

FADE IN:

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Clear and vast. Stars, satellites and moons illuminate.
One amazing evening.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

A pepperoni pizza minus a slice. Baseball game on in b.g.
Munching on the crust, ERIC, mid-twenties, a boyish face at
odds with the beginnings of wrinkles, tired eyes, which study
a computer monitor displaying the observatory telescope's
viewpoint. Nothing unusual.

He frowns, turning up the volume on the ballgame.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...and he makes the catch. At the
end of eight -- Cardinals five,
Cubs two.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Out of it.

Eric slowly, almost painfully grins, as if using atrophied
muscles to do so. He turns the sound down, looks to see his
co-worker, GLEN, putting on his coat. Glen doesn't take
many things seriously. Keeps him happy, but also holds him
back.

ERIC

Still got a chance, Glen.

GLEN

Thirty games left in the season.
What are they, twenty games out?

ERIC

Exactly, they're still technically
alive. They win twenty-five in a
row and they're right back in it.

GLEN

(incredulous)

I ask for health benefits, and you
ask for cable so you can watch the
Cubs.

Eric glances back at the game, his eyes narrowing slightly.

ERIC

The Cubs are for my health.

Glen starts in on a slice, annoyed.

GLEN
Pepperoni again?

SKY

Somewhere among normal evening spectacle -- a tiny, curious object GLOWS, slowly getting larger.

BACK TO SCENE

Somehow it doesn't show up on scope monitor. Glen tosses his half-eaten slice in the garbage, starting for the exit.

GLEN
Good night.

Eric mechanically nods, fixated on the TV. Glen stops short at the door. Something eats at him.

GLEN
Hey, why do you root for such a loser?

Eric furrows his brow, considering.

ERIC
I guess it would just make it that much sweeter if they won.

Suddenly, there's something different about Eric, a little life in his face, animated.

ERIC
You know, when I was thinking about leaving home, I went to catch them at Wrigley Field, just like when I was a kid. Someone was supposed to go with me, but then they canceled out. For some reason, I went anyway.

Glen walks back over, intrigued.

GLEN
All by yourself? Kind of sad.

Eric ignores that comment, continuing.

ERIC
So I'm sitting there. First inning. Jeff King comes up for the Pirates. Hits this shot. I'm in the bleachers, and this thing, well, it's just...up there in the sky, like a second sun. And I'm thinking, "This thing is coming right for me."

SKY

The curious object continues to grow, though still distant.

BACK TO SCENE

Still nothing on monitor. Eric is now out of his chair, his hands cupped, likes he's preparing to catch something, eyes ablaze. Glen follows his every word, getting caught up in Eric's rare excitement.

ERIC

I'm waiting. I can feel the other people start to crowd in, but I just know it's for me. And, I catch it. Left-handed.

(grins)

I'm a righty and I catch it left-handed. I must've gone to fifty games, and the only ball I ever got was a ricochet off someone's head that rolled on the ground. But this one -- It was like someone was saying "goodbye" or something.
July 13, 1996.

They both smile, like wide-eyed children.

GLEN

Where do you keep the ball?

Eric's smile fades.

ERIC

I didn't. The rule at Wrigley is, if you catch an opponent's home run, you have to throw it back, like a bad fish. I guess you don't "have to," but it's tradition.

Glen shakes his head. A "convenient" explanation.

GLEN

That's too bad that you don't have the ball, or a witness.

Eric quietly nods, hurt by the distrust. A silent beat. Glen looks at him, remorseful.

GLEN

You really think someone was saying "goodbye?"

Eric sits back down. He will politely answer the question, but the magic of the moment is clearly gone.

ERIC

I don't know. Forty thousand stadium capacity.

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

The odds aren't astronomically against catching one. Could've been just chance. I guess I'd just like to believe that it wasn't.

Glen nods, still feels bad.

GLEN

I'm going to hit the bars, maybe...

ERIC

No, I'm just going to catch up our files a little bit, and then I'm going home. I'm tired.

Glen studies Eric, sighs.

GLEN

You look it.

And, as Glen starts back for the exit, Eric flips the game back on.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Bases loaded. Winning run at the plate. Three and two, the count.

Glen lingers at the door, watching Eric press his face near the TV, wholly believing in his team.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Here's the pitch...

(a long beat)

Strike three...

Glen just shakes his head, leaves.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...that's the ballgame.

*

SKY

And, the object slowly starts its ascent for Earth.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

The building is makeshift, some parts more constructed than others, but the

TELESCOPE

protruding from the roof is grandiose, double-digit feet in diameter, a multi-million dollar investment, strangely left in the hands of two.

MAIN EXIT

Glen hops out of the double doors, singular in purpose.

GLEN
 (to himself)
 Get ourselves some pussy.

He gets in a very used car, so taken with his objective that he doesn't notice...

SKY

The object is closing in. A car engine is heard RATTLING, Glen already starting off on his night of "clean fun."

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Eric dilligently, almost obsessively, crunches numbers at the computer. Eyes focused. He's good at this.

Suddenly, he is BLINDED by a powerful white light...

He slowly squints to see -- it's coming from the scope monitor. Another beat, then the light completely disappears. Eric springs out of his chair, checking the readings:

ERIC
 As if nothing ever happened?!

EXT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Eric rushes out of the entrance. Something immediately catches his eye, freezing him. He's either afraid or excited by this...

UFO

Engulfing a patch of blackened grass. Just as so often described by alleged abductees -- Sleek, beautifully contoured, saucer-shaped, like two huge satellite dishes stuck together.

The hatch starts to open. And, out comes

THE ALIEN

Also, just as so often described -- four-foot tall, green-skinned, wide-shaped head, two-fingered hands, unclothed, with no hint of gender, the National Enquirer's dream come to life.

Eric is still frozen.

The alien slowly moves toward him, as if about to say something.

But, then a second BLINDING LIGHT encompasses. Could it be another one? Just the high beams of

CAMOULFLAGE-COLORED ARMY TRUCKS

Soldiers quickly exiting the vehicles. Eric can't believe it. Like every late night sci-fi movie he's ever seen.

The alien is quickly snatched, deposited into a truck. Eric succumbs to the same treatment. As the army drives away, we hear one of the victims protest.

ERIC (O.S.)

What have we done?!

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Eric sits at a small table, the only furniture in an otherwise empty, sterile room. For the moment, he strangely looks at home...until MAJOR GARY HARRISON enters, taking a seat in the opposing chair. Well into his late thirties, he's not trying to be military machismo, just trying to do his job.

HARRISON

Hello, Eric.

Eric immediately eyes Harrison's holstered gun. Now the nerves start.

ERIC

Are you going to kill me?

Harrison smiles.

HARRISON

Is that what you think of your United States Government?

Eric doesn't trust this guy at all.

ERIC

I saw something I wasn't supposed to. I've paid all my taxes, never had a beer before I was twenty-one, and why do I have a feeling none of that matters anymore?

HARRISON

My dad used to let me have a sip of his Budweiser, even when I was a real little shit. Your parents were that strict?

ERIC

No. I was that strict.

Harrison gazes at Eric, appraising him. Likes the kid. The major stands, now appraising a different matter.

HARRISON

What to do? What to do?

ERIC

What do you usually do?

Harrison chuckles to himself.

HARRISON

You make it sound like we have some sort of protocol for this.

ERIC

(skeptical)

I'm not the first...

Harrison looks at him, silent.

ERIC

"He's"... "It's" not the first.

Harrison still only stares. Eric quietly thinks to himself. Suddenly, he jumps up, excitedly, like a just-been-informed sweepstakes winner. His limbs swing awkwardly, as if he slept in school on the day they taught "celebrating without looking idiotic."

ERIC

I saw the first alien?!

Harrison nods affirmative. Eric enjoys the idea a moment longer, before his more reserved skepticism returns.

ERIC

What about Roswell? The Iowa cornfields?

HARRISON

Nothing.

Eric doesn't buy it, returns to his seat. Partying over.

ERIC

That's what you said anyway.

Harrison frowns at him.

HARRISON

You know, once in a while, when the government says it doesn't know something, it's because it really doesn't know something.

Eric nods. Okay, even he can believe that. Looks toward the ceiling, and the sky lying somewhere beyond.

ERIC

This is why I got into Astronomy. The chance that there might be someone out there.

HARRISON

(laughs)

Seems like this guy is more important to you.

Eric looks at Harrison, maybe the major's not such a bad guy. The astronomer nods to himself, as if coming to a decision. He speaks softly, thoughtfully.

ERIC

When everyone on Earth has treated you like crap, you're only choice is to hope there's someone out there. Someone better.

Harrison smiles, appreciates the candor.

HARRISON

Well, I don't know if he's better. But he's certainly real.

ERIC

Can I meet him?

HARRISON

I think you know the answer to that, but, it doesn't matter, he doesn't speak our language, or if he does, he's not talking to us.

Eric stares ahead, his face registering disappointment. He quickly shakes it off. Harrison notes this reaction.

HARRISON

Now, since you don't know where we're located, and if you talk, you know you'll only join that woman who saw Elvis in her chicken fricassee...

ERIC

(rolls his eyes)

Yeah, like I'm the only witness.

HARRISON

I guess we lucked out. The one time they would've been on-the-money, and not one drooling loony came forward.

Harrison takes out his gun. Eric is now completely lost.

ERIC

What's that for?

HARRISON

Sleeping pill.

As Harrison moves to pistol-whip Eric...

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - DAY

Eric stirs from the sleeping position, finds himself laid out on a decrepit park bench, disoriented. Looks to the sky. The sun stares back at him as if it were just another day.

He quietly shakes off slumber cobwebs, not helped by the fresh lump on the back of his noggin. Then, having some idea of where he is, he rises, starting for the street.

A grizzly BUM is holding conversation on a graffiti-laced payphone.

BUM

(into phone)

That sounds like a good idea.

(quickly turns to Eric)

Hey, buddy, do you have an extra quarter? I've got my daughter on the phone, and the operator says I'm almost out of time...

Eric reaches into his side pockets. Empty. Checks the back pockets. Same discovery.

ERIC

The government took my wallet.

The bum points to his prosthetic leg, and ripped army jacket (circa Vietnam), smiles.

BUM

The government took something from me, too. Sure you don't have a dollar?

Eric somehow realizes that the bum isn't talking to his daughter, leaving him absolutely infuriated, probably more than most people would be.

ERIC

Why, does the phone make change?!

The bum turns away, blushes. Not too many dollar machines on payphones. Eric continues to glare at him.

ERIC

If you would just be honest with people...I really would've given you some money if I had it on me.

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

Now, the next time I do, I won't give you anything. Once you break people's trust, it's over.

Eric angrily starts away. The bum curiously watches him go. It's another moment before he resumes his supposed, fake conversation, but in an important, hushed tone:

BUM

(into phone)

No, he didn't say anything about anything.

INT. OBSERVATORY - AFTERNOON

Glen number-crunches into the computer, hunt-and-peck, like he hasn't done this too many times. Eric inches through the doorway, sluggish, hair frazzled. Glen doesn't look up from his work.

GLEN

You had me feeling guilty that you stayed late, so I came early.

(re: computer)

You must've left a whole ten minutes after me. Lot of work to do.

Eric nods blankly, sitting down. Glen's eyes move towards him. Good afternoon, Sunshine!

GLEN

You look like the shit of shit.
What happened?

Eric looks at Glen, he'd really like to tell him, but...

ERIC

I was watching one of those late night science fiction flicks. The alien came down, and the army took it in for examination.

GLEN

Did they kill it in the end?

This quickly wakes him up.

ERIC

Why would they kill it?!

GLEN

Cranky?

(re: alien movies)

They just always do.

Eric takes a breath, regains himself.

ERIC

Why?

GLEN

(purposely over-dramatic)

It's a threat to all that is right
in the universe.

ERIC

Maybe we're the threat to all that
is right in the universe.

(pause)

You didn't see anything unusual
happen last night?

Glen grins.

GLEN

I didn't get laid?

INT. ERIC'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A single poster of constellations lines otherwise bare walls.
Telescope points at closed window shades. A Cubs baseball
cap hangs on a closet door handle.The only furniture -- a small couch, and even smaller bed.
A gargantuan, cardboard moving box is taped shut in the
corner. Looks like someone's preparing to leave.Suddenly, a BANGING from the door. ANGRY GRUNTS. The door
won't give. FOOTSTEPS walking away. They cease. Maybe
they gave up? Another beat, then RUNNING FOOTSTEPS. Is
Eric still being followed? The door SLAMS open, barely left
on its hinges.

When the sawdust clears, we see the perpetrator is...

ERIC

almost out of breath, closing the door shut, grabbing his
bruised shoulder. He's really getting beaten up lately.

ERIC

(mutters to himself)

Can't believe the bastards took my
keys, too.

MAN (O.S.)

That way, we wouldn't have to do
what you just did.Eric turns to see SERGEANT BILL SANTRY, emerging from the
bathroom. He's a large man, late twenties, sometimes
mischievous, but knows how to follow orders when it counts.
Santry waves his hands near his nostrils, signaling that he
left a stinker in the john.

SANTRY

I'd give it about five minutes.

Santry eyes the lone moving box.

SANTRY

Leaving town?

Eric doesn't answer.

