

THE BUCKET LIST

by

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*You see, Mr. Barnes. It is because I have lived
very much, that I can now enjoy everything so well.*

--Count Mippipopolous

"The Sun Also Rises"

*He not busy being born,
Is busy dying.*

--Bob Dylan

THE HIMALAYAS

Wide as all the world. Towering and timeless and rumbling mutely into the sky to scrape the floor of heaven.

We're gliding between them as if on a cloud, and CARTER'S VOICE is quiet and humble and yet somehow makes us feel as though he knows a great many things we don't.

CARTER (V.O.)

Edward Perriman Cole died in May. It was a Sunday, in the afternoon, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky...

One mountain rises above the rest. A plume of ice and snow billows from its wedge-shaped peak which thrusts up into the jet stream.

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

"Life is not measured by the breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." Whoever said that knew a thing or two.

We're MOVING HIGHER now as the mountain looms closer, drawing us up its massive shoulders.

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

Even now, I can't claim to understand the measure of a life... Some people will tell you it's how we're remembered by history, or by the ones we've left behind. Some believe it can be measured in faith. Some say by love... Other folks say life has no meaning at all. We're only dust in the breeze.

CONTINUING over ridges and glaciers towards the peak.

CUT TO:

A SKI POLE - THRUST THROUGH A CRUST OF FROZEN SNOW

The CLIMBER is wrapped in a hooded mountaineering suit and his face is protected by an oxygen mask and ski goggles.

With great effort, he lifts his right foot and plants it forward next to the ski pole, his thin breath swept away by the exertion.

He pauses and lifts his goggles to his forehead. His eyes are blue and ringed with exhaustion as he turns to take in the view of the entire world beneath him...

CARTER (V.O.)
 What I can tell you is that, by any standard, Edward Cole lived more in his last days on earth than most folks manage to wring out of a lifetime.

Lowering the goggles, the climber turns back to the summit.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I know that when he died his eyes were closed, and his heart was open... And I know that he could hear the mountain...

The climber plants the second ski pole and takes another agonizing step as we RISE high above him until he becomes small on the face of the giant.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And I know the mountain heard him in return.

And we slowly FADE TO BLACK...

CUT TO:

A CIGARETTE ASHING INTO AN EMPTY "CHOCK FULL O' NUTS" COFFEE CAN

INT. MCCREATH SERVICE CENTER - DAY

CARTER CHAMBERS is a black mechanic in his late 50's with a worn, but thoughtful demeanor. His job is beneath him and he's known it for the last 30 years. He leans back against the El Camino he is working on.

MANNY (O.S.)
 So then what happened?

His partner MANNY is beneath the car on a roller. He slides in and out of view over course of the following...

CARTER
 Tesla took his design to the richest man in town, mister J.P. Morgan.

MANNY
 The stockbroker guy?

CARTER
 That's right. Morgan was the major financier for Tesla's primary rival, a fellow by the name of Tom Edison.

MANNY

No way.

CARTER

Between them, Morgan and Edison controlled the entire power grid for New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and so on.

MANNY

(jingling his pocket)

So they had some serious jing.

CARTER

They had "serious jing." Which is why, when Tesla walked into Mr. Morgan's office and unveiled an invention designed to provide free, wireless electricity to the entire population of the planet - remember now, this is 1912 - Mister Morgan had no choice but to finance it immediately.

MANNY

Hold up. He agreed?

CARTER

Without hesitation.

MANNY

But wouldn't free energy put him out of business?

CARTER

Invariably.

MANNY

Yo, that's one stupid stockbroker.

CARTER

A year later, Tesla invited Mr. Morgan out to Long Island, where he had nearly completed the first in a series of towers which would tap into the Earth and beam its energy through the air to a nearby receiver.

MANNY

Crazy... So what happened?

CARTER

Morgan knew the invention would make both Tesla and himself famous beyond their wildest dreams...change human history forever. So, he did what anyone in his position would do. He went back to his office, made a few phone calls, then home to his wife... The next day Tesla received notice that Morgan had pulled his funding. He was thrown out on the street and the lab was demolished. The morning papers carried stories about Tesla's clinical insanity, quoting "anonymous sources" who claimed to have seen Tesla consorting with prostitutes and demons.

MANNY

And Morgan protected his company. That's so...

CARTER

Machiavellian? I agree.

MANNY

I was gonna say wack, but whatever spansks your monkey. What happened to Tesla?

CARTER

He became a pariah. No one dared cross Morgan. Nikola Tesla lived the rest of his life in isolation and died in poverty. The proverbial tree that falls without a sound.

MANNY

He never tried to start over.

Carter shakes his head as the phone rings...

MANNY (CONT'D)

Yo, that's a messed-up story.

CARTER

Most true stories are. Happy endings are for suckers.

Carter lights a new cigarette as he answers the phone...

CARTER (CONT'D)

This is Carter... Hey, how was the interview?... Oh... Well, there's plenty of fish in the... Dr. Young?

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

What did he want?...Uh huh...What does that mean?... It can't be all that bad...

He takes a drag of his cigarette then suddenly stops. His expression changes as he listens...

CARTER (CONT'D)

That's not possible.

He removes the butt from between his lips as smoke dribbles from his mouth. He looks at the cigarette for a moment then drops it to the floor.

ANGLE ON the cigarette butt, slowly burning itself out. In the b.g., Manny pulls himself out from under the car, staring up at Carter.

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

Today? That's no good, the team's got their first scrimmage before... Yeah... No, I know. Okay... Yep. Okay.

MANNY

Yo, what the hell is that?

CARTER

(hanging up the phone)
Ah, it's nothing, it's just...

He steps on the cigarette as he walks in a daze past Manny and out the door of the garage into the blinding day which fills the frame with its white light...

COUNTY DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Come to order. Hudson County Planning Board.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN EXPENSIVE LOOKING COPPER THERMOS

As the lid is unscrewed releasing a waft of rich steam which curls up into the waiting nostrils of EDWARD COLE who inhales deeply.

EDWARD

Kopi Luwak. It's the rarest beverage in the world. At a thousand bucks a pound it better be.

INT. WESTCHESTER COUNTY PLANNING BOARDROOM - DAY

Across the aisle, the COUNTY DIRECTOR is flanked by five fellow BOARD MEMBERS who go through the minutiae of beginning the meeting.

Edward is in his mid to late 50's. He's immaculately dressed and groomed, though his Italian suit appears slightly too large for his gaunt frame.

He unscrews a matching cup from the bottom of the thermos and pours a small amount of the brew before handing it over to RICHARD, one of several executives in Edward's retinue.

EDWARD
(coaxing with his hand)
First the aroma.

Richard bends his head to the cup, sniffing it.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Note the earthy tones and the complexity of the body.

RICHARD
It's just coffee, right?

COUNTY DIRECTOR
Mister Cole?

EDWARD
(to Richard)
It's not 'just coffee.'

Watches Richard take a tentative sip.

COUNTY DIRECTOR
Mister Cole. We're ready to begin.

EDWARD
(focused on Richard)
Well?

RICHARD
(clearly doesn't get it)
Wow. Really, uh, good.

COUNTY DIRECTOR
Mister Cole!

EDWARD
 (to Richard)
 You're a friggin' Philistine, you know that.

Grabs the cup back and stands to face the board.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 Thank you, Mister Director, fellow board members. Very much appreciate you taking the time... I'm not big on sugarcoat, so you'll forgive me if this comes across as somewhere south of warm and fuzzy...
 (looks directly at them)
 All of you should be immediately and pointedly fired. They should haul you up by your boot-straps and dump your bloated salaries into the street. The appalling decline of Jefferson Hospital is a direct result of your gross incompetence and utter lack of fiscal erudition.

COUNTY DIRECTOR
 I beg your pardon! This--

EDWARD
 Okay, I got a deal. I'm going to talk for a few minutes, and the moment I speak the slightest untruth you can shout me down. Good? Fair? Good... Your shop is hemorrhaging cash. Overhead costs are in the stratosphere. Your lease and land costs were criminally overbid.

One of the board members raises his hand to protest but the County Director waves him off.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 Donations have atrophied to the point that you've fallen hopelessly behind the tech curve in research, pediatrics, oncology, MRI...

He pauses and savors a long sip of his Kopi Luwak coffee, eyeballing the board over the rim of the cup until his eyelids close in ecstasy from the flavor.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 Mmmm... Put simply, your hospital loses money every time a patient walks through the door.

The board members range from uncomfortable to furious, though none say a word.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

More truths... The Cole Group is the largest private hospital management firm in the region. We have a proven track record of corporate governance and exceed every requirement of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act... Our shops maintain state-of-the-art technology systems, and wield unparalleled clout in negotiating with unions and the insurance companies... What's more we've privatized fifteen other public hospitals in the past seven years, each of which now provide the highest standard of medicine to their communities.

He pours a second cup of coffee and brings it to his lips.

FEMALE BOARD MEMBER

Despite being grossly understaffed?

EDWARD

(pausing before drinking)

We employ the best of the best of the best. The stronger the staff, the less need there is for--

Suddenly, he coughs into the cup, spraying coffee onto the table.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

Pulls a silk handkerchief to his lips as his suits search their pockets for tissues to wipe the table.

COUNTY DIRECTOR

What about beds? There have been reports that you increase the number of beds to the point of overpopulation.

EDWARD

(wiping coffee)

That's because I run hospitals, not bed and breakfasts. The sole concern of my company is to provide the best health care in the world, which we do.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

The sole concern of my shareholders, who include three of you, I might add, is to turn a profit, which, as you know, we also do... Our methods are stringent and effective and one has never suffered at the hands of the other, and you know it... Truths? The truth is you need me boys and girls...a fuck of a lot more than I need--

Coughs into the handkerchief again.

COUNTY DIRECTOR

Mister Cole?

Edward stares in shock at the ugly puddle of clotted blood staining the white silk of the handkerchief...

CUT TO:

INT. HUDSON VALLEY ONCOLOGY CENTER - DAY

A pair of elevator doors open at the far end of a long hallway emitting a hulking man in a tailored black suit, lugging a set of four massive suitcases as he counts room numbers. This is THOMAS.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Thomas barrels in, passing a curtained off area near the door, and drops the bags onto the empty bed next to the window. Opening the first suitcase, he sets up the room with practiced efficiency--

He plugs in a cell phone cradle and sets it on the bedside table along with a hi-tech alarm clock... Lines half a dozen shoes and slippers down the length of the bed... Unloads a stack of thick books on living with cancer, cancer treatment, cancer nutrition, new cancer protocols... Sets a laptop computer on the table, surrounding it neatly with pens, notepads and Post-Its...

Places a massive, Royal Classic copper coffee siphon on the window sill, along with copper-lined cups and saucers and spoons and a dark wooden box covered in Arabic writing and Sumatran customs stickers...

VOICES are heard in the hallway - a commotion coming closer.

Thomas quickly removes a vase and flowers. He jogs through the separator curtain and into the bathroom where he fills the vase with water, completely missing the figure lying in the bed behind the curtain.

The noise in the hallway is reaching a fever pitch as Thomas emerges from the bathroom and nearly loses the vase as he sees Carter lying in the near bed.

CARTER
(eying the flowers)
You shouldn't have.

He's thin and drawn and hooked up to a network of tubes and even his eyelashes have fallen out exposing his sallow skin that's dappled with angry chemo burns.

There are flowers everywhere and the wall behind him is a collage of get well cards and photos of a girls soccer team.

THOMAS
I uh... I'm sorry. What are you doing here?

CARTER
You know, fighting for my life... You?

Just as the hallway brigade bursts into the room - seen in silhouette and through the gap in the curtains - as doctors and nurses and handlers hover over--

EDWARD (O.S.)
(from his gurney)
And tell Holcomb I want to know more about this bleo-maya-something.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Bleomycin.

EDWARD (O.S.)
Bleomycin. Thomas says it eats your lungs. How do I stoke fear in the hearts of my employees if I'm breathing through a hole in my throat for the rest of my life.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
That's not exactly what--

NURSE (O.S.)
We're going to move you into the bed now.

EDWARD (O.S.)
I can do it myself goddammit. I'm not dead yet.

Then a huge clattering is heard as Edward falls off the gurney. He swears bitterly as the doctors and nurses grab him quickly and lift him into the bed.

EDWARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Where the hell is Thomas?

THOMAS
You rang my liege.

Pushing through the curtains, leaving a gap through which Carter views Edward being slid into bed.

EDWARD
You ditched me again.

THOMAS
Wishful thinking on my part.

EDWARD
You let these people drop me. Did you see them drop me?

THOMAS
I wouldn't lose a testicle over it.

EDWARD
That's funny. That's absolutely, goddamn hysteri--

Lapses into a coughing fit which doubles him over, allowing him a look through the curtains at Carter.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Who the hell is that?

CARTER
Who the hell are you?

THOMAS
(to Edward)
One thing at a time. Lean back now.

Edward and Carter glare at each other before Thomas gingerly leans him back into the bed.

CARTER (V.O.)
That was the first I laid eyes on him. An inauspicious beginning to be sure, but most stories begin that way... It got worse before it got better.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLCOMB'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. HOLCOMB is tall and ultra-confident with a runner's physique and shoulder-length hair. He examines Edward's brain scan on a light board.

DR. HOLCOMB

Luckily the tumors appear relegated to the surface of the brain. Shouldn't be too difficult to--

EDWARD

I just gave you my left nut, if you think I'm going to let you crack my head open and--

DR. HOLCOMB

Stop talking.

EDWARD

(glowering)
Beg your pardon?

DR. HOLCOMB

This isn't a skinned knee. I can't fix it with a band-aid and a lollypop. Choriocarcinoma travels through your bloodstream which means it's everywhere and it has almost finished killing you.

They stare each other down. Egos facing off... Finally, Edward stands...

EDWARD

You'll understand if I want a second opinion.

He heads for the door.

DR. HOLCOMB

You don't have that kind of time.

EDWARD

Go fuck yourself.

Walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Electric clippers shave smooth avenues onto Edward's scalp. His mood has not improved.

EDWARD

There's a guy in my room.

NURSE SHING continues shaving his head without a response. She's Asian, late-thirties with a quiet confidence born of years comforting the sick and dying.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I said there's a guy in my room.
(points to the curtain)
Right in there.

NURSE SHING

Mmmm.

EDWARD

I want him moved.

NURSE SHING

Mister Chambers bothering you?

Pokes her head through the curtain to see Carter lying in bed reading Robert Massie's *Nicholas and Alexandra*.

NURSE SHING (CONT'D)

Carter, have you been bothering Mister Cole?

CARTER

(without looking up)
Who the hell is Mister Cole?

EDWARD

It's not a question of-- Not to pull rank, but this is my hospital. Which, at the very least, should rate me my own room.

(to Carter)

No offense.

CARTER

(dismissive)

Mmmm.

NURSE SHING

(disapproving)

Mmmm.

EDWARD

What's "Mmmm?" Is that some kind of secret cancer code? Why don't you run down and tell doctor what's his nuts that I want to see him ay-sap.

NURSE SHING

(brandishing the clippers)
 Look bub, maybe this is your hospital,
 but this is my ward and we have strict
 rules. Two beds to a room. No single
 rooms. No exceptions.

EDWARD

(catching himself in a
 mirror)
 Jesus... Yeah, those are my rules,
 (checking her name tag)
 Phyllis. I wrote the rules.

