

RED LINE

Written by

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## TEASER

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a bright red trickle of blood on a man's cheek. It falls slowly in a straight line on his skin.

REVEAL the man is lying down, blood pouring from a gash in his head.

The sounds of an ER flood in - doctors shouting orders, nurses responding.

The patient's eyes dart around. We see what he sees:

- The gloved hands of doctors and nurses cutting off his bloody shirt.

- Stab wounds pouring blood from his chest and arms.

- Gloved hands pressing white dressing to the wounds, blood quickly soaking through those as well.

- His own bloody hand trying to cover a wound, stop the blood from running out of his body.

We come back to the patient's face as he coughs blood.

One of the doctors, RICHARD BRENNAN (late 40s, black, handsome), notices the blood and calls loudly:

RICHARD  
Blood in the airway!

A NURSE places an oxygen mask over the patient's mouth. Richard packs clean rags in a wound.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Need to pack these faster, guys!

The patient, terrified and in agony, stares up at Richard, beading in on this doctor. Pleading with his eyes for help.

Richard catches the look. He nods as his hands keep working.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
We got this, man. You and me. We got this.

The certainty in Richard's voice is the last thing we hear clearly. The sounds of the ER fade out until there's just the patient's ragged breathing in his own ears. His eyes close.

Blackness, for a moment. Then:

We come back to the ER brutally! An explosion of sound and movement as the patient's eyes open and he gasps.

He sees Richard, now holding defibrillators to the patient's chest. Richard brought him back.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Don't you fucking do that.

The patient gasps and blinks rapidly, shocked to still be alive. Richard grins. This is one of the good moments.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The patient lies in bed, bandaged and bruised, but alive. All around him is stillness, and the rhythmic beeping of his vitals. Steady pulse.

We hear a soft scratching sound. A pen on paper.

Richard, in OR scrubs, makes notes in his patient's chart. He blinks from fatigue. He glances up at a clock on the wall - 1:15 in the morning.

He takes out his phone and dials.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON - a smart phone lying silent on the counter. It lights up and vibrates, a picture of Richard appearing on the screen. The name "RICHARD" appears on the screen as well.

In the picture, Richard stands with his arm around the shoulders of a white man (NOAH). They both smile and hug a giggling black girl between them (JIRA - aged 5 or 6). It's from Election Night 2008 - a really great night.

As the phone buzzes, we notice a teenage girl ignoring it. JIRA CALDER-BRENNAN(16, black, surlier as a teenager). She sports comfy PJs and glasses. She plays a surgery simulation on her laptop.

When the phone continues to buzz, she relents and picks it up.

JIRA  
(into phone)  
He's asleep.

INTERCUT Richard in the hospital and Jira in the kitchen as they talk.

RICHARD

Hello to you, too. Put dad on the phone and then go to bed.

JIRA

I'm not tired.

RICHARD

(smiling despite himself)  
You cutting?

JIRA

Yeah.

RICHARD

It'll be there in the morning.

JIRA

Just until you get home. Come on.  
It's a brain tumor.

RICHARD

Well... that is very important.

Jira smiles. She might have teenage attitude, but Richard's approval means everything to her.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Keep your hand steady and put dad on the phone, please.

JIRA

*I told you.* He's asleep.

RICHARD

Jira. Am I gonna have to ask a third time?

Jira rolls her eyes and holds the phone away from her face. She pads out of the kitchen.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

NOAH CALDER (mid-40s, white, WASPY handsome) snores softly in bed, glasses still on his face. The bedside lamp is on and there's a biography of Teddy Roosevelt open on his chest.

Jira enters and barks:

JIRA

Dad!

Noah wakes with a start, blinking like a cute owl.

JIRA (CONT'D)

It's dad.

NOAH

No better way to tell me?

Jira holds out the phone. Noah's approval is *not* everything to her. He knows it, and has mastered frustrated dad shtick.

NOAH (CONT'D)

"Sorry, daddy! I love you so, so much!"

Jira holds out the phone more emphatically. Noah, enjoying teasing her, pretends not to notice.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Did I ever tell you about where you slept the week we brought you home?

JIRA

Oh, my God, yes. A million times.

Noah points to his chest.

NOAH

Right here, baby girl. Like a beautiful little snoring, pooping kitten.

Jira, both pleased and disgusted by the affection, drops the phone on the bed and stomps out.

NOAH (CONT'D)

(calling to Jira)

You complete me! Go to bed!

(into phone)

What are the legal ramifications of a forty-eighth trimester abortion?

INTERCUT Richard and Noah.

RICHARD

Not great.

NOAH

You on the way?

RICHARD

Yeah, soon. What was the thing?

NOAH

The thing?

RICHARD

Was there a thing I'm supposed to pick up?

NOAH

Milk? That thing you put in coffee every day? That thing?

RICHARD

Besides milk.

NOAH

Just milk, Dr. Brennan.

RICHARD

Okay. Thank you. Love you.

Noah's already falling back asleep.

NOAH

Mm-hmm.

He hangs up and snores - glasses still on his face.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Richard pulls on pants over his scrubs. Then a hoodie. A huge winter coat and wool hat.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Richard, bundled until hat, hoodie, and coat hood, trudges through the snowy night.

Two laughing white girls, dressed to look good and not to stay warm, approach him from the opposite direction. As they catch sight of him their laughter dies and they walk quicker, eyes down.

After they pass him, they begin talking and laughing again.

Richard rolls his eyes - the same way Jira does. White people being afraid of him? It happens all the time.

EXT. CHICAGO SKYLINE - NIGHT

Chicago, in all its glittering grandeur. The camera seems to sweep in from the lake, closer to the lights and skyscrapers.

The camera pans North along the shore. It closes in on an elevated train.

As we get closer, we see Richard through one of the windows - just one man in this vast city.

INT. RED LINE TRAIN - NIGHT

Richard and a few scattered late night travelers ride the train. He reads the news on his phone. A headline catches his eye.

INSERT - "YOUNG" UPSTART IN 5TH WARD

Beneath the headline there's a picture of a tough, cool black woman in her early 30s - TIA YOUNG. Richard seems to recognize her, and laughs to himself in surprise.

He switches to messages and starts texting.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Noah's phone dings and lights up next to him as he sleeps. It's Richard's text.

INSERT TEXT - "You'll never believe who made the news."

The phone dings again. Noah knocks it away and rolls over.

EXT. THORNDALE RED LINE STATION - NIGHT

We hear the sound of a train receding as Richard walks quickly out of the station, stiff in the cold. He ducks into an all night convenience store near two doors down from the station.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

POV - SECURITY CAMERA - Richard enters the store, just another customer in black and white footage.

BACK TO NORMAL: Richard grabs a gallon of milk from a fridge at the back. On his way back to the counter, he passes a stack of NEWSPAPERS. He puts the milk on the counter and the CASHIER (60s, grizzled, white) starts to ring him up.

RICHARD

One second.

The cashier nods and Richard doubles back to the newspapers. He rifles through one, searching...

There it is. The article about Tia Young. Richard looks at her picture and smiles. Richard holds the paper up to show the cashier.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Take this, too--

Before the sentence is out, a YOUNG MAN (20s, black), also wearing a coat over a hoodie, walks into the store and pistol whips the cashier, who cries out in pain as blood leaks out of his nose.

Richard, shocked, drops the paper and freezes.

YOUNG MAN

Open the register!

The cashier, in pain and pissed, is slow to comply.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Don't make me tell you again.

The cashier shoots the robber a filthy look and moves to the register slowly. Richard watches, still frozen.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Hurry up.

The young man glances up at a mirror on the wall that shows the rest of the store. He sees Richard standing by the newspapers.

The young man wheels around and points the gun at Richard, who immediately puts his hands in the air.

RICHARD

Hey.

YOUNG MAN

You trouble?

RICHARD

No. I'm married. I have a daughter.

The young man gestures with the gun.

YOUNG MAN

Floor.



Richard, moving slowly, begins to kneel. The cashier, taking advantage of the robber's distraction, presses an alarm.

As the alarm rings out, Richard drops to the ground. The robber twists around and beats the cashier in the face.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)  
OPEN IT NOW, ASSHOLE!

