C'MON C'MON

Written by

Mike Mills
CU ON Johnny thinking and talking into his recorder. Does he try the same question a few different ways? First part probably on black, logos.

JOHNNY
I’m going to ask you a series of questions. There are no right or wrong answers.

NOW see CU of Johnny.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
It’s Saturday, November 2nd.

The day mom died.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
When you think about the future, how do you imagine it’ll be? What will nature will be like? How will your city change? Will families be the same? What will stay with you, what will you forget? What scares you? What makes you angry? Do you feel alone? What makes you happy?

CUT TO: JOHNNY, and ROXANNE, holding shotgun mics, digital recorders, headphones - INTERVIEWING KIDS.

Q: WE ARE GOING AROUND THE COUNTRY, GOING TO DIFFERENT CITIES, INTERVIEWING KIDS, ABOUT THEIR LIFE, WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE.

Q: IF I ASK YOU ANYTHING THAT YOU DON’T WANT TO ANSWER OR YOU DON’T LIKE THE QUESTION, YOU CAN BE LIKE, NOPE.

Q: I WANT YOU TO JUST FEEL COMFORTABLE AND IF THERE’S ANYTHING I ASK YOU ABOUT THAT YOU DON’T WANT TO TALK ABOUT, SAY I DON’T REALLY WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT.

A new kid being interviewed in her/his REAL home.

Q: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE, HOW DO YOU IMAGINE IT WILL BE?
INT. NEW DETROIT HOME - KID’S BEDROOM

A new kid being interviewed in her/his real home.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK ADULTS COULD HAVE DONE TO MAKE SURE WE WENT ON THE RIGHT PATH?

INT. DETROIT HIGH SCHOOL

IMPROV - Johnny interviews a kid from Detroit.

Q: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE, DO YOU THINK IT WILL BE BETTER OR WORSE?

IMPROV - Johnny interviews another kid from Detroit in the same school.

CONTINUE TO INTERWEAVE KIDS’ ANSWERS AS VOICE OVER:

INT. DETROIT HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Johnny walks back to his hotel room.

INT. DETROIT HOTEL - NIGHT - AFTER DAY OF INTERVIEWS.

Johnny listens to interview on his LAP TOP, eats take out food. Spot check on the sound, just making sure it’s all in his computer. Should have recorder pack, SD card, laptop there....

CUT TO: Johnny does “Scratch” recording intro for his show. It’s like verbal notes to himself, trying out lines, might say lines over and over, quick and light, more improvised than before.

JOHNNY

Detroit was the future, the car was the future, factories were the future? But the future didn’t turn out like we thought it would? So we came to Detroit to talk with kids, young people? What do they think things will be like? What are their lives like now?

He turns off his recorder, put’s that away.

He’s alone.

He’s lost in his thoughts more deeply now.
CUT TO MEMORY OF PLAYING MUSIC FOR MOM. His hands dancing, mom’s hands dancing, Viv’s hands too.

MAYBE WE SEE SOME OF MOM’S THINGS? Balloons, Rabbit, Empty bed.

INT. DETROIT HOTEL / INT. VIV’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

HARD CUT BACK TO HOTEL - JOHNNY’S IN ANOTHER PART OF THE ROOM, SOME TIME HAS PASSED, MAKING A CALL.

VIV
Hey...

SEE VIV IN HER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM, NIGHT.

JOHNNY
Hey.

Something distant between them, something awkward, but there’s hope or something in his face.

VIV
This is nice.

Their humor, when their nervous.

JOHNNY
Is it?

VIV
I don’t know? Is it?

They laugh cause there’s also discomfort, sadness, pain.

JOHNNY
I didn’t know if we were finally gonna talk today?

VIV
It’s a good day to talk – do you think mom can hear us?

INTERCUT WITH MOMENTS OF MOM IN BED.

JOHNNY
Doesn’t seem like a year, does it to you?

VIV
No. It’s pretty trippy huh? What are we supposed to do today?
They begin to connect more.

CUT TO VIV AND JOHNNY ARGUING? DOOR SLAM?

JOHNNY
I don’t know. If I just work I feel like I’m an asshole...

VIV
I know.

JOHNNY
If I sit in this depressing hotel just thinking about her, it’s pretty brutal. So I called you?

That’s nice.

VIV
Where are you?

JOHNNY
Detroit. I’ve been interviewing kids all day...

(You’d be good at that actually).

VIV
Jesse heard you on the radio the other day.

INTERCUT WITH JESSE IN CAR.

JOHNNY
Oh yeah? (some kinda hopeful sound)

VIV
Yeah, you were on the radio, I had to tell him it was you. A year in kid years is like, 3 years? So, you know...

JOHNNY
Right.

Should she say “It’s nice you called” but we feel the tension? Johnny feels quite alone, a bit of tension, pause.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
It’s nice to hear your voice... you sound like my sister... How’s Jesse?
Blue Rev. (mm/dd/yy) 5.

VIV
He’s older, he’s quite a person,
He’s great – Paul moved to
Oakland...

JOHNNY
Oh, woah – he did?

VIV
Yeah, It’s OK, Jesse’s dealing with
it pretty well. But now I have to
go all the way up there cause he
needs a little help, settling.

Johnny knows what that means, feels concern for her, but it’s
not something they easily talk about.

JOHNNY
Yeah?

VIV
Yeah, so I’m about to head up
there.

JOHNNY
You and Jesse going?

VIV
Just me. (Not that kinda trip)

Either just a look from Johnny or he says.

JOHNNY
Who’s taking care of Jesse?

24 EXT. VIV’S STREET – DAY 24

Wide tracking shot – obviously LA. After we establish we’re
in a new place, we find Johnny getting out of a cab, with
luggage. A little nervous or vulnerable or something.

25 INT/EXT. VIV’S HOUSE – DAY 25

Door opens, a pause – he’s not sure what’s going to happen.

VIV
Hey.

JOHNNY
Hey.
They don’t hug. He would have liked to. Jesse comes to the door, studying him, no one is sure what he remembers.

JESSE
Hi.

VIV
This is Johnny. A man. Your uncle. My brother. Standing here.

JOHNNY
Hey, how’s it going?

JESSE
Have you been to our house?

JOHNNY
It’s been a while.

INT. VIV’S HOUSE - DAY

IMPROV: Jesse gives a tour, showing every bit of the house, every room, hallway, every small detail. Johnny’s immediately taken by this kid, but wants to keep connecting to Viv, make eye contact with her.

INT. VIV’S BEDROOM - DAY

Johnny, Viv and Jesse sit on Viv’s bed.

JESSE
Mom said you’re going to sleep up here tonight, in her extra big, cozy bed. The best bed in the house.

INT. VIV’S DINING ROOM / OR KITCHEN / NIGHT

They eat OR cook dinner. Jesse/Viv IMPROV: about something he’s heard on Radiolab – the fungus that connects all tree roots. Viv heard it with him and is equally enthralled – they go back and forth, interrupting and finishing thoughts, describing what they heard together.

INT. VIV’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

After bath, Johnny and Viv find a private place to really talk.
**JOHNNY**

So what’s going on with Paul?

**VIV**
The San Francisco symphony offered him this great position, which is awesome, he so deserves it, but the whole transition’s fucked him up, like transitions do, he got a fucking dog he shouldn’t have gotten, it’s a mess. (laughs)

She laughs, she doesn’t know how serious it really is.

He’s trying to be on her side, take care of her?

**JOHNNY**

And you have to clean it up?

Viv cares for Paul, he’s a good guy, he’s Jesse’s dad and there’s no one else left.

**VIV**

Yeah. It’s Paul.

**OR JUST A LOOK FROM HER.**

Johnny accepts that, feels for her. “Yeah”.

**JOHNNY**

What does Jesse know?

**VIV**

I told him his dad needs some help getting organized, but it’s not a big deal and he can go up and see him another time.

**JOHNNY**

He’s gonna be OK with just me?

**VIV**

Oh god he loves it when I’m not around.

The first time back in her house in over a year.

**JOHNNY**

It’s nice to see you.

They share a look, she nods? They connect.

**VIV**

You too.
OFF SCREEN

JESSE

Hello???

She looks up, has a look on her face, starts to head downstairs.

VIV

Are you ready for this?

JOHNNY

What?

VIV

There’s an orphan that visits me at night. You may get a visit from him yourself. Sometimes he’s got this whole story where I have to have dead children that he, the orphan, want’s to know all about, and do what they did??

Off his look, as she goes.

VIV (CONT’D)

This is a great moment for you to not be judgy...

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INT/EXT. VIV’S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT  

The door bell rings, Johnny’s surprised, Viv’s not “damn it”. She opens the door, knowing Jesse’s gonna be there half dressed on in PJ’s.

VIV

Jesus, come in.

In a strange mood, he nods yes.

JESSE

I snuck out of that horrible place. Can I sleep here tonight?

VIV

Sure, you cold? My son’s rooms in there, he’s not here, you can sleep in his bed.

JESSE

Thank you.

They walk into Jesse’s room, Johnny’s trying to keep up.
VIV
I asked him to clean up.

JESSE
Do you want me to be messy? Like your son? I could do that.

VIV
That’s OK, I’ll just have to clean it up. You tired? You want to try on his pajamas and see if they fit?

JESSE
Sure.

He holds them up to himself to see if they fit.

JESSE (CONT’D)
They’re just the right size?!

Johnny’s gonna read to you. Hi. This is Johnny, he’s my brother.

JESSE
I’m an orphan. I escaped.

He shakes Johnny’s hand.

JOHNNY
You seem like you’re doing OK.

JESSE
I’m not, it’s been hard.

JOHNNY
I’m sorry.

Dead serious look from Jesse. Johnny looks to Viv for help.

VIV
(Yeah don’t ask) He’s an orphan who’s seen some hard times. Who wants to be read to.

She hands him the book and leads him into bed with Jesse. Johnny gets in; Jesse snuggles up next to him, surprising Johnny. He begins to read.

INT. JESSE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Johnny reads a book to Jesse.
INT. VIV’S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Johnny documents recent events into his recorder.

JOHNNY
She hugged me. She felt different.
Or I felt different. Jesse, maybe,
vaguely remembered me. Maybe, maybe
not. He told me about trees
communicating with each other, and
how connected they were. By an
underground network of fungus.

INT. VIV’S HOUSE - DAWN
Viv tip-toes through house.

JESSE’S ROOM: She whispers goodbyes to sleepy Jesse. He hugs
and kisses her and passes back out. She sneaks her way out of
the house. Looking back once before she goes.

INT. VIV’S HOUSE - VIV’S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING
From downstairs, we hear Mozart’s “Requiem” blaring. Johnny
begins to wake up.

JESSE (O.S.)
Johnny? Johnny?!

Disorientated. He gets up, sleepily puts on pants.

JOHNNY
Hey?

JESSE (O.S.)
Are you awake?

JOHNNY
Sort of. I’m coming.

Johnny heads downstairs.

It’s the first time they’ve been alone face to face - they
check each other out.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
Loud.

JESSE
It’s Saturday, I get to be loud on
Saturday.
JOHNNY
Your mom just left?

