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The Great Race

Willard Bullock
willb263@gmail.com

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A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Humanities and Teacher Education Division
Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

by
Willard Bullock

April 2024

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This thesis, written by

WILLARD BULLOCK

under the guidance of a faculty committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Faculty Committee

Leslie Kreiner Wilson, Ph.D., Chairperson

Tom Provost, MFA Faculty

Jarrett Golding, MFA Faculty

Lee Katz, Ph.D. Interim Dean

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Will Bullock

Dr. Kreiner

Thesis

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The Great Race

Journalist and Boston Marathon winner Amby Burfort said, “Life is a marathon.” In my time as a collegiate runner, I have found that a long run greatly resembles a well-told story. Both can frighten you and challenge you. Both can be in parts joyful and painful. Both can surprise and, at the same time, feel familiar. In the end, both can make you a little better than you were before you began. My vision for my storytelling is to bring the audience along with me on a long run that makes them feel complete for having taken the journey. Storytelling, through my lens, is deeply rooted in this analogy. I approach narrative the same way I approach running—with a recognition of pace, cadence, and forward momentum. The weekly development of mileage in a run corresponds to the evolution of characters in a story. As the big race approaches, so does the intensity of the workouts.

The arc of the narrative is congruent to running. I envision my narratives as immersive journeys that invite the audience to traverse human experience alongside the characters.

American distance legend Steve Prefontaine once said, “A race is a work of art that people can look at and be affected in as many ways as they’re capable of understanding.” Prefontaine’s famed racing tactic of asserting himself to the front, pushing his competition to the limits, is why he is considered an artist. When Eliud Kipchoge became the first man to break the two-hour barrier in the marathon, millions of lives were touched through his achievement. Amid

celebration, Kipchoge rejoiced that no human is limited, suggesting that his accomplishment was not an individual achievement, but rather a collective success.

The impact of a powerful story inspires millions in the same way Kipchoge's race did. The journey a reader takes alongside the characters modifies the reader's outlook. Storytellers carry a heavy burden—the message they convey has the power to spread. Thus, the delicacy that storytelling requires cannot be overstated. Screenwriting, as a medium of storytelling, is produced into a heavily consumed format, in which the message can have profound cultural expansion. In moments where storytelling has touched my soul, the message has come through in the form of a few concepts: satire, psychology, and exploration. Within the tapestry of my storytelling vision, these story principles materialize onto the page. I seek to challenge preconceptions, fight overbearing authority, and teach others the beauty of a good story. Embodying these fundamentals, I am inspired by several commanding storytellers: Trey Parker and Matt Stone, George Lucas, and Vince Gilligan. Breaking down specific scene-work, I will prove how each storyteller embodies one of the concepts, exemplifying why they inspire my own writing.

SATIRE

I value storytellers that challenge the audience. Satire, commonly presented in the form of sarcasm or ridicule, stands in defiance of common beliefs. As such, comedians stand as the great equalizers. In just about any instance when a government enacts authoritarian policies, the comics fight back. The satire is derived from the observation of human behavior within the societal structures (Koziski). Heavily inspired by the great satirists before their time, Trey Parker and Matt Stone created Comedy Central's *South Park*, a modern-day fight against the status quo. The show reflects the values that Parker and Stone share as cultural leaders:

“I hate conservatives, but I really fucking hate liberals.... It’s all based on saying the shocking thing. We used to have a great time going to Hollywood parties and saying ‘I think George Bush is doing a great job.’ We’d clear out the room. I used to love it.”
(Leo).

It was their goal to be punk rockers, which by their definition, is playing devil’s advocate in opposition to the popular opinion (Brownlee). The show is composed of precisely this satirical viewpoint. In championing it, they make no allies, as their delivery needs no approval from those under criticism (Antonoff).

Storytelling from Trey Parker and Matt Stone that best represents what I seek to recreate is found in the episode “Margaritaville.” Following the 2008 economic recession, Trey Parker and Matt Stone delivered their interpretation of the crisis through their half-hour script. In typical *South Park* fashion, the comedic satire is blatant. Money from the bank vanishes into thin air, and the citizens of South Park panic. As a solution to the crisis, the people of the town live out their days in togas, throwing rocks at squirrels while rejecting their previous life of materialism. Regular citizens, posing as preachers, detail their philosophy for why the recession occurred. Many blame the economic downward spiral on the collective’s reckless spending:

RANDY
But the fault lies in all of you! YOU,
who bought that three hundred thousand
dollar house when you only had twenty
thousand to put down? YOU, who bought
that third car, even though only two
people in your home drive!

The character of Randy Marsh, in particular, is the issue he claims to reject. Purchasing a Margaritaville drink mixer prior to the financial crisis, he is blissfully ignorant that he is a perfect

example of the kind of person he is chastising. This playful sarcasm is something I find myself implementing in my stories.

As for Eric Cartman, his blame aimed at the “covetous Jews” may seem unnecessary to the narrative, but this hateful response is, in reality, unfortunately relevant. As a matter of fact, this is precisely why political satire is so important. Cartman’s hateful language towards the Jewish community continues to be prevalent in society. Kanye West’s infamous outbursts in 2022 prove the existence of such vitriol (Sisario). Identification of hateful speech is useful in preventing it. By and large, Eric Cartman represents evil ideology within the show. When Parker and Stone want to satirize hate, they do so loudly through the form of Cartman. Therefore, Cartman’s rhetoric portrays the reality of those ideologies.

Following the financial crisis, the U.S. government bailed out several banks to keep the economy afloat. Basic economic principles teach that the economy requires stimulation to continue persevering (Lu). Kyle Broflovski played this role in the “Margaritaville” episode. As a Jewish kid, he was given a Jesus-like storyline, taking on everybody’s debt for no return. Thinking he would get recognition for his selfless act, Kyle watches the television as the newscast praises their economic savior, Barack Obama. In a subtle and brilliant touch to end the episode, Parker and Stone satirize the idea that Americans attribute any positive or negative events to the current president.

Seen through “Margaritaville,” Parker and Stone exercise satire in a fashion that benefits the audience. Through a few juxtaposing characters, we get several exaggerated reactions to the 2008 financial crisis. Stan Marsh, who sees the irrational behavior of the town, seeks to discover the problem for himself, only to discover how deep the rabbit hole goes. Randy Marsh blames others despite being just as culpable. Kyle Broflovski is the unsung hero, selflessly saving the

town. Eric Cartman is the epitome of how prejudiced some can get during a crisis. The structure, narrative, characters, and satire of this episode speak to my nature as a writer. There are always events to be satirized.

However, I have no intention of trying to change the opinion of the viewer; I seek only to challenge their beliefs. Satire is a prime method for doing so. This tool allows a writer to touch on a potentially dark or touchy subject with little repercussion. Since I first began watching *South Park*, I connected with the sarcasm. Beyond the message, it inspires me to write satire based on current events. The current social climate in America is hostile, and the average person wants something to laugh about. Through satire, I can provide just that.

EXPLORATION

George Lucas dreamt of exploration. Growing up in Modesto, California, Lucas found a passion in rebellion, often ignoring his father's interests. Leaving home at 18, Lucas discovered for himself what the world meant and how he could cultivate it. Lucas's first love came in the form of racecar driving. His passions led him to a deep desire for vehicles and driving fast. This, however, came to a crashing conclusion when Lucas got in a near-death car accident. His goal of exploration meant leaving his hometown and developing new, creative passions.

The release of *Star Wars* (1977) accelerated the career of a new Hollywood hero. Touching the lives of many, Luke Skywalker stares at the binary sunset, desiring to leave his home planet of Tatooine for an adventurous journey. The weight of his uncle's demands—that he stay on the family farm and work—hold the young man down in the sand. But, as a loyal nephew, Luke attempts to appease his uncle by rejecting the proposition of his mentor, Obi-Wan. When given no other option, Luke then accepts the inevitable quest of exploration, which aligns with Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey." As long as I can remember, I have had the desire to

leave home in the name of exploration. I still remember the moment I accepted an athletic scholarship to move across the country; I felt free and yet terrified. Just like so many others before, I saw myself in Luke Skywalker.

The giant twin suns of Tatooine slowly disappear behind a distant dune range. Luke stands watching them for a few moments, then reluctantly enters the doomed entrance to the homestead.

As the eager yet naïve protagonist, Luke learns the great mystery of the force, but he faces the consequences of embarking on such a long journey. Following the death of Obi-Wan Kenobi, Luke's youth slips away, as he must become the hero. Though Luke achieves the exploration he originally desired, he loses his youthful nature. The exploration created a hardened man, carrying the respect of his peers (Galipeau). In the process of the exploration, Luke gained something more valuable than money: a purpose. Through my own exploration outside my hometown, I have gained the purpose of a storyteller. Just as Luke's journey speaks to my own, there are others with similar experiences. In my writing, I seek to tap into that element.

PSYCHOLOGY

"Chemistry is, well technically, chemistry is the study of matter. But I prefer to see it as the study of change." This statement, said by Walter White in the pilot episode of *Breaking Bad*, crystallizes what the show is about: change. There is no stronger theme in Vince Gilligan's writing than character development, and it is abundantly evident in the world he curated in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is the psychology of characters, rather than the action, that keeps the audience glued to the screen. Furthermore, Gilligan executes this excellently with three crucial personalities that vigorously attempt to change: Walter White, Jesse Pinkman, and Saul Goodman. Between the three, it is Walt that demands the strongest evolution.

The fear of death is staggering when dwelled upon. However, those that let go of these worries are destined to achieve great things. In a character that has let fifty years of his life slip by, a lung cancer diagnosis ignites a primal reaction. How can Walter White give meaning to the remainder of his life? His initial reaction is to support his family. Freeing himself from fear itself, Mr. White becomes addicted to the thrill.

WALT

I am awake.

Gilligan's attention to the details of psychological development shows the viewer a Walter going beyond what he intended. A two-sided coin, Walt's descent to crime is exhilarating and terrifying, as Walter navigates slippery slopes. The phenomenon of audiences seeking out anti-heroes is a recent trend, but it seems to have gained traction (Mittell). Within the pilot screenplay itself, Walt's change is demonstrated through his sexual engagement with his wife. After Walt's lack of enthusiasm is clearly established in Act 1, his wife, Skyler, is taken aback in Act 4 when Walt shows a wilder side in bed. This simple change of attitude and aggression gives the audience cues for Walt's progression.

Of course, Walt's transformation escalates from there. His destiny is cemented after his cancer diagnosis. Analyzing Gilligan's script work in the final episode "Felina," we find Walt tying up every loose end, which includes being entirely truthful to Skyler—something he had not been in years:

WALT

-- I did it for me.

Skyler is caught off-guard by this sudden, quiet candor.

WALT

I liked it. I was good at it, I was really...

(then; simply)

I was alive.

One of my favorite directors, David Fincher, stated in an interview, “I like characters who don’t change, who don’t learn from their mistakes” (Jenkins). I don’t wholly share Fincher’s opinion. The change Walt experiences in his journey could be described by a blind man. It is as obvious as change gets. However, due to his large ego, Walt never learns from his mistakes, which leads to his eventual downfall. Those who feel unsatisfied with their own existence may feel a twinge of temptation while watching Walt change. This is where Vince Gilligan’s understanding of psychology shines. The audience can vicariously experience an unworthy life through Walter White’s transformation into Heisenberg, without having to actually engage in illegal activities. Self-affirmations are typically found at the source of psychological change, and in the case of Walter White, the identity of Heisenberg serves as the reaffirmed phase (Cohen).

Tying it back to my own journey as a writer, this is an aspect that I hammer on. In just about all my stories, I conceive my main character to be incompetent in many ways. Walter White, as smart as a person can get, was incompetent as a man. He took no initiative within his life and was living to die. There is a Walt in all of us, a fragment of ourselves that refuses the call of adventure. This psychology is what I wish to unlock within my stories. Although I will not be encouraging the audience to cook methamphetamine, I will push them to examine and conquer their inner psychology, to live meaningful lives.

ROADMAP

Writing original material is a daunting task that promises a uniquely satisfying reward. I, the writer, manufacture a story in my head and externalize it onto the page. Storytellers that I admire, such as Trey Parker and Matt Stone, George Lucas, and Vince Gilligan accomplish this daunting task better than most. They created stories tailored to the daydreaming kid who would attempt to pursue the rewards. After years of wondering what direction to take my life in,

I take pride in my commitment to running, far from home, in hopes of achieving something great. Accomplishing my MFA in Screen and Television Writing at Pepperdine University is the jump-start to my career as a storyteller.

While I typically improvise my life, my career in film will require a bit of precision. My roadmap to success revolves around two key points: mentorship and advancement. In other words, can I get my foot in the right door, and can I advance through that door? Having excellent writing samples can only take a storyteller so far; making connections will take them to the next level. This entails getting entry-level assistant positions, whether it be production, management, or writing. Doing so takes clear advertisement and communication of my previous achievements in an attempt to impress somebody and gain an interview at a suitable company. It is my goal to prove to that company that adding me will only help them in their endeavors. My ideology is that consistent competence equals eventual excellence, and that is what a company would gain from hiring me.

Going forward, my imprint on the company will determine my advancement. If the people around me benefit from my work, there can be no denying my value. If my absence from work has a negative impact on productivity, that would demonstrate my value. Using my experience, I would seek a promotion that allows for stronger creative control over the projects I work on. This, along with my continuous writing, will strengthen the potential for me to produce my own work. The experience, along with the connections I make, are the building blocks for pitching my own content.

While continuing to write, honing my craft in satire, exploration, and psychology, it is equally important that I take in cultures other than my own. Understanding story is understanding people, and I cannot truly identify the cause of a person's behavior without

discovering the source. If I can manage, travelling will be the root of my story inspiration. If the advice to “write what you know” is valid, then learn more. One of the best pieces of advice I got while at Pepperdine is that travelling is education to a writer. What we experience is inevitably reflected onto the page.

The importance of my best work relies on my connection to the stories. Why I am the best person to tell this story? This is where travelling and understanding diverse cultures play an integral part. If my experiences are genuine, they will shine from the page with a sense of reality, which sells the story. As my projects are approved, I would like to be involved with the execution of said story. Whether it be a producer or director role, it is a critically important goal of mine to work on set. Establishing myself as a trusted writer, I would then be able to produce content for all the other daydreaming kids.

As Yogi Berra said, if you see a fork in the road, take it. That is my approach to life and, consequently, writing. The decisions I make will be bold, regardless whether the way is clear to me or not. I accept the mistakes I have made, for they have brought me to this moment. However, attending Pepperdine University to complete an MFA in Screen and Television Writing was not one of those mistakes.

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ONE FIFTY

Written by

Will Bullock

FROM THE BLACK WE HEAR--

INARA (V.O.)
Everything you could ever want.
Nothing more. Nothing less.

EXT. OPULENT HOUSE - MORNING

Luxurious house... described by a spectator.

INARA (O.C.)
(softly)
Two stories. Beige paint. Three car
garage.

SCRAPING. BRUSHING. The spectator is active.

INARA (O.C.) (CONT'D)
See-thru windows. That's ripe for
breaking and entering.
(beat)
Marble staircase. I hope whoever's
chasing me is in a wheelchair.
(beat)
Large roof. I'd escape on one of
those airboats they use for the
swamps.

A CANVAS, painted of the house, rests against an EASEL.
Behind it, INARA RUIZ (35) puts away her painting tools.
Attractive and well-dressed, she is the Hispanic version of
Bob Ross... no afro unfortunately.

INARA (CONT'D)
Airboats fly, right? Why else would
it be called that?

Grabbing the painting and easel, she walks to her MERCEDES
SUV, parked just down the street.

After putting her stuff away, she sees a car pull into the
driveway of the house she painted. Greeting the arrival...

INARA (CONT'D)
You must be Kendall.

KENDALL (40s) dresses like a celebrity in hiding: sweatsuit
and sunglasses. Just the curl of her mouth exudes arrogance.

KENDALL
And you are?

INARA

I'm Inara. We spoke on the phone yesterday.

KENDALL

Did we?

INARA

You said you wanted a tour. I said there wasn't one available for a month, and you demanded I fit you in, which I did.

KENDALL

I hope this house is more memorable than you are.

INARA

Right... how was the drive?

KENDALL

It was awful. I nearly had a stroke!

INARA

I'm so glad you didn't.

KENDALL

Why?

INARA

Huh?

KENDALL

Tell me why you're so glad.

INARA

Well... we wouldn't have met if you had a stroke, and you probably would've killed someone.

KENDALL

I wouldn't killed anyone. Every time I've nearly had a stroke while driving, I slam the brakes.

INARA

Are these frequent? And what happened to the back of your car?

The back of Kendall's car is torn up.

KENDALL
Asshole rear-ended me. He should've
seen the stroke signs when I
sneezed.

INARA
And you want to buy this house?

Kendall walks away from Inara to the house.

KENDALL
(smug)
Show me the interior.

Inara leads inside.

INT. OPULENT HOUSE - MORNING

Kendall leads herself around, while Inara pitches.

INARA
Built in 2004, it has 6 bedrooms, 6
baths--

KENDALL
Is that enough for a few guests to
spend the night?

INARA
It depends. How many are we talking
about?

KENDALL
A hundred and Thirty-six.

INARA
What're you doing that requires a
hundred and thirty-six people?

KENDALL
Plus or minus 10.

INARA
What a difference that makes.

KENDALL
Have you ever heard of an orgy?

INARA
Forget I asked.

Faintly, a SCREECHING noise. Neither reacts.

Kendall struts around.

KENDALL
So, this is the kitchen?

INARA
The room with a refrigerator and a
stove? No, it's the master-bedroom.

SCREECH.

KENDALL
Something's wrong with the smoke
alarm. I keep hearing screaming.

Inara looks up to the smoke alarm. Nothing.

INARA
I don't hear anything.

KENDALL
It's like an EEE-EEE.

INARA
That doesn't help--

KENDALL
Listen!

They stand there, looking up, waiting to hear something.

Inara notices... the ceiling seems to be shaking, ever so
slightly. Following, a SCREECH, but not from the smoke alarm.

INARA
(quietly)
I think that's... upstairs.
Someone's up there.

KENDALL
(whispering)
You should go check it out.

INARA
You should! You're like 6'4.

KENDALL
The taller they are the harder they
fall.

INARA
Fine, I'll go.

Inara finds a KITCHEN KNIFE and brings it with.

EXT. OPULENT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Viewing the place from where Inara painted, she creeps up the marble staircase.

INT. OPULENT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The screeching is much louder and more consistent. It sounds like...

INARA
(under her breath)
A woman in danger? Here?

Inara creeps to the room in question.

INARA (CONT'D)
If anyone's gonna save her, it'll
be me!

Inara CHARGES into the room to save the WOMAN. She finds the woman, BRITTNEY (20s), naked in bed. The woman is underneath a naked MAN, but not just any man...

INARA (CONT'D)
Jason?

JASON (40s) turns back, surprised to see Inara.

Brittney gets under the covers. Jason stands up, using a pillow as a censor.

JASON
Inara, what're you doing here?

INARA
You're cheating on me?

JASON
Do we have a showing today? I don't
remember that on the calendar.

INARA
I can't believe... Who's she?

BRITTNEY
Hi, I'm Brittney! You must be
Inara. He's told me all about you.

INARA
Did he now?

JASON
Now, don't get mad--

INARA
Oh, I'm getting mad! You just wait
for it!

JASON
Look, it's just a misunderstanding.
We weren't having sex, just
hugging. And, I had an erection!

INARA
How long's this been going on for?

BRITTNEY
A grueling thirty minutes, just
back and forth--

INARA
I mean, how long has this been
going on for?

JASON
Four months.

INARA
FOUR FUCKING MONTHS--

KENDALL (O.C.)
Did someone die?

Kendall enters the room and has a moment of realization.

KENDALL (CONT'D)
Oh my god! Do you remember when I
asked if you knew what an orgy was?
It's like this, but a hundred and
thirty-four other people!

INARA
Why?

KENDALL
Because they're fun--

INARA
Not you!
(points at Jason)
You.

JASON

Either you're working, or you're painting. You never had time for me.

INARA

That justifies you banging this rando?

BRITTNEY

Excuse me? I am not a rando.

Kendall slips to the corner of the room. She takes out her PHONE and records.

BRITTNEY (CONT'D)

I've happened to know Jason for over a year.

INARA

(voice raised)

Have you now?

BRITTNEY

He's been coming to my work every week for months.

INARA

Let me tell you something, Brittney...

Inara's hand motions scares Jason, considering the kitchen knife in Inara's hand...

INARA (CONT'D)

You're nothing but a whore!

JASON

Hey! Play nice.

INARA

You!

Inara waves the knife around.

INARA (CONT'D)

Why are you defending her? I'm your girlfriend. We're supposed to have a future together.

Jason cowers back.

EXT. OPULENT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

With dried-up tears, Inara storms out the house.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Inara shoves clothes in suitcases. She picks and chooses between stuff to take or leave.

Jason runs in, with a handful of stuff.

JASON

Inara! Wait, don't go.

(deep breath)

I love you! To prove it, I bought clothes, shoes, makeup, and perfume. That's all you want, right?

INARA

Can you please leave?

JASON

I paid for this apartment, along with all of this. You should be thankful. I spent a pretty penny on it.

INARA

I can't stay here.

JASON

Yes, you can. You're just upset. By the morning, you'll have forgotten all about it. You'll go to work with me... like a clean slate.

INARA

I can't work either.

JASON

You threatened my life today in front of a customer. You're lucky I'm letting you back.

INARA

You were not in danger!

JASON

Oh yeah? Then, what was the knife for?

INARA
I thought someone was getting
killed.

JASON
Accept my gifts, go to bed, and
we'll call it even-Steven.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

In the dark streets, Inara drives. She dials the phone.

DAVE (O.S.)
(on speaker)
Hello?

INARA
Hey, Dad.

DAVE (O.S.)
(groggy)
Inara, it's late. What's going on?

INARA
I've had a bad day. I need to come
home.

DAVE (O.S.)
I haven't seen you in so long. I
was almost hoping you'd fail in
your career, and you'd have to come
home.

INARA
That's... heartfelt?

DAVE (O.S.)
George will be excited to see you.
He hasn't been talking much... he's
been "in his feels" lately, or at
least that's what he calls it.

INARA
Nothing an older sister can't fix.

DAVE (O.S.)
When will you be back?

INARA
In...
(checks phone)
8 hours.

DAVE (O.S.)

Woah. Don't drive overnight. That's dangerous.

INARA

I'm not sleeping in a hotel.

DAVE (O.S.)

Back when I was your age, I would pull over to the shoulder to sleep. You could--

INARA

(sarcasm)

That's so safe. Great recommendation.

DAVE (O.S.)

Dads always know what's best.

INARA

I know. I'll see you soon.

Inara hangs up. She puts on a PODCAST. As the podcast talks, we watch Inara drive.

JUDITH (O.S.)

(speakers)

Welcome back to the "Random Shit" podcast, where we talk about random shit. I'm your host, Judith, along with my co-host, Marquis--

MARQUIS (O.S.)

I'm Marquis. I can say my own name, Judith.

JUDITH (O.S.)

Sure you can.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

At least my name doesn't come with antique furniture and cobwebs.

JUDITH (O.S.)

