

BLACK

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INT. HOTEL ROOM - HAWAII - MORNING

ELLIOT, around 70, white hair, hunch-back, flips through a cave encyclopedia until he finds a photograph of Martha (his wife, around 70, red hair, green eyes) wedged between two pages. On one of them is a list of "Exceptional Caves." Of the twenty caves listed, 11 are circled. Each of these also has a line drawn through it, except for the Kazumura Cave of Hawaii, on which Elliot places his finger.

He closes the book and stands up, but a different photograph falls out of the back. It's a few years old. He forgot it was there. In the photo are Elliot, Martha, Leslie (late 30s, red hair, green eyes), Tom (early 40s, brown hair, tall), and Andy (around 10, light brown hair, green eyes).

EXT. KAZUMURA CAVE ENTRANCE - NOON

Elliot stands outside of the Kazumura Cave, isolated in dense jungle. He's wearing a cave helmet, a headlight, a climbing harness, rappelling gear, and knee and elbow pads.

He looks way too brittle to be spelunking, squinting at the cave opening as if he can barely see it. He pulls out a cave map, turns on his headlight, and hobbles in.

INT. KAZUMURA CAVE - SAME TIME

Many lava formations: tubular lava stalagmites, lava blades, and plunge pools dimly lit by Elliot's headlight. Elliot moves slowly, but he gets pretty far, making several turns into different intertwining pathways.

But it doesn't take him long to realize that he has absolutely no idea where he is. He can barely read the map, given his poor eyesight. He begins to panic. He picks up speed while keeping his eyes glued on the map, trying to make out what it says. Distracted, he falls into a 10 foot pit, smashing his headlight on the cave floor.

He is now injured, lost, and alone in complete darkness (blackness). He screams in agony.

ELLIOT

My God.

He attempts to stand up, but he immediately falls and wails in pain. His breathing is fast and fearful. He smacks his headlight, attempting to knock it back to life. It doesn't work. He tries to stand up again.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Come on. Get up.

He falls. One more try...

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
God damn it Elliot. Get the hell
up!

He collapses.

He pulls the grappling ropes out of his bag. We hear the CLINKING OF CARABINERS AND ROCK and the swift PULLING/TYING OF ROPE, as if he's attempting to build some sort of pulley mechanism. He throws the end of one of the ropes up through the opening of the pit, hoping to lasso some sort of unseen protruding rock. CLINK, SLIDE, DROP.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
If I can just catch the ropes on
something, I can...

CLINK, SLIDE, DROP.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Little harder...

CLINK, SLIDE, DROP.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Come on!

CLINK, SLIDE, DROP. Out of breath, he gives up.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Hello? Anyone? Is anyone there?
Somebody help! Somebody please help
me!

EXT. PULL OUT OF CAVE - DAY.

His SCREAMS reverberate as the camera pulls out of the cave and flies up into the sky, providing a birds-eye-view of the eastern slope of the Kilauea volcano, Kazumura's home. The Kazumura cave is just a tiny freckle on the Big Island's face. We can no longer hear Elliot. All we hear is LONELY WIND.

Title: **Black.**

INT. KAZUMURA CAVE - BLACKNESS - TIME UNKNOWN

ELLIOT
(exhausted whispering)
Somebody. Please. Anybody.

He shakes off the exhaustion.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
No Elliot! Use your brain. Think.
Come on. Use your head. This is not
how it ends. You're getting the
fuck out of here... Calm down.
Breathe.

He breathes heavily for a few moments.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
(screaming)
Somebody help! For the love of God,
is anyone there?

He sobs.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
No, no, no, no... why me?

He chuckles out of shock at his impending doom...

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Am I going to die here?

(pause)

I'm going to die here... This is
it...

He stops talking. We hear only his breath and cave ambiance.
He's starts losing his mind a bit...

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
(exhausted)
How long have I been down here?

(pause)

Leslie, Andy... What will they
think? What will they do?

