them, continuing as if nothing changed.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Suffice it to say, it's not all in their heads.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Unexplainable things really are
happening. And they're caused by
this "phenomenon."

He sits and waits for their response.

PHIL
What is this phenomenon?

JONATHAN
(Scattered, manic)
Glad you asked. Fuck if I know. It
seems to have started about a month
ago. I spend way too much time
researching this stuff and I
haven't found anything useful. I
mean, I have this... thing, this
phenomenon that causes me to
disappear and I can't find anything
about it. It's an entirely new
problem for mankind. I've read
about sunspots, quantum physics,
religious apocalypse, magic,
mystical this and that,
transcendental meditation, out-of-
body experiences, UFOs, alien
encounters, I could go on, but
nothing explains the phenomenon.

Sits and leans in with meaning.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
My closest guess is that it has
something to do with the invisible
fabric that holds the universe
together and one object existing in
multiple places in an infinite
number of parallel universes and
we're in some sort of time warp or
cosmic mega-storm that's bending
the fabric and mixing up the
nonexistent particles and sort of
shuffling the deck of reality.
Bottom line being, we are living
with multiple realities, all
existing at the same time and
duking it out for dominance.
(Aside)
That was good. I'll have to
remember-

He disappears again and reappears sitting next to them. He's
unfazed.

(CONTINUED)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

-that one. But the real bottom line is, fuck if anybody knows. This is beyond anything humans can even begin to comprehend. Random shit is happening that makes no sense and is completely out of our control and all we can do is watch it happen.

PHIL

(Obvious conclusion)
And pretend everything's okay.

JONATHAN

Yeah, like that. So if you have any interest in meeting these freaks of nature, we're having our first group session nex-

He disappears. Sam and Phil look around the space. No Jonathan.

PHIL

Damn.

INT. PEEBLES DINING ROOM - LATER

The two are in their seats, waiting for dinner. They have no more energy, no hope. WE can hear CLATTERING from the kitchen O.S.

PHIL

Did you get any of that stuff about mega-storms in the universal fabric?

SAMANTHA

No. None of it. It doesn't matter anyway. Does it? Since we can't do anything about it.

PHIL

I think we're doing it, actually.

Samantha shakes her head resignedly.

SAMANTHA

I never thought I'd lose all my children. I miss them so much. The boys pissed me off all the time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I mean, they did everything they could to get under my skin, but I made them. We had stuff in common.

PHIL

And Tree never had a chance.

SAMANTHA

We barely got to know her.

PHIL

We were a family. Maybe a tad dysfunctional. But we had each other.

SAMANTHA

Do you think the boys have a new family and they miss us too?

(Phil shrugs)

Do you think these girls had a family? Parents who miss them?

PHIL

They seem so normal, compared to us.

SAMANTHA

But they probably pissed off their parents too.

PHIL

The twins are probably pissing someone off right now.

SAMANTHA

That's what they do.

A hint of a smile.

They stop talking and listen - no more clattering from the kitchen.

Samantha gets up and heads to the kitchen. Phil follows.

INT. PEEBLES KITCHEN

Samantha and Phil come in. The girls are gone - disappeared right in the middle of making dinner. Pieces of uncooked sea urchin float in a bowl. A burner is still going on the stove.

Samantha can no longer hold it together. Her knees buckle. She breaks down and puts her arms around Phil and cries out. It's all-encompassing.

(CONTINUED)

All her props have fallen away and she is coming apart. Phil feels it too. They hold each other tightly and HOWL into the night.

INT. PHIL AND SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

They are asleep with Samantha holding tightly to Phil.

It's very quiet. Then, the wind starts - little whispers, growing slowly to a steady breeze.

EXT. PEEBLES NEIGHBORHOOD

The breeze bends the trees and bushes, blows trash here and there. Then, it picks up. Powerful gusts up to 60, 70 mph pound against walls, knock over trash, SNAP a branch, send neat piles of anything flying.

Then, the increasing power of the wind catches branches, and trees bend and scrape helplessly against each other. Loose objects are picked up and flung like bullets. Sporadic bursts of wind grab whatever they can and toss them, slam them against trees, cars, buildings. The bursts turn into a steady gale. A tall maple tree CRACKS and crushes half of a house.

