NOCTURNA

WRITTEN BY ZAK ZAIDI & CARL COETZEE

We hear the sound of a light breeze, birds are chirping, the leaves rustling in the wind.

1. EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD, DAY

1

The streets are empty as YOUNG MATTHEW and YOUNG BRIAN ride their bikes lazily through their quiet, shaded suburb in the distance.

We see our young protagonist's eyes as he rides.

MATCH CUT ON EYES TO:

2. INT. OFFICE BUILDING, DAY

2

A telephone rings, waking MATTHEW (20s) from a lurid daydream. He is unkempt -- messy hair, tattered uniform, dark circles under his eyes. Matthew looks over at the phone for a a moment before looking back towards the window he is cleaning. He slips back into his daydream.

3. INTERCUT - EXT. SUBURBAN NBHD/INT. OFFICE BUILDING, DAY

3

The two young boys ride their bikes down the shaded street. Young Brian grips his handlebars as he rides, and we see his hand.

Back at the office, Matthew pushes the cleaning cart down a long, winding hallway. His movements are slow, distracted.

The boys begin biking faster and faster, gaining dangerous speeds. Suddenly, one of the boys falls over.

At the office, Matthew accidentally knocks over a trashcan, spilling balled-up papers across the floor. He bends over to sweep up the mess, looking down.

We see Young Brian sprawled out on the ground, covered in scratches and bruises. Scarlet, shining blood coats his hand. Our young protagonist looks down at his brother before looking up at something offscreen.

Matthew is kneeling over, still cleaning up the spill, as MR. STEVENS (50s) approaches. He is wearing a gray jumpsuit, sporting slightly greasy hair and light stubble from his last shave.

MR. STEVENS (O.S.)

Matthew? Matthew?

4. INT. OFFICE BUILDING, DAY

Matthew kneels over the dustbin with a blank stare on his face as his boss, MR. STEVENS, walks up.

MR. STEVENS

You know we can't pay you overtime, right?

MATTHEW

(looking up)

Huh?

MR. STEVENS

Your shift ended twenty minutes ago.

MATTHEW

Oh. Right.

A beat passes as Matthew looks at his watch. He gets up to leave.

MR. STEVENS

Hey -- are you all right?

MATTHEW

What?

MR. STEVENS

(gesturing towards the floor) You missed some.

MATTHEW

Oh.

Matthew, embarrassed, finishes sweeping up the mess on the floor before getting up and pushing the cart back up the hallway. As he leaves, Stevens turns towards him.

MR. STEVENS

Matt?

Matthew turns back towards Stevens, a vacant stare on his face.

MR. STEVENS

Take care of yourself, alright?

Matthew gives a silent nod and walks away.

J-CUT TO:

We hear a light hum from the car as Matthew drives down a series of back roads. Music crackles faintly from the radio, and the wind laps at the open window.

As he drives, the light in the car begins to change. Matthew looks up.

Through the sun roof of his car, Matthew sees a daylight sky with beautiful green trees passing overhead. The same trees from the dream. All of the diegetic noise in the scene fades as we begin to hear birds chirping in the distance.

J-CUT TO:

6. EXT. SCENIC OVERLOOK, SUNRISE

6

Matthew smokes a cigarette as he watches the sun rise from his car. Weary, he wears a look of jaded exhaustion.

7. INT. HAZEL'S HOUSE, DAY

7

The sun shines faintly through the thin drapes as Matthew walks into his mother's house. Sitting at the kitchen table --surrounded by a clutter of bills, old papers, and half-read magazines -- sits HAZEL (40s-50s) an older, weary woman with a perpetually dazed expression on her face and a buried, hidden darkness behind her eyes.

Matthew walks up and begins sorting through the piles of paper. Quickly, Hazel turns around.

HAZEL

Didn't anyone ever teach you not to go through other people's mail?

MATTHEW

It's our mail, ma.

Without saying anything, Hazel reaches across the table and takes the stack of envelopes away from Matthew, who gives her a shocked look. Hazel begins looking through the stack facing away from Matthew before trying to change the subject.

HAZEL

You were out late.

MATTHEW

Oh, you know. Just driving around.

