Porch
(50 Page Excerpt)
PORCH

Scene 1

Two small houses with porches. It may be shabby, but it’s home. It’s somewhere around 2 am, a summer night. Jeff - in a long sleeved shirt - sits on his stairs, smoking a cigarette. A short silence. We start to hear yelling. It is muffled at first, then becomes louder. Jeff rubs his eyes, tired. The fight reaches it’s peak.

SCOTT

(Off)
I DON’T FUCKING NEED YOU. I DON’T NEED YOU. YEAH, FUCK YOU. WALK AWAY. I DON’T FUCKING NEED YOU.

A woman enters from Scott’s house and leaves. A silence. Scott enters, slamming the screen door behind him. He looks to see if the woman is gone. She is. He kicks something, maybe a trash can or a lawn chair. He is clearly drunk. He sits on the steps. A silence.

Hey.
I said hey.

Jeff looks up.
Give me one of those, will ya?

JEFF
Oh. Sure.

Jeff tosses the pack out over to Scott. Scott takes out a cigarette and a lighter. He lights up, inhales deeply, blows out. He tosses the pack back to Jeff.

SCOTT
Thanks.

They smoke in silence: Scott angrily, Jeff tired. Finally:

JEFF
You okay?

Scott blows out smoke.

SCOTT

He takes a drag.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
SCOTT (cont’d)
It’s just. Like. Fuck. What a fucking bitch. Thinks she can go screw guys behind my back, but I can’t fuck other girls.

Silence.
Bitch.

Silence. Scott looks at Jeff.
You’re that queer guy who lives next door, huh?

JEFF
Huh?

SCOTT
I mean, if you’re not, feel free to hit me or something. I could use a fight. You just look like it. Like, you look like you’ve got feelings, and you don’t give a shit who knows.

JEFF
... Thanks?

SCOTT
I wish I could be like that, man. I do. Like... Like I could say to my girl, like, "What you’re doing is fucking hurting me". But instead I just yell at her and call her a whore. It’s fucking awful.

Beat.

JEFF
Yeah.

Silence. Scott gets up.

SCOTT
I’m going to get another beer. You want one?

JEFF
Sure.

Scott goes into the house. Jeff lights up another cigarette. Scott comes out a second later and tosses a beer to Jeff. Jeff barely catches it. The two drink in silence. Finally:

SCOTT
Why you out here?

JEFF
Hm?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SCOTT
Like, it's late.

JEFF
So?

SCOTT
I mean, people just don't sit on their fuckin' porches all night.

JEFF
It's nothing.

SCOTT
What is?

JEFF
I--
It's not important, really.

SCOTT
No?

JEFF
No.

SCOTT
Oh.
Well.

Beat.
Whatever.

Silence. Scott starts crying, just very slightly.
Jeff sits. He notices, decides if he should ask.

JEFF
You doing okay?

SCOTT
I'm fine.

JEFF
You sure?

SCOTT
Yeah. I'm fine. I'm just fucking fine.

Beat.
God, what a bitch, you know? Like, what a fucking whore. You know she fucked my best friend?
CONTINUED:

JEFF
Yeah?

SCOTT
Yeah.

JEFF
That's shitty.

SCOTT
Thank you! I know! She's such a...

Beat.
Dammit, she's fucking beautiful. You know that? She's beautiful. She has these amazing, like, eyes. They're green. Her eyes. You don't find many people with green eyes anymore. I think only, like, super special people have green eyes. Like the ones that are gonna do something. Not me, I got brown eyes. Brown eyes are for the shits of the world. Not gonna go anywhere, we're just gonna sit around and, like... I dunno.

... What colour are your eyes?

JEFF
Blue.

SCOTT
Blue eyes are cool, too. There are so many different types of... blue. Eyes. I once knew this kid who had, like, these bright blue eyes. They were almost greenish. Like, what's the word? Um...

JEFF
... Aqua.

SCOTT
Yeah. Aqua. They were aqua. He had like, aqua eyes. He is gonna be like, president one day. He just understands people so much. When I used to get sad, he would know just the right thing to say.

Beat.
You know the right thing to say?

JEFF
No.

SCOTT
Yeah, nobody does, really. I bet your eyes are like, a light blue, then. You're sensitive like that. Sensitive people have blue eyes. Light blue eyes. Like, the people who feel shit, you know? You're like that. I can tell.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Silence.

JEFF
What about hazel?

SCOTT
You gotta be careful of those people. They're the liars. You see, someone with blue eyes will tell you they've fucked up, but hazel eyes will lie straight to your face. They will tell you that everything's alright when everything is so fucked up.

... My best friend had hazel eyes.

JEFF
I'm sorry?

SCOTT
I'm not. Fuck him, you know? I'm glad I know now, rather than like, years from now after all the shit we woulda went through. Well. After more shit.

Beat.
He was a shitty friend, though. I don't need him. Not at all.

JEFF
Yeah. Probably for the best.

SCOTT

JEFF
No worries.

SCOTT
But it's like, fuck. Who does that? You know? What kind of shitty, hazel-eyed person fucks over their best friend like that? He'd been fucking her for months. And I'm just, like... I think, like, how many times did she come over after blowing him and then... kiss me? Like, did I, like, taste his cum? That's fucked up.

JEFF
Yeah.

Silence.

SCOTT
Fuck.
I'm drunk.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF
I can tell.

SCOTT
Fuck you.

JEFF
Sorry, buddy, just tellin’ you the truth.

SCOTT
You got blue eyes?

JEFF
Sorta. Like, very light blue. Like, almost grey.

SCOTT
I never seen that before.

    Jeff shrugs.
    You think I’m crazy?

JEFF
I think you’re drunk.

SCOTT
So?

JEFF
I don’t care. Everyone’s a little crazy when they’re drunk. Like, their neuroses that they manage to hide when they are sober finally worm their way out.