Then, the rain starts, LOUD and driven hard by the furious wind. It's heavy and saturates the earth in an instant. The intensity of the storm HOWLS through confined spaces and pries open vulnerable enclosures. Things CRACK and SNAP. Power lines are ripped from poles with THUNDEROUS POPS and ROARS.

It becomes the storm of the century, with an intensity never experienced by any living thing. Thick tree trunks SNAP and topple. Roads and open spaces are strewn with trees, trash, bushes, anything that can fly, anything unable to withstand the rain driven sideways by a force approaching the strength of a hurricane.

The sky is lit with the pulsating glow of fires and emergency vehicles trying to bring some control to the chaos. But WE can see by the ferocity of the wind and rain, and the vulnerability of the things they touch that the situation is far from controllable.

The storm rages amid flames in the darkness through the night.

FADE TO BLACK,
THEN IN ON...

INT. PEEBLES DEN - DAY

LOW ANGLE PAST THE COUCH, out the sliding door. It's morning and the storm has passed, but the once-pristine backyard has been transformed into a hellscape. A Douglas fir has flattened the gazebo and part of the bar-b-que. Lawn furniture and any other loose object has been blown over or dashed against anything that couldn't be uprooted. Trash and plant litter fill in all the open spaces.

After a moment, a Labrador retriever appears from behind the couch. She pauses to pee on the white carpet then continues on her way.

WE FOLLOW her as she heads toward the stairs and up to the second floor.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL - CONTINUOUS

She crosses from the stairs to the twin's bedroom.

INT. TWIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She pushes the door open, hops up on one of the beds, and makes herself comfortable.

After a moment, a strange boy (8) awakens and pets the dog. He yawns, gets out of bed, and walks out of the room. WE SEE another strange child waking up in the other twin bed.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL

WE FOLLOW the strange boy down the hall. He turns into the bathroom, tries to turn the light on, gives up and heads to the toilet in the dark. As he starts peeing, WE CONTINUE down the hall into the master bedroom.

INT. PHIL AND SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

WE ENTER the room as a cell phone alarm goes off. Two people are sleeping in the bed. A strange man reaches out and turns off the alarm. Then, he yawns and gets out of bed. A strange man sleeping next to him awakens.

STRANGE MAN IN BED

(Yawning)

I'm not going in today.

STRANGE MAN 2

I don't think anyone is.

(CONTINUED)

He looks out the window.

STRANGE MAN 2 (CONT'D)
You should see this. It's a
disaster zone.

HIS POV, the downed trees and litter covering the street in front of the house.

INT. MIDDLE CLASS BEDROOM - MORNING

SIMILAR SECOND-STORY POV, trees and detritus covering a street in a middle class neighborhood.

Phil is looking out the window in this strange, undersized, ill-decorated bedroom with a sloped ceiling. He has just awakened and noticed the change, understandably disoriented and disheartened.

He explores the room, crosses to the closet and looks in, checks the tiny bathroom. Samantha is beginning to awaken. He sits on the bed next to her.

Her eyes open. She notices things have changed and closes them. He rubs her back.

PHIL
The power's still out.

SAMANTHA
(Eyes still closed)
Where are we?

PHIL
It kind of looks like North Seattle outside. But it could be Renton, Rainier Valley, Kingsgate...

SAMANTHA
The twins?

PHIL
I haven't looked yet.

SAMANTHA
I'm done pretending.

PHIL
Don't be done. It's all we got.

He kisses her shoulder, then leans in and hugs her. She turns and they hug, closely, tightly, for a long time.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL (CONT'D)
I'm going to explore. You want to
come? Maybe there's some coffee.

She shakes her head, then turns away and pulls the blankets over her.

He heads into the hall.

INT. MIDDLE CLASS HALL

He walks down the hall, exploring in rooms. He comes to a closed door, where the children should be sleeping. He stops with his hand on the doorknob, searches for the strength to open it.

Then, he turns away and heads down a half-flight of stairs to what should be a living room.

