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Author

Sullivan, Joseph Colin

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RIVERSIDE

Find Your Bliss

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Joseph Colin Sullivan

December 2014

Thesis Committee:

Professor Joshua Malkin, Co-Chairperson

Professor Stu Krieger, Co-Chairperson

Professor Bill Rabkin

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The Thesis of Joseph Colin Sullivan is approved:

Committee Co-Chairperson

Committee Co-Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

For Dad

FADE IN:

Many shots of Davis, California. A small college town of about sixty thousand people, half of whom are directly connected to the University, either as students, faculty or employees.

INT. JORDEN'S HOUSE - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

JORDEN ELLISON, a short, muscular man in his mid-thirties sits on the floor of a small master bathroom in tuxedo pants, dress shoes and a wife-beater. His hands are filthy, but he's on his cell phone.

JORDEN

Tell him I'll come in tomorrow morning and take a look.

There's a beat while we hear something unintelligible said on the other line.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Tomorrow morning is the best I can do. I've got a wedding tonight.

More unintelligible babbling.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Yeah. Alright, see you tomorrow.

Jorden hangs up the phone and sets it down on the floor next to him. He plunges his head under the sink begins to take the piping apart. He removes the large "J Bend" and empties it out into a bucket right next to him. He turns and makes a face; it clearly doesn't smell great. He shoves his hands in the bucket and start poking through the hairs and muck.

CLOSE UP: A brief sparkle.

Jorden mutters to himself as he removes the diamond ring from the bucket.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

I swear to God...!

He looks up and sees a toddler, about two years old, waddling bow-legged quickly out of the room and into the cramped master bedroom like a miniature Godzilla. He's got a heavy wrench in his hands.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Whoa!

Jorden gets up quickly to chase, and then immediately falls into the wall. He starts stamping his legs on the floor--his legs were asleep. He half waddles/half runs outside and manages to capture his son in his dirty hands, while taking the wrench away.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Junior--No. How are you even carrying this?

Jorden's wife, JESSICA ELLISON, is sitting in front of a vanity applying her makeup. She's a pretty and fit, and also in her early to mid thirties. She speaks to Jorden through the reflection in her mirror.

JESSICA

(playful)

Uh-oh, looks like someone wants to help Dada.

JORDEN

(annoyed)

You're just going to sit there and watch him do this? You know he shouldn't be messing with my tools.

Jorden sets down his son, JUNIOR, on the bed and walks over and places the diamond ring on the vanity. Jessica is surprised.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

And is it too much to ask that you pay a little more attention to where you keep this?

JESSICA

You found it!!

JORDEN

I did. Maybe the sink is not the best place to leave it.

Jessica wraps her arms around her husband and gives him a kiss.

JESSICA

Aw...my cranky hero. What's it like to be so perfect and be surrounded by such imperfection?

Jorden smiles.

JORDEN

It's hard. A burden, really.

Then she backs away.

JESSICA

Now, you're filthy. You don't have time to take another shower, do you?

JORDEN

Nope. I'm just going to go like this.

Jorden flexes his muscular arms and pats his paunch in his wifebeater.

JESSICA

(sarcastic)

Oh my God, how do I ever manage to keep my hands off you.

JORDEN

I don't know.

INT. JORDEN'S LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE BIT LATER

Jorden, now completely dressed and cleaned up, walks into a living room with a huge couch, toys all over the floor, little drawing tables and little play areas scattered throughout. There are stains on the couch and on the area rug. A 50 inch flatscreen is playing "Mickey's Clubhouse" in front of his four year old daughter. She is riveted.

JORDEN

OK Abby, it's time to turn off Mickey.

ABBY

No, Daddy!

JORDEN

Yes.

He flips off the TV. The CLIP CLOP of high heels on hardwood announces Jessica's arrival as she walks into the living room, dressed to the nines. Abby gets up off the couch and runs to Jessica.

JESSICA

Oh baby, you're going to have such a good time with Grandma tonight!

ABBY

(excited)
Gramma is coming?

JORDEN

Yup, Gramma. Which means I'm sure she'll turn that TV back on as soon as we leave.

Jessica rolls her eyes.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Where is your mother?

He checks his watch.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

We're going to be late if she doesn't show up soon. I'll text Brian and let him know we may be late.

He takes out his phone and begins to text.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

BRIAN, a tall, thin and balding African-American man, early to mid thirties is standing in his small, cramped and well-lived in living room. He's also wearing a tuxedo, although he's fully dressed. He glances at his phone.

BRIAN

Jorden says he may be running late.

LAURIE, early to mid thirties, has short blonde hair and is a little overweight. She doesn't really appear to hear him. She's also dressed up, but she's reading a book to her seven year old son, Isaiah, who is cuddled up next to her on the couch.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Laurie?

Laurie looks up from the book.

LAURIE

Yeah, they're running late. OK.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Brian mutters under his breath.

BRIAN

Finally.

He opens the door, and the 14 year old baby sitter, MICHELLE, walks in. She looks like a young and kind of awkward and gawky sixteen.

MICHELLE

Hi Mr. and Mrs. Young!

Laurie gets up off the couch in a hurry. Isaiah stays and continues reading the book on his own.

BRIAN

Hi Michelle.

LAURIE

(a little too serious)

Hello, Michelle. Very nice to meet you! I hear you have a lot of experience.

MICHELLE

Yes, ma'am! I watch my little brothers and sisters all the time, and the Smiths have had me watch Billy a couple times.

Michelle smiles. There is an awkward silence.

BRIAN

Come in, Michelle. Welcome!

Michelle enters and heads towards Isaiah.

MICHELLE

Hi Isaiah!

Isaiah, shy, just waves and gives a coy little smile. Michelle sits next to him.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Whatcha reading?

LAURIE
Brian, can I talk to you for a
second in the next room?

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM

Brian is sitting on the bed and Laurie is standing in front
of him, speaking animatedly.

LAURIE
She's fourteen! She's barely any
older than he is!

BRIAN
She's fourteen! She's literally
twice his age!

LAURIE
You said she had experience!

BRIAN
She does! You heard her!

