WITHIN THESE WALLS

Written by

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INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The camera activates. The camera moves around in an amateur manner indicating a home video. The camera faces a young Hispanic man in his early 20s, STEVEN, he smiles.

    STEVEN
    (to camera)
    Here we are! Finally moved into our brand new apartment.

Steven flips the camera to show the apartment off.

    STEVEN (CONT’D)
    It’s allll ours.

Steven continues to show the apartment and he pans over to show a Caucasian male in his mid 20’s, KENT, on the couch.

    STEVEN (CONT’D)
    And he’s all mine.

Kent gives out a laugh as Steven moves towards him with camera still in his hand.

    STEVEN (CONT’D)
    Hold on.

Steven moves the camera around and points it towards himself as he sits next to KENT.

    STEVEN (CONT’D)
    And here’s the man of the hour, who helped get us this fancy new apartment with his fancy new job.

    KENT
    Oh shut up.

    STEVEN
    Hm. Gimme a kiss.

Steven turns his head and Kent leans in and kisses him. Steven lets out a smiling chuckle.

    STEVEN (CONT’D)
    (playfully)
    But he’s an alright kisser.

Kent lets out a challenged sound.

    KENT
    Come here.
He pulls in Steven for another kiss.

FADE OUT.

Muffled sounds of tires zooming across wet pavement.

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Steven crouches against the small stone wall that lies planted in a small patch of grass.

He cries quietly to himself as he remains alone in the area, separated from so much life just a few yards behind him in the active nightclub.

His phone glows in his hands - “Please leave your message after the-” Steven ends the call, the name “Cindy” remaining on the screen momentarily.

Steven puts the phone down on the grass and slowly lifts himself up, walking up the small hill of grass towards the lonesome road ahead of him.

Whoosh!

Another vehicle passes by the desolate back road. Time slows down.

Steven takes more steps leading him onto the cold pavement of the sidewalk adjacent to the road. It’s difficult to concentrate, but he hears the faint sound of a motor approaching.

Every second that passes feels like minutes for him.

Another step.

Steven’s mind is numb.

One more step.

The muffled noise of tires and steel get louder.

The intensity of lights increases in his eyes.

A few feet behind him, in the grass, his phone illuminates with the words “Incoming Call- Cindy.”

Steven does not hear it. A hand reaches out. Steven steps into the street.
The strong hand grabs Steven’s shirt and pulls him back one step.

With a gasp, time resumes at normal speed. The vehicle speeds past Steven without hesitation. His feet planted still on the very edge of the sidewalk.

The hand releases it’s grip. Steven stays frozen for a moment, one more tear streaming down his face.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I’m on borrowed time.

The phone illuminates one last time, with the words “One missed call: Cindy”

DENIAL

3
INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM – DAY

PRESENT DAY.

The alarm clock sounds loudly until Steven’s hand slams down on it. Steven gets out of bed and grabs his clothes for the interview.

INTERCUT:

4
INT. OFFICE – DAY

Steven sits across from the OFFICE MANAGER with his back straight and his posture poised.

OFFICE MANAGER
So tell me a little about yourself.

STEVEN
Well, I’ve kept two jobs before today, first one for 7 years, and the last one for 2 before the layoffs.

5
INT. APARTMENT, BATHROOM – DAY

Steven stands in front of the bathroom mirror, with a giant bruise on his right eye. He pauses for a moment.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I’m very resourceful and am a quick problem solver.
Steven begins to place concealer on the bruises.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

OFFICE MANAGER
It says here you’ve never worked in an office setting before.

STEVEN
No. Mostly retail. But I’m a quick study.

INT. APARTMENT, BATHROOM - DAY

Steven continues to cover up his bruises in the mirror.

OFFICE MANAGER (V.O.)
Have you ever been faced with a challenge you could not meet?

STEVEN (V.O.)
I like to think of every day as a new challenge. And so far, I’ve made it through each and every one of them.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

OFFICE MANAGER
Can you think of a specific example, where you met or exceeded in solving a difficult problem?

Steven remains silent for a moment.

STEVEN
I often... Find myself in situations where I have to be quick on my feet. Meet demands that are required of me, while being quick as well as efficient. Once I had a very irate customer who demanded a lot from me, things I couldn’t offer. And even though I was unable to give them all of the things they needed, I ensured, to the best of my abilities, that they left with what they could and that they felt like they were being cared for.
The office manager writes down a note onto his note pad and smiles at Steven.

OFFICE MANAGER
(standing up and offering hand)
Okay. Thank you for coming in and you’ll be contacted soon.

Steven reciprocates.

STEVEN
(smiling)
Thank you.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Steven travels through the path in the apartment complex, back from his interview. He meanders through the sidewalk pensively when he hears a familiar voice. He looks up to see his elderly neighbor, MARIE, taking out two large trash bags.

MARIE
Hello!

Steven sees her struggling with the bag.

STEVEN
Ohp! Lemme help you with that.

Marie graciously refuses.

MARIE
Oh no thank you sweetie, I’m fine.

STEVEN
I’m not doing anything right now Marie, at least give me one of those bags.

MARIE
Oh okay fine, if you insist.

Marie hands Steven one of the trashbags. He feels the weight of it.

STEVEN
Marie why is it every time I see you, you’re always trying to lug around some ridiculously large item?
MARIE
Oh, well, I’ll usually wait by the window, so when I see you two coming, I can con you into taking out my trash for me.

Steven laughs and walks along side her in the opposite direction of his original trajectory.

MARIE (CONT’D)
You look nice.

STEVEN
Oh thank you, I just came back from an interview.

MARIE
Oh how nice! Well good luck I hope you get it.

STEVEN
Very sweet of you, thank you.

Marie lightly taps Steven’s torso with her free hand.

MARIE
Hey maybe when you get your job, you’ll make some friends.

STEVEN
What, and give up scrapbooking with my cute little neighbor?

MARIE
Oh hush up

STEVEN
Don’t you know? We gay couples love little old lady neighbors. It’s a thing. Makes us feel like we have our very own Golden Girl.

Marie lets out a hearty laugh.

MARIE
Oh shut up! Well I think I still have a few of your pictures you left behind last time, in case you wanted to take it back up on your spare time.

STEVEN
What are you kidding, that was so mind-numbing.
MARIE
Some Golden Girl you are.

Steven lets out a small chuckle as they continue their stroll to deposit the bags.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Steven lets out a huge sigh as he drops his keys onto the table in the living room and heads into his bedroom to change.

INT. APARTMENT, BATHROOM - DAY

Steven finishes putting on his shirt as he glances in the mirror to see his bruise seeping through the cover up. He grabs the foundation and gently adds on a little more. As he finishes, he hears a knock at the door and turns around in curiosity.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Steven opens the door, not sure of what to expect on the other side. As he opens it, he is taken aback as his friend, CINDY, mid 20’s African American female stands at the open doorway.

STEVEN (pleasant surprise)
Cindy.

CINDY
Hey! Remember me?

STEVEN (laughs)
Oh my god, yes come in.

Cindy walks into the door and Steven gives her a welcoming embrace.

STEVEN (CONT’D) (breaking the hug)
How are you?

CINDY
I’m good, thanks. You?

STEVEN
Oh, great.
CINDY
I was in the area and I was thinking about you, and I thought I’d pop by and see if you were home.

STEVEN
Of course! Make yourself comfortable.

Steven beckons Cindy inside and as he journeys into the kitchen, Cindy quietly observes her surroundings.

CINDY
Wow. You’ve really spruced this place up since I was last here.

STEVEN
(passing laugh)
Yea, it was mostly Kent, he has an eye for this sorta thing.

Steven begins unpacking cooking supplies from their places and begins preparing a meal.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
So how are things? Are you still with Rick?

CINDY
 stil interested in decor
Uh.. No actually, that ended a while ago. How about you? How are things with you and Kent?

Steven cuts into a few carrots with precision.

13 INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Flashback.
A flying vase shatters on impact against the wall.

14 INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY
Present day.
Steven continues to cut the vegetables with certainty. A voice pops into his head.
STEVEN (V.O.)
Go ahead. Tell her.

Steven cuts into a new carrot.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Flashback.

Steven sits in a retreated posture. Arms crossed and body small. Kent sits close to him and hugs him tightly, apologetically. Steven’s body language withdraws from Kent, but Kent only pulls him in closer.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY
SLAM! SLAM! The sound of the slicing resonates in Steven’s ears.

STEVEN (V.O.)
She’s here for a reason. Tell her the truth.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT
Flashback.

Steven rewashes the same plate over and over as his emotions seep out through his face. He cries over the running water and quickly stifles his emotions as Kent passes behind him to grab an item from the refrigerator.

Kent closes the fridge door and nonchalantly exits the kitchen. Steven continues to rewash the same plate.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY
Present day.

SLSHHH! SLSHHH! Steven is in a hypnotic daze, unaware that he is avoiding the question.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Tell her what you’ve become.

CINDY
(jarring)
-Steven?
Steven is snapped out of his trance. He looks up at her from the cutting board.

STEVEN
I’m so sorry what did you say?

CINDY
I asked how things were with you and Kent.

STEVEN
Oh.
(smiles)
Everything’s great. He’s been very supportive since I got laid off. Very patient with me.

Steven struggles to keep his gentle smile.

CINDY
That’s good to hear, but I’m sorry you still haven’t found a new job yet.

STEVEN
I had an interview today actually! So fingers crossed.

CINDY
Oh great, how did you do?

Steven nods his head.

STEVEN
I think I did pretty good.

CINDY
Well I hope you get it.

STEVEN
Thanks. It’s not really a high paying job or anything, so even if I don’t it’s no big deal.

Steven slides the vegetables into a bowl, and travels across the kitchen to grab more cooking items.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
So what’s new with you? Tell me everything please.
CINDY
Well, I finally got my nursing degree, and I’m working over at St Mark’s. I’m getting major hours, but I find myself exhausted constantly. David tells me it’ll get better, but at this point, it’s like I don’t knowww...

Steven tries to hide his reaction to hearing David’s name.

CINDY (CONT’D)
(pause)
David says hi by the way.

Steven takes a moment before speaking.

STEVEN
Oh. Tell him I said-
(beat)
How is David?