INT. MIDDLE CLASS LIVING ROOM

He does a quick appraisal of the room, then turns into what should be the kitchen.

INT. MIDDLE CLASS KITCHEN

He looks up with a start. The strange woman from the ramshackle hut is standing by the island, facing him with a lost look.

PHIL
Hi.

She seems to brighten a bit when she sees Phil.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Is this your house?

She shakes her head, points to her ear and mouths "can't hear," without making a sound.

PHIL (CONT'D)
(Pointing to his ear)
I can't hear you either.

He pantomimes as he speaks...

PHIL (CONT'D)
Is this your house?

She shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL (CONT'D)
Where are we?

She shrugs. She mouths, "I don't know."

PHIL (CONT'D)
So, we can both talk but we can't
hear each other. Why not?

She shrugs, nods. He goes to the slider and looks out. She follows.

A tree from the neighboring yard has fallen on part of the fence and crushed it and a swing set. Toys are scattered, bushes uprooted.

They look up at the sky. It's the first time WE HAVE noticed it. The sky has started glowing lime green and pulsating, like the northern lights. But the atmosphere is so concentrated with charged particles that it can be seen clearly through the clouds, casting a sickly, shadowless, yellow-green pall over the earth.

He turns and looks at her, then he heads toward the living room.

INT. MIDDLE CLASS LIVING ROOM

The power is still out but the glowing sky fills the middle class room with light. He crosses through it and up the stairs, followed by the woman.

INT. MIDDLE CLASS BEDROOM

He comes in. The woman waits by the door. He looks down at rumpled bedding. Samantha is gone. It's like he was struck by lightning.

PHIL
Samantha.

He repeats her name as he checks the master bathroom, then runs out the door.

INT. MIDDLE CLASS HALL

He looks in the rooms, calling her name over and over. He runs down the stairs.

INT. MIDDLE CLASS LIVING ROOM

He turns around in the middle of the room, looking in every corner, calling her name. Nothing. He gives up and collapses on the couch. He's lost it all.

The woman approaches him slowly, as he falls apart before her eyes. Whatever magic had been keeping him away from the brink has disappeared and been replaced with a very cold and unforgiving reality.

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The streets are strewn with downed trees, power lines and debris, empty of cars. People are wandering about, silently trying to grok the unbelievable.

The only sound comes from a couple of distant CHAINSAWS and the sky all around. It's a SIZZLING, CRACKLING sound. The magnetic field surrounding the earth is electrified and squirming, bright and screaming with a ghoulis glow.

Phil is walking among the lost. The strange woman is walking alongside him.

She comes up next to a man and woman and taps his shoulder. He turns and she pantomimes, "Where are we?"

Like everyone else, they are overwhelmed and exhausted.

MAN IN STREET

Well, we live on Rosehill in
Kirkland. I don't know where we are
now.

WOMAN IN STREET

We woke up and everything was
different.

She gets some of that, points to her ear and shrugs. They shrug.

MAN IN STREET

(Pantomiming)

We plan to keep walking until we
recognize something. You're welcome
to join us if you want. I'm Fred.
This is Joanne.

The strange woman smiles and mouths, "Hi." She points to Phil.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL

I'm Phil.

They shake. Then they fall in with Fred and Joanne. Phil pulls out his phone, unlocks it and takes a look.

FRED

Ha. Already tried that. Cell towers are down. GPS is probably down too.

Phil puts his phone back, looks away from them. He's unable to speak, just wants to disappear.

FRED (CONT'D)

Tried the radio this morning. Nada.
(Pointing upward)
This must be one hell of a sunspot.

JOANNE

I walked in the guest room yesterday and a strange man was standing there, naked as a jaybird.

FRED

You never told me that.

JOANNE

Well, I didn't want to, you know... It scared the shit out of me and I didn't know how you'd take it. He disappeared anyway after a couple minutes.

FRED

Hell, we're a mixed up bunch, aren't we?

INT. CHURCH HALL

The small local church hall has been repurposed for the emergency. Phil, the strange woman and the two they met on the street are seated in a group, eating scrambled eggs.

FRED

I don't remember this church being here, do you?

JOANNE

Well, it's not as if we notice things like churches.