LAURIE
What happens if there's an
accident? She can't even drive!
What's she going to do, call a cab?
And then stand there and wait while
Isaiah bleeds out?

BRIAN
Jesus. No. She will call one of
the eighteen emergency numbers
you've left for her on the fridge.

LAURIE
What if she gets confused and
doesn't know which number to call?

BRIAN
Then she will remember to press 9-1-
1.

Brian stands up from the bed and walks over to Laurie,
putting his hands on her arms.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

We will be gone for no more than four or five hours. She has two jobs--order pizza, and know how to work the Bluray player. And you've already ordered and paid for the pizza, so you've cut the odds of failure considerably.

Laurie is still too worried to be amused, but she's listening. She glances at a framed photo of him on the wall.

LAURIE

I know I need to be able to do this. I just hate being away from him. I just want to eat him up. What if...

BRIAN

No. No more what ifs. He's going to be fine. He's going to hang out with this girl and eat pizza and watch movies and stay up too late and eat junk food and generally have a great time. And he'll be passed out when we get home.

Laurie takes a big deep breath.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

So then you can eat me up.

Laurie is irritated by the joke and walks away.

LAURIE

And you ruined it. Don't talk to me right now.

She walks out into the other room and calls out to Isaiah.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

OK my love, come give mommy and daddy a hug, we're leaving.

Brian's phone rings, as he stands alone in the bedroom. He picks it up.

BRIAN

Hey man, we're just about to head out.

INT. CHAD'S CAR - AFTERNOON

CHAD is an attractive, fit man in his early to mid thirties. He has a full head of hair and still looks like he's 23. He sits behind the wheel of a fairly new SUV, wearing sandals, board shorts and no shirt. His long time girlfriend, KAREN, sits in the passenger side. She's a dark-haired beauty with glasses who doesn't look very pleased at the moment.

CHAD

OK, cool, man. Hey, do you have the address for the wedding?

BRIAN

It's on the invite, right?

CHAD

Yeah, bro. The thing is, we're driving there already and I forgot the invitation at home.

BRIAN (O.C.)

No worries. I'll text it to you.

CHAD

Ah, you're a life-saver, bro. Thank you.

Chad hangs up the phone. Karen is clearly annoyed.

KAREN

Did you get it?

CHAD

Yup.

KAREN

Do you have your tux?

CHAD

Yeah, babe. It's in my bag.

KAREN

Your bag? Where are the hangers they were hanging on this morning?

CHAD

Also in my bag.

KAREN

It's going to get all wrinkled!

CHAD

It's going to be fine! Relax.
What is your problem right now?

There's a beat. Karen is staring out the window.

KAREN

No. Just leave me alone. I don't
want to talk right now.

There is a silent beat while Chad considers his next
approach.

CHAD

Fine. I'm just going to talk to
myself then.

Karen continues to look out the window.

CHAD (CONT'D)

How was your day, Chad? Oh, me?
Work was good. Nobody drowned, so
I guess I earned another paycheck.

Chad flashes his huge, million dollar smile, and glances at
Karen, expecting to see a smile. No dice.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Chad, you sexy bitch, do you have
your speech ready? It's my
brothers wedding! Of course I've
got my speech ready!

He pats his tuxedo breast pocket.

CHAD (CONT'D)

I think you're gonna like it. I
wrote about the most important
person in my life.

Karen turns and looks at him.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Dr. Oz.

Karen snorts, a little surprised laugh.

CHAD (CONT'D)

A-ha! I win! You can't be mad,
you still love me!

Chad turns and looks at the road. He doesn't see Karen's expression turns back to sadness when she turns again for the window.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - A FEW HOURS LATER - DINNER

The reception hall is done up with white balloons and crepe paper hanging everywhere. Tables and chairs for about eighty people are set up. You can hear chairs dragging against the floor, as well as the familiar clinking and clanking of glasses and flatware. At the front of the room is a small table for two--the GROOM and GROOM.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - GROOMSMEN'S TABLE

Jorden, Jessica, Brian, Laurie, Chad and Karen all sit around the same table, picking at chicken or fish and chatting over and around each other. GLASSES CLINK throughout the room, causing the Grooms to kiss. A phone RINGS.

JORDEN

Hello?

Jorden gets up and walks away to have this conversation with a little more privacy. Jessica groans audibly.

JESSICA

I hate that stupid phone so much. It's always ringing and he always picks it up.

BRIAN

Always? Even when...

JESSICA

Yes Brian, even when we have sex.

BRIAN

Nice.

Laurie is staring at her lap.

CHAD

What are you looking at, Laurie?

LAURIE

My phone. I got a baby cam, and I have an app that gives me the playback.

CHAD
Oh..that's cool. What baby do you watch?

LAURIE
My own.

CHAD
Oh. Isn't Isaiah a little old to be baby monitored?

BRIAN
Yes.

Laurie smacks him on the arm.

LAURIE
Absolutely not. I don't know this baby-sitter. She might be stealing. She might be doing drugs. She might have had people over. I just want to know what she's doing.

JESSICA
What is she doing?

LAURIE
Nothing! Just sitting there with Isaiah, watching TV.

CHAD
I'm getting another drink. Anyone need anything? (to Karen) Babe?

KAREN
No, I'm good.

CHAD
Really? It's a celebration!

KAREN
Yeah, but I've got to be back at the lab tomorrow morning. So nothing for me.

JESSICA
I'll have some more wine.

She holds up a now empty glass of red. Laurie responds without taking her eyes off her phone.

LAURIE
Chardonnay, please.

BRIAN
Yes! Chad, I'll go with you.

They both get up and walk away from the table.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - WALL NEAR THE KITCHEN

Jorden stands by the wall, on his phone.

JORDEN
Those sheets of drywall were
supposed to be there two days ago.
I'll be in tomorrow as I said, but
I don't think they're open
tomorrow. I'll kick 'em in the ass
Monday.

As we hear an unintelligible voice speak on the other end of the phone, Jorden sees into the kitchen, where tray after tray of chicken and fish are being shoved into industrial sized ovens. Jorden is dismayed.