Actually, it does. Thank you for this show's sponsor, Online Antiques. Have you ever seen an old set of Knight armor that would look horrible in your living room and thought, that doesn't fit inside my Volkswagen Beetle? How about glass plates that would shatter in the trunk?

MARQUIS (O.S.)

Now you have Online Antiques. They can fit the Knight Armor in their vans, and the glass plates will be shattered in pieces at your door step, but don't worry. Use code, randomshit, to get 10% of your first purchase.

A big YAWN from Inara. This bores her.

JUDITH (O.S.)

Let's get to our topic of the day. We are talking about the lucrative industry of streaming.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

Is that what the kids watch these days?

Now alert, Inara HONKS her horn towards the car ahead of her. She SWERVES her car to a different lane.

JUDITH (O.S.)

Don't pretend like you don't.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

Do I look like a kid?

JUDITH (O.S.)

You don't have a social life.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

I have a family and a mortgage, so I don't have time to watch streamers.

JUDITH (O.S.)

Well, people are watching, because millions tune in daily.

Inara's car DRIFTS slightly to the BUMPY-side part. She re-adjusts.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

I did a bit of research watching them--

JUDITH (O.S.)

So, you're a fan?

MARQUIS (O.S.)

It's called doing my job. Ever heard of it?

JUDITH (O.S.)
I also did my job, and I found it a
bit... crude.

MARQUIS (O.S.)
How else will the audience's tiny
brains be stimulated?

JUDITH (O.S.)
I miss the days were someone like
Bob Ross could entertain an
audience with tree metaphors.

Inara RAISES her EYEBROWS.

EXT. MERCEDES - MORNING

The SUN is RISING, and Inara drives slowly through the road.

INT. MERCEDES - MORNING

Pulling an all-nighter for the drive, Inara is exhausted.
However, seeing her hometown again keeps her awake.

She rolls down the window.

EXT. SANTA FE - MORNING

The town is desert-like, with some trees here and there. She
drives by a playground, a convenience store called The Sunny
Station, and the many Pueblo-styled homes.

Behind it all, mountains that tower.

INT. MERCEDES - CONTINUOUS

Inara takes a deep breath.

INARA
(softly)
Home.

EXT. MERCEDES - MOMENTS LATER

The vehicle pulls into a driveway of a small home, parking
right next to a HUMMER. As she parks and exits, a man emerges
from the house.

With a scruffy gray beard, it is DAVE (60s), Inara's father. Juxtaposed to Inara's smaller stature, Dave is a large man, though he looks unimposing.

Tired, Inara stumbles over to her dad.

DAVE
Inara! Welcome home!

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

From the window, a kid, GEORGE (15), sees Dave and Inara hug.
George runs downstairs.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Dave overbearing enthusiasm shows to Inara.

DAVE
You don't know how many times I
prayed to the Lord up above that
you'd either get fired or have an
earth-shattering breakup, and I got
both! Anything to have you back.

INARA
(sarcasm)
I'm so happy for you.

DAVE
Let me tell you what I've been up
to--

GEORGE
Hey Inara.

Behind his dad stands George. He cracks a smile to Inara.

INARA
Come here! Give your sister a big-
ole hug.

George shuffles over and awkwardly hugs Inara.

DAVE
Why don't you help carry her bags
inside?

GEORGE
Okay.

George grabs bags from the Mercedes trunk, and takes them inside.

INARA

Something seems off with him.

DAVE

He's going through a phase. He's wearing new clothes. Eating new food, like spinach and kale. Listening to some kind of weird music. He'll grow out of it. I did.

INARA

Are you sure you did?

DAVE

Anyways, what was I saying earlier? Oh, about what I've been up to.

INARA

Right.

DAVE

It only took seven years, but I finally got over your mother's death.

INARA

Just now?

DAVE

And, I've going on dates. Lots of them. Fifteen women to be exact, all in the last two months.

George comes back to carry more bags.

INARA

Are you seeing any of them consistently?

DAVE

Miranda. She's about your age. We met on a threesome date from an app, but the third never showed.

George carries more bags.

INARA

Shouldn't you be driving him to school?

DAVE

He may as well get his exercise in before going to school. Showing up to class drenched in sweat is the manliest thing he can do.

INARA

What if he doesn't want to smell bad?

DAVE

When I met your mother, I hadn't showered in two days--

INARA

You should take George to school.

George is not outside. Dave swivels his head around.

DAVE

George! George!
(beat)
Where is that guy?

INARA

Does he do this often?

DAVE

He's like Batman. You turn your head, and he disappears. Too bad he can't fight like Batman.

INARA

You'd need to die for him to be Batman--

DAVE

Ahh!

George sneaks up on Dave and Inara.

INARA

How are you so quiet?

GEORGE

Alright, bud. I'm taking you away.

INT. HOUSE - INARA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

With all her bags stuffed in the room, Inara goes through her old belongings. Clothes. Art awards. Stacks of Architectural Digest.

On the wall, her PAINTINGS hang up, along with a BOB ROSS POSTER.

Inara lays down on her bed and closes her eyes.

INT. HUMMER - MORNING

The car ride of Dave and George is silent... on George's part. Dave is basically talking to himself.

DAVE

I was your age, going to my first high school party. I'm sure you hear about those. My friend, Wade, gave me a drink. I thought it was kool-aid. Turns out it was Hennessy. After that, everybody always said that I was like oatmeal mixed with Hennessy, which means I was the cool guy.

GEORGE

Mhm.

DAVE

Not too long after, I'd be the top salesman at the Hummer dealership. We'd get a sharp discount on all purchases of Hummers.

EXT. HUMMER - MORNING

The car arrives at the school.

INT. HUMMER - CONTINUOUS

George fiddles with the unlock button until he gets it. He quickly grabs his things and LEAVES.

GEORGE

Bye.

DAVE

Have a nice day--

George closes the door.

INT. HOUSE - INARA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Inara wakes from a nap. When she sits up, the first thing she sees is her paintings.

She goes through her stuff and finds her painting supplies. Inara passes the Bob Ross poster and remembers...

JUDITH (O.S.)
Something, something, something,
Bob Ross.

INARA
Oh, yeah.

Inara downloads a streaming app on her phone.

She leaves.

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Inara drives her car off somewhere.

EXT. MERCEDES - DAY

Inara drives into the MOUNTAINS that hang over the town.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Deep into the TREES, Inara carries her painting supplies down a trail.

She hikes for quite a while until...

Inara finds a great view. With this, she sets up her easel, canvas, brushes, and paints.

Before she begins, Inara sets up her phone against the tree. She gets to the streaming app and hits record.

INARA
Hello, hello. My name is Inara, and
I am going to paint for you.

She gets a hold of her paints and brush. Inara takes control of the canvas.

INARA (CONT'D)
We have this view of Santa Fe. I'll
start with a midnight blue... use
it for a sky.
(MORE)

INARA (CONT'D)

If one were to shoot an RPG, this would be the perfect spot. Aim it up above the town, and it might soar over.

Inara completes the sky.

INARA (CONT'D)

For the town, I'll use coffee brown. Eventually, the rocket will drop, 'cause of gravity of course. It could potentially land on someone--

CALVIN (O.C.)

Hello!

Inara jumps.

INARA

Jesus Christ!

Inara turns and sees CALVIN KELE, a Native-American park ranger, who has intruded upon Inara's stream.

CALVIN

Sorry to bother but... wait, is that... you?

INARA

Is it who?

CALVIN

You. The girl.

INARA

I am a girl.

CALVIN

Not just a girl.

INARA

(sarcasm)

I'm flattered.

CALVIN

No, you're famous. Everybody knows you.

INARA

What are you gonna say next? That I don't look a day over 25? I've heard those lines before.

(MORE)

INARA (CONT'D)

Next time you try hitting on me,
try to think of something original--

CALVIN

The video.

INARA

I am recording a video.

CALVIN

No, not that. Something different,
but that's how I know you. The
video.

INARA

I posted a video of me singing
"Call me Maybe" in 2012 if that's
what you mean. It got roughly 200
views. I guess you could say I was
a prodigy.

Calvin searches through his phone.

CALVIN

Definitely not a prodigy. Let me
find it... real... quick... okay...
is it here?... No.

INARA

Look, you've probably got the wrong
person, but that's okay. If you
leave right now, I promise not to
key your tires--

CALVIN

Here!

Calvin holds his phone up. It is indeed a video of Inara.
With her is Jason, her ex, and Brittney, the home-wrecker.

INARA (PHONE)

YOU BITCH. COME BACK HERE! DON'T
RUN AWAY!

In the video, Inara chases Jason (naked) around with the
KITCHEN KNIFE. Brittney (also naked) steps in front.

BRITTNEY (PHONE)

No! Don't hurt him!

INARA (PHONE)

I'M GONNA KILL YOU AND YOU!

JASON (PHONE)

NO!

Jason takes Inara's arm, and Brittney takes the other arm.
Inara fights them off and maintains the knife.

INARA

No, no, no... this can't be real.

CALVIN

Very real. I told you, you're famous. 10 million views.

INARA

I can't watch anymore. Just let me paint in peace.

CALVIN

That's right. Can you show me your permit?

INARA

Why would I need a permit?

CALVIN

No worries. Do you have your ID on you?

INARA

Yeah.

Inara takes out her ID and hands it over.

Calvin reads it and pulls out a pad of paper and a pen. He writes something down.

INARA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CALVIN

Just a moment.

He finishes, rips the paper, and hands it over with the ID.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

It's a citation. You can't paint at this park without acquiring a permit.

INARA

You're kidding me! This has got to be a joke... A hundred and fifty dollars!

CALVIN

Woah, O.J. Simpson. Don't chase me with a knife. I'm just doing my job.

INARA

Show me the rules.

CALVIN

Look, there are two rules at this park, and only two. Firstly, if two animals are fornicating you cannot interfere, and two, you cannot paint without a permit.

INARA

Those have got to be the worst rules ever made. You're making it up, aren't you?

CALVIN

Am not.

INARA

Show me then.

CALVIN

I don't have to. I just keep them up here.

Calvin taps his noggin.

INARA

I don't believe you. Is this another ploy of hitting on me?

CALVIN

Why would I hit on you?

INARA

Cause... never mind. I'm just not paying this.

CALVIN

Then, I'll just give you another one when you come back.

INARA

You see a thousand people everyday--

CALVIN

And, I'll remember your face.

INARA
No, you won't.

CALVIN
I will, Inara Ruiz.

INARA
(pause)
You better not have memorized my
address.

CALVIN
I already know where jail is.

INARA
You know what, I'm leaving.

Inara turns off the stream.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Inara's Mercedes leaves in a hurry.

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Inside the vehicle, Inara's art supplies fumble around. She
is a bit preoccupied.

INARA
Goddamnit!

Inara types around on her phone for podcasts...

JUDITH (O.S.)
(speakers)
Are you down on your luck?

INARA
Yes!

JUDITH (O.S.)
Does it feel like the whole world's
against you?

INARA
Yes!

MARQUIS (O.S.)
Well we can't help you!

INARA
No!

MARQUIS (O.S.)
But what we can get you is 10% off
your first purchase with Dollar
Tree.

INARA
Fuck this.

Inara turns the podcast off.

INT. HOUSE - INARA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Inara pouts on her bed, rewatching her viral moment. That is
until she gets a phone call from VANESSA.

Inara answers.

INARA
Hello?

VANESSA (O.S.)
(speaker)
Inara! Is that you?

INARA
The one and only. I haven't talked
to you in so long!

VANESSA (O.S.)
I know. It's been what... 3 years?

INARA
Something like that. So what's the
occasion?

VANESSA (O.S.)
Occasion?

INARA
Yeah, why'd you call?

VANESSA (O.S.)
We're basically besties. Do we need
an occasion?

INARA
(shrugs)
I guess not.

VANESSA (O.S.)
Well, there was. I saw that video
of you! That's pretty
incriminating.

INARA

That's one way to describe it. I
had to move back home.

VANESSA (O.S.)

You're back!?

INARA

That's what I said.

VANESSA (O.S.)

Then why are we talking on the
phone. Come to me!

INARA

I would, but I don't know where you
are.

VANESSA (O.S.)

I'm at work.

INARA

And where is that?

EXT. THE SUNNY STATION - NIGHT

Lit up against the dark sky in big orange letters, *The Sunny
Station* logo flickers rapidly from a SIGN.

Rows of gas PUMPS stand before the CONVENIENCE STORE.

The store itself is large in size. A SUNNY SUN is planted
above the DOOR.

INT. THE SUNNY STATION - NIGHT

The store is bulked in supply, with lines of food,
accessories, and clothes.

At a table sits Inara and VANESSA (35).

INARA

You work here?

VANESSA

I'm the manager. I got laid off at
my last gig, took the part-time
cashier job, and I just kept
getting promoted.

INARA

Lucky you.

VANESSA

Last time we talked, you said you were a real estate agent.

INARA

Not anymore. That was the video you saw.

VANESSA

So, he was your boss and your boyfriend? Did you sleep your way into the job?

INARA

God no. The job came first.

VANESSA

I'll bet he did.

Inara cracks a smile. Vanessa is pleased.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Fuck him and fuck the job! We gotta get you back on your feet.

INARA

I just gotta get job in the meantime. You know any realtors?

VANESSA

Aren't you forgetting something?

INARA

(beat)
What?

VANESSA

Ever heard of background checks?

INARA

I'm plenty qualified!

VANESSA

No, you're not!

Vanessa holds up the video of Inara running around with a knife.

INARA

They won't know it's me.

VANESSA

Believe me, they'll know if they're good at their job.

INARA

Then how am I supposed to have my comeback?

VANESSA

You work for me!

Inara looks at her blankly.

INARA

You want me... to work... at The Sunny Station.

VANESSA

Be the cashier, just like me.

INARA

Doesn't that take training?

VANESSA

Don't worry, it's quick.

INT. THE SUNNY STATION - LATER

Inara and Vanessa are behind the cash register.

INARA

That was quick.

VANESSA

See. What did I say?

INARA

But this is such a downgrade. Can't I work in the back with you?

VANESSA

Would we ever get anything done?
It'd just be us yabbering and jabbering.

INARA

But what about the vibes?

VANESSA

Working the cash register is not a downgrade. Just imagine this scenario... you're getting hit on by a 52 year-old divorced dad with missing teeth--

INARA

Gross.

VANESSA

But, it gets better. His one bed
condo has an attached living room.

INARA

Are there... other options?

VANESSA

I'm afraid not.

INARA

Good, because I'm swearing off
guys.

VANESSA

No, you're not.

INARA

Um. Yes, I am.

VANESSA

But, I need someone to two-man with
me.

INARA

But, I don't care. I went through a
bad experience. I spent years of my
life with a man just for him to be
cheating on me. I don't need anyone
but myself.

The front door opens, in walks CALVIN.

INARA (CONT'D)

(whisper)

Holy shit! That guy is a fucking
prick. He gave me a ticket earlier.

VANESSA

Did he now?

Vanessa shoots Inara a "watch this" look, as she approaches
Calvin.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Hi customer, how can I help you?

CALVIN

Just looking around.

VANESSA

For what?

CALVIN

Hmm?

VANESSA

What're you browsing for? I know where everything is.

CALVIN

I'm okay.

VANESSA

Are you single?

CALVIN

I... yes, I am. Why?

VANESSA

I'm not interested in you, but my friend is. She's really hot. You should talk to her.

Inara watching behind the counter...

INARA

Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit.

Inara tries hiding, but she does not find anywhere.

VANESSA

Yeah, she's over here.

CALVIN

I don't see anybody.

VANESSA

She's a nervous gal, but she's a charmer.

(beat)

What's your name?

CALVIN

Calvin.

VANESSA

Okay, Cal. Meet Inara.

Inara pops up to Calvin's surprise.

CALVIN

Oh.

INARA

Fuck you bitch.

Inara holds up middle fingers.

INARA (CONT'D)

It's \$150 in fuck you's. You think you can pay it?

VANESSA

Now, be nice Inara. This man was about to ask you out.

CALVIN

Well, I didn't say I would. I wanted to see if she was pretty first.

VANESSA

You don't think she's pretty?

CALVIN

She is, but I don't think she likes me.

VANESSA

Inara, don't you find this man very appealing?

INARA

He's not bad.

Calvin looks at Vanessa, then back at Inara.

CALVIN

How about this, I'll take you out with the budget of \$150 just for you. If there's money left over, we keep going out until we hit the one-fifty mark. After that, it's your call.

Inara looks at Vanessa, then smirks at Calvin.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Well?

INT. HOUSE - INARA'S BEDROOM - NOON

Inara is sluggish, messy-looking getting out of bed, dressed in her pajamas. Without doing anything else, she walks out.

EXT. HOUSE - NOON

Waiting for Inara is Calvin, sitting in his beaten-up Ford Taurus.

He rolls the window down, as Inara approaches the car.

CALVIN

You look...

Calvin tries to come up with a nice word, but he fails.

INARA

I look what?

CALVIN

(sarcasm)

Just great.

Inara gets in.

INT. TAURUS - NOON

Calvin drives.

INARA

So where are we going?

CALVIN

Did you just wake up?

INARA

I'm in the mood for eggs and bacon.

CALVIN

There's this nice pizza place just down the street we're going to.

INARA

I read one time that the reason why humans today have weak teeth is because they brush them. How do mine smell?

Inara breathes towards Calvin.

CALVIN

(leaning back)

Does that mean you just woke up?

INARA

I'm sorry I worked the late shift.
I don't have the luxury of getting
off at five.

CALVIN

We have plenty of open spots for
you.

INARA

Pizza you said? I was hoping eggs
and bacon.

CALVIN

It's a little late for breakfast
food.

INARA

It's never too late.

CALVIN

Your breath would smell worse after
eggs.

INARA

You think my breath smells bad? How
dare you?

CALVIN

Brush your teeth, and I might
change my mind.

INARA

You know what? Take me home.

CALVIN

Okay.

Calvin goes to U-TURN.

INARA

Wait, I want my free meal.

CALVIN

Okay.

Silence for a few beats.

INARA

It doesn't matter anyways.

CALVIN

What doesn't?

INARA

My breath. You're not getting any closer than this.

CALVIN

You could be a little nicer.

INARA

You could've spared me a ticket.

CALVIN

You wouldn't be here if I hadn't.

INARA

You're lucky I'm here, to be in my presence.

CALVIN

The presence of knife-wielding maniac.

INARA

You think that about me?

CALVIN

Of course not, but it makes a good comeback.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - NOON

Inara and Calvin sit comfortably at a booth. The waiter, PAM, looks excited seeing the customers.

PAM

What can I get started for you today? Waters for the table?

CALVIN

Yes--

INARA

Do you have a martini?

PAM

We don't have a martini.

INARA

This is going on Yelp.

PAM

We do have beer.

INARA

Ew. I'll have your largest
lemonade.

PAM

We do have one of those.

Pam turns her back to walk away.

INARA

I'm ready to order!

Coming right back...

PAM

What can I get you?

INARA

Do you have anything under 100
calories? It's just that he called
me fat on the way here.

Inara points at Calvin.

INARA (CONT'D)

So do you have anything?

PAM

We have water.

INARA

Eh. I'll have your largest pizza,
with all the toppings.

PAM

All as in...?

INARA

As in every single topping.

PAM

(to Calvin)
And you?

CALVIN

Regular cheese.

Pam walks away.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

If you're like this on the next
date, I'm leaving you there.

INARA
You wouldn't.

CALVIN
Are you sure?

INARA
You shook on it. That means
everything to a guy.

CALVIN
Who revealed our secrets?

INARA
I won't tell.

Beat, then...

CALVIN
You know... you're not very smart.

INARA
Why is that?

CALVIN
You have \$150 to spend in food
however you like, and you're
ordering the most expensive
lemonade?

INARA
It'll be the best lemonade anyone's
ever had. Extra pumps of sugar and
shit.

CALVIN
Just saying, you could be a little
less frivolous with the budget.

INARA
Sure buddy.

Pam comes back with the largest lemonade ever put in a cup.
Also with Calvin's water.

PAM
Your pizzas will be out shortly.

As Pam leaves...

INARA
What did I tell you? Look at this
thing.

CALVIN

I'll admit. It's the largest
lemonade I've ever seen. It doesn't
make it good.

Inara SLURPS it.

INARA

Don't worry. It's good.

CALVIN

My water--
(drinks)
Is equally good.

INARA

You're gonna have to stop your
lying.

CALVIN

It's the truth. Water is the
natural drinking source.

INARA

You're only saying that because--
(points at Calvin)

CALVIN

Because what?

INARA

You know... It's your holistic
vibe.

CALVIN

You're gonna have to say it.

INARA

No, I don't.

CALVIN

I'll walk out right now and leave
the bill to you.

INARA

You wouldn't.

CALVIN

Yes, I would. I'm the law.

INARA

You're a park ranger. That's like a
second, no third class cop.

CALVIN
Just say it.

INARA
Of course you like water, you're...
(whispering)
Native American.

CALVIN
Why'd you whisper? It's not a
disability.

INARA
No, no, I didn't mean it like that--

PAM (O.C.)
Here are the pizzas.

Pam comes in with two pizzas, juxtaposing each other.

PAM (CONT'D)
One with all the toppings. One with
no toppings.

Pam places the pizzas down.

PAM (CONT'D)
Is the lemonade everything you
dreamed it was?

INARA
That and more.

PAM
And the water?

CALVIN
Better than hers.

Pam nods and leaves.

Inara peels off many of the toppings.

INARA
I actually don't like olives, and
spinach, and pineapple... ew. And
sausage, pepperoni, and everything
else. I'm a cheese pizza girly.

Inara's once decorated pizza matches Calvin's as a cheese.

Calvin takes the forsaken toppings and puts it on his own
pizza.

CALVIN
Someone's gotta eat these.

INARA
You're one of those guys?

CALVIN
Someone who eats what they order?
Yes, I'm one of those.

INARA
That's an ick.

Beat.

CALVIN
You know Native Americans drank
more than just water?

INARA
Yeah. You guys got that stuff that
makes you see the ancestors and
shit. The hallucination mixture.

CALVIN
You take every stereotype and run
with it. What if I said you're
family jumped over the border?

INARA
Then you'd be right.

CALVIN
I'll bet you think my family owns a
casino.

INARA
I never said that.

CALVIN
You're thinking it.

INARA
No, I wasn't. I'll guess your
family runs a sophisticated medical
practice where dreamcatchers and
leaves heal all wounds.

CALVIN
Unfortunately, you'd be wrong. We
own a casino.

INARA
(under her breath)
I knew it.

CALVIN
What's that?

INARA
Nothing. Let's eat.

Inara digs into her cheese pizza. Calvin begins on his topping-full pizza.

INT. THE SUNNY STATION - NIGHT

Vanessa is talking to someone at a table.

VANESSA
You might be the dumbest person
I've ever met.

Reveal to Inara eating leftover pizza across from her.

INARA
What? I took it to-go.

VANESSA
You have to be less frivolous with
the budget.

INARA
Really?

VANESSA
Yes, when have you ever got the
chance to order whatever you want
at a restaurant?

INARA
Every time I went out with Jason.

VANESSA
Does that count? I mean he was
fucking that women you chased
around with a knife.

INARA
My Mercedes counts.

VANESSA
He bought that for you? Why don't
you sell it?

INARA
Cause it's a Mercedes. Have you
ever seen something so...
magnificent?

