

SEAN'S BROTHER

Anton A. Hill

FADE IN:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Bathed in rays of mid-morning sun, a tacky seascape of majestically leaping whales smacks the wall with intensely hot rhythm. Below it, CARA, late 20s, elegant, refined, is sitting up in bed, thoroughly enjoying herself.

MILTON (V.O.)

I don't really know how it happened.

Underneath her, MILTON, 30s, handsome, scruffy, stares upside down at the wall. Off in some distant, introspective realm.

MILTON (V.O.)

I mean, I know how this happened.
...Sort of.

INT. BOOKSTORE - EVENING

A little independent coffee/book shop. Sitting before a small crowd of a couple dozen admirers, Milton reads fervently from a white paperback inscribed with a black title, "The Frozen Trail."

MILTON (V.O.)

It was at a signing of my novel,
The Frozen Trail.

He closes the book. The crowd gives him a standing ovation.

MILTON (V.O.)

Trail was the story of a pioneer family that takes on the Oregon Trail. The triumph of the human spirit against brutal odds.

He thanks his audience.

MILTON (V.O.)

Trail sold under 1,000 copies in three years. Mainly at book stores like these. Mainly by me. Mainly because I'm friends with the owner.

He signs his fans' books. Answers their questions. Then spies Cara. In the back. Wearing a sundress and French braid. Reading. All goes quiet.

MILTON (V.O.)

Enter Cara. She was utterly exquisite, and the only one not vying for my attention.

He excuses himself from the others. Goes over to her.

MILTON

No question?

As if expecting him, Cara looks right up into his eyes.

CARA

Au contraire, Mr. Medley.

MILTON

Call me Milton.

Cara holds up her copy of Trail.

CARA

I loved your first three novels --

MILTON

Thank you, Ms...?

CARA

Call me Cara.

MILTON

That's beautiful. Sounds French.

CARA

Latin. It means "beloved."

MILTON

Fitting for someone so --

CARA

Regarding your latest work, the stories about the sibling rivalry --

MILTON

Burning Desert.

CARA

Yes. What I wanted to know is, since it mentions no desert anywhere, burning or otherwise, why did you give it that title?

MILTON

Desert is just a metaphor.

Cara raises a suspicious eyebrow as if Milton had mispronounced the word.

CARA
A metaphor?

MILTON
For that place in life where we
don't know where we're going, where
we came from, and there's nothing
but arid simplicity all around us.

Cara laughs.

CARA
You just made that up.

She goes back to her reading.

MILTON
I'll tell you the real reason if
you let me buy you coffee.

Cara doesn't meet his gaze. Stifles a yawn.

CARA
I prefer tea.

MILTON
So do I.

He holds out his hand. She hesitates. Eyes him. Then accepts. They cross over to the cafe portion of the store.

MILTON (V.O.)
Hard to believe it, but...

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Milton lifts his eyes. Focuses on Cara's. She's about to explode. She clamps him between her legs. Shouts. He turns his attention back to the wall.

MILTON (V.O.)
Why am I at this motel in the first
place? I live a ways outta town,
and I didn't wanna have to drive
back in this morning to get to --

He sits up. Knocks her down onto the mattress.

MILTON
My meeting!

He gets out of bed as politely, and cleanly, as possible.
She fans herself.

CARA
You are amazing.

Milton throws his clothes together. Rubs on some deodorant.

MILTON
Listen, Cara, I gotta go meet with
my editor.

Cara lifts her head. Teases him.

CARA
I thought you were taking me to the
Chinese Gardens.

MILTON
I was?

Cara sits up.

CARA
Remember? We were talking about
art. You said:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Milton and Cara are having drinks at a trendy little dive.
They're both quite liquored up, and flirty.

MILTON
I'll take you to the Chinese
Gardens in Portland. Most
authentic Chinese gardens outside
of...

CARA
China?

MILTON
Yeah! I'll take you tomorrow!

Cara pokes his chest repeatedly.

CARA
No you won't! Portland's in
Oregon, silly!

Milton pokes her right back.

MILTON
 Yes I will! We'll even have room
 service for lunch.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Milton stares into space. His mind races.

MILTON
 You're right. I did say that. I
 was drunk. And I've gotta go.

Inspiration smacks him upside the head.

MILTON
 Why don't you join me?

CARA
 Join you??

MILTON (V.O.)
 Couldn't blame her. Only details I
 remembered about her were her art,
 lit, and history degrees, and that
 she was working on her own novel.

MILTON
 I cook a mean linguini.

CARA
 I prefer penne.

MILTON
 So do I.

He holds out his hand. She hesitates. Eyes him. Then
 accepts. Gets out of bed. Gathers her clothes.

MILTON (V.O.)
 I don't really know why she came.
 Maybe it was because she thought I
 was amazing in bed.

Cara has her shirt on. She bends over to pick up her pants.
 Milton gets a good look. Smirks.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Maybe it was my "exquisite"
 culinary taste.

Pulling up her pants, Cara spies him watching her.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Maybe it was because she considered
 them novels, not books.

INT. KATHERINE'S OFFICE

A sleek, feng shui'd space. Milton and Cara sit opposite Milton's editor, KATHERINE, 30s, petite, blonde, all-power, all-attitude.

KATHERINE
 Milton, where the hell is my
 ending?!

MILTON (V.O.)
 I know how this happened, too.
 ...Sort of.

INT. COLLEGE MEETING HALL - AFTERNOON

Twelve years earlier. A spacious, post-modern building crowded with name-tagged students and alumni. A banner reads: "Welcome seniors and alums." With a Styrofoam drink in hand, Milton meanders the crowd.

MILTON (V.O.)
 It was at one of those college
 career fair get-togethers.

He accidentally rams into Katherine. His impact knocks her wine glass out of her hand. It shatters. He shakes his head clear. Hands her his drink.

MILTON
 Excuse me.

Her fury rising, Katherine instinctively gives him the once-over. An avaricious smile brightens her face. She scans his name tag.

KATHERINE
 Not at all, Mr. Medley.

They have an easy conversation. She gives him her card. It reads: "Katherine Moon - Fulcrum Press."

MILTON (V.O.)
 Enter Katherine. My editor. She'd
 graduated a couple years before.
 Became a junior exec at one of the
 major houses.

INT. MILTON'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Small and messy. One entire wall is stuck with 3x5 note cards. A sweaty, naked Katherine flops down on the bed next to a sweaty, naked Milton.

KATHERINE
You are incredible.

Milton slaps a freshly-printed manuscript on her stomach.

MILTON (V.O.)
Hard to believe it, but a few weeks later, she signed me to a four-book deal.

INT. DINER - AFTERNOON

An overpriced greasy spoon. Milton sits opposite Katherine. She flips through his manuscript.

KATHERINE
This is very good. Very good. Unfortunately, modern readers don't give a flip about the human spirit.

MILTON
What do they give a flip about?

KATHERINE
Explicit, brutal violence, and steaming, sweaty sex.

MILTON (V.O.)
No way in Dante's Inferno was I gonna betray my novel, so I added a couple skirmishes here and there, but basically left it alone.

EXT. COLLEGE QUAD - AFTERNOON

At his graduation, Milton and Katherine pose for a picture. A red X crosses itself over Katherine's face.

MILTON (V.O.)
We split shortly after I graduated, so she never promoted it. Despite a handful of positive reviews, it went out without even a whimper.

INT. MILTON'S PAD - AFTERNOON

A decent bachelor shack. Dressed in slacks and a sweater, Milton grabs a quick bite to eat as he rushes out the door.

MILTON (V.O.)
How have I fed myself in the
intervening years?

EXT. WANG ADVANCED ACADEMY

Milton steps into a small office tucked into the far corner of a strip mall. His eyes pause on each of the words in the Academy's sign, "Wang Advanced Academy", in the same order as he thinks another set of three words.

MILTON (V.O.)
Three words: E. S. L.

INT. CLASSROOM

Milton stands at a dry erase board where he instructs six Taiwanese grade school students.

MILTON
Kevin? Your sample sentence?

KEVIN, 10, cute, awkward, stands up.

KEVIN
Yesterday, I write in my diarrhea.

MILTON
Very close. "Diary."

Still standing, Kevin raises his hand.

MILTON
Yes, Kevin?

KEVIN
What diarrhea?

Milton struggles to explain. On the board he draws an extremely discomforted stick figure pooping all over the place. The students laugh out loud. That moment, MRS. WANG, a short, stout lady in a bad suit, barges in.

MILTON (V.O.)
Enter Mrs. Angel Wang.

MRS. WANG
Milton! You late again!

MILTON
Sorry, Mrs. Wang.

MRS. WANG
What that?!

Milton moves out of the way of his drawing. Mrs. Wang shouts in horror. The kids laugh even louder.

INT. DINER - AFTERNOON

Milton meets with Katherine.

MILTON (V.O.)
Because of my less-than-stellar debut, Katherine started dictating every little aspect of my future work.

KATHERINE
You have to change your new book's title. It's not strong enough.

MILTON
People seemed to like my last three.

KATHERINE
Not enough to buy them.

Ouch. Milton ignores the zing.

MILTON
What do you wanna change my new one to?

KATHERINE
Something spicy. Feverish Farce. Smoldering Sun. Burning Desert!

Milton balks at the suggestion.

MILTON
Why "Desert"??

KATHERINE
It'll make people think of heat, the tropics. They'll think they're on vacation!

MILTON
But I love Sandbox Ruminations.

KATHERINE

Milton, you're the writer. I'm the seller. You do your job. I'll do mine.

MILTON (V.O.)

She'd published excerpts of Desert in lit mags because I couldn't come up with an ending. She was always up my ass about that.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

Well, where's my ending?!

INT. KATHERINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Milton blinks back to reality.

KATHERINE

And who the hell is she?!

CARA

Call me Cara.

Katherine's eyes dart between them. She gives Cara a condescending grin.

KATHERINE

I give it a week.

MILTON

Listen, Katherine, about Desert. I need another... month.

KATHERINE

You've got two weeks.

MILTON

I can't do it in two weeks!

KATHERINE

You'd better, or not only will I sue you back to the Bronze Age, but I'll blackball you so hard you'll think I boiled your nuts in oil.

CARA

Actually, that wouldn't turn them black.

Not at all appreciative of being corrected, Katherine yells at both of them.

KATHERINE
 You've got two weeks!! Or you'll
 never publish again!!

INT. MOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Cara and Milton sit on the floor. Munch on room service,
 picnic style.

CARA
Desert's a Huck Finn, picaresque
 narrative with a sibling rivalry
 spine, right?

MILTON
 ...Right.

CARA
 Then all you need to finish the
 story is make up with your brother.

MILTON
 How did you know I have a brother?

CARA
 I didn't. Until now. Makes sense.
Desert's an autobiography.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Ah hell. She was right. It was
 all about me.

CARA
 What's his name?

Milton stares off into space. His tone aches with a distant
 contempt, as if the name itself inflicted his deepest wound.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Enter... Sean.

EXT. THE BEACH - MORNING

Twenty five years ago. Milton and Sean build sand castles.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Sean was born one year, three
 months, and two days after me. We
 were really close as kids. Did
 everything together.

Milton's castle decent...

MILTON (V.O.)
Everyone could see we were
talented. Especially Sean.

...but Sean's is a glorious cathedral.

MILTON (V.O.)
We used to take these great trips
to the beach...

EXT. THE BEACH - AFTERNOON

The family races go-carts against the backdrop of Cannon Beach's Haystack Rock. Sean and Mom against Milton and Dad. Both parents' faces are conveniently obscured.

EXT. THE MOUNTAINS - AFTERNOON

The family goes sledding on Mt. Hood.

MILTON (V.O.)
...and the mountains.

Sean zips down the snowy hill. Milton shoves his sled after him.

MILTON (V.O.)
The shit childhood joy is made of.

He hits a root. Flips over into the snow.

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Twenty one years ago. The family enjoys an evening stroll.

MILTON (V.O.)
The summer of my twelfth year was
the best one yet.

He and Sean discover a home-made sign on a telephone pole announcing a go-cart race.

MILTON (V.O.)
Sponsored by local businesses, the
prize was a hundred bucks.

Milton and Sean smile at each other.

MILTON (V.O.)
We didn't know dick about building
go-carts, but we entered anyway.

INT. GARAGE - DAY/NIGHT

Over countless days and nights, the brothers design their cart together, build its engine together, and paint it together.

MILTON (V.O.)
We labored tirelessly for weeks.
Practically lived in the garage.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

The boys present their shrouded masterpiece to their eager parents. Milton removes the sheet. Underneath sits an oddly beautiful, aerodynamic, Frank Gehry-meets-Frank Lloyd Wright sculpture on wheels. The brothers bow. Their parents clap.

MILTON (V.O.)
It was beyond a cart. It was a
work of art.

EXT. PARK - AFTERNOON

The day of the race. The race track is a hilly, green, sectioned-off area that runs the length of the park.

A crowd of families gather to watch. A dozen kids move their vehicles to the start line. The machines range from clunky piles of junk, to imitation hot-rods.

With Mom and Dad in tow, the brothers, in old-fashioned driving goggles, wheel theirs up. Next to the rest, it sticks out like a bludgeoned thumb.

MILTON (V.O.)
Art is so rarely understood.