JORDEN (CONT'D)
(on the phone)
Listen, I gotta go. I gotta go,
there's something that needs my
help here.

Jorden walks into the kitchen as Chad and Brian walk by towards the bar.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - BAR

Chad and Brian chat as they stroll casually to the open bar.

CHAD
I dunno man, she's been pissed at
me or something all night.

BRIAN
Think it's because you guys still
aren't married?

CHAD

No way, man. We've totally cleared that up. She got pissed when they got engaged, but we're good now.

They are at the bar.

BRIAN

Hello! I will have a bourbon straight for me, and two Chardonnays for my lovely wife.

CHAD

Two?

BRIAN

Damn right. If I want any chance of getting lucky tonight, she needs at least two glasses of wine.

CHAD

Dude, no offense, but that's some sad shit.

The bartender hands Brian his drinks, as Brian tosses a couple bucks into the tip jar.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Two whiskeys an a Cabernet.

BRIAN

You don't know, man. You don't know what it's like over here, with you not having a kid and being all sexy. You have so much more freedom.

The bartender comes over and hands over Chad's drinks. Chad immediately takes one of the whiskey and downs it, slamming the glass back on the bar. Brian stares at Chad with surprise.

CHAD

Getting speech-ready. Can't do it sober.

BRIAN

That's exactly what I mean! I can't do that, drink whatever I want. Laurie would give me such shit.

(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)

As it is, we'll probably be leaving here in the next half an hour or so, just because she cannot stand being away from home. Her work and her kid are all she cares about-- I'm just background now.

CHAD

That's your thing, man. I just found someone that will be with me for me--I'm not going to change what I do. Take me or leave me.

Jorden walks out of the kitchen with a new plate.

JORDEN

These people have no idea what they're doing. What are we talking about.

BRIAN

My wife only recognizes my existence when I screw something up, and Chad thinks Karen's upset about something but he doesn't know what.

JORDEN

Please. It's because your gay little brother got married before her. Literally, state legislation has been passed in less time that it has taken you to man up and marry her.

CHAD

Yeah, but dude, we've never really been about that.

JORDEN

Really? Are you sure she still feels as strongly as you do?

There's a beat while Chad considers.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

A-ha! See! You're not sure.

CHAD

I'm pretty sure.

JORDEN

You've been with Karen a decade and you still won't pop the question, and it's cause you're a huge puss. Right, Brian?

Brian is staring at his phone, texting something. Jordan smacks him in the arm.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Right?

BRIAN

Wha? Yeah.

JORDEN

Who are you talking to? What's so goddamn important?

BRIAN

It's just Lizzie.

CHAD

That chick at work?

BRIAN

Yeah, so?

JORDEN

Be careful with that, man.

BRIAN

Careful with what? She's a friend. My office wife.

JORDEN

How does your regular wife feel about that?

INT. RECEPTION HALL - GROOMSMEN'S TABLE - ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Things have loosened up a bit. More jackets are hanging on the backs of chairs. Ladies shoes are starting to come off. Laurie is still staring at the phone in her app.

LAURIE

That little bitch.

She sounds a little tipsy. She raises her voice.

LAURIE (CONT'D)
Use a coaster, trash!

Brian sighs and rubs her back while texting on his phone.

A small Asian kid, no more than 19, is doubling as emcee and DJ.

EMCEE
Hey alright, can we get the best man up here to toast our happy couple?

Chad practically jumps out of his seat and bounds up to the mic.

CHAD
What's up, everybody. I wanted to thank my little brother Eric for letting me be his best man. It's a fun experience for me because Eric has always been the better man.

There's an "aww" out in the crowd.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Anyway, I'm super happy that you've found Adam. The only thing that matters in life is finding the one thing that makes you happiest, and do whatever it takes to hang on to that. Find your bliss, bro. So, uh, let's raise our glasses

Everyone in the crowd raises their glasses of champagne.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Eric and Adam, you found your one thing--each other. Congratulations! I love you both. Cheers!

Everyone clinks their glasses together. The DJ steps forward to grab the mic, but Chad pulls away.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Now really quickly, before I'm done, I wanted to say one more thing if you don't mind.
(MORE)

CHAD (CONT'D)
I've been lucky enough to find my own "bliss." And so I wanted to thank her for making every day my happiest day. I love you Karen.

Another "aw" rolls through the crowd, along with scattered applause.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Karen, will you marry me?

The crowd gasps with surprise. Karen looks like a mixture of shock and mortification.

WOMEN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Well that's tacky. This is someone else's day.

KAREN
Oh God.

She just stares at Chad for the longest time. Then she finds her voice, solid and firm.

KAREN (CONT'D)
No.

Karen turns and walks away. Chad stands there, stunned. The crowd goes quiet, and then begins to murmur. The Emcee looks equally stunned, then snaps himself out of it long enough to start a song, The Black Eyed Peas "Let's Get it Started."

EXT. WEDDING RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Karen is walking away from the reception with purpose, through the parking lot. Chad bursts through the door to catch up.

CHAD
Karen!

Karen keeps walking. Chad is hustling to catch up.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Karen, wait up!

Chad is gaining on her.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Karen, what is the deal? I thought you'd be happy.

Karen wheels around on him.

KAREN

You thought I'd be happy? What about that was supposed to make me happy?

CHAD

Why are you so mad? Why are you acting like this?

KAREN

I'm mad because you just hijacked your brother's wedding to make an ass of yourself.

Chad is beginning to get defensive.

CHAD

How is me telling everyone I love you and I want to be with you forever making an ass of myself?

KAREN

Because its you doing what you do. You make it all about yourself. It honestly doesn't even occur to you think about others, does it? Do you think about anything? Did you think about this for even two seconds before you did it? Do you even have a ring?

CHAD

Oh, so that's what all of this is about? It's about a ring. I can propose all I want, but if I don't do it with a big enough ring, then fuck me, right?

KAREN

It's not about the ring-

Chad jumps in to continue.

CHAD

I can't believe that you'd make it all about a ring. You know, a lot of women would find what I did romantic, and all you can focus on is that I didn't have a ring--

Karen snaps for a moment and yells.

KAREN

It's not about the fucking ring!