HAZEL

Hm. You're still having those dreams, aren't you?

MATTHEW

I uh-

HAZEL

I keep telling you, Matt. you just have to let it go. For both of our sakes.

MATTHEW

What's that mean?

Hazel, still turned towards the window, picks up the last envelope, It reads, "From Brian."

MATTHEW

Ma?

Hazel takes the letter and puts it into the drawer before immediately turning back towards Matthew.

MATTHEW

What was that?

HAZEL

Have you told Riley?

MATTHEW

No. I mean, not everything-what was that, ma?

HAZEL

Nothing. Just some junk mail. How was work?

MATTHEW

I couldn't concentrate.

HAZEL

Are you getting along with your boss?

MATTHEW

Stevens? He's fine-- Mom, are you listening to me? What was-

Hazel cuts him off.

HAZEL

Of course I'm listening, honey.

Suddenly, a horn honks outside. Hazel turns around and looks ou the kitchen window.

HAZEL

Speak of the devil.

Slightly disturbed, Matthew stands up to leave. Hazel starts neatening her belongings on the table facing away from Matthew.

HAZEL

Leaving so soon?

MATTHEW

I shouldn't leave her waiting.

HAZEL

Okay. Tell Riley I say hi.

We hear the door close behind Matthew. Hazel turns around to an empty kitchen and waits for a moment. Hazel than opens the drawer and picks the letter back up. Her face begins to fall. She opens up the letter and begins reading. She then pulls out a slip of paper with a phone number, an address, and the message 'Call Me'. Pocketing the letter, she looks at the slip -- and then over towards the phone.

J CUT TO:

8. EXT. OFFICE PARKING LOT, DAY

8

Matthew and Riley sit on the hood of her car, eating takeout food.

RILEY

So how was your shift?

MATTHEW

It was... rough. I couldn't
concentrate.

RILEY

Oh God. Tell me you're not having those dreams again.

Matthew says nothing.

RILEY

I saw the bags under your eyes. You've got to sleep, you know.

MATTHEW

Can't sleep most days. And it gets worse when I do.

RILEY

Worse? Worse how?

MATTHEW

The dreams. I don't make progress.

RILEY

Progress? What progress? Matthew, there's nothing in those dreams for you.

MATTHEW

I mean, if I figure them out, maybe they'll get better.

RILEY

Or maybe they'll get worse. Or maybe a lot of things. Maybe who cares. You need to focus on what's already in your life. Like your job. Or your family.

MATTHEW

These dreams have been with me for my whole life. What if I could end it? Once and for all?

RILEY

Yeah, but what's the point if you lose everything else?

9. EXT. OFFICE, DAY

9

Matthew stands outside his office building, smoking a cigarette. After a moment, he puts out the cigarette and begins to walk back inside. As he does, though, someone inside motions for him to hold the door. Matthew stands in the doorway as we see the outline of a man walk towards him. The man puts a scarred hand on the door next to Matthew.

BRIAN

Thanks.

Matthew sees the scar and looks quickly up at the man. They make eye contact for a moment, but the man gets spooked and begins to walk at great, panicked speed out the door. As he leaves, the door obstructs Matthew's view slightly; craning his neck to see outside, Matthew suddenly sees not a man but a vision of the little boy from the dream. The boy's hand is still bloody and scarlet, just as it was in the visions.

In shock, Matthew runs out of the building and around the corner.

MATTHEW

Hey! Kid!

But the kid is gone. Matthew looks out the door, then back at the building. Images from the dream start flashing across his mind. Panicked, Matthew considers running after him; he looks at the building, then at the street, then building, then street...

10. INT. MATTHEW'S CAR, DAY

10

Matthew gets into his car and chases after the man. We see him drive, following the man's car, keeping his head down as not to be seen. After a while, though, the car takes a turn and parks on the side of the road.

11. EXT. OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, DAY

11

Parking his car nearby, Matthew watches through his windshield as the mysterious man gets out of his car and starts standing in the middle of the street.