At first, the other kids stare at it. Then a couple start to laugh. Soon, the whole crowd mocks them. But the brothers keep their chins up. Mom and Dad pat them encouragingly on the back.

MILTON (V.O.)
We didn't care. We weren't there
to grace the cover of Jr. Auto
Trend.

Some guy blows a whistle. The kids jump into their carts. Stepping back, Mom and Dad clap for their boys. Another whistle. The kids start their engines.

The brothers turn to each other. Their expressions are deadly serious. They share a nod. A third whistle. They all speed off --

Except Milton and Sean.

MILTON (V.O.)
Then panic struck.

They open the hood.

INT. GO-CART

They quickly inspect the engine. Sean holds up a finger.

MILTON (V.O.)
But not for long.

Sean points to a part. Milton kicks it. The engine roars to life.

EXT. PARK

The cart nearly tosses them out. They rocket across the park. It doesn't take long before they catch up to the other kids.

MILTON (V.O.)
Hard to believe it, but...

As they rip past the competition, they wave good bye. Distracted, Milton runs over a tree root. It flings them into a whirl.

Milton fights to regain control. Sean fights to stay on. The second Milton tames their mechanical beast, they peel past the finish line. Mom and Dad go crazy.

EXT. STORE FRONT - EVENING

The owner hands the brothers an over-sized check, and a huge trophy. They each hold a side of it. Thrust it triumphantly in the air.

MILTON (V.O.)
It was the greatest feeling in the world.

Mom's hands snap a picture.

EXT. THE MEDLEY HOME - AFTERNOON

Milton and some girls shake it up at a block party on his front lawn.

MILTON (V.O.)
I blew my coin on women and wine.

INT. BANK - DAY

Studying stock, bond, and t-bill brochures, Sean instructs a teller where to put his cash.

MILTON (V.O.)
Sean invested his.

EXT. THE HILLSIDE SCHOOL - MORNING

Mom's car enters the campus, passing a proud, bronze plaque that reads: "The Hillside School - Est. 1882."

MILTON (V.O.)
That fall, I entered the best private, K-12 school in Oregon.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Sitting across from a balding TEACHER, Milton fidgets nervously.

MILTON (V.O.)
After I took the entrance exam, they told me:

TEACHER
You won't be going to Harvard, but you're welcome at Hillside.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MORNING

Milton sits with other students. The same Teacher addresses them.

TEACHER
You will all learn great things, make great friends, and go to the college of your choice.

MILTON (V.O.)
That was their big thing. College of our choice.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

About sixteen years ago, WALLY SOBEL, 30s, a laid-back, hippie teacher heads an English class. Milton, now 17, clad in long hair, flannel, and holed jeans, sits in front, wide-eyed with excitement.

MILTON (V.O.)

English was the only subject I ever excelled in. Wally Sobel was my favorite teacher. I had him two years in a row.

Milton speaks up.

MILTON

I think that the woman is the protagonist, not the narrator.

MILTON (V.O.)

We were reading the latest Nobel-winning Mahesh Raj Mohan novel.

WALLY

That's an excellent point, Milton. In fact, if we apply Milton's observation to the structure of the entire work, we see that...

Milton grins proudly.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Milton studies for his SATs.

MILTON (V.O.)

I busted my ass day and night for the SATs, but all I got was:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dad's hands hold an open letter.

DAD

A perfectly respectable score.

The corner of Milton's mouth forces itself into a smirk.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Students meet with college reps. Milton's at a table with some Harvard emissaries. They look over his materials, then force their lips into diplomatic smiles.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Harvard wasn't exactly impressed
 with my "perfectly respectable
 score"...

He turns his attention to a nearby table. Its unoccupied
 representatives get all excited that he's noticed them.

MILTON (V.O.)
 ...so I took it, my grades, and my
 extra-curriculars, and strutted off
 to a perfectly respectable small
 town college.

He shakes hands with the Harvard people, then heads over to
 the other table.

EXT. THE HILLSIDE PARKING LOT - MORNING

Milton and Sean jump out of Mom's car.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Sean entered Hillside the year
 after me.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MORNING

About fifteen years ago. Speaking with overly-dramatic,
 oratorical gusto, SEAN, now 18, delivers a speech to the
 entire school. He wears a pin-stripe suit, huge, dorky
 glasses, and unintentionally messy hair.

MILTON (V.O.)
 By the time he was a senior, he was
 school president.

SEAN
 "And now abideth faith, hope,
 charity, these three; but the
 greatest of these... is charity!!"

He receives a standing ovation.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Working on his own article, Sean passes rapid-fire judgement
 on a flurry of his fellow students' pieces.

MILTON (V.O.)
 And the editor-in-chief of the
 Hillside Chronicle.

SEAN
 Run-on sentence! Passive voice!
 Am I the only one here who speaks
 proper English?!

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Sean's at a podium, with fellow students at tables to either side. He pounds his fist on the podium.

MILTON (V.O.)
 And captain of the debate team.

SEAN
 And that's why, you sir, are wrong!

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Some other time, Sean's center stage in the darkened theater. Dressed in a multi-colored unitard. His Shatnerian delivery would make Olivier weep.

MILTON (V.O.)
 And the lead in the winter and
 spring plays.

SEAN
 Ill met by moonlight, proud
 Titania.

EXT. THE HILLSIDE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Munching on an open mouthful of lunch, Sean lazily paints a landscape of the campus. A group of girls passes by. Pauses to admire his work. One gets a closer look. He slips her hand into his. Kisses it. She politely recoils.

MILTON (V.O.)
 He didn't study for his SATs at
all, but still:

INT. MILTON'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Milton gets the proud news over the phone.

MOM
 If it weren't for that one point he
 missed, he'd have a perfect score!
 He has such great test-karma.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sean shows off a fancy certificate. Milton attempts to finish his thought in one breath.

MILTON (V.O.)
He became a National Merit
Scholar...

INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Posing for a photo-op, Sean shakes hands with a senator.

MILTON (V.O.)
...was flown to DC for a young
leadership conference, where he met
our senators...

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

At an all-school awards ceremony, Sean receives another few fancy certificates.

MILTON (V.O.)
...won five separate young
journalist's publishing awards...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

For several weeks, Sean answers the door to find various COLLEGE REPS. Offering everything from free pens to flight coupons, they all wear name tags boasting colleges you've never heard of. Bumfuck U. East Wichita State.

MILTON (V.O.)
...was courted and wooed by every
single college and university this
side of the moon...

One set are the same people Milton went with. Before they even get a chance to shake hands, Sean slams the door in their faces.

In better suits, and offering smaller gift bags, the next few are from better-known schools. Brown. Duke. Reed. Sean's more polite with them, but still shakes his head.

Then the big boys. Columbia. Princeton. Stanford. Yale. Sean listens to their pitches, but right in the middle of Yale's, the same people who passed on Milton show up. No gift bag. No flight coupons. Just a note.

Sean opens it. One calligraphic word: Veritas. The Yale people disappear from Sean's attention span.

Milton takes a breath.

MILTON (V.O.)
...and guess where he went?

Sean gently folds the note. His eyes raise to meet the Harvard emissaries' gaze. A maniacal grin spreads across his face.

EXT. HARVARD UNIVERSITY - MORNING

Sean struts past the famous gates, and a sign that reads: "Hahvahd."

MILTON (V.O.)
He had his amazing achievements,
but I had my exquisite words.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

About fifteen years ago. Milton gets his diploma.

MILTON (V.O.)
The night of my Hillside graduation
was the last time I saw him.

He scans the audience.

MILTON
The next morning, he left on the
first of many trips to Asia.

He finds Sean. Not clapping.

MILTON (V.O.)
China, Cambodia, Thailand, India,
and Tibet. Even met the Dalai
Lama. Yes, that Dalai Lama.

INT. MILTON'S PAD - EVENING

Milton and Cara share dinner. She stops eating.

CARA
What about his graduation?

MILTON
I was in the middle of finals.
Couldn't get away.

He shrugs.

MILTON

He didn't come to my college graduation. I didn't go to his.

CARA

You never saw each other over vacations?

MILTON

Every time I was home, he was off on some trip.

CARA

If you were so close, why haven't you seen him in fifteen years?!

Milton ponders a moment, then lights up.

MILTON

That's it! I don't know how that happened! And if I'm ever gonna finish Desert, I've gotta find out!

Cara thinks on it. Spies a piece of his mail. From Hillside. She inspects it.

CARA

Fifteenth year reunion?

MILTON

This Sunday.

CARA

You gonna go?

Instead of answering, Milton takes the letter. Reads the school name as if it were the center of all of life's questions.

MILTON

Hillside.

HILLSIDE YEARBOOK

About twenty one years ago. Milton remembers a picture of his seventh grade class of 40 students. A 12-year-old Milton, brunette AM, redhead BREE, and an already smooth, confident GRAHAM are together, all looking rather bored.

MILTON (V.O.)
 I donated six years of my life to that school. I'm the dork on the left. The ones nearby are my best friends. Enter Amber and Amber.

EXT. MOONSTRUCK CAFE - AFTERNOON

A hip, northwest Portland hangout. A late 20s Milton sits outside with Am and Bree.

MILTON (V.O.)
 First week of school, we realized we'd have to keep them straight, so I designated the one on the left as Am, and the one on the right, Bree.

AM
 I can't believe you brought him home to be our third!

BREE
 He was a really sweet guy.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Somehow, the names just stuck.

AM
 But he was such a jackass.

She gives Milton a coy grin.

AM
 No offense, babe.

MILTON
 Oh, you're high-larious. You gotta take that shit on the road.

BREE
 He might've been a jackass, but he was hung like a mule.

MILTON (V.O.)
 They're beautiful, sassy. The kind of girls you wish you'd nailed, but never did, because they'd rather be friends than swing your way.

INT. GRAHAM'S PAD - EVENING

A studio decorated with culinary wares. A late 20s Milton prepares a salad with Graham.

MILTON

Enter Graham.

GRAHAM

Man, she was so hot, and so drunk!

MILTON (V.O.)

Graham is that friend. The Magellan of female conquest. He was at this one party...

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

An alcohol-soaked 20-something party. Dressed in a waiter's tux, Graham stands behind a line of food trays. A really fine FEMME moves to his spot. She appears to be alone. He scoops her up a pile of ravioli.

GRAHAM

I saw you across the room, and told myself, "Graham, you have got to talk to that gorgeous woman."

The Femme's heard it all before. Ignores his ravioli offering. Moves to the next spot.

FEMME

I'm with someone.

GRAHAM

Great! I'll talk to him too.

FEMME

Her.

The second that she moves out-of-range, Graham flashes her a winning smile.

GRAHAM

Even better.

The Femme stops dead in her tracks.

MILTON (V.O.)

Don't ask me how...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buck-naked in bed, Graham's got his arms around the fast asleep Femme, and her girlfriend.

MILTON (V.O.)

...but he nailed them both.

INT. GRAHAM'S PAD - EVENING

Graham points his index fingers at Milton.

GRAHAM

Though not nearly as drunk as that chick Your Night.

MILTON (V.O.)

The incident he's alluding to happened almost two decades ago. He always brings it up.

INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

About seventeen years ago. A middle-class suburban home. An alcohol-soaked, teen-something shindig rages into the night. Rubbing skin to a hot, Latin beat with a circle of hot, Latin chicas, Graham swigs off a bottle of vodka.

MILTON (V.O.)

My sixteenth birthday. I brought the booze. Graham brought the babes. We both whipped up the cheese dip.

An absolutely ripped Milton sucks on a beer. So does a busty, blisteringly hot blonde next to him.

Noticing this, Graham leaves his swingin' circle o' sweet. Maneuvers Milton and the blonde into the bathroom, then slams the door. Chuckles proudly to himself.

INT. MILTON'S PAD - EVENING

Milton and Cara are at the sink. She washes. He rinses. She's faster, so when a big pot comes, they rinse it together. Their hands stay completely separate...

CARA

Was that your first time?

...until --

MILTON

You missed a spot.

CARA

Did I?

Milton grabs the soap. Stands behind her. Reaches over. Squirts a little into his hands.

Cara rubs her ass into his crotch. Milton does his best to ignore it. Lathers up his hands. Takes the sponge. Rubs down the contested spot.

CARA

You didn't quite get it.

She places her hands over his. They rub at the spot together. She moves her head to face his neck. Gently breathes on it. Their scrubbing slows as their attention shifts from the chore to each other.

Milton faces her. Gives her a deep, sultry kiss. Trying to keep his soapy hands off her, he clumsily holds her with his arms and elbows. She smiles.

CARA

This is nice.

MILTON

Sean and I used to do this all the time.

CARA

Kiss??

With that, their chemistry croaks. Milton steps away from her. Goes back to scrubbing the pot.

MILTON

The dishes! I'd help cook. He'd clear the table, then we'd wash them together.

He grins nostalgically.

MILTON

We usually made more of a mess than we cleaned up. Anyway...

HILLSIDE YEARBOOK

About twenty one years ago. Milton focuses down to the lower right of him and his friends, to a very cute SUSAN CARLTON.

MILTON

Susan Carlton was the only girl I ever really liked.

INT. THE MEDLEY HOME - AFTERNOON

About seventeen years ago, Milton and friends, around 16, watch a horror movie together.

MILTON (V.O.)
 For some reason, I could never
 manage to ask her out... except to
 hang out with us.

Sean wanders in. Stares longingly at Susan.