She stops herself and tries to calm down.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Chad, listen. It's not about the ring. It's about the way you live your life. You do whatever you want, whenever you want to do it. You still have the same job you did when I met you as an undergrad ten years ago. You still live in the same house, and go to the same bar every Thursday for happy hour.

CHAD

That's not fair. I've made changes for you. You moved in with me. You have drawers, closet space..hell, the shower has fifty different bottles in there that are all yours.

KAREN

I don't want space in *your* house anymore. I want to feel like I have a place of my own. A place that is ours, not yours. I'm tired of coming home to a place with neon beer signs in the living room.

They stand in silence.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I love you. But I want someone to grow old with. And you just aren't growing up.

CHAD

How long have you been feeling this way?

KAREN

A long time. I tried to bring it up a few times, but I've been so busy with work and school that I honestly didn't have the energy to get into it. And I think I was hoping that if I ignored it somehow it would work itself out. Which I fully admit was stupid of me. And then when I found out Eric and Adam were getting married, I wanted to wait until after...there just wasn't ever a good time to tell you.

CHAD

OK. Well, let's go home, and tomorrow we can go and get some new furniture or sheets or something, and you can have first choice on whatever it is you want.

KAREN

No, Chad. You don't get it. I'm leaving. I got a job offer to teach at the University of Pittsburgh. I'm leaving at the end of the month.

INT. JORDEN'S CAR - LATER

Jorden is behind the wheel, with Jessica in the passenger seat. Brian and Laurie are in the back set.

BRIAN

He took a cab home?

JORDEN

That's what he said he wanted. Karen took the car so she could get home and pack. She's going to stay with her coworker until she moves.

JESSICA

The car was hers anyway, right?

LAURIE

I can't believe Karen's going to move away. Did she tell you, Jess? She had to have told someone.

JESSICA

No, she didn't say anything to me.

There's a silent beat.

BRIAN

I can't believe that Chad waited all those years to propose only to get shot down.

JESSICA

I can't believe she would do that to him.

LAURIE

I can't believe Karen stayed with him as long as she did.

JESSICA

Listen, we all that Chad is a great guy who's just never really grown up. I think it's charming! She did too, I thought. It seems cruel to stay with him for this long and then end things like that.

LAURIE

Hey, Chad had plenty of years to do it right, and he was too busy being a Lifeguard for fifteen bucks an hour and living in the same disgusting place you guys all moved out of 10 years ago. He's not exactly husband material.

BRIAN

And who is? I'm proud of Chad. He has always lived exactly the life he wanted to live. Who says giving up what you believe is something adults have to do?

JORDEN

I do. I say that.

LAURIE

Chad can continue to do whatever he wants. He'll just do it alone. I'm just saying. Good for Karen.

BRIAN
He loves Karen!

LAURIE
Yeah? Or maybe he just loved that
Karen let him get away with
everything.

There is a long, silent beat. Jess and Jordan are used to staying quiet during Brian and Laurie's disagreements.

JORDEN
It was a really nice wedding
though. That chicken turned out
way better the second time around.

BRIAN
Yeah! And Eric and Adam will enjoy
Europe. All that Honeymoon sex
they're going to have? In trains,
on boats, castles and
stuff...Honeymoon sex is the best.
Remember our Honeymoon?

Laurie smiles and puts her head on Brian's shoulder.

INT. JORDEN'S HOUSE - LATER

Jorden and Jessica walk into their home and find Gramma, Junior and Abby passed out on the couch with the TV on.

JESSICA
I'll get the old one if you get the
young ones.

JORDEN
Deal.

Jorden picks up Junior and carries him into his crib, still sleeping. He reaches down and strokes his head tenderly, and then leans down and give him a kiss.

He comes back out into the living room and picks up his still sleeping daughter from the couch, and carries her into her room. She stirs as he tucks her in.

ABBY
Daddy?

JORDEN
Yes, baby?

ABBY
I made you something.

Jorden's phone buzzes. He takes it out of his pocket and looks at it.

JORDEN
Mm-hm?

ABBY
I made you something, Daddy. It's over there.

Jorden's gaze snaps away from his phone, back to his daughter.

JORDEN
Where?

ABBY
Over there.

She points to her nightstand. On top is a clump of multi-colored play-doh, not quite distinguishable as anything specific.

JORDEN
Thank you baby! I love it! What is it?

ABBY
It's a wrench for your work.

Jorden leans over and kisses his daughter on her head as she closes her eyes.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Will you read me a story?

JORDEN
No, it's too late. Go to sleep.

ABBY
Please?

JORDEN
Maybe your mother will, OK?

ABBY

I don't want Mommy, I want you.

Jorden is trying to check his phone an he's getting frustrated.

JORDEN

Abby, go to sleep. No stories.
Sleep.

He gets up and turns off the light.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Goodnight.

Jorden walks out into the living room while typing on his phone. Jessica is cleaning up some dishes.

JESSICA

Ugh. What does he want? It's eleven o'clock on a Saturday night.

JORDEN

He needs me to come in tomorrow morning.

JESSICA

(annoyed)

On a Sunday morning? No. No way. Abby's whole class is singing in that church service tomorrow morning. You said you'd be there. And you said you wanted to go house hunting afterwards, remember?

Jessica turns off the sink and dries her hands. Together, they continue the conversation on the walk to their bedroom.

JORDEN

Shit. Well, I don't know what to tell you, Jess. There's no one else. I need to go. If you want to do more than house hunt, and would like to house buy at some point, then I need to go.

JESSICA

Fine. Please just try to be done by noon. That way you can at least meet us afterwards at the pot-luck.

Jorden and Jessica are now undressing. Jorden takes off his shirt, while Jessica jumps into bed.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

So what do you think? Did that wedding put you in the mood for a little fun?

JORDEN

You know, this one didn't really do it for me.

JESSICA

Really? I wonder why.

Jorden gets into bed. She moves in and gives him a passionate kiss. Jorden pulls away.

JORDEN

Maybe tomorrow. I'm exhausted. I need to get some sleep.

