

THE
SPECTACULAR
NOW

by

Scott Neustadter

&

Michael H. Weber

Based on the novel by Tim Tharp

GREEN Production Draft
July XX, 2012

OVER BLACK, we hear a teenage voice:

VOICE (O.S.)
"Question number two. Describe a challenge, hardship or misfortune you have experienced in your life."

FADE IN:

1 INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 1

EXTREME CLOSE UP on a single BEAD OF SWEAT. The skin it belongs to is out of focus.

VOICE (O.S.)
What have you learned from this and how has it prepared you for the future?"

The lone bead of sweat begins its slow descent.

RACK FOCUS on the bead of sweat to REVEAL the "skin" is actually a beer bottle.

And then we SLOWLY PULL BACK to show who the voice and beer belong to: SUTTER KEELY, 18, boyishly handsome, killer smile. He takes a swig of the beer, staring at a college application on his computer.

As he thinks about the answer, we get a glimpse of Sutter's room. A small desk. A twin bed. Clothes on the floor. Decorations include a baseball pennant from some minor league team and a framed photo of the Rat Pack.

BACK ON Sutter, staring down the application. An idea comes to him. He starts to type.

SUTTER (V.O.)
"Dear... Dean of Admissions... My name is Sutter Keely and up until yesterday I had the best fucking girlfriend in the world."

2 INT CASSIDY'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - DAY 2

CASSIDY (18, blonde, small town beautiful) takes off her shirt, revealing her voluptuous body. She's on top of Sutter, who lies on his back on the floor. Sutter looks up at her, can't believe how lucky he is.

3 INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 3

Sutter types.

SUTTER'S VOICE
I know I probably shouldn't say "fuck" right there but I'm sorry, I have to.

4 INT CASSIDY'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - DAY 4

Naked, Cassidy grinds on Sutter. Getting into it. Her eyes are closed. She's in control.

SUTTER'S VOICE
She's tremendous. High definition. And so damn beautifully fat. Like, in a good way. You know what I mean? Immaculate proportions. I dated Cassidy two months longer than anyone else. It was magic.

5 INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 5

Sutter stops typing. Takes another drink.

SUTTER (V.O.)
Shit. I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's start at the beginning.

6 EXT CONVENIENCE STORE / PARKING LOT - MORNING 6

Sutter pulls into the parking lot of a suburban strip mall off the highway. There's a vast openness in every direction. The horizon unsettlingly far away.

SUTTER (V.O.)
Like all great stories, mine begins with a breakfast burrito...

Sutter gets out of his car and notices, in front of the store, a YOUNG KID (8), kicking a rock.

SUTTER
Hey little man, you ok?
(no answer)
Shouldn't you be in school or something?

The Kid shrugs. Sutter nods to him as he walks:

7 INT CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS 7

Sutter goes to the soft drink counter and pours himself a Big Gulp of 7UP. The Kid follows him inside. As the Clerk rings Sutter up, the Kid sheepishly tugs on his shirt.

YOUNG KID
Can I borrow a dollar?

SUTTER
What do you need a dollar for?

YOUNG KID
Three Musketeers.

SUTTER
How bout a tasty breakfast burrito? On me.

YOUNG KID
And a Three Musketeers?

SUTTER
 (laughs; to the Clerk)
 You heard the man.

8 EXT CONVENIENCE STORE / PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER 8

Sutter and the Kid exit the store. Sutter has his Big Gulp. Kid has his breakfast. Sutter is about to walk away when he realizes -- this Kid isn't going anywhere.

SUTTER (V.O.)
 I was already late but I couldn't just leave him by the side of the road.

Sutter motions for the kid to get in. As Sutter heads to the driver's side door we can't help but notice the flask in his back pocket.

9 INT. TREE LINED STREET / SUTTER'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER 9

Sutter drives and Walter sits next to him. Barren branches on the tree-lined streets.

SUTTER
 Where to my good man? *

WALTER
 Florida.

SUTTER
 (surprised)
 Florida?

WALTER
 To see my Dad.

This effects Sutter, who turns to look at the Kid.

SUTTER
 What's, uh, what's he doing there?

WALTER
 He was fighting a lot. With my Mom. She made him leave us.

SUTTER
 No shit, dude! High five!
 (off his confused look)
 Same thing happened to me and my sister!

WALTER
 Really?

SUTTER
 Mm-hmm. I was 8 or 9. Just like you. My Dad was the best...

Sutter takes out a flask, pours some of its contents into his Big Gulp. Takes a sip. *

SUTTER
 You're really going, huh?
 (off his nod)
 Well good for you, kid. I think that's very brave.
 (beat)
 Got any money?
 (he doesn't)
 Cash? Credit cards...? You know Florida's pretty far, right? What if you get hungry?
 (he shrugs)
 Well you're gonna need food, aren't you?!

WALTER
 I could hunt it.

SUTTER
 Ha. That's true. You could hunt it.
 (beat)
 You got a gun? Knife? Fishing rod.

Walter starts to realize the obstacles. *

SUTTER
 Hmm... Not sure you've thought this thing through all the way, have ya? *

Walter sinks back in his chair, defeated. *

SUTTER
 Don't be sad, little man. *

But Walter is sad. Sutter's heart breaks for this kid. *

SUTTER
 Tell you what. Let me drive you home. And tomorrow, if you still feel like skipping town, you call me. Day or night. We'll make a run for it, the two of us. What do you say? *

Walter thinks about this a beat. Two beats. And then he nods. Good plan. They slap five again. Sutter smiles, feeling magnanimous. Takes another big sip. CUT TO: *

18 EXT CASSIDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

18 **

Sutter knocks on the door. No answer. He can hear loud, angry music blaring from inside.

SUTTER (V.O.)
So thanks to Walter, I'm late to pick my
girlfriend up for school.

Sutter calls for her. Nothing. Knocks again. Nothing.

SUTTER
Shit.

Sutter looks for another way in. Seeing a gutter he boosts himself up towards Cassidy's 2nd story window.

SUTTER
Cass!

The window opens and Cassidy's head appears.

CASSIDY
Sutter?! What are you --

But then he loses his grip, disappearing from the frame.

SFX: CRASH!

18B EXT CASSIDY'S HOUSE - SAME

18B

Sutter lies on the ground, having fallen hard from the tree limbs above. Cassidy comes out in a huff. What the hell? She looks over at the Big Gulp on the ground. Sutter sees what she's looking at. Shrugs. We hear:

SUTTER (V.O.)
I'll be honest with you. Sure. I enjoy a
drink from time to time.

- 11 INT SUTTER'S BEDROOM 11
OMITTED
- 12 INT/EXT. HIGH SCHOOL / PARKING LOT - MORNING 12
Sutter parks his Mitsubishi Lancer. He takes a swig from a flask before walking into school.

SUTTER (V.O.)
It's like a hobby for me. A pleasant diversion from all the annoying responsibilities that come with being a kid. Things like:
- 13 EXT HIGH SCHOOL / TRACK - DAY 13
The class runs laps around the track. We see Sutter in the middle of the pack running backwards, smiling. Kids crack up at his antics.

SUTTER (V.O.)
Gym class.
- 14 INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / DINING ROOM - DUSK 14 **
Sutter's family sits at the table. Mom SARA, sister HOLLY, Holly's husband JOE who is in mid-story. Sutter seizes the opportunity for a quick drink.

SUTTER
Xmas Dinner.
- 15 INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 15
Back on Sutter, at his desk, as he continues typing:

SUTTER
This essay.

ANGLE ON a framed picture by his bedside, showing Sutter (5) on the shoulders of a HANDSOME MAN, his father. Sutter takes another sip. Continues.
- 16 EXT. PARTY HOUSE 1 / BACKYARD - NIGHT 16
Sutter reveals, from beneath his T-shirt, a keg tap. PARTYGOERS cheer and applaud. Sutter is the man.

SUTTER (V.O.)
People talk about the "dangers" of drinking, how harmful it is... Nobody talks about the good stuff. How much fun it can be. How good it feels.
- 16A INT. PARTY HOUSE 1 / KITCHEN - LATER 16A
Sutter does shots with friends, including Cassidy.

16B INT. PARTY HOUSE 1 / SCREENED IN PORCH - LATER 16B

Sutter standing on a couch leading the room in a cheer.

16C EXT. PARTY HOUSE 1 / BACKYARD- LATER 16C

Sutter diving into a pool fully clothed. Partygoers follow him in. Over which we hear:

SUTTER (V.O.)

When I'm drinking, it's like I can see another dimension to the world. Words and ideas I never knew I had come flying out of me. I'm funny, compassionate, in love with everything.

17 INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 17

Sutter typing.

SUTTER (V.O.)

And it's not like I'm some toothless derelict drinking by himself late at night. I'm 18. This is what I'm supposed to be doing.

Sutter takes another swig. Confident now. He continues:

19 INT CASSIDY'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - MORNING 19 **

Sutter sits on the couch, rubbing his injuries. Cassidy paces as she reprimands Sutter.

CASSIDY

Do you even remember what we talked about?

SUTTER

(no idea)
Of... course I do.

SUTTER'S VOICE

I had absolutely no idea what she was talking about.

Cassidy's lips move as she continues but all we hear is:

SUTTER'S VOICE

She's always saying something or other and I try to listen, honest to God, but I mean... look at her.

CASSIDY

It's the last time I'm gonna say it.

SUTTER

I...'m with you. 100 percent.

CASSIDY

Promise?

SUTTER

Cross my heart, hope to die.

Cassidy tries to stay mad at Sutter but it's virtually impossible. He throws her that smile and her resolve crumbles. They quickly undress and start getting into it. Sutter looks up at her. Can't believe how lucky he is.

SUTTER (V.O.)

What can I say, I'm a romantic. I am in love with the feminine species. It's a shame you only get to pick one, but since that's the rule, I was very grateful for the one I had.

20 EXT CLARKE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL / FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY 20

Home of the Plainsmen.

SUTTER (V.O.)

Well the next day, it all went to shit.

ANGLE ON Sutter, who stands by the entrance with his best friend RICKY (18, undersized, uber-awkward looking). Sutter points to a girl. Ricky shakes his head no.

SUTTER

Colleen Marshall?

RICKY

Way too tall. I'd look like her son.

SUTTER

That's it. I'm tired of your excuses. Tonight's the night.

RICKY

What night?

SUTTER

The night I get you some action.

21 INT/EXT. SUBURBAN STRIP / SUTTER'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON 21

Cars zoom by as Sutter and Ricky drive extra slow with the windows down, scoping left and right for something or someone to perk up the evening. It may be "Downtown" but there's little to do. Ricky pulls out a blaze and lights it. Sutter sips from his Big Gulp.

RICKY

I don't know about this.

SUTTER

Relax.

From behind the car, headlights flash. Sutter squints through the rearview. See two girls waving excitedly. Sutter smiles.

RICKY
What is it?

SUTTER
Potential.

The girls' car pulls up alongside him. Driver is BETHANY, the passenger TARA.

TARA
Just the man we've been looking for.

SUTTER
Hi Tara. Bethany.

TARA*
Know where we can score some beers?

SUTTER
(smiles, does he ever)
Step into my office ladies.

22 EXT SUBURBAN STRIP / SIDE STREET - MAGIC HOUR 22

Sutter pops the trunk, revealing a large cooler filled with booze. The eyes of the girls light up.

TARA
My hero.

SUTTER
Bethany, you know Ricky don't you?

23 EXT LAKE SIDE - DUSK 23

Sutter helps Ricky and Bethany get on a small boat.

SUTTER'S VOICE
It takes me all of 30 seconds to get them alone.

SUTTER
Shit, I left my phone in the car.

RICKY
I have --

SUTTER
(hinting)
No dude, don't worry about it. You guys go ahead. I'll run back and get it.
(to Tara)
Tara, come with me.

As the boat floats away Sutter winks at Ricky, who's now "trapped" on the boat with Bethany. Ricky looks at Bethany and can only shrug. Back with Sutter and Tara:

SUTTER
 (pulls phone of his pocket)
 Whaddaya know?

TARA
 (realizes)
 You're terrible.

SUTTER
 They make a cute couple, don't they?

24

EXT/INT STREET NEAR LAKE / SUTTER'S CAR - LATER

24

Sutter and Tara drinking. An old classic on the radio.

TARA
 I can't wait to get out of this place.
 Can we put on some something --?

SUTTER
 No I like this.

Tara thinks this strange but doesn't say so. Soon after they hear a CAR careen into the parking lot. Sutter and Tara turn. It's Cassidy, storming out of the car. Mad.

SUTTER
 (upbeat)
 Hey Cass --

Sutter goes to give Cass a hug but she pushes him off.

CASSIDY
 Kendra said she saw you with Tara.

SUTTER
 Uh, yeah, the girls wanted some beers so--

CASSIDY
 I asked you to do one thing for me. One.
 And you still couldn't do it.

SUTTER
 What are you so mad about? What thing?

CASSIDY
 I asked you to put someone else's
 feelings before your own. For once in
 your life!

SUTTER
 Wait a sec. That is what I'm doing!

CASSIDY
 Oh please --

SUTTER
 Ask Ricky. I'm just here to --

CASSIDY

You're the most selfish person I've ever met.

SUTTER

Are you hearing me? I'm doing this for Ricky. I'm completely unselfish.

Cassidy sees Tara in the car, beer in hand. Tara looks away, like she knows she was doing something wrong.

CASSIDY

You're a lost cause, Sutter.

SUTTER

Cass, you gotta believe me --

CASSIDY

We're done.

SUTTER

Cassidy!

It's too late. She gets in the car and drives off. Sutter stands there. Buzzed enough to not be upset. Yet.

25 EXT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 25

We're back with Sutter. He looks up from the page. Thinks for a moment, and then continues writing:

SUTTER (V.O.)

A misunderstanding. No big deal. She'd come around, right? Well listen to this. Fucking last night...

26 INT. SUBURBAN STRIP / SUTTER'S CAR - AGAIN 26

Sutter drives. He nips from the flask.

27 EXT. SUBURBAN CUL DE SAC / PARTY HOUSE 2 - NIGHT 27

OMIT

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28 INT. PARTY HOUSE 2 - MOMENTS LATER 28

Sutter wanders through the place looking for Cassidy. The house is huge and expensively decorated. He sees some flowers in a vase in the hallway. Takes one out. Continues on his way. Occasional partygoers high-five him as he walks but he's in no mood to be social right now. And then he sees her. Sitting on the couch, playing with the hair of MARCUS WEST (18, tall, lanky, athletic).

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SUTTER

Well this is unexpected.

Cass and Marcus turn. Cassidy is surprised to see him.

CASSIDY
What are you doing here?

Knowing he's lost her, Sutter hides the flowers behind his back.

SUTTER
You got a haircut.

CASSIDY
Yeah I... seemed like a good time for a change.

SUTTER
Goddamn stunning, that haircut.

MARCUS
Is he drunk or something?