Gun to his head, the cashier quickly opens the register. The young man grabs as much cash as he can and flees into the night.

In the distance, sirens approach.

Richard, shaking, wipes his mouth and stands. He hears the cashier moaning.

RICHARD  
You okay?

CASHIER  
God damn it!

Richard makes his way slowly to the counter. The cashier's holding his face in pain. The sirens are closer.

RICHARD  
Let me see.

CASHIER  
Leave me alone.

Behind the cashier, Richard notices a first aid kit for sale.

RICHARD  
Hey.

Richard leans on the counter and points behind the cashier.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Hey, can I grab that?

The cashier, eyes closed in pain, doesn't see what Richard's indicating.

CASHIER  
Fuck off.

Richard rolls his eyes and reaches. The sirens are very close now.

The way Richard's standing, his back's to the open door, and the night. He's blocking the cashier from whoever might arrive.

As Richard stretches his arm forward, almost reaching the first aid kit, the cashier opens his eyes. He straightens up and holds out his bloody hands towards Richard.

CASHIER (CONT'D)  
Get the fuck away!

Richard, fucking tired of it, gets in the cashier's face and yells:

RICHARD  
Look! I'm just trying--

A shot rings out and Richard staggers against the counter.

Two more shots. Richard slides to the floor.

He looks up. A cop, PETE EVANS (20s, white, Irish stock) stands in the doorway. His gun is drawn. Outside, snow is falling on a police car, the sirens and lights going full.

Pete's partner, VICTORIA RENNA (30s, white, Italian stock) races towards Pete. She takes in the sight of Richard on the ground.

VICTORIA  
(to Pete)  
You okay?

Pete doesn't answer. He stares at Richard. Richard's eyes blink rapidly. We see what he sees.

- Holes in his coat.
- Blood coming out of them.
- His own hand, moving to cover the blood. Stop it.

Richard looks up at Pete. He pleads with his eyes for Pete to help him.

Sound fades out until there's only Richard's ragged breathing in his own ears.

Pete lowers his gun, frozen. Victoria steps past Richard, toward the cashier. The cashier gestures wildly, yelling, making it clear they shot the wrong guy. The knowledge of their error washes over Pete and Victoria's faces.

Richard's eyes roll up. Milk trickles over the edge of the counter and on to Richard. Around him.

A pool of blood spreads out from his back and mixes with the milk. His breathing continues, loud in our ears. It carries over...

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Noah sleeping alone, oblivious, Richard's half of the bed still made.

The sound of Richard's breathing begins to slow.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jira plays on, her hand steady on the mouse pad, her finger's path mirrored on the screen by a beautiful incision around a brain tumor.

Jira smiles to herself. She beat the game.

The sound of Richard's breathing slows even more. Then stops.

Blackness.

**END OF TEASER**

**ACT ONE**

**Six months later.**

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAWN

Noah lies awake in bed. His glasses are on the bedside table. Next to them, a clock tells us it's 4:59 in the morning.

Noah's grown a beard. There are streaks of gray in his hair that weren't there before.

He's wide awake, staring at the clock. Richard's side of the bed is made. Empty.

The clock turns to 5:00. An alarm goes off. He turns it off and jumps out of bed.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - HALLWAY

Noah, still in his pajamas, blearily pads up to a closed door. He knocks softly.

NOAH  
First warning, Jira.

No answer. He pads away.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - BATHROOM - DAWN

Noah stands in the shower, eyes closed, taking the brunt of the water in his face.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - HALLWAY - DAWN

Noah, fresh from the shower, wearing only a towel, walks past Jira's door and knocks again.

NOAH  
You should now be seriously  
considering getting up.

No answer.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Honey? You hear me?

No answer. Noah walks away.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Noah, looking very much the absent-minded professor in a dress shirt, blazer, and glasses, sits quietly with a cup of coffee that he doesn't touch.

His phone rings. He silences it. It dings. A text. Reluctantly, he reads it.

INSERT - Smart phone screen. A text from someone named ELIZABETH pops up. It reads: "Call me."

Noah stares at the text, then deletes it. He scrolls through his messages and lands on Richard. He re-reads the text Richard sent the night he died - "You'll never believe who made the news."

Noah stares at the text like it's a puzzle he wants very much to solve.

Noah puts his phone away and checks his watch.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Noah pounds on Jira's door.

NOAH

You have five seconds before I pull  
you out of bed. One. Two. Three.  
Four--

Jira yanks open the door. She's changed, too. Her hair's cut violently short. Her eyes are red from crying. Noah notices.

NOAH (CONT'D)

You okay--?

JIRA

Why do I have to go in with you?

NOAH

You know why.

JIRA

It is six a.m. School doesn't start  
until it is seven-forty-five a.m.

NOAH

I'm really not liking your tone.

JIRA

I could be sleeping for another  
hour.

NOAH

Well, when you stop disappearing  
for hours at a time we can talk  
about--

Jira slams the door in his face. Noah takes a breath. He will  
not lose it with his daughter. Not today.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Jira. I'm not looking forward to  
today either. It won't be so bad  
tomorrow. We just have to get  
through today.

Jira wrenches open the door.

JIRA

I have to repeat an entire year. I  
missed *three months*. I have to  
repeat a year.

NOAH

Everyone knows it's not your fault--

JIRA

Everyone knows everything!

Jira starts to slam the door, but Noah blocks it with his  
foot. She doesn't meet his eyes as he searches her face.

NOAH

You're right. Everyone will be  
looking at us. But we don't have a  
choice in the matter. We just have  
to do it. So, please. Get dressed.

Jira finally looks up, staring daggers.

JIRA

I can't get dressed until you move  
your foot.

Noah slowly removes his foot. Jira slams the door. From  
behind the door:

JIRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But I'm not walking in with you!

Noah silently screams at the closed door.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - JIRA'S ROOM - DAY

Jira leans against the door, shaking with silent sobs. We hear Noah's footsteps as he walks away.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - DAY

Street's snow free. A beautiful late summer morning. In the daylight, we can see that it's a lovely neighborhood, all brownstone houses and trees.

Noah and Jira walk towards the Thorndale train station. They pass the convenience store where Richard died. Noah keeps his eyes ahead of him. Jira stares at the store as she passes.

Noah notices Jira staring. He reaches to put an arm around her shoulder, but she shakes him off.

Jira walks ahead of Noah, into the train station.

INT. RED LINE TRAIN - DAY

Noah and Jira sit several seats away from each other on the morning train. Jira plays surgery simulator on her phone. Noah reads a biography of Lincoln.

Noah glances up at Jira. She does not look at him.

EXT. BERWYN RED LINE STATION - DAY

Jira and Noah get off the train in a rush of mostly white commuters. Next to Noah, Jira stands out. They disappear down the stairs leading to the street.

The robotic "Doors closing" announcement calls out.

The train operator AARON YOUNG (30s, black, cheerfully heavyset) pokes his head out the window and checks that there's no one blocking the doors.

INT. RED LINE TRAIN - DAY

We stay with Aaron as he guides the red line through the city. Out the window, we see Chicago as it changes from North to South.

- The wealth of Thorndale and Berwyn becomes the poverty of Wilson.

- Wrigley Field looms large off Addison.

Aaron takes the train into a tunnel underground. A sign for Roosevelt comes into view as Aaron brings the train to a stop. The commuters now getting on the train are predominately people of color.

The train bursts out of a tunnel, back into the sunlight. Signs for Garfield, 63rd, 79th fly by, further and further South.

EXT. 95TH/DAN RYAN RED LINE STATION - DAY

Aaron exits the train. He wears a CTA uniform. He passes an Hispanic woman wearing the same uniform. They nod in acknowledgement and the Hispanic woman boards the train - her shift is beginning as Aaron's ends.

INT. SOUTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - DAY

Aaron walks through his front door. His house is working class and welcoming. As he closes the door behind him, BENNY (6, ball of energy) comes tearing towards him.

BENNY

Daddy!

AARON

What's up, little man?

Benny jumps on Aaron, who lifts him into a kiss.