Jorden pulls the blanket up and rolls over, turning off the light on his end table. Jessica sits up against the headboard and stares ahead into nothing for a beat. After a moment, she sighs and turns on the TV.

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - LATER THAT NIGHT

Chad sits by himself at the end of a pretty crowded bar. There are college-aged kids all around him having a great time. In front of him are five empty shot glasses in front of him, and a sixth glass, still full, in his hand. He downs the shot, and stares at it before setting it down. The bartender, KATIE, mid-twenties with short blonde hair and tattoos.

KATIE

How you doing, Chad?

CHAD

Doing great! Couldn't be better.

KATIE

OK, holler if you need something.

A gorgeous brunette approaches the bar, leaning over and trying to get Katie's attention. Chad notices her.

CHAD
You need something?

BRUNETTE
Yeah, I was hoping to get a couple
tequila shots for my and my
friends.

She gestures over to a group of girls laughing and talking in
the corner.

CHAD
Lemme help.

Chad reaches over the bar and grabs a bottle of tequila. He
lets loose a very loud whistle that can just barely be heard
over the din of the bar, and must be very useful in days at
the pool. Katie looks over and sees Chad. Chad shows her
he's taking the bottle, and flashes a little gesture she's
seen before. Katie nods her head. Chad starts pouring
shots.

BRUNETTE
Wow, what was that about? Do you
own this place or something?

CHAD
Me? No. But I come here pretty
frequently, and Katie knows I'm
good for it.

Chad hands her the shot glasses.

BRUNETTE
Wow. Well, thanks. Do you want to
join us? It's the least we can do.

She extends her hand.

BRUNETTE (CONT'D)
My name's Veronica. What's yours?

Chad looks her square in the eyes and flashes his million
dollar smile.

CUT TO:

INT. TOYOTA CAROLLA - LATER

The windows are all fogged up and we hear heavy breathing and moans coming from inside.

VERONICA
Oh God, Oh God, Oh God...

CUT TO:

INT. BRIAN'S MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Brian and Laurie are in bed having sex. The covers are pulled up over their heads, all the lights are on, drapes closed and TV is on in the background. The large comforter is moving somewhat rhythmically, and completely silently. The only thing heard is the TV.

TV NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)
Our top story tonight, a series of brush fires are still raging out of control in Southern California. Our own Chuck Kramer is on the scene with the details. Chuck?

CHUCK (O.S.)
Thanks, Maria. Yes, these fires--

BRIAN
Oh God, Laurie--

LAURIE
(sharply)
Sh!

CHUCK (O.S.)
--firefighters working 'round the clock to save as many homes as possible--

They rhythmic motion of the comforter picks up speed and goes very rapidly.

CHUCK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
--however, the people in these communities are binding themselves together--

There's a knock at the door.

ISAIAH

Mommy?

The bedroom explodes in activity. Laurie jumps up out of bed and wraps herself in the comforter, as Brian rolls over and falls on to the floor.

LAURIE

Yes baby, what is it?

She starts mouthing to Brian and gesturing towards the door, "Go, go"

ISAIAH

I had a bad dream.

Brian is hurriedly putting on some pajama pants.

BRIAN

Aw buddy. I'll be right there, OK?
Go grab a book from your room and
jump into bed and I'll be right
there.

The door knob begins to wiggle and turn, but it's locked.

ISAIAH

Why is the door locked?

LAURIE

Uh, Mommmmy is taking a bath, baby,
that's why the door is locked.

Laurie, still naked and covered by the comforter jumps into the bathroom. Brian, now with pajama pants on, opens the door and sweeps up his son into his arms, while walking him back to his room.

BRIAN

So you had a bad dream buddy? What
was it about?

INT. ISAIAH'S ROOM - LATER

Brian and Isaiah are sitting together in his little bed. Brian is reading aloud from a book when he looks down and notices that Isaiah is asleep. He gently removes himself from the bed, and kisses his son. He leaves.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brian walks back into the bedroom. He can hear the TV is still on, and the light is spilling into the hallway. Excited, he walks quickly inside. Laurie is passed out in sweats and an old t-shirt of Brian's. When Brian leans in over her and begins to kiss her neck, she semi-consciously waves him away and turns away from him. He hangs his head. He grabs his smartphone and heads to his bathroom. He pulls up some porn on the browser on his phone, and puts his hand down his pants.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - LATER

Jorden walks through a busy construction site as the sun begins to rise. He walks into a trailer.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Jorden walks inside a small, nondescript trailer with stacks of paper all over the place. There are binders everywhere as well. There a very large 300 pound man Latino man sitting behind a small desk in the corner.

JORDEN

Hey, Mike.

MIKE

Hey, J.

JORDEN

Why are there so many of us here on a Sunday morning, Mike?

MIKE

Because when the Bossman says jump, I say how high?

JORDEN

And then you call me and tell me to jump instead?

Mike shrugs.

MIKE

That's the job. Somebody's gotta be the electrician around here.

JORDEN

And it sure as hell won't be you,
huh? What's the problem?

MIKE

Chancellor Lentz has got some sort
of conference call this afternoon,
and he says he's not getting any
power to his conference room.

JORDEN

Crap. Maybe if I hurry, I can get
back in time to see the end of
Abby's choir thing.

Mike laughs.

MIKE

That's why I like you, J. You're
an optimist.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Jorden walks into the conference room. A middle-aged bald
man in a power suit is sitting by himself at the end of a
long conference table. Jorden is underneath the table
checking the connectivity of several different cables.
Jorden crawls out from underneath the table.

JORDEN

Mr. Lentz, try it now.

Mr. Lentz tries turning on his projector and it works.

MR. LENTZ

Viola! You are a genius! What did
you do?

JORDEN

It wasn't a problem. It wasn't
actually an electrical issue. The
power was getting to the room fine,
we just needed to swap out a faulty
cable.

MR. LENTZ

Thank you. What was your name?

JORDEN

Jorden Ellison, sir.

MR. LENTZ

Well, thank you for coming in on a Sunday Jordan Ellison, and doing such a great job.

Jorden begins packing up his tools. A secretary walks in holding a few fans.

SECRETARY

Mr. Lentz, I've got those fans you asked for.

