

ROULETTE

Written by

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OVER BLACK

A single circle slowly fades into view, accompanied by the sound of METALLIC WHIRRING. Inside the circle, a nauseating whirlpool of blurred blacks, whites, and occasional color spin by, on and on, accelerating with no sign of slowing down.

Different places, different times. Some monochrome, some colored.

Just as soon as the view through the hole mixes into a murky gray, a thunderous CLICK hammers space back into stillness.

Through the hole, scattered, monochrome details of the right profile of a man's face are visible as the circle raises to rest next to his head. This is LIAM (30s).

LIAM (V.O.)

This...

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Liam, eyes puffy and arms weak, holds a REVOLVER to his head.

LIAM (V.O.)

...This is what God looks like.

He closes his eyes and pulls the trigger.

COLOR: INT. DOCTOR BROWN'S OFFICE - DAY

A STRESS BALL comes crashing down from a filing cabinet and CRUNCHES into an unkempt pile of papers on the ground. From the other side of the cramped room, LIAM watches the ball come to rest. Across the desk from him is DOCTOR BROWN (50s). He does not look up from the PAPERS littering his desk.

DOCTOR BROWN

--process for the new medication is a fairly simple one, you'll get used to it after a while. As always, you'll have to let Doctor Bennet know of nay side effects...

On and on he drones, while Liam's gaze travals from the stress ball to the CALENDAR up over Doctor Brown's shoulder. It's August, 1966. There are Xs marking the passage of each day until the twelfth.

DOCTOR BROWN

...Do you want a haircut or shave anytime soon? I can send in an order for a barber. Or maybe, if you make a good case for yourself, they'll let you do it while supervised.

Doctor Brown looks up at Liam for the first time.

DOCTOR BROWN

Liam? Are you listening to me?

LIAM

Your calendar is a week behind. You stopped crossing dates off after the eleventh.

Doctor Brown doesn't even bother looking at the calendar. he gives Liam a long, hard look.

DOCTOR BROWN

Why are you here?

LIAM

Are we already at that part?

DOCTOR BROWN

I'm not asking you why you think you're here. I just can't help but wonder. Young, intelligent, good job. Why are you here?

LIAM

You know why.

DOCTOR BROWN

No, I know what you did. Two different things. Big picture: what reason does someone like you have for needing to be in a place like this?

Liam looks around the room.

LIAM

I feel myself spinning out. My relationships are falling apart. The constant threat of nuclear war is too much to handle.

Doctor Brown sighs and goes to the corner of his office to a shelf of BROCHURES. He tosses three onto the desk in front of

Liam.

One has a cartoon image of a man losing control of a car and is emblazoned with the text, "SPINNING OUT?" The second bears a wedding ring with a happy face inside of it and says "RELATIONSHIP COUNSELING." The third shows a mushroom cloud, the upper portions of which spell out "NUCLEAR ANXIETY."

DOCTOR BROWN

I get calls twice a week from your university to check in on your progress. I can't even count how many times we've had this conversation, but I'm pretty sure you were already here last I marked my calendar. You have to let me do my job and get you out of here, Liam.

COLOR: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING HALLWAYS - MOMENTS LATER

Liam exits Doctor Brown's office and walks by MIA (30s), another patient, arguing with JIM (40s), the orderly.

JIM

You can't skip out on your two o'clock meds!

MIA

Oh c'mon Jim, how long have we been at this now? Two three, midnight, no matter when I take them, they're not gonna do shit!

JIM

I'm writing a report for Warden Jeffries.

MIA

Do you know how to spell this for your report?

Mia BLOWS A RASPBERRY in Jim's face and walks away. Liam, overwhelmed by the situation, makes a beeline past them.

COLOR: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Liam takes a seat, alone, at one of the small tables in the large lobby where various PATIENTS have congregated in high-school-like cliques. Still struggling to sit still, he grabs a nearby pile of MAGAZINES and begins re-ordering them.

Mia enters the lobby from the same direction and spots Liam practically vibrating with nervous energy. She plops down across from him.

MIA  
You never smile.

Liam seems almost offended by the suddenness of her arrival.

LIAM  
What?

MIA  
It's true.

LIAM  
You don't even know me.

MIA  
I know you never smile.

LIAM  
I'm fine.

MIA  
I'm Mia.

LIAM  
Hi Mia. I'm fine.

MIA  
Wanna hear a joke?

LIAM  
This all feels a little sudden.

MIA  
Jeez, I'm not asking if you want to get married. What's your name?

LIAM  
Liam.

MIA  
There you go. Now we know each other. I just thought you might want a distraction.

LIAM  
From what?

Mia smiles and shoves Liam's magazine pile, sending them scattering.

LIAM

Hey!

MIA

Are they yours?

LIAM

No.

MIA

Then why do you need to organize them?

Liam looks away, embarrassed.

MIA

Okay. Ready?

LIAM

Fine.

MIA

So these two women, we'll call them Mary and Janice, are sitting purgatory. They just died, and they're waiting to find out where they're gonna end up. They strike up a conversation, and Mary asks Janice how she died.