We finally, albeit barely, recognize Santry as the bum from the park. Turns out the prosthetic was a fake. Santry even does a little tap-dance, laughing. Eric is shocked, and irritated.

ERIC

You left the toilet seat up.

SANTRY

(laughs)

I'm supposed to take your ass back to Never-neverland.

ERIC

How is "he?"

SANTRY

He's lonely for you.

Eric shoots a puzzled look.

SANTRY

Green Dingleberry finally spoke, but all he said was...

(imitating a monotoned voice)

"Eric Corwitz."

Santry pulls out his gun, quick-draw style. The showman further dazzles with a few tricks, tossing it between hands. Eric eyes the gun, fearful.

ERIC

Sleeping pill?

Santry stops the Wild West show, confused.

SANTRY

No. Pistol-whip.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - ARMY BASE - DAY

Once again, Eric finds himself alone in this room. Rubs the back of his now-swelling head. Harrison enters.

ERIC

You guys ever heard of brain
hemorrhaging?

HARRISON

Poor baby.
(smiles)
Do you want to meet him?

Eric immediately lights up. He sure does.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - DAY

Much like the interrogation room, except there's a green alien sitting in it, large mirrors on all sides, as well as multiple video cameras. Harrison and Eric slowly enter, like they're afraid they'll be zapped by a hidden, alien laser gun.

Harrison stops, lets Eric move closer.

The alien slowly turns his head, staring at his request.

ALIEN'S MOUTH

starts to...smile.

Eric looks to Harrison, as if saying, "I didn't know he could do that." Eric smiles back at the alien, doesn't seem to hurt his face so much. Harrison tries to hide his own grin, nervously looking back at the cameras and the people he knows are behind them.

Over an intercom:

PRIVATE (V.O.)

Major Harrison, we found something
in the UFO that you need to see.

HARRISON

We're busy.

PRIVATE (V.O.)

Uh, we think it might be the Ten
Commandments.

HARRISON

(disbelieving)
The what?

The alien's smile fades.

INT. ARMY WAREHOUSE - DAY

Imposing warehouse doors slide open, Harrison and Eric entering. Their eyes take in the UFO, still in awe of it.

A TECH sticks his head out from the hatch, chomping on a sandwich, mustard caked on his lips.

TECH
(mouth-full)
If you think the outside is
impressive...

INT. UFO - DAY

A conglomeration of lights, monitors, paneling, dead-on with what so many "witnesses" have described (minus the probes). The two famed religious tablets lie on the floor, in the center of it all. The tech leads Harrison and Eric inside.

TECH
It's a sci-fi convention, man.

An explorative beat, then Harrison nods for the tech to leave. Reluctantly, he does. Eric flops on his belly, surveying the Hebrew writings.

ERIC
(reading)
"Honor father and mother."

HARRISON
Yeah, that's probably one of them.

ERIC
It definitely is. "E-ma" means
mother.

HARRISON
You can read this crap?

Eric sighs.

ERIC
Hebrew school is finally good for
something.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - DAY

Harrison looks surprisingly tense, drilling the seated alien, while Eric silently watches from the corner.

HARRISON
Where did you find the Ten
Commandments? Be honest, did you
poach them?

The alien doesn't answer. Harrison stares him down. The creature only nods toward the door. He wants the major to leave. And, though the alien has no authority, Harrison exits angrily, like a lowly tech.

Another moment, then the earlier, badly-imitated, monotone voice comes to life. Unlike Santry's version, it's not without its expressive cadence, only a little more subtle.

ALIEN

He thinks that your race got the only copy.

Eric looks up. Was he talking to him? Again, the alien smiles. Eric won't smile back this time, too overtaken by the millions of questions racing through his head. He inches closer.

ERIC

There are other races than ours and yours?

ALIEN

Many.

Eric just takes this in. A question that we've asked for thousands of years, answered in a second. Overwhelming.

ERIC

How many have you visited?

ALIEN

All of them.

ERIC

So ours is the last destination?

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAY

Eric and the alien are watched behind glass via the other side of a two-way mirror. In this darkened room, the major quietly observes their silence, a standstill. CHEWING. ANGLE on the tech, still gnawing on his sandwich, tweaking the audio-feed.

Someone else stands in the b.g., though we don't see his face.

And, through the glass, we see Eric finally feels comfortable enough to take a seat.

ALIEN'S QUARTERS

ALIEN

I've come here many times.

Eric softly chuckles.

ERIC

Why?

The alien seems to think this one over, gazing at the mirror where the major hides behind.

ALIEN

We all have our favorites.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

Harrison looks away like an embarrassed peeping tom.

ALIEN'S QUARTERS

ERIC

The tablets -- Have you talked to God?

ALIEN

Never. Have you?

ERIC

I don't believe in Him.

ALIEN

Then why did you ask if I had ever talked to something that you don't even believe ever existed?

Eric has no answer for this, doesn't pretend to.

INT. ARMY CAFETERIA - DAY

Eric sits alone, brooding, perhaps still chewing over the alien's question. Harrison repeatedly punches a coffee machine, yelling, "I just want some caffeine."

They are the only two in the place, it's been reserved.

Finally, the java flows. Harrison turns to Eric, explains his rare violent behavior.

HARRISON

Only for coffee.

(smiles)

Sex maybe.

Harrison sees Eric's mind is somewhere else. Sits opposite him.

HARRISON

He pulled some shit with you, huh?

Eric nods.

HARRISON

There's no doubt that he's got powers that we don't have.

Eric looks at him, incredulous.

ERIC

Come on, he's on a totally different playing field.

Harrison takes a swig of his coffee.

HARRISON

What really gets me...The Ten Commandments...Didn't we have some sort of exclusive deal on that or something?

Eric laughs to himself. Harrison doesn't get the joke.

ERIC

It must be hard for you. An alien comes out of the sky and we're all supposed to think, "Everybody run for your life."

Eric looks intense, eyes showing that focus.

ERIC

There's always that talk about how we're all God's creatures, but we see the mother-ship come down and, all of a sudden, it's like outside the realm of God. If it's green and goes to work in a flying saucer then God doesn't watch over it. God didn't create it. God had nothing to do with it. Why do we believe that God only loves us? Or is that just what we choose to believe?

HARRISON

For a man that doesn't believe in the Lord, you sure have one healthy obsession with Him.

(smiles)

Now I'm pulling the same shit with you. Great superior-being minds think alike.

Eric's expression turns darker, grim.

ERIC

How does this work? Now do you kill me?

(wishful thinking)

Or, now do you let me go for good?

Harrison glances at him, wishes he could let him go, but...

HARRISON

Neither. We'll let you keep your day-job, but you'll be moonlighting as an alien interpreter.

ERIC

Actually, my day-job is a night-job, and I don't think I can take many more blows to the head.

HARRISON

Well, we'll work out the schedule, and, we're going to trust you to keep our location and what we do here secret.

ERIC

Why?

HARRISON

Just because citizens don't trust the government, doesn't mean the government doesn't trust the citizens.

(off Eric's look)

Just keep the late night movie reviews to yourself.

Eric just stares, now knows he's been watched every last second of the past twenty-four hours. Harrison snorts.

HARRISON

Okay, maybe a little paranoia is a good thing.

ERIC

But why not just keep me here?

HARRISON

You have a life.

Eric grimaces to himself.

ERIC

Obviously you haven't been monitoring me close enough.

(then)

If I'm the only one he'll communicate with, then how are you going to learn from him when I'm not here?

Harrison doesn't answer, drinks his coffee.

EXT. ARMY BASE - DUSK

Santry pulls up in an unmarked, enclosed black jeep.

We get our first look at the base, several building structures all connected like a modern-day castle, the central one towering over the rest, the jeep sitting in front of it.

OVERHEAD of base. Covered on all sides by twenty-foot high walls, thick forestry even above that, no roads of any kind in sight, except for a thin path of heavy, gravel terrain (probably only manageable by jeep or SUV), leading to the single aperture in this military fortress, closed-off by mammoth gates.

Only the guard at the booth can open them, and he'll need to see proper ID. He doesn't wear army gear, nor are there any visible, military demarcations anywhere near the entrance. They've never had an unexpected visitor, but if they do, no hints as to what this place is.

Back by the central building, Harrison forcibly pulls Eric toward the passenger-side of the jeep. He fights all the way.

ERIC

You have no right to experiment on him!

HARRISON

We won't hurt him.

ERIC

How do you know what will hurt him and what won't?!

Harrison doesn't respond, pushing Eric inside, with the help of Santry, who starts the engine.

ERIC

How do you know I won't talk?!

Harrison takes a deep breath, sadly.

HARRISON

Because we'd kill you.

The major signals to the sergeant. Eric gives Harrison one last look as the truck pulls away.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

A pair of hands type rapidly. Another, hunt-and-peck. Eric and Glen input data from their respective computers. But Eric is constantly having to backtrack on typos, frustrated, preoccupied. Wonder why. He pats his back pocket, remembering that he "lost" his wallet.

ERIC

Hey, I'm out of money. Can you spot me for a pizza?

GLEN

You're going to eat a whole pizza by yourself? I'll split it with you, but I'm tired of pepperoni. Hell, I'm tired of pizza. How about something else?

Eric tenses at the thought. The man likes his pizza.

ERIC

We don't have to get pepperoni, but I really want pizza.

GLEN

Fine, sausage and pineapple.

Eric twitches, a disgusted look on his face.

ERIC

Are you sure you want pineapple?

GLEN

(smarmy)

Are you sure you want pizza?

ERIC

(unconvincing)

Yummy pineapple.

PIZZA

Engulfs the frame, somehow doesn't look real. Turns out to be...

EXT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

...the ten-foot tall, plastic decoration on the roof of a "Joe's Pizza" truck. Someone in a pizza hat and uniform hops out.

PAN to Eric at the entrance door. He's excited. Must be hungry.

The delivery person enters frame, NANCY, twenties, a sizable cross dangling from her neck. She's a cute one. Eric shifts nervously, obviously interested in a lot more than just the pizza.

NANCY

You really surprised me.

He's so nervous. Finally, he manages some eloquence...

ERIC

Huh?

NANCY

Sausage and pineapple. I thought for sure you were a pepperoni man.

ERIC

Yeah, I thought I'd try something different.

An awkward beat. She finally hands him the pizza.

NANCY

It's thirteen dollars.

ERIC

(reads receipt)

Says eleven dollars and thirty cents.

She looks at him, strangely. He freezes with an "Oh God, she thinks I'm cheap" look.

CLOSE on Nancy's mouth. It slowly curls into a smile.

NANCY

I was including my well-deserved tip.

ERIC'S MOUTH

chewing a slice of pineapple, grimaces.

ERIC

This is terrible.

PULL BACK to reveal that we are back in...

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Glen enjoys Eric's pain, along with a pineapple slice.

GLEN

What are you complaining about? I've spent a lot more than thirteen dollars at the strip bars just to see women.

ERIC

What does that mean?

GLEN

It means, you didn't want pepperoni either. You should've asked for a pizza with Nancy as the topping.

ERIC

How did you know her name?

GLEN

I think I've hit on her before.

Eric puts down his slice. He's off the hook, in a way.

ERIC

Well, if she's been with you, then
I can finally order from that
Mexican place.

Eric reaches into a drawer, pulls out a menu marked "Buenos Nachos."

GLEN

Don't give me that virgin-on-a-
pedestal crap.

ERIC

(dials phone)
I didn't say she had to be a virgin.
(into phone)
Yes, I'd like a large chicken
burrito...Okay, yes, I can hold.

GLEN

Trust me, she'd have to be a virgin
to not have had sex with me.
(and)
So I guess that would make her a
virgin.

Eric throws Glen a befuddled stare.

ERIC

(into phone)
No thanks, I already have pizza.

INT. BUENOS NACHOS - NIGHT

A Mexican waitress holds a phone to her ear, staring blankly,
bewildered.

BACK TO SCENE

Eric still has his own baffled look.

ERIC

She turned you down?

GLEN

Yes. But she's probably a lesbian.

They both share a laugh. Eric's is more of the nervous kind.
Still doesn't have a good reason not to pursue her.

GLEN

Hey, are we going bowling tomorrow?

Eric takes another bite of his pineapple slice, groaning not just at the taste.

ERIC
Sorry, I already made plans with a friend.

INT. JEEP - DAY

Santry and Eric ride in silence.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - ARMY BASE - DAY

Harrison leads Eric in. The alien quietly waits.

HARRISON
(sotto to Eric)
He didn't say anything all day.

ERIC
(sotto to Harrison)
It's hard to talk while a doctor tells you to turn your head and cough.

Eric takes a seat. Harrison just stands there. The alien and Eric both turn to him, staring. The major finally takes the hint, leaving them alone.

HARRISON
(as he exits, under his breath)
Snobs.

Eric waits for the door to close.

ERIC
Did they hurt you?

ALIEN
No more than usual.

Eric nods, revealing the one thing that's been gnawing at him.

ERIC
Why did you ask for me?

The alien only stares.

ERIC
I'm not special.

A long silence. Eric fears he's forever lost this unique communication privilege. But, finally...

ALIEN

Who is?

Eric smiles, thankful to still be in the game.

ERIC

World leaders? Entertainers?
Athletes?

ALIEN

I would've asked for the Cubs, but
they're still busy trying to make
the playoffs.