Vanessa looks out the window at Inara's Mercedes, GLOWING in
the dark sky.

VANESSA
Magnificent isn't the word I'd use.
It's more of a waste of space in my
parking lot.

INARA
You wish you had it.

VANESSA
Maybe that's true, or maybe you're
holding on to something you
shouldn't.

INARA
I don't know what you're talking
about.

VANESSA
It's an example of your old life.
Your past relationship.

INARA
I... think you're full of shit.

VANESSA
Just my observation.

INARA
Okay, bitch.

Vanessa walks to her office.

VANESSA
Be smarter with the money. Use
him... respectfully.

INT. HOUSE - INARA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Inara prepares for bed, she checks her streaming numbers.
1,500 FOLLOWERS.

INARA
(under her breath)
Not bad.

She takes clips of her stream and posts them to various social media.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Through the camera lens, Inara finishes up a PAINT.

She talks to the camera.

INARA

That is why you should put babies
to sleep through chokes rather than
rocking them in your arms. You'll
create superhuman athletes.

Inara displays her PAINTING of the nearby HOUSES.

INARA (CONT'D)

This is my art. I hope you were
able to follow along. If not, maybe
try to find a new hobby. This is
Inara, and I'll see you next time.

Inara turns off the stream, and the camera goes dark.

INT. TAURUS - NIGHT

Calvin takes Inara to their next destination. Inara looks far more presentable.

CALVIN

You look good.

INARA

Where are we going this time?

CALVIN

This time it's a surprise.

INARA

You better hope your surprise is
good.

Calvin just smirks.

INARA (CONT'D)

Silence I see.

Calvin looks at her.

INARA (CONT'D)

What?

Nothing.

INARA (CONT'D)

What!?

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Inara is in total shock of the choice. Calvin just looks at her reaction.

INARA

Breakfast for dinner?

CALVIN

Well? What do you think?

INARA

Not bad, Calvin. Not bad.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

The WAITER looks to get Inara's order.

INARA

I'll have as many eggs and bacon
you'll allow.

Waiter nods and walks away.

INARA (CONT'D)

What?

Calvin looks at her confused but laughing.

CALVIN

I thought you were going to be more
cautious with the budget.

INARA

What do you expect? It's eggs and
bacon.

CALVIN

I guess so.

INARA

Next time, I'll be more
conscientious.

CALVIN

Next time?

INARA

Duh. There's a next time, isn't there?

CALVIN

Yeah, there is. Didn't think you'd be so excited.

INARA

Can I ask you something?

CALVIN

Of course.

INARA

I have to warn you. It's really important.

CALVIN

I'm warned.

INARA

Like really important.

CALVIN

I get it.

INARA

Does the budget extend outside of food?

CALVIN

(beat)

What do you mean?

INT. ARCADE - NIGHT

In a flashy, colorful venue, Calvin and Inara go crazy on SKEE-BALL.

CALVIN

Out of everything here--

INARA

I wanted to play Skee-ball. Just imagine how many games we can play.

CALVIN

I'll let you do most of the playing. It's not really my kind of thing.

INARA

Grow up. Skee-ball is a man's sport
for the intelligent and mature.

CALVIN

It's definitely a kid's game.

INARA

Think about how dumb you'd look
standing here, talking to me and
not playing. Doesn't that sound
like an ugly sight?

Calvin inserts coins into the machine next to Inara's. They
talks as they play.

CALVIN

Why here?

INARA

I used to come here a lot with my
mom. We stopped when she got sick.

CALVIN

How is it coming back?

INARA

Bittersweet. I left town after she
died. I thought I could run away
from my problems.

CALVIN

Did you?

INARA

No, it's something I never got
over.

CALVIN

That's what I've found. Running
away from your problems keeps them
relevant.

This troubles Inara. She has a face full of regret.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Look at that! I got it in the 100.

INARA

You're a natural.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Calvin's Ford Taurus pulls up to Inara's crib.

INT. TAURUS - NIGHT

CALVIN
I'll see you in a few days.

INARA
That was fun. I'll see you then.

Inara gets out.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Inara enters the kitchen, finding George sitting at the table, all alone.

INARA
Hey George, what're you doing?

GEORGE
Waiting.

INARA
What for?

GEORGE
He was supposed to be back two hours ago. I haven't eaten yet.

INARA
Who? Dad?

GEORGE
Yeah.

INARA
Where is he? What's he doing?

GEORGE
On a date with who-knows-what at the location of who-knows-where.

INARA
You don't have to wait any longer. I'll make you something.

GEORGE
Okay.

Inara starts getting things out of the refrigerator.

INARA
How was school? You do anything
fun?

GEORGE
Not really.

INARA
Why don't you invite some friends
over? That way you're not waiting
by yourself.

GEORGE
I wouldn't know who to invite. I
don't have a lot.

Inara starts putting things in the microwave.

INARA
Talk to more people. Put yourself
out there.

GEORGE
Okay.

INARA
And, I'll talk to Dad. Don't worry.
I have your back.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

SUPER: A FEW HOURS LATER

Dave stumbles through the front door, turning on the lights.

Asleep in a chair, Inara is supposed to be on watch for Dave.

Dave tries tiptoeing around, but he slips over a fork laying
on the ground.

DAVE
Ouch!

Inara wakes.

INARA
(sleepy)
Well, well, well. Look what the cat
dragged in.

DAVE

Hey sweetie. What you doing up so late?

INARA

I was sound asleep in that chair, but I could be asking you the same thing.

DAVE

Why is there a bunch of silverware on the ground?

Dozens of knives, spoons, and forks lie spaced out on the floor.

INARA

I took a gamble that one of those would trip you up, just incase I fell asleep.

DAVE

Why would you do that?

INARA

You were supposed to be home hours ago. George was sitting here, waiting for you.

DAVE

He's fifteen. He can take care of himself.

INARA

Fifteen with crippling anxiety. Have you seen him walking around? It's like the Lion, Tin-man, and Scarecrow all in one person.

DAVE

Do you even want to hear about the date?

INARA

I don't.

Inara walks away.

INT. HOUSE - INARA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Inara is shaken up to George.

GEORGE
Hey. Inara.

INARA
(groggy)
Yes?

GEORGE
Can you drive me to school? Dad's
asleep.

Inara rolls over in bed.

INT. MERCEDES - MORNING

Inara is driving George.

GEORGE
Thanks.

INARA
Yeah.

GEORGE
(beat)
You ever heard of Fornite? It's
this game I play where you drop in
a map full of people, and it's last
man standing.

INARA
Sounds familiar.

GEORGE
I play it a lot. I'm pretty good.

INARA
Oh yeah.

GEORGE
Yeah. I think I could make a living
off of it.

INARA
Is that sustainable?

GEORGE
Just as sustainable as painting.

INARA
Woah. I could go back to real
estate anytime I wanted.

GEORGE
Then why haven't you?

INARA
(hesitates)
I just want to try other things at
the moment.

GEORGE
Sure buddy.

George looks out the window. Inara spots his mood dip.

INARA
I talked to Dad last night.

GEORGE
And?

INARA
Lost cause. He seems a bit
preoccupied with his own...
endeavors.

GEORGE
He's been that way for months. I've
had to wake him up so many times to
take me. Now with you back, I'll
just wake you up.

INARA
That's not gonna last. Waking up
this early is killing me.

GEORGE
I can't keep up the same charade
around Dad. His head's so far up
his ass that he doesn't even know
I'm gay.

INARA
You're gay? Since when?

GEORGE
Since ever. I'm a raging
homosexual.

INARA
He wouldn't care. It's not like
he's prejudiced.

GEORGE

You're right. He wouldn't care.
It'd go in one ear and out the
other.

INARA

Here's the real question. Does he
need to know?

GEORGE

I'd prefer if he actually knew me.
If he knew something about my life.
Ask him my favorite hobbies, and
he'll tell you sleeping and
masturbating.

INARA

I didn't need to hear that--

GEORGE

But they're not true... partially.
I have other interests that he
knows nothing of.

INARA

Like Fortnite?

GEORGE

Exactly.

INARA

Why don't you ask him to play with
you?

GEORGE

Umm, I'll pass.

INARA

(sighs)

You're a lost cause.

Inara puts the car in park.

INARA (CONT'D)

We're here. Have fun at school!
Make some friends.

George OPENS the doors and STEPS out near a crowd of
students.

GEORGE

(trailing away)

Still don't know how.

George CLOSES the door. Inara ROLLS down the window.

INARA
(shouting)
Just tell them you're gay!

The crowd looks right at George. Inara puts the window UP and drives away.

INT. THE SUNNY STATION - DAY

Inara ENTERS in the back room where Vanessa is.

VANESSA
You're here early.

INARA
I'll do my shift now. Calvin wants to meet at like 4 PM. Said he's got a fun one for tonight.

VANESSA
How've they been going?

INARA
The dates? It's only been two of them, but surprisingly... it's been interesting.

VANESSA
Ohhh. You like him.

Inara cracks a smile but attempts to hide it.

INARA
No, I don't.

VANESSA
I can tell. I'm a master a reading people.

INARA
I'm unreadable. I don't like him!

VANESSA
(beat)
You can't even hold a straight face.

INARA
This is the straightest face you're ever gonna see. Look.

Inara poses with a dead stare, but she breaks with a laugh.

VANESSA

See!

INARA

That was a fluke! It's cause you're staring.

VANESSA

You like him. I know it.

INARA

I'll prove you wrong.

EXT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Inara waits outside for Calvin. As she does, Dave drives his Hummer with George in the passenger seat.

The two guys hop out the Hummer.

INARA

How was the ride?

George speed walks past Inara to the house.

GEORGE

(quickly)

Just great.

Dave walks slowly to Inara.

DAVE

I know you're gonna say something, but you should know... I sold a Hummer today! I haven't done that in months. Nobody seems to want them anymore.

INARA

Shouldn't you be worried about something else?

DAVE

Did I scrape the curb? Is there a scratch on my precious hummer?

INARA

Your son... dumbass.

DAVE

Oh him? He's great! Thanks for taking him to school. If you don't mind, that should be your job now.

INARA

Actually, I do mind. You need to talk to your son. Relate to him. And drive him to school cause I'm not doing that.

DAVE

Maybe I should take him to work. Show him all the premium Hummers for sale--

INARA

Go to his room and talk to him. He and I are proof of your great marriage with Mom.

DAVE

So what your saying is... you think I should talk to him?

INARA

Yeah.

DAVE

So in other words... I should strike up a conversation?

INARA

Yep.

DAVE

If I were to change the style of the statement... my mouth needs to talk to his mouth?

INARA

Ew no. Just turn around, go inside, and speak to him.

DAVE

If I were to regurgitate--

INARA

Go inside, you parrot.

Calvin's Taurus arrives at the house.

INARA (CONT'D)

That's my cue.

Inara gets in Calvin's whip.

INT. TAURUS - AFTERNOON

As Inara buckles, Calvin looks at Dave.

CALVIN
Is that your dad?

INARA
Unfortunately.

CALVIN
He looks fun.

INARA
Maybe too fun.

CALVIN
When am I meeting him?

INARA
Who said you'll get to meet him?

CALVIN
I'm pretty confident.

Calvin DRIVES.

INARA
So, what's this fun date you have planned?

CALVIN
You'll see.

INARA
Not gonna tell me?

CALVIN
Surprises are the best.

INARA
The last one was a surprise.

CALVIN
And you loved it.

INARA
Guarantee I hate this one.

CALVIN
Guarantee you won't.

INARA

Can you at least describe it? Give me some adjectives.

CALVIN

I'd say it's... unorthodox and creative.

INARA

Calling your own idea creative is a red flag.

CALVIN

The idea isn't creative, but the potential of it is.

INARA

That must mean we're painting? You know I do that every day.

CALVIN

Not painting. You don't need to see my artistic ability.

INARA

Why not?

CALVIN

I'll give you some adjectives. Grotesque and deformed.

INARA

In that case, we better be painting. I need a reason to laugh at you.

CALVIN

You'll be laughing at me when I tell a hilarious joke.

Painful silence.

INARA

I'm putting you in timeout.

CALVIN

What does that mean?

EXT. GROCERY STORE - AFTERNOON

Inara and Calvin get out of the car.

CALVIN
So by timeout, you meant not
talking to me?

INARA
It's called adult timeout. I don't
want to hear another bad joke come
out of your mouth.

CALVIN
But--

INARA
Not another bad joke. You got me?

CALVIN
Sure buddy.

INARA
Now, what are we doing at a grocery
store?

CALVIN
Jesse, clear your social calendar.
We need to cook.

INARA
Huh?

CALVIN
You've never seen *Breaking Bad*?

INARA
Why would I have watched *Breaking
Bad*?

CALVIN
That can't be a real question. It's
quite possibly the greatest tv show
of all time.

INARA
Anybody with a brain cell can tell
you that *Keeping Up with the
Kardashians* is the greatest show
ever.

CALVIN
Rather than standing outside my
car, we should go inside and buy
some ingredients.

INT. HOUSE - GEORGE'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

As George plays Fortnite, Dave knocks and walks in.

DAVE

Hey bud. Whatcha doing? Is that
Minecraft?

GEORGE

It's Fortnite.

DAVE

Is that the one game where you
shoot people?

GEORGE

I mean... there's... a few of those
games like that... FUCK!

DAVE

Hey. No cussing.

GEORGE

I died cause you were distracting
me.

DAVE

Well, it's a good time for us to
catch up.

GEORGE

What's there to catch up on?

DAVE

What's school life been like?

GEORGE

It's quiet. I don't really talk to
too many people--

DAVE

Wait. Are those Vans?

GEORGE

Yeah, they are.

DAVE

NO! NO!

GEORGE

What?

DAVE

I knew it! You're hiding something from me aren't you?

GEORGE

What? No, I'm not!

DAVE

George, you have to be honest with me. Is there anything you want to tell me?

GEORGE

Ummm... no?

DAVE

Are you sure? I'll let you come out. This is your chance.

George stays quiet.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Fine. I'll be the one to say it.
(deep breath)
My son's a liberal!

GEORGE

What?

DAVE

Only liberals wear Vans. I can't believe it. Your mother's turning over in her grave.

GEORGE

Get out of my room!

Dave stutters as if he has a comeback, but he says nothing. He takes two steps backwards and EXITS the room.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

On the kitchen counter, GROCERY BAGS full of ingredients. Emerging to the room is Calvin, carrying many bags. Following, Inara enters with one bag.

CALVIN

Is that the last of them?

Inara sets the bag down.

INARA
Yeah. Just this one. This chicken
alfredo is gonna HIT.

CALVIN
You close the trunk?

INARA
Do I look like your maid?

CALVIN
A hot one.

Inara pretends like she is gonna shove the groceries to the ground.

INARA
Whoever taught you how to
compliment a woman did a horrible
job. Whatever happened to "you look
pretty today"?

CALVIN
Look, you gave me the alley-oop.
Don't get mad when I dunk it.

INARA
I actually forgot my maid outfit at
home. You mind if I go back and get
it?

CALVIN
Go ahead, and close the trunk on
your way.

INARA
I won't lay a finger on your trunk.

CALVIN
Are you sure?

Inara finds that mildly amusing, but she moves on.

INARA
Why don't you close it? I'll get
started on the cooking.

Calvin smiles at Inara.

MONTAGE OF INARA AND CALVIN

- Cooking up the ingredients
- Laughing as they spill noodles

- Finishing the final product
- Eating the food together

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Inara and Calvin are cleaning their mess. Dishes, silverware, pots, and pans being washed.

CALVIN
We make a mean pasta.

INARA
Mostly because of me.

CALVIN
Well, I beg to differ. I was the
mastermind behind the whole thing.
Look at the--

INARA
(laughing)
Oh be quiet.

CALVIN
It's true.

INARA
You got quite the ego. Someone
needs to humble you.

CALVIN
The day you find someone who can,
let me know.

INARA
Me, silly.

CALVIN
What makes you think I need
humbled?

INARA
Do you hear yourself right now?
That's like... the epitome of
cocky.

CALVIN
How are you gonna humble me?

INARA
You put in a lot of hard work
tonight. Maybe I'll just take my
feet out the door.

CALVIN
You'd leave?

INARA
Yes.

CALVIN
Well...

INARA
Yes?...

CALVIN
Nobody's stopping you.

Inara walks over to the front door, staring at the center.
She takes a deep breath and turns dramatically back around.

Calvin is also close to the door, as he steadily struts to
Inara.

INARA
Maybe I don't want to leave.

Calvin reaches Inara.

CALVIN
Good.

He puts his hand up to Inara's face and pulls himself in for
a KISS.

Though she is surprised, Inara reciprocates. She puts her
hands on his.

At a snail's pace, the attached duo makes their way to the
bedroom.

Keeping focus on the dirty dishes in the kitchen, Inara and
Calvin kiss in frame, then walk out of it.

Staying on the dishes, we hear them continue to make out
until...

A door SLAMS shut.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Inara WAKES from under Calvin's bedsheets. She glances over to his side, Calvin is knocked.

She lays in bed for a moment, thinking she can wait it out.

Screw it, she is LEAVING.

Inara slowly gets out from under the sheets without waking Calvin.

She puts on her clothes and tip-toes to the door.

CALVIN
(groggy)
You going somewhere?

INARA
Oh, I didn't want to wake you.

CALVIN
You leaving?

INARA
I mean... yeah.

CALVIN
Why don't you stay for breakfast.
Then, you can take off.

INARA
I should go.

Calvin sits up in the bed.

CALVIN
Why are you going? Is it something
I did?

INARA
No, no. It's just... my dad is
probably wondering where I am right
now.

CALVIN
You're not 16.

INARA
I have to get to work.

CALVIN
I know you don't work this early,
and it's a Saturday.

INARA

Can't you just let me leave?

CALVIN

No, I want to know why.

INARA

Why what?

CALVIN

Why you just toy with me. Play with my feelings.

INARA

I don't--

CALVIN

You have been the whole time. The first date was just to mock me. And, now you sleep with me just to storm off in the morning. Was any of it genuine?

INARA

Yeah, of course it was.

CALVIN

Don't fuck with me. Please, Inara, don't.

INARA

Okay maybe the beginning was nothing but a gag, but that doesn't magically negate the rest of it. You have to believe me.

CALVIN

Then what is it?

INARA

Before I met you, I was in a committed relationship, and he was cheating on me. Since then, I wasn't looking for anything serious, but then you showed up.

CALVIN

Then stay.

INARA

(beat)

I can't.

Calvin sighs.

CALVIN
Yeah, just go then.

INARA
You're not even gonna fight it?

CALVIN
Why? I'm not changing your mind.
Either you like me, or you don't.
Clearly, you don't.

INARA
It's not that simple!

CALVIN
It always is. If there's any doubt
in your heart, then you're not the
one for me.

INARA
You really think you're gonna find
a woman who's gonna adore you 100%
of the time? Talk about
unrealistic.

CALVIN
That's exactly what I'll find! One
true love.

INARA
It doesn't exist. Give it up.

CALVIN
(beat)
Maybe I will.

Inara stands there blankly, thinking of a clever response.
She thinks of nothing and LEAVES.

INT. HOUSE - GEORGE'S ROOM - MORNING

Underneath his comfortable covers, George sleeps ever so
blissfully. The relaxation of sleeping, alongside gracefully
resetting his mind--

DAVE (O.C.)
Hey Buddy!

Lights BEAM on.

George's sleep comes to an end, as his dad skips over to his
bed.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Time to get up. We have a big day
up ahead.

GEORGE
Dad, are you stupid? It's the
weekend.

DAVE
You may not have school, but I have
work, and you're coming.

GEORGE
Why?

DAVE
Introduce you to the real world.
C'mon bud, it'll be fun.

George groans and stumbles out of bed.

Dave walks away.

DAVE (CONT'D)
We're leaving in 10.

Dave LEAVES.

INT. HUMMER - 10 MINUTES LATER

Dave dresses nice for work. However, George threw on whatever
clothes he could find.

DAVE
Here's the key to life, George. You
have to understand people.

George side eyes Dave.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Life is all about sales. That's how
to conquer work.

GEORGE
Mhm.

DAVE
Take my job for example. I sell
Hummers, the premium car of our
generation.

GEORGE
(sarcasm)
I love Hummers.

DAVE
(laughs)
I'm sure you do.

GEORGE
Huh?

DAVE
I'll bet you love when girls give
you a hummer.

GEORGE
(confused)
I don't... understand.

DAVE
Blowjobs, son. Hummer is what you
might call a double entendre.

GEORGE
That... okay. Wow.

DAVE
You have to understand subliminal
messaging. I pitch this every time
I sell a car, but I'm very
discreet.

GEORGE
Are you pitching...

DAVE
That guys can get a hummer in a
Hummer, absolutely.

GEORGE
I doubt that actually works.

DAVE
The sale or the blowjob? Because,
they both work just fine. Take me
for example--

GEORGE
I'm good.

DAVE
No, just listen to this. I'm taking
this woman out...

FLASHBACK

INT. HUMMER - WEEKS EARLIER

Dave is driving a woman, SANDRA in his car.

DAVE (V.O.)

We were on this awesome date, and
this girl was so into me.

Sandra looks so bored.

DAVE

So, do you like Hummers?

SANDRA

Ummm... the car is nice.

DAVE

Yeah, I sell cars like this for a
living. I do pretty well if I can
say so myself.

SANDRA

Lovely.

DAVE

It's because Hummer is a double
meaning. I use suave salesman
tactics to reel them in.

SANDRA

Is that so?

DAVE

You want to guess how?

SANDRA

Uhhh, just tell me.

DAVE

I'll bet you're thinking it right
now.

SANDRA

Stop this car, and I'll show you
what I'm thinking.

DAVE

I like where your head's at.

Dave pulls the Hummer over.

He takes off his seatbelt and LEANS his car back.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I'm waiting.

SANDRA
(flirty)
Watch this.

Sandra takes her seatbelt off, unlocks her door, and LEAVES.

DAVE
Come back! My penis is right here!

Sandra SLAMS the door shut.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. HUMMER - CONTINUOUS

Dave finishes his story.

DAVE
It worked like magic, and that's
what makes me such a great
salesman.

EXT. HUMMER DEALERSHIP - DAY

Dave is on the sidewalk by his work, pitching his car to
random strangers.

DAVE
Blowjobs! Anybody want a blowjob?
Blowjobs anybody?

Some guy, KARL, approaches Dave.

KARL
I'll take a blowjob.

DAVE
Great! You get yourself a brand new
Hummer, and every person you drive
will give a blowjob.

KARL
But I don't want every person to
give me a blowjob.

DAVE
That's too bad you legend, cause
you're getting one!

INT. HUMMER DEALERSHIP - DAY

George sits in Dave's office, listening to music via headphones.

He peaks his head, seeing his dad poorly pitch Hummers to strangers.

George then looks around the inside of the work. He sees workers talking amongst each other.

George looks back at his dad, then back to his coworkers.

EXT. HUMMER DEALERSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Dave finds more people to bug, including TERRA.

DAVE
There's so much room in the
backseat.

TERRA
How's the gas mileage?

DAVE
This is what you might call a gas
guzzler, but you'll look sexy doing
it.

TERRA
(taken aback)
Excuse me.

DAVE
Not like that--

TERRA
My husband's a lawyer. He'll sue
your ass.

Terra speeds away.