MILTON (V.O.)
 I sometimes suspected that Sean had
 a thing for her, especially since
 they shared AP Calculus, but he
 never did anything about it.

HILLSIDE YEARBOOK

Fifteen years ago. Senior picture. Everyone's in the same
 place. Milton, Am, Bree, and Graham wear flannels and holed
 jeans. A smokin' hot Susan's gothed-out in all black.
 Milton focuses on Susan.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Wondering if I ever made a move?

EXT. THE HILLSIDE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Milton charms Susan. She laughs at something he says.

MILTON (V.O.)
 The week before prom, I finally
 did.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Returning home from school, Milton steps inside. The very
 next moment, Sean leaps out from behind the front door.
 Clutches Milton by the hair. Throws him to the floor. Slams
 Milton's face into the carpet. Gets in a couple blows --

Milton elbows him. Returns the attack. Rolling across the
 floor, they beat the piss out of each other --

Their parents show up. The brothers freeze.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The brothers, bruised and scratched from fighting, glare
 furiously at each other, while their parents grill them.

MILTON (V.O.)
 After some "intense" interrogation,
 Sean said he'd caught me reading
 his journal. Total bs, but they
 sent us both to our room anyway.

EXT. THE HILLSIDE MOUNDS - NIGHT

A hilly portion of campus. Prom festivities frolic into the night. Milton and Susan, respectively in a cheap tux and dress, work it with their head-banging schoolmates.

Behind them, Am and Bree, respectively in a very nice tux and dress, make out. Off to the side, Graham and a date, both in leather, dance the lambada.

MILTON (V.O.)

We both went, but Sean probably should've stayed at home.

Dressed in elegant attire, Sean sits alone. Nurses a bottle of Martinelli's. His eyes fixed on his brother. And Susan. The song ends. Susan whispers something to Milton. He nods. They steal away.

INT. MILTON'S PAD - NIGHT

Seated at his couch, Milton flips lazily through a notebook labeled, "Burning Desert." Cara's curled up next to him. Casually browses his notes.

CARA

Where's Sean living now?

MILTON

When he's not travelling the world?
Usually at our house in Portland.

CARA

Have you ever tried to reach him?

MILTON

Dozens of times. He's never returned any of my e-mails, calls, letters, postcards, or even my pony expressed carrier pigeons.

CARA

It's so simple! When you fly back for your reunion, make up with him.

Inspiration hits Milton. He jumps up.

MILTON

Why don't you join me?!

CARA

Join you??

MILTON
My reunion!

CARA
I dunno, Milton.

MILTON
It'll be great! I'll show you the
Chinese Gardens. Make up with
Sean. You can help me finish
Desert. We'll go to my reunion.

CARA
You'd do all that? With someone
you hardly know?

MILTON
Cara, you found the root of Desert
in a New York minute. With your
help, not only will I finish it,
but it'll be my greatest work ever!

Cara eyes him, uncertain.

MILTON (V.O.)
Hard to believe it, but...

INT. PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MORNING

Milton and Cara exit the security area.

MILTON (V.O.)
We got in to PDX at eight Thursday
morning. And there they were.

MOM and DAD, hippies in their 50s, greet him with open arms.

MOM
It's so good to see you... two!

DAD
How was the flight?

MILTON (V.O.)
Enter my mom and dad.

HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK

Thirty five odd years ago. Milton remembers a yellowed page from a bygone era. He focuses on Mom's portrait, in the top row. The label reads, "Most likely to raise two great kids, and always side with her youngest."

Then to Dad's, at the bottom. It reads, "Most likely to provide for his family, but stay the hell out of the way."

MILTON (V.O.)

They were one of those fairy-tale couples. Both from working-class families. High school sweethearts. Married the day after graduation.

EXT. THE MEDLEY HOME - AFTERNOON

Mom and Dad move a brand new couch into a comfortable one-storey, suburban house.

MILTON (V.O.)

With both families' help, they got a place in northeast.

EXT. STREET CORNER - EVENING

It features a shabby, local bar. Dad runs inside.

INT. BAR

Dad bursts in. Offers everyone a round.

MILTON (V.O.)

The day they found out I was only eight and a half months away, he celebrated at his local watering hole.

Dad gets into a prolonged card game with friends.

MILTON (V.O.)

After several rounds of beer and poker, he lost everything.

The owner of the bar slaps a firm hand on Dad's shoulder.

INT. BAR KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dad scrubs dishes.

MILTON (V.O.)

He started working it off, but it was soon clear that it'd take him years to pay it back.

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE - MORNING

Milton's very unhappy great-grandpa hands his Dad a check. Dad gives him a feeble, nervous grin.

MILTON (V.O.)
So mom's grandfather bailed them
out...

INT. BARTENDING SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Dad clumsily mixes drinks.

MILTON (V.O.)
...and put him through six months
of bartending school.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Dad sweeps the floor. The owner finds him.

MILTON (V.O.)
A few years later, the owner
decided to retire, passing him the
reigns. Shortly thereafter, he
opened:

EXT. STREET CORNER - AFTERNOON

Through the frame of his cupped hands, Dad beams at his view
of workers placing a big, new sign on the bar. It reads,
"Dad's."

INT. DAD'S - NIGHT

The entire neighborhood lives it up. Mom, young Milton, and
Sean are all there.

MILTON (V.O.)
Local brew only. And he never let
you forget that he made:

Dad brags to a patron.

DAD
The best goddamn chili dogs this
side of the Willamette!

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE - MORNING

Dad and Mom have another meeting with her grandfather. Dad
proudly hands him a check. Great-grandpa eyes Dad, then the
check, then Dad again.

MILTON (V.O.)
He paid the old man back, and a week later, the poor guy met his maker. Mom always used to say he died of terminal bewilderment.

INT. PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MORNING

Milton introduces Cara.

MILTON
Mom, dad, this is my... This is Cara.

MOM
Pleased to meet you.

DAD
You're even more beautiful than Milton said.

MOM
Not that Milty said that much.

Awkward pause. Cara smiles.

CARA
Why thank you.

MILTON
Where's Sean?

MOM
Last time he bothered to tell us anything, he said he was going to India.

MILTON
Any idea when he's coming back?

DAD
He left a bunch of his stuff here, so, soon, we hope.

MILTON
Mom, doesn't it piss you off that Sean never considers you?

DAD
Never did before, why would it now?

MOM
That's just how Sean does his life.

EXT. THE MEDLEY HOME

They pull up to the house. The outside looks the same as it has in Milton's memories. Milton, Dad, and Cara unload the back of the car. Mom opens the front door. Carrying a suitcase, Milton follows her inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Mom stands clear as Milton makes his way in.

MOM

I feng shui'd the living room again to refocus the Zen center. Other than that, nothing's changed.

She disappears into the kitchen. A picture of a young Sean, and his sand cathedral, is the first thing Milton sees. His hand is his only body part that made it into frame.

MILTON

Nope, nothing's changed.

He sets his suitcase on the floor. Goes over to the piano. Stares at the picture of him and Sean with their trophy. Cara and Dad carry more things in. Milton crosses over to help them. Dad pats Milton's back.

DAD

I better get to work. Good to have you home, boy.

MILTON

Thanks, dad.

Dad kisses Mom good bye, then leaves. Milton grabs some of his and Cara's stuff.

CARA

Need help?

MILTON

No, it's cool. Relax. It'll only take a second.

He heads down to the basement. Cara spots the picture of him and Sean. Goes over. Picks it up. Smiles fondly at it.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM

Milton pushes the door open. Gazes at the darkness. Turns on the lights.

Finds himself surrounded by mementos of his and Sean's years together. Their sleds, beach toys, dusty go-cart, and trophy.

MILTON (V.O.)

A whole childhood laid out before me. I was a paleontologist examining my own pre-history.

He sets down his and Cara's luggage. Wipes some dust off the cart. Cara comes down the steps. Quietly slips an arm around his waist. Lovingly caresses his cart.

CARA

There she is.

Mom calls from upstairs.

MOM

Milty? I have to get to the shelter!

MILTON

We'll go with you! I'm dying to see everyone again!

INT. YOUTH SHELTER

Milton and Cara follow Mom in. As Mom checks her mail, she greets the staff, who all turn their attention to Milton. Before he gets a chance to open his mouth, they assault him with praise.

RECEPTIONIST

Look at you! You went and got all handsome on us!

Milton smiles bashfully. A CASE WORKER shakes Milton's hand.

CASE WORKER

I kept all those award-winning editorials you wrote.

An ASSISTANT smiles.

ASSISTANT

I was so proud when you became a National Merit Scholar!

The Receptionist gets a little ebullient.

RECEPTIONIST

We just adore our handsome Harvard man!!

Milton's smile vacates.

MILTON
No. That's Sean.

It takes them all a moment to figure out their little faux pas. They politely withdraw. Get back to work.

EXT. MOONSTRUCK CAFE - AFTERNOON

Milton, Cara, Am, Bree, and Graham share chocolate and coffee. Cara casually glances at a handsome hardback entitled, "New Angles on Cubism: 1001 reasons why Picasso sucked by Mahesh Raj Mohan." Am and Bree flirt with Cara.

AM
And we host this girls' only poker night every month. If you ever get bored with our babe, feel free to drop on by.

Cara flirts right back.

CARA
I might have to take you up on that.

Milton feigns desperation.

MILTON
How can I possibly compete?

Graham gives them all a dismissive wave.

GRAHAM
No amount of rough muff could ever replace a hard log o' wood.

Am groans.

AM
Graham, you are so full of shit!

BREE
How the hell would you know anyway?

GRAHAM
Like a missionary fresh outta seminary, I've been known to convert a few.

AM

Puh-lease. One night with a couple drunk lipsticks does not constitute conversion.

GRAHAM

You're just jealous 'cause you've never had it.

BREE

You're just insecure 'cause we've never wanted it.

She, Am, and Cara titter playfully. Milton coughs. They stare at him.

BREE

Alright, Poop Head, we know you didn't come back just to escort us to the reunion, so what's up?

Milton takes a determined breath.

MILTON

...I'm gonna make up with Sean.

Am, Bree, and Graham laugh out loud. Then they realize Milton's not kidding.

AM

Why?!

MILTON

So I can finish my latest novel.

GRAHAM

Can't you just make up the ending?

MILTON

If I wanna get any decent reviews, it has to be authentic.

BREE

What'll you do if he doesn't show?

A RASTA GIRL wearing blonde dreadlocks and pierced cheeks walks her dog past them.

MILTON

Turn that page when I get there.

The Rasta Girl stops. Turns around. Goes up to Milton.

RASTA GIRL

Excuse me. Sorry to interrupt.
Did you guys go to the Hillside
School?

Milton gestures to the Ambers and Graham.

MILTON

We did. Fifteen years ago.

The Rasta Girl points at him.

RASTA GIRL

I thought you looked familiar!
You're Sean Medley's brother!

MILTON

Milton.

The Rasta Girl laughs.

RASTA GIRL

Oh my God! He was totally like a
big brother to me. If it weren't
for him, I never would've passed
Geometry.

MILTON

That's great.

INT. MOONSTRUCK CAFE

Milton and Graham wait by the bathrooms. Am marches over to
them. Yanks Milton away from Graham.

AM

I want you to know we've decided.
You hurt Cara, we kill you.

MILTON

Am, you don't even know her --

Am holds her hand up in his face. Frighteningly serious.

AM

We - kill - you.

Cara emerges from the bathrooms. Takes Milton's arm.

CARA

Let's get a beer.

INT. DAD'S - EVENING

Milton and Cara are at the bar. Dad serves them beer and chili dogs.

DAD
Two Miltons on the house!

Cara slathers on ketchup and mustard. Takes a bite. Nods her approval. Eyes the menu.

CARA
I don't see a "Sean."

DAD
He never liked my dogs.

A tanked REGULAR sits next to them. Dad passes him a mug. The Regular slaps down some bills. Takes a gulp. Recognizes Milton.

REGULAR
Hey, kid! I been dyin' to know.
What's the Dalai Lama like?

MILTON
Never met him.

He takes a big, conversation-ending bite. The Regular either didn't hear, or doesn't care.

REGULAR
Dalai Lama's the fuckin' wisest guy
I know. I mean, the Pope? Pompous
prick! Mahatma Gandhi? Eat my
chutney! Dalai fuckin' Lama!

He finishes off his drink. Passes out.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

With Cara on top, she and Milton vigorously go at it. She's having an unbelievable time. He's busy staring upside down into the darkness at his and Sean's go-cart.

MILTON (V.O.)
Here I am, in the literal basement
of my childhood, and despite his
absence, I'm still dwarfed by
Sean's glory.

EXT. THE MEDLEY HOME

A figure steps up to the front door. Grabs the knob. Jerks it. Grumbles at its state of lockedness. Picks the lock.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM

Milton rambles on.

MILTON (V.O.)

Brothers, yet strangers. Nothing
in common now but this house.
Memories, like dust, settling on
the furniture, clogging the air.

EXT. THE MEDLEY HOME

The figure gets the lock. Barges in. Slams the door open.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM

The upstairs clamor shakes Milton out of his mind-wandering.

INT. KITCHEN

The figure pokes around in the fridge. Finds some beer. A roll of bread. He pops the beer open. Chugs. Coughs in disgust, but chugs some more. Tears off a chunk of bread. Chews with his mouth open.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM

Milton hears all the noise. He slowly sits up. Listens. This drives Cara wild. She clings desperately to him. Pounds him like a piston.