(CONTINUED)

FRED

That's true. The food's good
anyway. Praise the Lord, huh?

A Christian PREACHER near them holds a Bible high and starts evangelizing LOUDLY. As he preaches, people gather around him and listen. They're desperate for an answer. With the pulsing sky growing brighter and LOUDER, the crowd is ready to believe anything.

PREACHER

It's all here in the Bible. Behold.

(Reading)

"The heavens will disappear with a
roar; the elements will be
destroyed by fire, and the earth
and everything done in it will be
laid bare."

The four find themselves caught up in the message. Phil looks up. Something catches his eye.

PHIL'S POV. It's Samantha, coming out of the kitchen, wearing an apron with her hair tucked up in a food service hairnet.

ON PHIL. He makes his way toward her, through the dense gathering of refugees spread out randomly on the floor.

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

Anyone who doesn't see this is a
fool, anyone who waits to act will
perish. It is no longer some
abstract idea. It is happening as
we speak.

She grabs a stack of dishes and disappears through a door into the kitchen. Phil reaches the door.

INT. CHURCH KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He enters and sees her heading through a passage into the dishwashing area. He tries to catch up.

PREACHER (O.S.)

How can anyone of us question these
prophecies when they're appearing
right there in front of us, right
now? The devil is having his way,
and this is the last chance you
will ever have to save your souls.

INT. DISHWASHING AREA - CONTINUOUS

He enters, as she sets the dishes by the washer and circles out through another passage. Phil picks up speed.

PHIL
(Calling)
Sam!

PREACHER (O.S.)
(Reading)
"Get rid of all the filth and evil
in your lives, and humbly accept
the word God has planted in your
hearts, for it has the power to
save you."

INT. CHURCH KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He steps around a wall and sees her across the kitchen, heading toward the swinging door back to the main room. It seems no matter how hard he tries, she is always 20 feet ahead of him.

PHIL
Sam!

He slows to avoid running into a worker carrying a hot pan of eggs. Sam is gone.

INT. CHURCH HALL - CONTINUOUS

He enters, searches the room.

A person falls to her knees in front of the Preacher.

FOLLOWER
Save me, please! I'm ready.

The Preacher places a powerful right hand on her head.

PREACHER
Do you accept Jesus Christ as your
Lord and Savior?

Phil turns to his right and there she is, standing right behind him, watching the Preacher. Phil faces her.

PHIL
(Tenderly)
Sam. Sam, it's me.

(CONTINUED)

She doesn't hear him, even though he is standing inches away. He cautiously reaches out and puts his hands on her arms. Her head turns, face softens, as if a pleasant thought has come to her, but in her world he doesn't exist.

FOLLOWER (O.S.)

I do!

PREACHER (O.S.)

Say, I believe in Jesus.

FOLLOWER (O.S.)

I believe in Jesus.

PREACHER (O.S.)

And I believe in the power of Jesus
to save me from the ravages of
hell.

He steps back, continuing to watch her closely. He senses some sort of unseen, otherworldly communication between them and can't seem to stop watching her, hoping some magical breakthrough will occur.

FOLLOWER (O.S.)

I believe in the power of Jesus to
save me from the ravages of hell.

PREACHER (O.S.)

(Reading, fully
enthralled)

"Though you have not seen him, you
love him. Though you do not now see
him, you believe in him and rejoice
with joy that is inexpressible and
filled with glory, obtaining the
outcome of your faith, the
salvation of your soul."

FOLLOWER (O.S.)

Yes!

The crowd exclaims, "Amen!" Phil turns his head reflexively to the sound.

PHIL'S POV, as the Preacher pushes his hand against the follower's forehead and she lands in a heap on the floor. Others stand and approach him. He grabs the next one in line.

ON PHIL, as he turns back to Samantha. She is heading into kitchen with an armload of dishes. He watches her disappear through the doors, and continues watching long after the doors have stopped moving.

EXT. HILL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The four are making their way down an old residential street, strewn with downed trees and trash. Phil has paired up with Fred.

FRED

That's tough. I don't know what to say.

PHIL

She... she stopped pretending. And that was it. She was gone.