MR. LENTZ

Thank you Janice. This will have to do until Mike can get his air conditioning guy up here next week.

Jorden's phone rings. He looks at it, sees JESSICA on the Caller ID, and hits "Ignore".

JORDEN

Would you like me to take a look?

MR. LENTZ

Could you? Aren't you an electrician?

JORDEN

Oh, I can do a little bit of everything. I'd be happy to. Just don't tell the union.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - ONE HOUR LATER

Jorden heads over and messes with the thermostat. Soon we hear the hum of the air conditioning unit and air starts coming through the vents.

JORDEN

There we go.

MR. LENTZ

You're a miracle worker!

JORDEN

No problem, I'm glad I can help.

MR. LENTZ

Is there anything else you can do besides electrical and air conditioning? Can you do any plumbing? Car repair?

Jorden laughs.

JORDEN

I can do a little bit of everything.

MR. LENTZ

Jorden Ellison. Nice to meet you. You do good work. Do you know why Mr. Lopez wasn't able to handle this directly?

JORDEN

Mike? I don't know. He should have been.

MR. LENTZ

I see. I appreciate your feedback. And I've definitely noticed how behind we are on certain projects across campus.

JORDEN

It doesn't have to be that way. It just needs a little bit of hard work and some better organization.

MR. LENTZ

Let's do this. I have some time later this week. Come and see me and give me more details on some of our larger construction projects, and what you would do to improve them. We'll talk.

JORDEN

That sounds great.

Mr. Lentz gestures to his secretary.

MR. LENTZ

Pam here will set you up with the details.

INT. VERONICA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Chad opens his eyes. He lays in bed, shirtless and alone. The bedroom door opens up and Veronica walks in, wearing only a towel. She smiles when she sees Chad is up.

VERONICA

Hey.

She closes the door behind her and leans into Chad, giving him a deep, passionate kiss.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

The last few nights have been a lot of fun.

CHAD

(distracted)

Totally.

Veronica throws on some sweats and a top while talking.

VERONICA

Listen, I have class in twenty minutes, so I have to run. I know you normally bail early, but feel free to shower before you go if you want. I share the bathroom with two other people, but I told them you've been crashing here, so it shouldn't be a problem.

CHAD

Sweet.

She's dressed and packing up a gym bag and a book bag.

VERONICA

Call me.

She picks up her stuff and heads out the door. Chad is left alone in the bedroom of this apartment.

INT. VERONICA'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM

Chad walks out of the bedroom fully dressed, ready to leave. He runs into a short Asian girl sitting on the couch with a bowl of cereal.

ASIAN GIRL
Are you Ronnie's friend?

CHAD
Uh, who?

ASIAN GIRL
Veronica.

CHAD
Oh, yeah. She's a great girl.

ASIAN GIRL
Yeah, she is a great girl. A great
21 year old girl trying to finish
her Biology degree. Back off. Go
home.

Chad is taken aback.

CHAD
What?

ASIAN GIRL
You heard me, man. I don't know
what your deal is, but you're old.
It's a Thursday morning and you
aren't at work. You've spent the
last several worknights in my
roommate's bedroom, and not at your
place. At this point you are
either a jobless loser with nothing
better to do, or a married liar
who's hiding something. Go home.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - LATER

Chad walks into the front door of his house. There is still
a giant flat screen TV with several different video game
systems hooked up. Chad walks down a hallway to his bedroom.

INT. CHAD'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chad enters his bedroom and finds it mostly unchanged on one
half of the room. The other half of the room has been
stripped bare. Drawers are open and empty, pictures taken
down from the walls. Chad walks into the master bathroom.

INT. CHAD'S MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chad looks into his shower. In it is a single bottle of shampoo, a single bar of soap, and tens of little brown/pink rings signifying where all of Karen's bottles used to be.

Chad sits on the toilet for a second and begins to cry into his hands.

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - LATER THAT DAY

Jorden and Brian sit at their usual table in the sunny corner. Chad is conspicuously absent. They already have a pitcher in front of them.

JORDEN

So, I'm supposed to meet with him tomorrow. It could be a huge deal.

BRIAN

That's cool! Congrats! And so this would mean...what? More money?

JORDEN

Yes. This would be fucking huge. A chance to finally move out of our dump and get an actual house built for a family. But it also means a lot less time at home, at least for the short term.

BRIAN

Less time at home, huh? When do divorce proceedings start?

JORDEN

I know. She has to understand though--I'm doing it for her and the kids. It's not like I want to be working all the time. It's all for her and the kids.

Brian checks the time on his phone.

BRIAN

It's not like him to be so late.

JORDEN

Have you heard from him?

BRIAN

No...and I've texted and called him every day since Saturday.

JORDEN

Me too. And he hasn't missed a single happy hour in ten years. Should we swing by his house?

BRIAN

I went to the pool today. They said he hasn't been showing up, so they've replaced him.

JORDEN

Fuck.

At that moment, Chad walks into the bar area.

CHAD

What's up, fellas?

JORDEN AND BRIAN

Heeeeeeeeeeeeeey!

JORDEN

Where've you been, man? You apparently stopped going to work? You shouldn't drop off the map like that, we've been worried.

CHAD

Sorry, bro. I've been in pretty bad shape the last few days. I met this girl here after the wedding, and I've spent the last few days holed up with her, just trying to feel good again.

BRIAN

Of course you did. God damn you.

CHAD

Anyway, I've come to a realization. I've made a huge mistake.

BRIAN

Yeah? About what?

CHAD

She was right. Karen was right about everything. I live in this great town, surrounded by my friends and with a beautiful girl who loves...loved me. And I took her for granted. I didn't remind her every day that life here, with me, was what made me happy.

JORDEN

I'm proud of you man. Does this mean you're finally done with that "find your bliss" bullshit? You're finally going to start putting Karen first?

CHAD

What? It's not bullshit, bro. It's just that I found what made me happy and I stopped letting her know that she was it. That's why she deserved a ring--a symbol that for us, we will always be the thing that makes each other happiest.

BRIAN

You're so wrong! We just talked about this. You do you, remember? "Take me or leave me."