Matthew strains his eyes as he tries to get a better look. Suddenly, he leans too far forward and accidentally lays on his horn, which blares across the scene. Seeing this, the man in the street gets spooked and heads back towards his car. Trying to stop him, Matthew gets out of his car and walks towards the man. Unfortunately, before Matthew can say anything, the man drives off, leaving Matthew in the middle of the street.

Suddenly, Matthew realizes where he is -- the street from his dreams. In a flurry of montage and match cuts, he starts seeing the images from the dream again.

JUMP CUT TO:

12. EXT. OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, SUNRISE

12

Later, Matthew wakes up in his car, right where he parked it. He rubs his eyes and looks around. Two kids are biking on the sidewalk next to his car. Looking at the clock on his dashboard, he sees that it is morning. Shocked, he drives off.

13. INT. HAZEL'S HOUSE, DAY

13

Matthew walks into his house to find his mother sitting on the couch, passed out, holding the letter from earlier. She wakes up as he walks past.

HAZEL

(groggily)

Matthew? Out all night again?

Matthew walks past his mother and looks through some moving boxes on the ground.

HAZEL

What are you looking for?

MATTHEW

We used to have another house, right? When I was little?

HAZEL

Yeah, why?

MATTHEW

Was it in that old town out past the interstate?

Looking through the boxes. Matthew pulls out a picture frame. In the frame Matthew can see a photo of himself standing with his mother. Faintly in the background you can make out the same sidewalk from the night before. Matthew is holding a balloon and a brand new bike, the same bike from the dream.

HAZEL

You know I don't like that place, Matthew. It's a bad area.

MATTHEW

Why? Did we live there?

HAZEL

You know I don't like living in the past, Matthew.

No, for your information, we did not live there. I barely know anything about that place. Happy?

Matthew looks down at the image, then back up at his mother.

MATTHEW

Yeah. Totally. Listen, I got a shift. I'll see you later.

Matthew puts down the photo and starts walking back out the door.

HAZEL

What've you got there?

MATTHEW

Nothing, ma.

14. INT. OFFICE BUILDING, DAY

14

Mr. Stevens looks at his watch before picking up a desk phone and dialing a number.

MR. STEVENS

Pick up, kid.

After going to voicemail, Mr. Stevens hangs up and walks away shaking his head.

15. INT. OFFICE PARKING LOT, DAY

15

Matthew sits in his car outside the office building, visibly conflicted. Suddenly, his phone rings. Mr. Stevens is calling. He lets it ring out before turning on his car and driving off.

16. EXT. OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, DAY

16

Matthew parks his car, gets out, and walks onto the sidewalk. Taking a deep breath, he breathes in the environment and takes out the photo from earlier. He starts to recall.

He begins to see his dream from the start of the film again, this time with diegetic sound. Leaves rustle in the trees. The two boys are riding bikes. Young Matthew looks up at <u>something</u> as the other boy is sprawled on the pavement.

In the present, Matthew tries to remember more. He clutches the photo tighter in his hand. The dream plays again, but faster. As Matthew comes in and out of the dream his figure becomes more and more disheveled.

Leaves. Trees. Bikes. Fall. Bloody hand. Looking up at <u>something</u>. In the present, Matthew closes his eyes tighter. Bits and pieces of the sequence begin flashing across the screen -- the shots getting faster, more intense, the sound more abrasive. Faintly,

Matthew begins to recall the image of a silhouette standing above him in the street -- presumably what he was looking up at. However, he cannot see more than a dark shape. The pacing hits a fevered pitch.

Growing increasingly more frustrated, Matthew yells.

MATTHEW

No, no, no, god dammit!

Matthew opens his eyes. To his left he see to young boys staring at him. In the distance, a woman looks at him before holding a phone to her ear.

Embarrassed, Matthew runs back to his car.

17. INT. MATTHEW'S CAR IN OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, NIGHT (MONTAGE) 17

That night, Matthew sits alone in his car. Images from the flashback sequence are still playing in his head. Suddenly, the lighting in the car begins to ebb and flow between light and dark — while at first it could be mere headlights, the lighting gets so erratic that it is indiscernible to tell whether it is night or day.

We see sudden, abrasive shots of the dream. We see sudden shots of Matthew, daytime, on the sidewalk. He starts to look more unkempt. The hours turn into days. How much time has passed? The lighting in the car grows almost surreal. Suddenly...

