

The Sleepwalker

by David Bramer

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FADE IN

INT. YOUNG KEMP'S HOUSE/BEDROOM -- NIGHT -- 1995

BONNIE (Kemp's mother, 28) is asleep. She is perched on the edge of the mattress, her back to her husband's side of the bed, which is conspicuously empty.

A man's voice, barely audible in the distance, causes her to stir restlessly. She rolls over, realizes that her husband isn't there, opens her eyes and sits up, guardedly.

She remains perfectly still, listening, then slowly swings her legs over the side of the bed and stands up.

INT. YOUNG KEMP'S HOUSE/STAIRS -- MOMENTS LATER

She descends the stairs, and the man's voice gets slightly more audible with each step. He is whispering directions or commands of some kind.

INT. YOUNG KEMP'S HOUSE/KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

She goes into the kitchen slowly, almost cautiously. PETE GOODELL (Kemp's father, 30) is crouching next to YOUNG KEMP (5) whose pajama bottoms are around his ankles.

BONNIE

Pete?

PETE

(startled)

What! Yeah! It's me.

(pause)

And the little guy. Both of us.

BONNIE

What's going on?

PETE

He was sleepwalking again. Caught him about to pee on the floor.

BONNIE

Right there?

PETE

That looked to be the plan.

BONNIE

(to Young Kemp)

Kempy? Is that right?

PETE
You're asking him? He's in another
world. He doesn't up from down.

Young Kemp remains wordless. Pete jerks up his pajama bottoms.

BONNIE
I just thought- I can take it from
here. If that's okay.

PETE
If it's okay?
(caustic pause)
What is your deal? Go back to bed.

BONNIE
Are you sure? I don't mind.

PETE
(abrasively)
What did I just say?

Bonnie is about to respond, reconsiders, then turns and, hesitantly, leaves.

INT. KEMP'S HOUSE - EARLY AFTERNOON -- 2024

Kemp, now a vaguely professorial 30-something, is boozing on his lanai. Beer bottles litter the floor next to his lounge chair. Nineties alternative blares from the open sliding-glass door to the den. He has on jeans, no socks and a tattered pair of tennis shoes.

Kemp's phone rings repeatedly. After the fourth or fifth ring, he gropes around on the floor and locates it, but not before knocking an open beer over onto a pile of books. He lunges to rescue the books from the pooling beer, and his lounge chair tips over.

KEMP
(yells)
Alexa, stop!

He looks at his phone. It's CHARLIE (his wife, 30). He rights the chair, with difficulty, then answers.

KEMP (CONT'D)
Charlie.

EXT. CHARLIE'S WORK -- PARKING LOT -- DAY

Charlie is professionally dressed and well put-together, but, somewhat incongruously, vaping as she walks around her

car, a pearl-colored Lexus, to inspect it for non-existent blemishes. She licks a finger and dabs at the hood.

CHARLIE

Kate's school called. She's skipping.

INTERCUT phone conversation.

KEMP

They didn't call me.

CHARLIE

Did you ask them to?

Having righted his chair, Kemp picks up the dripping books one at a time and wipes the covers on his Mr. Robot T-shirt.

KEMP

You have to ask them? Nobody asked me to ask. Did they ask you to ask?

CHARLIE

Nobody had to ask me. Have you been drinking?

Kemp doesn't answer. He is examining an especially wet hardbound book.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Kemp! Did something happen?

KEMP

As a matter of fact, yes. I was working on my online bookstore, all 15 too-rare-for-words books, and *somebody* spilled beer on my first edition Ferlinghetti.

CHARLIE

To you! Did something happen to you?

KEMP

To me? True confessions? My dad happened. Or, to be more precise, he stopped happening. He's dead.

CHARLIE

Shit, Kemp. I'm sorry.

KEMP

Do you know when the last time I talked to him was?

CHARLIE

Not really.

KEMP

Neither do I.

CHARLIE

The two of you weren't exactly close.

KEMP

True, but he was my dad.

CHARLIE

A dog can be a father.

Kemp looks across the yard outside his lanai. The enormous oak next to the lanai casts a shadow on the immediate area, but beyond that, everything -- the houses adjacent to theirs, neighbors' parked cars -- are bathed in soft sunlight.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Kemp, I'm sorry. I really am, but I've got to hang up now. We'll talk about this tonight.

KEMP

Salud!

He lifts a bottle up, as if showing it to the phone, catches himself, and then takes a swig.

CHARLIE

Can I trust you not to burn the house down before I get home?

KEMP

I couldn't if I wanted to.

CHARLIE

If Kate shows up, tell her Mom said she's grounded. You should be able to handle that.

Charlie hangs up. Kemp looks at the dripping Ferlinghetti in disgust, examines his beer, sees that it's empty, and sighs.

KEMP

Alexa, play something lachrymose.

ALEXA

Got it. Playing songs like "No Remorse" by Metallica.

"Enter Sandman" by Metallica starts playing.

KEMP

Is that robot fucking with me?

EXT. DRIVEWAY IN FRONT OF KEMP'S HOUSE -- MINUTES LATER

A jeep careens into the driveway of Kemp's modest, old Florida bungalow and slams to a stop inches from the garage door.

Inside, KATE (Kemp's daughter, 16) and DEREK (a conspicuously older boy, 18), look at one another wide-eyed, then explode into laughter. Derek reverses the jeep, backs it up a couple of feet, then cuts the engine.

Kate and Derek stumble out from either side, Kate with a backpack and Derek with a pint of rum. They hear the music blaring from the lanai, and Derek shoves the rum down the front of his pants.

Kate lurches to the front door, unlocks it clumsily, and steps into the sonic onslaught of Kemp's midday soundtrack.

INT. KEMP'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

KATE

(softly)

Dad.

(louder)

Dad!

(screams)

DAD!

Derek, warily, steps in behind her and looks around. Kate, laughing, drops her backpack on the dining room table and, with Derek skulking after her, stumbles down the hall and through the den toward the pounding music, where she stands at the entrance to the lanai. Kemp has his back to them.

KATE (CONT'D)

(accusingly)

You're home.

Kemp doesn't hear her. Kate goes to the smart speaker sitting on a bookcase.

KATE (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Alexis, stop!

The music stops, and Kemp turns around, glassy-eyed.

KATE (CONT'D)

Aren't you supposed to be at HCC,
brainwashing college people?

KEMP

(looking at his watch)
Fuck me. I am supposed to be at HCC
brainwashing people. Aren't you
supposed to be at school, learning?

KATE

I was getting bullied.

KEMP

(alarmed)
By whom?

KATE

Mrs. Collins, my English teacher.
She's making us read *Hamlet*.

KEMP

That heartless bitch!

KATE

Anyways, it's my birthday. Nobody
goes to school on their birthday.

Kemp looks at the pint protruding from the crotch of the
boy's pants.

KEMP

Oh, that's right. My baby girl is...

KATE

Sixteen.

KEMP

And kids at your school get wasted
on their birthdays?

KATE

Maybe. What's your excuse?

KEMP

I don't need an excuse. I'm your
father.

KATE

Well, that's my excuse. You're my
father. I'm a chip off the old block.

KEMP

You're a chip off the old block but
you hate Shakespeare. How is that
possible?

Kate makes a mock apologetic face. Kemp looks at Kate's
male friend.

KATE

That's Derek. He hates Shakespeare,
too.

KEMP

Well, it's important to find someone
compatible. A partner in crime.

Derek turns to Kate, uncomprehendingly. She ignores him.
After an uncomfortable silence, Kemp announces his directive.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I need to go, and
(nodding at Derek)
so does he.

Kemp gets up, with great effort, starts to leave, turns
around, and points to the pint protruding from Derek's pants.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I'll take that.

KATE

Shocking.

Derek reluctantly pulls the pint from the front of his pants.
Kemp takes it, grabs his satchel and leaves.

DEREK

(to Kate)
So I gotta leave?

Kate looks at Derek like "You can't be serious," then walks
into the dining room and opens a cabinet stocked with liquor.

KATE

See anything good?

INT. A BUILDING ON THE CAMPUS OF HILLSBOROUGH COMMUNITY
COLLEGE -- LATER

Kemp, his satchel hanging from one shoulder, hurries down a
long hall. When he reaches his classroom, he finds it empty,
except for a single female student who looks up expectantly.
MS. BARR (an administrator, 50ish) comes up behind him.

MS. BARR

Mr. Goodell, nice of you to show up.

KEMP

Class isn't over. Where is everybody?

MS. BARR

How long did you think they were
going to wait?

Kemp looks in the room again. The student opens her notebook, as if hoping for brownie points.

CUT TO

INT. MS. BARR'S OFFICE -- MINUTES LATER

Ms. Barr is seated behind her desk, with Kemp sitting opposite.

KEMP

I get you're upset. I have an excuse.

Ms. Barr leans forward and sniffs.

MS. BARR

Is that alcohol I smell?

KEMP

Yeeeeees.

He shifts his eyes, conspiratorially, as if he is letting Ms. Barr in on a secret.

KEMP (CONT'D)

It's not what you think. You see, I had a little situation on the home front. It's my daughter's birthday, and she skipped school, so I had to
(he makes air quotes)
"Dad."

Ms. Barr narrows her eyes as if trying to make sense of the senseless.

KEMP (CONT'D)

(discomfited)

I'm sorry I was late.

MS. BARR

Five minutes is late. You weren't "late." You weren't there. And this isn't the first time.

Kemp, starting to look peak-ed, doesn't speak.

MS. BARR (CONT'D)

Mr. Goodell, I can't keep you on. I'm sorry. I have your syllabus on file. I'll have another adjunct finish out the semester.

KEMP

Ms. Barr, I messed up. I get it.

MS. BARR

Mr. Goodell, I won't poison the water for you if somebody calls for a recommendation. I think that's more than fair, don't you?

KEMP

Wait, Ms. Barr. Wait. I'm just gonna put it out there. My dad died last night, and,

Kemp lowers his voice.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I'm a little messed up about it.

Ms. Barr is embarrassed.

MS. BARR

I'm sorry to hear that, Mr. Goodell. I really am. But that hardly explains all the other times you've been late or called in sick, does it?

Kemp nods bleakly. After an awkward pause, he picks up his satchel and walks out, dejectedly.

INT. THE KEMP HOME -- KITCHEN -- EVENING

Kemp is sitting at his kitchen table, cradling a bottle of beer. Charlie is leaning over the table, her lips trembling. Her eyes and cheeks are wet with tears, her mascara smeared.

A store-bought cake, the box lid open, sits in the middle of the table. The piped lettering says, "Happy Birthday, Kate!"

CHARLIE

(her voice raised)

Who loses a part-time job?

KEMP

(his voice also
somewhat raised)

Who loses their shit about someone losing a part-time job?

CHARLIE

I'll tell you who. Someone whose daughter is upstairs crying about God knows what because the so-called man of the house left her alone with an older boy.

KEMP

That's not what happened. And anyway,
Kate was fine. She said they both
hate Shakespeare.

CHARLIE

That's- I'm at a loss. It's like,
do I know you?

EXT. KEMP'S HOME -- CONTINUOUS

A neighbor is standing on the front lawn of the house across the street from Kemp's house, looking at the police cruiser parked in Kemp's driveway. Kemp and Charlie can be heard yelling from outside. A black policewoman gets out of the cruiser. She knocks on the front door.

POLICEWOMAN

Police officer!

Kemp and Charlie freeze. When the policewoman knocks again, he opens the door.

POLICEWOMAN (CONT'D)

Is there a problem here?

KEMP

(apprehensively)
I guess it depends on what you mean
by "problem."

POLICEWOMAN

I mean two people yelling so loud
neighbors call 911. That kind of
problem.

Kemp is at a loss what to say.

POLICEWOMAN (CONT'D)

Can I come in?

He steps aside to let the policewoman enter.

INT. KEMP'S HOME -- LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Kemp and Charlie sit in chairs on opposite sides of the living room.

KEMP

I'm sorry, officer. Things got a
little heated.

CHARLIE

Ask this jackass about his stellar day. He got fired **and** invited a boy into our house to have at our daughter.

KEMP

I didn't invite him in.

CHARLIE

Did you kick him out?

The policewoman, who has positioned herself between Kemp and Charlie, cuts them off.

POLICEWOMAN

Am I right to assume that you two have been drinking?

KEMP

A little.

CHARLIE

Me a little. Him a lot.

KEMP

Wrong. She's had way more than a little.

POLICEWOMAN

Next question: has there been physical contact here? Hitting? Pushing?

CHARLIE

No. My husband's a dumbass, but he's not abusive.