BLACK AND WHITE: EXT. STORE - NIGHT

Liam walks through a street of storefronts, his eyes glazing over each entrance. He stops outside the front door of one particular store and considers for a minute.

MIA (V.O.)

Janice says, "I froze to death." And Mary's really disturbed by that. She says, "Oh, that must have been horrible!" Janice says, "Not really. You just get really cold, fall asleep, and you're dead."

Liam steels himself and enters the store.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. STORE - CONTINUOUS

Liam enters and browses around, but we can't see what items

surround him. After some searching and nail-biting, he goes to the front counter and starts up a conversation with the SALES CLERK (50s), which we do not hear.

MIA (V.O.)

So then Janice asks, "How did you die?" and Mary says, "Well, I was certain my husband was cheating on me, so I drove home during work, when I thought he was having the girl over, and when I got there I searched the bedroom, the closets, and anywhere else I could think she might be hiding."

The Clerk places a BOX onto the counter, which Liam inspects the contents of and closes. He hands The Clerk some MONEY and leaves.

BLACK AND WHITE: EXT. STORE - CONTINUOUS

Liam exits the store and crosses the street.

MIA (V.O.)

"I couldn't find her, so I just started screaming, 'Where is she? Where is she?' at my husband, until I had a heart attack and died."

After crossing, Liam looks back at the store he just left. He stares at the box in his hands.

MIA (V.O.)

And Janice just shakes her head and stares at Mary before saying, "You should have checked the freezer."

COLOR: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Mia gives Liam a big, "I know, right?" smile, but he does not reciprocate.

MIA

Well fine, fuck me.

Mia walks away from the table. As she reaches the other side of the room, Liam SCOFFS. She whips around.

MIA

You scoffed!

Liam, embarrassed, looks around the room to see if anyone's paying attention to Mia's half-yelling.

LIAM

I did not. I was exhaling.

MIA

You were laughing!

LIAM

At how bad that joke was.

Mia comes back to the table and sits down.

BLACK AND WHITE: EXT. STORE - CONTINUOUS

Liam shakes himself out of his reverie and walks away. Behind him, the storefront reads "GUNS."

MIA (V.O.)

That's still laughing!

COLOR: INT. LIAM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Liam is sitting at a small table in his cramped room, though "cell" would be a better descriptor. With a DECK OF CARDS, he's playing a game of solitaire. Muffled through the walls, he hears the sound of Mia's voice.

MIA (O.S.)

I told you, they make me nauseous.

JIM (O.S.)

Nausea isn't even listed as one of the possible side effects.

Liam opens his door and peaks across the hallway, watching Mia and Jim argue in her room.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jim stands over Mia, who sits on her bed.

MIA

That doesn't mean it's impossible.

JIM

It means it's more likely that you're bullshitting me.



MIA

Oh, Jimmy. How long have we been at this?

JIM

Grow up and take your medication!

This stings, and Mia's smile melts. Jim looks down at his feet.

JIM

Listen, I'm not supposed to tell you this, but Warden Jeffries is looking for an excuse to put you back in, and I--

Mia jumps to attention.

MIA

No, I--

JIM

--I just wouldn't want that to happen again. Because honestly, Mia, for a repeat offender? He could put you in there for a very long time.

Silently, Mia grabs the PAPER CUP from Jim's TRAY and downs the MEDICINE within.

JIM

Thank you. Good night.

COLOR: INT. LIAM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Liam, watching through the crack in his door, waits for Jim to leave before gathering the cards from his desk and crossing over into Mia's room.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia stares at the wall until Liam comes in with the cards in his hand.

LIAM

Wanna play?

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mia and Liam are mid-game.

MIA  
So what do you do?

LIAM  
I'm a statistics professor. You?

MIA  
That's a complicated question.

LIAM  
How is that a complicated question?

MIA  
I do a lot of things.

LIAM  
What do you do to support yourself?

MIA  
Chairs, beds, the usual.

LIAM  
So, unemployed. You must be married,  
then.

MIA  
Why must I be married?

LIAM  
Because you don't have a job.

MIA  
Are you working right now?

LIAM  
No.

MIA  
Are you married?

LIAM  
No.

MIA  
So why do I have to be?

LIAM  
Because you're a--

Liam catches the look in Mia's eyes and gives it a rest.

MIA  
What're your parents like?

LIAM  
What?

MIA  
People here usually have some pretty insane stories about Mom and Dad. I like them. Good ice breakers.

LIAM  
Well then what're yours like?

MIA  
Rich. Boring. Cold. Your turn.

LIAM  
I don't know, what's there to say? My Mom's dead. My Dad's a good guy.

MIA  
Did you wanna be like him as a kid?

LIAM  
Honestly, not really. He never really amounted to much. I didn't want to be like that, so I went to school. got my doctorate.

MIA  
Why are you here?

LIAM  
Why are YOU here?

Mia sighs, irritated.

MIA  
Because a nuthouse is the only place they let you cut loose. Time to share, Dr. Liam.

Liam sets his hand of cards down and scrutinizes the wall behind Mia.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Liam holds the revolver to his head.