SUTTER
Well if drunk equals A, and something equals B, let's just say the answer is... definitely not B.

Marcus looks at Sutter with a touch of sympathy.

MARCUS
Look man, I know this is awkward. Maybe we should talk outside--

SUTTER
Marcus West! Speaking to me?! What an honor!

CASSIDY
Oh God, Sutter...

MARCUS
Come on man, let's go out to my car.

SUTTER
Thank you Excellency, but that won't be necessary. I am a fair-minded individual who thoroughly understands the meaning of the phrase 'kicked to the curb.'

Sutter bows, struggling to keep his balance. Backs away.

SUTTER
I bid you both a pleasant evening.

Marcus wants to stop Sutter from leaving but Cassidy puts her arm out.

CASSIDY
Let him go. He drives better that way.

SUTTER
 (still backing away)
 Thanks for the vote of confidence,
 beautiful! You are the most understanding
 woman... in everything but love.
 Arrivederci!

Sutter turns with a flourish and stumbles away.

29

INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

29

Sutter finishes the essay in a flurry.

SUTTER (V.O.)
 Unbelievable, isn't it? You want
 hardship, misfortune, well there you go.

JUMP CUTS:

- Sutter getting dressed for the evening.
- Sutter drinking some more.

SUTTER (V.O.)
 A lesser man might get depressed about
 it. Sit in his room, have a good cry. Not
 Sutter Keely. Don't count me out just
 yet, Dean of Admissions. It's another
 day, and the night is just getting
 started. So forget Cassidy, forget exams,
 forget these pointless college
 applications. Fuck the past, fuck the
 future... all that matters is the here
 and now.

- Sutter looking at himself in the mirror, psyching
 himself up for the night ahead.

SUTTER (V.O.)
 I'm Sutter Keely and I say... it's time
 to be alive.

Music up: Sutter's laid back "go-to" music.

30

INT. DOWNTOWN STREET / SUTTER'S CAR - NIGHT

30

Which continues over Sutter driving, two hands on the
 wheel. But it's just not right for the mood he's in. He
 changes the station. Once. Twice. Until eventually he
 finds something loud, propulsive, perfect. He starts
 drumming a bit to the loud music. Psyching himself up.

31

EXT DOWNTOWN / BAR 1 - LATER

31

Sutter gets turned away by a BOUNCER. Pretends it doesn't
 bother him.

31A EXT DOWNTOWN / SIDEWALK NEAR BAR 1 - MOMENTS LATER 31A

Sutter ambles along down the promenade. Takes a nip at his flask. All around him, YOUNG COUPLES stroll past. He tips his imaginary hat at a BUSKER playing acoustic guitar on the street.

31B EXT DOWNTOWN / BAR 2 - MOMENTS LATER 31B

Sutter turned away from another bar. Now getting frustrated. Sees a sign for a bar across the way and the best part -- no bouncer.

32 INT DOWNTOWN / BAR 3 - MOMENTS LATER 32

Sutter spots a table full of COLLEGE GIRLS at the crowded bar. Decides to approach.

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SUTTER

Ladies... I'm 18 years old and I just got dumped by my girlfriend. Will someone, anyone, please have a drink with me?

A beat. The Girls are delighted to meet him!

- Sutter and the Girls do a round of shots. Then another. They love this kid.

- Sutter dances between two of the Girls. They play with his hair, pinch his cheeks. Innocent fun.

33 INT DOWNTOWN / BAR 3 - LATER 33 **

Sutter and the Girls are leaving. We quickly realize they're not leaving together. As they walk away Sutter yells after them.

SUTTER

I love you!

The Girls look back and laugh -- he's so cute.

SUTTER

I love everyone!

But the Girls keep walking.

34 INT. DOWNTOWN STREET / SUTTER'S CAR - LATER 34

Cruising - windows down, wind in his face, radio on. Drunk and feeling much better now.

SUTTER

(yelling out the window)
You are holy! You are beautiful! Down with the king! Down with the motherfucking--

SMASHCUT TO BLACK.

HUGE FUCKING TITLE CARD: THE SPECTACULAR NOW

AND THEN DARKNESS.
SILENCE. UNTIL:

35 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET / FRONT LAWN - MORNING

35

FEMALE VOICE

Um... hello...

A face.

Or, at least, a head. Female. Completely in shadow from the bright morning sun and thus impossible to make out.

Sutter, who has clearly spent the night passed out on the ground, looks up, disoriented. Puts his hand up to see who it is.

And we see her. Sutter's age but looking younger. Pale with freckles and glasses. Her hair is strawberry blonde and her eyes the color of a public swimming pool. Her name is AIMEE FINECKY.

AIMEE

You're alive.

When she talks it's like she just discovered her voice.

AIMEE

I thought maybe you were dead.

Sutter blinks a few times.

SUTTER

I don't think I'm dead... Where the hell am I?

AIMEE

You're in the middle of a yard. Do you know who lives here?

SUTTER SITS UP. LOOKS AT THE UGLY PINK LITTLE HOUSE.

SUTTER

Jesus, I must have gone to sleep. Hey, where's my car?

AIMEE

Is it one of those?

Sutter looks at the nearby parked cars. None of them his.

AIMEE

You don't live in this neighborhood. Do you, Sutter?

SUTTER

You know my name?

AIMEE

We go to the same school... You wouldn't remember me.

SUTTER

No... of course I do. You're um...

AIMEE

Aimee. Aimee Finecky.

SUTTER

Right. Aimee. I was about to say that.
(standing)
What time is it, Aimee?

AIMEE

6am.

SUTTER

Are you coming back from a party or something?

AIMEE

I'm on my paper route.

She motions to the white pickup truck that's pulled over. We see the back is filled with papers.

AIMEE

It's really my mom's paper route but she went to the casino last night with my step-dad. She hasn't come back yet.

SUTTER

You need some help?

AIMEE

I can manage.

SUTTER

No I'll help you.

AIMEE

You don't have to --

SUTTER

Aimee, you're driving round the neighborhood, I gotta find my car. I'm thinking we can help each other out. Whaddaya say?

Off her look:

36

INT SUBURBAN STREET / AIMEE'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

36

Aimee drives and Sutter throws papers while looking for his car. After throwing some, we can tell Sutter isn't nailing this. Aimee shyly suggests:

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AIMEE

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Try aiming *ahead* of the driveway.

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Sutter absorbs that. Tries it. He's impressed with the results. Aimee smiles at him. CUT TO:

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LATER. Aimee and Sutter continue throwing.

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SUTTER

I didn't realize newspaper throwing was such big business. You must reel in some cash.

AIMEE

My mom does.

SUTTER

And you get nothing?!

AIMEE

I get an allowance.

SUTTER

An allowance? That doesn't sound fair. I mean, you do all the work.

AIMEE

Well yeah but... she pays the bills... most of them.

SUTTER

Most of them?! Aimee, she's your mom!
(off her shrug)

Aw man, I don't know. Sounds to me like a pretty raw deal, this paper route. If I were you, I'd say something.

A sad smile comes over her face. Standing up for herself is the last thing Aimee ever does. Sutter feels bad for her, decides to change the subject. Throwing more papers:

SUTTER

I'm getting the hang of it, aren't I?

AIMEE

You're a natural.

SUTTER

You should have seen me back in Little League. I had this booming arm. Watch this.

(throws right on target)

Look at that! Are you impressed? I had the gift, Aimee. That's what my Dad used to say. Probably could have gone pro if I stuck with it.

AIMEE

So what happened?

SUTTER

Hmm?

AIMEE

Why didn't you stick with it?

17A.

SUTTER

(beat)

Wait... I think I see something...

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CUT TO:

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36A

EXT SUBURBAN STREET / LAWN - MOMENTS LATER

36A

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Aimee and Sutter stand over Sutter's Mitsububishi which is parked in the middle of a lawn. **

AIMEE
What's it doing on the lawn?

SUTTER
That is a very good question.

Aimee laughs. **

AIMEE
Well... thanks again. For helping me.

SUTTER
(motioning to all the papers)
Whaddaya mean? We're not done yet!

AIMEE
Oh you don't have to --

SUTTER
Hey it's the least I can do. Besides, I'm enjoying myself.

The light flips back on in her eyes. A beat.

AIMEE
Should you move your car first?

SUTTER
Yes. Good idea.

Sutter jumps out to move his car. Aimee waits. Smiles.

37 INT SUBURBAN STREET / AIMEE'S TRUCK - LATER 37

Now they're having fun delivering the papers. Aimee launches another that lands right on the doorstep.

SUTTER
(explosion sound effect)
Direct hit!

They share a laugh. It's nice.

SUTTER
We make a good team.

AIMEE
You think so?

Sutter catches the look on Aimee's face. She's beaming.

SUTTER
You know what, Aimee Finecky? I had a pretty rotten night last night until you came along. We should get lunch sometime.

AIMEE
How bout Monday?

SUTTER

Oh...k Monday it is. We can relive our
greatest triumphs of newspaper delivery!

Aimee smiles at him. It's nerdy but endearing. Sutter
feels great about this.

38

INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - LATER THAT MORNING

38

*

A modest house. In the kitchen Sutter finds his mother,
SARA (40s, faded beauty) already up and dressed in her
work clothes. She moves in and out of the room as she
readies for the long day, barely looking at her son.

SARA

You're up early.

SUTTER

I uh...

SARA

(not listening)

They have me on a double shift... again.

Sutter heads up to his room.

SARA

Dammit Sutter.

Sutter stops in his tracks. Uh-oh. Sara comes out of the
utility room holding her uniform.

SARA

Didn't I ask you to hang this for me?
Look how wrinkled this is?

That's what she's mad about?

SARA

It would have taken you two seconds to
hang this up and help me. Is that too
much to ask?

SUTTER

I'm sorry, I just --

SARA

It's not like I ask you to do so much
around here. Christ.

(shakes head; almost to
herself)

Sometimes you act just like your father.

Sutter's face suggests that's alright with him. Like a
tornado, Sara passes through one last time.

SARA

I may not be back in time for dinner.
There's leftovers in the fridge. Or if
you want, call your sister --

Sutter clearly hates that idea. Starts to walk off.

SARA

Sutter.

(he turns)

Next time I ask you do to something...

Sara doesn't finish. She just shakes her head. And with that she's out the door.

SUTTER

(to no one)

I love you too.

39 INT SUTTER'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT MORNING 39 *

Sutter lays in his bed, looking up at the baseball pennant. Thinking. Music plays softly in the background. He still hasn't slept. *

40 EXT CONVENIENCE STORE - THE NEXT MORNING 40 *

Ricky and Sutter emerge. Big Gulp in hand, Sutter is back to his relaxed self.

RICKY

...who knew dinner and a movie would cost 30 bucks?

SUTTER

Pretty much anyone who's ever been on a date.

RICKY

Oh but the best part is... she didn't even care, dude! She paid for the popcorn and everything. She's just... mmm.

SUTTER

You kiss her?

RICKY

Check.

SUTTER

Tongue action?

RICKY

Double check.

The boys high five. Sutter looks at Ricky and smiles. Likes seeing him happy. Knows he had a hand in it.

SUTTER

Where to for lunch today?

RICKY

Aren't you eating with what's her name?

SUTTER
Shit. That's right.

RICKY
I gotta tell ya Sutter. Aimee Finecky?
Strange choice for a rebound.

SUTTER
She's not a rebound.
(off his look)
She's not!
(another look)
I have no interest in dating Aimee
Finecky. I think she's nice, is all.
Maybe too nice. Listen to this. Her mom
has her throwing newspapers at 5am, 6
days a week, schooldays and all. Mom
keeps all the money, pays half the bills,
and Aimee never says a word about it!

RICKY
That sucks.

SUTTER
It's bullshit's what it is.

RICKY
So where do you come in?

SUTTER
I can help her.

RICKY
Oh, here we go. Sutter to the rescue.

SUTTER
She just needs a little confidence is
all. Who better than me to bring it out
of her?

RICKY
So... you don't want to nail her?

SUTTER
Dude, what is wrong with you?

41 INT HIGH SCHOOL / MR ASTER'S CLASSROOM - DAY

41

MR. ASTER (50s, beard) solves a geometry problem on the
chalkboard. The bell rings and students begin to leave.

MR. ASTER
Sutter, a word?

SUTTER
Uh... actually I have to --

MR. ASTER
Have a seat, Mr. Keely.

Sutter really doesn't want to have a seat but there's not much he can do about it.

MR. ASTER
Noticed you didn't turn in the homework.

SUTTER
(suddenly animated)
And I have a really good reason why, Mr. Aster. You're not even gonna believe --

MR. ASTER
Stop talking.

SUTTER
Yes sir.

MR. ASTER
Sutter, I only want to see you succeed. You know that, don't you?

SUTTER
Sure I do.

MR. ASTER
And if you fail... that means I fail.

SUTTER
I know, Mr. Aster. And believe me, I will get it together. From here on in.

MR. ASTER
I wanna believe you.

SUTTER
(standing)
Well you should. I'm turning a corner, I -

MR. ASTER
Let's see you answer this.

SUTTER
Sorry?

MR. ASTER
(handing him a sheet)
If one of the acute angles is 2 times as large as the other, what's the measure of the two angles?
(no idea)
Siddown, I'll show you.

Sutter is a deer in headlights.

Sutter emerges from Aster's class, super late to meet Aimee. He races through the hallway on his way to:

43 INT HIGH SCHOOL / LUNCHROOM - DAY

43

Sutter enters, looking all around for her. Just as he thinks he's missed her, there she is. Standing alone by the lunch line. Waiting.

SUTTER
I'm so sorry --

AIMEE
You came!

SUTTER
Well of course I did. Why wouldn't I?

Sutter takes in the scene (only the lamest of the lame eat in the lunchroom).

SUTTER
You actually eat here?

AIMEE
Isn't that what it's for?

SUTTER
Well yeah but nobody ever... I mean, I've never...
(not wanting to insult)
What's good, I'm starving?

43A INT LUNCHROOM - LATER

43A

Sutter and Aimee at the table.

AIMEE
That's crazy! How fast were you going?

SUTTER
20, 25 miles per hour.

AIMEE
And you just jumped out of the car?

Aimee is hanging on every word.

SUTTER
There was snow on the ground. I didn't think it would hurt.

AIMEE
That's amazing.

SUTTER
Look at you, you're such a great listener. Ok, now you go.

AIMEE
Um... well, I remember... sophomore year. When you wore that mascot head to gym class and wouldn't take it off...

SUTTER

Oh yeah.

AIMEE

That was so funny.

SUTTER

Yeah, no, I mean, stories about you.

AIMEE

I don't have any stories.

SUTTER

Of course you do. Everyone does.

AIMEE

Not me.

SUTTER

Come on. What's your thing?

AIMEE

My thing?

SUTTER

Yeah, like... what do you love? What do you want to be known for? Larry Rourke's the stoner. Greg Jacoby's the rich kid. We all have a thing.