DAVE
(yelling out)
You misinterpreted what I said. I
would never objectify you like
that. It just seemed like you were
interested in buying a Hummer.

Terra is completely out of range, but Dave is still yelling.

DAVE (CONT'D)

If you want, I can show you
different colors we have available.
I'll give you a sharp 5% discount
on your first Hummer purchase.

Terra is not even visible anymore, Dave is speaking to the
wind.

DAVE (CONT'D)

At least feel the leather interior
and the seat warmers. It's really
good for those cold winter nights.
Great air conditioning in those
warm summer days.

AARON (O.C.)

Dave, who are you talking to?

Dave jumps. His coworker AARON is behind him.

DAVE

Oh, just that woman down there.

Dave points at AIR.

AARON

Right. Maybe get checked for
schizophrenia. In the meantime, you
should come inside.

DAVE

Why?

AARON

The whole office is talking to your
son. Thought you'd want to join.

DAVE

George is talking?

Dave and Aaron start walking to the entrance.

AARON

Does he not usually?

DAVE

Usually not.

INT. HUMMER DEALERSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Dave arrives to see George entertaining three of his coworkers: MICAH, BIANCA, and WENDY.

GEORGE

Everyone thought the same thing I did. How on earth did my sister get a knife, and why was she chasing that guy? Turns out the guy was cheating, and she thought someone broke in the house.

MICAH

You know what they say, bad publicity is good publicity.

BIANCA

I've seen some of her painting videos. It's entertaining to say the least.

WENDY

Isn't she somewhat famous now?

GEORGE

Mild fame. I think if she lets me run the off-camera tasks, it'll keep her running.

Dave enters the conversation.

DAVE

Hey guys, what're we talking about? What's this little knuckle head yapping over?

The group staggers.

WENDY

Just chatting over Inara's rise to stardom.

DAVE

She is? Had no idea.

BIANCA

You must've seen the video.

MICAH

The one with the knife.

DAVE

No, I--

GEORGE
I'll show him later.

DAVE
(laugh)
What about now?

Nobody says anything.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Now, George? How about right now?
Like, this particular moment.

GEORGE
Sure, I guess so.

INT. HUMMER DEALERSHIP - MOMENTS LATER

George, Bianca, Micah, and Wendy watch Dave closely, as he sits nervously in his closed office, watching the Inara knife video.

BIANCA
This isn't gonna go over well is it?

GEORGE
Nope.

MICAH
Is he always like this?

GEORGE
Perpetual state of madness.

WENDY
I gotta say, he wasn't like this a few years back. He just doesn't seemed invested like he used to.

GEORGE
Yeah, he's not.

Dave looks furious as the video unfolds.

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Inara drives through town, painting gear in the back.

She gets a text from Vanessa:

CHECK THE NEW RS POD. 5 MINUTES IN. I THINK YOU'LL LIKE IT

Inara puts on the podcast...

MARQUIS (O.S.)

Random Shit Podcast coming back at you. Looking at a few upcoming stars, we got a couple to talk about.

JUDITH (O.S.)

That's right, and if you're a returning listener, you know that we love our streamers.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

It's what the kids watch.

JUDITH (O.S.)

And us... for educational reasons, of course.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

Now, someone who's just absolutely skyrocketed as of late is a painter. Call her modern day Bob Ross the way she talks about random shit.

JUDITH (O.S.)

She will make a perfect co-host when I get you fired.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

Right back at you, Judith.

JUDITH (O.S.)

Her name is Inara, and I watched all of her streams from start to finish. Don't get me wrong, she's entertaining, but that doesn't explain the recent burst of fame.

MARQUIS (O.S.)

Does it need an explanation?

JUDITH (O.S.)

It does, and that's when I found a strangely familiar clip attached to her name. Do you remember the knife girl?

MARQUIS (O.S.)
The crazy girl chasing that guy
around with a knife? I'm pretty
sure everybody saw it.

JUDITH (O.S.)
That was Inara.

MARQUIS (O.S.)
It seems there's a market for crazy
women.

JUDITH (O.S.)
Or as we call it, boss bitches.

MARQUIS (O.S.)
She really got her money and her
funny up.

JUDITH (O.S.)
You're not very funny. Maybe she
should replace you.

MARQUIS (O.S.)
(sarcasm)
Ha, that's hilarious. You're so
funny.

JUDITH (O.S.)
Onto the next streamer--

Inara cuts the podcast there.

Her face is difficult to read. Is she happy? Is she upset?

A SHOT OF THE MERCEDES PULLING TO A STOP

Inara puts the car in park, but sits still.

DEEP BREATHING. Looking to her eyes, TEARS fall ever so
quietly.

She looks down, then... SMILES. She is THRILLED.

INT. THE SUNNY STATION - DAY

Vanessa works behind the counter, then she sees Inara.

Vanessa puts her arms up. Inara runs in.

They HUG.

VANESSA
You're a star!

INARA
All because of you.

VANESSA
No. Not at all. Because you're a
crazy bitch!

INARA
So many people listen to that. I
wonder if I'll get deals.

VANESSA
Just imagine all the free shit
you're gonna get.

INARA
I know, and I won't have to work
here anymore!

Vanessa's smile fades.

INARA (CONT'D)
I can go back to doing whatever I
want. I could go back to real
estate if I wanted.

VANESSA
(less excited)
I mean... you don't have to work
here anymore... if that's what you
want.

Inara spots her mistake.

INARA
(nervously)
No. I like working here. You know
that, don't you?

VANESSA
Apparently not.

INARA
No, I really do.

VANESSA
It's just a rebound job that I got
you without interviewing. It's not
like I let you work whatever hours
you wanted to. I guess I just
wasn't a good friend to you.

INARA

Vanessa, you know I didn't mean it like that. I really appreciate all the things you've done--

VANESSA

AH!

Inara jumps.

INARA

What?

VANESSA

Got you!

Inara takes a deep breath and steps back.

INARA

Jesus. You really had me going for a second.

VANESSA

You really think I care that you wanna leave this? I don't give a FUCK.

INARA

Thank God.

VANESSA

Now, you won't need that new boyfriend of yours to pay for your meal.

INARA

He's not my boyfriend.

VANESSA

So was I right or was I right?

INARA

About?

VANESSA

That you like him.

INARA

I...

Beat.

VANESSA
Unreal hesitation. What'd you love
birds do last night?

INARA
We cooked dinner.

VANESSA
Together?

INARA
Yes.

VANESSA
Oh, that's so romantic. I know it
didn't just end there.

INARA
Well, we....

Inara looks around, seeing customers.

INARA (CONT'D)
Let me tell you about it in your
office.

INT. THE SUNNY STATION - MOMENTS LATER

In Vanessa's office, Inara gives all the details from the
previous night.

VANESSA
And then you just left?

INARA
Yeah.

VANESSA
No breakfast or anything.

INARA
Nothing.

VANESSA
That's not very smart. You're not
very good at this relationship
thing.

INARA
That's because I don't want one.

VANESSA
After all that?

INARA
(beat)
Yes.

Vanessa raises her eyebrows.

VANESSA
Are you sure?

INARA
It'll get in the way of this new
opportunity.

VANESSA
If that's what you want.

INARA
It's what I want.

VANESSA
Okay.

INT. HUMMER - DAY

Dave and George are heading back from the dealership.

DAVE
I just can't believe it. I can't
believe how stupid she'd be.

Dave looks over at George for affirmation, but George looks
away.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I taught her better, didn't I? I'm
sure I did.

GEORGE
She really didn't do anything
wrong.

DAVE
You saw the video? Inara has never
behaved that like before. It's like
I don't even know her.

GEORGE
I doubt you do.

Dave looks almost angrily at George.

DAVE
And what's that supposed to mean?

GEORGE

You don't put much effort into us.
All you care about is you.

DAVE

How can you say that? I raised you
by myself. It's me who takes you
anywhere like school--

GEORGE

If you remember. You're always too
busy going on dates.

DAVE

This is how I get over your mom.

GEORGE

By forgetting your son?

DAVE

I would never.

GEORGE

You know nothing about me.

DAVE

I know so much. I know you like to
sleep. You go to school. You...
come back from school.

GEORGE

See.

DAVE

Maybe if you talked more--

GEORGE

You don't know anything.

DAVE

Like what?

GEORGE

You don't even know I'm gay.

Dave does not respond right away. He is stunned.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I am, and you've been too busy to
actually notice.

DAVE

Is that why you wear Vans?

GEORGE

What?

DAVE

Your fashion choice. I thought it was because you're liberal. How could I be so naive?

(realizing)

It's because your gay.

GEORGE

What do my shoes have anything to do with the facts that I'm liberal and gay?

DAVE

No! You're actually liberal? My worst nightmare is coming true.

GEORGE

Did you hear me? I'm gay!

DAVE

I'll bet Inara's liberal, too. You're right. I don't know my children at all. I'm a terrible father.

George takes out his phone and texts Inara:

BEWARE OF DAD. HE'S FUCKING NUTS!

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Inara reads the text from her phone.

INARA

Hmm. I wonder what that means.

Inara drives to her house. Arriving simultaneously is George and Dave.

INARA (CONT'D)

Ah. There they are. I guess I'll find out--

Dave stomps out of the Hummer, heading straight at Inara.

KNOCK KNOCK. Dave pounds on Inara's window.

INARA (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

You're fucking kidding?

She holds a finger up.

INARA (CONT'D)

One second.

Inara gets OUT of the car.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

George watches that as Inara steps onto the driveway, Dave does not hesitate to initiate.

DAVE

A word with you.

INARA

I'm willing to bet it'll be more than a word.

DAVE

I saw your little video.

INARA

Which one?

GEORGE

The stabby stabby one.

INARA

The one that got me famous? You mean that one?

DAVE

Yes, I mean that one. It's a disgrace!

INARA

He cheated on me!

DAVE

So you tried to kill him?

INARA

That's clearly not what happened!

DAVE

And you'll never guess what I found out about your little brother?

INARA

(to George)

Oh, you told him you're gay?
Congrats.

DAVE

I found out he's a liberal!

INARA

What now?

GEORGE

I told him I was gay, but I'm not sure it registered.

DAVE

I have to know Inara. Where do you fall on the political spectrum? I'm hoping you're authoritarian right. At worst, libertarian left.

INARA

What are you talking about?

DAVE

If you're authoritarian left, Inara, just leave me. Let me die in peace.

INARA

Wow, that's dramatic. I really have no idea.

DAVE

Just break it to me. Who'd you vote for in the 2016 election?

INARA

Hilary.

DAVE

NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE!

INARA

Has he lost his mind?

GEORGE

It seems like it.

DAVE

Your mother is ROLLING in her grave!

INARA

I assure you; she's not.

DAVE

Where did I go wrong?

INARA
You know what Dad. I'm moving out!

Inara storms by Dave and George, running inside.

INT. HOUSE - INARA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Tears in her eyes, Inara packs her gear to leave.

Knocking and coming in is George.

GEORGE
Hey.

INARA
(sniff)
Hi.

GEORGE
Before you go, can we hang out?

INARA
Yeah.

George closes the door.

MONTAGE OF INARA MOVING

- Inara places her stuff in her car.
- She drives away.
- Finding an apartment, Inara moves her stuff in.
- Inara receives a "CAN WE TALK?" text from Calvin. She ignores it.
- Days go by, she sells her car for cash.
- Then, Inara gets a cheap car.
- Weeks fly by, Inara is painting, becoming more famous and making more money.
- Despite the success, her inbox is flooding with emails.
- She still cannot manage the technical part of streaming.
- Her previously empty apartment turns decorated.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Calvin dines with another woman, KATE.

CALVIN
Tell me about yourself.

KATE
I just like to stay in. I don't
really go out much, except Thursday
when I get Margs with the girls...
and Friday when I go clubbing...
Saturday's usually a concert...
Sunday I'll only be at the bars
until midnight.

CALVIN
And Monday through Wednesday?

KATE
I hang out with my guy friends.

CALVIN
(sarcasm)
You really do stay in a lot.

Kate is puzzled.

EXT. THE SUNNY STATION - AFTERNOON

Inara pulls up to the old work in her new car.
She looks inside, seeing Vanessa talking to a customer.

INT. THE SUNNY STATION - AFTERNOON

Vanessa notices Inara walk through the front.

VANESSA
Look who it is.

INARA
Hey Vanessa!

VANESSA
What's a busy star like you doing
out here?

INARA
Wanted to see my friend. You want
to grab some margs?

Vanessa smirks.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

At a booth, Inara and Vanessa drink their margaritas.

VANESSA

You would get a watermelon margarita.

INARA

And? You say that as if it's an insult.

VANESSA

It certainly is. I always get a mango mega-marg, but I'm keeping it tempered tonight with the regular mango marg.

INARA

(sarcasm)

I'm glad. You're always so tempered.

VANESSA

Ooo, you're talking all spicy at me, as if you haven't bailed on me all week.

INARA

Endorsements are good, but the work is heavy. Sometimes it's hard to manage all the workload.

VANESSA

Sounds like you need some help. Is that why you came?

INARA

It isn't actually--

VANESSA

Good. I'm helping you anyways. I'll be your manager, and I'll take 15% of the cut.

INARA

Ten, and it's a deal.

They shake on it.

INARA (CONT'D)

I didn't come here to ask for help.

VANESSA

Oh, I believe you. You're certainly someone who lives quiet desperation.

INARA

I can't tell if you're joking or--

VANESSA

I'm serious.

INARA

And, I'm serious when I say that I'll fire you if you can't keep up with me.

VANESSA

How's the apartment?

INARA

It's nice and cozy. I'll show you tonight.

VANESSA

Better than living with the fam?

Inara takes a large sip of the marg.

INARA

A lot better. I still talk to George everyday, but I haven't spoken to my dad in a little bit. I've heard he's calmed down a touch.

VANESSA

You gonna see them soon?

INARA

I was thinking of it. Might stop by just to check up on the boys.

VANESSA

Hmmm.

They both take large gulps.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Any new men?

(beat)

Or women. Whatever you're into now.

INARA
It's still men. That hasn't
changed.

VANESSA
So, you have been seeing someone?

INARA
No, the last was Calvin.

VANESSA
Nothing more with that?

INARA
No, I never replied back. It's just
over.

VANESSA
I guess I was wrong after all.

INARA
Yeah. Maybe.

Vanessa raises her eyebrows.

INT. CAR - DAY

Inara drives back to her old house.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

In the driveway, both Dave and George wait for Inara's
return.

Her new car pulls in, and Inara steps out.

INARA
Hey guys!

She hugs both George and Dave.

INT. HOUSE - GEORGE'S ROOM - DAY

Inara and George are catching up.

INARA
You making any friends lately?

GEORGE
More than usual.

INARA
Oh, so you're a charmer now?

GEORGE
I was talking it up at the Hummer dealership, and then I realized, it's not so bad. I can do it.

INARA
Good.
(beat)
I find you lovable. Therefore, everybody else has to... by default.

GEORGE
If you need any help on the streaming, you know I'm your guy.

INARA
I am having some technical difficulties.

GEORGE
Are you gonna pay me?

INARA
Well, I mean if I have to--

GEORGE
Yes, you have to. I'm your brother for god's sake.

INARA
Don't be a greedy little bastard.

George grabs a PILLOW and attacks Inara with it.

Inara FLEES.

INT. HOUSE - INARA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Inara makes it back to her room. It is just as messy as she left it.

DAVE (O.C.)
I didn't touch a thing.

Inara turns to see her dad walk into her room.

DAVE (CONT'D)
It's just as you left it.

INARA
I guess that's heartfelt.

DAVE
I have missed you.

INARA
Do you believe in a one true love?

DAVE
I don't know. I've only loved one woman, your mother.

INARA
Did you always?

DAVE
There were times the love wavered, but there was no one else. Each time I fell out of love, I got the opportunity to fall in love again.

This started to make sense to Inara.

INARA
Really?

DAVE
The more it happened, the better it felt. I started wishing for the fights just for that feeling I'd get later.

INARA
And when she died?

DAVE
Unconditional.

Dave looks down at something in his hands.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I thought that I'd give you something before you went back.

Dave hands Inara a SCRAPBOOK.

DAVE (CONT'D)
It's pictures of your mother. I've been looking at them a lot recently, but they'd be better in your hands.

Inara opens the book.

INARA

This is...

She sees a picture of herself as a baby with her mother.

INARA (CONT'D)

(sniffs)

Great. Thank you, Dad.

They HUG.

DAVE

She always had such an emphasis on family. If I could be half the person she is, maybe I'd be a decent father.

Dave looks teary eyed at Inara.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

George and Dave stand in the driveway, watching Inara drive away.

DAVE

What do you say you and I go out, have a little bit of fun?

GEORGE

What'd you have in mind?

DAVE

Skee-ball.

This gets an approving looks from George.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Calvin gets ready for work, putting on his uniform to make sure he looks good.

He finds a mirror, looks at himself, sighs, and leaves.

INT. TAURUS - MORNING

Calvin listens to the Random Shit Podcast on the way to the park.

JUDITH (O.S.)

I love how there's always random shit to talk about.

MARQUIS (O.S.)
Random shit gets me through my day.
The details of obscure things--

JUDITH (O.S.)
Or, random shit.

MARQUIS (O.S.)
(annoyed)
Yes, Judith

EXT. PARK - MORNING

Calvin's car pulls into the parking lot, with a few other parked cars.

Calvin steps out of the car towards the headquarters, but then he spots something unique.

Somebody is watching him. Somebody familiar.

He walks on over. It is INARA. She is painting.

INARA
Hey, Stranger.

Inara and Calvin lock eyes, as if they could do that for the rest of their lives.

SOB

Pilot Episode ("Break a Leg")

Written by

Will Bullock

FADE IN:

CLOSE-UP: two eyes, fighting to stay awake.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

It is STRIKER O'BRADY, and he is driving. It is clear that Striker is swerving left and right through the road.

As he presses down the peddle, a few things happen:

- The engine revs.
- His drink from the cupholder flies away.
- The vehicle spins out.

Despite this, the motion sets Striker unconscious, and we see his imagination.

INT. OCTAGON ARENA - NIGHT

In a dream-like state, Striker stands in the middle of the octagon like a sore thumb.

Fans send out a shower of boos. The scoreboard flashes "BUM".

ANNOUNCER

Striker O'Brady. You are a
certified bum. Don't you ever fight
again.

STRIKER

I'm not a bum! I'm not!

ANNOUNCER

Yes, you are, Striker. Yes, you
are.

The booing makes Striker angry.

STRIKER

I'll take on any of you! Come get
some!

The fans storm the stage, and Striker defends himself. After knocking out five fans, the swarm engulfs Striker.

Struggling to fight back, Striker shouts.

STRIKER (CONT'D)

I'll show them! All of them!

The dream state slips away.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Gaining control of the spin out, Striker manages to pull the car back to the road. He is in control.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

As Striker straightens the car out, it CRASHES into a building, SHATTERING everything in its path.

The car halts, crashed halfway between the indoors and outdoors.

INT. OCTAGON ARENA - NIGHT

SUPER: A WEEK EARLIER.

The octagon resembles a large kiddie pool, with blood replacing the water. Fighting are two heavyweights, one with white trunks, the other with black trunks.

The stands are packed with fans, clamoring for more blood.

The BELL RINGS and the fighters return to their corner. The fighter in the black trunks, SONNY, slumps into the chair. His CORNERMAN runs in front of him.

CORNERMAN

Final round, Sonny. We're losing here.

(beat)

Are you still awake?

SONNY

(slurring)

Water.

CORNERMAN

No water. Go out there and take his head off.

Sonny stumbles up, meeting his opponent in the middle. The opponent throws a jab, and Sonny falls back unconscious.

INT. TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Strutting through, Striker is pumped for his fight. Blue and green LIGHTS flash at his feet, and a roaring CROWD shakes the tunnel.

Striker ENTERS the octagon arena.

Stopping in his tracks, Striker is caught off-guard...

REVEAL: a wide cut of the arena. The stands are EMPTY, besides one fan. The crowd noise plays from a BOOMBOX. The lights come from a person waving around two FLASHLIGHTS.

Striker spots his corner: DUKE DUPREE, his old, nearly-dead coach; and AJ HATFIELD, his training partner.

AJ
Striker, just the guy--

STRIKER
AJ, why are you here?

AJ
Listen, about your absences--

STRIKER
Not now. Where is everyone?

AJ
Everybody left. Turns out they were all here to see Sonny's fight.

STRIKER
Not them. Dakota and Emma.

AJ
I'm sure they're asleep.

STRIKER
Which is where you should be. Why even come?

AJ
I've been meaning to talk to you. I have nobody to train with. If you'd just come to practice--

STRIKER
Are you sure Emma won't come?

AJ
She can't bring herself here.

STRIKER
She has two legs, doesn't she?

AJ
Isn't she nine months old?

STRIKER
Why should I know?

AJ
She's your daughter.

This does not register to Striker.

STRIKER
No Jaime or Eddie either?

DUKE
(interjecting)
I remember Eddie.

FLASHBACK: ORPHANAGE

A young Duke Dupree runs around.

DUKE (V.O.)
It was a long time ago. I'd say
1938. No, 1939.

STRIKER (V.O.)
I'm thinking of a different Eddie--

DUKE (V.O.)
He ran the orphanage with a strict
code of conduct.

An OLD MAN chases Duke with a paddle.

AJ (V.O.)
Why were you in trouble--

STRIKER (V.O.)
Don't ask.

AJ (V.O.)
Does he have a paddle--

STRIKER (V.O.)
No!

BACK TO SCENE

STRIKER
Why would he show?

DUKE
He wouldn't. He died of leukemia in
1953.

AJ
(to Striker)
I wouldn't know about your Eddie...
or Jaime for that matter. They're
your friends, not mine.

STRIKER
They have excuses, but Emma has
none.

AJ
Well, at least I showed, but you
should come to practice--

STRIKER
I don't remember inviting you. Just
the old man here.

DUKE
I brought the duct tape.

Coach Duke holds up duct tape.

STRIKER
And he brought the duct tape.
That's why he's the best coach
within a five-mile radius.

AJ
I brought vaseline.

STRIKER
You're useless. I don't bleed.

Inside the octagon, a REFEREE stands impatiently.

REFEREE
Hey! O'Brady! Are you fighting?

STRIKER
I'm not sure I want to, anymore.
Nobody is here.

REFEREE

What do you mean? The fan paid a
good price for the ticket.

In the stands, SUPERFAN STEVE, Striker's biggest fan, waves.

SUPERFAN STEVE

(monotone)

Knock his ass out.

STRIKER

Anything for you Steve.

AJ

Let me take your place. At least
I've practice.

STRIKER

Absolutely not.

(beat)

Coach, strip me down.

After a few failed attempts, Coach Duke removes the hoodie.
Striker looks one missed meal from dying.

DUKE

I could knock you down in one
punch.

(beat)

Did you forget to eat your bread
rations?

STRIKER

You forgot to bring it.

DUKE

I left it by the water bowl.

STRIKER

AJ, why don't you be a good boy and
fetch the bread.

(to Duke)

Is it wheat or white?

DUKE

Sourdough.

STRIKER

I'll starve.

DUKE

Open wide.

Coach Duke fumbles Striker's mouthpiece onto the ground.

STRIKER
AJ, pick it up.

DUKE
No, no.
(beat)
I dropped it. I'll do it.