NURSE SHING

Great, then you shouldn't have any
 trouble remembering them. Dr. Holcomb
 will be in in a minute to dot you up.

She walks out leaving him with Carter who is chuckling to
 himself. Edward glares.

CARTER

No offense...

EDWARD

(grumbling)
 Mmmm.

Carter chuckles some more...

CUT TO:

INT. READY ROOM - DAY

Edward's bald cranium has been clamped into a large,
 steel halo. A laser marks a point on his forehead and Dr.
 Holcomb marks corresponding dots on his skin with a
 Sharpie.

DR. HOLCOMB

I'm going to ask you to remember
 something for me.

Edward is staring with disgust at his reflection in a
 glass window.

EDWARD

Oh yeah, what's that?

DR. HOLCOMB

The young lion waits in a dream beneath
 the cold white lantern.

EDWARD

What?

DR. HOLCOMB

The young lion waits in a dream beneath
the cold white lantern. Repeat it back to
me.

EDWARD

The young lion waits in a dream beneath
the cold white lantern. What the hell
does that mean?

DR. HOLCOMB

Doesn't mean anything. It's a memory
test. Any time we go near the brain...
there's always a risk. This is how we'll
know if you've gone vegetable on us....
Again.

EDWARD

(seething)

The young lion waits in a dream...

CARTER (V.O.)

Testicular cancer is almost unheard of
for anyone over thirty, but then Edward
always despised conformity.

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING THEATER - DAY

As Holcomb and his surgical team operate on Edward who
lies in fragile stasis.

CARTER (V.O.)

By the morning of the surgery it had
spread so far throughout his body that
the doctors gave him a five percent
chance to live...but then they didn't
account for how pissed off they'd made
him.

PUSH INTO Edward's inert face which, even under sedation,
appears annoyed at the intrusion...

WHITE DISSOLVE TO:

THE PALE FACE OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Peering down at Edward as his eyes open slowly, wandering in their sockets before focusing on the perfect visage hovering over him. Her name is ANNA, she's 26.

ANNA

There you are.

He struggles to speak.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Here.

She lifts a glass of water with a straw to his lips. He sips slowly. His head is wrapped in bandages.

ANNA (CONT'D)

We've been so worried. You were asleep forever.

EDWARD

How...? Did it...?

ANNA

Oh, they said it went really well.

He coughs. She draws back involuntarily, uncomfortable around sickness.

He hears a noise and looks over at Carter who is surrounded by his three children, LEE, 26, ROGER, 23, and RACHEL, 13. His wife VIRGINIA, 50's, sits at the end of the bed. All are talking quietly over plates of food.

ANNA (CONT'D)

They are so nice. She's a nurse. They come to eat with him almost every night. I should-- The doctor said to page him when you woke up.

His eyes begin to close again...

ANNA (CONT'D)

No wait, there's something I have to--

HIS POV FADES OUT...

Virginia looks over to see Anna kiss her hand and press it to Edward's cheek.

VIRGINIA

Everything all right, dear?

ANNA

He fell asleep before I could tell him.

VIRGINIA

I'm sure he'll understand.

ANNA

It's only a few months, right? It's not like I'm never coming back.

It's obvious she's never coming back.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I guess I'll...

VIRGINIA

(to her family)

We should probably push off too.

(to Carter)

If you need any more books--

CARTER

Nah, I'm good all the way up to Stalin.

Lays his hand on an impressive stack of books atop his bedside table, all concerning early 20th century Russia.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Oh, Todd Phillips called. He was asking about the--

VIRGINIA

Already took care of it.

He nods his thanks. Barely meets her eyes.

RACHEL

I can't come on Saturday. We've got the semi's against Newark.

CARTER

That's right... Watch out for their front line, and their sweeper likes to take the ball up the field.

RACHEL

All the girls wish you could be there.

Virginia puts a light hand on Rachel's shoulder, cautioning her not to upset him.

CARTER

You ladies are much better off without me. Coach Sanders knows ten times more about the game as I do.

RACHEL

Everyone knows that's not true... I love you, daddy.

Kisses him, followed by her brothers, all exchanging heartfelt "I love you's."

Finally, Virginia takes his hand. He grasps it briefly, without any intimacy. She leans over to kiss him, but the closeness is awkward. Her eyes fall as she kisses his cheek, feeling the lack.

CARTER (O.S.)

What is a blackberry?... What are lingonberries?... Who is Halle Berry?...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Edward opens his eyes to see the television is turned on to Jeopardy. Carter is sitting up in bed, firing the answers back at the screen.

EDWARD

(barely a whisper)
Excuse me...
(stronger)
Excuse me.
(a hoarse shout)
I beg your pardon!

CARTER

Huh? Oh.
(lowers the volume)
Doc wanted you to wake up, said I shouldn't pussyfoot.

Just as Dr. Holcomb enters like a zephyr.

DR. HOLCOMB

So, it couldn't have gone better. We got in, got out and the tumor came back benign. All that remains now is to make sure you're not mentally--

EDWARD

The dumbass lion waits in a dream beneath
the stupid white lantern.

Dr. Holcomb nods approvingly. Marks the chart.

DR. HOLCOMB

Surliness is a good sign. How's the
catheter feel?

He checks the integrity of the bulging plastic drain
implanted into the center of Edward's sternum.

EDWARD

Like someone took a dump in my chest.

DR. HOLCOMB

(barely listening as he
scribbles on the chart)

Wonderful. Okay, we saved your brain, now
we're going to kill your body. Your
markers are through the roof so I'd like
to begin the first course of chemo in the
morning. Good?

EDWARD

I can't wait.

Dr. Holcomb's expression does little to hide the fact
that Edward has no idea what he's in for. Holcomb surges
for the door...

CARTER

Say, Doc. Do you think you could-

DR. HOLCOMB

I'm sorry. I'm running late.

Walks out.

CARTER

(to Edward)

Real Mother Theresa, that one.

Edward tries to sit up but is held in place by the web of
tubes running in and out of his body.

CARTER (CONT'D)

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

EDWARD

I have a choice?

Carter turns back to Jeopardy. Edward takes a moment to accept his situation, then turns his head and studies Carter.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

How long have you been here?

CARTER

What is the quadratic equation!

(to Edward)

Huh? Oh, in and out for the last few months.

EDWARD

Has it been uncomfortable?

CARTER

Which part?

EDWARD

The chemo.

CARTER

They say it's different for everyone. Once you get used to the 'round the clock vomiting and watching your veins turn black and the feeling that your bones are made of napalm, it's not bad at all.

EDWARD

(paling slightly)

Fantastic.

CARTER

Say, I been meaning to ask you, what the hell is that contraption over there?

Points over to the high-tech coffee maker.

EDWARD

It's a siphon. Makes coffee.

Fumbles his hand for the nurse call button.

CARTER

I figured that much. What else it do?

EDWARD

Nothing. Just coffee.

CARTER

I'll be damned... Did you know that coffee was originally discovered by a shepherd in Ethiopia?

Edward just stares at him... Carter continues, as much for his own pleasure as for Edward's edification...

CARTER (CONT'D)

His goats had been eating the cherries of an unfamiliar bush and soon became unmanageable, running and jumping all over creation. The shepherd chewed some of the leaves which gave him a strange vitality so he took some branches to the local monastery where the abbot decided to roast them. When the cherries started to burn, the beans inside produced such a pleasant aroma that they brewed them into a stew which eventually spread to Columbia, Asia, even Sumatra, like that hooch you got over there.

EDWARD

It's called Kopi Luwak.

CARTER

I know what it is.

EDWARD

You've tried it?

CARTER

(makes a face)

Not even if I was dying of thirst in the Gobi desert.

EDWARD

Why not, it's the most expensive--

CARTER

I'm more of an instant coffee man.

Edward's I.V. tubes have become tangled in the call button. Carter rolls his eyes, but eases himself creakily out of bed and shuffles over to untangle them expertly.

EDWARD

Your wife's a nurse?

CARTER

Twenty-six years. Used to work in this ward.

EDWARD
Retired?

CARTER
In a manner of speaking.

Hands Edward the call button and shuffles back to his bed.

EDWARD
What happened?

CARTER
You fired her, when this became "your"
hospital.

CUT TO:

A LARGE I.V. OF FLUID - FEEDING INTO EDWARD'S CATHETER

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As Thomas begins to unpack a stack of aluminum containers from *Il Mulino*. Spoons the contents onto a large plate.

THOMAS
Okay, we got prosciutto de Parma, some
fresh mozzarell', and Bruno threw in some
of that fried artichoke crap you froth
over.

EDWARD
Guidea. And the meat?

THOMAS
Double veal chop with lobster truffle oil
risotto.

CARTER
You sure you want to eat all that?

He's watching them through thin eyes as he works his way through his own I.V.

EDWARD
I'm a bottomless pit. It's true, I could
eat twice this much if some people
weren't such goddamn nursema--

He's cut off as Thomas clears his throat loudly.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

What?

(to Carter; off Thomas' look)

Oh. Uh, you want Thomas to make you a plate? Tommy, fix a plate for mister, uh--

CARTER

Carter.

EDWARD

Right.

CARTER

Pass.

EDWARD

Yeah? It's the best in New York.

CARTER

Good enough to taste it twice?

Thomas puts the plate in front of Edward who picks up a piece of fried artichoke...

EDWARD

You know what they say, living well is the best revenge.

CARTER

Revenge for what?

Edward pops the artichoke in his mouth, grinning as he chews.

EDWARD

Whadd'ya got?

CUT TO:

EDWARD - PUKING HIS KIDNEYS OUT

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As his sumptuous dinner hits the floor with the force of a hurricane. He's moaning and spitting as he climbs out of bed and makes for the bathroom but his I.V. tubes jerk him back and he ends up on the floor where he unleashes another torrent. After a moment, he looks up to see Carter watching him evenly.

EDWARD

I feel like I'm dying.

CARTER

You are.

Winces as Edward vomits again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Edward is in bed and covered in sweat as he shivers uncontrollably. His eyebrows are gone and the first chemo burn blooms above his right eye.

Carter is curled up in his own bed as he turns the last page of *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin: A Poem* by Mayakovsky then places it atop a stack of completed books on the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Carter stares up at the collage of photos and cards taped to the wall above his head. He removes a photograph of his daughter's soccer team. He's seen standing proudly in the back row wearing a coach's hat and a whistle around his neck.

Edward groans in his sleep and wrestles with his sheets. The bandages have been removed from his head, which is now scarred and littered with uneven patches of stubble. Carter looks over at him until he settles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A new stack of books relating to The Civil War towers atop Carter's bedside table as Nurse Shing removes an empty I.V. bottle from the stand.

CARTER

So, that's the end of it?

NURSE SHING

Fourth and final round. Couple more tests and we'll see where we stand.

CARTER

How long?

NURSE SHING

Soon as I can get Dr. Gibian to look at them. I'm on for another hour. Anything you need.

CARTER

Thanks Phyllis.

She heads out as he checks his watch.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Mind if I turn this on?

Edward is sitting up in bed, haggard but lucid as he types angrily on his laptop, sipping a cup of coffee. He waves his hand dismissively.

Carter turns the television on to Jeopardy and becomes immediately engrossed...

CARTER (CONT'D)

What is The Great Divide?... What is somnambulism?... Who was Warren Harding?...

Edward pauses in his typing. Glances over at Carter...

EDWARD

Do you ever miss one?

CARTER

(shrugs modestly)
I missed one last week.

Edward studies him for a moment before turning back to his computer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - DAY

Edward kneels on the floor, head resting on the toilet seat, fast asleep. He's woken by VOICES coming from the room. He weakly pushes open the door to see who it is.

RACHEL

...got the corner kick which Karen put right in the box and Angela headed it straight into the net.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rachel sits on Carter's bed. He's elated at the news.

CARTER
So who you playing in the championships?

RACHEL
(glumly)
Essex.

CARTER
Oh.

RACHEL
Yeah.

CARTER
I'll have to do some homework on 'em.

Edward shuffles out of the bathroom.

EDWARD
Sorry.

He's a mess as he slowly makes his way around the bed as Virginia walks in from the hallway...

VIRGINIA
Three months I'm gone and this place has gone to the dogs. There isn't an M.D. within--

Almost walks into Edward...

EDWARD
Excuse me.

...as he shuffles over to his bed and wrestles with the cables and tubes. She watches him for a moment then, despite herself, moves to help him.

VIRGINIA
Nice and easy.

She clears a path then helps him ease into bed.

EDWARD
Thank you.

VIRGINIA
Mmmm.

EDWARD
Mmmm. Don't you people use words anymore?

VIRGINIA

You people?

EDWARD

Nurses. I meant-- Forget it.

VIRGINIA

(walking away)

Forget yourself.

EDWARD

I beg your pardon.

VIRGINIA

You can beg all you want, you ain't gettin' it.

EDWARD

How dare you talk to me that way.

VIRGINIA

I will talk to-- I don't work for you anymore "Mister Cole" so don't think for a hummingbird heartbeat you put the quake in my boots with your fat voice because all you're doing is taking up oxygen.

CARTER

'Gin-

VIRGINIA

I don't think so.

(back to Edward)

It's been two days since a doctor's looked in on my husband and you of all people have the nerve to condescend to us... I've been a nurse my entire adult life with a ringside seat to more human tragedy than any woman should have to bear and I've learned that the one thing in this world worse than dying is staring your life's end in the face with no one beside you but a nurse you've known for a week who's being paid to hold your hand... I don't wish that on you, Mr. Cole, I wouldn't wish it on anyone, but I know what I know about these things, and you might want to make what ever peace you can with god and give back just a little bit of the respect you so desperately demand, because as far as I can tell, you are going to die alone.

Edward's eyes betray him for a brief moment, just enough for her to see she's laid him wide open. Her regret is immediate.

She turns to see everyone staring at her including Thomas who has just entered from the hallway carrying several Chinese take out bags.

THOMAS

Peking Duck?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The copper coffee maker reflects a single light source in the otherwise darkened room. Edward stares at the machine from his bed, eyes lost in the gleaming metal.

The reflection shifts and Edward rolls over to see Carter adjusting his reading light.

EDWARD

What are you reading?

CARTER

Book on Robert Smalls.

EDWARD

Never heard of him.

CARTER

He was a conscripted slave aboard a Confederate steamship, The Planter. One night he and some of the crew smuggled their families aboard and stole it right out from under the rebels' noses. He turned it over to the Union Navy who made him a captain. By the end of the war he'd risen to the rank of General and later became the second African-American to serve in Congress.

EDWARD

Quite a life.

CARTER

(agreeing)

Quite a life.

EDWARD

I don't like books.

CARTER

You're joking.

EDWARD

I never saw the point. History's just... history. I'd rather make it than read about it.

CARTER

How's that coming along? Make any yet?

EDWARD

I've done alright for myself.

CARTER

(dubious)

All your dreams fulfilled?

EDWARD

Pretty much, yes. What about you?

CARTER

Not exactly. We were practically kids ourselves when my first boy came along. Young, broke and black, you take the first job they offer you. Thirty years goes by in a heartbeat.

EDWARD

Would you change it?

CARTER

I love my children, if that's what you mean.

EDWARD

I'm sure you do. But you're a smart guy, must have had a plan for your life before they came along.

Carter thinks a moment, then reaches into the drawer of his bedside table and removes his well-worn wallet. He pulls a small square of yellowed paper out from a pocket and unfolds it gently in his hands.