JESSE
She said you might be awkward at first, but you’d get used to things.

JOHNNY
Can we turn that off for a minute?

Bummed, he goes and turns it off. Johnny’s processing, hurt/confused. He goes to kitchen, finds Viv’s notes - several typed pages.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Jesus, Viv.

INT. JESSE’S BEDROOM - DAY

Johnny enters, pulls out his recorder – Jesse’s intrigued by the gear.

JOHNNY
What about I interview you?

JESSE
Like the questions you ask those kids?

JOHNNY
Yeah.

Johnny points the mic towards Jesse.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
How do you think the world will be different? By the time you’re my age?

JESSE
I don’t want to.

JOHNNY
O.K.


JOHNNY (CONT'D)
This shows you the recording level – you want it to be strong but not in the red here, see?’ I actually have no idea what this button does.

(MORE)
JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Oh, don’t touch that one cause if you do everything disintegrates.

Jesse pushes it. Johnny disintegrates.

(IMPRAV: They discuss where they want to record. Jesse says “The Beach”)

EXT. VENICE BEACH / GRASSY MOUND NEAR BOARDWALK - AFTERNOON

BEAUTIFUL LONG TRACK SHOT - Johnny follows Jesse recording. Just when he thinks Jesse’s gonna stop, he continues. Johnny has to wait, and follow, and wait - Johnny begins to like it. Johnny comes and lifts up Jesse’s headphones.

JOHNNY
You OK?

Jesse beams. Signals Johnny to be quiet.

EXT. VENICE BEACH CU INSERT

Jesse walks with recorder to breakwater, lands in close-up, He loves listening to the world like this. Johnny catches up to him.

Maybe Johnny gets his attention - “you like it?” Nods YES. Smiles, he loves it.

JESSE
Everything sounds so good (real) in here. My dad would love this...

Maybe Johnny says “Yeah”. Mention of dad makes Johnny think - how’s this kid doing? What’s OK to say about dad? How’s he dealing with it all.

Jesse senses this and want’s to show he knows everything.

JESSE (CONT'D)
My dad’s not around all the time now. And you’re all by yourself. That’s why my mom asked you to take care of me. She does stuff like that.

JOHNNY
It was my idea to come.

That surprises Jesse, why? Realizing he doesn’t know everything...
(Maybe Jesse says “Why did you and my mom stop talking?”)

INT. VIV’S BATHROOM – NIGHT

IMPROV JUMP CUTS: Johnny follows Viv’s sheet as he helps Jesse through night routine – running bath, brushing teeth, etc. Johnny doesn’t know why he likes all this so much.

CUT TO: Jesse’s in the tub. Johnny sits on the floor beside him, still strangers.

JESSE
My mom tells me stories, it can be fiction or non-fiction.

JOHNNY
What about we just – get to know each other?

Awkward silence.

JESSE
Why did my mom stop talking to you?

JOHNNY
We talk.

JESSE
No you don’t.

INT. CAROL’S HOUSE – DAY

QUICK CUTS/GRAPHIC SHOTS: Johnny brings a tray of food into Carol laying in bed. A hospice worker finishes something and leaves.

CAROL
Where’ve you been? He’s coming to get me.

She can’t go anywhere. He’s confused.

JOHNNY
Who’s coming?

I need to get dressed.

She’s pointing to a sweater. He’s worried.

CAROL (CONT’D)
My dad’s taking me to the DMV.

She’s so excited, breaks Johnny’s heart.
CAROL (CONT'D)
Gonna get my license.

REVEAL: Viv is there. She makes eye contact with Johnny over Carol’s shoulder – she doesn’t want to play along with this delusion; but Johnny can’t deny her.

He carefully lifts her body off the pillow, threads her weak arms through sweater sleeves. “Hurry, please” “OK, Mom, OK”.

MOMENTS LATER: Johnny sits looking at Carol sitting in chair waiting for her dad to come, keeps looking at the door. It’s killing him to see her wait like this, she notices Johnny’s emotions – a little mean, cold.

CAROL (CONT'D)
What’re you looking at?

Johnny’s at a loss. Viv’s there too, with empathy for this mess.

VIV
Let’s get back in bed, Mom.

Viv helps her up. Johnny just watches.
He thinks about that.

INT. CAROL’S HOUSE – SIDE ROOM – DAY

22

INSERT into MOM MEMORY sequence.

CU of VIV, as if she was in that room in Carols’ house. Just her side of conversation.

VIV
(You want to know what my problem is? It’s that for our entire lives, I’m the only one who challenged them.

JOHNNY
Really? Our entire lives?

Now calmer, communicating her point.

VIV
Yes it’s always been this way, it’s so easy for you, with me it’s always a fight, they treated me like I was a crazy person Johnny and you we’re never there for me, you couldn’t deal with it.
JOHNNY
You didn’t make it easy to help you.

VIV
I wanted help. And you couldn’t give it to me...
You’re losing a mom who adored you.
I’m losing a mom who never understood me. (Who made me feel this big).

INT. CAROL’S HOUSE – DAY

Dolphin-shaped balloons scuttle across ceiling.

Carol has just died. A hospice person leaves the room, closes the door. Louis Armstrong playing. Johnny kneeling on the floor by the bed; he’s watching Viv comb her hair, kiss her on forehead? Johnny’s surprised she’s so sweet to her.

JESSE
Why aren’t you married?

JOHNNY
I was with Luisa, we broke up, while my mom was sick.

Johnny pulls up a picture of her on his phone. We see her too.

JESSE
Did you love her?

JOHNNY
I still do.

JESSE
Then why break up?

Jesse leaves to get his pajamas, Johnny half follows.

JOHNNY
(I don’t know) We were together a really long time, so it’s impossible to tell who did what wrong to who, the line between you and the other person gets very blurry. But you’re just not making each other happy anymore. Even when you want to.
Johnny reads a book (TBD) to Jesse in bed.

Jesse begins to lean on him, this blind trust and closeness is new for Johnny. Does Jesse need to show him how the kid fits into the crook of his arm?

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CUT TO: Johnny tucking Jesse in.

JESSE
You can just kiss me on the head, put the book away, say sweet dreams, leave that one light on, and then go.

Johnny does all that.

JOHNNY
Sweet dreams.

JESSE
Sweet dreams to you.
As he puts book away, he finds: “Bi-Polar Bear Family Book”. He takes it with him.

INT. VIV’S OFFICE – NIGHT
Johnny Documents recent events into his recorder.

INT. VIV’S BEDROOM – NIGHT
Johnny read’s “Bi-Polar Bear Family Book” in bed.
TEXT SUPERS ON : “The Bipolar Bear Family By Angela Holloway”
Johnny’s V.O. over:

156 INT. JESSE’S LIVING ROOM – DAY

CUT TO: Jesse is dancing with Paul. Paul is beautifully lost in the music, encouraging Jesse to be more free, more intense, to be really into it.

CUT TO: Both breathing hard lying on floor, we half-hear Paul’s describing the beauty of the music to Jesse.

PAUL
Hear it? AHHHHHHHHH! The way it goes from minor to major right there, AHHHHHHHH!

157 INT. VIV’S HOUSE

CUT TO: Jesse watching Viv and Paul argue in another room.

41 INT. VIV’S LIVING ROOM – MORNING

Jesse is in the living room alone. Johnny enters.

JESSE
Should I call you like? Papa? Dad?
Or just Johnny.

JOHNNY
We’ll whatever feels most comfortable to you.

JESSE
I don’t know I’m not used to being able to pick.
JESSIE
So I might take Johnny? I don’t know. What do you want me to call you?

JOHNNY
Well I’m sure this is a difficult transition for you.

JESSE
It is.

JOHNNY
It’s new for me also. So we shouldn’t force each other to be anything extreme right now, and we can see how it goes after some time passes - that sound OK?

JESSE
Yeah.

JOHNNY
So for now you just call me something personal like, Jesus Christ.

JESSE
I’m not Christian.
I’m sorry your children died.

That trips Johnny up.

JESSE (CONT’D)
What did they like to do? I’ll do that.

JOHNNY
Do we have to do the dead kids part?

Jesse breaks character.

JESSE
Yeah. I told you.

JOHNNY
Yeah, but... JESSE (CONT’D)
Oh my god, you are so bad at this.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
You don’t have to say ‘oh my god’ like that. I was doing OK, I just, the dead kids thing threw me, it’s so sad.
JESSE
Never-mind.

He walks off, leaving Johnny to wonder about the shortcomings of his performance - and filled with admiration for this kid.

INT. VIV’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Johnny’s working on interviews on his laptop at night. Jesse asleep on couch behind him, wearing his own headphones and with an iPad in his lap. Johnny reads a text.

TEXT SUPERS ON:

Paul’s not doing good
He’s been hiding how bad
He needs go to the hospital again
But he won’t, trying to get him
into place without doing the whole
ER room thing.

Johnny reacts to the text, surprised, guilty. He sneaks into the office, away from sleeping Jesse.

INT. PAUL’S HOUSE - NIGHT

JUMP CUTS / FRAGMENTS: We see Viv trying to negotiate with PAUL, 40s. He’s talking manically, looks unhinged, hasn’t slept. MOSES, a large rescue dog, is there.

JOHNNY (V.O.)
What’s going on?

INT. VIV’S HOME OFFICE / EXT. OAKLAND STREET (NEAR MELROSE LAUNDROMAT) - NIGHT

Moses is pulling Viv throughout.

VIV
He’s all manic again, his brain’s eating him up. He hasn’t been like this in a long time, and he’s totally paranoid about me helping.
JOHNNY
I’m sorry (I didn’t believe you).

VIV
He saw me packing his bag, he got so scared. I stopped trying to make him go. Can you stay another day or two? I’ll call his school - you can take him actually, I’ll add you to that list...I’ll talk Paul into checking himself in.

JOHNNY
OK, I can stay.

VIV
Thank you.

JOHNNY
But they set up all these interviews for the weekend. I’m supposed to go back Friday. I told them I’d be there.

Viv knows how much Johnny clings to work.

VIV
I know. Thanks Johnny. Don’t tell Jesse, OK? I will later.

JOHNNY
Right.

Johnny hangs up the phone, goes back to the living room. Jesse’s sleeping on the couch; Johnny’s in a new situation.

INT. KITCHEN / DINING - LATER
They eat together.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MUSCLE BEACH - DAY
(Time permitting, quick call from Roxanne about work in NYC on the way, or in VO over wide shot)

EXT. BEACH / SANTA MONICA PIER - EVENING
Johnny and Jesse sit on the sand, underneath Johnny’s feeling taxed by all this - how’s he gonna stay here and do his work? He has a plan.
JOHNNY
You’ve never been to New York?

JESSE
No.

JOHNNY
Maybe you should come with me?

JESSE
Really?

We see Jesse really want this – a vulnerable, open child.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Like now?

JOHNNY
Yeah? I have to do more interviews, but maybe you could help me? Do ambient sound?

JESSE
I’d love that.

Johnny sees the purity, sees he’s manipulated a kid. Something conflicted, something more complicated growing inside him.

