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A Good Man is Hard to Find

Cara Jackson

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FINAL THESIS
FEATURE SCREENPLAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Student Name: Cara Jackson

Thesis Logline:

A Good Man is Hard to Find

Title

A teleplay written and produced and presented to the faculty of
the Writing for the Screen MFA Program in the School of Film &

Television at Loyola Marymount University of

Los Angeles, California

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Fine Arts

Writing for the Screen

By

Cara Jackson

Student Name

Cara Jackson

Cara Jackson (May 2, 2022 09:31 PDT)

Student Signature

APPROVAL TO ADVANCE TO CANDIDACY

The following student has met all the criteria to advance to candidacy for an M.F.A. in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Writing for the Screen:

Cara Jackson

Student Name

May 2, 2022

Date

Karol Hoeffner

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Graduate Director Signature

A Good Man is Hard to Find

By

Cara Jackson

A thesis presented to the

Faculty of the Department of School of Film and Television

Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Degree

Masters of Fine Arts

May 5, 2022

INT. SUBURBAN CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

A Nashville non-denominational church. The interior painted with tasteful neutrals. Stained glass windows depicting Jesus crucified on the cross.

HAILEY KENDRICK (29, well-dressed, lost) sits in a pew near the front of the sanctuary, bopping along to the music. CLARK KENDRICK (29, trust fund baby, distracted) sits in the next seat, unmoved, trying to type on his phone discreetly.

The multicultural CHOIR sings a contemporary Christian song - lots of repeated phrases, positive reinforcement, dramatic production, a soft guitar.

Hailey mouths the words, as if she was afraid of her own voice. No real enthusiasm. A teary eyed WOMAN (30s, has been through it) sings along loudly, voice cracking with emotion.

The pastor, JOHN (white, 40s, wearing denim on denim) stands in the middle of the pulpit, swept up in the moment - eyes closed, both arms swaying to the beat, singing slightly under the key.

The Woman leans forward, doubles over. Her body shakes with heavy breaths. Then, she jolts back and screams, startling both Hailey and Clark. Clark YELPS.

She rocks back and forth, continuing to scream and sob. Clark refocuses his eyes on the pulpit. The woman drops to the floor, rolling around. Two burly male DEACONS come to assist the woman, helping her to her feet. Hailey stares at the woman. Envious.

INT. AN OPEN CONCEPT KITCHEN - DAY

The Kendrick home is an open concept, two bedroom loft style apartment in The Gulch. Their rent is three thousand dollars. The apartment looks well lived in. Everything is a shade of white, copper, or navy.

Hailey and Clark sit across from each other at a small, rose gold accented dining table, silently eating pancakes. Hailey stares at Clark as she chews. Clark types away on his phone, not making eye contact.

HAILEY

Did you enjoy church?

CLARK

Mm-hmm.

HAILEY

No, really. Did you enjoy it?

Clark's eyes narrow, a little suspicious.

CLARK

What's this about, Hailey?

HAILEY

I just feel like it's been a while since we had, like, a conversation.

Clark places his phone on the table, screen facing down. Hailey notices, but does not comment.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

I want to talk to you, is all.

Clark smiles at that. Gives his full attention to Hailey.

CLARK

So.

HAILEY

What did you think about church? Your real opinion.

CLARK

I don't care for that pastor. And I hate when people do all that yelling and screaming. Like, chill out.

HAILEY

You can't chill out when the Holy Spirit is moving you.

CLARK

Sure.

Hailey looks off, wistful.

HAILEY

I bet it's amazing.

CLARK

What?

HAILEY

Losing yourself in the Lord like that.

Clark doesn't know how to respond. They keep eating.

EXT. NICE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant building is a repurposed antebellum plantation home. Long, white pillars. A wrap around porch. Standing on a mass grave.

INT. NICE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The interior of the restaurant is oppressively "fancy." Bright white tablecloths, immaculately folded napkins, the WAITERS wear bowties and vests. Sparsely populated, a slow day for the restaurant. A light tinkle of smooth jazz playing.

Hailey and Clark walk in, relatively casually dressed. In the back, at a corner table sit two elderly white folks - ROBERT and DORIS - Clark's hungry, aloof parents in their Sunday best.

Hailey takes a seat across from Robert. She gives him a smile. He smiles back. Not a very affectionate man. Clark goes for his mother, gives her a kiss on the forehead before sitting down.

ROBERT
It's about time.

CLARK
Good to see y'all.

ROBERT
I ordered for the table.

Doris reaches out across the table. Clark grabs her hand, squeezes it.

DORIS
So, how are things?

CLARK
Good.

Doris waits for him to continue. He doesn't. A WAITER arrives, quietly pours red wine into the glasses on the table.

DORIS
I need more than "good," sugar.
It's been too long.

CLARK
There's not much else to it.

The dulcet sounds of an IPHONE RINGTONE interrupt him. Clark quickly silences his phone. Puts it on the table, face down.

HAILEY
Who's that?

CLARK
It said Scam Likely.

Hailey does not believe that. Doris notices the tension. It puts a smile on her face.

DORIS
How are things with you, Hailey?

HAILEY
Same as Clark, I guess. Just Good.

DORIS
Are you still working? You're trying out the whole art thing, right?

HAILEY
I do graphic design.

DORIS
How's that going?

Both Hailey and Clark tense up.

HAILEY
Well, I'm freelancing.

DORIS
Oh.

A moment of dead air. Clark's phone BUZZES. Hailey's eye twitches.

DORIS (CONT'D)
At least that'll be easy to quit once the babies get here.

Another uncomfortable silence. The WAITER arrives with small, simple salads. Robert eats, in his own world.

CLARK
Well, that won't be for a little while.

HAILEY
Or at all, ever.

This catches the entire table off guard. Clark keeps his eyes on Hailey - concerned. The gears turning in his head visible on his face.

ROBERT

Aww, don't say that.

HAILEY

It's just...the more I learn about childbirth, the less I want to like, put my body through that. Did you know that some women lose their teeth? I don't want a baby to steal my teeth.

Clark's phone BUZZES.

DORIS

I've got all my teeth, still.

HAILEY

You got lucky. I'm unlucky.

The phone BUZZES again. Clark doesn't look at it.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

And then when they're born you don't belong to yourself anymore. You have to share yourself completely. Your body fluids, your blood, your whole soul.

That's a little too philosophical for the rest of the table.

DORIS

Being a mother has been the most magical experience of my life.

CLARK

(to Hailey)

But you've always wanted to have kids.

Hailey shrugs. An attempt at unbothered.

HAILEY

I changed my mind. But I could change it again. It's only Sunday. Who knows who I'll be on Friday?

Clark's concern shifts into suspicion.

CLARK
You're being spiteful.

HAILEY
I'm being honest.

Another BUZZ.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
Clark. Who is texting you.

CLARK
Some scammer.

HAILEY
That's a pretty fuckin' persistent
scammer.

CLARK
Times are tough.

Another BUZZ. Hailey moves faster than Clark. She grabs the phone. Clark gives up, resigned.

HAILEY
Do not answer wants to know what
time you'll be coming over tonight.

A beat. The WAITER arrives, replacing salads with steaks. Hailey gently places the phone back onto the table.

CLARK
Let's not do this here.

DORIS
Oh no, don't mind us.

She's loving it. Robert takes a bite.

HAILEY
Who is she?

CLARK
Does it matter?

HAILEY
You're dropping dick off at random
women's houses, yes it matters.

ROBERT
The steak's pretty good here.

He and Doris eat.

CLARK

Not random. Carefully vetted. I have respect for myself. Unlike someone.

HAILEY

What do you mean by that, Clark?

The other people in the restaurant begin to take notice of the situation.

CLARK

Let's not do this here. Let's have a pleasant evening and enjoy our food.

Hailey looks around, feels the eyes on her. She slows her breathing down. Presses her hands together and begins a silent prayer.

A small victory smirk on Clark's face.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Besides, we're even now.

Hailey's momentary calm vanishes.

HAILEY

Fuck you.

Clark's victory smirk vanishes as well. Doris reaches her hand out again. He swats it away.

Hailey's anger, also gone.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A California King bed with flat pillows. Hailey and Clark laying in bed. Awake.

CLARK

Are you mad at me?

A pause.

HAILEY

Not really.

CLARK

Why not?

Hailey doesn't have an answer. She leans over, shuts her eyes, tries to sleep.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

The office is designed for maximum comfort. The carefully chosen colors all pleasing to the eye. Hailey and Clark sit on beanbags, holding hands - putting on a performance.

The therapist SARAH (20s, baby faced, still optimistic) sits in a chair with more structure, peering at the couple from behind her desk.

CLARK

I didn't even sleep with her. I was just texting her.

SARAH

Why?

CLARK

Sometimes when I talk to Hailey it's like I'm talking through her. She's there but not there.

Hailey, processing that.

CLARK (CONT'D)

I wanted to get a reaction out of her. To see if she can feel something.

SARAH

Not the best strategy, though.

Clark, a casual shrug.

CLARK

Hindsight is 20/20.

SARAH

How did you expect her to react?

CLARK

I thought she might be angry. Or upset. And she was. For like, a second.

Sarah focuses on Hailey.

SARAH

Tell me about it from your perspective.

HAILEY

It's like he said. I was angry for like a second and then I got over it.

She's emotionless.

SARAH

Why weren't you upset?

Hailey searches herself for the answer.

HAILEY

I realized it didn't matter. Whether or not I was upset.

Clark's eyes flick over to her - alarmed.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

So I just let go of it.

Sarah scribbles in her notebook.

SARAH

I'm going to assign you two some homework.

She pulls out a book - MARIANNE WILLIAMSON'S A RETURN TO LOVE. Hands it to Clark.

INT. AUDI - DAY

Hailey pulls out of the parking lot and onto a residential road. They ride in silence for a moment. Hailey turns the radio on. A pop station.

Hailey looks forward. Clark's eyes on Hailey.

CLARK

Hailey.

She doesn't look at him. Mouths the words to the song playing.

CLARK (CONT'D)

You know I love you, right? A lot. More than anybody, or any thing.

She actively avoids looking at him. He reaches for her face.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Look at me.

She does, briefly, then looks away. She avoids a pothole.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Do you love me?

A pause.