BENNY

How's the train today?

AARON

Really, really fast. Got me back home in no time. You sleep okay?

BENNY

Yeah.

AARON

Good deal. Where's mama?

Benny shrugs.

AARON (CONT'D)

Think Superman can find her?

Aaron lifts Benny and swooshes him in the air like Superman.



INT. SOUTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

TIA YOUNG (30s, black, cool as hell) - the woman Richard noticed in the newspaper - sits reading the news on her phone.

INSERT HEADLINE: "Officer Involved in Richard Brennan Shooting Awaiting Federal Charges"

Tia's face is serious as she reads. But as she hears Benny and Aaron enter making Superman swooshes, she smiles wide and puts her phone away.

TIA  
Hey, Superman.

AARON  
Hey, baby.

Tia and Aaron kiss as Benny squirms out of Aaron's arms to the ground.

TIA  
Get your backpack, Benny. We're leaving in thirty seconds.

Benny races from the room. When Tia speaks, you obey.

AARON  
You still doing breakfast with Gordon?

TIA  
Yes, I am.

If Tia's nervous she hides it. Aaron cheerleads like a pro.

AARON  
He just wants to get in your head 'cause he knows you've got him beat.

Aaron hugs Tia from behind, kissing her neck.

AARON (CONT'D)  
This time next year I'm gonna be calling you Alderman Young.

TIA  
You jinx me, I swear to God...

AARON

Don't come home too tired. I got plans for you tonight, Alderman Young.

TIA

Call me that again and you're not getting any for the entire term you jinx away from me.

AARON

Hey.

Tia looks at him. Aaron kisses her. Damn well.

AARON (CONT'D)

Whichever way it goes I'm proud.

TIA

Oh, I'm gonna win.

AARON

How come it's not a jinx when you do it?

TIA

(chuckling)

Go to sleep.

Aaron smiles and heads to bed. Once he's gone, Tia takes out her phone and continues to read.

INSERT: Police Officer Peter Evans is unlikely to be charged on the federal level.

TIA (CONT'D)

(disgusted)

God damn it.

Next to a picture of Richard is a picture of Pete Evans in uniform. It's Pete's face that makes her finally turn her phone off.

TIA (CONT'D)

Benny! Backpacks don't take this long!

Benny appears in the doorway. He has changed into a Superman costume, backpack hanging from his tiny shoulders. Tia eyes him, torn between amusement and annoyance.

INT. EDISON PARK HOME - DAY

CLOSE ON a living room wall covered in framed pictures of the Evans family. They hang above a couch that looks like it's been there since 1973.

The pictures tell a story of Chicago cops and Catholics going back to the 50s. Stern men stand together in uniform. Children receive first communion. Mothers with thick waists clasp proud arms around young officers.

Over the pictures, we hear the sound of a man breathing rhythmically, heavily, as though in distress.

INT. EDISON PARK HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

REVEAL Officer Pete Evans doing push-ups in his undershirt and boxers on the floor of his bedroom, breathing from the effort.

He's sweated through his clothes. It drips from his head to the carpeted floor. He works his arms mercilessly, lost in the effort. Maybe that's his labor's purpose.

He finally collapses, breathing hard. He pushes himself up and walks to his window. He carefully parts a curtain and stares outside.

We see what he sees - news vans standing sentry on the street in front of his house.

EXT. EDISON PARK HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Pete, now wearing jeans, a Bears sweatshirt, and a cap and sunglasses to hide his face, cautiously walks out his back door.

We see something we haven't yet in Chicago - a yard. Pete's house is a small one-story number, one of many in a row.

He looks all around him. He races stealthily to the fence and hops it, taking off to parts yet unknown.

EXT. EDISON PARK ALLEY - DAY

Pete stands against the alley wall, peering in a hunted way towards the alley entrance. After a few moments a police cruiser enters the alley and approaches Pete slowly.

It stops in front of him - his partner Victoria is driving. Pete quickly gets into the passenger side.

INT./EXT. POLICE CRUISER - DAY

Victoria smirks at Pete as he slouches down.

PETE  
What's funny?

VICTORIA  
You look like a fucking Kardashian  
in those sunglasses.

PETE  
It's not funny.

Pete takes off his glasses but stays slouched in the seat.  
Victoria drives them off.

VICTORIA  
Federal stuff's gonna go away.  
You'll be back at work sooner than  
you think.

The idea doesn't seem to comfort Pete. But he nods.

PETE  
Hope so.

VICTORIA  
This time next year no one's gonna  
care. Promise.

Pete glances over at Victoria. She stares ahead with earthy  
calm.

PETE  
You do eight last night?

VICTORIA  
Ten and a half. Need the hours.

PETE  
If you just want to go home and  
crash that's okay.

VICTORIA  
Shut up. Lemme buy you breakfast.

Pete nods. Sits up straighter.

PETE  
Thanks, Vic.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - NOAH'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Noah preps his lesson at his desk. Jira is slumped in one of the student desks, eyeing the clock. It reads 7:30.

Noah gets another text from Elizabeth: "CALL ME NOAH."

He checks, then ignores it.

JIRA  
Can I please go?

NOAH  
At first bell.

JIRA  
I'm already here. I'm not going to go anywhere.

Noah looks at her and sighs. He's got to cut her some slack.

NOAH  
If you do leave--

Jira jumps up, grabbing her stuff.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
*Listen.* If you do leave, on today of all days, I will *ruin* high school for you.

Noah points to the blackboard.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Nothing up there but your baby pictures, I swear to God.

Jira rolls her eyes, heads for the door.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Love you.

Jira's gone. Noah puts his head on the desk.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Students have begun to mill in the hallways. Jira walks quickly, without looking at anyone.

Jira stomps past LIAM PIRRO (late 20s, young-looking, tough as nails gay guy), who's carrying two cups of coffee.

LIAM  
Hey, Ms. Jira.

JIRA  
Hey, Mr. Pirro.

LIAM  
Are you and I going to have a  
better time this year than last  
year?

JIRA  
You still teaching *The Great  
Gatsby*?

LIAM  
As a matter of fact, no. You'll be  
pleased to hear that you broke me.  
This year it's all cat videos while  
I sob quietly in a corner.

JIRA  
We'll be good, then.

She turns and walks away. Liam watches her, sympathetic but  
not dewy or coddling. He walks into Noah's classroom.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - NOAH'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Liam takes a look at Noah, who's head is still resting on the  
desk. He places one of the coffees next to Noah's head.

LIAM  
Sit up. If they smell weakness on  
the first day, you're fucked.

Noah sits up and chugs his coffee. Liam eyes him, amused.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
Should I leave the second one?

NOAH  
No. My heart will literally  
explode.

Liam smiles and nods. It seems like he wants to say something  
else, but thinks better of it and turns to go.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Hey, real quick.

Liam turns back quickly, eager to help but playing it cool.

LIAM

Yeah?

NOAH

I know you and Jira weren't each other's biggest fans last year--

LIAM

I changed the syllabus.

Noah looks at Liam, grateful and surprised.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Last thing she needs is having to read all the same books again.

NOAH

Thank you.

Liam shrugs, quietly pleased to have helped. Casually:

LIAM

Anything I can do for you?

NOAH

...pretend I'm fine.

Liam nods and leaves. Noah watches him go. First bell rings and students begin to file into Noah's classroom.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - MATH CLASSROOM - DAY

Jira sits in the back row, not meeting anyone's eyes. Some students ignore her, others just blatantly look.

One kid, a quiet Asian boy named MATTHEW (16, uncool but kind), decidedly does *not* look Jira's way.

One girl, KALEN DAVIS (17, white, clueless and too sincere), approaches Jira with a big smile.

KALEN

I'm Kalen.

JIRA

Jira. Hi.

KALEN

I just want to tell you that I think what happened to your dad is, like, a complete injustice.

Jira is having *none of it*. But she makes an effort.

JIRA

Yeah. It was.

Kalen, too swept up in her own sympathy to notice Jira's discomfort, starts to cry as she talks.

KALEN

I'm just so sorry. I just want you to know that there are people who understand.

JIRA

(quickly)

You're wrong.