INT JESSE’S BEDROOM – NIGHT
Johnny reads to Jesse in bed.

51 INT. PAUL’S HOUSE – DAY 51
Viv and Moses walk around, call out – no one there. SHOTS OF empty rooms at Paul’s.

I can’t find Paul
He’s not at his house
Not answering phone.

51A INT. PAUL’S HOUSE – LATER 51A
CUT TO: Viv now on the phone in Paul’s.

VIV
Can you stay longer?
JOHNNY
Maybe he just doesn’t want to get better. He just wants you back
taking care of him.

VIV
Nobody would want to feel what he’s feeling.

51B   EXT. SCHOOL – INTERCUT WITH/VIV
Johnny is waiting for Jesse to get out of school.

JOHNNY
What if Jesse just come with me to New York? He said he wanted to go.

VIV
You invited him?? Johnny?

JOHNNY
I want to help - this is how I can help.

VIV
That’s not gonna work.

JOHNNY
Viv...

VIV
No. I’ll call some friends, I’ll call you back.

IMPROV Goodbyes: She hangs up as Jesse appears from the
building. IMPROV asks if Johnny talked to Viv about going to
New York.

JESSE
What did she say?

JOHNNY
She said she loves you.

INT. VIV'S OFFICE – NIGHT
Johnny documents recent events into recorder.
INT. VIV'S KITCHEN / INT/EXT. BODEGA - NIGHT

Johnny’s cooking with Jesse. Johnny’s looking at Jesse like he’s already lost all of this - and misses it. His phone rings.

He goes outside/other room, out of hearing range. Viv walks down the aisle of the Bodega, talking to Johnny. Hard for her, but with some kinda love for Johnny too...

VIV
Can you get someone to watch him
while you work? Can you make a
realistic plan for that to happen?

He didn’t think it was going to go this way. It means more to him than he understood it would.

JOHNNY
Yes.

VIV
Who will that person be?

JOHNNY
Viv, I’ll figure it out, I’ll get someone.

ON: Viv’s face, stuck between bad choices.

IMPROV: Viv standing in front of Butcher Case, looking at steaks. A customer gives Viv grief about bringing Moses into the Bodega.

Viv fights back.

INT. VIV'S OFFICE - DAY

Johnny finds a “Mother’s” book on Viv’s desk. He begins to read it.

JOHNNY OR VIV (V.O.)
“Motherhood is the place in our
culture where we lodge, or rather
bury, the reality of our own
conflicts, of what it means to be
fully human.

TITLE SUPERS: Mothers: An Essay on Love and Cruelty by
Jacqueline Rose
Viv talks to a student as class leaves. She’s confident and filled with life.

JOHNNY OR VIV (V.O.)
“It is the ultimate scapegoat for our personal and political failings,

JOHNNY OR VIV (V.O.)
“For everything that is wrong with the world, which it becomes the task – unrealizable, of course – of mothers to repair.

INT. VIV’S LIVING ROOM – DAY
CUT TO: Jesse and Viv having Saturday morning Mozart listening party.

What are we doing to mothers when we expect them to carry the burden of everything that is hardest to contemplate about our society and ourselves? Mothers cannot help but be in touch with the most difficult aspects of any fully lived life. Why on earth should it fall to them to paint things bright and innocent and safe?”

Maybe from water to city.

CUTS: Johnny watches Jesse recording the very busy world of sound that’s NYC – the huge booming sound of the subway crossing the bridge. Sometimes, Jesse closes his eyes as he listens; Johnny takes a picture/video of him recording...

CUT TO Baseball field with Manhattan Bridge in distance. Johnny watches Jesse; Johnny loves watching Jesse record.
Jesse puts the mic up to Johnny’s face. Jesse smiles. Johnny pulls up his headphones.

JOHNNY
You like New York?

JESSE
Yes.

JOHNNY
Recordings, for me - you get to keep the sounds, they don’t go away - that’s what I like about it.

It’s Johnny’s way of saying “everything’s gonna be OK” - Jesse senses something, and walks off.

Johnny watches, concerned, not knowing what to do.

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY

Johnny and Jesse walk along the bikepath.

TEXT SUPER’S ON:

Your kid says he likes NYC better than LA

Little traitor

Wish I could see him there

EXT. NYC STREET - NIGHT

Jesse walks with Johnny and Roxeanne. She doesn’t know what to make of this Johnny. The one who’s not all work - it’s touching and confusing.

Johnny is texting with and they’re all looking for Fernando who approaches from the other direction.

IMPROV hello’s and introductions. Something like:

JOHNNY
This is Fernando, he’s a friend of ours, he’s gonna help take care of you while we’re recording.

FERNANDO
Hey. Or you can take care of me.

JESSE
I don’t need that.
Fernando improv about how they’re gonna have a good time together.

INT. NYC RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Johnny, Roxanne, Jesse, and Fernando are all finishing a meal. Jesse’s finishing a very large piece of cake - mid-conversation, revved up on sugar.

   FERNANDO       JOHNNY
   Do you think things will be He doesn’t want to do this. *
different?

   JESSE
   Everything is always changing.
   ROXANNE
   How?

Jesse can IMPROV about how we are going to finally admit there are aliens. Or talk about “Parasite brain” Roxanne and Fern IMPROV with him - Johnny starts to feel slightly left out, can’t enter the conversation.

   JESSE
   In the past, like when Johnny was a kid, men couldn’t cry, or be afraid, or have a lot of feelings.

   ROXANNE
   This explains a lot.

   JOHNNY
   I cried.

   FERNANDO
   That is kinda hard to imagine.

   JESSE
   Men couldn’t have certain jobs, or just stay at home or wear dresses, or love other men. And men were supposed to be like the hero of everything.

   FERNANDO
   Things are different now?

   JESSE
   Maybe.
They are taken by Jesse, he eats up the attention. Johnny sees that Jesse’s had the whole dessert, clocking that something is changing.

JOHNNY
I thought we were gonna share that?

JESSE
Yeah, and then I just ate it.

Roxy and Fern laugh. Jesse loves the attention. Jesse continues to IMPROV about Parasite brain, one of his other obsessions.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - NIGHT

They all walk home after dinner - Jesse still cranked up.

ROXANNE
Do your friends talk like you do?

JESSE
No, not really.

Johnny’s increasingly worried for Jesse, feeling out of control.

INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Johnny records memories of the day’s event into recorder, intercut with:

INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Johnny brushes teeth; Jesse talks and paces back and forth in and out of the bathroom, very revved up.

JESSE
How could I get my recordings on the radio?

JOHNNY
I don’t know.

JESSE
When you went to school, they taught kids that white people are just like, innocent, or (uses air quotes) “normal”. 
JOHNNY
I know, I was there.

JESSE
Do you think you’re racist?

Johnny thinks, “On a level every white person in America is racist, but what do I say to this kid?”

JOHNNY
No...

JESSE
White people never think they are, especially older people like you.

JOHNNY
Right. Where’s your toothbrush?

JESSE
I don’t have one.

JOHNNY
You didn’t pack your toothbrush? I told you to pack it?

JESSE
Do you have trouble expressing your emotions?

JOHNNY
I’m feeling pretty frustrated right now.

JESSE
That’s good—it’s good to just say what you’re feeling.

Johnny gets down to Jesse’s eye level; Jesse doesn’t want to make eye contact. Johnny keeps at it, trying to like see inside Jesse. Jesse bounds out of the bathroom; Johnny’s in over his head.

66 INT. JOHNNY’S ROOM - NIGHT

Dark room—Johnny’s sleeping. Door opens; Jesse enters IMPROVISING about something, waking him up.

JESSE
My friends don’t talk like me, because I don’t really have any friends.
JOHNNY
Jesse. It’s time to be asleep.

JESSE (CONT'D)
I mostly hang out with adults.

JESSE (CONT'D)
How much does Pro-Tools cost?

JOHNNY
We can talk about that in the morning. You don’t need Pro-Tools right now, it’s too complicated for you.

JESSE (CONT'D)
I’m better at Pro-Tools than you.
Just tell me how much it costs.

INT. JOHNNY’S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

IMPROV: Johnny walks Jesse back to his couch; on the way, Jesse pretends he is the orphan, marveling at this wonderful house, this wonderful furniture.

JESSE
You have such beautiful things.
I’ve never seen furniture like this.

JOHNNY
Please stop.

JESSE
We just have wooden benches we have to share with mean children. Don’t take me back to the mean children.

INT. JOHNNY’S LIVING ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

CUT TO: Johnny’s lying with Jesse on his couch bed. Seems like Jesse’s finally asleep - he begins to slowly escape. First silently sitting up, then a foot on the ground, then slowly up off the couch, then tiptoeing out to leave, he’s almost made it - and something creaks. Jesse sits up.

JESSE
Can I just sleep with you?

Johnny - to have almost made it out. Johnny marveling at his tenacity, changes course.
JOHNNY
OK.

INT. JOHNNY’S ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

CUT TO: Johnny’s room - they are now both in Johnny’s bed, it’s feeling more like a sleep over now, Johnny has given up trying to get him to sleep.

JESSE
You had me eat all that sugar. My mom would never let me eat that.

A sense of humor about it all.

JOHNNY
Oh my god. You said she’d let you.

JESSE (CONT’D)
Of course she wouldn’t let me eat all that sugar - didn’t you read her thing?

JESSE (CONT’D)
Can’t you tell me a story?

JOHNNY
No, Jesse - we’re done.

JESSE
TELL ME A STORY!

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
OH MY GOD, I’M NOT GOOD AT FICTION.

JESSE (CONT’D)
Tell me about mom when she was little.

Johnny’s so tired he doesn’t know what he’s saying, half asleep.

JOHNNY
She was really cute.

JESSE
Was she crazy?

JOHNNY
What? No.

JESSE
I heard about her boyfriends. That she ran away... got in trouble all the time.
Johnny tries to educate the boy about women.

JOHNNY
Just cause a woman does something wild, or doesn’t follow other people’s rules doesn’t maker her crazy, it’s real important not to call women crazy...

JESSE
And she got an abortion.

Oops. How did we get here? What to say?

JOHNNY
A woman has a much more complicated deal... A woman’s body...

His incomplete attempt hanging in the air. Jesse can feel his failure in the air, takes care of things.

JESSE
I’ll show you how my mom puts me to sleep. Just be still. Now rest your feet, and your legs, and your hands, your arms, let your stomach relax.

JOHNNY
My mom would never do this.

JESSE
Shhh. Rest your eyes, your mouth, your jaw. Rest your mind, no more thoughts tonight, no more questions, no worries, just stars in the sky -

Jesse realizes Johnny’s asleep.

IMPROV: Jesse puts himself to sleep.

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INT. JOHNNY’S ROOM – DAWN

CUT TO: Towards dawn. Johnny’s awake, holding Jesse’s hand, listening to his breathing, watching early light coming up – When was the last time he was this present? Hearing the cars outside, people talking, wind in trees.

JOHNNY (V.O.)
He was impossible, I tried everything, I couldn’t get him to sleep.
EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - MORNING

Exhausted Johnny walks with perky Jesse on a busy street. They’re carrying shopping bags.