CARTER

I made this in high school. Creative writing class. Some kind of exercise to get us to think about something besides chasing skirts.

He slips out of bed and hands it across to Edward.

EDWARD
(reading)
"Carter's Bucket List"... You weren't
much on penmanship.

CARTER
Hasn't improved, I assure you.

EDWARD
I don't understand what this is.

CARTER
I was trying to be funny, I guess. It's a
list of things to do before I kick the
bucket.

EDWARD
(still reading)
"Make a million dollars. Run for
president."

CARTER
I didn't say it was realistic.

EDWARD
"Help a complete stranger for the good?"
How philanthropic.

CARTER
(shrugs)
I was sixteen.

EDWARD
What's the one about the mountain?

Hands the list back.

CARTER
(without looking)
"Listen to the mountain and be heard."
That's from my uncle. Second World War
his squadron flew supplies through the
Himalayas into China. Called them the
Hump Pilots... Most non-combat casualties
of any unit in Air Force history... You
can honestly say you've accomplished
everything you ever dreamed about?

EDWARD
(shrugs)
I'm a millionaire a dozen times over.
(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I grew my company from the ground up,
built my own house, sold it, built a
bigger house.

CARTER

Money ain't everything.

EDWARD

No, but it sure takes the edge off being
miserable all the time.

CARTER

What about your wife?

EDWARD

Which one? We're talking about dreams,
not nightmares.

CARTER

There's got to be something you haven't
done.

EDWARD

Dreams are for teenagers. Let's face it,
we've had our time and we did what we did
with it. We're all out of wishes. The
genies left our magic lamps a long time
ago.

CARTER

(after a beat)

Suit yourself.

He gets back into bed and slips the list between the
pages of his book. Edward watches him for a moment, then
turns back to staring at the coffee maker.

CUT TO:

THE SOUNDS OF A BASEBALL GAME

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Carter hides behind the sports section of a local
newspaper, highlighting pieces of an article on the Essex
girls soccer team.

EDWARD (O.S.)

Come on you pansies, it's one out, how
hard can it be?

Carter lowers the paper just enough to reveal Edward lying on his stomach with his head propped on a pillow at the foot of the bed, stretching his tubes and cables to the limit as he yells at the Yankee game on the TV.

A Red Sox player bloop a single. Edward is beside himself.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

That's just... That's... I can't take much more of this!

Carter's feelings are commensurate as he puts on a pair of head phones and listens to Mozart's *Requiem Lacrymosa*.

He finishes the article and reaches down for a second newspaper when he sees Holcomb standing at the foot of Edward's bed. Holcomb's face is pinched and somber as he speaks... Edward listens implacably, his face impossible to read.

Carter slides the headphones off to listen...

DR. HOLCOMB

We're not giving up. There are some experimental programs we're conducting and I think you'd be an excellent--

EDWARD

Doc.

DR. HOLCOMB

--candidate. It's cutting edge medicine. The odds are against you, but-

EDWARD

Doctor Holcomb.

DR. HOLCOMB

Yes?

EDWARD

You're blocking my view.

DR. HOLCOMB

Oh. Sorry.

Holcomb steps to the side of the television. Stares for a beat...

DR. HOLCOMB (CONT'D)

Well, if you have any questions.

Waits another beat then starts for the door.

EDWARD
(eyes never leaving the
screen)
One question.

DR. HOLCOMB
Of course.

EDWARD
Carter?

CARTER
Yeah?

EDWARD
'Something you needed from Dr. Holcomb?

DR. HOLCOMB
I'm sorry, I'm not Mister Carter's--

EDWARD
You are now.

Holcomb stares at him but Edward's attention never leaves the screen. Finally, Holcomb lifts Carter's chart from the foot of the bed and flips through several pages. After several moments, his shoulders drop and he looks up at Carter and shakes his head slowly.

DR. HOLCOMB
I'm sorry, Mister Carter. According to
this your markers haven't stabilized.

Carter takes it in, though it's the answer he expected.

CARTER
How long?

DR. HOLCOMB
Several months. A year if you're lucky.
As I was just telling Edward, we have an
experimental program which has had some
very positive--

CARTER
Sure, Doc. Whatever you think.

DR. HOLCOMB
I'm truly sorry.

Carter just nods and replaces the headphones over his ears as Holcomb makes his exit.

CARTER (V.O.)

There was a survey once, a hundred people were asked, if they could, would they want to know in advance the day of their death. Out of the hundred, ninety-six of them said no.

Carter closes his eyes as the music washes over him.

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

I never understood that. I always thought it would be liberating, knowing exactly how much time you had left to work with.

A tear escapes onto his cheek and he looks over at Edward who is staring back at him over his shoulder.

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

So now I knew.

Neither says a word and Edward finally turns back to the game.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON CARTER; fast asleep. A square of sunlight moves across his eyes until he opens them and squints into the white light. He rolls over, away from the window and face-to-face with a single sheet of yellowed paper propped up against his tower of books.

He pulls the paper close to his eyes and sees the title: "EDWARD'S BUCKET LIST."

CARTER

I'll be damned.

Just as Edward bustles out of the bathroom, arms filled with toiletries.

EDWARD

Thought you'd never get up.

CARTER

'Time is it?

Edward dumps the toiletries in his half-packed suitcase.

EDWARD

Six twenty-four. I've been up since--
I've had a lot on my mind.

CARTER

(re: the paper)
So I see.

EDWARD

Not bad, huh?

CARTER

(reading)
A hot dog eating contest? "Kiss the most
beautiful woman in the world?" How you
figure on doing that?

EDWARD

That's one of the tough ones. We'll
figure it out.

CARTER

Don't take this the wrong way, but these
are a little...shallow?

EDWARD

You're out of your mind, there's some
great stuff on there. What kind of tattoo
do you think I should get?

CARTER

None, actually... I think you
misunderstood-

EDWARD

No, I understood you perfectly. Your
whole unfulfilled dreams thing is great
for someone with a few decades in front
of him, but I'm looking at weeks, months
if I'm lucky.

(as Thomas enters,
bewildered)

About time.

Thomas turns and walks out. Edward goes after him, pushes
him back into the room.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Pack it up, Tommy. We're blowing this
popsicle stand.

(to Carter)

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Your list was a little unrealistic so I took the liberty of paring it down a little.

Turns the paper over revealing Carter's original list which now has several of the items crossed off in red ink - "Run for President", etc.

CARTER

What did you-- You had no right--

EDWARD

I got them both down to ten a piece so if we budget our time properly we should be able to bang 'em all out before one of us kicks it.

THOMAS

(with an armful of business suits)

Did you want these arranged by color as usual or--

EDWARD

Forget 'em. I'm only about comfort from here on out. I dunno, give 'em to some orphans or something.

THOMAS

Orphans? You've been mixing medications again.

CARTER

You don't seriously think-- I was being metaphorical, you know, taking stock, trying to understand something about--

EDWARD

Blah, blah, blah. Metaphors are for tea-drinkers who read poetry out loud to their sister. You said yourself you haven't done anything. This is your last chance.

CARTER

To make a fool of myself?

EDWARD

To have your own life. To spend what time you have left remembering what it feels like to have a future, rather than wallowing in the past as a guinea pig in Holcomb's bullshit science experiment.

Carter stares at the floor, his mind racing...

CARTER

You think it's bullshit?

EDWARD

You know it is... What do you think, Tommy. You're in our shoes, what would you do?

Carter looks up at Thomas who thinks for a moment...

THOMAS

I think it's the dumbest idea I've ever heard...and you're fools if you don't do it.

Carter stares at him...

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Empty save for a slow-moving nurse or two until Edward bursts out of the room with a full head of steam followed by Thomas, once again laden with luggage, and Carter who carries a small bag and an armful of books.

Edward makes for the elevators as Carter struggles to catch up to him.

CARTER

What about my family?

EDWARD

What about them?

CARTER

I can't just abandon them.

EDWARD

Why, because you've been doing such a great job supporting them from the cancer ward?

CARTER

No, I just--

HALL NURSE

(rushing to stop them)

Excuse me? Excuse me! Where do you think you're going?

EDWARD

(not breaking stride)
We're checkin' out. Tell Holcomb he can
take his experimental program and shove
it where the sun don't shine.

Nurse Shing comes out of the Nurses Station.

NURSE SHING

I'm sorry, Mister Cole, we can't let you
leave without--

EDWARD

Without a doctor's written authorization.
Also my rule.

NURSE SHING

Then you'll understand my need to enforce
it.

EDWARD

Certainly. In fact, Tommy here's got a
doctorate in... What the hell's it in
again?

THOMAS

Education.

EDWARD

Education, fantastic!
(to Thomas)
Really, education? What the hell you
doing working for me again?

THOMAS

If I had a nickel for--

EDWARD

Anyway, Nurse Phyllis. Seeing as section
fourteen, paragraph three of Cole
Medical's operations guidelines fails to
stipulate the kind of practitioner
necessary to facilitate a release, Doctor
Tommy promises to return with a note
granting us our freedom post haste.

She stops at the elevator door as the other three pack
inside.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(taking Carter's books)
You won't be needing those.

CARTER
 (to Nurse Shing)
 Tell my wife--

He's cut off as the doors close.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Edward helps Thomas load the luggage into the trunk of the waiting limousine.

EDWARD
 It's not like we're flying off around the world, at least not at first. I figure we knock out the ones we can do locally before heading over to Europe, then Africa and--

CARTER
 I can't go to Africa.

EDWARD
 Why not? I thought all black people dream of going back to the homeland.

CARTER
 It's not that. It's-- I've never been on an airplane.

EDWARD
 (climbing inside the limo)
 You're joking me.

CARTER
 (stopping at the door)
 No. I'm not.

EDWARD
 You should've put that on the list.

He pulls Carter inside and the door closes.

CARTER (V.O.)
 And so it began...

As the big limo roars away, the sound of which becomes...

THE ROAR OF AN ENORMOUS CROWD

CUT TO:

EDWARD AND CARTER - IN THE CENTER OF THE THRONG

Edward is electrified with nervous energy while Carter looks like he'd rather be anywhere else.

EDWARD

Okay, so I figure middle of three then we go. You ready?

CARTER

No.

EDWARD

Good.

He, along with everyone else around them, looks off in the distance.

CARTER

I want to go back... I'm serious, have your man-- Where is he?

(looking around)

Have him take me back to the hospital.

EDWARD

Forget it.

CARTER

(grabbing him)

No you forget it. This isn't rational.

EDWARD

Of course it's not rational, that's why it's so exciting.

(the crowd groans)

That's our cue. You ready?

CARTER

No!

Edward starts unbuttoning his shirt.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

As the Yankee outfielders jog out to their positions. The crowd suddenly ROARS as the left fielder passes a naked man who is jogging and waving across the grass.

Carter holds Edward's clothes, staring in disbelief as Edward takes a victory lap towards right field.

CARTER

Oh lord.

Stadium security guards hustle out after Edward, forcing him to veer towards deep center field. The crowd boos, as it appears they have him trapped, until he throws a fake on one of his pursuers who trips in the grass much to the crowd's delight.

Edward's headed back into left but the NYPD has joined the chase and they're closing in fast. Edward tries another fake, but he's tackled by a burly police officer who brings him to the ground.

A second officer helps bring Edward's arms behind his back when something suddenly knocks him off his feet and into his fellow officer.

INT. CARTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rachel does her homework while Roger studies for the L-SATS. The ball game is turned down low on the television. Rachel is stuck on a particularly heinous geometry equation when her brother starts smacking her arm.

RACHEL

Ow! What'd you do that for?

ROGER

Look!

He turns the volume up on the television where Carter is seen streaking away from the fallen policemen, clutching his genitals with a look of incredulous fear on his face.

Brother and sister share a look before-

RACHEL

Mom!

ROGER

Mom!

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

Edward streaks after Carter, whooping and hollering. Carter is actually beginning to enjoy himself until he pulls up short. Edward comes to a stop next to him.

CARTER

Oh crap.

They turn and run for the stands followed closely by SEVERAL DOZEN security and police officers

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Virginia walks up to the sergeant's desk.

VIRGINIA

I'm here to post bail for my husband.

The NIGHT SERGEANT barely looks up from his paperwork as he hands her a clipboard.

NIGHT SERGEANT

Down the hall, second door on the right.
Sign here.

She is less than pleased.

INT. POLICE BOOKING ROOM - NIGHT

As Virginia counts out several hundred-dollar bills then hands them to waiting BOOKING OFFICER.

BOOKING OFFICER

And if you could sign here, that should
do it.

Again, Virginia signs her name where instructed as the officer speaks into a microphone.

BOOKING OFFICER (CONT'D)

Release for Chambers, number three.

(to Virginia)

It'll be just a second.

Virginia walks to a chair across the room from where Edward waits dressed in prison pajamas and Thomas' overcoat.

EDWARD

For the record it was my fault. I talked
him into it.

VIRGINIA

He's not a grown man?

EDWARD

Even so, I'd like to pay you back for the
bail, if--

VIRGINIA

That's not necessary.

EDWARD

Really, it's the least I can--

VIRGINIA

You've done quite enough, Mister Cole. Carter spent thirty years killing himself with those cigarettes. If the lord sees fit to give him a second chance I'd like it to be home with his family where he belongs, not in prison, and certainly not with you.

EDWARD

He hasn't told you.

The door to the holding cell opens with a CLANG as Carter is ushered out by a guard. He's dressed in prison pajamas and clings to a blanket as he shivers uncontrollably.

VIRGINIA

(to Carter)

Told me what?

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Virginia wipes tears from her face as she walks resolutely to her car. Carter follows her, watching Edward as Thomas helps him to the limo.

VIRGINIA

I'm taking you back to the hospital. See about getting you into Dr. Holcomb's--

CARTER

I can't.

She opens the driver's side door. Carter stops on the passenger's side.

VIRGINIA

Don't play with me.

CARTER

Gin', you don't understand.

He sees Edward waiting at the limo door, watching Carter.

VIRGINIA

(sees Edward watching)

I understand plenty. You two think you can run off and act like children because your time's up so nothing matters anymore. Why don't you tell your children that? See what they have to say when they find out you've given up on them.

CARTER

Given up?! I've spent my life giving up everything to this family. Thirty years greased up under the hood of a car to see that they didn't want for nothing! And they didn't, 'Gin... I gave up every last one of my ambitions and I wouldn't take any of it back, but if I am gonna die, I'd like to go out with some idea of who I could have been...of who I am.

VIRGINIA

You're my husband.

CARTER

I know it. I just wish I knew what that meant anymore...

He turns and walks over to the limo. He takes a last look at his incredulous wife then climbs inside.

CUT TO:

CARTER'S POV - CENTRAL NEW JERSEY SEEN FROM 8,000 FEET

EXT. SMALL AIRPLANE - DAY

We see him through one of the windows. Feeling queasy, he shuts the blind.

INT. SMALL AIRPLANE - DAY

CLOSE ON CARTER; wearing a helmet and struggling with the top of a child-proof prescription pill bottle.

KYLE (O.S.)

Need a hand?

CARTER

No, I got it...
(to no avail)
Dammit!

Throws the bottle to the floor. It rolls towards the cockpit where Edward is seen from the back, talking with the pilots.

CARTER (CONT'D)

(about all of it)
Fool... So foolish...

KYLE (O.S.)

