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And Then Okay

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And Then Okay

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Creative Writing
(emphasis in Screenwriting)

by

Summer Dorr

B.A. Flagler College, 2004

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They are the sort of professors you feel privileged to have known.

FADE IN:

EXT./INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT (PROLOGUE)

JASPER'S MOM (38, hard-faced beauty) leaves as a lean TEENAGED BOY, Jasper, moves toward her. When he reopens the door, his mother turns and pushes him back, slaps him twice.

JASPER'S MOM
Don't you try again.

TEENAGED BOY
But Mom. Mom, please.

She walks away.

JASPER'S DAD (V.O.)
You shouldn't have let her leave.
You should have woke me up. I could
have done something--

Jasper stands in the hallway, by the front door, crying.

JASPER'S DAD (50, overweight) sobs as he pushes his son hard into a wall causing him to fall. Jasper curls himself up on the floor, devastated.

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Sealed up boxes clutter the apartment. There is a desk with a folded laptop and a silk-screening press by a window.

The only hint that this studio is also an apartment is the kitchenette, bathroom with shower, and full-sized bed upon which MAGGIE, 31, and JASPER (34, sloppy dark hair, burly, attractive) lie half-dressed.

A sheet is over Maggie's head.

MAGGIE
Sometimes... I pretend I'm dead.

Jasper leans and kisses Maggie's face through the sheet.

JASPER
Well, I'm glad you're not.... I
want you to have my children.

MAGGIE looks ahead as Jasper takes the sheet off her. She's so beautiful.

JASPER (CONT'D)
They would have your eyes, my
eyebrows. They'll be cute,
beautiful maybe.

MAGGIE
I hope they're ugly.

JASPER
What?

MAGGIE
It'd give them deeper character,
sooner in life. They wouldn't be
loved because of their outsides.
They'd get their confidence in
their brain and personality.

JASPER
I love more than your
beautiffulness.

Jasper handles her left ring finger, where an engagement ring
would go.

MAGGIE
Don't.

Jasper puts her hand down.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(softer)
I ask you not to and you do anyway.

Maggie gets out of bed.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
It puts pressure.

Maggie begins to dress into an expensive, fashionable outfit.
Jasper watches her, sits up.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(more to herself than to him)
You don't aspire to a career with a
steady income. It'd be one thing if
you actually wrote daily.

Maggie is almost fully clothed. Jasper's heard this before.

JASPER
Maggie, please don't discuss money
when you --

MAGGIE

Have money and you don't?

Maggie looks at the boxes, Jasper follows her gaze.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I don't want you to move in.

Maggie looks around, picks up her overnight bag.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I am freaking out about you moving
in and we pretend my uncertainty
will go away.

She adjusts the strap of her bag.

JASPER

I've never ask for, don't want,
your financial aid.

MAGGIE

Whenever we go out I pay for dinner
or the movies. I even picked up
tonight's tab at the bar.

JASPER

I don't like going out.

MAGGIE

But you like to drink.

JASPER

Maggie. Please don't kick.

Maggie sits on the bed.

MAGGIE

I love you, but I don't want to any
more.

Jasper pulls her towards him, he holds her. Kisses her head,
her cheeks. Her mouth. They kiss intensely, Maggie tears up.

JASPER

Why do you keep breaking up with
me?

MAGGIE

(to his shoulder)
This is the last time.

Jasper squeezes his eyes closed. Maggie pulls away.

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - MORNING

Jasper wakes alone. Sad.

INT. JASPER'S BATHROOM - LATER

Jasper sits on the toilet. Gets up, FLUSHES. He washes his hands. He reaches for an electric toothbrush but that task seems too energy intensive.

He looks dejected.

Maggie reaches behind him, and acts like her arms are Jasper's arms. She puts toothpaste on the toothbrush, rinses it. Turns on the TOOTHBRUSH and parts his lips with it. She LAUGHS.

MAGGIE

(whispering into his ear)

You are the first man I let use my
toothbrush.

The toothbrush stops, Maggie is not there.

Jasper spits, puts the toothbrush down.

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - DAY

Jasper gets dressed. Puts on a shirt that reads: "Sobriety is Fun" and jeans with one leg rolled up. Then he puts on his pink bike helmet and picks up his backpack.

He stands and looks at the empty bed.

He takes off his helmet. Puts down his backpack.

INT. JASPER'S KITCHEN - LATER

Jasper pours whiskey into a mug.

He walks to his silk-screening press and begins to lay letters and designs for and atop T-shirts.

EXT. JASPER'S STUDIO - LATER - DAY

Wearing his helmet, Jasper carries his bike down the stairs to the sidewalk.

His bike's three baskets (two rear, one front) are partially filled, with T-shirts, thermos, and blanket.

He gets on the bike, signals into nonexistent traffic, and cycles off.

EXT. T-SHIRT STAND - LATER - DAY

Jasper pedals up to a sidewalk booth, gets off his bike. He unlocks and opens the stand's windows.

From his bike's baskets, he takes and arranges folded T-shirts across the booth's counter. The shirts read: "Don't Leave Me," "I Feel Vomitious," "I Pretend I'm Dead," "Jerk Face," and "Look Away."

He sits inside the booth, which faces a quiet street.

He watches a PASSERBY, who carries a bag and ignores Jasper's booth and stare until...

JASPER

You want to buy a shirt? I think I have a shirt for you.

Jasper holds up a shirt that says, "I Like Your Nose." Passerby keeps walking.

JASPER (CONT'D)

No? You sure? It's okay. Maybe tomorrow. I'd appreciate your consideration next time you pass. Do, please have a better day than me.

EXT. JASPER'S DAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jasper hides his bicycle behind shrubbery and goes up and rings the building's DOORBELL. Waits. Takes out a key and opens the door.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is dated 1980, in shades of brown and orange. Most notable are ceramic figurines, which crowd shelves and any furniture with a flat surface.

Nowhere in the house are there family photos.

Jasper walks in.

JASPER

Dad?

HALLWAY

A SHOWER runs. There's a baritone SINGING. Jasper walks down the hall toward the sounds.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper KNOCKS, opens the door.

JASPER

Dad.

The SINGING stops.

JASPER'S DAD (70, still overweight) opens the floral shower curtain, looks at Jasper, annoyed at the intrusion, then shuts the curtain and starts to SING once more.

Jasper sits on the toilet seat.

Then he reaches down and picks at the shag rug in front of him.

JASPER (CONT'D)

Maggie... she's... she left
again.... But she.... Should I...?
Did you know when--

The SINGING stops.

JASPER'S DAD

Jasper, for fuck sake. Do not come
into an occupied bathroom
uninvited.

His Dad shampoos his hair.

Jasper gets up and closes the door.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jasper opens the refrigerator. He takes food off the second shelf and sets it on the counter. Begins prepping a meal.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S KITCHEN - LATER

Jasper and his dad eat dinner. Lasagna.

JASPER'S DAD

There was a solicitation from a funeral and cremation service in the mail today. It was addressed to your mom too. I took comfort in that.

JASPER

Do you think Mom--?

Jasper's Dad waves him off.

JASPER (CONT'D)

(changing tactics)

Dad? What's Iris's last name?

JASPER'S DAD

Why?

JASPER

Just wondered if she was still alive, and what her last name was.

JASPER'S DAD

I think, ah, Bigrin, I think.

Jasper's Dad looks at him inquisitively, but drops it.

JASPER

How was your group?

JASPER'S DAD

The only woman who's single there has this brown poodle hairdo and thinks I'm fat. I can tell because she stares at my stomach when I say, "hi," to her. Maybe make smaller plates.

The two continue to eat.

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Jasper walks in. Slouches.

He reaches into his pocket for his phone. Calls Maggie.

MAGGIE'S VOICE MACHINE
Hello, this is Maggie, and this is
my voice machine. BEEP.

He hangs up, and then calls her again. He hangs up a second time, once her VOICE MACHINE MESSAGE begins.

He sits on his bed. He notices Maggie's lingerie top on the floor. Jasper picks it up and smells it. He wraps it around his neck as a scarf.

He takes a whiskey bottle from a box and sits at his desk. He drinks from it, while he reads a typed page.

A MAN ON STILTS (30s, wearing a white button down shirt with rolled up sleeves) appears in the room and climbs up on stilts.

INT. BAR - LATER - NIGHT

Jasper walks in, wearing his backpack and looking apprehensive and inebriated. AIDEN (40, an arrogant novelist) waves him over.

Aiden sits next to PAUL (35, Maggie's coworker who's in vest and tie, and has parted hair).

There is a pitcher of beer and three pint glasses on the table. Aiden writes in a journal as he converses with Paul.

PAUL
Alaska. A-LAS-KA. It's like another
country, like going abroad. An
adventure.

AIDEN
Why there?

PAUL
Work transfer.

AIDEN
How long have you been lusting
after Maggie?

PAUL
(ignoring the question)
It'd likely be to Anchorage, though
I am interested in the Juneau
prospect.

Jasper approaches.

AIDEN
Jasper.

JASPER
Hey, Aiden.

AIDEN
This is Paul. Paul might move to
Alaska, so don't get attached.

Jasper sits down.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
Get yourself a glass.

Maggie walks over.

Paul observes both Maggie and Jasper as they look at one another.

JASPER
(to Maggie)
Hi.

Maggie nods. Looks to Paul and Aiden then back to Jasper.

MAGGIE
Hi.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Paul, Jasper, Jasper, Paul. Paul's
my friend, date.

JASPER
(casually)
Yeah, we met.

MAGGIE
Oh.

AIDEN
(to Paul)
Terribly awkward. Breakups among
friends.

JASPER
(to Maggie)
I'm actually on my way home. So,
Paul, nice to meet you. Maggie, you
are making a solid effort. Aiden.

Aiden waves.

AIDEN

Okay.

Paul stares.

JASPER

(still facing Maggie)

You're dating? It hasn't been a complete day.

Maggie looks to say something but decides on silence.

Jasper walks toward the entrance.

Jasper turns around. He heads back to her, while taking something out of his bag.

He stands in front of her, his arm still searching in his backpack.

He pulls out and hands Maggie her electric toothbrush, and then leaves.

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Jasper lies on his stomach, on the floor. There is a row of a cups (aluminum, mug, glass, plastic) in front of him. He rolls a die. The die says four. Jasper counts to cup number four and drinks from that cup.

He reaches to refill it, but the whiskey bottle is empty.

