

THE HEADLANDS

BY CHRISTOPHER CHEN

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CHARACTERS

HENRY	Chinese American, male, 30's.
GEORGE	Chinese, male, 20's and 40's
LEENA	Chinese American, female, 20's, 40's
JESS	Female, 30's
PAT / LEENA (OLDER)	Chinese female, 70's
WALTER / DETECTIVE	Imagined as male, at least 50's
TOM	Chinese American, male, 20's and 40's

NOTE: The roles of Pat / Leena (older) and Walter / Detective are lumped together for easy casting, but they can be split apart. P.O.C. casting encouraged for Jess.

" / " means overlapping dialogue.

VIDEO

This play ultimately takes place inside of the mind. A series of large projection surfaces are the primary features of the set, with a very minimalist playing area in front. The purpose of video is to create an all-encompassing, ever-shifting neural landscape as we quickly jump from place to place in memories and filaments of the subconscious, with different layers of the mind reflected simultaneously. I've expressed the character of the video in the script as this...

... with each block representing a different video surface. Please note that this grid, and the elements I put inside them are *only suggestions* that point to how video should function scene by scene throughout the play. In practice, a director, set designer and video designer can and should go beyond this, using their own discretion as to what goes in each video at any given moment, and even how many surfaces there should be. 6 is arbitrary. The size and shape of surfaces can also vary, and in sum they should give the impression of a complex system that is a composite of many fragments (the brain being a composite of disparate memory fragments). It is strongly preferable that this concept be embodied by many different, discrete physical projection surfaces, each surface dedicated to a single image at a time; as opposed to, say, one or two giant single screens with many different image areas within. Above all, the main directive is that video must be always present and all-encompassing.

TONE

Inspired by *Vertigo* and other San Francisco noir, as well as the exquisitely precise tone management of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, the play's primary requirement for its creative team will be to make each scene, each moment, a highly distinct pocket of atmosphere, mood and emotion. There should be a cinematic quality to each scene, and to the flow of the production as a whole.

Introduction

(Henry onstage, looking at a blank screen. He holds this for a beat, then he turns to the audience.)

HENRY

There are so many ways to make an introduction. And I'm not sure what the *best* way is, so I'm just gonna jump right in. Okay?

Hi, my name is Henry. And because you *must* be defined by your job, I'll start by saying I'm an engineer at Google, aaand enough about that. I also have a serious girlfriend, I'm a big time film buff-- film noir-- and... I have a side hobby. That's what I really want to talk to you about.

On the side, I'm an amateur sleuth. What this means is I do independent research on cold cases, on my own, just for kicks. Long before *Serial*, *Making a Murderer*, I was a true crime aficionado, before it became cool.

Tonight I'm going to tell you about one particular case I studied. An unsolved case that's stuck with me for a long time. It's a murder, so buckle up. I'll walk you through the details.

Ready for this?

The victim is George Wong, a kitchen contractor who lived in the Sunset District of San Francisco.

(One panel of screen area comes alive for the first time. We see George onscreen. On another screen or two we see pictures of the Sunset District)

George	Blank	Sunset District
Blank	Sunset District	Blank

HENRY (Continued)

He was shot in his own home. Right in the living room. Single bullet to the side of the head.

George	Crime Scene Image	Sunset District
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Crime Scene Image	His home from the outside	Crime Scene Image
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HENRY (Continued)

The official story? It's a burglary gone wrong. Computers and jewelry are stolen, the place is torn up.

George	Crime Scene Image	Crime Scene Image
Crime Scene Image	Crime Scene Image	Crime Scene Image

HENRY (Continued)

It's the middle of the day, so Mr. Wong shouldn't be home. For some reason he is, he surprises the burglar, burglar has a gun and shoots him, runs away. This is the official story, and it rings true because there had been several unsolved burglaries in the neighborhood within the last few months. The only person they briefly look into is a Paul Cheung, employee of Mr. Wong's who has a criminal history. He's cleared once his alibi checks out. Now, why is he even suspected? For a brief moment there's a theory that the home invasion part was staged, and the killer was someone Mr. Wong knew. What makes them think this? The question of... How did the intruder get in.

George	Front door	Front door detail
Crime scene image	Garage	Front door from afar

HENRY (Continued)

In other burglaries in the neighborhood, the robbers used coat hangers to trigger garage doors open. Not the case here. Front door is simply unlocked, and the garage door is locked, no signs of forced entry. So maybe Mr. Wong simply forgot to lock the door? Or maybe... he let them in himself? A delivery man in disguise? Who knows. But doesn't fit the burglary pattern.

George	Blank	Blank
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Blank	Blank	Blank
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HENRY (Continued)

As for witnesses, there aren't any. Neighbors are questioned, some *think* they heard the gunshot, but assumed it was a car backfiring. Time of death is placed at around twelve noonish, and Mr. Wong was found at 4:21pm when his wife, Leena Wong, returned home. His wife has an alibi too. Mrs. Wong...

(We see LEENA onscreen.)

George	Blank	Leena
Blank	Blank	Blank

HENRY (Continued)

... was a piano teacher at the San Francisco Conservatory of music. She was with a student at the time and came home right after. Their son was at his friend Martin's house-- they often took him after school-- and thankfully wasn't with his mother when she made the grim discovery.

By all accounts they were a very loving and happy family. But were they really? Was everything *really* okay? This is the thread I started to pull. While the physical trail went cold, there may have been more in the *personal* realm than previously known. Let's take a look.

The Dinner Table

Kitchen wall	Window showing nighttime outside	Kitchen wall
Blank	Blank	Blank

(The dinner table. GEORGE is sitting there, silently. LEENA is standing nearby, paused in the middle of an activity. Charged tension. GEORGE doesn't react.)

LEENA

I just wish uh...

GEORGE

There was something more you could do.

(He waits while LEENA somehow indicates the affirmative.)

LEENA

I want us to be a team on this. Like always.

(GEORGE doesn't respond.)

You're just... acting very different now.

GEORGE

I'm sorry.

LEENA

It's just... very hard.

(They stop suddenly, look out into the audience-- or HENRY. The play sits in a slightly awkward beat.)

HENRY

Okay so I know this doesn't make a lot of sense out of context. But this, along with many other instances, will add up. They're clues.

They had this strange conversation in the kitchen about a week before he died. They stop when they see me in the doorway. Oh, I'm their son. Sorry for not telling you earlier, just wanted to-- get the facts out there first. Felt easier to remove myself.

Anyway, he died about two decades ago. I was ten. And when I think back to that time, other memories started to return.

Maybe *they*... were the missing evidence.

Hospital

Hospital imagery	Hospital imagery	Hospital imagery
LEENA behind scrim?	Hospital imagery	EKG machine

(HENRY by LEENA (OLDER)'s side.)

HENRY

But first: how did I come to think there was more to the case than the official story? Well, it's as cliched as a deathbed confessional because, well, it's a deathbed confessional. Of sorts. My mother was struck with cancer in her seventies, and in her morphine delirium, she'd sometimes say things that didn't make a lot of sense.

LEENA (OLDER)

George...

HENRY

This is Henry.

LEENA (OLDER)

Don't confuse me.

(HENRY doesn't respond. Goes and holds her hand.)

HENRY

Are you remembering Dad?

LEENA (OLDER)

Of course I remember him.

(Beat)

There's too much... despair.

(HENRY nods solemnly.)

He wasn't happy.

HENRY

(Suddenly interested) Wait-- What do you mean? He seemed pretty happy to me.

(LEENA shakes her head.)

LEENA (OLDER)

I'm talking about his death, his death.

HENRY

What about it?

LEENA (OLDER)

His death. He was in despair. I tried to help him.
(Slight beat)

HENRY

What do you mean by that? Help him? How? His death was...
(LEENA (OLDER) suddenly snaps out of it.)

LEENA (OLDER)

Oh, you know what happened. It was a burglary.

HENRY

Wait, but you just said...

LEENA (OLDER)

Please. I don't want to talk about this. I need to sleep.

HENRY

(to audience)

Of course, she never mentioned this again. And she passed away soon after. But what did she mean...

(As he says the following, the text types out
onscreen...)

"I'm talking about his death. He was in despair. I tried to help him."

<i>... his death.</i>	<i>He was in</i>	<i>despair.</i>
<i>I tried</i>	<i>to help him</i>	<i>.</i>

HENRY (Continued)

Despair? So... suicide? *My father?* Inconceivable. And yet, going back to my memories...

The Window

Aspects of living room	Living room window, blinds open	Aspects of living room
Aspects of living room	Closer view of the night street	Aspects of living room

(GEORGE standing still, looking out a window.)

HENRY

It's near the time of his death and he's looking out the window. Just staring. At the time I thought this is just something adults do, but now I know adults don't have time to stand around and stare blankly at things; and we lived in the sleepy, fog-banked Sunset District, where there wouldn't be much to look at anyway. I come to the window too, don't see anything of note, so I ask: (To GEORGE) What are you looking at?

GEORGE

Nothing. Just thinking.

HENRY

Why are you looking out the window?

GEORGE

(Looking out) It's nice sometimes to look out and not in.

(He looks at HENRY)

(Smiling) Or you can get trapped in your own brain. Do you know what I mean by that?

HENRY

Uhh...

GEORGE

You're dad's just being weird.

HENRY

(To AUDIENCE): No shit.

(He looks at GEORGE at the window again. The melancholy has returned. They hold this pose for a beat.)

I'd forgotten about this episode, but looking back on it now, its strangeness, I see it as the clue it is.

Piano

HENRY

Here's another instance. My mother was the pianist, but my father liked to plunk around on the keys. And in the days before his death, he started exclusively playing these chords, improvised by him.

(GEORGE sits down, as if before a keyboard. We hear THE MUSIC.)

George's left hand on keyboard	George's eyes	George's right hand at keyboard
The living room window from before	The street view from the window from before	An element of the crime scene

HENRY (Continued)

I didn't think much of his playing at the time, but thinking back I can identify an obsessiveness to it, like that same faraway trance I saw at the window. Why is he playing these chords? With the help of a musician friend I was able to pick them out. My friend said the chords were primarily suspended chords. So, you have the tonic, the harmonious chords, and then you have suspended chords where one note is off, suspended, the note *wants* to resolve, but never quite reaches it.

Animation demonstrating suspension chords, using THE MUSIC, across multiple screens

Both of George's hands playing THE MUSIC on keyboard.