HAILEY
Yes. I think. I'm pretty sure. But
it's like, do I even know what love
is? Is this it?

CLARK
Is what it?

Hailey doesn't hear him. She keeps going.

HAILEY
If this is love, it's like, was
this what I was looking forward to?
My whole life? I don't even dream
anymore.

Hailey speeds up. Clark sits up in his seat a little, growing concerned.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
I've done what I was supposed to
do. I'm supposed to be happy. Why
can't I just be happy?

Hailey plows through a 4-way stop sign. A car HONKS.

CLARK
Hailey, slow down -

Hailey begins to SOB. Her foot pressed firmly on the gas. Clark, strangely sort of calm and prepared, trying to soothe her.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Let's get something to eat. We can
talk over food. Slow down so we can
pull over somewhere.

She's not listening.

HAILEY
I can't keep going like this. I
won't.

CLARK
Hailey, I'm in this car too. You
might want to die, but I don't.

She slows down, briefly. Clark catches his breath, keeping his eyes locked on Hailey.

Hailey looks out. The car approaches a bridge, underneath it a body of water.

She takes a deep breath.

HAILEY

It's better this way.

Hailey FLOORS IT. Clark tries to grab the steering wheel.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The car shoots off of the bridge and slams into the body of water underneath it.

The figure of a MAN floats in from above, descends slowly into the water.

EXT. WATER - DAY

The Man looks down at Hailey and Clark unconscious in the rapidly flooding car.

INT. THE GARDEN OF EDEN - ?

Hailey awakens on her back, lying in a patch of deep green grass. She sits up. Takes in her surroundings, the saturated colors of nature. She's in the middle of a Biblical Paradise, a dream version of the Garden of Eden.

She stands. Her feet carry her north, she doesn't think about her destination. It's instinctual.

Hailey walks through the lush vegetation, pushing away vines and fruit-covered branches.

The Man stands in a field of bright flowers, a beacon of light shining down on him from the heavens. He's healthy, well-fed. He turns to Hailey and smiles.

Hailey smiles back at him, one of deep relief.

HAILEY

I saw you.

MAN

We've known each other for a very long time. I was there the day you were born.

HAILEY

I missed you.

MAN

I've missed you, too.

Hailey starts to speak again, but no sound comes out. The Man approaches her.

MAN (CONT'D)

Everything will be alright now.

He raises his hand. Hailey kneels. Blood drips from The Man's hand onto Hailey's face. She reaches up, rubs the blood on her face.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Hailey, in a hospital bed. Her eyes shoot awake, scaring the hell out of the NURSE attending to her IV.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Hailey stands behind a walker. The Nurse and The DOCTOR (30s, fantastic hair) observe. The Doctor nods, signaling for Hailey to begin.

The first few steps are difficult. Then, Hailey starts walking smoothly. The ease confuses her.

Both the Doctor and the Nurse are awed, slightly terrified.

INT. X-RAY ROOM - DAY

The room is dark. A slightly disheveled Hailey sits in a chair. The DOCTOR sits behind her desk, clicking away at a computer.

Projected onto a screen are two sets of X-Rays. In the first set of X-Rays, nearly every bone has a fracture or a break. In the second set of X-Rays, every bone is healed.

DOCTOR

You see this?

She uses the computer mouse to circle a particularly gnarly looking crack in a leg bone in the first set.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Usually, this takes eight weeks to heal and months physical of therapy afterwards.

She points to the same bone in the second set.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
But you're already walking. Like nothing happened. It's been two weeks. Pardon my language, but that's a God damned miracle.

That sinks in for Hailey. A God damned Miracle.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Hailey, in a hospital bed, signs paperwork on a clipboard. The Doctor looks at her, a little awed but mostly apprehensive.

DOCTOR
All your tests look normal.

HAILEY
So I'm alright?

The Doctor looks down at Hailey. Hesitates before responding.

DOCTOR
We're releasing you. Whatever happens next, we are not liable for.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Hailey and Clark embrace at the entrance. They hold the hug. An ambulance, sirens blaring, hurriedly pulls up. Three EMTs leap out of the back, rushing bodies on gurneys inside.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Hailey and Clark fuck for the first time in a long time. Good for them.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Hailey and Clark lay in bed, naked and comfortable. They pass a backwoods-encased joint back and forth, taking deep inhales. They blow the smoke towards the open window, fanning it away from the smoke alarm.

CLARK
Hailey?

HAILEY
What?

CLARK
I love you.

Hailey giggles.

HAILEY
You keep saying that.

CLARK
I mean it.

HAILEY
Sure.

Hailey inhales. Clark kisses her on the cheek. She smiles, huge. Then, a flash of determination.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
Now we just have to find the guy
that saved us.

Clark's eyebrows furrow - confusion.

CLARK
What guy?

Clark's confusion makes Hailey confused.

HAILEY
The guy who pulled us out of the
car.

CLARK
Are you talking about like, the
EMTs? We were fuckin unconscious.

HAILEY
But he must have saved us both.

CLARK
Who?

HAILEY
You really didn't see him?

CLARK
Hailey, I have no idea what you're talking about.

HAILEY
I'm sure you saw him.

An idea in Hailey's mind. She jumps up.

Hailey leans over, opens the side dresser and pulls out a blank notebook.

She draws a quick sketch. She gets the major details - The Man's striking eyes, the shape of his jawline, the way his hair fell onto his face. She's momentarily mesmerized by her own drawing.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
This guy.

She hands the drawing to Clark. He looks it over, very seriously trying to remember the man. But he doesn't.

CLARK
Baby, I've never seen him before in my life.

HAILEY
Well, that's him. Did you have any dreams while you were in the hospital?

He thinks.

CLARK
I can't remember.

HAILEY
I dreamt about him. We were in the Garden of Eden. His blood...

In that moment, Hailey Understands.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
Oh my God.

She moves from the bed to the floor, kneeling in prayer.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
Thank you Lord. Thank you, Lord! I accept.

Clark takes a good long look at the joint, now just a roach.

CLARK
You should probably stay away from
sativas.

Hailey ignores him. She gets up, starts getting dressed.

HAILEY
I have to find him. I have to -

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

A printer prints dozens of copies of Hailey's drawing. The words HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN? in a dark, all caps font on the top. CALL (615) 555-555 printed underneath the picture.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE - DAY

Hailey walks down the block, taping her poster to poles.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

This apartment is much less swanky than the Kendrick's. There's barely enough room for a twin bed. The floor is covered with clothes and bags of old takeout.

The man in Hailey's memory, JOSHUA JENKINS - 29, a true country bumpkin, dark undereye circles - moves around the 200 square feet of the apartment slowly, in search of a clean pair of pants. He finds one.

Joshua's phone rings. He tenses up. Answers the phone. Is silent for a moment.

JOSHUA
I know I can come home, momma. I
have enough to get through these
next few weeks.

Joshua's shoulders slump.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
I'm not going to give up. I love
you, too.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

A brightly lit, sterile grey and blue room. Joshua stands at the end of a mortuary table.

An anatomy poster detailing the veins and central nervous system of a human being behind him. On the table, the cold, grey legs of a man that's been dead a week and just had embalming fluid pumped into his arteries. Joshua keeps his eyes to the left, refusing to look at what the MORTICIAN is doing off screen.

MORTICIAN (O.S.)

Trocar.

Joshua soundlessly finds the tool and passes it to the Mortician.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE - SUNSET

Joshua walks down the street, head down. He narrowly avoids a MOTHER pushing a STROLLER. They exchange polite apologies. Joshua keeps his eyes up. Notices a strange poster on a utility pole.

He recognizes himself in the drawing immediately.

JOSHUA

What the heck?

He snatches the posting down.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joshua dials the number on the poster.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A half-dressed, slightly sweaty (not in a sexy way, in like a "just ran thirty minutes to get home way) Clark holds up one of Hailey's posters.

CLARK

Hailey, this is nuts.

HAILEY

It's all I could think of. I have to find him.

CLARK

Why are you so pressed to find him?

HAILEY

He saved our lives, Clark! He might also be the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but I don't want to get too ahead of myself.

CLARK

What???

Hailey's phone rings. She answers. On the other line, Joshua begins to speak. A big grin cuts across Hailey's face as she recognizes the voice.

INTERCUT:

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joshua, scared out of his mind, pacing around the apartment.

JOSHUA

Ma'am, what exactly do you want from me?

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A serene Hailey. Clark eavesdrops.

HAILEY

I want to thank you.

JOSHUA

Thank me for what? I don't know you, lady. I wish you would take the pictures down.

HAILEY

I will. And I'll give you some money from your trouble.

Clark mouths, SOME MONEY? Hailey puts her index finger up, a silent "hush."

HAILEY (CONT'D)

But I have to meet you. I have to thank you in person. You are very special to me.

Joshua softens at that. A little intrigued.

JOSHUA
Special?

HAILEY
You have no idea.

JOSHUA
Okay. But we have to be in public.
In case you're a crazy person.

HAILEY
We can meet at Centennial Park.
Does noon work?

JOSHUA
Sure.

He hangs up. Exhales. A little astonished that happened.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hailey hangs up. Beaming.

CLARK
(deflated)
So he's real.

HAILEY
Mm-hmm.

CLARK
You can't meet up with this guy.

HAILEY
Well, I'm going to.

Clark gets serious. Like a disappointed sitcom dad.

CLARK
Hailey, we need to be honest with
each other about what happened.

Hailey's face drops. Pain on her face. She does not want to think about it.

CLARK (CONT'D)
I'm seeing a cycle repeated.

HAILEY
Don't -

CLARK

This happened the last time you tried to kill yourself. You got all manic and happy, a real fuckin zest for life after nearly dying. You even tried to kill me this time. I've been chilling since I know you were in a bad place, but that was seriously not cool.

The words hit hard. Hailey swallows.

CLARK (CONT'D)

I'm worried about you.

HAILEY

This is different.

CLARK

Is it?

Hailey shakes her head. Rejecting Clark's words with her body.

HAILEY

Didn't you listen to the doctors? She said our survival was statistically impossible, never mind our full recovery. The only explanation is an intervention from God -

CLARK

Or modern medicine. We have pretty good health insurance, you're welcome.

Hailey switches strategies - folds in on herself, looks pitiful.

HAILEY

Please. You know how I've been. And I'm sorry for trying to take you with me. That was wrong.