LIAM (V.O.)  
I tried to kill myself.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia sets her cards down as well.

MIA  
Oh.

Mia gives Liam a smile. There's a painful silence between the two, then Mia looks at Liam's hand of cards at they sit face-up on the table.

MIA  
I'm so sorry.

LIAM  
It's okay, it's not your fault.

MIA  
No, I'm so sorry to kick you while  
you're down. But...

Mia places her cards next to Liam's.

MIA  
...I win.

COLOR: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Mia and Liams LAUGHTER can be heard, muffled, through the door of her room. Outside, Doctor Brown walks by. Once he hears their voices, he stops and continues to listen.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia and Liam are giggling like schoolchildren as they clean up their cards. Mia finishes with her cards and hands them to Liam.

MIA  
Hey, before you go...

COLOR: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

At this, Doctor Brown hurries away from Mia's door.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Liam stops collecting his cards at the change in Mia's tone

and returns her gaze.

MIA

...I really am sorry. But you got through that, and now you're here. This is the part where it gets better, right?

Liam considers this, and smiles in return before leaving the room. Mia anxiously watches him go.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

Mia, alone in a large, empty, padded room, stares blankly into nothingness, a small dribble of drool collecting at the corner of her mouth.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The POP of a can opening. Mia's room is now littered with the paraphernalia of a variety of GAMES OF CHANCE, including a now-spilled deck of cards, some DICE, multiple COINS, some POKER CHIPS, and a small plastic ROULETTE WHEEL.

Mia and Liam are sitting on the ground, across from each other, FIVE UNOPENED CANS OF SODA lined up between them. Mia, a newly-opened can in her hand, flinches. When nothing happens, she takes a sip before triumphantly setting it down next to her.

LIAM

Alright, you get one question.

Mia eyes Liam suspiciously.

MIA

What's your worst fear?

Liam considers for a moment.

LIAM

I'm walking down the crosswalk and a car comes flying out of nowhere and hits me.

With some hesitation, Liam picks a can and opens it. The soda FIZZES harmlessly.

LIAM

What about you?

MIA

I have to go to jail because some dumbass got in front of my car.

Mia's already reaching for her next can. Without even looking, she pulls the tab. It simply POPS.

MIA

Do you blame yourself for your mom?

Liam swishes his can uncomfortably.

LIAM

How could I? I didn't do anything wrong.

Liam stares long and hard at the three remaining cans. Then he stares at Mia.

LIAM

A few weeks ago, I heard Jim threatening you when you wouldn't take your meds. Something about "going back in." What was he talking about?

Mia avoids Liam's gaze.

MIA

Those aren't the rules. You have to pick a can first.

Liam takes his time analyzing the three remaining cans in front of him before choosing one. It doesn't go off. Mia rolls her eyes.

MIA

Y'know, you're so terrified of opening up because everything with you is about control. What you don't get is that none of us can control anything. When you tell someone your shit, you can't control what they're gonna do with it, or say about it, or think about it. But you can't handle that, so every time someone tries to break down your walls you deflect by bringing the conversation back to them.

LIAM

We weren't even talking about me, we

were talking about you.

MIA

I never said you're the only one who does it. But I'm not a control freak! I just don't wanna talk about it.

Liam shakes his newest can at Mia.

LIAM

C'mon, those are the rules.

MIA

Fine. Sometimes, when a patient seems hopeless, or unreachable, or just really pisses Jeffries off, they put them in solitary confinement for a while. They've done it with me a few times.

LIAM

How long?

MIA

Depends on the case. The first time for me was about 5 hours. Then a day--

LIAM

A day?

MIA

Last time was a week.

LIAM

Holy shit. What's it like in there?

MIA

Doesn't matter.

LIAM

What do you mean?

MIA

It wouldn't matter if the room were a luxury suite. You just lose it in there. They say it's to "reflect on your progress", but you're just given nothing to do, nowhere to go, nothing to think about. You never know how long it's been, or how long you have left. And the drugs. They pump you

with so much shit, you feel like you're three feet behind yourself, all the time. It's like they got sick of you, so they just shoved you into a cupboard until they decided to take you out later. Like you've been paused. Like you're dead.

Mia pops the second-to-last can open. It does not go off.

MIA

Why do you want to die?

Liam reaches towards the last can and opens it away from himself. The two of them quietly watch as it EXPLODES, spewing SODA all over the room.

LIAM

I have no goddamn idea.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

An intimidatingly large audience of STUDENTS spreads throughout the amphitheater-style seating arrangement in front of Liam, who looks particularly disheveled as he stands at the corner of his small stage, staring at something on his PODIUM that is obscured from his students' view.

Behind him, there is a simple drawing of a STANDARD DISTRIBUTION BELL CURVE on the blackboard. One student near the front, MICHAEL (late teens), raises his hand. Liam doesn't even look up.

MICHAEL

Professor.

Liam is finally pulled out of his daydreaming.

LIAM

Yes?

MICHAEL

All that stuff that you just said. Isn't statistics just some math? How can you be so sure about, well, everything?

LIAM

Are you saying miracles must exist?