POLICEWOMAN

Ma'am, your language is abusive.

She stares at Charlie, who lowers her head.

POLICEWOMAN (CONT'D)

So what's this about your daughter? Did you call the police?

CHARLIE

No, I'm still- I'm figuring it out.

POLICEWOMAN

Can I talk to her?

CHARLIE

(emotionally)

Yes, of course. She's upstairs.

The cop walks upstairs. Charlie glares at Kemp.

KEMP

What makes you so sure something bad happened?

Charlie waves him off disgustedly, and the two sit frozen, waiting.

INT. KEMP'S HOME -- LIVING ROOM -- 10 MINUTES LATER

The policewoman comes downstairs. She is writing notes on a spiral stenographer's pad.

KEMP

So?

POLICEWOMAN

They had sex, if that's what you're asking.

CHARLIE

I got that. And?

POLICEWOMAN

And it was consensual.

CHARLIE

She said that?

POLICEWOMAN

She said she let him do it, quote/unquote. As an officer of the law, I'm good with that. As a parent...

Her voice trails off. Charlie and Kemp burn with shame.

POLICEWOMAN (CONT'D)

If I leave, what's going to happen here? Are you two going to start your nonsense back up?

KEMP

Absolutely not.

POLICEWOMAN

I hope not. I'm going to let you off with a warning, but if I have to come back, one of you is taking a ride with me. Comprene?

INT. KEMP'S HOME -- MOMENTS LATER

The policewoman is gone. Kate creeps down the stairs and looks over the railing at Charlie and Kemp.

KATE

If I got the cops here, you two would
shit.

KEMP

Kate!

CHARLIE

Kate, go back to your room. Your
father and I need to talk.

KATE

Scream is more like it.

CHARLIE

I mean it, Kate. Back upstairs!

KEMP

Wait, I want a word with her.

KATE

About what? I'm sorry I drank your
booze. There's plenty left!

Before Kemp can respond, Kate runs back upstairs. Charlie looks at Kemp, incriminatingly.

KEMP

Once I get my online books thing
going, all this shit will be water
under the bridge.

CHARLIE

(disbelievingly)

You've sold, what, four or five books
so far?

KEMP

(taken aback)

They're rare books. It's not like
I'm selling Skittles.

The look on Charlie's face is thoroughly unimpressed.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I have a kid. I have a job... Had
one.

Charlie throws back her head and walks into the kitchen,
followed by Kemp.

She picks up her glass of wine, then puts it back down.

CHARLIE

This isn't working. I think you should leave.

KEMP

(flaring)

The cop just left and you're starting your shit again?

CHARLIE

I mean it! Get out, or I'll call them back myself.

KEMP

Because I won't leave my own house?

CHARLIE

"Your house." That's a good one.

Charlie grabs a blender from the kitchen counter and thrusts it into Kemp's chest.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

This is how much of this house you paid for. Take it.

Kemp is stunned.

KEMP

You know, when you lost a job, I didn't act like this.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I lost a job. A real job. And then got another real job.

KEMP

(uncertainly)

So we're talking, what, a few nights?

Charlie storms past him and upstairs. Kemp starts to follow her, reconsiders, puts the blender down, goes to the refrigerator, grabs two bottles of beer and walks out of the house to his parked car.

EXT. THE SUCK IT UP TAVERN -- NIGHT

Kemp parks outside the Suck It Up Tavern and takes huge gulps from a bottle of beer while listening to a scratchy AM station that is playing a spiritual. Kemp plays invisible drums, exaggeratedly slowly, as if actually accompanying it somehow. When he's killed his beer, he shuts off the engine and gets out of his beat-up Subaru.

He walks into the bar.

INT. THE SUCK IT UP TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Dozens of bras dangle from the rafters and a neon sign behind the bar commands patrons to "Shut Up and Drink."

Kemp thinks about sitting at the bar, reconsiders, and sits at a small table by the front window. He takes his phone out, checks for messages, sees none, and catches the eye of a waitress, who seems irritated to see a new customer.

WAITRESS

What's your poison?

KEMP

(somewhat drunkenly)

Beer. No. Wine. Nothing too expensive.

WAITRESS

You want it in a glass, or a bottle with a straw?

Kemp is too taken aback to answer.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Red or white?

KEMP

One of each, and keep them coming.

The waitress looks at him to see if he's serious, decides that he is, and walks away.

KEMP (CONT'D)

(calling after her)

No straws!

While Kemp is waiting for his drinks, a middle-aged woman, egged on by two men at the bar, removes her bra without taking off her blouse. She hands it to the bartender, who hangs it by one strap from a rafter with a staple gun.

One of the men at the bar, a hairy middle-aged behemoth, then attempts to remove his boxers without taking his pants off. He falls down to hoots from onlookers, scrambles awkwardly to his feet, pulls his right leg out of one pant's leg and exposes his ungainly ass. Groans issue from throughout the bar. The waitress arrives with Kemp's drinks, the expression on her face absolutely impenetrable.

EXT. KEMP'S CAR OUTSIDE THE BAR -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Kemp dials his cell phone drunkenly. His headlights are shining on the front of the bar.

A couple exits the bar and walks in front of his car. The man is bald, with a long hipster beard, and a gym rat's build. The woman, wearing a short skirt and a midriff shirt, is heavily tattooed and has ombre hair.

Kemp looks at the couple while listening to his call ring.

INT. KEMP'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie is curled up on the sofa, drinking a glass of wine. Her face is streaked with tears. When the phone rings, she pauses before answering.

CHARLIE

What?

INTERCUT phone conversation.

KEMP

Can we talk?

CHARLIE

There's nothing to talk about. I'm hanging up.

KEMP

Wait! Wait! Listen, Mom's gonna need help at the bookstore now that my dad's gone. I'll do it full-time. That's what you want, right?

The couple stop in front of the car parked next to Kemp's and start to kiss. The man grabs the woman just below the butt and slides his hand up over her ass, lifting her skirt and exposing her panties as he goes. Kemp looks away.

CHARLIE

Kemp, you're not a horrible person, but you do kind of suck. Figure it out. Without me. I'm out.

The woman swears loudly, and Kemp turns to look. The gym rat is lying on top of her on the hood of the car.

Phone in hand, Kemp opens his car door drunkenly. When he has clumsily extricated himself from his seat, he calls out to the couple.

KEMP

Everything okay over there?

GYM RAT

Uh, yeah. Everything okay over there?

KEMP

I don't know. It seemed like you two might be fighting or something.

GYM RAT

Sorry. Who the fuck are you?

KEMP

I am-

(thinks)

a man with no PhD. No luck. And, worst of all, no more bottles of beer on the wall.

GYM RAT

Are you for fucking real?

KEMP

I'm as real as any automaton can be at a time when human agency is the slave of the psycho-demonic forces of late-stage capitalism and reality is meditated, um, mediated by-

Kemp momentarily loses his train of thought, then adds:

KEMP (CONT'D)

algorithms.

GYM RAT

You're either kind of smart, or totally fucking retarded. Why don't you get your sorry ass back in your car before I decide.

KEMP

Retarded isn't a word I cotton to. Unless you mean "to slow or hinder, in which case, "I forgive you."

The Gym Rat takes a step toward Kemp, but the woman holds him by his arm. She slides off the hood, adjusts her clothing, walks up to Kemp, somewhat incredulously, and leans in just close enough to whisper.

WOMAN WITH OMBRE HAIR

If you two are going to have a throw down, my money's on him.

Kemp considers that, somewhat drunkenly, then recognizes the woman.

KEMP

I know you. You went to Chamberlain
... Are you okay?

WOMAN WITH OMBRE HAIR

Oh, Jesus. It all comes back. The
sad, stoned knight in shining armor.

She turns and starts to walk away from Kemp.

KEMP

(louder)

Are you okay? It's a simple question.

The Gym Rat, infuriated, lunges forward, but The Woman With
Ombre Hair stops him, again, then walks back to Kemp, again.

WOMAN WITH OMBRE HAIR

Get some sleep. I'm fine. He's
fine. You're ... drunk.

She studies Kemp's face one last time.

WOMAN WITH OMBRE HAIR (CONT'D)

Drunk, but kind.

She puts a finger to her lips to signal that he needs to
stop talking, and then walks away. After a moment, Kemp
remembers Charlie and puts the phone to his ear.

CHARLIE

That was quite a performance.

KEMP

I'm quite a performer.

CHARLIE

I'd listen to your woman friend. My
money's on the other guy, too.

KEMP

Can I talk to Kate?

CHARLIE

She doesn't want to talk to you.
And neither do I.

KEMP

You can't stop me from speaking to
my daughter.

CHARLIE

I can when your daughter doesn't
want to talk to you.

KEMP

I want to hear it from her.

CHARLIE

You're drunk, Kemp. Call an Uber and go to a motel. When you wake up, start looking for a new place.

Charlie hangs up. Kemp listens to the dead tone for a moment, then scrolls through his contacts until he finds his dad.

He dials his father's number. After several rings, Pete's voicemail answers.

PETE'S VOICEMAIL

Hello. I can't get to the phone right now, but if you leave your name and number, I'll return your call ASAP.

Kemp hangs up, pauses, redials the number, but only lets it run halfway through the message before hanging up again. He isn't so much upset as numb.

CUT TO:

INT. PAPYRUS PETE'S USED BOOKS -- EVENING

Kemp is standing behind the counter of his deceased father's bookstore. He's separating books a customer wants them to buy into two piles: yes and no. Bonnie, grey-haired and haggard, walks up to him, and he gives her a pained smile.

BONNIE

You don't like being here, do you?

KEMP

Why do you say that?

BONNIE

I'm your mother. I think I know what you're feeling.

KEMP

Okay, I'll play. What am I feeling?

BONNIE

You want to get your PhD and teach on some ivy-covered campus, not be back here shelving books again.

KEMP

I'm not back "again." I'm back. For good. I'll never get my PhD, and I'll never be Dr. Goodell. I'm Dad now. No offense, but it kinda sucks.

BONNIE
There are worse things.

KEMP
Are there?

She gives him a look somewhere between hurt and concerned.

KEMP (CONT'D)
Come on, Mom. Let's not pretend
like he was nice to you.

BONNIE
He had his moments, but for God's
sake, Kemp, show a little respect.

Kemp lets it go. He goes back to sorting the books, placing
one of them demonstratively on the yes pile.

KEMP
Yes.

He places another book on the opposite pile.

KEMP (CONT'D)
No.

The customer who had left the books with Kemp while he browsed
in the stacks comes up to the counter. He watches as Kemp
sorts through his books, accepting some and refusing others.
He becomes visibly irritated.

MAN SELLING BOOKS
This one's yes, this one's no. It
seems pretty arbitrary.

Bonnie, who is still close-by, steps forward and is about to
intervene.

KEMP
(to Bonnie)
I got this. If that's okay.

Stone-faced, Bonnie moves away from the counter, but not so
far away that she can't observe what Kemp is doing. He places
an empty box on the floor and moves on to the next box.

KEMP (CONT'D)
Some books sell, some don't. For
example-

He rifles through the books in his keeper pile and picks out
three books.

KEMP (CONT'D)

These are classics and they're in perfect condition, like they've never been read.

MAN SELLING BOOKS

(mildly insulted)

They're books I had to read in high school. I bought them as reminders or whatever. Is that a crime?

The Man Selling Books reaches for a book off the discard pile.

MAN SELLING BOOKS (CONT'D)

What about this? It's in mint condition, never been read.

Kemp takes it and looks at the title: *A Life Well-Lived*. The cover has a split-image: on the left is a black-and-white pic of an ocean at night and, on the right, a color pic of the same ocean at midday.

KEMP

It's a vanity press. People pay companies to publish these. Nobody pays to read them.

Kemp turns the book over and the man's picture is on the back. He looks at the man, apologetically.

KEMP (CONT'D)

It might be a good book, but you know, the demand's just not there.

Bonnie comes over.

KEMP'S MOM

Kemp, sweetie. Can I have a word?

She grabs Kemp gently by the arm and leads him far enough away from the front counter that they can talk in private.

KEMP'S MOM (CONT'D)

Put the book on the yes pile. Give the customer a total, and he'll be happy. It all blurs together.

KEMP

So fool them?

BONNIE

No. We keep the customer satisfied. It's our job.

Kemp ponders that.

KEMP

Was I a customer, Mom? Growing up?
What was I?

Bonnie looks unnerved.

BONNIE

Maybe you need a break. Better yet,
take the rest of the day off.

Kemp groans, starts to walk away, thinks better of it, turns and hugs his mom, then goes to the counter, where the Man Selling Books is picking through the pile of his rejected books.