VIV (O.S.)
Did he have sugar? Or screen time? He might be overstimulated, he gets all cranked up when he’s tired.

JOHNNY
You’re used to this.

A river of feeling, tears?

VIV (O.S.)
I’m not used to it.

EXT. PAUL’S HOUSE - SIDE YARD - INTERCUT WITH JOHNNY ON STREET

Viv on phone, Moses with her.

VIV
I fucking hate it. I even hate him sometimes. I don’t want to clean up a mess ever again, make lunch one more time in my life, one more interrupted thought, just fucking picking up shit all day and putting it back, talking about some random nothing that’s so random my mind just can’t repair itself.

Johnny did not see that coming. He feels for her.

VIV (CONT’D)
You think I’m horrible?

JOHNNY
No.

VIV
He loves those gross little salami-and-cheese tube things - you just gotta somehow give him protein. Or let him to listen to his music.

On Johnny processing how complicated this love is.

JESSE
Look! Balloons!
WE SEE: Johnny, Roxanne, go to 5-7 DIFFERENT NYC HOMES over a few days.

WE SEE: Kids giving tours of their homes, interviews in bedrooms. Johnny and Roxanne are equals - both record, both ask questions. Some of the homes are wealthy, some not.

WE SEE: Children of emigrants from diverse parts of the world, diverse economic situations.

Q: "HISTORICALLY NEW YORK REPRESENTS THE FUTURE AND POSSIBILITIES FOR SO MANY IMMIGRANTS. WE ASKED TODAY’S CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE AND THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN NOW..."

WE SEE: Jesse’s with them, and Fernando is taking care of him. They are often outside on stoop or in a hallway or bench or park across the street, drawing, listening to something. Jesse does his own ambient recording. We see Johnny checking in, Johnny needing to go off and do interview.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STOOP: Fernando and Jesse hang out; Jesse reads a book, waits. Johnny comes out of interview and checks in with Jesse. He’s stressed and torn between wanting to take care of Jesse and the pressures of his work.

Johnny and Jesse walk down the street, enter store. Johnny on phone/texting with Roxanne as they head in. SOMETHING PLAYFUL, physical going on between the two of them. Maybe Jesse is imitating Johnny and Johnny imitates himself back.

They enter, Johnny still texting or on phone, Jesse still teasing, they are having fun.

JOHNNY
Find a toothbrush you want. What kinda toothpaste you use?

Jesse runs ahead. Johnny keeps texting, absently walking down aisle. He turns - Jesse’s gone. Worried, puts phone away, finds him in another aisle. Jesse holds up brightly-colored toothbrush, it plays a crazy pop song - “I AM YOUR TOOTHBRUSH, CALL ME YOUR FUNKY BRUSH”.

Johnny laughing at how much Viv would hate this?
JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Your mom would totally flip out.
This would be like (X) to her.

JESSE
She’s not here.

JOHNNY
We’ll she’s actually right.

JESSE
I want it.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
We’re not getting that – you
don’t need a song to brush
your teeth? Next thing you
know you’ll –

Jesse walks away and makes a turn, disappearing. Johnny
continues talking over the shelves, then follows.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
You’ll need some kind of electronic
stimuli to do anything, and it’s
important to just live through it,
peace and quiet, boredom is an
important thing...

He turns down the aisle that Jesse should be in, but he’s not
there. Johnny’s surprised, but maintains calm.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Jesse?

Down another aisle, and no Jesse – Johnny’s more freaked.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Jesse?

Down another aisle, no Jesse. A WORKER comes down the aisle.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Have you seen a little kid?

WORKER
No.

Johnny turns and runs the other way. Down another aisle – now
very worried.

JOHNNY
JESSE!

He turns, surprised by Jesse behind him with a huge smile.
JOHNNY (CONT'D)
What’re you doing?

JESSE
You should see your face!

Jesse laughs. Johnny loses it.

JOHNNY
Jesse! You can’t do that!! YOU UNDERSTAND?!

Jesse’s laughing more and more.

JESSE
Oh my god, you’re losing it.

JOHNNY
STOP IT!

JESSE
STOP IT.

Johnny, a bit out of control, takes hold of Jesse’s shoulders, pushes him against a wall, or pulls his arms down towards the ground, until they’re both sitting, awkward and not good.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Stop that!

Johnny stops, wakes up to what he’s doing, horrified. Is someone there watching? Johnny lets him go, deals with how out of control that got.

80
EXT. NYC STREET - NIGHT

Busy NYC street, Jesse storms out. Johnny catches up with him. Jesse doesn’t want to hold his hand or wait or get eye contact with him, they walk through big city, mad at each other.

80A
INT. CHEAT FOR JOHNNY'S NYC APT / INT. PAUL’S HOUSE - SMALL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Johnny against the wall of his bathroom we haven’t seen.

INTERCUTS WITH INT. PAUL’S HOUSE NIGHT - VIV ALONE IN SMALL ROOM. Maybe intercut with Jesse brewing on the couch in the living room MCU.
Johnny's not as freaked out, confused over-retelling, and confessing everything to Viv. WE MAY ENTER IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS...

JOHNNY
I- I was so scared looking for him, I thought he was gone. And then he jumped out at me - and I was like filled with anger - Viv, I yelled at him. *

VIV
Yeah... I’ve done it. It’s the worst, but it’s OK, you just explain to him why you yelled, tell him you were scared, you know, be honest with him. And then apologize to him. It’s called a repair, you can look it up. Let me talk to him.

Johnny vulnerable.

JOHNNY
Everything’s been going so great.

Helping him out, ‘It’s OK’.

VIV
He’s done it with me before, when he was mad or overwhelmed, Let me talk to him...

Viv waits as Johnny brings the phone to Jesse.

MCU on Jesse on the couch.

VIV (CONT'D)
Sweetie, are you okay?

JESSE
Yeah.

VIV
I miss you.

JESSE
I’m OK. I was just joking around, he didn’t need to call you.

VIV
Jesse, you really scared him. You can’t do that.
JESSE
Mom? Why are you on his side?

VIV
There are no sides You gotta listen
to Johnny. You’re at his place,
he’s taking care of you.

A pause, Jesse’s thinking about something...

JESSE
Why? Why’s he taking care of me?

81 INT. JOHNNY’S BATHROOM - NIGHT
81

Jesse starts up “I AM YOUR TOOTHBRUSH”. Johnny sits on the
toilet in disbelief. Jesse dances around to the beat of the
electronic toothbrush, dances around the house.

JESSE
I don’t even know you. Why’d my mom
let me come with you?

JOHNNY
You wanted to come.

JESSE
I didn’t really have a choice
She’s a horrible mother.

JOHNNY
You don’t feel that.

JESSE
I know what I feel, you can’t say
that.

JOHNNY
That’s true, that’s so true - your
mom taught you that right?

JESSE
She just does what she wants.

JOHNNY
We’ll no, she doesn’t. She needed
to help your dad, he needed some
help.

Jesse gets more angry.
JESSE
You don’t know what you’re talking about.

JOHNNY
Why do you think you’re here, cause she needs to be there helping him.

Long pause while he takes that in.

JESSE
Is he staying in a place where they make you where a uniform or a place you can wear your own clothes?

That slugs Johnny, he’s in over his head.

JOHNNY
He’s not there yet. Your mom’s trying to get him to go.

Something turns in Jesse. He becomes calm, puts on his pajamas. Johnny watches him, but Jesse won’t give eye contact.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
You OK? I didn’t mean to tell you that.

JESSE
I’m tired.

JOHNNY
Talk to me a little?

JESSE
I’m OK.

Jesse leaves. Johnny waits for him to come back. Johnny checks on him. To his surprise, he’s asleep, or at least pretending.

156 INT. JESSE’S LIVING ROOM – DAY
Jesse and Paul play on the living room floor.

83 EXT. NYC STREET / INT. PAUL’S HOUSE – MORNING
Johnny is walking behind Jesse, out of hearing range.
JOHNNY
He was mad at me about this
toothbrush and then he got really
mad at you, and I was explaining
why you weren’t with him cause you
were helping Paul and I (guess he
knows everything).

VIV
He knows. Let me talk to him.

Johnny catches up to Jesse.

JOHNNY
Here, It’s your mom.

JESSE
Tell her I’m fine.

JOHNNY
JESSE (CONT’D)
Jesse, c’mon. She’s impossible.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
Hey. Johnny don’t force him.

Johnny puts the phone on speaker, holds it out.

JESSE
I don’t wanna talk.

VIV
Jess, babe. Your dad’s fine, he’s
gonna be fine. He’s gotten a little
out of control, I didn’t get it,
how he was. But he’s gonna be fine.

JESSE
Is he like before?

VIV
Yeah. But he’s gonna get better.
I didn’t want you to worry, but I
messed up, I should have told you.
I was, I...

JESSE
Are you home now?

VIV
Not yet.

To Johnny.
JESSE
Just tell her I’m fine.
Johnny puts phone off speaker, back to his ear.

JOHNNY
He says he’s fine.

VIV
Tell him I miss him and I love him.

JOHNNY
She says she loves you and she
misses you.

Jesse tunes it out, starts walking away. Johnny looking at
him, on the phone with Viv. This all kills her, but she’s
thinking of how to make it not so hard for him.

VIV
He might want to listen to the
Nutcracker now – you might offer
him that.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK – LATER

NUTCRACKER PLAYS. Jesse, wearing the big headphones, is
walking ahead of Johnny on the avenue alongside the park.
Johnny follows.

CUT TO: They’re walking through Central Park, Jesse ahead of
Johnny, not looking back. NUTCRACKER PLAYS.

INT. JOHNNY’S BATHROOM – NIGHT

Jesse’s in the tub, still aloof. Johnny sits on bathroom
floor.

JESSE
Did your child fight about washing
his hair? Do you want me to do
that?

JOHNNY
Do you want to talk?

JESSE
At the orphanage, we have to wash
our own hair.

JOHNNY
That’s harsh.
JESSE
What did your kid like to do?

JOHNNY
Don’t have a kid.

JESSE
Why not?

Thinks. Somehow sincere and playful at same time. A list of potential answers.

JOHNNY
I’m too selfish?
Only an insane person would have a kid?
It requires another person to have a kid?
All the steps it takes to get that to happen, I never got through all the steps. I always thought I would.

Jesse appreciates the honesty, even if he doesn’t get all the details. Changes something inside him.

JESSE
You still can. But a woman your age probably couldn’t.

JOHNNY
Thank you.

Johnny studies this strange secret person.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
Do you want to fight about washing your hair and then I’ll wash your hair?

Jesse nods yes, and then they don’t fight but Johnny does wash his hair. OR IMPROV: They fight and Johnny washes his hair. Jesse is disassociating but also enjoying the care and touch.

INT. PAUL’S HOUSE / JOHNNY’S NYC APT – NIGHT

Viv reads Wizard of Oz into phone, to Johnny and Jesse sitting on couch in NYC.

Viv is leaning against bed in little bedroom.
VIV
(After reading a while) You guys still there?