SCOTT
Yeah.

    Beat.
    How long you think we been living next to each other?

JEFF
Dunno.
Two, three years, maybe.

SCOTT
And we never really met.

JEFF
Nope.

SCOTT
That’s fucked.

(CONTINUED)
JEFF
Whatever.

SCOTT
No, that’s fucked. Like, what ever happened to the days when people would like, know their neighbours and shit?

JEFF
I don’t think those days ever existed.

SCOTT
Amen.

Silence.
What time is it?

JEFF
Two, maybe two thirty.

SCOTT
Shit.
It’s late.

JEFF
Technically it’s early.

SCOTT
Yeah, I guess.
I dunno.
...I got work in the morning.

JEFF
Yeah?

SCOTT
Yeah. Gotta be in at... seven. Fuck.

JEFF
Sucks.

SCOTT
Whatever.
Rock’n’roll.

JEFF
Yeah.

Silence.

SCOTT
Fuck this.
I’m going to bed.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF
Sleep well.

Scott beings to go inside. He stops, turns.

SCOTT
What’s your name?

JEFF
Jeff.

SCOTT
Yeah?

JEFF
Yeah.

SCOTT
Well, do you wanna grab a beer sometime? Like, as neighbours.

JEFF
...
Yeah.
I’d like that.

SCOTT
Nice.

An awkward silence.
Night.

JEFF
Night.

Scott goes inside. Jeff sits. He finishes his cigarette. After a moment, he stands up, goes inside. Silence, stillness. Alicia enters. She takes a cigarette out from behind her ear. She fishes in a pocket for her lighter and drops the cigarette.

ALICIA
Shit.

She stops, grabs the cigarette. She sits under a street light, smokes. A moment later, Jeff comes back outside, now wearing a sweatshirt. He watches Alicia for a second. Then:

JEFF
Mind if I join you?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Alicia jumps. She turns, sees Jeff.

ALICIA
F*ck, you scared me.

JEFF
Sorry.

A silence.
You were just...
Like, sitting outside my house?
So I figured that I would join you for a smoke.

ALICIA
That's fucking creepy.

JEFF
Sorry.

Silence. Jeff lights a cigarette.

ALICIA
I'm sorry about yelling at you.

JEFF
Whatever. No worries.

ALICIA
I mean, you can join me if you want. The sidewalk is
city property. So, it's like, everyone's.

A beat. Jeff moves, sits next to Alicia. He
stifles a yawn. The two smoke in silence.
You look awful.

JEFF
Thanks.

ALICIA
I'm sorry.
You just look like...
You look like you've gone through hell and came out the
other side.

JEFF
You could say that.

He looks at her. She has a black eye.
You don't look too good, either.

ALICIA
It's nothing.
CONTINUED:

JEFF
Nothing nothing, or something nothing?

ALICIA

JEFF
Okay...

Silence.
You ever feel like... like everything's a fucking mess?
I mean, more than normal? Like everything's broken, and
nothing can fix it, and you're just standing in this
pile of rubble. And everything around you is a
wasteland?

Beat.

ALICIA
Yeah.
I do.
A lot, actually.

A long silence. The streetlight, the smoke,
nighttime sounds of a city.
You're nice.

JEFF
Yeah?

ALICIA
Yeah. You're a nice guy.

JEFF
Thanks.

Beat.
Um. I don't know if this is, like, appropriate, or

A silence. Alicia cries softly.
Oh. Fuck. I didn't mean...
It's just...
...
I'm sorry.

ALICIA
No, it's...
I haven't heard that in a long time, that's all. I
forgot how it felt.
God, that's so fucked up.
...
You know, when people stop complimenting you, you
forget the good stuff about yourself.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF
Yeah.

Silence. Jeff looks at the ground. Alicia looks around.

ALICIA
Where are we?

JEFF
What?

ALICIA
Like, in the city.

JEFF
Oh. South side. A few blocks from the city library.

ALICIA
Oh.

JEFF
Where... Where did you think you were?

ALICIA
I don’t know. When I was walking, I wasn’t really thinking about it.

JEFF
Oh.

Where are you coming from?

ALICIA
From the east side.

JEFF
No shit? What are you doing here?

ALICIA
I...
I’m not... Fuck... I left my boyfriend. I’m like, running away or whatever.

JEFF
Oh.
Is everything... okay?

ALICIA
...
Is anything ever okay?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF
... I'm not sure anymore.

Silence. A siren in the distance.

ALICIA
You know, I didn't tell him I was leaving. I just... left.
He was...
He was in the living room watching football, and he told me to get him a beer. And as I was walking to the kitchen to get one, I thought to myself 'I don't want to get him a beer. I don't want to ever get him anything again'.
And so I just... walked out the door.
And I guess I walked to the south side.

Beat.
I bought a box of cigarettes at some shitty convenience store. I don't usually smoke, but...
I dunno. It's like...
Like, maybe the next one will have the answer to all of my problems inside of it, and when I smoke it, I'll inhale the knowledge, and then I can fix my fucked up life and everything will somehow be okay.

Beat.

JEFF
Is...
Is he the one who...

He lets the question hang in the air.

ALICIA
Yeah.
Yeah. He is.

JEFF
...
I'm sorry.

ALICIA
Don't be.

Silence.

JEFF
You can stay the night. If you want, that is.

ALICIA
i...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
ALICIA (cont’d)
I shouldn’t. All my stuff is back there. My cell phone
and shit. I should go back and get it.

JEFF
...
You sure?

ALICIA
... Yeah. I s’pose.

Silence. Alicia puts out her cigarette. She
stands.
Um. Thanks. For everything.

JEFF
Yeah. No worries.

ALICIA
It’s. Um. You’re a good person. You got a good heart. I
can tell.