EXT. BANK - LATER - NIGHT

Jasper's in front of an ATM. He's drunk, whimpering. His balance shows: \$356.34. He takes \$20.

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - LATER - NIGHT

Jasper's curled up on the floor, staring at a wall. Whiskey bottle in sight.

He closes his eyes, as if to sleep, but instead reopens them.

JASPER

Aiden.

EXT. AIDEN'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Jasper walks to the door, with two coffees, and KNOCKS.

INT./EXT AIDEN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Aiden's at his desktop typing. Hardcover and paperback books with his name, AIDEN BOOTH, are on the shelf in front of him.

KNOCKING has Aiden get up and answer the door.

AIDEN

Today's a work day.

Jasper hands Aiden a coffee, sets his own down on the stoop, and digs into his backpack. Hands a paper stack to Aiden.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

You brought them with you? Jasper.

JASPER

Sure, yes, I know you're likely writing, busy, today, but could you just scan a few pages?

Aiden hesitates then nods. The two go inside.

INT. AIDEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Aiden begins to read Jasper's story. Jasper stares at him as he does.

Jasper's story is visible in the room. Although, neither Jasper or Aiden acknowledge it.

NARRATOR

There is a place, not a purgatory or a limbo, but a state of almost. A place he waited, sat at-- mid-air on extended wooden limbs-- until he was perceived by her.

Man on Stilts walks around, his head grazing the apartment's ceiling. He sits mid-air, as if he's in a chair while standing on stilts. He looks sad. A CURVACEOUS WOMAN, walks past.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It wasn't because of her beauty,
which was overt, but that she saw
him, for eye-locking seconds, that
he discarded stagnancy and grew
infatuated with her curves and
vivacity.

The Man takes off his stilts and puts them in the corner of
the room. Approaches the Woman.

Both the characters smile.

Aiden turns the page. He jumps ahead to another passage.

A large aquarium with faux plants and an exterior sign that
says, "No Fish," appears. Both the Woman and Man step into
and sit down inside it.

The water is over their heads, and they hold their breathe as
they face forward, holding hands.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He hadn't known the pain that comes
with unrequited emotions. He longed
for her, held his breath for her,
while she waited for someone else
to come by.

The Man's cheeks puff up. The Woman looks as calm and pretty.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Their words were muddled or
unspoken. She resented him for not
being who she once saw-- a man tall
with aspirations. And he pouted and
choked in garbled expression, yet
didn't change.

The Man opens his mouth and starts YELLING at the Woman, who
looks ahead. He starts to choke, stands, gets out of the
tank. He is distraught.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The tank grew murky without a
filter, and he didn't conserve his
air.

Aiden skips to another story part.

Exhausted, damp, the Man looks under furniture for his stilts. He finds them tucked in a corner and then he climbs and stands upon them.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He located his crutches, which he attached to his feet. And, in his heartache, became slouchier than before.

Aiden puts the pages down, and Jasper's story character and props disappear.

AIDEN

It's a decent start.... Working on anything else?

Jasper shakes his head.

JASPER

There's more there, more pages.

Jasper points to the unread pages still in Aiden's hands.

AIDEN

You could teach again.

JASPER

I didn't get my degrees to teach.

AIDEN

You're a pauper.

JASPER

I think I'm depressed.

AIDEN

Self pity is pathetic.

JASPER

I know. Did Maggie say anything after I left? She left with Paul?

AIDEN

My loyalty's to her.

Jasper nods. Aiden goes back to reading.

INT. AIDEN'S ROOM - LATER

Aiden throws his coffee cup away, into the trash.

Nearby a row of FANTASTICAL CHARACTERS stand. They are a hodgepodge that wear attire and makeup similar to carnival and circus performers, dolls and stuffed animal toys. (Like the ceramics on Jasper's Dad's living room shelves.)

AIDEN

There are too many characters. I'm skimming, true, but because I'm getting bored. These digressions are superfluous. There is something not good about this.

Aiden picks up a red pen and with each mark he makes to the page in his hand, a Fantastical Character becomes covered with a red mark as well.

JASPER

Ah, don't, why so much red? Green is a better color for editing. I might have a marker in my--

Jasper rummages through his backpack.

He looks up. Most characters are marked with red lines.

AIDEN

You should shelve this for awhile if you can't handle cuts.

JASPER

No. It needed an objective edit. But. I need to write so much more.

AIDEN

Why the sudden interest in prolificacy? You seem desperate.

JASPER

I need to get published.

AIDEN

This?

JASPER

It has potential, yeah?

AIDEN

You should teach. Quit the T-shirt stand, and don't text me incessantly.

JASPER

But you're my only friend.

AIDEN
What does that say about you?

JASPER
What are you saying?

AIDEN
While you were with Maggie, we were friends. But you're not dating Maggie anymore.

Aiden hands him the pages.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
I said it was decent. Keep at it, sure.

Jasper nods.

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Jasper sits at his computer. A few beers nearby. He's texts on his phone to Maggie. The Man on Stilts lies on Jasper's bed. He's on his stomach, slowly kicking his legs, which wear stilts.

INSERT PART OF TEXT TO MAGGIE:

"Is it completely over then?"

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Jasper comes in. His dad continues to watch TV.

JASPER
Hey.

He watches his Dad watch TV.

His Dad doesn't look at him, so Jasper leaves the room.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jasper looks into a cupboard. He takes down some boxed pasta. He pulls out a pot, fills it with water, puts it on the stove. Turns the stove on.

He opens the fridge, takes out some tomatoes and zucchini, and rinses the vegetables.

SOUNDS OF BROKEN CERAMICS come from the next room.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper's Dad throws his ceramic figurines around-- at the TV specifically. Jasper rushes in, protects the already broken TV.

JASPER

Dad?

Jasper's Dad motions to the television.

JASPER'S DAD

Why the hell are all her stupid ceramic shit-fuck fuck figurines still here?

Jasper turns off the TV and starts picking up the broken figurines.

Jasper's Dad sits back on the couch.

JASPER'S DAD (CONT'D)

Please, just box, trash or sell, or donate them.

Jasper nods and takes his handfuls of broken pieces and puts them into a garbage bin near the couch.

INT. JASPER'S T-SHIRT STAND - DAY

Jasper's inside the booth, writing in a notebook. A few of the aforementioned figurines are now on the counter-top along with his T-shirts for sale.

The shirt Jasper wears reads: "I Showered Today."

Jasper puts down his pencil and calls MAGGIE. Phone RINGS.

MAGGIE'S VOICE MACHINE

Hello, this is Maggie, and this is my voice machine. BEEP.

JASPER

(to her machine)

Hey, hi. So....

He hangs up.

His phone BUZZES.

INSERT TEXT FROM MAGGIE:

"Paul asked me to move with him to Juneau,
Alaska."

Jasper looks up.

In front of Jasper, on the street, appear Paul and Maggie. They stand, posed, and wearing Carhart pants, Xtra Tuff rubber boots, Alaska Brewery hooded sweatshirts, and beaming grins.

A mural is rolled out and situated behind them by two FANTASTICAL CHARACTERS. The mural shows an Alaskan background with: snow-capped mountains, a glacier, a bear, and a Tlingit tribe designs.

Jasper picks up and starts throwing ceramic figurines at Paul. Paul and Maggie and the Fantastical Characters-- pushing the mural-- run off scene.

EXT. JASPER'S DAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jasper wipes his eyes. Deep breaths.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jasper's Dad and SALLY (50s, with permed hair and bangs) are cooking dinner together. Looking romantic, lovey-dovey.

Jasper walks in, the third wheel.

JASPER'S DAD

I meant to call you, tell you not
to come.

JASPER

(to Sally)
Nice to meet you.

JASPER'S DAD

Sally, this is my son, Jasper.

SALLY

Oh, so good to meet you.

Jasper's Dad tends to the stove and Sally cuts vegetables while Jasper watches them cook and flirt.

JASPER

This your first date?

SALLY

No, no. Well, first dinner. Your father's been taking me to lunch. He asked me to lunch six times before finally today suggesting dinner. I told him what a good cook I was. He just smiled and smiled. What a smile he has.

Jasper's Dad stirs a sauce. Sally cuts another vegetable. They exchange a glance.

JASPER

Well, you two enjoy dinner.

Sally smiles and turns her attention back to the cutting board.

JASPER (CONT'D)

So, Dad, I'll see you tomorrow night then?

His Dad turns to face him.

JASPER'S DAD

(shaking his head)

No. I think Sally and I are going to be cooking together for a foreseeable while.

Sally is all smiles by this future talk.

Jasper musters a nod that neither Sally or Jasper's Dad turns to see.

JASPER

Good night, then.

SALLY

Nice to meet you.

JASPER'S DAD

Goodbye.

Jasper loiters by the front entrance before he leaves and closes the door.

EXT. A BROWERSVILLE'S STREET - NIGHT

Jasper's drunk and crying, paused aside his bike and wearing his helmet. He calls someone on his cell phone.

The dialing is a challenge. He sets down his brown-bagged liquor bottle into a bike basket.

AIDEN'S VOICE RECORDING
You've reached Aiden, I might've
screened you, but leave a message
if it's important. BEEP.

He texts Maggie. The texting is time-consuming.

INSERT TEXT TO MAGGIE:

"Have you already left the state?"

JASPER
She's not going to reply.

Jasper pounds the sidewalk with his feet. Stomping, a tantrum.

He gets on his bike. Sits there.

At a loss, he Internet searches an address to "Iris Bigrin."

INSERT INTERNET MAP

He studies the directions that appear. He looks around at nearby street signs.

EXT. ANOTHER BROWERSVILLE STREET - LATER THIS NIGHT

Jasper cycles out of town and into rural scenery.

EXT. ROAD - LATER THAT NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS

--A raccoon scurries alongside Jasper's bicycle tires.

--Man on Stilts, his stilts extremely high, walks down the road at a fast pace. In the cars lane.

--Jasper drinks from the bagged liquor. Cycles with one hand.

--Jasper SINGS. He drinks. He falls off his bike.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. SIDE OF TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - MORNING

Jasper is curled up like road-kill a couple feet from the highway.

He wakes. Road-rash on face.

He surveys and remembers. Overt hangover.

He looks to his phone.

INSERT ADDRESS AND DIRECTIONS TO IRIS BIEGRIN'S

INSERT LOW BATTERY ALERT

JASPER

(to himself)

You could have been killed. You could have killed. You drunk driving shit in the middle of rural land shit. Don't use expletives. Don't use expletives. You're educated and... euphemisms. You should make friends with Temperance. Shit.