FRED

(Shakes his head, the philosopher welling up in him)

Oh, but pretending, that's everything. That's life. That's all life is. Without that, we have nothing. We're born lost, all of us. No one has the answer. No one knows. We're all just making shit up, forever trying to talk ourselves into thinking everything is okay. But we're all just as clueless.

Phil looks up. The news seems to give him some twisted sense of hope.

PHIL

Clueless.

FRED

Pretending is the only thing that keeps us all from jumping off a cliff. It's all we ever had. We were born to try to make sense of something that makes no sense, on a journey that takes us nowhere.

He looks up as the charged sky begins to flash.

FRED (CONT'D)

But now, the truth is staring us right in the face.

A rumble of THUNDER.

(CONTINUED)

FRED (CONT'D)
(With the conviction of a
man on the edge)
All around us is proof, scientific
proof that there is no answer.
Chaos is all we got, and it's all
we ever had.

He closes his eyes and breaths it in.

The four turn a corner and start down a hill. Ahead, they can
see a lake through the downed trees. Off in the distance,
they see the tops of tall buildings.

FRED (CONT'D)
(Rejoicing)
Look, it's downtown. So that must
be Lake Union.

PHIL
I think you're right.

FRED
Probably near Wallingford. What
does that sign say?

PHIL
Bagley North and 39th.

FRED
Yup.

They continue down the hill toward the lake.

The electromagnetic sky intensifies. A lightning storm
develops above them with powerful flashes of light and
THUNDER.

EXT. LAKE UNION STREET - DAY

A street runs by the lake at the bottom of the hill. Only an
occasional car attempts the labyrinth of parked cars, stalled
buses, flooded intersections and logjams.

FRED
We're heading home.
(To Phil with a sly smile)
Or maybe just pretending to. How
about you?

PHIL
I don't have a choice.

(CONTINUED)

He turns to the strange woman. She pantomimes, "I'm with you. I have nothing else."

The four start their long journey down the sidewalk, AWAY FROM CAMERA.

JOANNE
What was all that about pretending?

FRED
Oh, nothing, nothing.

JOANNE
I need you to focus, Fred.

FRED
I'm focused.

JOANNE
And not go off on one of your tangents.

FRED
Yeah, yeah.

The conversation trails out.

The angry sky starts sending incredibly bright bolts of lightning earthward. The THUNDER CLAPS are tremendous, unlike anything humans have ever experienced.

As they walk, it starts to rain. It's heavy. It glows like radium. They're soaked in an instant. All they can do is pull their coats tight, hunch over and push ahead.

EXT. FREEWAY RAMP - DAY

The rain has abated some. They're following the ramp connecting to the floating bridge over Lake Washington. The road is virtually empty of vehicle traffic. A line of hundred or so displaced people stretches out for miles ahead.

EXT. FREEWAY BUS STOP - DAY

The four take shelter under the covered bus stop. Fred sits, takes his soaked shoes off and rubs his feet. Phil sits. The woman stands and watches Fred.

FRED
We got another stretch of walking until we get to the other side.

(CONTINUED)

JOANNE
How's your feet?

FRED
Pretty fucked up. Excuse the
French.

JOANNE
Are you going to make it?

FRED
I honestly don't know. I think the
gout's coming back. Hurts like
hell.

The woman gets an idea. She gets their attention, then points to herself and the group. Then, she points to the street, indicating the cars.

JOANNE
You think you can get us a ride?

She nods.

JOANNE (CONT'D)
Well, we'd sure be up for that.

The woman gets Phil's attention and beckons him to follow her.

They head across the bus lane and stand on the freeway shoulder. A car approaches. She tries to flag it down, but it zooms past them.

She turns and gives a hopeful thumbs up to the people in the bus shelter. They wave back.

It's bitter cold and the number of yellow-green lightning strikes continues to increase all around them.

The woman huddles close to Phil, puts her arm through his. He looks down, covers her cold hand.

Another car approaches. Phil and the woman attempt to stop it, but it continues on by.

