

THE SECRET LANGUAGE

"The Reprieve"

Act Two, Part A

[Draft 2]

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dark. A wire crate in the corner, a towel over half of it, and from inside it: crying. Puppy crying, thin and awful, the loneliest sound ever manufactured.

Mary's bed: empty.

Mary is on the floor. Sleeping bag dragged alongside the crate, her arm through the wire door, her hand flat on the floor of the crate, and the puppy pressed against the hand, hiccupping down into sleep.

Mary's eyes are open. Listening to the breathing slow.

The room around them is still the bare room -- the pale rectangles still on the walls. But there's a sleeping bag on the floor, and an arm through a crate door, and that is not nothing.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Gray morning. Mary, fourteen, stands in wet grass holding a treat. Secret -- twelve weeks now, all ears and paws -- sits in front of her. Sort of. Briefly.

MARY

Sit.

Secret bounces. Tugs the hem of Mary's sleeve --

Mary pulls the sleeve back down over her hand. A small motion, automatic. We notice it. Nobody else is there to.

MARY (CONT'D)

Sit.

Secret pounces on a leaf.

Mary stands there, treat in hand, out-stubborned by a three-pound leaf-killer. This is going to be harder than the videos.

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY - WEEKS LATER

Wreckage.

A couch cushion, unzipped by teeth, snowing foam. A shoe -- one of Mary's old HARD SHOES, the Irish dance shoes, dragged from some closet grave -- now missing its heel. And in the middle of the debris field: Secret. Tail going. Delighted with everything she has accomplished.

Mary stands in the doorway. Something's been building for days -- the failed sits, the chewed weeks, the no sleep -- and the wreckage lights it:

MARY

WHY would you DO that?! What
is WRONG with --

It's out of her at family volume, the full voltage, her father's sentence in her mouth --

-- and Secret FLINCHES.

Drops flat. Ears back. Tail tucked and pumping, eyes up at Mary, and it is precisely the flinch. It starts at the eyes. We have seen it a hundred times in this movie on a girl's face, and here it is on a dog.

Mary stops.

Whatever was coming next doesn't come. She looks at Secret -- Secret looking up at her, reading her, braced, wanting only for the weather to change --

-- and Mary reads that the way she reads everything. In one pass. All the way down.

She lowers herself to the floor. To the actual floor, flat, on her back among the foam snow, and turns her face away from the puppy and goes still. Palm open on

the floorboards.

A moment. Foam settles.

Then paws, incoming. Secret climbs onto her chest, licks her chin, forgives her -- no. Not even forgives. There's nothing to forgive because nothing is being held; there is no ledger; the weather changed and the dog came back. Secret flops down on Mary's sternum with a sigh, four minutes old, the whole thing already never having happened.

Mary's hand comes up and rests on the little ribs.

They breathe.

Nobody asks anybody anything.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY - SPRING

Sun. Secret is bigger -- five months, the ears deciding what they'll be. The PVC weave poles stand straighter; someone has rebuilt them.

Mary crouches. Treat in the closed hand. Secret watches the hand like it's the only object in the universe.

MARY

Sit.

Secret SITS. Click -- Mary's thumb on a little clicker -- treat.

MARY (CONT'D)

Down.

Down. Click. Treat.

MARY (CONT'D)

Spin.

Spin -- clumsy, gorgeous. Click. Treat. And Mary LAUGHS, the floor laugh, and Secret comes up out of the spin ready to do anything, anything at all, for the rest of her life.

At the kitchen window, inside: LISA, dish towel stopped in her hands, watching. TED joins her. They

watch their daughter -- animated, outside, LOUD, alive
-- run a five-month-old puppy through a repertoire.

Neither of them says anything. There's a superstition
forming in this house: don't name it. Naming things is
what breaks them.

Ted, though. Ted can't help himself. Later --

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY - LATER

Ted crosses the grass with PAPERS in hand. Printed
pages, stapled. He's excited. He's helping.