Clark, stung with guilt.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

You've got to believe me. I think I've finally found it, baby. I'm not going to be empty anymore.

She approaches him for a hug.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
Please let me have this.

He hesitates.

CLARK
Okay.

He wraps his arms around her.

CLARK (CONT'D)
But if you get a bad vibe or he
looks dangerous, you leave and you
call me and I'll come get you,
alright?

HAILEY
Okay.

A lie.

EXT. CENTENNIAL PARK - DAY

It's Centennial Park. Very green. The Parthenon looms in the background. Hailey arrives. She sees Joshua's frame. Hailey waves, skips towards him. He's not sure how to react.

HAILEY
Good afternoon.

JOSHUA
Good afternoon...

HAILEY
I'm Hailey. You saved my life.

She holds her hand out for a shake. Reluctantly, he takes it.

JOSHUA
I'm Joshua.

HAILEY
Joshua.

His name like honey on her tongue.

EXT. CENTENNIAL PARK - DAY

Joshua and Hailey sit on a bench. He eats a hamburger. Hailey drinks a green juice. Joshua keeps his distance. He's scared of her.

She watches him like he's a captive animal.

JOSHUA
You said something about money?

HAILEY
How much do you need? I'll write
you a check.

His mouth opens, but he doesn't speak.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
You saved my life. And my
husband's. I'll give you whatever
you ask for.

Joshua, suspicious of her.

JOSHUA
Fifteen thousand dollars.

Hailey shrugs - to her, this is a bargain. She pulls out her checkbook, a pen and fills it out.

Joshua looks on, awed. She hands him the check.

Joshua holds it in his hands. All that money on a thin slip of paper. Then, he rips it in half.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
I don't really want your money.

Undeterred, Hailey starts writing another check.

HAILEY
Here.

JOSHUA
I don't want it.

HAILEY
Please. I insist. You're
underselling yourself.

He turns away from her.

JOSHUA
I don't feel right taking it. I
don't believe I'm who you think I
am, ma'am.

HAILEY
I know exactly who you are.

Joshua hesitates.

JOSHUA

It's funny. I feel like I know you already. But I know I've never seen you before.

HAILEY

I told you, you saved my life.

JOSHUA

I don't remember doing that. And that's the kind of thing you remember.

HAILEY

I had a vision of you.

JOSHUA

That doesn't make any sense.

HAILEY

How else do you explain it, then?

Joshua leans back.

JOSHUA

Sometimes...things happen. Beyond anything a human could perceive or explain.

Hailey absorbs that.

HAILEY

Wow. You're very wise.

A chip away at Joshua's armor. She's clearly the only person who's ever said that to him.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

But I don't believe you. I saw you in my vision and here you are in front of me.

JOSHUA

I couldn't have.

Joshua, filled with self-loathing.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

I'm not heroic enough to do what you said I did.

Hailey, a little disgusted by the self-loathing.

HAILEY
Can I be frank with you?

She doesn't give him a real chance to respond.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
You have been given a blessing from
the good Lord above. The power to
heal. Right now you're taking it
for granted.

He absorbs that. She hands him the second check. He takes it,
stares at it.

JOSHUA
My mother always told me that
people from the city were strange.

She smiles at him.

HAILEY
You're adorable.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Joshua shoves quinoa into his mouth, eyes flickering between
an awestruck Hailey and a suspicious Clark. The air is tense,
uneasy.

JOSHUA
I'm from Gladeville. Ain't much
there. A couple of churches, a
school. My family's all still
there.

CLARK
What do you do?

JOSHUA
I'm working with this mortician.
But really, I'm a musician.

CLARK
Hmmm.

JOSHUA
Were you in the accident, too?

Hailey and Clark share a look. They're calling it an
accident.

CLARK
Yes.

JOSHUA
Did you see me? Like Hailey did?

CLARK
No.

Joshua deflates a little at that.

CLARK (CONT'D)
What is it that you want from my
wife?

Hailey shoots him a look, appalled this apparent attitude.

JOSHUA
I don't want anything from her. To
be honest, I'm trying to figure out
what she wants from me.

CLARK
She didn't tell you? She thinks
you're the Second Coming.

Clark gets up.

CLARK (CONT'D)
You want anything to drink?

Joshua shakes his head, negative. Clark leaves. Hailey shoots
Joshua an apologetic look.

HAILEY
He's not usually this big of like,
a hater.

Clark returns, can of Pabst Blue Ribbon in hand. An awkward
silence.

Clark opens the beer can but it pops up weird, slicing his
thumb open. One of those cuts that looks worse than it
actually is. He bleeds profusely.

CLARK
Aw, goddammit.

Hailey jumps up, grabs a paper towel to compress the wound
with. She returns with it but Joshua stands suddenly.

JOSHUA
Wait.

Joshua holds his hand out in Clark's direction. The cut STOPS
BLEEDING. Slowly, the skin fuses back together. The only
evidence of the cut a faint scar.

A moment of silence. No one sure they actually just saw that.

A small trickle of blood runs from the edge of Joshua's mouth.

Hailey notices first, leans over, napkin in hand.

HAILEY

Jesus.

LATER

Joshua, still at the table, mouth filled with paper towels. Hailey brings him a glass of water. Clark stares at his finger, still in disbelief.

JOSHUA

Sorry about this.

HAILEY

You've got nothing to be sorry about. Your very presence is a blessing.

Joshua, a little embarrassed.

CLARK

How did you do that?

JOSHUA

I don't know. It's not something I can really control.

HAILEY

It's happened before?

JOSHUA

It used to happen all the time. That's why I didn't think you were fully insane.

Clark, a little thrown by that.

CLARK

Jesus fuckin' Christ.

JOSHUA

It's been a while. When I was younger, I'd wake up with no memory of what happened. Just people telling them I'd healed them. But when I became a teenager it stopped.

HAILEY

They're back now. There must be a reason.

JOSHUA

My mom would get upset with me because she thought I was doing it on purpose.

Joshua, suddenly solemn.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

The last time I healed someone, Hurricane Katrina happened.

Hailey doesn't pay attention to the vibe shift.

HAILEY

God is trying to tell us something. I don't know what.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joshua sleeps on his back.

Hailey and Clark stand in the doorway, watching over him like parents of a newborn.

CLARK

This feels odd.

Hailey ignores that, looks on with pure love.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clark paces the bedroom, eyes still on his finger. Hailey in the ensuite bathroom, brushing her teeth.

CLARK

This only makes him like, a guy with healing powers. Not Jesus 2.

HAILEY (O.S.)

Clark. Please.

CLARK

Be real.

Hailey shuts off the sink, enters the bedroom.

HAILEY

I am being real!

CLARK
I don't know why a God would trust
us with him.

HAILEY
He's mysterious.

Clark takes Hailey's expression in. She's completely unbothered, content in her belief.

CLARK
I'm worried about this.

He leans over, kisses her on the forehead.

CLARK (CONT'D)
I'm really fucking worried about
you.

She stands on her tip toes, kissing her back.

HAILEY
Baby, this is what I've been
waiting for my whole life.

Clark stays tense.

CLARK
I don't like that he's in our
house.

Hailey climbs into bed.

HAILEY
It's only for the night.

Clark settles in next to her. Still unconvinced, but dropping it for the moment.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joshua, in bed, sleeping violently. He tosses, turns. Sweat soaks the sheets.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

Everything is quiet at the governor's mansion. No lights on inside. No staff roaming about.

The roof catches fire first. Slowly, surely, the entire building is consumed by flame.

INT. HAILEY'S CAR - DAY

Hailey, Clark, and Joshua all stuffed into a small Volkswagen. Clark in the driver's seat, dressed nicely - a button down shirt, a blazer. Hailey in a brightly colored floral wrap dress. Very Jeanne Damas' Rouje. Joshua wears a Nirvana T-shirt, jeans, and black Air Forces.

Hailey turns the car radio on. The Clark Sisters sing.

Clark drives straight but he keeps his eyes on Joshua in the back seat.

Joshua stares out of the window, transfixed by something. Hailey notices, tries to see. But she doesn't see anything. She frowns.

INT. SUBURBAN CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

Hailey and Clark in their same seats. Joshua where the Woman was, on Hailey's left.

Pastor John, once again in denim on denim, stands at the altar, an open Bible in front of him. Wordlessly, he signals for the congregation to stand. They get to their feet.

PASTOR JOHN

We'll be reading Revelations 5,
verses 1 through 14.

The sound of thick books opening, pages being turned. The verses are projected onto a screen behind Pastor John and scroll at the speed he speaks.

PASTOR JOHN (CONT'D)

Then I saw in the right hand of him
who was seated on the throne a
scroll written within and on the
back, sealed with seven seals.

The congregation chants the verses along with the pastor. A ritual.

PASTOR JOHN (CONT'D)

And I saw a mighty angel
proclaiming with a loud voice, "who
is worthy to open the scroll and
break its seals?" And no one in
heaven or on earth or under the
earth was able to open the scroll
or to look into it.

(MORE)

PASTOR JOHN (CONT'D)

And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

Pastor John interrupts himself with a wet, phlegmy cough.

PASTOR JOHN (CONT'D)

Excuse me. And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

He coughs again, this time harder.

PASTOR JOHN (CONT'D)

Pardon me, y'all.

An ELDERLY WOMAN closer to the front shouts out.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Take your time, pastor!

The congregation backs her with polite applause. Pastor John collects himself. His hand on his chest.

PASTOR JOHN

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Pastor John begins to cough again, harder and uncontrollably. He falls to the ground, groans, rolls around. A man in severe pain. A DEACON (50s, Black, bald) and several MEN IN SUITS rush the altar. The Deacon checks the Pastor's pulse.

DEACON

Somebody call a doctor!

The rooms lets out a collective gasp.

Hailey shifts in her seat, the anxiety of watching something go wrong. Clark places a hand on her shoulder, an attempt at comfort. She turns to Joshua.

He's transfixed, again. Looking at what Hailey can only see as a blank piece of wall. His eyes are wide. They start rolling up towards the back of his head.

He snaps out of that trance, abruptly. He turns to Hailey. She smiles at him.

HAILEY

You know what you need to do.

He nods at her. Joshua leaves the pew, moves towards the altar. Hailey lags behind, far enough to not interfere but close enough to get a good look.