Wanna try to get it?

PULL BACK to reveal KYLE, young and brawny, sitting immediately behind Carter. In fact, Carter is literally sitting in Kyle's lap.

CARTER

How do you suggest we do that?

Kyle stands suddenly - he's huge, about 6'5" and Carter is bound to his torso via a series of nylon jump straps. As his feet dangle, Carter pitches forward until his upper-body is almost horizontal while his hips are still vertically strapped to Kyle.

Kyle duck-walks the suspended Carter over to the prescription bottle. Carter extends his arms down but the bottle rolls out of his grasp and into Edward's outstretched hand.

Carter looks up at him. Edward appears as if he hasn't touched a razor in days.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Not a word.

(grabs the bottle)

Back to the chair, Kyle.

Kyle waddles back to the chair. Carter almost hits his head on the fuselage.

EDWARD

(to Kyle)

You'll have to forgive him, Kyle. He's on the outs with the wife.

KYLE

(sympathetic hand on Carter's knee)

Been there, man.

CARTER

Some things are not up for discussion.

EDWARD

I understand.

The CO-PILOT comes out and straps himself to Edward's back.

CO-PILOT

Thirty seconds to drop.

EDWARD
(to Carter)
She's tough, your wife. That's good. The
Sequel was tough like that.

CARTER
The Sequel?

EDWARD
The second Mrs. Edward Cole. God that
woman hated me.

CARTER
(sarcastic)
I can't imagine why.

KYLE
Maybe because he called her The Sequel.

CARTER
Thank you, Kyle.

EDWARD
Know what I learned? That independence is
the only true gauge of human virtue; what
a man is and what he makes of himself.
Not what he has or hasn't done for
others.

As the Co-Pilot pulls the door open, filling the cabin
with whipping wind. Kyle stands and moves them closer to
the door. Carter eyes the abyss outside. Edward is
nonplussed.

CO-PILOT
Fifteen seconds. Fourteen. Thirteen.

EDWARD
(to Carter)
There's no substitute for personal
dignity.

CARTER
(terrified)
Could you shut up?!

CO-PILOT
Ten. Nine. Eight.

Kyle lowers goggles over Carter's face.

CARTER
I can't do this.

EDWARD

Sure you can.

CO-PILOT

Five. Four. Three.

CARTER

I can't do this!

He screams as Kyle jumps and they disappear out the door. Edward watches them fall away then dons his goggles...

CO-PILOT

Here we go.

EXT. SMALL AIRPLANE - DAY

As they leap from the plane, free-falling into the ether. Everything goes quiet save for the flapping of their jump suits.

The Co-Pilot dives towards Kyle and Carter, whose scream grows louder as they approach, and lock hands so that Carter and Edward are once again face to face.

EDWARD

This is amazing!

Carter's too busy being terrified to respond.

CO-PILOT

Cords in five seconds.

He and Kyle separate, getting distance between them...

KYLE

You wanna do it?

CARTER

No!

KYLE

Just let 'er rip!

Carter is unsure which cord is which, so he pulls everything. He's jerked to a stop as both main and emergency chutes billow open.

Edward and the Co-Pilot continue to drop, watching their counterparts' dueling chutes flapping high above.

EDWARD

Amazing. Nine toes in the grave he's still afraid to let go.

CO-PILOT

Okay, let's deploy.

EDWARD

Right there's the piss of it. When you're living for someone else you can't help but be careful... No progress in careful.

CO-PILOT

We're in the red zone.

EDWARD

I was in love once.

CO-PILOT

Pull the damn cord!

But Edward just closes his eyes, spreads his arms out, and lets god decide.

CUT TO:

IMPACT - OF AN ANGRILY SLAMMING DOOR

EXT. JUMP SCHOOL - DAY

The furious, muffled swearing of the Co-pilot is heard from within the building as Edward and Carter walk towards the limo.

Edward has taken out The Bucket List. With the red pen he crosses off "Jump out of a perfectly good airplane" just below "Streak Yankee Stadium," both on his side of the list.

EDWARD

Two down. Eighteen in the pipe. How you feeling?

CARTER

(horrible)
Terrific.

EDWARD

(oblivious)
Me too. Who'd believe that only yesterday we were rotting in a cancer ward?

THOMAS

Back in one piece I see. How fortunate.

EDWARD

We live to die another day.

(to Carter)

I'm hungry. Are you hungry?

CUT TO:

HOT DOGS - HUNDREDS OF THEM BOILING IN A VAT

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - DAY

It's the annual Nathans Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest. Participants and onlookers mill beneath a striped tent. Edward wears a contestant's badge. Carter watches as Thomas massages Edward's shoulders.

EDWARD

I'm telling you, I got it in the bag.

THOMAS

You're a bottomless pit.

EDWARD

Goddamn right I am.

(to Carter)

'Sure you don't want in?

CARTER

I'm quite sure I'm out of my league on this one.

EDWARD

Suit yourself. Hey, when I'm done here, we'll go to that Russian place. Get some of that caviar you were talking about.

CARTER

We'll see.

A whistle sounds and Edward joins the other contestants behind a dozen long tables laid out end to end. Before each contestant is a tray of dozens of hot dogs in buns.

Edward looks over at the tiny FEMALE KOREAN CONTESTANT standing next to him. Tries to stare her down.

Carter and Thomas watch from the crowd..

CARTER (CONT'D)

Your boss, he's not all there, is he?

THOMAS

His relationship with sanity has its little hiccups... Still, you gotta admire his pluck.

Edward continues to stare down the hundred pound Korean woman.

EDWARD

You're going down, sister.

The whistle sounds and the contestants dive in.

CUT TO:

EXT. WINNER'S PODIUM - DAY

Where the tiny Korean woman raises her arms in victory as a judge drapes a medal over her head.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - DAY

Edward lags behind Carter and Thomas as they head back to the car. Edward is griping over the outcome...

EDWARD

And what is this dipping the buns in water crap. If you're going to eat it, eat it... Screw this, I'm going back.

Turns back towards the tent then stops cold.

THOMAS

What's the problem?

EDWARD

I don't feel so good.

THOMAS

So that's a no on the caviar?

EDWARD

Go fuck yourself, Tommy.

THOMAS

Trying my best sir.

CUT TO:

EDWARD UNLEASHING A TREMENDOUS BELCH

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - DAY

He and Carter are staring at a wall of tacky tattoo art.

EDWARD

I don't know. The skull is kind of cool but maybe I'm more of a Confederate flag kind of guy.

CARTER

I didn't know you were from the south.

EDWARD

Connecticut actually. Our side won, I can wear any flag I want. What're you going to get?

CARTER

(not into it)

I can't think of anything meaningful.

EDWARD

What's meaningful? We're gonna be dead in five minutes.

The heavily inked TATTOO ARTIST looks up at them from behind the counter.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Not literally.

CARTER

Nah, I think I'm gonna--

EDWARD

You can't keep passing on things. We're supposed to be in this together.

CARTER

Tattoos and hot dogs aren't exactly what I had in mind.

EDWARD

So what did you have in mind? Something metaphorical? Something life-changing? Oooh. Ahhh... Lighten up, already. This is supposed to be fun.

CARTER

Fun is fine. I have no problem with fun, I just imagined there'd be more behind this than pretending we're nine year-old's again.

EDWARD
 Nine year old's don't have tattoos.

CARTER
 That's a wonderful argument.

EDWARD
 (to the Tattoo Artist)
 Am I right?

TATTOO ARTIST
 My kid's got three of 'em.

EDWARD
 You must be incredibly proud... That's
 it! I got it!

CUT TO:

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - DAY

Edward winces in pain as the Tattoo Artist inks his
 shoulder blade. Carter's reading one of his books.

EDWARD
 So fine, we'll do a "grown-up" one next.

CARTER
 That's not the point.

EDWARD
 Then what is?

He suddenly erupts into a coughing fit.

TATTOO ARTIST
 I can't do this if you keep moving.

EDWARD
 Sorry, I'll tell the cancer to take the
 day off.

TATTOO ARTIST
 (pulling back)
 You guys got cancer?

EDWARD
 Don't worry, it's the non-contagious
 kind... Chop chop, we don't have much
 time.

CARTER
 I'm going to call Virginia.

The Tattoo Artist grunts in response and plunges the needle into Edward's back. He grits his teeth, containing the scream. Carter can't help but smile a little as he dials the phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. AUTO RACE TRACK - DAY

Edward examines the reflection of his tattoo in the window of a pristine Mustang Shelby GT.

EDWARD

It's not bad, it's just... Do I really look that--

CARTER

Old?

Both are dressed in racing suits.

EDWARD

I was going to say tired. Still, it's a pretty good likeness.

For the first time we see the tattoo - it's Edward, scowling out from his own shoulder.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

And you can't tell me it's not meaningful.

CARTER

Not where you're concerned, no.

EDWARD

(looking at the car)
This what you wanted?

Carter grins as he nods and pulls on his helmet.

CARTER

Ready for an ass-whuppin'?

Edward replaces the bandage and zips his suit up. His burgeoning facial hair has been shaved into giant Elvis chops.

EDWARD

We'll see.

He walks around the Mustang to the waiting Lamborghini Murcielago Roadster. Nearly one of a kind, it's more rocket than automobile.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

First one to a hundred miles. Loser buys dinner.

CARTER

I'm having dinner at home tonight.

EDWARD

Of course you are.

Slips into the car, closing the gull-wing door behind him.

INT. MUSTANG - DAY

Carter climbs into the car. Checks the gauges as he runs his hand along the beautifully refurbished dash.

CARTER

Now this is more like it.

EDWARD

(filtered)

Grown-up enough for you?

Carter pulls on his helmet. Adjusts the microphone in front of his mouth.

CARTER

You sure we're cleared for this?

The Lamborghini comes to life, whining like an aircraft engine.

EDWARD

It's taken care of. Why, you want to pass again?

Carter turns the ignition on the Mustang. It's growl is guttural and primal.

CARTER

You're in my world now. See you at dinner.

EXT. RACE TRACK - DAY

As the Mustang drenches the Lamborghini in a shower of dirt and rocks as it fishtails out onto the track.

INT. LAMBORGHINI - DAY

Windshield wipers clear the dirt as Edward struggles to put the car in gear.

EDWARD

So it's like that, is it?

The gears grind as he works the stick. Finally gets the car in gear as Carter is heard over the headset, cackling for joy.

ON THE TRACK; where the Mustang screams around a turn, taking a line close to the infield where the Lamborghini hiccups in fits and starts towards the track.

IN THE LAMBORGHINI; Edward wrestles with the stick...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Come on, you stupid--

The car jerks forwards onto the tarmac, right in the path of the oncoming...

IN THE MUSTANG; Carter hits the gas, taking the car low across the infield, narrowly missing the Lamborghini before he roars back onto the track.

Carter grins into his rearview mirror, sees Edward's car swerving across the track behind him.

IN THE LAMBORGHINI; Edward's trying to control the car.

CARTER (O.S.)

It's a racing set up. Steer with the throttle.

EDWARD

Which one's the throttle?

He's about to hit the wall until he mashes the gas and the car suddenly launches down the track.

DOWN THE TRACK; Edward pulls even with the Mustang.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

So we're having fun now?

CARTER

It's a nod in the right direction.

The Mustang jumps ahead, cuts the Lamborghini off.

EDWARD

You know what your problem is?

CARTER

I'm sure you'll enlighten me.

The Lamborghini cuts around and pulls even again.

EDWARD

You're the guy behind the chairs at the poker table.

CARTER

Come again?

EDWARD

You know, the one who stands there with his hands in his pockets, peering over the players' shoulders, studying the game like he's learning something, when all he really wants to do is walk away.

CARTER

And live to fight another day. Maybe he's got a mortgage, and tuition payments, and-

EDWARD

So why's he in the casino in the first place? He's dying to get in the game. What's keeping his hands in his pockets?

CARTER

Not everyone can afford to play.

EDWARD

I'm not talking about money. I don't think he's afraid to lose, everybody loses sometimes. But what I think? I think that deep down, you're afraid to win.

Now the Lamborghini takes the lead, clipping the front of the Mustang as it pulls in front.

CARTER

Jesus!

(regains control of the car)

Why on earth would anybody be afraid to win?

EDWARD

That's between you and your shrink, I just call 'em where they fall.

CARTER

You want to talk about-- You're the most fearful person I've ever known. God forbid you ever open the door a crack and give up even the smallest ounce of control.

EDWARD

My work done my way. Personal, selfish, egotistical motivation. Look where it's gotten me.

CARTER

Alone, bitter and scared of anything with a hint of emotional consequence.

EDWARD

Depravity's in the eye of the beholder. At least I'm not chicken.

IN THE MUSTANG; Carter rolls his eyes, knowing he shouldn't take the bait. He drives evenly for a moment. Then, despite himself...

CARTER

Ah, screw it.

ON THE TRACK; the Mustang revs and roars alongside of the Lamborghini before slamming into its side. The Mustang pulls away then smashes into the car again.

Both cars careen off the track, punching through a chain link fence then out into the outer parking lot.

LONG SHOT; as the two cars play demolition derby in the empty lot, colliding towards us until they roar past and slam through the striped security gates and out onto the open road.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

The cars speed down either side of the double-yellow line doing well over a hundred as they smash back and forth.

EDWARD

Do you have any idea what these cars cost me?

CARTER

We're sitting at the table, aren't we?

SIRENS BLARE as a police car appears behind them.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Oh, Jesus.

EDWARD

Are we really?

CARTER

Are we really what?

As the Lamborghini suddenly guns ahead, red-lining down the highway.

CARTER (CONT'D)

He really is crazy.

The Mustang roars after it. The police car loses ground quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL POLICE STATION - DAY

As Thomas emerges followed by Edward and Carter. Thomas carries the police paperwork. Edward's marking up the list.

CARTER

That's a serious fine.

EDWARD

Chump change. My tab.

He crosses off "RACE A VINTAGE MUSTANG" on Carter's list, then flips it over, putting a line through "GET IN A POLICE CHASE" on his side.

CARTER

Better believe your tab.

EDWARD

You gonna tell the wife about this one?

CARTER

I'm not the crazy one.

EXT. CARTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A small but comfortable-looking low-income brick face. A couple of street kids stare as the limo pulls up out front.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Carter reaches for the door. Edward is sprawled out across the opposite seat watching the Yankee game.

CARTER

Sure you two don't want some roast?

EDWARD

And face Darth Vader, I'm sure she'd love that. Tommy's got family to get to and I've got six innings left.

CARTER

Suit yourself. 'Night Thomas.

Thomas waves from the front as Carter climbs out and closes the door behind him.

THOMAS

Nice of him to ask.

EDWARD

Superlative.

Despite his sarcasm, he watches Carter talking to the street kids before climbing the steps to his door.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Why aren't we moving?

THOMAS

A thousand pardons, mein fuhrer.

EDWARD

Thomas.

THOMAS

Go fuck myself?

EDWARD

Yahtzee.

(to the TV)

Oh, come on!

INT. EDWARD'S LIBRARY - NIGHT

Floor to ceiling bookshelves. Edward slouches in a large, leather couch. Heaves a sigh of displeasure as he switches off the losing ballgame.

He stands and stretches while looking around the room. Unsure of what to do, he stuffs his hands in his pockets and moves to a wall of books, browsing the titles.

EDWARD

Oh, who cares.