TED

So I was reading about this --
it's called shaping? There's a
whole literature. Skinner,
operant conditioning --
reinforcement schedules. Fixed
ratio, variable ratio --
variable is actually stronger,
counterintuitively, so if you --

Mary isn't looking at the pages. She's looking at
Secret, who is looking at her. Something microscopic
passes -- a shift of Mary's weight, maybe nothing at
all --

-- and Secret rotates smartly and backs up, in
reverse, through Mary's legs, and sits behind her
facing forward. A move with no name.

TED (CONT'D)

(stopped, mid-word,
stapled science in
hand)

What -- how did you cue that?

MARY

She was ready.

TED

Ready how? You didn't say
anything.

Mary looks at him. It's not a hostile look. It's the
look from the piano: "get what?" The question is
asking her to see a thing she didn't do -- there was

no cue, there was just the dog, ready, and her, seeing it.

MARY

Watch.

And she turns back to Secret, and does it again -- does what again? Nothing. Nothing we can see. And the dog reverses through her legs and sits, and the dog is laughing the way dogs laugh, and Ted stands there holding his stapled pages like sheet music at a birdsong.

EXT. BELLINGHAM - RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Streetlight to streetlight, girl and dog. The nightly walk. Secret trots at Mary's knee, off leash, matched to her stride like a gear.

They pass out of one cone of light and into the next.

BEHIND THEM, at the front door, held open one inch: Lisa, watching them go.

Ted's voice from inside, low:

TED (O.S.)

Is she --

LISA

Don't.

She closes the door as softly as a door can close.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dinner, four plates. And it is LOUD again -- listen, the old altitude:

MARY

-- so she knows LEFT from RIGHT now, like as WORDS, which means I can send her around the poles either way, and today she offered the reverse weave HERSELF, she invented it, nobody taught her that --

IZZY

Can she do it around ME?

MARY

If you stand still. You have
to actually stand still --

IZZY

I can stand still!

MARY

You literally cannot, you're
doing it right now --

Izzy freezes mid-gesture, caught. Laughter. Mary
keeps going, a torrent, the crayfish energy, arms
demonstrating a weave pattern over the table --

-- and while she talks, she EATS. Not performing
eating. Just eating, absently, fuel for the torrent.

Lisa's eyes go to the plate -- the old scale, the old
glance --

-- and find it half empty. Emptying.

Lisa looks away fast, before anyone catches her
weighing it, and refills Izzy's water with the face
of a woman not crying at dinner.

INT. DINER - BELLINGHAM - DAY

A booth. Mary, fifteen now, slides in. Secret -- full
grown, black tri, gorgeous -- tucks herself under the
table in one practiced fold and becomes furniture.

Across the table: Izzy, menu up.

This is a test. You can tell because Mary isn't
looking at Secret at all. The not-looking is the
test.

A WAITRESS arrives. Coffee pot, no-nonsense.

WAITRESS

You girls know what you --
(spotting the dog)
Oh. Hon, we can't have --

MARY

She's a service dog in training. She won't move.

WAITRESS

(skeptical, looking under the table)
...Huh. Well. She really won't, will she.

Secret, under the table, chin on paws: furniture.

The waitress goes. Izzy leans out and drops -- with intent -- a french fry. It lands six inches from Secret's nose.

Secret looks at the fry. Looks at Mary's shoe. Does not move.

IZZY

That's actually insane.

MARY

(to the menu)
If she's going to come everywhere with me, she has to be perfect everywhere.

She says it like a fact of nature. Izzy eats the floor fry herself -- five-second rule -- and under the table, without anyone visibly doing anything, a piece of chicken finds its way from Mary's hand to a soft mouth.

Perfect everywhere doesn't mean unpaid.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bare walls aren't bare anymore. No drawings yet -- something better: a corkboard with a leash, a clicker, ribbons from -- somewhere. The terrarium gone. The room belongs to somebody again.

Mary sits cross-legged on the bed, phone in hand. Secret's head is on her knee.

ON SCREEN: a new Instagram account. The username field, typed carefully:

my_aussie_gal

First post: a photo of Secret mid-spin in the yard, ears sideways, joy incarnate.

She stares at the post button. This is the platform where a newt made her prey. The scroll of curated faces, the hand-over-mouth emojis -- same app, same world.

Secret sighs on her knee, asleep.