AIMEE

(beat; thinks)
I'd like to think there's more to people than just one thing. You know?

Sutter smiles, impressed. At which point, Aimee's equally awkward friend KRYSTAL approaches.

KRYSTAL

He finally got here, did he?

AIMEE

Hi Krystal.

SUTTER

(standing like a gentleman)
Krystal, hey, Sutter Keely.

KRYSTAL

I know who you are. Come on Aimee. French Club. They're waiting for us.

Aimee clearly wants to stay but standing up to people isn't her thing.

AIMEE

I forgot about French Club. I'm sorry.

SUTTER

No worries.

(an idea)

Hey Aimee, you ever have Aster for geometry?

AIMEE

Freshmen year.

SUTTER

Probably thought it was easy, huh?

AIMEE

Kind of.

SUTTER

Could you tutor me? I never know what that guy's talking about.

AIMEE

Uh, sure, anytime.

Aimee writes down her number and hands it to him. Krystal doesn't like this development one bit.

SUTTER

Thanks. I'll call you.

Aimee nods, gets up to go, unable to hold back a smile. Krystal gives Sutter one last look before walking away. Sutter watches them go. Eats another tater tot.

44

INT CLOTHING STORE - DAY

44

The store has seen better days. Sutter finishes a sale.

SUTTER

It's gonna look great on you.

CUSTOMER leaves passing the owner, DAN DEAN (late 30s, kind face) saying goodbye to his WIFE and CHILD at the door. Sutter watches them go. Once they're gone:

*

SUTTER

Will you please just adopt me already?

DAN

Sorry bud, two's my limit on mouths to feed. So where were we...

*

SUTTER

Cassidy.

DAN

Oh right. That's a shame. I liked her.

*

When Dan is turned around, Sutter pours some whiskey into his soda can. Careful not to let Dan see this.

*

*

SUTTER

So did I.

DAN

I kinda thought she'd be the one to yank
you out of neutral.

SUTTER

Neutral? What neutral? I'm in overdrive.
(off his look)
What?

*

45

EXT. AIMEE'S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR - AFTERNOON

45

A small brick cube surrounded by a bare yard. Some
shingles are missing from the roof and the original paint
color has faded away. Sutter knocks.

CHILD'S VOICE FROM INSIDE

Aimee, your boyfriend's here.

AIMEE'S VOICE (V.O.)

Shut up Shane.

The door opens. Aimee has put some effort into her looks
this afternoon. Most notably, she's wearing lipstick.
He'd never say so but Sutter would rather she wasn't.

AIMEE

Hi.

SUTTER

Hey there.

AIMEE

Come in.

Sutter follows Aimee inside.

45A

INT. AIMEE'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

45A

We take in the total mess that is Aimee's living
situation. Clothes piled up, opened containers covering
the tiny coffee table, VHS tapes scattered on the floor.
Aimee's little brother SHANE (11) plays an ancient video
game system wearing shorts and no shirt.

AIMEE

This is Shane, my brother.

SUTTER

Hello Shane.

Shane flips Sutter the two-handed bird.

AIMEE

He just learned that.

SUTTER

Charming.

AIMEE

We can study in my room.

SUTTER

Lead the way.

Sutter follows Aimee down the narrow hallway. Notices more mess, some tacky wall hangings. Sutter catches a glimpse of Aimee's step-dad RANDY, taking a nap in one room (dressed exactly like Shane). Finally they get to Aimee's bedroom.

45B

INT. AIMEE'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

45B

Sutter is expecting the worst but when she opens the door, it's an awesomely neat and colorful place, clearly a sanctuary from the world outside. Sutter is impressed.

SUTTER

Wow, nice.

AIMEE

I like to keep it clean.

Sutter walks around the room, admiring. The back wall is a giant map of the Milky Way. There's some pencil drawings and ceramic cats scattered about. On one wall is a massive bookshelf covered in notebooks and paperbacks.

SUTTER

You must really love reading.

AIMEE

They're mostly science fiction. A few mysteries.

Sutter picks up one book that's half in Japanese. "Battle of the Immortal."

AIMEE

(apologetically)
I know it's weird.

SUTTER

No that's cool. Weird is good. I say "embrace the weird." Why's it backwards?

AIMEE

That's how you read them. See?

She shows Sutter how it works. He's impressed. Notices on the wall one of the pencil drawings -- an anime-style scene of a woman flying through space.

SUTTER

Is this you flying through space?

AIMEE

No, it's, um... it's nothing. Just this thing I like.

SUTTER

Who is she?

Aimee is embarrassed... but Sutter silently encourages her to answer.

AIMEE

Shirei Migoto. From the Gleaming Planet books. Stupid, I know.

SUTTER

If you like it, it's not stupid. What makes her so special?

AIMEE

She's the leader of the Neexo Ark. It's up to her to escape the Dark Galaxy and find the Gleaming Planet star system.

SUTTER

(looking at another drawing)

I... see...

There's drawings of the Commander everywhere.

AIMEE

(still shyly)

She's kind of my hero... and stuff.

Sutter feels exceedingly bad for this girl right now.

SUTTER

You know what? You'll be my hero if you can straighten me out on this geometry business.

They sit down and get situated. Sutter opens the book.

AIMEE

How much of this have you read?

Sutter looks up. Smiles. He hasn't read a word of course.

45C

INT. AIMEE'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - LATER

45C

They've been at it a while.

AIMEE

So, in this figure, angle 2 and angle 4 are...

(Sutter has no clue)

Complementary angles.

SUTTER

Complementary. Got it. Man, you're a wonderful teacher, Miss Finecky.

AIMEE

So then, you understand?

SUTTER

Well... here's what I don't understand.
When will I ever need to know this stuff?
I mean, seriously. Vectors? Slopes?
Coplanar lines? Who gives a shit? Who
calculates slopes at their job?

Aimee laughs, can't argue with that. And then:

VOICE (O.S.)

Aimee! Come out here right now, will you!

The craggy voice belongs to Randy. Hearing it saps the
fun vibe of the room almost immediately.

RANDY'S VOICE (O.S.)

I thought you were going to get us some
milk.

AIMEE

I will!

RANDY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Do it now, crissakes. The hell has she
been doing all afternoon?

It's quiet for a beat.

AIMEE

I should really...

Aimee smiles her sad smile, starts putting on her shoes.

SUTTER

Yeah, sure. No problem.

The expression on her face is like her ship just crashed
back to Earth. Sutter feels terrible.

SUTTER

You know what, there's this party on
Saturday. I think you should go with me.

AIMEE

Me?

SUTTER

Yeah you. I'll come by and grab you. What
do you say? *

AIMEE

Um... ok?

SUTTER

Is that an answer or a question?

AIMEE

No, I mean, yeah, yes. I'd like that.

- 46 EXT CONVENIENCE STORE / COMIC BOOK STORE - DUSK 46
- Sutter comes out of the convenience store with his Big Gulp. On the way to his car, he passes a comic book store. Sutter walks right by before stopping.
- 47 INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT 47
- Sutter finishes mixing a drink and sits down at his desk. We see a stack of Manga books which Sutter bought at the store. He puts his feet up, begins to read in reverse.
- INSERT: elegantly drawn images from the books, the occasional caption about dreams, freedom, the future.
- Sutter finds himself surprisingly captivated.
- We hear the chime of an Instant Message. Sutter looks up from the book to his computer. He's got a message from "CASSIDY210." (Her icon is a seductive personal pic). The message just says "Hey."
- Sutter perks up. This is a nice, new development. He writes back... Sutter&7: "Hey." (His icon: Sinatra). Takes a swig.
- Her message: "How are you?" Sutter drinks some more. Writes back: "Fabuloso." It's quiet for a few beats. He scratches his head, thinking of the right thing to say.
- But then he gets this: "I miss you." Sutter's eyes open wide. Writes back: "Will I see you at the party tomorrow?" Her message: "Think so." Then, as Sutter is writing back, she sends: "Gotta go. Talk soon." And signs off. Sutter returns his attention to the Manga but his mind is now very much elsewhere.
- 48 EXT. LAKE SIDE / PARTY SPOT - AFTERNOON 48 *
- Beachfront. Picnic tables. Kegs. Music. Twenty or so high school kids already in the swing of things. Sutter and Aimee approach the party. Aimee wears an unflattering purple jacket. Sutter badly wants her to take it off. *
- SUTTER
- Sure you don't want me to carry that? *
- Aimee looks at him like "why?" Oh well, he tried. As they walk towards the keg, pretty much everyone they pass says "Hi" to Sutter or slaps him five. He's the king of these high school parties. At the keg he hands her a cup. *
- AIMEE
- Um, I don't... really... *
- SUTTER
- You don't have to drink it. Just hold. *
- Gives off the illusion you're having fun. *

Sutter looks around, spotting Cassidy in a group of partiers by the beach. He shrugs it off, turns back to Aimee.

SUTTER
See anyone you know?

AIMEE
I don't really know a lot of people.

SUTTER
Well that, my dear, is about to change.

Sutter downs one drink, pours two more. Gestures for her to follow him. They walk over to Cassidy's group.

SUTTER
Hey gang. Who needs a refill?

Sutter hands one to Cassidy who takes it.

SUTTER
This is Aimee Finecky.

Aimee shyly waves. Awkward nods all around. Sutter gets the impression everyone is waiting for some incident. Well he's not going to give them one.

SUTTER
Everyone's so serious tonight. How bout a joke? What do you call a fish with no eye?
(they wait for it)
A fsshh.

It takes a second but eventually Cass starts to laugh. The others join in.

SUTTER
Heard that from an 8 year old running away from home.

Sutter sees Cody standing next to Aimee. Gets an idea.

SUTTER
You're a reader, aren't you Cody? You ever read the Gleaming Planet books?

CODY
(cautiously)
One or two.

SUTTER
(to Aimee)
I meant to tell you. I started the first one last night. It's really cool.

AIMEE
I know, right?!

SUTTER *

I like the part where Shirei Migoto takes *
on the Cosmic Superlord. She fucks that *
guy up! *

CODY *

I love those books. *

SUTTER *

(of course he does) *
Do you now... *

CODY *

Have you read "Solar Bull?" *

AIMEE *

Oh my god, I love Solar Bull! *

Cody and Aimee start enthusiastically chatting about it. *
Feeling good about this, Sutter turns to Cassidy. *

SUTTER *

I don't believe we've met, Sutter Keely. *

Sutter extends his hand. After a beat, she shakes it, *
causing him to smile. *

CASSIDY *

Don't give me that smile. *

SUTTER *

I'm sorry. Can't help myself. *

Sutter gestures he needs a refill. *

They walk back to the keg. Sutter gets another refill. So *
does Cassidy. He raises his cup to toast her. She *
hesitates but goes for it. Can't help but be charmed by *
him - which is just when Marcus shows up. *

MARCUS *

Cassidy. Sutter. *

SUTTER *

Marcus. *

MARCUS *

I'd better get going Cass. You riding *
with me? *

And she is. She takes his hand. *

CASSIDY *

Good to see you, Sutter. *

Off they go. Leaving Sutter alone. He looks back over at *
Aimee, expecting to still see her chatting with Cody. But *
she's not. In Cody's place is ERIK WOLFF (collar up, *
smarmy as hell) standing way too close to her too. Sutter *
doesn't like this one bit. *

SUTTER *
(to Aimee) *
You all right? *

AIMEE *
Yeah, I'm just, you know, not used to *
drinking. *

SUTTER *
Let's go for a walk. *

Sutter grabs Aimee and helps her up. *

ERIK WOLFF *
Hey, man, what the -- *

SUTTER *
Get lost douchebag. *

Sutter takes Aimee by the arm. They walk off. *

48A EXT. LAKE SIDE / PARTY SPOT - SAME
OMITTED

48A *
*

48B

EXT. LAKE SIDE / DIRT PATH - MOMENTS LATER

48B *

Aimee and Sutter walk on a dirt path, far away from the rest of the revelers. He carries her windbreaker.

SUTTER

Hey, I'm sorry about Doyle. He's a dick.
I hope he didn't --

AIMEE

No, we were just... we were just talking.

SUTTER

Wow. You're hammered, aren't you?

Aimee leans up against Sutter. Their shoulders touching. She looks at him and smiles. Sutter isn't sure what to do so he takes a nip from the flask.

AIMEE

Can I try that?

SUTTER

This? No. This is serious stuff.

AIMEE

Just a taste.

Sutter hesitates but then hands it to her. She takes more than a sip and is immediately coughing and choking.

AIMEE

How can you drink this?

SUTTER

I've been at it a while. You know who gave me my first beer?

AIMEE

Who?

SUTTER

My father. I was probably... 6. We used to go to baseball games every Saturday and he would let me take little sips.

AIMEE
Did you get drunk?

SUTTER
Nah. But it sure felt nice and warm...

He smiles at this memory.

AIMEE
Where is he now... your father?

SUTTER
He's an airline pilot. Flies all over the country.

AIMEE
That's so cool!

SUTTER
He's a cool guy. Can't imagine what he was doing with my mom that whole time.

AIMEE
They're divorced?

SUTTER
Oh yeah. She threw him out of the house a long time ago. But it's fine. Believe me, he's way better off.

Aimee takes another sip. Winces but doesn't choke.

AIMEE
Sounds like we have the same mother.

SUTTER
How's that?

AIMEE
Well for example... I got into college today. But there's no way my mom will let me go.

SUTTER
You got into college today?

AIMEE
In Philadelphia. Where my sister lives.

SUTTER
That's, I don't know what to say, Aim. Congratulations!

AIMEE
It doesn't matter, though, cause my mom--

SUTTER
What's your mom have to do with it?

AIMEE

Well she needs me. For the route and stuff. She's alone all day, no one to help her --

SUTTER

Aimee. Hold on. Your mom will be fine. She's a grown woman. You are going to Philly.

AIMEE

Yeah but --

SUTTER

No. No buts. Don't you see? You're this extraordinary genius but you've got all these people making you do stuff. It's gotta stop.

AIMEE

How?

SUTTER

It's easy. Stand up for yourself.

AIMEE

I don't know how.

SUTTER

I'll teach you. Here... have another swig.

Aimee takes the flask. Drinks another sip.

SUTTER

Now repeat after me. "Mom, get off my motherfucking back!"

AIMEE

What?!

SUTTER

Say it.

AIMEE

No!

(beat; quietly)
Get off my back.

SUTTER

Dude, you've got to say it like you mean it. And the motherfuck is key. Trust me. "Mom..."

AIMEE

"Mom..."

SUTTER

"Get off my MOTHERFUCKING back, Mom!"

AIMEE

(beat)

"Get off my... fucking... back, Mom!"

SUTTER

Motherfucking.

AIMEE

Motherfucking back! Motherfucker! Aaaah!

SUTTER

Yes!

AIMEE

That sorta feels good.

SUTTER

I told you.

AIMEE

Get off my motherfucking back, mom. Stay out of my motherfucking business, Krystal.