Eric looks at him, realizes he's been spied on by more than
just the army.

ERIC

How did you watch me?

ALIEN

(gesturing toward the
wall mirrors)
How did they?

ERIC

How long have you watched me?

ALIEN

Since you've existed.

ERIC

Why? I'm not special.

The alien doesn't answer. Another long silence, as if issuing a
final warning against the "I'm not special" declaration. Then:

ALIEN

Why don't you ask her out?

Eric softly sighs.

ERIC

At least you can't read my thoughts,
too...or you'd already know.

ALIEN

Why haven't you connected with
anyone for so long?

ERIC

If you've seen, then you know.

ALIEN

No one sees anything exactly the
same.

ERIC

I'm just not sure about her.

The alien doesn't seem to understand.

ERIC

I've been disappointed so many times, if she wasn't everything that I imagined...

ALIEN

Then pizza wouldn't be the same?

Eric closes his eyes, thinking of a way to explain this.

ERIC

Uh, it's like a new song that comes out. You hear it, and you want to hear it again. Finally, you buy it, and it's yours. But by having it, it's like you lose it. It's like with every time you play it, the magic disappears a little more, until it's just like any another song on the radio.

The alien seems to consider this.

ALIEN

But you can't own a living thing, and no one remains the same song. Can you predict everything someone will say?

ERIC

Not everything.

ALIEN

Maybe that's what scares you.

ERIC

How can you say that? You don't scare me.

The alien smiles.

ALIEN

But you don't have to worry about losing me to someone else. I'm only here for you.

EXT. JOE'S PIZZA - NIGHT

Eric stands by the entrance, waiting. Fidgety. The pizza truck pulls up, Nancy stepping out to get the next orders. She spots him, points.

NANCY

Thought you'd save yourself the
delivery tip?

ERIC

I don't want pizza anymore.

NANCY

We have a whole menu of stuff.
Lasagna, vermicelli...

ERIC

I don't like Italian.

NANCY

(smiles)
I'm Italian.

INT. PIZZA TRUCK - NIGHT

Eric watches from shotgun as Nancy delivers to a somewhat
thankful family. She hands them their change, then crawls
back inside the truck, shaking her head.

NANCY

They didn't tip me anything.

ERIC

Why didn't you just charge them
with the tip already installed,
like you did with me?

NANCY

Oh, that only works with customers
trying to get in my pants.
(off his look)
Well, I'll just change out of my
super-hero costume, and then we
can go have our first date.

ERIC

Wasn't this it?

NANCY

(sarcastic)
Good first impression, Eric.

ERIC

It's just, I have to be back at
work in half an hour, and if this
was our first date, then the next
time we went out, I could...
(suddenly, bravely)
let you kiss me?

Eric looks away, wondering whether that was cute or just
really stupid.

NANCY
 (grins)
 You have rules?

It was cute.

ERIC
 (unsure)
 Yes?

NANCY
 What could I do on our third date?

ERIC
 Oh, everything except...

NANCY
 Except?

ERIC
 ...things involving farm animals?

Nancy bursts out laughing. Eric looks on, as if seeing the most amazing thing in his life, even for the last few days.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

As the pizza truck pulls away, we hear:

ERIC (V.O.)
 Okay, cows, but that's it.

She laughs even louder.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Eric and Glen raise their respective burritos, toasting the recent dating success.

INT. UPSTAIRS TRACK - ARMY BASE - DAY

LOW ANGLE of two-toed feet quickly moving. The alien is getting his exercise. Five-toed Eric is slightly behind, catches up.

ERIC
 Nice that they're letting you stretch your legs.

The alien adds rare sarcasm.

ALIEN
 Nice.

We PAN DOWN to the

BASKETBALL COURT

where Harrison shoots hoops. From a hidden ear-piece:

ALIEN (V.O.)
Did you ask her out?

ERIC (V.O.)
Yes.

*

The major's ears perk up, squeezes the ball tight.

ALIEN (V.O.)
What did she say?

Harrison crosses his fingers.

ERIC (V.O.)
(annoyed)
You know she said yes.

Harrison spikes the ball, pumping his fists in victory. Happy for Eric. Slowly, Harrison looks up. Both alien and Eric are staring down at him. The major tries to cover his ass.

HARRISON
I made a tough hook shot?

UPSTAIRS TRACK

The alien and Eric nod, moving on.

ALIEN
Are you scared?

ERIC
(quietly)
Yes.
(then)
Do you have someone where you're from?

ALIEN
No.

ERIC
And you gave me advice?

ALIEN
I didn't tell you anything you haven't thought to yourself a thousand times.

ERIC
More like a million.

ALIEN

Yes, I got bored of listening to it, so I shut you out sometimes. But, with the speed of brainwaves, a million sounds more accurate.

Eric looks at him, confused. A mind-reader, too?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Various military personnel seated at an endless conference table. Harrison and Eric stand before them.

For the first time, the major is outranked and knows it. He looks at the unseen man from the surveillance room, GENERAL WALTER BARROW, late fifties, poised in his mind for much bigger things. No one here outranks him. He also knows it.

GENERAL

We've been listening to the playback of your conversations, and find them to not exactly be what we're looking for.

Harrison responds with unusual, quiet trepidation.

HARRISON

But we're finding out many things about the alien's emotional aspects. His ability to care. Humor. Patience.

GENERAL

Yes, but we need priority here. How does his vehicle run? Where is his planet? How many other races are out there.

Eric decides to pipe up.

ERIC

General, I asked that, and he told me that there were many.

GENERAL

But that's too general.

HARRISON

But he only seems to want to be general, General.

A couple personnel crack up at the double-usage of "general." The general's glaring quickly ends the laughter. He turns back to Eric and Harrison.

GENERAL

We're on a timetable here.

HARRISON

Eric has made himself fully available to us. He asked for this weekend off, but other than that...

Strangely, some personnel give the "thumbs up" signal to Eric. One even whispers, "Go get 'em, Tiger." Eric is slightly confused by this. The general just stops them cold with a look, then gets up, whispering something into Harrison's ear.

The major doesn't like what he hears, but mechanically nods his head in agreement.

HARRISON

I'll come up with a proper list of questions.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The general exits the conference room, followed by his personnel/entourage. A beat, then Harrison and Eric step out. One COLONEL looks back at Eric from the personnel group.

COLONEL

Counting on you, stud.

Eric shrugs his shoulders helplessly, looks to Harrison.

ERIC

What did the general tell you?

HARRISON

I bet she's pretty?

ERIC

Who?

HARRISON

Your girlfriend. We've got a pool going. Five of us think this is the weekend.

Eric nods -- that explains the sudden interest in his love-life.

ERIC

(embarrassed)

She's not my girlfriend yet.

(pause)

What did the general tell you?

Harrisons slowly turns grim.

HARRISON
The alien is dying.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - DAY

Eric opens the door. His eyes completely bug out. A shadow on the wall hints at a figure with three legs. Eric quickly slaps his hands over his eyes.

ERIC
I'm sorry. I didn't know you were
changing.

The shadow now only has two legs -- The alien grins.

ALIEN
Eric, I've never had any clothes
on to begin with.

Eric peeks through his fingers, puzzled.

ERIC
But I saw...

The alien laughs. A little joke. In that almost monotone voice, he bizarrely taunts.

ALIEN
Mine's bigger than yours is.

The alien sits down, motions for Eric to do the same.

ALIEN
You didn't think it was "ha-ha?"

ERIC
Somehow, I guess you're not aware.
Harrison told me that you're...

ALIEN
Dying. Yes, death is my fate.

ERIC
If they stop the tests?

ALIEN
(plainly)
No me die.

Eric chuckles skittishly.

ERIC
You sure take death interestingly.

ALIEN

I knew if I came down like this
that it would happen. But I got
tired of being a secret. I suppose
I still am.

Eric pulls out a laminated document. Obviously detests what
he's about to do.

ERIC

I've got some questions I'm supposed
to ask you. From now on, they
want our meetings to be less
personal.

ALIEN

I would never have categorized our
talks as being personal. You never
even told me about your family.
Tell me about your parents.

Eric eyes the alien, irritated. Maybe he does want to do
this. Reads from the question sheet.

ERIC

"Do you eat food?"

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general smiles, standing over Harrison's shoulder.

GENERAL

Now, that's a good question.

Clearly, this question was thought up by the general himself.
The loud speaker gives the simple answer.

ALIEN (V.O.)

No.

The general frowns.

INT. JEEP - NIGHT

Eric wallows in the passenger seat, but surprisingly, Harrison
is driving.

HARRISON

Hey, I'm sorry about this.

ERIC

About the fact that you drive slow
as shit?

HARRISON

I don't drive that slow.

ERIC

A policeman would have to clock
you with a calendar.

HARRISON

I was trying to say that I'm sorry
that we're putting you through
this.

ERIC

Did you say you were sorry to him?

Harrison now looks indignant, his voice filling with a quiet
bitterness.

HARRISON

I don't say anything to him. He
doesn't say anything to me.

ERIC

I don't know why he picked me.
I'm not special or anything.

INT. TRUCK STOP - NIGHT

Harrison returns to better spirits, ogling a big steak in
front of him, next to his mandatory cup of coffee. Across
the table, Eric just glares.

HARRISON

You don't even want a piece of
pie?

ERIC

I want to get home and get some
sleep.

Harrison takes a ravenous bite. Beats army food.

HARRISON

(mouth-full)

"Home" is an interesting term...

ERIC

(disgusted)

Does anyone have manners in the
army?

Harrison self-consciously swallows, continuing.

HARRISON

...like that alien said -- two
people can hear the same thing,
yet hear two completely different
things.

ERIC

(correcting)

He said no one sees anything exactly the same.

HARRISON

But it applies. Like, I "hear" the word "home," and I "see" a house with a great big family. Now, you live in a cramped apartment, and you don't have any family, yet you still call your shit-hole "home."

ERIC

Okay, I don't live in a big house with a family like you, what's it matter, Major?

Harrison regards the sudden formality, but struggles to continue his thought.

HARRISON

I don't have those things either. My lonely place looks just like yours, but when I call it a day, I say, "I'd like to get back to my shit-hole and get some sleep."

ERIC

(giving up)

Fine, I live in a shit-hole.

Harrison takes another healthy bite, then:

HARRISON

I disagree with him on this. I think sometimes people do see the same things. I think one of us is lying. Either I live in a home or you live in a shit-hole. Who's telling the truth?

Eric answers a question with a question, not because he's interested, just hoping to change the subject.

ERIC

Why don't you have a family?

A silent beat. But mission accomplished.

HARRISON

My father died of a bad liver when I was twelve -- half the reason I liked to drink his beers when I

(MORE)

HARRISON (CONT'D)

was young. Thought I was prolonging his life. My mother went not long before I joined the service. The military is my family, I suppose. They clothe me, feed me and give me orders.

Eric has been barely listening throughout. Harrison stops, looks at him. The civilian will comply, but in a blatant "could care less" mode, which Harrison doesn't seem to want to pick up on.

ERIC

You don't sound happy with your present situation. Why don't you change it?

HARRISON

Because there's nothing else for me. I don't mean that I couldn't get another job, but, well, it's my excuse and I wear it proudly.

Harrison takes a chug of coffee.

HARRISON

What have you been making excuses for?

Suddenly, Eric slams his fist down, rattling his unused-yet-dirty dinnerware. His eyes raging. Harrison is taken aback by the reaction, but relieved to see the kid shows some emotion.

ERIC

I get it from him and now I get it from you! Can't someone just be a coldhearted prick anymore? Isn't that possible? Mommy and Daddy didn't beat me. Nothing I can press charges for. I just wasn't allowed to leave a room without telling them that I loved them. I was also told that I should always kiss them on the lips in front of people. It wasn't sexual. It was just their way of letting their guests know that I "loved" them. "Close families always kiss on the lips." Didn't want to be known as cheek kissers. I completed their resume. No businessman has a compete portfolio without at least one kid.

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

I just didn't know when I spilled
out of my mother's uterus that I
was actually applying for a job.

Eric takes a breath, flagging down a waitress.

ERIC

Slice of chocolate cream pie,
please?

He glances back at a shocked Harrison.

ERIC

Do you think I could have my wallet
back so I don't have to wash dishes
here?

HARRISON

It's on me.

ERIC

No thanks. I don't take government
hand-outs.

Harrison frowns, speaking with all sincerity.

HARRISON

I just thought it was a friend
buying another friend some pie.

ERIC

I don't have any friends.

HARRISON

What about that guy down at your
work?

ERIC

There's a difference between being
friendly and being friends. You
work with someone fifty hours a
week, it only makes sense to get
along.

HARRISON

I feel the same way every time I
enter the Officers' Club.

ERIC

(back to "could care
less" mode)
That's nice.

Harrison finally feels the coldness.

HARRISON

What's wrong with you? When you're with the alien, you're not like this.

ERIC

He doesn't waste my time.

Harrison looks outright pissed for once. Really pissed. The waitress appears, smiling, setting down the pie.

HARRISON

We're going to take it to go.

EXT. ERIC'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The jeep pulls up not far from, but not in front of, the paint-chipped apartment structure. Some street kids exchange something, quickly run away.

INT. JEEP - NIGHT

Harrison stares ahead, still pissed. Eric looks at him, doesn't want to leave it like this.