She turns and wraps her arms around Phil, puts her head on his chest and closes her eyes. He looks down at her, unsure how to react. She holds him even tighter. He reciprocates after a moment. They hold each other - two people standing on a freeway shoulder in the glowing rain, as the sky melts and the world appears to come apart around them.

Another car passes, but they continue their embrace.

(CONTINUED)

Suddenly, a massive lightning bolt CRASHES down on the metal bus shelter. It EXPLODES. The flames and concussion from the electrical discharge immediately turn the people and everything in the shelter into a smoldering, melted heap.

Phil and the woman stare in disbelief. Then, they shake off the shock and turn back with added urgency to the task of stopping a car. Here comes one. They pull out all the stops, jumping high with arms raised, CALLING, SCREAMING.

It works. The small used Honda pulls over just ahead of them. They run to the car and get in - Phil in the passenger seat, the woman in back. The car takes off.

INT. HONDA - DAY

The driver SHONDA (30s) is still wearing her scrubs, just as freaked out as everyone else, still buzzing on high doses of caffeine and shear terror.

SHONDA

I'm Shonda.

PHIL

I'm Phil. This is... I don't know.

He looks back. The woman smiles at him.

SHONDA

What do you mean?

PHIL

She can't hear us and we can't hear her.

SHONDA

Sure, why not. I just got off work at Swedish ER. You wouldn't believe what's going on there.

PHIL

I'll bet.

SHONDA

Fucking chaos. A lot of people freakin' and having visions and disappearing and reappearing in weird places and running around with their heads chopped off. All we could do was shoot 'em up and set 'em down someplace. Where you headed?

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
East of Woodinville. Whatever you
can do.

SHONDA
I can take you as far as east
Redmond.

PHIL
That's fine. Thanks.

He takes the opportunity to exhale.

An accident ahead. Shonda slows and passes the car on fire.
They look in. It appears to be empty, the occupants having
disappeared. More slow traffic ahead.

The lightning increases, as they start across the lake. Bolts
pound the lake and send up huge waves of exploded water,
dumping buckets on the floating bridge deck and any vehicle
that happens to be in the way.

Shonda pours on the gas now. She swerves into the right lane,
then the left and back, angling around slow and stalled
vehicles. Phil holds on to whatever he can grab.

SHONDA
This is freaking me out a little,
just so you know. I don't usually
drive like this but... I'm just a
little, fuck...

She hits the brakes, wedged in by slow cars in both lanes.

PHIL
I can drive if you want.

SHONDA
That's ok. I got it. ER was such a
shit show, I'm still a little, you
know...

PHIL
I get it.

She zooms into the left lane when she's past the blockage.

SHONDA
One woman appeared in a locked
closet with no light. She didn't
know where she was, screaming her
ass off for hours before someone
came and let her out.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHONDA (CONT'D)

We loaded her up on Ativan and let her sleep it off in the waiting room. That's the kind of day I've had. As soon as I get home, I'm jumping into my Lazy-boy, putting my feet up, drinking a bottle of I don't give a shit and doing nothing for a week.

PHIL

My sons disappeared. Then, my wife.

She glances at him. Sees the empty shell.

SHONDA

Sorry about that.

PHIL

I don't think I can handle any more.

SHONDA

It's tough, alright.

PHIL

I don't know how you could face all that suffering and still keep it-

End of conversation. He looks over and Shonda is gone. The car slows. Then, she's back and freaked.

SHONDA

What the fu-

Then, she's gone. Then, she's back, SCREAMING. Gone. Back. Gone. Back. She comes and goes a few more times, in quick succession, SCREAMING her ass off.

SHONDA (CONT'D)

I think you'd better dri-

Gone for good. Phil grabs the wheel and rights the car, coasts and swerves a bit until he can switch over to the driver's seat.

Lightning just ahead cooks the right lane. He hits the brakes, swerves into the left lane, cutting off a car. HONK. HONK. Then, he straightens out and continues on. Looks in the back seat.

The woman is shaking her head. She reaches up and pats his shoulder. He squeezes her hand. More lightning. It's nonstop. Then, the rain starts for real.

(CONTINUED)

The deluge becomes so heavy, he can't see an inch in front of the windshield. He lets off the gas, brakes to a stop and prays he doesn't get rear-ended. Then, the car shuts off on its own. No electricity - dash, lights, engine, everything dead.