CARA

That's the spot! Don't move a
muscle!

INT. KITCHEN

The figure stops, mid-chew. Sniffs the air. Drains the rest of his beer. Arms himself with the bottle. Heads down to investigate.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM

Milton watches the ceiling. Cara digs her fingers into his shoulder blades.

MILTON

Cara...?

CARA
 Oh yeah! Milton! Say my name!
 That's so hot!

MILTON
 Cara, I think someone's in the
 house.

CARA
 I love role-playing! You be the
 burglar! I'll be your unwitting
 victim! Say my name, Milton!

Oblivious to her rapidly approaching climax, Milton stares at her.

MILTON
 No, Cara, someone's really in the
 house!

CARA
 I'm gonna come again!!

INT. HALLWAY

The figure sneaks down the stairs. Trembles with exhilarated anticipation.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM

Finally, as Milton hears the figure approach, Milton slams Cara down onto the bed, and throws the sheet over both of them.

CARA
 Yes!!

Milton gets off her. That moment, the figure bursts in. Leaps on Milton.

SEAN
 Goddamn trespassing perverts!!
 This is my mother's basement! Take
 your tryst elsewhere, or I shall
 call the police!

He and Milton scuffle. He whacks Milton over the head. Milton shouts. Cara grabs Sean. Twists his arms behind his back. Sean growls. Milton switches on the lights. They all scream.

MILTON
 Sean??!

SEAN

Milton??! What are you doing here?!

MILTON

Me?! I thought you were in India!

That moment, Mom and Dad pop in.

MOM

Milton? We heard a noise --

She screams at Milton and Cara's nakedness. Milton, Cara, Sean, and Dad scream at Mom's scream.

INT. KITCHEN

Now decently dressed, everyone recovers with the help of tea and coffee. Milton writes in his Desert notebook. Sean regales them with a story featuring drastically over-pronounced foreign words.

SEAN

So there I am, surrounded by coca plants, this Columbian cartel boss's rabid pit bull pointed at my pick and nuggets, ready for dinner.

MILTON (V.O.)

How I've missed these. Sean's self-aggrandizing anecdotes. They always follow the same formula.

MOM

What did you do?!

SEAN

I looked her dead in the eyes, and said, "And that's why, you ma'am, are wrong."

MILTON (V.O.)

Yammer on and on, picking only the most exquisite adjectives, then finish with a casual, personal plug.

DAD

What did she do?!

SEAN

Apologized, in English, untied me,
and signed a truce I'd negotiated
with her sworn enemies, ending more
than a decade of bloodshed.

MILTON (V.O.)

The shitty part was they were all
true.

MOM

You have such great travel-karma,
Sean.

SEAN

Honestly, mother, it was nothing
more than what any UN delegation
would have done.

DAD

It's so good to finally have you
boys back. Seems like only
yesterday you two built that
winning go-cart.

MOM

Sean, how long are you in town?

SEAN

Tomorrow, Saturday, and Sunday.

MOM

Well I have work tomorrow. Sean,
you're welcome to the living room.
We have a couple blankets --

She goes to the closet. Sean jumps up. Gets in her way.

SEAN

That's not necessary, mother. I
can take care of it myself.

MOM

Very well then. Good night, dear.

Dad stands.

DAD

You two all set?

MILTON

We're cool.

Mom hugs Sean. Dad pats Milton on the shoulder. Then Dad and Mom retire to their bedroom. Sean drags his bedding to the living room. Cara yawns.

CARA
Bed sounds like a fine idea.
Coming?

MILTON
I'll be down in a minute.

Cara shrugs. Heads to the basement alone.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Milton helps Sean spread blankets on the floor.

SEAN
Who's the girl?

MILTON
Cara's a friend.

SEAN
Whom you fuck.

MILTON
How I've missed your "poetry."

SEAN
Why did you bring her here?

MILTON
She's helping me finish my latest
work.

SEAN
Ah yes, your little books.

MILTON
Novels.

SEAN
My mistake.

MILTON
How was the flight?

SEAN
Long.

MILTON
What brought you back?

SEAN
Your reunion.

MILTON
Why are you going??

SEAN
If you'll excuse me, Milton.

He crawls under his blankets.

MILTON
You know, we should sit down. Have
a talk.

SEAN
About what?

MILTON
It's been fifteen years, Sean. A
lot's happened --

Annoyed, Sean sits up.

SEAN
Milton, I'm not your girlfriend.
If you want a blowjob, go talk to
her. I have to get some sleep.

MILTON
By all means.

He goes downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Mom and Dad have coffee. Sean fries up pancakes. Everyone
greet's each other.

SEAN
Ah, the dead have risen to break
their fast. What kind of pancakes
do you two want, mein Bruder?

CARA
I'd kill for some chocolate chip.

MILTON
Whatever's on the griddle.

Sean goes over, tosses pancakes onto Milton's and Cara's
plates, replaces the frying pan, and sits down. They're all
quiet. Then --

MILTON (V.O.)
I don't really know how it
happened. Maybe it was the
uncomfortable silence.

MILTON
We should go to the beach.

SEAN
I just sat down.

MILTON
Today. Spend the night. I'll rent
a car. Drive us out.

MILTON (V.O.)
It was the perfect plan. Sean and
I'd hang out, get all nostalgic,
and come home the best of friends.
Desert would finish itself.

CARA
I'd love to go. I've never seen
the northwest coast.

SEAN
It's wet.

MOM
All the time.

MILTON (V.O.)
The deeper I dug, the more I
enjoyed it.

MILTON
We should go to that old boutique
hotel. It'll be great. Just like
the trips we used to take when we
were kids.

DAD
That'll be a blast, Sean. Water in
your ears. Sand in your hair.

MOM
You two will have so much fun. The
negative ions will be so relaxing.

Sean ponders the issue, then decides.

SEAN
Why not? Let's go. Today.

MILTON
How about you guys?

MOM
Oh, I can't. Bad work-karma.
Major grant proposal due today. If
I'm not there, the shelter will
implode.

DAD
Same here, boy. We're testing some
new lagers and porters. Sorry.

Sean stands.

SEAN
I must bid ado, and anon. I shall
see you all later.

Before the others know it, he's out the door. Milton's
shocked at the mess he left.

MILTON
Mom, look at your kitchen!

He gets to work cleaning a couple of the dishes, caked in
layers of drying, concrete batter.

MILTON
Doesn't it piss you off that Sean
left this mess?

DAD
Never did before, why would it now?

MOM
That's just how Sean does his life.

INT. STATIONARY STORE

With the help of the lovely, female store CLERK, Sean browses
document covers. The Clerk picks up a faux leather one.

CLERK
How about this?

Sean handles it like it's a dead rat.

SEAN
I'm afraid that's a tad bourgeois.

He spots a plain, blue cover.

SEAN

This.

CLERK

But it's so... simple.

Sean places a gentle hand on her cheek.

SEAN

Beauty, my dear, is simplicity.

The Clerk removes his hand.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Cara sits on the couch. Reads Milton's notebook, along with a thick paperback with a Greek title, "Ἄ Οδυσσεια", while Milton cleans up Sean's mess.

MILTON

What do you think?

CARA

It'll definitely be your best. I'm really excited for you.

MILTON

Thanks. I have a feeling it's gonna hit its stride when we get to the beach.

CARA

I can't wait.

INT. DRESS SHOP - AFTERNOON

Surrounded by partially-sewn dresses and patterns, Sean stands stock still as a very cute SEAMSTRESS measures him.

SEAMSTRESS

As much as I appreciate your business, Mr. Medley, I know ten tailors off the top of my head who are all very good.

SEAN

Not a one of them would have your lovely eyes.

The Seamstress stops measuring for a moment.

SEAMSTRESS
I've got their numbers right over
here.

SEAN
Nonsense. I shan't hear of it.
Your hands are quite capable.

The Seamstress shrugs. Gets back to work measuring him.
Sean savors the sensation of her hand on his leg.

SEAMSTRESS
Alright, then what color of
cummerbund?

SEAN
White.

SEAMSTRESS
An excellent choice.

SEAN
Judge him not by his mores, but by
the strands on his back.

The Seamstress stops measuring. Faces him.

SEAMSTRESS
That's beautiful. Who wrote that?

SEAN
I did.

The Seamstress puts down her tape.

SEAMSTRESS
It should be ready by tomorrow
night. I'll have it delivered
first thing Sunday morning.

SEAN
Thank you ever so much, my dear.

He kisses her hand. She stares at it, then at him.

EXT. THE MEDLEY HOME

Milton and Cara pack up a car. Sean strolls up to the house.

MILTON
Where have you been?

SEAN

Out.

CARA

We're ready to go.

SEAN

Then let's go.

INT. THE CAR

They arrive in Cannon Beach. Cara naps in back while Milton searches the streets, and Sean stares out the window. They turn a corner. Pull up to a rickety, old building. Sean glares at Milton.

MILTON

Here we are! This is where we used
to rent the go-carts!

He jumps out. Sean grudgingly follows. Cara slowly climbs out.

EXT. BUILDING

Milton tries to admire it.

CARA

I think it's closed.

Milton inspects the sad, little building. It looks deserted. He rings the doorbell. No chime. He knocks. No answer. Sean gets back in the car. Waits impatiently. Milton marches over to him.

MILTON

Alright, so let's go to the beach.

He tries the door. Sean holds it closed.

SEAN

I'd rather go to the hotel.

MILTON

Stay here if you want.

He and Cara head down the road. Sean unbuckles. Groans.

EXT. THE BEACH

Their shoes already off, Milton and Cara run to the surf. Milton points to a huge boulder sticking out of the water. Sean steps onto the beach.

MILTON
That's Haystack Rock! At low tide,
it's shallow enough to swim to!
From the top, you can see the whole
town!

Cara grins wickedly.

CARA
Tide looks low to me!

SEAN
Milton!

Milton spins around. Sean points to the sky. Milton holds out a hand. Smiles at the drops hitting it. Then it really starts to pour. Milton dances in it.

MILTON
It's perfect Oregon weather!

SEAN
Your so-called "perfect Oregon
weather" shall drench us all!
Let's go to the hotel!

Milton turns to Cara. Even her face is souring.

MILTON
We can still swim to the rock.

CARA
We didn't bring towels.

She hikes back up to Sean. Milton can't face them. He drops to the ground. Frantically sculpts the wet sand into a castle foundation.

MILTON
We can still make a sand castle!
Just like when we were kids!

By the looks of it, he's practiced this particular craft for years. In a couple moments, he's already onto the bottom wall of the keep.

MILTON
Look, it's practically building
itself! Sean, you can show Cara
your brilliant sand architecture!

Sean ignores Milton. Keeps moving. Milton now has the inner keep nearly finished. He builds up the outer wall.

MILTON

It'll be fun! Sand castles...
Beach.... Ocean... Childhood...

A little wave washes past him, over his fledgling granular fortress. The walls collapse. Only the foundation remains. Milton is undeterred. He rebuilds the castle faster and stronger than before. Cara stops. Faces Milton.

CARA

Milton? We really should go.

Milton ignores her. Finishes the walls. Piles lumps of sand onto the inner keep for the central tower --

Whoosh! A second, larger wave drenches Milton and his castle. When the wave recedes, Milton is covered in seaweed. His castle's central tower still stands, but the rest has again been reduced to foundations.

Milton carefully lays the seaweed down over the foundations. Alternately layers seaweed and sand on top of each other. With the stripes of seaweed, the castle resembles the medieval Moorish palaces of Spain.

CARA

Milton!

She points behind Milton. He ignores her. As he finishes the third version of his central tower, a shadow falls over him and his castle. He spins around.

Boom! A huge wave and branch of driftwood knock Milton onto his castle. When the wave recedes, only the top portion of his tower still stands. Milton spits out some sand. Throws the driftwood away. The tower top flops onto his face.

Defeated, Milton sits up. Wipes the sand away. Stands. Trudges up to Cara. Doesn't take her hand. She ignores the rebuff. Holds his arm. Whispers to him.

CARA

The best times in life are often
the brief ones.

And, as the three head back, Milton's demolished sand castle washes quietly, sadly away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

A pleasant, if unremarkable property, it boasts a living area, kitchenette, separate bedroom, and a very nice view.

Sean slips past Milton and Cara, into the bedroom, and claims one of the beds. He calls from the bedroom.

SEAN

You two think maybe tonight you can keep the fornication to a minimum?

MILTON

I'm gonna get dinner.

CARA

I'm going with you.

SEAN

And the streets rang with jubilee.

INT. MINI-MART

Milton scours the tiny establishment for dinner ingredients.

MILTON

Why is it every single time, with every single thing, he has to be so goddamn difficult? No, scratch that. Impossible!

CARA

Can I bite your lip?

She kisses him, and, as she pulls away, nibbles his lower lip.

MILTON

Sorry. It's just... the second I'm around him --

CARA

You're not around him now.

Milton sighs. Grabs a package of angel hair. Tosses it into the basket.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The three enjoy din din. Sean noisily slurps up the pasta, then chomps it down with his usual open mouth. Cara's on the edge of her seat. Writing in his notebook, Milton's politely tolerant of Sean's flirting with Cara.