ERIC

You're turning quiet on me.

Harrison only stares ahead.

ERIC

You didn't say anything the whole way home.

(grins)

I mean, the whole way shit-hole.

Harrison works hard to hold back laughter, remains silent.

ERIC

This is how the alien treats you, huh? Must be frustrating.

But Harrison still won't give.

ERIC

You know, I'm basically a captive in this whole thing, and you've threatened to kill me. I hardly ever like it when people threaten to kill me.

Harrison quietly nods. Makes some sense.

HARRISON

Yeah, I guess that's not too friendly.

ERIC
In general, General.

They share a grin. Breaking some of the ice. Harrison reaches past him, into the glove compartment. Flips something into Eric's lap. It's a surprise -- his "lost" apartment keys.

EXT. ERIC'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Opening the entrance door, Eric looks back at the jeep as it disappears from sight. Slowly smiles.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Eric and Nancy wait at the end of a very long line. They already look desperate for conversation.

NANCY
Must be some movie.

ERIC
Opening weekend.

Then, awkward silence.

INT. LOBBY - MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

They wait in another long line, this time pointing toward the refreshment counter. Conversation still stagnant. Finally...

ERIC
Should we share a large popcorn?

NANCY
Okay.

And, more awkward silence.

INT. THEATRE #4 - NIGHT

Making their way in, they see the place is packed, except for a few sporadic, solitary seats. They look at each other, disappointed. Maybe this isn't meant to be.

INT. THEATRE #4 - LATER NIGHT

As everyone else watches the movie, our two lovebirds stare at each other...from opposite ends of the theatre. Frustrating. Eric can feel the evening slipping away. He starts pumping himself up in a "not this time" motion. Won't give up.

Desperately, he grabs a handful of popcorn, running hunched-down through the crowd, like a tailback trying to find the end zone. People yell out disapproval.

He doesn't care, finally reaching Nancy. She's not sure whether this is chivalry or insanity.

NANCY
What are you doing?

Eric smiles, eyelashes amusingly fluttering.

ERIC
I thought we were going to share
the popcorn.

Nancy can't help but smile, happily opening her pie-hole. He shovels it in, kissing her stuffed mouth. A BEARDED MAN watches from the next seat, touched.

BEARDED MAN
Maybe we should switch seats.

ERIC
(eternally grateful)
Really?

BEARDED MAN
Sure, I was once in love, too.

The bearded man gets up, eagerly heading for another row. Eric plops down by Nancy. They share another kiss. Perfection. Then, the WOMAN on the other side of Eric starts to cry, loudly. He reluctantly turns to her.

ERIC
What's wrong?

WOMAN
(re: bearded man)
I'm his wife.

The woman runs out of the theatre in hysterics. Eric and Nancy watch her go. Almost perfection.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Nancy steps to the front porch, followed by a reluctant Eric. Worried eyes.

ERIC
You want to go over to my place
instead?

NANCY
You can meet my parents.

ERIC
Isn't that a little premature?
Usually when you meet someone's
parents, it means...

NANCY

What do you think it means if we go back to your place?

Eric thinks this over.

ERIC

Fine, we could go back to your place.

Nancy emphatically gestures toward the house.

NANCY

This is my place.

ERIC

You live with your parents?

NANCY

We "co-habitate."

INT. LIVING ROOM - NANCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nancy's parents, LINDA and HAL, watch television on the couch. A beat. Poppa's hand starts to creep on Momma's thigh. Linda gives her best "innocent little girl" face.

LINDA

Where do you think you're putting that hand?

Hal grins.

HAL

I don't know. I haven't gotten there yet.

NANCY (O.S.)

Mom and Dad?

The parents quickly separate, like lust-lorn teenagers. Nancy enters, Eric standing behind her.

NANCY

This is Eric.

HAL

Why don't you shake my hand, son?

Eric hesitantly steps forward, shakes.

HAL

Nice firm shake. Must've spent a lot of time on your knees in the bathroom.

LINDA

(scolding)

Hal.

HAL
 I meant, so he could pray.
 (coy)
 Why, what did you think I meant,
 Linda?

Linda won't say a word. Nancy laughs. Eric is stunned.

NANCY
 Dad's the sicko in the family.

LINDA
 (feeling left out)
 What about me? I'm sick, too.
 (laughs)
 Don't make me flash your boyfriend,
 because I will!

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nancy and Eric step back out. Eric is still stunned.

NANCY
 Did you like them?

Eric is even more stunned by his answer.

ERIC
 Yes, I did.

HANDS

An unseen face buried in them. The fingers slowly part,
 revealing Eric's shaken eyes.

ERIC
 I don't think I can see her again.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - ARMY BASE - DAY

The alien gazes, expressionless.

ALIEN
 Because of her parents?

Eric jerks his head up.

ERIC
 Don't you have any respect for a
 person's privacy?

ALIEN
 (simply)
 No.

ERIC

It's this whole situation. Moving too fast.

ALIEN

You haven't even slipped her the tongue yet.

Eric really wasn't expecting that.

ERIC

How could you know that? What, do you have a camera that sees inside mouths?

The alien waves this off, wanting to move on to more important issues.

ALIEN

Why is your apartment so empty?

Eric is taken aback. A question from deep left field.

ERIC

Well, if I ever decided to leave, then I could just go. I wouldn't have to worry about where I would put my stuff or anything.

ALIEN

Where would you go?

ERIC

Somewhere else.

ALIEN

Would you get a lot of stuff when you got there?

Eric's head is spinning. So many questions.

ERIC

I don't know. Why?

The alien doesn't answer, continues the grilling.

ALIEN

Do people count as stuff?

ERIC

No.

ALIEN

It's the same thing, isn't it? If you have people in your life, then you couldn't just go.

ERIC

Why? All I would have to do is
call them and tell them I was going.

ALIEN

But all you would have to do is
call Good Will to get rid of your
stuff. They pick it up for you.

Eric can't say a word. He's been caught.

ALIEN

It's not so easy to get rid of
things. You get attached.

Eric still says nothing, irritated, reaching into his pocket.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general smiles upon seeing -- the questions list in Eric's
hand. Now we're getting somewhere.

ERIC (V.O.)

(reading)

"Do you believe in organized
religion?"

THROUGH THE GLASS

The alien seems to think it over. A moment passes. Then
another...

GENERAL

furrows his brow, turns to Harrison.

GENERAL

If he gives us another bullshit
answer, I swear...

Then, suddenly:

ALIEN (V.O.)

It's almost like asking me if I
believe in oxymorons.

THROUGH THE GLASS

The alien continues.

ALIEN (V.O.)

Political parties, governments,
educational institutions all have
a standard, sometimes good, but
what happens when your individual
thoughts stray from your allegiance?

EVERYONE

in the surveillance room are spellbound. He's questioning everything they stand for.

ALIEN'S QUARTERS

Eric is under a similar hypnosis.

ALIEN

I'm not suggesting anarchy.

After a moment, Eric snaps out of the mesmerizing trance.

ERIC

What are you suggesting?

ALIEN

When two people lie to each other, and each knows the other is lying, then what is even the point of the lie?

ERIC

(surmising)

Honesty is the best policy?

ALIEN

Goodness is the best policy.

ERIC

What is goodness?

The alien smiles.

ALIEN

If you people haven't figured that out...

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general is quietly brimming with fury.

GENERAL

(under his breath)

Cop-out.

ALIEN'S QUARTERS

ERIC

And you know what goodness is?

ALIEN

It's in the word.

Eric mouths "It's in the word." Finally comes to him.

ERIC
So we're back to believing in God?

ALIEN
"Back" implies coming back from
somewhere else. God never left.

Eric quietly nods, looking back at the question sheet.

ERIC
(reading)
"What is the purpose of your
mission?"

ALIEN
To me, it's not a mission. It's
an inevitability...

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

GENERAL
Now what the hell does that mean?

THROUGH THE GLASS

As if answering the general's question, but really only
bridging his own thought.

ALIEN (V.O.)
...it means, that doctor keeps
looking at me as if I don't have a
clue. You call me advanced, yet
think I don't know what will happen.
You believe that I deal in the
past, present and an unseen future,
just like you. You probably even
think I speak English as my official
language. Why would I even need a
language?

DOCTOR NATHAN JODD

About forty. Looks on from the surveillance room,
expressionless. But we know he's taking this personally.

THROUGH THE GLASS

ERIC (V.O.)
To communicate?

ALIEN (V.O.)
"Communicate" is a word that you
invented.

ERIC (V.O.)
But then, how do you deal with
others?

The alien can only shrug.

ALIEN (V.O.)
It's beyond your understanding.

GENERAL

leans closer to glass.

GENERAL
Cop-out.

THROUGH THE GLASS

The alien slowly turns profile, now seemingly looking straight at the general.

ALIEN (V.O.)
You honestly believe that there is nothing beyond you? Nothing you can't grasp? Then how do I know that the only thing keeping me alive is the fact that you haven't gotten all the answers from me? And how do I also know that you'll end up killing me after you think you have?
(pause)
And how do I know that you'll only have scratched the surface...in general, General?

The general and alien appear to be staring each other down.

ALIEN QUARTERS

Of course, the alien is only staring at a mirror.

Sound of WAVES RIPPLING.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Linda rubs Hal full of sun tan lotion and then some.

HAL
(bothered)
Enough already.

LINDA
I'm protecting you from cancer.

Linda lights herself a cigarette.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Nancy and Eric pull up in the pizza-mobile, the ocean waiting in the distance. They wrangle beach chairs out of the back.

NANCY

Thanks for deciding to come.

ERIC

I don't know why they invited me.

Nancy laughs, pinching his ass. Surprised by her own behavior, she backs away, an intense look about her.

NANCY

For some reason, they like you.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Hal rises from his chair, waves them over. Shakes Eric's hand.

HAL

Firm grip. You must spend...

ERIC

(cutting him off)
...a lot of time on my knees in
the bathroom?

HAL

I was going to say that you must
work out.

(fake scolding)

What you said was gross, Eric.

LINDA

Leave him alone, Hal.

Nancy puts down her beach chair, grins at her father.

NANCY

Yes, Hal, leave him alone.

Hal gives Nancy a look, then picks her up, playfully depositing her in the nearby ocean. Linda and Eric look on. Eric seems awkward, still holding his beach chair, like a security blanket.

ERIC

Uh, thanks for inviting me to your
beach house and everything.

LINDA

Well, thank you for being the first
halfway decent person my daughter
has brought home.

ERIC

(more at ease)
How do you know I'm decent?

LINDA
I said halfway decent. Cigarette?

Eric shakes "no."

LINDA
Heroin?

He smiles, again shakes "no." Hal and Nancy are now having a splash fight. Eric watches in wonderment.

ERIC
Have they always been like that?

Linda takes the beach chair from Eric's hands, sets it down.

LINDA
No.

INT. DINING ROOM - BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Linda serves everyone their dinner, then takes her seat among them. They haven't waited for her, already digging in.

LINDA
(sarcastic)
Thanks for waiting.

HAL
(sarcastic back)
And we forgot to say "Grace" too.
Goddamnit.

Nancy flashes Hal a look of disapproval. He nods in apology, then quickly turns to Eric.

HAL
But why Astronomy?

ERIC
The chance that there might be
someone out there.

NANCY
You believe in aliens?

ERIC
When everyone on Earth has
treated...

Eric stops, looks at the inhabitants of the table.

ERIC
Yes, I believe in aliens.

HAL
Sounds like a shit-living.

ERIC

Yes, it's been that way, but I think I may try something else soon.

HAL

Why, you're giving up on the "green people?"

ERIC

I just feel like I've reached...

Eric finds himself trailing off again. Sighs.

ERIC

I don't think I can get any further in this career.

HAL

I respect that. Don't believe all that "only a loser quits" crap. Sometimes the smartest thing is to know when to quit.

LINDA

(cigarette in her mouth)
Absolutely.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Nancy picks up a sea shell, puts it to her ear.

NANCY

They say you can hear the ocean from inside a sea shell.
(listens)
Wow, I can hear it.

Eric steps from the sand to the water.

ERIC

That's because we're standing five feet from the ocean.

NANCY

You're so skeptical.

She gazes at him searchingly.

NANCY

You're the last person who should believe in aliens.

He toes at the sand.

ERIC

I meant that I believed that there was a real possibility.

NANCY

I saw how you looked. You said it like you believed as much in them as you did in anything.

Eric slowly looks up.

ERIC

Well, I don't believe in anything that much.

The waves quietly rock. Nancy motions toward the beach house.

NANCY

What do you think of them?

ERIC

Can they really be that way?

NANCY

What do you mean?

ERIC

"Parents" -- are they really like that?

NANCY

I'd assume that each set is a little different. Why, are yours like that?

Eric watches the tide coming in.

ERIC

No, they weren't.

Silence. A sore subject all the way.

NANCY

I'm sorry. I didn't know they died.

ERIC

They didn't. Well, they could be dead by now. I really don't know.

NANCY

You don't know if your parents are dead?

Eric's voice turns eerily similar to the alien's, devoid of almost all expression.

ERIC

They're dead to me.

Eric shifts his feet, unsure. He nods to himself, coming to some kind of decision.