18. INT. MATTHEW'S CAR IN OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, DAY

Matthew wakes up, and the car is filled with sunlight. Whereas before he looked unkempt, now he looks straight up disheveled. Groggily, he digs through a pile of wrappers which has appeared on his passenger seat before grabbing his phone. On it, he sees missed calls from everyone -- Hazel, Riley, Mr. Stevens. Suddenly realizing how much time has passed, he drives off.

19. EXT. HAZEL'S HOUSE, DAY (19)

19

18

Hazel is standing in the middle of the driveway as Matthew pulls in. Angrily, Hazel walks around towards Matthew's car door as he steps out.

HAZEL

Look at you! Where the hell have you been?!

MATTHEW

I'm sorry. I was driving.

HAZEL

For two weeks?! You couldn't have bothered to call?

(Hazel hugs Matthew)

Matthew you have people that love you. I love you. You can't just disappear. Not you, too.

Just tell me. Where have you been going?

MATTHEW

(whispering/mumbling)

The place from the dreams, ma. I found it.

Suddenly, Hazel's face falls.

HAZEL

What the hell does that mean?

MATTHEW

I'm so close, ma. I'm so close to figuring it out. What it all means. I found the place. I don't know everything yet, but I'm learning every day. Look at this, ma.

Hazel watches with a look of shock and fear as Matthew reaches into his car and pulls out the picture frame.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

I found this, in the old boxes. That's the same kid. The same bike. Same place. I've seen this in my head for... for I don't know how long, and now I found it-

Suddenly, Hazel swipes the picture from his hand.

HAZEL

(Speaking calmly)

Where did you find this?

MATTHEW

I just need a few more days. A few more days, and I'll have it figured out. Just trust me-

HAZEL

Enough! I can't look on and watch you destroy everything like this. You're flaking at your job. You're flaking with your <u>family</u>. Figure your shit out. Go to your fucking job. And I don't want to hear about this ever again.

Angrily, Hazel walks back into the house with the picture frame, leaving Matthew shocked in the driveway.

20. INT. MATTHEW'S CAR, OFFICE PARKING LOT, DAY.

20

Matthew sits in his car before work. Still shaken from his previous encounter, he straightens his hat in the rearview mirror, mustering up confidence before getting out of the car and walking towards the building.

21. INT. OFFICE BUILDING, DAY

21

Matthew walks into the maintenance room to pick up his cleaning cart. However, before he can make it into the hallway, Stevens blocks his path through the door. After an awkward silence, each tries to speak.

MATTHEW

Look, I can explain-

MR. STEVENS

Son, don't make this harder than it has to be.

MATTHEW

No, wait! I swear-

MR. STEVENS

Do you know how many shifts everyone had to cover for you? How many I had to cover?

Look, I... didn't want to have to do this. But I can't have my employees playing hooky for weeks on end. 5/1/2021 **Nocturna** – Draft Final Page 14 / 22

I'm sorry, kid.

Say hi to your mother for me, alright?

Mr. Stevens walks off. Matthew stands in the maintenance room, visibly shaken. Suddenly, he grows angry and spiteful, storming out of the room.

22. I/E, MATTHEW'S CAR, NIGHT

22

Matthew is driving when he sees Riley walking down the street. He pulls up next to her and rolls down the window.

MATTHEW

Hey, how's it been?

RILEY

Oh my god! Matt! Where have you been? We've been worried sick!

MATTHEW

You wanna see?

RILEY

See what?

MATTHEW

Where I've been. Come on. It'll be fun.

Apprehensively, Riley gets in the car, sliding old fast food wrappers and styrofoam containers off of the passenger seat before she gets in. They drive off.

23. EXT. OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, NIGHT

23

Matthew leads Riley out of the car and down the street of his old neighborhood, covering her eyes.

RILEY

Matt, where are we? We've been driving for forever.

MATTHEW

Just wait. Just wait.

Slowly, Matthew walks Riley to the middle of the road before lifting his hands with great theatricality.

RILEY

Matt, there's nothing here.

MATTHEW

Don't you see it?