(then)

Excuse me.

Jira grabs her stuff, gets up, and blows past Kalen on her way to the TEACHER (50s, woman, matronly), ignoring the stares Kalen's tears have garnered from the class.

JIRA (CONT'D)

I need a hall pass.

TEACHER

Of course.

The teacher hands it to Jira, taking her hand and whispering:

FEMALE TEACHER

Take as long as you need, dear.

Jira gets the fuck out of the room. Only as she leaves does Matthew look after her.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Jira stomps down the empty hallway. As she passes Noah's classroom she slows, observing him through the window in the door.

He's in front of the class, putting on a good show, engaged and smiling.

Jira clenches her jaw in rage and turns away. She walks down the hallway, towards the exit. She bangs out the door, out of the school, and out of sight.

**END OF ACT ONE**



**ACT TWO**

INT. SOUTHSIDE MANSION - DINING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON Tia's hand pouring milk into her coffee.

NATHAN (O.S.)

I'm glad we got a chance to do  
this, Tia.

REVEAL Tia sitting in a beautifully appointed dining room with Alderman NATHAN GORDON (60s, black, old guard). The tail end of a lovely breakfast is spread out before them.

TIA

Thank you for the invitation.

NATHAN

Last chance to be cordial for a  
while. Last six months of an  
election are the most exhausting  
thing you can do.

TIA

It can't be harder than the first  
six months of being a mom.

Nathan chuckles good-naturedly. Tia smiles.

NATHAN

How old is he?

TIA

Almost seven.

NATHAN

That is a beautiful time. They  
still think you're perfect.

TIA

Ha. No, I'm the law. But his dad is  
perfect. Little boys love trains.

NATHAN

Now, how does a girl with a masters  
in economics end up married to  
public transit?

TIA

We grew up together.

NATHAN

And you came back for him.

TIA

I came back for my neighborhood. I was just lucky he was still here.

NATHAN

Genuine and dedicated. That's the impression you've made in the ward.

Tia eyes Nathan carefully. What's the "but"?

NATHAN (CONT'D)

But. Polling at twenty-two percent, you're not beating an incumbent in the third ward. You probably know that better than me. I know you could hand me my ass in statistics.

TIA

A lot can happen in six months.

NATHAN

That's true. But I have been here a great deal longer than that. I'm proud of what I've done. And one more term will allow me some finishing touches.

TIA

I can appreciate that, but--

NATHAN

I am looking to groom a successor. If you just *wait*, if you work within my administration and learn the game, at the end of four years there is an endorsement from me that carries the weight of thirty years of service.

Tia takes it in. It's a hell of an offer.

TIA

That's very generous, Nathan.

NATHAN

But?

TIA

I believe I can win this year.

Nathan nods. He understands her drive.

NATHAN

Perhaps. But what would you get done in those first four years, not knowing anybody?

TIA

Do something about that hundred and twenty-five million you're about to spend on new police recruits.

NATHAN

I know we disagree about this.

TIA

It is a waste of money. We don't need more of them, we need to train the ones we have. We need them to not cost us another hundred million every two years in lawsuits.

NATHAN

You need to be more than right to get what you want, Tia. Trust me.

Nathan pours himself more coffee.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Come work with me. Take these four years to learn the ropes. Enjoy watching your son a little longer.

Tia's eyes register annoyance, but her voice is smooth.

TIA

(chuckling)

The working mother argument is beneath you.

NATHAN

No, I speak from experience. You don't get those years back.

Tia stares into her coffee, considering...

INT. OPEN ARMS ADOPTION AGENCY - DAY

Jira sits politely in cluttered office, a tabbed folder clutched in her hands.

Behind the desk is an Hispanic woman on the larger side, ELENA (early 40s, tatted up, cool gray hair), who types on an ancient computer. Jira tries not to fidget, but her eyes bore into Elena's computer.

ELENA  
 (to herself, typing)  
 Okay, okay, okay...

She hits one more key decisively and looks up at Jira. She stares at Jira a long while, appraising but not unkind.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
 I'm Elena. How can I help?

Jira finally can't take the quiet and clears her throat.

JIRA  
 I'm Jira. I was adopted from here in 1998. Um. I've decided I'm ready to know who my birth mother is. Please.

ELENA  
 Would you mind showing me some I.D., Jira?

JIRA  
 Yeah, sure.

Jira opens her tabbed folder and hands Elena a copy of her driver's license. Elena checks it out.

ELENA  
 Good picture.

JIRA  
 Thank you. I also have copies of my birth certificate and social security card, if you need more forms of I.D., and, uh--

Jira flips through her folder. Elena watches, amused.

JIRA (CONT'D)  
 I have the introductory letter written to my mother, and the forms from the website filled out.

ELENA  
 I wish everyone was as prepared as you.

Jira smiles, encouraged.

JIRA  
 Thank you. I've been thinking about this a long time. And I always do my homework.

ELENA

So, why aren't you in school right now?

Jira's face falls. Oh, crap.

JIRA

Uh... I was there this morning. But this just seemed more important.

ELENA

I'm sure it does. Why do you want to meet your birth mother?

JIRA

I, uh...

ELENA

Is something going on at home?

JIRA

No. Not... I know what you mean. No. I just... need more family.

ELENA

Why do you need more family?

Jira steels herself and holds out her folder of materials.

JIRA

I just do.

Elena hands Jira back her I.D.

ELENA

You're seventeen, Jira. Until you're eighteen, a parent needs to request your records.

JIRA

I'm eighteen in January. I'm hoping you'll make an exception.

ELENA

That's not how it works--

JIRA

There's no need to involve my dad. She's *my mom*--

ELENA

No. She gave birth to you. There's a difference.

Jira flops back, upset, staring at the computer again.

ELENA (CONT'D)

It's a big decision, and until you're an adult, it's one you should make with the parents who raised you. Or, you can wait another four months. After seventeen years, four more months isn't very much.

Jira shoves her folder in her backpack.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Come back with your dad and we'll see what we can do.

Something about Elena's tone makes Jira look up. Does Elena know who she is? Elena stares back, matter-of-fact.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you, Ms. Calder-Brennan.

Elena knows *exactly* who Jira is. Jira grabs her backpack and goes. Elena types.

INT. THE BIG TOP RESTAURANT - DAY

Nothing has changed in this diner since 1983. Formica counters. Ancient waitresses named JANEY and WILDA (white, 60-something smokers) standing behind said counters, bored.

Pete and Vic sit in a corner booth. A non-cop buddy in, STEVE (40s, Polish stock), sits next to Vic. Pete's brother JIM (30s, roughneck) sits in a wheelchair at the head of the booth, bearish and moody. Jim wears a Blackhawks jersey.

Remnants of a decimated breakfast sit before them. Pete's plate is pretty untouched.

JIM

The cup's fucking ours this year.

STEVE

No way. Red Wings are taking it back.

JIM

Only bling that belongs in Detroit's on the front teeth of your citizens.

STEVE

I can't hear you over the Hawks  
losing to a team from California.

VICTORIA

Shut up, Steve. No one likes  
Detroit.

STEVE

I like Detroit.

VICTORIA

You're an asshole.

Vic, Steve, and Jim laugh comfortably with each other. Pete continues to stare at his food. The others notice his disquiet. Jim smacks Pete's arm affectionately.

JIM

Who do you like this year, Pete?

PETE

Whoever kicks the shit out of the  
Kings.

VICTORIA

Hawks need someone who can shoot  
straight.

STEVE

Maybe get a job with them, Pete.

The mood instantly ices over. Steve back peddles.

STEVE (CONT'D)

That was dumb. That was, Christ,  
that was a total dick thing to say.  
Thought it would be funny, Pete.

PETE

It was. Real funny. It's fine. Jim,  
it's fine.

Jim's glaring at Steve. Pete grabs Jim's shoulder, to calm him. Janey comes over and refills coffees. After she leaves:

STEVE

Sorry, man--

Jim throws his hot coffee in Steve's face, then grabs his head and bashes it on the table. Pete reaches to stop him.

PETE

Jim, no!