Mary posts it.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

The phone, propped against a lamp. Mary is drawing -- DRAWING, a pencil, first time in the whole movie -- Secret asleep on the bed as the model.

The phone pings. She picks it up.

Eleven likes. Three comments. Strangers.

"OMG those EARS"

"what a good girl!!"

"aussies are the best, mine turned 12 today. give yours a hug from us"

Mary reads them. Reads them again. Every one of them is the warm kind. She can sort that in one pass -- and there is nothing else in them to sort. No look passing under the words. No second channel. Just people, somewhere, looking at her dog and saying what they see.

She holds the phone a moment.

Then she puts it back against the lamp and keeps drawing.

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Furniture pushed back. Izzy stands on the couch with Mary's phone, filming. This is a production.

IZZY

Okay. Ready. Three, two --

MUSIC -- a fiddle reel, tinny from a speaker -- and MARY DANCES.

Hard shoes on the floorboards. The drum of it, the old precision, feet doing what her feet do -- and SECRET, moving with her. Through her legs on the beat. Around her on the turn. Backing, weaving, spinning, matched to the reel and matched to Mary, the two of them stitched together with invisible thread --

It's the most alive we have seen Mary since she was nine years old. And the dog -- the dog is DANCING, there's no other rigorous word for it --

IZZY

(behind the phone,
losing it)

Oh my god. OH MY GOD --

They stick the ending, girl and dog, Secret sitting proud between Mary's feet, and Mary is breathing hard and laughing and there is nothing wrong anywhere in the world.

MARY

(to Secret)

Good girl.

INT. FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Mary at breakfast. Toast, actually eaten. Her phone, face down, starts BUZZING. And doesn't stop.

She turns it over.

The screen is a waterfall. Likes, comments, follows, stacking faster than the screen can draw them. The dance video, posted last night: the number under it is six figures and climbing while we watch.

And a text banner drops from the top. RUBY -- a name we haven't seen since a lunch table:

RUBY: MARY. you're going VIRAL. an irish

dance page posted it, my cousin in DUBLIN
just sent it to me. DUBLIN.

RUBY: this is the coolest thing anyone from
our school has ever done btw

Mary reads it. Reads it twice.

Izzy and Lisa are at the counter. It would take one
word to detonate the kitchen -- Izzy is already
vibrating, watching over her shoulder --

Mary gets up, takes her toast, and goes to the
living room, where Secret is on the rug. Sits down
next to her. Holds the phone in front of the dog's
face -- the waterfall, Dublin, the six figures.

MARY

Look at it.

Secret looks at it. Then licks the toast.

That's about right. Mary eats the licked toast,
one arm over the dog, watching her number climb.

EXT. BELLINGHAM - PARK - DAY

Mary throws a disc; Secret arcs out and takes it
out of the air like it insulted her family.

Nearby, a MAN wrestles a bouncing LAB PUPPY on a
leash. The puppy jumps on a stranger, plants two
mud feet --

MAN

(yanking the leash)

NO. Bad dog! BAD dog --

Mary goes still.

It's a small stillness. But we know her stillnesses
now, and this one is the held kind, the kitchen-at-
the-party kind. Her eyes are on the puppy: flattened,
confused, braced -- reading its person, finding no
information, only weather.

The man notices her looking. Half-defensive:

MAN (CONT'D)

He knows better.

MARY

He doesn't.

It's not an argument. It's a fact, laid down. The man blinks. And then Mary says the next part, and listen to it -- it comes out in a different register. Even. Assembled. Like a card being read, or a stone being set down on a table:

MARY (CONT'D)

He can't know better. He can only know what happens. Ask him for something he can do. Then make it happen, and pay him. Don't ask him for anything he'll fail.

The man stares at her -- teenage girl, immaculate dog sitting untethered at her knee like an endorsement.

MAN

...Pay him.

MARY

He works for you. Pay him.

She turns and goes, Secret falling in at her knee. The man looks down at his puppy. The puppy, braced, reads him.

Slowly, feeling like an idiot, the man digs out a treat.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary, scrolling her own comments. Thousands now. Hearts, dog emojis, Ireland flags. Her thumb moves down the warm waterfall --

-- and stops.