RILEY

It's a fucking sidewalk, Matthew.

MATTHEW

No, no, you don't get it! It's the one! The one from the dreams. I found it! it's right there. The kid, he was right here.

RILEY

What? A kid? Matthew, you've been missing for weeks. You've had everyone worried sick. And now you drag me out here for an hour and a half to look at a sidewalk at night? What the hell is wrong with you?

Matthew is fumbling on the sidewalk, desperately pantomiming his dream sequence. Disgusted, Riley stares at the man she once knew.

MATTHEW

I was right here, and he was down on the ground like this...

RILEY

I thought I told you to leave these dreams alone! Matthew, you're going to lose your job.

MATTHEW

And there was something... someone...

RILEY

What about your mom? What is she supposed to do now? Are you just going to abandon her?

MATTHEW

Something...Something was right there. It was right up above me, Riley. And I don't know. I don't knowExasperated, Riley walks up to Matthew, standing over him in the middle of the street.

RILEY

(calm and collected)

There's no one here Matt.

It's just me, ok?

At that moment, Riley leans forward over Matthew -- the exact same way the silhouette in the dream did. Matthew's eyes widen.

RILEY

It's just me, ok?

24. EXT. OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, DAY (DREAM SEQUENCE)

24

Young Matthew stands over the other boy spread-eagled in the street. The boy's hand is bloodied up, and the boy is passed out. Suddenly, a shadow falls over both boys. Young Matthew looks up to see the figure of a man. The figure points away and barks a set of distorted orders. Young Matthew nods and runs off, leaving the other two alone in the distance.

INT. MEDICINE CABINET

We see Young Matthew's hands reach around the inside of a medicine cabinet, grabbing bandages and rubbing alcohol.

OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, DAY

Young Matthew runs, bandages and alcohol in hand, to the scene of the bike crash, only to see that both the young boy and the man are gone. He stands there in place for a moment. As the dream sequence ends, the visuals start to become more erratic -- we hear sirens, see the faint outlines of 'missing' posters, hear the sound of an Amber Alert...

MATCH CUT TO:

25. EXT. OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, NIGHT

25

Matthew stands in the exact same spot on the street. Riley is standing next to him, fed up.

RILEY

Matthew? Matthew? (Matthew comes to)
I've had enough. Take me home.

Matthew is sitting in the passenger seat of his car. Flashes of the man in the dream plague his mind. RILEY

Hello?
(beat)
Matthew, what the fuck is wrong
with you?
(beat)
Ugh, we're so done.

26. INT. MATTHEW'S CAR, NIGHT

26

Matthew sits in the passenger's seat as the two drive home, resting his head against the window as his flashes of the man continue.

27. EXT. HAZEL'S HOUSE FRONT DOOR, DAY

27

As Matthew walks to the door of his mothers house we see distorted images from his dream flash in his mind.

28. EXT. HAZEL'S HOUSE KITCHEN, DAY

28

Matthew stumbles into his house falling onto the counter top in front of him. Hazel noticing the commotion rushes into the kitchen.

HAZEL

Matthew? Matthew, what's wrong?

MATTHEW

(mumbling)

Who is he?

HAZEL

What?

MATTHEW

The man. The man in the dream.

HAZEL

Jesus Christ. I told you not-

MATTHEW

He took him, didn't he? Didn't he?

HAZEL

Who? Who? Matthew, I have no idea who the fuck you're talking about.

Matthew turns around to face Hazel.

MATTHEW

You know. He took him, didn't he? (beat)

My brother.

A tense silence fills the room. A look of horror fills Hazel's face.

HAZEL

Don't say that. Don't say that.

MATTHEW

He took my brother, didn't he? You knew, didn't you?

HAZEL

I can't do this again. Not again. Please, I can't.

MATTHEW

The whole time. The entire time. You knew.

HAZEL

Matthew, please. There's nothing there for you. Let this go.

MATTHEW

That's why. That's why you didn't want me to see that picture.

HAZEL

Please. Stop. Stop, Matthew.

MATTHEW

That's why you didn't want me going back.

HAZEL

Please. Please.

MATTHEW

You weren't worried for me. You were worried for yourself.