MICHAEL  
Well, maybe not miracles--

LIAM  
Let me ask you...

Liam points at Michael.

LIAM  
C'mon, help me out.

MICHAEL  
Michael.

LIAM  
Michael. Let me ask you something.  
Were you an accident?

MICHAEL  
What?

LIAM  
Your parents. They had sex. You were  
born. Was that on purpose?

MICHAEL  
Yeah, I was planned.

LIAM  
Errr. Nope. Trick question. You were  
an accident. Your parents may have  
decided in that moment to have a  
child, but you, Michael, were an  
accident. Let's do some quick math.

Liam grabs a marker.

LIAM  
The average ejaculate contains about  
two hundred million sperm cells.

He writes "200,000,000" on the board. Students look around at  
each other, uncomfortable on the subject matter.

MICHAEL  
You just know that?

LIAM  
You're not the first person I've had  
to explain this to. So, here's you.

Above the two hundred million, Liam draws a division sign, and a "1" above that.

LIAM

The odds that sperm cell gets there first are...

Liam draws an "equals" sign, and on the other side, "0.000000005."

LIAM

Zero-point-zero-zero-zero-zero-ze--

MICHAEL

Okay, I get it. But doesn't that prove my point? The odds were so low.

LIAM

No. The odds of an eventual conception, if your parents were actively trying to have a child, were relatively high. If someone else were conceived in that moment, don't you think they'd be sitting here, telling me how special they were for being in your seat? Speaking of which, consider this. If you're one in two hundred million, what about your one hundred million, nine hundred ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-nine siblings? What about all those possibilities, all those potentialities, that you wiped out in the blink of an eye? Before seeing the sun, before even having eyes to see, you took part in the universe's oldest, coldest game of chance. And how do you use your sibling's potential? Interrupting your professor.

Liam points at the far end of the bell curve.

LIAM

You're not special, Michael.

He moves his marker to the center and puts a dot, marked with an "M", right on the middle percentile line.

LIAM

You're just a fast swimmer.

The class is speechless. Liam simply waves them away.

LIAM  
Dismissed.

Liam looks at the "M" on the board. Then he returns his gaze to an unseen object on his podium.

COLOR: INT. DOCTOR BROWN'S OFFICE - DAY

Liam stares listlessly out the window. Doctor Brown's eyes scrutinize Liam as if her were a puzzle.

DOCTOR BROWN  
Let's talk about your mother.

LIAM  
Fine.

DOCTOR BROWN  
How is she doing?

Liam looks at Doctor Brown for the first time.

LIAM  
She's not. She died. A long time ago.

DOCTOR BROWN  
Was that hard for you?

LIAM  
I don't know.

DOCTOR BROWN  
You don't know?

LIAM  
I don't know.

DOCTOR BROWN  
Why don't you know?

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

A barren apartment. A PAIR OF HANDS tug violently at a CORD connected to something on a nearby wall.

COLOR: INT. DOCTOR BROWN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Liam's leg begins to shake.

LIAM  
Because I didn't really know her.

DOCTOR BROWN  
What do you mean?

LIAM  
I was a baby. Why do you want to talk  
about my mom?

DOCTOR BROWN  
Just going through the usual  
questions. Your dad?

LIAM  
Yes?

DOCTOR BROWN  
Is he alive?

LIAM  
Yes.

DOCTOR BROWN  
Is he a good man?

LIAM  
Yes?

DOCTOR BROWN  
Do you want to be like him?

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

A PHONE on the wall comes to life, vibrating against its rotary.

COLOR: INT. DOCTOR BROWN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A slow, creeping realization comes across Liam's face. He sits quietly until Doctor Brown must fill the silence.

DOCTOR BROWN  
What about your mother? Do you blame  
yourself for her death?

LIAM  
Why would I blame myself?

DOCTOR BROWN  
Because you said she died giving birth

to you.

LIAM

I said she died when I was a baby. I didn't tell you that it was in childbirth.

Doctor Brown leans back into his chair.

DOCTOR BROWN

Liam, don't you think you've been here long enough?

LIAM

What's going on?

DOCTOR BROWN

I did a little extra research into your records.

LIAM

No, you're asking very leading questions.

DOCTOR BROWN

Nothing I don't have on file.

LIAM

I don't believe you. You asked me if I want to be like my father.

DOCTOR BROWN

What's so strange about that?

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

Mia, alone in a large, empty, padded room, stares blankly into nothingness, a small dribble of drool collecting at the corner of her mouth.

COLOR: INT. DOCTOR BROWN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Liam bursts out of his chair.

LIAM

Holy shit.

Liam rips the door to the office open. Doctor Brown follows.

COLOR: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Liam bursts out of the office, easily outpacing Doctor Brown, who only follows for a few steps before being intercepted by WARDEN JEFFRIES (60s).

WARDEN JEFFRIES  
What's going on?

Liam, continuing to stomp down the hall, doesn't even bother turning around to address the two men behind him.

LIAM  
Doctor, why don't you explain the situation to the Warden?

WARDEN JEFFRIES  
(to Doctor Brown)  
What's he talking about?