JOHNNY
Yeah.

JESSE
Keep reading mama.

INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

CUT TO: Jesse asleep, or pretending to be asleep. Johnny takes a photo and sends it to Viv.

EXT. NYC STREET - MANHATTAN BRIDGE AREA - DAY

Jesse record ambient sound under the Manhattan Bridge.

Reveal Johnny and Roxanne watching him.

JOHNNY
He’s talking about what’s going on in this totally indirect way. He’s reacting to it all but not being direct with me so I’m struggling with how to help him. When I try to address it he makes me feel stupid cause he see’s right through it all, and then he just says he’s fine.

ROXANNE
Remember when your mom was dying and we were on the phone all the time and I didn’t even know you were with her? (OR: and when I’d try to help you’d make me feel stupid) Or when Luisa left, and you were, ‘fine’. (He’s like you?)

Johnny thinks about that.

WE HEAR: INTERVIEWS in V.O.

Q: SAY THERE WAS SOMEBODY YOUR AGE THAT WAS COMING FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY. WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM ABOUT THE U.S.?

INTERCUT WITH: SHOTS OF THESE KIDS IN THEIR REAL WORLDS - THEIR REAL HOMES, WHERE THEY HANG OUT IN NYC.
INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jesse does homework at the table while Johnny edits interviews on his laptop.

TITLE SUPERS: “AN INCOMPLETE LIST OF WHAT THE CAMERAPERSON ENABLES BY KRISTEN JOHNSON”

JOHNNY (V.O.)
I ask for trust, cooperation and permission without knowing where the experience will lead the subject.

WE SEE: Scenes from Johnny and Roxanne’s work life, interviewing kids.

JOHNNY (V.O.)
I can and will leave a place, a situation, a problem, but the people I interview cannot. The work offers the interviewer access and a reason to stay in a world not my own, complete distraction from my own life, a sense of invincibility, a sense on invisibility. I traffic and hope without the ability to know what will happen in the future. The work offers the subject a chance to speak of things they have never spoken of. A chance to see themselves as subjects worthy of time and attention. The work offers the subjects the creation of an image of self, the distributions of which they cannot control, on a global scale, in perpetuity.

EXT. NYC PARK- EVENING

Jesse walks with Johnny through the park. Johnny has Viv on speaker phone.

VIV (O.S.)
You let Johnny interview you yet?

JESSE
Oh god no.

VIV (O.S.)
That seems like a smart move. Too many questions with that guy right?

(MORE)
VIV (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Not enough answers. Aw, I miss you so much babe.

JESSE
I miss you too mama.

91A EXT. RESTAURANT — NIGHT
Johnny and Jesse walk into a pizza place.

92 INT. RESTAURANT — NIGHT
Jesse and Johnny sit at a counter. Jesse pulls out the recording equipment; Johnny watches, wary. Jesse puts the mic up to Johnny’s mouth.

JESSE
Can I interview you?

Unsure, but always proud of Jesse’s recording interest.

JOHNNY
Sure.

JESSE
Do you think this restaurant will be here in the future?

JOHNNY
No.

JESSE
By the end of your life, what do you think the natural world will be like?

Johnny doesn’t want to say the truth in front of Jesse.

JOHNNY
Probably, less good.

JESSE
Why?

He’s strangely not good at answering, even Jesse’s surprised.

JOHNNY
Cause, you know.

JESSE
What are you afraid of happening in the future?
JOHNNY
Lots of things.

JESSE
Why don’t you and my mom act like brother and sister?

He doesn’t answer, just looks at Jesse...

JESSE (CONT'D)
Why are you alone?

JOHNNY
You’re not my therapist.

Jesse’s stares him down. Johnny thinks he’s being very honest and revealing.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
When I’m not working, I’m not very good at talking to people, keeping up with them. And I spend my time doing my thing, which people notice, so people stop trying.

JESSE
Blah blah blah.

JOHNNY
Blah blah blah.

JESSE
Did you tell my mom to leave my dad when he first got sick?

How much to say?

JESSE (CONT'D)
Did you?

JOHNNY
I told your mom to take care of herself. She sometimes had a tendency of loving these interesting but chaotic guys. I wasn’t trying to take your mom away from your dad I was trying to take care of my sister.

Jesse’s just looking at him.
JOHNNY (CONT'D)
And your mom would say I don’t know what’s good for her, and that I turned her sadness into some scary problem just like our parents did, and Paul understood her like I never did, loved her, I don’t get him, and she’s probably right.

Older waitress comes up to them.

WAITRESS
You two guys all done here?

The waitress obviously thinks they’re so cute together.

JESSE
He’s not my dad.

Defeated.

JOHNNY
I’m his uncle. We can still be cute together.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - NIGHT

Jesse’s ahead as they walk home; Johnny’s watching him, feeling like a failure. Then, to his surprise, Jesse stops, gestures for Johnny to catch up. When he does, Jesse holds out his hand for Johnny to take – he does, not understanding, but it’s no big deal to Jesse. They walk home hand-in-hand.

CUT TO: Johnny and Jesse pretend to do professional wrestling match after shower.

INT./EXT PAUL’S HOUSE - DAY

MOS: Viv packs up a bag. See her and Paul leave the house.

VIV V.O.
Get my stuff together, just take me to the hospital, if you don’t take me I’ll run away again won’t I?

INT. ER ROOM - ROOM - DAY OR NIGHT

Viv is with Paul while he’s vitals are taken and a Medical Doctor is asking him routine questions.
DR. HARA
Hello Paul, my name is Dr. Hara. I understand you aren’t feeling well. Have you been sleeping? Have you been eating? Have you been drinking or taking drugs? I understand you have been hospitalized for bi polar before...

CUT TO: 30 minutes later. Now a ER PSYCH DOCTOR is now interviewing Paul. Doctor’s questions and Pauls IMPROV answers fade below Viv’s call sound.

DR. RAO
I understanding you were in the hospital for a manic episode several years ago, your partner Viv is reporting that you are not eating or sleeping and that you are displaying similar symptoms, is that correct? I understand you got angry the other night and were in an agitated state that scared Viv, can you tell me what happened? When was the last time you slept, how much on average have you been sleeping a night, have you been eating regularly, have you had any big changes? Have you recently lost your job or had any big shifts in your life. Have you ever hurt yourself or tried to hurt yourself before. Is there any family history of completed suicide.

VIV (V.O.)
He had to go to ER, it’s so humiliating, they just ask the same things over and over and it makes him so scared. Finally got him into the real treatment place. But no one else will visit him, I need to stay up here a few more days.

INT. RICHMOND KERR MEDICAL CENTER - PAUL’S ROOM - DAY
Nurse is going through his bags, doing contraband check and logging all his items. “No drawstrings, no clothes with logos” See Viv help Paul pull the drawstrings out of his sweatpants. “No mirrors” “Why no mirrors?” No answer.

He signs consent forms.
“No shoelaces” See Viv and Paul take shoelaces out of his shoes. “No flat irons, curling irons, no items with cords”

Someone takes phone, other things out of Paul’s bag.

No shoes with laces. No metal containers. No belts no mirrors no phone no money.

Nurse; “Bring a list of phone numbers, you can’t bring your cell phone, she can take your wallet”.

See them write down some numbers, Paul gives her his wallet and phone.

VIV (V.O.)
He wants me to stay until he’s a little better?

I can visit between 6-7
He can only call for 10 minutes a time. He’s so freaked out.

101 INT. PAUL’S HOUSE - NIGHT
Viv laying on floor, talking on phone.

VIV
Don’t want him in pain, so afraid.
I want Jesse to have his dad.

101A INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT - INTERCUT WITH VIV’S SIDE
Johnny opens his door, Jesse sleeps on his couch. He takes call in kitchen or windowsill.

JOHNNY
He’s OK here, he can stay with me.

106 EXT. DIVISION ST TRIANGLE NYC STREET - LATER
Johnny’s a little stressed on the phone with Roxeanne, Jesse’s been bugging him to go to the park for a while now.

JESSE
Johnny, Johnny, Johnny. Let’s go to the park.

JOHNNY
What? Every time you say my name it just means you want something.
JESSE (CONT'D)
Get off the phone.

JOHNNY
Hang on a fucking second OK? (teasing) Hang on a fucking a
Just let me finish this call. second?

ROXANNE
He gets away from Jesse. Jesse begins to play with sound
recording in Division street triangle, many people milling
about heading to work. We stay close on Johnny on the phone.

ROXANNE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  JOHNNY (CONT'D)
They want the South, or This’s such bad timing...
something rural.

ROXANNE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I know an amazing person in New
Orleans. She could hook us up with
some kids there.

Johnny turns and doesn’t see Jesse. Concerned but also
thinking maybe Jesse’s just hiding from him again, doesn’t
want to be fooled like at the pharmacy. He starts looking,
heading towards Seward Park, but stays on the phone...

JOHNNY
Fuck, do we need to add in another
city? We have good stuff, and I got
Jesse.

As Johnny gets increasingly worried, walking towards the
park, getting up to a trot. Does he call out once, “Jesse
stop hiding”.

ROXANNE
This is a great opportunity. This
is good news.

JOHNNY
Can you just go?

ROXANNE
Uhm, we said we’d do this together?

He’s now fully worried, can’t find Jesse.

JOHNNY
Rox, I have to go....

He runs back from the corner of Essex towards the Division
triangle. He gets there now Jesse.
He heads west on Canal looking, no Jesse.
He see’s Jesse across the street.

JOHNNY RUNS ACROSS THE STREET.

JUST AFTER HE DOES A BUS PULLS INTO BUST STOP, JUST UP THE BLOCK FROM JOHNNY AND JESSE.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Jesse.


JESSE

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Where’d you go?! I was right there.

They dodge in and out of people as they argue.

JESSE IS HEADING TOWARDS THE STATIONARY BUS WHICH LANDED JUST UP THE BLOCK.

JESSE (CONT'D)

No you weren’t.

JOHNNY

I was right there on the phone and I said gimme me a second and I turned around and you ran off.

JESSE

You lost me!

JOHNNY

JESSE (CONT'D)

I didn’t. You did.

THE BUS DOORS OPEN, PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO COME OUT.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I’M SORRY IF I LOST YOU. I WAS TRYING TO FUCKING TAKE CARE OF THINGS.

JESSE HEADS UP THE BLOCK INTO THE CROWD OF PEOPLE GETTING OFF THE BUS. JESSE’S HEADING TOWARDS THE DOOR OF THE BUS.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
DO YOU KNOW HOW IMPOSSIBLE YOU ARE? YOU ARE OUT OF CONTROL AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW OUT OF CONTROL.

Jesse’s squirms away, pushes through crowd away from Johnny, onto the bus.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Hey! Come back.

Jesse doesn’t, Johnny follows him onto the bus. The doors close behind him. Jesse sits, Johnny sits next to him.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Why did you do that?

Jesse doesn’t answer at first, then.

JESSE
I don’t know.

Johnny’s a little out of his mind.

JESSE (CONT'D)
I don’t need you.