SEAN

I'm in this gondola, in the middle of the Canale Grande, about to slip between two vaporette, when a tourist boat bumps into me.

MILTON (V.O.)
I couldn't believe it.

SEAN
This thrusts me even faster between
the two vessels, which will clearly
crush my tiny craft under their
rapidly approaching weight.

MILTON (V.O.)
She was actually into his story.

CARA
What did you do?!

SEAN
I leapt onto the behemoths' guard
rails, precariously straddling
between them like a tight-rope
acrobat.

MILTON (V.O.)
She was completely caught in his
verbose, overwrought web.

CARA
What did they do?

SEAN
Slammed together, crushing my
craft, allowing me to embark. I
thanked them, in Italian, and they
returned me to my hostel, gratis.

CARA
That's amazing. You're lucky you
survived.

SEAN
Luck is for the weak. If I hadn't
studied with that Parisian ballet
professeur, I never would have
survived.

CARA
Still amazing.

SEAN
At Harvard, I once built an exact
1/8th scale, ice replica of
Venice's Campanile clock tower for
Carnevale.

CARA
That's so cool!

SEAN
In the Spring, as it melted, it
looked as if it were sinking into
the very depths of Hades itself.

MILTON (V.O.)
Quick! Say something, or they'll
think you're a jackass!

MILTON
...I once built one of those
cardboard bird houses.

Silence.

CARA
Cool.

SEAN
Ah yes. I remember that. It never
quite enjoyed any avian
inhabitants, though, did it?

Milton's about to retort, then he decides against it. Takes another bite of dinner. Turns his full attention to his notebook. Sean goes back to impressing Cara. She goes back to hanging on his every word.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Milton and Cara are in bed, her trying for sleep, him staring at the ceiling. Sean's not there.

MILTON
I see you and Sean are hitting it
off.

CARA
You gotta admit, he has a very
fascinating mind.

MILTON
Very fascinating.

He climbs out of bed.

CARA
Where you going?

MILTON

For a walk.

He heads to the kitchenette, where he starts making himself some tea. Tap, tap, tap. He hears it, but can't tell where it's coming from. He scans the room. Tap, tap, tap. It grows louder as he nears the front door. He opens it.

EXT. HOTEL ROOM

Milton finds Sean, sitting on the front steps, hammering away at a typewriter. Sean's blue document cover waits nearby.

MILTON

What are you doing?

SEAN

Finishing my book.

MILTON

Your what??!

SEAN

My book.

MILTON

I don't understand.

SEAN

Which half of my previous sentence would you like me to explain?

MILTON

What's it about?!

SEAN

My travels. My thoughts. I kept a journal. I based it off that.

MILTON

So it's about you.

SEAN

The most fitting protagonist I could conceive.

MILTON

It's not that easy, Sean. You need a publisher --

SEAN

I have one lined up.

MILTON

Who??

SEAN

It doesn't matter.

MILTON

...Can I read it?

SEAN

No.

MILTON

Why not??

SEAN

Because.

MILTON

That's not a reason!

Sean faces him.

SEAN

Of course it is. It's just not a logical one.

He turns back to his typewriter.

SEAN

Now, Milton, if you will excuse me, I have to finish this.

MILTON

By all means.

INT. THE CAR

Milton tosses Sean's typewriter, manuscript, and blue cover into the back seat. Sean dives in after it.

SEAN

Milton! What are you doing?!

Milton slams the door behind Sean. Runs into the hotel. After a moment, he carries a half-asleep, half-dressed Cara back outside. Gingerly sets her in the passenger seat. Closes her door.

CARA

What's going on?

Milton runs back to the hotel. Carries out their luggage. Throws it in the trunk. Jumps into the driver's side. Slams his door. Drives off like a maniac.

EXT. THE MEDLEY HOME - EVENING

They pull up. Milton jumps out. Opens Cara's door. Helps her out. Leads her inside.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM

Once they're inside, Milton closes the door behind them.

MILTON
Sean's writing a novel!

CARA
What's it about?

MILTON
Him!!

CARA
Like yours.

MILTON
Mine's completely different!!

INT. KITCHEN

Sean comes in to find Milton, Cara, and Dad chatting.

DAD
So, if you boys haven't already got plans, your mother's hosting a fundraiser tonight. I'd be great if you could help her out.

Milton and Sean glare at each other.

INT. BANQUET HALL

Now in suits, the brothers separately greet incoming GUESTS. The first is the youth shelter's Receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST
Look at that fine, young man!

Milton grins appreciatively until he notices her cross over, past him, to Sean. The Receptionist and Sean greet each other. More guests arrive. Shower Sean with attention.

MILTON (V.O.)

It couldn't get any worse. Sure, I had to stand next to Emperor Ego, but even that would end. Then, in that darkest of hours, it happened.

KATHERINE

Sean, darling, is it ready?

MILTON (V.O.)

Oh yes, that.

Sure enough, he spots his editor at the front door.

SEAN

Printed and bound. All it lacks is a final orthographic pass.

He pulls his manuscript out of his jacket. Hands it to her. Katherine flips through it.

MILTON

What are you doing here?!

Katherine casually glances at him.

KATHERINE

Meeting my latest best-selling author.

She hands Sean his manuscript.

KATHERINE

Very nice. Get it to me as soon as you're done.

SEAN

You shall have it in your eager hands post haste.

MILTON

Excuse us.

He takes Katherine by the arm. Leads her a few feet away.

MILTON

You're Sean's editor?!

KATHERINE

Oo, you're quick.

MILTON

What's his deal?

KATHERINE

Four books.

MILTON

You even read his manuscript?

KATHERINE

I... peeped at a synopsis.

MILTON

Four books? Off one synopsis?! No sample chapters?!

KATHERINE

Your brother has a very fascinating mind.

MILTON

You slept with him.

Katherine tries to keep her voice down.

KATHERINE

Only in his wildest dreams.

MILTON

Then you're doing this to spite me.

KATHERINE

Oh, honey, don't flatter yourself. It doesn't go with your eyes. So, how's my ending?

MILTON

It's turning into a tragedy.

KATHERINE

That won't work for me.

MILTON

It'll have to, because that's authentic.

KATHERINE

Readers don't do "authentic." They need up endings to make them feel better about their own pathetic lives.

MILTON

I don't know if I can pull that off.

KATHERINE

How about this? Finish it by Sunday, or find yourself another publisher.

She steps slowly backwards toward Sean.

KATHERINE

Of course, even if you do find another publisher, I'll still grind your ass in court.

MILTON

Never realized you were so eager to get back together.

KATHERINE

Even if you were a best-seller, and Cara weren't slipping you in every night, Hell would still freeze over before you and I got back together.

MILTON

I'm so happy to see that you finally agree with me on that.

Katherine ignores him. Faces Sean. Shakes his hand. Milton returns to greeting.

KATHERINE

Lovely doing business with you.

Sean kisses her hand.

SEAN

You as well, my dear.

Katherine politely tolerates his lips on her fingers. On her way out, she turns around. Glares at Milton.

KATHERINE

And I'll see yours in 48 hours.

MILTON

Count on it!

INT. KENNEDY SCHOOL - NIGHT

Milton, Cara, Am, Bree, and Graham are seated in the Courtyard Restaurant of northeast Portland's grade school-turned-boutique hotel. Milton writes in his notebook while periodically nursing some soup. Graham nurses a beer.

GRAHAM

The city was gonna tear this whole place down.

AM

It'd been abandoned for years.

GRAHAM

Who's tellin' the story? Are you tellin' the story?

BREE

Keep going, Graham.

GRAHAM

The school's abandoned, the city's comin' in, and the brothers --

He points at Milton.

GRAHAM

Not these brothers. The McMenamin brothers come in and say hey, we buy the school, renovate it, turn it into a hotel and bars, and --

BREE

The neighborhood agreed.

CARA

That's fantastic.

GRAHAM

I knew this guy who got married here. Fuckin' awesome wedding. I nailed the Maid of Honor and the photographer chick.

AM

On that note.

She stands. Leads Bree and Cara to the bar. Graham downs the rest of his beer.

GRAHAM

So where were we?

MILTON

Sean's novel.

GRAHAM

Right. Don't worry about it. It's gonna be some lame book where Sean beats his meat for three hundred pages.

MILTON

Graham, for the past seventeen years, everyone's fallen all over themselves just to catch a glimpse of Sean beating his meat!

GRAHAM

Doesn't mean it won't be a lame book!

MILTON

My luck, it'll be brilliantly lame. If only I could read it.

GRAHAM

I'd pay hard currency to watch you beat him unconscious with his lame book, then dump 'em both in the river.

Milton laughs. Cara, Am, and Bree return with their drinks. Cara slips Milton's notebook from his fingers. Casually peruses it. Stops reading.

CARA

There's a problem.

She points out a passage.

CARA

Up to this point, everything's had at least a grain of optimism. But now, it seems like the brothers are never gonna make up.

MILTON

They may not.

AM

What did Katherine say about that?

MILTON

Something about readers needing up endings.

CARA

They do.

MILTON
That'll seem so fake. Reviewers
will see right through it.

BREE
How long have you got?

MILTON
Katherine wants it by Sunday.

CARA
Less than 48 hours.

GRAHAM
Make it up, Milt. Make it up.

A WAITRESS catches his eye.

GRAHAM
Oo, she's new! Pardonnez-moi.

He rushes over to talk to her. They hit it off. She follows
him back.

GRAHAM
Hey Milt! Brandy says she knows
you!

WAITRESS
Last name Medley, right?

MILTON
That's right.

WAITRESS
Oh my God! This is so crazy!
You're Sean's brother!

MILTON
Milton.

WAITRESS
Sean was like a big brother to me.
If it weren't for him, I never
would've finished my study abroad
application essay.

MILTON
That's great.

INT. DAD'S

Everyone is at the bar.

MILTON (V.O.)

Cara and Katherine were right.
Desert had to have an up ending.
But should I take Graham's advice,
or strap in, and deal with Sean?

Mom comes in. Drags Sean along with her.

MOM

Look who I found hiding in the den.

Sean tears his arm from her grip. Mom joins Dad at the bar.

SEAN

"Whom I found," mother! And I
wasn't hiding. I was honing my
manuscript.

He spots Am and Bree. Waltzes over.

SEAN

Am, Bree, what a pleasant surprise!

BREE

Hey Sean.

Sean sits between them. Goes for Am's hand. She yanks it
free. Holds it up in his face.

AM

In your creamy, wet dreams.

SEAN

Oo, nice one. Did you pilfer that
from Young and Bland?!

MILTON

Better than the basement archives
of Modern Pedant.

GRAHAM

Yeah, get pissed!

Mom and Dad intervene. Cara grabs a couple mugs. Reaches
over the counter. Fills them up.

DAD

Sean, yank your head outta your
ass.

MOM

Milty, breathe.

Cara maneuvers in between the brothers. Shoves the mugs into their mitts. Gives a nod to the parents.

CARA
Let's take it to a table.

Mom and Dad smile approvingly.

INT. DAD'S

They've all migrated to a nearby table. Listening to Sean.

SEAN
I'm in a remote region of the Yangtze river, navigating a fishing boat full of refugees, when out of the shadows come the Yin Jing-Fong.

MILTON (V.O.)
As he droned on, I couldn't shake the idea of his novel outta my head.

DAD
Ying's Long Dong??

CARA
The secret police.

MOM
What did you do?

SEAN
I told them, in their dialect, that I was bound for the provincial capital, to deliver the magistrate's favorite delicacy.

MILTON (V.O.)
He was perfect at everything! Now he was with my editor?!

DAD
What did they do?

SEAN
They bought it. Hook, line, and Er.

He chuckles at his own joke. Everyone turns to Cara.

CARA
"Sinker." Actually, it's "bait."

Sean grunts at her correction.

SEAN

A couple days later, I delivered the refugees to safety. For two whole months, they held a feast in my honor.

MOM

Such great travel-karma.

Milton yawns.

MILTON

What an exquisitely exhilarating, riveting story.

Everyone but Graham glares at him. Milton pretends not to notice. Takes a gulp of his drink.

SEAN

We should go to the mountains.

Milton sprays the gulp out his mouth and nose, then coughs. Cara pats his back.

SEAN

Tomorrow. Spend the night.

CARA

I'd love to go. I've never seen the Cascades.

MILTON

They're cold.

GRAHAM

All the time.

SEAN

We can stay at Timberline Lodge. It'll be great. Just like the trips we used to take when we were kids.

The Regular stumbles over to them.

REGULAR

You're the one that met the Dalai Lama! What's he like, kid?!

SEAN

Short.

The Regular wanders back to his seat. Quietly ponders Sean's answer.

MILTON

What were we gonna use to fund this little holiday? Your witty anecdotes?

SEAN

I know people. I'll set it up.

MOM

Sounds good to me.

DAD

Same here.

Sean gives Milton a cocky little nod. Everyone faces Milton.

MILTON (V.O.)

I would've preferred having my scrotum waxed than hang out with him one more second, but I had to read his manuscript.

MILTON

Why not? Let's go. Tomorrow.

EXT. THE MOUNTAIN - MORNING

Milton, Cara, Am, Bree, Graham, Sean, Mom, and Dad are all at the top of a hill. They take turns sledding. Sean slides first. Then Mom and Dad go together. Then Graham and the Ambers. Finally, Milton and Cara take their turn.