Jasper surveys. Looks at his phone. Adjusts his helmet so it sits on his head properly.

He cycles away.

JASPER (CONT'D)

(yelling)

I don't care for my life.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jasper bikes.

Bugs hit his face. He tastes a few.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jasper turns onto a street lined with one-story brick homes. They all look to have unkempt, trash-littered yards, except for one situated in the middle of the row.

EXT. BRICK HOME - CONTINUOUS

This house has a huge tree in the front yard, which is perimetered with a wooden fence that's draped in vines, like Carolina Jasmine.

Jasper checks his phone, the address.

He gets off his bike, takes off his helmet.

FRONT DOOR

Jasper KNOCKS. Rings the DOORBELL.

He looks around. A fountain runs, BIRDS CHIRP, and lawn furniture sits empty.

IRIS BIEGRIN, 80s, opens the door. She's blond-haired, in baggy clothes, and she smiles mischievously. Her eyes deny her age.

JASPER

Hi.

IRIS

Hello to you.

JASPER

We met when I was a teenager. I didn't even recognize your house until I saw that fountain.

IRIS

Jasper.

Jasper, relieved, near tears already.

JASPER

Yeah.

Instead of inviting him in, Iris steps out.

IRIS

How'd you find me, not your father?

JASPER

No.... The Internet.

IRIS

(looking to the heavens)
Big Brother.

(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)

I hear they have aerial photos of my house and are listening or watching us talk, putting it away in a computer file.

Jasper shrugs. Iris studies him.

IRIS (CONT'D)

You hungover? A drunk?

Jasper puffs up his cheeks and then breathes out.

JASPER

Yes.

IRIS

I'm sorry I never sent cards with money.

JASPER

Yeah?

IRIS

Why'd you come to see me?

JASPER

I missed Mom.

Iris takes a smoke from her pocket.

IRIS

Don't smoke. I'm going to light up, but it'll kill you. I only allow myself one a day, and only if random shit like a sole grandchild shows up at my door.

She takes a deep pull.

JASPER

You talk to her, Mom?

IRIS

I'm going to respect her wishes. No matter how distorted they are. I love her more than you. But I do care for you. Shit, I'm sorry. But I won't say.

She elevator glances him.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Can I do anything for you?

JASPER

Water?

INT. IRIS'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Iris puts a glass under the faucet, which she turns on.

Jasper surveys the house: doily and afghan everything. Plus expensive dolls and angel paintings everywhere. It'd all seem overcrowded if it all weren't so tidily arranged.

Iris hands Jasper the glass.

IRIS

You're a college professor now,
right? That's as brag-worthy as
"Doctor" and "Lawyer," these parts.

Jasper shakes his head.

JASPER

Dropped out of my PhD program.

IRIS

Why?

Jasper shrugs.

JASPER

Guess I'm still able to be a
labeled "Professor" with a Master's
degree post, but I'm not currently
teaching. I... I'm a writer?

IRIS

Mid-life crisis?

JASPER

Quarter-life.

IRIS

People don't live your age times
four. The bible says the longest
you can go is one-twenty.

Wind chimes chime.

JASPER

(suddenly)

Can I stay here? Or, well, no,
could I?

Iris is both surprised and not.

JASPER (CONT'D)

(more thought out)

It'll be brief, really temporary.
I'm working on my collection of
stories and this place seems
scenic, restful. I could do chores--

IRIS

I'm not an asshole. You don't need
to sell your spiel to me. I have
rules here, but you're free to
freeload for a short while, sure.

She taps his hand.

EXT. STORAGE LOT - DAY

Jasper transfers his mattress, desk, printing press, and a
few boxes from his rental truck into a storage unit. Most
notable is his T-shirt Stand.

He tenderly pats his printing press before pulling to door
down.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S HOUSE - DAY

Jasper stands near his Dad, who's seated and works on a
puzzle.

JASPER

So things are, you and her are,
she's going to--

JASPER'S DAD

She's moving in.

JASPER

So... Well....

JASPER'S DAD

Why the hell do you have such a
challenge formulating a direct
sentence?

JASPER

I just want to make sure you're
okay. I'm leaving town.

JASPER'S DAD

You are?

JASPER

But you have my number.

JASPER'S DAD

Where you going?

JASPER

I don't want to say.

JASPER'S DAD

Why?

JASPER

You don't share with me.

JASPER'S DAD

You piss off me, and likely others,
in so many fucking ways.... For
another job?

Jasper shakes his head.

JASPER

I didn't say, "I'm moving." I said,
"I'm leaving town."

JASPER'S DAD

Then why the hell have this
conversation? Be gone for a month
or whatever. Fuck. But those loan
collectors better not start calling
my house looking for you.

JASPER

Just thought I should explain my...
my not being around.

His Dad is attentive to the puzzle as Jasper leaves.

INT. IRIS'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jasper and Iris do stretches. They touch their toes and then
their waists and then stretch toward the ceiling, then they
repeat this over and over throughout their talking.

IRIS

My sixth husband died. He was
twelve years younger than me.

JASPER
Seriously?

IRIS
Why the shit would you judge me on that?

JASPER
I'm not.

IRIS
People do.

JASPER
Jerk-faces.

IRIS
I like you.

JASPER
I like you.

IRIS
You look like her.

JASPER
No, I don't.

IRIS
Not in the facade of things. But you have stupid mannerisms, like moving your arm like you just did, or pondering things a moment longer than most would. That's your Mom.

Iris sits, has some water.

JASPER
How'd you know that I taught college?

IRIS
Truth told. She is selfish. Has that bitch brutality in her, what she did to your Dad and you. But she was hurt, and my loyalty's to her. She has heap of good in her too. I have dishes to wash.

Iris heads out of the room, with her water glass in tow.

JASPER
So Mom told you?

Iris continues to leave.

INT. IRIS'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Jasper is in a twin-sized bed, which is in a floral, doily-draped room.

A wall picture has been taken down (it's obvious something else had been there by a dirty frame outline on the wall), and in its place are tacked up school photos of Jasper as an elementary student.

Jasper and Iris look at them.

JASPER

Do I have cousins? Any other relatives?

IRIS

No. We have a history of having accidents only once.

Iris shuts off the light.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Good-night.

Iris starts shutting the door.

JASPER

Good-night.

INT. IRIS'S GUEST ROOM - DAY

Iris carries a card table into the room. Jasper stirs, turns over toward the wall, still asleep. She sets up the table.

Iris brings Jasper's laptop in and puts it on the card table. She also produces an antiquated chair.

Quietly exits.

INT. IRIS'S GUEST ROOM - LATER

Jasper wakes and sees that half his room is now an office, a writer's retreat.

He sits at his "desk." Touched.

INT. IRIS'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jasper opens cupboards, finds the one with mugs. Pours himself a cup of coffee and surveys around.

EXT. IRIS'S BACKYARD - LATER

Jasper, with mug in hand, sees Iris fussing with her garden. The back lawn is just as impressive as the front yard.

JASPER
Thank you for the office.

IRIS
Nothing.

Jasper watches her tend to her grounds.

JASPER
I think I'll go write.

Iris then turns to face him.

IRIS
I'm not going to tell you what to do. Except no drunkenness here. Alcohol has all your repressed thoughts and actions come out. Lost me a couple husbands to Hard A. I saw that bottle in with your things. I'd ration that out.

Jasper, uncomfortable.

INT. IRIS'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jasper walks into the house.

INT. IRIS'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jasper takes some animal crackers out of a cookie jar.

INT. IRIS'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jasper eats the animal crackers as he walks. There are photos that he passes without stopping.

He turns around and stares at one photo of his Mom, at the age she was in the prologue scene.

He takes a picture of this wall photo with his cell phone.

INT. IRIS'S GUEST BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper powers up his computer. A typed page appears.

The Man on Stilts also appears and sits high watching Jasper.

JASPER
(to the computer screen)
What do you want to do now?

The Man on Stilts shrugs.

Jasper opens a duffle bag, takes out a whiskey bottle. He then hides behind the closed door to take a couple swills.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jasper leaves his room, tip toes and listens at a door. Hears SNORING.

Skulks toward the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper leafs through papers found in desk cubbies. He finds an address book. He thinks he hears a noise, he drops to the floor, hides.

No one enters. He flips through the entire address book. Looks frustrated, starts again at the beginning of the alphabet. Until he comes to the letter "D" and sees a name, number and address scribbled.

INSERT ADDRESS BOOK:

"Susan Koet"

He stands, finds a pen and note pad, and writes down the contact information.

INT. IRIS'S GUEST ROOM - DAY

Jasper sits at the computer. The page is blank.

INT. IRIS'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Jasper's drunk.

He's SINGING Sheryl Crow's "First Cut Is The Deepest."

EXT. IRIS'S GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Iris hears his off-key crooning from the hallway, isn't pleased.

INT. IRIS'S GUEST ROOM - AS BEFORE

Jasper, with his SINGING tapering off, texts MAGGIE.

INSERT TEXT:

"Maggie, did you leave with him?"

INT. IRIS'S GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper lies in bed. BIRDS are obnoxiously loud. He opens his eyes.

MONTAGE IN QUICK SNIPPETS

1.) EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Maggie and Jasper LAUGH and bird-hop race. (To bird-hop is to have legs together, arms positioned like wings, and to jump chest forward.)

2.) INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Maggie and Jasper sit next to each other in desks, facing a PROFESSOR.

3.) INT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Maggie and Jasper climb into the bed of pickup truck and slow dance.

END MONTAGE

INT. IRIS'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Iris and Jasper sit, facing forward, on one of the two sofas. Plates on their laps while they eat scones.

JASPER
They're--

IRIS
Lemon ginger.

They continue eating.

JASPER
I'm having writer's block.

Iris nods sympathetically.

IRIS
Want to pray?

Jasper can't tell if she's serious. Until Iris stands and goes over to the other couch and kneels aside it. Jasper follows suit.

With their heads bowed, hands folded, eyes closed...

IRIS (CONT'D)
Lord Jesus, we pray that Jasper
will have anointed words come to
his mind and then to the page...
that he won't be a slothful, lazy
drunk and that creative juices will
come. Amen.

JASPER
Amen.

The two go back to eating scones on the other sofa.

IRIS
I got an idea.

HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She slips on shoes and opens the door that adjoins the house to the garage. Turns on a light.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Iris walks over to a box. There are heaps and heaps of boxes and other unpacked things.

Jasper enters and surveys the belongings.