Coach Duke bends over slowly, picking up the mouthpiece. He reaches back to Striker's mouth but...

Duke drops it, again.

DUKE (CONT'D)
I got it.

REFEREE
Striker!

STRIKER
Yeah, okay.
(beat)
AJ?

AJ bends in front of Coach Duke and does the job.

DUKE
Striker, wait.
(beat)
There's something I must tell you.

STRIKER
Yes?

DUKE
I survived a plane crash.

STRIKER
Shouldn't I get going--

FLASHBACK: PLANE

A plane flies through a storm.

DUKE (V.O.)
It was 1955.

STRIKER (V.O.)
I should just go--

DUKE (V.O.)
Going to Russia, we flew through a storm.

(MORE)

DUKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Some might say it was a casualty.
Catastrophic. Cataclysmic.

A younger version of Duke sits lonely amongst the wreckage.

DUKE (V.O.)
Only I survived.

BACK TO SCENE

STRIKER
Can't this wait--

DUKE
Waiting! That's what I did. With
nothing except...can you guess?

STRIKER
A paddle?

DUKE
(intelligently)
Sourdough bread.

A confused Striker walks up the stairs into octagon.

His opponent, RICARDO MACHIDA, stands opposite. In the middle
of the octagon, the referee and the ANNOUNCER stand.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentleman, it's your
Chino Bandido fight of the night.
Order one burrito and get seven
more half off. Only on Tuesday's
from 6:30 to 6:45 PM.
(Beat)
Fighting out of the red corner,
holding a record 11-6, out of Rio
de Janeiro, Brazil, Ricardo "the
Capybara" Machida!
(Beat)
Fighting out of the blue corner,
holding a record of 4-1, out of
Phoenix, Arizona, Striker "son-of-a-
bitch" O'Brady!

Announcer steps off.

The two fighters come to the center. Referee steps in.

REFEREE

Fighters, you know the rules; let's
have a clean fight. If you would
like to touch gloves, do it now.

Striker does not touch gloves, and the fight begins.

Quick paced, Striker moves forward. Throwing jabs without
feeling out Machida. Striker attempts a kick to the stomach.
His foot misses, hitting Machida in the groin.

The referee steps in front of Striker, pausing the fight.

STRIKER

(mouthpiece)

What!?

REFEREE

Groin shot. Go to your corner.

Striker spits his mouthpiece into his hand and walks to his
corner.

STRIKER

He's faking.

Ricardo Machida lies on the floor sobbing his eyes out.

AJ

Looks real to me. I've never seen
someone cry so hard.

DUKE

I've seen someone cry like that. It
was 1942--

STRIKER

Not now.

DUKE

I took the gentleman's oath. I
vowed to never hit another man in
the balls.

Machida is on his feet. The tears have dried against his
face.

AJ

Leg kicks, Striker. Use them.

DUKE

(evil)

Give him one more to the groin.
Break the gentleman's oath.

REFEREE

O'Brady!

Fight continues. A few jabs land for Striker, so in return, he throws a leg kick. The kick lands at Machida's jaw.

THUD.

Machida falls to the floor, unconscious. Striker is victorious but...

REVEAL: His right shin bone is snapped in half.

STRIKER

Great.

Coach Duke Dupree shuffles onto the octagon with his duct tape. He reaches Striker and bends down slowly.

DUKE

I've seen worse. I'll tape it up.
Nothing duct tape can't solve.

AJ Hatfield hurries towards them.

STRIKER

AJ! Just the guy I was looking for.
Do you still have the vaseline?

AJ

Yeah, but I thought you didn't need-

Striker throws it to Superfan Steve.

SUPERFAN STEVE

(catching the vaseline)
Great fight, Striker. You're the
man.

Coach Duke finishes duct taping Striker's right leg.

STRIKER

(to Duke)
Mr. Miyagi, what would I do without
you?

Striker stands up, but he crumbles back.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Striker lays on the hospital bed. A NURSE rolls in Sonny in a wheelchair to Striker's room. Sonny's face is bruised up.

STRIKER

What're you doing? There's like a hundred other rooms here.

NURSE

Sorry, we're all full. You'll have to share.

The nurse walks out.

STRIKER

So... did you win?

SONNY

No.

STRIKER

I did.

(beat)

What happened to your face?

SONNY

I got punched.

(beat)

And kicked.

(beat)

And slapped.

(beat)

And spit on.

STRIKER

Must be nice.

(beat)

Well, it's nice because you can still walk.

SONNY

I'm in a wheelchair.

STRIKER

And, you could walk if you had to.

SONNY

I don't think I can. I actually have a concussion. I'm not supposed to move my head around.

STRIKER

You got off easy.

SONNY

I could have died.

STRIKER

Barely.

(beat)

Look at this. Look at my leg. I
could have died.

SONNY

You couldn't have died from that.

STRIKER

Yeah? Well, imagine this. It's
2004. I just graduated
kindergarten.

SONNY

Why 2004?

STRIKER

Don't interrupt. Anyways, I moved
up into the world, as a fully grown
five year-old.

FLASHBACK: TRAIL

Five year-old Striker is hiking with his MOM.

STRIKER (V.O.)

I'm hiking with my mom when I fall
off the trail, breaking my leg for
the second time.

Young Striker falls off the trail, breaking his leg.

BACK TO SCENE:

SONNY

How many times have you broke your
leg?

STRIKER

Oh, this isn't about me. This is
about my friend...who's name is...
Streaker.

SONNY

A friend named Streaker? That isn't
real.

STRIKER

Don't focus too heavy on the
details.

FLASHBACK: TRAIL

Young Striker cries on the trail. His mom walks away.

STRIKER (V.O.)
His mom left him behind to fend off
against grizzly bears.

Grizzly bears surround young Striker.

SONNY (V.O.)
(interrupting)
Arizona doesn't have grizzlies.

STRIKER (V.O.)
Coyotes, then.

Coyotes replace the grizzlies.

STRIKER (V.O.)
If it weren't for my natural--I
mean, my friend's natural talent
for kicking, he wouldn't have
defeated every coyote.

BACK TO SCENE:

STRIKER
That's how I could've died tonight
with my broken leg.

SONNY
You were indoors. There weren't any
coyotes.

STRIKER
Don't focus too heavy on the
details.

SONNY
Have you thought about when you'll
fight next?

STRIKER
Nurse said it'll be a year before I
can.
(beat)
You?

SONNY
Months, but I've been thinking
about a life outside of fighting.

STRIKER

A life outside of fighting? What is that?

SONNY

You don't ever think about what life would be like outside of this?

STRIKER

Never.

INT. STRIKER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Striker wakes, with blurry eyes, headache, and nauseous. He is hungover. On both sides of him, figures sleep, underneath the covers. His hair is messy and fluffed up.

Striker crawls to the end of his bed, sliding off onto a wheelchair.

INT. STRIKER'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

He rolls in the chair, barely fitting through the door. Striker brushes his teeth.

INT. STRIKER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He rolls, just squeezing the wheelchair through the door. Striker sees DAKOTA RODDY and EMMA RODDY at the table.

Dakota eats eggs. Emma eats baby food elegantly, reaching it from the many pillows underneath her.

DAKOTA

Well, look who rolled out of bed.

STRIKER

How did you get in? I thought I banned you from the apartment.

DAKOTA

Jaime let me in.

(beat)

Your place is a mess. Don't you ever clean?

STRIKER

Jaime and I switch every time. He had last year's clean, and I have this year's.

DAKOTA
How am I supposed to bring Emma
with all this shit lying around?

STRIKER
If you're gonna be such a negative-
Nancy, then maybe you should clean.

DAKOTA
Maybe I will.

KNOCK KNOCK. Someone is at the door.

STRIKER
You gonna get it?

DAKOTA
I don't live here.

STRIKER
Emma?

Emma puts her empty dish in the dishwasher. She shakes her
head "No" to Striker.

STRIKER (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Fine. Stupid daughter anyways.

Striker opens the door. It's the USADA AGENT.

USADA AGENT
Striker?

Striker nods his head.

USADA AGENT (CONT'D)
You're being drug tested.

STRIKER
(panic)
Oh fuck!

Striker rolls to his cabinet, as his heart-rate spikes.

DAKOTA
Striker?

STRIKER
Ah, there it is.

Striker pulls out a pre-rolled joint. He lights it and
smokes.

DAKOTA
Really? In front of Emma?

STRIKER
She's won't remember.

USADA AGENT
We still test for marijuana.

STRIKER
I have a medical waiver.
(beat)
It's for my "depression."

Striker uses air quotes.

In the cabinet, Striker finds three pieces of paper. He hands all three to the agent.

STRIKER (CONT'D)
Here is the marijuana waiver.
(beat)
I got another one. It's oxycontin
for pain relief.
(beat)
And this other one. HGH for
osteoporosis.

USADA AGENT
The paperwork seems in order.
(beat)
Now for the blood.

Striker sticks his arm out.

STRIKER
Do your worst.

The agent takes Striker's blood, and he places a band-aid on the site. Striker rips off the band-aid.

USADA AGENT
I wouldn't do that.

Striker goes into his cabinet. He pulls out "HGH".

USADA AGENT (CONT'D)
I wouldn't do that, either.

STRIKER
You're not my medical professional.

Striker injects steroids into his arm.

USADA AGENT
You'll get your results back in a week.

The agent walks out. Striker finishes his joint, while Emma mimics the motion of smoking.

DAKOTA
Help me clean.

STRIKER
Did you notice I'm in a wheelchair?
I'll call over Erin and Jasmine.
They'll help you clean.

DAKOTA
No, don't--

STRIKER
ERIN! JASMINE!

DAKOTA
You know I don't wanna talk to them.

STRIKER
Oh, c'mon. They're not that bad.

DAKOTA
It's embarrassing. It really is.
What would Emma think of all this?

STRIKER
Of all what?

DAKOTA
That you cheated on me--

STRIKER
(proudly)
Several times.

DAKOTA
And you're proud of it? Emma's gonna notice you spend no time raising her.

JASMINE
(interjecting)
Hi, Dakota!

Jasmine and Erin enter.

DAKOTA
Hey Jasmine. Hey Erin.

ERIN
(awkward)
Hey.

JASMINE
(to Striker)
You called us?

STRIKER
Dakota's doing a little spring
cleaning.
(beat)
Why don't you two help her out?

Dakota, Erin, and Jasmine throw away trash.

STRIKER (CONT'D)
Look at that.
(beat)
Women cleaning.

Dakota drops a glass plate onto the floor. It SHATTERS.

DAKOTA
Excuse me?

STRIKER
(playing dumb)
It's just an observation.

DAKOTA
I'm leaving.

STRIKER
Oh no! But, aren't you having so
much fun?

DAKOTA
Drop off Emma at the trail later.

STRIKER
You're leaving her here?

DAKOTA
It's your day of the week.

STRIKER
Fine, but we're gonna do reckless
activities like... running with
scissors... and swallowing jolly
ranchers.

(MORE)

STRIKER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Aren't you at least gonna clean up
the glass plate?

DAKOTA

Nope. Not my problem.

Dakota leaves.

STRIKER

Why doesn't anyone care about feet
hygiene?

Striker swipes the glass under a table.

INT. GYM - NOON

Striker rolls into the gym with Emma in his lap. She hops off
and roams around. Striker finds Coach Duke Dupree and AJ
Hatfield.

DUKE

Look at you in the wheelchair.
Hilarious.

(beat)

Do a five minute warm-up, and then
we'll get started.

STRIKER

I'm not training today. I'm just
stopping by. Just wanted to see
what the retired life feels like.

AJ

Retired?

DUKE

You got in a wheelchair and
softened up before I did. I was a
prisoner of war--

STRIKER

I'm not actually retired, but I'm
considering it. Do either of you
think there's a life outside of
fighting?

AJ

Not for you.

STRIKER

I could see myself working as a
waiter.

(MORE)

STRIKER (CONT'D)

I'd start there and work my way up.
Eventually, I'd own the place, and
I'd rename it... Beef O'Brady's.

AJ

Like the franchise?

STRIKER

It already exists? Then, I'll just
do O'Brady's Potatoes, where we
only serve potatoes.

DUKE

There's no life outside of
fighting. Look at me, I tried once.
I put the gloves down back in 1969.
Too many mushrooms, not enough
punching.

AJ

(to Striker)

Why would you stop?

STRIKER

My leg is broken. My career is
going nowhere. On top of that, I
have this talentless child I have
to raise.

Emma is effortlessly punching and kicking a punching bag.

AJ

You're 5-1. A few more in wins, and
you could sign somewhere.

DUKE

Quit. That's what I did.

(beat)

Only winners quit. Remember
Vietnam?

STRIKER

How am I supposed to get better?
I'll come back and everybody will
be better.

(to AJ)

Even you might beat me.

DUKE

Begin the empty life. Quit.

Emma is still punching and kicking.

INT. RESTAURANT - 30 MINUTES LATER

Striker and Emma sits at a table with EDDIE. All three have large plates of food. Emma is digging into the food.

STRIKER

Eddie, it's been too long. How's life treating you?

EDDIE

I enjoy the job at the firm. The wife and kid are doing well. How is it for you?

STRIKER

I punch people in the face. I go home everyday to women that should've left my apartment hours ago.

(referring to Emma)

Although, I have this daughter.

Emma looks at Striker.

EDDIE

How is the fighting going? I heard you fought recently.

STRIKER

I won, but at a terrible cost.

EDDIE

At least you didn't get a concussion. You don't want brain damage.

STRIKER

No, broken bones are far worse. Take my word for it.

EDDIE

So, will you rehab for the next fight?

STRIKER

You've been my friend for years, and I need your advice. My leg is broke. I can't train. I have nothing. Just look at how miserable my life is. It's just like yours now.

EDDIE

Your injury could be such a blessing. There's more to this than fighting. I think you might find that out.

STRIKER

You really think so?

EDDIE

You have a daughter right here that's full of energy. Prioritize her.

Emma finishes her food.

INT. RESTAURANT - 30 MINUTES LATER

Striker sits at the same table with JAIME. Just Emma and Jaime have food, and Emma is digging.

JAIME

You should not quit. It's what your good at. Forget Emma. Forget Dakota.

(beat)

We have to spend our twenties blacking-out, fighting strangers, and waking up in jail cells.

STRIKER

Did you let in Dakota this morning?

JAIME

I had to. She said she was dropping-off Emma.

STRIKER

I thought our apartment ban list was very clear: cats, men with pink hair, and Dakota.

JAIME

I was leaving for work anyways. There wasn't much I could've done.

STRIKER

Next time, tell her to throw Emma into the kitchen.

JAIME

You two dated for years. It couldn't have ended that bad.

FLASHBACK: APARTMENT

Dakota throws dishes and knives at Striker.

BACK TO SCENE

STRIKER

I had to buy a new set of dishes.
Speaking of, she shattered a plate
this morning.

JAIME

What did you do?

STRIKER

What did I do? Jaime, you know me.
I would never say anything to
provoke her. I'm an angel.

EXT. TRAIL - LATER

Striker rolls his wheelchair through the trail. Emma is in
his lap, and Dakota walks alongside.

DAKOTA

As much as I hate you, I'm glad we
can still do this.

STRIKER

As much as I hate you, I hate this.
I think the wheelchair is about to
tip over.

DAKOTA

How was Emma today?

STRIKER

Actually, she was pleasant. I don't
think I heard her complain once.

(beat)

Or cry. Is that healthy?

DAKOTA

Your constant abuse numbed her to
the crying.

STRIKER

Abuse? I fed her all day.

DAKOTA

How much baby food did you feed
her?

STRIKER

Baby food?

(beat)

She was eating the real thing:
eggs, bacon, and steak.

DAKOTA

(frustrated)

You can't feed her that. She can
barely chew.

STRIKER

See that's the thing, she cut such
small pieces with her knife that--

DAKOTA

(angry)

She what?

STRIKER

Yeah, she cut her food up into
small pieces that she could eat.

DAKOTA

Using?

STRIKER

Using a knife, of course.

DAKOTA

A knife that you provided?

STRIKER

No, I didn't provide the knife.
What kind of person to you take me
for?

(beat)

I stole it from the restaurant.

Striker pulls a cutting knife out of his pocket. The knife is
presented an inch from Emma's face.

DAKOTA

Please. Put the knife down.

STRIKER

I'm just showing that it's
harmless.

(beat)

Look!

Striker places the knife in Emma's hands.

DAKOTA
(worried)
Emma!

Dakota snatches Emma and the knife from Striker.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
(angry)
You asshole!

Dakota throws the knife at Striker. He closes his eyes and covers his face.

Striker opens his eyes to see the knife sticking out of his leg's cast.

STRIKER
You're lucky that didn't hit me.

DAKOTA
You're never seeing Emma again!

Dakota pushes Striker's wheelchair, and he tumbles over.

STRIKER
(on his side)
Dakota! That's not nice. Can you
help me up?
(beat)
Emma?

Dakota walks away. Over her shoulder, Emma looks at Striker blankly.

INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

CLOSE UP: the rough, beaten face of Striker. His eyes flicker in & out of consciousness.

JAIME (O.S.)
Striker? You sonuvabitch, wake up!

The room is filled with young adults and alcohol. A chaotic JAIME shakes Striker awake.

JAIME (CONT'D)
We have a problem.

The eyes of Striker sprout open.

JAIME (CONT'D)
There's a group of guys causing
problems.

STRIKER
Don't you see the wheelchair? I'm
retired.

JAIME
It has to be you.

STRIKER
No, no. It can't be! I'm done.

JAIME
Well, at least threaten them.
Everybody knows you. You'll scare
them away.

STRIKER
How many?

JAIME
Four.

Striker falls to his wheelchair, croaking like a frog. He
rolls around... Turning a corner, he spots them.

STRIKER
Hey you! That's right, you four.
(counting)
One, two, three... four. I'm gonna
rock your shit.

JAIME
Striker!

REVEAL: Striker is talking four unsuspecting women.

STRIKER
(realizing)
Oh... I'm sorry... lovely ladies.
(turning to the guys)
You four! I'm gonna--

INT. BAR - LATER

JAIME
--Buy you another drink!

Striker has a brand-new black eye.

JAIME (CONT'D)
What's your choice?

STRIKER

On the drink? Yeah, whiskey and coke.

JAIME

You already have one in your hand.

REVEAL: the drink is in Striker's hand.

STRIKER

How many have I had?

JAIME

This would be... eight. No, nine.

STRIKER

Tabs gonna be a pricey one.

JAIME

Did you decide if you're continuing?

STRIKER

Continuing?

JAIME

Fighting.

STRIKER

I might just hang up the gloves, sit back and reflect on my days through a sippy cup at a nursing home.

JAIME

Why so somber?

STRIKER

Dakota said I'll never see Emma again.

JAIME

She says that all the time.

STRIKER

This time was different. Something seemed off about her.

JAIME

She did seem a little odd this morning. Maybe she's... you know...

STRIKER

I think I catch your drift.

JAIME
Playing hard to get.

STRIKER
Not exactly what I was imagining.

From a group of people entering, emerging is Superfan Steve.
Steve wears a t-shirt with Striker's face on it.

STRIKER (CONT'D)
Steve!

SUPERFAN STEVE
(monotone)
It's my favorite fighter.

JAIME
I'll get you a drink, Steve.

Jaime gets Steve a drink,

SUPERFAN STEVE
What is this?

JAIME
It's your drink.

SUPERFAN STEVE
(smelling the drink)
I can't.

JAIME
It's on me. Just drink it.

SUPERFAN STEVE
I'm not drinking it.

STRIKER
Steve, just drink it.

SUPERFAN STEVE
I love you Striker with every fiber
in my being, but I will not drink
this.

Steve throws the drink across the club.

STRIKER
(shock)
Why would you do that?

ANGRY GUY
Hey! Who threw that?

An ANGRY GUY emerges.

ANGRY GUY (CONT'D)
(to Jaime)
Was it you?

JAIME
No, it wasn't. It was--

Angry guy PUNCHES Jaime in the face. A brawl breaks loose.

SUPERFAN STEVE
(backing out)
I'm a pacifist. I shouldn't be
here.

Striker throws low punches from his wheelchair, defending Jaime from the onslaught of attacks.

SECURITY intervenes, and the brawl ends.

Jaime is bruised up. Many guys lay on the floor, clutching their stomachs from Striker's low punches. Striker remains untouched until...

SECURITY
(grabbing Striker)
You! You're coming with me.

STRIKER
What? I didn't do anything.

Jaime slips to the back, hiding from security.

STRIKER (CONT'D)
(desparately)
It wasn't me!

Security carries Striker and his wheelchair to the exit.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

Striker is thrown out of his chair into the sidewalk.

SECURITY
(referring to the chair)
I'm keeping this.

STRIKER
Not my chair!

Security walks inside the club. Striker digs into his pocket, finding his CAR KEYS. With his remaining energy, he army-crawls.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Striker drives away perfectly, hitting nothing.

STRIKER

I'll show them. All of them.
Dakota, Emma, Eddie, Jaime,
Jasmine... Erica? Is that her name?

(beat)

Erin! That's it. Steve, AJ, my
mother.

(beat)

Is it just me, or am I driving like
a pro?

REVEAL: Striker hit EVERY sign in his path.

His car crashes through a glass window. Striker falls out of the car, lying on the ground.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP: the closed eyes of Striker.

DUKE (O.S.)

Wake up.

The eyes open and scan the room. Striker finds himself at a familiar location.

INT. GYM - MORNING

Coach Duke Dupree is kicking Striker's ribs profusely.

DUKE

Get up, you idiot.

STRIKER

(annoyed)

Could you stop kicking?

DUKE

Oh, Striker, it's you. I thought
you were Eddie.

STRIKER

How did I get here?

REVEAL: glass is shattered onto the floor, with Striker's car parked inside the gym.

STRIKER (CONT'D)

Oh.

Duke holds out a piece of bread.

STRIKER (CONT'D)

Sourdough?

Duke nods. Striker takes a piece and eats.

DUKE

The value of this bread is immeasurable. This will heal your leg.

STRIKER

If I bought you some, would it repay the damage?

DUKE

No, keep fighting. You won't own me a dime.

STRIKER

You told me to quit yesterday.

DUKE

Sure, you're a quitter. But, are you a quitter?

STRIKER

I guess I'm not.

DUKE

What is it you truly desire?

STRIKER

I'd say money, weed, and women.

DUKE

That's precisely why you'll be a great fighter. Every champion became one for those three reasons.

STRIKER

Really?

DUKE

Hell no.

STRIKER

Dammit.

DUKE

You must cut each out of your life.
I remember the day I did: April
15th, 1953.

STRIKER

I don't have any money to cut.

DUKE

Yes, you do. You could be broker.
If you're not borderline homeless,
you won't be a champion.

STRIKER

What about the weed and women.

DUKE

Give them to me, young man. That's
your payment for that.

Duke refers to the property damage.

STRIKER

How will you pay for that?

DUKE

You'll never guess, but in the
spring of '55, I was digging in
dirt, looking for sacred native
artifacts, and I stumbled across a
little thing called gold.

FADE OUT.

CALL OF THE VOID

Written by

Will Bullock

FROM THE BLACK WE HEAR--

ALYSSA (V.O.)
If you fall, there's nothing.

MARVIN (V.O.)
Nothing, but the sky, the wind, the
trees.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
And then, there's nothing.