"The way you two communicate. My daughter is autistic and she has this exact thing with animals -- like the rest of us are hearing through a wall and she's just IN the room with them. Anyway. It's beautiful

to see. ♥"

Mary reads it.

Reads it again.

The room is very quiet. Secret, on the bed, lifts her head -- reading something, the way she does.

Mary's thumb hovers. Then, slowly, she types into the search bar, and we see the word go in letter by letter, the first time it has appeared in this movie:

a-u-t-i-s-m

She reads. We don't see the screen anymore. We see her face, lit from below, absolutely still --

-- the creek stillness. All of her, poured into it.

The light from the phone shifts as pages turn. Secret puts her head back down, against Mary's leg, and the two of them stay like that, deep into the night, one of them reading, both of them still.

INT. FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Ted and Lisa at breakfast. Mary comes in, phone in hand, and puts it down on the table between them, screen up. An article.

MARY

Look at this.

They look. We hold on the parents -- we don't need the screen -- as first Lisa and then Ted arrive at whatever word is standing at the top of that page.

A long moment.

TED

(very carefully)

Have you been -- reading about this?

MARY

All week.

(beat)

It's me. The whole thing is
me. There's a test. A real
one, at UW. I want to take
it.

Lisa looks at Ted. Years of specialists and
counselors and programs offered and refused -- and
here is their daughter, asking to be assessed, as
flatly as she once said "I need a dog."

LISA

Then we'll get you the test.

Mary nods. Once. Takes her phone back and goes to
feed Secret. Through the doorway we can hear the
kibble hit the bowl.

Ted hasn't moved. His coffee's going cold. Lisa
watches him staring at the middle distance,
somewhere between the table and fifteen years.

LISA (CONT'D)

Ted.

TED

Yeah. No. Yeah.

That's not a sentence, and neither of them corrects
it.

INT. UW MEDICINE - CONSULTATION OFFICE - DAY

A quiet office. DR. AMARA OYELARAN (50s, unhurried,
the kind of person who never fills a silence just
because it's there) closes a folder.

Mary sits across from her. Lisa in the second
chair, one seat back. Secret lies at Mary's feet.

DR. OYELARAN

We finished scoring
everything. And it's what
you thought it was, Mary.
You're autistic.

Beat.

DR. OYELARAN (CONT'D)

I find people want a minute,

right about here.

MARY

I don't need a minute.

She doesn't. We're looking at her and there is nothing to steady, nothing shaking. What's happening on her face is almost the opposite of shock. It's a settling. A weight finding a shelf.

MARY (CONT'D)

It makes sense. Everything makes sense now. The way I --
(she stops; the sentence doesn't need finishing)
There was a reason.

DR. OYELARAN

There was never anything wrong with the instrument, Mary. It's just tuned to a different --

MARY

(not unkind; done)
You don't have to make it a thing. It's good news.

Dr. Oyelaran smiles -- caught being gentle when nobody needed it.

Behind Mary, one seat back: Lisa. Her hand is over her mouth, and above the hand her eyes are doing years of arithmetic -- every counselor, every program, every 2 a.m., resorting themselves around one word.

Secret sits up and puts her chin on Mary's knee. Reading the room, finding it good.

INT. FAMILY CAR - I-5 NORTH - DAY

Lisa drives. Mary in the passenger seat, window down an inch, watching the green go by. Secret is asleep across the back seat.

A long comfortable silence. Then, to the window, not to Lisa -- flat, factual, the way you'd report

the weather:

MARY

I'm not just bad at being a
person.

Lisa's hands tighten on the wheel. Ten and two.
Eyes on the road. If she looks at her daughter
right now she will drive this car into the median,
so she looks at the road --

LISA

No.
(steady; barely)
You never were.

MARY

(still to the window;
almost interested)
There's no such thing. That's
the part nobody -- there's no
such thing as bad at being a
person.

Lisa doesn't understand that, not all the way. She
files it -- wife of a modeler, mother of this: she
has a whole cabinet of sentences she doesn't
understand yet.

Mile markers. Green.

LISA

You hungry?