Jeff gives a halfhearted laugh.

JEFF
Thanks.

Alicia begins to head out. Jeff calls after her.
Hey. Um. Take care of yourself.

Alicia smiles slightly.

ALICIA
Thanks.
...
You, too.

JEFF
Thanks.

Alicia leaves. Jeff sits alone, smoking. He rubs
his eyes with his palms. He finishes his
cigarette, sits for another moment, and then heads
inside. Lights.

Scene 2

The next day, around four in the afternoon. A
woman walks up to Scott’s door. She knocks. No
response. She bangs on the door.
CONTINUED:

VALERIE
Scott! Open up!

    She attacks the door.
Fuck you! Open up!

    Jeff comes outside from his house. He watches
Valerie for a moment.

JEFF
Can I help you?

VALERIE
Yeah, fuck off.

    Jeff remains quiet. Valerie digs through her
purse.
        (To herself)
C'mon...

    She begins searching around, looking under the
welcome mat, in a flower pot, etc.
        (To herself)
Where the fuck is it?

JEFF
What are you looking for?

VALERIE
His spare key. I left my keys at home in my fucking
fruit bowl.

JEFF
Who are you?

VALERIE
I'm his girlfriend.

JEFF
Ah.

VALERIE
Fuck it.

    She picks up a rock, looks at the window, gets
ready to throw it.

JEFF
Woah. Woah. You can't just--

VALERIE
I CAN DO WHATEVER THE FUCK I WANT.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She winds up, stops for a moment.
I. Ah. I’m... That was... totally out of line...
...
What am I doing?

She drops the rock, sits on the porch. She looks
at Jeff.
What the hell is wrong with me? You know, I’m actually
a really nice person...

JEFF
Yeah?

VALERIE
Yeah. I’m actually a hospice worker?

JEFF
Huh. That’s gotta be...

VALERIE
Yeah...

Jeff sighs. He sits down, takes a pack of
cigarettes out of his overshift pocket. He
gestures to her. She shakes her head.
Thanks. I quit last year.

JEFF
You mind if I...?

VALERIE
No, go right ahead.

They sit on their stoops in silence. Finally:
You don’t have, like, a spare key or something? Like a
neighbor key?

JEFF
Nope.

VALERIE
Oh.

Beat.

JEFF
What are you, like, trying to get?

VALERIE
I left a lot of my stuff here last night.

Beat.
He, um kicked me out. Scott. We broke up last night.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF
Yeah. I, um, heard.

VALERIE
Oh.

JEFF
I mean, it wasn't that... Like, I was outside. And your windows were open. So it just kinda...

VALERIE
Yeah.

    Silence.
He slept with someone else. A couple of girls, actually.

    Beat.

JEFF
He said that you had... with his best friend.

VALERIE
Oh.

    Beat.
Am I a bad person?

JEFF
... Probably.

VALERIE
Fuck.

    ... I never meant to, like...
With Josh, his friend, it didn’t mean anything. It was like... You know some things you just have to get out of your system? Like, feelings, and emotions, and...

    ... Well, it was that. We’d been like, fighting it for a while. And then one night we decided to get drunk and just... do it. And we did... I didn’t think that Josh was going to tell Scott, but he did, and... Well, it’s in the past now. It’s over. Done.

    ... What Scott doesn’t understand is that I had to do it. Because I love him. I love Scott so much, and there was this thing between us, and I had to get rid of it...
Shit, I sound like a martyr. Am I crazy? Please, tell me if I’m crazy.
CONTINUED:

JEFF
I...
I mean. I guess you're not.

A silence. Jeff shrugs.

VALERIE
Sometimes you have to make a shitty decision. To make things better. Like... defuse a bomb before it explodes.

JEFF
Yeah. I guess.

Silence.

VALERIE
Could you tell him I stopped by? If you see him?

JEFF
Yeah. Sure.

VALERIE
Thanks.

She exits. Blackout.

Scene 3

The golden hour. Jeff sits on his porch, writing in a notebook. Scott enters, walking home. He sees Jeff, nods at him. Jeff returns the nod. Scott continues to his house.

JEFF
Oh, wait. Um, what's her name stopped by. Your ex.

SCOTT
Oh.

What did she want?

JEFF
Dunno. Talk to you, I guess.

SCOTT
Whatever.
Rock 'n' roll.


(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ALICIA
    Hey.

JEFF
    ... Hi.

ALICIA
    I don't know if you remember me, but--

JEFF
    I do. I, uh, remember you.

ALICIA
    Oh. Um, good, I guess.

        A silence.

JEFF
    What are you doing here?

ALICIA
    I...
         I dunno. I didn't really have anything to do. So. I went on a walk and I guess I ended up here again.

JEFF
    Oh.

        Silence.

ALICIA
    If you want me to go, I can.

JEFF
    No, I mean... You're welcome to be here. I'm just... I don't think that I'm really great company. Or a host. And, uh, my place is kinda a mess.

ALICIA
    Oh. Well, I mean, we could just hang out here. Talk for a little. I dunno.

JEFF
    Yeah. Sure.

ALICIA
    Would you mind if--

JEFF
    Yeah, sure, go ahead.

        She sits down.
        How's your eye?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ALICIA
Fine. It's fine. I, uh, put some ice on it last night. It'll be gone in a few days.

JEFF
That's... good.

Beat.

ALICIA
What're you writing?

JEFF
Nothing.
Well, I mean, not nothing, I'm not just, like, scribbling letters and stuff. Just nothing of importance.

Poetry. It's poetry.

ALICIA
Yeah?

JEFF
Yeah.

ALICIA
Will you read me something?

JEFF
I don't really--

ALICIA
C'mon! Please?

JEFF
I've never, like, read it to people.

Scott exits his house with a six-pack of beer.