DEACON

Are you a doctor?

Joshua waves him off. The Deacon steps aside. Joshua stares down at the Pastor, who struggles to breathe. He places a hand on his forehead. The Pastor closes his eyes, comforted. Stops breathing. For a moment, he appears dead. Then, his eyes shoot open. He shakes, violently. He wakes up, screaming in tongues.

Joshua grabs the Pastor's face. Looks into his eyes. He calms down.

PASTOR JOHN

You...

He smiles at Joshua. Then falls back asleep, gently. Joshua vomits a little, trying to avoid Pastor John's shirt.

INT. NASHVILLE LOCAL NEWS STUDIO - DAY

Hailey and Joshua sit at a tall table. Across from them is a pleasant Caucasian lady NEWS ANCHOR (platinum blonde, big teeth, good aura), looking out at a small AUDIENCE.

A video of Joshua healing Pastor John plays large in the background.

NEWS ANCHOR

Chaos at church as a Pastor wakes from what looked to be certain death. Sometimes, life is stranger than fiction. A miracle occurred Nashville's First Baptist Church this past Sunday. Today on Good Morning Middle Tennessee we've got the healer himself and the woman who helped him unlock his potential.

Hailey basks in that. The idea of her unlocking his potential.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

So, Josh. This video has reached over a hundred thousand views in just two days. People are calling you the next Jesus. Tell us what happened.

A pause. Joshua looking unwell.

JOSHUA

Well. I was in church. And the pastor just started coughing. I got up and... Honestly, I really didn't know what happened until I saw the video. All I remember is throwing up.

The News Anchor nods, peppy.

NEWS ANCHOR

Now Hailey, how did you know he was a miracle worker?

HAILEY

I just knew. As soon as I saw him.

The News Anchor smiles but it doesn't quite reach her eyes. These vague answers don't make great TV.

NEWS ANCHOR

How wonderful. Thank you for coming.

The AUDIENCE applauds.

The News Anchor turns away from Joshua and Hailey and addresses the camera.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Next up. Strange happenings in Middle Tennessee. The governor's mansion caught fire last night. Investigators are looking for the cause although they do believe it was a deliberately set fire.

Joshua shifts in his seat, uncomfortable.

EXT. NASHVILLE LOCAL NEWS STUDIO - DAY

Hailey and Joshua pose for pictures outside the studio with a woman, MARJORIE (50s, exhausted, a permanent worry on her face) and her daughter, EMMA (12 but looks younger, in a wheelchair, frighteningly thin).

Marjorie embraces Joshua in a tight hug. He does not hug back, unused to affection.

MARJORIE

I'm so glad to see you.

Hailey, caught off guard.

HAILEY

Do you know him?

MARJORIE

Of course I do. He's the Son of God.

Hailey, an eyebrow raised.

HAILEY

How do you know?

MARJORIE

Same as you do. I moved here from Memphis so I could join your church after I saw the video. Joshua, you are the way and the light.

JOSHUA

I don't know about all that, ma'am.

MARJORIE

You saved that man from certain death. And I know that you'll be able to heal my baby, too.

She gestures towards Emma, who is so frail she struggles to keep her eyes open. She takes deep breaths, clearly struggling through them. Hailey takes in the human suffering. It makes Joshua uncomfortable.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Please heal my baby. They say she's got weeks.

JOSHUA

Ma'am, I'm sorry, but it doesn't quite work like that.

MARJORIE

I'll give you whatever amount of money you want. I've got plenty.

Joshua, disgusted.

JOSHUA

I don't want your money.

Marjorie, a little puzzled. Joshua not fitting her expectations. Hailey notices, jumps in.

HAILEY

What he means is his miracles are spontaneous. He doesn't have them focused yet, but he's working on it.

Joshua shoots her a look - working on what? Hailey keeps going.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

But it's wonderful that you recognize him just like I do. I believe he's going to save the world.

Marjorie doesn't care about the world. She cares about Emma.

MARJORIE

(to Hailey)

Please help me.

A silent bond formed between them.

HAILEY

I will. I promise.

Hailey and Joshua go their separate ways.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hailey and Clark sit on the couch, watching Joshua and Hailey's media appearance and eating Doritos. Hailey, absorbed in the screen - scrutinizing herself.

CLARK

I love that color on you.

HAILEY

I thought it might be too dark.

CLARK

It's perfect. You look so nice.

He wipes Dorito dust off of his hand with a hand towel. Leans over and reaches for one of Hailey's breasts. She looks down. Places her hand over his but doesn't move.

HAILEY

Has Joshua called you?

CLARK

Why would he call me?

HAILEY

I don't know. I haven't talked to him since we filmed this. I need to know if he's coming to church tomorrow.

Clark releases the titty. Hailey, frowns at the sudden loss of pressure.

CLARK

Are you sleeping with him?

HAILEY

No!

She realizes that came off suspicious.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

No.

Clark frowns.

CLARK

No. Of course. You wouldn't fuck Jesus 2. Although he is handsome.

HAILEY

True.

CLARK

When you've fucked up you're always waiting on the other shoe to drop, you know? I'm waiting on you to retaliate.

HAILEY

I'm not going to. I don't want to be that kind of person anymore.

CLARK

Neither do I.

Clark's hand returns to Hailey's breasts. He finds a nipple, squeezes it. Hailey moans a little.

CLARK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about everything.

Hailey reaches for his sweatpants.

HAILEY

So am I. It's one thing to try to kill myself. But I should've left you out of it.

CLARK

Please stop talking about suicide
it's making my dick soft.

She obliges, smiling, pulling him into a deep kiss.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE

Clark and Hailey in a pretty good mood. Sarah, detached and unconcerned.

CLARK

Things are going well. Usually when I say that I'm lying to you but not this time.

HAILEY

I really think it's because we have this new friend in our life.

CLARK

I have to agree. I was skeptical of him at first. But it's like...being around him makes everything feel easy.

HAILEY

He's just such a calming...soothing presence.

CLARK

Hailey's getting into church.

HAILEY

That's why we've gotten so close to our friend. He goes there with us.

Sarah's eyebrows go up.

SARAH
Which church is this?

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

Hailey claps happily along with the worship music, eyes scanning the room. No Joshua. She's disappointed.

INT. HAILEY'S CAR - DAY

Clark in the driver's seat. Hailey in the passenger. She dials Joshua's number. Waits. It goes to voicemail.

HAILEY
Hey Joshua! We missed you at church today. We should do brunch or something soon. Call me back. Bye-bye.

Clark pulls out of the parking spot.

CLARK
He's avoiding you.

HAILEY
He can't avoid fate. He sure as hell can't avoid God.

He drives. They're silent for a while.

CLARK
It's a burden, I bet.

HAILEY
You think? I think it's a blessing.

CLARK
Yeah, because it ain't you with the Jesus powers.

HAILEY
I suppose you're right.

CLARK
Imagine you have healing powers. People would be coming up to you all the time for the smallest shit.

HAILEY
I'd love that.

CLARK

You would? I wouldn't.

HAILEY

It would be nice if there was something that I knew I had to do. Like a purpose for being here on this Earth. A real purpose. Besides just getting up and existing.

Clark shrugs.

CLARK

Fair enough.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hailey, on her laptop searches Joshua's phone number. Terrifyingly, a number of websites with his personal information pop up. Hailey clicks the first link.

CLARK

You should probably leave him alone. If he wanted to talk he'd call you.

Hailey ignores him.

HAILEY

He lives in East Nashville.

CLARK

How the hell do you know that?

HAILEY

I looked it up.

CLARK

It was that easy?

She spins her laptop around, showing Clark the screen. It's got everything including his (semi-redacted) social security number.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Yikes.

HAILEY

Yeah. That's kind of scary, actually.

A pause.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
Well. Anyway.

EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

A two-story apartment complex. The front door has a slightly busted window panel. Hailey looks at the buzzer. Sees. J. JENKINS. Presses it. It emits a sad bzzz.

JOSHUA (O.S.)
Hello?

HAILEY
Hi! It's me!

Silence on Joshua's end for a moment.

JOSHUA
What do you want?

HAILEY
Just to talk.

JOSHUA
I'll come outside.

Hailey waits. Joshua appears, shirtless and in slides.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
Look. You need to leave me alone.

He keeps his voice low. Hailey, flabbergasted.

HAILEY
What did I do?

JOSHUA
I know you want me to keep healing people. I don't want to.

She crosses her arms.

HAILEY
Why not?

JOSHUA
It hurts. I can't save the world if it kills me.

HAILEY
That's what Jesus did.

JOSHUA
Yeah, but he knew he was coming
back.

HAILEY
You'll know, when the time is
right.

Joshua takes a look at Hailey. Sees her for the first time. A true believer in him.

JOSHUA
It's easy for you. You're not the
one with the responsibility.

HAILEY
Maybe. I won't pretend I've got it
as difficult as you do.

A moment of silence between the two.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
I think we're kindred spirits. Our
whole lives we've been looking for
our higher purpose. Yours is
healing people. Mine was to find
you. And help you.

JOSHUA
I can't make miracles on demand.
And I know that's what people want
of me. I wish I had control over
it.

HAILEY
Joshua, I pledge to do everything
in my power to help you reach your
potential.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is still a mess. Hailey tiptoes over garbage. She shoots off a quick text to Clark: might be late for dinner joshua and i are working on his god powers

JOSHUA
Sorry about this.

He clears off a portion of his couch. Hailey sits. Joshua sits next to her, staring straight, scared to make eye contact.

HAILEY

What happens when you heal someone?
To you?

JOSHUA

It's like my body doesn't belong to
me. I can see myself doing things
but I can't feel it. And then when
I'm back in my body I get really
sick.

HAILEY

So the goal is to make the
unconscious, conscious.

JOSHUA

Right.

HAILEY

Let's practice.

Hailey pokes at the filth on the ground. Finds a Target grey
ceramic plate. Hailey takes it and shatters it.

JOSHUA

Wait -

She slices her hand with a shard of ceramic. It hurts like
hell but Hailey bites the pain back.

A moment.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

You're an insane person.

HAILEY

Don't worry about that. Heal my
hand, please.

Joshua stares at it. Nothing happens. Seconds pass like
minutes. Hailey continues to bleed.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

JOSHUA

I'm trying!