HENRY (Continued)

A stretch, right? To think that unresolved, *searching* chords somehow reflect the hidden pathos of a man? But again, this is unusual behavior, and he's playing these odd chords a week before he dies.

Hiking with Father

HENRY

I need to emphasize here that my father was not usually a melancholy man. My mother was very happy too, I had a pretty loving and idyllic childhood. They took me on a lot of adventures...

(Images of different places in San Francisco cycle through the video screens underneath the following as they are described. Some are noted below, but they should always be in motion. Nostalgic music should accompany, something of the feel of Satie's Gymnopedie No. 1)

San Francisco playgrounds w/ sports. Old photos of father and son?	San Francisco museums	Ghiradelli Square and Golden Gate Bridge
Mission District burritos and murals	Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach. Old photos of them?	House fun-- toys, backyards etc. Old photos of them?

HENRY (Continued)

I remember playgrounds, friends, the beach, all kinds of museums. I remember San Francisco so vividly: the bustling Mission District, the wild foliage of Golden Gate Park. They'd take me everywhere, and when you're a kid following your parents, these places you travel to feel like extensions of your home, do you know what I mean? They imprint in your mind the sense of *place* being connected to... *safety*. I especially cherished memories of places my father took me one on one.

(The below noted images/video should change in a staggered manner as they are described.)

Marin Headlands from a distance	Images of Lucca's Delicatessen	Video of crossing the Golden Gate Bridge
On the Marin Headlands path	The spot with the view	The view of San Francisco/Land's End

HENRY (Continued)

There was one place that seemed to have particular importance to him: a hike in the Marin Headlands, right outside the city across the Golden Gate Bridge. It became a ritual for us, one that seemed very deliberately choreographed. It always started with a trip to Lucca's Delicatessen in The Marina for sandwiches. The first time I wanted turkey. He said:

GEORGE

Get the Italian Combo.

HENRY

I want turkey.

GEORGE

Trust me.

(Images of the Golden Gate Bridge drive onscreen.)

HENRY

After numerous trips I had to admit he was right, and the Italian Combo became the most treasured part of the ritual. Then comes the hike. Again, deliberately planned. The first time I said...

(Images of the hike onscreen.)

(To GEORGE) I want to stop here. Let's eat here.

GEORGE

No. There's a special spot up further.

HENRY

I'm hungry now.

GEORGE

Just a little further.

HENRY

We get to the spot. It's the view that he wants.

(Images of San Francisco from afar.)

GEORGE

You see that! Doesn't the city look amazing from here?

HENRY

Yeah.

GEORGE

And you see, that area right over there... those trees on those cliffs. Do you see it?

HENRY

Uh huh.

GEORGE

That's where I first met your mother.

HENRY

On the cliffs?

GEORGE

Yep! We were sitting on the cliffside, on the edge of that big, amazing city, looking out... over to here! To where *we* are now!

HENRY

Can we go there?

GEORGE

Sure. But I actually like looking at it from here, from far away.

HENRY

How come?

GEORGE

Because it's a special place, but it's changed. It's much busier now, with tourists all over, taking pictures. Back in the day you could really just sit there and make it your own.

HENRY

He's trying to craft a moment for me. But I can't figure out why. He comes alive during these Marin Headlands outings of ours. But in the week before his death, I ask to go one more time.

(Video out.)

GEORGE

No.

HENRY

Why not?

GEORGE

It's too far away.

HENRY

I want to go!

GEORGE

(Unexpectedly firm) No. Not there.

(Charged pause.)

EMDR

(Suddenly, a light goes back and forth between screens, like a pendulum, with appropriate "whooshing" sound accompaniment.)

Light.... moving...	... across... screens...	... like... pendulum...
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HENRY (Continued)

I'm currently engaged in a therapy technique known as EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. It helped me a lot with my father's death long ago, and I've taken it up again with my mother's passing. It's a technique for overcoming trauma by reliving specific painful memories while...

(His eyes go back and forth, following the light.)

Having your eyes go back and forth, following a light. This taps into the neural network associated with a trauma and rewires it, in order to...

(His eyes go back and forth.)

Remove it from your sense of self as a whole. Reprogram your memories.

(His eyes go back and forth.)

Blank	Blank	Blank
Blank	Blank	Blank

HENRY (Continued)

Like the trauma of the day he died. When my mother finally told me what had happened. It was at a police station. I was at a friend's house before that and his mother, Pat, drove me there. I remember my mother, in tears, telling me. I remember the policeman standing behind her, and wondering why he wasn't comforting her when she was so clearly in distress. How that told me the situation was primitive. I remember understanding this was real, he was gone, but nevertheless thinking let's go home and see him just the same. I remember thinking: "these are emotions I can't handle. But he can help me. He'll know what to do." I want my dad to help me deal with his own death. One of the crazy notions that pops into your-- heh.

Jess

Cafe or home or park?	Cafe or home or park?	Cafe or home or park?
Cafe or home or park?	Cafe or home or park?	Cafe or home or park?

(Throughout, JESS and HENRY are both "into it,"
engaged in the puzzle-solving.)

JESS

Okay so the window, the piano, the hike: this drastic change in character,
all within...

HENRY

Within the week before he dies.

JESS

Yeah, that's weird.

HENRY

(To audience): This is Jess, my girlfriend.

JESS

And even *if* it's just coincidence, still the question of *why*, what *caused*
this / change.

HENRY

Right, exactly, there had to be *some* reason. (To audience) Jess is a true
crime aficionado like me. I turned her into one.

JESS

And he was never really moody.

HENRY

I mean sometimes, but not like this. (To audience) We immerse ourselves
in my cold cases together. Some of our favorite memories as a couple
involve hunching over crime photographs, brainstorming ways a man's
head could have been bludgeoned in.

JESS

But okay, then, just to play devil's advocate... Is there the possibility he
was *always* more depressive than you remember, but these *particular*
things are jumping out because-- you know, memories get heightened
around traumatic events. Right?

HENRY

This wasn't normal behavior. And I swear I remember thinking that *at the time they occurred* too. Before knowing he was going to die.

JESS

Mm.

HENRY

Kids are perceptive. They can pick up complex emotions.

JESS

They can.

(A beat, while they are lost in their respective thoughts.)

Heh. I remember just *one* raised eyebrow from my mother, and I could piece together this entire *psychological profile* of a situation.

(HENRY smiles and does a little chuckle of recognition.)

Like just one raised eyebrow would tell me my dad had *one* too many beers. And then *he'd* do this *slight* little smile that told me that he was... ashamed, but not *really* ashamed.

HENRY

Sorry not sorry.

JESS

Sorry not sorry, yes. There's no more complex emotion than that.

(They both laugh. Then they are lost in thought for a bit.)

(Back to the case) Okay. But is there a way to get some outside corroboration?

HENRY

For...

JESS

Your memories. Of your father's mood. Like is there someone *else* who knew your father well at the time, who might *also* have seen this change, this weird depression?

HENRY

I think I know just the person. You're so smart.

JESS

Yeah. (Obviously). So this is like the ultimate case right?

HENRY

The case to end all others.

Differing images of George	Differing images of George	Differing images of George
Differing images of George	Differing images of George	Differing images of George

HENRY (Continued)

(Looking at the images, studying them): My father. Why would he be depressed? What would put him in despair? You have an image of someone. But it's a sliver of an image you're seeing, one that's cropped just for you.

Walter

Walter's house, outside	Living Room	Details of living room. Photos?
Hovering memory of young Henry and George	Detail of house.	Hovering memory of Walter and George, younger?

(As WALTER enters, HENRY narrates.)

HENRY

Walter Bingham in some ways knew my father just as well as my mother did. He started a kitchen contracting business with him back in the very beginning, in 1978. He was almost like a brother to him, and uncle to me, though I hardly saw him since my dad died. I went to visit him at his house in the Noe Valley.

(They embrace when they meet.)

WALTER

Henry how are you.

HENRY

I'm okay, thanks.

WALTER

I'm so sorry about your mother.

HENRY

Thanks.

WALTER

And how are you holding up?

HENRY

One day at a time.

WALTER

Yeah, that's how it is.

(He smiles.)

How's your... wife? / Is it?

HENRY

Girlfriend.

WALTER

Ah.

HENRY

She's good. We're good.

WALTER

That's great to hear.

(Slight awkward beat)

HENRY

Uh, hey yeah so the reason why I / came to see you...

WALTER

Yeah.

HENRY

I was wondering if I could talk with you about my father.

WALTER

Yes, of course.

HENRY

Since my mother died, I'm just thinking about *him* again too now , / and...

WALTER

Sure, of course.

HENRY

And this might sound like an odd question, but, I've been thinking about his-- his death. And I was just uh... wondering-- How you'd describe his--... I guess... mood, his disposition, right before... it happened.

(WALTER doesn't immediately respond.)

If you can remember.

WALTER

Yeah, it's just-- It was so long ago.

HENRY

I guess what I want to know is, did he seem...

WALTER

What.

HENRY

I dunno... different?

WALTER

Different. Um...

(Beat)

HENRY

Did he seem... *depressed*?

WALTER

Your father never really seemed depressed.

(Slight beat)

But look. To be honest. At the time, our business was going through some-- a bit of a rough patch. Don't know how much / you...

HENRY

I didn't / know, no.

WALTER

Yeah well... He wouldn't have wanted to bother you with that. He really looked out for you.

(HENRY smiles and nods.)

So his mood-- he might have been a little more... under stress... than usual, around that time. I was too.

HENRY

What kind of rough patch? Like sales?

WALTER

Yeah. But again, it was so long ago, I can't--...

(Beat)

It's tough to think about.

HENRY

What is?

WALTER

That time. Because of what happened to him.

HENRY

Ah.

WALTER

Why do you ask this? If you don't mind my asking.

HENRY

Well, right before she passed, my mother said my father was... in despair, right before he died.

(A beat. WALTER shifts uncomfortably, looks down.)

HENRY notices.)

(To audience): That's when I see it. It's in the way he shifts in his seat, then looks down. (To WALTER) There's something you're not telling me... Right?

(A silence, where WALTER averts his gaze.)

It's okay. I'm really just after the truth.

WALTER

You have good memories of your father. Don't you?

HENRY

Yes.

WALTER

And he was a good man. That's the bottom line truth.