KEMP

My mom will take it from here.

Kemp's mom, watching from the wings, comes back to the counter, picks up the man's self-published book and smiles, somewhat artificially.

BONNIE

My son's new to this. He doesn't
get how much a signed copy is worth.

She hands the Man Selling Books a pen and opens the front cover for him to sign. The man beams. After he signs the book, Bonnie nods at him gratefully.

Kemp, watching from a distance, picks up his satchel and walks out of the store and into the evening dusk.

INT. PIGGLY WIGGLY -- EVENING

Kemp is picking through a bin of apples, when the woman opposite him recognizes him. It's the woman with ombre hair from the Suck It Up Tavern.

ANA MARÍA

Hey! White Knight!

Kemp looks up, surprised.

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)

The Suck It Up Tavern. You got out
of your car.

Kemp is mortified.

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)

Sorry. I wasn't trying to embarrass you.

KEMP

Oh, I pretty much took care of that all by myself.

ANA MARÍA

Don't be ridiculous. You meant well. It's the thought that counts.

KEMP

Well, thank you for saying so. It's a nice thought.

ANA MARÍA

I see what you did there. You're funny.

Kemp chuckles, nods good bye, and wheels his shopping cart off. Not more than two or three minutes later, he encounters Ana Maria in an adjacent aisle.

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)

Are you following me?

KEMP

I'm not really a follower. I'm the guy with the shopping cart leading the pack.

ANA MARÍA

Likely story.

Ana Maria wags her finger at Kemp, then steers her cart around him and down the aisle.

EXT. YBOR CITY -- NIGHT

Kemp and Ana Maria are strolling playfully, arm in arm, along the sidewalk in front of a strip of bars and restaurants in Ybor City, the "Little NOLA" section of Tampa. They're both slightly inebriated.

Kemp looks at Ana Maria admiringly.

ANA MARIA

What?

KEMP

I'm here, I'm with you, Ana Maria, who is gorgeous. It's criminal.

ANA MARIA
(jokingly)
Tell me something I don't already
know.

Kemp becomes as serious as a somewhat drunken person can be.

KEMP
Can I ask something totally wack?

ANA MARÍA
Wack?

KEMP
Unforgivable. Or not that bad, just
... wack.

ANA MARÍA
(irritated)
Let me guess. You recognize me.

KEMP
(slightly startled)
What? No. Recognize you?

ANA MARIA
I used to be a stripper. I gave you
a lap dance or whatever. Right?

KEMP
No, you didn't. No. I wanted to ask
about your tattoos. That's all.

ANA MARÍA
My tattoos? What is this? 1950?

KEMP
Technically, no, but you know what
Faulkner said. The past is never
dead. It's not even past.

ANA MARÍA
So this *is* 1950?

KEMP
Don't be ridiculous. We're up to at
least 1970.

ANA MARIA
(tiring of the repartee)
Ask your question.

KEMP

Sorry. Here goes: do you regret some of your tattoos? I mean, a tattoo's like a shirt you put on one day and wear for the rest of your life. I've never liked a shirt so much I wanted to wear it forever.

Ana Maria furrows her brows.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Fuck me. I'm an ass. Sorry.

[Uncomfortable silence.]

ANA MARÍA

You're wondering about my tattoos?

KEMP

No, just their permanence. I mean, if they weren't permanent, I'd probably have some. But, I'm a dope. Don't answer.

ANA MARÍA

Oh, but I want to.

(meaningful pause)

Tattoos are permanent. They aren't random crap. They're like scars an artist draws on you. They mean something.

She indicates a scar on his cheek.

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)

Like that.

KEMP

(mildly surprised)

That? It means things happen that you're too young to remember. I hurt myself sleepwalking, but I have no memory of it.

Ana Maria reaches over and tenderly touches his scar.

ANA MARÍA

It'll come back to you.

KEMP

You might be right. One time, I got high in eighth grade and had a flashback to my birth.

(MORE)

KEMP (CONT'D)

Angie, my girlfriend, said I fell off the couch and spilled some Faygo, but I knew better. It was afterbirth.

He looks at Ana Maria to see how his tale is landing. She simply nods at him, gesturing for him to go on.

KEMP (CONT'D)

There were forceps. A doctor. A nurse. I mean, my dad had the bill for the whole thing in his hand, and he didn't look happy. And here's what's weird: my mom had me with a c-section. Or so I was told.

ANA MARÍA

Or so you were told.

Kemp is confused, momentarily, but then he relaxes and his posture softens. He is more taken with her than ever.

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)

Now, my tattoos!

KEMP

Of course. Ignore everything I just said. I'm just being me.

ANA MARÍA

Be me! Better yet, let's both be me's. I'll be my me and you be yours.

She puts her pinky out for Kemp to pinky swear. He curls his finger around her pinky and is strangely moved.

Ana Maria points to a yin-yang tattoo on her upper bicep.

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)

This one says, I was once sixteen and had no imagination.

She turns slightly and indicates a fish jumping over a rainbow on her left shoulder blade.

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)

This one was on sale. It means I'm a very practical person.

Kemp, amused, points to a crown of thorns tattoo just above her right knee.

KEMP

What about this? Another sale?

ANA MARÍA

That? You have to know me longer
than one date. Give it time.

KEMP

So I have time? You did say "Give
it time." That's what that means.

Ana María looks at him, mock uncomprehendingly, then continues walking.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Never mind. I'm an idiot. I'm-

ANA MARÍA

Married?

KEMP

Separated. Soon to be divorced.

ANA MARÍA

Sorry.

KEMP

We were like conjoined twins always
pulling in different directions.
Separation was a medical necessity.

Kemp and Ana Maria stop in front of a narrow storefront:
Madame Mercedes' Voodoo Shop.

The menu of services taped to the window offers "Love Spells,
Psychic Readings, Spiritual Services, Voodoo Dolls, Magic
Spells, Ritual Items, Talismans, and Jewelry."

When they open the door, a bell rings. The store is a narrow
corridor with the glow from a lit-up larger room visible in
the rear. The walls on both sides have shelves filled with
merchandise (voodoo dolls, talismans and charms, etc.).

There is a pause, and then, toward the back of the small
shop, a woman pulls aside a curtain and steps forward to
greet them. Madame Mercedes is a middle-aged Haitian woman
with a bearing that is an unnerving mix of imperiousness and
intimacy.

KEMP (CONT'D)

(somewhat stiffly)

This special lady wants a Tarot Card
Reading.

Madame Mercedes acknowledges the request with a nod, then
leads them into a dimly lit room on the second floor. The
only furniture in the room is a small table and, on the wall
adjacent to it, a small fan.

Ana Maria takes a seat at the table opposite Madame Mercedes and Kemp remains standing.

MADAME MERCEDES
(looking up at Kemp)
And how about you? What do you want?

KEMP
I'm good.

MADAM MARIE
Are you?

KEMP
Um, pretty sure. Why?

MADAM MARIE
Your hand. It's weeping.

KEMP
Oh, that. I gave my hand to my wife
in marriage. She gave it back.

Neither of the women laughs.

KEMP (CONT'D)
(nervously)
It's happy-sad. You know, tears of
joy and all that.

He curls his fingers into a mouth-puppet and pretends it's talking.

KEMP (CONT'D)
Yay. ... Can we do the Tarot Card
Reading for Ana?

MADAM MARIE
I'm going to. But what I have to
tell you, it's on the house.

She takes his hand, turns the palm up, and points at some lumps (nodules) an inch or so below his ring finger.

MADAM MARIE (CONT'D)
Have you looked into this?

KEMP
That's a pressure wound. I got it
lifting stuff.

MADAM MARIE
Who told you that?

KEMP

My doctor.

MADAM MARIE

They were being nice.

Kemp is confused.

MADAM MARIE (CONT'D)

You have a condition. It's called,
um, "Du-", I can't remember, "Du-
Something." You drink, right?

KEMP

A little.

(pause)

Okay. More than a little. So?

MADAM MARIE

I'm not a doctor, but trust me, things
catch up to you.

Kemp looks at his hand skeptically.

MADAM MARIE (CONT'D)

See a doctor. A different doctor.

Madam Marie starts to place her cards on the table in front
of Ana María. Kemp's hand is no longer a topic of discussion.

INT. KEMP'S BEDROOM

Three empty beer bottles are on an end table with a table
lamp and a smart phone, which is ringing.

In the background, you can see the sleeping figures of Kemp
and, on the far side of the bed, Ana María. Her shirt is
rising just far enough to partially reveal one of her tattoos:
iam.

The phone continues to ring. Kemp ignores it. He tosses.
He pulls the covers over his head. Whoever is on the other
end of the line isn't hanging up.

ANA MARÍA

Your phone is ringing.

KEMP

I hear it.

ANA MARÍA

So you're not going to answer it?

KEMP

It's too early.

ANA MARÍA

Really? What time is it?

Irritated, Kemp picks up the phone and looks at it.

KEMP

It's my soon-to-be ex-wife.

ANA MARÍA

I don't know that time. Is that early or late?

Kemp presses answer and puts the phone to his ear.

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN -- MORNING

Charlie is sitting at the counter that divides the kitchen from the dining room.

INTERCUT BETWEEN KEMP AND CHARLIE

CHARLIE

(without saying hello)

Kemp! Jesus! Only one hundred rings?
Why am I not surprised?

Kemp holds the phone at arm's length, irritatedly. Ana María gets out of bed. She still has her blouse on, but she is naked from the waist down. The entire tattoo on her upper leg is now visible. It's a heart and a name: Liam.

KEMP

(covering the phone)

Who's Liam?

ANA MARÍA

My almost ex-husband.

As Kemp looks at her quizzically, you can hear Charlie scolding him from the phone in his hand.

CHARLIE

Kemp?

KEMP:

Charlie? Why are you calling?

CHARLIE

Why am I- You called me at 3 a.m.
You left a message, if you can call it that.

KEMP:

Oh, right. That's true. I did call you.

CHARLIE

May I ask why?

KEMP:

(starting to wake up)
I don't know. To ask if we're
officially separated, I guess.

CHARLIE

You called me at 3 in the morning to
ask that?

KEMP

Is there an official time for that
question?

CHARLIE

Whatever. Yes we are. Is that what
you wanted to hear?

KEMP

Yes and no. I mean, it's basically
a technicality at this point, right?

Kate walks into the kitchen and Charlie points at the stove
top, where breakfast awaits. Kate looks at the scrambled
eggs and bacon on the stove and makes a disgusted face. She
takes a liter of Diet Coke from the refrigerator. As Charlie
narrows her eyes at her, Kate pours herself a glass.

CHARLIE:

(shaking her head at
Kate)

Whatever. You called. I'm calling
you back. I thought you should know
that Kate's been expelled. The school
thinks she put a lady stick in Ms.
Collins' coffee.

KEMP

Who's Ms. Collins? Oh, wait. I
remember. She's the Shakespeare
bully.

CHARLIE

What?

KEMP

Long story. What's a lady stick?

CHARLIE:

A tampon. Someone put a tampon in
her coffee cup. It wasn't a used
one, so I suppose we should count
our blessings.

KEMP

What does Kate say about all this?

CHARLIE

She says she didn't do it, but she won't say who did.

KEMP

She won't- Why not?

CHARLIE

Because she's not a *snitch* quote-unquote.

KATE

(loudly interjecting)

Everyone knows it wasn't me. Where's my Buddha bowl?

She is holding a box of cereal with one hand and, with the other, rifling through the cabinets. Frustrated, she slams a cabinet door.

CHARLIE

It's probably under that pile of dishes in the sink. It wouldn't kill you to wash a few.

KATE

You want me to wash dishes?

Kate pulls the wastebasket out from under the sink, sets it on the counter next to the sink, and begins dropping each of the dirty dishes into the wastebasket one at a time.

CHARLIE

(to Kemp)

You should see your daughter. She's throwing away dirty dishes. You'd be so proud.

KEMP

Kate is doing that? Why?

CHARLIE

Have you two met?

Behind Kemp, Ana María is searching for her belongings. Kemp points toward a chair against the far wall, then admonishes her, through gestures, to be quiet. Ana María looks at him disbelievingly.

KATE

"Found it!"

She holds up a bowl with a smiling, almost infantile Buddha on it. Charlie, disgusted, turns her back on Kate.

CHARLIE

I need you to help.

KEMP

You mean, like talk to her?

CHARLIE

Kemp, I love Kate. I'd die for her, but she's **your** daughter, and your ex, her biological mother, skated on her. Is that your plan? How about being an actual father for once?

KEMP

Wait, what? You want me to take Kate? What about her school?