JOHNNY
I lost you. You understand I’m responsible for you? That could’ve been really really bad. Do you understand?

JESSE
I don’t need you.

JOHNNY
You so need me. (Your mom so needs you).

Nothing from Jesse. Johnny feels bad.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
I’m sorry I lost you.

Nothing from Jesse.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Could you say you’re sorry?

JESSE
My head wants to apologize but my body doesn’t.
Johnny’s impressed, but wonders if he can really take care of this kid.

108  INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Johnny away from Jesse in a room, pacing, disturbed.

      JOHNNY
      I lost him. It was terrifying. I
      get he was mad at me, but to walk
      off into the city, get on a fucking
      bus? (That’s insane?!)  

      VIV (V.O.)
      He’s a kid, you’re the adult and
      you said you’d take care of him.

108A  INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT / EXT. PARKED CAR NEAR PAUL’S – NIGHT

Johnny’s torn up, on phone with Viv.

      JOHNNY
      I know.

Viv hears his pain, understanding, but also exhausted.

      VIV
      Jesse’s feeling things are really
      out of control, right? This
      situation really is out of control,
      and he’s saying in his kid way,
      ‘I’m feeling out of control – can
      you handle how out of control I am?
      Am I gonna be OK? Even if I hide?
      Even if I jump on this bus? Is
      everything gonna be OK? Can you
      handle it? Can you handle me??’

      JOHNNY
      I yelled at him Viv.

      VIV
      I’ve done that. It’s horrible,
      right?

Johnny thinks he’s seeing himself clearly now.

      JOHNNY
      I’m in this fantasy I’ve got it
      under control.
VIV
Everyone fucks up, you just admit
it to him and explain your needs
and feelings and what happened.
(It’s called doing a ‘repair’, look
it up).

JOHNNY
What if I can’t?
She’d crack?

VIV
OK, so you thought you were the
hero and now it’s rough and so
you’re gonna bail?

JOHNNY
I came to see you.
She can’t even really talk to him if he’s gonna pull that?

VIV
And you got Jesse who’s so much
sweeter.

INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT – NIGHT
Johnny documents recent events into his recorder.

JOHNNY
I ran up and down the street
calling out his name. I saw him
from across the street as a bus
crossed in front of me. I ran
towards him, screaming out his name
– “JESSE.” He was mad at me. He was
scared. He turned and walked away
and got onto a bus. I don’t like
feeling this, but I feel like he’s
spoiled. Or I am.

INT. JOHNNY’S BEDROOM – EARLY MORNING
Johnny is packing Jesse’s bag. Jesse won’t help, won’t look
at him. Johnny has resigned himself, is going through with
this. Johnny takes Jesse’s bag and his bag to the door.

CUT TO: Johnny’s returned, Jesse still lying on the bed, not
moving. Johnny lays next to him on the bed.
JESSE
I can’t believe you’re doing this.

JOHNNY
I’m sorry. You didn’t do anything wrong. It’s not your fault. I’m not able to take care of you, in the right way. As soon as I’m done with work I’ll come to LA. We can do whatever you want. I’d love to do that.

Jesse just stares him down.

110
EXT. NYC STREETS

Johnny and Jesse in back seat of a cab.

Long moment, Jesse maybe sneaking peaks at Johnny.

Silent, Jesse more and more angry at Johnny. Johnny determined.

JESSE
My stomach hurts.

JOHNNY
Yeah?

He doesn’t answer for a bit...

JESSE
Yes. I have to go poop I think.

JOHNNY
Really?

JESSE
Like now.

JOHNNY
You can’t wait?

JESSE
No.

110A
EXT. RESTAURANT ON BROADWAY ON THE WAY TO JFK – DAY

The cab pulls over next to a restaurant.

Johnny asks the cab driver to wait and takes Jesse inside.
Johnny and Jesse enter the empty restaurant. Johnny asks someone working there where the bathroom is. They get pointed to the back.

Jesse enters a stall. Johnny waits outside the door. After a beat.

    JOHNNY
    You okay?

    JESSE
    No.

    JOHNNY
    Okay, well hurry up because we gotta go to the airport.

    JESSE
    No.

    JOHNNY
    What?

On Jesse in bathroom.

    JOHNNY (CONT'D)
    Are you going poop?

    JESSE
    No.

    JOHNNY
    Do you even have to go to the bathroom? (No response.) Huh?

On Johnny in restaurant.

    JOHNNY (CONT'D)
    Ohh, you got me, you got me. You got me, you... All right, fun time’s over, let’s go, time to come out.

    JESSE
    No.

    JOHNNY
    Jesse, come out right now.

    JESSE
    No.

Cut to inside bathroom.
JESSE (CONT'D)
I want to stay with you. I’m sorry
I hid on the street. I heard you
talking on the phone, you can’t
just take care of me. I’m sorry
Johnny. I’m sorry I hid, I’m sorry
I ran onto the bus. I AM sorry. I
don’t want to go home. My mom’s
just gonna be sad about my dad –
and my dad’s not even there.

110C EXT. RESTAURANT ON WAY TO JFK
Johnny runs back outside to the cab, pays the driver and
brings their bags into the restaurant.

112 INT. RESTAURANT/I/E MEDICAL CENTER - INTERCUT
CUT TO: Jesse sitting at a table happily eating something.
Johnny’s away from him, in a dance floor area on phone with
Viv.

JOHNNY
I think he should come with me.

DOES? Johnny walks the phone to Jesse, he turns away to talk
with his mom. On Johnny’s face watching the call happen.

114 EXT DRONE OR DRIVING SHOT - DAY
We fly up Mississippi, or over the city, we arrive in NOLA.
V.O. Interviews with kids from New Orleans.

INT. NEW ORELANS KID’S HOME - DAY
We see Johnny interviewing.

115 EXT/INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - DAY
Jump cuts: Johnny, Jesse, Rox and Fern arrive.
They are greeted by Johnny and Rox’s friend, SUNNI. They’re
all staying at Sunni’s they find where they’ll crash.
Jesse explores, unpacks, does some of his Orphan routine.
INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - JOHNNY AND JESSE’S ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

JOHNNY WORKS WITH ROX AND FERN, SUNNI TELLS THEM ABOUT NOLA. JESSE LYING BORED ON THE FLOOR IN HIS ROOM, BIG HEADPHONES ON, LISTENING TO NUTCRACKER/MOZART.

INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - JOHNNY AND JESSE’S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Johnny and Jesse are on their beds. Johnny’s reading from his laptop.

JOHNNY
How this happens will depend on your personality, as some people prefer to talk... Calmly invite your child to hear you out. You can try, (Johnny acts this out to Jesse) “Hey, I made a mistake and would like to talk to you about that. May I come in?”

JESSE
Sure.

Johnny goes between reading and performing to Jesse. Comes over to Jesse’s bed, they’re side by side now.

JOHNNY
Try something like... “Did you feel scared when I shouted?” “Did you feel like I let you down when I was going to take you home?”

JESSE
I did.

JOHNNY
Yeah. Then I say, “I feel badly about how I behaved. Are you feeling mad at me? It’s okay if you are. I’d like to hear whatever you’re feeling and thinking.”

JESSE
I thought were being a pain in the ass.

JOHNNY
Right. (Then back to reading) “I am feeling very - use a feeling word...”
Johnny thinks about what he’s feeling. Jesse’s getting more and more into this, leaning into Johnny.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
Shitty, Stupid, out of touch. Sad.
“Share with your child what you were feeling and what you needed.”
I was overwhelmed. When I lost you I thought something horrible was gonna happen to you, and I couldn’t handle that?

JESSE
What did you need?

JOHNNY
I needed to be in control.

Back to reading.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
“Don’t defend yourself with phrases like ‘but you were acting crazy’” – right, my mom was really good at doing that.

JESSE
My mom doesn’t do that.

JOHNNY
“Then, from the bottom of your heart, look your child in the eye, and say you are sorry.”

Johnny is surprised – that hits in the heart.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
I’m really sorry, Jesse – I didn’t know what to do.

JESSE
It’s OK.

JOHNNY
Your mom does all this?

JESSE
Yeah. But she doesn’t read it from a computer.
NT. SUNNI’S HOUSE – JOHNNY AND JESSE’S ROOM – A LITTLE LATER

CUT TO: The room is now dark, then Jesse turns on the light, waking Johnny up. “Turn off the light, Jesse.”

Jesse can’t sleep – IMPROV: continues to talk about something in granular detail. Johnny tries to get him back into bed, but Jesse keeps talking.

JESSE
Can I be the orphan now?

JOHNNY
Sure.

He takes a moment to change... He’s a little different somehow.

JESSE
Is it OK if I sleep with you?

JOHNNY
Sure.

He snuggles with Johnny.

JESSE
Is there anything about my past you’d like to ask me?

JOHNNY
What was your mom like?

He thinks for a beat then begins...

JESSE
She was very nice.

JOHNNY
Really – you remember her?

153 INT. VIV’S HOUSE – BATHROOM

CUT TO BATHROOM: VIV READING IN BATH.

JESSE (V.O.)
She liked baths. She’d act like she never got to take one even though she took them all the time.
INT. VIV’S HOUSE - KITCHEN

CUT TO KITCHEN: VIV CLEANING AS SHE LISTENS TO A PODCAST.

JESSE (V.O.)
When she got home after work she’d always say ‘OK time to clean up’ and she’d clean the kitchen, and the rest of the house all bangy loud. And I’d say, ‘why are you so loud are you mad??’ And she’d say, ‘I’m not loud.’

INT. VIV’S OFFICE

CUT TO: Viv writes at her office.

JESSE (V.O.)
She wrote books. Fiction and Non-Fiction.

INT. VIV’S OFFICE - DAY

CUT TO: Jesse sits on the couch, Viv sings.

JESSE (V.O.)
She’s always singing old songs from when she was a kid.

INT. VIV’S HOUSE - JESSE’S ROOM - NIGHT

CUT TO: Viv helps Jesse get ready for bed.

JESSE (V.O.)
She thought about weird things.

Viv kind of feeling the air?

VIV
All the things that have ever been said in this house? All the families that lived here before us. Can you feel them? All the loves and hatreds and confusions, people’s big dreams and hopes and all that? All the things that happened on this piece of land - good things, bad things - some people can feel that. Can you feel it?
INT. VIV’S SMALLER CLASSROOM
CUT TO: Viv teaches a seminar style class with a few students.

JESSE (V.O.)
She taught her classes.

INT. PAUL’S HOUSE - NIGHT
CUT TO: Viv eats a steak.

JESSE (V.O.)
When she was stressed out, she would just cook herself a big steak. And just eat it.

INT. VIV’S HOUSE
CUT TO HOUSE: VIV LAUGHS WITH FRIENDS.

JESSE (V.O.)
She loved hanging out with her friends.

INT. VIV’S HOUSE
CUT TO: Jesse and Viv having Saturday morning Mozart listening party.

JESSE (V.O.)
She says, she’ll never know everything about me, and I’ll never know everything about her, that’s just the way it is.