MARY

Burgerville.

The smallest smile crosses between them, first
cousin to a joke, and the car goes on north.

INT. FAMILY HOME - TED'S OFFICE - 2 A.M.

One lamp. Ted at his desk, laptop open, reading
glasses on. He has been here for hours -- there's
an archaeology of mugs.

ON SCREEN, fragments as he scrolls: clinical pages,
papers, a parents' forum. Phrases surface and go
by: "...may not intuit that others' minds differ

from their own..." -- "...questions experienced as demands..." -- "...behavior is communication..."

He stops scrolling.

Reads one paragraph again. And again.

Whatever is in that paragraph, it has his whole face. He takes the glasses off, and sits there, a systematic man at the bottom of all his systems, doing the math on every reasonable, loving, catastrophic sentence he has ever said in a doorway.

He closes the laptop.

INT. FAMILY HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ted comes down the hall in the dark. Stops.

The HERON. Framed now, hanging where the family photos hang. It's been there for years -- we just haven't looked at it since she painted it. He looks at it.

A gray shape that was nothing, and nothing, and nothing -- and then, all at once, exactly what it always was.

He stands in front of it a long time.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door, open a few inches. Ted looks in.

Mary asleep. Secret stretched against her back, head rising just enough to find Ted in the doorway: a soft look, holding him there. On watch. Not worried.

Ted's mouth opens -- old habit, there's always been a sentence, fifteen years of sentences offered through this door --

-- and he closes it. Doesn't say anything. Doesn't need anything from her, not even that she know he's here.

He pulls the door back to how it was and goes.

Secret puts her head down.

INT. WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE - LECTURE HALL - EVENING

Empty. Two hundred seats, lights half on. A JANITOR holds the door as Mary and Secret slip in.

JANITOR

Twenty minutes. Then I do floors.

MARY

Twenty. Thank you.

He waves it off, gone. This has the ease of an arrangement -- not the first evening.

Mary picks a seat in the middle of a middle row. Points at the floor beside it. Secret pours herself under the fold-down desk, out of the aisle, invisible: the tuck.

Mary sits. Takes out a notebook, opens it, as if class were happening. The empty hall hums.

She drops a pencil -- on purpose. Clatter. Secret doesn't move.

She rustles the seat. Coughs, loud, echoing. Kicks the seat in front, once.

Secret, under the desk: furniture.

MARY

(a whisper, down)

Good girl.

Then she just sits there a minute, the two of them alone in two hundred seats, rehearsing a world.

INT. WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - DAY

The world, populated: thirty COLLEGE STUDENTS, backpacks, laptops, a PROFESSOR taking roll. Mary -- sixteen, youngest in the room by years -- in a

middle seat. You'd never know the dog was there until the kid next to her drops his phone, ducks for it, and comes up pale --

COLLEGE KID
(whisper)
There's a DOG under --

MARY
(whisper; eyes
front)
She knows.

The professor calls a name. Another. Then:

PROFESSOR
Peters. Mary Peters.

MARY
Here.

Small word, big room. Here. Nobody laughs. Nobody turns around. A pen clicks somewhere; the professor moves down the list; the world keeps going, holding, roomful of strangers and none of it burning --

Under the desk, unseen by anyone, Mary's hand finds one soft ear.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY - SUMMER

An easel, low, dog-height. A canvas. A table with paints squeezed onto a palette. IZZY, fifteen now, films from the deck; TED watches from the steps with coffee, a man who has learned to attend things he can't explain.

Mary kneels by the easel. Secret stands before the canvas, tail loose, and takes in her mouth -- delicately, an old hand at this -- a BRUSH.

MARY
Okay.

Mary holds the palette up. Secret dabs the brush -- red -- and touches it to the canvas. A mark. Small, curved, meaningless.

MARY (CONT'D)

Good. Again.

Dab. Mark. Meaningless. Mary turns the palette a few degrees; the brush finds a different red. Mark. Meaningless. The marks accumulate the way weather accumulates -- there is no sketch, there was never a sketch, there's a girl reading a dog and a dog reading a girl and a brush going where it goes, one true mark and then the next one --

On the deck, Ted has stopped drinking his coffee. He's seen this before. Years ago, at a kitchen table: the gray shape that was nothing, and nothing, and then --

-- petals.