EXT. THE BIG TOP RESTAURANT - DAY

Vic helps Steve down the street.

In front of the diner, Jim smokes a cigarette. Pete stands next to him.

PETE

Jim--

JIM

I don't want to hear it. I'm so goddamn tired of every useless piece of shit talking about you like they *know*.

PETE

It was just a crack.

JIM

He's never been on the job. He's never been scared, with a second to make a call. Fuck that guy.

PETE

I got enough to deal with without your fucking tantrums, Jim!

Jim smokes, considering that.

JIM

I know what happens when you don't make the call.

Pete eyes Jim's chair. He has nothing to say to that.

JIM (CONT'D)

You got a little bit of ours back.

PETE

He was the wrong guy.

JIM

You didn't know that.

Jim offers Pete a cigarette. Pete takes it.

PETE

Let's get a drink.

JIM

Fuck yes.



INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - NOAH'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Sound of the bell. CLOSE ON the clock on the wall - 8:44.

A class full of restless seniors whisper and stare at Noah as he writes his name on the board: Mr. Calder.

NOAH

Quick rule, everyone. When I am speaking, you are not.

He has given this speech many times before. He will give it multiple times this morning.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Good morning. I hope you had a good summer. Welcome to AP U.S. History.

Sound of the bell. CLOSE ON the clock on the wall - 9:39.

A new group of seniors has replaced the first batch. They, too, whisper and stare. Noah barrels forward.

NOAH (CONT'D)

This course is designed to provide students with the analytic skills and factual knowledge necessary to deal critically with U.S. History.

Sound of the bell. CLOSE ON the clock on the wall - 10:34.

A third batch of students. The staring and whispering persist. Noah's powering through, but it's tough.

NOAH (CONT'D)

This year's work and study will prepare you for the AP exam, which is three and a half hours long, and consists of both multiple choice and free essay questions.

Sound of the bell. CLOSE ON the clock on the wall - 11:29.

A fourth batch. Still whispering. Still staring. Among them is Matthew, the quiet boy who seemed taken with Jira earlier.

Noah stands at the front of the class, his arms crossed in front of him.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I'm required to teach you names and dates, and you're required to memorize them.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

But that's not what I get out of this class and I hope it's not the only thing you take away.

This part of the speech doesn't seem rote. Noah means it.

NOAH (CONT'D)

History is our story. Yours. You are the result of every decision made by every person who has come before you. We live here, in Chicago, because someone once came upon this land, cold and empty, and thought, "I could make a home here." Stood by that vast lake, and weighed their fear, and stuck it out. I want you to understand that person's hope, because we wouldn't be here without it. We are all the children of a million hopes. And it is our responsibility to act upon our own hopes. We owe it to everyone who will follow us.

Holy hell. Noah is the teacher we all wish we'd had.

As Noah speaks, a student, ANGELICA (17, mean girl) snaps a covert picture of Noah with her phone. She posts it to Instagram with the caption, "#RichardBrennan's husband is totally my teacher this year.

Behind her, Matthew sees. He raises his hand. Noah points.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Yes?

MATTHEW

She just took your picture.

All eyes on Matthew, newest snitch in town. Noah strides over and takes Angelica's phone. He looks at the post, then at her.

ANGELICA

Sorry, Mr. Calder.

Noah chokes down what he has to choke down. Then, quietly:

NOAH

No phones in my class, Angelica.

He strides back to the desk, her phone in hand. Angelica turns to Matthew and mouths, "Fuck you."

Noah returns to his desk. Time seems to slow. He deletes Angelica's post.

The sound of the bell. It startles Noah, who looks up at the clock. It reads 12:24. Students begin to file out the door.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Students race around, thrilled for lunch and the enthusiastic reunion after the summer break. Chatter fills the air.

Noah walks through them quickly. He sees an open classroom door. Through the door he can see Liam, grading at his desk.

Noah makes a beeline.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - LIAM'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Noah knocks on the doorway. Liam glances up.

NOAH

You tyrant. What did you already give them that you have to grade?

LIAM

I'm making them journal this year. They're easier to break if I have a window into their souls.

Noah chuckles, but stays in the doorway. Liam, casually:

LIAM (CONT'D)

How are yours, so far?

NOAH

You had Angelica Barrett last year, right?

LIAM

Oh, Jesus. Buckle up.

NOAH

She was posting something about me online.

Liam, immediately furious, gets up and walks towards Noah.

LIAM

Want me to fight her?

NOAH

She'd eat you alive.

LIAM

I'd tear out enough hair to ruin  
prom.

They exchange small smiles. Liam's reached Noah by the door.

NOAH

I'll consider it.

LIAM

Hey. Um. How would a "You survived  
the first day back" drink sound  
tonight?

Noah's smile dies.

NOAH

Uh. Thank you. Can't. Jira.

Liam understands the rejection, and tries to cover.

LIAM

Oh, sure. Well. If you change your  
mind--

NOAH

I won't.  
(kinder)  
Sorry. Thanks.

Suddenly, over the school PA, a weary, female voice:

ANNOUNCEMENTS (V.O.)

Mr. Calder, please report to the  
office.

The announcement makes Noah's head snap around.

NOAH

Oh, God, what's she done? Bye.

Noah takes off. Liam waves good-bye. Then smacks his forehead  
against the doorway in disappointed embarrassment.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Noah races into the office. BETH (40s, large, all business)  
is waiting on him.

BETH

If I tell you to call me, *call me.*

NOAH

It's our first day back, Elizabeth.  
We can't have one goddamn day--?

BETH

There aren't going to be any  
federal charges brought against  
Pete Evans.

The wind is knocked out of Noah. He looks around, struggling.

BETH (CONT'D)

The civil lawsuit is ready to be  
filed. They've failed Richard every  
way they can. It's time to make the  
city pay up.

Noah is barely listening. He stills himself.

NOAH

Is it online yet?

BETH

No. I have a friend at the Tribune  
who got a tip. But it'll be on  
their website soon.

Noah turns and walks away in a daze. Elizabeth follows.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY

Noah walks quickly. Beth tracks him.

BETH

There's going to be a press  
conference at end of day. We need  
to craft a response.

NOAH

Not right now.

BETH

Noah, we need to do this *now*--

Noah wheels around to her.

NOAH

No! I have to tell Jira before she  
sees it on her fucking phone.

Noah strides away. Looking for Jira.

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

EXT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - COURTYARD - DAY

We hear the stunning sound of Vivaldi's "Summer."

Students have lunch, laugh, enjoy the sun. They seem to move in a dreamlike state, too beautiful. Too young. Exquisite.

REVEAL Jira planted at a table in the far corner of the courtyard, earbuds in, Vivaldi blasting in her ears.

She stares at her fellow teenagers blankly. They seem an entirely different species: carefree, joyous, light.

As she looks around, she catches Matthew looking at her. He quickly looks down.

Jira does the same, focusing on her phone. She's playing her surgery simulator again. This time she's prying a bullet out of a patient's gut.

Her face is set, intent on her task, blocking everything else out.

We hear the muffled sound of her name being said nearby: "Jira? Jira?" She ignores it.

Noah's hand appears, softly placed on top of Jira's. She looks up, dazed. Noah is sitting at the table with her.

She pulls her hand away, removes an earbud. Noise floods in.

JIRA

What are you doing?

NOAH

Come inside for a minute.

Jira takes in Noah's stricken face. Her own face falls.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - NOAH'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Jira and Noah sit next to each other in student desks.

He's just told her. Their faces are blank, exhausted.

JIRA

So, nothing's going to happen to him?

NOAH  
No legal ramifications. No.

JIRA  
Does he get to keep his job?

NOAH  
I don't know.

JIRA  
He probably will. He'll be happy.

Noah has nothing to offer her. He touches her hair. She pulls away.

NOAH  
Beth says there's going to be a press conference. Do you want to go?

JIRA  
No.

NOAH  
...you know, we can go home. We don't have to finish the day--

JIRA  
You said, "We just have to do it."  
We don't have a choice.

Jira gets up, her tough act slipping. Her eyes shine with tears. Noah stands to hug her, but she steps back.