INT. IRIS'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

With markers, Jasper designs posters in font and style similar to his T-shirts.

INSERT POSTERS:

"Flea-market on a front lawn!
YARD SALE TODAY ONLY
(5638 Mavern Road)"

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - EARLY MORNING

Jasper staples YARD SALE signs to trees and poles.

EXT. IRIS'S FRONT YARD - DAY

A large yard sale goes on.

Blankets cover the ground, and atop them, various things and furniture.

A CUSTOMER, a Maggie look alike, approaches with two vases.

CUSTOMER
Would you take fourteen dollars for
both?

Jasper stares at her before he looks down at the items.

JASPER
Sure.

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Iris and Jasper haggle with CUSTOMERS that come and go.

--The For Sale items lessen.

--Iris and Jasper haggle with CUSTOMERS that come and go.

--The remaining for sale items become fewer.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. IRIS'S FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Later, the sky darkens, the yard is packed up.

INT. IRIS'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Iris and Jasper count the profits.

IRIS

Whew. Four hundred and eighty one dollars.

JASPER

The yard sale signs were bold and placed at eye level--

IRIS

BFD. It was my treasured junk that lured all those passersby, not your poster-boards.

She smirks at Jasper as she puts the money into an envelope. She puts the coins into a gallon milk container.

IRIS (CONT'D)

It's been wonderful, you here these few days.

She hands him the envelope. He doesn't reach out for it, so she puts it in his hand.

IRIS (CONT'D)

This money will help get you along. Respite is temporary. It was nice having you visit.

He furrows his brow, but he gets her point.

EXT. IRIS'S HOUSE - DAY

Jasper wears his helmet, a stuffed backpack, and sits on his ridiculously overstuffed bike. Iris hugs him back.

JASPER

Well, goodbye. Thank you.

IRIS

Jesus really didn't get started,
his career and all, 'til thirty.
So, don't think you're a fuck up.
Just know you got to get doing
something more.

Iris waves and then turns back toward her yard, bends and plucks a weed.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Jasper pedals along. Talks on his phone.

JASPER

You told me, when you began your
push-pulling, kicking, emotional-
intimacy-problem evincing, that I
needed to not let you go. You broke
up with me five times. FIVE TIMES.
And I proved a constant. I proved I
wanted you. You, Maggie.... You
like Paul because he's ... because
you aren't vulnerable with him yet.
And Alaska? Alaska? Seriously?
Seriously.

Jasper's looks over. He sees Maggie across the road, all bundled up in winter attire, biking in the opposite direction. Her bicycle waves an Alaskan flag.

He hangs up his cell phone.

JASPER (CONT'D)

(loudly, toward her)
So you did leave?

Maggie doesn't acknowledge him as she cycles past.

Jasper turns his head and bike around to follow her, but she's gone.

EXT. ROAD - DAY - LATER

Jasper pedals and hears AUGUST SINGING. Looks ahead, to his right.

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

AUGUST (25, enigmatic, overtly pregnant), sits on a bench playing a guitar, SINGING. She wears a dress with a Bill-Cosby-type sweater.

Jasper cycles up from the road. He props his overstuffed bike against the building. Jasper and August observe one another. August stops singing.

AUGUST

I'm not fat, just moderately pregnant.

Jasper smiles.

JASPER

I like your voice.

AUGUST

Not many people our age that eat here. You a drifter?

JASPER

I'm Jasper.

AUGUST

August. Fred's the manager, also the father of my unborn, he's looking for a server. If you took the job, I'd get to stay in the kitchen. I prefer to cook. I make a new meal every other Tuesday, it's catching on. I think more people come in every other Tuesday now, curious. Last week I made a vegan meatloaf, no one knew. It'd be nice to have you around as a friend.

INT. DINER - DAY

Jasper walks in. The place has a few PATRONS. August enters and points to Jasper, once FRED looks over.

Fred (50s, gruff man, with friendly hints) elevator glances Jasper.

FRED

You here for the job?

Jasper looks around.

FRED (CONT'D)

It's a fill-in position, but you'll be needed this first week, for at least forty-plus hours. Minimum wage plus tips. Once Lindsey returns, if you worked out all right, you can be on-call for all the servers. You also get one meal a day, an under \$10 dollar meal, comped.

Jasper ponders.

JASPER

Okay.

JASPER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Why would you take this job?

FRED

You have experience, right?

AUGUST

Oh, Freddie, who doesn't have experience carryin' food on plates and appeasing complainers and hungry people?

Jasper smiles, uncertain.

INT./EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

August and Jasper stand outside a house. ROY (80, long braided hair, questionably senile) opens the door.

AUGUST

Roy!

August hugs him, as he stares at Jasper.

JASPER

Hello, Sir.

AUGUST

He needs a temporary home. He's passing through and working for Lindsey. I thought: your travel trailer. That'd be convenient.

Roy squints. Intense look at Jasper.

INT./EXT. ROY'S BACKYARD - TRAVEL TRAILER - NIGHT

Roy, Jasper and August walk to an old immobile trailer that's in the driveway, which is across the street from the Diner.

Roy opens the trailer's door, the three of them enter.

AUGUST

It'd be so romantic to live here.
Don't ya think?

Jasper notices how the place is a fly repository, but there is character to the place.

ROY

Two hundred a month. There's a
toilet and shower at the diner.

August is giddy. Jasper optimistic. Roy indifferent.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - NIGHT

Jasper, stripped down to his underwear, attempts to sleep on the narrow mattress. He gets up, wipes off the small table, and unfolds his laptop.

INT. DINER - DAY/NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Orders up, Jasper, wearing an apron, picks up the plates and heads toward a table.

--Jasper makes coffee.

--Jasper takes an order for a FAMILY scanning menus.

--Jasper brings Roy a bowl of soup.

--Brings water and silverware to a table. Two other SERVERS work. Most tables are full.

--August LAUGHS at Jasper as she puts a plate on the counter and rings a BELL.

--Jasper wipes the bar counter. Through the windows, he watches August play her guitar outside on a bench.

--Jasper pours coffee for a PATRON who eats. Quiet night there.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. DINER - DAY

In a few booths, Jasper's Fantastical Characters sit, as if frozen, behind their food.

Jasper leans over as Roy lifts his head from a notebook.

The elderly man nods.

ROY
Good stuff.

Jasper takes and closes the notebook. Fantastical Characters leave.

JASPER
Yeah? I appreciate that.

Jasper's phone BUZZES. It's a text from Maggie.

JASPER (CONT'D)
Excuse me, Roy.

Roy slurps soup.

INSERT MAGGIE'S TEXT:

"No, I haven't left yet. Had to give my job notice, and will have to pack."

Jasper texts a reply.

INSERT TEXT:

"I'm writing again."

But instead of clicking send, Jasper hesitates.

INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - DAY - (FANTASY)

The home is expensive. Paul helps Maggie pack. They tape and fill boxes.

MAGGIE
(to camera)
I haven't broken up with him once.

INT. DINER - AS BEFORE

Jasper looks back down at his text. He clicks send.

August, through the kitchen-to-behind-the-bar window, waves him over.

AUGUST
What was that you showed Roy in the notebook?

JASPER
It's an outline of a collection of stories that I'm working on.

AUGUST
Can I read it?

JASPER
The outline?

AUGUST
No, your book so far.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - NIGHT

August sits in front of his laptop. Jasper watches her. Fantastical Characters are stuffed into the trailer like sardines in a can. They struggle to breathe.

August folds down the laptop, smiles, and the Characters go away.

JASPER
Did you like...[it]?

AUGUST
Are you heartbroken?

JASPER
Why do you wonder that?

AUGUST
They're sorta sad stories. The characters. Nearly drowned, suffocated, suicidal, or lost....

JASPER

There are some points of levity,
though.

August nods.

AUGUST

But, still, you should finish it
before you leave town. Though I
think you should stay.

JASPER

You like me.

AUGUST

People need deadlines. I give
myself projects and due dates every
day.

JASPER

I'm more of a writer when inspired.

AUGUST

Hmmmm.

JASPER

What?

AUGUST

What's with the stilts? Do they
represent somethin'?

JASPER

Suppose they subtly tell how he
aspires for something he feels is
out of his reach or how he's
discontented with himself?

AUGUST

Hmmmm....

JASPER

What?

AUGUST

What are you thinking this instant?
Give me a stream-of-consciousness
train of thought. GO.

JASPER

I'm... I think you're attractive,
and... I'm confused by this game.

(MORE)

JASPER (CONT'D)
I need to do laundry... and don't
want to do it by hand.

August nods, stands, then touches his shoulder.

AUGUST
I bet Roy would let you use his
washer/dryer for a few dollars. I
gotta go. Don't want to keep a
writer procrastinatin'.

She waves as she closes the door behind her. Jasper waves
back.

INT. DINER / EXT. TRAVEL TRAILER (BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN)-
CONTINUOUS

Fred eats a meal in front of paperwork and looks out a window
to see August leaving Jasper's place and walking toward the
diner.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - DAY

Jasper sleeps with his mouth open.

He stirs, wakes, closes his mouth, is disgusted. Sprints up
and spits a dead fly into the sink.

INT. DINER - KITCHEN - DAY

Rice cooks.

Jasper enters, puts on an apron and approaches August as she
mashes an avocado with a fork.

AUGUST
I once gave myself the project of
making an LP in two weeks. I was
strummin' and composin' and drivin'
Fred batty with my voice that got
all raspy, scratchy.

August then imitates what her voice sounded like, by SINGING
a song lyric.

JASPER
Can I hear it, the album?

AUGUST
Maybe you're an unripe avocado?
....(looks to him)...
(MORE)

AUGUST (CONT'D)

I think I'm going to be that person who draws parallels in food metaphor.

JASPER

I'd discourage that.

They smirk.

AUGUST

Wanna take a tour of the town tonight? Get you attached to the place?

Jasper looks at her neck and shoulder.

EXT. TOWN, NAMED BRISTLE - EARLY EVENING

August and Jasper walk on a sidewalk. The town, not including residential homes, constitutes two blocks worth of buildings facing each other. Liquor store, library, grocery store, gas station, laundromat, town office building.

JASPER

What's the population?

AUGUST

Maybe a thousand.

JASPER

A thousand?

AUGUST

Well, Browsersville is the largest place an hour or so off, with maybe twenty thousand, and there's not many houses here to live. Where I went to school is a few miles that way. (She points in some direction.)

JASPER

I'm from Browsersville.