EXT. 7TH WARD KID INTERVIEW HOME / RENTAL VAN - DAY
IMPROV: Johnny gets Jesse and Fern set up with art supplies, headphones in rental minivan.

INT/EXT. 7TH WARD KID INTERVIEW HOME - LATER
INSIDE: Johnny and Roxanne interview a kid.

IMPROV: DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR HOMES. BEING INTERVIEWED BY JOHNNY AND ROXANNE.
Q: DO YOU FEEL LIKE ADULTS UNDERSTAND WHAT KIDS ARE GOING THROUGH?

Q: YOU SAID THIS WAS ONE OF THE HARDEST HIT AREAS OF KATRINA, WHAT ARE THE STORIES YOU’VE HEARD?

INTERCUT WITH OUTSIDE: Jesse is already a bit bored, explores outside the car, headphones on. Fern is busy, watching Jesse while on phone arranging other interviews.

MAYBE Jesse comes to the house, looks through open door, or window? Watches Johnny interview from a distance – that’s also boring.

130 INT. 2ND KID INTERVIEW HOME – SAME DAY

New home, ROXEANNE AND SUNNI interviews a new kid.

131 INT. SCHOOL / COMMUNITY CENTER NEAR CITY PARK – LATER SAME DAY

Roxanne interviews a kid.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENS TO YOU AFTER YOU DIE?

INT. SCHOOL / COMMUNITY CENTER NEAR CITY PARK

Johnny, feeling rushed, checks on Jesse and Fern between interviews.

132 INT. SCHOOL / COMMUNITY CENTER NEAR CITY PARK – LATER

In a room Johnny does an interview.

Q: DO YOU THINK THAT THE WORLD IS FAIR?

INT. KID INTERVIEW HOME – DAY

Suni and Johnny interview a kid.


130 INT. NEW KID INTERVIEW HOME – SAME DAY

Suni and Roxanne interview a new kid at the dining table.
Q: SAY IF YOUR PARENTS WERE YOUR CHILDREN, WHAT’S SOMETHING YOU WOULD WANT THEM TO LEARN?

INT. HOMMER PLESSY CLASSROOM

Johnny sits with a kid in classroom.

Q: IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOURSELF, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

136 INT. HALLWAY OR ADJOINING ROOM AT HOMER PLESSY 136

Johnny exits the room, exhausted from interviews, finds Jesse - eating snacks and reading a book with Fern

    JOHNNY
    Thank you.

It went great, but Johnny’s more in touch with the costs.

    FERN
    Go good? Good stuff?

    JOHNNY
    Yeah, really good. You guys OK?

Johnny notices that Jesse looks upset, spent, he’s cried?

    FERN
    We’re doing better, he ran out of snacks, and the iPad battery died. Some tears were shed, we went to the bookstore and got some snacks.

    JESSE
    I’m sorry.

    JOHNNY
    Fuck, I’m sorry. I should’ve planned better.

    JESSE
    Don’t cuss.

Johnny sits down next to Jesse, hugs him. Fern lets them be.

    JOHNNY
    You OK?

    JESSE
    Can you finish this?
Johnny sits down next to him, gets the book, begins reading "Star Child". Jesse slowly, unconsciously leans into him.

JOHNNY
To visit planet earth you will have
to be born as a human child.

INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - JOHNNY AND JESSE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Johnny’s reading to Jesse, side-by-side in bed.

JOHNNY
At first you will have to learn to
use your new body to move your arms
and legs, and to pull yourself
upright.

CREDIT SUPERS “STAR CHILD BY CLAIRE A. NIVOLA”

We see scenes from Jesse and Johnny’s time together, moments
we haven’t seen in the film so far, moments the audience
missed.

JOHNNY (V.O.)
You will learn to run, to use your
hands, to make sounds and form
words. Slowly you will learn to
take care of yourself. Here it is
still and peaceful but there
the colors, sensations and sounds
will wash over you constantly.
You will see so many living things-
plants and animals beyond
imagining! Here it is always
the same, but there, everything is
in motion. Everything is always
changing. You will be plunged into
earth’s river of time. There will
be so much for you to learn and so
much for you to feel – pleasure and
fear; joy and disappointment;
sadness and wonder. In your
confusion and delight you will
forget where you came from. You
will grow up, travel, work, perhaps
have children of your own.
INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE – JOHNNY AND JESSE’S BEDROOM – NIGHT

JOHNNY
Over the years you will try to make sense of that happy sad full empty always shifting life you are in. And when the time comes to return to your star, it may be hard to say goodbye to that strangely beautiful world.


JESSE
You crying?

Yes.

JOHNNY
It’s true, we forget, we forget everything.

JESSE
No we don’t – you do.

JOHNNY
You’ll barely remember all this. You’ll have like a few blurry memories of this whole trip.

JESSE
That’s stupid.

Fake Italian.

JOHNNY
Ti amo, scimmia.

Jesse turns away. CU on his face – worried.

145 INT. FRIENDS’ HOUSE – BATHROOM – NIGHT

JESSE BRUSHES TEETH WITH ELECTRONIC BRUSH. JOHNNY NONPLUSED.

162A INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE – BATHROOM – NIGHT / INT. PAUL’S KITCHEN

JOHNNY
* So you eat steaks now? Didn’t you * used to give mom all kinds of shit * for that?
VIV
He needs to learn how to keep
secrets. What are you still doing
up?

JOHNNY
I’m so exhausted but I can’t sleep,
haven’t slept right in days. I lay
in bed thinking of all the things I
have to do for him tomorrow.

He knows she knows, they connect over this.

VIV
Oh yes, I know that one.

JOHNNY
Taking care of him and working at
the same time is, as you know, like
a little much - and I promised we’d
go to a parade Sunni told us about.

VIV
JOHNNY (CONT’D)
That’ll be fun. Yeah, super fun, restful.

VIV (CONT’D)
You’re doing great.

EXT. NOLA PARADE STREETS - DAY

CUT TO: A BIG, ROWDY PARADE OF SOME KIND. CHANTING, DRUMMING,
SOME PEOPLE DANCING IN A CIRCLE WITH HORNS. TWO HUNDRED
PEOPLE. JUBILANT CHAOS.

FIND: Jesse and Johnny in the throng. Jesse’s recording,
getting bounced around, shouting along, they’re both loving
it. Johnny’s laughing, taken by Jesse’s bravery and that he
loves recording everything.

INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT / INT. PAUL’S KITCHEN - NIGHT

JOHNNY
Thanks. You know he keeps asking me
why we stopped talking.

VIV
I like this kid. What did you say?

JOHNNY
Apparently some bullshit.
EXT. NOLA PARADE STREETS - DAY

Jesse grabs Johnny’s hand and pulls him deeper into the crowd. Phones videoing in front of lens. LOUD OVERWHELMING DRUMS AND THROBBING CROWD.

MOMENTS LATER: The parade has intensified. JOHNNY, SWEATING, PICKS UP JESSE IN THE DENSE CROWD, CARRIES HIM PIGGY BACK.

INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT / INT. PAUL’S KITCHEN - NIGHT

VIV
He didn’t let you get away with that did he?

JOHNNY
No.

VIV
Tell him the truth.

How? Grasping, this all spills out quick, laughing at himself, the impossibility of the situation, laughter mixed with real confusion and vulnerability. She might laugh but spiked with real hurt and anger at some of the points...

JOHNNY
To your 9 year old? OK, sure, but what? What was it? Which thing? I messed up with you and Paul? I got in the middle of something I didn’t understand? That part?

VIV
That’s good. That’s a good place to start.

JOHNNY
Or when mom died? And we got into all that weird shit when mom died? Is that it?

VIV
You mean the weird shit of our entire lives?

JOHNNY
(Yeah) Our entire lives.

VIV
Yeah we got into that...
JOHNNY
And then Luisa left me and the
space ship exploded.

VIV
You know that’s the first time you
said that.

JOHNNY
Which part?

VIV
All of it.

VIV (CONT’D)
I was so mad at you.
I get especially mad at you don’t
I?

JOHNNY
Yeah.

VIV
I’m so sorry Luisa left. Maybe I
never said that.

JOHNNY
It’s been a long year.

VIV
I know.

Surprises himself.

JOHNNY
I like taking care of Jesse. I like
being with him, watching his face,
wanting what he’s thinking.

163      EXT. NOLA PARADE STREETS – DAY

Dancing, chanting with Jesse on his back, he’s starting to
look a bit crazed, or exhausted, or something. In the dense
crowd he suddenly falters, starts coming down to the ground.

JESSE
Keep going?!

JOHNNY
One sec.
Johnny has to stop, let Jesse down - when he goes to stand up, he crumples down on himself - is he passed out? Forearms, knees, head on the ground.

JESSE
JOHNNY! JOHNNY!

JOHNNY’S NOT RESPONDING. MIXTURE OF VOICES “JOHNNY! - HELP HIM UP - IS HE OK? - ARE YOU WITH HIM?”

CUT TO: Johnny, half sitting up, eyes crushed closed, blinding headache, not moving. People around him - Jesse’s by his side - confusion - all very fast.

JOHNNY
Jesse? Jesse? You here?

JESSE
Johnny!

JOHNNY Bystander 1
I’m OK, I’m OK. Is this your dad?

Jesse looks at that question, intense. More gather around.

JESSE Bystander
Johnny?! You OK man? Anyone call 911?

Eyes still closed.

JOHNNY
No. I’m fine.

Bystander 3
Let him sit up.

His denials just make Jesse more aggravated. Johnny tries to get up. Dizzy, piercing headache. Tries to get away from Jesse - Johnny throws up.

JESSE
You fainted!

JOHNNY
No, I’m fine.

Johnny on ground.

INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - LATER

Jesse follows Johnny down hall towards their room.
Pink Rev. (mm/dd/yy) 70.

JESSE
We should call Roxanne.

JOHNNY
It’s not that big a deal.

JESSE
You fainted.

166 INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE – JOHNNY AND JESSE’S ROOM 166
Johnny lays down on the bed, Jesse watches him, mad at him.
Johnny looks at Jesse for a while, something changing inside.

JOHNNY
O.K. I fainted.

JESSE
Yeah.

JOHNNY
And I threw up.

They share a look.

JOHNNY (CONT’D)
That must’ve been scary.

JESSE
I was fine.

JOHNNY
Really? I blacked out. You were alone. You weren’t fine, I wasn’t fine.

JESSE
Well yeah.

Avoiding, like something he’s memorized, performed before – he mimes out all the gestures listed.

JESSE (CONT’D)
We have a zone of resiliency. When you are out of your zone you can meditate, think about something that brings you joy. If you’re stressed out you can use some of these techniques; tapping shoulders, rock tossing. Finger touching. Mindful breathing.

(MORE)
Pink Rev. (mm/dd/yy) 71.

JESSE (CONT'D)
(demonstrates) Or, like an animal -
you can shake it off...

Jesse shakes it off.

JOHNNY
That’s amazing.

Jesse leans into Johnny. Johnny’s moved by this closeness.
Does he say, or just feel...

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Do you think we’re similar?

JESSE
Oh my god - no.