(yelling like a madman)
How long have I been down here!?

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 (creepy giggles)
 They're gonna think I left them...
 Well, I did leave them...

(creepy and serious)
 How long has it beeeeeeeeeeen? ...

(devilish roar)
 How long have I been down here!?

He laughs hysterically.

Silence. Until...

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 Am I talking?

(pause)

Am I talking, or are these my
 thoughts? ... Am I thinking!?

Eerie silence, until he explodes with confusion and anger
 towards his inability to distinguish his thoughts from his
 speech. Fast paced...

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Am I talking or am I thinking - am
 I talking or am I thinking, are
 these my thoughts? Am I talking or
 am I fucking thinking, I don't know
 - I don't - how do I - how am I
 suppose - am I talking or am I
 thinking - am I saying it out loud
 or am I think - am I talk - am I
 talking, am I talk...

Exhausted from this episode, he stays quiet for a moment,
 until he yet again hysterically laughs like a madman. Then he
 growls like a bear.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 (creepy)
 I'm cleeeaaaarrly... just...
 thinking!

Silence. Until...

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 (whiny)
 I'm so tiiiiirrrrrreeeeedddd.

He starts lullabying himself to sleep:

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
*Good night my Elliot,
 Good night my love,
 Sleep tight my Elliot,
 Sleep tight my love...
 The moon is rising --*

We hear a woman join Elliot in song:

ELLIOT & MOTHER
The stars are bright...

ELLIOT
 (confused and frightened)
 Who's there!? Who is that!?

MOTHER
 It's time for bed, Elliot.

Elliot suddenly sounds like he's 10 year old:

ELLIOT
 (exhausted & whiny)
 But I'm not tired!

MOTHER
 There-~~there~~, my baby Elliot, just
 close your eyes...

Elliot begins to snore. FADE TO...

INT. ELLIOT'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1955

Lying in bed.

Baby blue walls, a full-sized bed with a green comforter & french headboard, a red egg chair, knotted pine dresser, poster of Chuck Berry, and a framed photo of a turquoise 1955 Cadillac Eldorado convertible with sharkfin tailfins.

Elliot's MOTHER (mid 40s, brown hair) continues the lullaby while gently rubbing Elliot's face...

MOTHER
*Good night my Elliot,
 Good night my love,
 Sleep tight my Elliot,
 Sleep tight my love,*

Elliot's eyelids grow heavier and heavier.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

*The moon is rising,
The stars are bright,
So sleep tight my --*

Elliot's FATHER (mid 40s, thin, brown hair) busts into the room, holding a banana like a microphone and singing a lullaby-lyric version of "Hound Dog" by Elvis. Elliot laughs uncontrollably with his mother:

FATHER

*You ain't nothin' but a tired boy,
Sleepy all the time,
You ain't nothin' but a tired boy,
Sleepy all the time,
Well you ain't never gonna see the
day until you sleep tonight!*

*Yeah you said you was wide awake,
But that was just a lie,
Yeah you said you was wide awake,
But that was just a lie,
You ain't never gonna see the day
until you sleep tonight!*

Mother gently covers Elliot's eyes with her hands. Elliot falls asleep. Wakes up to...

INT. KAZUMURA CAVE - BLACKNESS

His voice suits his age (70), but his tone is still childish:

ELLIOT

Mommy? ... Daddy?

No response... He cries.

He frantically lullabies himself to sleep again:

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(dozing off as song
progresses)

*Good night my Elliot,
Good night my love,
Sleep tight my Elliot,
Sleep tight my love...*

Begins to snore as he slurs the ending lyrics of the lullaby. We hear Martha trying to wake him up:

MARTHA

Elliot! Elliot! Come on Elliot!

FADE TO...

INT. LOG CABIN IN SEQUOIAS - MORNING - 1970

Lying in bed.

He opens his eyes to MARTHA'S beautiful face, mid 20s, green eyes, red hair, perfect skin, wearing a bucket hat.