CHAD

That hasn't changed. This isn't about me. It's about reminding her that the two of us, here, is happiness. And if I need to get a job to prove that, then I'm in.

JORDEN

Yeah, my offer is still open. I'm looking for people, especially now that I'm trying to impress the big boss.

CHAD

Thanks, bro, but I can't rely on a handout right now. I have to do it all myself, to prove to her that I'm a changed man, and that I get it, y'know?

JORDEN

Good for you! Let me know if you need a reference.

BRIAN

Lots of big changes today. Jordan's going to get a promotion and buy a house, Chad's finally going to man up and get his girl, and I'm going to set a world record for masturbation.

CHAD

Good for you, bro!

JORDEN

Jesus, you're disgusting. Not everything is about sex.

BRIAN

It's totally natural. The average man thinks about sex every seven seconds. I'm normal. You're the strange one for never wanting to talk about it. And you complain about the pics I send too! What kind of man does that?

JORDEN

One with a soul.

BRIAN

Whatever. Perhaps if my wife had more sex with me I'd be less pent up. When she does agree to have sex, she just lays there totally silent. It's like trying to carry a futon--it's all dead weight.

JORDEN

You should talk with her about it.

BRIAN

She hates when I bring it up. She says it stresses her out.

CHAD

Dude, you've got to do something. De-stress her.

BRIAN
Sex is a de-stresser!

JORDEN
Maybe for you--not for her. Make
her a romantic dinner or something.
Get her a glass--one--of wine.
Make it about her, not you.

BRIAN
Ugh. It didn't used to take that
much effort.

EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - SWIMMING POOL

Brian is swimming laps in the pool in his backyard. The sun is coming up. Lights go on inside his house, and he can hear his wife and kid stirring. He gets out of the pool and dries off.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Laurie is already up and pouring coffee for herself and Brian. She leans in and gives him a quick kiss.

LAURIE
Morning. How was your swim?

BRIAN
Good. What do you think about this
tag line for my presentation:
"Success is measured in pints."

She shrugs.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Well?

LAURIE
I don't know. It's fine, I guess.
I've already got Isaiah up and he
should be getting dressed and ready
for school.

BRIAN
Do you think it's too cheesy?

Laurie is packing a lunch for herself and Isaiah.

LAURIE
It's fine. Do you need a lunch?

BRIAN
No, I'll grab lunch with Lizzie.

Laurie glances up to look at Brian as she continues packing lunches.

LAURIE
Lots of lunches with this girl,
huh?

Brian changes the subject.

BRIAN
What time are you going to be home
tonight? I was thinking I'd make
us some carbonara.

LAURIE
Late. We've got to finish up our
paper to submit to the Journal of
American Psychology.

BRIAN
Late again? It would be nice to
have you home. Maybe we can try
where we left off last night.

Brian moves in close and grabs her. She escapes his grasp.

LAURIE
Brian, not now. I've got too much
on my plate at the moment. I'm
heading in early as it is.

Laurie grabs her lunch, cup of coffee and picks up a
briefcase near the door.

LAURIE (CONT'D)
Love you. Don't forget Isaiah's
lunch again when you drop him off.

INT. MR. LENTZ'S OFFICE - MORNING

Jorden walks in to a large office. The wall behind the desk
is covered with framed degrees. Mr. Lentz is seated behind
his desk.

MR. LENTZ

Good morning Jordan! Thanks for joining me so early today.

JORDEN

Of course. I'm always up early anyway.

MR. LENTZ

Me too. I've always been an early riser myself. My wife hates it. Are you married?

JORDEN

Yes sir. With two kids.

MR. LENTZ

Wonderful! Well, let me get right to the point. Michael Lopez has been the Head of Facilities here for decades. And I must admit that I know absolutely nothing about construction costs or timetables. What I do know is that nearly all of our recent construction work has come in late and over budget. Do you think there's something you can do about that?

JORDEN

Yes.

MR. LENTZ

What is your solution?

JORDEN

Mike's biggest problem is that he outsources everything he does, to subcontractors like myself. But not all subcontractors have the same work ethic. And Mike is too hands off to stay on top of each subcontractor the way he should. There's just no shortcut--it requires time and effort. You've got to oversee everything, and the best way to do that is by actually being there.

MR. LENTZ

And you have the time to do that?

JORDEN

That's the difference. I'll make the time.

There's a beat while Mr. Lentz pulls some blueprints out of his desk.

MR. LENTZ

I need the Performing Arts Center project to go smoothly. This building is the crown jewel of my plan to put this University on the map. We will stop being "just" a college town. We will become a cultural center for all local communities as well.

Mr. Lentz stops looking at the blueprints and stares intently at Jordan.

MR. LENTZ (CONT'D)

We're supposed to break ground next month and I'm hearing we're already behind schedule. You've shown me that you can already handle problems more quickly and efficiently than Mike. Can you help me?

JORDEN

What do you need me to do?

MR. LENTZ

Mr. Lopez has had this job for thirty years, and it's a Union job, so immediate replacement is not necessarily on the table. However, we're getting to the point where retirement is an option for him. I'd like to make you his replacement. If all goes well, the job is yours.

JORDEN

What do I do in the meantime?

MR. LENTZ

I'll put you in charge of several smaller projects around the campus.

(MORE)

MR. LENTZ (CONT'D)

You'll have this full school year to bring them in on time and under budget. Consider it an audition.

JORDEN

I won't let you down. Thank you for the opportunity.

Jorden turns to walk out.

MR. LENTZ

One more thing--you've set your own standard here. I expect you to be true to your word in terms of the amount of time and effort you put into the work. Talk to your family. If you don't think that's something you can do, let me know before the start of the school year--you've got two months.

JORDEN

I promise you that won't be a problem.

EXT. BRIAN'S OFFICE - LATER

Brian and LIZZIE, a tall African American woman, sit together at a small table in the corner of their office having a cup of coffee.

BRIAN

He dumped you?

LIZZIE

Well--it was pretty mutual.

BRIAN

You seemed really into him. Weren't you supposed to be going on some cruise?