HENRY

What is it. Tell me.

(A silence while WALTER looks at him long and hard.)

WALTER

Okay. Fine. I'll tell you. I... caught your father.

HENRY

Caught??

WALTER

I caught him. He was... taking money from the company.

(Stunned beat while HENRY takes it in.)

HENRY

(To audience) I'm not prepared for this. (To WALTER) Like... embezzling? He was embezzling money / from the--

WALTER

Yes. From our company.

HENRY

How? Are you sure? How / could this--

WALTER

There was a discretionary fund. I discovered it was much lower than it should have been. Did some digging around a large withdrawal. I confronted your father, he confessed.

HENRY

How much?

WALTER

A substantial sum.

(He's not going to continue. Slight awkward pause.)

HENRY

Why did he do it?

WALTER

Don't know. Maybe it's easy to cross lines when it's your company, that you started from scratch. I can see that. Nevertheless...

HENRY

So what happened next? Was he-- going to leave? / Or...

WALTER

He was going to leave, yes.

(Beat)

HENRY

And what about the two of you?

WALTER

What about us?

HENRY

Like-- personally.

WALTER

We weren't on good terms, no, at the end. It was a really-- tough situation.

HENRY

Did he not want to leave? Or--...

WALTER

It was more than that.

HENRY

You were going to turn him in? My father?

WALTER

I was talking to my lawyer. To see all options. But yes, that's where we were headed.

(HENRY does a disbelieving laugh.)

HENRY

But--

WALTER

But what.

HENRY

You couldn't have---... worked it out amongst yourselves?

WALTER

Look. This is serious business, okay? The company's bigger than just the two of us. If it was discovered that I knew about this and kept quiet, I'd be in trouble too. Okay? *Your father* put us in this situation, so don't you dare imply that I was in any way responsible for what happened to him, okay? If you're thinking he-- he was in *despair* or something. I still loved him. I was devastated by happened to him.

(Pause. HENRY doesn't respond.)

And he didn't do it to himself anyway, right? It was a burglary.

HENRY

I guess I just thought of you guys as family.

WALTER

Families are complicated. Look, I care about you, but...

(He stands up.)

This is going to have to end now.

(Extends hand. HENRY doesn't take it.)

Take care of yourself.

The Dinner Table

(We immediately see the EMDR pendulum start to swing, indicating a re-ordering of a memory. We see the exact same elements of the recurring dinner set-up again on video and onstage.)

Kitchen wall	Window showing nighttime outside	Kitchen wall
Light.... moving...	... across... screens...	... like... pendulum...

LEENA

I just wish uh...

GEORGE

There was something more you could do.

(He waits while LEENA somehow indicates the affirmative.)

LEENA

But I want you to let me--

GEORGE

No. I don't need you to help me find a lawyer.

LEENA

But I know people!

GEORGE

I don't want your help. I'm not dragging you in further.

LEENA

I want us to be a team on this. Like always.

(GEORGE doesn't respond.)

You're just... acting very different now.

GEORGE

I need to fix my own mistake. By *myself*.

(Beat)

LEENA

It's just... very hard. I still don't know what possessed you to do it.

(HENRY is revealed to have been watching.)

HENRY

(Observing the scene, kind of to himself.): I remember them fighting about a lawyer once. Was that *this* conversation? Might be conflating two different--... (To audience shaking it off) *Anyway*.

Jess

Cafe or home or park?	Cafe or home or park?	Cafe or home or park?
Cafe or home or park?	Cafe or home or park?	Cafe or home or park?

HENRY

So my father's an embezzler. (Does a disbelieving laugh)

JESS

But *why*, why did he do it. That's the question.

HENRY

Yeah.

JESS

Did you guys have money problems? That you knew of?

HENRY

Not that / knew of. But maybe.

JESS

Could he have had, like... debts? Like gambling? Or-- sorry / for even suggesting that he--

HENRY

No, no, that-- that crossed my mind too. But I don't think so. Not him. That's not him.

(A silence.)

What are you thinking?

JESS

Well just that-- I mean it would make sense-- if he took his own life-- it would make sense if it was something, uh... shameful. Or something. Right? And again, sorry, / for--

HENRY

No, it would. But...

JESS

I mean if you have a *family*, the reason would have to be *so*--... uh (searching for word)...

(Silence)

Honey I'm sorry, should we keep talking about this?

HENRY

Yeah, why not?

JESS

Sure?

HENRY

Yeah it's no problem.

(Pause)

I *had* actually wondered if we had money problems I didn't know about.
Because I thought... maybe it was *life insurance*.

JESS

Ahh. /

HENRY

It wasn't, I checked.

JESS

Oh.

HENRY

But see that, *that* would be more in character for him.

JESS

What.

HENRY

Some big sacrifice, some big noble gesture. Especially for my mother. I
mean maybe not as extreme / as-- (suicide)

JESS

Right.

HENRY

Because yeah, he worshipped her.

JESS

Mm. He'd make a sacrifice.

HENRY

Yeah.

JESS

That *is* more him than gambling.

HENRY

He was a romantic.

(Slight beat)

JESS

But didn't *she* make the first move? Your mother? I remember from when she was telling us how they / met.

HENRY

Yeah, she approached him first yes. Guess it's a pattern for us Wong men, huh.

JESS

Hm?

HENRY

Women approach us first, we fall hard in response.

JESS

(Half-playfully) We went over this! You came to *me* first!

HENRY

(Playful) No, no / no.

JESS

Yes! At Jamie's! *You* asked if you could get me a drink!

HENRY

That was *after* we talked on the sofa about Google. And *you* / started that.

JESS

We had our drinks *in our hands* on / the sofa.

HENRY

Yeah, drinks from / before.

JESS

We've already been through this.

HENRY

I was sitting on the sofa and you came up to me, and *we had never met*, and you approached me and said: "Jamie tells me you do UX design at Google."

JESS

No, you were *standing* by the sofa, our eyes met, and you said: "Hey I'm getting another drink, want one?" I said okay, and you said: "Stay there, I wanna talk to you." And I was thinking to myself: that was pretty bad-ass. You're saying it didn't happen that way?

HENRY

Well maybe you're right, maybe that's / how it happened.

JESS

Okay fine, you were a little dweeb, / and I coaxed you out of your little techie shell, we'll use that version.

HENRY

No, okay, you're--.... (He laughs)... No, no, actually I think my memory's a little (hand motion that indicates "shaky")--....

(They laugh.)

(To audience): But my mother did approach my father. That was for sure. He was a recent immigrant from China, and she was second generation San Franciscan. They met at Land's End, a San Francisco cliff-side overlooking The Bay.

One evening, a few months before her diagnosis, my mother told us the whole story.

George and Leena

HENRY

He was a recent immigrant from China, and she was second generation San Franciscan. They met at Land's End, a San Francisco cliff-side overlooking The Bay.

(Images of and from Land's End, looking out over the Bay, including the Golden Gate Bridge. GEORGE is sitting there, with food and a book. LEENA (OLDER) is talking to HENRY and JESS at the table, describing the scene. Nostalgic atmospherics, perhaps reminiscent of the Satie environment from earlier. LEENA at some point enters under the following monologue and approaches GEORGE.)

Views of and from Land's End.	Views of and from Land's End.	Views of and from Land's End.
Views of and from Land's End.	Views of and from Land's End.	Views of and from Land's End.

LEENA (OLDER)

I can remember meeting him like it was yesterday. When I saw him sitting there, looking out at the Bay, he looked so content. There was a confidence in him, just sitting there with his lunch and a book, looking out. I wondered what he was doing, but I was first attracted to the food. It smelled like home. Mm. Braised pork, sour cabbage: home cooking you didn't find in restaurants. He must have made it himself. (To GEORGE) Excuse me, I said.

GEORGE

Yes?

LEENA

Sorry, I was drawn by the smell of your food.

GEORGE

Oh, would you like some?

LEENA

Oh! No, I just wanted to ask-- are you Hakka?

GEORGE

I am, yes!

LEENA

My grandmother made a dish exactly like that.

GEORGE

She is...

LEENA

Hakka, yes. She passed away so I haven't smelled those smells in a long time.

GEORGE

Speak Chinese?

LEENA

Poorly.

(When they speak Chinese, there are subtitles onscreen)

GEORGE

(In Chinese) (Offering it) Smell more.

闻一闻。

wén yì wén

LEENA

(In Chinese) Thank you.

谢谢。

xiè xiè

GEORGE

(In Chinese) Try some. I insist. Here let me find...

尝一下，快尝尝吧，我给你找一个...

cháng yí xià, kuài cháng cháng ba, wǒ gěi nǐ zhǎo yí gè...

(Fumbles around, trying to find something to serve her with.)

LEENA

(In English) Oh, well, I can just use yours.

(She quickly takes his fork and takes a bite. GEORGE is taken aback.)

(In Chinese) Sorry, I'm so sorry, I don't know what came over me, I--

不好意思，实在对不起，我也不知道刚刚我怎么了，我就...

bù hǎo yì si, shí zài duì bù qǐ, wǒ yě bù zhī dào gāng gāng wǒ zěn me le, wǒ jiù...

GEORGE

(In Chinese) No! It's okay!

没事，没关系的。

méi shì, méi guān xi de.

LEENA

(In English) Here, uh... (In Chinese) Napkin.

纸巾

zhǐ jīn

(She looks around for a napkin. GEORGE is about to procure one, but before he can, she's wiped the fork off on her clothes. She hands it back.)

(In Chinese) Sorry again. (In English) Don't know what came over me.

实在对不起。

shí zài duì bù qǐ

(He gently pushes her hand-- with fork-- back to her. He also hands her the bowl.)

GEORGE

(In Chinese) Have more. Please.

请多吃一点。

qǐng duō chī yì diǎn.

(She hesitates for a second, then takes another bite. Slight awkward pause. But then they settle in, getting more comfortable. Sounds of the Bay rise up a bit as they look out to it.)

(In Chinese) It's so beautiful, right?

这里真的很美，对吗？

zhè lǐ zhēn de hěn měi, duì ma?

LEENA

(In Chinese) This is one of my favorite places.

这是我最喜欢的地方之一

zhè shì wǒ zuì xǐ huān de dì fāng zhī yī.

GEORGE

(In Chinese) Almost seems... fake. Does that make sense...