HAZEL

I was just trying to protect
you!
(beat)
You were so young. So young,

You were so young. So young, Matthew. I just wanted to give you any way not to remember.

MATTHEW

You knew. You knew everything.

HAZEL

Do you have any *idea* how hard it was for me, Matthew? To start EVERYTHING over again, after how much I lost?

MATTHEW

All the dreams. All the sleepless nights. You knew.

HAZEL

I tried, Matthew. I really did. I thought we could have a fresh start. A clean start. After all that mess. But no. It always comes back. Always some stupid photo, or a dream, or a letter, or-

MATTHEW

Letter? What letter?

Matthew notices that his mother is holding the slip from earlier with the phone number and address.

MATTHEW

Brian. That was his name.

After a pause, Matthew reaches for the letter, but Hazel turns away from him.

MATTHEW

I need that.

HAZEL

I promise you, it's nothing. An address and a phone number, that's all it is.

MATTHEW

Ma, I need it. I need to know.

HAZEL

Please. Look at you. Look at what this has already done to you.

MATTHEW

Ma. Please. Give it to me.

HAZEL

Think about what it could do to him. What if he doesn't know?

MATTHEW

This needs to end, mom. Give me the letter.

HAZEL

Nothing good comes from this, Matthew. Nothing.

MATTHEW

Mom. No more.

Matthew stands over Hazel, his hand outstretched. Reluctantly, Hazel gives him the slip. Hazel looks up, alarmed.

MATTHEW

This is it? This is $\underline{\text{all}}$ he sent?

Hazel doesn't respond. Incredulous at his mother's dishonesty, Matthew scoffs and heads back towards the door.

HAZEL

Matthew.

Matthew turns around.

HAZEL

If you do this, don't bother coming back.

Matthew stops for a moment, then turns back around and closes the door behind him.

29. INT. MATTHEW'S CAR, DAY

29

In a hurry Matthew gets in his car and begins to back out of the driveway.

As Matthew pulls up to his brothers house, we can hear a phone ringing in the background. Matthew waits for a moment, staring at the house in front of him. He looks down at the slip of paper, staring at the lettering with trepidation. His eyes flutter.

JUMP CUT TO:

30. EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE, DAY

30

Matthew walks quickly up to Brian's house, pounding on the door and pacing feverishly. After a moment, Brian opens the door. Matthew stands in front of him, paralyzed.

BRIAN

(Still turning his head from inside)

Can I help you?

After a moment, Matthew stutters into speech.

MATTHEW

Brian?

BRIAN

I'm sorry, do I know you?

MATTHEW

Dont- Don't you realize?

BRIAN

I think you have the wrong house. Sorry.

(Brian begins to close the door)

Matthew, in a panic, grabs the door.

MATTHEW

No, you don't get it! It's me, Brian! It's me! Matthew!

BRIAN

Who?

MATTHEW

You know- Matthew! Your brother!

BRIAN

No. I- I think you must be confused... I- I don't have a brother...

Brian, in obvious distress, tries to close the door again, but Matthew forces his way into the house. In the scuffle Brian is knocked back toward the living room in his house. Matthew steps inside with the door swung wide open behind him.

BRIAN

Please. Please. Stop.

MATTHEW

I found you! I finally found you! Oh, god!

(Matthew laughs in a frenzied yet relived manner)

BRIAN

What do you want? Anything! Leave me alone. Leave my family alone.

Matthew unsure of what Brian is talking about looks to the right in the living room. Standing there are Brian's wife and 2 kids. She is gripping her children tight at the shoulders stuck with fear staring directly at Matthew.

BRIAN

Who- Who are you?

Soberly, Matthew looks around. He is unruly. Unkempt. Everything in his life utterly destroyed. Brian and his family are cowering in front of him.

JUMP CUT TO:

31. INT. MATTHEW'S CAR, DAY

31

Suddenly, Matthew wakes up. He is still sitting in the car outside of Brian's house, the slip of paper in his hand. He catches a glimpse of his bloodshot eyes in the rearview mirror.

In the background, the phone is still ringing. Looking behind him, Matthew turns the ignition and starts the car.

CUT TO BLACK