CINDY
He’s good. He’s been working a lot too. He misses you, says things just seem duller without you around.

STEVEN
(colder)
Cindy-

CINDY
I’m sorry. I don’t mean anything by it.

STEVEN
Yeah, I just- I’d prefer not to talk about him right now. Not here, in Kent’s house.

CINDY
Well it’s your house too.

STEVEN
You know what I mean.

CINDY
Sorry, didn’t mean to bring him up.

STEVEN
(shrugs it off)
Oh don’t worry about it.
Steven continues to prepare things in the kitchen.

    STEVEN (CONT’D)
    Kent wouldn’t be happy if he found out we were talking about him is all.

There is a pregnant pause. Steven offers no follow up to their conversation and continues to prepare the meal.

    CINDY
    Well, hey it looks like you’re busy, I don’t want to keep you.

    STEVEN
    Oh! Well I mean, I love that you’re here, but I really do need to finish this.

    CINDY
    Okay. I’ll come back another time.

    STEVEN
    Yea, definitely!

Steven comes around from the kitchen into the living room.

    STEVEN (CONT’D)
    Here, let me walk you out.

    CINDY
    (opening door)
    I got it.

Steven stops where he is with an “ohp.”

    CINDY (CONT’D)
    (with a smile)
    Bye.

    STEVEN
    (with a smile)
    Bye.

Cindy closes the door behind her. Steven stands there alone in the living room.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN – NIGHT

Kent leans against the kitchen counter as Steven places the finishing touches on the main course. Kent comes up from behind Steven and hugs him warmly.
KENT
(reaching in for a carrot)
You really think they’ll hire you?

Steven shrugs.

STEVEN
We’ll see. I’m still looking for other backups in case this one doesn’t work out.

Kent exits his backwards embrace and returns to the kitchen counter. He pops the carrot into his mouth.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
But getting it would be great. Plus the benefits, dear God those benefits.

Kent goes back behind Steven for another carrot.

KENT
(reaching out)
Well, just try to stay realistic about this one okay honey?

Kent almost grabs another roasted carrot when Steven gently smacks his hand away.

STEVEN
Stop it necio!

KENT
Awh! But I love your cooking too much.

STEVEN
You’re going to ruin the presentation of it! Go sit down, I’ll bring it right out.

KENT
Are you almost done?

STEVEN
Almost.

Kent leans back up against the counter. Steven turns back towards him.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Pues sientate!
KENT
I’ll wait till you’re done! I like being in here with you.

STEVEN
Awh.

Steven gives a very soft punch to Kent’s shoulder.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
You only wanna make sure I don’t spike your dish.

Kent gives out a laugh.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Oh! By the way, guess who came by to visit me today?

KENT
Who?

STEVEN
Cindy. My old friend you remember.

KENT
Is that the one that’s friends with that sissy.

STEVEN
If by sissy you mean David, yes. But she was my friend first so...

KENT
Hm. What did she want?

STEVEN
Well she hasn’t been over in forever, so she just wanted to catch up and talk.

KENT
Talk about what?

STEVEN
I don’t know. Stuff.

KENT
About David.

STEVEN
Kent, stop. She didn’t even bring him up.
KENT
So you brought him up then.

STEVEN
Nobody brought him up Kent.

KENT
Really? I find that hard to believe, since last time that bitch was in here all she kept talking about was how much he fucking loved you and shit.

Steven stops what he’s doing and turns to completely face Kent. Steven places his hands on Kent’s face, who slightly turns away from him.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
(pulling Kent’s face back)
Hey.

Kent slightly resists, Steven pulls slightly harder.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Hey.
(Kent now looks directly at him)
Why are you being like this? You don’t need to feel threatened.

KENT
I just don’t like her coming in here filling your head up with stories.

STEVEN
There aren’t any stories Kent. She just told me about her new job, David didn’t even come up I promise.

KENT
Whatever.

STEVEN
Kent, look at me. Where am I at right now? Hm? Am I over at David’s? No. I’m here. With you. Because I chose you. Because I love you. There’s no need to be jealous. There’s no competition.

Steven kiss Kent a gentle kiss on the lips and then turns back to finish decorating the main course.
STEVEN (CONT’D)
Look it’s almost done. Go sit down, I’ll serve it for you.

Kent hoists himself off of the counter and walks behind Steven.

KENT
I told you I didn’t want that meddling bitch here anymore.

STEVEN
Please don’t call her that. She’s my friend, please respect that.

Kent gets very close to Steven’s side and talks into his face.

KENT
You heard me though right? I don’t want that fucking nosy cunt bitch here anymore.

Steven ignores Kent, refusing to give in.

KENT (CONT’D)
(rubs Steven’s face)
Hey what’s that?

Steven pulls away in annoyance.

STEVEN
Stop that.

KENT
(laughs)
Is that makeup? Why do you still have that on? I didn’t know I was dating a girl.

Kent rubs his face a little more forcefully with his thumb. Steven recoils in pain.

STEVEN
(pulls away)
Stop it!

Kent chuckles.

KENT
Wash that shit off, who are you fooling?
Kent licks his thumb and goes in to rub Steven’s face one more time. Steven quickly reacts and smacks away Kent’s hand with force.

Kent hesitates for a moment and then shoves Steven forcefully away from him. In response, Steven instinctively turns and slaps Kent across the face.

There is a moment of thick tension between the two.

STEVEN
I’m sorr-

Kent shoves his palm into Steven’s jaw, grasping it firmly, while forcefully thrusting him backwards into the stove.

KENT
(closely)
I really thought we were going to have a nice night tonight. But you continually test my fucking patience, and I try Steven. I try so fucking hard, but you make it so difficult to not get pissed off.

Steven stands still, unable to control the shaking of his hands.

KENT (CONT’D)
I’m going to sit down. We’re going to have dinner, and we’re going to bed. Don’t antagonize me, don’t try to pick another fight with me, because I really want to keep my promise. Can you do that?

Steven meagerly nods his head.

KENT (CONT’D)
Good.

Kent releases Steven and walks out of the kitchen. Steven remains there for a moment, pondering.

INT. APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Steven places the meatloaf onto Kent’s plate and sets it down in front of him. Steven then builds his own plate and sits opposite of Kent. Kent quietly cuts into his food and shoves it into his mouth.

STEVEN
So how was work today?
Kent does not respond. He just continues to eat his food.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
So you like the food then?

Kent still does not respond. Steven stares at Kent in quiet desperation as he tries to elicit a response from him.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Kent, please. I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have snapped at you like that, I’ve just been on edge lately. I really... I’m sorry.

KENT
Can you pass me the salt please? It could use more flavor.

STEVEN
Kent, God, please don’t do this. Let’s just-

KENT
(slower)
Salt please?

Steven stops talking. He gets up and hands the salt to Kent.

KENT (CONT’D)
Thank you.

STEVEN
You’re welcome.

Steven sits back down at his spot.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
So... How was your day?

Kent does not respond. Steven sits there for a moment and then briskly stands up.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Excuse me.

Steven walks out of the dining room, Kent does not look up.

INT. APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steven sits down on the closed toilet. He stares off for a moment before his emotions betray him. He tries to hold in his pain, but it escapes in the form of a quiet sob.
Tears stream down his face, as he covers his mouth to avoid from making any noise.

INT. APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - NIGHT
Kent continues to ravage his meal.

INT. APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT
Steven finishes his sob and tries without ease to collect himself. He remains there for a moment and then stands up from the toilet and flushes.

FADE OUT.

ANGER

EXT. PARK - DAY

STEVEN
What did I do to deserve you?

FLASHBACK.
The sun shines down and gives an orange glow to the green leaves as they band together to create a safe haven for two young lovers taking refuge in their own world. Steven and Kent lay in a patch of shaded park grass. Kent breaks their kiss and caresses Steven’s face.

KENT
Well, you let me take you out.

STEVEN
(laughs)
I guess I did do this to myself didn’t I?

Steven leans in and gives Kent another quick peck on the lips.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
I’m gonna be late for work.

KENT
You’re gonna leave me here all by myself?
STEVEN
(chuckles)
Yes. And you stay right here, until
I come back for you.

KENT
Gawh.

Steven gives Kent one more peck.

STEVEN
Until next time.

Steven turns to stand up from their lounged position, Kent
playfully grabs his arm and pulls him back towards the
ground. Kent kisses Steven. Steven laughs it off and turns to
leave again. Kent, still grabbing Steven, pulls him towards
him again.

KENT
Hey, where you going?

Kent kisses Steven again.

STEVEN
Okay last one.

Steven turns to leave again and Kent turns him one last time,
this time kissing him passionately and grabbing his head and
embracing him tightly. Kent slowly pulls away.

KENT
Stay.

STEVEN
I wish I could.

Kent loosens his hold of Steven and with a smile, Steven
moves his hand down Kent’s chest. Kent smiles back at him and
continues to watch as Steven stands and walks away. Steven
can’t hold in his smile as he walks out of the park and
towards his car.

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM – DAY

Present Day.

Steven opens his eyes as he awakens in their bed, Kent facing
away from him. Steven quietly gets out from under the sheet
so as not to disturb Kent and walks out of the room.
INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Steven enters the kitchen and begins working. He takes the full trashbag out of the can and places it on the kitchen floor. Steven shakes out the new bag to place in the can when a memory flashes in Steven’s mind.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The light intensifies. A strong hand pulls Steven back onto the curb.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

STEVEN (V.O.)
I’m on borrowed time.

Steven grabs a pan and places it on the stove. Steven turns to open the refrigerator for ingredients. Another memory flashes in his mind.

INT. DAVID’S KITCHEN - DAY

Steven’s memory is a dreamlike moment. The sun shines bright orange. DAVID, 20’s, male with a kind face, stands against the counter slicing vegetables on a cutting board. Steven remembers the warmth of the moment.

INT. KENT’S KITCHEN - DAY

Crack! Steven cracks open an egg and allows it to bleed into the pan before him. The sizzle of the eggs rings in his ears.

INT. DAVID’S KITCHEN - DAY

David feeds a bite of the omelette to Steven. Steven judges his work and nods his head in approval. Steven feeds David a piece of his meal.