As Kemp says this, Ana María waves good-bye and prepares to leave.

KEMP (CONT'D)

(mouthing silently)

"What's wrong?"

ANA MARÍA

You called your ex-wife after I went to sleep. Major disrespect.

KEMP

Soon-to-be ex-wife.

Ana María glares at him, then steps out into the hall and shuts the door behind her.

KEMP (CONT'D)

(covering the phone's mouthpiece)

Ana!

The door remains closed.

CHARLIE

Kemp! Kemp!

KEMP

(remembering)

Charlie. Yeah, I'm here.

CHARLIE

You know what, I'm not even going to ask.

Beat

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Lakeland North expelled her. She's supposed to start at an alternative school out by I-75--unless, that is, we find a private school that will take her.

Charlie sniffs the air and turns to look at Kate, who is sitting at the counter with a bowl of cereal and smoking a cigarette. Charlie makes an "absolutely not!" gesture to Kate, who ignores her.

KEMP

What kind of private school?

CHARLIE

What kind? The kind that costs money.

KEMP

I'm paying rent now. I honestly don't know what you expect.

Charlie looks at Kate even more disapprovingly. Kate gives her a look of undisguised contempt, draws on her cigarette and blows three smoke rings.

CHARLIE

Oh no. Absolutely not.

Charlie walks around the counter with her phone at her side.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Give me the cigarette, Missy.

KATE

Why? You don't even want me here.

CHARLIE

I'm not playing. Give me it.

Charlie tries to snatch the cigarette away. Kate twists on her stool, so that her back is to Charlie. Charlie lunges and reaches around Kate's other side with the hand holding her cell phone. Kate jumps up, and as she does so, her cigarette gets jammed into Charlie's arm.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(shrieking)

Fuck!

She drops her phone on the floor. Kemp calls out, but he can't be heard.

KEMP

Charlie!

Chaos ensues as Charlie and Kate exchange recriminations.

KATE

You came at me!

CHARLIE

Are you fucking kidding me? You had a cigarette. What did you expect?

KATE

Not for you to be crazy!

KEMP

Charlie! Kate!

CHARLIE

(examining her burn)

Look at this! You burned me!

KATE

You spazzed. I was trying to get away.

KEMP

Charlie!

CLOSE - CHARLIE'S CAMERA ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR

Kemp's voice, almost ant-like, is barely audible against the backdrop of Charlie and Kate's argument.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Don't try to turn this around on me.

KATE (O.S.)

Me? What about you?

The sound of their argument fades into the sound of Kemp continuing to plead, fruitlessly, until the entirety of their voices becomes an inaudible blur.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KEMP'S APARTMENT -- DAWN

High-angle view of street, from second-story window. View is partially obstructed by a palm tree that intrudes on the left side of the frame.

Charlie's car pulls up into an empty parking space. The instant it comes to a stop, Kate throws the passenger-side door open, jumps out, and slams the door shut.

The trunk pops open. Kate walks angrily to the back of the car and removes her backpack and a grocery bag bulging with unknown contents, then stomps away without closing the trunk.

Charlie walks around to the rear of the car, closes the trunk, and then calls out to Kate, who doesn't acknowledge her.

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Kemp looks at the coffee table behind him; it is littered with beer bottles. He grabs the bottles and walks into the kitchen, picks up some trash from the wastebasket with one hand, throws the bottles away, then covers them up by putting the trash back into the wastebasket on top of them.

The door buzzes, and he pushes the mic button.

KEMP

Kate?

She doesn't answer. She tilts her head sideways and shoves her face, aggressively and ridiculously, so close to the intercom camera that her nose touches the glass.

Kemp pushes the button to let her in, then opens the door to his apartment and looks down the stairs.

INT. STAIRWELL OF KEMP'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Kate is climbing the stairs. We see her from Kemp's P.O.V. She reaches the landing, pauses, cranes her neck upward, sees Kemp, says nothing, and then continues to mount the stairs. She has on tight jeans and a cropped Nirvana t-shirt.

When she reaches the top, Kemp smiles, unconvincingly.

KEMP

Hey, girlie! I'm just finishing
breakfast.

He backs into his apartment, motioning for Kate to follow.

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT. -- MOMENTS LATER

KEMP

You can put your stuff anywhere.
Actually, how about-

He points at the couch.

KEMP (CONT'D)

That's your bed. Just pull it out.

KATE

I don't have my own bedroom?

KEMP

Sorry. It was between this place
and the mansion with the heated pool.
I went small.

Unhappily, Kate drops her backpack and paper bag on the couch.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Charlie said she was dropping you
off last night. What happened with
that?

Kate crosses her arms defensively.

KATE

I had things to do.

KEMP

What sort of things?

KATE

Stuff. Things.

Kemp weighs her answer and, uncertain how to proceed, lets
it go. He looks at the time on his phone.

KEMP

We're actually running a little late.
Have you eaten?

Kate mumbles something vaguely affirmative.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Is that a yes or no?

KATE

(flaring slightly)
Yes. I ate.

Kemp is brought up short by her attitude, but moves on.

KEMP

Your new school. They're ready for
you to start today?

KATE

Mom called. They didn't have a
choice.

KEMP

Well, neither do we.

Kate's face falls.

KEMP (CONT'D)
I meant because you got expelled
from Lakeland. That's all.

His explanation fails to mollify her, and she continues to look hurt.

KEMP (CONT'D)
Come on, Kate. I'm super happy you're
here. Honest.

She doesn't respond, so, leaving well enough alone, Kemp picks up his keys and satchel, and motions toward the door. Kate follows him, sullenly.

CUT TO:

EXT: PARKING LOT IN FRONT OF STEP-UP -- MORNING

CLOSE - SIGN IN FRONT OF STEP-UP

The sign reads: **Step-UP Opportunity Center. Get With It!**

Kemp parks his car, gets out. Kate remains seated. He walks around to the passenger side and opens the door.

KEMP
You coming?

KATE
(fiddling with her
book bag.)
Go ahead. I'll just be a minute.

KEMP
Kate, I have to get to work. We
need to move this along.

She remains seated, obstinately, for another moment, then explodes from the car and storms ahead of him toward the main building.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL DAWSEY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Dawsey's office has shelves on three of the four walls, stuffed with books, sets of enormous 3-ring binders, plastic file boxes, and stacks of loosely organized papers. A brass name plate on the desk says "PRINCIPAL LAURENCE E. DAWSEY."

Kemp and Kate are sitting in plain, wooden chairs in front of Dawsey's desk. He hasn't arrived yet. Kate is looking at her phone. Kemp reads the framed poster on the wall behind the principal's desk.

CLOSE - FRAMED POSTER

*The truth is that you always know the right thing to do.
The tough part is doing it.* - GENERAL NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY, a muscular, meticulously groomed black Alpha male, walks in the office and sits opposite them. He shakes Kemp's hand and nods at Kate.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

It's Kate, right? What do you know about Step-UP, Kate?

KATE

It's where the bad kids go.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

Not bad. "Doing badly." Students end up here for all manner of foolishness. What they all have in common is they need structure.

He looks at Kemp again.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY (CONT'D)

I'm sure you'd agree that every child needs structure.

KEMP

To a degree, yes.

Dawsey studies Kemp.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

To a degree?

Kemp nods, guardedly.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY (CONT'D)

Your wife said you're a professor, correct?

KEMP

Soon-to-be ex-wife. Already ex-professor. To be precise, I was an adjunct instructor. I quit.

Kate looks at Kemp with raised eyebrows, her mouth all but dropping open.

KEMP (CONT'D)

(quickly)

My father died and I'm managing his bookstore now.

Dawsey smiles, but just barely.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
But when you taught, your classes
were structured?

KEMP
I wasn't a nazi or anything.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
But you do believe in structure?

Kemp nods.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY (CONT'D)
These kids, they'll do just as much
as you let them get away with. No
less, no more.

Dawsey looks at Kate.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY (CONT'D)
Sound about right?

KATE
(uncomfortable)
I think that's all people. Everyone
needs structure. Not nazi structure,
but, you know, lines.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
Fair enough.
(beat)

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY (CONT'D)
(to Kemp)
Remind me. What brings you here?

KEMP
(confused)
Me?

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
(jokingly)
I meant Kate, you as Kate's parent,
but ...

He spreads his arms wide as if he's open for anything.

KEMP
There was some kind of hi-jinks with
a tampon. She says it wasn't her.

Dawsey reviews one of the papers on the desk in front of
him, then looks at Kate.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
(skeptically)
Kate? That's it?

KEMP
She was truant a lot, too.

(Beat)

KEMP (CONT'D)
Don't you have all that there?

He points to the forms on Dawsey's desk.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
Yes, I do. I was hoping to hear
Kate take some responsibility. It's
also important to hear that you
understand why she's here.

KEMP
It's pretty straightforward, isn't
it? She doesn't go to school or,
when she does, she doesn't behave.
To be fair, it's not all her fault.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
Why's that?

KEMP
When she was younger, her mom, her
biological mother, left. She took
the car, our savings, everything.
We actually had to live with my dad
for a while.

Principal Dawsey nods, as if taking this in.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
Were you working?

KEMP
Sure, but only part-time. I was in
a Ph.D. program.

Principal Dawsey is silent. Kemp, uncomfortable, presses
for the conversation to end.

KEMP (CONT'D)
So! Is there anything else I need
to know?

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY
Yes. Thanks for reminding me.

He stands up and stretches far enough to pick something up from an adjacent shelf.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY (CONT'D)

This is our handbook. Go over it with Kate and then both of you sign the contract in the back.

KEMP

Contract?

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

It's more an agreement. It just lays out all the school's expectations. We want to be on the same page, right? For Kate.

Kemp flips through the handbook distractedly.

KEMP

(to Dawsey)

We'll have a look at it. Thanks.

He stands up and shakes Dawsey's hand.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I've really gotta run. Work beckons.

Kemp pats Kate on the shoulder and takes a step toward the door.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

You've made arrangements to get Kate home?

Kemp is thrown.

KEMP

Wait. There's no bus?

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

I wish, but we get students from all over the county. That's over 1,000 square miles.

KEMP

When does school let out?

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

3:30.

KEMP

Jesus! I guess I'll have to come back here then, won't I?

He flashes what he hopes passes for a smile, then turns and leaves.

EXT: STEP-UP PARKING LOT -- MINUTES LATER

Kemp, obviously irritated, gets in his car and looks at the handbook, then at the time on his cell phone, and curses softly. He opens the glove box and stuffs the handbook in there, with some difficulty, then starts the car, backs out and hurriedly drives away.

INT. PAPYRUS PETE'S USED BOOKS -- DAY

Kemp is standing next to his mother at the counter, writing prices on the inside cover of books. He looks at his phone.

KEMP

I have to go get Kate.

KEMP'S MOM

How's that?

KEMP

Today was Kate's first in purgatory.
They don't have busses.

Kemp's mom turns this information over in her head.

KEMP'S MOM

But you'll be back, right?

Kemp takes a deep breath.

KEMP

Yeah, but this is gonna have to be
the routine. Every day, I'll have
to leave here at 3 to be there by
3:30.

KEMP'S MOM

Every day?

KEMP

Week days.

KEMP'S MOM

That's fine I guess. You're her
father. Pete would have done the
same thing.

KEMP

(coldly)
Would he have?

Kemp's mom bristles.

KEMP'S MOM

Your father had his faults, but he
was a good man. He cared about you.

KEMP

Mom-

Kemp thinks better of it and doesn't finish the thought.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I'll be back. Do we have any snacks
for Kate?

KEMP'S MOM

I have a box of coconut macaroons in
the office.

KEMP

I'll pick something up on the way.

EXT. STEP-UP PARKING LOT -- DAY

Kemp is parked facing the school as students exit the main entrance and make their way to the cars of their waiting parents. He looks at his phone. There are two messages: one from Charlie and one from Ana María. He opens the one from Ana María. It says, "?"

He sets his phone down, and turns his attention to the front of the school again. Fewer students are coming out now. He picks up his phone and looks at the time. It says 3:40.

EXT. STEP-UP PARKING LOT -- 10 MINUTES LATER

Only six or so kids are milling around the front of the main Step-UP building. Kemp looks at his phone again. It's 3:50.

At last, Kate exits the front of the school with another girl. Kemp unbuckles his seat belt, gets out of the car and waves to her. When Kate sees him, she doesn't wave back. She walks slowly down to Kemp's car.

She gets into the back seat on the passenger side and starts scrolling through her phone without acknowledging Kemp. He is ready to snap at her, but reconsiders, turns around and looks at her in the rearview mirror, as if he were a chauffeur.