DOCTOR BROWN  
Nothing, a simple misunderstanding...

Liam rolls his eyes and turns the corner down the hallway as their conversation drifts away behind him.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is fully-furnished. A MIRROR hangs crooked on the wall. Something off-screen pushes the mirror, and it settles into the right position for just a moment, and then falls into the same crooked position in which it began.

Over and over again, no matter how carefully the mirror is adjusted, it falls back into disorder.

COLOR: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Liam continues down the hallways. He stops outside Mia's room and throws the door open.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia lays on her bed, staring up at the ceiling when Liam explodes into her room.

LIAM  
I'd ask what the fuck is wrong with you, but I know that you don't even know the answer to that.

Mia jumps out of her bed.

MIA  
What're you talking about?

LIAM  
We're gonna play that game?

Warden Jeffries and Doctor Brown can be heard coming down the hallway.

WARDEN JEFFRIES (O.S.)  
I think he came down this way.

DOCTOR BROWN (O.S.)  
Sire, please let me explain.

Mia's face reddens in shame.

LIAM  
So you do know what this is about.

MIA  
Please, he said he'd keep me out of the chamber--

LIAM  
You wanna know why I tried to kill myself? People like you. You can't just sit still, can you?

Mia's face hardens.

MIA  
You know, I pity you. You don't even know how sad you are.

The two stare each other down as the Warden and Doctor both enter the room, Jim accompanying them.

WARDEN JEFFRIES  
Liam, what is going on?

LIAM  
Doctor Brown has been talking to another patient about my case behind my back.

WARDEN JEFFRIES  
(to Doctor Brown)  
Is this true?

Doctor Brown opens his mouth to speak, but instead simply stares down at his feet.

WARDEN JEFFRIES

Get out.

Doctor Brown does so.

WARDEN JEFFRIES

(to Liam)

And I'm guessing that patient is Mia?

Mia looks at Jim, who is preparing a SYRINGE. Tears suddenly pour from her eyes.

MIA

No. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Liam,  
please.

WARDEN JEFFRIES

Liam, is Mia the patient you speak of?

BLACK AND WHITE: EXT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The MIRROR comes flying out of the window, CRASHING into the alley below.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia grabs Liam in desperation. He shrugs her off as he answers the Warden.

LIAM

Yes.

The Warden nods to Jim, who restrains Mia as she fights and SCREAMS.

MIA

No! No!

WARDEN JEFFRIES

Let's try a month this time.

Liam's eyes widen for just a moment before he hides this reaction from everyone else, and maybe himself too. Mia screeches hysterically as Jim injects the syringe into her neck. Her screeches become sobs, which become mumbles as she twitches in Jim's arms before going limp.

Jim and the Warden leave the room with Mia's unconscious body



in tow. Liam, frozen in the center of the room, watches them go.

COLOR: INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

THE WORLD IS A LITTLE LESS COLORFUL.

A new DOCTOR sits across the desk from Liam, holding a hokey PUPPET and explaining something to Liam that we can't hear. Starting wide, we slowly push in on Liam, and--

COLOR: INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

--The exact same scene as we continue to push in, except Liam and the Doctor's clothes have changed. The Doctor continues to ramble silently with the doll as we continue to slowly push in on Liam--

COLOR: INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

--Once again, nothing has changed but Liam and The Doctor's outfits, which are both now more suited for cold weather. We continue to push in as The Doctor hands the doll, to Liam, who stares silently into its eyes.

THE WORLD BECOMES A LITTLE LESS COLORFUL.

COLOR: INT. PADDED CELL - DAY

Mia jogs the perimeter of the cell repeatedly.

COLOR: INT. PADDED CELL - DAY

Mia does push ups.

COLOR: INT. PADDED CELL - DAY

Mia stands in one corner, screaming. We do not hear her.

COLOR: INT. PADDED CELL - DAY

Mia simply sits in the far corner, drooling, staring.

THE WORLD BECOMES A LITTLE LESS COLORFUL.

COLOR: INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE - DAY

Liam sits with Jim, filling out some PAPERWORK. He is handed a BOX containing some CLOTHES, his WALLET, and other PERSONAL AFFECTS. He follows Jim out through a security door.

COLOR: EXT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Jim leads Liam to the curb, where a TAXI awaits him. He silently gets in.

THE WORLD BECOMES A LITTLE LESS COLORFUL.

COLOR: INT. PADDED CELL - DAY

Mia, still in the corner, tugs at the tufting of the wall.

THE WORLD BECOMES A LITTLE LESS COLORFUL.

COLOR: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Liam enters into his well-furnished apartment and sets down the box from the hospital. He goes over to one of the walls, noticing a mirror is slightly askew. He adjusts it, but after a moment it slips back into imperfection. He adjusts it again, and again it slips. Over and over again.

Liam looks around the apartment--everything seems out of place. An OPENED BOX here, a MISPLACED CHAIR there. No matter what rearrangements Liam makes, he finds something new wrong with it. he sits in the corner, overwhelmed by the space around him.

COLOR: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Liam is stuffing everything into BOXES.