INT. KENT’S KITCHEN - DAY

Steven places the cooked eggs onto a solid white plate. Steven carelessly tosses the pan into the sink, causing a clatter.
INT. DAVID’S KITCHEN – DAY

David splashes Steven with water from the sink and Steven dries the dishes. Steven lets out a shocked giggle and then reaches into the sink to return the favor.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN – DAY

Steven rubs his face with his palm as he turns on the faucet with his free hand. He is taken away from his thoughts.

KENT (O.S.)
What’s all that noise?

Steven looks over and sees Kent rubbing his eyes as he walks into the kitchen area.

STEVEN
Good morning.

KENT
Can’t even sleep in anymore, Jesus.

Kent grabs the trashbag laying on the tiled floor and heads to the door. Steven stares blankly. Entranced. In an instant, he is surrounded by fire. Embers crackle around him as he remains still, unaffected by the flames.

KENT (CONT’D)
I’ll be right back.

Kent closes the door behind him. The flames have vanished. Steven lets out a deep breath and turns off the faucet water.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX – DAY

Kent tosses the trashbag over the wall and sees his neighbor, Marie, struggling to drag a small dresser on wheels over a ledge to her apartment.

KENT
Marie? Marie, what are you doing?

MARIE
Oh hey Kent, I’m just trying to get this damn dresser into my apartment.

KENT
(grabbing the dresser)
Here let me help you.
MARIE
Oh you’re such a dear.

KENT
Doing some redecorating?

MARIE
Hm? Oh! No, my brother just passed and I inherited this hunk of junk from him.

KENT
Oh. I’m sorry for your loss.

MARIE
Oh don’t be, he was an asshole.

Kent reacts with a taken back expression instead of words.

MARIE (CONT’D)
You know, while I have you, I do have a favor to ask regarding my sink.

Kent and Marie continue to walk towards her apartment.

36 INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN – DAY

Steven places the pan on the top rack of the dishwasher. As he sets it, he is overwhelmed by a familiar feeling. He crouches down to the washer’s level and massages his forehead.

37 INT. DESOLATE ROOM – DAY

Steven remains in the same crouched position. The wallpaper of this dismal room burns around him. The flames grow louder. It is all he hears.

38 INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Flashback.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Steven peeks his face through the crevice of the open door. An officer stands on the other side.

STEVEN
Can I help you Officer?
POLICE OFFICER
I’m here about a domestic disturbance that was called in to us. Is everything okay in there?

STEVEN
What? Yes, everything is fine. We were just having a small argument.

POLICE OFFICER
Do you mind if I come inside? Check for myself?

STEVEN
Sure.

Steven opens the door and steps aside, granting the officer passage. The officer looks around at the apartment, everything is tidy and organized.

The officer notices a few uncollected shards of glass in the corner of the room behind Steven.

POLICE OFFICER
(turns to Steven)
Where’s your partner?

KENT (O.S.)
I’m right here Officer.

Kent walks into the living room, with his hair wet and speckles of drying water across his face. Kent makes a passing glance at Steven, who feels a jolt through his system.

CUT TO:

39 MOMENTS LATER

The officer talks quietly to Steven, Kent no longer in the room.

POLICE OFFICER
This is the third time I’ve been here. If there’s anything wrong, tell me now and I can help you.

Steven inconspicuously draws his eyes to the open bedroom door, he sees Kent in the room. Kent looks in another direction, but Steven knows he is intently listening.
STEVEN
Everything is fine, but thank you for your concern.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Steven closes the door as the Officer leaves their home. Kent stands broadly a few feet behind him.

KENT
How many times you have to get them called on us?

Steven calmly turns around, without locking the door.

STEVEN
How many times are you going to cross the line?

KENT
Steven don’t start up with me again.

Kent approaches Steven, who’s demeanor stiffens. Kent reaches behind Steven and locks the door.

STEVEN
(calmly)
Or what? You going to keep me in line?

Kent chuckles and runs his fingers through Steven’s hair. Steven slightly flinches from the initial contact.

KENT
You’re feeling brave huh? Cuz your officer friend is outside.

Steven stands his ground, and darts his closer to Kent’s in a defensive manner.

STEVEN
Understand that the only reason you got away with hitting me in the past is because I allowed it.

Kent rolls his eyes and walks away from Steven. Dismissing the conversation.

KENT
I’m going to bed, you coming?
STEVEN
Don’t turn your back on me Kent. Or I will go back to that officer and tell him the truth.

Kent quickly turns around.

KENT
Yea? What truth? Your truth? That I’m the asshole who can’t stop beating on his man.

STEVEN
The truth that you’re an oafish brute that’s not smart enough to solve things with words so he uses his fists like a stubborn child throwing a tantrum.

KENT
Shut that fucking mouth of yours.

STEVEN
Oh no. Am I striking a nerve?

Kent reaches behind Steven and firmly grabs the back of his head by his hair. Kent moves in very close.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Go ahead. Prove me right big man.

KENT
I said shut that fucking mouth of yours. You want to call me a stubborn child, you’re a spoiled little brat. Sucking at my teat and taking everything I give you and still acting like the fucking victim.

Steven offers no rebuttal. He simply stares back, unflinching.

KENT (CONT’D)
I treat you right.

Kent uses his free hand to rub Steven’s back.

KENT (CONT’D)
You don’t seem to mind it at other times.

Kent positions himself for a kiss, Steven turns away.
KENT (CONT'D)
I think you like it.

STEVEN
I hate your fucking guts.

Kent lets the comment sink in. He’s hurt, and it shows.

KENT
Don’t say that to me.

Kent lets go of Steven’s head and takes a few steps back.

KENT (CONT'D)
You’re hurting my feelings.

STEVEN
(exasperated gasp)
Are you kidding me? You’re so goddamn dense Kent. Can’t even see past yourself-

Kent punches Steven in the mouth, causing his head to jolt back and his lips to bleed.

KENT
I told you to shut that fucking mouth

Kent goes back to the bedroom and Steven is left to wipe the blood from his mouth.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

PRESENT DAY.

Steven has not moved. He is still crouched against the open dishwasher.

EXT. MARIE’S APARTMENT - DAY

Kent wipes his hands on his shirt as he exits Marie’s apartment. Marie follows behind him.

KENT
Should be all fixed up now. If you have any more issues let me know.

Before heading through the door, he turns back to her.

KENT (CONT’D)
You have my number, right?
MARIE
No, I don’t think I do.

KENT
You got your phone?

MARIE
Oh yes. One moment.

Marie briskly heads to a small end table and grabs a flip phone from it, handing it to Kent.

MARIE (CONT’D)
Oh! Hold on for one moment while I go grab something.

Kent dials a few numbers into the cellphone as Marie disappears for a few moments. Kent closes the phone and Marie returns with a few photographs in her hands. Kent hands the phone over to Marie.

KENT
There, if you ever need me at anytime, just give me a call.

MARIE
Awh thank you! Steven wasn’t kidding about the whole Golden Girl thing.

KENT
What?

MARIE
Oh, forget about it dear. Here.

Marie hands the small photographs to Kent.

MARIE (CONT’D)
Steven left these here a long time ago, and as much as I don’t mind staring at your face, I won’t have anyone calling me a hoarder.

Kent gives a slight chuckle in response.

KENT
Alright, have a good one Marie.

MARIE
You too darling.

Kent exits the dimly lit apartment and heads back to his own.
Steven closes the door to the dishwasher as Kent enters the apartment. Kent walks over to Steven.

KENT
Smells good.

Kent drops the photographs onto the counter top in front of Steven. The top photograph being a singular photograph of Kent.

KENT (CONT’D)
Marie wanted me to give these back to you.

Kent goes to give Steven a peck and Steven reciprocates unenthusiastically.

KENT (CONT’D)
What’s wrong with you?

STEVEN
Nothing, I’m fine.

Kent give a moment’s hesitation before departing from Steven and approaching his cooked food.

KENT
Thank you.

STEVEN
You’re welcome.

Steven’s demeanor is apathetic. He exits the kitchen and walks into the living room.

Kent becomes bothered by Steven’s demeanor and calls to him from the kitchen.

KENT
Is it your thing again?

Without turning to face him, Steven responds with a small hint of bitterness in his voice.

STEVEN
You knew what you were getting into when you met me.
Kent takes his plate and heads through the living room into the adjacent dining area.

KENT
Yea, but it’s been so long at this point, you’d think you’d be over it by now.

Steven shakes his head, ignoring Kent. Kent places his plate down on the dining table and sits.

KENT
I mean, are you even trying? Or, is it just your convenient excuse when you want to act like this?

Steven quickly turns around.

STEVEN
What is wrong with you Kent? You know I can’t control it.

Kent throws his hands up from the plate sitting on their dining table.

KENT
What do you want from me Steven? You do this all the time, what am I supposed to do?

Fire.

STEVEN
Why are you belittling my emoti-

Kent sighs and waves his hand in dismiss at Steven.

KENT
Okay, okay. Don’t start, I don’t want to hear it. I just woke up and then I gotta deal with this, I’m just not in the mood for it right now.

STEVEN
Glad to hear you’re not in the mood for it.
KENT
Okay enough! The conversation is done, if you’re going to be in your mood, let’s just keep separate today.

Steven remains statuesque. Pondering. Deciding.

STEVEN
Maybe, we should stay separate.

KENT
(exhausted)
What?

STEVEN
I think we should break up.

KENT
(laughs)
Shut up.

STEVEN
I’m serious. I’m done with this.

Kent drops his fork onto the plate in frustration.

KENT
Oh yeah? Where are you going to go?

STEVEN
It doesn’t matter. We obviously shouldn’t be together. Look how fucking miserable we’ve become!

KENT
You have no money! Where are you going to go? Who’s going to take you in, you have no one.

STEVEN
I only have no one because you took them away from me!

Kent shakes his head in annoyance.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
You kept me from everyone I loved because you didn’t like them.

(beat)
-And I let you.

KENT
Whatever, you’re not leaving.
Steven quickly paces out of the area. Kent becomes slightly alarmed.

KENT (CONT’D)
Steven. Steven!

INT. CINDY’S ROOM - DAY

FLASHBACK.

Cindy lies lazily on her messy bed, in pajama clothing, while Steven, in softball attire, slowly swings a wooden bat, pantomiming hitting a ball in mid-air while standing in a wider stance.