KEMP

(affecting an English
accent)

Where to, madam?

Kate stops scrolling and looks at the reflection of Kemp's eyes in the rearview.

KATE

Huh?

KEMP

(still sporting the
makeshift accent)

Is the vehicle's climate agreeable
to Your Ladyship?

Rather than answer, she aims a look of impatient contempt at the rearview.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Very well then. What would your
listening pleasure be? Bebop? Doom
blues? Cajun fiddle?

Kate remains silent, locked in her attitude of complete disdain.

KEMP (CONT'D)

NPR it is.

He tilts the mirror up, in the manner of discreet chauffeurs everywhere, turns the key in the ignition, and starts to pull out of his parking space. After a second thought, he stops the car.

KEMP (CONT'D)

If I may, was madam delayed somehow?

KATE

(in a sort of Cockney)

The lady had to go to the loo.

Kemp is surprised. He turns around to face Kate directly.

KEMP

Son of a- How do you know that word?

KATE

I'm not dumb. "Skip to the loo" and
all that.

KEMP

It's "Skip to My Lou" -- L-O-U. It
doesn't have anything to do with
going to the bathroom -- l-o-o.

KATE

When I skip, I do it in the loo--
l-o-o.

KEMP

Fair enough.

He turns back around, and looks in the rearview again, winking at Kate and then finishes backing out.

INT. ANA MARÍA'S LIVING ROOM. -- EVENING

Ana María is sitting on her couch having a cup of hot tea.

INTERCUT BETWEEN KEMP AND ANA MARÍA.

ANA MARÍA

Hello.

KEMP

Ana María? Is that you? There are lots of Ana Marías, but not just any one will do. I want the Ana María who walked out of my apartment without so much as a backward glance. Are you that Ana María?

ANA MARÍA

Maybe. Are you calling to apologize?

KEMP

Yes, a thousand times yes. I'm sorry.

ANA MARÍA

You called your ex-wife while I was in bed with you.

KEMP

No, I wouldn't do that. I went into the kitchen.

ANA MARÍA

Are you serious?

KEMP

Yes. I mean no. It was wrong. I felt guilty. You're the first person I've been with since we separated.

ANA MARÍA

Well, you're the first person I've been with since, what day is it?

KEMP

What? I'm not following.

ANA MARÍA

I'm teasing you.

KEMP

Sorry. Also, if you don't mind, can I ask what's the story with your almost ex-husband?

ANA MARÍA

Now I'm not following.

KEMP

Your tattoo. Liam.

ANA MARÍA

That's for my son.

KEMP

You have a son?

A short silence ensues.

ANA MARÍA

Somewhere. Cuba maybe. Maybe the North Pole.

KEMP

You don't know?

ANA MARÍA

His bastard father took him when he was two. I don't know where. Nobody does.

KEMP

I'm sorry. My daughter's birth mother was a doozy, too. But it was the opposite with her. She didn't want anything to do with Kate.

ANA MARÍA

Count your blessings, I guess.

KEMP

I do, that's why I really want to go out again.

ANA MARÍA

What?

She groans.

ANA MARÍA

Is that your way of saying another date would be a blessing? Before I answer, I need to decide if you got game or you're just mad corny.

KEMP
Take your time.

[beat]

KEMP (CONT'D)
Have you decided?

ANA MARÍA
I'm thinking.

KEMP
Fair warning. It would be me and my daughter, Kate. She's going through things. I can't leave her alone.

ANA MARÍA
What would she think?

KEMP
About tagging along or whether I'm mad corny?

ANA MARÍA
Both.

KEMP
She would consider me the tag-along and, yes, she definitely thinks I'm mad corny.

ANA MARÍA
Then I'm in.

KEMP
Yes! My heart is going like mad and yes she said yes she will. Yes.

Ana María laughs.

KEMP (CONT'D)
Sorry. That's-

ANA MARÍA
The end of that James Joyce novel. *Ulysses*. I skipped a lot of classes, but I liked English.

In Kemp's apartment, he beams. In Ana María's, she smiles, but wistfully. She pulls up the leg of her shorts just enough to reveal her tattoo, *Liam*, and runs her index finger over it, tenderly.

INT. SLICE OF HEAVEN PIZZERIA -- EVENING

Kemp, Ana María and Kate are sitting at a round table looking at menus. No one is speaking, until Kemp breaks the silence.

KEMP

Was this a bad idea? I mean, not unforgivably bad, but, you know, awkward bad. It's my second date with you

(looks at Ana María)

and it's my first week as your-

(looks at Kate)

What am I now?

KATE

Lame-o Dad.

KEMP

Harsh. Why don't we just go with primary caregiver.

KATE

To be a caregiver, you have to care.

KEMP

I care.

KATE

Prove it. Get me-
(she looks at the menu)

KATE (CONT'D)

A calamari pizza.

KEMP

You don't want a calamari pizza.

KATE

Yes, actually I do.

KEMP

Do you even know what calamari is?

KATE

(defiant, but halting)

Fish. Of some kind. From the sea.

KEMP

God help us.

The waitress comes to the table.

WAITRESS

Are you ready to order?

KATE

I'll take a pitcher of sangria and a large calamari pizza.

KEMP

She'll take a pitcher of, what kind of soda do you have?

KATE

Water. I'll take a pitcher of water. Extra ice.

KEMP

She'll have a pitcher of water and a SMALL calamari pizza.

He then looks at Ana María, inviting her to order.

ANA MARÍA

We'll have a pitcher of sangria and a large calamari pizza.

Kate hoots and Kemp looks aghast.

ANA MARÍA

Sorry. I meant a large eggplant pizza and a small pepperoni.

WAITRESS

How many glasses with the sangria?

ANA MARÍA

Two.

The waitress takes their menus and leaves.

INT: SLICE OF HEAVEN PIZZERIA -- SLIGHTLY LATER

Kemp and Ana María are drinking sangria and Kate is sulking with a glass of water in front of her.

KEMP

Kate's school has the totally reasonable expectation that I pick her up before sundown.

KATE

Or, a friend could take me home.

KEMP

You've been there one day.

KATE

Fine. I can home school.

KEMP

How am I going to home school you if I'm not at home?

KATE

You have all those books. Just leave me a list every day: "Read *Hamlet*. Do math. Do science."

Kemp gives her a side-eye and turns toward Ana María.

KEMP

I'm probably going to have to pay someone. Maybe Uber, but hopefully cheaper.

ANA MARÍA

When does she have to be picked up?

KEMP

3:30.

ANA MARÍA

I can do it next week.

(to Kate)

I'm my own boss.

KEMP

I'm too desperate to argue, but why in the world would you?

ANA MARÍA

Sometimes a white knight needs a white knight.

The waitress comes up to the table and sets her tray on a tray stand. She takes the calamari pizza off the tray and sets it in front of Kate, and then sets the other two pizzas in front of Kemp and Ana María. Kate sniffs her pizza.

KATE

I can't eat this.

WAITRESS

Is there something I can give you instead?

ANA MARÍA

(to Kate)

I'm a pescetarian. I can't eat *this*.

(MORE)

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)
(indicating the small
pepperoni pizza)
Trade?

She hands the pepperoni pizza to Kate and takes the calamari pizza, then thanks the waitress. Kate looks at the pepperoni pizza, pleased.

KEMP
(to Ana María)
You're back-dooring me.

ANA MARÍA
Sometimes a White Knight needs a
White Knight.

KATE
White Knight is right.

KEMP
So that's how it is. She's the White
Knight and I'm the Lame-o Dad.

Kate, biting into the pizza, shrugs her shoulders matter-of-factly. Kemp looks at Ana María, with a mixture of confusion and gratitude.

EXT: PARKING LOT IN FRONT OF STEP-UP -- AFTERNOON

Ana María is sitting in her car in the parking lot of Step-Up, listening to the radio and watching as a dwindling number of students exit the main entrance.

After watching the last student walk to a waiting car, she dials Kemp.

INT. PAPYRUS PETE'S USED BOOKS - CONTINUOUS

Kemp is shelving books when his phone rings.

INTERCUT phone conversation.

ANA MARÍA
Hi, I don't see Kate. It's pretty
empty now.

KEMP
Fuck me. I'm sorry.

He takes a deep breath.

KEMP (CONT'D)
Give her a minute.
(MORE)

KEMP (CONT'D)

Friday, she stopped at the restroom on her way out.

ANA MARÍA

She's at that age. Forget puberty. Bladders develop last. Some days in high school I'd tell every teacher, every class, I had to go.

KEMP

I had days like that, but I wasn't going to the bathroom.

ANA MARÍA

Neither was I.

KEMP

Well, sometimes I was. What I mean is, I wasn't actually going to the bathroom to go to the bathroom.

ANA MARÍA

Nobody was.

KEMP

And yet those words, "I need to go to the bathroom" cast a spell. Say them and you got a free pass.

ANA MARÍA

Not with every teacher. Just the ones who didn't care.

KEMP

You believe that? That some of them didn't care?

ANA MARÍA

You don't?

The shopkeeper's bell mounted over the store's entry rings. Kemp, caught short by Ana's question, turns to greet the customer, a 50-something woman, without smiling. She smiles at him, and, remembering himself, he smiles back.

KEMP

Hey, I've got a customer. If Kate doesn't show up in the next five minutes, give me a ring.

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

Kemp and Ana María are sitting at the dining room table. He is drinking a beer and she has a can of Diet Coke.

KEMP

Are you sure you don't want something
stiffer?

Ana María shakes her head no. There is just the slightest
hint of disapproval in the look she gives him.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I could call her again, but I've
already tried about a hundred times.
Why would one more make a difference?

ANA MARÍA

Have you called Charlie?

KEMP

(cautiously)
She's not there.

The door buzzes, and Kemp starts. Ana María smiles, relieved.
Kemp goes to the mic button and pushes it.

EXT. ENTRANCE IN FRONT OF KEMP'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

KATE

Pizza girl! Did you order a calamari
pizza?

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Kemp, angered, looks back at Ana María for direction.

ANA MARÍA

(gently)
Buzz her in.

Kemp buzzes her in and stands there, frozen, looking at the
door, indecisively.

After a moment Kate knocks at the door, and Kemp lets her
in. She stands just inside the entrance, and neither Kemp
nor she say a word.

ANA MARÍA (CONT'D)

(Getting up from the
table)
I should probably leave.

KATE

Or he could leave and you could stay.

Ana María walks toward the door, kisses Kemp and then, to
the surprise of both Kemp and Kate, hugs Kate.

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT -- MINUTES LATER

KEMP

What were you thinking?

KATE

I don't know. Maybe nothing. Why do I always have to be thinking something? What were you thinking?

KEMP

I was thinking Ana María was going to pick you up like we agreed. Where the fuck-

(catches himself)

Where were you?

KATE

I was with Derek.

Kemp is stunned. Speechless.

KATE (CONT'D)

He says he'll pick me up from Step-UP whenever I want him to.

KEMP

What a guy! When does his school let out?

KATE

He dropped out. He can be there whenever.

KEMP

How convenient.

Kemp wipes a hand down his face.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Kate ... Go to bed.

KATE

Go to the couch, you mean.

KEMP

I'm sorry. I can't talk to you right now. I'm just, I don't know. Sick.

KATE

Maybe so am I. Have you ever thought of that?

KEMP

I mean it, go to bed.

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT - LATER

Kemp is sitting at the kitchen table, and Kate is asleep on the couch. Kemp pours a beer into a large glass, then takes a bottle of Jim Beam out of a kitchen cabinet, fills a shot glass, and drops it in the beer.

INT. KEMP'S BEDROOM - HOURS LATER

Kemp is lying in bed. He picks up his phone from the bedside table, drops it, picks it up again and checks for messages. There are none, and he drops his arm to his side, phone in hand, lit-side up.

DREAM SEQUENCE. INT. KEMP'S (FORMER) LANAI - DAY

Kemp is asleep in his chaise lounge when a muffled sound rouses him. He sits up, disoriented. Listening intently, he finally is able to make out the sound of a young man's voice. Haunted, disturbed, he clambers from the lounge chair.

He walks falteringly through the den, down the hall, and upstairs. As he gets closer to the second floor, the young man's voice becomes increasingly audible. He seems to be issuing commands of a sort.

At the top of the stairs, Kemp pauses, then crosses the hall to Kate's bedroom door and slowly pushes it open. It's dark inside, darker than expected for that time of day.

KEMP

Kate?

Kemp waits for a response but gets none. He enters the room cautiously and, as his eyes adjust, can gradually make out Derek standing over Kate. She is prostrate on the floor, her panties around her ankles.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Kate!