COLOR: EXT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Liam sets the last of many boxes of his POSSESSIONS on the curb. Sitting along with the boxes is all his FURNITURE. As if this is completely normal, Liam turns back and re-enters his apartment complex.

COLOR: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Liam re-enters his apartment and surveys the now-empty space. Empty, save for one time he forgot: the mirror, still hanging crooked on the wall. As if in response to Liam's gaze, the mirror comes completely undone and falls to the floor. Liam rips a nearby window open, grabs the mirror, and chucks it out.

COLOR: EXT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The mirror comes flying out of the window, CRASHING into the alley below.

COLOR: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Liam watches the mirror CRASH into the ground outside, then closes the window. He lays down on the the empty floor and curls up into the fetal position.

THE WORLD BECOMES COMPLETELY BLACK AND WHITE.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

Mia has made a sizable tear in the wall's fabric. She holds one of the many BUTTONS used to hold the tufting of the wall together. She turns it over in her hand.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Early morning sunlight streaming through the window awakens Liam on the floor. He checks his watch.

LIAM

Oh, shit.

He raises himself from the ground and leaves without changing or showering.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LECTURE HALL - LATER

The seats filling the hall are empty. Liam sits behind the podium in the lecture hall, still looking as unkempt as he was at his apartment. He idly cracks a CAN OF SODA open. The loud POP of the carbonation makes him jump.

He checks to make sure no soda sprayed onto his shirt before taking a sip and setting the can down. STUDENTS come spilling into the room and file into seats. Liam looks at them like they're roadkill in his rear window.

Even after everyone's settled in, Liam continues to swish the can around in his hand and stare at the wall. After one more chug, he slams the can down.

LIAM

Right.

Liam grabs a PIECE OF CHALK.

LIAM

This...

He draws a STANDARD DISTRIBUTION BELL CURVE on the blackboard behind him.

LIAM

This is what God looks like.

Setting the chalk down, Liam turns back to his audience.

LIAM

It's standard distribution. The universe's coding for how the chips should fall. Every choice, every potentiality is here.

He uses his finger to draw an imaginary circle around the "bump" of the curve.

LIAM

We live on this. We die on this. Whether or not we like where we've been, whether or not we like where we're going, it's laid out for us, right here. There's no changing that, but statistics offers us the chance to at the very least see the hill we'll die on. To see God.

He points at the far end of the curve.

LIAM

The so-called "miracles" live here. bit of a misleading term, though. The implication of a "miracle" is that it is not only an unlikely occurrence, but an important one. And how do you define the importance of an event? By its long-term effects. So, we're here, at the edge of the curve, and an event occurs. Is it a miracle if it sends ripples through the rest of the data? Sure, I'll give you that. But that's where the law of averages comes in. Any deviation from the plan, any cosmic clerical errors that we little meat bags misinterpret as divine intervention, karma or hocus-pocus, will eventually be balanced out. "Miracles" may struggle against the tide for a moment, but the universal undertow of inertia will put everything right back in its place.

He points at the center of the curve.

LIAM  
Average. That's it. All we can really  
do is ride the curve.

Liam turns away from the blackboard and back towards the podium.

LIAM  
"God works in mysterious ways?" No, He  
doesn't. He works in statistics. In  
numbers. In--

As he speaks, Liam's eyes rest on the can of soda sitting on the podium.

LIAM  
--in chance.

Liam loses himself as he stares silently at the can, deep in thought. Near the front, Michael raises his hand. Liam doesn't even look up.

MICHAEL  
Professor.

Liam is finally pulled out of his daydreaming.

LIAM  
Yes?

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

Mia sits in the corner of her cell, flipping the button around. There is a smile on her face. The door opens. Jim stands outside the cell, waiting for her. Mia pockets the button before leaving the room.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. GUN STORE - NIGHT

Liam enters and browses around. After some searching and nail-biting, he goes to the Sales Clerk at the front counter.

LIAM  
Hello.

SALES CLERK  
Hey there, looking for some  
protection?

LIAM  
Yes. A handgun.

SALES CLERK

You sure? We just got a great Winchester 12 Gauge in. Nothing scares off a burglar better than two barrels in the face. If you're looking for something a little more long-range--

LIAM

No, no. It has to be a revolver.

BLACK AND WHITE: EXT. GUN STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Liam exits the storefront with a BOX in his arms and crosses the street.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Liam sits on the floor with the REVOLVER and SIX BULLETS in front of him. He picks the gun up and opens the cylinder. He takes half the bullets and puts them in the cylinder, leaving the remaining three on the floor.

He gives the cylinder a hard spin, lets it rotate for a few beats, and CLICKS it into place.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING LOBBY - NIGHT

Mia inserts a QUARTER into a PAYPHONE, spins the number into the rotary, and holds the receiver up to her head.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Liam raises the gun to his head and closes his eyes. the PHONE suddenly RINGS. Liam, startled, turns in the direction of the noise as his finger reflexively pulls the trigger. There's a harmless CLICK as the cylinder advances one chamber.

Liam turns back at the click, staring directly into the barrel of the gun.