HAILEY

Put all your thoughts into healing.
Focus your energy.

Joshua stares, harder. The cut slowly begins to heal, then
stops. Joshua slaps a hand to his forehead.

JOSHUA

Ow.

HAILEY

Ignore the pain. Focus on the healing.

He stares again. A new determination and focus. A trickle of blood streaming from the side of his mouth.

The cut heals in fast-motion. A slight scar the only thing left.

JOSHUA

Honestly? That was easier than I thought it would be.

He says with a mouth full of blood.

HAILEY

Now you know how to do it!

They share a hug.

MIRACLE MONTAGE

- Joshua in church, healing a line of ELDERLY PEOPLE. Each one takes a little more out of him. A woman hops up, starts doing laps around the church.

- Joshua heals a dog's broken leg in front of a sobbing child. He bleeds from both the nose and mouth.

- Joshua heals a patch of dead grass in the front lawn of the church, breaking into a cold sweat and shivers

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Marjorie stomps up to Joshua, sobbing.

MARJORIE

Why did you let her die? Why?

Joshua takes Marjorie in his arms. She collapses to the ground.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Why didn't you save her? Hailey, you're worshipping a liar!

Hailey, taken aback.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)
 You want to know what her last
 words to me were?

Hailey waits.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)
 She said, why would God do this to
 me?

Marjorie sobs.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

A Middle Tennessee mid-spring thunderstorm. The sky is
 greyish blue, swirling. Threatening to form a tornado.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - NIGHT

MOURNERS shuffle in to view the corpse. Hailey and Clark,
 dressed in black, wait their turn in line.

Hailey looks down at Emma's peaceful face and bursts into
 tears. Marjorie notices and is unmoved. Clark, caught off
 guard by the emotion, wraps an arm around her shoulder and
 brings her to a seat.

Joshua follows, taking the seat on the other side of Hailey.

HAILEY
 Forgive me, but I'm a little upset
 with you right now.

JOSHUA
 There was nothing I could do.

HAILEY
 You let her die. You didn't have
 to.

JOSHUA
 It was God's will. The circle of
 life.

HAILEY
 She's so young. Just twelve.
 Imagine looking around and
 everyone's got their whole life
 ahead of them. Knowing your only
 future is the eternal dark.

JOSHUA
She's in heaven.

HAILEY
I guess.

The Mourners all take their seat. A SINGER steps behind the microphone at the front of the church. The CHOIR stands up in unison behind her. She begins to sing a Southern funeral classic, "His Eye On the Sparrow."

The words hit Hailey in the chest. She begins to shake, sobbing. Clark caresses a shoulder, trying to soothe.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
You could save her, still.

CLARK
Hailey, please.

HAILEY
What? She shouldn't be dead,
anyway!

CLARK
Keep your voice down.

Hailey's eyes turn to Marjorie. Witnesses utter devastation. Remembers the promise she broke.

HAILEY
He could still save her. This
doesn't have to be it.

JOSHUA
How do you know that? You can only
heal someone that's still alive.

HAILEY
Not if you're the Son of God.

JOSHUA
I don't know about this, Hailey.

HAILEY
You've got to stop worrying about
what you do know and what you don't
know and run on faith.

Joshua absorbs that.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

I have faith in you. God has faith
in you. But you have to also have
faith in yourself.

A determined Joshua gets up and approaches the casket. The singer makes a face but keeps singing.

Joshua stares down into Emma's dead, slightly smiling face. And focuses. He shakes so hard it's like his atoms are vibrating.

A voice comes out of the crowd -

MOURNER

Who is this and what in the hell is
he doing?

Marjorie perks up, hopeful.

MARJORIE

Let him!

Joshua's mouth and nose begin to bleed. His eyes roll into the back of his head. His body contorts. The transformation is unimaginably painful.

He stops, trying to catch his breath. Emma BLINKS. The singer sees it, lets out a yelp.

SINGER

Oh, absolutely not.

She removes herself from the pulpit, not trying to be connected to whatever is going on.

Emma sits up and grabs Joshua's hand.

MOURNER

Oh my God!!!

EMMA

My mommy was right.

Joshua, scared of himself, helps her out of the casket. She takes several steps. Then she makes a beeline for her mother, who embraces tightly.

The church erupts into terrified, panicked SCREAMS. Marjorie screams too - full of unbridled joy.

MARJORIE

Thank you! Thank you, Lord!

Joshua's body hits the ground with a sickening CRACK.

Hailey rushes over to him. He's beyond unconscious - a deep coma.

INT. NASHVILLE LOCAL NEWS STUDIO - DAY

A video of Emma getting out of the casket and grabbing Joshua's hand plays. Rewinds to the point right before she wakes up. Continues from that point.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

The TV is shut off. Hailey watches Joshua, lying unconscious in the hospital bed. The same Doctor observing the two of them.

HAILEY

Is he going to be alright?

DOCTOR

We're doing the best we can.

She kneels down next to him. Begins a silent prayer. The doctor backs out of the room.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hailey, wrapped up in a fluffy blanket and Clark. She pushes tears out of her eyes.

HAILEY

I can't help but feel like this is my fault.

CLARK

Don't let guilt consume you, baby. That's no way to live.

HAILEY

Am I a bad person?

Clark thinks about it.

CLARK

You're not a bad person or a good person. You're just...a person.

HAILEY

Gee, thanks.

Clark shrugs.

CLARK
I'm no better than you.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Joshua, eyes wide although his vital signs remain low.

He stands up. Unhooks himself from the machines. They don't react. He's like a ghost.

There's a mirror. He takes a good long look at himself. Like he's seeing his body for the first time.

He walks out of the room.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joshua floats down the hallway. The hospital is small, dark. A SECURITY GUARD fights sleep in a chair. Joshua passes him, jolting him awake.

SECURITY GUARD
Hey! Hey!

He jumps out of his seat and gives chase. Joshua turns a corner. The Security Guard stomps behind him, baton in hand.

The Security guard turns the corner, shuts his eyes and strikes out at the air. Joshua is gone. No sign of him.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Hailey enters the room, a bouquet of flowers in hand. Expecting to see Joshua but finding the Doctor. The Doctor surprised to see Hailey.

DOCTOR
We figured he was with you.

HAILEY
He's not here?

DOCTOR
Left some time during the night.

Hailey sprints out of the room.

EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Hailey presses the buzzer. No answer from Joshua but a DISGRUNTLED NEIGHBOR leans out of their window.

DISGRUNTLED NEIGHBOR
Get out of here! Git! He ain't
here!

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Pastor John leads the church in a solemn, desperate prayer. A photograph of Joshua's face adorned with flowers in the foreground. Dozens of WORSHIPPERS, Hailey and Clark included, gathered around the altar. Some weeping openly.

PASTOR JOHN
We ask you Lord...if it is your
will...find him, Lord. Please bring
him back to us.

Pastor John, barely containing his own tears. Hailey mouths her own, furious, silent prayer.

A thick, dense beam of light shines from the back of the church. Joshua steps out of it. HEAVENLY TRUMPETS.

In the front pew, Marjorie faints. The Pastor approaches Joshua. Kneels down. Kisses his feet. Joshua turns to the congregation.

JOSHUA
This is my church now.

The congregants erupt into a rapturous applause. Joshua's voice rings out, clearer than it should be.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
I can save you. But you have to
trust me.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The local news crew from earlier stationed outside the church.

NEWS ANCHOR
We're here outside First Baptist,
the latest in a long line of
miracles surrounding the church.

Joshua addresses the camera, a confidence he hasn't had before -

JOSHUA

I now understand that I am the Son of God. We've been living in a false New Testament. I am the only way out.

A pause. The News Anchor doing her best to maintain professionalism.

NEWS ANCHOR

Well, y'all heard it here first, folks.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hailey and Clark going at it. Hailey with an enthusiasm and aggressiveness not yet seen before.

HAILEY

I love you. I'm so glad we met.

Hailey kisses Clark on the mouth before he can respond.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Hailey, Clark, and other CHURCH MEMBERS gathered near the shoreline of a lake. They form a loose straight line, with Hailey and Clark at the front. Each of them dressed in long, flowy white clothing. Electric with excitement.

Joshua stands in the water. The water is dark, inky. Joshua's white clothes starting to stain greyish.

JOSHUA

Hailey.

She takes a deep breath. Centering herself. Clark gives Hailey a quick kiss on the forehead before she steps down into the water.

Joshua takes her hand.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

It's time to be reborn.

Joshua pushes Hailey down by her forehead into the water. Hailey disappears into it. She re-emerges, eyes closed with a wide smile on her face. Joshua pulls her into a hug as the other members applaud.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

Joshua's first time in the pulpit. He's a natural. Doing his best impression of the Pentecostal preacher he grew up with.

Hailey watches on, awed. Clark a little unimpressed.

JOSHUA

And God's righteous rage will rain down upon the nonbelievers, the corrupt, the demonic. The oceans of this Earth will run red with the blood of the deceived and the ignorant. Our God is angry. Yes, yes, he's angry. So angry your little human minds can't even understand it. It's beyond understanding.

Hailey nods along as if the message was uplifting.

INT. CHURCH - MULTIPURPOSE ROOM - DAY

Darkness. A hand flips a light switch. The lights go up, illuminating Joshua and the recently baptized, all changed into new clothes. The room covered in color and confetti. Sheet cakes. A banner hanging from the ceiling - THANK YOU, JOSHUA! A surprise party.

The church members begin to mingle amongst the pictures of Jesus and the sausage balls. Hailey spots Clark across the room, deep in conversation with a BUSINESSMAN.

Hailey stays near Joshua, who taps his foot - panicky.

HAILEY

This is so nice.

She notices his nervousness.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Are you alright?

He does not answer her. MARJORIE (mother to EMMA - a sick child healed by Joshua) pushes Emma towards Joshua. Emma has several gift bags in her lap.

MARJORIE

We just wanted to thank you for all you've done for us and the church.

JOSHUA

You didn't have to.

MARJORIE

The doctors say Emma is completely healed. No sign of any tumors.

HAILEY

That's wonderful.

Marjorie turns to Joshua, expectant. He looks down at her, like she was a roach.

MARJORIE

We needed a miracle, and you gave us one.