DEREK

It's okay. She's fine.

KEMP

Get away from her!

DEREK

She was about to piss or something,
right on the floor.

He lowers his voice, to speak confidentially.

DEREK (CONT'D)

She's drunk.

KEMP

Kate, is that true?

Kate looks at him, wordlessly, as if in a trance. Kemp is frozen, unsure about what he should do next.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. KEMP'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door opens to Kemp's bedroom, and we see Kate's silhouette, backlit by a light from the living room, her hand on the doorknob.

KATE

Dad?

Kemp sits bolt upright in bed, confused.

KEMP

Kate!

KATE

I feel sick. My stomach hurts.

KEMP

Maybe you just need to use the bathroom. Are you constipated? Is it nervous hurt?

KATE

What? No.

KEMP

How does your stomach hurt? That could mean anything.

KATE

It hurts like I'm sick. That's how. Can I please stay home tomorrow?

Kemp tries to orient himself.

KEMP

You want to skip. Does the term accessory to a crime ring a bell?

KATE

Being sick is a crime? I'm not asking you to go rob a bank.

KEMP

Can you ask me in the morning. It might just be nothing.

KATE
It's something.

KEMP
Just ask me again in the morning,
hon, okay?

Kate rolls her eyes and shuts the door. Kemp looks at the door, listening to Kate make her way to the couch, and then he lies back down, shaken.

INT. PAPYRUS PETE'S USED BOOKS - MORNING

Kemp and Kate are both sitting on long-legged stools behind the counter. Kemp's feet are flat on the floor; Kate's hang carelessly on either side of her stool, a half foot from the floor. She has AirPods in and is oblivious to him.

He waves his hand in front of her face to get her attention. She looks up from her phone, slightly annoyed.

KEMP
Here's the plan; you're going to
shelve books.

KATE
I'm sick.

KEMP
You're in luck. This place is
practically a drug store. What's
the name of it?

KATE
(without enthusiasm)
Papyrus Pete's Used Books.

KEMP
Exactly. They didn't just use papyrus
to make books. They'd burn it and
smear the charcoal on oozing sores,
people's eyes, all kinds of things.
Rub a couple of books where it hurts
and you'll feel better in no time.

KATE
If I'm gonna work, why don't you
just take me to school?

KEMP
It's too late. We're here now.

Kate gives Kemp a look that is unexpectedly hostile.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Come on. It's easy. Walk around the stacks. Look at how they're organized. By category.

He points to the sign above the Bestseller section.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Look on the shelves. The books are in alphabetical order by the authors' last names.

He holds up an Agatha Christie novel.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Start with this. It's a mystery novel.

Kate doesn't take it from him at first.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Go on. I'll watch.

She takes the book, looks out across the store floor and walks toward the "Mystery" section, which is two stacks away. Kemp's mom walks over and watches Kate with him.

KEMP'S MOM

You don't believe she's sick?

KEMP

Does she look sick to you?

KEMP'S MOM

She thinks she is. That's all that matters.

The comment makes Kemp uncomfortable.

KEMP

Meaning?

KEMP'S MOM

People get notions in their head and won't let go of them. If she thinks she's sick, she might as well be.

Kemp's mom seems to be waiting for a reaction, but he doesn't take the bait.

KEMP

Either way, I couldn't leave her home alone. So here we are.

Kemp's mom smiles, unconvincingly.

KEMP'S MOM
You're her father, Kempy. That's
all that matters.

She walks away, the look on her face suggesting that her
parting comment was unfathomably profound.

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Kemp takes a bottle of beer out of the refrigerator, opens
it, and sits down at the kitchen table across from Kate, who
has a can of soda.

KEMP
You did well today. What would you
think about working on weekends for
money?

KATE
I'd rather die.

KEMP
Why? I'd pay you.

KATE
I hate it.

KEMP
What? The store?

KATE
Grandma. The store. It's like a
trap.

KEMP
I don't know what you have against
my mom, but she won't be there. Not
on a weekend. And the books won't
kill you.

Kate gives Kemp a resigned look and starts to get up from
the table, but he puts his hand on her arm.

KEMP (CONT'D)
We're not done yet. We still haven't
talked about your little stunt after
school yesterday.

KATE
Seriously?

KEMP
This whole Derek thing, for one.
What's that all about?

KATE

What's what all about? Do you want
to know if he fucked me?

Kemp tries to compose himself. He gets up from the table, goes to the fridge and opens it. While his back is turned, Kate grabs his beer and takes a huge swig, glaring as if the single swallow of beer is an act of limitless retribution. Kemp, oblivious, briefly scans the refrigerator's contents, then sits back down without getting anything out.

KEMP

(calmly)

I'm asking if he's a nice person,
nice enough for you to be seeing.
It's a reasonable question.

KATE

I have a reasonable question. Why
don't you fix things with Mom?

KEMP

(thrown)

It's up to me?

KATE

I don't know. You're both assholes.
Just say "I'm sorry" or whatever.

KEMP

Kate, your mom and I were a bad match.
I know you don't want to hear that,
but it's just that simple.

KATE

Bullshit. You could fix things,
you're just too proud. Or stupid.

Kemp inhales deeply. There is a long silence while he stares at the ceiling.

KEMP

Okay, this isn't working, so here's
the deal. I want your phone so you
can't make arrangements to leave
Step-UP. One of Ana María or me is
going to pick you up every day, and
you *will* wait for us to get there.

Kemp holds out his hand for Kate to give him her phone. She doesn't. Kemp takes another sip from his beer.

KATE

(cruelly)

That's why Mom left you, isn't it?

KEMP

What?

KATE

(pointing at the beer)

That. You're an alchy.

Kemp is too taken aback to respond. Kate thrusts her phone into his hand, then stomps into the living room, turns on the TV, and throws herself on the sofa with her back to him.

EXT: PARKING LOT IN FRONT OF STEP-UP -- MORNING

Kemp parks the car, turns the engine off, and turns around to face Kate, but she opens her door and rushes away from him without a word.

He watches through the windshield as she hurries toward the school entrance and, after a moment, he notices Dawsey standing with an SRO (campus cop) off to the right.

Kemp gets out of his car and waves at Dawsey, who sees him almost immediately and gestures for him to come over.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

Mr. Goodell, I've been meaning to ask you about that contract.

KEMP

Contract?

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

You know, the agreement you and Kate were supposed to sign.

Kemp remembers and grunts, apologetically.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY (CONT'D)

Did you read the part about our dress code?

KEMP

Honestly, no. Fuck. It slipped through the cracks. Sorry.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

Kate is out of dress code. Not just sometimes. Every day. I know our dress code can be a burden, but we have a closet with some donated outfits. Would you like to see it?

KEMP

It's not the money. I just messed up. I'll take her shopping tonight. What does she need?

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

Step-UP operates on a business model. We want students to dress for school like it's a job. Dress pants, collars, it's all in the handbook.

KEMP

I'm on it. I'll take her to the mall tonight. I'm- sorry doesn't do it. I'm sorry on steroids. I'm next dimension sorry.

Dawsey looks at Kemp as if he is a curiosity of sorts.

PRINCIPAL DAWSEY

Don't ... apologize. We just have our way of doing things. It's all part of the process.

KEMP

Of course.

Principal Dawsey extends his hand, Kemp shakes it, and then Dawsey turns to another parent. The conversation is over.

CUT TO:

INT: A MALL RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Kemp and Kate have just finished shopping, and the clothes they bought for her are sitting in disarray on the table. Kemp has a beer in front of him, and Kate a tumbler of soda.

KATE

I'm not wearing these.

KEMP

You haven't even given them a chance.

KATE

I haven't given jumping out of an airplane a chance, but I'm not doing that either.

Kate picks up a polo, holds it in front of her body, and looks down, horrified.

KATE (CONT'D)

You know who dresses like this?

She points at one of the waitresses taking an order at a nearby table. The waitress is wearing a polo with the restaurant's name stitched into it.

KEMP
(mortified by her
rudeness)
Your shirts have to have a collar.
It's either a polo or a blouse.

KATE
Why don't we get a dog collar? If I
wear it with a t-shirt, I'll be
(makes air quotes)
in dress code.

KEMP
I think you know that's not what
they mean.

KATE
All it says is a collar. It doesn't
say what kind.

KEMP
Actually, that's not a bad idea. If
we get a leash, I can keep you right
by my side. I'll always know where
you are.

KATE
So I'm a dog?

KEMP
Please. You were talking about
wearing a dog collar. It was a joke.

Kate glares at him, furiously.

KEMP (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.
Jesus.

Kate won't look at him.

KEMP (CONT'D)
I have to use the restroom. If the
waitress comes before I get back,
order something you really like.
Believe it or not, I want you to be
happy.

KATE
By making me wear these?

Kemp gives her a pleading look and gets up from the table.

KATE (CONT'D)

Can I at least have your phone while you're gone.

KEMP

You don't have phone privileges right now.

KATE

My friends think I'm dead. It's just for the time you'll be gone. Like you care.

Kemp reluctantly gives her his phone, and then walks through the restaurant to the men's restroom.

Kate waits until he has disappeared, then darts from the restaurant with his phone.

INT: BATHROOM OF MALL RESTAURANT -- MINUTES LATER

Kemp is standing at the sink washing his hands. He pauses to look at his reflection, smiles resignedly, then exits the bathroom.

INT: DINING AREA OF RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

He emerges from the hall leading to the bathrooms and looks toward their table. Kate isn't at it.

He looks around the restaurant, then remembers his phone. He rushes to the table, sorts through the clothes purchases on the table. The phone isn't there. He signals to the waitress, and she comes over.

WAITRESS

Are you ready to order, or do you want to wait until the young lady gets back?

KEMP

I'm sorry. What do you mean "until she gets back"?

WAITRESS

The young lady?

KEMP

Yes, my daughter.

WAITRESS

I'm pretty sure I saw her go into the mall. Is everything all right?

KEMP

I'm not sure. I'll be right back.

Kemp runs out of the restaurant and into the corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR OF MALL -- CONTINUOUS

He runs to the main concourse, peers frantically down the other three corridors that intersect at the concourse, and then sprints back toward the restaurant, looking every which way as he does so. To his left, he sees the exit to the parking lot, and dashes outside.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT -- MOMENTS LATER

Kemp darts somewhat haphazardly around the parking lot near that exit to the mall, then turns and scans the highway adjacent to the mall and sees her standing on the side of the road, hitchhiking. He calls out to her, but she is too far away to hear him. He runs toward her, but almost immediately, a car pulls over and she gets in.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF KEMP'S FORMER HOME -- NIGHT

Kemp is standing just inside the front door, and Charlie is facing him.

CHARLIE

Unfuckingbelievable. I let you have Kate for two weeks, and she's gone. What is it with you? It's like you're addicted to fucking up.

KEMP

Make me feel worse, fine, but let's not forget, you gave her to me because you couldn't control her either.

CHARLIE

I "gave" her to you because she's your biological daughter. Or did that minor detail slip your mind?

Kemp and Charlie stare at each other furiously.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Have you called her?

KEMP

I couldn't. She has my phone.

Charlie looks at Kemp with a mixture of disbelief and confusion.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I took her phone for punishment and then she took mine when I went to the bathroom in the restaurant.

CHARLIE

So this whole thing happened because you took her phone?

KEMP

In some ways, maybe, yes.

Charlie's attitude softens.

CHARLIE

Good for you.

KEMP

Plus, there's a whole clothes thing. They have a dress code she hates, and I bought her all the required garb. Big mistake.

Charlie walks across the living room and picks up her phone from an end table by the sofa.

CHARLIE

I'll call.

She scrolls through her contacts, finds "Hubby," and presses call. After a brief moment, a phone can be heard ringing, faintly, from upstairs. Kemp and Charlie are both stunned.

It rings twice more, then stops. Kemp takes a step toward the staircase.

KEMP

Hello!

(pause)

Is that my phone I'm hearing?

CHARLIE

Kate?

KEMP

Kate! Can you come downstairs, please?

A door creaks open upstairs, then footsteps can be heard. The footsteps stop, and Kate is visible at the top of the stairs. She stands there, looking down at Kemp and Charlie.

CHARLIE

Surprise, surprise! I don't suppose you'd mind coming downstairs?

KATE

I'm sleeping.

CHARLIE

Don't try me, girly. Get your ass down here.

KEMP

Come on down, Kate. Please.

Kate walks sulkily down the stairs. When she gets to the bottom, Charlie holds out her hand.

CHARLIE

Your father's phone.

KATE

It's upstairs.

CHARLIE

(impatiently)

I guess that means you'll have to go get it.