这里几乎像是... 假的一样。你明白我的意思吗？

zhè lǐ jī hū xiàng shì... jiǎ de yí yàng. nǐ míng bái wǒ de yì sī ma?

LEENA

(In Chinese) Sure.

当然

dāng rán

GEORGE

(In Chinese) Like a... you send them...

就好像... 那个你用来寄送的...

jiù hǎo xiàng... nà gè nǐ yòng lái jì sòng de

LEENA

(In English) A postcard.

GEORGE

(In Chinese) Yes. (In English) Like a postcard.

对的

dùì de

(Beat)

JESS

What happened next?

(The same "nostalgic music" as in the hiking scene
(reminiscent of Satie))

LEENA (OLDER)

It was a whirlwind. He was a *true* romantic. He took me all over the city.

Romantic images of S.F. Some with them, younger?	Romantic images of S.F. Some with them, younger?	Romantic images of S.F. Some with them, younger?
Romantic images of S.F. Some with them, younger?	Romantic images of S.F. Some with them, younger?	Romantic images of S.F. Some with them, younger?

LEENA (OLDER) (Continued)

Even though I was born and raised here, he made me see it anew. North Beach was a favorite of ours.

North Beach	North Beach	North Beach
North Beach	North Beach	North Beach

GEORGE

Being in a new country, it is like I get to be an outsider crashing a party.

LEENA

You'll have to settle down at some point.

GEORGE

Says who.

LEENA

What if you meet someone who wants to settle down?

GEORGE

The time comes when the person comes.

LEENA

Well okay then.

GEORGE

What I love about a new city is... I get to be more... (In Chinese) awake?

醒过来?

xǐng guò lái?

(In English) To its-- its (In Chinese) details 细节.

xì jié

(In English) And magic.

LEENA

Well, I've lived here all my life and it's still magic to me. I want to take you to one of my favorite places.

Coit Tower? Or something more unique.	Coit Tower?	Coit Tower?
Grant Ave.?	Coit Tower?	Grant Ave.?

HENRY

My father of course was smitten. My mother was too, but by society's measures, she was the catch. They were the Chinese American elite, she was heiress to a shipping fortune, living in a mansion in Pac Heights. My father was a dishwasher living in Chinatown. He tried to play down his insecurities, but...

GEORGE

(To LEENA) I don't know what you see in me.

LEENA (OLDER)

(To HENRY and JESS) He kept saying this throughout our marriage. Got old.

(They are sitting side by side. He kisses her.)

LEENA

That was bold.

(She kisses him back.)

HENRY

My father brought me here (indicating screen) and told me this was the place where they first kissed. I'm sure they made more memories in his Chinatown apartment too.

Tenement house exterior	The street	Tenement house exterior
Inside hallway	The room	The room

(Quick shots of body parts and skin, indicating sex.
They are flickering and go out quickly.)

Close-ups of aspects of the room from their different points of view	Close-ups of aspects of the room from their different points of view	Close-ups of aspects of the room from their different points of view
Different parts of their bodies.	Different parts of their bodies.	Different parts of their bodies.

HENRY (Continued)

It had to be his place of course, she still lived with her parents.

(Afterwards...)

The room	The room	The room
The room	The room	The room

LEENA

You asked why I like you.

GEORGE

(In Chinese) Just joking.

我只是开玩笑。

wǒ zhǐ shì kāi wán xiào

LEENA

But you really don't know?

GEORGE

Okay. Why do you like me?

LEENA

It's because... I'm not telling you.

GEORGE

(In Chinese) Tease.

切

qie

LEENA

I'm not going to make some list of things.

GEORGE

To keep me on my toes?

LEENA

If you can't see the goodness in you, then...

GEORGE

I am pretty good. But... you are not (In Chinese) turned off

扫兴

sǎo xìng

(In English) by this apartment?

LEENA

It's a scholar's apartment. Wittgenstein in Chinese-- impressive!

GEORGE

I like his way of thinking.

LEENA

How so?

GEORGE

It is like the... (In Chinese) connective tissue.

结缔组织

jié dì zǔ zhī

(LEENA doesn't understand, gives a confused look.)

(In Chinese) Makes me feel... connected. To new places. (In English)

Understand?

让我们感到连结，到新的地方。

ràng wǒ men gǎn dào lián jié, dào xīn de dì fang.

LEENA

(Stares at him with a humorous "stupid" look) Ni hao ma?

(They laugh. A beat.)

So why do you like me?

GEORGE

I could list reasons, but...

LEENA

Don't copy me.

GEORGE

Because you're a Goddess.

(LEENA scoffs.)

Because you treat me well.

LEENA

I treat you well because you treat me well.

GEORGE

Is it that easy?

HENRY

When I say high society, I mean high society. As daughter of a shipping magnate, she was courted by everyone, even the heirs of the white elite, and this was the 1970s so interracial dating was still, well, foreign. And yet she chose my father. And her father, my grandfather, did not approve.

LEENA (OLDER)

(To HENRY and JESS) It was rough going during our courtship. My father made things unbearable. And your father let it get to his head. There was always tension. That burst forth without warning. One evening, at his apartment, a wine glass slipped from his hand.

(Video of glass dropping.)

GEORGE

Damnit!

LEENA (OLDER)

His reaction was too forceful. It alarmed me.

(LEENA starts cleaning it up.)

GEORGE

(In Chinese) No, no I'll do it.

不用，我来就好

bú yòng wǒ lái jiù hǎo

LEENA

Let me help.

(She insists. he tries to help but soon is just watching.)

Can you help me open the... (garbage)
(He does.)

GEORGE

(In Chinese) Can't believe I did that.

我竟然把它摔碎了。

wǒ jìng rán bǎ tā shuāi suì le

LEENA

It's just a glass.

GEORGE

I only have two wine glasses.

LEENA

So we'll drink wine out of mugs.
(Beat)

What.

GEORGE

I cannot think like that.

LEENA

Like what?

GEORGE

Like we can settle for less.

LEENA

That's not what I meant.

(GEORGE suddenly breaks down. Has to sit down?
Deep breathing?)

What's wrong??

GEORGE

What is wrong is I am not good enough for you.

LEENA

I get to decide what's good for me.

GEORGE

But it is not just about you. It is me. What I need to be. (In Chinese) You do not understand.

你不明白。
nǐ bù míng bái

LEENA

You're thinking like my father. You're letting *him* tell you who you need to be.

GEORGE

This is not about your father *or* you. It's me, okay? *Me*. I need to know that I can take care of you on my own!

LEENA

And I'm *telling you how* to take care of me!!

LEENA (OLDER)

It was soon after this that he left me.

HENRY

What?? I didn't know he left you!

LEENA (OLDER)

For three whole years. I was devastated. Then one day, three years later, there he is, knocking at our door, dressed to the nines, announcing he's started his own business and wants my hand in marriage. He says this right in front of my parents. My father stands up, stares him up and down, then says: "You think you can fool me? You're the same person you always were. Get out of my sight." I left home to be with George. (To JESS) Father would have approved of *you* though, you're a total class act.

JESS

Well thank you. And I have to say: I know it was tough, but... it sounds pretty romantic. He worked so hard to get you back.

LEENA (OLDER)

He wanted to please me so badly. Especially... that first night we spent together.

(The flickering images of sex again.)

Close-ups of aspects of the room from their different points of view	Close-ups of aspects of the room from their different points of view	Close-ups of aspects of the room from their different points of view
Different parts of their bodies.	Different parts of their bodies.	Different parts of their bodies.

LEENA (OLDER)

He was very slow. Very thoughtful. He started by taking my--

HENRY

(To LEENA) Okay! Okay! (To audience) I stopped her there. But I knew... I knew she remembered every detail.

Longer sequences of body parts. Clearer and in focus now. A sequence indicating sex.	Longer sequences of body parts. Clearer and in focus now. A sequence indicating sex.	Longer sequences of body parts. Clearer and in focus now. A sequence indicating sex.
Longer sequences of body parts. Clearer and in focus now. A sequence indicating sex.	Longer sequences of body parts. Clearer and in focus now. A sequence indicating sex.	Longer sequences of body parts. Clearer and in focus now. A sequence indicating sex.

LEENA (OLDER)

Hint of concrete beneath the tapestries and rug. The hint of dampness. Hint of mothballs that smell like home. Muffled sounds of other tenants. Light under the doorway. Sounds of stoves and fire, and with that the smells of cooking. He apologized for the place but it was paradise to me. But our thoughts turned away from the environment around us. We made our own world. Piece by piece. Second... by second... touch by touch.

(Video out.)

Sorry I was in another place.

JESS

It's okay.

LEENA (OLDER)

I just get down sometimes.

(JESS or HENRY puts a hand on her.)

I'll be fine.

HENRY

Do you want us to stay? Or go.

LEENA (OLDER)

I'll be alone now.

Jess

Video of car ride (different details)	Video of car ride (different details)	Video of car ride (different details)
Video of car ride (different details)	Video of car ride (different details)	Video of car ride (different details)

HENRY

I remember the ride home after that evening at my mother's. I remember thinking about the memories Jess and I made.

Picture of a fun time as a couple, taken by Henry	Picture of a fun time as a couple, taken by Henry	Picture of a fun time as a couple, taken by Henry
Picture of a fun time as a couple, taken by Henry	Picture of a fun time as a couple, taken by Henry	Picture of a fun time as a couple, taken by Henry

HENRY (Continued)

I remember looking over at her.

(He does, then looks back out at the audience.)

(To audience): A feeling of gratitude washes over me at that moment. To be here, in this little hovel of a car, moving through these dark streets with the woman who-- who is my home, she really is.

(He looks back at her. Looks back out to audience.)

Of course we've had issues, like every couple. I've been immature at times. Not too long ago I might have asked oooone too many questions about a male co-worker she's close with. I get stupid sometimes. But we talk things through, it's a process.

(He looks back at her. Looks back out to audience.)

Negotiating that sacred little space where our experiences cross paths. And to really be okay when suddenly... she's a mystery. And I can't know her. (Looking at her) Like now. Where is her mind when she gets that faraway look?

JESS

Is In-N-Out still open? Think I'm still hungry.

HENRY

Daly City?

(She nods vigorously.)

Think so. Wanna go?

(She smiles a big smile: "Yes." They drive in silence)

for a beat.)

JESS

Are you sure it's okay we just left her? Your mother?

HENRY

She likes her privacy.