NOAH  
It's not always going to be like this.

Jira wipes her eyes.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
I promise.

Jira nods, wanting to believe it.

JIRA  
Okay.

NOAH  
I love you.

Jira leaves. Noah sits down, not believing his own promise.

INT. NORTHWEST HIGHWAY DIVE BAR - DAY

Pete, Vic, and Jim have the bar to themselves, apart from a BARTENDER watching football on one of several large TVs.

Someone's put explosive, heartfelt, cathartic rock from the British Isles and the Evans boys are singing along.

It's the most relaxed Pete's looked since we met him. Vic watches him sing and smiles, glad to see the change.

Pete's phone rings. He sees the number. He steps away from Jim and answers.

PETE

Yes, sir.

Jim and Vic immediately bead in on Pete. Frank Turner still wails around them.

Pete freezes as he listens to the voice on the other end of the phone.

PETE (CONT'D)

Are you sure?

(long beat)

Yeah, I'll be there. Thank you, sir.

Pete hangs up. Jim and Vic wait, scared for him.

PETE (CONT'D)

I need my suit.

VICTORIA

Why?

PETE

No charges.

A beat. Then Victoria and Jim scream in joy. Vic throws her arms around Pete. Jim does the same.

Pete's eyes are wild. He looks anything but comforted. After a moment he breaks away from them and runs for the bathroom.

INT. NORTHWEST HIGHWAY DIVE BAR - BATHROOM - DAY

Pete makes it to the toilet. He retches. Frank Turner can still be heard, but muffled.



INT. NORTHWEST HIGHWAY DIVE BAR - DAY

Vic and Jim listen to Pete puking in the bathroom.

VICTORIA

He looks like a kid waiting on the  
goddamn principal in that suit.

JIM

He looks like that in everything.

Jim chugs. Vic gestures to the bartender. One more round.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - LIAM'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Liam's class sits writing journals. Jira sits in the back,  
her pen frozen over a blank page. Her mind is elsewhere.

On her left sits Matthew, diligently writing. On her right  
sits Kalen, who glances at Jira repeatedly, wanting to say  
something.

Jira ignores her. Kalen checks to see that Liam's not  
watching, then writes a note which she tosses on Jira's desk.

Jira ignores the note. Kalen pushes it closer to Jira with  
her pen. Jira calmly picks it up and flicks it back at Kalen.

Kalen regards Jira with patronizing sweetness. She "gets it."

LIAM

Okay. Pass 'em up. I'm excited,  
guys. I get to spend all night  
judging you.

Students begin passing their journals to the front of the  
class. Kalen takes the opportunity to whisper to Jira.

KALEN

Hey, I know why you lashed out at  
me, and it's okay.

Jira's jaw clenches. This girl is *the worst*. She takes out a  
water bottle and drinks.

KALEN (CONT'D)

You're holding a lot of anger, and  
it's getting directed at the people  
trying to help you. You need to let  
go of that.

JIRA  
 (furious)  
 I need to *let go* of that?

KALEN  
 Yeah.

Jira takes out her phone. She scrolls through something, then shows it to Kalen. Kalen's eyes widen.

INSERT: A picture of Richard's dead body from the news. He's bleeding, bullet-ridden, and open-eyed. It's ghastly.

JIRA  
 Please don't talk to me. Ever.

LIAM  
 No phones, Jira! Lemme see you in the hallway.

Jira looks up to see Liam pointing at the door.

JIRA  
 But--

LIAM  
 Now, please.

Jira stomps to the door. Kalen, tearing up, to Matthew:

KALEN  
 It's just so sad!

MATTHEW  
 (without looking up)  
 It didn't happen to you.

INT. NORTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

The empty hallway is made noisy as Jira bursts out of the classroom door, followed quickly by Liam.

LIAM  
 Hey, Miss Jira!

JIRA  
 I'm going to the office, okay?

LIAM  
 I want to talk to you!

JIRA  
 No, thank you.

LIAM  
You like baseball?

His words shock Jira into stopping. She turns to look at him.

JIRA  
(wary, confused)  
Yeah. Cubs.

LIAM  
What happens when a ball gets lost  
at Wrigley?

JIRA  
Outfielder raises his hands.

LIAM  
Okay. So, the next time someone's  
pissing you off, stretch your arms  
over your head. I'll send you on an  
errand.

JIRA  
Really?

LIAM  
How can I possibly overwork and  
terrify everyone if you're stealing  
focus?

Jira can barely believe it, but she's grateful. She nods.

JIRA  
Do I have to go back?

LIAM  
Yeah, but let's give it a minute.

Liam leans against the wall. Jira leans next to him.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
Who's your favorite player?

JIRA  
This year or all time?

INT. SOUTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Tia sits, conferring with her team: her sister SUZANNE (40s, the extrovert to Tia's introvert) and her election coordinator and nephew XAVIER (21, black, wunderkind).

\*

XAVIER  
Man was explicit?

TIA  
Yes.

SUZANNE  
Well, okay, Tia.

Tia makes a face.

XAVIER  
What is that face? I don't even  
know that face.

SUZANNE  
I know that damn face. She's mad  
because she always has to have it  
her own way.

Tia rolls her eyes.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)  
Don't you eye punch me. Been doing  
that since you were six.

TIA  
Yeah, well you've been pissing me  
off since I was six.

Tia stops typing, looks up at her confidants.

XAVIER  
You're not considering turning him  
down.

TIA  
You want to be out of a job pretty  
bad, huh?

XAVIER  
If it means I'm your chief of staff  
in four years, yeah, I'll go busy  
myself elsewhere for awhile.

SUZANNE  
Be nice if you actually finish your  
political science degree. Acting  
like you know everything.

XAVIER  
Where'd I get that attitude from?

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

The sound of the front door opening and closing. Tia checks her watch.

TIA  
How the hell is it already two?

Xavier gets up to go.

XAVIER  
Call me tonight. We need to figure out when you'll concede.

TIA  
I liked you better when I was your babysitter.

SUZANNE  
Kiss your auntie. Let her think about it.

Xavier kisses Tia. Then Suzanne.

XAVIER  
Bye, mom.

Xavier passes Aaron and Benny as they enter the kitchen.

AARON  
Hey, man.

XAVIER  
Tell her to do it.

AARON  
Yeah, telling her what to do always works out for me.

Xavier leaves. Benny, still in his Superman outfit, runs around the kitchen making "whoosh" sounds.

TIA  
Hey, baby. How was school?

BENNY  
(still running)  
Good.

Benny starts hopping. Aaron shoots Tia a tired look.

AARON  
Someone drank three juices at snack time.

Tia watches her son hop. She smiles. Turns to her sister.

TIA  
(to Suzanne)  
You think I should do it?

SUZANNE  
Yes, I do. It's not gonna be any  
less impressive you getting elected  
at thirty-seven instead of thirty-  
three.

TIA  
That's not what--

Tia's Google Alert goes off.

SUZANNE  
She even have an internet alert for  
herself?

TIA  
No. Will you just...

Tia checks her mail. Her face falls. The sound of Benny  
yelling as he hops fills the room.

BENNY  
SUPER! MAN! SUPER! MAN!

TIA  
(distracted, upset)  
Baby, you gotta stop...

BENNY  
SUPERMAAAAAAAAAAAAAAN--!

TIA  
Benny, you be quiet WHEN I SAY!

Benny comes to a halt, shocked at her volume.

AARON  
Suzy, maybe you wanna watch some  
cartoons with Benny for a minute.

SUZANNE  
Yeah, come on, baby.

Suzanne ushers Benny out. Aaron goes to Tia.

TIA  
I'm sorry.

Aaron just waits. Tia, furiously:

TIA (CONT'D)

No federal charges. Nothing. Never,  
ever a goddamn thing when they do  
this.

Aaron waits. Tia isn't looking at him.

TIA (CONT'D)

It's not about me. I met the man  
once.

(beat)

He was so happy to get that little  
girl.

Tia finally looks up at her husband.

TIA (CONT'D)

He thanked me.

Aaron takes her in his arms. She clings to him, dry-eyed.

TIA (CONT'D)

What if I reached out?