INT. EDWARD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Immense and unused with glowing hardwood floors and a pristine grand piano covered in empty silver picture frames. He walks in like a stranger, hands still in his pockets and stops just inside the door.

He stares for a long moment then turns and walks out.

INT. EDWARD'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Edward is on the phone. Holds a take-out menu.

EDWARD

What do you mean you don't deliver past six, what kind of business is that?... I don't care what day it is, you--

THE DOORBELL RINGS

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Now what?

Slams the phone down.

INT. EDWARD'S FOYER - NIGHT

Edward emerges through double stained-glass doors into the marble foyer just as the elevator doors open revealing Carter, Virginia and their kids.

RACHEL

Happy Easter.

EDWARD

(to Carter)

What are you doing?

CARTER

Loser buys dinner... Grab this, will ya?

Lays an enormous platter of mashed potatoes into Edward's arms. The rest of the family doesn't move.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Well, come on. Turkey ain't gonna carve itself now.

The family shuffles out reluctantly. The boys bid Edward hello, but Virginia says nothing. Clearly, she's been out-voted.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Paneled walls wrapping around an immense mahogany table. Roger and Lee stare open-mouthed at the opulence.

EDWARD

Okay, just let me get a tablecloth or something.

Balances the potatoes as he rummages through some drawers he's probably never opened before.

ROGER

How many people live here?

Edward digs up a load of silverware and woven placemats.

EDWARD

Just me... And don't touch anything. This stuff costs more than your education.

LEE

We went to public school.

EDWARD

Oh.

The boys are too polite to laugh.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

You know what, screw it. Just dump it all down there.

Drops the potatoes with no small amount of relief.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I don't know about you guys, but I could eat a station wagon.

The boys smile openly.

CUT TO:

A HI-TECH RECORD PLAYER; as Edward lays a platter down on the turntable and drops the needle. Louis Armstrong's *Autumn in New York* plays over the following SERIES:

-- IN THE DINING ROOM; Rachel organizes the place settings. Fork and spoon on the left, knife on the right. Opposite her, Edward tries to mirror the layout. Gets it right the second time.

-- Carter sits with eyes closed and hands pressed together, saying grace. Edward watches him, eyes flicking around the table to see the rest of the family have their eyes closed.

-- JUMP CUTS as Carter hands Edward the carving knife; Edward attacks the meat while the others look on; Virginia watches as her perfect roast is hacked to pieces; a blockish chunk lands on Lee's plate.

-- Edward is a wallflower as the family tucks into the meal, passing steaming dishes back and forth through a lively discussion.

-- Edward's on his second plate. He's talking now, telling a story that has Virginia mildly on edge. The kids seem to love it, except Rachel who makes eyes at him. Edward returns the look until she points to her closed mouth. He gets the picture and snaps his mouth shut, swallowing his food before continuing.

-- Carter stares glumly at the tiny slice of apple pie sitting on his plate. Virginia is marking the size of Edward's slice with a pie cutter. Edward motions for a bigger piece. Virginia moves the cutter. Edward's still not satisfied. She moves it again.

-- IN THE KITCHEN; Edward coaxes a steaming cup of coffee from the copper siphon. He puts it on a saucer and carefully offers it to Virginia who has a chain-gang of dishes going at the sink with Carter and the boys. She allows a thin smile as she moves to accept the coffee, then notices Carter behind Edward, shaking his head not to take it. She looks back at Edward and politely demurs.

-- IN THE LIBRARY; Edward waits for the last bars of the song to end before lifting the needle and carefully sliding the record back into it's sleeve.

VIRGINIA (O.S.)

They played that at our wedding.

She stands in the doorway, wiping her hands on a kitchen towel.

EDWARD

You were married in the city?

VIRGINIA

First Baptist in the Bronx. My uncle was the pastor so we got the reception room for free. It's gone now. 'Put up one of them gargantuan shopping malls.

EDWARD

They tend to do that these days.

VIRGINIA

They do.

A beat. He's unsure how to approach her...

EDWARD

Health care's a perilous industry. The only way we can keep the hospitals from closing is to reduce the overhead so--

VIRGINIA

I understand. It's business.

EDWARD

Not to the people we let go.

VIRGINIA

Do you find that difficult?

EDWARD

Only when you meet them. Which I try very hard not to do.

VIRGINIA

I don't blame you.

EDWARD

We keep them from closing.

VIRGINIA

You don't owe me anything.

EDWARD

Still, I'd like to--

VIRGINIA

Give him back to me.

EDWARD

I'm not sure I can--

VIRGINIA

I'm not asking for his sake. He's the only one who can decide what's best for him. I'm asking for myself.

EDWARD

I don't understand.

VIRGINIA

I'm prepared for him to die. If there's one thing I understand it's that, but what I can't do-- I'm his wife. I'm not prepared to lose him while he's alive.

Her eyes hold his. She's laid herself wide open and he's unable to look away.

CUT TO:

INT. GULFSTREAM PRIVATE JET - DAY

Carter enters ahead of Edward. He whistles at the sumptuous cabin.

CARTER

Now this is what I'm talking about.

EDWARD

It's the best.

CARTER

It'd have to be. How much money do you have, anyway?

EDWARD

I've got enough. This is just a time-share so--

CARTER

How much is enough?

EDWARD

Didn't anyone tell you it's rude to talk about money?

CARTER

I never knew anyone with enough money to ask.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

As the Gulfstream lifts off the runway.

INT. GULFSTREAM PRIVATE JET - DAY

Carter accepts a frozen daiquiri from the STEWARD.

CARTER

Thank you.

(to Edward)

I could get used to this.

Edward nods. He's pensive.

EDWARD

Maybe we should go back?

CARTER

Come again?

EDWARD

I just think you should-- It's easy for me, but you've got your family to think about, and--

CARTER

'Ginia got to you, didn't she?

EDWARD

She wants you back. You can't blame her for--

CARTER

Why do you think I'm doing this?

EDWARD

Because I talked you into it.

CARTER

(shakes his head; a beat)

At first, you tell yourself it's a rut; just part of the ups and downs of marriage. You figure the pendulum will swing back the other way like it always has before and everything will be right again... A year goes by, then another and soon you've been sleeping only on your side of the bed so long you forget how to reach across and bring her into your arms. You forget why you could never walk down the sidewalk without holding her hand or what it was about her smile that stirred you. She's the same girl I fell in love with at seventeen. Nothing's changed, but everything's different. Then I realized, it's me.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

I lost something along the way and I aim to find it... Sometimes you have to take the long way home.

Edward nods slowly.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Tell me about the island?

EDWARD

It's a few acres. Beach all around. Palm trees. Some kind of a small house, I think.

CARTER

Completely deserted?

EDWARD

I think so.

CARTER

We can't "live on a deserted island" if it's not deserted.

CUT TO:

EXT. TROPICAL ISLAND - DAY

Completely deserted. Seen from high above as a SEAPLANE lands just outside the reef.

EXT. TROPICAL ISLAND - DAY

Edward and Carter walk from the trees out onto the sugary beach surveying the reef and gently lapping waves.

CARTER

Wow.

EDWARD

Yeah.

They sit in the sand. Carter scoops up a handful and lets it run through his open fingers. He sighs contentedly... Edward sighs as well... Several long, empty moments pass.

Carter sighs again. Edward nods in silent agreement. Several more moments pass until...

CARTER

Think we can still call the plane back?

EDWARD

God, I hope so.

Whips out his satellite phone as they run back towards the trees, brushing the wet sand off their butts.

CUT TO:

A DOLPHIN ICE SCULPTURE

INT. PETROSSIAN - NIGHT

A WAITER passes with a tray supporting an enormous bowl of caviar which he deposits in the center of a table where Edward sits with Carter and Rachel. All are dressed for the occasion and Edward now sports a freshly waxed pencil-thin moustache.

WAITER

Anything else, gentlemen?

EDWARD

Thanks.

CARTER

Would you look at that?

RACHEL

It looks disgusting.

CARTER

(heaping it onto toast)

In Iran they call it Aswad Thahab, Black Gold.

RACHEL

They can call it whatever they want, still looks nasty.

She takes a tiny spoonful and sniffs at it. Edward is studying the Bucket List.

EDWARD

Some of this is just so... "Laugh until you cry?" How you figure on that?

CARTER

Got any good jokes?

EDWARD

That's Tommy's department. What about number seven?

CARTER

What's seven?

EDWARD

Being a contestant on Jeopardy?

Carter takes his first bite, closes his eyes and savors the flavor. Rachel eyes him carefully, still not convinced.

CARTER

(to Edward)

Like most people, I guess. Take some kind of test and then--

EDWARD

You realize that could take months. What if you can't--? Forget it. You figure that one out.

(to Rachel)

How's the caviar?

RACHEL

(making a face)

Honestly?

EDWARD

Of course.

RACHEL

(looks at Carter who nods)

It tastes like ass.

Edward almost chokes on his food. Soon all three are laughing.

EDWARD

Couldn't have said it better myself.

CARTER

More for me then.

EDWARD

(still laughing)

She sounded just like Emily.

RACHEL

Who's Emily?

EDWARD

My little-- Well, she's not so little anymore, she's--

CARTER

You have a daughter?

His grave surprise brings the laughter to a halt.
Edward's suddenly uncomfortable.

EDWARD
Yeah...had a daughter...we don't--

CARTER
Why on earth not?

EDWARD
(pause)
Carl Okafor.

RACHEL
What's a carlo-kafor?

EDWARD
I'd really rather--

CARTER
When was the last time you saw her?

RACHEL
Dad.

CARTER
Answer me.

Edward just shakes his head. Carter grabs the list and the pen and adds "#11" to the bottom of Edward's ten tasks.

CARTER (CONT'D)
(writing)
Get back in touch--

EDWARD
(slamming his hand down)
Stop it!

CARTER
Why?

EDWARD
Because "some things are not up for discussion."

CARTER
Not this. This is too important.

EDWARD
You don't know me.

CARTER

I don't have to. I know when something's more important than flinging yourself off an airplane or running around with cattle...

(looks at Rachel)

She's your-- Some things are more important... I'll be right back.

Takes a last bite of caviar and heads to the bathroom.

EDWARD

He's not the most tractable man, your father.

RACHEL

He's just... He calls me "The Accident." They weren't planning on having more kids. Also because when I was eight, I chased my ball into the street when a car came. It dragged me the whole block before it stopped. I was in the hospital for a month. The first night, he told me he'd give anything if god would let him switch places with me.

EDWARD

That's how it should be.

RACHEL

Can I ask you something?

EDWARD

Of course.

RACHEL

Is she pretty?

Edward takes a beat, then nods slowly. There's a sudden commotion and the waiter quick-walks over to them.

WAITER

Right this way please.

EDWARD

What's wrong?

RACHEL

Where's dad?

WAITER

There's been an-- If you please!

EDWARD
 (to Rachel)
 Stay here.

INT. PETROSSIAN MEN'S ROOM- NIGHT

Edward bursts in. It's empty. Sees blood pooling across the sinks.

EDWARD
 Carter?!

CARTER (O.S.)
 I was trying to wash it off.

He's sprawled out underneath the sinks. Edward rushes to him and pulls him out.

CARTER (CONT'D)
 It's my only suit.

It's covered in blood, running from his mouth.

RACHEL (O.S.)
 Daddy!

She's standing in the open doorway.

INT. PETROSSIAN - NIGHT

As Edward and the waiter help Carter through the dining room.

CARTER
 Hold on. I need to...just for a second.

They stop by the ice sculpture allowing Carter to lean on the table.

Edward notices everyone staring at the blood on Carter's suit, whispering to each other, doing little to hide their distaste.

EDWARD
 (to a gawking woman)
 Can I help you? You've never seen a dying man before?
 (to the room)
 Get a good look, because someday this will be each and every one of you.

CARTER
(weakly)
Edward.

Edward loops his head under Carter's arm and resumes their way towards the door.

EDWARD
(to the room)
You're fucking parasites!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CARTER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Carter sits up against the headboard looking surprisingly fit. Rachel sits on the edge of the bed dressed in her soccer uniform.

CARTER
...draw their fullbacks to the ball
leaving the left side open for you to
slip behind them as long as you watch the
off-sides.

RACHEL
You really think they'll fall for it?

CARTER
Worked against Brazil last year. Just
enjoy yourself. Win or lose, that's the
most important thing.

EDWARD
(at the door)
Don't believe a word of it, kid. If
winning isn't everything, why do they
keep score?

CARTER
Good point.
(kissing Rachel)
Good luck, baby.

She jogs out, her cleats clacking on the stairs.

EDWARD
I hear you're doing well.

CARTER
It was just an ulcer. It's spread to my
stomach so-- It's expected.

EDWARD

And why aren't you going to the game?

CARTER

Holcomb said I should rest. I'm not supposed to get excited.

EDWARD

So don't get excited.

CARTER

You've never seen me coach.

EDWARD

So don't coach.

Carter thinks about it.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

The game is well underway as Edward and Carter skulk behind the back row of onlookers on the field.

EDWARD

Why don't we stand where we can actually see the field?

CARTER

'Ginia's here. I don't want her to--

EDWARD

Too late.

Points up to the bleachers where Virginia stares down at them. Shakes her head angrily and turns back to the game.

CARTER

Gotta get me a bigger dog house. May as well go up front.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

It's late in the second half and the mid-field scorer's table shows zero-zero. Carter and Edward stand right next to it.

CARTER

(shouting)

Pass it, pass it, pass the...oh come on ref! That's a penalty!

As the Essex team steals the ball and drives it up field.

EDWARD
You're not supposed to get excited.

CARTER
I'm exhilarated. There's a difference.

EDWARD
(pause)
So this may not be the best time,
but...I'm heading out of town tomorrow.

CARTER
(half-listening)
Yeah?

EDWARD
Spain first.

CARTER
Really?

EDWARD
The festival's coming up and--

CARTER
Which festival?

As Rachel steals the ball and passes to a teammate.

CARTER (CONT'D)
(shouting)
That's what I'm talking about!

EDWARD
Pamplona.

CARTER
Which one's that? Nice pass!

EDWARD
The one with all the cattle.

Carter turns to look at him. Realizes Edward is talking about finishing the list without him. He stares for several moments before a surge in the crowd pulls him back to the game.

Four of Rachel's teammates are streaking up the right side of the field while Rachel quietly jogs up the left side.

CARTER
They're drawing the fullbacks.

EDWARD
I'm sorry, it's just that--

CARTER
Shut up for a second.

Rachel turns on the speed and streaks into enemy territory.

CARTER (CONT'D)
She's open. She's open. She's--

As the ball loops over the fullbacks' heads towards the goal. Rachel controls it then shoots...just out of the goalie's reach and into the net.

The crowd goes ballistic. None more than Carter who leaps into the air, screaming his head off...

CARTER (CONT'D)
Now I'm excited!

The scorer sounds an air horn and the game is over. The players converge on Rachel, tackling her in mid-field.

Carter looks up at Virginia who is hopping like mad in the bleachers. They share a look. He's out of the dog house for the moment.

CARTER (CONT'D)
(to Edward)
Taking that macked-out plane of yours?

EDWARD
Commercial.

CARTER
Business class?

EDWARD
Are you kidding me?

CARTER
Hope you got another ticket then, 'cause--

Stops as he sees Edward holding up a pair of first class plane tickets. Carter smiles.