JESS

Mm.

(Silence.)

And so your grandparents-- her parents-- still after all that time...

HENRY

They never made amends. It was *her* doing actually.

JESS

What was.

HENRY

She disowned *them*.

JESS

Really.

HENRY

Because her father never gave *my* father the respect she felt he deserved.
So she cut them off.

JESS

Wow. She's big on respect.

HENRY

For the people she loves, yes.

Pat's House

HENRY

Thinking back to that car ride, a new angle to my suicide theory started to emerge. Respect. My mom demanded it for her loved ones. But did that extend to after death? What if she tried to *hide* my father's shameful deed when she discovered it? To help him save face? "He was in despair. I tried to help him."

<i>... his death.</i>	<i>He was in</i>	<i>despair.</i>
<i>I tried</i>	<i>to help him</i>	.

<i>I</i>	<i>tried</i>	<i>to</i>
<i>help</i>	<i>him</i>	.

HENRY (Continued)

Because if he did... take his own life, with a gun... *where was the gun?* That was the missing part of my theory. There was no gun at the scene, so suicide meant someone had to clean up after him, make it *look* like a random burglary, and take away the gun. And I know, it sounds out there, but-- Okay, remember I told you I was at a friend's house after school the day my dad died? It was more his mom Pat was my *mom's* good friend. They were like sisters. And there are details of being at her house that day I can still remember so clearly.

(The images below come up and cycle through as HENRY describes them.)

Details of Pat's house	Grilled cheese	Batman: The Animated Series
Exterior of Pat's house	Batman: The Animated Series	Martin playing game boy

HENRY (Continued)

Like I remember grilled cheese, my favorite. I remember the TV on, and Martin, her son, on the couch playing a game boy. In hindsight the whole thing seemed strange because TV, grilled cheese, and game boys were all rarities there. And then there's Batman, the Animated Series. I never missed an episode. And here's the thing: On days I went to Pat's house after school, my mother *always* picked me up at 3:30, so I'd be back home

by 4 when the show started. What I'm saying is I'd never watched Batman at another person's house before, so when 4 O'Clock came and the opening credits started and still no word from mom, I knew something was wrong. Later I discovered that my mother's 911 call, when she supposedly found the body, was placed at 4:21, but she should have been done teaching by 3, and been on her way to get me. So why did she go home first? What was she doing in the unaccounted for time? *Could she have been cleaning up my father's act?*

Batman	Batman	Batman
Batman	Batman	Batman

HENRY (Continued)

I needed to make sure I got these details right-- the timing, her alibi-- so I decided to try and see the case file again.

Detective

Details of a police station	Details of a police station	Details of a police station
Details of a police station	Details of a police station	Details of a police station

DETECTIVE

You know, we did a thorough investigation. I looked at every possible angle myself.

HENRY

And this isn't about correcting your investigation.

DETECTIVE

Well it could seem like that, just letting you know.

HENRY

Oh okay.

DETECTIVE

People come in here, requesting case files, thinking we forgot / something.

HENRY

Oh but--

DETECTIVE

But we're trained professionals, you know?

HENRY

Uh huh, yeah.

DETECTIVE

So it's almost like-- we can't do our job?

HENRY

I don't mean any offense.

DETECTIVE

Well, it's a little offensive, / just gotta be... honest.

HENRY

Okay, okay.

(Awkward pause)

DETECTIVE

But I guess anyone can be a detective these days, the whole gig

economy, that stuff.

(A beat. HENRY doesn't understand.)

HENRY

Uh, look, I know you get a lot of requests. But this is my father, and I just... want to look at the case file.

DETECTIVE

Can I give you some advice?

HENRY

Okay.

DETECTIVE

Move on.

HENRY

Excuse me?

DETECTIVE

Because you haven't moved on. Right? Even after all these years? I'm telling you, this won't help you find resolution. You're trying to piece together a puzzle that's not actually a-- a--...(getting lost in his own metaphor) uh... you know, a *puzzle*. A *complete* puzzle.

HENRY

Nevertheless...

DETECTIVE

When I had my child, do you know what I did? When he was just a baby, every night before he went to bed, I'd imagine, just briefly, that he stopped breathing, and that I held his lifeless body in my arms. I'd imagine my worst fear, my little baby's death, so that when I woke up the next morning, it would feel like... a miracle! A miracle that he was still alive!

(HENRY doesn't know how to respond.)

What I'm saying is that I'd be so grateful and so humbled by this extra day with him. This puts things in perspective, it's a technique of the Stoics. When each of my parents fell ill, I did the same with them, every day I'd imagine them dead, so when they actually died, the blow wasn't that bad. So what I'm saying is... if you imagined his death beforehand, you wouldn't have this problem.

HENRY

I have no idea what you're talking about, what problem.

DETECTIVE

(Leans in) Well, the problem of death. Right? You're searching for answers

you don't even have the questions for.

HENRY

(To audience) There's something to what he said.

DETECTIVE

Okay. One case file coming up. Just so you don't think we're hiding anything.

(He shambles off. JESS enters, a little out of breath, but very upbeat)

JESS

Hey!

HENRY

Hey!

(They embrace.)

JESS

Sorry I'm late.

HENRY

No problem.

JESS

Did you talk to anyone yet?

HENRY

Yeah, he's going to get me the case file.

JESS

Oh yeah?? Just like that?

HENRY

Well-- we'll see. (In a bit of a whisper) It's-- the actual guy.

JESS

What guy.

HENRY

The detective from my father's case.

JESS

From all that time ago?

HENRY

Yeah, that's who I'm talking to.

JESS

Oh wow. He's still here?

HENRY

Hey do you need some water? Should we try and / find a--

JESS

Oh no, I'm okay. Sorry again for being / late, bus problems.

(HENRY brushes it off at "/")

This is kind of exciting. I mean *you've* done this / before, but--

HENRY

What.

JESS

Like a *field* investigation, at a station.

HENRY

Oh! Yeah. It's hit or miss sometimes but...

(Slight beat as they wait. She's still a little out of breath.)

You sure you don't want any water, / or--

JESS

(Looking around) Actually yeah, I wonder if there's--...

(DETECTIVE returns with case file.)

DETECTIVE

Okay, here you go. (Noticing JESS). Oh, hello!

JESS

Hi, I'm Jess.

DETECTIVE

Hello Jess.

HENRY

This is my girlfriend. Is it okay if she--...

DETECTIVE

Sure, let's get a whole team in here to check my work! (To JESS): I'm kidding. I'm very secure.

(Slight awkward beat. HENRY begins to flip through the folder.)

JESS

So you were the actual investigator on this case.

DETECTIVE

Yup. I was the guy who didn't find the guy. Which is why we need these task rabbits now, right?

(A beat. They don't understand.)

JESS

Uhh, yes!

(Light laughter from all.)

So let me ask you: did you have any other, like... pet theories?

DETECTIVE

My theory is that there were a number of unsolved break-ins at the time.

JESS

Even though this one didn't fit the pattern.

DETECTIVE

We're looking for the most likely scenario.

HENRY

Did you question my mother?

DETECTIVE

Of course.

HENRY

I mean at length.

DETECTIVE

What do you mean.

HENRY

Like her timeline, alibi...

DETECTIVE

Whoa. Hold on. (Does a disbelieving laugh.) You telling me you suspect your *mother*? Boy / that's some--

HENRY

No, I didn't say that.

DETECTIVE

That's some Greek shit right there. Not like current Greeks, I'm not a / racist, or--

JESS

No, what we--

DETECTIVE

But you actually believe *she* is the / ...

JESS

No, not the *culprit*, but we're... Should I-- (Turns to HENRY for permission to continue. He nods.) We're working on a theory that she could have helped, uh... clean up after a-- an *intentional* act.

DETECTIVE

Suicide? Really?? God, that's-- (Does a disbelieving laugh) Didn't know you were going *there*. Jesus.

JESS

There were no other suspects?

DETECTIVE

Only his father's employee.

HENRY

Paul Cheung.

DETECTIVE

Yeah. But he had a solid alibi.

HENRY

And you suspected him because of his criminal record.

DETECTIVE

No. Because of the video.

HENRY

Video? What video?

DETECTIVE

You didn't know about the video?

HENRY

What video??

DETECTIVE

Wow, you guys are probably gonna make a really big deal out of this then. Neighbor's surveillance video. Only photos now. And it's from the other end of the block, so doesn't show your door or anything. The timing matches. But it's probably just a passerby. His face is blurred, but he sort of resembled Paul. (Preemptively defensive) *Yes because he's Chinese but I asked some Chinese colleagues and they said it could be him too.*

HENRY

(Out of the scene) It was blurry, but I could see his face. It wasn't Paul. I felt my blood run cold. I recognized the man.

The surveillance image of the man.	The surveillance image of the man.	The surveillance image of the man.
The surveillance image of the man.	The surveillance image of the man.	The surveillance image of the man.

Tom

(With these next few scenes, the play takes on a distinctly darker, more sinister atmosphere.)

The surveillance image of the man.	The surveillance image of the man.	EMDR
EMDR	The surveillance image of the man.	The surveillance image of the man.

HENRY

(Looking at the surveillance image) It's one of those things where, when you're a child and you encounter something that doesn't seem quite right, you instinctively don't pursue it, for fear of what the truth might be. Well, this man, at one point, appeared in my house, and it didn't seem right so I pushed it down. All these years. But this photograph brought it back.

Detail of living room	Detail of living room	Detail of living room
Detail of living room	Detail of living room	Detail of living room

HENRY (Continued)

The doorbell rings one day. My mother's home but my father's out. She opens the door, and I see him beyond. At first I think he's a stranger, but then they start talking in whispers. Until my mother relents with...

LEENA

Okay, okay.

HENRY

He enters. Again. Doesn't feel right. They're in the living room and she's serving him tea. I'm watching through a door crack, then build up the courage to venture in.

LEENA

Oh! Henry this is Tom.

TOM

Hello. Nice to meet you. You're a good looking boy.

HENRY

She flashes him a look. Can't tell what it means. "Who are you?" I boldly ask.

TOM

I'm a friend.

LEENA

He used to be my piano student, but now he's our friend.

HENRY

I want to ask if by "our" she means "dad too."

LEENA

Henry, go to your room for a bit. Tom was just telling me something personal, so we need some privacy.