LIAM

Fuck!

He puts the gun down. The phone continues to ring and the noise is grating. Liam stares at the gun on the ground before stomping over to the phone and picking up the receiver.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Mia perks up at the NOISE on the other end.

MIA

Liam?

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Liam is not holding the receiver to his head, but instead using it as a handle to tug on the cord connecting it to the rotary.

LIAM

God-fucking-dammit!

With one final tug, Liam rips the cord from the rotary, and the rotary partially from the wall. His apartment is silent once more.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING LOBBY- CONTINUOUS

Mia listens sullenly to the DEAD TONE emanating from her end. Pointlessly, she continues on.

MIA

Liam, I'm okay.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Liam sits down next to the smashed receiver. He looks up God. Or the ceiling. He quietly begins to sob.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Students file into their seats once more as Liam, eyes puffy and arms weak, sets his BAG down on the podium. When he opens it to remove some NOTES, a metallic object catches a gleam of light before he closes the bag once more, the GUN now a lump sticking out in the fabric.

His eyes drift up to the class and he makes eye contact with Michael before both uncomfortably look away. Liam grips the lump in his bag as if it were life itself. He then forces himself to let go, grabs the notes, and steps into the full view of the class.

He stares at the paper and blankly recites the scrawled-out words.

LIAM

"Today, let's talk about confounding variables. Those that move the bell-curve into a right- or left-leaning bias and skew the data. As we've

talked about before, everything in a data set is connected. If one item goes to an extreme, the rest will follow in order to better serve the law of averages--"

Liam stops and sighs. He crumbles the paper into a ball and throws it onto the ground. He stands in silent thought for a moment. MURMURS of confusion echo throughout the class.

LIAM

Y'know, the argument could be made that I'm a confounding variable. My parents were in the same grade at the same high school in a really small town. Like, graduating-class-of-a-hundred-small. But somehow, they didn't meet in high school. Neither had ever heard of the other and they never had any classes together. It was only until freshman year at a college halfway across the country that they met in a geology gen ed, struck up a conversation, and realized they grew up about four streets away from each other. So, who am I to say? Maybe Michael's right.

Michael jumps at the mention of his name.

LIAM

Maybe I'm a miracle. Maybe, when my parents didn't end up at prom together, some other force intervened to ensure that I'd be here in front of you today. That'd be nice. Maybe under the skewed bell curve of my life there's a larger one that is perfectly symmetrical, a sort of cosmic groundwork making sure everything balances out in the end. Maybe confounding variables appear to us only to be out of place because we can only see on half of the curve.

Liam's shoulders slump.

LIAM

Or maybe I'm just what we think confounding variables are: a mistake. Maybe I screwed everything up on the



curve by being born, so my entire life has been one chain reaction of unnecessary turbulence as the law of averages tries desperately to find a place for me. Maybe my mom had to die to balance some scale: an unlikely death for an unlikely life. So every single win, every single turn of the wheel that goes in my favor, will be balanced out by something equally devastating. So the best I can do is just swim along and put up as little fight as possible. Allow mediocrity to be the rule, enforce it into my world, abstain from extremes, and I can stay safe under the thumb of the fates. That's how I felt for the longest time. If I just get everything in my corner into perfect little boxes, if I cut out messy things like love, or friendship, maybe as an apology to statistics, or fate, or God, for even being here, if I could just keep it all clean and simple, maybe I could carve a manageable existence out for myself. But eventually I couldn't take either anymore: I couldn't take the fear of the unknowns, of all the other confounding variables in the world, and I also couldn't take this coping method of the dry life I'd built. I was scared, and I was bored. So I figured I'd just cash in. I took a razor to my wrists.

Students GASP as Liam shows his scars.

LIAM

But that didn't work. A roommate I had at the time found me and I was just institutionalized. Talk about being put in a box, am I right? And the whole time I'm in there, I just get more and more confused. Is a little freedom really all that bad? Maybe I was looking at things the wrong way. Maybe I could find a path on the curve that was all my own, and still be safe. The best of both worlds, of waking up in the morning content with where you are and excited about being

unsure of where you're going. There's a psychological phenomenon in human behavior known as the sunk cost fallacy. It's how casinos get gamblers to stick it out. the basic idea is, we stick with things that aren't doing us any good because we figure we've already put so much in, why should we go back now? I began to wonder if I had gotten myself into that hole before I tried to kill myself. Maybe if I had just called it off and taken a few risks, I'd be a happier person. But, you can't change the past, so I just decided that from then on I'd be a little more free, a little more colorful, a little more open. I made a friend. I let my boxes get a little mixed up.

Liam scoffs bitterly.

LIAM

But the minute I did that, this friend of mine, she went ahead and burned the boxes up. She crossed a boundary and betrayed my trust. The first risk I take and I'm in the red. So what do I do, I go right back to my old ways, shove her in a box, and go on my way.

Liam walks back over to the bell curve on the blackboard.

LIAM

I'm pretty sure, in some ways, I killed her. I'd never met someone who started here--

He points to the center of the curve.

LIAM

--but consistently chooses to be here.

He moves to the edge.