Suddenly he's hit from behind by a flood of ponytails. Joined by their current coach, the entire team surrounds him as they hop up and down with glee. He lifts Rachel off the ground and hugs her for all he's worth.

CUT TO:

INT. CARTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carter deposits a litany of pill bottles into his shabbily packed suitcase which lies open on the bed. Roger comes in with Rachel.

RACHEL

Need any help?

CARTER

Thanks, baby. I'm just about there.

RACHEL

(eying the suitcase)

Nuh-uh.

She pulls his clothes out and starts re-folding them. He smiles and removes the pills, placing them into a bag.

ROGER

When are you coming back?

CARTER

'Bout a month, I guess. It's an open ticket so-- You take care of your mother for me.

ROGER

What do you think I've been doing?

CARTER

I guess you've been the man of the house for a while now. I'm so proud of you son.

ROGER

Sorry I can't say the same.

CARTER

(pause)

I understand.

ROGER

Man, please. You don't understand nothing! You're running off with your sugar-daddy fat cat to-

CARTER

Don't ever use that tone with me, boy!
 (a beat; he's never raised
 his voice like this)

I know you can't understand why I have to do this...but I do. I have to do it and I'm begging you to respect that. I've never asked anything of you son, and if you tell me that it won't be okay and you won't be able to watch over them for me...then I'll stay and we'll never talk about it again.

He hands Roger the bag of pills. Roger is unsure what to do. He looks at Rachel who nods slowly. Roger bows his head and wipes his eyes...then he holds the bag out to his father.

ROGER

Just don't die on us.

CARTER

Not this trip.

He ignores the bag and wraps his arms around his son.

CARTER (CONT'D)

I love you, son. I love you so much.

Rachel finishes folding his shirt and lays it gently into the suitcase.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARTER'S HOUSE - DAY

As Thomas puts the suitcase into the limo. He closes the trunk revealing Carter who is kissing his children goodbye.

Carter looks up at the front door of the house, but Virginia is not there. He blows his daughter a final kiss then climbs inside.

Edward now has a goatee and a freshly shaved Mohawk which reveals several lesions on his scalp. He moves to follow Carter but stops as he sees Virginia watching from a window.

EDWARD

I'll bring him home.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Pulling away. Carter watches through the back window as his children see him go.

EDWARD

You okay?

Carter nods as he sits back down in the seat.

CARTER

And I thought cancer was hard... Man,
what the hell is that thing on your head?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PAMPLONA STREET - DAY

Seen through a stone doorway as hundreds of people stream past, running for their lives from the herd of bulls charging hard on their heels.

EXT. PAMPLONA STREET - DAY

Running with the crowd now as dozens pass until we find Edward and Carter whooping and hollering in the heart of the push.

They're having the time of their lives until Edward trips and falls. Carter turns back for him just as he sees the bulls roiling towards them.

CARTER

You okay?

The bulls are closing fast.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Give me your hands!

EDWARD

I got it. I--

As Carter yanks him up, throwing them into the base of the wall an instant before the bulls thunder past...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

That was close.

CARTER

Yeah. You were a goner for sure.

Edward stands and tests his legs.

EDWARD
My knee's a little--

CARTER
Come on.

Loops Edward's arm around his neck and the two shuffle off after the departed bulls.

EDWARD
For the record, I'm on my way out anyway,
so don't get all puffed up about saving
my life.

CARTER
Hey, Eddie.

EDWARD
Yeah?

CARTER
Do me a favor. Once we get to the hotel,
and you're back, all comfortable in the
room, take a second and go fuck yourself.

CUT TO:

INT. POSH LONDON RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Where Carter sits at the end of a long table. His eyes are wide as he stares in dumb wonder.

The CAMERA TRACKS down the table to reveal his dinner companions: PAUL MCCARTNEY, MOHAMMAD ALI, LUCIANO PAVAROTTI, and ELIZABETH TAYLOR all engaged in a lively discussion.

Edward sits at the far end, chatting with PRINCE WILLIAM. He shares a look with Carter who is unable to organize himself until a mechanical voice interrupts--

MECHANICAL VOICE
Please pass the salt.

Carter grabs the salt and passes it to STEVEN HAWKING who sits on his right in his wheelchair. Hawking's wife JANE WILDE smiles as she salts her husband's shepherd's pie.

MECHANICAL VOICE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Carter can only nod and smile.

EXT. POSH LONDON RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Carter closes the door to Mohammad Ali's car then steps back on the curb next to Edward. Both are still starstruck.

CARTER
Well, that was...

EDWARD
Yeah.

CARTER
One question?

EDWARD
Huh?

CARTER
How much that one cost you?

EDWARD
You really don't want to know.

Carter nods as they start walking down the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EGYPTIAN HILLTOP - DAWN

Bathed red in the first ray of the morning sun. Edward and Carter sit atop an ancient wall, taking in the endless expanse of desert below, though Carter's eyes are closed. Edward has the list out. Crosses off "See the Pyramids."

EDWARD
You know technically, we can kill two of these.

CARTER
Yeah?

EDWARD
What are you doing?

CARTER
(eyes still closed)
Listening.

EDWARD
To what?
(Carter doesn't answer)
(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Anyway, I figure you want to "Witness something Majestic," this is about as good as it gets.

CARTER

You haven't seen the mountain yet.

EDWARD

(shrugs)

Never will if we sit around here all day.

Starts to get up...

CARTER

The ancient Egyptians had a beautiful belief about death... When their souls reached the entrance to heaven, the gods would ask them two questions. Their answers determined if they were admitted or not.

EDWARD

What were they?

CARTER

Have you found joy in your life?

Edward realizes that Carter has opened his eyes and is looking directly at him.

EDWARD

What, you're asking? Oh, how the hell do I--

CARTER

It's a simple question. Have you found joy in your life?

EDWARD

(thinks for several moments)

Yes.

CARTER

When?

EDWARD

Next question.

Edward's uncomfortable with whatever he remembered.

CARTER

Has your life brought joy to others?

EDWARD
 (standing)
 This is horseshit.

CARTER
 Is it?

EDWARD
 Haven't I done enough for you?
 (getting agitated)
 I set everything up myself. Paid for the cars, the plane tickets. It took me a month getting that dinner set up.

CARTER
 For me or for you?

EDWARD
 Are you that ungrateful?

CARTER
 I'm more grateful than you'll ever know. I didn't know you before, but now you're my friend and if I had the means there's nothing I wouldn't do for you if asked.

EDWARD
 Thank you.

CARTER
 The question still stands.

Edward walks several paces away, hands in his pockets. Several moments pass...

EDWARD
 She was born on a Sunday. I remember because there wasn't a single cloud in the sky and I thought it was somehow appropriate... I know, cheesy right?
 (Carter just listens; this is Edward's joy)
 I managed to push her out of my mind the last few years, but after meeting your daughter-- And sometimes when I wake up in the morning...

He sits down next to Carter. Takes an angry breath...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Carl Okafor was an activist. Emily had joined some "save the poor people" thing and I guess they met and she decided she loved him... I saw him a few times. Good looking kid. Smart. Driven. But there was something about him I didn't... Anyway, when she said they were engaged I told her I was against it. But, being my daughter, she went ahead anyway... We had some distance for a while, she's as stubborn as her old man, but she seemed happy... The first time he hit her she came to me. I wanted to-- I wanted to beat him into the dirt until he begged for forgiveness...but she wouldn't let me. She said it wasn't his fault. He was broke. Had a few drinks. Said she picked the fight... I gave her some money and she went back to him. When the money ran out he did it again. She didn't come to me that time.

CARTER

What did you do?

EDWARD

I did what any father would do. I got him a job. Administration in a small hospital in Great Neck. Gave him an office and a salary. Company car.

CARTER

I don't understand.

EDWARD

I let him get comfortable. Let him think he'd got it made until one night, when he was out banging one of the nurses, I had someone crack his computer and move a bunch of money around. The next morning he showed up for work and they arrested him on the spot. My lawyer's a pitbull. Got him ten years for embezzlement.

CARTER

And Emily?

EDWARD

She saw through me like glass. Cursed me out in front of the entire courtroom after his sentencing. Called me names you wouldn't believe. Said I was dead to her.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

But I figure, if that's what it took... I grew up with nothing. I'm not proud of everything I've done but I've played by the rules for the most part. If my daughter hates me and they don't let me into heaven...well then I guess that's just life, isn't it?

CARTER

Happy endings are for suckers.

EDWARD

Yeah.

They stare at the desert for a beat. Then Carter stands.

CARTER

Come on.

EDWARD

What?

CARTER

I got an addition to the list.

They begin to climb down the stepped wall and WE PULL BACK to reveal that they have been sitting atop the peak of the Great Pyramid of Khufu this entire time.

CUT TO:

INT. CAIRO DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Edward follows Carter through the perfume section. Both are drinking cans of Coke as they pass wealthy, westernized Egyptians and tourists.

EDWARD

What the hell did we just eat?

CARTER

Don't know. Don't wanna know.

EDWARD

If this is your idea of cheering me up...

CARTER

My brother pulled this once at Macy's. Got him grounded for a week. I never had the guts... There.

He makes for the elevators as a crowd shuffles inside.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE ELEVATOR - DAY

Nearly full. Edward and Carter stand against the back wall.

EDWARD
Now?

CARTER
Next floor.

EDWARD
This isn't very adult of you.

CARTER
It really isn't.

He smiles wickedly. The elevator doors open and more shoppers wedge themselves into the packed elevator. Edward and Carter are pressed into the wall.

EDWARD
Now?

CARTER
Loser buys dinner.

They both scrunch up their faces with effort. Carter's teeth are gritted together until he suddenly burps drawing a look from the woman next to him.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Beg your pardon.

The woman looks away. Edward's fingertips are white as he presses his hands against the wall. Suddenly, the elevator is filled with the sound of--

INT. CAIRO DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

As the elevator doors open and the passengers erupt outward, pinching their noses, waving their hands and twittering angrily until the elevator is empty save for Carter and Edward who are on the floor in spasms of laughter until the doors close on them.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE ELEVATOR - DAY

The laughter continues for several moments until--

CARTER
(waving his hand)
Oh man that's-- What did we just eat?

They break up again.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE FIRST CLASS CABIN - DUSK

Edward is asleep then suddenly chuckles in his dream. Carter looks over, smiling knowingly before laying a postcard of the pyramids on his seat-back table. Starts to write.

CARTER (V.O.)

Dear Chambers Family... We're on our way to India now.

He thinks a moment before looking out the window at the sun painted table of clouds below and the endless blue above.

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

I can't tell you how much I miss you all. This is a gift that you've given me and everything I've seen and done has been through your eyes and with you in my heart. I'm taking all my pills and I honestly haven't felt this good in years. I hope you're well and looking after your mother... "I love you" doesn't come close... Dad.

He replaces the cap on the pen and leans his head back on the seat. Edward suddenly laughs out loud and Carter can't help but chuckle as he closes his eyes to sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TAJ MAHAL - DAY

Establishing.

CARTER (O.S.)

The empress was the beloved wife of Shah Jehan, the fifth mughal emperor.

INT. TAJ MAHAL GALLERY - DAY

Carter and Edward walk past murals depicting the history of the monument.

CARTER

And though it was an arranged marriage, they were deeply in love and were inseparable until she died giving birth to their fourteenth child.

EDWARD

Fourteenth? That's a lot of love.

CARTER

They didn't write the Kama Sutra for nothing... It took twenty-thousand volunteers twenty-two years to complete the structure in sixteen forty-eight. Every square foot designed by Shah Jehan himself.

They stop at a tile mural of the empress.

EDWARD

So that's true love.

CARTER

Yeah.

Edward reads Carter's thoughts and quietly walks away leaving Carter to stare up at the mural.

EXT. TAJ MAHAL - DAY

Edward and Carter walk along the promenade beside the reflecting pools.

EDWARD

(trying to lighten the mood)
You ever wonder why all the great historical monuments have to do with dead people?

CARTER

Because they're monuments. That's what they're for.

EDWARD

Yeah, but does being dead have to be a prerequisite? We can't put up a tomb to the unborn soldier? "He would have died for his country if only his parents had been Catholic."

CARTER

You're losing your grip, aren't you?

EDWARD

My family's got this plot upstate. My parents are there. Cousins. Grandparents. The whole shebang. We even got a little monument of our own.

CARTER

That where you want to end up?

EDWARD

I don't know, I'm not sure they'd have me. I was a real pain in the ass when I was little. Hard to believe, I know. I dunno, it just seems so...colloquial.

CARTER

I got it in my will. Want myself cremated and my ashes put in a can which they'll bury somewhere with a view.

EDWARD

You mean an urn?

CARTER

(shakes his head)

I never liked the sound of it. "Urn." Nope, an old can of Chock Full O' Nuts do me just fine.

EDWARD

Chock Full O--? The instant coffee?

CARTER

Yup. Better coffee your money can't buy.

EDWARD

I wouldn't bet on that.

CARTER

Ah yes, Kopi Luwak. You really dig that stuff, don't you?

EDWARD

It's the best. What do you got against it?

CARTER

Much too fancy for my taste. Simple pleasures my man, simple pleasures.

EDWARD

Think I might get another tattoo.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA - DAY

Seen from a distance as it looms across the hilltops. A sound is heard in the far off distance. We can't quite make it out, but it clearly doesn't belong.

ANOTHER SECTION OF THE WALL; closer now. The sound is heard again, a faint buzzing.

AT THE BASE OF THE WALL; the buzzing is closer now. It's joined by voices.

ATOP THE WALL; plunging down a hillside before us then surging back up to our position. The buzzing is louder still and the voices appear to be singing.

VOICES (O.S.)

Ah louie louie. Oh no. Say we gotta go.
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Said ah louie
louie--

And suddenly a motorcycle bursts into view up the hillside. Edward clings to Carter's back as they ride down the center of the wall, roaring by us then disappearing down the opposite hillside.

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

--whoa baby! Said we gotta go. Yeah,
yeah, yeah, yeah.

CUT TO:

AGED CELL BARS CLANGING AS A DOOR OPENS

INT. CHINESE PRISON - DAY

Thomas stands with a disapproving look on his face as a guard leads Edward and Carter out of the cell. They're dressed in filthy prison smocks with several weeks facial growth.

THOMAS

This is becoming epidemic.

EDWARD

(shuffling past him)
Shower.

THOMAS
 (catching a whiff)
 Several.

INT. POSH HOTEL SUITE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Thomas waits with a towel while Edward showers. Carter is seen through the doorway, talking to his family on the phone in the living room. He's yet to shower.

EDWARD
 So what's the going rate for busting two
 Americans out of the Chinese clink?

THOMAS
 Ain't what it used to be.

EDWARD
 That bad, huh?

THOMAS
 You don't want to know.

EDWARD
 Actually, I do... Don't I?

THOMAS
 I've got your statements in my bag, but
 all told you're down to a couple million.

Edward sticks his head through the shower door, halfway through shaving a new look that links his moustache to his sideburns.

EDWARD
 You're joking me.

THOMAS
 I never joke with Civil War heroes. Nice
 ink, by the way.

Edward holds up his arms which are now covered in tattoos: a charging bull, the pyramids, etc.

EDWARD
 Like 'em? One for each item on the list.

THOMAS
 How punk of you.

EDWARD
 (after a beat)
 Thanks Thomas. Really, this is way above
 and beyond.

THOMAS
 What are indentured servants for.