CINDY
Steven! Stop! You’re gonna break something!

STEVEN
So what? We’ll just go to the dollar store and replace it. Broke ass.

CINDY
Shut up. Stop swinging that damn bat around.

Steven makes his motions slower, so as to appease Cindy without fully obeying.

STEVEN
Can you believe it sissy? A game that involves me playing with balls and sticks, then running for dear life. It’s like this sport was made for me.

Cindy laughs off his joke. Steven stands erect, and lightly tosses the bat in Cindy’s direction.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Here, you can have it.

CINDY
Tsk. What the hell am I supposed to do with this?

STEVEN
I don’t know! Shove it up your ass or something. I give you a gift and you’re like
(mocking)
(MORE)
Cindy inspects the wooden bat.

**CINDY**

Hm. It’s a little small for me.

She tosses it aside off the bed and leans up against one elbow.

**CINDY (CONT’D)**

Don’t you need it for your next game?

Steven tosses himself backwards onto the bed, leaning his back against the wall.

**STEVEN**

I don’t know I’m probably going to quit.

**CINDY**

Oh my god, can you ever stick with something for more than a week.

Steven shrugs his shoulders.

**STEVEN**

It just doesn’t interest me. I’m bored of it.

**CINDY**

Maybe if you stuck with it this time, it wouldn’t.

**STEVEN**

Yea, maybe if I found something worth sticking around for.

**CINDY**

So what’s your next hobby gonna be? Cooking.

**STEVEN**

*(scoffs)*

Yea, I can see it now. Me pacing back and forth in a cute little apron playing Holly Housewife— erh husband. *(beat)*

Ugh. Shoot me.
CINDY
(sing-song)
There’s always school

STEVEN
Yea, let me spend all my time and
effort to be in debt forever.

Steven shakes his head.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
I don’t wanna talk about this stuff
right now. You know what I do wanna
talk about?

CINDY
David?

STEVEN
(clutches chest)
DAVID!

Steven quickly grabs a hold onto Cindy’s leg.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Did you tell him I said hi yet?

CINDY
No, he hasn’t been in class!

STEVEN
Don’t you have his number?

CINDY
Well yea, but what I’m supposed to
text him, “hey my friend says hi.”

STEVEN
Yea? What’s wrong with that? Here
just send him a picture of this.

Steven contorts his face into a dorky smile.

CINDY
Oh my god. Stop.

STEVEN
Ask him if he likes uniforms.

CINDY
I won’t!

Steven continues to make an eager smile towards her.
CINDY (CONT’D)
(laughing)
Stop it!

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM – DAY

PRESENT DAY.

Steven briskly grabs a small duffle bag and crams in an array
of clothing from their dressers. Kent walks into the room,
his heart visibly sinking with each passing second. Kent
rushes to the bag and start to unpack Steven’s items.

KENT
Stop it. You’re being dramatic
Steven.

Steven does not respond, he grabs the items Kent unpacked and
throws them back into the duffle bag. Kent grows more
concerned.

KENT (CONT’D)
Steven, stop it. I’m sorry, please
stop.

Steven shakes his head.

STEVEN
(tearing up)
It doesn’t matter. We’re not good
for each other.

Kent gets to his knees and holds onto Steven’s legs.

KENT
Look, I’m sorry. I know I can be a
real big asshole sometimes, but I
don’t want you to go. I promise
I’ll try harder. I promise I won’t
lose my temper.

STEVEN
(on the verge of tears)
You can’t promise that.

Kent gets to his feet and paces back and forth.

KENT
(yells)
Fuck!
Kent closes his hands into a fist and swings, impacting with the side of his own temple. Steven is taken aback by this action.

STEVEN
Kent.

Kent continues to cry and hits himself again. Steven rushes to Kent and attempts to hold his arms down.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Stop it Kent!

Kent shakes Steven off of him.

KENT
I’m sorry! I don’t mean to be an asshole, I just get frustrated that I can’t help you. You get in your moods and I don’t know what to do and I feel useless! It kills me to see you like that.

Kent hits himself a few more times. Steven briefly looks away, finding it difficult to take in.

KENT (CONT’D)
I’m a fucking idiot. I don’t treat you right, I know that! You deserve better than me, but please don’t leave me because I’ll die if you’re not here.

Steven’s walls begins to crumble.

STEVEN
Kent, stop this.

KENT
I’m sorry I said those things. I do care about you, I don’t want to see you in pain.

Kent embraces Steven tightly and cries into his chest.

KENT (CONT’D)
I love you. Please stay.

Steven embraces Kent in return and places a hand on his head. Steven kisses the top of his head and nods his head as a tear rolls down his cheek.

STEVEN
Okay. Baby. I’ll stay.
The fire consumes the desolate room, the flames grow louder and louder.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
I’ll stay...

FADE OUT.

BARGAINING

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FLASHBACK.

"AYE VIDA MIA!"

"Amor de Mis Amores" by Sonora de Margarita begins to play as Steven presses play on the stereo perched on top of the counter.

Kent continues to unpack one of the many boxes stacked in their empty apartment.

Steven grabs a slice of pizza and takes a bite, tossing the slice back into the cardboard container as he shimmies his way over to Kent.

STEVEN
Dance with me white boy.

Kent chuckles and grabs another item from the moving box.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
No, no, no. Bailamos!

Steven grabs the item from Kent’s hand and places it back in the box. Steven grabs Kent’s hand and leads him to a more open area in the room as they start their dance.

Kent wraps his hand across Steven’s lower back and begins to dance with him. After a few steps, Kent twirls Steven away and then pulls him back.

They continue to dance and sway as they become more involved in the song.

“AMOR DE MIS AMORES...”

STEVEN (CONT’D)
White boy can dance!

KENT
Yea, and better than you.
Steven laughs and places his open palm on Steven’s chest.

STEVEN
Oh? Is that how we’re going to play it?

“QUE GANO CON DECIR QUE UN HOMBRE CAMBIO MI SUERTE...”

Kent embraces Steven and lifts him up from the ground.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
(laughs)
No!

Kent puts him back down and then grabs his arm and twists Steven around so that Steven’s torso is facing away from Kent. Kent wraps his arm across Steven’s chest and breathes into his ear. Steven smiles and Kent kisses his neck.

KENT
I love you.

STEVEN
I love you too.

Kent holds Steven as the song comes to an end and the final lyric echoes.

CUT TO: 44

“QUE NADIE SEPA MI SUFRIR...”

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Present Day.

Steven awakens from his daze and finds himself collapsed on the couch. He rubs his eyes and look at the watch on his wrist, popping out from underneath the yellow latex cleaning gloves.

STEVEN
(yawns)
Shit.

Steven gets ups and walks out of the living room to resume his cleaning duties.

INT. APARTMENT, BATHROOM - DAY

Steven wipes the glass cleaning solution from the mirror.
Steven places a raw chicken onto a sprayed foil tray, and gently slides it into the oven.

Steven vigorously scrubs the bathtub.

Steven’s hand shakes as he pours out a glass of orange juice for himself. His nerves racking as he tries to calmly take sips of the beverage.

Steven folds the pile of laundry haphazardly placed on the bedsheets.

Steven pauses in the living room and surveys the scene, checking if he missed any spots. He takes a moment to breathe.

FLASHBACK.

The same living room, quiet and still; only this time, it is occupied by two people. Steven and Cindy stand silently, not sure who should speak next.

CINDY
I don’t know what to say.

STEVEN
What is there to say? I’m sorry.

CINDY
This isn’t right. Steven, this isn’t right and you know that.

STEVEN
Look, if he’s not comfortable with you being here, I have to respect that. He’s my boyfriend, and I love him.
CINDY
Yes, but if he makes you choose
between your friends and him, he
doesn’t love you.

STEVEN
Tsk. You just don’t understand.

There is a pregnant pause between the two.

CINDY
When I said you should stick with
something, this isn’t what I had in
mind.

Steven shakes his head, arms folded, not able to maintain eye
contact with Cindy.

CINDY (CONT’D)
Steven if you need help I-

STEVEN
Cindy stop. I’m fine.

CINDY
But Steven, you don’t need someone
who’s goin-

STEVEN
What do you want me to do? Quit
this too? I can’t do that right
now. I need some stability in my
life for a while. I’m sorry. I’m
happy with him.

CINDY
But you’re not happy. I see it in-

STEVEN
Stop it!

Cindy is stunned by his outburst.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Please leave.

CINDY
Okay
(pause)
But if you need help. You call me
okay. You fucking call me.

Steven nods his head, still not looking at her.
CINDY (CONT’D)
I love you god damnit.

Steven doesn’t respond. Cindy walks forward and hugs Steven tightly. Steven breaks for a moment, but composes himself quickly before Cindy can see it. She pulls away and slowly walks towards the front door.

CINDY (CONT’D)
(opening door)
Bye.

Steven, arms folded and looking away, responds.

STEVEn
Bye.

Cindy solemnly closes the door behind her. Steven stands there alone in the living room.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Steven stares blankly at the front door. He turns his head and grabs the cellphone lying on the counter next to him. As he lifts it to chest level, a loud BEEP! from the oven snatches his attention. Steven places the phone back down.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DUSK

Steven places the aluminum tray with a roasted chicken from the stove onto the counter top.

INT. APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - DUSK

Steven lights two candles placed on the table and sets the decorations.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Steven places the plate of steaming food in front of Kent.

KENT
Thanks baby.

Steven leans in and kisses Kent on the lips.
STEVEN
You’re most welcome.

Steven makes his way to the opposite side of the table. Kent gestures the exuberant display in front of him.

KENT
What’s the special occasion?

STEVEN
(sitting down)
No occasion. I just thought it would be nice.

KENT
Well it is.

STEVEN
Glad you like it.

Kent digs into his meal. Steven begins to cut his chicken, when he pauses. Steven stands from his seat, Kent hesitates and looks up at Steven from his feeding position.

KENT
What is it?

Steven grabs his plate from the table and walks across. Steven pulls out the chair next to Kent and sets his plate down as he seats himself. Steven grabs Kent’s free hand and holds it tight.

STEVEN
I just want to be close to you.