SUTTER

Oh! Krystal got one. Who else?

AIMEE

I think that's it.

SUTTER

How bout an ex-boyfriend? Fuck you ex-boyfriend!

Aimee clamps up. Sutter notices.

SUTTER

Come on. You can't be 17 and not have one horrible ex-boyfriend you want to curse out.

(she doesn't)

Nobody?

AIMEE

It's not... guys don't really look at me... like that. You know?

SUTTER

You're crazy. Didn't you see Erik Wolff hitting on you? And Cody Dennis?

AIMEE

They weren't hitting on me.

SUTTER

Of course they were. You're a sweetheart. I mean, look at you.

Aimee is not at all convinced. To convince her, Sutter takes hold of her chin, tilts it up, and plants a kiss on her. When it's over:

AIMEE

Whew.

SUTTER

You're damn right "whew."

Sutter smiles. Aimee smiles back. So Sutter goes in for another one. Why the hell not? And as they kiss, CUT TO:

49 INT SUTTER'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY 49

Sutter's asleep in his clothes from the night before. Food wrappers and a stray beer can are littered around the bed. The clock reads: 12:06pm. Sutter stirs. Moans. The hangover is upon him.

50 INT BATHROOM - DAY 50

Sutter showers. He leans against the wall, head in his arms as the water falls on him. He tries to remember the night before.

50A EXT. LAKE SIDE / PARTY SPOT - NIGHT 50A

FLASH: Sutter and Aimee walk away from the party. Cassidy watching.

50B INT. BATHROOM - DAY 50B

BACK TO Sutter in the shower. Remembering.

50C EXT. LAKE SIDE / DIRT PATH - NIGHT 50C

FLASH: Sutter kissing Aimee, like we saw.

50D INT. BATHROOM - DAY 50D

BACK TO Sutter in the shower. Ok, yeah, that happened.

50E EXT. AIMEE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 50E

FLASH: Sutter helping Aimee to get to her front door.

SUTTER

Of course you're going to the prom. I'll take you.

50F INT. BATHROOM - DAY 50F

BACK TO Sutter in the shower. Can't believe he said that. Rolls back his head in disgust.

51

EXT. SUTTER'S PORCH - DAY

51

Sutter and Ricky hanging out, taking in the sun, their
feet dangling in a small plastic kiddie pool.

**
**

RICKY

You made plans with her? Like, future plans?

SUTTER

It's no big deal.

RICKY

It's you making plans. You never make plans.

SUTTER

Relax, will you? I'm just trying to help the girl.

RICKY

Right I forgot. Sutter to the rescue.

SUTTER

Exactly.

RICKY

And if she falls for you, what happens then?

Sutter dismisses this as nonsense. Ricky holds his gaze.

52

INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

52

There's a voice mail on Sutter's cell. Presses play:

AIMEE'S VOICE

Sutter, hi, it's, um, it's Aimee. Wasn't sure if we were studying tonight. Call me. If you want.

Sutter barely reacts to this. Walks to the fridge. There's a note from Mom, something about working late and chicken in the microwave. Doesn't react to that either. Goes straight for the liquor cabinet.

53

INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

53

Sutter sits in front of his computer, stirring a drink. Looks at the application essay he has written ("Describe a hardship...") Sutter highlights the essay (from our opening) and deletes the whole thing. Is about to start over when he hears a DING: "CASSIDY210 is now online."

Sutter opens the chat window. "Sutter&7" send her a message: "Hey, beautiful." He waits for a response. Gets one: "Hello you..."

Sutter thinks about what to say next. Writes: "What are you doing? Let's hang out." Sutter debates sending that. Looks at it a few beats. Wills himself to hit send.

And there's no response. One beat. Two beats. Now he's nervous. Then it happens: "Come on over." Sutter's eyes light up.

54 INT MALL - NIGHT 54

OMITTED

55 INT CASSIDY'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 55

They pass Sutter's Big Gulp back and forth, reminiscing.

SUTTER
Or the lightning storm?

CASSIDY
On your roof! Yes! That was amazing!
(beat; reflective)
I don't know how many times I've ever
felt like that.

SUTTER
Isn't often.

CASSIDY
But every time was with you.

Sutter smiles, leans in closer.

SUTTER
Actually I think I feel it right now.

CASSIDY
Stop it.

SUTTER
No I'm serious. When we're together, it's
like, we're invincible. Like nothing can
touch us, like everything else in the
world - the problems, the
responsibilities - they all just
disappear.

Sutter looks right in her eyes. Cassidy looks down.

CASSIDY
I don't want to lose you Sutter.

Sutter tenderly touches her cheek.

SUTTER
Then you won't.

She looks back up at him. Deciding. And now they're
making out. Clothes are coming off.

SUTTER
God you're beautiful.

CASSIDY
Don't talk.

Cassidy lies down. They continue kissing. Sutter moves to her neck. Suddenly her hands stop moving and her body freezes. Sutter is confused.

SUTTER

What's the matter?

CASSIDY

Nothing. Just go ahead.

SUTTER

What do you mean, 'just go ahead'?

CASSIDY

Just do it.

She lies perfectly still with her eyes closed.

SUTTER

I can't... I'm not gonna just do it.
What's wrong with you?

Sutter pulls away.

SUTTER

Are you thinking about Marcus?

(she says nothing)

Are you in love with him?

(still silent)

What about us? This afternoon?

CASSIDY

I'm like really confused right now. I mean, I don't have fun with anyone like I do with you.

SUTTER

Exactly --

CASSIDY

But you can't go around having fun all the time. Sometimes you have to be serious.

SUTTER

I am serious. I'm 100 percent serious.

CASSIDY

About what?

SUTTER

About... not being serious.

CASSIDY

Did you even apply to college yet?

He doesn't answer. Cassidy looks at him "thought so."

SUTTER

Hey, my Dad never went to college and now he's, like, the number two real estate developer in Cook County. Who needs it? I have everything I need right here. A job. A car. A beautiful woman. You think beauty's in some classroom? A text book? It's here. It's all around us.

CASSIDY

You're drunk.

SUTTER

Yeah but I'm not wrong. You got to live in the moment, Cass.

CASSIDY

I want more than just... "moments." I want --

SUTTER

What?

CASSIDY

A future.

Sutter looks away. Starts to get dressed. Disappointed.

56 INT. LAME LIVING ROOM - LATER 56

OMITTED

57 INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE HOUSE / DOWNSTAIRS 57

OMITTED

58 EXT HOUSE - BACK YARD - LATER 58

OMITTED

59 INT SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT 59

Sutter comes in and sits at his computer. Again opens the college application window. The essay is now totally blank. He looks at the question. Quick glance to the pennant on the wall. Sutter takes a swig from the flask. Says out loud:

SUTTER

Fuck this.

And turns off the computer.

60 INT HIGH SCHOOL / HALLWAY - DAY 60

Crowded with kids heading in all directions. And then there's Sutter. He strolls down the hall until he spots Aimee at a distance. Her back is turned. Sutter quickly turns down another hallway.

61

EXT HIGH SCHOOL / COVERED WALKWAY - LATER

61

Sutter is walking to his Lancer when:

VOICE

Just who do you think you are?

It's Krystal and she doesn't look happy.

SUTTER

The King of Mexico.

KRYSTAL

You're not gonna joke your way out of this, Sutter. Aimee told me about the party by the lake.

SUTTER

And?

KRYSTAL

And now you're avoiding her.

SUTTER

I'm not avoiding her.

KRYSTAL

Really? Have you seen her since the party? Have you even called?

SUTTER

How bout you get off my back?

KRYSTAL

I knew she got that from you. Aimee said the same thing.

SUTTER

Did she? Good for her.

KRYSTAL

No, it's not good for her. Aimee's isn't like you, Sutter. She's a sweet girl. She doesn't need you causing problems in her life.

SUTTER

(walking away)

The only problem Aimee has is you bossing her around like she's your personal assistant.

KRYSTAL

(yelling after him)

You shouldn't treat her this way.

SUTTER

(not stopping)

Whatever buzzkill.

62 INT/EXT. SUBURBAN STRIP / SUTTER'S CAR - LATER 62

Sutter drives around. Takes a drink from the Big Gulp. We can tell he's thinking about what Krystal said. Rolls his eyes and makes a U-Turn.

63 EXT AIMEE'S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR - AFTERNOON 63

Sutter knocks. After a few moments Aimee appears. Surprised - and delighted - to see him.

AIMEE

I didn't know you were coming over today.

SUTTER

Yeah, no, I wasn't, but uh... I was driving around and I thought, 'I don't care how busy I am. I want to see how Aimee's doing.'

(off her smile)

So... how you doing?

AIMEE

Good.

SUTTER

Good. Great. Listen, my sister is having a dinner for her swanky friends and I'm being forced to show --

AIMEE

You have a sister? I didn't know that.

SUTTER

Yeah, well, we're not really close. Anyway, would you wanna come with me?

AIMEE

Um... ok! When is it?

SUTTER

Ten minutes.

AIMEE

Oh. Uh... Sure! I'll get my coat.

SUTTER

Let's... leave the coat.

63A EXT HOLLY'S HOUSE - DUSK 63A

Establishing.

64 INT HOLLY'S HOUSE / DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 64

ANGLE on HOLLY, Sutter's sister, (25, heavily made up, dyed blonde hair, fake breasts and dressed to show them, jewelry glistening everywhere).

HOLLY

...and I said "could I get you boys anything else?" And he said, tell 'em what you said honey.

Holly's husband JOE (early 40s, confident without cause) sits to her right.

JOE

I leaned back in my chair, puffed out my chest and I said... "You could give me your number gorgeous?"

The PARTY GUESTS (mostly OLDER MEN and their YOUNGER SECOND WIVES) like this. Sutter, at the other end of the long table, makes the "vomit" face to Aimee. She laughs.

HOLLY

I had no idea he was a big fancy lawyer but I gave it to him anyway. And I sure am glad I did!

JOE

Hasn't worked a day in her life since.

Joe squeezes her leg. Holly pecks her husband on the lips. Aimee rolls her eyes at this. Signals for another top-off from the flask which Sutter provides out of view from the others.

SUTTER

Wow. You guys sure are a breath of fresh air.

HOLLY

Thank you Sutter.

SUTTER

It's rare to see such happy couples nowadays. Seems like everyone's divorced.

HOLLY

That's not true.

SUTTER

Isn't it? My parents, (to Aimee) your parents, most of my friend's parents --

JOE

Kid's got a point.

SUTTER

Thank you Joe.

AIMEE

Mine didn't.

SUTTER

(confused)
They didn't? But I thought...

Aimee shakes her head no.

HOLLY

See Sutter. Not everything is doomed.

AIMEE

My Dad died.

That sucks the air out of the room.

HOLLY

I'm so sorry, honey.

AIMEE

Not your fault.

Aimee takes a drink. The guests shuffle in their seats.

HOLLY

What happened?

AIMEE

He was a great guy. He just... he had a... problem. Painkillers, mostly.

No one really knows what to say.

AIMEE

He tried to stop a bunch of times, but... One day my sister came home and he was just lying there. She had to close his eyes.

Joe winces. Aimee takes another sip. This time, she doesn't flinch.

AIMEE

(to Sutter)

Anyway, I don't agree with you. About marriage. Mine's gonna totally work.

SUTTER

Oh yeah?

AIMEE

I've thought it all out. We're going to live on a horse ranch, my husband and I. I'll work for NASA. And my husband... he'll do something completely different. And we'll offset each other. Like we'll have some things in common but we'll also have all these other dimensions that we bring to the relationship. And that's how I know it'll work.

Sutter is taken aback. Really impressed with her now.

JOE

(dismissive)

Sounds like a dream.

AIMEE
 (right back at him)
 It's good to have dreams. Don't you think?

Aimee looks at Sutter, smiles. Sutter, still stunned, smiles back. Raises his glass.

SUTTER
 To dreams.

65

EXT PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

65

Where kids hang out cause there's nowhere to go. Away from the party, Sutter and Aimee share a drink sitting on the roof of his car.

AIMEE
 Did you mean what you said at the party?

SUTTER
 Uh... which... thing --?

AIMEE
 The prom.

SUTTER
 (beat)
 Well of course I remember that. Are you kidding? I wouldn't forget something like that.

There's an awkward pause.

AIMEE
 Do you still want to go? I mean, if you don't, I'll understand.

SUTTER
 What are you talking about? I totally want to go. I wouldn't have asked you if I didn't.

AIMEE
 Really?

SUTTER
 Sure. Can't wait.

She looks at him and smiles. He smiles back. Starting to really like how happy he makes this girl.

SUTTER
 (shutting off radio)
 Come here.

They start to kiss. Sutter then stops. Takes off her glasses. Sets them on the hood. Kissing resumes. This lasts a few seconds before someone whistles at them from afar. Aimee and Sutter laugh.

In the hallway, Aimee kisses Sutter goodbye. Holds on to his arm for as long as she can as they part. Sutter goes one way, she goes the other. Ricky joins Sutter with a disapproving look.

SUTTER

It's under control.

(Ricky shakes his head)

Hey, did it ever cross your mind that I might actually be attracted to her?

RICKY

No.

SUTTER

That's cause you haven't really looked at her. I'm telling you. You have to talk to her a while before you can really see her.

Ricky's expression doesn't change.

SUTTER

What am I doing that's so wrong? Worst case scenario, I'm giving her some much needed boyfriend experience.

RICKY

That's worst case scenario?

SUTTER

And besides, you and I both know, another month tops before she's done with me and moves on.

RICKY

And if she doesn't?

SUTTER

That would be a first then, wouldn't it?

Fair point. Erik Wolff walks over.

ERIK WOLFF

Hey Sutter, Marcus was looking for you.

SUTTER

Marcus? What for?

ERIK WOLFF

I'll let him tell you that.

Erik walks away, smiling maliciously. Sutter and Ricky look at one another, knowing that can't be good.

Sutter is shadowboxing while talking to Dan at the shop.

SUTTER
 ...and he's like yay big and I'm like yay
 big... so that's bad. Plus, he's fast.
 And his reach has got to be way out --

DAN *
 Sutter, what are you doing? You're not a
 fighter.

SUTTER
 Tell me about it!

DAN *
 So why's he want to fight you?

SUTTER
 I don't know. He must think I'm still
 after Cassidy.

DAN *
 Is he right?

Sutter stops boxing (clearly winded). Takes a drink from
 his Big Gulp.

SUTTER
 No. I mean -- we talk, a little. Online
 mostly.
 (off his look)
 Just cause I want to keep in touch with
 my ex doesn't make me a bad guy. Does it?

DAN *
 You're not a bad guy, Sutter. You just
 don't have a real good grasp of the idea
 of consequences.

67A INT. CLOTHING STORE - AFTERNOON

67A **

Sutter turns off the lights, Big Gulp in hand. Marcus
 walks in.

VOICE
 What's up with you and Cassidy?