HENRY

I don't move. I want to put myself in the middle of this, whatever it is.

LEENA

Go on, and we'll go get pizza afterwards.

HENRY

(To audience) Okay. Fine.

(An atmosphere shift to something a little more surreal. HENRY moves away from the scene. TOM makes sure he's gone, then rises and embraces LEENA. She resists a bit but is into it.)

LEENA

(Not completely saying no.) No, don't.

TOM

He's a good looking kid.

LEENA

You shouldn't have talked to him.

TOM

He'll be fine.

LEENA

I know, but...

TOM

I'm sorry for coming. But not too sorry.
(They kiss.)

LEENA

I like spontaneity, but--

TOM

I didn't know he was home sick today.

LEENA

I know, so just...

(Gently pushing him out the door...)

TOM

When can we...

LEENA

I'll call you.

(One last kiss.)

HENRY

I extrapolated that last part. That last part I didn't see, but it's a truth I pushed down. Children know things. And with this memory recalled, other memories started to bloom.

The Window

(The same "Window" video setup from earlier in the play. GEORGE is in the same position, looking out the window.)

Aspects of Living Room	Living Room Window, open	Aspects of Living Room
Aspects of Living Room	Closer view of the night street	Aspects of Living Room

HENRY

Remember that scene at the window I described earlier? Well, I suddenly remembered the *complete* version. (To GEORGE) Why are you looking out the window?

GEORGE

(Looking out) It's nice sometimes to look out and not in.

(He looks at HENRY)

(Smiling) Or you can get trapped in your own brain. Do you know what I mean by that?

HENRY

Uhhh...

(Slight beat)

GEORGE

You're dad's just being weird.

HENRY

I'd forgotten what happened next. I had *pressed* him. (To GEORGE:) What are you really looking at?

(GEORGE looks at him.)

GEORGE

I'm looking at... I'm looking at your mother.

HENRY

Where is she?

GEORGE

In her car. Down the street.

HENRY

(To audience) I peeked out but couldn't see. I knew I wasn't supposed to ask this, but-- (TO GEORGE:) Can I go to her?

GEORGE

No.

HENRY

I want to go to her.

GEORGE

You can't.

HENRY

Why?

(Pause.)

GEORGE

She's talking to a friend.

HENRY

I knew it was him. Mom didn't come in until much later. They barely spoke. There was a chill.

(Beat)

Things we know in our gut but push down. My mother had an affair.

George and Leena

(Video and staging: Suggestion of the Dinner Scene
but possibly deconstructed)

HENRY

And it all started clicking into place.

Kitchen wall. Flickering?	Blank	Blank
Blank	Blank	Kitchen wall. Flickering?

LEENA

I just wish uh...

GEORGE

There was something more you could do. There's nothing. Nothing can
repair what you've done.

HENRY

It *wasn't* a perfect marriage.

LEENA

I want us to be a team. Like always.

GEORGE

We're not a team anymore.

HENRY

Their tripwires set from the very beginning.

(Suddenly: Video and staging add in-- or replace
with-- suggestion of George's tenement apt., the
argument scene. Video: The glass falling.)

GEORGE

Damnit!!

(Video of the glass falling repeating on a loop.)

George's tenement room	Glass falling	Glass falling
------------------------	---------------	---------------

Glass falling	George's tenement room	George's tenement room
---------------	------------------------	------------------------

GEORGE (Continued)

I am not good enough for you.

HENRY

Insecurities, from the beginning.

LEENA

You're thinking like my father. You're letting *him* tell you who you need to be.

HENRY

Inadequacies. Always pulling him back into his own head.

GEORGE

It's me, okay? *Me*. I need to know that I can take care of you on my own!

HENRY

He was driven, always on a mission that never ended.

LEENA

And I'm *telling you how* to take care of me!!

HENRY

He left her because he was on a quest for *himself*. He neglects her. He has the capacity to neglect her.

GEORGE

I am not good enough for you.

HENRY

His leaving. Their signature trauma, carried over all these years.

Marin headlands hike	View to Land's End	Glass falling
Glass falling	View to Land's End	Lucca's Delicatessen

GEORGE

I like looking at it from here, from far away, because it's a special place, but it's changed.

(During the following, VIDEO cycles through a single image-- but possibly repeated on several panels-- which represents each part of what HENRY's talking

about. Perhaps it could be 3 panels with a single image, that is staggered when a new image comes up. For example...)

Marin headlands hike	Marin Headlands hike	Tom
Marin Headlands Hike	Tom	Tom

Walter	Walter	Tom
Walter	Tom	Tom

Tom	Tom	George at window
Tom	George at window	George at window

HENRY

He's trying too hard to craft a moment. There was always some tension in those hikes, if I'm honest. He's always carried tension. So: insecurities, baggage, neglect. She flirts at a piano lesson with someone not so *burdened*. Dad picks up on her distance, gets *more* insecure as a result. Looks to their bank account for validation and it's not enough, needs more to match her father so he takes more, gets caught, and then.... Then what... He's caught, family's in trouble, play time's over with the new man because family comes first so she breaks it off, in the car, while my dad watches from the window. Breaks it off but the man, *he* doesn't like it, he's not well-- I sensed that when I met him in our house, he seemed unstable-- he gets angry-- wants my father out of the way because he's obsessed with her-- comes to the house, and-- and--...

Tom aiming gun	Tom aiming gun	Tom aiming gun
Tom aiming gun	Tom aiming gun	Tom aiming gun

EMDR	EMDR	EMDR
EMDR	EMDR	EMDR

(We hear THE MUSIC.)

Leena's left hand on keyboard	Leena's eyes	Leena's right hand at keyboard
George's left hand on keyboard	George's eyes	George's right hand on keyboard

HENRY

Those chords, those mysterious chords Dad played, right before his death. I remember now. It was *her* composition, not his. He played it when she was gone. Gone to that other man. Like a bird sending a special song through the forest to its lost mate. He was trying to call her back.

(Music reaches a final conclusion, a final chord.)

Jess

(Suddenly all video freezes. Slightly staticky in silence. Sound of a key in the lock. Door opening.)

HENRY

Honey?

(No response.)

Honey... Jess?

JESS

(Offstage still)

Yes, just a minute.

HENRY

(To audience) Something's off.

(A pause. Then JESS slowly enters but stops in the doorway. All video out. A sudden, unexpected "natural" look. A pause in this new environment, with JESS in the doorway. JESS has a totally different energy from before. Where before she was energized, matching HENRY's infectious energy, now there's something more "naturalistic" to the acting. Like documentary realism. The following is played as gentle and loving as possible. Push against the anger. Make the beats, pauses and silences as pregnant, even if they feel uncomfortably long.)

Hey... What's up?

(She doesn't immediately respond.)

Is everything okay? What's-- (going on)...

JESS

Listen uh... I have something I need to say.

HENRY

(Nervous) Okay...

(Pause. It's hard for her to continue.)

What is it-- / Just-- just--

JESS

Wait. Just let me--...

(He gives her the floor. She takes a deep breath.)

I've decided I need to get away for a little bit.

HENRY

Um... Get away?

JESS

For about a week. Or more. Just to my sister's.

(HENRY waits for her to continue but she doesn't for a beat.)

HENRY

Are you breaking up with me??

JESS

No. I'm not.

HENRY

Oh thank god.

JESS

I just think that... with this case you're doing... I've decided I *do* need some distance from it. Like we talked about. So...

(HENRY takes a moment to absorb this, but is still confused.)

HENRY

Sorry, talked about? What do you mean?

JESS

What do you mean what do I mean?

(They both have a beat of mutual confusion.)

What we talked about in couples counseling. My needing to set boundaries for myself, that whole talk.

HENRY

Oh right.

JESS

And how a break for me was an option.

HENRY

But I didn't think that was serious.

JESS

What??

HENRY

Just the break part.

JESS

Of course it was serious.

HENRY

Oh yeah no of course. Of course.

(A silence.)

Um. I'm sorry but I'm still just having a little bit of--... Because weren't we *just* at the police station and you were really *excited* about the case?

JESS

(Confused, troubled)

Henry, you thought I was excited?

(HENRY is genuinely taken aback for a beat.)

HENRY

Am I missing something here?

JESS

It was an inconvenience. I was at a business lunch and you pulled me away because you said it was really important but you hadn't even *found* anything yet, when I arrived. It was a big inconvenience to me, and the fact you can't see that is--

(She stops herself before she gets too angry.)

And then I just got this crazy idea that... maybe you thought I was having lunch with *Mark*, and *that's* why you pulled me / away to--

HENRY

No! That's absolutely / not what I--

JESS

Okay. Okay. But the fact that I *thought* that-- It's-- That's why I need this distance. I can't think like this. I can't get pulled in.

HENRY

What do you mean pulled in?

(Pause)

JESS

You were *severely* depressed over your mother's death. You were. But instead of *dealing* with that, you started saying your *father* was depressed. Then I get this text from you saying your mother had an affair, and *we* had just had that fight about *Mark*. And-- and so you're not thinking straight. You're not seeing clearly. (A little shaky) And it's affecting me, and it's not healthy for me.

(A silence.)

HENRY

I don't want you to go. I'm sorry.

JESS

It's best for both of us. You need space to grieve, for both of your parents, on your own.

(Beat)

HENRY

Are you saying I should drop the case?

JESS

That's not what I'm saying at all.

HENRY

Will you stay if I drop it?

JESS

That's not how this works.

(Pause)

HENRY

(To audience): She assures me once again this isn't a break-up. She packs a suitcase in silence and leaves.

(The play rests in an inconclusive silence for a beat. The following is delivered with more resignation than before, an ambiguousness.)

If...

(Slight beat)

If...

(Slight beat)

If there was one person who could confirm my mother's affair, it was her oldest friend in the world: Pat. I decided to pay her a visit.

Pat

Details of Pat's house	Pat's living room	Details of Pat's house
Exterior of Pat's house	Pat's living room	Batman: The Animated Series

PAT

Something's up with you. I can tell.

HENRY

Huh?

PAT

Something just happened to you. What's wrong.

HENRY

Nothing happened. I'm fine.

(She looks at him dubiously, does a little grunt re: she doesn't believe him.)

Maybe just missing my mother.

(She studies him, still not believing.)

PAT

As you should.

HENRY

I know she was like a sister to you.

PAT

That she was. Do you want some tea?

HENRY

Oh no, I'm fine.