Kent smiles back at him and continues to eat.

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INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Kent sits on the couch as Steven sits on top of him, straddled. They kiss passionately and breathe heavily as they become closer to each other.

STEVEN
I’m so proud of us

They continue to kiss, and speak in their breaks.

KENT
Are you?

STEVEN
I am.
Steven kisses Kent’s neck, who lets out a moan.

          KENT
Yes, I’m loving our new system.
Have you heard back from the interview?

Steven stops kissing Kent and caresses his hair.

          STEVEN
Not yet. I’m hoping I will by the weekend.

          KENT
What are you going to do once you start earning all that money?

          STEVEN
(smiles)
Save up and leave you obviously.

          KENT
(chuckles)
Shut up.

Steven smiles back and kisses Kent again, they speak in their breaks.

          KENT (CONT’D)
I don’t like you joking like that.

          STEVEN
Oh I’m sorry. Well hey I have an idea.

          KENT
What?

          STEVEN
Let’s think positive and say I do get this job, that means technically I could pay you back if we were to say.. Go out tonight?

Kent lets out an exhausted sigh.

          STEVEN (CONT’D)
It’s Latin night tonight, thought maybe we could go, for old times sake.

          KENT
Steven, I’m tired. I’ve had a long day.
Kent moves Steven from on top of him and gets up to walk towards the exit of the room. Steven opts to stand as well.

STEVEN
Okay. That’s fine. Maybe next week or something.

KENT
Yea, maybe.

Steven nods his head in response. Kent rolls his eyes.

KENT (CONT’D)
Are you going to get upset now?

STEVEN
No, I’m fine Kent. Really it’s okay. I don’t mind.

KENT
You sure?

STEVEN
Yeah.

KENT
Because you know, really, the only reason guys go out to those things is because they’re trying to find someone to sleep with. We don’t need to be involved with that shit, you got me.

STEVEN
Right.

KENT
I mean what do you need to be going to those things for, ya know?

STEVEN
Yeah, I get it Kent.

KENT
See now you’re making me feel guilty about it. Damn it Steven.

STEVEN
I’m fine Kent! I don’t understand why you’re getting upset, there’s no need to, everything is good.
KENT
No, you always do this. You’re doing that little passive aggressive shit that always gets under my skin.

STEVEN
(pause)
Don’t raise your voice at me Kent, I didn’t do anything wrong.

KENT
(frustrated)
Oh fuck off.

Kent disappears into the room and Steven collapses onto the couch, regretful.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Daydream.

Steven lays on top of a soft grass patch. The outside world doesn’t exist to him. He is surrounded by sounds of tranquility.

Birds **chirping**!
Winds **whooshing**!
Leaves **rustling**!

Steven lets out a content sigh.

The muffled sound of wheels approaching on wet pavement-

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Moments later, Steven’s attention is caught by Kent walking in with his jacket. Preparing to leave. Steven stands up in protest, but says nothing.

KENT
I’ll be back.

STEVEN
We were doing so well.

Kent ignores his statement and slams the door behind him. **SLAM**!
The lights intensify, then fade as a hand pulls on Steven’s clothing, forcing him back on the curve of the sidewalk. Steven is still in an emotional well of apathy and disillusionment. He turns around to see his savior, Kent. Steven analyzes this new face.

STEVEN
Who are you?

KENT
My name’s Kent. Are you okay?

Steven pauses, taking in the information.

STEVEN
I don’t think so.

Kent removes his jacket and wraps it around Steven.

KENT
C’mon, let’s get you somewhere safe.

As Kent and Steven walk down and away from the small grass hill, Steven’s phone vibrates as a second call from “Cindy” takes place, however due to their distance, Steven does not take notice.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are all drawn down, Steven is illuminated by his phone’s screen as he sits quietly in darkness. His face is solemn and lonely.

He hovers his finger above the “call” icon on Cindy’s name. His phone beeps with a new message. Steven looks down at it and opens it.

DAVID
(text)
Hey wasn’t expecting to hear from you anytime soon, how are you?

Steven goes to respond when the lock to the front door starts to stir. Steven quickly looks over and turns on the living room light as he goes to face Kent on the other side.

Kent manages to get the door open as he stumbles into the frame. Kent starts to fall towards the ground as he enters.
Steven relieves his domineering stance and quickly rushes to catch Kent before he hits the ground. Kent, now apparently sloppily drunk, looks over to Steven.

KENT
(joyously)
Stevie...

STEVEN
C’mon let’s get you up.

Steven uses his leg to close the front door. Steven begins to carry Kent towards the bedroom. Kent stands up and then begins to collapse back down.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Whoap-

KENT
(laughs)
You’re always taking care of me aren’t you baby?

Kent falls to the ground, Steven kneels down and tries to lift him starting with his torso. Kent caresses Steven’s face, who instantly stops tying to lift him.

KENT (CONT’D)
You’re always there for me. No matter how bad I am to you.

Steven’s brows grow closer together as Kent continues to speak.

KENT (CONT’D)
I hope it’s not because you think you owe me your life. That’s no reason to let me be so horrible to you.

Steven shakes his head, fighting back tears.

STEVEN
It’s okay, sometimes you can’t help yourself.

KENT
And if I’m being honest, sometimes—well not sometimes—very rarely—very rarely—I wish I hadn’t pulled you out of the street—

STEVEN
Oh god dammit Kent.
KENT
But I think about what a waste of a beautiful human life that would be if I hadn’t.

Kent presses his forehead against Steven’s temple.

KENT (CONT’D)
But then again, I guess that means you do kinda owe me huh?

Kent lets out a chuckle.

STEVEN
(voice crack)
C’mon let’s get you to bed.

Steven forcibly lifts Kent up to his feet and carries him, one arm over his shoulder, towards the bedroom.

KENT
I wish I knew how to be good to you.

STEVEN
(quietly)
Me too

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steven manages to get Kent to the bedroom. Kent collapses onto the bed and Steven caresses his head.

KENT
You’re too good to me.

STEVEN
I know.

Steven kisses Kent on the forehead.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Good night baby.

Steven turns to walk out before Kent grabs Steven’s wrist.

KENT
Please don’t leave me.

Steven stares at him, unable to think of words.

KENT (CONT’D)
Let me hold you.
Kent tugs Steven towards him, Steven doesn’t resist and crawls into the bed with Kent.

The couple lay on their sides and Kent wraps his arm across Steven’s chest. Kent takes in Steven’s smell and kisses his neck.

   KENT (CONT’D)
   I love you.

Steven remains silent for a moment and furrows his brows.

   STEVEN
   I love you too.

Kent falls to sleep peacefully, as Steven lies there in his arms, wide awake.

FADE OUT.

DEPRESSION

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY
A white glow surrounds the room as Steven wraps his arm across Kent’s chest. The two lie in bed together, Kent on his back and Steven on his side. Steven looks lovingly into Kent’s eyes, who reciprocates. Steven smiles and kisses Kent on the lips.

   STEVEN (V.O.)
   I’m on borrowed time.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT
The lights intensify. Steven finds himself back on the edge of the sidewalk.

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY
Steven moves his legs over to either side of Kent’s hips and they kiss more passionately.

   STEVEN (V.O.)
   My minutes are wasted, plagued by this disease

Cuts. Steven and Kent make love in an intimate and caring manner.
STEVEN (V.O.)
It numbs my senses with its intensity

Steven lets out a soft moan as Kent flips their positions and Kent is now on top of Steven, facing him, they continue their passionate entanglement.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Its roar as loud as a wild fire.

71  INT. DESOLATE ROOM - DAY
The deafening flames grow along the tattered wallpaper.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Its pressure as powerful as drowning.

72  INT. AMBIGUOUS ROOM - DAY
Steven lies in the fetal position in a rusted bathtub. He remains still as he is consumed by a viscous black liquid.

73  EXT. STREET - NIGHT
Kent wraps his coat around Steven and walks with him back down the hill.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Its effect too ravenous to share.

74  INT. STEVEN’S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Steven, still wearing his clothes from the night, lies down in his bed.

STEVEN (V.O.)
So you suffer quietly.

Kent lies down next to Steven, and wraps a nurturing arm around him.

STEVEN (V.O.)
So as not to disturb.
Steven and Kent both climax together. After a brief moment they chuckle and kiss.

STEVEN (V.O.)
You dare not share your anguish.

Kent closes his eyes, Steven stealthily sobs, with no noise emanating from his action.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Lest you be judged for it.

Kent kisses Steven again, softly.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I should have died that night.

Kent rolls over and Steven rolls back onto his side to cuddle him-

CUT TO:

Steven wakes up with a slight gasp. He finds his arm outstretched to the other half of the bed, occupied by rustled sheets and nothing more. Steven digs his fingers into the empty sheets.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I’m on borrowed time.

Steven’s phone sits on the counter and displays one voice message.

OFFICE MANAGER (V.O.)
Hello Steven, this is C & R Law Firm calling you back regarding the position you interviewed for.
INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Steven lays in his bed, shades drawn, and sheets up to his face.

OFFICE MANAGER (V.O.)
We would like to thank you for the interest you have shown in working for our company.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room sits in overcast lighting, still and silent.

OFFICE MANAGER (V.O.)
But unfortunately we have decided to go in a different direction in terms of filling the position. Thank you so much for applying and your application will be filed in case there are any openings in the future.

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Steven continues to lie in bed, using all of his effort to turn his position, lying on his back and staring up at the ceiling.

INT. STEVEN’S BEDROOM - DAY

FLASHBACK.

Steven lies on his back, staring up at the ceiling. Thick black blankets are tacked into the wall to prevent any light from seeping into the room.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

There is a knock on the bedroom door. Steven does not respond to it. The door opens and Cindy peeks her head inside.

CINDY
Hey Stevie... How are you feeling?

Steven does not respond.

CINDY (CONT’D)
I brought you something.
Cindy walks into the room, the open door now allowing sunlight to enter. Steven courteously sits up as she travels across the room with her hand behind her back.

CINDY (CONT’D)  
(revealing her hand)  
Ta-da!

Cindy presents a wire whisk with a pink bow wrapped around it.

CINDY (CONT’D)  
For when you inevitably take up cooking, so I don't have to keep eating fast food all the time.