ERIC

All my life, they said, "You don't like it? When you're eighteen, you can leave." One day, I told them I was taking them up on their offer. If only I could still have the courage it took to board that plane. I didn't have any reason to think it would turn out okay, but I knew if I stayed...

Eric just trails off, feels he's already said too much for one night.

NANCY

I wish I could have been there to help you.

He shoots a surprisingly cold stare.

ERIC

What would you have done?

Nancy can only shrug innocently. Eric looks away, embarrassed. Nods to himself again, reluctantly.

ERIC

A year-or-so later, some cops showed up at my door. They said my parents had filed a "missing persons" report. I kept my phone number unlisted that whole year, purposely kept as much information about me confidential. Didn't matter. It's like you can never really escape.

NANCY

(confused)

But they knew you weren't missing. You left.

Eric sighs. He looks more alone than ever.

ERIC

The cops asked me a few questions. "Are you okay?" Stupid stuff like that. Then, "You should really call them. They're worried." Then they left. Cops are great.

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

I got a jaywalking ticket once.
After that cop finished with
Bad-ass Eric, he drove off,
obliviously passing a drug dealer
selling crack to a twelve-year-
old. Cops are great.

NANCY

Sounds like you have a little
problem with authority.

ERIC

So it seems.

The rushing tide becomes

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Pavement rushing under the wheels of

INT. JEEP - DAY

Eric and Santry drive in silence.

INT. HALLWAY - ARMY BASE - DAY

Eric steps toward the alien quarters. Harrison obediently
sits by the door. Stands to cut him off.

HARRISON

He's taking a nap.

Eric thinks it's a joke, grins.

ERIC

Naps are made to be broken.

Eric reaches for the door. Harrison pulls out his gun.

HARRISON

You can't go in right now.

Eric stares at him, knows it's serious, but somehow can't
back away. The gun moves closer to Eric, but this time, it
isn't bothering him as much. An intense beat. Both are
still holding their ground, but Harrison really doesn't know
what he'll do if Eric proceeds.

Slowly, Eric reaches back for the door. Harrison braces the
trigger, but the rest of him is shaking.

HARRISON

(imploring)

Don't.

Their eyes lock...

Now, neither knows what will happen next...

Suddenly, the door flies open. The alien lies on a distant table, weakened. Harrison examines the door. Telekinesis?

HARRISON

How did he...

ALIEN

"He" just does.

Harrison looks to the alien.

HARRISON

Were you talking to me?

The alien only stares. Harrison will never know.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - LATER DAY

Eric stands over the alien. They are alone.

ERIC

What did they do to you?

ALIEN

Injected me, lasered me, touched me inappropriately.

(smiles)

Anybody touch you inappropriately?

Eric realizes -- ah yes, the weekend. Shakes his head.

ERIC

You really can see everything.

ALIEN

I just fast-forward to the good parts...of which there were none.

Eric helps the alien sit up, then takes his own seat.

ALIEN

At least you smiled a lot.

ERIC

Don't I always?

ALIEN

No, you don't.

They exchange a smile.

ERIC

It's nice to have you to share this with.

ALIEN

But what will you do when it's over?

ERIC

You mean me and Nancy don't last?

But that was not what the alien was referring to.

ALIEN

No. Us.

Eric looks away, doesn't want to think about it.

ERIC

I don't know. I keep feeling that you're the cause of all this change of fortune. Guiding me through it all.

(softly, to himself)

What will I do?

ALIEN

You'll survive, but the trust still isn't there with you.

Eric sits back, nods.

ERIC

I keep waiting for her and her parents to do something to me. To screw me over in some way.

ALIEN

What if they do?

ERIC

I've already been fucked over enough, right?

The alien doesn't answer, lying back down.

ERIC

Are you okay?

ALIEN

Tired.

Eric stands, helping him put a blanket over his much-deteriorated body.

ERIC

What if they didn't kill you? Would you stay? Would you report back to your "people?"

ALIEN

Would you stay?

The alien doesn't wait for a response, closing his eyes. Eric gives him one last look, starts for the exit.

ERIC

(softly)

Maybe.

ROOF

Eric and Glen observe a crisp, evening sky from respective telescopes. Quiet. Glen turns to him, but Eric is too caught up in the stars.

GLEN

So how's it going with her?

ERIC

(without looking up)

Good.

An awkward beat. Glen looks left out.

GLEN

Seems like it.

Glen studies a small, bent bolt in his hand.

GLEN

Hard to believe that something that cost fifty cents can render our seven-figured-costing, Gaston Observatory Scope powerless.

Eric isn't listening.

GLEN

The Cubs got officially eliminated from the playoffs. Lost to the Pirates, five-to-three.

But Eric still doesn't hear him, elsewhere. Glen squeezes the bolt tight, isn't fond of talking to himself.

GLEN

I'll hit the hardware store in the morning.

EXT. FACTORY - NIGHT

Long-abandoned, half the windows broken, soot of decades past remain. But, RISING, we see the roof is just the right view for our astronomers, one only focused on his telescope, the other focused on finding a way to get some attention.

CLOSE on Eric's intent face, lost in the stars, and thought. Another moment, then suddenly:

GLEN (O.S.)

(laughs)

Just make sure you're the one buying the condoms.

This time, Eric does look up from the telescope, hatred-filled eyes. Glen winces, immediately wishes he could take it back. Then, he attempts to explain, only making it worse.

GLEN

She could poke holes in them. I'm really paranoid about that sort of thing.

ERIC

(furious)

Good tip.

GLEN

I'm only saying...

ERIC

Yeah. So, who are you going out with this weekend?

GLEN

Cheryl.

ERIC

What happened to Janeane, Glen?

GLEN

Well, she and I...

ERIC

Or Natalie, or Gina, or Mary...

GLEN

They were just for fun...

Eric forcibly grabs Glen, pulling him near the edge of the roof.

ERIC

Or Denise, or Jenny...

Glen tries to stay cool, but doesn't like where this is going.

GLEN

Jeez, you remember their names better than I do.

Closing in on the edge, Glen is really starting to get unnerved.

GLEN

Running out of room here.

Eric stops, still holding onto Glen. Looks him over, appraises him.

ERIC

I'm not going to throw you over.
I don't care about you that much.

Glen's face loses all expression. Hurts more than if he had been thrown off the roof. Eric lets go of him, methodically packs up his telescope. Glen calms, doesn't feel he deserved that.

GLEN

Hey, I'm not going to say I'm sorry.

ERIC

No, because then you might have to mean it.

Eric strides toward the downstairs door.

GLEN

I'm sorry.

Eric looks back, can only shake his head, tight.

ERIC

I thought you weren't going to say it.

He opens the door, disappearing inside. Glen shakes his own head wildly, like a dog caught in the rain.

GLEN

Aw, numb-nuts!

GROUND FLOOR

Eric leaves the factory through a rusty door labeled "Condemned," pissed off as hell.

GLEN (O.S.)

Hey, would you care if I jumped?!

Eric stops, turns around. Glen walking the tightrope on the roof's edge. Eric isn't even fazed, has seen him do things like this before.

ERIC

Would you care if you fell?!

Glen considers this, steps back off.

GLEN

(sadly)

No.

Eric looks at him, can't help but care.

ERIC

Then...I think we have to go
bowling.

INT. BAR - BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

From a soaked coaster, a beer bottle is slowly raised into the air, like a Cape Canaveral liftoff. Human-generated space shuttle noises mixed with pins crashing, violent video game explosions and just a touch of bad country music in b.g.

Glen drinks from his shuttle, then turns to Eric, who quietly tolerates all of this.

GLEN

Don't you ever wish you could be a
kid again?

Eric sips from his beer, then:

ERIC

Nope.

GLEN

I used to dream about being an
astronaut.

Eric hasn't heard this one before. Intrigued.

GLEN

I got on my first airplane when I
was eleven. Couldn't wait for the
takeoff. As soon as the bird left
the ground, I spewed. They should
tell you to put those barf bags on
your head, because I got the guy
right in front of me. It must
have taken a lot of shampoo.
Anyway, after that, I knew it was
over. I tried to get on planes
other times. Same result.

Eric quietly nods.

ERIC

I guess we don't always get every
last thing we want.

Glen slams his beer on the table. A tipsy objection.

GLEN

But it was the only thing I wanted!

Eric glances around to see if anyone noticed Glen's behavior -- similar drunken arguments at every other corner of the place, drowned out by the now blasting music. He shrugs it off.

ERIC

(playing the realist)

You and a million other kids. You think we should have a million shuttles taking off?

GLEN

Yeah, I think we should. A million shuttles. A million professional sports teams. A million millionaires. I bet we could do it, too. It's the ones who have their dreams come true that probably ruin it for the rest of us.

Eric snorts at the theory.

ERIC

John Glenn made Glen throw up.

Glen only snickers drunkenly, taking another gulp.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Darkness. Harrison sneaks in as the alien sleeps. He sits down, watches him.

HARRISON

(whispers)

Why won't you talk to me? I'm not like everyone else here. I don't want to kill you.

The alien suddenly opens his eyes.

ALIEN

Why not?

On Harrison's startled look...

PEPPERONI PIZZA

In a dimly-lit location, a cheesy slice is pulled away from a large pie.

INT. ERIC'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Under the covers, Eric chews on the slice, with Nancy next to him, huddled in the bed's close quarters.

NANCY

I knew you were a pepperoni man.

Eric smiles, giving her a pizza sauce-filled kiss.

NANCY

Where do you go?

ERIC

Huh?

NANCY

There seems to be a certain grouping of hours when you're not at work, and you're not with super me, when you have to go somewhere. Where?

ERIC

It will be done soon.

NANCY

What will?

RUSTLING. Eric fidgets beneath the sheets.

ERIC

I have a second job.

NANCY

Where at?

Eric sighs.

ERIC

I can't tell you.

NANCY

(laughs)

A spy for the government. Will the Cold War ever end?

Eric stares up at the ceiling. Secretive isn't so easy anymore.

NANCY

If we're going to have a more intimate relationship, then we have to be, you know, intimate.

ERIC

I believe you're the one that doesn't want to be "you know, intimate."

NANCY

I meant, as in "close."

Silence. Broken bottles CRASHING somewhere in the street. Eric glances out the window, whatever he sees doesn't surprise him.

ERIC
Do you believe in God?

NANCY
Very much so.

She studies him, this question so important to her:

NANCY
Do you?

ERIC
No.

NANCY
(puzzled)
But you believe in aliens?

ERIC
I said I believed there was a real possibility.

NANCY
Why don't you believe in God?

Eric sighs softly.

ERIC
Because I never lost a leg, or an arm, or anything.

Nancy gives him another imperceptible gaze.

ERIC
I've felt so much pain in my life...
(puts an arm around her)
until recently. I used to deal with these veterans missing limbs, and the mentally-ill people, the ones that don't know, well, anything. If I've suffered to me, then what could it have been like for them? I just wanted to shout, "What happened?" "Who could have done this to you?" The answer was...Life did this to them.
(then)
Life does it to everybody.

NANCY
I didn't know you volunteered.

He waves it off, like he hadn't really done anything.

ERIC

Things are going really good for me, and I still feel bad, like I don't deserve what we've got.

NANCY

But, if this is the good time of your life, and you're miserable, then how did you get through the bad times?

Eric considers this.

ERIC

I figure you don't have to like what's happening to you, but you have to accept it, because either way, it's happening.

Nancy grins, rebutting.

NANCY

So, if you can accept when bad things happen to you, why can't you accept when good things happen to you?

Eric thinks. Can't argue with that. Reaching for her arm.

ERIC

You have a very sexy elbow.

Surprisingly, Nancy violently pulls away, the sheets flying off, revealing both of them are...fully dressed.

NANCY

Not yet!

ERIC

Okay, never mind the not-having-sex part. I can wait. But you have to admit, sleeping with our clothes on is a little bizarre.

NANCY

Well so are you. And, anyway, I'm trying to slowly work our way up to this.

ERIC

If you want to stay a virgin, I completely understand.

He puts his arm back around her.

ERIC

You won't lose me. I'm not
lose-able.

Nancy works hard to hold back tears, she succeeds, but her
face contorts and shakes from the effort.

NANCY

I can't stay what I never was.

Eric looks completely baffled.

NANCY

I'm not a virgin. I'm the anti-
virgin.

Eric mouths the term "anti-virgin," still puzzled. Nancy
just loses it, balling now.

NANCY

I fucked so many guys. Fuck-fuck-
fucked them. Here a fuck, there a
fuck, everywhere a fuck-fuck.

(pause)

Fuck!

Eric doesn't know what to say. Her language is completely
uncharacteristic. Finally, the blind man gets it.

ERIC

So, you're "experienced?"

NANCY

I could teach the class. But I
don't want to teach, I want to
return to being the student.

ERIC

A born-again virgin?

NANCY

There's no such thing. And, I
don't even want to be that. I
want to be with you in "that way,"
but how do I know that that way is
different from the other ways that
I've already been...

(shakes her head)

It's been fun.

Nancy looks at him a beat, then suddenly dashes out of the
apartment, stepping on the pizza that sits on the floor as
she goes. A long moment, then Eric starts taking off his
clothes for bed, glowing.

ERIC
 (softly to himself)
 She's precious.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Harrison and the alien, coffees in hand, sit side-by-side like the best of friends. Two lonely friends.