SCOTT
Oh. Hey. I was just gonna... I didn't know you had company, I was gonna ask you if you wanted a beer.

JEFF
Yeah, I'd like that.

Scott tosses Jeff a beer.

SCOTT
Who's your friend?

Alicia crosses to Scott's porch, extends a hand.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

ALICIA
Alicia.

SCOTT
Scott.

They shake hands.
Beer?

ALICIA
Gladly.

He hands her one. She opens it, drinks. A small silence.

SCOTT
What were you guys talking about?

ALICIA
He--

She turns to Jeff.
I never asked your name.

JEFF
Jeff.

ALICIA
Jeff was about to read us a poem he's written.

SCOTT
You're a poet?

JEFF
No, I'm not a poet.

SCOTT
Well, you write poetry.

JEFF
No, I--
Well, yes, I do, but I guess...
I don't know, I just write, and then... Yeah.

SCOTT
Let's hear it.

JEFF
I'm not really--

ALICIA
Do it. Please?

(CONTINUED)
JEFF
I'd rather--

SCOTT
Do it, bro. C'mon.

JEFF
Fine.

He takes a breath. He opens his notebook, flips a few pages.
I haven't really finished this one, I--

Alicia laughs.

ALICIA
Shut up and just read it!

JEFF
Fine...

Another breath.
The night you made me realize
that gender is not a social construction
is the night that I wanted to climb
up to the observation deck
with a bottle of whiskey,
drink it all,
and dive from the ledge,
firebombing the city with my firewater stomach.

I've never told you that
my heart is an empty bird cage,
but it's true.

My bones scream out for something I cannot name.

You never understood when I told you that
every time
I see you, my rib cage gets five sizes too small.
Knowing that you're in this city makes me feel like I'm living in a box
full of shattered hearts
and every time I move, another shard flays my skin.

Your eyes are in my head all day,
watching everything I do.
My body sends white blood cells to blind you,
but still you're there.
My body and heart are
worn and tattered,
like a flag in the wind after a battle,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
JEFF (cont’d)
her colors bled, handing, dripping the remains of
everything it once stood for.

I am sick of all these fucking words.
I’m sick of not being able to say what I want, because
I don’t have the right words anymore,
I don’t have the words that will fix everything,
and I think everything’s broken forever and that scares
me.

You are the taste of metal in my mouth.

He stops. Silence.
Um, that’s not the end, but it’s all I have.

I’m not really good at finishing things.

ALICIA
That was... Wow.

SCOTT
Yeah. That shit’s good.

JEFF
Thanks.

He sits back down, takes a long drink. The silence
lingers. Finally:

SCOTT
Who’s it about?

JEFF
What?

SCOTT
The poem.

JEFF
Oh.
Um.
An old friend of mine.

SCOTT
Yeah?

JEFF
Yeah.

ALICIA
Do you wanna talk about it?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF
I mean, I don’t really...

ALICIA
You don’t have to.

JEFF
No it’s just... I haven’t really talked about it lately.

SCOTT
We’re all ears.

    A beat.

JEFF
Some other time.

ALICIA
Oh. Okay.

    A lingering silence.

JEFF
Don’t beat yourselves up, okay? Chill.

ALICIA
Sorry. I just didn’t want to upset you.

JEFF
I’m fine. I can take care of myself. I’m an adult.

SCOTT
I know, but you’re--

JEFF
FINE. I’m fine. I’m not upset, nothing is wrong, I’m fine.

SCOTT
Okay.

JEFF
Okay?

ALICIA
Okay.

    Beat.

JEFF
I’m going to bed. 
I’ve got work in the morning.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SCOTT
Yeah.
Yeah.
Okay.

ALICIA
Night.

JEFF
Night.

Jeff begins to head in.
Hey, Alicia. Um. Come 'round more, okay?

Alicia smiles.

ALICIA
Yeah. I will.

Jeff heads inside. An awkward silence as Scott and
Alicia sit. Scott steals glances at Alicia.

Finally:
What?

SCOTT
Huh?

ALICIA
What? You keep looking at me?

SCOTT
Well.
Um. Your eye. The cover-up isn't... covering... up.
Completely.

She doesn't respond.
It's like. I can see the bruise under it. Like a dark
spot where--

ALICIA
Drop it, okay?

SCOTT
I--

ALICIA
DROP IT.

SCOTT
Okay.
...Okay.

(CONTINUED)
ALICIA
I'm sick of talking about it.

SCOTT
I didn't say you had to.

ALICIA
Fine.

Silence.
I'm gonna... like, head home. I think.

SCOTT
Cool, whatever. Rock 'n' roll.

ALICIA
It was nice to meet you.

SCOTT
Yeah. You, too.

Alicia exits through the street. Scott sits alone.
After a moment, Alicia returns.

ALICIA
I'm not mad at you.
Just so you know.

SCOTT
I didn't think so.

ALICIA
Yeah. Well.
Thanks.
...
Night.

SCOTT
Night.

She heads in.

Scene 4

The next day, twilight. Scott, on his porch. A man enters, wearing a punk t-shirt. He walks up to Jeff's door and knocks. No response. He knocks again.

SCOTT
He's not here.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

VINCENT
  Huh?

SCOTT
  He’s not here.

VINCENT
  Oh. Do you know when he’s gonna be back?

SCOTT
  Five or ten minutes? He ran out to get some cigarettes.

VINCENT
  He smokes?

SCOTT
  I guess.

    A silence. Vincent stands there awkwardly.
    Who are you?

VINCENT
  I’m, uh. I’m an old friend.

SCOTT
  Yeah?

VINCENT
  Yeah. I just wanted to check up on him.

SCOTT

    Silence. After a moment, Jeff enters, carrying a paper bag. He sees Vincent. He falters. The two look at each other for a long moment.