AUGUST

You are? Well, we've had years to meet. I'm glad to meet you now. I've lived here all my life except when I went to community college in Browsersville.

(MORE)

AUGUST (CONT'D)

I had to leave here 'cause my mom got busted for her drawer full of pot and I couldn't afford rent so I thought I needed an education and had a scholarship there. Oh, she's out of jail now, but by the time I came back to town I felt I needed my own place. I had one too, wanna see it, a nice apartment not far from this street, but when I got pregnant, Fred thought I should move in with him, so I could save money.

EXT. AUGUST'S OLD APARTMENT - LATER

August and Jasper stand outside a two-story home. It is an sturdy, peeled-paint house.

August points to a second-story window.

AUGUST

That one was mine. It had a living room full of plants that I'd grown from clippings and seeds.

JASPER

Why'd you move back here? And not go to culinary school or something?

AUGUST

Not that ambitious, I suppose. Or I didn't want to take out student loans, be in debt.

Jasper goes inside the house and up the stairs. August follows suit.

INT. AUGUST'S OLD APARTMENT BUILDING'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jasper KNOCKS on the second-floor apartment's door.

AUGUST

What are you doin'?

JASPER

Aren't you curious who has your old home?

SARAH (late 40s, wears a Christmas Tree sweater), answers the door carrying a mug of cocoa. She doesn't say anything, she waits for August or Jasper to introduce themselves.

AUGUST

Hi. I used to live here. We were just wonderin' how the home was treatin' you. Please don't find us too weird. I'm August, this is Jasper.

JASPER

Hi.

Finding them harmless, with their sheepish grins, Sarah opens the door for them to enter.

The room plays Christmas music and there is a fake Christmas tree in the corner. Other Christmas ornaments are sprinkled about.

SARAH

Would you like some cocoa?

JASPER

Yes.

Sarah puts a kettle on a burner and turns on the stove. Stays standing by the stove.

SARAH

My name is Sarah. The grand-kids like it to be Christmas when they visit me. And, well, I don't really feel a need to explain myself.

AUGUST

It's nice.

Jasper nods.

The KETTLE WHISTLES. Sarah turns off the stove, and scoops cocoa mix into two cups. She picks up the kettle, but then sets it back down.

She looks at August and Jasper.

SARAH

You are here, judging me and my things, being polite and I only like family to be here.

JASPER

Sarah, I'm so sorry we came here unexpectedly. But I, we, think you and your home are lovely.

Sarah turns away, pauses and then pours kettle water into their cups.

EXT. AUGUST AND FRED'S HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

A double-wide with a front yard garden.

Jasper stands on the sidewalk with August.

JASPER
Good-night.

AUGUST
Wait.

August sprints into the home. Soon she sprints back out.
August hands him a CD.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
That's me. That's my LP. So, okay.
Good night now, for real. See ya.

She turns.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - NIGHT

Jasper puts August's CD into his computer. A typed page is up on the screen. Man On Stilts sits, arms folded at the table across from Jasper.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Jasper's checking out. He's buying orange juice, a notebook, ice, fly swatter, two cans of silly string, poster board and markers.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - LATER

Jasper leaves with paper-bagged bottle, and gets on his bicycle and pedals away.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - DAY - LATER

Jasper surveys the trailer. Sits, watches a fly. His laptop is folded down. He drinks whiskey.

His CELL PHONE BUZZES.

INSERT TEXT FROM MAGGIE:

"You're not in town? You moved?"

Jasper stares at the phone, not wanting to touch it. Almost afraid of it. He pushes it away from himself with a fly swatter.

He takes a whiskey gulp. Stares at the phone.

He picks up the phone and calls her. After THREE RINGS, she answers.

MAGGIE
Jasper, hey.

JASPER
You answered.

INT. OFFICE - ADVERTISING AGENCY - DAY

Maggie sits in a dress suit behind a desk. She's working, that is, writing something in a file.

Her desk sign reads: MAGGIE AISEN, ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE.

Paul is in sight, working at a desk of his own. She looks at him while she's on her cell phone.

MAGGIE
Now's not a good time, I'm at work.

JASPER (O.C.)
It's just you just texted and so
I...

Paul makes a kiss face toward Maggie.

MAGGIE
I just wondered if you were all
right?

JASPER (O.C.)
You don't like being cold. You say
your hands hurt like an arthritic
in cold temperatures, and so,
besides my disapproval, you should
factor your bones into this move.

MAGGIE

I'm glad you're writing, that's so good. Please, though, don't call.

INT. DINER - DAY

Jasper heads into SHOWER room door. He looks hungover.

Jasper, clean and changed, leaves.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - NIGHT

Jasper types, whiskey in sight. Man on Stilts sighs.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - DAY

Jasper's designing posters in similar fashion to when he made his T-shirts and his Iris's yard sale signs. THREE FANTASTICAL CHARACTERS draw along with him.

The posters advertises: "August Tuesdays and Music at The Diner."

INT. DINER - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jasper, working, approaches August at the kitchen's window, as she cooks.

JASPER

I have arty somethings to show you.
Would you want to see it tonight?

He smiles. She nods.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - NIGHT

Jasper presents the Diner's Tuesday fliers that he's made.

AUGUST

Oh, they're fun. Beautiful. Fred would have to approve makin' Tuesday such an event, but gosh, this was awfully nice, Jasper, Thank you. ... What music do you mean?

JASPER
Your LP will play overhead, while
the customers eat. And, once you're
up for it, you can perform live.

August sets the signs down on the table and takes a seat.

AUGUST
Nice of you to make these fliers.

JASPER
Would you like a drink?

Jasper pours himself a whiskey. Then opens the mini-fridge.

JASPER (CONT'D)
I have orange juice?

AUGUST
Sure.

Jasper pours the juice into a cup and hands it to her, and
then takes a seat at the table.

JASPER
How did you and Fred...?

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Fred starts to walk to his car but instead keeps walking
across the street.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - AS BEFORE

AUGUST
I'm not an age-ist. I wasn't
employed yet at the diner when
we... Fred called it off when I
applied to work there.

JASPER
So you two aren't dating?

AUGUST
He dates. I don't think he wants me
to know, but I'm pretty sure.

August notices her cup is empty. She stands and puts it in
the sink.

August turns back around, Jasper abruptly stands. The two are inches apart. He kisses her.

EXT. TRAVEL TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Fred spies into Jasper's trailer window. He sees Jasper and August kissing.

Fred walks back toward the Diner. He's crossing the street.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

August pulls away. Jasper questions her with his look.

AUGUST
We're supposed to be friends,
Jasper.

Fred opens the door.

FRED
... (to August)
What are you doing?

AUGUST
We kissed.

JASPER
(to August)
I like you.

AUGUST
Friends, Jasper.

August leaves.

FRED
(to Jasper)
You're--. She's pregnant with--.
You're no longer an employee at my
diner.

Fred walks off. Trailer door sways.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - DAY

August enters. Jasper's in bed, sleep-eyed.

AUGUST
Heya.

JASPER

I'm sorry.

AUGUST

Fred won't take back his firin'
you.

He sits up, looks for and puts on his shirt.

JASPER

I thought you said you two weren't
a couple.

AUGUST

He's protective is all. He says I
have naivete when it comes to men.

He stands and gets into his pants. He hands her the posters
he made.

JASPER

I'm going to leave, I think.

AUGUST

Town?

Jasper packs up the few things about.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Now? This soon? We could maybe
search around here for another job?

August watches him, folds his bedding.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Will you write to me?

Jasper wants her to protest his departure.

JASPER

You want me to?

She pulls out a receipt pad and writes down her address.

INSERT RECEIPT PAD

She hands the note to him.

AUGUST

Write me okay? I gotta go to work,
I'm coverin' your shift. I'll miss
you.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Jasper cycles along on his overstocked bike.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Jasper, standing beside his bike, hitchhikes.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Jasper, biking, hitchhikes at vehicles that pass.

After a few cars, a truck pulls over.

INT. TRUCK - DRIVING - LATER

DRIVER (40s, scruffy man) sits next to Jasper, imitating him.

DRIVER
(laughing)
Your thumb waving on your cycle-
machine.

EXT. PICKUP TRUCK/ GAS STATION - EARLY EVENING

Jasper takes his bike from the bed of the pickup.

JASPER
Thanks.

Driver waves as he stands by a gas pump.

INT. GAS STATION - LATER

Jasper checks his ATM balance: \$486.92.

EXT. GAS STATION - LOT - LATER

Jasper sits at a picnic table, eats store-bought food, and watches the PASSERSBY, around their cars. He writes in his notebook.

The Teenaged Man on Stilts walks, straight postured, and can't stay still.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Jasper pedals and calls SUSAN KOET. The phone RINGS.

SUSAN
Hello.

JASPER
Susan?

SUSAN
Yes.

JASPER
Sorry, I'm on the road and I
shouldn't have called while I'm
steering, so I'll call back later.

SUSAN
Who is this? ... Jasper?

JASPER
How could you know?

SUSAN
How did you get my number? ...
How could you get this number? ...
I'm not your mother anymore, do you
understand?

JASPER
No, I don't. Parents aren't
supposed to leave. There's some
clause, like with God, that you're
supposed to love me and stay a part
of my life.

SUSAN
Do you know where I am?

JASPER
I have an address in Trevor.

SUSAN
I'm not there anymore.

JASPER
I just want to have coffee or
something.

SUSAN
Please don't call again.

She hangs up.

Jasper's eyes water.

EXT. STREET - TREVOR - NIGHT - LATER

Jasper slowly cycles, taking in the suburban town.

EXT./INT. A ONE-STAR MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Jasper takes a room key.

INT. A ONE-STAR MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jasper's bike leans against a wall. He takes off his shirt and pants. As he pulls back the covers, he sees a dried bloody fingernail. He flicks it to the floor, disgusted.

He lies there in bed.

He tosses and turns, his pillow is lumpy.

INT. A ONE STAR MOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Jasper FLUSHES Susan Koet's contact information down the toilet.

INT. ONE STAR MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper walks to his backpack, takes out his notebook, and his cell phone. He is about to delete Susan's information from it, but doesn't.

He gets into his bed. He talks into a pillow.

JASPER

I want Maggie. For the times she
was vulnerable.

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - DAY

Maggie crying hysterically and hitting Jasper's chest before sobbing into it, collapsing.

INT. A ONE-STAR MOTEL ROOM - AS BEFORE

JASPER
For the holidays she didn't forget.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Maggie presents Jasper with a wedding cake, with candles atop it.