Marjorie begins to cry. Joshua does not reach out to comfort her.

EMMA

We got you some gifts!

She hands him a bag. He turns the bag upside down, shaking the contents out. A bright orange Hermes box smacks the ground. Joshua takes in a deep, panicked breath.

JOSHUA

What's Hermes?

HAILEY

They make nice bags.

JOSHUA

Bags.

He says it like a slur. He leaves the Hermes box on the ground. Emma hesitantly hands him the next bag.

He opens it. A MacBook. He puts the MacBook back into the bag, places it gently on the ground.

Marjorie hands him the next gift. He opens it - a ROLEX. Joshua slams the watch down.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

No! No more of this! I don't deserve this!

Joshua points skyward.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

He deserves it! I am but a vessel!

Joshua begins to knock gifts and party decorations onto the ground. Hailey grabs onto one arm, leading him away from the multipurpose room.

INT. BIBLE STUDY ROOM - DAY

Joshua sits in a desk chair, still breathing hard. Hailey dabs his forehead with a towel. He fidgets, moving like a pissed off toddler.

JOSHUA

They'll be damned to Hell...They'll damn us all!

Hailey, shocked by this intensity.

HAILEY

What is all this about?

His expression steels. Hailey notices. Starts to get nervous.

JOSHUA

You don't understand. Leave me. Please.

HAILEY

I want to understand.

Joshua takes a deep, tortured breath.

JOSHUA

Did you have anything to do with that...debacle?

HAILEY

No. Absolutely not.

JOSHUA

Displays like that...indulgent. Sinful.

HAILEY

They just want to celebrate you, Joshua. You saved Emma's life.

JOSHUA

God saved Emma. He just used me to do it.

HAILEY

Isn't that something to celebrate? Out of everyone in this earth, God chose you. That's a blessing.

Joshua softens at that.

JOSHUA

Although their intentions were good. They've put your souls into extreme peril.

She grabs his hand. It's maternal.

HAILEY

But we're not damned yet. So there's still a chance to fix things.

Joshua relaxes.

JOSHUA

That's right. I'll save you all.

He takes a few deep breaths.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Let's go back.

INT. MULTIPURPOSE ROOM - DAY

The party goes silent as Hailey and Joshua re-enter the room.

JOSHUA

Sorry about that, everyone. Continue to have a good time. God is still great. Amen.

The party echoes the Amen. Clark catches Hailey's eye. Mouths, EVERYTHING OKAY? She gives him a thumbs up. Clark returns to the conversation with the BUSINESSMAN.

INT. OPEN CONCEPT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Clark's hand picks up an artistically-plated dish of steak and rice. He brings it into the dining area, places it in front of Hailey.

The table is minimally but elegantly decorated. A large bottle of red wine opened.

HAILEY

It looks amazing.

CLARK

Happy half anniversary, baby.

HAILEY

Happy half anniversary to you, too.

They begin to eat.

CLARK
So is Joshua, like, okay?

HAILEY
He's good.

CLARK
He kind of freaked out on us
earlier.

HAILEY
He's very serious about idolatry.
Praise belongs to God and God
alone. And, to be honest, the gifts
were kind of tacky. They don't even
know what he likes.

She reaches under the table, pulls out a small bag. Hands it
to Clark, who receives it suspiciously.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
Speaking of gifts.

CLARK
We said we weren't doing getting
each other anything.

HAILEY
I lied. Forgive me, Lord.

Clark opens the gift. A gold half heart necklace with HAILEY
etched into it. Hailey pulls her shirt down a little, shows
him that she's wearing the other half, CLARK engraved into
it.

CLARK
Cute.

He puts his necklace on. A big, goofy grin.

CLARK (CONT'D)
You know, I've been thinking.

Hailey waits for him to continue.

CLARK (CONT'D)
We should get our vows renewed.

HAILEY
Why?

CLARK

I feel like this last few months has been the start of like, a new beginning for us, you know? So we could commemorate that.

Hailey considers.

HAILEY

I like that idea.

Hailey's phone RINGS. She looks at the contact - JOSHUA. She answers.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

I'll be right there. God bless.
Bye.

She hangs up. Clark looks on, insulted.

CLARK

What's that about?

HAILEY

Joshua needs me to help him pick up a goat.

CLARK

A goat? For what?

HAILEY

I don't know.

She gets up, puts her plate in the microwave.

CLARK

You have to leave right now?

HAILEY

He said it wouldn't take that long.

CLARK

We're celebrating five years and six months of marriage.

HAILEY

We'll have plenty of time to celebrate when I get back.

Clark gives up. Takes a bite of his steak. Hailey puts her shoes on.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

I'll literally be right back.

CLARK

Be safe.

Hailey leaves.

Clark gets up. Starts drinking the wine directly from the bottle.

EXT. FARM - NIGHT

Hailey and Joshua walk amongst tall stalks of wheat.

HAILEY

Are we stealing this goat?

JOSHUA

No. We're helping this blessed creature fulfill his true purpose.

Hailey accepts that.

HAILEY

Okay.

Hailey and Joshua approach a wooden fence guarding sleeping goats.

Behind it, in the distance, a worn down house with all the lights off.

JOSHUA

We'll be out of here in ten minutes.

Joshua clears the fence easily. Hailey remains on the other side, hesitant.

HAILEY

Are you sure about this?

He nods, affirmative. Reaches for her hand. Helps her over the fence.

They look out at the goats. Sleeping, peaceful. Some lie cuddled up against another.

Hailey remains near the fence as Joshua creeps around, his intuition guiding him to an acceptable goat. He finds one. It's small - older than a baby, but still small. He picks it up, cradles it in his arms. The little goat begins to screech. Joshua goes to cover its mouth. The goat bites him.

He throws the goat at Hailey, who tries to catch it and fails. She prevents it from running too far away and picks it back up. The other goats awaken, letting out confused, sleepy yells.

Joshua vaults himself over the fence, stumbles to his feet. Hailey places the goat in his arms. A light cuts on in the house behind the fence.

Hailey, adrenaline-fueled, scrambles over the fence. They run off into the night.

EXT. HAILEY'S CAR - NIGHT

They stand next to the Volkswagen. The goat circles their legs.

JOSHUA

I need you to keep him until tomorrow.

HAILEY

Why?

JOSHUA

My landlord would disapprove. You have a house.

She can't argue with that.

HAILEY

Okay.

JOSHUA

Make sure he is well rested.

She looks determined.

HAILEY

Do you need a ride home?

Joshua shakes his head. Leaves, walking through the wilderness.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hailey opens the door and turns on the light, revealing Clark, drunk, lying on the floor. The goat shuffles in behind her.

Clark's eyes snap open. He rolls over, lazily looking up at Hailey.

CLARK

Look who decided to come back...

The goat sits. Hailey leans down, kneeling in front of Clark.

HAILEY

I told you I wouldn't be gone that long.

CLARK

It was too long. Too long.

HAILEY

You drank too much.

A flash of guilt in her eyes. The goat checks out the living room.

CLARK

Don't pretend you care about me.
You don't care about me.

Hailey doesn't answer him. Tries to get him to sit up. He kind of obliges - settling into a half sit, half lean.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Why did you marry me?

HAILEY

To be honest with you, I don't really have the emotional capacity for this conversation right now.

CLARK

Answer. Please.

HAILEY

Because I love you.

CLARK

You're not very good at it.

That hurts Hailey. She pushes the hurt down.

The goat lets out a cute yelp. The animal noise sobers Clark up a little.

CLARK (CONT'D)

What the fuck was that?

HAILEY

The goat. He's staying with us for the time being.

CLARK
There's a goat in our house?

HAILEY
I couldn't leave him outside.

Clark crawls over to the goat, Hailey trailing him. His anger subsiding, temporarily.

CLARK
He's cute.

HAILEY
He is cute.

Clark yawns. Stretches out to sleep on the floor. Hailey tries to lift him up, but he resists.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
You'll hurt your back sleeping like this. Come on.

CLARK
You don't care if I get hurt. Stop pretending.

Hailey, hurt by that remark. She thinks to herself. She speaks like she just realized it -

HAILEY
Clark, sometimes you're all I care about. I care about you more than I care about myself.

Clark can't help but smile at Hailey's codependence. Another big yawn. Clark settles into a sleeping position.

CLARK
I'm still mad at you. Gonna sleep here. With our goat friend.

The goat sleeps peacefully. Hailey reaches caresses its fur. She smiles. Snuggles up next to Clark on the floor.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Hailey passes the sleeping goat to Joshua.

JOSHUA
Thank you, sister.

Joshua cradles the goat in his arms. He kisses its forehead.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

It's offering time at the church. An upbeat gospel song plays. USHERS pass golden plates down pews, hands dropping in checks and cash.

Joshua stands at the pulpit, the floor of it covered in newspaper. The goat, legs tied together, rests against the microphone stand.

The Ushers return to the front. Consolidate the money in each plate into a garbage bag. The gospel song ends.

A white gloved DEACON presents Joshua with an open case. He reaches in and pulls out a golden SCYTHE. The Deacon walks away.

JOSHUA

Lord, we ask that you be pleased
with our offering today. We give
offerings to you and you only, Lord
of all Lords, King of all Kings.

Joshua kneels down and slices the goat's neck open with the scythe. The room lets out a collective GASP.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Amen.

The goat bleeds to death on the pulpit. The church watches on in silence.

Hailey, unsure, begins to clap. Other members join, a halfhearted applause.

HAILEY

Well, Hallelujah.

The Deacons wrap the goat in the newspaper. They toss it into the garbage bag with the money.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Clark, on his feet, pacing around the beanbags. Hailey, petulant and defiant, sitting down. Sarah sits behind the desk, having completely lost control of the session.

CLARK

And then she fucking clapped!

HAILEY

He did it for all of us! That is
worth applauding!

CLARK

There's this innocent animal
bleeding out right in front of us
and this is her.

HAILEY

He's in heaven now! That's a
blessing!

Over her protests, a quick imitation of the way she clapped.

CLARK

Does that make any fucking sense to
you?

HAILEY

Hebrews, 9:22. And almost all
things are by the law purged with
blood; and without shedding of
blood is no remission.

SARAH

Right...

CLARK

That shit was written a thousand
years ago! We, as a society, have
moved on!

HAILEY

And that's the problem. We've moved
on, but God hasn't.