VINCENT
  Hi.

JEFF
  ... Hi.

    Beat.
    What are you doing here?

VINCENT
  I stopped by to...
  Lauren told me that you...
  And I wanted to stop by.
  And see you.

    Jeff pushes past Vincent, unlocks his door.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF
    Well, you saw me you shouldn’t be here.

VINCENT
    I’m sorry. I just... I wanted to see how you are doing.

    Jeff turns, looks at Vincent

JEFF
    How the fuck do you think I’m doing?

VINCENT
    ...

JEFF
    Go home.

VINCENT
    But--

JEFF
    I can’t do this right now.

    Jeff goes inside, closes the door, locks it. A long silence. Vincent stares at his feet.

SCOTT
    (Putting it together)
    You’re him?

VINCENT
    Who?

SCOTT
    ... No one.

    Silence. Vincent is uncomfortable.

VINCENT
    Has he been doing okay?

SCOTT
    Jeff? I mean. I guess. We didn’t really... He seems like a kind of melancholy person.

VINCENT
    Yeah. I guess he is.

    Beat.

SCOTT
    Maybe you should...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VINCENT
  Yeah.
  Yeah.

  Vincent looks at the door, hoping that it will magically open. After a moment, he leaves. Scott sits alone. Valerie enters. Scott and Valerie lock eyes. A beat.

VALERIE
  Hey.

SCOTT
  Hi.

VALERIE
    ... How are you?

SCOTT
    ... Alive.

VALERIE
  Yeah.

    ... I'm doing okay. Hanging in there.

SCOTT
  Yeah?

VALERIE
  Yeah.

    Silence.

SCOTT
  Why'd you--

VALERIE
  I wanted to... I dunno. I mean, I do know; I came to give you back your key. But I mean like... I... I don't want us to part on like, bad terms. I was hoping, that, like, maybe we could be friends?

SCOTT

    He looks at her, sad.

  Yeah. I guess.

VALERIE
  Okay. Good. Well...

  Good.

  (MORE)

  (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VALERIE (cont’d)
Do you maybe wanna... like... get coffee later? Or something?

SCOTT
Why don’t you come over for a beer or something.

VALERIE
Yeah. That sounds nice. Okay.

SCOTT
Okay.

Silence.

VALERIE
I better be--

SCOTT
Yeah. Yeah.

VALERIE
Ok. I’ll text you. See you later.

She begins to leave.

SCOTT
Val.

She turns.
The, uh, the key.

VALERIE
Oh. Right.

She approaches him. She takes the key off of her keyring. A beat. She hands it over to him.

Silence.


She leaves. Scott looks at the key. Silence. Jeff enters from his house.

JEFF
He gone?

SCOTT
...

JEFF
You okay?

(CONTINUED)
SCOTT

... Yeah.
Whatever.
Rock 'n' roll.

Beat.
Catch.

He tosses Jeff the key.

JEFF
What's this?

SCOTT
Key. To my place. Just in case... of whatever.

JEFF
Thanks.

Beat.

SCOTT
Do you wanna get stoned?

JEFF
I, um. No, thanks. I don't really... Like, I don't
really like being high. When time slows down. I just
want time to, like, move faster. I'm never comfortable
where I am. You know?

SCOTT
No.

JEFF
Oh.

SCOTT
I just... Sometimes, I just want time to like. Fucking
just. Stop. Like, if time moves slower it might stop.
Or if it slows down, at least I'll be able to deal with
it better, because things will change slower.

Beat.
I dunno. Sometimes I just want a remote control for
life. Where I can just, like, pause shit.

Silence. Jeff takes out a cigarette, lights it.
Scott goes inside, reemerges a moment later with a
glass pipe. He packs it, smokes. Silence.
CONTINUED:

JEFF
Do you think that things get better?

SCOTT
I...
  I dunno.
  I think maybe things just change? Like. Like you
  just... fucking feel a new kind of hurt, but it's
  always a hurt.

JEFF
Yeah?

SCOTT
Yeah.

JEFF
...
  Fuck.

  Lights.

Scene 5

The 4th of July. Dusk. Alicia helps Scott and Jeff
hang up a strand of lights. Music plays from
somewhere inside. Everyone might be a little
drunk.

ALICIA
No, this end has to go higher!

SCOTT
The string isn't long enough for that.

JEFF
It isn't gonna reach, Al.

ALICIA
No, it will. You just gotta raise your end up!

SCOTT
It's as high as I can get it.

JEFF
Oh, Jesus Christ, just tape it!

   Alicia pulls out a roll of duct tape. She tapes
down a few points. The three step back and admire
their handiwork. The lights are incredibly
lopsided. They laugh.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ALICIA
   It's perfect.

           Scott goes to his porch. He grabs a beer from a cooler. He offers it to Alicia. She puts out her hand and he throws it to her. Same business with Jeff.

SCOTT
   A toast!

JEFF
   To America!

SCOTT
   No, something better than that.

JEFF
   What's better than America?

SCOTT
   Lot's of stuff.

JEFF
   Like what?

SCOTT
   Like...

ALICIA
   Like frozen yogurt.

SCOTT
   And... Oysters.

JEFF
   Oysters?

SCOTT
   Yeah. I fuckin' love oysters.

JEFF
   Well. Okay. To America, fro-yo, and oysters!

SCOTT
   Huzzah!

           They clink their beers together and cheer.

ALICIA
   (While taking a sip)

       Oh!

       (CONTINUED)
She runs to her bag.
I got these!

She produces a pack of sparklers.

JEFF
Okay, cool, we’re eight again. That’s fun.

ALICIA
Shut up. Okay. So. Don’t make fun of me but...
(Quickly)
There was this thing that me and my sister used to do
where when we were kids and it was fourth of July, we
would light our sparklers and we would write a wish in
the air, and if the sparkler didn’t burn out before we
could finish, we would get our wish.