MARTHA

Come on, Elliot. Get up. We have a tour in five minutes!

ELLIOT

(lethargic mumbling)
Shhh shh shh, just a few more minutes...

He dozes off.

FADE TO...

EXT. CRYSTAL CAVE - MORNING

Elliot and Martha stand outside the entrance of Sequoias' Crystal Cave in front of a full TOUR GROUP (around 15 people, all ages).

Surrounded by forestry. WATERFALL.

Martha smiles at Elliot. She clicks-on a black 12 inch maglite.

MARTHA

All right everybody, most of the interior is illuminated, but I have a light just in case. I'll be staying in front of you guys while Elliot anchors in the back. He'll make sure no one trails behind.

She nods at Elliot as he walks to the rear. Martha leads the group into the cave.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

And remember, what's the number one rule?

TOUR GROUP

(harmonized)
No touching!

MARTHA

Yep. We don't want the oils on our fingers interfering with mineral formations!

It would also be great if you guys could try to keep your voices down... bats are easily startled...

NERVOUS GIGGLING.

INT. CRYSTAL CAVE - "DOME ROOM"

The group enters a giant dome composed of stalagmites, calcite flowstone, and stalactites. The reverb of Martha's voice increases as they enter the dome.

MARTHA

Now *this* colossal space is known as the "Dome Room." It's a product of millions of years of water erosion, with a little help from microorganisms. Fancy-shmancy science people refer to this process as "Speleogenesis." Notice how --

A TOURIST raises his hand.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Yes sir?

TOURIST

Around how deep into the cave are we?

MARTHA

Good question. I'm sure ya'll feel as though we've traveled quite far, but we've actually only trekked around a quarter mile. The cavern deepens for about another 3/4 mile, but we aren't going further than this point.

That actually reminds me...

She looks at Elliot. As if reading her mind, he pulls a white, six inch candlestick out of his pocket and walks forward.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Only a quarter mile in, notice how there's absolutely no natural light? This is not the right environment for most organisms, especially not for *people*... Any of you want to live down here for the rest of your life?

TOUR GROUP

(chuckling)

No!

MARTHA

That's what I thought!

Now, there's a whole lot of folklore around here - stories of curious fools who entered caves, unprepared for the darkness...

Elliot lights the candle, walks to an electrical box next to the entrance of the dome, and turns off all of the cave's interior lighting. The tour group murmurs in EXCITED NERVOUSNESS.

The flame overwhelms the screen. Elliot walks around the tour group in circles as Martha tells the folktale.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

All he had was a candlestick and a couple matches. He figured that if the candle blew out, he could just spark up another match and relight it...

So, he entered the cave with confidence...

He twisted and turned through different tunnels and pathways, streams and cracks...

And eventually got as far as this magnificent dome!

But, then he turned around...

And he saw that there were several tunnels...

But he had no idea which one he came through.

(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

He began to panic.

He knew the consequences of
choosing the wrong tunnel.

He tried to visualize which pathway
he had walked through...

But the memory was too dark.

He noticed that the candle was half
melted.

An infinite number of matches
couldn't solve that problem.

"How long have I been down here?"
he pondered... "An inch of wax
every hour, right?" ...

But time doesn't make much sense in
blackness.

He picked a random tunnel and
prayed for his survival...

But he only trekked deeper and
deeper into the cavern, as his hand
burned and cast in candle wax...

Martha stands in front of Elliot, face-to-face (with the
candle in-between them).

MARTHA (CONT'D)

And soon enough, the light
vanished...

Martha blows out the candle. Abruptly CUT TO...

INT. KAZUMURA CAVE - BLACKNESS

Terrified, Elliot yells:

ELLIOT

Martha! Martha! Where'd you go? Are
you still here?

MARTHA

(elderly)

Shhh shh shh. I'm right here, my
love.

ELLIOT
 Oh thank God! Martha! Oh my Martha,
 I missed you so much.