They were always petals. The curved red marks close on themselves, a stem arrives in two green strokes, and the whole canvas is suddenly and retroactively and obviously A FLOWER -- crooked, alive, painted by a dog, of course, it's exactly that --

IZZY

(behind the phone,
a whisper)

No way. No WAY --

Secret drops the brush and barks, once, at the flower. The most honest review in the history of art.

Mary laughs the floor laugh. Ted, on the steps, does not move at all, because the full coffee mug is the only thing holding him together.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dinner. The flower painting is propped against the wall, still smelling of paint. Izzy is narrating view counts off her phone --

IZZY

-- okay it's at four hundred thousand. It's been SIX HOURS. Chelsea Clinton commented. CHELSEA CLINTON.

TED

What did she say?

IZZY

A heart and "this made my
whole week."

Mary, eating, unbothered, reaches down to slip
Secret something under the table.

MARY

(mouth half full,
to no one, light
as anything)

I can't imagine what it'll
be like when that dog dies.

Forks stop.

It's not dark, the way she says it. It's the
opposite -- an overflow, the sound of someone
measuring how good something is by the only
ruler big enough. She keeps eating. She has no
idea what she just did to the table.

Lisa recovers first, refills waters. Ted looks at
the flower against the wall. Izzy looks at
Secret, at her sister --

IZZY

You're so weird.

MARY

Yeah.

Said like "here." The table restarts. The cold
current passes under the boards of the movie and
is gone.

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ted with the laptop, frozen. He turns it around
to face the room.

TED

Mary. A rapper just posted a
-- there's a compilation of
your videos. It's --

(refreshing;
refreshing again)
Mary, it has a hundred
million views. That's -- a
THIRD of AMERICA has --

MARY
(from the floor,
where she and
Secret are doing
something
complicated with a
towel)
Which videos?

TED
Which -- I don't -- the
dance one, the painting,
the Jenga --

MARY
The Jenga's old. Her stay
is way better now.

Ted looks at his screen: a number with eight
zeros attached to his daughter's dog. He is the
one person in this house equipped to understand
this number, and the one person in this house
who cannot get anyone to look at it.

TED
SportsCenter wants the
sledding one. SPORTSCENTER.
I watched SportsCenter every
day for --

MARY
(to Secret, re:
the towel)
Good. Again.

Lisa, passing through with laundry, pats Ted's
shoulder in sincere condolence and keeps
walking.

INT. FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Lisa at the table with the laptop, reading
email aloud. Mary stands at the counter making

-- note it, in passing -- a sandwich she is going to eat.

LISA

This one's a dog food company. They want -- okay, they want one video a month. For that they'd pay --
(she has to read it twice)
-- Mary, this is more than I made last year.

MARY

No.

LISA

You can hear the number --

MARY

No to all of them.

Lisa looks at her over the screen. It's not teenage stubbornness; there's no heat in it. There's no why in it either. It's bedrock, reported flatly, the way she names dogs and requests assessments.

Then Mary sets down the sandwich, and -- the register changes. Even. Assembled. The stone set on the table:

MARY (CONT'D)

They follow her because it's real. You can't pay for real. Paying for it is the thing that kills it.

She picks up the sandwich and goes to the yard. Through the window: girl and dog among the weave poles.

Lisa looks back at the number on the screen. Closes the laptop like she's putting a lid on something that will otherwise keep talking.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Late. The house asleep.

Mary in bed, on her side. Secret stretched long against her back -- seventy pounds of finished work, the puppy long gone, ribs rising slow.

On the nightstand, face up: the phone.

It lights. A notification. Another. Another -- silent, stacking, the numbers doing what numbers do somewhere out in the dark: Dublin and Dallas and Nagoya arriving one glow at a time, the whole roaring world at the door --

The phone glows and dims. Glows and dims.

Girl and dog sleep through all of it, breathing in step. One of Secret's ears tracks something -- a car, a possum, the planet turning -- and settles.

The room, unmoved.

The wave, still out at sea.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO-A