SCOTT
That’s dumb.

JEFF
No, shut up. I like it.

ALICIA
Okay. Well, Jeff and I will do it, and you can sit out.

SCOTT
... Fine, I’ll do it.

  Alicia doles out the sparklers.

JEFF
Do we have to form it as a full sentence or what?

ALICIA
You can do whatever you want.

JEFF
Okay.

ALICIA
Ready?

JEFF
... Yeah.

SCOTT
Are we really gonna do this?

JEFF
Yes!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ALICIA
C'mon!

SCOTT
Yeah, okay, fine, ready.

She lights Jeff’s sparkler, then Scott’s then hers. They write frantically in the air. The sparklers seem to glow with an ethereal brightness.

ALICIA
Done!

Beat.

SCOTT
Done!

Beat.

JEFF
Fuck!

He drops the sparkler to the ground.

ALICIA
You okay?

JEFF
Yeah, the fucking sparkler burnt me.

ALICIA
I’m sorry. Lemme see it.

SCOTT
Did you finish your wish?

JEFF
... No.

SCOTT
Eh, fuck it. It’s just a childhood game.

JEFF
Yeah...

ALICIA
What’d you wish for?

SCOTT
He can’t tell you, then it won’t come true.
CONTINUED:

JEFF
   It isn’t gonna come true anyway.

SCOTT
   Oh. Right.

ALICIA
   What was it, then?

JEFF
   I...
   Don’t worry about it. It was stupid.

   He grins, and then raises his beer up.
   A toast! To... Sparklers!

SCOTT
   And... hot dogs!

ALICIA
   And America!

JEFF
   I thought you thought fro-yo was better than America?

ALICIA
   I do. But it’s pretty much, like, the only thing.

JEFF
   Whatever. To America!

   They cheer, drink. The sun sets into darkness.
   Lights up on:

   Scene 6

   Later that evening. Alicia and Scott sit on
   Scott’s porch, Jeff asleep with his head near
   Alicia. Fireworks from far away. A silence.

ALICIA
   Do you think we should wake him up?.

SCOTT
   I don’t think so.
   I’m glad he’s sleeping. I don’t think he, uh, sleeps
   very much.

ALICIA
   Yeah?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SCOTT
Yeah.
Sometimes, in the middle of the night, I’ll look out
the window and he’ll be on the porch, smoking. At just
like, three in the morning.

ALICIA
Aww. Poor kid.

She strokes his hair softly.

SCOTT
I know you probably...
Never mind.

ALICIA
What?

SCOTT
No, it’s nothing.

ALICIA
Oh.
Well...
Well, now that you’ve brought it up, you have to tell
me.

SCOTT
No, I don’t.

ALICIA
Yeah, you do. Whenever someone brings something up in
conversation, and then changes the subject, it means
they want to talk about it.

SCOTT
Oh. Well. I mean...
I’m sure you get this all the time. But.
...
When are you gonna leave him?

Alicia is silent. She lights a cigarette. She
takes a few drags.

ALICIA
It’s not that--

SCOTT
Fuck that, ‘it’s not that easy’. Yes, it is. One day
when he’s at work, you pack up all your stuff and get
the fuck out of there.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ALICIA
I couldn’t.

SCOTT
You could come stay with me.

ALICIA
No, I mean--

SCOTT
What is it, then?

ALICIA
I...

A beat.
Sometimes, when you love someone, you...
Fuck, I don’t know.
I can’t just...
It’s kinda like this. Like, we’ve both hurt each other
so much, yeah? So, like, I guess... It’s like this bond
we have, almost. Like, no matter how much we fight,
there is, like, this thing that we have. We’ve both
seen each other in such bad places. We’ve both affected
each other’s lives so much, that we can’t just let go.
It’s like... if one of us leaves, we’ll both just...
sel... self-destruct.

Beat.

SCOTT
You’re self-destructing anyway.

Beat.

ALICIA
I know.

SCOTT
So then why--

ALICIA
I don’t know.

SCOTT
You don’t--

ALICIA
No, Scott, I don’t. I don’t know.

SCOTT
Okay...
CONTINUED:

Silence.

ALICIA
I should go...

She stands.

SCOTT
I...
What if... like... What if you stayed the night? As friends. I’m not trying to...
I just mean...
What if you didn’t go back, but just for tonight. To try it out.

ALICIA (Softly, maybe sadly)
I can’t.

SCOTT
But--

ALICIA
I’m sorry.

SCOTT
... Okay.

Silence. The two look at each other, maybe ten seconds.

ALICIA
I don’t think.
I don’t think we should hang out. Anymore.

SCOTT
Wh--

ALICIA
I just...
I think it’s a bad idea.

SCOTT
Why?

ALICIA
I just...

SCOTT
Is it because of him?

(CONTINUED)
ALICIA
What?

SCOTT
You feel guilty, or some shit, is that it?

ALICIA
What?

SCOTT
Does he think you’re, like, cheating on him? Does he hit you when you get home?

ALICIA
What? No.

SCOTT
So then what’s the fucking problem?

ALICIA
What the fuck is wrong with you?

SCOTT
I’m just--

ALICIA
No. You fucking think you know me? What it’s like to be me? I don’t need you fucking passing judgment on my relationship, okay? You don’t know what it’s like, you don’t know what I’m feeling. You’ve never even fucking met him. I don’t need you telling me how to deal with my fucking relationship.

SCOTT
I’m just trying to look out for you!

ALICIA
I can fucking take care of myself!

She storms off. Scott sits down, angry, hurt. He lights a cigarette. A small silence.

JEFF
(Softly, still laying down)
There are some problems that you gotta figure out on your own.

SCOTT
That’s stupid.