Oh shit, it's Marcus. Here we go.

SUTTER
 Look, man, I don't want any trouble.

Marcus just stares Sutter down. Intimidating.

MARCUS
 Tell me the truth.

Marcus gets right up in Sutter's face. Sutter knows if
 this gets physical, he's not gonna win.

SUTTER
Nothing's up. We're just friends. She's moved on. I've moved on...

MARCUS
You've moved on?

SUTTER
(not convincingly)
I have.

MARCUS
Come on, man. Everyone knows you'd drop Aimee Finecky in a second if Cass would get back with you.

SUTTER
Everyone knows that? Well guess what... everyone's wrong. Look, Marcus, trust me, ok. We hang out sometimes, we have fun, but I promise you, nothing's going on between Cass and me.

Marcus continues to stare Sutter down. A beat. And then it's Marcus who breaks the stare first. He looks down at his feet. Sutter realizes something -- he isn't angry, he's distressed.

MARCUS
Can I ask you something?

SUTTER
Oh...k.

MARCUS
Why can't it be me she has fun with?

SUTTER
(beat; not expecting that)
What?

MARCUS
I'm not like you, Sutter. I don't know how to make her laugh and stuff. I want to, I just... I don't know what to do.

Sutter is thrown for a loop.

SUTTER
Dude... you're Marcus West. Star athlete. Class President. What's that charity you started?

MARCUS
The Hope Squadron.

SUTTER
The Hope Squadron, for fuck's sake!
You're the man, Marcus! You don't need my help.

MARCUS

The way she talks about you... it's not the same. I want her to like me like that. And she doesn't. I know she doesn't.

Sutter is stunned to see Marcus so distraught and vulnerable. This is too weird.

SUTTER

Look, Marcus, you don't want to be like me. Ok? I make jokes and stuff but you... you get shit done. You're gonna change the world. You guys are perfect together.

Marcus's mood is slowly improving. Sutter is on a roll.

SUTTER

You just need to loosen up a bit. You're too tense.

MARCUS

Maybe.

SUTTER

Not everything has to be serious all the time. See a movie. Maybe have a beer once in a while.

MARCUS

That's not for me, man.

SUTTER

I'm just saying... relax. Enjoy yourself, you know? Live in the now.

Marcus sighs, taking it all in.

MARCUS

Thank you for talking to me like this, Sutter. I appreciate it. I really do.

Sutter nods, feeling pretty good about the whole thing. Marcus opens the door to go outside.

MARCUS

Hey Sutter!
(Sutter turns)
They're wrong about you.

SUTTER

What's that?

MARCUS

You're not the joke everyone thinks you are.

Sutter flinches, as if he just received the punch he was expecting all along. Marcus leaves and we remain on Sutter, thinking about that. CUT TO:

Sutter and Aimee sitting close together watching TV.

SUTTER
What do you think of the movie?

AIMEE
I've seen it before.

SUTTER
We can watch something else.

AIMEE
No I like it. Used to watch it with my
Dad all the time. He loved this stuff.

SUTTER
My kind of guy.

AIMEE
You would have liked him a lot. He's the
one who turned me onto music and manga
and stuff. He was cool.

Sutter puts his arms around her. Aimee likes the feeling.

AIMEE
What about you?

SUTTER
Hmm?

AIMEE
Do you miss your Dad?

SUTTER
Nah it's cool.

AIMEE
He's not flying back soon?

SUTTER
What?

AIMEE
You said he was an... airline pilot?

SUTTER
Um... yeah, exactly.

AIMEE
So... why can't he fly to come see you?

SUTTER
I don't know.

AIMEE
If my Dad was alive --

SUTTER
Why are we talking about this?

AIMEE
I'm just saying... you should see him,
before it's too late.

Sutter says nothing.

AIMEE
Maybe you can ask your mom --

SUTTER
(jumping up)
Goddamit Aimee! Will you shut up already?
Jesus Christ.

Aimee's face flushes red and she shrinks away. This is the first time Sutter's gotten mad at her and it stings.

AIMEE
I'm sorry.

SUTTER
(realizing he snapped)
No, I'm sorry. You just... you kept going
on and on --

AIMEE
(looking away)
I know. I don't know what's wrong with
me.

SUTTER
(sitting back down)
Nothing's wrong with you. I'm just... a
little touchy about my Dad, ok. Come
here. I'm sorry I yelled.

Sutter hugs her tight. He then lifts her chin to look at him. Then he kisses her. The mouth. The forehead. The eyelids. Kissing the tears away. It grows in intensity.

69 INT AIMEE'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

69

And now they're on the bed, kissing, fondling.

AIMEE
Can we take off our clothes?

There's no stopping it now. Sutter lifts off Aimee's shirt. Aimee takes off her own bra. Sutter then takes his shirt off. Aimee helps him with his pants. It's awkward but there's a real romance to it. Sutter sees Aimee in a new light. And he's amazed at what he sees.

SUTTER
Nudity looks awesome on you.

They get under the covers together. Feeling each other's bodies. Aimee stops first. Reaching over to the night stand. She pulls out a condom.

AIMEE

Just to be safe.

Sutter is surprised. Girl's got all the bases covered. Aimee helps him put the condom on. And then pulls him over towards her so he can be on top.

AIMEE

I like you so much.

SUTTER

You're spectacular. You really are.

AIMEE

I'm so glad I met you.

SUTTER

I'm glad I met you too.

Slowly, tenderly, they begin to have sex. Sutter looks down at Aimee's face. Her eyes are closed. It's very different from sex with Cassidy but in a way it's better. More intimate. More connected. Sutter is entranced.

69A INT AIMEE'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - LATER

69A

They lie in bed together. Post-coital.

AIMEE

You're incredible.

SUTTER

Nah. It's easy to seem that way on your first time.

(Aimee looks away)

It was your first time, wasn't it...?
Aimee?

Her silence says maybe it wasn't.

SUTTER

I thought you said you never had a boyfriend.

Aimee sits up, pulls her knees to her chest. Chin down, looking very distraught.

AIMEE

I don't want you to hate me.

SUTTER

Hate you? I won't hate you. You're un-hatable.

AIMEE

It's just something that happened... I was 14. I didn't know anything about boys.

SUTTER

Ok.

AIMEE

Randy's son Troy was sleeping over.

SUTTER

Randy? Step-father Randy?

AIMEE

(nods)

We all went to sleep and then I heard this knock on my door. It was. He said he couldn't sleep and would I mind if he came in, talk for a while.

SUTTER

Of course he did.

AIMEE

He climbed in the bed. And started... saying all this stuff to me...

SUTTER

What kind of stuff?

AIMEE

You know. How warm I feel. How much he likes my mouth and my hair.

SUTTER

Smooth talker, this Troy.

AIMEE

No one ever spoke to me like that. It felt... I don't know... special. So I just... let him do it.

(beat)

I should have known better.

SUTTER

How could you? You were 14.

AIMEE

I still should have known no 20 year old would actually like me --

SUTTER

20? Are you fucking kidding me?

AIMEE

And the worst part is... when we... finished... he couldn't look at me. Drove away in the morning. Haven't seen him since.

SUTTER

Oh man! That dude is king of the creeps.
If I ever see that guy -- I can't believe
your mom stayed with Randy after that.

AIMEE

She doesn't know.

SUTTER

What? You never... How could you not --

AIMEE

I've never told anyone that. Until now.

They both lie there quietly. Aimee puts her head on his
chest. Sutter sits there thinking. Then he hears her.

AIMEE

You must think I'm awful.

SUTTER

I don't think you're awful. Why would you
say that?

(beat)

Aimee don't cry...

(beat)

I'll tell you a secret. My Dad's not a
pilot. I'm not sure what he is. Or where.
I just said that because... I don't
know... I don't know anything about him.
He's been gone half my life and I... I
guess I just miss him.

AIMEE

Doesn't anyone know where he is?

SUTTER

My mom does. She refuses to tell me.

AIMEE

She can't keep him from you. He's your
father.

Sutter looks away. Uncomfortable.

AIMEE

I'll make you a deal. I'll stand up to my
Mom, if you stand up to yours.

Sutter looks at her. Aimee puts out her hand to shake.

AIMEE

What do you say? Deal?

Sutter hesitates. Then he just smiles, touches her face.
Instead of answering he says:

SUTTER

You're spectacular.

And then they lay together. She strokes his hair as he looks at the ceiling.

70 INT HIGH SCHOOL / AUDITORIUM - DAY 70

OMITTED

71 INT HIGH SCHOOL / HALLWAY - DAY 71

Sutter is walking to class when he hears:

VOICE

Sutter!

It's Mr. Aster from inside his classroom. Sutter exhales.

71A INT. HIGH SCHOOL / MR. ASTER'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS 71A

Sutter is seated. Aster hands him a homework assignment. A big red D+.

SUTTER

(upbeat)

It's not an F.

MR. ASTER

I thought you were getting help.

SUTTER

I am.

MR. ASTER

Well now you need a C on the final or you fail my class.

SUTTER

I'll try harder.

MR. ASTER

No you won't.

That takes Sutter by surprise.

MR. ASTER

I don't get you, Sutter. You're a smart kid. Thoughtful. Do you even want to graduate?

SUTTER

(beat; thinks about it)

I'm not sure.

MR. ASTER

Excuse me?

SUTTER

I'm being honest with you. The truth is, I like it here. I like being young.

(MORE)

SUTTER (CONT'D)
 Everybody's rushing me to grow up, move
 on -- why? What's so great about being an
 adult?

Aster doesn't know what to say.

SUTTER
 Are you happy, Mr. Aster?

Aster is silent. Sutter shrugs. Takes his paper and goes.

72

EXT AIMEE'S HOUSE / FRONT YARD - MAGIC HOUR

72

Tuxedo-clad Sutter stands with Aimee's MOM and Randy.
 Aimee's Mom has the camera out and is readying to take
 some prom pictures.

AIMEE'S MOM
 Randy, get in there with Sutter.

The two men pose for the picture. As odd a couple as
 you're likely to see. Sutter pretends to be comfortable.

Finally Aimee comes out. She's wearing the lipstick
 again, her dress is a pale yellow that doesn't quite
 match her skin tone, and she's done her hair up in a
 leaning tower of Pisa style do. An awkward girl trying
 too hard to look elegant. Sutter doesn't care about that.

SUTTER
 You look fabuloso.

AIMEE
 Thanks. So do you.

They do the boutonniere/ corsage exchange. Mom takes a
 few more. Randy loses interest, walks away. They say
 their goodbyes and they're off.

73

EXT/INT. SUTTER'S CAR - MAGIC HOUR

73

Sutter's car has been washed for the occasion.

SUTTER
 Sorry I didn't get you a limo.

AIMEE
 That's ok.

SUTTER
 Let me make it up to you.

He removes a wrapped gift from the glove compartment.
 Aimee tears the paper off of the box. It's a flask.

AIMEE
 I love it!

SUTTER
 And you'll notice it's already full.
 (raising his flask)
 To you, Aimee Finecky.

They toast. Aimee leans in to kiss him. When it's over:

SUTTER
 Ok then. Let's go to prom!

74 EXT HIGH SCHOOL / GYM - NIGHT 74

OMITTED

75 INT HIGH SCHOOL / GYM - MOMENTS LATER 75

The prom is already in full swing and it's very much like you'd expect -- DJ, punch bowl, padded chairs, white tablecloths. Sutter and Aimee arrive. Through Sutter's eyes, the place sparkles. Aimee adjusts the straps on her ill-fitting dress. Sneaks a drink from her flask. Sutter takes her arm as they walk in.

People greet him as they always do when he shows up to a party. High-fives etc. Sutter and Aimee choose a half-empty table to sit at. Sutter pulls out a chair for her like a gentleman. **

They sit and take it all in. There's Ricky sitting with Beth. And there's Cassidy, on the dance floor with Marcus. Her dress is amazing, showing off her body in the perfect way. Sutter takes a moment to watch but quickly returns his attention to Aimee. They toast drinks. Sutter can't help himself, his eyes returning to Cass on the dance floor. Aimee eventually notices: **

AIMEE **
 She's a good dancer.

SUTTER
 Hmm?

AIMEE
 Cassidy.

SUTTER

Oh, yeah, I hadn't noticed.

Aimee doesn't push the issue. Sutter downs another drink. And so does Aimee. The song ends and Cassidy sees Sutter at the table. She walks over with Marcus.

CASSIDY

Why aren't you dancing?

SUTTER

You know I hate this kind of music.

CASSIDY

Who cares? It's the prom. Aimee, c'mon!

AIMEE

I'm not much of a dancer.

SUTTER

That's why you got me. I can teach you some of my moves.

AIMEE

(taking a big sip)

I'm good right here. You two go ahead.

Sutter and Cassidy share a look.

SUTTER

You sure?

AIMEE

It's fine.

Aimee takes out her flask and re-spikes the drink. Sutter hesitates, sizing up whether Aimee is telling the truth.

SUTTER

If you change your mind...

Aimee turns back around. Sutter shrugs. He and Cassidy head to the dance floor. Once they're dancing:

CASSIDY

She looks nice.

SUTTER

She does.

CASSIDY

You're not turning her into a lush are you?

SUTTER

You wanna dance or lecture me about Aimee?

CASSIDY

I wanna dance.

LATER. Sutter comes back with more punch. He sits down, kisses Aimee on the cheek. Aimee smiles. Seems like she means it. Then again, might be the alcohol. Sutter takes her hand and holds it at the table. He looks around the room. Sees Ricky and Beth having fun. Everything he sees makes him happy.

**
**
**

SUTTER

Amazing, isn't it? All these kids. Dressed up, dancing, singing, falling in love... This is our night! St. Patrick's Day for the young. Do you realize -- right now, this moment, this is as young as we're ever gonna be. This is it. The spectacular now.

(beat)

God, I love these people.

The song ends and a new one begins, slower, more romantic. Sutter grabs Aimee and gestures to the dance floor. This time she doesn't resist. They dance. She puts her head on Sutter's shoulder.

AIMEE

I'm sorry I can't dance like Cassidy.

SUTTER

You dance like Aimee. And that's perfect.

We stay with them a few beats. A nice moment.

75A

INT. HIGH SCHOOL / GALLERY - MOMENTS LATER

75A

Sutter and Aimee walk outside.

AIMEE

We're gonna miss the King and Queen.

SUTTER

Fuck it. We're all Kings and Queens tonight.

AIMEE

That's right! I'm the Queen.

(getting dizzy)

I need to sit down.

They take their seat on a bench. The stars are out tonight. It's beautiful. Neither says a word for a second. Aimee starts to but stops herself.

SUTTER

What is it?

AIMEE
You have any more?

SUTTER
Uh, yeah, here.

AIMEE
(drinks)
I've been thinking... about the summer.
My sister said she could get me a job at
a book store.

SUTTER
In Philadelphia?

AIMEE
Uh-huh.

SUTTER
A book store's perfect for you.