Through the washed-out windshield, he can see the greenish sky become as bright as the sun, as if it's three feet over the car.

He feels tingling, burning throughout his body, as thin tendrils of highly-charged light, flow over the car like a liquid spider's web, enclosing them in a high-voltage electric cage. The HISS and CRACKLE of the field is unbearably loud.

He looks back at the woman. Their eyes meet. They're in this together. They watch and wait. It has to end sometime, but it's all completely out of their control.

They hear POUNDING and METAL STRETCHING as the car is heated and transformed. They hear rivets and tires POPPING. The car begins to glow. It's like they're being baked, but not from heat, from high-frequency radiation emanating from the atmosphere.

He looks back. She is highly distraught now and trying to talk - shaking her head, running her hands over her arms and legs.

PHIL

Are you in pain? What can I do?

She starts SCREAMING, holding her head, shaking it. But no SOUND. Phil is at a loss as she appears to melt or burn up in front of his eyes. SILENTLY SCREAMING. He can't get to her from the driver's seat. He wants to hold her, find out what's wrong, but he's afraid touching her will make it worse.

Sparks travel from her forehead and fingertips to the metal on the headrest and seatback. She contorts, folds over, grabs her legs. She holds on tight, as her body is invaded by something horrible from within. Her head rises, then falls. She is still. She slumps.

Phil does what he can but is forced to wait helplessly for the universe to give him a break. He faces forward and closes his eyes tight.

Then, as if someone came along and hit a big switch, the bright light turns off. Then, everything begins to contract. The web of electricity enveloping the car retreats. The rain slows. The atmosphere begins to lose its SIZZLE.

(CONTINUED)

He reaches back and touches the woman, rubs her hand. He can't tell for sure, but she appears to be alive. After a moment, there's some movement. She raises her head slowly and opens her eyes. She finds Phil and looks directly, deeply into his eyes. Phil attempts a smile. She is lost, except for his touch.

He looks up out the windows at the stalled cars and trucks, the smoldering bridge deck. He tries the door handle. It's still hot. He gathers a part of his tee-shirt and manages to pull the handle and shove the door open.

EXT. BRIDGE DECK

Phil steps out of the car to greet the new world. The wind and rain have stopped, lightning has lost its fury. And the angry sky appears to be cooling down. He steps a few feet from the car and leans against the Jersey barrier.

From his vantage mid-lake, he can see the tall buildings of Seattle and Bellevue, the mansions in Medina, U.W. Stadium and the stalled, burned-out vehicles running the length of the floating bridge in both directions.

Then, the reality storm hits.

REALITY STORM MONTAGE

He feels something. Not sure what. It's not physical. It's part metaphysical, part spiritual. It's nothing he can touch or see, but it's very real. He stands and allows it, has no choice.

Without moving an inch, with everything completely out of his control, the world around him begins to change, slowly at first, then faster and faster. The things he sees and hears flash rapidly from one reality to another. The bridge disappears, reappears; sky turns blue, then yellow, then green; people appear, disappear; traffic becomes fast and heavy, then light. Then, he is in different places, times, with different people - his wife, twins, Gene and Carl, the woman, the 4-year-old girl, Dave at work, total strangers.

Every aspect of his world changes continuously. And it all happens rapid-fire with elements overlapping, so a friend he hasn't seen in years is on the bridge, then he's at a baseball game, then he's gone. They aren't memory flashes. They are glimpses of his multitude of parallel realities colliding and smashing into insane disconnected pieces - something that is impossible to describe, that can only be realized as it's happening in four dimensions.

(CONTINUED)

Then, the storm stops suddenly.

CUT TO BLACK.

SILENCE, then...

CUT TO:

INT. PEEBLES DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE SHOT of Phil, as his eyes pop open. He immediately focuses with intensity on something ahead of him O.S.

ON Samantha and the twins. They're sitting motionless at the dining room table, staring with confused looks at Phil O.S.

THE FOUR OF THEM. Phil is seated at the head of the table, appearing very lost and shaken.

After a very LONG BEAT...