JEFF
I know. It’s just...
You know when you’re a kid, and your mom tells you not

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
JEFF (cont’d)
to play on something? But you do it anyway? It’s like that. As much as we think we know what the right thing is, people aren’t gonna listen.

SCOTT
F**k everyone.

A very long silence. Jeff, laying down, Scott sitting. Finally, softly:
Tell me one of your poems.

JEFF
...
It’s not very good. But...

The first time I saw you,
I knew you were going to make me cry.
This wasn’t a bad thing,
I just knew it was a fact.
I looked into your eyes and said to myself,
"This boy is going to turn me into something that makes the White House sprinkler system look like the Sahara desert."

Your heart is like your front lawn,
and some people are always having yard sales.

When I was a child, my mother would hold me in her tire iron arms
and watch me as I fell asleep.

If you have never felt your heart slowly fracture, helpless,
If you have never looked into someone’s soul when they barely made eye contact,
If you have never mistook What Could Be with What Is,
this poem is too soon for you.

This poem is for every father who watched from a distance as his son slowly killed himself.
This poem is for every soldier who went back to war after a two week visit home on leave.
This poem is for the girl who paints her nails with heartbreak and goes out dancing every weekend.
This poem is for the people who fight their every instinct and sick around for the one they love.

I think love is like water,
because in a long enough span of time
it can break down a boulder into a pebble,
and the beach is just tiny, little rocks.

CONTINUED}
So, every time I see you,
I remember that it takes an ocean to break down a
boulder,
and it takes real heart to stay long enough to see
everything turn to sand.

_ A very long silence._

**SCOTT**

What happened between you and... him?

_Silence. Jeff searches for words._

**JEFF**

I just...
Vincent.
He was.
Um.

He was a good friend of mine. But I, um, I fell in love
with him. Which I hate saying because it sounds so
fucking stupid. Like, that's the cause of my problems,
like I'm the protagonist from a middle school young
adult novel. But I fell in love with him. And he's
straight. And so... We had this kinda fucked up
friendship for a few years. We'd flirt with each other
a lot. It was this easy thing because, like, we were
both really lonely, and I had feelings for him, and
when he flirted with me, I'd feel, like, validated or
whatever. And when I flirt with him, he'd get someone
who was giving him attention, and who thought he was
great, but at no risk to his own self-esteem or ego or
whatever.

... That's not to say that we both didn't like each other
as friends. That's why it was all so fucked up, you
know? We got into this poisonous cycle. And eventually,
it wore me down, and he kept acting like everything was
alright, and... Well, I guess to sum it up, I had to
cut off our friendship. We were both too fucked up to
be friends, in my opinion. I felt like I was drowning,
and I needed to just get out and save myself, and I
couldn't worry about hurting him anymore. So I wrote
him this big letter telling him that I needed space,
and that he shouldn't talk to me anymore. And yeah.

... The worst part is that I missed him. When he wasn't
there, I missed the fuck out of him. And I'd alternate
between being pissed off at him, and missing him, and
just wanting to be held by him. And none of my friends
could really understand me, and I felt like I kept
bothering them with all this shit, and I felt like
nobody was there or cared or understood or approved,
and everything I saw reminded me of him, and so...

(MORE)
JEFF (cont’d)

... I was hurt and angry. Because I wanted to just be there for him. And I couldn’t, because he didn’t feel the same way about me. And so I started thinking this stupid shit in the back of my head. Like, I began thinking that maybe he wasn’t emotionally mature enough to understand that he loved me, because he couldn’t separate wanting to f**k someone from loving them. And I thought about asking him to be in some sort of, like, weird open relationship where we could cuddle and watch movies and fall asleep next to each other, but he could still go out and date girls. As long as he came home to me. And I had all these ideas in my head, and all of them were fucking stupid, and I knew logically that they weren’t true, but there was still this part of my brain that was saying all of these things and...

Silence.

SCOTT
Yeah?

JEFF
(On the verge of tears)

And so, a few weeks ago, I tried to kill myself. Not, like, because of him. Not because he didn’t love me. But just because...
I don’t know.

A very long silence. Jeff tries not to cry, Scott tries to find words. Slow fade.

Scene 7

A hot summer night. Jeff and Vincent sit on Jeff’s porch, smoking. Vincent wears a Misfits t-shirt, shorts. Jeff, a long sleeved plaid over shirt, jeans. Vincent spits when he smokes. A silence, neither comfortable nor uncomfortable. They talk in a disaffected manner.

VINCENT
How is everything?

JEFF
Fine. I guess. I dunno.
You?

VINCENT
Things are good.

Beat.

(MORE)
VINCENT (cont'd)
I uh.
I've been talking to my dad again.

JEFF
Yeah?

VINCENT
Yeah.
I dunno. We had this long... talk? I dunno. It was over
the Fourth. We were like, standing in the back yard,
grilling hot dogs and hamburgers and.
I dunno.

This conversation. Just kinda started. And, like, I
just told him that I have to do what I need to? Because
he wants me to put my degree to use.

JEFF
I know.

VINCENT
So. Anyway. We're good now. Him and me.

JEFF
That's good.

Silence.

VINCENT
You know, you really hurt me.

JEFF
Yeah.
I know.

VINCENT
When I...
I mean.
When you first said you wanted. Space...I... this is
gonna sound stupid. But I threw up. It just made me
feel so sick and...

The words trail off. Silence.
But you hurt me. Especially when you said that you
thought I didn't want to work to make this better.
'Cause I do. You're like, my best friend in this city.
We kept in contact after we graduated. And I'm so happy
about that.
You've shown me that I need to grow up... That like...
You've made me be a better person. You're such a good
person. Like, I want to introduce you to my kids one
day, and have you be their Uncle Jeff. Because I love
you. But just as a friend.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF  
    Yeah...
    