AIMEE
I know! And it'll help pay for college.

SUTTER
Have you talked to your mom yet?

AIMEE
No but I will.

SUTTER
That's excellent. I can't think of
anything better.

AIMEE
Come with me....

Sutter doesn't know what to say to that.

AIMEE
I've looked into it. You can take classes
at the junior College. We'll both get
jobs downtown. Have you ever seen the
Liberty Bell? I've only seen pictures but
it looks amazing.

SUTTER
(beat)
Wow. That's... that's some plan. You've
really done your homework.

AIMEE
And best of all my sister says there's
tons of vacancies in her building cause
of the economy and stuff. They're not
expensive at all. We could move at the
end of June. Together.

Sutter remains dazed, silent.

AIMEE

Sutter... what do you think?

Looking at Aimee, Sutter knows there's only two possibilities. Break her heart -- or just go with it.

SUTTER

I think... that's a terrific idea. Best I've ever heard.

Aimee embraces him. They kiss. We can tell what she can't: Sutter is not convinced about any of this.

75B

INT HIGH SCHOOL / GYM - MOMENTS LATER

75B

Sutter and Aimee walk back into the room. Aimee is ecstatic. Sutter looks pained now. The joy of the buzz completely sucked out of him.

The prom itself seems to be equally pallid. The room has thinned out. The glitter is crumbling. The lame decorations are half on the ground. Depression threatening, Sutter makes his move.

SUTTER

This is ridiculous.

Hops up on the riser and grabs the mic from the DJ.

SUTTER

Can I have everybody's attention?

The music stops. There's a little feedback from the mic.

SUTTER

Come on people, let's pick this party up.
This is our night.

Some people yell out "woo Sutter" etc. Aimee is by this point too drunk to shout. Others are less enthusiastic.

SUTTER

How bout I add a little class to the evening?

(clears his throat)

A 1 and a 2 and a 1 2 3...

(sings)

"We're dancing at the prom. We're singing
at the prom. We're, um, la la da da da."

Sutter doesn't have the next line. The crowd starts to turn on him.

SUTTER

Shit. Um... "Hey it's a party."

Somebody yells "Sit down!"

SUTTER

You sit down. Dickhead.

Other kids start shouting too. "Go back to rehab!" Etc.
Mr. Aster runs over to put a stop to it.

MR. ASTER
Alright Mr. Keely, that's enough.

SUTTER
I'm just warming up.

MR. ASTER
I said that's enough.

SUTTER
This is our night, Mr. Asterhole, not yours.

Some people cheer the dig - but not everyone.

MR. ASTER
That's it, your prom's over.

SUTTER
Fine. We'll take this party elsewhere.

Sutter drops the mic on the ground. Hops off the riser. Stumbles a little but covers it up well enough. He still thinks he's under control but the stares from his classmates say otherwise. Sutter pays them no mind. Cassidy runs up to him.

CASSIDY
You have to take Aimee home.

SUTTER
Cass where you been?

CASSIDY
In the bathroom with your girlfriend. She passed out on the floor!

SUTTER
Ouch. Was it my singing?

CASSIDY
This is not a joke Sutter.

SUTTER
Ok, ok, I'll take care of her.

CASSIDY
Do you even know how?

SUTTER
Hey, this is none of your business, Cass.

AIMEE
Stop!

Aimee comes out, walking at a bit of a tilt, covered in vomit, angry.

AIMEE
Get away from him.

CASSIDY
I was just trying to --

AIMEE
I know what you were trying to do. You
were practically... dancefucking!

SUTTER
Whoa.

CASSIDY
Aimee --

AIMEE
Stay away from him, you fat bitch.

At which point Aimee winds up and slaps Cassidy across
the face, hard. This surprises everyone, even Aimee. **
After a beat, Aimee tries to steady herself against a **
table, the nausea returning. Before she realizes, she's **
vomiting again onto the floor. Sutter rushes to her aid. **

SUTTER **
Can you sit up? Are you cut? Come on, **
let's get you up in this chair. **

He lifts her up, gently. Anyone still watching the scene **
(which is most people) groan at the sight. **

AIMEE **
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. **

SUTTER **
Don't be sorry. It's the prom, things **
happen at the prom. **

Sutter sees Cassidy still giving him that look, the same **
one he got a thousand times as her boyfriend. **

AIMEE **
I'm such a mess. **

SUTTER **
You're beautiful. Let's get out of here. **

And with Cass watching, as he helps her out of the room: **

AIMEE **
I love you, Sutter. I love you so much. **

And this is like a gunshot to Sutter. Of all the things to happen tonight, that one stings the most. **

BLACK.

HOLD A FEW SECONDS AND THEN FADE IN:

76 INT CLOTHING STORE - AFTERNOON

76

Sutter rings up a customer -- Erik Wolff.

SUTTER
Nice-looking suit.

ERIK WOLFF
Present from my pops. You should have seen him when I got into Dartmouth. Guy was in tears.

Sutter doesn't say anything.

ERIK WOLFF
You pick a college?

SUTTER
Yeah.

ERIK WOLFF
Which one?

SUTTER
(beat)
F.U.

ERIK WOLFF
Nice. Go Gators.

Once he's gone, Dan appears in the doorway to the back. *

DAN
Sutter -- *

Dan gestures for Sutter to follow him into the back. *

76A INT CLOTHING STORE - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

76A

Sutter sits across the desk from Dan. *

DAN
You've probably noticed we're not too busy these days. And because of that... well, I can only keep one clerk.
(Sutter nods, waits for it)
You know I like you, Sutter. More importantly, the customers like you. So I think you should be the one I keep. *

SUTTER
That's excellent, Dan. Thank you! You won't regret it. *

DAN

Hold on a sec. I've given this some hard thought, and the only way I can let you stay is if you promise me, 100 percent, that you'll never come in here loaded again.

Sutter is taken aback. Never thought Dan was on to him.

DAN

I'm serious. Not even a light buzz. And if you do, one time, I'm gonna have to let you go. Do you understand?

SUTTER

I do.

DAN

Can you promise me, Sutter?

Dan looks Sutter in the eye. Sutter holds his gaze for a beat, then laughs to himself.

SUTTER

You've got me there, don't you, Dan? You know I can't promise that.

Dan looks at Sutter, disappointed, hoping he'll reconsider. Knows he won't.

DAN

I appreciate your honesty.

SUTTER

I'm always up front with you.

Sutter, proud of himself, rises to shake Dan's hand.

SUTTER

It's been a pleasure working for you Sir.

Dan stares at him a beat. Then shakes his hand.

DAN

I guess... if I was your dad, here's where I'd give you a lecture or something... 'bout what you're doing to yourself.

SUTTER

You know what, Dan... If you were my Dad, you wouldn't have to.

77

INT/EXT. CLOTHING STORE - AFTERNOON

77 **

Sutter leaves, loosening his tie on the way out. Feeling pretty good until:

CASSIDY

Can we talk to you for a minute?

Cassidy stands on the sidewalk.

SUTTER

Who's we?

She points to a parked car. Marcus and Ricky are inside.

78

INT. CLOTHING STORE / MARCUS' CAR - LATER

78

Sutter sits next to Ricky in the back. Marcus and Cassidy are in the front. They all look at him.

SUTTER

Please tell me this isn't one of those, 'We're worried about your drinking' intervention type things.

RICKY

We know you better than that.

CASSIDY

It's more like an Aimee Finecky intervention thing.

SUTTER

What are you talking about?

MARCUS

You're hurting her, man. Don't you see that?

SUTTER

I'm hurting her? How am I hurting her?

CASSIDY

We never once saw her drink before. Now she's drunk between classes. Hungover all the time --

MARCUS

You got her suspended from school, dude.

SUTTER

I didn't --

RICKY

Who brought the flask to the prom?

SUTTER

I --

(exhales to suppress his growing agitation)

Excuse me. Can I ask a question? Since when do any of you give a shit about Aimee Finecky?

They look at each other.

MARCUS

That's not the point --

SUTTER

Sure it is. You don't know her. You don't know shit about her. You look at Aimee and all you see is this little mouse who should keep quiet and hide in the corner. Well that's not what I see. I see someone whose dreams are as big as all of yours put together. Someone who can stand up for herself now. I did that.

RICKY

So you're some kind of hero then?

SUTTER

As a matter of fact --

RICKY

Fuck off, Sutter. You're not a hero. You're just using her... to keep from dealing with your own shit.

SUTTER

Really Richard. One girl gives you the time of day and now you're an expert --

RICKY

Fuck you.

SUTTER

Fuck you!

CASSIDY

Guys. Cool it!

(beat; to Sutter)

Can we talk for a minute? Alone?

79

EXT. CLOTHING STORE - MOMENTS LATER

79

Sutter and Cassidy lean against the car. Silent at first.

CASSIDY

It's a nice night.

SUTTER

I've had better.

CASSIDY

This was my idea. So don't blame the guys. We just want what's best for Aimee.

SUTTER

And that's not me?

CASSIDY

It could be. Maybe. If you tried.

Sutter stands there for a moment without saying anything.

SUTTER

If you really have this vast knowledge about me and relationships, then you'd know I don't need to break anything off. She'll take care of that soon enough, just like you did.

CASSIDY

And you think that was easy? Say what you want, but you're the one who made it clear we didn't have a future. And I get it. That's you, that's who you are. But Aimee's different. You're her whole world. She thinks there's a future with you and there isn't.

SUTTER

What makes you so sure?

CASSIDY

What do you mean?

SUTTER

I mean maybe there is one. A future. Maybe the two of us are moving in together.

CASSIDY

What?

SUTTER

Yup. It's all set. Her sister got us a place up in Philly. Leaving right after we graduate.

CASSIDY

You can't be serious.

SUTTER

As a heart attack. Just gave my two weeks notice to Dan.

(beat; Cass is shocked)

Guess you don't know everything, do you Cass?

*

And with that, Sutter (mimicking Shane) flips the double bird to his friends and gets in the car. Cassidy watches him drive off, shocked.

80

EXT HIGH SCHOOL / PARKING LOT - DAY

80

Sutter and Aimee walk towards the parking lot. Some kids laugh and point. One shouts "Puke-a-Reena!" Sutter wants to get in the guy's face.

AIMEE

It's ok. Come on.

SUTTER

Where are we going?

Aimee pulls him towards his car. She takes out the flask.

AIMEE
We're celebrating.

SUTTER
You sure you wanna --

AIMEE
I did it. I talked to my mom.

Sutter is surprised.

AIMEE
I just walked in, shut off Nancy Grace,
and I told her. It's my life and I'm not
going to let that her stand in my way.

SUTTER
And it worked?

AIMEE
It was ugly at first. She tried to guilt
me into staying but I refused to back
down. I just said, look, if I can afford
it, I'm going and there's nothing you can
do about it.

SUTTER
That's amazing! I'm so proud of you!

AIMEE
I'm proud of myself! Cheers.

SUTTER
(beat)
Cheers.

They drink.

SUTTER
Wow Aim, you're like my hero.

AIMEE
It wasn't so bad. You'll see.

SUTTER
Hmm?

AIMEE
When you do it.

Sutter looks away.

AIMEE
We made a deal.

SUTTER
Aimee --

AIMEE

You can do it Sutter. I know you can.

Sutter isn't so sure.

AIMEE

Repeat after me. "I'm calling my Father,
mom." I want to motherfucking call him!"

Sutter stares at Aimee. Aimee holds his stare. Smiles.

81

INT HOSPITAL / ER - NIGHT

81

Sara works behind the Front Desk charting into a
computer. Sutter takes a deep breath and walks in through
the automatic doors. Sara sees him. This is a surprise.

SARA

What's wrong?

SUTTER

Nothing. I, uh, I want to ask you
something.

SARA

What is it?

SUTTER

It's about Dad.

SARA

(not again)
Sutter --

SUTTER

I just want to talk to him.

SARA

We've been over this. It's not a good
idea --

SUTTER

Why not?

SARA

I don't need a reason, do I?

SUTTER

He's my father --

SARA

Well I'm your mother and you live under
my roof.

SUTTER

I wish I didn't.

The conversation is attracting the attention of some CO-
WORKERS. Sara, embarrassed, thinks before responding.

SARA

I know that, Sutter, but that's the way it is.

SUTTER

You can't keep him from me.

SARA

(quiet but stern)

Sutter... this is my job. We'll talk about it later, Ok?

A standoff. One that Sutter will lose.

SUTTER

No wonder he left you.

And with that, Sutter grabs a handful of mints from the jar on the counter. Storms off.

82

EXT HOLLY'S HOUSE / PATIO - DAY

82

Sutter sits on the patio with Holly, who, as usual, is overdressed for the occasion. Sutter watches with amusement as she fusses with food and drinks.

HOLLY

How do you like the way we've relandscaped back here? Joe and I planted-

SUTTER

That's nice, yeah. So like I said on the phone, I wanted to talk to you about Dad.

HOLLY

Why do you want to dredge that up?

SUTTER

Dredge? Come on, Holly. Dad's not something you dredge. He's great. Remember how he used to tell us stories out in the tent in the backyard?

HOLLY

That was mostly you.

SUTTER

Well, you remember our vacation in Mexico? He had us going up to people and asking 'em 'Where can we find the belt buckle museum?' or 'Why is there no artichoke ice cream?' It was hilarious.

HOLLY

It was embarrassing.

SUTTER

People thought it was funny. They loved us.

HOLLY

They loved you because you were little
and cute.

SUTTER

But the guys loved you. They thought you
were a hot little muchacha.

Holly remembers, then smiles.

HOLLY

He did know how to make friends, didn't
he?

SUTTER

Damn right he did.

They sit in silence for a moment.

SUTTER

Do you know happened? Between him and
Mom?

HOLLY

He cheated on her.

SUTTER

That's her version...

HOLLY

You think it's a lie?

SUTTER

I'm not saying she's lying. I'm saying
there's two sides to every story.

HOLLY

Sutter --

SUTTER

Think about it. She won't let us see him.
Won't say where he is --

HOLLY

Let's talk about something else. How's
your friend, how's Aimee?

SUTTER

-- won't even give us his number. You
gotta admit, it's suspicious.

Holly's face shows that she's thinking about it.

SUTTER

I tried asking Mom but she refuses. Will
you ask her for me?

(off her look)

Please, Holl.

HOLLY

(beat)

I don't have to ask. I know where he is.

Sutter looks at her, expectantly. She goes inside for a moment. When she returns she hands Sutter a slip of paper. Sutter looks at a phone number, then at his sister. Psyched!

SUTTER

Thanks, Holl. You're the best!

Sutter jumps up to go.

HOLLY

Sutter!

(he turns, beat)

Come by for lunch sometime. Ok?

SUTTER

I will. I promise!

Holly watches him go, a little apprehensive.

83

INT SUTTER'S BEDROOM - DAY

83

Sutter listening to music alone. He fixes himself a drink. Downs it. Takes a deep breath. Then takes out a piece of paper on which there is a phone number. Sutter picks up the phone. He seems nervous. Dials. (Behind him in a corner, we see Aimee's windbreaker).