ALIEN
 You shouldn't worry so much. People confuse fear with shame.

HARRISON
 How's that, Alienski?

ALIEN
 You think you're ashamed that you haven't done more with your life, but you're really afraid that you won't do more with your life.

Harrison thinks this over, then:

HARRISON
 What's the difference?

ALIEN
Fear mostly has to do with what might happen. Shame has to do with what has already occurred.

HARRISON
 So you're saying there's still time?

ALIEN
 There's always time. Time is always.

Harrison doesn't necessarily understand it all, but isn't concerned, clinking mugs with the alien, drinking up. The alien doesn't even take a sip.

HARRISON
 Have you ever had enough of having all the answers to the universe?

ALIEN
 There has never been an answer to the universe, Major Harrison, because there has never been a question.

Harrison needs another hit of caffeine to think that one over.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general has been watching, unbeknownst to the major.

ALIEN'S QUARTERS

Harrison still taking things in. We hear what he doesn't:

GENERAL (V.O.)

(mutters)

He's worse than the fucking astronomer.

CLOSE on Harrison's eyes. Focusing on something.

INT. JEEP - NIGHT

Harrison's eyes are now trading focus from driving the slick road to Eric in the seat over.

HARRISON

A slight detour.

Making a sharp turn into...

EXT. FOREST PRESERVE - NIGHT

The jeep, headlights on, parked in a clearing. Harrison and Eric start away. Eric begins to speak, but is quickly given the "shh" signal by an unnerved Harrison.

Deeper into the thicket. Harrison looks back at the jeep. It's safe now. No more than a whisper.

HARRISON

Okay.

Eric doesn't have a clue what this is about.

HARRISON

What are we going to do about Mr. Alien?

ERIC

(shocked)

I didn't know you wanted to do something about "Mr. Alien."

Harrison is shocked by Eric being shocked, inadvertently blurts out...

HARRISON

I've always wanted to do something about "Mr. Alien!"

Harrison hushes, gazing back at the jeep. Returns to whispers.

HARRISON
I just don't know what. Bust him
out? Should we do that?

ERIC
Can we do that?

HARRISON
(sadly)
No.

ERIC
Then, what?

HARRISON
(re: alien)
He'd know.

ERIC
Then why don't we ask him?

HARRISON
He's under surveillance. And, for
the most part, so are we.

ERIC
He's the only one that will know
how...

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - ARMY BASE - DAY

Eric studies the question sheet. The alien looks awful.
Drugged eyes. Shaking limbs. Near keeling over.

ERIC
(reading)
"What's your favorite TV show?"

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general is beside himself. Harrison sits, motionless.

GENERAL
(incredulous)
What's your favorite TV show?
(glares)
What's your favorite TV show?!
Harrison?!

HARRISON
I've run out of good questions. I
mean, what else is there?

The general wracks his brain, frustrated.

GENERAL
Hell...

Harrison peers at the general, then nods to himself, as if coming to a decision.

HARRISON

I guess we could ask him, "Does he like ice cream?" "What's his favorite color?"

Harrison really hesitates. Takes a breath.

HARRISON

"If he's so smart, then how come he doesn't just escape?"

The general is silent. Harrison slowly turns to him. So nervous. Quiet enough to hear the ocean without the sea shell. Finally:

GENERAL

Yeah, I've been curious about that last one myself.

Harrison smiles in surprise, and relief.

HARRISON

You have?

GENERAL

Bastard sits there telling us the supposed "secrets of the ages," yet he can't even get out of that room unless we let him. Tell that kid to ask him.

ALIEN'S QUARTERS

Eric puts a hand to his earpiece. A wide smile forms. Turns to alien.

ERIC

Why don't you escape?

ALIEN

I can't.

ERIC

Too sick?

ALIEN

No, there's countless ways to do it.

We hear an angry voice from an intercom.

GENERAL (V.O.)

Then name some for us, you bastard!

The alien ignores this.

ALIEN

I'm not looking to escape. You can never escape anyway. Right, Eric?

Eric somberly nods in agreement.

GENERAL (V.O.)

Cop-out pussy!

The alien still ignores him.

ALIEN

(to Eric)

You going to marry her?

ERIC

I've heard in order to make a marriage work, you have to be completely honest. How do I explain you?

ALIEN

I'll be gone soon.

ERIC

I'd still have to tell her, otherwise, the Sin of Omission, right?

ALIEN

I thought you didn't believe in religion, quoting the Talmud?

ERIC

I pick and choose. Things from the Talmud, the Koran, the Bible...

ALIEN

But doesn't the Good Book say you can't "pick and choose?"

Eric's been thinking about this one a lot. His eyes widen, eager to share.

ERIC

Maybe that's the challenge? Writings in which "thou shalt not kill" and 'homosexuals must die' basically share the same space, it leaves you to figure out which is the truth and which is not. And, if you can't, then you suffer the consequences, and if you can, then you enjoy the rewards.

ALIEN
 (simply)
 So, which is which?

Eric is stuck. Didn't think that far ahead.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general has completely lost it, breathing down Harrison's neck.

GENERAL
 Tell that kid that we don't pay
 him to do most of the talking!

HARRISON
 We don't pay him anything.

The general ponders this, backs off some.

GENERAL
 Oh, well, we'll give him an army T-
 shirt. You know, the cool yellow
 one?

ALIEN'S QUARTERS

Eric is really thinking hard, wrestling with a difficult question. Then, just to up the ante.

ALIEN
 And, what about "Honor father and
 mother?"

Eric sighs.

ERIC
 If only it would have been "Honor
 father and mother...if they're
 good to you."

The alien smiles, slightly condescending.

ALIEN
 And I thought you were so close to
 the answer.

Eric grins, letting the brain-cramp slowly release.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

GENERAL
 I think we're going to have less
 talk, more tests.

The general exits. Harrison quietly seethes. Got to do something.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Harrison tries to catch up to the general, who already is halfway down the hall.

HARRISON

Wally?

The general stops in his tracks, keeping his back to us.

GENERAL

That was one card game. Just one card game I said you could call me "Wally."

HARRISON

I'm sorry...General?

Now, the general turns around to face him. Stares hard.

GENERAL

Yes, Major?

HARRISON

Why do this?

The general only stares silently. Harrison slowly meets his gaze. And, slowly, the general smiles, relaxes.

GENERAL

Heck, everyone knows I want to get to the White House. You don't get there by inventing problems.

HARRISON

Does the President know about who we found?

GENERAL

Of course not. The man's an idiot.

HARRISON

Then it seems like you're trying for a demotion.

The general gestures for him to further explain.

HARRISON

How do you know that the future highest-ranking general won't think the same of you when you're in the Oval Office?

GENERAL

(grins knowingly)

Well, unless he's you, I'm probably okay.

Harrison is caught off-guard by this rare sense of humor. Then, he recovers.

HARRISON

This may be the most important thing ever. Bigger than any of us, and all we might have to do is recognize it.

The general tightens.

GENERAL

I have a responsibility to God, the United States of America and my family. Not to that alien.

HARRISON

Well, "that alien" was given a copy of the Ten Commandments. What will God think of you if you do this?

The general is starting to lose it now.

GENERAL

If I do what?! What am I doing?!

HARRISON

You're killing him.

The general is really boiling, this could get violent. He's in Harrison's face.

GENERAL

If that's a charge, it could come with a heavy price to pay!

Harrison nods, slowly backing down. Powerless.

HARRISON

(shakes his head)

I wish I could do something.

The general looks at him, also knows what it's like to lose. He again slowly softens.

GENERAL

When my father was in World War Two, he was second-in-command of his unit. Number One wanted to attack a harmless German town...so they did. Dad thought it was wrong, but it didn't matter. It's the chain of command.

(MORE)

GENERAL (CONT'D)

It's a system we always come back to. It goes like this -- Someone has to lead, and someone has to follow.

The general puts a hand on Harrison's shoulder.

GENERAL

It's your time to follow. One day, you'll lead.

The general starts away like he just made an acceptance speech at his presidential election headquarters. Harrison watches him go. It looks like that will be the end of it, but suddenly...

HARRISON

(shouting)
Hey, Wally?!

The general stops at the end of the hall, turns back around.

HARRISON

What war did you fight in?!

The general just looks at him, has to admire his courage.

GENERAL

I guess this would be my first.

The general smiles, though somewhat uneasily. He disappears down another hallway, almost as if retreating.

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The only visible light filters from an open garage door. Someone lurks by the porch.

INT. GARAGE - NANCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hal fiddles under the hood of his car, strangely scowling to himself.

HAL

Car leaks more than Aunt Sally's bladder.

ERIC (O.S.)

Hello?

Hal doesn't even look up, tense.

HAL

I'm more of a "hi" kind of person myself.

Eric enters.

ERIC
Mr. Norder, is Nancy around?

Hal quickly glances at him, then just returns to his fiddling.

HAL
(quietly)
No.

Eric can feel the distance between them.

ERIC
I'm sorry, Mr. Norder.

Hal doesn't answer. Silent fiddling. Then:

HAL
You know anything about cars?

ERIC
No.

HAL
Me either.

Hal slams down the hood.

ERIC
I'm sorry, Mr. Norder.

Hal takes a deep breath, troubled.

HAL
I'm sorry, Mr. Corwitz.

Eric shrugs, perplexed.

HAL
There'd be all hours of the night
when she wouldn't come home. We
thought we were trusting her.
Bullshit. We were trying to be
the "cool" parents. But it's
difficult. You get tough with her
and she'd say, "You don't love
me."
(sighs)
God, I hate "you don't love me."

Eric looks down. Not much he can say, never been a parent.

ERIC

It's not easy.

HAL

No, it isn't. I heard that you don't talk to your parents. You seem like a pretty good guy. Maybe they did more things right than you give them credit for?

ERIC

(looks up)

Or maybe you didn't do as many things wrong as you give yourself credit for. I wish you were right about them. May and June always kill me. Mother's Day and Father's Day are kind of like Valentine's Day to single people.

(grimaces)

Really, this may be the first year that Valentine's Day isn't like Mother's Day and Father's Day.

HAL

Then why don't you call them?

ERIC

Hal...

Eric stops, then nods to himself, coming to another one of those decisions. Maybe his most difficult yet.

ERIC

They hit me. I never tell people that. It embarrasses me. I just say that they weren't good people. I like to leave it at that most of the time. They'd hit me even before I did things wrong. Like saying, "This is in case you're even thinking about doing something."

(pause)

I didn't ask to be born.

(pause)

I don't like to tell people, because I worry that they think I'll be the same way. "Violence begets violence." "Assholes beget assholes." Just like you assumed that if I'm good then I must have been raised by good.

Eric breathes deeply. That wasn't easy. Hal knows it, too.

HAL

She's at Second Presbyterian Church.
We're not even Presbyterians. But
we're not really anything. She
goes there almost every night.
Comforts her.
(smiles)
Comforts me.

ERIC

On Dehar Boulevard, right?

Hal nods. Eric starts to exit the garage, then stops, looks
back at him.

ERIC

I'm not ready for her to know about
that stuff. I wasn't really ready
for you to know.

Hal nods, understanding.

PRIEST (V.O.)

That will conclude our service for
this evening.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Eric enters against the wave of exiting church goers. He
looks for Nancy in the crowd, but nowhere to be found.
Finally pushing through, he spots her in the first pew, alone.

NANCY

Her head bowed solemnly, whispering prayers to herself.

ERIC (O.S.)

I absolve you of your sins.

She cursorily looks up, then just bows her head, returning
to prayers. Eric sits down beside her. Out of his element.

ERIC

What are you praying for?

NANCY

Nothing in particular.

ERIC

I used to go to synagogue sometimes.
That's where the Jews go. I hope
they don't mind me being here.

Nancy stops her prayers, stares ahead at something out of
view.

NANCY

Who? The Jews?

ERIC
 No. Jesus, or the priest, or
 whoever.

Another mouthed prayer, then:

NANCY
 I go here to make me feel better.

ERIC
 Is it working?

NANCY
 (stares ahead)
 No.

She holds back the tears this time, as if it was a sin to cry in church. But the exertion gives her those shakes. Eric pulls her close, whispers.

ERIC
 We're not who we used to be. We're
who we are.

NANCY
 (still shaking)
 Who are we?

A beat.

ERIC
 Better.

JANGLING. The priest passes them, swinging a keychain around his finger. He wants to go home, but knows she needs more time.

PRIEST
 (smiles)
 Whenever you're ready, Nancy.

She nods. He quietly leaves through a side exit. They're alone. After a moment.

NANCY
 I wish you had a place like this.
 To me, it's been a...
 (searching for a word)

ERIC
 Godsend?

Nancy sadly smiles, as good a word as any. She looks around, taking in the candles...the stained-glass angels...and what she's been staring ahead at -- a wall mosaic of Jesus, peering out from behind the church's altar.

Gives her strength, which she desperately needs at this moment. She finally looks to Eric.

NANCY

I got pregnant. I was pretty good at making them use condoms, but sometimes...anyway, I got pregnant. Really pregnant.

(motions outwardly
from her stomach)

I mean, out to here.

She stops, looks back to the mosaic Jesus, then continues.