MAGGIE
On sale. Three tiers. Happy birthday!

INT. A ONE-STAR MOTEL ROOM - AS BEFORE

Jasper looks at TWO FANTASTICAL CHARACTERS who point to a chalkboard.

One points to:

"How Many People There Are In the World = Billions"

Then the other points to:

"Maggie as the Only 'One' for Jasper = probable."

INT. JASPER'S STUDIO - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK [TO THEIR FIRST SCENE TOGETHER])

Jasper and Maggie lie next to one another.

MAGGIE
Are you going to write tomorrow,
this week?

Jasper shrugs.

JASPER
I might.

Maggie looks disappointed at his response. Pulls the blanket over her head.

MAGGIE
Sometimes...

INT. A ONE-STAR MOTEL ROOM - AS BEFORE

Jasper's remembering.

MAGGIE (V.O.)
... I pretend I'm dead.

Jasper takes his laptop out.

EXT. HOUSE - TREVOR - DAY

Jasper pulls up to a one-story home. With pruned shrubbery and a basketball hoop in the driveway.

MR. FOSTER (60, sturdy and intimidating man) answers the door.

MR. FOSTER
Hello.

JASPER
Hi. Is Susan Koet here?

MR. FOSTER
This here is The Foster's. Sure you have an address right? Are you lost? It's seven A.M., son.

Jasper peers behind the man, peeking in.

JASPER
Can I come in? Use your rest room? I've been biking for miles, and, could I?

MR. FOSTER
Uh, huh.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jasper enters, follows Mr. Foster. Jasper snoops by tarrying at framed photos and a letter's envelope on a counter.

Mr. Foster points to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper locks the door. He opens the medicine cabinet and reads the names on the pill containers. No Susan Koet.

Jasper, disappointed, unzips his pants, lifts the seat.

EXT. MR. FOSTER'S HOME - DAY - LATER

Mr. Foster follows Jasper out. Jasper, instead of proceeding down the stairs, turns.

JASPER
Tell her, it's okay.

MR. FOSTER
Who? ... A Susan Koet doesn't live here.

JASPER
Do you know a Susan? Have you ever known one?

MR. FOSTER
Well, I... Well, I dated one a few years back, but she didn't exactly live with me. Susan Stanson.

JASPER
That's her maiden name. She was my... Do you know where she went?

MR. FOSTER
People aren't always friends after things end. I'm not sending some, somebody, I don't know after her.

JASPER
She's my mom.

MR. FOSTER
Huh. Is she. She is? Well, she took a promotion. At, uh, FinSmith.

JASPER
Finsmith?

MR. FOSTER
Uh, huh. A publishing house. She's an editor there or was.

JASPER
Really? She's a book editor?

MR. FOSTER

A workaholic. A bitch. Sorry, she's your mother, supposedly, but, well, she was. Verbally mean. Maybe she's changed, though. She'd drop these big words and condescending phrases and she'd just hurt you, you know? And then she'd sometimes apologize.

JASPER

Was she happy sometimes?

MR. FOSTER

I loved her. She, ha, ah, she didn't like that. Anyhow. Take care, son.

Mr. Foster goes into his house.

Jasper gets on his bicycle and signals into non-existent traffic.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Jasper cycles, hitchhiking as he does so.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Jasper sleeps in the passenger seat. His head against the door's window. FEMALE DRIVER, 60s, HUMS and periodically SINGS some of the words of a song that plays on the RADIO.

EXT. BROWSERVILLE - DAY

Jasper returns, cycling in.

EXT./INT. A COPY SHOP - DAY

Jasper hands a USB to a CLERK (20, who wears a fluorescent yellow ball cap).

JASPER

Two copies of the file labeled,
"Novel halfway."

CLERK

Sure.

Jasper notices a twirling stand of homemade postcards, he smirks. He takes two that read "Browersville says, 'Maybe visit?'" The corner has initials J.K.

The Clerk opens the file and clicks print. He then takes up a couple pages and reads.

Outside in the street Fantastical Characters try to resuscitate Man on Stilts, whose legs are misshapen: Two perform CPR on him. While two others rearrange his legs to normal. Another sadly picks up the broken stilts.

Man on Stilts looks dead.

NARRATOR

How does one die? He mused in his unconscious. From a fall? From a duel? From unhealthy food? Is it a choice? Did he allow this? He couldn't see the friends around his bruised scratched face and crooked legs. They who didn't complain that the gravel made their knees uncomfortable or that his being nearly-dead made them queasy.

A Fantastical Character outlines the Man on Stilts body in chalk.

Jasper brings up the postcards to the counter. The Clerk puts the pages down. The Characters outside disappear.

EXT. COPY SHOP - LATER

Jasper leaves with two clipped paper stacks, which he puts in his backpack and gets onto his bicycle.

Signals into nonexistent traffic.

INT. ADVERTISING OFFICE - DAY

Maggie and Paul are both at their work spaces. Jasper walks in and puts a stack of fastened pages on her desk.

JASPER

It's my book. It's at its half-way point.

MAGGIE

Really? Jasper, that's great. Why are you....

She eyes Paul, who walks over. Jasper ignores Paul's approach and speech, keeps his eyes on Maggie.

PAUL

Hey, Jasper. You should leave.

Jasper leans down and kisses Maggie, with his hands on her face, head. She kisses back until she doesn't.

Paul knocks Jasper back with a shove. Paul presses Jasper against a wall. Jasper pushes Paul back with equal force. They're almost dancing.

A few COWORKERS watch. As Jasper talks, Paul focuses his energy on shoving.

JASPER

You said, forever....

INT. JASPER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Maggie and Jasper cuddle on the bed. She faces him.

JASPER (V.O.)

We didn't exchange rings but you said, "forever." And I believed you.

Her lips say, "forever."

INT. ADVERTISING OFFICE - AS BEFORE

JASPER

... I can't believe you work with him. Have been working with him.

Jasper feels foolish, holding Paul. He drops his arms and then Paul lets go too.

Maggie looks to Jasper's back as he leaves, while Paul watches her.

EXT. JASPER'S DAD'S HOUSE - DAY

Jasper rings the DOORBELL. Sally answers.

JASPER

Hi.

INT. JASPER'S DAD'S KITCHEN - LATER

Jasper's Dad enters and puts some of Jasper's mail in front of him.

JASPER'S DAD

Your mail is not my responsibility. There're bills there. I don't want them calling me if you don't pay.

JASPER

Sorry, I should have told you I'd listed here as a forwarding address. I just didn't have a fixed place yet, and--

JASPER'S DAD

I don't care.

JASPER

Dad, do you hate... Why... Why are you still angry at me? I didn't want Mom to go either.

JASPER'S DAD

Keep your mouth quiet.

Jasper stands. Puts a postcard with it addressed to himself in front of his father.

JASPER

My address is on the card. I know you don't like the phone.

Jasper leaves.

EXT. AIDEN'S TOWN HOUSE - DAY

Aiden opens the door to find Jasper standing with two coffees and his manuscript under his arm.

AIDEN

Jasper.

JASPER

I was in town. I thought, while I'm on my masochism streak, that I'd ask you to look at some more pages. I really think it's better.

AIDEN
You leaving again?

Jasper nods.

Aiden takes the offered coffee. Sits down on the stoop.

EXT. AIDEN'S TOWN HOUSE - LATER

Aiden puts the pages down.

AIDEN
Huh. Well, it's not something to be embarrassed about. You can go ahead and e-mail me a draft when it's finished.

JASPER
Really? Aiden, thanks. Think you might mention it to your agent or--

AIDEN
Jasper. Maybe.

Aiden hands his empty coffee cup to Jasper and enters his house.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Jasper drives a rental truck.

EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jasper's rental truck pulls up into Roy's driveway.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Roy and Jasper sit at a booth. August, beaming, walks over to their table.

Fred's flirting with BEATRICE (50, heavy makeup) is interrupted when he notices August standing aside Jasper and Roy's booth.

AUGUST
Kitchen's closed. But--

ROY
Soup.

August nods, looks to Jasper.

AUGUST

Are you staying this time? We can search for work. Did you write me?

JASPER

I wasn't gone very long.

AUGUST

Did you?

JASPER

I sent you a postcard.

Fred looks past Beatrice and continues to watch August interact with Jasper. He watches as August heads back behind the counter and into the kitchen.

FRED

Tomorrow night?

Beatrice smiles. Nibbles his ear.

BEATRICE

Yes.

FRED

Beatrice, I got to go talk to a unwanted customer. But I'll see you then.

Beatrice nods. Fred stands and walks to Jasper's table.

Jasper's unsurprised. Roy's indifferent.

FRED (CONT'D)

Why are you here?

Fred looks to his watch.

ROY

To eat, Fred.

FRED

It's almost closing.

Beatrice walks past and out the entrance.

ROY

But you're not closed.

FRED
(to Jasper)
I don't appreciate drama. You
coming in here, after you've been
terminated, is unappreciated.

JASPER
I am going to be living across the
street. I would like to eat here.
I'm sorry for upsetting you. But?

Jasper motions his head toward Beatrice who drives out of the
parking lot.

FRED
August is monogamous and pregnant
with my child. Mine. I don't want
you on her.

August approaches with Jasper and Roy's bowls of soup.

AUGUST
Pumpkin and sweet potato stew, with
buttered bread. It's like you're
tastin' autumn.

She puts the meals down on the table, then turns to Fred.
Senses the tension.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
Fred? You shouldn't bother shooing
out your customers when we have so
few of 'em.

Fred stares at Jasper. Jasper tries to smile through it.

FRED
I want you out by closing.

Fred walks off.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

August and Jasper sit on the railing, dangling their feet.
The entire tone of this scene is friendly, not romantic.

AUGUST
What's the most disgusting thing
you've ever consumed? I hate
vitamins.

(MORE)

AUGUST (CONT'D)

I have to take these prenatal nastinesses every day, and they smell so awful, so hard to swallow them.

JASPER

Do they come in chewable form? In a cherry flavor?

AUGUST

Maybe you're like a vitamin? Hard to take? Ha, ha, ha.

JASPER

You're not too funny.

AUGUST

No.

JASPER

But you have other attributes.

AUGUST

Yes. Yes, I do. ... What'd my postcard say?

JASPER

Don't you want to wait until it comes?

August shakes her head.

JASPER (CONT'D)

It said, "I miss you."

August reaches and holds his hand.