Half way down, Milton and Cara hit a branch. Fly off to the right --

Boom! They plow through a snow drift. Milton wipes the snow off his face. Sees that they're racing straight to a row of trees. He hollers. Ducks his head. Now Cara sees the trees. She buries her face in Milton's back --

Wham! They snap off a bunch of dead branches. Milton dusts off a few needles, but most of it remains glued to his snow-covered clothes. In another few feet, Milton and Cara see the edge of a cliff. Cara clings to Milton for dear life.

Scrape--Swoosh! One of the branches stuck between Milton and the sled sticks into the snow. Flings them off the cliff...

EXT. TIMBERLINE LODGE

...into the snow-drenched, ice-covered parking lot of the famed ski lodge. Milton and Cara fall a good ten feet --

Slam! They hit the ground hard. The force of their fall sends them spinning across the parking lot. Groups of innocently by-standing families and friends jump out of the way --

Yoink! Milton and Cara knock a little boy off his feet, onto Milton's lap. The boy screams --

Vroom! An engine starts up. Milton sees that it's a truck pulling away from a freshly delivered stack of dozens of cases of wine. The boy dives off the sled. Slides away --

Smash! Milton and Cara crash right into the wine cases...

One case falls over. Nothing else. Milton sighs with relief. Wipes the remainder of snow, branches, and needles from his face and clothes. Looks back at Cara. Before Cara has a chance to say anything --

Groan... It's the sound of wine cases on the verge of collapse. Both Milton and Cara peer at the top of the stack. The stack wobbles. Milton and Cara shout. Milton throws himself protectively over Cara. Not a moment too soon --

Bang! Crash! Boom! The top half of the stack rains down all over them. Even with his arms covering his head, Milton receives the worst of it. Sean, Am, Bree, Graham, Mom, and Dad catch up to Milton and Cara.

GWENDOLYN

My pinot!!

An attractive woman in her mid-40s comes running out of the lodge. Gwendolyn spots Milton and Cara immediately. Her mouth hangs open. Sean takes Gwendolyn's arm.

SEAN

Wendy, allow me to introduce you to my brother.

Gwendolyn leans into Sean.

GWENDOLYN

I didn't know you had a brother.

Sitting only inches above Milton, one more case of wine flops over. From the case's bottom corner, a thin stream of pinot gris dribbles down onto Milton's head.

SEAN
It's easy to forget.

INT. TIMBERLINE LODGE LIVING ROOM

Including the staff, and many guests, everyone sits around Sean, captivated by another of his stories. Writing in his notebook, Milton half pays attention.

MILTON (V.O.)
Turns out that years ago,
Gwendolyn, the lodge's caretaker,
was caught in a snow storm while
hiking in the Himalayas.

SEAN
The snow is cascading down all
around us, the wind is wailing, we
have no food, no water, but despite
all that, I had only one thought.

GUEST
What was that?

Sean pats Gwendolyn's shoulder.

SEAN
Keeping this woman awake. I knew
that if she stayed conscious for
the twenty mile hike to the nearest
village, she'd recover.

GUEST
How did you do it?

SEAN
I engaged her in an a capella
rendition of one thousand bottles
of green tea on the wall.

The crowd lets out a relieved laugh.

GWENDOLYN
Much to my chagrin, we'd only
gotten to five hundred by the time
we arrived.

The entire crowd applauds. Sean soaks it up.

MILTON (V.O.)
As much as I hated to, I had to
admire him.

He eyes his surroundings.

MILTON (V.O.)

And it wasn't so bad getting an all-inclusive sledding trip for free.

GUEST

Weren't you afraid?!

SEAN

To fear is to be human. To be human is to fear.

His comment elicits a few pensive nods. Milton cocks an eyebrow, but doesn't lift his eyes from his work.

MILTON

There are observers, and there are creators.

SEAN

Excuse me?

All eyes turn to Milton. He lifts his head. Meets Sean's glare.

MILTON

Simply that there are those who observe life, and those who take part in it. History favors the latter.

GWENDOLYN

So, Milton, which one are you?

Milton stops writing. With a hint of cockiness:

MILTON

Me? Oh, I'm a novelist.

The room's attention makes an exodus from the bondage of Sean's pretention to the beckoning oasis of Milton's. Noticing this, Sean goes eggplant-purple. Milton struggles to restrain his glee at his successful coup.

GWENDOLYN

That's so interesting! Have you been published?

Milton's about to answer, then Am, now noticing the room's new tone, jumps in.

AM

His first three novels are out-of-print, but you can special order them.

BREE

And he's finishing up his latest as we speak.

A few guests strain for a peek of Milton at work. He lifts his pen cordially.

GUEST

When will this one be published?

MILTON

Not sure, but I have to turn it in by tomorrow night.

The crowd gasps with collective awe.

GWENDOLYN

Who's your favorite author?

MILTON

Mark Twain. Some day, I hope to write a novel as good as Huck Finn.

With a sneer, Sean strikes.

SEAN

You won't.

His blow knocks Milton out of his cool.

MILTON

That's funny, Sean. I don't remember anyone asking for your opinion!

MOM

Milty, breathe.

Milton stands. Leaves the room. Graham zeroes in on Gwendolyn. Flashes his winning smile.

GRAHAM

I saw you across the room, and told myself, "Graham, you have got to talk to that gorgeous woman." And get a walk around her kitchens.

Gwendolyn's completely taken with him.

GWENDOLYN

I don't know about "gorgeous."

Not allowing his spotlight to diminish, Sean embarks on another tale.

SEAN

Harvard has the largest endowment of any university. Compared to the world's wealthiest non-profits, it ranks second only to Il Vaticano.

His comment elicits a few impressed nods.

INT. BATHROOM

Milton rinses his face. Sighs at the mirror. When he opens the door, he finds his Mom standing there.

MOM

Need to talk?

MILTON

He has to put me down. In front of a bunch of people we don't even know. Sure, what I do isn't as exotic as what he's done, but --

MOM

That's just how Sean does his life.

MILTON

Why is it that whenever I'm a prick, I'm a prick, but when he's a rude, pompous, selfish asshole, it's "just how he does his life"?

MOM

Milton Medley, that is not fair!

MILTON

It never is.

Graham slides in between them.

GRAHAM

Milt, we could use your help with dinner.

Without another word to his Mom, Milton goes off with Graham.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Cara chats up Dad, Mom, the Ambers, and a few guests. Standing at the back of the crowd, Sean barely tolerates it.

CARA
And it was the Sumerians who first developed beer.

MOM
Is that true, Sean?

SEAN
No, it was the Assyrians.

CARA
Not according to the cuneiform I've read.

Lacking a comeback, Sean stews silently.

CARA
Some say it was completely by chance. When the damp grain fermented, it left behind an inebriating pulp.

DAD
That's incredible.

CARA
Beer was so important to the Ancient Egyptians that they created a hieroglyphic just for brewers.

SEAN
I hardly think that the worshippers of Amen-Ra esteemed their brewers as highly as their scribes, priests, and pharaohs.

CARA
Perhaps a glance at the Rosetta Stone would convince you.

Still coming up empty, Sean trembles with rage. But before he has a chance to unleash his fury --

Milton pops his head in.

MILTON
Dinner!

INT. DINING ROOM

Sean and the family sit on the opposite side of the table from Milton's friends. Milton, Graham, and Gwendolyn serve everyone. Sean tries a bite. Gives everyone front row, stadium seating to the contents of his mouth. Nods.

SEAN

"By Providence divine. Some food we had, and some fresh water, that a noble... did give us."

GRAHAM

Come again?

MOM

He says it's good.

SEAN

The Tempest, Act two, Scene one.
As spoken by Miranda.

CARA

Actually, it was Prospero who said that.

Sean's voice goes deathly cold.

SEAN

I beg your pardon?

CARA

It was Prospero. And it was Act one, not two.

Sean offers a condescending grin.

SEAN

I regret to inform you, my dear, that you are quite mistaken.

Cara offers her own little grin, neither attacking, nor conceding. She sips her wine. Sean sets down his utensils. Wipes his mouth. Slowly rises.

SEAN

Look, Cara, I've read the Bard more times than you can count, so why don't you just pack it in, and step off?!!

On his feet, his white knuckles rigidly grip the edge of the table.

Everyone stops eating, except Cara, who easily maintains her cool despite Sean's rage. Mom, Dad, and Milton exclaim at the same time.

MOM

Sean!

DAD

Sit your ass down!

MILTON

Lovely, Sean. You wanna pull your cock outta your mouth now --?!

CARA

We can look it up, if you want.

SEAN

Look it up?!

CARA

Hold that thought.

She runs off to their rooms. Milton and his friends go back to eating.

SEAN

This is so ridiculous.

AM

I'd love to know what scene it is.

SEAN

Nobody asked you.

Milton hammers his fist on the table.

MILTON

Back off, Sean!

MOM

Milty, breathe --

CARA

Got it!

Lugging a massive Shakespeare book, she runs back to the table, sits, flips to a book-marked page, and quotes it.

CARA

"By Providence divine. Some food we had, and some fresh water..."
Etc. The Tempest, Act one, Scene two, Prospero, lines 159-162.

She holds it out to Sean.

CARA

You can borrow it, if you want.

Milton wraps his arm around Cara. Smiles proudly.

MILTON

That is if you say, "please."

Sean's eyes blaze with finally-proved-wrong fury. He sits.

INT. LIVING ROOM

After dinner, Milton and his friends hang out with Gwendolyn and some guests. On the other side of the room, Sean has his parents cornered.

SEAN

Who does that bitch think she is?!

MOM

That is enough, Sean Medley!

DAD

Your brother happens to like Cara!

Sean takes a deep breath.

SEAN

Sorry. It's just... I've read The Tempest twenty times! I got the only "A" Wally Sobel ever awarded on my Tempest paper!

MOM

It was an honest mistake. One quote. You need to breathe.

SEAN

One quote? One quote?! Empires are built on quotes, mother!

DAD

Really? Who said that?! Hitler or Stalin?

Sean storms off. He doesn't get far when Milton grabs him.

MILTON

Hey, you didn't bring your manuscript, did you?

SEAN

There's only one place on the face
of the orbis mundi where its
security is completely guaranteed.

MILTON

And the crowd waited in eager
anticipation for the arrival of his
point.

SEAN

You would be quite safe in assuming
that I brought it with me. Why do
you ask?

MILTON

Oh, no reason.

He slips away.

INT. SUITE

The best rooms in the house. Everyone's in bed. With Cara's arm around him, Milton waits patiently for signs that she's asleep. After a moment or two, he carefully, quietly slips out from under her grasp.

Milton sneaks past Am and Bree's bed, and Graham's bed. As he passes his parents' bed, he slips on a pile of clothes --

Wham! Milton lands on his ass. Covers his mouth to contain the pain. Picks himself up. Rubs his sore butt. Waits to see if he woke anyone up. No sound.

Milton tiptoes much more carefully to Sean's bed. Stops when he bumps into Sean's bags. Cautiously rummages through Sean's things. Some clothes. Toothpaste. Milton checks to make sure everyone's asleep. Still no sound.

Milton completely unzips Sean's bags. Shakes out their contents. Mountains of unopened condom boxes pour out. No manuscript. Milton hastily shoves all of Sean's stuff back in. Zips the bags up. Stands. Waits. Not a peep.

Milton crawls along the right side of Sean's bed. To Sean's snoring face. Milton searches around Sean's right night stand. No manuscript. Milton then notices something tucked under the covers. Under Sean's arm.

Milton carefully peels the blanket back from Sean's arm. Like an adored pet, the manuscript lies quite safely wrapped in the tight grasp of Sean's fingers. Despite this, Milton gingerly pulls the manuscript out from under Sean's arm --

Sean grunts. Turns over. Milton begins the long crawl around to the other side of the bed. As he nears the foot of the bed...

Rumble. It came from somewhere deep within Sean's innards. With a jolt, Sean accidentally sticks his ass right in Milton's face --

Pffft! Pop-pop-pop! Pffft! Crack! Hiiiiss! Sean lets off the loudest, juiciest stank in the history of time. Milton coughs.

MOM

Sean? You alright?

No answer. Milton tumbles around the bed's corner. Presses himself up against the foot of the bed.

MOM

Such awful fart-karma.

Milton struggles to keep calm. After a few deep breaths, he crawls around the left side of Sean's bed. Poking his head above the covers, Milton watches Sean. Still asleep. But now, Sean's got himself all kinds of wrapped up in blankets.

Milton slips his hand under the blanket. Carefully maneuvers himself to the manuscript. Nods when he's found it. With his other hand, he opens Sean's left night stand. Removes the Gideon Bible. Closes the drawer with the Bible.

Milton mouths a count of three. On three, he yanks Sean's manuscript out of his grasp, shoves the Bible into Sean's hands, and dives back down against the left side of the bed.

Sean's eyes snap open. He sits up. Peers into the darkness. Looks right. Looks left. Sniffs. Rubs his nose. Snags a nearby tissue. Drenches it with snot. Tosses it on Milton's head. Flops back down onto the bed. Snores away.

Milton lets out a relieved sigh. Peels the used tissue from his face. Tosses it into a nearby trash can. Gazes victoriously at Sean's manuscript. A vengeful grin creeps onto Milton's lips.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Seated near the glowing embers of a dying fire, Milton skims the manuscript. His introspective voice rises as he takes in the tome's words.