NANCY

I didn't want to have it, but I just couldn't not have it. Even got to the bottom of the steps of that abortion clinic, near the mall. Couldn't go in. Not for the baby, for me. The guilt, you know?

Eric nods, silent.

NANCY

Started praying a lot. Threw up a lot. Came here, maybe twice. I just said, "Please, if there is a God, have this thing work out."

Nancy can't hold back the tears anymore, doesn't want to. They spill freely onto the church floor, disappearing within the grooves of the wooden floorboards.

NANCY

And, it did. It died in the delivery room. Stillborn. You see, I let God decide it. I believe He made the right choice.

(looks back at mosaic)

I just hope He didn't let me influence Him.

Silence. Then, Eric asks this, not in jealousy, but only in concern.

ERIC

Who was the father?

Even though the tears have ceased, Nancy looks somehow sadder than before.

NANCY

All of them. None of them. They were all really the same guy, I guess.

Nancy mouths herself one more prayer, then motions that they should leave. She turns toward the side exit, loud enough so the priest can hear.

NANCY
We're ready, Father.

Her words ECHO with the aid of bad acoustics, OVERLAPPING for a brief moment into...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - ARMY BASE - DAY

Eric and Harrison quietly put on OR scrubs. Eric studies his surgical mask.

ERIC
Why do I have to go in there?

HARRISON
These "tests" don't just create data, they also lower defenses. Combine them with your special relationship and,
(sullen)
they think he'll talk.

ERIC
What are these tests?

HARRISON
Do you like hamburgers?

ERIC
Is it Chinese water torture in there?

HARRISON
People just eat hamburgers like crazy. They don't ask how the cow dies.

ERIC
This isn't a cow.

HARRISON
To them it is, and to them we're just acting like a bunch of Hindus. We believe he's sacred...They believe he's just meat.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

Work stations of scalpels, syringes, thermometers. The doctor that we recognize from the surveillance room switches off between them, readying himself for the "tests."

The alien lies on an examining table, eyes blackened and puffy, needle-marks evident throughout his body.

ALIEN'S POV

Blinding, globe-like lights dangle from the high ceiling. Eric slowly comes into frame, his breathing heavy, his voice muffled through the mask.

ERIC
Are you in pain?

ALIEN
Are you?

ERIC
Yes.

The alien points to the doctor, who is now filling a syringe.

ALIEN
The only reason he got into medicine was because a doctor's overuse of anesthetic caused his father to die right on the table. He was only getting his appendix removed.

The doctor stops for a moment, stares at the alien blankly. He quickly shrugs it off. Back to work.

ERIC
Where was God then?

The doctor looks up, it's a good question.

ALIEN
A doctor's mistake killed him, not
God.

ERIC
So God only takes credit for
miracles?

ALIEN
(smiles)
God only knows.

The doctor shakes his head, angrily mumbling to himself. The alien notes this, but doesn't back off.

ALIEN
Somehow we think that we can change
the past with what we do in the
future.

DOCTOR

His eyes flash angrily, trying somehow to keep his control.

ALIEN

No matter how many people he
operates on, not one of them will
be his father.

And, the doctor finally has lost that control, picking up
the needle in the stabbing position, pricking the alien
several times.

Eric stares at the assailant, shocked.

Then, the doctor slowly backs away, frightened, like he had
just used a butcher knife. The drug quickly takes effect.

ALIEN

(groggy)
You had some questions, didn't
you, Eric?

Eric throws the doctor another look, then hesitantly pulls
out a query list. He softly reads.

ERIC

"What is your biggest weakness?"

The alien's eyes begin turning glassy as he chuckles toward
the frozen doctor.

ALIEN

Human beings.

In the corner, with his back to a two-way mirror, Harrison
looks on, just eyes behind a mask.

INT. JEEP - DAY

Harrison and Eric ride in silence. Eric studies a hideous,
yellow army T-shirt in his lap.

HARRISON

What do you think of working on a
cruise ship?

Eric rolls his eyes.

ERIC

Yeah, so I didn't "help my country."
Harrison, it's not like I got fired
or anything. My real job is at
the observatory. Sure, they don't
pay me in one-size-fits-all, piss-
yellow T-shirts, but still...

HARRISON

No, me on a cruise ship. Always loved the sea, always hated the Navy.

Eric looks very confused.

ERIC

Finding a new excuse?

HARRISON

I don't want to see how this thing ends.

ERIC

(playing the realist)

You know how it ends. He dies. We forget he ever existed. Maybe years from now, we flip out and tell our grandkids while we're changing their diapers.

HARRISON

Or while they're changing ours. I'm a year away from full pension. I won't make it watching this.

ERIC

Maybe you can ask for a transfer.
(guffaws)

I think I can endure Sergeant Santry for my final day.

And, Driver Harrison becomes...

INT. JEEP - NEXT DAY

...Driver Santry flooring it. Eric stares ahead, silent. Then, out of nowhere:

SANTRY

My uncle got into a car crash.

Eric looks up, surprised to hear Santry's voice.

ERIC

Sorry to hear that.

SANTRY

Yeah, he's been in a coma. We call him "Uncle Tomato" -- You'll never guess why?

Eric is already sorry he responded.

ERIC

You're right. I'll never guess.

SANTRY
Because he's gay.

Santry starts laughing. Eric doesn't get it.

SANTRY
(explaining)
He's in a coma, man. And, what's
a tomato?

Eric still doesn't understand. Santry cackles wildly.

SANTRY
A tomato is both a fruit and a
vegetable.

Eric just stares, he gets it now, just doesn't think it's funny. Silence returns. Santry is clearly offended by his audience.

SANTRY
You see, this is why we don't talk
more.

EXT. ENTRANCE - ARMY BASE - DAY

The jeep pulls up to the mammoth gates, which strangely aren't parting. Santry looks to the civilian-clothed GUARD, who is fixated on Eric.

GUARD
I'm sorry. Your access has been
denied.

Eric looks puzzled. So does Santry.

GUARD
It's been decided that another
meeting is no longer necessary.

The guard reluctantly nods toward his gun.

GUARD
The general also wanted me to remind
you of the importance of security.

Santry glares at the guard, then backs the jeep out. Even the sergeant knows this treatment of his passenger is wrong. Eric's head hangs low, didn't even get to say "goodbye."

SANTRY
(somberly)
That's shit, Corwitz.

The jeep slowly pulls away, Eric gazing back at the fenced-in base.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

On a park bench, Eric with his arm around Nancy. Periodically, he glances off, as if looking for a peculiar bum making a phone call.

ERIC

What's your biggest secret?

NANCY

I thought I told you. I was a slut.

An awkward moment.

NANCY

(whispers)

I poisoned our dog.

ERIC

You did?

NANCY

Not really, but, I poured Mr. Clean into his doggy dish. My parents always warned me not to drink it, so I wanted to see what the big deal was. Smackers was found dead in his doghouse the next morning.

Eric leans back, processing it.

ERIC

Wow.

NANCY

(sadly)

Yeah, wow.

ERIC

You never told them?

NANCY

I was sorry. I've never killed again. Sometimes I have nightmares.

ERIC

(smiles)

Really?

Nancy hits him softly on the arm.

NANCY

Yes, things like that stay with you.

ERIC

(amazed, honored)

I just can't believe you'd tell me that.

NANCY

Me neither. You're the first person I've never kept anything from. You know, like when you tell someone you can't be somewhere when you really could, it's small stuff, but, even that...

Eric shuts his eyes, guilty.

ERIC

What if I kept something from you, because there was nothing good that could come from you knowing?

NANCY

Like another girl?

ERIC

(opens eyes)

Like another girl?! You think I could find someone better?

NANCY

No, I just wanted to make sure you were smart enough to know that.

ERIC

I am, and, if not, I'm now smart enough to know not to do anything to upset you.

(shakes his head)

Mr. Freaking Clean.

She punches him again, a little harder.

NANCY

And, are you going to tell me?

Another tough decision. He knows once he lets this out that nothing will be the same. A beat.

ERIC

I love you.

She smiles.

NANCY

How come you never said it before?

ERIC

Oh, I've said it before. Just never to anyone I ever loved.

MOVING BOX

Taped shut on all sides.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Eric trips over the moving box, among several strewn about the entrance. It's like home. He peers up, sees Glen at his desk, quickly wiping away streaking tears.

ERIC

Hey, what's the deal?

GLEN

The deal sucks. We lost funding.

Glen rises, handing him an envelope.

GLEN

The last check. Includes two weeks severance.

ERIC

(sarcastic)

Because everyone can find a new job in two weeks, right?

(and)

What the hell happened?

GLEN

Our Gaston Observatory -- funded by Mr. Gaston the Stupid Millionaire. Stupid doesn't believe in aliens anymore.

Eric shakes his head at the dripping irony.

ERIC

But we do other things here.

GLEN

Not enough, I guess.

They exchange a "we're screwed" glance.

ERIC

Any plans?

GLEN

Probably call Mommy and Daddy for a loan.

ERIC
 (smiles)
 That must be nice.

GLEN
 Maybe we should go into business
 together.

ERIC
 What would we do?

GLEN
 (considers)
 We could write a self-help book
 for people having trouble coping
 with self-help books.

ERIC
 Sounds brilliant.

Silence. A chapter is coming to a close.

GLEN
 Even though we're not working
 together.
 (looks at Eric curiously)
 I kind of consider you to be a
 friend of mine.

Eric studies him, grins.

ERIC
 That's really sad.

Glen laughs. So does Eric. They needed that. Slowly, Eric
 extends his hand. They shake.

ERIC
 Firm grip.
 (thinks)
 You must spend a lot of time on
 your knees...

EXT. BACKYARD - NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Hal drives a nail into a bright red birdhouse. Not worrying
 about exactitudes, he speedily hammers in nail after nail,
 racing with himself for the fun of it, whooping joyfully.

HAL
 Damn that's fucking fast!

Eric inches toward the back fence. Can't even look at Hal.

ERIC

Mr. Norder?

Hal glances up, smiles, their distance now a memory, at least for him.

HAL

Hey. Just finishing off the poop-house.

Eric walks into the yard, confused, eyes peeled to the ground.

ERIC

Looks like a birdhouse.

HAL

You call something a henhouse, because hens live in it. You call something a doghouse, because... Well, we don't really talk about doghouses around here, but, whatever lives in something, that's what you call it.

(pats the birdhouse)

You wait, in one week this red will turn shit-white. Not a trace of a bird, except for a crude version of what they had for a previous night's dinner. Birds are disgusting animals.

Eric still won't meet his gaze.

ERIC

Then why are you building a "poop-house?"

HAL

(grins)

They could always evolve.

Eric smiles, finally looks at Hal, as if now just realizing what a good man he is.

ERIC

Mr. Norder, did any of Nancy's previous boyfriends try and take advantage of you?

Hal puts down his hammer. Silence. A bird TWITTERS somewhere. Hal starts fake crying, really hamming it up.

HAL

Oh God, they said it was just a massage. And, then they...touched me.

Hal sees that Eric isn't laughing.

HAL

You're usually one of my better crowds.

(sobering)

Yes, her boyfriends took advantage of me, mostly by taking advantage of her. Yeah, they borrowed money,

(angry)

but the way they treated Nancy, she's the best thing we've got going, as you might already know.

ERIC

(nervous)

So you're saying that borrowing money...

HAL

I'm saying, that if you don't marry my daughter, I'm going to make you live in this poop-house.

ERIC

I may have to. They're closing down the observatory.

(pulls out his check)

Two-weeks-pay means two weeks till the street.

Hal looks at him, can't believe what he sees. Eric's eyes are streaming with tears, embarrassed.

ERIC

I'm such a shit!

Eric suddenly turns away, leaping over the back fence, running out of the yard in a panic.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Eric is almost clear of the property, breathing hard, running away from life, looking as lost as ever. Suddenly, he falls to the ground, playfully tackled by Hal.

Eric stares at him blankly through a face of dirt and tears. Hal is laughing his ass off.

HAL

God, you're a pussy!

Hal dabs spit on his shirt, wiping Eric's face clean.

HAL

Asking someone for help doesn't mean your helpless, Eric.

Eric just stares, a confusion lingering.

ERIC

But what about those other guys
who hit you up for money?

HAL

(laughs harder)
They never cried beautiful pussy
tears like you!

Hal gives him a sturdy hug. WIDENING to see Linda has been watering the side lawn this whole time. She smiles warmly.

LINDA

Get a room.

INT. ERIC'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eric and Nancy enter. He's awkward, wondering if her parents told of his crying episode. If Nancy knows, she's not letting on.

And, that solitary moving box awaits.

NANCY

Well, you were all ready to move
to begin with.

ERIC

(quietly defensive)
Living with you guys is just
temporary.

NANCY

I understand.

Nancy motions toward the box.

NANCY

What's in this thing anyway?

ERIC

Oh, nothing.

Nancy smiles, stepping in front of it. Curious.

NANCY

Then you wouldn't have a problem
with me seeing what's inside?

ERIC

Nope.

Nancy gives him a skeptical look, then tears it open fervently like it was Christmas morning.

Suddenly, Eric's eyes rage, furiously pushing her away from the box.

ERIC

I didn't say you should tear it open goddamnit!

Nancy ignores both Eric's roughness and his blasphemy, looking inside the box, shocked to find -- It's completely empty.