    I'm sorry that I didn't take responsibility for my part 
    of the... everything. Like. I was a huge cunt to you. I 
    treated you like shit.

VINCENT  
    Yeah. You did.

    Silence. Jeff takes out a new cigarette.

JEFF  
    Want another?

VINCENT  
    ... Yeah.

    Jeff lights his cigarette, hands the lighter to 

JEFF  
    When I was... When we weren't...
    I really missed you.

VINCENT  
    I missed you too, buddy.

    Beat.
    I just want to be friends again.

    A long silence.

JEFF  
    I don't think I can do that.

VINCENT  
    I--

JEFF  
    No, just...
    Vincent, I love you. And I don't know if I'm ever gonna 
    not love you. Okay? I don't want to be friends with 
    you. That's not an acceptable option. I want to either 
    kiss you, fuck you, or never see you again. I would 
    love to be friends with you, but we're past that. And I 
    can't deal with this weird fucking middle thing, where 
    we're always in each other's periphery. I can't go to a 
    party without being afraid that you're gonna be there. 
    I can't talk to my friends and not have you brought up. 
    Our lives are too intertwined.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VINCENT
We've been through this a million times. We're going in fucking circles!

JEFF
You don't fucking think I know that?

VINCENT
I just want to be FRIENDS with you! Is that too fucking much to ask?!

JEFF
You want to know what fucking being friends does to me?

Jeff stands, rolls up his sleeves. His arms are bandaged.

VINCENT
Don't...

Jeff unrolls the bandages. Deep gashes down his arms, scars.

JEFF
This is what being friends with you is like! You're a fucking trigger for me! Don't you fucking understand?

Vincent is on the verge of crying.

VINCENT
Stop!

Jeff lets his hands drop to his sides. Silence. Vincent sitting, Jeff standing. Lights, long fade out.

Scene 8

Valerie enters from the street. It's about noon. She walks up to Scott's door, knocks. It takes him a little bit to answer. When he opens the door, he is dressed in only his boxers, looks beleaguered.

VALERIE
You're not dressed. What the fuck?

SCOTT
What? I'm sorry.

VALERIE
Are you okay?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SCOTT
Yeah, I just...
I woke up still drunk.

VALERIE
You don’t change, do you?

He grins sheepishly.
Ugh. Go, get dressed. Make yourself presentable. We’re getting lunch, remember?

SCOTT
Yeah, I fucking remember.

VALERIE
Well, c’mon, get going.

SCOTT
Fine. Gimme like, fifteen?

VALERIE
Whatever.

SCOTT
You wanna come in?

VALERIE
No, you’ll just get distracted with conversation.

SCOTT
No, I won’t.

VALERIE
Um, hello. I know you better than, like, just about anyone.

SCOTT
Yeah, well, then you fucked my best friend.

VALERIE
Can we please not--

SCOTT
So, we’re never gonna talk about this?

VALERIE
Scott--

SCOTT
Oh, I get it. We’re just gonna continue like nothing’s happened--

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VALERIE
Scott.

SCOTT
-- and we’ll be 'just friends' forever.

VALERIE
Let’s talk about this over lunch, okay? Or maybe sometime when you’re more... sober.

SCOTT
I wanna talk about this.

VALERIE
I’m not saying we can’t!

SCOTT
Then let’s talk about it!

VALERIE
Right here? On your front porch?!

SCOTT
YES.

VALERIE
YOU’RE NOT WEARING PANTS.

SCOTT
Jesus Christ.

*He sighs.
Fine. Come inside. I’ll put on some clothing and we can talk.

VALERIE
Fine! Whatever.

*She pushes past him. They go inside. Lights.

Scene 9

Jeff and Vincent, on the porch, smoking. Silence.

VINCENT
Did I tell you that I got into a play?

JEFF
Yeah?

VINCENT
Yeah. With a community theater group.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JEFF
Cool.

VINCENT
Yeah.
It's not a, a big part. But it's gonna be nice to be on stage again.

JEFF
Yeah.

Silence.

VINCENT
I had a dream last night. With you in it.

JEFF
Yeah?

VINCENT
Yeah.
I...
We were sitting here. Like, right here. And you were really upset because I had done something, but I didn't know what it was. And, like, you were yelling at me.
And you just kept yelling and yelling and then, like, finally, I walked away.

Beat.

JEFF
And then what?

VINCENT
And then I remember that I wanted you to follow me, and you did, but you were still yelling and yelling. So I... I just started, like, running? And you stopped following me, but I kept running and running, and then I just kept passing you, no matter which streets I took, you were always there. Just... watching me. And I kept running until I was exhausted, and I collapsed.
And then you walked over to me, while I was panting on the ground, and you opened up your chest and pulled out your heart and handed it to me. So, I'm laying on the ground with this still beating, bloody human heart in my hands, and I just start screaming.

... And then I woke up.

A silence.
CONTINUED:

JEFF

That’s fucking stupid.

Vincent explodes.

VINCENT

Listen, I--
You need to stop treating me like shit. I’m sorry that I’m not gay. I am. But I like women, okay? I love women, and I can’t change that. I’m sorry that I don’t feel that way about you. I love you, but I love you like a brother, like a friend. You need to accept that. You need to stop resenting me for being straight, ok? I. LIKE. WOMEN. I’m not going to wake up one day and suddenly be gay. We, are never going to be a thing. And I’m sorry. But you need to stop treating me like shit. Every time you have a fucking self-realization you have to send me a fucking email or a text and tell me all about your feelings. And stop saying that I don’t want to work at this and have everything get better. I WANT TO WORK AT THIS. I CARE ABOUT YOU, AND WANT TO BE YOUR FUCKING FRIEND, AND YOU KEEP TREATING ME LIKE THE SCUM OF THE FUCKING EARTH.

Silence.