Steven smiles and gives out a breathy chuckles. He grabs the gift and holds it in his hands.

STEVEN  
Thank you.

Cindy sits down on the edge of the bed.

CINDY  
How are you? Do you feel like getting out of the house today?

Steven shrugs.

STEVEN  
Not really. I don’t think I’m up for it.

CINDY  
Well I have good news.

Steven looks up from the whisk.

CINDY (CONT’D)  
I texted David, and told him you said hi.

Steven lets out a laugh.

STEVEN  
Oh my god, no you didn’t.

CINDY  
I did! And he remembers you, says you’re cute.
STEVEN
(blushing)
Shut up. I hate you. Oh my god.

CINDY
So when you’re feeling better, you guys can go out on a date.

STEVEN
Yea. I wouldn’t want him to see me like this, he’d run for the hills.

CINDY
Tsk. No he wouldn’t. He’s a good guy.

Steven smiles at Cindy, still fidgeting with the whisk in his hands.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Steven paces back and forth. He sneaks glances at the clock on the wall and fidgets with his fingers.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Steven freezes. He can only stare at the front door. There is a moment of silence.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

He takes in a large nervous breath, and shakily heads to the door.

INT. APARTMENT, DOOR WAY - DAY

Steven is temporarily blinded by the overwhelming sunlight coming in from the outside. As Steven’s eyes adjust to the influx of light, he makes out the figure of a familiar face. DAVID, 20’s, male with a kind face, turns to face Steven.

DAVID
Hey.

STEVEN
(smile)
David.

David returns the smile. There is a warmth between them.
STEVEN (CONT’D)
Would you like to come in?

David’s face lights up.

DAVID
Sure.

Steven gives a small smile.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM – DAY

Steven walks David into the apartment as Steven struggle to overcome his anxiety.

DAVID
Where’s, uh...

STEVEN
Kent’s at work.

DAVID
(relief)
Oh.

STEVEN
How have you been?

DAVID
(looking around)
Uh.. Good! Yea I’m working with Cindy over at the hospital.

STEVEN
Oh yea that’s right.

Steven is noticeably concerned.

DAVID
Hey you alright?

Steven looks him in the eyes, his face betrays him for only a moment.

STEVEN
Yes David, I’m fine.

Steven briefly loses his composure, and then regains it. Steven quickly turns away from David and then places his palms into his hair.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
I’m sorry.
David approaches Steven and touches his arm. Steven stops in his tracks and then leaps on David and embraces him tightly, sobbing quietly.

David pauses for moment and hugs Steven in return, tightly. Steven quietly cries into his shoulder.

Kent gets into his Cadillac CTS and places a bunch of roses neatly wrapped together on the passenger seat. Kent turns the ignition on and begins to drive away.

Steven slightly pushes away from David and shakes off his tears.

STEVEN
I’m sorry.

DAVID
Don’t apologize. what’s wrong?

Steven shakes his head letting tears leak from his trying eyes.

DAVID (CONT’D)
(places hand on back)
C’mon sit down and talk to me.

STEVEN
I can’t.

DAVID
C’mon sit down.

David sits himself down on the sofa while Steven still stands, facing him.

STEVEN
Please don’t be so nice to me. I couldn’t handle it.

David extends his hand out to Steven, who stares at it with hesitance and pain. He lets out stifled cries and reaches out for it. Their palms embrace slowly.
EXT. STREET - DAY

Kent continues to drive down the street on his way back home.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

David holds Steven’s hand on his thighs and rubs his back as he speaks.

STEVEN
I feel like a prisoner in my own home. I- I-... 

DAVID
Steven, if he’s not right for you maybe you should end it. It’s not normal for someone to make you feel this way.

STEVEN
What if it is?

There is a pause.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
What if the reason you and I didn’t work out was because you were too good for me? What if I crave it? What other reason is there that I would allow this?

DAVID
Don’t say that, you deserve better, you said it yourself we just weren’t meant to be involved romantically.

STEVEN
But what if I do this to myself? Have you ever had your situation finally figured out, a calm in the storm, and thought “wow, I may finally be happy after all...”

Steven pauses for a moment.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
And then comes life knocking on your door, to say to you, “don’t you dare get comfortable. I’m not through with you yet.”

David does not have a response.
STEVEN (CONT’D)
What if things go badly because I always expect them too? Because I don’t believe, deep in my heart, that I truly deserve happiness, and this is the best I will ever do.

David continues to rub Steven’s back.

DAVID
When are you going to realize that’s not true? You’re a great person Steven. Why wouldn’t you think you deserve to be happy?

Steven places a finger on David’s jawline. Steven goes to respond, but instead leans in, being met by David for a kiss.

EXT. STREET - DAY
Kent continues to drive through traffic on his way home.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY
Steven, now straddled on top of David, kisses him intently and passionately. Steven gyrates, forcing a moan out of David. Steven continues to attempt to lose himself with David.

   STEVEN
   (whispering)
   Tell me you love me.

   DAVID
   I love you Steven.

Steven continues to kiss David. His motions becoming slightly more aggressive and Steven’s kiss becomes more vigorous.

David positions his hand to Steven’s exposed groin and moves his hand up and down his member. Steven slows his pace as they look down. Steven lets out a disappointed sigh.

David removes his hand.

   DAVID (CONT’D)
   (quickly)
   It’s okay.

Steven lets out an exasperated sigh and shakes his head.
STEVEN
I’m sorry David. You know it’s not about you.

DAVID
Hey, I know you have issues with it sometimes it’s really okay.

Steven gets up and lifts his pants back up to his waist.

STEVEN
This was a mistake.

DAVID
Oh.

Steven realizes his statement’s impact.

STEVEN
I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it like that.

David stands up and begins to buckle his pants.

DAVID
Steven, you know I’d do anything for you, but do me a favor.

Steven crosses his arms over his chest.

DAVID (CONT’D)
Please don’t string me along, if you still haven't figured out what you want.

David turns to leave, Steven offers no response. Guilt consumes him.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - PARKING - DAY

Kent puts the vehicle into park and grabs the roses, he begins to step out of the car when he notices David across the way walking away from the residence.

Kent freezes, not able to look away from David. David does not notice Kent. Kent hides his emotions well and tosses the roses back in the passenger seat before he heads upstairs.
INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Steven sits solemnly on the couch when he hears the door’s lock turning. In fearful surprise, Steven bolts upward and watches Kent walk through the door.

KENT
Hey.

STEVEN
Hi. You’re home early.

KENT
I forgot my lunch.

Kent kisses Steven on the forehead. Steven kisses Kent’s cheek. Kent walks into the kitchen and sets down his bag.

KENT (CONT’D)
So what were you up to today?

Steven gives out a slight chuckle.

KENT (CONT’D)
What’s so funny?

Steven does not respond.

KENT (CONT’D)
(smiling)
C’mon, what’s so funny.

STEVEN
I’ve been here all day, can’t say I’ve done anything eventful.

Kent chuckles.

KENT
Yeah, I guess you’re right.

Steven walks towards the kitchen.

STEVEN
I’m not feeling well. I’m going to go back to bed.

KENT
Well I hope you feel better babe.

STEVEN
Me too.
They give each other a peck on the lips. Kent places his hand around Steven’s jaw and looks into his eyes.

KENT
You look flushed.

STEVEN
I might be coming down with something.

Kent, using the one hand thrusts Steven against the wall, hitting the back of his skull. Steven lets out a grunt as he makes impact.

KENT
So how long you been sneaking behind my back?

STEVEN
I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about.

Kent punches Steven in the abdomen, causing Steven to cry out and double over. Kent approaches Steven again with ferocity and grabs him by the back of his head.

Kent forcefully and aggressively kisses Steven, who tries his best to back away from.

KENT
What’s wrong baby? Don’t I do it for you anymore?

STEVEN
Fuck you goddamnit!

Steven struggles to break free as Kent continues to forcibly kiss him. Kent uses his other hand to grabs Steven’s lower back and then his crotch.

KENT
Oh look at that, looks like I do.

Steven at this point only feigns resistance as he moans into Kent’s mouth. Kent moves his arm up and down while grabbing Steven’s groin.

Steven lets out a moan and pulls his head back. Kent kisses Steven’s neck as he continues to stroke his arm up and down.

STEVEN
Please stop.

Kent lifts his head back up to face Steven.
KENT
You want it.

STEVEN
(voice cracking)
No I don’t.

Kent forcibly turns Steven and slams him torso first into the wall. Kent positions himself behind Steven and with a grunt enters him. Steven lets out a slight yelp and Kent grabs the back of his head and keeps it positioned against the wall.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Please stop Kent.

Kent continues to buck his hips against Steven who cries out in desperation. After a moment, they both seemingly climax. Kent’s breath grows heavy and he rests against Steven for a moment.

KENT
I forgive you.

Kent kisses Steven’s cheek and then retracts. Kent grabs his bag and leaves the apartment. Steven lets out an anguished belt and sobs.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Kent drives in his Cadillac CTS and tosses the roses out of the car window. The vehicle continues to drive away, as the bunch of roses lie scattered on the road, being dismantled by the wind.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Steven remains, sitting on the floor and leaning on the wall. Mind in conflict.

FADE OUT.

ACCEPTANCE

INT. APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - DAY

STEVEN
Please understand that this is very difficult for me to talk about.

Steven hands Cindy a cup of tea and places the teapot on a dry towel that rests on the dining table.
STEVEN (CONT’D)
I’m not used to this—sharing.
Talking about—stuff.

CINDY
You don’t have to explain yourself
Steven.

Steven takes a sip of his drink and then places it back down.

STEVEN
I’m sorry Cindy. For how I treated
you— I— I never wanted you to go.

CINDY
I know.

STEVEN
You’ve always been there for me, it
wasn’t right for me to push you
away like that.

CINDY
Steven—

Steven looks into her eyes.

CINDY (CONT’D)
I forgive you.
(beat)
Tell me what’s wrong.

Steven hesitates.

STEVEN
Cindy, there’s something I should
have told you a long time ago.

Cindy listens intently.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
That night that I lost my phone—the
night I met Kent. I wasn’t myself.
I—

Steven pauses.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
I’ve been having trouble… lately.
For a while actually. And that
night— I called you.