Clark sits back down. Sinks into the beanbag.

CLARK

We were having a nice night. And
she leaves to go get a goat.

SARAH

Wait a minute. You went and got the
goat?

CLARK

On our half anniversary.

HAILEY

I wasn't gone that long. When I
came back, you were drunk and
asleep.

CLARK

Five and a half fucking years. She
left me alone.

Clark sniffs back some tears. A few fall anyway. Hailey notices. Feels terrible. Shifts uncomfortably under the weight. A dark cloud of silence over the both of them.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

Pastor John reads the announcements for the church. Clark seated next to the microphone. Hailey leans forward, paying close attention. Clark leans back in his seat casually, the church equivalent of manspreading.

PASTOR JOHN
Our Ghana program has been very successful. We are bring the children Bibles, clothes, and canned food. Amen?

The congregation answers him with a mass AMEN.

PASTOR JOHN (CONT'D)
That's all for this week.

The band starts to play him off.

A hand shoots up from the back of the sanctuary. Pastor John stands there, unsure of what to do.

PASTOR JOHN (CONT'D)
Uh...yes?

He calls on him like a professor calling on a student.

The hand belongs to RICHARD JENKINS - 30ish, blonde and blue eyed, wearing paint-stained jeans. Richard stands. His voice projecting across the sanctuary.

Joshua stiffens with recognition.

RICHARD
Ladies and gentlemen. It brings me no joy to say this. But y'all are worshipping a nutcase.

A dramatic GASP. Hailey steels. Clark with a look of "I told you" on his face.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I'm Joshua Jenkins' first cousin, Richard. I've known the boy my whole life. And I love him. But he is crazy as all hell. Always has been, probably always will be.

Joshua says nothing, just stares.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

He's got y'all convinced he's the Messiah. Well, he ain't. He's from a trailer park in Gladeville. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was sixteen years old. We haven't seen him since.

A MURMUR of discontent amongst the congregation. Hailey looks crushed. Clark grabs her hand.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

He's a nice boy, he just gets a little confused sometimes. I saw y'all on the news and I had to say something. End this charade.

Hailey, angry now.

HAILEY

He raised the dead!

The congregation agrees. Some applaud.

RICHARD

Movie magic, baby. Marj's in on it to. Where'd she say she was from? Memphis I bet. You're all the victims of a long, long con.

Marjorie says nothing.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Joshua, it's time to come home.
Your mother is worried about you.

Joshua, staring through Richard. Richard tenses up, like his insides are being squeezed.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Wait - don't -

Richard collapses. Dead.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Richard's body covered with a sheet, being loaded into the back of an ambulance.

Joshua watches on, unmoved. Hailey next to him.

HAILEY

They said he had a heart attack.

Joshua shoots Hailey a look - slightly mischievous, slightly malicious.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Clark and Hailey lie in bed. In each others arms but still separate. An impasse.

CLARK

I don't want to go to that church anymore.

HAILEY

Why? That Richard guy was lying.

Clark, not entirely convinced by that.

CLARK

I don't feel good about it. And I really don't want to see another animal die.

HAILEY

That was just the one time. And if we don't sin, we won't have to sacrifice anyone else.

CLARK

I don't know, Hailey.

HAILEY

Well, honestly, it's fine. You don't have to go.

Clark, unsatisfied by that.

CLARK

I think it's better if we both stop going.

She turns away from him, upset.

CLARK (CONT'D)

I don't ask you for much. Could you make this sacrifice for me?

HAILEY

You're being unfair.

CLARK

Joshua scares me, Hailey. I don't know what he's capable of. And neither do you.

HAILEY

He's a Son of God.

CLARK

That's only what we think is going on.

Hailey can't rebut that. Her breaths get sharper, shallower.

HAILEY

Are you of Satan?

CLARK

What?

HAILEY

I find something that makes me happy and you want me to abandon it.

CLARK

Are you?

A moment.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Are you happy, really?

HAILEY

Of course I am. I've never been this happy before in my life.

INT. JOSHUA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joshua tosses and turns. Then, as if possessed, he seizes - eyes opening wide. After a moment, he relaxes.

JOSHUA

Yes. I understand.

INT. BIBLE STUDY ROOM - NIGHT

Joshua sits at the head of the table Hailey, Marjorie, and two other SENIOR CHURCH MEMBERS.

JOSHUA

Last night, I was resting. Then the Lord came to me, a vision of a raging ocean. He told me that our work here is nearly done.

He smiles, pure joy. The others exchange glances.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

My Father has given up on humankind. Their systems, their society. He wants to press delete and start again. Many of the people you love will die. I can save you, but you have to follow my directions exactly.

They take that in.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

The time is now to get ready. We must remove all of our attachments from this sinful world. Questions?

A moment. Hailey slowly raises her hand.

HAILEY

How do we remove our attachments?

JOSHUA

Take your money out of your bank accounts. Get rid of it. All of it.

Marjorie takes out a pad of paper and a pen, starts scribbling things down.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Anything you purchased with American dollars. Get rid of it.

REMOVING ATTACHMENTS MONTAGE

- Hailey throws dollar bills into a fireplace.

JOSHUA (V.O.)

Anything with a microchip. Get rid of it.

- Hailey throws her laptop against the wall. It's surprisingly durable. She picks it up and throws it again. It breaks the second time.

JOSHUA (V.O.)
Clothes should go too. In Heaven,
we will all be naked.

- Hailey places clothing into a garbage bag.

JOSHUA (V.O.)
Your television should be
destroyed.

- Hailey throws something heavy into an absurdly large flat
screen TV.

JOSHUA (V.O.)
Anything that connects you to the
sinfulness of man. Break it, burn
it. It has to go before everything
ends.

- Hailey throws small pieces of jewelry from a box into the
fire. She looks at her heart necklace. Goes to throw it into
the flames, but doesn't follow through. Begins to cry. Forces
herself to smile through the tears.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hailey, lying down in front of the fire, asleep. Clark cuts
the light on. Sees the mess that the room is in.

CLARK
What the hell happened here?

She awakens, dazed.

HAILEY
You have to get rid of your stuff.

Clark, confused.

HAILEY (CONT'D)
It's the only way we can go into
the next life together. You have to
get rid of everything.

Hailey, weirdly emotionless. She stands up, throws her arms
around Clark. He holds her.

CLARK
I have no idea what the fuck you're
talking about.

Hailey takes a deep breath.

HAILEY
I'll miss you.

She's manic. Clark takes in the chaos at his feet. Hailey takes advantage of the distraction, reaches into Clark's pocket and grabs his wallet. She walks back towards the fire. Clark follows behind, panic rising.

CLARK
Hailey. What are you doing???

At the fire, she opens up the wallet and starts tossing cards in. She tosses two before Clark grabs her wrist, wrenches his wallet away.

HAILEY
I'm trying to save you and your
soul!

Clark pulls Hailey back. Then reaches into the fire, uses the tips of his fingers to pull out a half-melted Visa.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clark stands in the doorway, arms crossed over his chest. Hailey sits on the bed with her back to him.

CLARK
This behavior is alarming, my love.

She ignores him.

CLARK (CONT'D)
I was able to save most of the
credit cards. So we can still like,
eat and pay bills for the time
being.

HAILEY
That won't matter soon. That's what
I'm trying to tell you.

CLARK
Ain't it in the Bible? "No man
shall know the hour or the day,
only the father..." you know what
I'm talking about.

HAILEY
Joshua is no man. And his father,
our Father, told him.

A deep sigh from Clark.

CLARK
You want to hear my theory?

HAILEY
Sure.

CLARK
I think he's got healing powers.
Legit. And that's a miracle. But
he's schizophrenic, like his cousin
said.

HAILEY
The cousin that was struck dead
after uttering that lie?

CLARK
Schizophrenics get lucky too.

HAILEY
Seems like a whole lot of luck. I
think Joshua being the Son of God
is more likely than a long chain of
coincidences.

He realizes he's not getting anywhere with her. He switches
strategies.

CLARK
Hailey, your mother called me this
morning.

She doesn't respond.

CLARK (CONT'D)
She hasn't heard from you in weeks.

HAILEY
I don't have anything to say to
her.

CLARK
Last thing she heard from you is
you drove your car off a bridge.

Hailey, shocked by that.

HAILEY
I told her we were in an accident -

CLARK
We have to tell the truth. You
lying to yourself and your mother
solves nothing.

A pause.

HAILEY
I'll call her.

CLARK
You promise?

She nods.

CLARK (CONT'D)
And your friends - our friends -
they're worried about you. They
think you're in a cult.

HAILEY
Do you think I'm in a cult?

He hesitates.

CLARK
A little, yeah.

A moment. Hailey considers.

HAILEY
I'm okay with that.

Clark, somewhere between disbelief and concern.

CLARK
I hate when things are like this
between us, you know. I wish we
could always be on the same page.

HAILEY
So do I.

INT. HAILEY'S CAR - DAY

Hailey, phone in hand. Stares at the contact MOM. She calls,
but hangs up on the first ring.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Hailey walks towards the entrance of the church, alone. She's
startled out of her own world by a psychotically gleeful
Marjorie.

MARJORIE
I took all the money out of my bank
account and burned it.

(MORE)

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Six hundred thousand dollars! Put
my husband in the hospital.

She cackles, madly. They enter the church.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Hailey - seated alone in a front pew - watches Joshua, at the
pulpit, mid-rant, full of righteous anger.

The congregation looks on at the sermon in horror. More empty
seats than usual. Hailey is enraptured, eyes red.

JOSHUA

There are not many days left for
any of us on this Earth. A
cleansing is coming soon. The likes
of which have never been seen.
God's gonna get us with floods,
earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes,
all at once.

Hailey's head jerks back.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Sinful blood will cover the
streets. There's nothing we can do
for them.

Involuntary tears falling from her eyes.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

The people in this room are God's
chosen people. Your lives actually
mean something.

That hits Hailey. Finally.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

He wants us in the next world.

Hailey's mouth moves like she has no control of it.

HAILEY

Thank you, God!

Her outburst is met by a few loose "Amen's." The musicians
punctuate Joshua's words with organ chords.

JOSHUA

God delivered me to this church for
a reason. We will be the witnesses
to the end of the world.