PHIL
(Mouth agape)
Leaving?

MATT
I thought you were going up to the
cabin.

Phil looks at Samantha, cocks his head.

SAMANTHA
(To Phil)
Remember? We were going up after
work Friday.

He doesn't.

PHIL
Oh yeah. Um, well. We could do
that. Sure.

The twins flash each other sinister smiles.

SAMANTHA
Are you feeling ok?

PHIL
Who, me?

SAMANTHA
Who else?

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
I don't know. The twins?

SAMANTHA
They're fine. You seem... off.

PHIL
(Fake smile)
I'm not off. I'm on.

The twins SNICKER.

PHIL (CONT'D)
(To the twins)
What?

MATT
Nothing.

More SNICKERING.

SAMANTHA
Don't listen to them. They're being
silly.
(To Matt)
Silly twins.

Phil half-smiles, then looks down at his side.

HIS POV. Forest Whitaker is sitting there with her right paw raised. Phil smiles and shakes her paw, scratches her neck.

SAMANTHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(To twins)
You guys barely touched the seafood
salad.

MATT (O.S.)
You put anchovies in it. I hate
anchovies.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
They're good for you. You need more
seafood in your diet.

MATT (O.S.)
I like the fish and chips kind of
fish, not this crap.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Crap?! Phil?

He looks up.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
What do you think?

PHIL
(Lost, Soto voce)
Forest Whitaker...

SAMANTHA
Forest, what? What are you talking about?

PHIL
I don't know.

SAMANTHA
Have you tried the salad?

He looks to his side. The dog is gone.

PHIL
Yeah.

SAMANTHA
Well?

PHIL
(Looking up)
It's a little fishy...

The three stare at him again.

PHIL (CONT'D)
But good. It's good.

They all sense a strange, uncomfortable energy, and become still and quiet.

SAMANTHA
Phil...?

PHIL
I'm sorry. I guess I am a little off today.

SAMANTHA
That's okay. I understand. (LONG BEAT) Were you thinking about Tree?

PHIL
Yeah. How did you know?

The twins look down at their salads and attempt another bite.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
You got that look.

PHIL
Sorry.

SAMANTHA
You don't have to be sorry. She
would've been, what, twenty-six
years old today. A young woman.

A thought or memory comes to Phil in a flash, and everything
falls into place.

PHIL
Wow. You're right. Twenty-six. She
would've been twenty-six! Oh my
God. I never...

He stands and walks over to another picture of 4-year-old
Tree on a shelf.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Whenever I think of her, I picture
this little four-year-old, but
she's not four now. She's a full-
grown woman.
(Turning to Sam)
And you know what? I saw her, Sam.
I saw her. I was with her. We held
each other. I know exactly what she
looks like, feels like.

SAMANTHA
(With compassion)
What are you talking about?

PHIL
I don't know. It must've been a
dream, but it was so real. She was
beautiful.

They agree silently. Even the twins share the feeling, nod in
unison.

INT. PHIL AND SAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

CLOSE ON a framed professional photo of 4-year-old Tree. WE
PULL BACK to reveal Phil and Sam in pajamas, looking at the
picture on their dresser.

They move slower now, less rushed, more at ease than they
used to be, as if they're floating above it all.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
Today, it feels like something very
important happened.

SAMANTHA
I know. I feel it too.

PHIL
You do? There's no reason for it.
But I think it's a good sign, don't
you?

SAMANTHA
It must be.

Suddenly his phone erupts with a continuous burst of new text
messages. He picks it up and stares at the screen as it racks
up over 257 messages. He sets the phone down and they trade
perplexed looks.

PHIL
(Matter-of-fact)
Oh, by the way. Did I tell you? I
lost my job.

BEAT.

SAMANTHA
No. Phil. What happened?

PHIL
I don't know. It just disappeared.
It was there one minute and then it
was gone.

They smile and make their way to the bed.

SAMANTHA
What are you going to do about it?

PHIL
I don't know. I get the feeling
things will just work out. Or they
won't.

SAMANTHA
Sounds like a plan.

There are no words to describe the way they feel at this
moment, but they don't dare question it.

THE END