Elliot passionately embraces something.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 I've been so lonely, Martha --

MARTHA
 -- Shhhh. Just go back to sleep, my
 sweet Elliot. We need rest.

ELLIOT
 (yawning)
 Okay love.

Elliot dozes off. FADE TO...

EXT. AN ISLAND BEACH - DAY - 1974

Martha's face (late 20s).

Elliot (late 20s) and Martha are lying down face-to-face on
 the sand.

Martha's eyes are impossibly large and vibrant, and her skin
 is impeccable and blinding - almost as if she were anime. No
 real person looks like this. She's wearing a white bikini and
 a clam shell necklace. Elliot and Martha are the only people.

DELICATE SONGS OF PARADISIACAL BIRDS and the ROARING OF
 DISTANT SEA WAVES float on the tranquil silence. The sky is
 unnaturally saturated with sunset colors... but there is no
 sun. There's just an ever-expansive ceiling of light above
 the clouds. The clouds move abnormally fast, bending and
 swirling as if they were living organisms.

ELLIOT
 Your eyes...

 Can I even call them that? They are
 independent universes, galaxies. So
 much... energy. So much power
 compressed between your ears, it
 hurts to look at you...

Giggling modestly:

MARTHA
 Oh, stop!

ELLIOT
No seriously! Your existence is a
mystery to me --

MARTHA
-- so melodramatic!

ELLIOT
Come on, let me praise you.

MARTHA
(grinning)
Well, if you must...

ELLIOT
Thank you. Anyway...

Somehow, at 5'4" 110 lbs, you
embody all of the beauty in the
universe. Every inch of beauty that
has ever existed is compressed into
your tiny body...

MARTHA
Hmm... And...

ELLIOT
And then there's your mind...

MARTHA
What about it?

ELLIOT
Somehow...

I just don't get it.

MARTHA
What?

ELLIOT
How have all of life's events,
causes and effects - descending all
the way back to the beginning of
time - lead up to the creation of
your mind? intelligent, loving,
open, creative.

And why does this mind of yours
just so happen to be meticulously
hard-wired - beyond either of our
control - to find me desirable?

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

And why does that desire just so
happen to possess enough energy and
force to outweigh any
contradictions between our minds?

Billions of years of causes and
effects have lead up to you, lying
beside me, right now, in this very
moment...

If there's a God, he loves me.

Martha places her hand on Elliot's face.

MARTHA

I love you so much, Elliot.

She kisses him.

ELLIOT

I love you, Martha.

Martha rolls on top of Elliot and straddles him as they
proceed to kiss passionately.

They stop for a moment, glaring into each others eyes,
speechless. He strokes her hair. She kisses his nose.

BIRDS CHIRPING as they lie in silence.

(Pause)

MARTHA

I have something to show you.

Martha pulls out a cave encyclopedia and a pen from behind
her.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

There are so many caverns we need
to explore together.

ELLIOT

Show me.

Martha turns to the page of "Exceptional Caves." She circles
some, including the Kazumura.

MARTHA

We've never caved lava tubes
before... That's a must.

ELLIOT

Agreed.

MARTHA

Also, if we can get our permits, we should try cave diving.

ELLIOT

A bit dangerous, but maybe.

MARTHA

Promise you'll at least consider it.

ELLIOT

I promise.

On a whim, Elliot rolls on top of Martha, picks her up, twirls her around, and places her onto...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - 1975

...a hospital bed.

Martha's in labor. The DOCTOR pulls the baby out.

DOCTOR

It's a girl!

We don't see the baby's face yet; we only hear her crying, which carries into the next scene as Elliot wakes up to...

INT. KAZUMURA CAVE - BLACKNESS

... the sound of his crying baby, Leslie.

ELLIOT

Martha, Leslie's awake.

MARTHA

(half-asleep)

Give her some water.

As Leslie's crying persists, we hear Elliot gliding his hands through a cave puddle attempting to scoop up some water.