Hailey leans forward, begins to shake. The other congregants mutter amongst themselves, uncomfortable with the apocalyptic topic.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Your purpose is to step aside so
that the world can be cleansed.
Embrace it with open arms.

Hailey SCREAMS. Stands up and falls back onto the ground like a cut log. She begins to roll around. Two DEACONS emerge from the side of the pews, covering her with a sheet.

They try to encourage her to her feet but she's limp, her limbs noodly. They drag her towards the back.

INT. BIBLE STUDY ROOM - DAY

All the lights shut off in the room. Hailey regains consciousness. Looks around the room. She's alone. She's calmed down significantly, breaths deep and measured.

She peels off the sheet. Stands up.

INT. CHURCH BATHROOM - DAY

The harsh, fluorescent lighting of a public bathroom.

Hailey looks at herself in the mirror. Trying to see if she's different. She leaves unsatisfied.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

Service is not over. Hailey re-enters the sanctuary as the small choir performs a decent rendition of Mary Mary's SHACKLES. She takes her seat.

She stares at Joshua, who sits in front of the pulpit, head and eyes skyward. He smiles, softly. Receiving another message.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hailey and Clark sitting across from each other at their table. Hailey picks at what's left of her meal. An uneasy peace between them.

HAILEY

It's like I was outside of my body,
looking down at myself.

(MORE)

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Even though it was me screaming,
rolling around - it's like - my
body was doing it, not me.

CLARK

How do you feel now?

Hesitation. Hailey's shoulders heavy with disappointment.

HAILEY

I feel the same as I always do.

She's sad, but tries not to express it. Clark notices.

CLARK

You still gonna go to that church?

HAILEY

I don't know what else to do.

A moment passes.

CLARK

I told you this would happen.

A defensive hand goes up.

HAILEY

Please.

A moment later, Hailey leans across the table and onto
Clark's shoulder. He gives her a comforting pat on the back.

INT. HAILEY AND CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A sad, lonely Hailey eats Doritos. She stares at her phone.
Mom's contact open. Her finger hovering over the call button.
Impulsively, she presses it. Her mother, LUCINDA (50s, a deep
believer in tough love) answers on the second ring.

LUCINDA

It's about damn time. Are you
alright?

HAILEY

I'm fine, momma.

LUCINDA

I mean it. Are you okay?

Hailey thinks about it.

HAILEY

I'm okay.

A moment.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Mom, do you ever feel empty?

Lucinda chuckles.

LUCINDA

Honey, I don't have time to feel. I work.

Hailey takes a deep breath. Not exactly the comforting answer she was looking for.

HAILEY

I'm tired of being empty.

LUCINDA

Get a job. A real job. Have a baby. I don't know. You have to distract yourself. You're always in your head. Even when you were a little girl. I've never seen such an anxious infant.

This line of conversation upsets Hailey.

LUCINDA (CONT'D)

No wonder you're always trying to off yourself. The mind is a scary place to stay in.

Hailey pretends to be losing a signal.

HAILEY

Clark just came home - I gotta go help him - I'll call you right back.

She tries to sound hurried.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Love you mom, bye!

She hangs up. Sinks back into her seat.

INT. BIBLE STUDY ROOM - DAY

Joshua stands at the front of the room. Hailey, Marjorie, and the last of the TRUE BELIEVERS (about a dozen people) populating the rest of it. Hailey sinks into her seat, still disappointed.

JOSHUA

Good news everyone. Today is a joyous day. I have received the message from my Father. You have done well to remove your attachments. Soon, none of you will have to tolerate the gross injustice of living on this Earth.

A few of the True Believers erupt into applause. Hailey, caught off guard, quietly claps along. With a motion of his hands, Joshua silences the room.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

I will have to go first. You will have to destroy me in the way my older brother was destroyed. Then I'll return for the rest of you. My chosen few.

The disappointment in Hailey fades. The True Believers hoot and holler. Joshua rests in the attention, more comfortable with it now.

HAILEY

(to herself)

So *this* is it.

Marjorie's hand shoots up. She speaks without being called on, over the excitement of the rest of the room.

MARJORIE

I know everyone's excited. Joshua, really think about this.

HAILEY

Do you doubt him?

MARJORIE

No. But...we need you.

HAILEY

He'll be back.

MARJORIE

When?

JOSHUA

I'll only be gone for three days.

Joshua smiles down at Marjorie, paternal. He places a hand on her shoulder.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

My work on this Earth in this form is done. But I will be back.

Marjorie not entirely convinced.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

We will bring about the true New Testament. You're all living in a false world. No more.

Joshua's eyes move to Hailey.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Get up.

She does. Joshua embraces her. Hailey unsure of how to handle the raw emotion of the hug.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

I'm so grateful for you. I'm glad you showed me who I was supposed to be.

Hailey hugs back. Joshua releases her. She sits back down. The hug sinks in. Hailey pushes back happy tears. Faith fully reignited.

Marjorie watches the exchange, arms crossed over her chest. Unimpressed.

MARJORIE

You said we're going to have to destroy you.

JOSHUA

Yes, of course.

MARJORIE

You want us to kill you.

HAILEY

No, he wants us to help him achieve salvation.

MARJORIE

You've helped us so much. I don't want to hurt you.

HAILEY

We're not hurting him. We're helping him. We're helping the whole world.

Joshua smiles, warm.

JOSHUA

Marjorie, don't think of it as killing. Think of it as guiding me to my next destination.

Marjorie, still not quite convinced but knowing she won't win.

MARJORIE

Well, if it's decided. What kind of food should we get for the last supper?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hailey and Clark sitting up in bed, passing a joint back and forth.

HAILEY

I think this is the best outcome for all of us, everything considered.

CLARK

What?

HAILEY

Joshua dying and coming back. He'll confirm everything. And then the world will be different.

A deep inhale from Clark.

CLARK

He's not going to get up.

Hailey herself is unconvinced.

HAILEY

He might.

CLARK

And then what?

HAILEY

He'll come back for us. Well, for me. You're still attached to this world.

She inhales.

CLARK

What if you get to Heaven - or whatever's next - and you still feel the same?

An exhale.

HAILEY

I won't. I can't.

CLARK

And if he doesn't come back?

She considers.

HAILEY

Then... it's over. I guess.

The words taste bitter. She struggles through them.

CLARK

Well, Godspeed.

INT. CHURCH - MULTIPURPOSE ROOM - NIGHT

A self-conscious recreation of da Vinci's the Last Supper. Joshua in the middle as Jesus, Hailey on his right. Other True Believers fill the remaining seats.

They eat their Outback Steakhouse takeout in silence.

CRUCIFIXION MONTAGE

- Peppy music

- Hailey and the TRUE BELIEVERS, like a well-oiled high school theatre department, build the crucifixion "set"

- Hailey hammers a nail, joining two long pieces of wood together, making a cross

- Hailey and Marjorie high five each other after finishing a stair

- The MEDIA CIRCUS films every aspect. The Believers ignore them
- Joshua observes them all from a distance, wearing sunglasses

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Hailey, Marjorie, and the other True Believers gather on the front lawn of the church.

Joshua stands as a few Believers use ropes to raise a makeshift cross made of light, smooth wood. It stands on its own, intimidating.

Joshua strips nude. He turns to the crowd surrounding the cross. Marjorie pushes back tears.

JOSHUA

My brothers and sisters, do not weep. Today is a happy day.

Marjorie begins to sob. Other Believers comfort her. Hailey keeps her eyes on Joshua.

Two MALE TRUE BELIEVERS flank the cross, hammers and nails in hand.

MALE TRUE BELIEVER

Are you ready?

Joshua nods, too cool for words. He ascends the cross. Spreads out, relaxes into the pose. Both Believers on crucifixion duty begin to nail Joshua to the cross.

The nails break the skin. Joshua's cool demeanor disappears. He SCREAMS. It's loud, ugly - exactly the scream of someone being crucified. The Believers continue to hammer.

Hailey kneels against Joshua's legs. The Believers finish hammering and step away.

The screaming stops. Joshua cries, silently. He looks down at Hailey.

Hailey holds the eye contact for as long as she can, then her eyes drop to the ground.

Joshua's eyes go skyward. Listening to a message from up above.

JOSHUA

I know...But it hurts...

He begins to lose consciousness. Hailey pats his leg, like a mother trying to get a baby to fall asleep. Behind them, An EXCAVATOR scoops up dirt, a rough grave.

The True Believers lower Joshua down. His breaths slow. He's dying. Hailey caresses his face as the light leaves his eyes. Joshua dies with a smile on his face.

They work together to bury him, cross and all, in the excavator-dug grave.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Three days later. The church's front lawn covered with balloons - a celebration. Signs with Joshua's face on them captioned THE RETURN or HE IS RISEN. The True Believers buzzing with excitement and anticipation.

A REPORTER flanked by a NEWS CREW keeps a semi-respectful distance from Hailey and the Believers. Marjorie taps her foot, impatient.

MARJORIE

He didn't tell us where he'd come back at. We should've asked.

Her nervous energy affecting Hailey.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

I can't wait any longer. I need him to be back.

HAILEY

We know where he shouldn't be.

Hailey drops down to her knees and digs at the spot the Excavator dug up with her hands. Marjorie and other True Believers join in.

After some effort, Hailey uncovers Joshua, in the dirt - still very dead, the same slight smile on his face.

Hailey's reaction muted. A little relieved? She stands up. Walks away from it all.

The Reporter and his crew film Joshua's dead face.

REPORTER (V.O.)

A Holy fraud.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The Reporter talks into the television.

A half naked Clark changes the channel and mutes it. The news super describes a "lone wolf" shooting. Eleven injured, three dead.

Hailey reclines against the headboard, laptop open.

HAILEY

The auditing sessions start at \$800. If we buy a pack of 4 there's a bundle discount, so it would only be \$2500.

CLARK

That's not as bad as I thought it would be.

HAILEY

Scientologists are very generous people. Should I go ahead and buy this?

He settles into bed next to her.

CLARK

Yeah.

A few decisive clicks. Hailey closes the laptop. Hailey leans over, Clark kisses her on the lips.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Joshua's grave - empty.

The same swirling sky from the thunderstorm with no rain.

EXT. THE GARDEN OF EDEN - DAY

The same lush garden from Hailey's dream, ablaze.