EXT. ROY'S HOUSE/GARAGE - DAY

With Roy watching, Jasper unloads his belongings into the garage from the rental truck with a dolly.

EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jasper's T-Shirt Stand is situated on the corner of the lawn. The rental truck is gone from the driveway. A light is on in the travel trailer.

INT. ROY'S GARAGE - DAY

Jasper's making shirts on his printing press. August approaches.

AUGUST
You're not book writin'?

JASPER
I enjoy making shirts. I do. I enjoy it.

AUGUST
Okay. Well, good.

August sits down to watch.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Jasper, at a register, with THE MANAGER (59, glasses, bad teeth), takes out his T-shirts from a paper bag.

The Manager, half-interested, holds up and reads a few of the shirts. Some new T-shirts read: "Balloon Popper," "Merry Sarah," "Fly Mouth Soup," "Over Her," and "I Work at a Grocery Store."

MANAGER
How much for five?

JASPER
I usually sell them for \$15 each.
But, \$10 wholesale?

The Manager takes a minute with the math.

MANAGER
Half that.

JASPER
Sir, but I have to make a profit.

The Manager is barely interested now.

MANAGER
I don't even know if these will sell. Seven.

JASPER
Nine dollars each?

MANAGER

Seven, but I'm only taking five,
don't solicit me to buy anymore
until all five go. All five.

JASPER

Okay.

The Manager opens a till and counts \$35.

JASPER (CONT'D)

Are you hiring?

The Manager hands Jasper the money. His face says, "No."

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - DAY

August enters. She has a postcard sticking out of a pocket.
Jasper lies on his bed.

JASPER

Not hiring at the grocery store.

She sits on his bed. He sits up and she kisses him.

They make out, heavily. They are tender and awkward.

Jasper's phone BUZZES. It's a text from MAGGIE. The text is
read by both Jasper and August.

INSERT TEXT:

"What if I didn't go?"

The intimacy is distracted.

AUGUST

Who is... Maggie?

Jasper looks at and touches her pregnant belly.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Fears of mine? Spiders larger than
a quarter, people's pasts, being
vulnerable and then feelin'
inadequate.

JASPER

You are not inadequate.

Jasper kisses her, gently. August tears up, tries to smile them away.

JASPER (CONT'D)

Does Fred make you feel that way?
Do I?

AUGUST

Who's Maggie?

JASPER

Like Fred, she's a significant
person who I can't seem to move on
from, completely.

August ponders.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - DAY

Jasper types at his laptop.

MONTAGE

EXT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Man on Stilts sells his battered stilts to a PAWN SHOP OWNER
(50s, bald, round and rosy-cheeked).

EXT. FRONT LAWN - DAY

It's snowing. There's some snow on the grass. Fantastical
Characters throw ceramic figurines, as if they were snow
balls, at one another. Some LAUGH. Some faces painted mean.

NARRATOR

The hits felt more like ceramic
rock than snow. Yet no one shielded
and continued to throw. Eventually,
the whited ground became noisier
and the balls softer.

Snow now covers the ground, and so the Fantastical Characters
throw only snowballs at one another.

EXT. ROAD - EARLY EVENING

Man on Stilts (without his stilts) looks at himself in a window's reflection. He carries a hobo stick with a kerchiefed luggage.

NARRATOR

He didn't mind himself anymore. He felt the different muscles used in this new and different gait, and how it was to not see as far into the horizon.

He heads down the road, with sprightly steps.

END MONTAGE

INT. T-SHIRT STAND - DAY

Jasper faces the quiet road.

August walks up. They peck a "hello."

AUGUST

You can't stay here long.

JASPER

What?

AUGUST

Maybe twenty cars stop at the Diner each day. Those are hungry, bathroom-needing people, too. Your shirts aren't gonna support you, Jasper. And I can't move out of Fred's, 'cause I can't afford to support more than myself.

JASPER

I know. But when I finish this book and if it gets published.

AUGUST

I get that. But I don't get the rental truck. I tried thinkin' it was because of me, you coming back. But it's not that, is it?

(MORE)

AUGUST (CONT'D)

We could keep ya lookin' for a bill-payin' occupation in this zip-code, but, I think you might've made the wrong choice.

JASPER

... Maybe.

August smiles.

AUGUST

Glad we didn't sleep together, so my heart wouldn't ache more when you leave a second time.

August's eyes start to well up.

JASPER

You're who I want to love.

AUGUST

But you're in love with someone else. And I'm just... (wipes her tears away)... a pregnant hormonal mess.

Jasper's tender.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Jasper you can't keep being passive. You gotta, every day, every day, acknowledge a deadline.

JASPER

... I'll maybe leave after your upcoming Tuesday then.

AUGUST

Okay.

INT. TRAVEL TRAILER - NIGHT

Jasper searches on his Internet phone, for Finsmith Publishing.

INSERT SEARCH RESULTS with the address.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

The diner has most of its tables filled.

There's a "stage" with microphone and stool and two floor speakers in the corner.

Fred sees Jasper enter and accosts him by the entrance.

FRED

August said you're leavin'
tomorrow. So it's fine for you to
come in.

JASPER

Fred, she knows about Beatrice. And
she needs someone to love her not
just allot her a home and the guilt
of settling.

Jasper walks toward a booth Roy's at.

INT. DINER - NIGHT - LATER

August adjusts herself on the stool. She starts LAUGHING.

AUGUST

Ah, I'm so nervous. First public
concert.

The audience CLAPS some encouragement. Jasper sees Sarah and the two smile and wave at one another.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Thanks.

She starts strumming.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

(singing)

And then okay. He went away. And I
understood how he could. Hear the
other say. The pulls and
gravitations. Stuffed imploding
infatuation. The playful subtle
understood. The one who fled away.
And then okay. Then okay. In the
end he went and re-returned. And
said he seemed okay....

Jasper watches her SING, and this song plays over the following montage.

MONTAGE

1.) INT. ROY'S GARAGE - DAY

Roy and Jasper talk while eyeing Jasper's stuff.

2.) EXT. ROAD - DAY

Jasper cycles, he wears a backpack. His bike is stocked but not overstocked.

3.) EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - T-SHIRT STAND - DAY

Roy mans the booth, arms folded, waiting for customers to come.

4.) EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Jasper comes to a "T" in the road. One arrowed sign reads: "Maggie" and the other direction reads: "Susan."

Jasper closes his eyes. When he reopens them, the road has no turnoffs just a straight-ahead option.

5.) EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Jasper cycles through blocks.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. CHEAP MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Jasper takes a room key.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The room is small. The bed --with its lumpy pillows and sheets more yellow than white-- has had someone in it.

Jasper comes out of the bathroom. Sees in front of him a closet door labeled "Door TWO."

Jasper opens and walks through the door.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jasper stands watching.

Paul is in the driver's seat of a packed car attached to a U-haul. Maggie gets out of the passenger's side and walks toward Jasper, hugs him.

It's a long embrace.

MAGGIE
(to his shoulder)
Tell me I won't regret this.

Paul HONKS the horn.

JASPER
Maggie, what could I have done?

Maggie pulls away. She smiles, tearfully.

MAGGIE
So, ha, I'm going to Alaska.

JASPER
Yeah.

MAGGIE
You were my first deep love.

Jasper smiles, forgivingly, at her.

She gets back into the passenger seat.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - AS BEFORE

Jasper walks from where he'd paused and climbs into bed.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Jasper dresses into khakis, blazer, T-shirt, tie. The Shirt reads: "You're Reading Me."

EXT. CHEAP MOTEL - DAY

Jasper, dressed as before, but with pink helmet and a pant leg rolled up, cycles away.

INT. FINSMITH PUBLISHING LOBBY - DAY - LATER

Jasper sits, waiting.

He stands, awaits the RECEPTIONIST'S attention.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes?

JASPER

Yes, I had an appointment. Jasper Koet.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes. We spoke already.

JASPER

Yeah.

RECEPTIONIST

You are to meet with Mr. Gilbert and--

JASPER

Oh, I'm sorry, I was hoping to meet with Susan Stanson?

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Gilbert will let me know when he's ready for you to approach his office.

JASPER

Sure. Okay. Thank you.

INT. FINSMITH HALLWAY - LATER

Jasper walks slowly, and unaccompanied. Surveying around. He reads, on a door: "Mr. Gilbert, Editor."

Jasper KNOCKS.

MR. GILBERT

Come in.

Jasper opens the door.

INT. MR. GILBERT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MR. GILBERT (45, with a kind mustached face) waves him to sit.

MR. GILBERT

A face to the prose. I feel like I know authors already when I read their stories. Keys to subconscious thought and all that. Sit, sit.

Jasper sits down.

MR. GILBERT (CONT'D)

We need to come up with a title. And, moreover, what are your thoughts of nixing the disjointedness that is the short story collection and transform your bulk of work into a proper novel? It has a niche I think in fantasy. Though we need more coherency, clarity.

JASPER

You read my book?

MR. GILBERT

You e-mailed it to Ms. Stanson's office, she must've thought it had merit so she sent it down to me, and I agree. There is a silver line, subtle optimism, as a thorough-line, which helps the reader trudge through the odd and depressing.

JASPER

Would you have read it if Ms. Stanson hadn't asked?

MR. GILBERT

Without an agent? And, unsolicited? So brave of you. No. But, about publishing your book. I think we should.

JASPER

Yeah?

MR. GILBERT

Yes.

JASPER

I'm sorry. It's just. My mom is Ms. Stanson. And I. Am I getting published because she's related to me?

MR. GILBERT

Ms. Stanson is your mother?

Jasper nods.

MR. GILBERT (CONT'D)

Unorthodox. But not unethical. Unusual indeed. Different surname. I'd not have guessed. You've revealed a secret she mightn't have wanted told, eh?

JASPER

I haven't seen her in twenty years. We aren't in cahoots or anything.

MR. GILBERT

Fascinating. Well, regardless. Networking got you here. Your stories, though, they'll take credit to why you'll have a FinSmith binding.

Jasper looks the happiest we've seen him. His hands and arms even manifest happiness in their movement.

EXT. MR. GILBERT'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Mr. Gilbert and Jasper shake hands.

JASPER

Could you tell me what office is... Ms. Stanson's?

MR. GILBERT

All right, Jasper. But you tell her you found your way meandering about. Two rights and you'll see her door.

JASPER

This has been incredible.

MR. GILBERT
Much to do. But I do enjoy
fledglings and their unjaded
enthusiasm.

Mr. Gilbert turns back to his office.