Kate walks back upstairs, sulkily, and Kemp and Charlie exchange looks but neither one says anything more.

INT. CAR IN DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie is standing on the stoop looking at the two of them.

KEMP

(to Kate)

Seat belt.

KATE

Are you afraid I'm going to jump out?

KEMP

Should I be?

KATE

Do I get to pick what's on the radio?

KEMP

Seriously?

KATE

Seriously.

KEMP

Pick something good or I'll jump out.

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT - LATER

Kemp is standing at the kitchen counter making coffee. Kate is slumped on the couch, scrolling through the listings on the TV with the remote. The clothes they bought are stacked on the kitchen table.

KEMP

I don't know if you heard your mom and me talking, but you're going to be with her next weekend.

KATE

You never wanted me, did you?

KEMP

Not even close. Your mom wants to see you, too. I can't hog you.

KATE

She wanted me so much, she made me live with you. You wanted to hog me so much, you left. Makes sense.

KEMP

Kate, this stuff, the separation-

He gestures vaguely toward her.

KEMP (CONT'D)

your situation, is hard for everybody. We're trying our best.

The Keurig is done making the first cup of coffee, and Kemp starts on the second one.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Just for the record, this is decaf. Look at the time.

The clock on the wall says just after 11 pm.

KATE

My friends' dads hug them and stuff. You never do. I don't ever remember you saying "I love you."

KEMP

Boooo. I wrote it on every gift I've ever given you. I sign my texts to you, "Love, Dad."

KATE

That's fake. You don't do it for real.

Kemp winces. Then he turns to face Kate directly.

KEMP
(awkwardly)
Okay, may God be my witness: Kate, I
love you.

KATE
Am I supposed to say it back now?

KEMP
Worse. You have to come give me a
hug

He holds out his arms and stands like that, stiffly.

KATE
Stop it. You're the worst father
ever.

Kemp looks at Kate with a pained expression.

KEMP
Is that true? Say that isn't true.

KATE
Okay, it's not.

KEMP
Do you mean that?

Kate looks at him for a moment, as if considering what to say.

KATE
Sorry. I'm a bitch sometimes.

KEMP
Don't be ridiculous. You're
(he thinks)
a child. You're my child.

Kate's eyes well up with tears. Kemp, uncomfortable, hears the Keurig machine finishing her cup of coffee and turns to look.

KEMP (CONT'D)
How do you take your joe?

KATE
With rum.

KEMP
Very funny.

He places her cup of coffee on the kitchen table and sits down with his own.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Why don't you come sit over here.

Kate groans and stands up, making a great show of the effort her compliance takes. She walks to the kitchen table like someone who's completing the last leg of a long, harrowing trek through the desert, then drops into her chair.

She sniffs the coffee and, confirming that it is rum-free, gives a disappointed grunt.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I have a deal to propose. A compromise.

Kate responds to this announcement with a look of exaggerated interest.

KEMP (CONT'D)

The clothes aren't negotiable, but I know a hair stylist
(whispering)

Ana Maria
(speaking normally again)

who can make your hair look so great nobody will even notice your clothes. You'll just be a head with great hair floating through the halls of your school. She calls it the Marie Antoinette "Decapitation" Special.

KATE

Ana María said that?

KEMP

Verbatim. The dress code doesn't say anything about hair. She'll do it whatever style you want.

KATE

Any color? Any cut?

KEMP

Except a beehive. I draw the line at beehives.

Kate looks at the clothes on the table again, pondering the trade-off.

CUT TO:

INT. ANA MARÍA'S LOFT IN A SUBDIVIDED SALON -- LATE MORNING

The building in which Ana María rents her loft has a high, exposed ceiling that has stylish track lighting and allows voices and the sound of hairdryers in adjacent lofts to carry from one loft to the next. Ana María's space plays the same 90's alt music that is piped into all the lofts.

Ana María's loft has eggshell pink walls. In addition to the cabinets and a shelving unit against one wall, her loft has a single styling chair, a stylist station with a large mirror, a dryer chair, and a shampoo bowl.

Kate is sitting in the styling chair, looking at a catalogue of possible hair styles.

KATE

Dad says you're going to give me a Marie Antoinette "Decapitation" special.

ANA MARÍA

I give those to all my VIP's.

KATE

For the record, I googled Marie Antoinette.

ANA MARÍA

Okay?

KATE

They cut her hair off, then they cut her head off. Should I be worried?

Ana María is momentarily stumped.

ANA MARÍA

They cut her hair off because her stylist did such a great job they were jealous, and they cut her head off so her hair couldn't grow back.

KATE

Don't make my hair look that good. I like my head.

ANA MARÍA

I like your head, too, but I can't promise you your haircut won't look fantastic.

There's a moment of silence, while Ana Maria makes preparations.

KATE

So what Dad said about decapitation.
Did he make that up, or you?

ANA MARÍA

Him. I usually leave customers'
heads on. But I don't know why.
Everything bad is there.

KATE

You mean, like, things that happen?

Ana María's face expresses ... understanding.

ANA MARÍA

One of my favorite writers said "The
past is never past. It's not even
past." If he were alive, you know
what I'd tell him?

Kate looks up from the catalog, rapt.

ANA MARÍA

Si alguien expulsa gases, estos
persisten, pero finalmente
desaparecen.

KATE

What does that mean?

ANA MARÍA

It means, "If someone passes gas,
you smell it longer than you want,
but eventually it goes away."

KATE

(laughing)

Is that true?

ANA MARÍA

I hope so. Why, are you going to
fart?

KATE

Not before you do my hair.

ANA MARÍA

Good choice.

INT. ANA MARÍA'S LOFT IN A SUBDIVIDED SALON - CONTINUOUS

Kemp, who is sitting out in the waiting room reading a book,
looks at his watch, stands up and walks down the hall to
Ana María's space and sticks his head in the door.

KEMP
Is it safe to come in?

ANA MARÍA
We're talking history.

KATE
(loudly)
The history of farts.

Someone from the adjacent loft laughs. Ana María gives the wall separating the two lofts the side eye.

ANA MARÍA
(somewhat impishly)
It was a metaphor.

Kemp grimaces, half seriously, and then points back toward the waiting room.

KEMP
From the sounds of it, it's safer
out in the waiting room.

He gives Ana María a mildly questioning look, then closes the door.

ANA MARÍA
(teasingly)
Snitch

INT. KEMP'S CAR -- AFTERNOON

As Kemp is navigating his way slowly through traffic, he turns his head just long enough to study Kate. Her hair is bigger now and rainbow-colored, with a single pink leopard-print extension. She doesn't notice him looking because her bangs are brushed over that side of her face.

KEMP
Wait, wait, don't tell me. It's
emo.

KATE
Scene.

KEMP
What's the difference?

KATE
If I told you, I'd have to kill you.

KEMP
Can I eat first?
(MORE)

KEMP (CONT'D)

Nobody wants to die on an empty stomach. I thought we could pick something up before we head to the store.

Kate becomes visibly angry.

KATE

Why do I have to go to the store?

KEMP

The school day's almost over. Besides, if I drove all the way to your school to drop you off and then to the store, I'd be totally screwing over Grandma.

KATE

Fuck Grandma. Take me to school.

KEMP

Excuse me.

KATE

I'm not going to the store. I'll jump out.

She unbuckles her seat belt defiantly.

KEMP

Put it back on, Kate.

KATE

Not if we're going to the store.

KEMP

What do you have against the store?

KATE

Grandpa touched me on that ladder thing, and grandma didn't do anything. She just gave me cake and said take a nap.

KEMP

Wait. What?

KATE

He pretended like he was giving me a boost, but he was coppin' a feel.

KEMP

That's quite a charge.

(MORE)

KEMP (CONT'D)

How do you know that? He might have just accidentally touched your bottom or whatever.

KATE

Because he didn't just touch my bottom. He stuck his finger inside of me.

Kemp blanks, and their car slams into the back of an SUV stopped at a red light in front of them.

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT -- LATE AFTERNOON

Kemp is sitting in a row of four linked seats when Charlie rushes in, spots Kemp, and sits down, a chair away from him. Kate is nowhere to be seen.

CHARLIE

Where's Kate?

KEMP

She's getting a CT Scan. They don't think it's serious. They just have to be sure.

CHARLIE

What happened?

KEMP

I got distracted and hit the car in front of me. I was only going 15 miles an hour, max.

CHARLIE

But you hit it hard enough to make the airbag go off.

KEMP

It only went off because Kate didn't have her seat belt on. They're programmed to do that.

CHARLIE

(accusingly)

She wasn't wearing a seat belt?

KEMP

That surprises you?

A young man and woman cross from the triage desk to the bank of seats where Kemp and Charlie are.

They situate themselves in two of the four seats that are back-to-back with Kemp and Charlie's. The woman, who's visibly upset, has a baby wrapped in a blanket. She turns to Charlie.

MORTIFIED WOMAN IN ER

How long is the wait?

Before Charlie can answer, Kemp does.

KEMP

They're triaging. My daughter and I had to wait, but there were a lot of people with more pressing needs.

Charlie snorts.

CHARLIE

What's wrong with your- Is it a she?

MORTIFIED WOMAN IN ER

Yes. Keona. Her temperature's a hundred and one. Maybe I'm overreacting, but we don't take risks.

KEMP

That's exactly why we're here. You just can't be too careful.

Charlie gives Kemp a "You-can't-be-serious" look. Just then, the ER Doctor, an exhausted-looking young black man with glasses, a clipboard and two pens protruding from his pocket protector, comes and stands in front of Kemp's seat.

ER DOCTOR

Good news. It was just as I suspected. Only a bloody nose.

KEMP

Whew.

He gestures to Charlie.

KEMP (CONT'D)

She needed to hear that.

The doctor turns to Charlie.

ER DOC

(extending his hand)

Hi. And you're?

CHARLIE

Charlene. I'm Kate's mother.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm not her "real parent" but I'm
her real parent.

This pronouncement makes the doctor uneasy.

ER DOC

If she has bad headaches or her nose
starts bleeding again, call your
primary care physician, but I don't
think it's going to be a problem.

KEMP

Thank you, doctor. Should we just
wait here?

ER DOC

Sure. I'll have a nurse bring her
right out.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- LATER

Kemp, Charlie and Kate are standing on the sidewalk just
outside the ER.

CHARLIE

I don't know what the hell I was
thinking when I left her with you.

KEMP

It was a bloody nose.

CHARLIE

This time. She's coming home with
me.

KEMP

Why? *I repeat*, it was a bloody nose.

CHARLIE

I repeat: this time. Plus, she ran
away, and you got fired, and you
drink too much. Should I go on?

Charlie holds out her hand for Kate. Distraught, Kate looks
from Charlie to Kemp, unable to move.

KEMP

(to Charlie)

Leave her alone. I'm her biological
father. It's not your call.

CHARLIE

Are you sure? Do you want to try
that one in court?

KEMP

Don't do this, Charlie. Come on,
Kate.

Kemp starts to walk toward the parking lot. He gestures for Kate to follow. She hesitates, but after a painful few seconds, moves closer to Charlie, her head down, so she doesn't have to meet Kemp's eyes.

CHARLIE

(emotionally)

Don't worry, sweetie. I've got you.

Kate meets Kemp's gaze just long enough for him to look at her pleadingly, but then she looks back down. The issue is settled.

CUT TO:

INT. KEMP IS SITTING IN HIS CAR ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD -
NIGHT

Kemp is drunk. A police car is parked behind him, its lights flashing. A policewoman is standing by his driver-side door and blinding him with her flashlight, which is trained on his eyes through his open window.

POLICEWOMAN

Do you know why I pulled you over?

KEMP

I have a brake light out?

POLICEWOMAN

Your brake lights are fine. You
were weaving.

KEMP

Weaving? You say that like it's a
bad thing. Where would the world be
without weavers? Naked, that's where.
Would a simple thanks be asking too
much?

POLICEWOMAN

(patiently)

Could I see your license and
registration?

Kemp leans sideways, with difficulty, pulls his wallet out of his back pocket, then takes his driver's license out and hands it to the cop. She looks at it and then at Kemp.

POLICEWOMAN (CONT'D)

"Kemp Goodell." I thought I recognized you. You and your wife were fighting. You'd just been fired.

KEMP

I, unfortunately, am the miscreant in question. You got me.

POLICEWOMAN

How's your daughter?

KEMP

(misty-eyed)

Charlie took her. And she's not even her biological parent. I am. I'm the missing link. My father was the fount, the big ape, I'm the fool, and Kate ... she's collateral damage. Wrong time, wrong family.