After a few rings a deep, masculine VOICE answers.

TOMMY (O.S.)

Hello?

SUTTER

(tentative)

Um.... Dad?

TOMMY (O.S.)

I think you got the wrong --

SUTTER

It's me, Sutter.

TOMMY (O.S.)

(perks up)

Sutter!? No shit, kiddo! How you doing?

SUTTER

I'm alright.

TOMMY (O.S.)

Good. Good. You sound like a man now. You still playing baseball?

SUTTER

What?

TOMMY (O.S.)

You were a heckuva pitcher back in the day. Small for your age but what an arm.

Sutter is overcome with emotion but he sucks it down.

SUTTER

You remember that?

TOMMY (O.S.)

Sure, son, sure I do. Still throwing?

SUTTER

I, uh, no. Not really.

TOMMY (O.S.)

How's your Mom and Holly doing?

SUTTER

They're good, Dad... Real good.

TOMMY (O.S.)

That's great. That's... tremendous.

And then silence for a beat.

SUTTER

Listen, Dad, I, uh, I was thinking... could I come see you sometime...?

TOMMY (O.S.)

Of course you can. Come on over! How's Friday?

SUTTER

Oh, uh, really?

TOMMY (O.S.)

Come by at like 3 o'clock. Maybe we'll go to a game or something.

SUTTER

(cloud nine)

That would be... really?! That would be great.

TOMMY (O.S.)

Tremendous. See you then --

SUTTER

Hey, uh, Dad... where do you live?

Sutter and Aimee speed down the highway, filled with excitement. Music on, windows down, feeling good. Sutter sips from the Big Gulp. Aimee looks through the recently released High School Yearbook.

AIMEE
How much further is it?

SUTTER
Another three hours or so.
(beat; sincere)
Hey Aim... thank you.

AIMEE
For what?

SUTTER
I wouldn't have done this without you.

He grabs her hand. She holds his, touched. Smiles. Sutter looks at the road again. Anticipation building.

85 INT/EXT. DAD'S HOME / SUTTER'S CAR - AFTERNOON 85

Sutter and Aimee pull into a parking area in front of a row of townhouses. The whole place looks very poorly cared for.

SUTTER
(checking slip of paper)
Here we are.
(beat)
I think I need that shot of vodka now.

They take a couple of shots. Then a couple more. Sutter looks at her. Nods. It's time to do this thing.

86 EXT/INT. DAD'S HOME / SUTTER'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER 86

Sutter rings the doorbell. After a few moments he rings again. After the third ring the door opens. TOMMY KEELY, (late 40s extremely handsome but in a worn, creased way.)

TOMMY
What can I do for you?

SUTTER
(confused)
It's... me.

Tommy stares blankly at him.

SUTTER
Sutter.

Tommy hears this. He takes it in, cocks his head a little, squints at the kid in the doorway.

TOMMY
Sutter?

Could it really be his little man?

SUTTER
Hi Dad.

Tommy looks him up and down again. Then shakes his head, bemused. A big smiles comes over his face.

TOMMY

Sutter! Holy hell! Of course. Man, what am I thinking? Good to see you buddy.

Tommy shakes Sutter's hand. No hug. Sutter doesn't even notice, over the moon at seeing his hero in the flesh.

TOMMY

And who is this striking young lady?

SUTTER

This is Aimee. My girlfriend. Aimee, this is my Dad.

He takes Aimee's hand, then kisses it. She blushes.

TOMMY

Tommy. You have immaculate taste in the ladies, don't you?

(winks at her)

Just like his old man.

Tommy smiles at Sutter. This is followed by an awkward silence. Tommy doesn't yet invite them in.

TOMMY

Man it's good to see you.

SUTTER

You too Dad --

TOMMY

Listen, I was on my way to meet some friends of mine but now that you're here, let's all go together. What do you say?

SUTTER

(looks at Aimee; she shrugs)
Um... ok.

TOMMY

Great. You take your car and follow me there. It's just up the road.

Tommy gets in his beat-up Wagoneer. Sutter and Aimee head back to the Mitsubishi. Once inside:

AIMEE

Another shot of whisky, doctor?

SUTTER

Stat.

A dark, dirty little bbq joint. The BARTENDER and some of the REGULARS greet Tommy when he enters, much like Sutter's friends when they see him. After a few hello's:

TOMMY

Everybody... this here is my son, Sutter.

Everybody welcomes Sutter with raised glasses and pats on the back. Tommy seems proud. Sutter and Aimee are elated. When they reach the end of the bar the bathroom door opens and out comes ROBERTA (45, short dress, trashy). Tommy is surprised to see her.

TOMMY

Well if it isn't the most beautiful woman in the state.

ROBERTA

Last week you said "the country."

TOMMY

Did I?

Tommy smiles at her. Winks.

ROBERTA

Aren't you gonna introduce me to your friends?

TOMMY

Where are my manners? Roberta... I'd you to meet my son. The amazing Sutter Keely. And his ladyfriend Aimee.

Sutter beams. Roberta moves right up to him.

ROBERTA

Get your good looks from your mother, did ya?

Roberta kisses Sutter on the cheek and walks away.

TOMMY

(watching her go)
Ain't she somethin'? Let's get us some drinks!

Tommy sits with Sutter and Aimee at a corner table. Sutter and Aimee drink beers. Nobody's minding.

TOMMY

... and after that I moved to Key West. You guys ever been down there?
(they haven't)
You don't know what you're missing. Key West, now that is the life, boy.
(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Sunsets like a butterscotch sundae with swirls of strawberry mixed in, melting into the ocean. Everyone with a drink and a smile.

Tommy grins, and so does Sutter.

SUTTER

Sounds perfect.

TOMMY

It was.

(beat)

Wish you could have been there kiddo.

SUTTER

So how come you left?

TOMMY

Ran out of dough is why. Would have stayed there forever if I could, believe me.

Tommy looks in the direction of Roberta, who is sitting at the bar chatting with other men. His stare lingers.

SUTTER

Hey how bout some music?

TOMMY

That's a great idea. You take care of that. I'll go get us a refill.

Tommy gets up and walks over to the bar. Sutter goes to the jukebox with Aimee.

AIMEE

You OK?

SUTTER

Never better.

She squeezes his arm and smiles back. Sutter finds exactly what he's looking for on the jukebox. A song begins to play. They go back and sit down.

ANGLE ON Tommy, new pitcher in hand. On his way back to the table, he stops and whispers something in Roberta's ear. She eyes him flirtatiously.

Tommy sits back down. Sutter smiles, expecting Tommy to react to the music.

SUTTER

(beat, proud)

Pretty good, huh?

Tommy barely reacts, surprising Sutter.

SUTTER
Don't you like this song?

TOMMY
Eh, this was always your mother's thing.

This is news to Sutter. It's a bit of a shock. His only response is to take a large drink of his beer.

SUTTER
But it's... fun. I can't imagine Mom ever having fun --

TOMMY
Are you kidding? When we first got married... boy was she something. Nobody was more fun than that woman.

Again, Sutter is stunned.

SUTTER
So... what happened?

TOMMY
(still looking away)
What do you mean?

SUTTER
What happened... between you two?

Tommy had been watching Roberta this whole time. He turns to look at Sutter and says:

TOMMY
(takes another drink)
Things don't work out sometimes.

Sutter processes. Aimee watches him, growing increasingly concerned. And then:

SUTTER
You know she blames you for everything.
Won't even let us talk about you.

Tommy does not seem the least bit surprised.

SUTTER
I defend you though. I always defend you.

TOMMY
Thanks, kiddo. I appreciate that.
(beat)
Wasn't all my fault.

SUTTER
Right. Two sides to every story.

TOMMY
Damn straight.

SUTTER

And whatever happened, she still shouldn't have kicked you out of the house.

TOMMY

Oh she didn't kick me out.

SUTTER

What?

TOMMY

I left.

Sutter can't believe it. Tommy sees the look on his face.

TOMMY

I had to. I mean, I did want to be there for you. Man, did I ever want that. You guys were more important to me than anything in the world. But... well... things between your mother and I just got to be so... uncool. Guess I wasn't cut out to be a family man, not in the traditional sense anyway.

Tommy laughs. The room is now spinning for Sutter. Tommy sees his face.

TOMMY

You know how it is. One thing leads to another... the girls don't mean anything.

SUTTER

Girls? Like, more than one?

TOMMY

(shrugs)

Not like I kept a running tally. But hey, I don't live in the past. I live in the now. That's what it's all about.

Sutter looks like he might throw up. Tommy sees Roberta get up and leave the bar. Tommy jumps up.

TOMMY

I'll be right back. Settle the tab for me, will ya?

SUTTER

Um --

TOMMY

Thanks bud. You're a miraculous marvel.

And with that he heads outside. Sutter watches him go.

AIMEE

Sutter?

But he's just sitting there, staring out the window at Tommy, who's now pressing up close to Roberta, whispering in her ear. She laughs and playfully pushes him away.

AIMEE

Sutter.

Sutter snaps back to attention. Opens his wallet to pay Tommy's bill. He only has a few bucks. He looks to Aimee with embarrassment.

AIMEE

Don't worry about it --

SUTTER

I'm sorry --

AIMEE

Don't be --

Tommy comes back inside.

TOMMY

(winks)

So Roberta's had a few too many drinks. Think I'd better give her a ride home. If you know what I mean.

SUTTER

Oh... Um... do you want us to follow you?

TOMMY

I got it covered. Won't be more than an hour.

SUTTER

Why don't we come with you? We're not doing any--

TOMMY

You guys head on back to my place. I'll be right there I promise.

The bad feeling growing, Sutter tries one more time.

SUTTER

Dad, we came all this way...

Tommy smiles at his son. Puts a hand on his shoulder.

TOMMY

And I'm real glad you did, kiddo... Real glad. See you in a few!

Sutter and Aimee sit parked outside Tommy's house. Sutter takes a big hit from his flask.

SUTTER

We should probably head back.

AIMEE

It's only been a few hours. We can wait --

Sutter angrily turns on the ignition, pulls away.

89 INT. LARRY'S / SUTTER'S CAR - NIGHT

89

ANGLE ON SUTTER in the driver's seat. The car is not moving. And he is totally silent.

REVEAL what Sutter is looking at: his father, right back at the BBQ/bar. Tommy tips back the last of his beer and laughs at something one of his buddies said.

BACK TO SUTTER. Frozen. Aimee doesn't know what to say. Without a word, Sutter composes himself. Drives away.

89A I/E. HIGHWAY / SUTTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

89A

We stay with them in the car. The silence continues. Sutter looks like he's about to burst. Aimee watches, expecting an explosion any moment. She puts on the radio, tuning until she finds a baseball game. They listen for a few moments. Sutter angrily turns it off.

More silence. Sutter takes a long swig. Finally:

AIMEE

I'm sure he wanted to come back --

SUTTER

Aimee --

AIMEE

You saw her. She was in no condition to drive.

SUTTER

Please --

AIMEE

I bet that's what happened. If it wasn't for her, he would have come right back.

SUTTER

Sure, and if he hadn't cheated on mom then we'd still be a family and I'd be president of my Sunday school class and you and I would ride silver stallions to Pluto.

This shuts her down. Sutter glances over, feeling bad for snapping. Takes a deep breath and another drink.

AIMEE

Maybe we caught him on a bad day...

SUTTER

And maybe that's just who he is. Huh?
 Maybe he's been like that since day one.
 Just a selfish, lowlife, motherfucking
 asshole!

Sutter shakes his head in disgust at himself. Aimee stays
 silent. Until:

AIMEE

Sutter.

SUTTER

What?!

AIMEE

I love you.

Sutter exhales. Not what he wants to hear right now.

AIMEE

Did you hear me?

Sutter still won't engage.

AIMEE

I love you.

SUTTER

Stop saying that.

AIMEE

Why?

SUTTER

Because --

AIMEE

I want you to hear it. I love you.

SUTTER

You're wrong.

Aimee bristles at this. But Sutter has been waiting to
 say it. Can't stop now.

SUTTER

Come on, Aimee, you don't love me. You're
 just... drunk and you're... grateful...
 someone came along and showed interest in
 you.

AIMEE

Don't say that, Sutter. Don't try to mess
 this up --

SUTTER

Mess what up? What do you think this is?

At which point a loud horn blares from an oncoming car.

AIMEE

Watch out!

All this time, the car has been swerving slowly into the other lane. Sutter quickly rights the wheel and the car fishtails in the other direction. With no seatbelt on, Aimee slips down into the floorboard as Sutter struggles to regain control.

The car sideswipes a concrete abutment before Sutter is finally able to wrestle it to a stop in the high grass off to the left, facing the wrong way (passenger door closest to the road).

89B

INT/EXT. HIGHWAY / SUTTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

89B

When the dust settles:

AIMEE

(peering up from the floor)

Are you alright?

SUTTER

What?

AIMEE

Are you ok?

SUTTER

You're asking me that? Jesus Christ, Aimee, no! I'm way fucking far from ok.

AIMEE

(moving in for a hug)

Thank god you're not hurt.

SUTTER

(pushing her off)

What is wrong with you?! I nearly killed you and you wanna hug me?

AIMEE

I wanna make sure you're --

SUTTER

You need to run, Aimee. You need to get as far away from me as you possibly can.

AIMEE

No.

SUTTER

They're right about me. Everyone's right.

AIMEE

Sutter, what are you --

SUTTER

Get out of the car.

AIMEE

No!

Sutter leans over and opens the passenger door.

SUTTER

Get out of the fucking car!

Aimee doesn't move. Tears start to fall from her eyes. She bites her lip and finally gets out.

Aimee stands there. On the side of the road, the door still open.

AIMEE

I'm sorry.

SUTTER

Jesus Christ, Aimee, what are you sorr--?

But he doesn't get the rest of it out. She's hit! Knocked off of her feet by the blow of an approaching car. She goes down hard.

Sutter freaks, jumping out of the car, running as fast as he can to her side. Aimee lies in the grass, face caked in mud, blood dripping from her scalp. She isn't moving.

SUTTER

Aimee, oh fuck, Aimee. What have I done?

Sutter kneels over her, falling apart. Terrified.

SUTTER

Please, God, don't do this. Oh please, fuck. I'll do anything. I swear. I'll never drink again just don't let her go.

Finally Aimee opens her eyes. Seeing him, she still can't help but smile. Then she collapses again.

SUTTER

Aimee!

90

INT HOSPITAL / ICU HALLWAY - LATER

90

Sutter waits, fidgeting, his right foot tapping nervously on the floor. Seems like he's been there a while.

Finally a DOCTOR (40s, serious) leaves Aimee's room. In the BACKGROUND we see Aimee's Mom sitting at Aimee's bedside. The Doctor approaches Sutter.

DOCTOR

The good news is she only suffered a minor concussion. There may be some dizziness so she should take it easy the next few days.