Steven shakes his head.
STEVEN (CONT’D)
I shouldn’t be telling you this, I don’t want you to feel bad.

Cindy bolts her hand over to Steven’s.

CINDY
Steven, let it out.

Steven slightly lowers his head in shame.

STEVEN
It had gotten to be too much.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Steven shakily approached the small wall sitting atop a patch of grass.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I was pushed to the point. All I wanted was peace.

Steven bellows out towards the sky.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I knew what was coming next. I knew it was finally time for me to go. So I called you.

Steven collapses onto the ground and rests his back against the cold stone wall. He pulls out his cell phone and turns on the screen.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I was hoping you would answer. But I was also hoping you wouldn’t.

INT. APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - DAY

Cindy has not had a drink of her tea since Steven began talking.

STEVEN
Even though I made it through that night, for days after I still felt like I didn’t belong here.
INT. STEVEN’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steven is laid to rest in his bed by Kent, who gently gets in and wraps his arms around Steven.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Like I should have died that night, and that me still being here was some sort of mistake.

INT. APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - DAY

Steven shakes his head, still looking down.

STEVEN
I felt so out of place and-

Cindy quickly leaves her chair and consoles Steven, who begins to cry in her arms.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
And the choices I’ve made since then, I just-

Cindy shushes him and strokes his hair.

CINDY
It’s okay. It’s okay.

STEVEN
I try to stay strong. To get through it, but I- I just can’t anymore.

CINDY
You are strong. Asking for help is one of the strongest things you can do.

Steven composes himself and allows himself to separate from Cindy’s embrace.

STEVEN
Kent treats me so horribly. And I keep allowing him to. He hit me the first time and I didn’t do anything about it. I thought it would be a one time thing.

Cindy rubs Steven’s arm in a consoling manner.
Cindy’s brows furrow as she continues to console Steven.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
And no matter what I did nothing changed. If I stood up for myself, it just made it worse. And I think he’s right. I must like it. Otherwise I wouldn’t still be here.

CINDY
No Steven, don’t blame yourself it’s not your fault.

STEVEN
But it is my fault isn’t it? Even if he’s the one causing this pain, I’m the one that let him know it was okay. I should have stopped it, I should have stopped it earlier.

CINDY
He took advantage.

STEVEN
I love him Cindy. What is wrong with me?

CINDY
Nothing is wrong with you. He’s messed with your head, you need to leave.

STEVEN
But I can’t. I can’t do it. I can’t bear the thought of being away from him. I want to leave but I can’t.

CINDY
Even after all he does to you?

STEVEN
I provoke him, he can’t help who he is. And I die for those times when he’s nice to me. When he begs for my forgiveness and he shows he really loves me.
CINDY
You need to break free from the situation, he’s damaged you

STEVEN
I can’t. Even with all the bad, I can’t help but remember all the good times, the times he was good to me, kind to me, gentle and warm.

CINDY
That’s not the situation anymore. That part of the relationship is dead. You need to move forward and move on.

STEVEN
How... how am I supposed to? All my stuff- he would never let me leave

Cindy grabs her purse and begins to rummage through it before pulling out her cell phone. She places it up to her ear.

CINDY
David? I need to borrow your car.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Kent returns home, lets his bag down on the floor, and walks into the house.

KENT
Babe?

There is no response.

KENT (CONT’D)
Steven?

Kent walks through the apartment.

KENT (CONT’D)
Steven?!

STEVEN (O.S.)
I’m in here babe.

Kent walks towards the voice.
Kent enters the bathroom and sees Steven getting ready to go out.

KENT
Where are you going all dressed up like that?

STEVEN
You mean, “Where are we going?”

KENT
What the hell are you talking about?

Steven turns around.

STEVEN
I didn’t tell you this, but I have some cash saved up and I wanted to treat you to something special.

Kent scoffed a chuckle.

KENT
Didn’t feel like cooking tonight?

Steven gives a smile.

STEVEN
I thought it would be a good way to start fresh.

Kent shakes his head and lets out a scoff of exhaustion.

KENT
(under his breath)
Not even home for 5 minutes

Kent exits the bathroom and walks down the hallway and into the living room.

Steven follows Kent into the room.

STEVEN
We’re holding onto something that’s dying Kent.

Kent doesn’t respond.
STEVEN (CONT’D)
We don’t have to, maybe we don’t want to, but we’re too afraid of what will happen if we don’t.

KENT
Are you trying to break up with me again?

STEVEN
No. I’m trying to start over. A clean slate for both of us.

Kent’s hand clenches up, he leans down and picks up the bag he left on the floor.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Don’t do this Kent.

KENT
Don’t do what!

STEVEN
You know what.

Kent doesn’t respond.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
You’re getting angry. You’re thinking about lashing out on me.

KENT
Why does there always have to be an issue with you?

STEVEN
Because I’m not happy Kent!

KENT
I know! You keep reminding me!

Steven does not have a response.

KENT (CONT’D)
Every chance you get, you let me know how I’m not good enough for you.

Kent tosses his bag back down on the floor.

KENT (CONT’D)
And I don’t understand what you want. I keep you sheltered. I keep you fed.

(MORE)
KENT (CONT’D)
I try to do nice things for you, but it’s always never enough. What more do you want?

STEVEN
I need compassion Kent. Compassion like you used to give me when we first met.

KENT
Steven I swear if you don’t stop this conversation right now.

Steven uses both hands to grab Kent’s face.

STEVEN
Baby, I love you so much. Nothing is ever going to change that. And I know you love me too, and you try your best to keep me happy. I appreciate that and I appreciate you, but you want to know how to help. I’m telling you. Meet me halfway here.

Kent jerks his face away from Steven’s hands.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Please don’t think I don’t appreciate all that you do for me. I’m so grateful. I have no right to ask for favors, but if you really want to make me smile, you’ll let me take you out tonight.

Kent allows the moment to breathe. He thinks for a moment before finally responding.

KENT
Will it really make you happy?

STEVEN
It will.

KENT
(beat)
Okay.

Steven smiles in relief.

KENT (CONT’D)
I don’t wanna hear you talking about what we have dying.
Kent reaches and grabs the back of Steven’s neck.

KENT (CONT’D)
I love you so much. I won’t let it end.

Kent smiles at Steven then kisses him on the lips.

KENT (CONT’D)
What are you worrying for?

Steven smiles back at him. Kent walks into the bedroom to get changed. Steven remains where he is, and lets out a deep breath.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Kent and Steven sit at their table, Steven placing his hand over Kent’s hand while he peruses through the menu.

KENT
I bet nothing they give me will be as good as what you make.

STEVEN
Oh I’m sure.

Kent places the menu down.

KENT
Hey, I’m sorry about the job. But don’t worry about it obviously.

STEVEN
Thanks Kent.

Kent turns his hand upward and intertwines his fingers with Steven’s.

KENT
Everything is going to be fine.

Steven smiles as he stares into his piercing eyes.

STEVEN
I know.

INTERCUT:

105 INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

EARLIER
Cindy holds Steven in the living room as he wipes the tears from his face.

STEVEN
What do you have planned?

CINDY
Take him out, somewhere away from here.

107 INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT
Kent re-investigates the menu before him as Steven ponders his thoughts.

108 INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY
CINDY (V.O.)
Give me your key.

Steven hands over his house key to Cindy for her to take with her.

109 INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT
Kent and Steven hold a conversation with each other.

CINDY (V.O.)
While you two are out during your dinner-

110 INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Cindy and David enter Steven’s apartment.

CINDY (V.O.)
We’ll grab your stuff so when you finally get home-

111 INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT
Steven finishes his memory.

CINDY (V.O.)
-All you have to do is walk out the front door, and you’re free.

KENT
Are you okay?
Steven is broken from his concentration.

STEVEN
Huh?

KENT
You seem distracted.

STEVEN
Yea, I’m sorry, just zoned out for a bit.

KENT
You said you would try.

STEVEN
I know, I’m sorry. So, I’m really liking this whole finding out something new about you that I didn’t know before. Since when have you been into marine life?

KENT
I mean I'm not into it, but I like it. It’s just crazy that we know so little about what could be down there.

Steven tries his best to feign interest and zones off again.

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM – DAY

FLASHBACK.

Steven crawls on top of the sleeping Kent and gently bites his nose. Kent lets out a startled gasp as Steven laughs at his reaction.

STEVEN
Wake up stupid, I’m hungry.

Kent lets out a flirtatious chuckle and runs his hands up and down Steven’s back.

KENT
Hungry for what?

Steven lets out a slight moan and kisses Kent.

STEVEN
Obviously not the same thing you’re hungry for.
KENT
(prowls)
I could eat right now.

Kent lifts Steven up and then flips him, so Kent is now on top, Steven lets out a slight yell and laughs. They embrace and kiss further.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cindy quickly makes her way towards the bedroom with a duffle bag while David approaches the counter in the living room. David takes notice of a pile of small photographs with cut around edges.

David gently spreads them apart and sees they are photos of Steven and Kent, others of just Kent.

DAVID
(calling to Cindy)
Hey, do you think Steven will want any of these?

Cindy quickly pops her head back into view and looks at the photos in David’s hand.

CINDY
Leave them.

David places the photos back on the counter and joins Cindy in packing Steven’s items.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

FLASHBACK.

KENT
Okay ready?

Kent stands behind Steven covering his eyes with his palms.

STEVEN
Alright, let’s see it.

Kent lifts his hands and Steven sees a brand new dining room table.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
Oh my god! It’s so nice!
Steven turns around and kisses Kent.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
How did I get so lucky to snatch up
a man with such excellent taste.

Kent let’s out a “gawh” and holds Steven close to him.

KENT
You like it?

STEVEN
It’s gorgeous.

INT. MARIE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

PRESENT DAY.

Marie hums a small tune as she stirs the pot of spaghetti to mix it well with the recently added sauce. Marie grabs the empty sauce jar and walks to her trashcan to dispose of it.

Marie opens the lid and finds it overfilled. She gives out an annoyed groan and takes it out of the bin.

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

FLASHBACK.

Steven coughs up a storm as he lays on Kent’s chest.

KENT
You’re so cute when you cough.

STEVEN
I am not.