PAT

Oh you're not staying long?

HENRY

Oh uh sure okay.

PAT

You don't *have* to stay long, if you have somewhere to be.

HENRY

Oh no, I want to stay.

PAT

I mean you came *here*. I'm not putting a / gun to your head.

HENRY

I know, I know. Thank you.

PAT

Okay. I'll get some tea.

(She prepares tea. The following might be played with her in another room, and/or with her periodically coming back in while she prepares the tea.)

HENRY

Since you were like sisters, I suppose you shared things with each other. Like sisters do.

PAT

Like what.

HENRY

Like secrets, things like that.
(Beat)

PAT

What are you up to.
(Beat)

HENRY

What were mom and dad like. As husband and wife.

PAT

They were wonderful as husband and wife. Why.

HENRY

Always?

PAT

What?

HENRY

They were always wonderful together?
(Beat)

PAT

I don't like this.

HENRY

What.

PAT

This-- *energy* you're giving off.

HENRY

Oh! / I'm--

PAT

This-- this relentless, masculine energy.

HENRY

I'm sorry, I didn't-- I can leave.

PAT

But I'm making tea.

HENRY

Okay, I'm staying. I'm just curious these days. I'm sorry.

PAT

I'll forgive you. Because I see your mother in you.

(She goes and gets the tea and brings it in. Pause.)

They had their ups and downs. But the real problems were all in the beginning. I've known your mother a long time, I was there from the beginning.

HENRY

What problems from the beginning? Only if you want to...

PAT

Only if I want to what?

HENRY

Tell me.

PAT

You want to know, right?

HENRY

Yes, you're / right.

PAT

(Muttering) Just say what you want.

HENRY

/ want to know. Please tell me.

(Slight beat)

PAT

Well, the first years were rough because of your grandfather's disapproval of your father. They even split up for a time.

HENRY

Yeah she told me about that.

PAT

But they found their way back to each other. Why don't you tell me what are you're *really* after.

(Pause)

HENRY

Okay. I'm not saying this from any place of judgment toward my mother. But I remember there was a--... a man. To whom she seemed close, when I was a child.

(PAT stares coldly at him for a beat.)

I was wondering, if you knew him--... It's this man.

(He hands her printout of the surveillance footage.

PAT reacts with recognition. Stares at it a long time.

Then looks away from picture and HENRY.)

Again. No anger.

(Pause)

PAT

I knew your mother well. She entrusted me with her secrets.

HENRY

I love my mother. I know things get complicated.

PAT

Yes, complicated. This wasn't your mother's lover. Which I know is what you're thinking. Your mother would never do anything like that.

(Beat)

This man is your brother.

(VIDEO goes haywire. A chaotic mix of many images that have come before, but always with the EMDR pendulum swinging underneath.)

Chaotic mixture of images from throughout the play.	Chaotic mixture of images from throughout the play.	Chaotic mixture of images from throughout the play.
EMDR pendulum	EMDR pendulum	EMDR pendulum

PAT (Continued)

It happened early on. That was the real reason they broke up.

Video of the glass falling	Video of the glass falling	Batman, then other things
EMDR pendulum	EMDR pendulum	EMDR pendulum

PAT (Continued)

When they were young romantic souls running around San Francisco, they got pregnant, with him, your brother.

Chinatown tenement house	Images from the sex sequence	Images from the sex sequence
EMDR pendulum	EMDR pendulum	EMDR pendulum

PAT (Continued)

Your grandfather said, "no," your father wasn't going to raise this kid. He wasn't a suitable man. And your father, to your mother's horror, agreed! Agreed he wasn't good enough! Your father lacked... independence of mind. Even though he played the rebel. So the decision was made that the child would be given up. The decision was made *for* your mother-- by her father, and your father too.

HENRY

That's when he left?

PAT

He was banned from seeing her during her pregnancy.

HENRY

By Grandpa.

PAT

And her too. She was wounded. Because he didn't fight for her. And their son. She didn't want to see him.

HENRY

But she took him back. Eventually.
(PAT shrugs.)

PAT

Guess they loved each other. Stranger things have happened.

HENRY

And the boy...

PAT

They lost track of him. And when they started over, they agreed to have a blank slate. That meant no more mention of him. But...

HENRY

He came back.

PAT

Turns out he was close by the whole time. Living just North of here, in Marin, in San Rafael. He had done some digging and found them. He met your mother first. Then, she had a talk with George.

(Video now might be hazy to reflect the memory filters it's being passed through. Same setup as the "dinner scene.")

Kitchen wall	Window showing nighttime outside	Kitchen wall
Blank	Blank	Blank

GEORGE

What's he like?

LEENA

He's a very nice man.

GEORGE

And he's-- how old is he?

LEENA

Around seventeen.

GEORGE

And what does he do? What's / his...

LEENA

Odd jobs. Cleans pools. Fix-it things.

GEORGE

And he lived up in Marin this whole time?

(Pause)

LEENA

I want you to meet him.

GEORGE

I still wish you didn't let him into our house without talking with me.

LEENA

Did you hear what I said?
(Pause)

GEORGE

We just need to be very careful about... not sending any kind of message to him.

LEENA

He just wanted to meet us.

GEORGE

You said it seemed like he needed *family*.

LEENA

Well is that *so terrible*?

GEORGE

Well, we need to think about Henry, how this would affect him, if / suddenly--

LEENA

Yeah but--

GEORGE

So that's-- that's our top priority. Our family *right here*. It's going to be a very big deal, if we start to...

(He doesn't know how to finish, perhaps does an exasperated laugh.)

LEENA

You owe him a *meeting*.
(Pause)

I dream about him.
(Pause)

GEORGE

Okay. I'll meet him. But we can't promise him anything. We can't give him what he needs.

(LEENA shakes her head.)

LEENA

I just wish uh...

GEORGE

There was something more you could do.

(He waits while LEENA somehow indicates the affirmative.)

LEENA

I want us to be a team on this. Like always.

(GEORGE doesn't respond.)

You're just... acting very different now.

GEORGE

I'm sorry.

LEENA

It's just... very hard.

(Her attention is perked up by Henry in the doorway-- not necessarily the physical actor.)

(In a quick whisper, to GEORGE) Henry.

(GEORGE springs up and moves toward wherever the child is indicated.)

GEORGE

Okay buddy, come on, it's time to go to bed.

(Back to video of PAT's house.)

HENRY

Do you know where to find him?

PAT

I know where he works. He's still up North.

(Slight beat)

Take care of yourself.

HENRY

I will.

PAT

No really. I can see that... you're suffering. Take care of it.

San Rafael

Video of drive to Marin, across the Golden Gate Bridge	Video of drive to Marin, across the Golden Gate Bridge	Video of drive to Marin, across the Golden Gate Bridge
Video of drive to Marin, across the Golden Gate Bridge	Video of drive to Marin, across the Golden Gate Bridge	Video of drive to Marin, across the Golden Gate Bridge

(He drives in silence for a good while, the shock of the
previous scene still with him.)

HENRY

I'm driving. Driving. Driving to the brother I never knew I had.

(Pause)

Driving. To confront the man who might have killed my-- *our* father. Driving
but... I don't even have a plan. What will I do when I meet him? I can't
believe I have no plan.

(Pause)

I follow the paces of Google Maps, drive into the Canal area of San Rafael
where Pat told me he worked. A tackle shop near the Bay. I park a
distance away and watch. There he is. He emerges.

Details of the area	Details of the area	Details of the area
Details of the area	Details of the area	Details of the area

(TOM emerges, smokes.)

HENRY (Continued)

He looks weather-beaten. Hardened. Looking at his face, I see my father.
And my mother. And myself. I stay in my car, paralyzed.

(Pause)

I think about Jess. How she kept saying I'm seeing things through a
certain lens.

(Pause)

I wait 'til sundown when I see my brother finally drive off. I follow him to his
house, then knock on his door.

Tom

(At this point in time the entire play suddenly and joltingly changes perspectives. The video screens reflect this change by taking on a totally new quality we've never seen before. We are no longer in HENRY's headspace now, but TOM's. Everything that follows is now from TOM's point of view.)

Blank	Blank	Blank
Blank	Blank	Blank

TOM

And there he stands. Henry. Of course, I know who he is. I've kept tabs on him all this time, after all. Observed him from a distance for so long he feels like... well, like a long-lost brother. I invite him inside. He steps in. He seems a bit nervous and rambles a bit at first...

HENRY

There are so many ways to make an introduction. And I'm not sure what the *best* way is, so I'm just gonna jump right in. Okay?

TOM

I tell him to have a seat. He does, and then... he talks. And talks and talks. And it all comes out. The entire journey he took to get here. He tells it in such vivid detail that I can see it all play out in my mind's eye.

(We see a video of the entire show up until now-- the stage show, with video etc.-- in SUPER fast speed, spread across all screens.)

The entire show	The entire show	The entire show
The entire show	The entire show	The entire show

TOM (Continued)

Every instance. Every memory. Every memory of someone else's memory, it's all so vivid. I can see it. He's a good storyteller. But when I hear how rich, how detailed his own memories are, and how the good ones, the ones with father and mother, how they-- I can see this-- how *they* create the foundation from which he travels forth in life, how *those memories* are his engine...

The entire show	Nostalgic video images used before	The entire show
The entire show	Nostalgic video images used before	The entire show

TOM (Continued)

I dunno, it suddenly makes me feel... upset. Because while that's his memory space he's giving me, mine (indicating the screens behind him) is very different.

(Video shifts to murky images with more dulled, muddy color palates. We can faintly make out disturbing images of parental mistreatment, but the images are not vivid.)

Tom's childhood	Tom's childhood	Tom's childhood
Tom's childhood	Tom's childhood	Tom's childhood

TOM (Continued)

I put them to words. I tell him about *my* life. From the beginning. Well, after I was given up. How I always felt darkness nipping at my heels. How year after year dragged on until every last filament of trust had disappeared. I tell him about that first home I was placed in, the one where that motherfucker hit me, tormented me, and his wife stood silent while he did it. And how I fought back, and because I fought back was labeled "troubled." And how I actually *became* troubled because of that, *became* the tormentor in subsequent placements. (I didn't tell him all of that.) But I did say how I bounced around, family to family, until I came of age and went on my merry way. Then how I got into some trouble with some really bad people and so, not knowing where to turn, I decided to find the only two people who maybe couldn't say no to helping me. I tracked them down. Observed them. (I didn't tell him this either.) But boy did they look happy. All three of them. How that kid was being filled with such great memories. My mother. My mother looked to me to be a saint. I met her outside her workspace and over coffee she said:

LEENA

I've dreamt of you.