MARVIN (V.O.)
How can you be so sure?

FADE IN:

INT. PLANE - DAY

MARVIN PARKER is a 30 year old whose philosophical thinking
does not match his anemic appearance.

Despite the other voice, no woman is there.

In fact, Marvin is entirely alone on this plane.

MARVIN
Who says that the fall ends when we
hit the ground?

ALYSSA (V.O.)
A doctor.

MARVIN
This is beyond science. This is
spiritual. A place that transcends
ours.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
I think you're losing it, Marvin.

MARVIN
(beat, considering it)
I've never felt smarter.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Why don't we step away from the
door?

MARVIN

What door?

Suddenly, a door appears in front of Marvin. The door is unlike anything you would ever see on an airplane.

It is something you might find guarding a secret book in a library.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

(reaching his hand out)

You think if I--

Marvin pulls on the door knob, and it swings open in a hurry.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The door opens to the great abyss of... outside. We see the airplane hovering, almost stalling in the air.

The day is grand. Sunny. Cloudless. Warm.

We TILT DOWN to the ground where dozens of Dutch windmills power near colorful fields of flowers.

INT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Marvin leans his head past the door into the outside.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

I really hope you're not considering it.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

We see Marvin's head sticking outside, while the rest of his body is hidden indoors.

As the intense wind pounds at Marvin's head, we see a large grin appear on his face.

INT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS

MARVIN

This isn't a consideration.

(looking at the camera)

I'm doing it.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Let's think this over.
(beat)
Please, Marvin.

MARVIN
What's there to think about?

ALYSSA (V.O.)
If you jump out, you can't come
back.

MARVIN
What's there to come back to?

ALYSSA (V.O.)
This. The airplane is... nice.

Marvin looks around at the surroundings within the plane.

It is a dump.

Items are scattered everywhere.

Now that he thinks about it, the objects are odd.

Office desks. Staplers. Printers. Computers.

MARVIN
Where did we get all of this?

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Don't you remember?

MARVIN
(thinking)
Not... particularly.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Which is exactly why you shouldn't
leave.

MARVIN
How did I get here?

ALYSSA (V.O.)
How did we get here? Start from the
beginning.

MARVIN
Well...

MONTAGE OF MARVIN'S MISDOINGS:

-Marvin drives a truck full of office supplies, including the desk, to a runaway with a plane.

-A security guard tries to detain Marvin, but our hero throws a stapler at the guard's head, knocking him out.

-The back of the airplane opens, and Marvin crashes the truck into the plane, fitting all the office supplies and the truck in the aircraft.

BACK TO SCENE:

MARVIN (CONT'D)
... It's not important.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
I wouldn't gloss over that.

MARVIN
(pointing to the door)
What is important is walking out
that door.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
I'd put that low on my list of
priorities.

MARVIN
Is bothering me number one?

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Second or third.

MARVIN
(running at the door)
Well too bad you can't do that
anymore.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
No!

Marvin jumps out.

We stay at the empty plane for a second, just to take in the absurdity.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Leaving the aircraft, Marvin falls down.

Despite all the danger, he seems content.

TILTING DOWN, we notice the Dutch scenery again, but it is different.

The windmills and flowers are distorting in shape, size, and color.

It is like a psychedelic trip.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
It's strange, isn't it?

MARVIN
(flinching)
Oh Jesus!

ALYSSA (V.O.)
I'm not too scary, am I?

MARVIN
Caught me off guard.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
(sarcasm)
I'll make sure to warn you next time.

MARVIN
What are you doing here? I thought I had lost you back there.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
You can't lose me, but I thought it'd be a good opportunity to talk you out of this.

Marvin looks at the ground...

MARVIN
Might be too late for that.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
It's never too late. We still have a little bit until we hit the ground.

MARVIN
Why are you trying to help? I didn't ask for it.
(beat)
I want this.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Why?

MARVIN
Why what? Why didn't I ask for
help?

ALYSSA (V.O.)
No, why do you want this?

MARVIN
I feel the urge, the command.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
From who?

MARVIN
The sky. It's calling me to see
more.

CUT WIDE to Marvin falling closer to the ground.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
There's still time to back out.

MARVIN
(pointing down)
I'm almost there.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
You can't do it.

MARVIN
But it's right there.

Marvin is level with the windmills, still distorting, but
less violently.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Please don't go.

Fear creeps in as Marvin nears the ground...

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

...Waking violently, Marvin's eyes shoot open.

DEEP BREATH. Check the clock. 5:58. Fine, he gets up.

We follow Marvin to his door, where he opens and leaves, but
we stay in the room.

WIDE CUT to his entire room. It is filthy. A room designed by
compulsive hoarding. Piles of clothes.

Empty water bottles scattered. Food wrappers laying.

Tossing through his clothes pile, he finds a suitable outfit, all wrinkled.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

We catch up to Marvin, already eating his nutritious breakfast: gummy worms.

WIDE CUT, viewing the whole kitchen. Just as bad as the bedroom, but has dirty dishes piling up in the sink.

EXT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Even from the outside, his place looks dingy. He slugs to his car. A car that matches the nasty of his apartment.

INT. WORK - MORNING

At his favorite place in the world, Marvin walks through the halls. Though nobody wants to talk to him, he ignores everybody anyways.

Throughout the work, desks, staplers, computers, and printers span everywhere.

All stuff from the dream.

Arriving at the perfect spot, Marvin sits at his desk.

As he settles, one of his supervisors, JARED SMART, ruins Marvin's silence.

JARED
Parker, how was the weekend?

MARVIN
Oh, I didn't do too much--

JARED
Listen Marvin, can I call you Marvin?

MARVIN
Uhh--

JARED
I'll just call you Parker. Listen Parker, your numbers were due at the end of last week. I can't accept that kind of work for you.
(MORE)

JARED (CONT'D)

You just have to crunch some numbers.

MARVIN

Okay.

JARED

(walking away)

Crunch the numbers, Parker. My office by the end of the day.

Now alone, Marvin pulls out all the working essentials: paper and pen. Though, he should be doing work, something else has his mind occupied.

Pinned to Marvin's desk is a calendar, and it is not just any calendar, it is a Gregorian calendar.

Today's date, April 19th, is circled many, many times. It is circled like how a 2nd grader confidently circles the incorrect answer on a multiple choice quiz.

Marvin looks at the calendar as if he was Jesus looking at food after a 40 day fast.

INT. WORK - BREAK ROOM - NOON

Eating a piece of bread, Marvin sits at a table, staring into the food like it is empty space.

Once again, his empty space is penetrated by Jared Smart's presence. Alongside Jared, DEBBY FIELD, CLAUDIA LEWIS, and MICHAEL BANK join Marvin, carrying an annoying sense of pride. They all sit with Marvin.

JARED

Parker, how is the number crunching going?

MARVIN

Halfway crunched, I'd say.

CLAUDIA

Did you all see the data from Pat & Root?

MICHAEL

I looked at the spreadsheet. Wow. I didn't know that was possible.

DEBBY

Their finances are just wonderful.
I had no idea that numbers could be
crunched in that particular order.

JARED

It made our job real easy. That's
for sure.

CLAUDIA

So Parker--

MARVIN

Marvin.

CLAUDIA

-- I heard you're a little behind
on work. I could always help out.

JARED

No, don't be silly, Claudia. Parker
here is the best of us. He can
handle that responsibility.

Jared pats Marvin on the back.

INT. WORK - LATER

Despite the work assigned to him, Marvin is not working. In
fact, his attention is elsewhere. The calendar. Something is
planned, and Marvin cares about nothing else.

CLAUDIA

Parker.

MARVIN

(flinching)
Jesus!

CLAUDIA

So, the data, were you able to
finish?

MARVIN

Ah, no, I'm... preoccupied.

CLAUDIA

Could I?

MARVIN

(processing)
Could you...
(MORE)

MARVIN (CONT'D)
(realizing)
Oh, yeah. You can take it.

Claudia grabs the sheets.

CLAUDIA
(happy)
Thank you. It's just the best,
isn't it? Number crunching.

MARVIN
(unenthused)
Sure is.

Overjoyed, Claudia floats away.

That is it, for Marvin, at least. His work day is over. No more responsibilities.

He takes a marker, puts it to his calendar, and marks off the circled day.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

As he drives off, the boredom resting on Marvin's face fades away.

Looks like relief.

EXT. AIRTIGHT BRIDGE - NIGHT

Just exiting his car, Marvin arrives to a bridge. Though it is no normal bridge, it is unusually quiet.

Airtight carries a disturbing sense of stillness. The air is trapped, airtight within the passage.

Though disturbing, Marvin likes this. His fear is strong. Captivating. Addictive.

Marvin moves to edge of the bridge, overlooking the far drop. Rose and Jack style, he leans over the edge, just holding on with one arm. He closes his eyes, imagining letting go.

MARVIN'S IMAGINATION:

Looking down at the abyss, Marvin lets go.

His fall is quick. Dark.

SLAM.

BACK TO SCENE:

A CAR DOOR closes with a SLAM.

Only then does Marvin notice the car.

Next to it, a FIGURE. Undistinguishable. A hat is the only visible characteristic.

The figure approaches Marvin.

From the physics of Airtight bridge, the voices are amplified...

STETSON
You're awfully close there.

MARVIN
Just looking.

STETSON
What at?

MARVIN
The water.

STETSON (40) walks to Marvin, and we see Stetson clearly.

He is wearing a t-shirt that is supposed to be white, but is instead a light shade of brown.

His jeans are ripped, but not fashionably-ripped, but more like he fought a wild boar.

His hat resembles a dirty one you would find at a gas station.

Stetson goes past Marvin and looks over the edge of the bridge.

STETSON
You can't see anythin'.

MARVIN
If you look really close...

Stetson dips his head further down.

STETSON
I don't...

Stetson backs out.

STETSON (CONT'D)

Wait, is this some kind of trick?

MARVIN

A trick? I don't know what you mean?

STETSON

As in, you lure me over this rail, and you push me in.

MARVIN

Why would I do that?

STETSON

I don't know, but that'd be pretty irrational, wouldn't it?

MARVIN

Beyond irrational.

STETSON

So is standing over the edge.

MARVIN

I wasn't gonna do anything.

STETSON

You weren't? That's not what it's lookin' like.

MARVIN

What did it seem like?

STETSON

When I drive by this bridge, I tend to think that if I were to see someone standing on the ledge, I would assume they were jumpin'.

MARVIN

What if I was planning to jump?

STETSON

Then I'd ask you to step down.

MARVIN

What if I said no?

Stetson thinks carefully about his response.

STETSON

Would you come down if I bought you a drink?

Marvin thinks carefully about his answer.

MARVIN
Is that a real offer?

STETSON
It is.

Looking between Stetson and the abyss, Marvin juggles the options.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Deciding that the drink is a better option, Marvin sits across from Stetson at a booth.

The bar is mildly filled.

There is enough people to where nobody outside of Stetson and Marvin can hear the conversation.

Beer sits in front of the men.

MARVIN
People call you Stetson?

STETSON
The people that talk to me, yes.
Everyone else just keeps walkin'
by.

After a swig of the drink...

STETSON (CONT'D)
Tell me, Marvin. Why jump? Why even
consider it?

MARVIN
It's not that simple.

STETSON
(taken aback)
You don't think I'd understand?

MARVIN
I don't think I'd explain it
properly.

STETSON
Give it a chance.

Marvin gathers his thoughts...

MARVIN

Every morning, I wake up from a night of vivid imagination, to a life where nothing happens. I eat, and I work. On repeat.

STETSON

Some people dream of doing nothin'.

MARVIN

I did at first, but then I got stuck. It was this infinite loop of nothing.

STETSON

I take it you took issue to it?

MARVIN

There's nothing to look forward to.

STETSON

And so, the jump is somethin'--

MARVIN

--To look forward to? Yes. The curiosity of the fall, of the beyond. It's exciting.

STETSON

If you were to find somethin', that could be excitin', could that stop you?

MARVIN

I don't know. I'd planned this out for months. Excited for months. I'd picked out the perfect day. Bicycle day. April 19th.

STETSON

Bicycle day?

MARVIN

A chemist from Switzerland was experimenting with lysergic acid. He took a tiny amount of it. Started to see things.

STETSON

What kind of things?

MARVIN

Hallucinations. He then left his work and rode home on a bicycle.

STETSON
Bicycle day.

MARVIN
Do you know what they named his
creation?

STETSON
Should I?

MARVIN
It's in the name, lysergic acid.
LSD.

STETSON
Why this day of all days?

MARVIN
My nights of dreaming are all about
the jump, all in hallucinations.

STETSON
You planned this just to back out
over a drink?

MARVIN
Well, if this drink goes poorly...

STETSON
How about this, I have something
you could do?

MARVIN
What is it?

STETSON
It's excitin'. It's somethin' that
you'd cancel your plans over.

MARVIN
Just tell me.

STETSON
(leans in)
I want to rob Rural King.

MARVIN
Rural King? The farm store?

STETSON
Yes.

MARVIN
You want to rob that?

STETSON

Yes.

MARVIN

What're you taking? A tractor?
Chicken food?

STETSON

It wouldn't be the actual store.
It's the headquarters.

MARVIN

If you're taking the risk of the
headquarters, why not just rob a
bank? Hell, why not just rob this
place?

STETSON

Everybody's expectin' a bank. We'll
get caught, and I'll be spendin'
the next twenty in a cell.

(beat)

This place I'm not robbing cause
it's a bar. Somebody's bound to
have a gun.

MARVIN

Come in with a few guys, rifles--

STETSON

The guy that owns this place is one
of my guys.

MARVIN

You got a team?

STETSON

Just need one more.

EXT. AIRTIGHT BRIDGE - NIGHT

Marvin goes back to his spot on the ledge, overlooking the
dark abyss.

MARVIN (V.O.)

It's the night. I've planned this
for months.

Marvin peers DOWNWARDS.

STETSON (V.O.)

Do this. Then you can jump.

Marvin looks back at his car.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

Rob it.

Stetson looks around for ALYSSA, but he sees nothing, except the dark.

INT. BAR - BACKROOM - NIGHT

Marvin enters the room with four people already there.

One person that he recognizes is Stetson.

STETSON

You're alive!

MARVIN

Curiosity kept me here.

STETSON

I'm glad our conversation didn't go too poorly. Let me introduce you to the team.

(beat)

This is Antonio. He's a brute. The muscle. Played offensive lineman in college. Took his talents to a better team.

ANTONIO

Marvin.

ANTONIO (30) is a big man. Could tackle a cow.

STETSON

This is Bonnie. It's not her real name, but she's got an obsession with Bonnie and Clyde--

BONNIE

--Not an obsession.

STETSON

You don't see me renaming myself to George Strait.

BONNIE (30) looks tough, smart, but chaotic. She could trick a computer to pass the Turing test.

STETSON (CONT'D)

She's our brains of the operation. Though, I picked out Rural King.

BONNIE
It's a bad idea.

STETSON
And that's why she's on infantry
for this job.

BONNIE
Good to meet you, Marvin.

STETSON
Last is Tucker.

An angry looking TUCKER (30) steps up. It is the kind of guy
that would pull his gun out in traffic.

STETSON (CONT'D)
Tucker is--

TUCKER
The reason we survived the last
job.

STETSON
He may have killed some people.

BONNIE
That didn't deserve it.

TUCKER
Should be thanking me.

Nobody thanks him.

STETSON
(diffusing)
Well, that's the crew.

MARVIN
I heard one of you owns the bar.

TUCKER
I do.

MARVIN
Oh, is that--

STETSON
(subject change)
This isn't a panel. We have some
work to do.

EXT. RURAL KING HQ - DAY

AERIAL SHOT:

of the large structure.

STETSON (V.O.)
We're going after the headquarters
of Rural King.

TUCKER (V.O.)
Nobody's done it before.

STETSON (V.O.)
Right, so security is minimal.

CLOSE UP:

to the entrance.

There is no security.

BONNIE (V.O.)
If any at all.

STETSON (V.O.)
All in our favor.

INT. BAR - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The crew continues their discussion...

MARVIN
What's there to take? It's a farm
store.

STETSON
Slow down, partner. I'm getting
there.

TUCKER
(about Marvin)
His head's in the wrong place.

STETSON
He's new. He'll fix his priorities.

Marvin spots Tucker's dismissiveness.

MARVIN
Priorities?

STETSON

What we do is a logistical process,
like an assembly line. We don't
start the next step before
finishing the previous.

TUCKER

The priority is the security before
the score.

STETSON

We catch the ball before looking
downfield.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

In Marvin's head...

Marvin is a wide receiver running in slow motion. About to
catch a pass, Marvin turns his head downfield before his
fingers touch the football.

Back to regular speed:

Marvin DROPS the football and gets TRUCKED by another football
player.

BACK TO:

INT. BAR - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

By Marvin's expression, it is as though he just imagined
something awful.

BONNIE

(interjecting)
You'll catch on.

MARVIN

Right, so... security?

STETSON

That's where we'll need you--

TUCKER

-- First.

STETSON

Yes, and then we'll need you again
inside.

MARVIN
(trying not to be dumb)
I thought we weren't supposed to
talk about inside.

BONNIE
I told you he'd catch on.

Nobody acknowledges Bonnie's observation.

Nothing from this conversation is sticking for Marvin, unsure
what to do...

MARVIN
What can I do?

STETSON
Scout out the place. I want to know
everything: doors, traffic,
security--

BONNIE
-- In which there should be none
of.

STETSON
Come back with a report. We'll
think of a plan--

BONNIE
-- I will.

STETSON
(clenched teeth)
It's my job, Bonnie. I'll take care
of it.
(beat, on a better note)
Unless Marvin thinks of something
brilliant beforehand.

CLOSE UP:

of Marvin's face. Very uncertain.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Stetson walks Marvin out to the parking lot.

STETSON
I'm glad you're joining us. I think
you'll be a strong asset to the
crew.

MARVIN

Yeah, speaking of that, thank you
for letting me meet the crew...

Stetson's face lights up with a big smile. Little does he
know...

MARVIN (CONT'D)

I don't think I'm very interested
in doing this for you guys.

Stetson's expression drops like a penny off of the Empire
State building.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

I appreciate the offer, and I truly
wish your group the best success.

A deadly serious tone from Stetson.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

But I think I'll be on my way now.

STETSON

To the bridge?

Marvin pauses to read Stetson face, looking for the best
answer.

MARVIN

(analyzing Stetson's
response)

Yes? No?

(picking an answer)

No. I'm just going home.

STETSON

Why did you come back? Why did you
sit here and listen to all of this
just to back out?

MARVIN

Like I said, curiosity.

STETSON

If I didn't make it obvious before,
I'll make it obvious now. Either
you do this job, or...

MARVIN

...Or I go on my way?

STETSON
Or you go off that bridge, but not
by your choice.

Fear shakes from Marvin's body.

STETSON (CONT'D)
So what's it gonna be? Help us or
death?

Marvin quivers in the lot.

INT. WORK - DAY

Marvin sits at his desk, looking at sheets of paper. Not working or analyzing, just looking blankly at his work papers.

His boss, Jared, struts on over. He looks over Marvin's shoulder, seeing what Marvin is staring at.

JARED
Whatcha looking at?

Marvin jumps and turns to Jared.

MARVIN
I'm just going over this data
sheet.

Jared snatches the paper from Marvin's paws.

JARED
It looks... incomplete. Are you
just staring at this incomplete
piece of paper?

Marvin snatches the paper right back. Then he presents it to Jared.

MARVIN
(pointing at the paper)
If you look right there, you'll see
the computations I'm trying to
solve.

Jared snatches the paper back. He now lays out the page for Marvin.

JARED
This is EASY. Put it in your
computer.

Marvin takes the paper more politely.

MARVIN
Okay. I will.

Marvin turns his back away from Jared, but Jared has other plans...

JARED
Let's speak in my office.

MARVIN
(back turned)
Anything you say to me, you can say here.

JARED
I insist. My office.

MARVIN
(quietly)
No.

JARED
Fine. Have it your way.

Jared prepares for his tangent...

JARED (CONT'D)
I noticed you didn't finish your work.

Marvin ignores.

JARED (CONT'D)
From last week. Claudia did it for you.

MARVIN
(back turned)
She asked to do it.

JARED
It was your job.

This gets no response from Marvin, who still is not working, facing away from Jared.

JARED (CONT'D)
And the week before that. You finished it three days after it was due.
(beat)
It's unacceptable.

CLOSE UP:

on Marvin's face. He realizes what is about to happen...

Marvin spins back around.

MARVIN

Just wait.

JARED

No. I've done enough of that. What I need you to do now is to do what you always do. Shut up and listen.

MARVIN

Okay--

JARED

-- Not even that. Silence.

Marvin obeys.

JARED (CONT'D)

You're fired. I'm not giving you a warning or another chance. I want you out of here in the next hour.

Marvin continues to obey the "shut up and listen" policy.

Like a light switch, Jared switches his mood to "pleasant mode", as he goes away to talk to employees.

Marvin turns back to his work items. He eyes them one more time before...

Marvin tosses all of his work belongings in the air. He spikes them onto the ground. He rips them up.

He makes a scene, to which all his coworkers stand to watch. They notice something odd with Marvin. Rather than being upset, he seems to be celebrating.

EXT. AIRTIGHT BRIDGE - DAY

For a third time, Marvin stands on the edge of the bridge.

However, this time looks different. The scenery is all distorted. He is back in a dream.

Hundreds of leaves fall from the sky, but strangely enough, the leaves speak. They speak as...

ALYSSA
Things are looking better, aren't they?

MARVIN
This weather is nice--

ALYSSA
-- Your brain is calm. Aren't you glad you took my advice.

MARVIN
I don't know yet. We've yet to see.

ALYSSA
Why not? You seem like a new man already.

Marvin looks down at the abyss. It forms a colorful void of nothing.

MARVIN
The urge to jump. It's still there. I'm still curious.

ALYSSA
But I see another curiosity in your head. It's strong.

The void transforms into a tractor.

MARVIN
I'm not into tractors.

The tractor is picked up by four silhouette figures. They carry the tractor away.

MARVIN (CONT'D)
It doesn't seem like something I'd do.

ALYSSA
You've yet to reveal what it is you do.

Marvin looks back at the leaves.

MARVIN
How can I figure that out?

A GIANT leaf smacks the head of Marvin.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Jolting up from his bed, Marvin wakes from another unusual dream.

Inspired, Marvin cleans his messy room, from the piles of clothes to the trash on the floor.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Rather than eating gummy worms, Marvin cooks a breakfast of eggs and toast. Like his bedroom, he cleans the mess: the dirty dishes.

INT. BAR - BACK ROOM - DAY

Marvin enters the sacred room of the bar. Despite the holy ground, only one other is there: Stetson.

STETSON

This is your last opportunity. Join us or--

MARVIN

-- Don't. I'm not the perfect guy for this, and I don't know what I'm doing.

(beat)

But, I'm in.

STETSON

The crew be thrilled, especially Tucker.

Stetson's grin presents a chaos that Marvin is willing to embrace.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Marvin takes his work belongings, neatly placing them in drawers amongst his room.

As he unpacks, Marvin's phone gets a call.

MARVIN

Hello?

CLAUDIA (PHONE)

Hi, is this Marvin?

MARVIN
Claudia? Is that you?