166A INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE – JOHNNY AND JESSE’S BEDROOM – DAY 166A

AFTER ZONE OF RESILIENCY SCENE

CU on Jesse, DAY.

Johnny is asleep, Jesse sitting against the bed or in bed,
studies a listen to Johnny’s interviews and then makes a recording.

JESSE
(Imitating Johnny) Do you ever
think about the future?
Uh, yeah. But whatever you planned
on happening, that doesn’t happen.
Other stuff you never thought of
happens. So just - c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon.

Johnny Johnny Johnny. Johnny,
Johnny, Johnny. Johnny, Johnny,
Johnny.

173 EXT. CITY PARK – PERISTYLE – DAY 173

Johnny and Jesse make their way across the Peristyle.

INT/EXT – CHEAT FOR TREATMENT CENTER – DAY

Viv is on the phone.
VIV
He slept for two nights in a row. He seems to be responding to the new meds. I just talked to his doctor, and he thinks he’s ready for outpatient care. He said he can go home.

JOHNNY
He did?

VIV
Yeah.

JOHNNY
How are you? Are you doing all right?

VIV
I don’t know, yeah.

JOHNNY
You want to tell Jesse now?

VIV
Yeah, thanks. Thank you.

JOHNNY
I loved it.

He gives the phone back to Jesse.

JESSE
Hey.

VIV
Hi, sweetie, how are you?

JESSE
I’m good.

VIV
Oh, good. So listen, your dad’s doing so much better. The doctors are gonna keep helping him, but they thought he was well enough to go home. So, I’m gonna come get you, okay? I’m just driving Moses home and then I’m gonna be on the first flight out tomorrow. Ugh, I’m so excited, I can’t wait to see you.

(MORE)
Pink Rev. (mm/dd/yy) 73.

VIV (CONT'D)
Jesse? Jesse, sweetie, are you okay? Jesse?

174  EXT. CITY PARK / COUTURIE FOREST - AFTERNOON  174

Afternoon light. Johnny and Jesse cross a bridge into a more wild area, Jesse's ahead still brewing, mysterious, Johnny trying to figure out how to help. Does Jesse blast music in his headphones?

RS175  EXT. NOLA CITY PARK - DAY  RS175

They come to a new section of park. Maybe Johnny "Hey wait up?"

JESSE
Why are you following me?

A long dark look from Jesse. Johnny waits it out.

JESSE (CONT'D)
He’s always gonna be like this, isn’t he?

JOHNNY
I don’t really know. I’m so sorry you have to think about that.

JESSE
He’ll never be a normal dad.

JOHNNY
Your dad’s an awesome guy, he just can’t always take care of himself. But he loves you. I know that.

JESSE
I’m fine.

JOHNNY
You can be not fine.

JESSE
I’m fine.

JOHNNY
(Okay, when you’re out of your zone of resiliency) You can be not fine, you can be angry, confused, sad, lost and it’ll be okay.

(MORE)
JOHNNY (CONT’D)
You can like kick the air, you can
throw a fit (does?), you can yell
(does?), and you’ll be okay. It’s a
totally reasonable response.

JESSE
I’m fine.

JOHNNY
I AM NOT FINE AND THAT’S A TOTALLY
REASONABLE RESPONSE!

Still resisting, but Jesse’s matching Johnny’s intensity.

JESSE
I’M FINE!!!

JOHNNY
YOU ARE NOT FINE AND THAT’S TOTALLY
REASONABLE! - C’mon.

JESSE
AHHHHHH.

Johnny gives him a look, C’mon C’mon.

JESSE (CONT’D)
I’M NOT FINE AND THAT’S A TOTALLY
REASONABLE RESPONSE!

JOHNNY
THIS IS FUCKED UP AND THAT MAKES
SENSE!

JESSE
THIS IS FUCKED UP AND THAT MAKES
SENSE!

JOHNNY
(yells)

JESSE
(yells)

JOHNNY
(yells differently)

JESSE
YELLS
(yells differently)

Does Jesse end up on the ground? Johnny tries to get him to
go, “C’mon, time to go”. 
Johnny offers his back for a ride.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Are you going to faint?

JOHNNY
No, I got my finger touching, my rock tossing...

Jesse gets on and they start walking.

176  EXT. NEW PART OF TRAIL

Jesse rides on Johnny’s back.

JESSE
Do you think I’m like, half my mom and half my dad?

JOHNNY
I think you’re also half just yourself – stuff that’s not from either of your parents, that’s from wherever that comes from.

JESSE
That’s three halves.

JOHNNY
I know.

JESSE
Do you think I’ll be like him?

Johnny’s trying to figure out what to say.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Do you?

JOHNNY
No.

JESSE
Why not?

JOHNNY
Your mom. Your mom’s not like that. She’s helped you figure out what you’re really feeling, so you’re way ahead of the game. You’re lucky you got her.
Pink Rev. (mm/dd/yy) 76.

JESSE
Do you think later I won’t know him anymore?

JOHNNY
That’s such a sad thought Jesse. I just don’t think that’s gonna happen.

But he doesn’t know for sure.

The stuff you love about him, I think you get to keep that.

JESSE
Blah blah blah.

JOHNNY
Blah blah blah.

JESSE
Be funny - comma - when you can - period.

JOHNNY
He says that?

JESSE
Yeah.

JOHNNY
That’s very funny.

181 EXT. SUNNI’S HOUSE – DAY

Wide shot, a cab pulls up. Viv gets out and we see Jesse run to her; Viv and Jesse hug and reunite.

Johnny watches from a distance.

Then Viv walks to him, we’re not sure what will happen, but they hug, first time we see them hug.

182 EXT. NOLA SPOT ‘THE END OF THE WORLD’ – DAY

Johnny, Jesse, Viv, Rox, Fern and Sunni all walk out to the Mississippi river. Maybe have a picnic?

IMPROV: They eat and talk, Johnny on the other side of the table from them, watching them eat off the same plate, how Jesse unconsciously leans on her. There’s still some tension in the air, but they’re hanging out.
EXT. SUNNI’S HOUSE

Johnny gets Jesse’s bag and walks them to waiting taxi/car. They’ve become nervous around saying goodbye. Why does it all of a sudden feel so strange for all of them?

JOHNNY
Plenty of snacks with protein, he only gets to watch screens for one hour on Saturday and Sunday,

Viv hugs Johnny.

VIV
I love you.

JOHNNY
I love you.

Johnny goes to say goodbye to Jesse, who’s all cranked up and excited. They look at each other, the kids knows it’s supposed to be gushy moment.

JESSE
Blah, blah, blah.

Johnny smiles, but is already sad this is over.

JOHNNY
Blah, blah, blah.

Jesse gets in, and the car heads out – he’s gone.

EXT. NYC STREET JOHNNY’S NEIGHBORHOOD – DAY

VERY WIDE SHOT of Johnny, walking with his bags.

EXT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT – DAY

Johnny heads up the stairs to his building.

WE HEAR: Jesse’s recording from New Orleans.

INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT – DAY

Johnny’s listening to Jesse’s recordings on his computer.

JESSE (O.S.)
Have you ever nought about the future? Uh, yeah.

(MORE)
Pink Rev. (mm/dd/yy) 78.

JESSE (O.S.) (CONT’D)
But whatever you planned on
happening, that doesn’t happen.
Other stuff you never thought of
happens.

So just - c’mon, c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon, c’mon,
c’mon, c’mon, c’mon.

Johnny Johnny Johnny. Johnny,
Johnny, Johnny. Johnny, Johnny,
Johnny.

Johnny’s surprised and moved to hear this?!

167 INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - JOHNNY AND JESSE’S ROOM - NIGHT 167

CUT TO: Johnny is asleep, Jesse is on the floor, talking into
recording equipment.

JESSE
Johnny is a bit strange. He’s
really fun. He makes me laugh. He’s
really funny when he wrestles. He
might be my best friend. Because he
only has two friends. But he might
be might best friend. I don’t know.

Blah blah blah blah blah blah.

193 INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT - DAY 193

Johnny paces in his apartment. HEAR THE AMBIENT SOUNDS FROM
THE TRIP PLAYING on speakers. He gets his microphone and
begins to record.

JOHNNY
Blah blah blah blah blah...

194 INT. VIV’S HOUSE - JESSE’S BEDROOM 194

Jesse is listening to Johnny’s recording, Moses beside him -
either on big headphones or laptop speakers.

JOHNNY (O.S.)
Hey Jesse, this is Mozart, you’re
intense and overly emotional uncle.

(MORE)
JOHNNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
When I woke up, you were blairing
crazy opera music. I was surprised
your mom had left. But you didn’t
seem bothered by it. You just
pretty much accepted me.

CUT TO: MOMENTS WHILE JOHNNY THINKS OF WHAT TO SAY: pacing,
lying on couch, looking out window. MIX SOUND WITH: Waves of
Jesse’s ambient recordings. WE’LL FADE IN AND OUT OF THESE
MEMORIES.

197 INT. VIV’S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Jesse sits, big headphones on, listening.

    JOHNNY (V.O.)
    I showed you my recorder but you
didn’t want to be interviewed. You
recorded the beach, sounds of the
city...

205 INT. RESTAURANT (SAME AS SC. 92)

CUT TO: Johnny, Roxanne, and Fernando working.

    JOHNNY (V.O.)
    I had to go back to New York, and I
asked you to come with me...

196 EXT. JOHNNY’S STREET

Johnny walking down busy street.

    JOHNNY (V.O.)
    ...and you just said - I’d love
that.

INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT - DAY

Johnny continues recording his message.

    JOHNNY
    And you couldn’t sleep and you were
talking a mile a minute and you had
so many things to say...

207 INT. VIV’S HOUSE - BATHROOM

CUT TO: Jesse and Viv in bathroom, Viv giving him a bath.
200  INT. VIV’S HOUSE - KITCHEN

CUT TO: Jesse and Viv eating dinner together.

      JOHNNY (V.O.)
       ...and I could never actually stop
you, and I kept trying, and I wish
I wouldn’t have. I want to hear all
your crazy thoughts and cool
Ideas...

178  INT. SUNNI’S HOUSE - JOHNNY AND JESSE’S ROOM - NIGHT

      JOHNNY (V.O.)
       ...And then we were in bed and you
asked:

      JESSE
       Are you gonna remember any of this?

      JOHNNY                              JESSE (CONT’D)
       What?                                  You said you won’t.

      JOHNNY (CONT’D)
       I said you won’t - I’ll remember
this, believe me.

Jesse’s disturbed, confused, afraid.

      JESSE
       I won’t remember?

201  INT. VIV’S HOUSE - VIV’S BEDROOM

CUT TO: Viv’s house now Viv and Jesse are listening to the
tape. CU ON VIV, TAKING IT ALL IN.

      JOHNNY (V.O.)
       ...and I said I hope you do...

193  INT. JOHNNY’S APARTMENT – DAY

Johnny recording.

      ...and you got so upset,
so I said, I’d remind you of
everything.

CUT TO BLACK - KIDS VOICES CONTINUE TO BUILD, A SEA OF VOICES
THAT CARRY US INTO CREDITS.