TOM

I've dreamt of you too. You seem so close to the person in my dreams.

LEENA

I just want to say I'm sorry.

TOM

You don't need to be sorry.

LEENA

But--

TOM

What's important is that we're meeting now.

LEENA

I have so many questions. What's your life been like?

TOM

It hasn't been easy.

LEENA

I wish you hadn't said that.

TOM

Sorry.

LEENA

No--... I mean, I wish it wasn't true.

(She smiles at him, takes his hands.)

Hiking with Father

Tom's version of the Headlands trip	Tom's version of the Headlands trip	Tom's version of the Headlands trip
Tom's version of the Headlands trip	Tom's version of the Headlands trip	Tom's version of the Headlands trip

TOM

I tell him about meeting our father. We went to the Marin Headlands. (To GEORGE) Thanks for coming here with me.

GEORGE

Of course.

TOM

I hope I don't come across as--... I mean I picked this place because I heard it's where you bring your son. From Mother. (To Audience) I of course didn't tell him-- or Henry-- it was because I'd followed them here before. (Back to GEORGE) So I just assumed it's a place you liked. But... Does it feel weird to be here? With me?

GEORGE

It's--

TOM

Because I'm not trying to *weirdly* recreate anything, just thought you liked the place, so I suggested it. I'm talking too much now, huh.

GEORGE

It's okay. Don't worry about it.

TOM

But it is really beautiful up here.
(Silence)

GEORGE

So. Leena told me about your situation.

TOM

Oh, god, that's--

GEORGE

It's okay. I don't even want to know how it happened.

TOM

It's just so embarrassing. I knew I shouldn't have gotten involved with these guys, / it's just--...

GEORGE

It's okay. Seriously. I think that--... You gotta do what you gotta do. And you, I know you're a sharp, talented young man, and you had to do certain things to survive. And I admire you, for having the strength to survive, to take care of yourself, no matter what it takes. So I want to... help you now. I'm going to give you the money to make things square with these people.

TOM

That's a lot of money.

GEORGE

I've lined it up.

(TOM does a disbelieving laugh.)

TOM

Wow that's--... I don't know what to say.

GEORGE

It's something I need to do. For you. Yeah? Okay? We'll find a time for you to come over and pick it up.

(TOM nods. They stand in silence.)

TOM

You saved my life.

GEORGE

Believe me, it's the least I can do. You need the opportunity to start from scratch. To reach your fullest potential. You have it in you.

TOM

Have what in me?

GEORGE

Great promise.

TOM

How can you tell that, you don't even know me.

GEORGE

Well, I can see it.

(Silence.)

TOM

This is really just great. To be able to spend time here with you. To meet

you. Finally. Thank you.

(He goes in for a hug. GEORGE awkwardly accepts it.)

I want to uh... spend more time with you. Is that okay? I've gotten to know Mom so well now, and I know you've been busy, but-- and even Henry, my own brother! I hope that's okay. Better late than never, right?

(GEORGE smiles but doesn't respond.)

And I don't-- It doesn't have to be all time or anything, just to-- to *sometimes*--

(GEORGE nods.)

Or all the time! I dunno!

(GEORGE stops nodding.)

I don't want this generous payment to be a... a buy-off.

GEORGE

I wish you didn't say that.

TOM

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. I don't know what came over me.

GEORGE

Listen, Tom. I'm not sure quite how to say this, but... I have... a very set way of raising a child. And, this means I can't--...I'm now raising Henry in a certain way. I'm sorry that it wasn't you, but--

TOM

I'm not asking you to--

GEORGE

But please, hear me out. I'm just-- what I need to do right now is do what's best for Henry. And what that means is he needs a normal-- but not normal, but-- what he's used to.

TOM

A better / childhood.

GEORGE

No. One that he's used to. And, and so something like this would be... disruptive. And confusing. I mean maybe later on down the line, when he's older--... but right now-- I hear what you need, and want, I do-- but after this payment, for right now I'll need to give you support from... from afar. In spirit. It's just...

TOM

So no contact. That's what you're saying.

GEORGE

You're a good kid. A strong kid. I'm positive you'll succeed.

The Window

The perspective of the interior of the window, from before	The inside of a car, at night	The exterior of the Wong house at night, with window light on, George's silhouette visible
The inside of a car, at night	The inside of a car, at night	The inside of a car, at night

TOM

(To AUDIENCE): Soon after meeting father, I went to their house one night, unannounced. I just want to say hi, but mother quickly shuffles me into her car. In her car, as we talk, I can feel George watching us, from the window up above.

(We are now inside the car that GEORGE was watching from the window previously. TOM and LEENA.)

So you're saying we can't see each other anymore.

LEENA

Just for now. Until we figure things out.

TOM

Did I cause a rift between you two?

LEENA

We had a discussion about spending more time with you. And--... We're a team. That's how it's always been. So if one of us--...

TOM

Him, if *he* doesn't want me.

LEENA

It's not / that he--

TOM

I don't care about him anymore. It's you. I just want to spend time with *you*. Is that too much to ask?

LEENA

No, of course not.

TOM

Do you like spending time with me?

LEENA

Yes.

TOM

I can't go back now. Now that I've met you. I can't go back to being alone in the world. Once a week. Can I see you once a week?

LEENA

It's not a bargaining / --...

TOM

Once a month? Please? Can I at least call you?

(LEENA doesn't respond.)

The light is on. In your house. I think I can see him in the window. He's watching us, huh. I wish you didn't have to listen to him. It's because I'm not good enough.

LEENA

No. I--

TOM

(To audience) I imagine their conversation. I can guess what he said about me.

GEORGE

... I'm saying I met with him, like you wanted me to, and-- I just don't like his-- his *vibe*. He makes me nervous.

LEENA

His *vibe*?? You're talking about his *vibe*??

GEORGE

And those people he was involved with. What kind of a person is this?

LEENA

This is our son!

GEORGE

Look, I don't think he's *well*. Okay? Like even how he found us. It was like he-- he was stalking us!

LEENA

It's not stalking, it's a child trying to find his parents!

GEORGE

I just don't--

LEENA

Maybe he doesn't act right because he's had such a hard life.

GEORGE

We're not responsible for that. Okay? We're *not*.

LEENA

It's wrong to quarantine someone just because the situation's messy. That's what we did in the first place! We gave him up because you and my father were so obsessed with-- with this living up to some *idea* of what you *needed to be*, how our life was *supposed to be*-- and he didn't *fit* / into the idea, so--

GEORGE

No-- I was--

LEENA

You guys were just so *caught*, in both of your heads, in this *obsession* of-- of--

GEORGE

I was doing what your father wanted because of *you*! I was doing this for *you*! So we could--

LEENA

How can you say you were doing it for me?!! You weren't seeing what I really wanted!!! *I didn't want to give him up!! You forced me to!!!*

(Big, pregnant silence.)

GEORGE

I don't want this man around Henry.

LEENA

He's in despair. And I want to help him.

GEORGE

Which is why I'm going to give him the money. And that's it. No more.

LEENA

So I can't see him anymore. You're forcing me to give him up. Again.

GEORGE

We're a team. Right?

TOM

At least that's how I imagine it. Her standing up for me, my father, well, my father seeing through me. Being a monster for seeing through me. A monster compared to my mother, the angel, because the next thing she

said in the car was...

LEENA

Just remember. Even if I don't see you for a long, long time, I have your back. Okay? I'm with you.

TOM

(To audience) Angel.

The Headlands

TOM

As I relay my story to him, I can see the expression on his face changing. Where there was once fear and predation, a cautious empathy now creeps in. By the time I get to the car conversation, I can see he feels compassion. But still... I see he has *some* doubts, so what happens next surprises me. He looks at me long and hard, as if turning over several game plans, then...

(HENRY puts an arm on TOM's shoulder. Holds it there, then withdraws.)

And then he leaves. Without saying another word. Just leaves. What would have happened if he'd pursued things a little further? What would have happened if I'd said I went back to our parents' house some days after that car talk, ostensibly to get the money from father, but that I actually had a different plan, involving the gun I brought along? And what if I told him the plan *wasn't* to shoot our father, but to put the gun to my *own* head and pull the trigger as he watched? What would've happened if I'd said that at the final moment, in the midst of his protests, a spell came over me and, as if guided by an invisible hand, I slowly, in a trance, turned the gun his way instead; and then, in tears, allowed that strange spirit to take my trigger finger and, gentle as a feather, pull it. Just. So.

(He acts this out with his finger.)

And that I called mother right after, in a panic, and she came straight over from her work. What would he have done if I said all this to him?

(Slight beat)

I'll never know.

(VIDEO now pivots away from TOM's POV into something much more limited than before.)

Driving on the Golden Gate Bridge, away from Marin	Driving on the Golden Gate Bridge, away from Marin	The Headlands
Driving on the Golden Gate Bridge, away from Marin	The Headlands	Driving on the Golden Gate Bridge, away from Marin

(HENRY driving)

HENRY

(On Phone) Hi Jess. Look I know I shouldn't be calling you, but... (She says something kind) But still... I want to respect your space. I just really, really wanted to hear your voice right now. (She says something kind.) So

uh, I *definitely* know you don't want to hear about the case but (She says something kind, urging him to continue)-- Well-- I found him. (She asks who it is.) The person I think is... (She is surprised, asks who.) My-- okay my brother. But-- (She is shocked he has a brother, asks rapid fire questions.) It's a long story. But the reason I called you is, I wanted to tell you that--... I'm not going to pursue this anymore. (She says okay, then: why not?) Well, I think that uh... Whatever happened... he's... suffered. He's suffered enough.

(He turns his attention to the audience.)

We say we miss each other. We say goodbye. And in the rearview mirror, as I cross the Golden Gate Bridge, I see The Headlands, now dark silhouettes. The place is different now. Across the bridge, where my brother lives, will now be a place of mystery, a place of depths I can't conceive of, swimming in darkness... at a distance. I had some happy memories with my father there, but things change. This would be my new view of The Headlands. This is how they would be. Until they change again.

END OF PLAY