(then)

She's never had a mom. This is when  
you need a mom.

Aaron lets go of her. Thinks. Tia watches his face.

AARON

You're Benny's mom. She's got  
another dad.

TIA

I know that. But what if I could  
help her?

AARON

You're really asking?

TIA

Yes.

AARON

'cause in the past, I haven't  
exactly been allowed an opinion on  
this --

TIA

I need you to.

AARON \*  
You can meet her. \*  
    (then) \*  
But if you do -- \*

TIA \*  
Don't say it -- \*

AARON \*  
Do I get an opinion or not? \*  
    (then) \*  
Someone will find out. And when \*  
they do, you're not the economics \*  
genius any more. You're just a hood \*  
rat who got pregnant at fifteen. \*

Tia squints at Aaron, hurt and furious. \*

TIA \*  
Is that what I was? \*

AARON \*  
Not to me. You've only ever been \*  
the dream girl to me. \*

TIA \*  
What about her? \*

AARON \*  
Don't. \*

TIA \*  
What? *What?* \*

AARON \*  
I just don't think this is about \*  
what *she* needs. Why now? Why not \*  
six months ago? You want to fix \*  
something, run for office. \*

Tia seethes. Then grabs her purse. Heads for the door. \*

AARON (CONT'D) \*  
Come on. Tia. You asked. I'm sorry. \*

Aaron hugs her from behind. Kisses her neck. \*

AARON (CONT'D) \*  
Stay. We got all afternoon to make \*  
up. \*

Tia leans into him, wanting to let go of her bad mood. But it \*  
wins, and she pulls away. \*



TIA

If I'm not back before Benny's  
bedtime, you put him down. Since  
you're the expert on kids.

She storms out. Aaron watches her go, worried.

**END OF ACT THREE**

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

**ACT FOUR**

EXT. CHICAGO FEDERAL BUILDING - EVENING

CU: Andrew Calder's luminous "Flamingo" sculpture, a swooping behemoth, all curving red and steel and height. Peering up, it's like the sky's been cut open, and has started to bleed.

REVEAL: Pete staring up at the sculpture, his eyes wide and glazed. He's in a suit that seems too big for him.

He looks down, at the scene around him. He's at the Chicago Federal Building. And a huge crowd has assembled.

A microphone, and a line of uniformed police officers, separates those about to speak and those here to watch, and scream, and protest.

Pete's on the side about to speak. The authorities. Politicians, higher ups from the police department, lawyers. He blinks and stares out at the crowd on the other side.

Behind the line of cops, and the media, there stands a mass of Chicagoans in street clothes. Many black, some not, all staring at him in fury.

Things seem to slow. Pete looks down at his hands. He holds notecards with words written in pencil.

Pete looks up, and he's now standing before the microphone. He holds notecards, but the words written on them are blurry. Blood drums in his ears. We see his mouth move, but we can't hear what he's saying.

Then something breaks through:

VOICE IN CROWD

Murderer!

Pete jaw tightens and his eyes shoot up towards the voice. There's no telling who it could be in the crowd. He hardens and pushes on. His voice is matter of fact, almost cold.

PETE

Though a tragic mistake was made, I acted without malice and according to proper procedure. I'm grateful the federal government has recognized that and exonerated me. I look forward to once again serving the city of Chicago. I hope that all involved can now try to find a measure of peace. Thank you.

He steps back and screams of rage follow him.

The line of uniformed police stare at the furious crowd. Some officer's faces are impassive, unimpressed. Some are frightened. A few smile.

Tia stands in the crowd, watching Pete leave. Her face haunted.

INT. RED LINE TRAIN - EVENING

Jira and Noah make their way home on a crowded rush hour train. They both stand, arms up and grasping poles to steady themselves. They both look at their phones.

Noah stares at the text from Richard: "You'll never believe who made the news." He stares and stares.

Jira watches the press conference on her phone, ear buds in. She watches Pete walk away, flanked by lawyers and cops, his back to the camera, and to her.

A NEWSCASTER's voice plays over the image.

NEWSCASTER

A statement from Richard Brennan's family was read earlier by their attorney, Elizabeth Wells.

The text of the statement appears on the screen as the newscaster reads it.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

"We are profoundly saddened that Richard's killer will face no punishment. A good man has been taken from the world and justice has been denied. We ask now--"

Jira rips her earbuds out and puts her phone away. A jostle on the train almost knocks her off her feet.

Noah reaches out and steadies her. It's an automatic move, a father's move.

Jira, exhausted, stays against him. Grateful, Noah keeps his arm around her, in a half-hug. They lean together, surrounded by commuters with no idea what's happened to them.

EXT. THORNDALE RED LINE STATION - PLATFORM - NIGHT

End of day commuters flood out of the train, onto the platform. Noah and Jira are some of the last off.

They trudge toward the stairs which lead to the street. Jira slows, then stops, letting people walk past her.

Noah, walking ahead, looks around and realizes Jira's stopped. He walks back in her direction, against the crowd.

NOAH

Jira?

He breaks free of the crowd, which finally dissipates down the stairs.

Jira's standing by herself at the far end of the platform, staring South at the distant skyline of the loop.

He joins her. They're alone on the platform.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Honey?

Jira turns to him, working up the courage to say something.

JIRA

You love me?

NOAH

More than anything.

JIRA

I need you to do something for me.

NOAH

Okay. What do you need?

Jira takes a breath. This is it. She says in a hurry:

JIRA

I want to find my mom. But it has to be you who looks for her. Legally.

She looks up at him. Noah looks like he's been slapped. When he speaks, it's with only the thinnest layer of calm.

NOAH

I'm the parent you've got.

JIRA

I want more family.

NOAH  
We're going to get through this!

JIRA  
I'm so lonely, dad! God, aren't you?

NOAH  
Yes! Because you won't let me be angry *with* you.

JIRA  
You can't possibly understand what I'm going through. I just want someone who can.

NOAH  
How can you ask me to let you replace him--?

JIRA  
*Fuck you.*

NOAH  
You do *not* talk to me like that!

JIRA  
I don't want to replace *him!*

Noah stops cold, shocked.

NOAH  
You think I don't wake up every morning and wish it had been me--?

JIRA  
It would *never* have happened to you! *Ever!*

NOAH  
...I know.

And there it is. They stare each other down, both hurting.

JIRA  
Will you please, please help me meet my mom?

A red line train is approaching the station. Its whine is growing as it gets closer. Noah shakes his head.

NOAH  
No.

JIRA

Why?

NOAH

Because it's my job to protect you.  
I'm not letting you anywhere near  
the person who didn't want you.

He says it without anger, but it hurts her nonetheless.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Come on. We're going home.

JIRA

I don't want to go home--

NOAH

I am your father and you will do as  
I say! Now!

They stare each other down. The train pulls into the station. Commuters flood out around them. Jira walks past Noah, toward the stairs. He follows.

Suddenly, she's moving fast. She dodges between commuters, breaking away, down the stairs and out of sight.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Jira!

INT. THORNDALE RED LINE STATION - STAIRS - NIGHT

Jira, all boundless teenage energy and anger, races down one flight of stair, and back up another, back towards the platform. Noah follows as best he can.

INT. THORNDALE RED LINE STATION - PLATFORM - NIGHT

Jira pops back onto the platform, fights her way past people, and onto the train just before its doors close.

Noah appears on the platform and races towards the train but it's already pulling out of the station.

He watches it go, winded, furious, and no idea what to do.

INT. SOUTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Benny's room is a comic book dream. Bookshelves are lined with graphic novels and children's books.

Benny's lying in bed reading a Superman comic.

Aaron comes in. Back in his CTA uniform.

AARON

Okay, little man. Gotta go. Gimme my hug.

Benny stretches out his arms. Aaron leans down and Benny hugs his daddy. Benny whispers:

BENNY

Is mama still mad at me?

Aaron shakes his head and sits on the bed, pulling Benny into his lap.

AARON

Mama wasn't mad at you. But you do need to listen up and stop running when she says.

Outside the door, we see Tia walking down the hall, back home from the press conference. She slows to listen to her boys talk.