CLAUDIA (PHONE)
Thank goodness. I was worried I'd call the wrong number. It's one of my biggest fears.

MARVIN
I can't say I feel the same way.

CLAUDIA (PHONE)
You like talking to strangers?

MARVIN
Not really. I'm not afraid of it, though.

CLAUDIA (PHONE)
You're better than I am.

MARVIN
So why'd you call?

CLAUDIA (PHONE)
I saw what happened at work. Everyone did.

MARVIN
Yeah, well, I can't see myself coming back, not after that.

CLAUDIA (PHONE)
I got your number from Jared, but he didn't want me calling you.

MARVIN
(sarcasm)
The world's best boss.

CLAUDIA (PHONE)
After you left, he did a thirty-minute rant on crunching numbers.

MARVIN
Didn't you tell me that crunching numbers is the best?

CLAUDIA (PHONE)
I think it is, but nobody wanted to hear Jared's ambitions.

MARVIN
And after, you got my number?

CLAUDIA (PHONE)
I had to fight it out of Jared. He
didn't like my idea.

MARVIN
What idea?

INT. CLAUDIA'S PLACE - DAY

Claudia paces around a room, on the phone with Marvin. She
hesitates with her answer until...

CLAUDIA
You're a key part of the company. I
want to you to come back.

MARVIN (PHONE)
I don't want to.

CLAUDIA
At least get coffee with me. We'll
talk about it there.

MARVIN (PHONE)
I'll get coffee with you, but
there's nothing you can do to
convince me to come back.

EXT. RURAL KING HQ - DAY

The building is busy today. Parking lot full of cars.
Across the street, Marvin's car faces the facility.

INT. CAR - DAY

Marvin watches from the driver's seat.
He speaks to his phone, recording his speech.

MARVIN
There's a front entrance. Looks
unlocked.

EXT. RURAL KING HQ - CONTINUOUS

The front door is unguarded. People are just walking through.

MARVIN

It's a distribution center.
Nobody's stopping us from getting
in. Could be guards inside. Would
have to go in to figure out.

Variety of side doors are shown.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Many other doors. Probably locked,
but it could be a way out on foot.

Now to a set of garage doors.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Garages on either side. If there's
large cargo, this could be an
option.

To a set of trailers.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Why are there 18-wheeler trailers
just sitting there? There's like a
dozen of them. I wonder what they
keep inside.

Next to the HQ is another warehouse.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

A second warehouse. Looks like...
Midwest Jet Charter. Really? If
anybody could fly... no, that's a
bad idea.

A semi-trailer truck goes through the parking lot and to a
garage. The garage door opens, and the truck goes right
through.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

If we could get an 18-wheeler, I
wonder if they'd let us through.

Marvin stops recording the audio. That is enough for his
recon.

INT. BAR - BACK ROOM - DAY

Just in the place is Bonnie and Tucker. Within their
planning, they discuss...

TUCKER

Stetson's been making odd decisions lately.

BONNIE

You know how I stand on this.

TUCKER

It's a bad idea. All of it. I don't like the place. It's too risky for some tractor supplies.

BONNIE

He claims he has a buyer that'd make us some good money.

TUCKER

He also claims that there's something over there that we don't know about. Something that'd give us an early retirement.

BONNIE

Only two things would give us early retirement, a pile of cash or...

TUCKER

(makes a finger gun and
points at his head)
A bullet to the head.

BONNIE

The kid seems smart, but he doesn't know what he's doing.

TUCKER

Not exactly what I'd call smart. Those kids that went to college don't know what it's like.

BONNIE

I wonder what Stetson sees in him.

TUCKER

A chance for early retirement?

BONNIE

Which one does he want? The money or--

The door swings open. It is Stetson.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN

On his kitchen wall, Marvin sets up paper to plan his excursion.

Pictures and poorly drawn images set up a few different ideas and plans for the heist.

With the paper taped to the wall, he uses string to point from one idea to another.

Done with the work, Marvin has three separate plans marked on the wall.

Marvin sits on the floor, against the opposite wall, pondering which idea would be best.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Marvin walks into a coffee shop. He waits in line to order, but he sees Claudia out of the corner his eye.

They wave.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Zooming out, we see that the shop is just a few buildings down from Marvin's old company.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Marvin sits across from Claudia.

MARVIN

You go here often?

CLAUDIA

Everyday. Gotta get my coffee fix somehow.

MARVIN

I've heard it's unhealthy.

CLAUDIA

Coffee? Or getting it every day?

MARVIN

Coffee is good every once in a while. It's why I don't mind getting it now. Getting coffee every day of the week is absurd.

CLAUDIA

How come?

MARVIN

It's said to ruin your sleep schedule. Your body doesn't know when to wake up or go to bed anymore.

CLAUDIA

I sleep just fine.

Claudia has heavy bags under her eyes.

MARVIN

You're not addicted?

CLAUDIA

I am addicted. I get it every day. I can't live without it. That's what an addiction is.

MARVIN

You don't see it as harmful?

CLAUDIA

From a certain point of view, it's supposed to be healthy.

MARVIN

In what way?

CLAUDIA

They say it's good for recovery. Like if you were to workout, having coffee afterwards would speed up the rebuild.

MARVIN

I don't ever see you workout.

CLAUDIA

You saw me at a desk from 9 to 5. You don't know what I'm doing outside of this.

MARVIN

So if you're having coffee before work, that must mean you're working out before work.

CLAUDIA

That would make sense.

MARVIN

I'm good with piecing things together.

CLAUDIA

I don't workout, though.

Marvin nearly spits his coffee

MARVIN

Then what's the point of it?

CLAUDIA

I need it to crunch numbers.

MARVIN

Not this again. I told you I'm not coming back to work. You can tell Jared I have a boot coming to his ass.

CLAUDIA

You could've worded that differently.

MARVIN

I'll put a boot in his ass.

CLAUDIA

In his ass?

MARVIN

(unsure)

On?

CLAUDIA

Look, I didn't come here to convince you back. I'm sure you have a good reason.

Suddenly, Marvin is filled with confusion.

MARVIN

Then why did you ask me here?

CLAUDIA

You look in need of a friend. You've got one here.

Marvin is stunned.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)

But if you have other options, I can just back out.

Claudia raises an eye brow.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Marvin parks his car in the lot. It is late, but he is still sipping on his coffee.

He goes through the main entrance.

INT. BAR - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

With Stetson, Bonnie, and Tucker waiting, Marvin enters.

Along with him, Marvin brought a stack of office supplies, such as paper, tape, and string.

TUCKER

What's with the stuff? Are you giving us a lecture on macro economics?

MARVIN

I'm surprised you know what that is.

TUCKER

Just because---

BONNIE

Tucker!

STETSON

Welcome back, Marvin. Did you find anything of use?

MARVIN

You'll see.

Marvin sets up an empty wall just as he did back at his apartment.

Pictures are taped to the wall, with string connecting the points together.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Three ideas.

STETSON

Show us.

MARVIN

(pointing at the first set
of pictures)

First plan. It's the most simple,
but it could be dangerous. Like a
simple bank rob, we walk through
the front door with masks and guns.
We lock the door behind us and
engage with the workers inside. We
don't know who or what is waiting
for us, but there are a few
different side doors we could slip
out of. Then we leave in separate
directions.

TUCKER

This is my kind of plan.

BONNIE

Not my kind. This will get us
killed or worse... caught.

STETSON

Plan two?

MARVIN

There are garage doors on either
side taking in trucks. We hijack an
18-wheeler a few miles before it
gets there. We infiltrate without
anybody knowing. We take whatever
we can carry and put it back in the
truck. Then we drive out like
nothing ever happened.

TUCKER

Wouldn't somebody notice the
missing things?

BONNIE

Not for a little bit, but we'd
already be gone. I like this plan.

STETSON

As do I.

BONNIE

Do we even need to hear plan three?

TUCKER

I want to.

Marvin takes a deep breath.

MARVIN

Okay, and bear with me for this
one. Can any of you fly a jet?

They look at each other wide-eyed.

FADE OUT.

BUS DRIVER

Written by

Will Bullock

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Pure blue sky laying overhead. No clouds, only the sun. Underneath, red ROCKS stand firmly in the distance.

TILT DOWN to the red path. Completely unscathed. Only the breeze until...

... ZOOM!

Cruising into the desert abyss. A BOX TRUCK rambles through the uneven surface. The wheels collect the DIRT and MUD.

INT. BOX TRUCK - DAY

Firmly gripping the wheel, JASON LEWIS (34) checks his side mirror, spotting something terrifying chasing him...

A HUMVEE with a MACHINE GUN propped on the roof.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Gunning the HUMVEE, it fires at the box truck, piercing through the back, violently SHAKING it...

POP! The box truck's BACK LEFT TIRE is shot. Losing control, the vehicle SPINS OUT, crashing into a ROCK. Opening the door, Jason FALLS out, CRAWLING on the dirt.

The HUMVEE coming to a stop, the driver, JAY RICHARDSON (27), stomps out. Tattoos all over. Armed from head to toe. The passenger, ISAIAH CARTER (20), glides out swiftly. He opens the back door for...

TYRELL WILLIAMS (45). Mature and frightening, Tyrell leads these two men. Advancing towards Jason...

JASON
(crawling)
Don't shoot!

While he lingers over Jason, Tyrell directs Jay and Isaiah to the box truck. The two open the trunk to find...

JAY
It's just car parts.

Tyrell kneels over Jason.

JASON
(whimpering)
It's for Sawyer Auto! It's in
Flagstaff!

Isaiah forages around the car parts.

ISAIAH
(calling back)
There's nothing else.

JASON
We don't have anything else! I
swear, it's just car parts!

Staring deep into Jason's soul, Tyrell forces a confession...

JASON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Tires.

Tyrell twists his head in curiosity.

JASON (CONT'D)
(howling)
It's in the tires!

Isaiah takes out a SWITCHBLADE. Digging into a tire...

ISAIAH
It's a bag of white powder... Coke?

JAY
Not likely.

Looking up like a sad dog, Jason wonders whether his life
will be spared. Tyrell peers expressionless at Jason.

JASON
I don't know what they put in
there! They didn't tell me!

Tyrell ignores Jason and walks away. As Jason's eyes widen in
victory, his hands grips the dirt.

Arriving to the trunk, Tyrell scans the inside. Jay SNATCHES
the powdery bag from Isaiah, handing it to Tyrell.

TYRELL
Fentanyl.

JAY
(cutting the tires)
A lot of it. Dozens in each tire.

TYRELL

Take what they have. We'll meet
back at--

DIRT CRUNCHING. They hear distant steps...

The three thieves peer around the truck to see Jason
SPRINTING into the rocky desert. Taking out his GUN, Tyrell
takes a step towards the runner.

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - MORNING

Situated in a quaint neighborhood, the house is small. The
front grass is neatly cut. Driveway has one car, an old
PICKUP TRUCK.

We are in Flagstaff, Arizona: the Grand Canyon's asscrack.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - RICHIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The room is dark. The bed size is twin. Laying in it, RICHIE
MARIN (30) is still. Restless, his eyes are open.

On his wall, we see pictures, trophies, plaques. All for
Formula One racing. All of Richie.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Richie is dressed for work: a POLO SHIRT, SLACKS and a WATCH.
He drinks coffee with heavy bags under his eyes--

CARMEN (O.S.)

Richie!

INT. MARIN HOUSE - CARMEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

CARMEN SANCHEZ (65) sits up irritated. Her room consists of
MEDICINE, PUZZLES, PHOTO ALBUMS, and BLANKETS.

CARMEN (O.S.)

Richard!

Nothing.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

(persistent)

Rich--

Richie enters.

RICHIE
Morning, mom.

CARMEN
Help me out of bed, would you?

Richie sighs.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

While the two drink coffee, Richie sees Carmen eyeing the TV.

RICHIE
You can't just stare.

Carmen gives a "really?" look.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
If you want the tv on... you can't
just... look, I'll show you.

CARMEN
Who said I want to watch
television?

RICHIE
Do you?

CARMEN
(beat)
Yes.

RICHIE
Wheel of Fortune isn't on for
another...
(looks at watch)
12 hours. So, I don't know what you
want--

CARMEN
The news.

RICHIE
I thought we weren't watching the
news. You said it was bad for the
ears.

CARMEN
Nancy bought me a lottery ticket. I
want to hear the numbers.

RICHIE
I don't think they show the numbers
this early...

Carmen gives a "you better turn the TV on" look.

Richie turns on the news.

NEWSPERSON
--On a dirt path, just outside of
Sedona. Jason Lewis, age 34, found
dead in the bushes. Authorities say
foul play was involved. A driver
for Sawyer Auto--

CARMEN
(uncomfortable)
Turn it off! Turn it off!

Richie turns the television off.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
This is why I don't watch the news.
It's only violence.

RICHIE
Entirely my fault. Sorry, Mom.

CARMEN
It's bad for the ears.

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Richie waits impatiently against his pickup truck.

A car pulls into the driveway, next to his truck. NANCY LANE,
a woman in her early 40s, gets out of the car..

RICHIE
Nancy, you're late.

NANCY
You should've just gone to work.
She'd be okay for a few minutes
alone.

RICHIE
I can't leave her alone with her
condition.

NANCY
Well, there's traffic. A lot of it.

RICHIE
(confused)
Traffic?

NANCY
That's what I said.

RICHIE
Really? In Flagstaff?

NANCY
There's an accident. The freeway is
completely backed up.

RICHIE
(sarcasm)
Sure.

Richie hops into his truck.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

AERIAL SHOT

Of a bus in standstill traffic.

INT. BUS - MORNING

Driving a bus full of KIDS (8), Richie is displeased. A few
children, STEVIE, JIMMY, and ANNIE, are holding Richie
captive.

STEVIE
Mr. Richie! Are we gonna be late?

RICHIE
Maybe, Stevie.

JIMMY
Why don't we just skip school? Can
you take us to the Grand Canyon?

Richie smiles as he imagines...

RICHIE'S IMAGINATION

EXT. GRAND CANYON - DAY

Every kid is outside, while Richie stays inside, driving the
bus.

RICHIE
(encouraging)
Go on! You're free, now! Run free!

Richie closes the door and drives the bus away.

BACK TO SCENE

ANNIE
Can you take me back home?

RICHIE
(announcing)
Attention children! Yes, we're in
traffic. Yes, you will be late.
Yes, I am taking you to school.

The kids groan.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
You won't be punished for this.

Richie turns to the kids. All stopped listening.

INT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Richie meets with his supervisor, KAREN MCDUFFLE (55).
Although they sit across like equals, Karen has a dominant
presence over Richie.

KAREN
You're gonna be punishment for
this. It's the sixth time this
month.

RICHIE
C'mon. There was an accident. What
was I supposed to do?

KAREN
Leave earlier. It's what I told you
last week.

RICHIE
I couldn't, okay. It's my mother,
she--

KAREN
I don't care what she has. You have
a responsibility to the school.

RICHIE
I can't leave until I see her
caretaker walk through the doors--

KAREN
Just stop. You can't stop making
excuses for your tardiness. You
have kids to deliver to this
school. On time!

RICHIE
You have to understand--

KAREN
I'm cutting your pay.

RICHIE
(outraged)
Cutting?

KAREN
Yes.

RICHIE
If anything, I need a raise! Have
you seen these kids?

KAREN
They have the eighth highest test
scores in the Flagstaff.

RICHIE
There's only ten schools in town!

KAREN
School ends at 2:30, Mr. Marin.
Don't be late.

EXT. SAWYER AUTO - DAY

The store is closed. The windows are boarded up.

ZOOM OUT

To a parking lot on the other side of the street. Though most
cars are unoccupied, one vehicle stands out.

INT. CAR - DAY

Watching the store from a distance, DANIEL SANCHEZ (33) and
ZACH THOMAS (27) stare quickly. After a moment of silence...

ZACH

They fled.

DANIEL

No shit.

ZACH

This one's on you. You recommended the place.

DANIEL

I know.

ZACH

I won't be the one explaining it.

DANIEL

Jesus, man. I know. When do you think they left?

ZACH

I suppose last night.

DANIEL

It's messed up. I've known Jason since high school.

ZACH

Would he have talked?

DANIEL

(shrugs)

I don't know.

ZACH

Seemed a bit skittish. I know the type when I see one.

DANIEL

We have to trust he didn't snitch. They found his body like two football fields away from the road.

ZACH

So?

DANIEL

Dumbass, it means he ran.

ZACH

Or they dragged him there.

Daniel starts the car.

EXT. SAWYER AUTO - CONTINUOUS

AERIAL SHOT

Of the shop and parking lot. About two football fields long.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Could you drag a body that far?

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Daniel and Zach stand nervously.

PAN OUT

To see they are speaking to someone sitting. Someone mysterious. Someone powerful.

REVEAL TO

The nerdiest man ever laid eyes on. Thick glass. Combed hair. Somewhat of a lisp. Like Milton Waddams from *Office Space*. He is ALVIN CHESTNUT (40), but he goes by Alv.

ALV
(disappointed)
Last straw, Daniel. This is your
last straw.

DANIEL
I understand.

ALV
We have a responsibility to our
customers--

ZACH
Alv, if I may.

ALV
Go ahead, Zachary.

ZACH
Before Dan so... irresponsibly
arranged Sawyer Auto, I'd
recommended that we buy our own
truck. That we use our own driver.

ALV
If you remember, Zachary, there's a
few problems with that. How do we
bring the product across the
border?

ZACH

Tell the cartel we can pick it up
on our side of the border.

ALV

They could say no...

ZACH

We go in, or they'll turn to
someone new.

ALV

Even if they say yes, who would
drive?

ZACH

I could.

ALV

Neither of you are driving after
that fiasco in Glendale.

DANIEL

I might know someone.

Daniel stands before Alv, ready to pitch.

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - NIGHT

AS Richie drives up the driveway, Nancy waits impatiently
against her car. Richie slumps out of his truck, exhausted.

NANCY

You're late.

RICHIE

You wouldn't believe it, but there
was traffic.

NANCY

Still? She's crankier than usual.

RICHIE

She's always like that. Haven't
ever seen her in a good mood.

NANCY

Even before the diagnosis?

RICHIE

She was happy many years.
Everything changed when I left.

NANCY
Hopefully I'm helping.

RICHIE
Did you buy her a lottery ticket?

NANCY
I thought a few numbers to memorize
would be good for her.

RICHIE
Did she win?

NANCY
(sarcastic)
Yes, 10 million dollars. Spent
every penny on the world's most
expensive airhorn. Said it's to
wake you up in the morning.

RICHIE
Well, I best be getting inside...

Nancy does not move.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Can I help you with something?

NANCY
I don't get paid enough for this.
The hours are ridiculous. The work
is back-breaking. Literally, my
spine hurts. I love your mother,
but she's difficult sometimes.
Actually, she's difficult all the
time. And, I know I'm the only
caretaker that she's ever liked.

RICHIE
Money's tight right now, but what
if I get you a raise next month?
How does that sound?

NANCY
I can't wait that long. I have my
own family to support.

RICHIE
What about Carmen? She needs you.

NANCY
You need me. If you can't give me a
raise, this is my last week.

Nancy gets in her car and drives off.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Richie enters to see Carmen focusing on Wheel of Fortune, playing loudly on the TV. Beside her is an airhorn.

RICHIE
Oh, you actually bought an airhorn?

CARMEN
Hmm?

RICHIE
The airhorn?

CARMEN
I can barely hear it.

RICHIE
With the TV that loud, I don't
think you could hear anything.

KNOCK KNOCK. Richie hears someone at the front door, but he pretends not to hear.

KNOCK KNOCK. Richie ignores again.

AIRHORN SOUND. Carmen's call.

CARMEN
Goddamnit, Richard. Get the door!

RICHIE
(under his breath)
How can she hear it?

With ears of pain, Richie opens the front door to...

Daniel Sanchez. Richie's cousin.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Hey, can I help...
(realizing)
Dan?

DANIEL
Richie!

RICHIE
(extending for a hug)
It's been too long! Come in.

Daniel walks in, closing the door behind him.

CARMEN
(calling out)
Who's at the door?

RICHIE
It's Daniel, mom.

CARMEN
Who's Daniel?

RICHIE
Cousin Daniel. Martin's son.

Carmen turns from the TV to Daniel.

CARMEN
Oh, it's you!

INT. MARIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Richie, Carmen, and Daniel eat at the dining table.

RICHIE
Tell me about your job.

DANIEL
I work in manufacturing. It's a
place on the other side of town.
Been there for a few years now.

CARMEN
And what about my brother?

DANIEL
He's still in Phoenix, but he isn't
doing too well. Can't walk properly
anymore.

CARMEN
I knew I'd out live him.

RICHIE
Not everything's about you.

DANIEL
I'm glad I stopped by. I was
driving through the area, and I
wondered if you still lived here.

CARMEN

You should come earlier next time.
I'll make my speciality dish.

RICHIE

She won't be making anything.

DANIEL

Thank you, Carmen, I might take you
up on that. But since I did come,
Richie, I have something for you?

RICHIE

What's that?

INT. MARIN HOUSE - RICHIE'S BEDROOM

While Daniel leans against the wall, Richie sits on his bed.

RICHIE

So, what is it? What've you got me?

DANIEL

How's your mother?

RICHIE

You noticed?

DANIEL

It's obvious. She used to be sharp.
Something's off.

RICHIE

Alzheimer's. Early stages, but it's
a pain in the ass.

DANIEL

How long until she loses it?

RICHIE

A few months, if we're lucky. After
that...

DANIEL

Why don't you put her in one of
those old people homes? It's what I
did with my dad.

RICHIE

I would, but money's tight. I can
barely afford to keep her here.

DANIEL
Let me help you out--

RICHIE
No, no. Thank you, but I can do it myself.

DANIEL
She's my aunt. I'm more than willing to chip in.

RICHIE
I can do it myself.

DANIEL
It's a pride thing? It's got to be your own money?

RICHIE
Something like that. Is that what you were getting me? Money?

DANIEL
No something else.

RICHIE
Show me.

DANIEL
It's not what you think. It's a job. My work is looking for someone. A driver. Someone who can pick up a few things.

RICHIE
Why me? Just get someone to do it for minimum wage.

DANIEL
The items are... valuable. Can't afford to lose them.

RICHIE
What items?

DANIEL
Medicine.

RICHIE
Like a pharmaceutical company?

DANIEL
Something like that.

Richie gets the drift.

RICHIE
This medicine, where would I pick
it up?

DANIEL
Just outside of Bisbee.

RICHIE
That's by the border. It's a long
drive.

DANIEL
We pay good.

RICHIE
How much are we talking?

DANIEL
For you? \$10,000.

RICHIE
Ten--

DANIEL
Thousand. Can I take it you're in?

Richie hesitates before...

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Back in the dark facility, Daniel and Alv discuss.

ALV
Tell me about him.

DANIEL
Richie was a driving prodigy. His
mom put him in go-kart racing.
Arizona champ a few times. In high
school, they shipped him to Europe
for Formula One. He came back when
his mom got some health problems.
Whatever money he earned, he spent
it on her, and he's running low.

ALV
Sounds desperate. That's perfect
for us. When can I meet him?

DANIEL
Well, that's the problem.

ALV

What is?

DANIEL

He said no.

ALV

Do we need to... take care of him?

DANIEL

God, no! Alv, what's wrong with you? He's my cousin.