Heads into...

INT. POSH HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Where Carter is just getting off the phone with his
 family.

CARTER
 We're flying to Tibet tonight then next
 stop home. Alright. I will... Alright...
 Goodbye.

Hangs up the phone leaving the receiver smeared with
 grime. Thomas grabs a tissue and starts wiping it.

THOMAS
 Did you tell them?

CARTER
 (nods)
 My wife wants me tested for syphilis.
 She'll be sticking needles in me for days
 when I get back.

THOMAS
 You both seem in surprisingly good
 spirits considering...

CARTER
 I can't explain it. I was telling
 Virginia. I feel...

THOMAS
 Like a pigsty?

CARTER
 Young.

THOMAS
 They say your mental disposition can have
 a tremendous impact on disease.

CARTER
 They can say what they want, just so long
 as he gets out of that shower soon.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

Say, let me ask you something Thomas. Is it Thomas or Tommy?

THOMAS

It's Matthew actually but he finds that too biblical... Thomas is fine.

INT. POSH HOTEL SUITE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

As Edward emerges from the shower in a billowing cloud of steam.

EDWARD

She's all yours.

He wipes steam from the mirror to reveal his new look: Kojak meets Founding Father. Admires himself appropriately. Notices the lesions have faded on his head.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Hey, I said--

Sticks his head into the doorway to see Carter and Thomas whispering closely.

THOMAS

I do, but I'm not sure he'll---

EDWARD

He'll what?

CARTER

Ever think about flying coach back to the States. You know, save some for a rainy day.

EDWARD

You chumps want to ride with your knees in your throat that's your business... Shower's up.

CARTER

Thank the lord.

Runs into the bathroom peeling his shirt off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TIBETAN ROOFTOP - DAY

Where Edward and Carter take in the vista of hills rolling to the distant base of an impossibly enormous range of snow-covered mountains.

EDWARD
Okay, it's majestic.

CARTER
That's nothing. Twelve thousand tops.

EDWARD
What's our mountain?

CARTER
We're only going to base camp, but the
peak's about twenty nine thousand feet.

Edward whistles.

EDWARD
Why so many fatalities?

CARTER
Hmmm?

EDWARD
The air jockeys you were talking about.
Ones that flew through the mountains.

CARTER
The hump pilots. Well, first off you had
the Jap zeros which could ambush you from
anywhere as you flew through the valleys.
That was the easy part... When the
weather came in, which was always, they
couldn't choke off the supply runs, so
they flew in the soup... Sonar was all
they had back then. They used to try to
ping off the mountains to plot their
course between 'em. Sometimes it
worked... Sixty years and they're still
finding wreckage up there.

EDWARD
Your uncle?

CARTER
Two years on the hump. Not a scratch on
him.

EDWARD
Lucky guy.

CARTER

Maybe... When the storms rolled in and he couldn't see an inch past the windshield, he used to close his eyes and focus until he couldn't hear the copilot or even the engines. He'd focus until everything fell away except the mountains passing on either side. He could hear them and, 'til the day he passed, he swore they could hear him in return.

EDWARD

What did they sound like?

CARTER

I asked him once. Near as he could figure- "Voice of god," he said.

EDWARD

Wow, that's... Is there anything in this world you don't have a story about?

CARTER

It's called reading. You should try it someday... Here, you can start with this.

Slams a book in Edward's chest, *Gandhi an Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth.*

EDWARD

This some kind of yoga manual?

Carter's incredulous... Thomas comes up the steps. Edward tosses him the book.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Here. Read this for me.

THOMAS

So, shitty news or really shitty news?

EDWARD

The first one.

THOMAS

There's a storm up there. They won't fly until the weather clears.

EDWARD

(to Carter)

Where's your uncle when we need him.

CARTER
They expect it to clear?

THOMAS
Not for a month. Maybe two. That's the
really shitty news, in case you were
wondering.

CARTER
(disappointed)
Next trip, huh?

They know full well the remoteness of that possibility.

EDWARD
Definitely.

CARTER
I guess it's home then.

EDWARD
Maybe not.

CARTER
The climbing season's almost--

EDWARD
Everest isn't the only majestic thing in
the world.

CUT TO:

EXT. MT. KILUEA VOLCANO - NIGHT

Spewing enormous plumes of ash and lava into the night
sky while rivers of molten rock stream from the crater.

Carter, Edward, and Thomas stand atop a neighboring peak.
Their faces hang in awe in the light of the eruption.

EDWARD
(to Carter)
What, no story?

Carter just shakes his head. Edward smiles and turns back
to the show. The ground rumbles. They feel it. Thomas
grabs Edward's hand to steady him. Edward does the same
with Carter.

SEEN FROM BEHIND; in silhouette, the three friends stand
hand-in-hand at the beginning and end of the world.

CUT TO:

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Driving through the suburbs of New Jersey. Edward and Carter sit side by side in the back. Taking measure of what they've accomplished.

CARTER

Thank you. Really.

EDWARD

Don't be-- It's nothing. It's--

THOMAS

You're welcome, is what he's trying to say.

EDWARD

Dead in a month my ass.

They laugh and he looks out the window.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Hey Tommy, this isn't Newark. You leave your compass back in Beijing?

Thomas responds by putting up the divider between himself and the back seat.

IN THE FRONT; Thomas exhales a deep breath.

THOMAS

One more stop.

EXT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Pulling up in front of a small ranch house.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

EDWARD

Why are we-- Thomas, you off the methadone? What the hell's--

Stops as he sees something through the window. It's a woman. She's standing in the window of the ranch house, pacing back and forth as she talks on the phone.

CARTER

He kept tabs on her in case you ever wanted to--

EDWARD
 (livid)
 This was his idea?

CARTER
 No, it was mine. Took the whole flight to
 talk him into it.

EDWARD
 Hey Carter, will you do something for me?

CARTER
 Name it.

Edward opens the door and climbs out of the car and walks
 briskly away from the house. Carter watches him go...

CARTER (CONT'D)
 (softly)
 Go fuck myself.

EXT. SUBURB STREET - NIGHT

Edward walks briskly through pools of light from the
 street lamps. The limo pulls up and Carter jumps out.

CARTER
 This is what you want?

EDWARD
 Telling someone a story doesn't invite
 you to be a part of it. You had no right.

CARTER
 You're right, I didn't. But she's still
 there. Maybe you took the long way home
 but this is the road's end.

EDWARD
 Go away.

Walks past him. Carter follows.

CARTER
 What are you so afraid of?

EDWARD
 I'm not afraid of anything anymore. If
 you took a second to think it through
 you'd realize--
 (stops walking)
 How did you see it? I knock on the door.
 She answers.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

She's surprised and angry but I tell her how much I love her and missed her, and gradually, piece by piece, the ice starts to thaw?

CARTER

It's a start.

EDWARD

No, it's an end. Because you left one thing out. You didn't think-- How is it fair that I show up after all this time and inject myself back into her life when I could be dead in a week?

CARTER

You just--

EDWARD

How do I tell her...without her believing that I'm only reaching out because I'm scared to die alone and didn't care enough to consider what that would put her through.

CARTER

Everyone's afraid to die alone.

EDWARD

I'm not everyone.

CARTER

Then you're kidding yourself.

EDWARD

If I am, I'm not the only one.

CARTER

What's that supposed--

EDWARD

What are you even doing here, Carter? You've got a family and a wife whose holding her heart in her hands while you're flying around the world to "find the long way home." Don't you think she knows?

CARTER

Knows what?

EDWARD

That you blame her for your lack of accomplishment.

CARTER

Don't you dare--

EDWARD

That you say things like you "wouldn't trade your life with them for anything", but deep down you question yourself, so you say those things because you know they're the right thing to say, rather than what you really feel.

CARTER

You have no idea what I feel.

EDWARD

Maybe I don't...but I know this. I love my daughter. If I didn't I would be back there, knocking on her door. If you loved your wife, you wouldn't have to go home because you'd have been there all along.

He pulls out the Bucket List.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

This is fun, Carter. That's all it ever was.

Then he tears it in half, then again, and lets the pieces flutter to the sidewalk.

He sees Thomas standing by the limo.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Call me after you've taken him home.

He walks off. Carter stands there, staring at the pavement...

Music begins; Jeff Buckley's "*Hallelujah*" as Thomas walks around the limo and opens the door for Carter. Carter nods and walks towards him and then stops and turns to look at the Bucket List as the pieces scatter

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - AS THE SONG PLAYS OVER...

CARTER; walking up the steps to his house. He pauses at the door then opens it and carries his suitcase inside.

EDWARD; hands in his pockets as he walks down a neighborhood street. The limo pulls up next to him and he climbs inside.

CARTER; in bed with his wife, each on their own side.
Distance between them..

EDWARD; in his high-rise office sitting at his desk which
faces the window with a view of the city shrouded in fog
below. His hair is growing in again. He brings a coffee
cup to his lips. It's empty.

CARTER; at the hospital getting a check-up. Holcomb comes
in with test results. He's amazed at Carter's progress.
Carter smiles as he buttons up his shirt.

EDWARD; in his office kitchen. The box of Kopi Luwak is
empty. He searches the cupboard finding only a can of
instant. He puts the can back and walks out.

CARTER; at the dinner table with his family. Virginia is
saying grace. He's watching her. She feels it and her
eyes open. He reaches out and takes her hand. She smiles
as their eyes hold each other and she continues to pray.

EDWARD; shakes his head as he switches off the Yankee
game. Moves to the bookshelf and browses until he removes
a book on the Himalayas.

VIRGINIA; waiting in the car for Carter. It's autumn now
and the windows are painted with frost. A finger appears,
drawing letters on the windshield. WILL YOU MARRY ME?

EDWARD; working out on the elliptical machine at the gym.
It's late and the place is empty.

CARTER AND VIRGINIA; standing in the center of a shopping
mall, their friends and family around them as they renew
their vows.

EDWARD; stepping out of the shower. Wipes the steam from
the mirror revealing his full head of hair and the
journal of tattoos over his body. He touches the erupting
volcano on his forearm.

CARTER; home in bed staring at a small plastic bull. He
puts it away as Virginia comes in, dressed in her
nightgown.

She climbs in bed and he reaches across and pulls her to
him.

VIRGINIA
Happy second honeymoon.

CARTER
Happy second honeymoon.

They kiss. His hands move to her hips under the covers.

VIRGINIA

Do you have any idea how long it's been?

CARTER

Do I want to know?

VIRGINIA

No, I don't think you do.

CARTER

I love you, 'Gin.

VIRGINIA

I know you do.

CARTER

It wasn't that I ever stopped loving you so much as I forgot the reasons you loved me.

(she touches his face)

Remember that night, when I took you to the Bowl-O-Rama over on fourteenth street?

VIRGINIA

How do you think I could forget our first date? You wore that shirt with the stain on the front and your black shoes and brown belt.

CARTER

And you wore a blue dress with little bows down the back.

VIRGINIA

(surprised)

I can't believe you--

CARTER

I was so out of my league. I remember thinking, "What's a girl looks like this doing slumming with a kid who's best shirt got a stain on the front?"

VIRGINIA

You weren't worthy.

CARTER

I've never been worthy of you.

VIRGINIA

I was joking, baby. I knew that night after I got back. I told my mother I was your's forever if you'd have me... Forever's just getting started.

They kiss again, more passionately until she pulls away and stands out of bed.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

I got something for you. Wasn't sure I'd need it.

CARTER

Don't be long now.

She goes into the bathroom and closes the door halfway. We see her feet stepping out of her pajamas and into something black and lacy.

When the door opens her hair is down and spilling over her shoulders and a thin, satin negligee.

VIRGINIA

Carter?

The bed is empty. She walks around it.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

So we're playing games now? You think you can get me all riled up then--

She stops as she sees him face down on the floor, his hands twitching.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Carter!

She turns him over to see his eyes are rolled back into his head as the seizure storms through him.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Roger!

She finds his wallet on the bedside table and forces it between his teeth. Roger appears at the door--

ROGER

What's the--

He sees his father on the floor then runs for the phone. Rachel and Lee appear. Lee runs to help Virginia as Rachel stands in the doorway watching her father.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. IL MULINO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Edward and his date, AMERY, a pretty middle-aged woman sit at a table against the wall.

EDWARD

It's Bruno's specialty. It's not on the menu.

AMERY

That's a lot of food.

EDWARD

I'm a bottomless pit. Besides, I'm in training.

AMERY

Isn't mountain climbing dangerous?

EDWARD

For someone my age? You can say it.

She's interrupted by the MAITRE'D who walks briskly to the table.

MAITRE'D

I'm sorry Mister Cole. It's your driver. He says it's urgent.

Edward turns to the front door where Thomas stands. His face says everything.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edward emerges from the elevator and walks pointedly towards his old room. Passes Holcomb at the nurse's station.

DR. HOLCOMB

(walking after him)

Edward.

EDWARD

When did this happen?

DR. HOLCOMB

It came out of nowhere but it's his brain
and the tumors are deep.

EDWARD

So you can operate?

DR. HOLCOMB

Day after tomorrow.

EDWARD

And he'll be alright?

DR. HOLCOMB

In his condition it's not-- The odds
aren't what we'd like them to be.

Edward sees there's little hope. Resumes walking into--

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Where Carter is back in bed covered in tubes. Virginia
lies with Rachel on the bed next to him. Rachel is
asleep.

EDWARD

How is he?

VIRGINIA

Quiet. I wasn't sure if I should call
you, I--

EDWARD

Of course. Please. Is there anything I
can do for you? Are the boys--

VIRGINIA

We're fine. Really... He wanted me to
give you this.

She sits up and pulls the taped-together Bucket List out
of her purse.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

There's a letter too. I was supposed to
wait until... But then I thought--

CARTER (O.S.)

--she's never listened to me before, why
let a coupl'a tumors get in the way.

Edward sits down on the side of his bed.

CARTER (CONT'D)
What's with all the hair?

EDWARD
How they treating you?

CARTER
Food still sucks.

EDWARD
I'll talk to the owner.

CARTER
I wouldn't, I hear he's a prick.

EDWARD
He definitely has his moments...

Edward nods. It's all under the bridge.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
(holds the List)
What was I going to do with this?

CARTER
It isn't finished.

EDWARD
It's not a one man job.

CARTER
It's going to have to be.

Edward scans the remaining items. Stops on one of them.

EDWARD
No it doesn't... I'll be--
(heads for the door)
Don't go anywhere.

Runs out.

EXT. HOLCOMB'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Holcomb's packing up for the night when Edward enters, speaking on his cell phone.

EDWARD
I don't care how, just get a hold of him
and call me back.

He snaps the phone shut and glares at Holcomb.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Can he be moved without hurting him?

DR. HOLCOMB

Well, technically yes, but--

EDWARD

I'm taking him out of here.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edward walks with Holcomb trailing him. Thomas stands as he sees them.

EDWARD

Pull the car up front.

DR. HOLCOMB

I cannot allow you to sneak him out again. I could be personally liable--

As Edward slams him into the wall.

EDWARD

Plain English. I'm taking my friend out of here and you're coming with us. You've got ten minutes to pack what you need or I will personally ask Thomas to rearrange your kidneys.

Thomas smiles at Holcomb who nods abruptly.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Edward enters just as Carter is standing out of bed with help from Virginia.

EDWARD

How fast can you get him dressed?

VIRGINIA

Why?