Eric smoothes out the enormous rips, still freaking out.

ERIC

Did you have to tear it?!

NANCY

But there's nothing in it. I can't damage anything by tearing open a box with nothing inside of it to damage.

Eric pulls tape from a drawer, frantically trying to put the box back together.

NANCY

(doesn't understand)

There's nothing in it.

Eric slowly gives up the tape treatment, sees it's no use. He sits on the floor.

ERIC

It was my home.

Nancy sits down beside him, still puzzled. Eric breathes deeply. Then deeper.

ERIC

When I left my parents, I didn't have any money. I got the observatory gig right away, but until the first paycheck...I was homeless.

NANCY

Couldn't you have asked for an advance?

ERIC

Sure.

(imitating job interview)

"Thanks for the job, and I'm living in a cardboard mansion, so if you wouldn't mind..."

Nancy sees his point.

NANCY

I guess they don't hire the homeless, huh? You wouldn't think that the people who need a job the most would be the one's least likely to get it.

Eric looks away, speaks from experience.

ERIC

Yeah, well, maybe the last thing you suspect should be the first.

Nancy examines the box. Notices finger-sized holes.

NANCY

I know I didn't do these.

ERIC

Air conditioning. Thank God it was summer.

NANCY

(surprised)

Did you thank God it was summer?

Eric doesn't answer.

NANCY

But why didn't you wait until you had money?

Eric thinks to himself, tensely. This is obviously right up there with pouring Mr. Clean in a doggy dish. He turns to her, his face taut, every wrinkle having its way.

ERIC

I went into my dad's office and pulled out his gun. Took me a half hour just to figure out how to load the "bad boy." I just sat there looking at it, wondering what I was going to do.

Her eyes are locked on him, gazing intently.

ERIC

Oh, I wasn't going to kill myself, but the gun really made me feel better. Just like in *Steppenwolf*, the fact that I could have ended it at any moment made me feel that I didn't have to.

A long beat.

NANCY
And then you left?

ERIC
(nods)
And then I left.

INT. ALIEN'S QUARTERS - ARMY BASE - NIGHT

The alien sits up in darkness. Light sprays in. He doesn't move.

A shadow enshrouds his face...

A chair is pulled near...

Finally...

The general sits down. His voice is strangely awkward, almost apologetic, as if he knows he doesn't belong here.

GENERAL
I heard you have some sort of
initiation before you talk to
people.

The alien stares, expressionless.

ALIEN
I'll waive it.

A beat.

GENERAL
Why did you bother coming here?
You haven't helped us in any kind
of way.

ALIEN
I've tried.

GENERAL
Try harder. Tell us what we want
to know.

ALIEN
Well, what exactly do you want to
know? I've answered all of your
questions.

The general looks away, this is not easy to admit.

GENERAL
Maybe you know something that we
haven't thought to ask.

ALIEN

I'm sure I do.

The general looks back to him, frustrated.

GENERAL

Then why won't you tell me?!

The alien will let that question float in the breeze. Has a question of his own.

ALIEN

Why did you get into the military anyway?

GENERAL

I wanted to serve my country.

ALIEN

It wasn't all those kids who used to beat you up?

The general is rendered silent. Finally, his eyes widen, as if only now realizing that this guy knows a lot more than he does.

ALIEN

It's funny how you still try to beat them back. When you get up for your early morning run, you race against them. That gym punching bag is still Ned Brewer's face. Brewer's dead now. Worked as a bartender. Had the name for it. Turned out okay.

The general waves the accusations off.

GENERAL

They were just razzing me. They were my friends.

ALIEN

No, actually they weren't. You never had any friends. The only people that would hang out with you did it so they could have fun at your expense. Like every time Joey Glander secretly laid down behind you, and another kid would push you backwards so you would fall over him...Remember how bad you would sweat, thinking about what they might do next?

We see the general's shirt flowers tiny rings of moisture by the armpits.

GENERAL

(quietly)
Shut up.

ALIEN

Don't you want that "secret of the universe" now?

The general slowly nods "yes," but he's not so sure he does.

ALIEN

Then bring me Eric Corwitz, and I'll tell him.

The general is finally outranked, and knows it.

GENERAL

Why can't you tell me?

The alien sniffs loudly.

ALIEN

I would, except, suddenly someone needs a shower.

The alien sighs.

ALIEN

I'd like to think you were always this way.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The doctor checks an EKG monitor. The general enters, wiping off his armpits with paper towel.

DOCTOR

(empathizes)
Cock did the same thing to me.

GENERAL

Please tell me he's going to be dead soon.

STRIP MALL

Block lettering on front of corner building - "Army Recruitment Center." There isn't exactly a line out the door.

INT. HARRISON'S OFFICE - ARMY RECRUITMENT CENTER - DAY

Harrison sits at his new desk, opposite a potential enlistee.

HARRISON

Obviously, there are more options than ever. When I was your age, the military was one of the few ways out for me. Seemed glamorous almost.

(looks down)

Hey, it can help pay for college and, well, I won't give you any of that "you'd be protecting your country in times of war" bullshit. We all know wars are fought by a hand that hovers over "the button." Maybe good, maybe bad.

CREEPING OVER Harrison's shoulder, we see he's hiding a document on his knee, entitled, "The Army's "I'm Your Buddy" Speech" Last few words: "the button." Maybe good, maybe bad."

A knock at the door. Harrison is relieved to have the interruption, until he sees...Santry peering his head in.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Harrison exits his office, moves with Santry to a discreet corner.

SANTRY

He's on his last legs.

Harrison gives him a skeptical look.

SANTRY

I don't know. I thought it was important to you.

HARRISON

It is.

Harrison is still suspicious.

HARRISON

And how is it important to you, Santry?

SANTRY

I just figured, with all that time off I got from you driving that guy...

Harrison just glares at him, not buying it.

SANTRY

(relents)

The alien says he'll tell us the
"ultimate whatever" if we get
Corwitz over here.

(embarrassed)

We don't know where the turd is.

(then, brightening)

Did I tell you about my uncle?

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - NANCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nancy answers the door. Harrison smiles, the first time
we've seen him in civilian clothes. They fit him well.

HARRISON

(under his breath)

She is beautiful.

(to Nancy)

Is Eric home?

Nancy nods curiously, calls for him. A moment, then Eric
comes down, freezes.

ERIC

Hello, Harrison.

HARRISON

Did you forget about our poker
game? Both Al and Ian are waiting
for us.

Eric nods.

ERIC

How is Al and Ian?

HARRISON

Tired of waiting for you. They're
about ready to cash in their chips.
They'd like to talk with you before
they go.

NANCY

(to Eric)

But you don't have any money.

ERIC

(quickly)

It's okay. Your dad lent me some.

Eric and Harrison promptly exit. Nancy is fuming. Another
deadbeat boyfriend?

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A flashy sports car peels out of the driveway.

INT. HARRISON'S CAR - NIGHT

Eric admires the leather interior, as Harrison motors it.

ERIC

Nice car.

HARRISON

(chuckles)

The chicks dig it.

A beat.

ERIC

What should I say to him?

Harrison stares at the road ahead as if it was the past behind.

HARRISON

When my father was in the hospital, and I knew it would be the last time I would see him, I said, "I hope you'll be happy." I was eleven-years-old and, even now, I still don't know what the hell I meant.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Harrison flies through a yellow light on a lonely street. A long moment. A pizza truck barrels through a red.

INT. PIZZA TRUCK - NIGHT

Nancy drives angry, lights a cigarette.

EXT. ENTRANCE - ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Harrison's car is waved through. Pulls up near the central building. They exit, Harrison's phone RINGING.

HARRISON

(into phone)

This is Harrison.

GUARD (V.O.)

(from phone)

Major Harrison, we have a woman by the entrance screaming that she wants to see Corwitz.

In phone's background noise:

NANCY (V.O.)

Don't touch me there, goddamnit!
Frisk or no frisk!

The guard's voice fills with confusion.

GUARD (V.O.)

I think she's delivering a pizza
or something.

Eric looks to the entrance -- the ten-foot tall, plastic
pizza towering.

ERIC

Shit.

HARRISON

You have to tell her to go away.

GUARD (V.O.)

(alarmed)

That phone is property of...

NANCY (V.O.)

Eric, you either tell me what the
fuck's going on or I'll buy you a
new cardboard box!

HARRISON

(rethinks)

Maybe she's not so beautiful.

ERIC

Harrison, we've got to take her in
with us, or I'm not doing this.

HARRISON

You know I can't do that.

Eric gestures toward the central building.

ERIC

Then I can't do that.

HARRISON

Why?

Eric looks back at the entrance, where the guard and Nancy
are playing tug-of-war with the phone. She is really pissed.

ERIC

I don't hide things anymore.

Harrison studies him, then nods, dialing into his phone.

INT. HALLWAY - ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Eric and Harrison step towards the examining room, Nancy
trailing in awe.

NANCY

Eric, I don't think "I love you"
was your biggest secret.

ERIC

Just wait. It gets better.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - NIGHT

The alien lies on the same examining table, barely moving. Those globe-like lights beat down. Nancy, Eric and Harrison start in, no OR scrubs necessary this time.

NANCY

Is that a...

ERIC

Yep, he's not from around here.

The alien opens his eyes, studies Nancy.

ALIEN

Hello, Nancy.

She moves closer, trembling.

NANCY

Hello.
(realizes)
Al...Ian...Alien.

The alien extends his green hand. Nancy hesitantly shakes it.

ALIEN

You must spend a lot of time on
your knees.

ERIC

(to alien)
That joke only works if the person
has a...
(choosing his phrasing)
male reproductive organ.

The alien smiles.

ALIEN

Well, then obviously you haven't
had relations with her yet.
(taunting)
I win the pool.

Harrison and Eric can't help but laugh. Nancy just stares, left in the dark.

ALIEN

Harrison, will you take Nancy
outside?

Harrison leads her away.

ALIEN

Oh, Nancy?

She looks back.

ALIEN

Pre-marital fornication, even to
your degree, is forgivable.

Nancy shoots Eric a dirty look.

ERIC

(re: alien)
I didn't tell him.
(to Harrison)
Explain it to her.

Harrison nods. As they exit, he tries to break the tension.

HARRISON

You see, Eric is a bad, bad man.
Do you like older men?

Eric smiles as the door SLAMS shut. Then, looks to the alien,
quietly stands over him.

ERIC

So, do Nancy and me last?

ALIEN

Why spoil the ending?

Eric nods. What else would he expect?

ERIC

Well, at the very least, I'd really
like to know this little secret.
So would the general.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general stands rigid.

GENERAL

Damn right.

Harrison and Nancy quietly enter in b.g.

EXAMINING ROOM

The alien's eyes take Eric in. His green skin is losing much of its color. At the end of a long journey. Eric strokes the alien's forehead like a father comforting an ailing son.

ERIC

Hell, don't tell us anything. We probably don't deserve to know.

The alien manages a smile. Reaching behind his back, he pulls out..a worn baseball. Hands it to Eric.

ALIEN

Goodbye.

INSERT - COVER OF BASEBALL

Official Ball
National League

EXAMINING ROOM

Eric gazes at it in awe, as if being reunited with a long lost friend.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general presses his face to the glass.

GENERAL

(re: baseball)

Where did he get that?

HOLD on the general's puzzled face, as we hear:

ERIC (V.O.)

Is this the one that I caught?

ALIEN (V.O.)

Not all traditions are meant to last.

EXAMINING ROOM

The alien motions for Eric to lean in close. Time for the secret?

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general with his ear to the main speaker...

EXAMINING ROOM

The alien whispers something to Eric. Eric's face quickly turns as pale as the alien's.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

The general jerks away from the speaker, confused.

GENERAL
What did he say?

A doctor reads the EKG -- Flatline.

DOCTOR
He's finally dead.

The general doesn't hear, or doesn't care.

GENERAL
What the hell did he say?!

The doctor shrugs his shoulders, doesn't know.

The general bolts out the door, past a frozen Nancy and Harrison.

THROUGH THE GLASS

We see the general enter the examining room, waving his hands emphatically, even unknowingly bumping the alien corpse lying to the side of him.

GENERAL (V.O.)
What did he say?

Eric doesn't answer, suddenly smiles widely, child-like. Not fooling around, the general quickly pulls out a gun, aims at his head. Eric doesn't even blink. Then, strangely...starts playing catch with himself. Carefree. Surreal.

The general looks at his gun, as if making sure it hasn't somehow become invisible. Turns back to Eric.

GENERAL (V.O.)
(frustrated)
What did the fucker say?!

Eric tosses the ball a few more times, as if he didn't hear, then holds it. Silence. Everything stops. Then, strangely almost matter-of-fact:

ERIC (V.O.)
"I was God."

Silence.

ANGLE on general. He only stares into space, helpless, lifeless. Silence.

SURVEILLANCE ROOM

TRACKING the stunned faces of the doctor, and Harrison, then a quietly tearful Nancy, who now knows she's forgiven, if she didn't know before. Silence unchanged, PUSHING through the glass, back into

EXAMINING ROOM

Slowly, the gun is lowered. Silence. Then, Eric again tosses the ball, but this time, much higher in the air. As the ball becomes parallel with a globe-like ceiling light, we HOLD on it. Looks just like a second sun.

FADE OUT.

-THE END-

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