MILTON (V.O.)
 Just as I'd suspected. Brilliantly
 lame. Witty clauses! Striking
 adjectives! Exquisite prose!!

His eyes move off the page, onto the embers. He stands.
 Closes in on the fireplace. Holds the pages over the heat.

MILTON (V.O.)
 There was only one thing to do.

A tiny flame licks the manuscript's bottom edge --

CARA
 Milton?

Milton spins around. Hides the book behind his back.

MILTON
 Yes?

CARA
 What've you got there?

MILTON
 Where?

CARA
 Behind your back?

Milton glances over his shoulder. A wisp of smoke circles up
 from the pages.

MILTON
 Oh this? Just some light reading.

CARA
 Can I see?

Milton pretends to yawn.

MILTON
 Let's get back to bed.

He attempts to sneak the book past her.

CARA
 Lemme see.

MILTON
 No, Cara, come on!

Cara wrestles it free from his grip. Gasps at the burning lower quarter. Blows it out. Skims the first page.

CARA
This is Sean's!

She glances at where Milton was standing. Eyes the manuscript. Then the fireplace.

CARA
You were gonna burn this?!

Milton indicates the portion she blew out.

MILTON
Only a little.

CARA
Why?!

MILTON
Because the second it's published, any ending I write for Desert won't matter!

CARA
Of course it will.

MILTON
No, Sean's lame novel will hit the top ten! Probably number one! Then every goddamn English teacher in the world will suck his cock!

CARA
So what?

MILTON
What do you mean "so what"?!

CARA
So what if he wins the Pulitzer, the Nobel, and the Booker Prize? Take some pride in the fact that you've written brilliant work --!

Milton snatches the burnt pages. Smacks them repeatedly against a chair.

MILTON
That prac-tically no one's read!!

CARA

I have.

Her words catch him off guard.

MILTON

I know. It's just that --

CARA

Milton, listen to me.

She wraps her arms around him.

CARA

You're a published --

MILTON

Out-of-print --

CARA

Published author, with... dozens of fans, and friends and family who adore you. What more do you want?

MILTON

To spend one single moment of one single day outside of Sean's fucking shadow!

He turns away.

MILTON

Cara, I'm in my 30s, staring straight down the barrel of my 40s.

He paces.

MILTON

I've pinched out three piles of paper nobody cares about, and come Monday, Katherine's gonna string me up and shake me down.

CARA

You'll finish Desert. I know you will.

Milton shakes his head.

MILTON

Won't matter.

CARA
Milton, aren't you happy?

Milton stops. Faces her.

MILTON
What does that have to do with
anything?

CARA
It's a simple question.

Milton doesn't answer. She waits. He opens his mouth, but fumbles.

CARA
Not even a little bit?

Milton hesitates.

MILTON
Well...

Her patience gone, Cara steps away from him.

CARA
Milton, if you were even half as
pathetic as you think you are,
you'd still be twice the man Sean
wishes he were!!

MILTON
If I were...?

CARA
Gimme a call when you decide to
grow up and stop hating yourself.

She grabs the pages. Storms out. He runs after her.

MILTON
Cara, wait!

EXT. TIMBERLINE LODGE

Cara marches to their car. Milton chases after her, but isn't quite fast enough. Cara jumps in the car. Starts it up. Drives off into the night.

MILTON
Cara!!

Cara's long gone. Milton's left standing there, barefoot, in the cold and wet.

MILTON (V.O.)
And that was it. She was gone.
But before I even had a chance to
ponder how gloriously I'd just
fucked up...

He sighs. Turns around. Finds the Ambers and Graham standing there. Very annoyed.

EXT. THE MEDLEY HOME - AFTERNOON

Milton and his friends arrive. Graham opens Milton's door. Am pushes him out.

BREE
See you at eight!

They drive off. Milton trudges up to the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM

It's empty.

MILTON
Hello?

No one answers. He sits on the couch. Heaves a deep sigh.

Thump! A car door closes outside. Milton goes to the window. Gwendolyn drops off Sean. He thanks her. Stomps up to the house. Throws the door open. Searches frantically. Moves chairs. Tosses pillows.

MILTON
What are you looking for?

SEAN
My manuscript.

He stops. Mentally retraces his steps.

SEAN
Wendy had her staff tear the entire lodge apart. All for naught. The only other possibility is here.

MILTON
Don't worry about it.

SEAN

Perhaps you enjoy being cavalier with your deadlines, Milton, but I shall not be with mine.

MILTON

All I'm saying is that worrying won't accomplish anything.

SEAN

I have somehow managed to lose my entire manuscript, and you honestly suggest that I not --!

Milton sits.

MILTON

Years ago, I was finishing up my latest. Way behind. Katherine was all over me. I somehow managed to erase half the manuscript.

Sean sits.

SEAN

What did you do?

MILTON

Called a friend to try and retrieve the data.

SEAN

What did he do?

MILTON

Well, his estimate was he'd get it by the due date. I didn't wanna wait, so I rewrote it.

SEAN

The whole thing?!

MILTON

The whole thing. Well, the part I lost. So I'm all ready with my new version, and he hands me the old version.

SEAN

And?

MILTON
I liked the new stuff better. So
did Katherine.

Sean grins.

SEAN
That was really dumb of you.

Milton pats his back.

MILTON
You'll be fine, Sean. You'll be
fine.

They hear a knock at the door. Sean leaps to his feet.
Swings it open. A DELIVERY GUY shows him a huge hat box and
a garment bag.

DELIVERY GUY
Mr. Sean Medley?

Sean signs the delivery slip.

SEAN
Thank you my good man. And, for
your trouble.

He gives the Delivery Guy a \$50 bill. The Delivery Guy
stares at it in disbelief. Offers Sean his hand.

DELIVERY GUY
Thank you, Mr. Medley!

Sean proudly shakes the Delivery Guy's hand. The Delivery
Guy leaves. Sean closes the door. Sets his plunder on the
couch. Weighs them in his hands.

MILTON
What's this?

SEAN
A hat box. And garment bag.

MILTON
What are you doing with them?

SEAN
I'm going to open them, then don
their contents.

Realizing something, Milton jumps up. Snatches the hat box.

MILTON
So that's why you came back!

SEAN
What are you talking about?!

MILTON
Your book. My editor. My reunion.
Now a fucking tux?!

SEAN
I'm afraid I don't know what you
mean.

MILTON
It's not enough to one-up me in
every other part of my life, now
you gotta do it at my reunion!?
What is your problem?!

Sean scoffs. Liberates his hat box.

SEAN
I assure you, Milton, I am not
attempting to, as you so eloquently
put it, "one-up" you.

The corner of Milton's mouth turns up in a grin.

MILTON
It's all so clear. I can't believe
I didn't see it before.

He knocks the hat box out of Sean's hand. Backs him towards
the front door.

MILTON
You're going after Susan.

SEAN
Why would you even be the slightest
bit interested in Susan if you
already have Cara sucking your
sausage --?

He stops. A maniacal smile spreads across his face. He
peeks over Milton's shoulder.

SEAN
Oh no, Milty. You seem to have
misplaced your little friend.

He laughs in Milton's face.

SEAN

Was it something you said, or did she simply tire of the taste of your wurst and hunger for a hunk of real beef?!

MILTON

We'll see who's laughing when I nail Susan and you share a ménage-à-trois with your left hand and a bottle of KY call girl!

Sean stands straight up against the door.

SEAN

I'll have you know I have an excellent plan!

MILTON

You gonna bore her into bed?

Sean spits venom.

SEAN

You say that as if you owned her!

MILTON

She was a lot closer to me than she ever was to you.

SEAN

Is that so?! Well, for your information, meu irmão, we spent quite a lot of time together!

Milton laughs.

MILTON

In Calculus!

SEAN

And Physics!!

MILTON

You've got no chance!

SEAN

We, sir, shall see about that!

He shoves Milton back, grabs his tailored clothes, and barges into their parents' room. Slams the door behind him.

EXT. THE HILLSIDE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

All very nicely dressed, Milton, the girls, and Graham pull up. As they step out, Am takes a firm hold of Milton's right arm, while Bree claims his left. They strut up the front steps of the admissions building.

They go up to the name tag table, headed by a middle-aged WOMAN.

AM
Amber Kimball.

BREE
Amber Richardson.

GRAHAM
Graham Campbell.

The Woman dispenses tags.

MILTON
Milton Medley.

WOMAN
Who?

Milton takes a deep breath.

MILTON
Medley.

The Woman thumbs through her file. Locates his tag. Smiles brightly.

WOMAN
Medley! Of course! You must be
Sean's brother!

Milton snatches his tag. They move on. The Ambers place Milton's tag. Intentionally stick him with it. He grumbles. Spots his favorite English teacher, Wally Sobel.

MILTON
Hey, Mr. Sobel, it's great to see
you!

Facing him, Wally has no clue who he is.

WALLY
Good to see you too...

He glances at Milton's name tag.

WALLY
 ...Milton. Welcome back.

He attempts to move on. Milton gets in his way.

MILTON
 I was in your English class. Two
 years. You said I was one of your
 best students.

Wally pats his shoulder.

WALLY
 I'm sure you were.

MILTON
 I wrote that excellent paper on
 that Mahesh Raj Mohan novel.

Losing his polite cool, Wally merely nods.

WALLY
 I'm sure you did.

Milton gives up.

MILTON
 Does "Medley" ring a bell?

Wally's eyes light up. He points to Milton's face.

WALLY
 Oh, you're Sean's brother!

Milton's bewildered jaw hangs agape.

WALLY
 Tell him I said hello.

He pats Milton's shoulder again. Slips away. Too shocked to
 move, Milton's eyes follow Wally as he wanders off. Graham
 slaps a reassuring hand on Milton's back.

GRAHAM
 Milt, let's scope the scene.

AM
 Great idea, Graham!

BREE
 First time for everything.

They drag Milton away. As they do...

...Sean arrives with Katherine on his arm, him dressed in his lavish tailcoat tux and top hat, her in a stunning, white dress.

WOMAN

Well, speak of the devil. If it isn't Sean Medley himself!

EXT. THE MOUNDS

The same locale for prom all those years ago. Tents, tables, and a dance area are all set up. A crowd of about a hundred. Milton and friends mix in. They all get drinks. Graham wanders off alone --

Then Katherine finds them.

KATHERINE

Milton.

Flinching, Milton drops his drink. Spins around. Gathers his composure.

MILTON

Katherine.

Katherine glares at the Ambers.

KATHERINE

Milton's little friends.

They nod politely. Deadpan simultaneously.

AM & BREE

Katherine.

They turn away. Leave them be.

MILTON

What the hell are you doing here?

KATHERINE

Your brother brought me.

MILTON

No accounting for taste.

Katherine smiles facetiously. Taps her watch.

KATHERINE

Twenty four hours.

MILTON
Thanks. I can tell time.

KATHERINE
Finally learned?

MILTON
Don't be jealous. Doesn't go with
your dress.

They part ways. At the opposite end of the gathering, a woman in a long, black dress waltzes in. Instinctively, Milton turns her way. Recognizes her. Whispers to himself.

MILTON
Susan.

He surreptitiously scans for Sean. Finds him off chatting with Katherine, and some admiring teachers. Sean doesn't yet seem to notice Susan's arrival. Milton finds his friends.

MILTON
I'll be back in a second.

Their eyes follow him.

Sean departs his company. Heads for Susan. He doesn't make it too far before more people stop to talk to him. His frustration grows as he struggles to get anywhere near her.

Separated by only a few feet, Milton cruises on an uninterrupted line to Susan.

Sean shoves out of his conversation. Desperately tries to get back on track. As he's about to catch up to Milton --

WALLY
Sean Medley!

In the brief moment it takes Sean to politely excuse himself for the umpteenth time...

Milton makes it to Susan.

MILTON
Susan Carlton.

Susan faces him. Checks him out. Smiles.

MILTON
Milton Medley.

Sean's frozen, unsure of what to do.

WALLY
 You know, I've always meant to go
 to China --

SEAN
 That's splendid.

Milton gives Susan the once-over.

MILTON
 You look great.

SUSAN
 So do you.

Sean's easing his way out of his current conversation.

WALLY
 Which I think is clear if you
 consider that Mandarin and
 Cantonese really are separate
 tongues.

SEAN
 Yes, that's quite fascinating.
 Excuse me.

And just as he hits the clear, three more join in.

WALLY
 George, look who I found! Sean
 Medley!

But all Sean can pay attention to is the fact that Milton and
 Susan seem to be hitting it off.

Milton looks over Susan's shoulders.

MILTON
 No date?

Sean finally breaks free. Shoves people out of his way.

SUSAN
 Broke up.

Sean's about ten feet away. And closing.

MILTON
 Wanna take a walk?

Sean's almost there.

Susan cautiously answers.

SUSAN

Sure.

Sean's about to interrupt, when --

They head off.

Wally and the others find Sean. He resigns to his defeat. Puts on his happy face, spins around, and indulges them once more.

SUSAN

I have to confess, I don't really recognize you.

Milton laughs nervously.

MILTON

It has been fifteen years.

SUSAN

Yes it has.

MILTON

We used to watch movies at my place.

SUSAN

Right...

MILTON

I took you to prom. Senior year.

SUSAN

Of course! I'm so sorry.

MILTON

Quite alright.