ALV

We can't let what we do get exposed. What if he goes to the police?

DANIEL

He doesn't know anything. He's just suspicious.

ALV

Do you expect me to trust you after Jason?

DANIEL

I'll get him. Don't worry. All he needs is a push out the door.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Alone in the kitchen, Richie is on the phone.

RICHIE

Hey, Nancy, how are you?

NANCY (O.C.)

Cut the small talk, can you pay me?

RICHIE

No, I can't. I was wondering if you'd hold off just a few weeks--

NANCY (O.C.)

No.

RICHIE

Please Nancy--

NANCY (O.C.)

No, Richie. It's too much.

Nancy hangs up.

RICHIE
(to himself)
Okay.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The school bus is parked. Leaving it is Richie, but he in a hurry.

Spotting him from a few dozen feet away is his favorite supervisor.

SUPERVISOR
Richard, Hey!

Richie shuffles over.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
You want to wait back for a minute?
We got something to talk about.

RICHIE
I really don't have the time.

SUPERVISOR
It's about your email.

RICHIE
I... okay, but just a minute
because my mother is at home and
she--

SUPERVISOR
I can't up your pay. In fact, I'm
keeping it at the rate we
discussed.

RICHIE
(rushed)
That's just great. If you'd excuse
me--

Richie runs to his old pickup truck.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - DAY

Driving like the Wolf from Pulp Fiction, Richie swerves into his driveway.

With a quick step, Richie gets out of the car, running to his home.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Richie enters and immediately...

RICHIE
Mom! I'm back.

No response.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Mom!

He looks around for her. Nothing.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Mom?

Then Richie notices something strange. The TV is unplugged. The couches are moved.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Richie sees that the refrigerator and freezer is open.

RICHIE
Mom!

The toaster is also unplugged, but with a fork sticking in it.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Carmen!

Richie begins running.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - CARMEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Richie darts in.

RICHIE
(panic)
Hello?

The bedsheets are messed up. Clothes are thrown onto the floor.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
 (distressed)
 Oh God!

Richie looks under the bed. Into the closet. Behind the curtains. Out the window. Until...

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Carmen is standing aimlessly, watering a fence with a watering can. She is not looking at anything in particular.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - CARMEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Richie lets out a long, deep sigh. One of those "thank God my mom is alive" sighs.

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Richie walks to Carmen, whom does not recognize Richie until he gets real close.

 CARMEN
 You're back early.

 RICHIE
 Mom, what's with the mess?

 CARMEN
 Mess? What mess?

Carmen references the backyard. Richie doubles down.

 RICHIE
 Inside. There's a mess inside.

 CARMEN
 Don't blame me. I've out here for
 thirty minutes watering the plants.

ZOOM IN:

to the water falling out of the watering can onto a fence.
Not a plant.

ZOOM OUT:

 RICHIE
 There's a fork in the toaster.

CARMEN
A small piece of bread fell.

RICHIE
The television's unplugged.

CARMEN
It wasn't working in the first place. Thought I'd try something different.

RICHIE
And the couches?

CARMEN
I didn't like the way they sat. It wasn't bringing good energy to the room.

RICHIE
How about the bedsheets? The clothes?

CARMEN
They need to be washed.

RICHIE
We have a place for that. It's called a washer.

CARMEN
Leave me be, Richard.

Frustrated Richie storms away.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Richie is carrying a bin full of the sheets and clothes that were piled earlier.

As he does so, Carmen comes inside with her watering can.

CARMEN
(referring to the can)
It's empty.

RICHIE
I think we've done enough watering for one day. Why don't you watch some TV. I fixed it.

CARMEN
It better not be the news. You
can't trust them.

RICHIE
It's your favorite show.

CARMEN
Wheel of Fortune?

RICHIE
Second favorite show?

CARMEN
I don't...

RICHIE
Judge Judy.

CARMEN
Oh! I love Judge Judy. I can trust
her.

Carmen sits in the couch, back in its place, watching the TV,
back in its place.

RICHIE
I have to get back to work. I'm
gonna leave you alone just like you
asked. Don't move anything. Okay?

Carmen is fixated on the television.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Mom?

CARMEN
Yes?

Richie waves her off. He deliberately locks the door before
walking out of the house.

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Richie gets into his pickup truck and drives away.

CUT BACK:

to Daniel's car, sitting a few blocks back. Like the previous
day, Zach is in the passenger seat.

INT. CAR - DAY

They are watching Richies movements.

DANIEL
That's him.

ZACH
Doesn't look like much.

DANIEL
You should see him behind the wheel.

ZACH
He's behind the wheel right now.

Richie drives past, not noticing Daniel or Zach.

ZACH (CONT'D)
So how are we going to convince him?

DANIEL
As far as I know, he only has one weak spot.

ZACH
Which is?

INT. MARIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Carmen is watching her television when...

KNOCK KNOCK.

CARMEN
Richie!

A brief pause until... KNOCK KNOCK.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Richard! The door!

Carmen gets her airhorn and SOUNDS it.

She gets no response.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Dammit. Where is he?

Carmen slowly gets up from her spot, walking to the door. She unlocks and opens to see...

Zach Thomas looking as friendly as he can manage.

ZACH

Hi ma'am. My name is John, and I'm with Fresh Coat Painters. We got a call from a... Richard Marin that the exterior of your house needs to be repainted.

CARMEN

Does it?

ZACH

Records show that you're overdue for a job and just by looking at the deterioration of the house, you need a new coat.

CARMEN

My son called?

ZACH

Take a look at the outside, ma'am.

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Zach guides Carmen outside.

ZACH

(pointing at the house)
If you see this spot and right there, you'll see the paint is wearing right off.

CARMEN

Oh, I think I see something.

ZACH

If you take a look at your neighbors house just down there--

CARMEN

I always hated their color. Who would paint their house orange.

ZACH

We did their house, but if you notice, the paint stays right on.

CARMEN

Is that why the orange seems so bright?

ZACH
Exactly, and if we show you our
paint options at our company
vehicle...

Zach points at a dusty parked car.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Daniel nervously watches Carmen and Zach.

Zach leads Carmen to the car.

EXT. MARIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel runs to his cousin's home. As he opens the front door, Daniel does not enter, but rather he sticks his hand inside. Playing with the door, he gets the right spot and closes the door. Daniel checks the handle... LOCKED.

As Daniel runs to the car, he sees Zach nearly there with Carmen.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

As Daniel hops in the driver's seat, Zach and Carmen enter in the back.

CARMEN
This is nice.

Carmen seems comfortable with Zach, as he guides her.

ZACH
Carmen, this is our driver. He's
going to show us all the house's
with the paint you want.

Daniel looks uneasy pulling away from the house.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

From inside, Richie loudly fixes his keys to the lock.

Richie barges into his home...

RICHIE
Hello?

Nothing.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Not again... You better not be out--

Richie opens the back door...

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Side.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - TEN MINUTES LATER

Richie's truck drives slowly through the streets. Window's rolled down, Richie is searching for his mom.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

A desperate Richie looks at EVERY angle, searching for Carmen.

Then, he sees a WOMAN from a distance. It could be her.

Richie stops the car.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Richie runs after the woman, her back turned to him.

He puts his hand on her shoulder.

RICHIE
Mom.

She turns around, revealing...

It is NOT her. It is a neighbor, MIRANDA BURTON.

MIRANDA
(appalled)
What are you doing?

Trying to regain the situation...

RICHIE
Sorry, I thought you were someone else--

MIRANDA
(still appalled)
You touched me!

RICHIE
C'mon. It was your shoulder--

MIRANDA
Get away!

RICHIE
I need your help.

MIRANDA
Go!

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

CLOSE UP SHOT

of a police car. Blue and Red sirens. Gunning down the street.

It arrives to where Miranda and Richie politely debate.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Two COPS observe the very pleasant lady, shouting obscenities at Richie.

The cop driving, BRAD FAVORS (40s), squints at the debacle. The passenger cop, FRANK BERRY (40s), rolls his eyes.

BRAD
She looks familiar, have we seen her before?

FRANK
Don't you remember? Two weeks ago, she called about a drug deal. Ring any bells?

BRAD
Is that the one with the eight year olds--

FRANK
-- With the lemonade stand? Yes.

BRAD
That's right. Miranda Burton.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

MIRANDA BURTON paces, slowly, for the cops to exit their vehicle.

BRAD
Ms. Miranda, what a surprise--

MIRANDA
(dramatically)
I've been assaulted. And battered!

FRANK
Ms. Burton--

MIRANDA
-- He grabbed my shoulder and
YANKED me around! Like a merry-go-
round!

BRAD
Sir, you called?

RICHIE
Yeah, I have an issue.

FRANK
I can tell.

RICHIE
Not this. I'm looking for someone.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Brad and Frank enter the grocery store, shaken up and annoyed
from Miranda's badgering.

BRAD
I don't believe a word out of her
mouth.

FRANK
This kind of work makes me wanna
quit.

BRAD
What would you do?

FRANK
Sell drugs through a lemonade
stand. It's the perfect decoy.

BRAD
Miranda would see right through
you.

FRANK
Who's going to believe her?

BRAD
I wouldn't.

FRANK
Wonder if this grocery store call
is related?

BRAD
I guess we should look out for his
mom.

FRANK
If she looks like Miranda, I'm
praying she doesn't act like her.

BRAD
(pointing)
That woman looks like Miranda.

Frank looks in the direction of Brad's finger and sees a
woman like Miranda.

She turns her body towards the cops...

It's Carmen.

CARMEN
Can I help you?

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER

Richie sits, alone, in a chair. Staring at his hands, he is
thinking of something. Perhaps, he is pondering an idea.

ZOOM IN

to his face. Outside noise goes distant. Gradually building
is a small but annoying noise. As the sound grows, it reveals
as Carmen's AIRHORN sound. It peaks, then...

Carmen walks through the entrance to where Richie was
sitting. The sound goes away

CARMEN
Finally, Richard. You made it.

RICHIE
Gave me a heart attack.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Richie guides Carmen through the house.

CARMEN
(yawning)
I'm tired. I think I'll go to bed.

Collapsing into a chair, Richie could not handle the stress of the day. Maybe he needs a change...

INT. MARIN HOUSE - RICHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richie paces around his room. After a few laps, he picks up his cell phone and calls.

RICHIE
Hey, Daniel. It's Richie.
(beat)
I'm in.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Daniel staggers around like he is giving a Powerpoint presentation. Just behind, Richie, in the building for the first time, stands completely still. Richie is Daniel's presentation to...

Alv, sitting like a king watching the jesters perform.

DANIEL
This is Richie, the best driver
west of the Mississippi. He's ready
to work for us.

ALV
(to Richie)
Are you?

RICHIE
Ready? Yes... well, as long as I
can make it back for work.

ALV
For what we're paying you, you want
to go back to work?

RICHIE
I think it makes sense to have a
legitimate line of work.

ALV
This isn't legitimate?

RICHIE

I was told I was picking up medicine, but for what I was offered, it seemed like something different.

ALV

As far as you know, it could be medicine. It could be avocados. It could be dildos. You're never going to see the product.

RICHIE

Whatever it is, it's not legitimate, and I'd like to keep my other job.

ALV

What is your other job?

RICHIE

I'm a bus driver.

ALV

I'm paying you \$10,000 dollars, and you want to keep your job as a bus driver?

RICHIE

That's right.

ALV

Okay, Bus Driver.

RICHIE

And I have one condition.

ALV

Which is?

RICHIE

I want \$2,000 up front. Right now. The other eight can come after.

DANIEL

Richie, that was never part of our deal--

ALV

(hand up)
Let's hear him out.

RICHIE

I need the \$2,000 now, more than you need it. I have some things to settle first.

ALV

What's stopping us from finding someone else?

RICHIE

There is no one else. Daniel wouldn't have come to me unless it was a last resort. You need me.

ALV

Is that so?

RICHIE

Yes, and you'll have me after the money.

Though he already knows his answer, Alv pretends to ponder the dilemma.

ALV

\$2,000 for the Bus Driver.

Alv snaps at Daniel. As indicated, Daniel goes through their stash of money, taking out the \$2,000.

Richie receives the cash.

ALV (CONT'D)

I'll see you in here tomorrow.

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Richie rings the front door. Coming out is Nancy.

NANCY

Why are you--

Richie dangles a pile of cash in front of her face like he is teasing fish with bait.

NANCY (CONT'D)

What is this?

RICHIE

I need you to come back. She misses you.

Richie hands the money over, and she counts it.

NANCY
This won't cover much.

RICHIE
There will be more. Consider this a
downpayment for your services.

NANCY
When do I start?

RICHIE
Monday, and I might need you to
work extra one night.

NANCY
I don't know if I can.

RICHIE
I'll compensate you for the hours.

NANCY
What is it you'll be gone for?

RICHIE
A business opportunity.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

In the facility, it is just Alv and Daniel.

ALV
Good news. The Cartel said they'd
meet us on our side of the border.

DANIEL
That's great.

ALV
But, they have a condition. We
complete this, and they'll continue
to do it. If we fail...

DANIEL
What?

ALV
They'll kill us.

DANIEL
That's not good news!

ALV

It is, if Richie's as good as you say. Don't tell him, though.

DANIEL

I didn't know Richie was going to do that... The money thing.

ALV

I like it. Too many new guys are timid, afraid to make mistakes.

DANIEL

Jason was timid.

ALV

We need confidence. Someone who knows what they want.

EXT. DIRT ROADS - DAY

The desolate desert burns in the hot sun. Parked on the dirt is a HUMVEE, the one from earlier.

Outside it, Tyrell, Jay, and Isaiah wait for something...

JAY

Quiet day out.

ISAIAH

Maybe we scared them off.

TYRELL

Maybe, or they're regrouping.

JAY

They'd be dumb to try us again.

TYRELL

The cartel sells. Someone will come, and when they do...

Far off in the distance, a box truck is spotted, driving along the dirt.

ISAIAH

Is this the one?

Both Jay and Isaiah look at Tyrell, waiting for a decision.

Tyrell puts his hand up, and he points one finger to the box truck.

INT. MARIN HOUSE - MORNING

Carmen sits drinking her coffee, while Richie prepares to go.

CARMEN
Where did you say you were going?

RICHIE
Phoenix.

CARMEN
All day?

RICHIE
All day, so you'll have Nancy to
keep you company.

CARMEN
What is it you're doing?

RICHIE
Daniel offered me a part-time job.
I'm just giving it a try. Maybe
it'll pan out, and I'll

CARMEN
Be safe, will you?

RICHIE
I'll try.

Richie walks out.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

A box truck travels through the Arizona highway going 75mph
at a time. It blends in with the other traffic crossing
through the state.

Music plays. Something in Spanish.

INT. BOX TRUCK - MORNING

Music is playing clearly. It is the radio from Richie and
Daniel's travel.

Richie, the driver, turns the music volume down.

DANIEL
What'd you do that for?

RICHIE
I don't like the music.

DANIEL
What's wrong with it?

RICHIE
This the stuff my mom used to
listen to. I don't like it.

DANIEL
How about for me? Let me play my
music.

Daniel turns the volume back up.

RICHIE
(turning the music down)
I'm driving. I'd rather sit here in
silence than hear that again.

Though Richie gets his wish and gets a few seconds of
silence, Daniel breaks it...

DANIEL
Europe changed you, man. You used
to be different.

RICHIE
So?

DANIEL
Where's your tie to the family?
It's like you're a different
person.

RICHIE
Outside of my mom, I have no tie to
the family.

Daniel lets the conversation die, but Richie...

RICHIE (CONT'D)
I wasn't gonna stay in Arizona my
whole life. I had to go.

DANIEL
And look where that got you...
right back here.

RICHIE
Not for long.

DANIEL
Where you gonna go to now? Dubai?

RICHIE
Once my mom is taken care of, I
think I'll go up north.

DANIEL
(finger gun to head)
Taken care of?

RICHIE
Not like that.

DANIEL
Where up north?

RICHIE
Just somewhere with no people.

DANIEL
Would you be a bus driver up there,
too?

Richie shoots a dirty look.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What's wrong with staying here with
the family?

RICHIE
I used to think we had it perfect.
That our parents did it best, but I
grew up.

DANIEL
It was perfect. Couldn't you see?

RICHIE
They were complacent, and I knew
they'd resent me for leaving.

DANIEL
We didn't you resent you. We
supported you. Watched your races.
Wrote to you, but you never wrote
back.

RICHIE
I moved on.

DANIEL
But the family's all but moved on.
Gone.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Just your mother and my father.
There's no one for you to hide
from.

RICHIE

I had to leave then, and I'll do it
again.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

AERIAL SHOT:

of the box truck blending right in with the moving traffic.

DANIEL (O.C.)

All of that leaving just to take
you right back to me.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Alv and Zach pace around the warehouse, mid-discussion.

ZACH

I'm not sure how much we can trust
him.

ALV

He seems to be a good driver.

ZACH

Not him. Daniel.

ALV

Daniel's been working for me for
years. He's never betrayed me. He
would never.

ZACH

He's been jumpier than usual.
Haven't you noticed?

Alv fights to not show his concern.

ALV

He's tense. We all are.

ZACH

It was his man that got caught. His
man that's dead. His man that
could've ratted us out.

ALV
We're still here, aren't we?

ZACH
Don't be so blind! I don't know
what or who it was that killed
Jason, but it's coming for us.

ALV
If it happens--

ZACH
When it happens.

ALV
We're prepared. Look around.

WIDE SHOT:

of the warehouse. Dozens of weapons are lying on the floor.

ZACH
There's not enough of us to use all
of this.

BACK TO ALV AND ZACH:

ALV
Ever since I was kicked out of my
home, I made this entire operation
from the ground up. I spent years
making this place indestructible.
Nobody knows about it, and if they
do, they won't live to talk about
it.

INT. BOX TRUCK - DAY

Sleeping in the passenger seat, Daniel wakes to a bump in the
road.

DANIEL
Jesus, man, I thought you were a
good driver.

Daniel opens his eyes fully to see that Richie is calmly
steering the vehicle.

Daniel looks out the window to see...

They have arrived.

RICHIE
This them?

DANIEL
I think so.

RICHIE
You think?

DANIEL
I've only done this a few times.
Usually I'm not the one to go.

Parked outside are a few pickup trucks with boxes in the trunk. Men with rifles watch Richie and Daniel.

RICHIE
So, do we both get out?

DANIEL
No, just me.

Daniel gets out, and Richie watches him from inside the car. Although faint, Richie can hear Daniel speaking to them in Spanish.

Daniel motions Richie to turn the vehicle around, which he does in perfect fashion.

Richie hears the trunk being opened, and boxes being placed into the back.

After packing, Richie hears the trunk closing, and Daniel gets back into the car.

RICHIE
All good?

DANIEL
Good enough. Let's get out of here.

Richie moves the car out.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SUNSET

The box truck moves gracefully along the dirt. The sun is setting by the orange horizon, giving off a beautiful view.

INT. BOX TRUCK - SUNSET

DANIEL
(referring to the sunset)
There's a benefit to this kind of
work.

RICHIE
In the time I spent in Europe, I
missed this. There's nothing here
but the ground.

DANIEL
No buildings, stores, useless
coffee shops. Just some dirt and
rocks.

RICHIE
(pointing out in the
distance)
And whatever that car is.

DANIEL
I don't see anything.

RICHIE
(pointing)
See that little bump.

Daniel leans into the window, searching for Richie's item.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Following the directions of Richie, the mound is present, all
desolate. Next to it, however, there is something.

Moving closer, it is something unnatural. Man-made.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Is that...?

RICHIE
Kinda looks like a tank.

Getting close enough to recognize, it is...

A HUMVEE.

DANIEL
You should speed up.

INT. BOX TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Richie looks at Daniel in concern.

RICHIE
Why? I thought everything is under
control.

DANIEL
Listen to me, that's not our
friend.

The HUMVEE gets suspiciously closer to the box truck.

In distance, they spot the machine guns on the roof.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
DRIVE!

Richie presses the gas and grips the steering wheel firmly.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

A high-speed chase between the box truck and HUMVEE. The HUMVEE tails Richie's box truck.

The machine gun of the HUMVEE fires at the box truck but barely missing.

With an intersection in the road, Richie takes a sharp left turn, surprising the HUMVEE.

Having a larger gap, the box truck looks to extend.

INT. BOX TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Daniel looks into the side mirrors.

DANIEL
I think you got 'em.

The HUMVEE stalls ever so slightly.

RICHIE
(stressed)
I don't think so.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Richie and Daniel put distance on the HUMVEE, but not for long.

The HUMVEE presses forward, machine gun firing.

INT. BOX TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

From the driver-side mirror, Richie looks to see the HUMVEE catching quickly.

BAM! The mirror is shot and gone.

DANIEL
We're gonna die!

RICHIE
(calmly)
Just wait.

Richie does the unexpected... turning the wheel, drifting the truck, and making a sharp u-turn to FACE the HUMVEE.

DANIEL
What are you doing?! You're gonna
get us killed!

RICHIE
I know what I'm doing.

Bullets fly by the car. Richie spins the wheel vigorously.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Going right towards the HUMVEE, the box truck swerves back and forth, dodging the bullets.

DANIEL (O.S.)
We can't face that thing head on!

RICHIE (O.S.)
Better than running from it.

INT. BOX TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Daniel cowers behind the glove compartment, while Richie sits strong, steering the vehicle.

DANIEL
I don't like this--

RICHIE
Shut up!

From the front windshield, the HUMVEE gets close.

The machine gun stops firing. The HUMVEE is preparing for a collision.

Richie centers the box truck, aiming right for the HUMVEE.

Daniel peaks his head up. Seeing the situation, he goes back down...

DANIEL
(closing his eyes)
Dear God, please let me live.

The collision is just moments away. Before it happens...

Richie SPINS the wheel with great force.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The box truck SWERVES out of the way, and the HUMVEE flies right by.

Prepared by Richie, the HUMVEE crashes right into a rock and flips onto its backside.

The box truck keeps going in its direction, never looking back.

INT. BOX TRUCK - NIGHT

Time has passed, and it is evident that Richie and Daniel have been in silence since the chase.

Richie waits for Daniel to break the silence...

DANIEL
We're almost back.

RICHIE
I know.

Richie looks over. Daniel looks lost, like a child at a park.

DANIEL
I just want to say...

Daniel looks over at Richie in regret.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
That what you did back there...

RICHIE
I know.

DANIEL
Was the dumbest thing I've ever
seen.

RICHIE
Really? No "thank you".

Daniel looks back to the window.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Richie and Daniel stand outside the box truck, parked inside
the facility.

They have only Alv to greet them.

ALV
(looking at the supply)
Wow. Look at that. You boys did
good today.
(noticing the missing
mirror)
What happened here?

No response.

ALV (CONT'D)
Daniel. What is this? Were you
chased?

DANIEL
We were, but we got away through
the graces of God.

ALV
I'm glad both of you are safe.

RICHIE
The money.

ALV
Oh, right.

Alv digs through a bag, finding a stack of cash.

ALV (CONT'D)
Here.

Richie takes the money and leaves, but before he exits the
building...

RICHIE
It wasn't the grace of God.

Richie exits. Soon after, Daniel does too.

Alv is left to salivate over the supply. As he checks out the boxes...

Alv is STRANGLED. A rope clinches Alv's throat. After a struggle, Alv drops DEAD.

The darkness not revealing who did it.