POLICEWOMAN

(after a puzzled pause)

It's not my job to sort you out, but a word to the wise?

She leans closer as if to communicate an urgent truth.

POLICEWOMAN (CONT'D)

None of this helps.

Her look takes in everything: his drunkenness, his cryptic speech, the ghost of the call that brought her to their house.

KEMP

And?

POLICEWOMAN

And, against my better judgment, I'm going to let you off without a ticket.

KEMP

You are a goddess.

POLICEWOMAN

I'm gonna follow you home. You're going to sleep this off, and if I ever see you DUI again, it's all over. Do you understand that? This is called a second chance, my friend.

KEMP

I got it. This is a second chance.

POLICEWOMAN

That's right. Not too fast, not too slow. Just follow the laws.

KEMP

I will follow the laws, and the law -- you -- will follow me.

The policewoman is unamused. Kemp rolls his window up, waits for her to get into her car, turns his key in the ignition, and slowly pulls off the side of the road.

He has forgotten to turn his headlights on. He brakes, bringing his car to a stop, turns his headlights on, and then drives off, carefully, the cop's car following him.

INT. PAPYRUS PETE'S USED BOOKS - AFTERNOON

Kemp and his mom are at the counter. He is seated on a stool and pricing new stock, and she is checking a customer out. She staples the receipt to the top of the customer's bag, then smiles at the woman as she is leaving.

KEMP

Mom, you got a minute? There's something I want to talk to you about.

BONNIE

Oh?

KEMP

It's something Kate said yesterday right before the accident.

BONNIE

Look out for that car?

KEMP

Funny. No, she said-

Beat

KEMP (CONT'D)

She said Dad- she said you saw Dad stick his finger into her vagina once, and you didn't do anything. You just gave her cake or something.

BONNIE

Good lord!

KEMP

I'm asking, Mom. I'm not saying you saw every detail. Talk to me. She probably had on, what?, shorts, or a skirt, and Dad probably acted like he was giving her a boost.

BONNIE

I can't imagine what she'd be referring to, unless it's that time with the ladder.

KEMP

What ladder? The store ladder?

BONNIE

Yes, he got the ladder so she could reach the top shelf, and he held onto her obviously, but from where I sat, it looked completely innocent.

KEMP

So why the cake? Was she upset?

BONNIE

Yes. Because she almost fell. I was sitting where you are, and they were...

She points to a distant shelf.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

by Politics. But I assure you, I never, not for an instant, thought he mistreated her.

Kemp walks to the Politics book section, turns and puts up three fingers.

KEMP

How many fingers do I have up?

Bonnie's face falls.

KEMP (CONT'D)

How many fingers, Mom?

She doesn't answer. He puts his hands into his back pockets.

BONNIE

I'm not sure what point you think you're making. Am I blind? Is that what you want to know?

KEMP

You told me you found Dad with me in the middle of the night once. That I had my pants around my ankles. Remember that? You said he found me sleepwalking.

BONNIE

That's right. That's what he told me.

KEMP

Do you believe that? Really?

BONNIE

It seemed possible.

KEMP

(incredulously)
It seemed *possible*?

BONNIE

He was your father. Why shouldn't I trust him?

The entry bell rings, and an elderly customer walks in. Kemp and his mother look at him, expressionlessly. Sensing the tension, the customer freezes.

ELDERLY CUSTOMER

I'm sorry. Are you open?

BONNIE

Of course.

She looks at Kemp, who forces a smile, then walks, stone-faced, into the back office.

INT. PAPHYRUS PETE'S USED BOOKS - EVENING

Bonnie is sitting behind the desk, her arms folded defensively, and Kemp, who is obviously agitated, is standing and facing her.

KEMP

Did you ever catch me sleepwalking?

She shakes her head no, almost mechanically.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Nobody ever said they caught me sleepwalking. Nobody. Wives.

(MORE)

KEMP (CONT'D)
Girlfriends. Nobody except Dad.
Why?

BONNIE
You should be ashamed. Pete isn't
even here to defend himself.

She continues on, prattling meaninglessly, and Kemp becomes visibly more impatient.

BONNIE (CONT'D)
Pete was hard to read. He said,
"Kids shouldn't cry. It just creates
tension." Or that time you stole
those Cheetos, he was so angry. He
said, "That's what comes from coddling
them." He could be very tough.

Kemp looks for a chair, sees one against the wall, and throws himself down into it. He looks at his mom, disbelievingly.

KEMP
You are a wonder.

BONNIE
How? How am I a wonder?

KEMP
You know how people say, "Nothing
escapes that person's notice." You're
the opposite. You don't notice
anything. I mean, that's what you're
telling me, right?

BONNIE
(aghast)
If Pete was some bad person like you
say, I never saw it. But if he was,
I'm as sorry as anybody would be.
Hate me. I deserve it, I suppose.

KEMP
No, Mom. I don't hate you. Should
you have known? I can't say. Should
I have known? I moved back into the
house.

BONNIE
It didn't happen at the house. What
Kate says. It was at the store.

KEMP
Oh, thanks for that.
(MORE)

KEMP (CONT'D)

Mom, the only reason she was at the store is because I moved us upstairs. All she had to do was walk down here. But we're talking about you, not me.

BONNIE

Fine. Talk about me.

KEMP

What about the whole sleepwalking thing?

He looks at his mom cuttingly.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Whatever that was, it was at home.

Pause

KEMP'S MOM

(sadly)

I will say that if it happened the way you say, it would explain a lot.

KEMP

Like what? What would it explain?

KEMP'S MOM

The underperforming. The -- I'm sorry, but I'm gonna say it -- the failures. The total refusal to just be normal. To get on with it.

KEMP

Who are you describing? Me or Kate?

KEMP'S MOM

Both. You're both just so ... whatever.

KEMP

We are that.

BONNIE

And you yourself said it: you moved back in with us. Nobody forced you.

Kemp closes his eyes. It is not clear if he is too angry to respond, or too distressed.

INT. KEMP'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Kemp is sitting at the kitchen table with a book that is open before him, but he isn't looking at it.

Kate knocks at the door, and he answers it.

KEMP
Where's Charlie?

KATE
In the car. She's-

Kate imitates an angry cat.

KEMP
'Nuff said.

He steps aside to let Kate in and points to the couch, where he has gathered all her belongings. She picks up her stuff, starts to leave, but then stops.

KATE
I didn't tell Mom, about, you know,
Grandpa. She'd freak out and-

KEMP
And what?

KATE
That thing she said about court. I
don't want that.

KEMP
Kate, she can't keep you from me.
I'm your biological parent and-

Pause

KEMP (CONT'D)
my dad's dead.

Kate blanches.

KEMP (CONT'D)
Sweetie, you need to tell Charlie.
Your mom and I can't help if we don't
know things. We're here, both of
us, but you need to talk to us.

Kate, teary-eyed, nods her head. Kemp gathers her in his arms and kisses the top of her head.

KEMP (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, Kate. About my dad,
about everything. I let my shit get
away from me, and I was asleep at
the wheel. I'll do better, I promise.

Pause

KEMP (CONT'D)

I love you.

KATE

(muffled)

I love you, too.

She leaves, and Kemp steps into the hall to watch her descend the stairs. A tear trickles from one of his eyes.

INT. ANA MARÍA'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Kemp and Ana María are sitting on the couch in her apartment, watching a movie. Each of them is holding a glass of wine.

KEMP

I told my mom I'm not going to work at the store anymore.

ANA MARÍA

How'd she take that?

KEMP

Surprisingly well. She didn't beg me to stay or get riled up. Just said she was going to close up shop and whatever I wanted was mine.

Ana María acts mildly surprised.

ANA MARÍA

Is there anything you want?

KEMP

Maybe. Some of the really old titles they never sold are probably collector's items online.

Ana María pushes mute on the TV remote and turns to face Kemp.

ANA MARÍA

How is selling those books online different than selling them at the store?

KEMP

Books are just books. My dad was the problem. That store was the problem. Not the books in it.

ANA MARÍA

And Kate? What about her?

KEMP

She hated sleeping on the couch. I was thinking, if things work out, if I get my online thing going-

He pauses for a playfully dramatic effect.

KEMP (CONT'D)

That maybe you and I could, you know, get a place together. Not now of course. In time.

Ana María sips her wine and then, after a theatrical pause of her own, takes another sip.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I'm not talking about tomorrow, or next week. We just met. But I really feel like it could be good for both of us. Come on, what do you think?

There is an uncomfortable silence.

ANA MARÍA

(seriously)

I think, I'm not gonna lie, I think your drinking worries me.

Kemp looks at the wine glass in her hand.

KEMP

Said the kettle to the pot.

ANA MARÍA

Said the apple to the orange. I'm serious. I'd need to know what's different now.

KEMP

What's different is that I think I have some maybe's now. Some why's. I honestly feel I've turned a corner. With Kate. As a mate. Everything.

ANA MARÍA

As a mate?

Kemp smiles.

KEMP

The proof is in the pudding, but I've been thinking about a gesture. A down-payment or whatever.

Ana María looks at him expectantly.

KEMP (CONT'D)

I could get a tattoo.

She's confused.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Like your "Ian" tattoo, but with Kate's name. It'd be my symbol of solidarity.

Ana María doesn't answer, again. He puts his wine glass down on the coffee table in front of the couch.

KEMP (CONT'D)

It would be the same place on my leg yours is.

ANA MARÍA

I don't know where Liam is. You know where Kate is. You get the difference, right?

KEMP

I- Yes. I only meant, I want to be better. I want to live together. You, me, and sometimes, if I can finagle it, Kate, too. That's all.

She leans forward and pecks him on the cheek, ambiguously.

KEMP (CONT'D)

Is that a yes?

ANA MARÍA

It's not a yes, it's not a no. It's a maybe. Not right away, but maybe someday. Maybe even soon. Maybe.

Kemp looks at her, disappointedly, and nods. He leans forward and picks up his wine glass from the coffee table, remembers himself, and sets it back down. He sits back and, after giving her a guilty sideways glance, fidgets with his hands, his body visibly stiff.

Ana María puts her hand on top of his and leans her head against his shoulder, relaxing him. He looks at his wine glass then at her and places his free hand on top of hers. He pats her hand gently, once or twice, uncertainly, then stands up.

ANA MARÍA

Are you mad?

KEMP

No. You're right. I'm being-

He picks up his wine glass for a final swig, considers it, then puts it back down.

ANA MARÍA

Me. You're being that me guy.

KEMP

The good me, or the bad me?

ANA MARÍA

I'm not sure. Ask me again in a couple of weeks.

KEMP

I get that long?

Kemp smiles, leans down and gives Ana María a peck on the lips, turns, and lets himself out without looking back. Before he can close the door, Ana María calls to him.

ANA MARÍA

Call me.

He turns, nods affectionately, then closes the door.

EXT. ANA MARÍA'S APARTMENT -- KEMP'S PARKED CAR -- LATE EVENING

Kemp takes out his cellphone, finds Kate's number, and writes a text.

KEMP'S TEXT

Hey, baby doll. Thinking of you.

Almost immediately, Kate's contact picture shows up next to his text, followed by the three pulsating dots that indicate she is typing a response.

KATE'S TEXT

Same.

KEMP'S TEXT

What would you think of going out for pizza this weekend. Calamari or pepperoni. Your choice.

Again, he can see her contact picture, followed by the pulsating dots.

KATE'S TEXT

Maybe.

KEMP'S TEXT

Just maybe?

The contact picture shows again, then the dots.

KATE'S TEXT

I have to ask Mom.

KEMP'S TEXT

Do you want me to talk to her?

He sees the contact picture again, but the dots start and stop several times, as if she is starting and erasing her responses. Finally, the text she has settled on appears.

KATE'S TEXT

No. We'll go soon. I promise.

KEMP'S TEXT

I'm going to hold you to that.

The contact picture appears immediately.

KATE'S TEXT

I'm going to hold you to it.

Kemp starts to text, but stops to wipe away a tear.

KATE'S TEXT (CONT'D)

[heart]

KEMP'S TEXT

[heart]

This time, no contact picture shows up. He waits for a moment, then decides that she has left the conversation.

He reaches into his glovebox and removes the rum he took from Derrick all those weeks ago. At that moment, he looks up at Ana Maria's apartment and sees that she is looking down at him from her second story window. He waves, and she waves back.

He opens the door, pours out the rum, and then leaves the empty pint of rum sitting upright on the yellow line outside his driver's side door.

When he pulls out of his parking space, he sees that Ana Maria is still watching him. He flashes his lights and drives slowly away, smashing the bottle of rum with one of his tires as he does so.