Kent lets out a soft smile and runs his fingers through Steven’s hair as he nods off to sleep.

STEVEN (CONT’D)
I love you.

Kent quickly looks down at him.

KENT
I love you too.

Steven smiles as he continues to nod off in this peaceful moment.
INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Steven, glossy eyed, clears his throat.

STEVEN
I gotta wash my hands, I’ll be right back. Order for me?

Kent nods his head.

KENT
(smiles)
Okay.

Steven stands up from the table and heads to the bathroom.

INT. RESTAURANT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steven barges into the bathroom and heads straight for the sink. He quickly splashes some water on his face then pulls out his phone. He writes a text message to Cindy:

STEVEN
(text)
I’ve changed my mind, forget the whole thing. I can’t do this. I’m so sorry please stop the plan.

He hovers his finger over the “Send” button. He struggles with all his might and clutches the phone to his chest.

INT. MARIE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marie returns from the dumpster and heads to her door. She hears some commotion across the way and looks over to the source. She sees Cindy and David exiting Steven’s apartment with bags and cases of items. Marie gasps and quickly rushes inside her home, locating her phone as soon as she walks in.

INT. RESTAURANT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steven wipes away his tears as he deletes the message he wrote and types a new message.

STEVEN
(text)
How are things so far?

Steven hits send.
INT. RESTAURANT, DINING AREA - NIGHT

Kent sits at the table waiting for Steven when his cell phone rings.

INTERCUT:

INT. MARIE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marie waits on the phone for Kent to answer.

INT. RESTAURANT, DINING AREA - NIGHT

Kent swipes and ignores the phone call.

INT. RESTAURANT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steven receives a message.

CINDY
(text)
Almost done, we will be waiting outside when you get home.

INT. MARIE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marie lets out a worrisome gasp and re-dials.

INT. RESTAURANT, DINING AREA - NIGHT

Kent sees her calling again and sighs as he answers the phone call.

KENT
Hello?

INT. MARIE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

MARIE
Oh Kent! Some strangers are walking in and out of your apartment stealing all your stuff!
INT. RESTAURANT, DINING AREA - NIGHT

KENT
Wai- Marie what are you talking about?

INT. RESTAURANT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steven clears his face as he mentally prepares himself in the bathroom mirror and walks out.

INT. RESTAURANT, DINING AREA - NIGHT

KENT
What do they look like?

INT. MARIE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

MARIE
A black lady and a white guy. Do you want me to call the police?

INT. RESTAURANT, DINING AREA - NIGHT

Kent thinks for a moment and sees Steven walking back from the bathroom.

KENT
No that’s okay, I’m on my way home now, don’t call the police.

Kent hangs up the phone as Steven sits back down and smiles at him. Kent no longer giving smiles.

STEVEN
Is everything okay?

KENT
We have to go.

STEVEN
Why? What happened?

KENT
Marie just called and told me we were robbed.

Steven’s heart sinks.
KENT (CONT’D)
Let’s go.

STEVEN
Alone? Shouldn’t we call the police?

KENT
She already did, let’s go.

STEVEN
Ok.

They quickly stand from the table and start to walk out.

Steven slightly pulls out the phone from his pocket, but then immediately puts it back as Kent looks back at him. They both exit the restaurant.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

David and Cindy hover near the front door of the apartment.

DAVID
Is that everything?

CINDY
Yea I think so. Let’s go wait in the car.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Steven sits nervously in the passenger seat as Kent speeds back home. Steven types out a message to Cindy: “he knows.” Kent’s eyes shift to Steven’s phone, before he could read it, Steven locks the screen, unable to send the message.

EXT. PARKING LOT – NIGHT

David and Cindy sit in a Ford Expedition waiting for Kent and Steven to arrive home. Cindy sees their vehicle pull into the parking spot.

CINDY
They’re here. Keep the car running.
Steven enters the apartment, Kent behind him. Steven nervously enters the location.

STEVEN
Where are the police? They should be here by now.

KENT
They must still be on their way.

Kent closes the front door behind them and locks it. Steven turns around quickly, pushing his body against Kent.

STEVEN
What if they’re still in here?

KENT
What? Don’t I make you feel safe?

Steven doesn’t respond. Kent grabs Steven by his arm and leads him into the bedroom.

KENT (CONT’D)
C’mon. Let’s check it out.

Steven’s heart palpitating out of his chest.

David and Cindy continue to sit in the car.

CINDY
Shouldn’t be too long now.

Kent switches on the light in the bedroom and looks around. He rushes over to their dresser and loudly opens each drawer.

STEVEN
Kent we should really wait for the police-

Kent rummages through the drawers and closes each one consecutively. Steven takes a half step back.

KENT
Can I ask you something?
STEVEN
What?

KENT
Why is it the robbers only took your stuff?

Steven is given pause.

STEVEN
I don’t know.

KENT
You wanna know what I think?

STEVEN
Not really.

KENT
I think there are no robbers. I think you fucking lied to me.

STEVEN
Kent-

KENT
(yelling)
You fucking lied to me! You told me we were going to make this work!
And you fucking lied to me!

STEVEN
Kent please-

KENT
And you wanna know something else?

Steven doesn’t respond.

KENT (CONT’D)
The police aren’t coming.

Steven, as quickly as he can, turns around and bolts for the front door.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Steven speeds through the living room as Kent chases after him. Kent grabs him from behind.

STEVEN
HEL-
Kent throws Steven against the wall.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Cindy continues to wait in the car, nervous.

CINDY
C’mon Stevie.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Steven recovers from the impact and stands up, only to be struck down by Kent’s fist.

KENT
Why did you have to rip out my heart like that?

STEVEN
(weak)
Kent-

Kent throws another hard punch to Steven’s temple.

KENT
No more lies!

Steven grabs onto Kent’s legs and pulls them from under him. Kent falls to the ground as Steven, groggily, tries for the front door again.

Kent grabs his legs and pulls him down as well. Kent climbs on top of Steven who tries to break free. Kent punches him square in the face.

KENT (CONT’D)
Tell me you love me.

Steven keeps quiet. Kent punches him again.

KENT (CONT’D)
Lie to me. Tell me you want to make things right

Kent punches him again.

KENT (CONT’D)
Tell me you love me!

Steven goes limp. Kent ceases his assault. He shakes Steven with no result. Kent curses under his breath and stands up.
Kent exits the area, as he does, Steven opens his eyes to ensure he has left.

142  EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT
Cindy’s worry intensifies.

    CINDY
    Something’s not right, he’s taking too long.

143  INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Steven manages to get to his feet, bloody and bruised.

144  INT. APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT
Kent grabs a few washcloths from the cabinet and soaks them in warm water.

145  EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT
Cindy grabs David’s arm.

    CINDY
    Keep the car running.

Cindy opens the car door.

    DAVID
    Where are you going?

    CINDY
    To get him!

David holds her back.

    DAVID
    No. I’ll go.

Cindy shakes off David’s grip.

    CINDY
    Are you kidding me? He’ll kill you. Keep the car running I’ll be right back.

Cindy leans down underneath the seat and then runs out of the SUV and towards the apartment.
INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kent returns to the living room area and sees Steven standing his ground.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

FLASHBACK.

The light of the approaching vehicle intensifies.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kent approaches Steven. Kent lifts a washcloth to wipe away some of the blood from Steven’s face. Steven recoils.

KENT

I’m sorry.

Steven curls a fist and makes contact with Kent’s cheekbone. Due to Steven’s condition, the blow is ineffective. Kent drops the washcloth onto the floor.

KENT (CONT’D)

Does this mean you won’t forgive me?

STEVEN

I hate your fucking guts.

Kent’s heart breaks. In a rage, he grabs Steven’s shoulders and throws him against the counter behind them. Time slows down.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Steven takes one more step, timing his step with the arrival of the speeding vehicle.

STEVEN (V.O.)

I’m on borrowed time.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kent wraps his strong hands around Steven’s weakened neck. Steven has flashes of memories.

KENT

Why are you making me do this!
Steven sets down his cell phone on the cold grass beneath him.

Cindy rushes down the small hall leading to the apartment door. Upon approaching, she repeatedly slams her first against the door.

In the grass, his phone illuminates with the words “Incoming Call: Cindy.”

Steven struggles to stay conscious as Kent strangles him.

STEVEN (V.O.)
I’m on borrowed time.

Flashes of the vehicle burn in his mind. Steven hears Cindy banging on the door.

The phone vibrates on the cold ground. “Incoming Call: Cindy.”

With every ounce of strength he can muster, Steven speaks.

STEVEN
I.. am.. not!

With a newfound determination, Steven grounds his hands onto the counter behind him, and then raises his legs between himself and Kent before extending them at full length to disconnect Kent from his neck and send him tumbling a few feet back in the opposite direction of the front door.

Now liberated, Steven takes step after step towards the door.
EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Steven takes step after step up the grass hill. The phone behind him showing missed call from Cindy.

INT. APARTMENT, DOORWAY - NIGHT

Steven swings the door wide open. He sees Cindy standing on the other side. He ducks down and exits the place that had trapped him for so long.

Kent chases after him, being cut off by Cindy’s presence. He quickly scans her, and the baseball bat in her hand. His eyes dart from the bat to Cindy’s eyes. Filled with determination and fire.

Cindy grips the bat with both hands and swings. The blunt end of the weapon making THUDDING impact with Kent’s temple. Kent collapses to the ground.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Cindy wraps an arm around Steven to help prop him up as they head for the running vehicle.

EXT. APARTMENT, DOORWAY - NIGHT

Time resumes at normal speed. Kent lies motionless at the doorway of his apartment. His eye lids slightly twitching.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Steven remains in Cindy’s arms in the backseat of David’s moving SUV. A tear streams down his face, crumpled in his hand, a small photograph of Kent.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Hm. Gimme a kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Home video footage, shot by Steven as he lies on the couch with Kent.

Steven turns his head and Kent leans in and kisses him. Steven lets out a smiling chuckle.
STEVEN
He’s an alright kisser.

Kent lets out a challenged chuckle.

KENT
Oh-ho-ho.. Come here.

Steven leans in and kisses him again. Steven rests his head on Kent’s shoulder and they both stare into camera with a bright smile on their faces.

FADE OUT.