ELLIOT

Here you go, sweetie.

Even though Leslie was just a baby moments ago, she responds to her father with words. She must suddenly be a toddler now:

LESLIE

Thanks daddy.

ELLIOT
Of course, sweetie. Now go back to
sleep.

LESLIE
Can mommy sing to me first?

ELLIOT
Mommy's too tired right now --

LESLIE
-- Pleeeeeeaaassee

ELLIOT
Martha?

MARTHA
*Good night my Leslie,
Good night my love,
Sleep tight my Leslie --*

Elliot bursts into song, singing a lullaby-lyric version of
"Billie Jean" by Michael Jackson. Leslie laughs
uncontrollably:

ELLIOT
*She told me her name was Ms.
Leslie, it's past 10:15,
And we could see that her eyes
would dream when she goes to sleep,
She will fall, fast asleep, through
the night!*

LESLIE
More, more, more!

MARTHA
No, it's time for bed.

LESLIE
Can I at least sleep with you guys
tonight?

ELLIOT
(yawning)
Sure, sweetheart.

Elliot begins to snore. FADE TO...

INT. ELLIOT'S AND MARTHA'S BEDROOM - MORNING - 1985

Pink walls, flame stitch curtains, platform bed, brass lamps.

He wakes up next to his wife and daughter in his bed. This is the first time we actually see LESLIE (10). She looks just like her mother.

ELLIOT
Get up, Leslie. Time for school.

No response. Elliot proceeds to tickle her. Leslie giggles frustratingly.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Up, up, up! Rise and shine!

LESLIE
Okay, okay, I'm up!

INT. MINIVAN - MORNING

Elliot's driving. Leslie's in the passenger seat.

LESLIE
I don't wanna go to school.

ELLIOT
Well, you have to.

LESLIE
I hate it.

ELLIOT
Why?

LESLIE
Because Mrs. Gaffney is mean!

ELLIOT
No she's not, she's nice.

LESLIE
Nuh uh! She's evil! I hate her guts!

ELLIOT
Well that's too bad, because you're going.

Leslie screeches at the top of her lungs, thinking that she could persuade her father with high volume and frequency. While Elliot focuses on the road ahead, her screeching suddenly evolves into a womanly yell. Elliot turns his head to the passenger seat noticing that, right before his eyes, Leslie has transformed into a grown woman going through labor.

He places his hand on her pregnant belly while rushing her to the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM II - DAY - 2001

Elliot, Martha, Leslie, and her husband, TOM, are in the hospital room as Leslie gives birth. A DOCTOR II pulls the baby out.

DOCTOR II

It's a boy!

The baby's crying continues into the next scene as it transforms into the crying of a toddler...

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - EVENING - 2005

The front entrance of Leslie and Tom's suburban home, we see a toy train accidently crushed underneath Elliot's foot, and we see Leslie's son ANDY (now a small child) crying about it.

ELLIOT

I'm so sorry Andy... How about I take you to Toys R Us tonight and buy you whatever train your heart desires?

ANDY

No!

Andy charges up the stairs.

TOM

Andy!

I'm sorry Elliot, he's been so stubborn lately.

ELLIOT

It's okay.

Do you guys know where Martha is?

LESLIE

She's in the --

Plates, pots and pans CRASH and SHATTER on the kitchen floor. Leslie and Elliot sprint into the kitchen. Elliot's HEARTBEAT grows faster and louder as he approaches Martha's unconscious body.

Leslie calls an ambulance, but her voice is unintelligible. Elliot bends over to take Martha's pulse. The moment he presses his fingers against her throat, Elliot's heartbeat stops. Leslie is crying hysterically. Her cries continue into the next scene as they transform into...

EXT. A FIELD SOMEWHERE - DAY

... a sobbing eulogy.

This scene lasts for only about seven seconds.

Grey sky, bizarre clouds speedily bending a swirling like bacterium.