LIAM

That kind of adventure, it's infectious. Like a laugh. Or a disease.

He turns back to the students.

LIAM

On the curve, we can't change anything. Hell, we can barely even predict the important stuff. We can only observe the pattern, write some numbers down, and draw a fucking line. That's not God, it's prison. And knowing what the bars look like doesn't set you free.

He erases the drawing altogether.

LIAM

I'm always three feet ahead of myself, you know? Always have to have a plan, or a philosophy to abide by.

He tosses the ERASER aside.

LIAM

But when it falls apart like that, where does that leave us? The only logical conclusion is self-contradictory: there is a plan and there is no plan. So what do we do? Do we search on, certain we'll find something or feel something that no one's ever felt before us, poking the bear just for the hell of it? Or do we allow ourselves something safe, inoculate ourselves from pain by avoiding everything altogether?

He walks over to the podium.

LIAM

I've seen both paths now, and I gotta tell you, neither seems worth it. Any attempt at control and you'll find yourself spinning out. Any attempt at freedom and you're in a prison. And half the time, you don't even know where you're at. It's like this revolver.

He whips out the gun and SCREAMS emanate from the students. He continues on as if it were part of the curriculum.

LIAM

In a game of Russian Roulette, is it order, as you have a one in six chance

of there being a bullet in the chamber? Or chaos, because you've put yourself in a situation of chance, and once you've spun the cylinder, you have no idea what you're going to get?

He gives the cylinder a hard spin.

LIAM

Me, I always had a bad habit of hedging my bets.

He stops the cylinder, CLICKING it into place and raising the gun to his head.

LIAM

That's why I loaded all six chambers.

He closes his eyes.

LIAM

One-hundred percent.

He pulls the trigger, and with a BANG, we--

--SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

The BANG of the REVOLVER echoes and fades into nothingness. Slowly, a FIZZING sound fades in, replacing it.

COLOR: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The FIZZING of a CAN OF SODA in Mia's hands as she pops it open. She sits on the floor of her room, across from Liam. They are surrounded by a series of GAMES OF CHANCE. Between them sits a single UNOPENED CAN OF SODA.

MIA

Why do you want to die?

Liam reaches towards the last can and opens it away from himself. the tow fo them quietly watch as it EXPLODES, spewing SODA all over the room.

LIAM

I have no goddamn idea.

After the can empties itself, Liam looks up at Mia.

LIAM  
Hey. Wanna hear a joke?

MIA  
You tell jokes?

LIAM  
Maybe I can try.

MIA  
Okay, go for it.

LIAM  
Alright, so there are these two  
explorers settling a great big  
continent, right?

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mia sits on her bed against the left wall of the room, playing with the button from the padded cell. She flips it from one hand to the other, spins it to see which side will land up. She then sets her button down and picks up an unseen object from her nightstand.

She walks out to the hallway.

LIAM (V.O.)  
But once they're ready to start  
building their new city, they can't  
agree on where to put it. The first  
explorer thinks it should be on the  
riverbank, where they could fish and  
build mills.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING HALLWAYS-  
CONTINUOUS

Mia enters the room next door on the left.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. ADJACENT HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Everything in this room is a mirrored reflection of Mia's: the bed, though we can only see a portion of it, is on the right side of the room with its own nightstand in the corresponding position.

Mia gazes at something on the bed that we can't see before she sets the object in her hand down on the nightstand. As she leaves, we see it is a COIN, now sitting perfectly on its side.

LIAM (V.O.)

But the second explorer is scared of flooding, so he says they should live out in the plains. They keep arguing and arguing on the matter, getting nowhere, so the second explorer comes up with an idea.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mia re-enters her own room and arranges the button on her nightstand to sit on its side as well. She then lays back down in her bed.

LIAM (V.O.)

He pulls a coin out of his pocket and says, "Look, why don't we just flip for it?"

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. ADJACENT HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We now see that the object on the bed is Liam, the right side of his head wrapped in bandages, his room adorned with medical equipment. he comes to a strangely peaceful awakening before investigating his surroundings. He feels the bandage on his head.

He looks at his hands, checking to see if he can move his fingers. He seems completely functional. He notices the coin on the nightstand and stares at it in disbelief. Then, out of nowhere, he begins to chuckle.

More aware of himself and the situation he's in, his laughter erupts into a thunderous storm of pure, unadulterated joy.

LIAM (V.O.)

"Heads, the river, tails, the plains. Deal?" But the first explorer won't have it. "What are you, crazy?" He says, pointing to the vast, torrential sea separating the riverbank from the plains.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. MIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hearing Liam's laughter, Mia cracks up, too.

BLACK AND WHITE: INT. HOSPITAL PSYCH WING HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

From the hallway, with both doors open, we see the symmetry

of the two friends pressed against different sides of the same wall, cracking up at a joke both of them only just now understand.

LIAM (V.O.)

"What if it lands on its side?"

As we pull away from this final image:

COLOR FADES BACK INTO THE WORLD, BUILDING AND BUILDING IN INTENSITY UNTIL THERE'S NOTHING BUT WHITE.