INT. FINSMITH HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Following Jasper as he approaches his mother's double doors.
One of which states: "Susan Stanson, Executive Editor."

He turns back around and enters a Men's Bathroom.

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper flattens his hair. Checks himself out. Self-conscious.

EXT./INT. SUSAN STANSON'S OFFICE

Jasper cracks open the door and spies, but can't see Susan,
so he pushes the door a little further. A STERN VOICE stops
him.

SUSAN (O.C.)
Who is there?

Jasper opens the door completely and walks in.

SUSAN STANSON (58, thin, attractive, all-business) looks
expensive as she stands up from behind her desk.

For an initial moment her guard is dropped until...

SUSAN (CONT'D)
I changed my number and you found
my place of work.

JASPER
Can we just have a cup of coffee?
And then, I could maybe promise to
limit my visits to Mr. Gilbert's
office.

Jasper's childlike, as his mother stands pondering.

EXT./INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER - DAY

Jasper and Susan sit across from one another at a rounded table. They fidget with their coffee cups.

SUSAN

I know you want answers. But before you exhaust me with guilt triggers and accostings from our past, please just entertain the discomforting truth that people are selfish. Self preservation had me sprint away, sadly abusively, away from a life I hadn't wanted. One with--

JASPER

Me.

SUSAN

No, I hadn't wanted to rear you. But I did. You did nothing other than obligate me to an unwanted marriage and town. I was a magazine editor with a bumbling man who pleaded that I love him and keep you. ... I don't regret your existence or my choices, as callous and dismissive as I seem. It's simply I was depressed and that condition consumed me there. I don't ask for forgiveness. I can't apologize. I'm here.

JASPER

It's nice to see you now.

Those kind words have Susan flinch.

JASPER (CONT'D)

Did you see your ceramic figurines in my book's fantastical characters?

SUSAN

I didn't read your book.

JASPER

You didn't?

SUSAN

I'd deleted your e-mail when I saw your name. And then later retrieved it from the trash. See, you should be happy I didn't stay around for your pliable adolescent years, you'd have been--

JASPER

Employed?

Jasper smiles. Susan smirks then too.

INT. CIRCUS STAGE - DAY

Of the Fantastical Characters that appear in a row, a TALL WOMAN, 40, with white clown makeup and painted eyelids and nose, steps forward. Man on Stilts sits in a seat watching her. His stilts in the sit next to him.

NARRATOR

She knew her options as well as her chains.

The Tall Woman is attached to a string and yo-yos up and down from an unseen controller.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She knew about options such as scissors and fleeing and asking for help. But she continued her performance.

The Tall Woman curls herself around and walks on the string, which emphasize the flexibility of both her and the string.

Her final trick has her strangle her neck around the string two times.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She came close, and close was comfort enough for a delay.

The string unwinds and she goes back to yo-yoing up and down.

The string breaks. She falls.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And then, one low-audience day, she slapped the ground. And walked away.

She walks off stage.

MONTAGE

1.) INT. MR. GILBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

Jasper and Mr. Gilbert edit his book, they smile.

2.) INT. SUSAN STANSON'S OFFICE

Jasper and his mother eat Chinese food. They chat and smile. She behind her desk, he in a chair across from her.

3.) INT. MR. GILBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Gilbert, smiling, crumples up a few pages. Jasper grimaces.

4.) INT. BANK - DAY

Jasper gives \$25,000 check to bank teller.

5.) INT. MOTEL ROOM/INT. ROY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jasper and Roy talk on the phone, as Roy handles Jasper's mail.

6.) EXT. STREET - DAY

Jasper cycles so fast. He comes to the "T" again, but from the "Susan" direction and heads straight and into the "Maggie" direction.

END MONTAGE

EXT. FANCY APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Jasper's panting. His bicycle is on the stoop. He KNOCKS then rings the DOORBELL.

He picks up his phone and calls Maggie.

MAGGIE

Hello.

JASPER
I'm here.

MAGGIE
Where?

JASPER
At your house.

MAGGIE
Jasper, I'm not there. My house is
packed up. I'm at Paul's. We leave
to Alaska tomorrow.

JASPER
Tomorrow.... So, could we meet? Or,
where does he live?

INT. ADVERTISING OFFICE - FLASHBACK

Jasper stands shoving Paul as he shoves back. Jasper looks
and notices Paul's desk with the name plate: PAUL BRANTER.

EXT. FANCY APARTMENT BUILDING - AS BEFORE

Jasper puts Maggie on speakerphone as he Internet searches
"Address" for "Paul Branter" in "Browersville."

MAGGIE
Jasper, your persistence is
confusing me.

INSERT SEARCH RESULTS: of Paul's address.

JASPER
Great, I'll be there soon.

MAGGIE
What?

JASPER
Love you, bye.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jasper cycles.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

Paul and Maggie wait outside his house. Jasper reaches into his basket, takes something, gets off his bike.

PAUL

Do not hit me. I will sue. I will call the police if you don't desist and respect that Maggie is with me. My cell phone is in my hand.

Jasper continues his approach to Maggie, ignoring Paul's presence and voice.

JASPER

Maggie. I'm getting published. I have a \$25,000 advance. I--

Paul stands in front of Maggie. Paul's between the two. The three stand huddled like that. Waiting for the next move.

Jasper whips out a can of silly string and sprays Paul. Paul advances swinging.

JASPER (CONT'D)

No, not closer than two feet. The can warns about that.

MAGGIE

Jasper. I don't love you anymore.

Jasper listens. Stops spraying. Paul looks at Maggie too.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I felt relief, relief Jasper, after we broke up. Relief more than heartache. I'm sorry I'd get weak whenever you'd try to get me back. But every time I'd rethink, wonder, "what if someone won't ever love me this much again? What if I end up single?" I mean I'm thirty one. Looks go. But I pick you apart....

She backs up, as if to retreat into the building.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

... I leave you. Paul has similar interests, similar financial goals. He and I are a partnership. Jasper.... It was too hard for me to love you.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
And even your book, which I am
happy for, doesn't change that, I
don't choose you. I don't want to
love you. Please. Don't make me
feel worse about that.

JASPER
But do you love me?

Maggie tears up. Nods.

JASPER (CONT'D)
I don't know what to do.

PAUL
Say goodbye.

JASPER
I would have dedicated my books to
you.

Maggie nods again.

Jasper hands the silly string can to Paul. Walks toward his
bicycle.

SUPERIMPOSE: EIGHT MONTHS LATER

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jasper drives in a beater truck. He is more dapper and
smilier than before.

EXT. IRIS'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jasper pulls up into his grandmother's driveway.

He walks over to the front door and KNOCKS.

IRIS
So.

Jasper hands her a hardcover book.

IRIS (CONT'D)
Susan told me you found her and
about this already.

Iris opens it, flips and sees its dedicated to her.

INSERT DEDICATION:

"To Iris, a respite."

IRIS

Aw, that was kind. You do it 'cause you know I'm old and it's kind to do things for old people whose Last Will and Testament you might get into? Or 'cause you need to stay with me again? Get your ass in here, I made scones.

INT. IRIS'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Jasper and Iris sit at the table. Jasper's eating a scone next to a coffee mug. Iris is crocheting a pink baby hat. A pink crocheted baby dress and matching booties are also near.

IRIS

You see much of Susan?

JASPER

For coffee or lunch a few times.

IRIS

She's one who loves at arm's length. And only a few get that close. She, like the bitchy offspring on TV, blames her mother.

Iris shrugs, not caring if that's a fair assessment or not.

IRIS (CONT'D)

You're over whoever you were grieving last you were here then?

JASPER

I think so.

IRIS

You were so dejected...
(Iris then starts imitating him, by SINGING a lyric from a song Sheryl Crow's "First Cut Is The Deepest.")

Iris CHUCKLES. Jasper smiles, humored too.

JASPER

Yeah.

IRIS

Some part of you will always love her, maybe. Don't feel guilty about that. Just know that she's best kept in your brain as a reminder of how much you can give and not a "what if I'd done...?" You're smart to try to love again. There finished.

Iris holds up the girly hat for inspection.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Isn't that nice?

She holds it against the dress and booties.

JASPER

For one of your dolls?

IRIS

No, it's for your friend you're going to see.

EXT. A BRISTLE ROAD - DAY

Jasper drives in his truck.

EXT./INT. DINER - DAY

Jasper enters and sees Fred with a BABY GIRL strapped onto his chest. Fred's glowing.

FRED

Hey, Jasper, good to see you.

JASPER

Yeah? Is that--?

FRED

Yeppers, it's our September. August thought it was a way for our daughter to be a junior.

JASPER

She's cute.

FRED

She is.

JASPER
So, you and August are doing well
then.

FRED
We are.

JASPER
That's good. Good.

Fred enjoys a moment watching Jasper's discomfort.

FRED
Beatrice and me are doing well too.
She and I got married.

JASPER
You and Beatrice?

Fred nods.

JASPER (CONT'D)
Such, good, wonderful. Oh, but how
does August...?

FRED
She didn't want me either. She's on
break out back.

EXT. (BACK OF) DINER - LATER

On one of two foldable chairs, August sits. She's thinner,
wearing a Jasper T-shirt ("Balloon Popper"), looking down and
STRUMMING a guitar. Jasper approaches.

JASPER
Nice shirt.

AUGUST
Why, hey.

Jasper hugs her, with her guitar between them. August stands,
puts her guitar down and then they have a proper hug.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
Did you see September?

JASPER
I did. She's adorable. You look
lovely yourself, August.

August sits back down, puts her feet on her seat, hugs her legs. Jasper hands her a package, then takes a seat nearby.

AUGUST

Why has it been so long since you've visited me? You've been gone so long. This is too soft to be your book. You're lookin' less dishevelled now. Happier too.

August uncovers the outfit Iris made.

JASPER

My grandmother made that.

AUGUST

That was so very nice of her, and you.

JASPER

I'm moving back to Bristle. I'm going to stay in the trailer.

AUGUST

Why would you do that? You've left here twice, discontented.

JASPER

August?

Jasper looks vulnerable.

JASPER (CONT'D)

I'd like for you to love me.

August's eyes glaze.

AUGUST

When was the last time you were in love?

JASPER

Now.

AUGUST

Yeah?

JASPER

Yes.

They kiss.

They pull apart. Smile.

They kiss again.

FADE OUT.

THE END

Vita

Summer Dorr's first feature-length film, *Dissection of an Olive*, which she wrote and directed, premiered in 2011. The film is expected on DVD in late 2012.