CARTER

I can dress my own damn self. Where we going?

EDWARD

One more trip.

(to Virginia)

Can I talk to you?

(to Carter)

Pack it up. We're not home yet.

He ushers Virginia out into the hallway.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

The limo doors open and Thomas emerges along with Edward, Holcomb and the entire Chambers family. Carter is weak but shuffles along towards the waiting Gulfstream.

EDWARD

If you could step it up we're kind of on a schedule.

CARTER

I'll step it up when you tell me where we're going.

EDWARD

Roger.

ROGER

Sorry dad.

As he lifts his father into his arms and carries him towards the plane.

CARTER

Boy, put me down. Whose side are you on!

EDWARD

(to Lee)

Does he ever stop talking?

LEE

Only when he's eating.

EDWARD

Well, that I can relate to.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLF CART - DAY

Zippering between large warehouses. Carter sits in the back with Virginia. He's blindfolded and bitching and wearing a new suit. Edward's in the front next to the driver.

The golf cart pulls to a stop next to a warehouse door. Virginia helps Carter out while Edward gets the door.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

The doorway is curtained off with thick, sound-eating drapes. Virginia leads Carter inside.

CARTER

You're enjoying this, aren't you?

Muffled clapping is heard from the other side of the curtains. A man in a BASEBALL CAP pushes through an opening.

BASEBALL CAP

Great. We're ready for you.

CARTER

Who the hell's he talking to?

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now our contestants entering the studio: a college professor from Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, Deenaz Olpadwala.

Edward removes the blindfold and pushes Carter through the curtains.

ON CARTER; As his eyes adjust then light up as a familiar theme plays.

INT. JEOPARDY SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

The real deal, replete with a live studio audience.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Our second contestant.

CARTER

How in the world did you--?

EDWARD

I had a couple million lying around.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

A garage mechanic from Newark, New Jersey...

CARTER

But that's all you had--

EDWARD

So go earn it back.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Carter Chambers.

CARTER

You son of a bitch.

He straightens his tie and walks purposefully towards his podium. Roger, Lee and Rachel cheer him on from the stands as he nervously takes his place.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JEOPARDY SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

The game is underway. ALEX TREBEK calls the clues...

ALEX TREBEK

This sophistic monk is often credited as one of the causes of the Russian Revolution.

Carter hits the button but his timing is off.

DEENAZ

Who is Rasputin?

ALEX TREBEK

Correct.

DEENAZ

I'll take Mad Men for two hundred.

ALEX TREBEK

An animated character with a predilection for tall headwear... Carter.

CARTER

The Mad Hatter.

ALEX TREBEK

No... Sherman.

SHERMAN, the bookish current champion clears his throat.

SHERMAN

Who is the Mad Hatter?

ALEX TREBEK

Yes.

Edward stands anxiously with Virginia.

EDWARD

Get it together.

Virginia shushes him.

SHERMAN

Mad Men for three-hundred.

ALEX TREBEK

This King of England earned his maligned nickname in part by conversing with a tree he believed to be the King of Prussia.

CARTER

Who is King George?

ALEX TREBEK

Can you be more specific?

CARTER

Who is "Mad" King George the third.

ALEX TREBEK

Correct.

Virginia grabs Edward. The Chambers kids cheer.

ALEX TREBEK (CONT'D)

Carter takes control of the board.

CARTER

I'll take Mad Men for four-hundred, Alex.

A SERIES OF CUTS; as Carter begins to run the board. His answers are quick and on the mark. The other contestants get an answer here and there but the game is clearly Carter's to win.

Roger, Lee and Rachel continue to cheer him on. Virginia's grip on Edward's arm grows tighter and tighter until he winces.

VIRGINIA

Oh. Sorry.

(Carter gets another answer)

Go on, baby!

She's punches Edward's arm in glee.

The game continues. Carter is doing well but he's beginning to tire. Sweat stains are visible on his collar.

Edward now stands several feet away from Virginia.

EDWARD

Is he okay?

VIRGINIA

He'll be fine.

She applauds as he gets another correct answer.

INT. JEOPARDY SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

The game is down to Final Jeopardy. The final category is on the board:

ALEX TREBEK

The category is World Monuments and the final clue is--

The clue is revealed...

ALEX TREBEK (CONT'D)

(reading)

This mughal emperor built the Taj Mahal to memorialize the death of his wife, Empress Mumtaz Mahal.

Edward smiles as the Final Jeopardy theme plays.

EDWARD

It's in the bag.

His grin begins to subside as he watches Carter wipe a thick band of sweat from his forehead.

CARTER'S POV; is blurred as his hand slips on the pen. He closes his eyes to steady himself, but his vision is blurred even further.

VIRGINIA

Edward.

EDWARD

I see it.

He starts circling the stage, crossing behind the cameras to get closer to the contestants.

Carter scribbles loosely on the screen but drops the pen and falls just as Edward gets there to catch him.

FADE TO WHITE.

Voices are heard...

HOLCOMB (O.S.)

...do our best, but it's too far along.

EDWARD (O.S.)
Anything you need.

FADE IN ON:

THE FACE OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Carter's POV as Virginia stares down at him.

VIRGINIA
Hey, babe. Can you hear me all right?

CARTER
(dazed)
Wha- Where time is it?

His face is paralyzed on one side. His head is shaved and heavily marked with surgery markers.

VIRGINIA
We're in the hospital. You had a stroke,
but you're gonna be fine.

CARTER
Where's Alex?

VIRGINIA
(looking)
Who's Alex?

EDWARD
He's probably sleeping. It's almost
midnight.

VIRGINIA
They're taking you in for surgery in a
minute.

CARTER
Okay.

EDWARD
I'll leave you two alone.

CARTER
Wait.
(to Virginia)
My bag.

She reaches for his overnight bag.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Can you--

She opens it for him. He reaches inside and pulls out a sealed envelope and a folded slip of paper.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Got any of that coffee left?

EDWARD

I'm all out. I can see if there's anywhere that sells it out here, but--

CARTER

(smiles)

Not if I was dying of thirst in the desert... Wanna know why?

EDWARD

"I'm sure you'll enlighten me."

Carter hands the paper to Edward.

CARTER

Read.

EDWARD

(reading)

Kopi Luwak is the world's most expensive coffee, though, for some, it falls under the category of too good to be true. In the village where the beans are grown lives a breed of wild African tree-cats. The cats eat the beans, digest them, then...

(a beat; he swallows)

...then defecate them out for the villagers to collect. It's the gastric juices of the cat that give the coffee its unique flavor and absence of aftertaste... You're shitting me?

CARTER

Cats beat me to it.

He bursts into weak laughter. Edward stares for a moment then starts to chuckle himself. Soon both men are laughing until tears stream down their cheeks. As he laughs, Edward's tears become gradually laced with grief as he hold's Carter's wrist.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Still have the list?

EDWARD

Of course.

(pulls it out along with the
red pen)

There's only a few left. Which one do you
want to do next?

Carter runs a finger down the items, until he reaches
"LAUGH UNTIL I CRY." He crosses it off shakily with the
pen. Only four remain.

His finger stops on the half finished "#11) GET BACK IN
TOUCH" Edward sees this.

CARTER

There's a difference between dying alone
and living like you're already dead...
Finish the list, Edward.

He places the envelope atop the list.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Go home.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Edward emerges through the sliding doors. He wipes the
tears flowing from his face, unsure of where to go.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As Holcomb enters, scrubbed for surgery, with several
nurses.

DR. HOLCOMB

We're ready.

Carter reaches out for Virginia's hand and presses it to
his heart.

VIRGINIA

I'll be here when you get back.

CARTER

Forever's just getting started.

Her hand slips out of his as he's wheeled out of the
room.

INT. GULFSTREAM PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

Edward loses himself in the raindrops sliding down the window as the plane readies for takeoff.

He glances down at the envelope in his lap and turns it over. On the front is his name and address. He thinks a moment, steeling himself before he opens it.

INT. OPERATING THEATER - NIGHT

Carter lies unconscious with a tube in his mouth as the surgeons do their work. In contrast to Edward, he looks completely at peace.

CARTER (V.O.)

Dear Edward. It's turning cold out here in Newark and the trees are like skeletons beneath the lamp posts. Winter's almost upon us and despite what the doctors tell me, I know it will be my last.

EXT. THE NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE - NIGHT

Seen from the Hudson, the mandala of lights reflect like jewels in the water. Carter sits on the edge of a pier taking in the view...

CARTER (V.O.)

You know how I love to tell stories so if you can spare a few minutes I think I've got a good one for you...

He returns to the letter in his lap, and resumes writing...

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

There was an old farmer spent his life working the earth to give his family all the cares and comforts he'd never had.

INT. GULFSTREAM PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

Edward reads the words as Carter speaks them.

CARTER (V.O.)

One day the farmer fell sick and he called his sons to his bedside where he took up a bundle of sticks and said to his eldest son, "Show me that you can break it." The son strained and strained, but with all his efforts was unable to break the bundle.

Edward finishes the letter and wipes the tears from his cheeks. The flashing wing lights of the plane reflect the raindrop on the window indelibly onto his face.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Seen from above as Roger, Lee and Rachel lie in bed with their mother, clinging to her as she prays.

CARTER (V.O.)

The other sons also tried, but none of them could break it. "Untie the bundle," said the farmer, "And each of you take a stick."

EXT. SUBURB STREET - DAWN

As Edward walks up the path to his daughter's house. He knocks on the door without hesitation.

CARTER (V.O.)

When they had done so, he called out to them, "Now, break them," and each stick was easily broken...

The door opens revealing Emily. She's surprised and her sleepy features harden instantly. Edward begins to talk.

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

No man is an island, my friend. We're just not built that way.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Virginia scoops instant coffee into a styrofoam cup. She looks up as Holcomb appears at the other end of the hallway walking towards her. His face is unreadable.

CARTER (V.O.)

You measure yourself by the people who measure themselves by you, and no matter how you battle the current--

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Thomas leans against the limo, watching through the window as Carter and Emily speak. Her guard is still up, but she's listening...

CARTER (V.O.)
 --our lives are streams flowing into the
 same river towards whatever heaven lies
 in the mist beyond the falls.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL - NIGHT

We can't see Holcomb's face or what he's saying as he reaches Virginia, but her expression says it all. The coffee cup slips from her hands and lands at her feet, spilling onto the floor.

CARTER (V.O.)
 Find the joy in your life, Edward. Close
 your eyes and let the waters take you.

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Edward shakes Emily's hand goodbye. She's not giving in, but it's a start. He reaches for the front door just as a LITTLE GIRL, still half-asleep, comes out from the back bedroom. Edward is stunned.

CARTER (V.O.)
 Open your heart and listen to the
 mountain...

He looks up at Emily who says something to the little girl. He crouches down as the girl walks right up to him and lays her head on his shoulder. His eyes are full as he looks up at Emily in amazement then slowly kisses his granddaughter's head.

INT. LOS ANGELES OPERATING THEATER - NIGHT

Carter's face is at peace. Virginia's face comes into frame and kisses him softly. Her tears fall onto his eyelids and continue down his cheeks.

CARTER (V.O.)
 I promise you'll be heard.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Virginia stands in the doorway, staring at her sleeping children. Rachel opens her eyes and looks at her mother.

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Edward walks the path towards Thomas and the waiting limo.

CARTER (V.O.)

We're a bundle of sticks, you and I, be it in this world or the one that follows. I will be forever grateful for the joy your life has brought to mine.

Thomas opens the car door for him.

THOMAS

So that's your daughter?

EDWARD

(emotional)

Yup.

THOMAS

Pretty.

Edward looks angry. Thomas waits for the rebuke. Instead, Edward pats him on the shoulder before climbing into the car. Thomas looks back at the house as the lights go out.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAWN

Edward pulls the list out of his pocket. With the red pen he crosses out: "KISS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD."

CARTER (V.O.)

Your friend always... Carter.

Edward lowers the window and looks out at the painted dawn sky as the limo drives away. He stares for several moments then closes his eyes and listens...

EDWARD (V.O.)

Good afternoon. My name is Edward Cole and I'm not much of a storyteller.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE ROOM - DAY

Edward is in his business suit again. His game face on.

EDWARD

I'm a business man, a good one. I run hospitals.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

We take sick people and make them well again. Sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail, but we're getting better at it every day... I started out with nothing but cold ambition, and over the years my company grew until I had everything I ever wanted... I know now that-- I know now that I was never a wealthy man until my best friend came into my life...and from this incredible turnout, it only verifies the fact that Carter was truly the richest man I know.

CAMERA TRACKS until we're behind Edward revealing his audience of nearly a THOUSAND MOURNERS filling every last inch of the room including Carter's family who sit in the front row. Familiar faces in the crowd include Manny, Holcomb, Nurse Shing, parents and players of the soccer team, etc.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I don't know what most people say at these things, so I'll just tell you what I think Carter would want you to know. He's dead and I still can't shut him up... He loved his children more than his own heart. He loved his wife more than his own soul. He took the long way home but he made it back and you took him in and made him whole again and you will never know how grateful he was.

His eyes move from the family to Thomas who stands against the wall with Emily and her daughter.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(taking out the Bucket List)

We saw the world together. Pretty amazing when you think that only nine months ago we were strangers... He saved my life, and he knew it before I did.

With the pen, he crosses out: "HELP A COMPLETE STRANGER FOR THE GOOD."

Beneath it, the last remaining task lies unfulfilled: "LISTEN TO THE MOUNTAIN AND BE HEARD." Slowly, the words on the page--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE PEAK OF EVEREST - DAY

As the climber from the opening scene finally arrives at the peak.

EDWARD (V.O.)

Carter gave me a book once. It was about a man who knew a thing or two about the world.

The climber walks over to a flat stone and lifts it onto its side. He removes his gloves revealing a wedding ring on his left hand.

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

The man said: "Learn as if you were going to live forever. Live as if you were going to die tomorrow."

His hands lift to his face, removing the oxygen mask and hood revealing THOMAS.

He reaches down and lifts A FROZEN CHOCK FULL O' NUTS CAN from its resting place in the hole beneath the rock. He wipes off a section of frost with his thumb revealing:

A PHOTOGRAPH taped to the can -- Carter and Virginia at their second wedding surrounded by their family.

Thomas sets the can on the snow then opens his backpack and reaches down to the bottom--

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

Tomorrow comes for all of us.

--and removes A SECOND CHOCK FULL O' NUTS CAN which he places on the ground next to the first.

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

It's what we do in-between that makes us who we are.

CLOSE ON A NEWER PHOTOGRAPH; taped to the second coffee can. It's Edward. He's old and grey.

CARTER (V.O.)

Edward Perriman Cole died in May. It was a Sunday, in the afternoon, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky...

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal that he's closely surrounded by Thomas, Emily and their THREE CHILDREN, hands intertwined with--

--Carter's grandchildren, each of whom stands with their parents and Virginia. One family.

Edward is smiling like we've never seen.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He was seventy-nine years old.

Finally, Thomas deposits both cans into the hole beneath the rock.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Even now, I can't claim to understand the measure of a life, but I can tell you this...

Thomas replaces the rock over the coffee cans.

CARTER (CONT'D)
I know that when he died his eyes were closed, and his heart was open... I know that he could hear the mountain...

THE CAMERA lingers on the rock for a moment then tilts up to reveal the breathtaking view of the entire world below.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And I know the mountain heard him in return.

THE END.