Leslie is standing on a pedestal, eulogizing to an invisible audience, as Elliot sits a couple feet in front of her, stone cold. Leslie's speech is unintelligible: it just sounds like SORROWFUL GIBBERISH, echoing and phasing.

Martha's corpse, in a black dress, hovers a few inches above the grass, just floating there...

Elliot hears within himself a cold emptiness, CAVE AMBIANCE.

Leslie's grieving face doesn't change as the setting transforms into...

EXT. A CAFE - DAY - 2011

Leslie (tears) and Elliot sit across from each other.

LESLIE

When was the last time you saw
Andy?

ELLIOT

Well, I --

LESLIE

-- almost three years.

ELLIOT

Well, I've been across the globe...

LESLIE

Andy's 10! Do you want him to grow
up without a grandma *and* a grandpa?

ELLIOT

Sweetheart... I --

LESLIE

-- ever since mom died, all you've cared about is your damn caves!

ELLIOT

That's just not --

LESLIE

-- and on the rare occasion that you visit us, you walk around with that lifeless expression on your face. It's like you're numb or something.

And you never let go of that stupid cave book!

Elliot looks down at the cave encyclopedia on his lap.

ELLIOT

(sincere)

You don't understand... I love you and Andy more than you could ever imagine.

LESLIE

Do you?

Leslie places her hand on her father's. Elliot looks down, but notices that it's *not* her hand anymore: it's Andy's. Elliot looks up to see his 10 year old grandson sitting across from him.

INT. KAZUMURA CAVE - BLACKNESS

Elliot sounds weak - mumbling and barely conscious.

ELLIOT

Andy? ... Andy!?

ANDY

Yes, I'm right here, grandpa.

ELLIOT

Oh Andy, I'm so sorry I disappeared on you and your mother. You know how much I love you, right?

ANDY

I love you too grandpa. Don't feel bad. I'm not mad.

ELLIOT

And I'm sorry I broke your train.

ANDY

That's okay. Daddy bought me a brand new one! Wanna see!?

ELLIOT

Heck yeah I want to see it!

ANDY

Okay, be right back!

ELLIOT

Hey Andy could you also fetch your grandmother for me?

(chuckling)

I don't think I could get out of this chair if my life depended on it.

ANDY

Sure.

Andy walks away calling for Martha.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Grandma? Grandpa wants you.

MARTHA

I'm over here!

Elliot sees a small beam of light in the distance. It grows larger and brighter. A silhouette of Martha approaches.

ELLIOT

Martha? Is that you, my love?

MARTHA

Yes, I'm here. I'm coming for you.

Still only a silhouette, Martha picks Elliot up like a baby. We now see the combined silhouettes of Martha and Elliot. Martha turns around and carries him towards the light source.

ELLIOT

Oh Martha, what have I done to our family?

MARTHA

Don't worry, Elliot. Wherever you are, they can feel your love in their bones, in their blood.

ELLIOT

But I wasn't there for them when
they needed me most.

MARTHA

Tom is there for them. He's a
loving father...

And our daughter will sing to her
own as we have sung to her. The
song will never end, so neither
will the love.

Time flies, and people die, but
love does not...

Elliot and Martha disappear into the light. FADE TO...

INT. KAZUMURA CAVE - BLACKNESS

Elliot's alone. We hear his breath. It weakens and slows,
until it abruptly stops. Now, we hear only cave ambiance.

End title appears in the dark silence: **Black**

Hold.

We think the film's over, until...

DISSOLVE TO...

INT. ANDY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bird's - eye - view

Leslie and Tom perform a lullaby rap duo for their son. Andy
giggles in delight.

LESLIE

*I got a silly rhyme,
Telling ya it's bedtime,
Yeah when I'm in the lime - light,
It's time to say nighty night!*

TOM

*You say you ain't tired,
But ya being deceptive,
Getting dope sleep should be your
numba one objective!*

LESLIE

*Ya better listen to our raps,
Them dope modern-day Taps....*

FADE TO BLACK.