BENNY

I was just playing Superman.

AARON

Yeah, I know. You wanna be a hero.

Benny nods. Aaron grins.

BENNY

And never get hurt.

Aaron's grin fades a little. Tia's face is soft, scared.

AARON

You can do a lot of good stuff for other people. But everyone gets hurt. You gotta know that, okay?

BENNY

Okay.

AARON

But you and me and mama, we take care of each other. Always.

Tia quietly walks away.

INT./EXT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Pete, still in his suit, and Vic, back in uniform, sit drinking beer in the front seat of Vic's cruiser.

VICTORIA  
You did great.

Pete responds by tossing his beer can out the window.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)  
It'll be good to get back. In uniform. You'll feel like yourself.

PETE  
You got another overnight tonight?

VICTORIA  
Yeah, two boys in Catholic school doesn't get cheaper.

Pete takes a long look at Vic. She sounds tired.

PETE  
Thanks.

VICTORIA  
You bought the beer.

PETE  
For everything. For everything this year. For making sure... You're, I don't know, you're the only... hope I've had. The only person saying it would be okay. That I believed. Because you believed it. I don't know how you were able to do it, but--

VICTORIA  
Oh, Jesus.

Vic's crying. Pete notices and stops talking.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)  
Oh Jesus, this year. You think I believed that? You think I didn't wake up in cold sweats and worry every second? You fucking idiot. I've been so scared, Pete.

PETE  
Hey. Hey. S'okay. It's over. Right?



Vic suddenly lurches out of the car, still crying. Pete follows her.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Pete goes to Vic, worried.

PETE

Vic?

Pete steps to her, takes her face in his hands.

PETE (CONT'D)

Breathe.

Vic breathes. Again. Seems to calm. Then, suddenly --

VICTORIA

I did something bad, too.

PETE

What?

VICTORIA

You know how the security tape...  
the tape in the store was fucked up  
from that night?

Pete steps back from her.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

You were catatonic after it  
happened. You...

PETE

No.

VICTORIA

I couldn't let anything happen to  
you.

Pete looks around, suddenly lost and scared.

PETE

You told me I did everything right.

VICTORIA

You did--

PETE

Then why would you need to fuck  
with the tape?? *You said I did  
everything right!*

Pete's shouting, horrified, torn open. Vic just cries. \*

VICTORIA \*

I shouldn't have said it. I  
shouldn't have... \*

Pete turns and starts walking away. \*

VICTORIA (CONT'D) \*

Pete? Pete! \*

But Pete's gone in the shadows. \*

INT. SOUTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - NIGHT

Tia waits by the front door. Aaron appears.

AARON

He's tucked in.

Tia nods. Aaron starts to walk past her.

TIA \*

I'm sorry. You were right. I have a  
family. The one I want. I just...  
I'm the one who gave her to Richard  
Brennan. He took her away from  
here. Her life was supposed to be  
better. \*

AARON \*

How's the world your fault, Tia? \*

Kisses Aaron lightly, then harder, throwing her arms around his neck. Aaron returns the kiss, gripping her tightly.

Tia ends the kiss but presses her forehead to Aaron's.

TIA \*

I'm going do it this year. I have  
to, Aaron. It can't wait. I do have  
to fix something. \*

She looks at her husband. Waits for what he'll say...

AARON

Okay, Alderman Young.

Tia laughs. Kisses him again. Aaron grins.

AARON (CONT'D)

Go do it, baby.

TIA  
I love you.

AARON  
Love you, too.

Aaron leaves. Once he's gone Tia's smile turns to worry.

TIA  
Come home.

EXT. THORNDALE RED LINE STATION - PLATFORM - NIGHT

Noah, by himself, waits on the platform.

A train pulls into the station. He watches, hungry.

A few passengers disembark. He searches for any sign of Jira.

She's not there. The train doors close. The train pulls away.

Noah walks towards the stairs.

EXT. LAKESHORE - NIGHT

Noah appraises Lake Michigan - it's vast and lovely. He is alone on the lakeshore, like the person he asked his students to imagine. Trying to find some hope. To do what he has to do.

He's breathing hard, close to breaking down. He takes out his phone. He looks at the picture on the front:

Noah, Richard, a younger Jira. All so very happy in 2008.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. GRANT PARK - NIGHT

Election Night. 2008. Barack Obama has just won the presidency. The entire city of Chicago seems to be screaming with joy.

Grant Park is filled to the gills with its citizens - all thrilled to present in this historic moment. All wearing pins and shirts telling us it's 2008, and they love Barack Obama. All waiting to hear the new president speak.

Everyone's taking pictures with their phones. Everyone wants to capture this feeling forever.

In the midst of this shimmering crowd, we see Noah and Richard. Jira is with them, age eight. They're taking a picture of themselves as well.

Everyone is singing the National Anthem. Richard and Noah are crying from happiness. Jira is staring around, overwhelmed at the scope and noise, the emotion.

She pulls on Noah's sleeve. He leans down. She whispers in his ear. He smiles and lifts her up onto his shoulders.

NOAH

Look around, honey. This has been a really, really long time coming. And it's wonderful that tonight's speech is in Grant Park, because this was where Lincoln's funeral procession was held in 1865--

RICHARD

Jira, who's the biggest geek?

JIRA

Daddy!

RICHARD

That's right.

NOAH

Yeah, well, I'm *your* geek.

Richard laughs and kisses Noah. Jira leans down and kisses Richard as well. She whispers something.

RICHARD

What, baby?

JIRA

Are things going to be different now?

RICHARD

I hope so.

Jira stares around her. The world is on fire with hope.

The National Anthem comes to a close and everyone cheers. Jira cheers with her fathers.

A celebratory video starts up on the massive monitors. Its accompaniment is The National's "Fake Empire."

The lights in the park dim, and suddenly we can't see Jira, Noah, or Richard smiling anymore.

EXT. LAKESHORE - NIGHT

The National's "Fake Empire" continues over what we see in the present.

Noah is once again staring at the last text Richard sent. His fingers bang out a response.

"Never mind about the milk. Just come home."

He hits send. He starts to cry. He covers his face.

INT. NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL - LIAM'S CLASSROOM - NIGHT

"Fake Empire" continues.

Liam, grading at his desk, pours a little whiskey into a cup of coffee, indefatigable but lonely.

He attacks a student's journal with a red pen.

EXT. 95TH/DAN RYAN RED LINE STATION - NIGHT

"Fake Empire" continues.

Aaron walks to the train. As he crosses the station, he notices two white POLICE OFFICERS watching him.

He lowers his eyes and walks quietly to the train as the officers stare after him with suspicion.

It happens all the time. He gets on the train.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

"Fake Empire" continues.

Pete stands in front of the store, staring in the window, lost in the memory of what happened.

A CUSTOMER walks past Pete, through the doors, up to the cashier.

The customer's back is to Pete. He points to a pack of cigarettes. The cashier reaches to get them.

Pete stares. And stares.

INT./EXT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

"Fake Empire" continues.

Vic, patrolling the streets, rolls past a few BLACK TEENAGERS. She eyes them suspiciously. They eye her back.

We stay on their faces - still, wary, and with good cause.

EXT. SOUTHSIDE CHICAGO HOME - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

"Fake Empire" continues.

Benny is asleep, and his face is smooth, careless, innocent. He's kicked off his blankets. Tia replaces them, and runs her hands over his head.

She turns out the light.

INT. RED LINE TRAIN - DAWN

"Fake Empire" continues.

Aaron drives his train up out of a tunnel, heading North, the glittering Loop in the distance behind him.

INT. RED LINE TRAIN - DAWN

"Fake Empire" continues.

Jira is asleep in the car by herself. She's been on trains for hours.

EXT. THORNDALE RED LINE STATION - PLATFORM - DAWN

Jira gets off the train. Noah's there waiting for her. They stare at each other as the sun brightens around them. Jira and Noah walk towards each other slowly.

Whatever comes next, they have to figure it out together.

"Fake Empire" becomes all crashing drums and horns, the end of the song, but the beginning of something else.

And just before Jira and Noah reach each other:

**END OF PILOT**