SUSAN

I don't know why I didn't recognize you.

MILTON

It's completely understandable.

SUSAN

You're Sean Medley's brother!

Milton stops dead in his tracks. Takes a deep breath. The frustration of this weekend finally reaches its boiling point.

He explodes.

MILTON
I - HAVE - A NAME!!!

He swings around. Targets Sean. Runs over.

SEAN
You know, at Harvard --

Milton points an accusative finger at him.

MILTON
You die!!

SEAN
Milton! I'm in the middle of a goddamn story!

Milton grabs Sean's collar.

MILTON
Excuse us.

He pulls back a punch. Katherine rushes over.

KATHERINE
Not my best-seller!

Milton nails Sean. His hat stays more or less in place. Milton drags him over to the drinks table. Katherine and a few others run after them. Milton repeatedly dunks Sean's head in the punch bowl.

MILTON
I am sick to death of you!!

A crowd gathers around them, but before anyone can intervene, Am and Bree hold them back.

AM
Back off, people!

BREE
Lest ye forget! We're uppity dykes, with nasty über-'tudes!

Milton slams Sean down on the table. Katherine yells at him from behind his friends.

KATHERINE

Touch him again, and... your
publishing days are over!

Milton glances at her a moment. Shrugs. Turns back around.
Shoves an éclair in Sean's mouth.

MILTON

Life was sweet, and nice, and
innocent, then a year point quarter
into it, you came along, and ruined
it!

Katherine weeps.

KATHERINE

My best-seller...

Graham finds her. Turns on his signature smile.

GRAHAM

I saw you across the way, and told
myself, "Graham, you have got to
talk to that gorgeous woman."

Katherine spins on him, ready to strike. Then before she
knows it, she suddenly forgets all about Milton and Sean.

KATHERINE

I don't know about... "gorgeous."

Graham offers his arm. Katherine accepts. They wander off.

Sean gags on the éclair. Milton grabs the punch bowl.

MILTON

How inconsiderate of me! You need
something to wash that down!

He drenches Sean's face in a red, sticky sea. Punches him
again and again.

MILTON

Sean's brother! Sean's brother! I
could go on a cannibalistic killing
spree, and still, I'd only be known
as "Sean's rampaging brother"!

Sean spits out enough food to talk.

SEAN

You forget, frater meus, only one of us has vacationed in a Shaolin temple, training with kung fu masters!

MILTON

No, Sean, you're wrong! I didn't forget, I just don't care!

He throws a punch. Sean catches it. Kicks him off. They dive into each other. What erupts is a chaotic, clumsy, spazzy battle, fueled by years of mutual pent-up angst, bitterness, and jealousy --

Then a pair of very powerful arms tears them away from each other.

CARA

Stop it!! Both of you!!

Decked out in sweet threads, she holds them back.

CARA

You two are the most pompous, stuck-up, self-absorbed, pedantic, puerile, pathetic, insecure motherfuckers I've ever met!!

She shoves them together.

CARA

Shake hands, and make up!!

MILTON

Cara --!

Cara roars.

CARA

NOW!!!

The brothers cautiously step toward each other. Milton offers a hand. Sean takes his time, then accepts --

And then, with his other hand, Sean punches Milton square in the jaw. Milton hits the ground.

EXT. THE MOUNDS

Milton comes to. The crowd's thinned. Cara, Am, and Bree clean up the mess he and Sean made. Milton rubs his jaw.

Stands. Goes to Cara. She faces him with blazing eyes. Points a finger in the opposite direction. He backs away.

EXT. THE HILLSIDE PARKING LOT

Alone, Sean sits on a curb, with a bottle of wine. Milton heads over to him.

MILTON
This seat taken?

Sean doesn't bother looking at him.

SEAN
Knock yourself out.

Milton sits.

SEAN
If you're looking for an apology --

MILTON
Don't worry about it, Sean.

He glances at his brother. Nods to the bottle. Sean passes it. Milton takes a swig.

MILTON
You got all the praise.

SEAN
You got all the pussy.

MILTON
What are you talking about?

SEAN
Milton, for the past seventeen years, women have fallen all over themselves, just to get a chance to inject your little syringe!

MILTON
That's such bullshit!

SEAN
Oh really? Then tell me something. How does a jackass like you get a sexy, brilliant babe like Cara?

MILTON
You just gotta get out there.

SEAN

At Harvard, I joined two choirs.
Nothing. Five dance teams. No
dice. Not even in the goddamn
Society for Creative Anachronism!

MILTON

It can't be that bad. I mean,
you're not still a virgin.

Sean doesn't respond.

MILTON

Are you?

SEAN

There was one woman, but she wasn't
really official.

MILTON

What do you mean?

SEAN

I paid your friend Graham to make
the arrangements.

MILTON

He never told me about that.

SEAN

I paid him double not to.

MILTON

What happened?

SEAN

She wanted to get "ready." After
three shots of Jack, she passed
out. Graham drove her home. I
spent the night with Hustler.

MILTON

Sean, I don't really know what to
say. Has it ever crossed your mind
that maybe you try too hard?

SEAN

Face it, Milton. Women love me...
"like a brother." Always like a
brother.

MILTON

You'll find someone. You will.

SEAN

I thought it would be different in college. I knew at least you wouldn't be around to fuck things up. Like prom night.

MILTON

What are you talking about?

SEAN

Must you be such a dolt?! You stole Susan!

MILTON

Look, Sean, if you can't work up the guts to ask a girl out --

SEAN

She was my best friend! I loved her! I was going to take her to prom and tell her how I felt, but oh no, you had to go and ruin that!

MILTON

Best friend?! You hardly spoke a single word to Susan.

SEAN

Not around you.

Milton's stunned.

MILTON

I'm sorry, Sean. I had no idea.

SEAN

Of course not. You just waltzed in with your long hair and holed jeans, took her to prom, and stole away with her after only one dance.

MILTON

We were bored, Sean! I took her straight home!

SEAN

So you never slept with her?

MILTON

No!

SEAN

Not even a little?

MILTON

Never.

SEAN

No slip o' the finger?

MILTON

Uh uh.

SEAN

No Tillamook Creamery?

MILTON

No.

SEAN

No African Bush Floss?

MILTON

Of course not.

SEAN

No Congressional Session?

MILTON

No!

SEAN

No Kama Sutra Jacuzzi Bubble Party?

MILTON

For the last fucking time, no!

SEAN

But I assumed after your little parties with Graham and what not...

MILTON

Nope.

SEAN

How come you never told me?

MILTON

You never asked.

SEAN

You mean this whole time, I've been...

He struggles to wrap his mind around this new concept.

SEAN
...wrong about prom night?

MILTON
Feels pretty good, doesn't it?

Sean smiles.

SEAN
It seems I'm the dolt. I hated you for that night. Her too. I was so angry for ...so many years. I'm sorry, Milton.

MILTON
It's fine, Sean.

SEAN
No it isn't. I've treated you horribly. And lost Susan forever.

MILTON
It's never too late to forgive yourself.

SEAN
I suppose you're right. You were right about one other thing too.

MILTON
Only one?

SEAN
As I was preparing my cuff links, I found my manuscript sitting right there. I don't know how I missed it. I should not have worried.

MILTON
That's great.

SEAN
The odd thing is that the bottom portions of every page were better written than I had remembered.

MILTON
Where is it now?

SEAN
With Katherine. I slipped it to her just before she scurried off with Graham.

MILTON

You'll be fine, Sean. You'll be fine.

SEAN

So, is this thing between you and Cara for real?

MILTON

I dunno. But I wanna find out.

SEAN

Praise, mon frère. She's sweet, but she never tells you she loves you.

With that, he takes a long pull from the wine bottle.

SUSAN

Sean?

Sean finds Susan standing a few feet away. He chokes on the wine. Sprays it everywhere.

SEAN

Susan!

Susan rushes to his side. Helps him to his feet.

SUSAN

You alright?

SEAN

Never better.

He kisses her hand. Susan smiles at the gesture. They start chatting. Milton stands. Watches Sean and Susan.

SEAN

You know, at Harvard --

Milton shakes his head. Sean notices. Takes the hint. Changes the subject.

SEAN

I mean, what have you been up to?

Milton returns to his introspective realm. Susan laughs at one of Sean's jokes.

MILTON (V.O.)

I don't really know how it happened.

He pats their shoulders.

MILTON
I'll see you guys in a bit.

He heads back to Cara.

MILTON (V.O.)
It was suddenly all so clear.

Cara stops cleaning up. Straightens her dress.

CARA
That's it. I've had enough. I'm
going after him.

Am throws a cautious arm in front of her.

AM
Be careful.

BREE
Be gentle.

CARA
I will.

Am releases her. Cara marches off. She only makes it a couple steps before she sees Milton approaching. She pretends to look busy.

MILTON
We need to talk.

Cara spins around. Crosses her arms. Ready for battle. Milton leads her away to a more private area.

MILTON
Everyone's right. I've been a
total jackass.

CARA
Milton, I'm really busy here.

MILTON
This whole time I've based Desert
off my assumptions about Sean, and
me, and...

Cara rolls her eyes. Milton tries again.

MILTON

I don't need to be the smartest. I don't need to be the best. All I need is right here.

He wraps his arms around her. Smiles.

MILTON

I have my ending.

Cara holds still. Then she nods, understanding. Milton kisses her. For the first time since they've known each other, it's free, real, uninhibited.

MILTON

One thing.

CARA

What's that?

MILTON

Why'd you come back?

CARA

Someone had to save you two.

MILTON

But how did you replace all the text that I burned in Sean's manuscript?

CARA

Can I bite your lip?

She relishes every moment of it.

CARA

Let's get outta here.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - MORNING

Milton and Cara pack their things. Her iPhone rings. She puts on her BlueTooth headset. Answers it.

CARA

Hey Gary. I told you I was busy this weekend. I understand you need me desperately, but --

She listens. Milton eyes her with a hint of jealousy.

CARA

No, no, no. You're way off. Hold on.

She quickly types something into her iPhone.

CARA

Check your e-mail. I just sent you an algorithm. Not a problem. You too. Love to Rose and the kids.

She hangs up.

MILTON

Who was that?

CARA

NASA.

MILTON

You're shitting me.

CARA

Nope.

MILTON

You know rocket science?

CARA

Technically it's rocket math.

Milton's dumbfounded.

MILTON

Three college degrees --

CARA

PhDs.

MILTON

Hieroglyphics, cuneiform, and who knows how many other languages --

CARA

A few.

MILTON

Infinite charm, grace, and wit.

CARA

Don't forget patience and modesty.

MILTON
And you consult for NASA??

Cara shrugs.

CARA
A girl's gotta have a hobby.

MILTON
What are you, some kinda genius?

Cara smiles.

CARA
Some kind.

MILTON
How come you never told me?

CARA
You never asked.

MILTON
So this whole time, I've been...
dating a genius?!

CARA
That entirely depends on your
definition of "date."

MILTON
But... you like me.

CARA
Excessively.

MILTON
But Sean's never liked me.

Cara wraps her arms around his neck.

CARA
In case you haven't noticed,
sweetness, I'm not Sean.

Milton shakes his head. Laughs in disbelief.

MILTON
A genius.

CARA
Listen, Milton, about this dating
thing --

Milton pulls away.

MILTON
I knew it. I knew it!

CARA
What??

MILTON
It's been fun, you've had a good
time, but when we get back --

Cara gives Milton a quick one.

CARA
I'm biting your lip.

She shows Milton her iPhone.

CARA
I got a consulting offer this
morning. It's in town, and it
starts immediately. I was
thinking, why don't you join me?

MILTON
Join you??

CARA
The fact is your family's here,
your closest friends are here, and
you love it here.

MILTON
I dunno, Cara. What'll I do here?

CARA
Same thing you do already. Write
your novels.

INT. MILTON & CARA'S PAD - AFTERNOON

A cozy bungalow with a lovely view of a nearby park. While
Cara scribbles notes, Milton types.

MILTON (V.O.)
We got a place in northwest. I
helped Cara start on her novel.

INT. POWELL'S CITY OF BOOKS - AFTERNOON

Portland's own massive, independent, used and new bookstore. In the new non-fiction rack, there sits, "orbis mundi: a travelogue by sean medley."

MILTON (V.O.)

A couple weeks later, Katherine published Sean's book.

Milton grabs a copy. Takes a look at its sales rank. #1.

MILTON (V.O.)

As I'd predicted, it hit #1.

Across the aisle, in the new fiction rack, it's, "Burning Desert." Also #1. Sean grabs a copy. Cara and Susan get copies of each brother's books.

MILTON (V.O.)

But then, so did mine.

The four head to the cashier. That moment, Milton's cell rings. He answers without checking the ID. He can hear Mrs. Wang's screaming voice on the other end.

MRS. WANG

Milton Medley!!

Sean shakes his head. Offers Milton his hand. Milton passes Sean the phone. Without another word, Sean unceremoniously hangs up on Mrs. Wang.

MILTON (V.O.)

Exit Mrs. Wang.

INT. THE CHINESE GARDENS

Milton, Cara, Sean, and Susan share dried mangos and green tea in the afternoon sun. Their recently purchased books rest on the table.

MILTON (V.O.)

And finally, I took us to the Chinese Gardens, where we shared the first of many beautiful days. Exit Cara, Susan, Sean. And me.

They toast. Sip their tea.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END