SUTTER

Yes sir.

The Doctor puts down his chart and looks hard at Sutter.

DOCTOR

She didn't say much about what happened.

Sutter says nothing.

DOCTOR

I'll give you a choice, kid. The cops or your parents?

91 INT HOSPITAL / WAITING ROOM / NURSE'S STATION - NIGHT 91

Sutter waits. Through the glass of the room behind him we can see Sutter's Mom arguing with the Doctor. The voices are muffled but he can hear clearly enough.

DOCTOR

So you didn't know where he was tonight?

SARA

What gives you the right to talk to me like that?

DOCTOR

I'm sorry if I sound harsh --

SARA

Don't tell me how to be a parent! I work 15 hours a day to support my family.

DOCTOR

A lot of moms work hard, Sara - and their kids don't drink and drive.

Sara is silenced by this.

DOCTOR

Your son is lucky. And so is his girlfriend. Not everyone gets a second chance.

Sara doesn't respond. Sutter hasn't moved an inch.

92 INT/EXT. STREET / SARA'S CAR - LATER 92

They drive silently. We stay on them for a while. Sutter looks at his Mom. She looks straight ahead. A mixture of anger and guilt on her face.

93 EXT. AIMEE'S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR - DAY 93 **

Sutter rings the doorbell. Aimee's Mom answers and immediately hugs him.

AIMEE'S MOM

There he is! The hero!

SUTTER
(uncomfortable)
Hi Mrs. Finecky.

AIMEE'S MOM
Aimee's in her room.

Sutter nods politely, heads past Randy to Aimee's room.

94 INT AIMEE'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 94

Aimee's on the bed, reading. Sutter enters and sits on the end of the bed. He looks at her in her cast.

AIMEE
Should we talk about it?

Sutter's face says he'd rather not.

AIMEE
I agree.

SUTTER
Aimee, I'm so sor --

She silences him with a kiss.

AIMEE
Let's never speak of it again, ok? I
don't want anything getting in the way of
Philadelphia.

She touches his face with her hand. Sutter looks pained.

95 EXT CONVENIENCE STORE - PARKING LOT - DAY 95

Sutter parks his car. Baseball game in the background. He's about to go in to the 7/11 when out comes little Walter (from the first scene). Walter holds hands with his MOTHER while sipping from a Big Gulp. Sutter stares at the image, unnerved.

96 EXT HIGH SCHOOL / FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY 96

OMITTED

96A EXT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY 96A

The Class of 2013 has just graduated. Most GRADUATES are with their FAMILIES, taking pictures, celebrating.

Sutter, in cap and gown, is alone. He leans against a tree and opens an envelope labeled "Diploma." It's empty. He's not surprised.

Sutter looks up to find Mr. Aster watching him from across the way. He expects to see him gloat. But Mr. Aster isn't gloating. He just looks sad and walks off. Sutter is thinking about that when:

AIMEE

Hello Handsome!

Aimee wraps her arms around him. Kisses his cheek. She's never looked happier. She takes out her flask and spikes a drink. As she's about to do the same for Sutter, he stops her. Not today. Aimee shrugs, takes a swig.

AIMEE

Is your family here?

SUTTER

I told them it was next week.

Aimee laughs. Sutter can't help but smile at her. We see Krystal standing with her family. She waves Aimee over.

AIMEE

I should go say hi. Be right back.

She runs off. Sutter remains, alone for a beat. He sees Cassidy off with a GROUP OF CLASSMATES. They make eye contact - so much history between them. There's a moment where she thinks about walking the other way. She makes a decision. Approaches, a sad smile on her face.

CASSIDY

We made it.

SUTTER

I guess we did.

CASSIDY

I'm glad, Sutter. I really am.

They stand there a beat. Neither really sure what to say.

SUTTER

So when do you leave for Texas?

CASSIDY

Oh, you haven't heard?

(beat)

I'm not going to Texas.

SUTTER

(surprised)

You're staying here?

CASSIDY

Oh god no. No...

(should she tell him?)

I'm going with Marcus.

Sutter is taken aback.

CASSIDY
We talked about it and we just-- ***

SUTTER ***
California? ***

CASSIDY ***
That's right. ***

SUTTER ***
Cassidy. ***
(off her look) ***
Isn't that a little... I mean... come on-- ***

CASSIDY ***
What? ***

SUTTER ***
You're really going? ***

CASSIDY ***
Yeah I really am. ***

Sutter takes that in. It doesn't make sense. ***

SUTTER ***
Why? ***

CASSIDY ***
(beat) ***
That's none of your business. ***

That shuts him down quick. Sutter looks at his shoes. ***
Looks up, trying to recover, smiles. ***

SUTTER ***
Maybe I'll come and visit some time. ***

CASSIDY ***
(beat, sadly) ***
I don't know, Sutter. It's not a good ***
idea. ***

SUTTER ***
Oh. ***
(ouch) ***
Yeah, ok -- ***

CASSIDY ***
I'm just -- ***

SUTTER ***
No, that's cool -- ***

CASSIDY ***
I... you know... I'm gonna try and stay ***
away from things that are bad for me from ***
now on. ***

Sutter takes that in. And it hurts like hell. Cassidy is about to leave. But before she does, she hugs him. One last hug in case it's forever. Then she turns to go. On her way: ***

CASSIDY

Sutter! ***
(he turns) ***
You'll always be my favorite ex-boyfriend. ***

And off she goes. Sutter is alone again to think about all that. He looks over at Aimee, taking pictures with her Mom. She looks happy. Runs his fingers through his hair. A decision to make. ***

97 INT/EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

97

The bus to Philadelphia is already boarding. Aimee waits to the side, suitcase in hand. She's nervous. Her mood is sinking. She checks her watch. The last passenger boards.

BUS DRIVER

Miss.

AIMEE

Just... two more minutes ok.

The Driver gets back on the bus. Aimee takes out her cell phone and dials. She waits nervously as it rings. But there's no answer. And then she just starts to cry. The sadness overwhelms her. And then, just as quickly, she stops crying. She takes a few breaths, wills herself to be brave, picks up the suitcase and boards the bus.

As the doors close, and Aimee takes her seat, REVEAL Sutter has been watching this from a far. Tears in his eyes as well. His phone in his hand, unanswered. The bus drives off in the distance. He watches it go.

98 INT. SEEDY DIVE BAR STREET / SUTTER'S CAR - NIGHT 98

Driving. Trying not to be overcome with emotion. Silently convincing himself he's done the right thing. And that he doesn't need a drink.

He drives by a very seedy looking dive bar. He keeps driving. He looks in the rearview mirror, the bar still in view, beckoning.

99 INT SEEDY DIVE BAR - NIGHT 99

The lowest of the low. Dank, dark, and dusty. Two thuggish MEN play pool on a wrinkled table. Sutter sits at the bar next to a DRUNK in his late 60s. The BARTENDER has a wispy goatee and is missing some teeth. They've all been there a very long time.

SUTTER

Another round for the table.

(BARTENDER nods)

Thank you, Earl, thank you for serving me. This is better. Much, much better.

DRUNK

You're a good guy, Sutter.

SUTTER

That's what I think too. I agree.

(to BARTENDER)

Did I do the right thing?

BARTENDER

For you or for her?

The question doesn't get to hang for too long as the Drunk chimes in.

DRUNK

You had to let her go! You had to save that girl.

SUTTER

That's what I did. I saved her.

DRUNK

You're not wrong. You're a hero. You're a King!

SUTTER

You're exactly right!

DRUNK

Look at you, Suther. What are you 22, 23?

Sutter looks at the Bartender. Doesn't want to answer.

DRUNK

Beautiful! You got your whole life ahead of you.

SUTTER
So do you, my man.

DRUNK
Not me. I'm old. My friends are gone.
I've wasted all this time...

The Drunk trails off. Sutter lets those words wash over him as he watches the Drunk. Tries to shake off the uneasiness. CUT TO:

99A INT/EXT. SUTTER'S CAR - NIGHT 99A

Swerving down the street.

100 EXT SUTTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT 100

Sutter's Lancer takes the turn into the driveway too fast, crashing into the mailbox. Sutter exits the vehicle, leaving it half on the lawn.

SUTTER
(re: damage)
Shit.

A light turns on inside the house. Sara comes outside, pulling a robe around herself.

SARA
What the hell?
(seeing the mailbox)
Sutter!?

Sutter ignores her. Mom watches him stumble to the house.

SARA
Have you been drinking?

Sutter says nothing.

SARA
Jesus Christ! We just went through this.
The hell is wrong with --

SUTTER
What do you care?

SARA
Excuse me?

SUTTER
You don't care about me. You've never cared about me.

SARA
(stunned)
Sutter --

SUTTER
It's cause I remind you of him.

SARA
What are you talking about?

SUTTER
That's why you hate me. That's why you
can't stand to look at me.

SARA
How can you say that?! You're my son!

SUTTER
I'm his son too. We're exactly the same.

SARA
You're nothing like him.

Sutter won't listen. He storms past her and walks inside.
Mom follows.

100A INT. SUTTER'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - NIGHT

100A

She walks right past Sutter and into the kitchen. Sutter,
about to climb the stairs, hears his mom rummaging in the
other room. He stops. Mom reappears, handing him a piece
of paper.

CU: the paper has an address on it.

SUTTER
What's this?

SARA
Go to him. Then you'll see.

Sutter looks at the slip.

SUTTER
I thought you didn't --

SARA
I was trying to protect you from --
(beat)
I was wrong. Take this. Go see him. See
for yourself how different you are.

Sutter is stunned by this.

SUTTER
I've already been.

Now it's Mom's turn to be surprised.

SUTTER
Holly gave me his number and... we drove
there last week... You were right.
He's... you were right all along.

And Sara knows what Sutter is really saying.

SARA
You're not your father.

Sutter tries to hold himself together but he can't look his mother in the eye. Sara grabs him into a hug. Sutter allows it but doesn't respond, not yet.

SARA
 (beat)
 Sutter listen to me. That man... that man's never loved anyone but himself. His heart is this big. But you... you love everybody. You've got the biggest heart of anyone I know.

Sutter's hit hard by this. Starts to lose his composure.

SARA
 3rd grade, when Ricky was on crutches for a month. Who carried his books every day? Or when you were 10 and Rosemary Clark lost her mother. You invited her to live with us, said I'd be her new mom. Remember that? You've always been so special, Sutter. That's why everyone loves you.

SUTTER
 Nobody loves me Mom.

SARA
 You're wrong, Sutter.

And now Mom is crying too. Holds him tighter.

SARA
 You hear me? You're so very wrong.

And finally Sutter hugs back. He closes his eyes as they hold each other. Over her shoulder, we see him crumble the slip of paper in his hand.

101

INT. SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT

101

A COMPUTER SCREEN. "Describe a challenge, hardship or misfortune you have experienced in your life."

Sutter sits at his desk. Eyes still wet. Reads on.

"What have you learned from this and how has it prepared you for the future?"

Sutter stares at it a beat. And then he starts to write.

SUTTER'S VOICE
 My name is Sutter Keely and I'm 18 years old... Compared to other kids, I haven't had that many hardships. Not really. Shit's happened...

Sutter pauses, deletes "shit" and replaces it.

SUTTER'S VOICE

Stuff's happened, sure, stuff always happens... but the real challenge in my life, the real hardship... is me. It's always been me.

ANGLE ON SUTTER, deciding whether to continue. He does.

SUTTER'S VOICE

As long as I can remember, I've never NOT been afraid.

101A INT. TREE LINED STREET / SUTTER'S CAR - DAY 101A

Sutter behind the wheel. Walter riding shotgun. Sutter doesn't look afraid. And then the Big Gulp in hand. He takes a sip.

SUTTER'S VOICE

Afraid of failure. Of... letting people down. Hurting everyone. Getting hurt.

101B I/E. STREET NEAR LAKE / SUTTER'S CAR - NIGHT 101B

Cassidy angry with him, Sutter not knowing why.

101C INT. PARTY HOUSE 2 - NIGHT 101C

Sutter catching Cassidy with Marcus on the couch.

101D EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD / FRONT LAWN - MORNING 101D

The first time Sutter sees Aimee.

SUTTER'S VOICE

I thought if I kept my guard up, focused on other things, other people...

101E EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR - DAY 101E

OMITTED

101F EXT. LAKE SIDE - NIGHT 101F

Sutter hooks Ricky up with Beth.

101G EXT. LAKE SIDE / DIRT PATH - NIGHT 101G

Sutter coaches Aimee to shout and curse at the party;

SUTTER'S VOICE

...if I couldn't even FEEL it... well then no harm would come to me.

101H INT. PARTY HOUSE 1 - NIGHT 101H

Sutter drinking excessively. Goofing off.

101I EXT. HOUSE / BACK YARD - NIGHT 101I
 OMITTED

101J INT. HIGH SCHOOL / GYM - NIGHT 101J
 Singing at the prom. Pity from his classmates.

SUTTER'S VOICE
 I screwed up. Not only did I shut out the
 pain, I shut out everything. The good and
 the bad.

101K INT. AIMEE'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - DUSK 101K
 Sutter, peacefully in bed with Aimee.

101L EXT. HOLLY'S HOUSE / PATIO - DAY 101L
 Holly reaching out to Sutter.

101M INT. CLOTHING STORE - AFTERNOON 101M
 The disappointment on Dan's face as he lets Sutter go. *

101N EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT 101N
 Aimee's bus pulling away.

101O INT. SUTTER'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - NIGHT 101O
 Sutter and Mom hugging.

SUTTER'S VOICE
 Until there was nothing.

101P INT. SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT 101P
 BACK ON Sutter at his computer...

SUTTER'S VOICE
 I'm not gonna do that anymore.

101Q INT. SUTTER'S HOUSE / BATHROOM - DAY 101Q
 The future. Sutter empties his flask in the sink;

101R INT. SUTTER'S HOUSE / BEDROOM / BATHROOM - DAY 101R
 OMITTED

101S INT. SUTTER'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - DAY 101S
 Sutter sitting at the kitchen table with Holly and Mom.
 Saying grace. All together.

SUTTER'S VOICE

It's fine to just "live in the now." But the best part about "now" is -- there's another one tomorrow. It's time to start making them count. Sincerely, Sutter Keely.

102

EXT COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

102

A beautiful, sparkling day on a beautiful college campus.

SUTTER'S VOICE

P.S. I don't know if this was due a long time ago. Probably was. But that's fine.

Aimee comes out of a classroom looking confident, secure. She says goodbye to friends and walks down the steps.

SUTTER'S VOICE

It may be too late for this essay...

And then she sees him. Standing there. Waiting for her. And he's cleaned up too. Steady on his feet. Haircut.

SUTTER'S VOICE

...It's not too late for me.

In his hand is Aimee's ugly windbreaker.

AIMEE

What are you doing here?

SUTTER

(beat)

You forgot your coat.

And before we ever know what happens next:

BLACK.