LIZZIE

Well, that was the thing. Long story short, but my mom ended up in the hospital this weekend. I wanted to stick around in case she needed me to fly down and take care of her.

(MORE)

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

He thought I was being stupid. He said I was an adult and my mom had-- get this--"had a good run."

BRIAN

No.

LIZZIE

Yes.

BRIAN

He said that?

LIZZIE

Hand to God.

BRIAN

Where is he now? I'm going to kick his ass right now. I will fuck--- wait, hold on, is your mom OK?

LIZZIE

What? Oh, yeah, she's fine. She fought a losing battle with a curb and sprained her ankle pretty bad, along with some cuts and bruises. But she's OK.

BRIAN

Good. Because I'm going to straight up murder this man. Look at you! He's a damn fool.

Lizzie laughs.

LIZZIE

You are too sweet.

BRIAN

You are too smart, too pretty and too great in general to be putting up with morons like that.

LIZZIE

Thank you. It's too bad you're married. All the good ones are taken.

Brian smiles--he's glowing.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

Do you have the slides ready for
our presentation to John tomorrow?

BRIAN

Yup!

He smiles and digs in to his leftover pasta, taking a bite.

LIZZIE

What is that? It smells amazing.

BRIAN

Pasta Carbonara. Home made.

LIZZIE

You made that? Or your wife?

BRIAN

My wife doesn't make food. She
makes the money, and I make the
food.

Lizzie laughs.

LIZZIE

Oh my God, stop it. Can I try
some?

BRIAN

Of course.

Lizzie opens her mouth and sticks out her tongue slightly.
Brian whirls a forkful of pasta around his fork and brings it
to her mouth as she softly parts her lips. She moans.

LIZZIE

Oh my god, that is so good. I wish
someone would make me food that
good.

BRIAN

Maybe I can bring you some of the
leftovers next time. Or maybe
you'd want to come have dinner at
my place some time?

Lizzie leans in.

LIZZIE

Or maybe you come to my place?

BRIAN

That...would be a lot of fun, but pretty difficult. I have to pick up Isaiah most days.

LIZZIE

Well, consider that an open offer.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - MORNING

Chad jumps on the internet and goes to google. He types in "Adult Jobs."

SUPERTITLE: ONE HOUR LATER

We can hear the sound of the water running behind the closed bathroom door. When it opens, Chad is drying his hands. He sits back down at his desk, and there's a bottle of lotion and a box of tissues sitting there next to the keyboard. He goes back to google and types in "careers."

He reads through a couple job postings looking for "experience" or "Master's degree required."

INT. OFFICE OF CAREY, BOWERS AND BAUM - LATER

Chad walks into the office wearing sandals shorts and a t-shirt. He approaches the lady behind the receptionists desk with his ten thousand kilowatt smile.

CHAD

Hi, I'm here to find out about the job opening?

SECRETARY

And which job opening would that be?

CHAD

I'm not certain the exact title, but it was the one I saw on Craigslist.

SECRETARY

There are several openings at the moment. Do you have the listing with you?

CHAD

Oh, no, man. I don't have a printer, but I can probably find it on my phone, if I absolutely had to.

Chad makes no move for his phone. The secretary stares at him, waiting for him to check his phone.

CHAD (CONT'D)

You know, on second thought, maybe you can just help me out. You look like a woman who knows what she's doing.

SECRETARY

OK. What were you hoping to find out about this job opening?

CHAD

Like....how much money it pays? What I would need to do? That kinda thing. I had a pretty sweet set up at my last professional, office job, and I want to make sure that this job would be...the same. Or more.

SECRETARY

OK, do you have a resume and cover letter? Any references?

CHAD

What? References? Oh! My friend said he would reference me. Do you want me to call him?

SECRETARY

Are you being serious right now?

CHAD

I've heard of a resume. That's like a list of jobs I've had, right? This is good stuff. That's why I'm here--I need to know what I need to apply.

SECRETARY

Is this a joke? Am I on one of those shows?

CHAD

What? No, I...

SECRETARY

OK, you need to go. If this is a joke, it's wasting my time. And if this isn't a joke, I just don't have the time to help you. You don't know what you're applying for you don't have your paperwork, you don't have your forms, you don't know how to dress--it's like a twelve year old has walked in off the street. You can't be this dumb. Have you heard of the internet? Go to there. They can help you with the basics.

INT. JORDEN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Jorden walks in the door, and places his keys on a small table nearby. Jessica is sitting on the couch with a glass of wine, watching TV.

JORDEN

Kids asleep?

JESSICA

Yup.

Jorden walks into their rooms to check on them. They are sleeping peacefully, but he looks pained. He walks back out through the living room and into the dining room.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You're home very late.

JORDEN

I told you. I need this promotion. We need this promotion. There are going to be some late nights for a while. But it's already starting to pay off. Chancellor Lentz is starting to trust me.

He opens the fridge and grabs some leftovers.

JESSICA

Well, Abby keeps asking about you. You need to do something for her.

JORDEN

Babe, I am doing this for her. Honestly, what's the bottom line here? We need money to provide the best life for Abby. And that's what I'm doing.

JESSICA

Can you please try to come home on time the next few days? You already missed her Choir show, and her birthday is coming up soon...

JORDEN

Jess, you think I don't know all the shit I have to get done? You don't think I'm not aware? We live in this shitbox of a house, we've got two kids and just my one income. I'm working my ass off to pay all the bills, and I'm doing it for you and the kids. And I get the chance to land a promotion that will put us on much more solid ground. Can you be happy for me for two seconds before you remind me what a failure I am for always working?

JESSICA

Of course I'm proud of you. But don't you dare try and put this on me. You want a second income? I'll go back to work. And then we'll have the added expense of childcare. Will that make things any better?

JORDEN

I just think I deserve a little more appreciation. I feel like all I ever hear about is what I'm not able to get done.

Jessica moves in close to Jordan.

JESSICA

You are a wonderful provider. You are the man of my dreams. But you put too much of this pressure on yourself.

(MORE)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

We don't *need* to buy a bigger house now if we don't want. We don't *need* the 50 inch TV. All I need to be happy is you and the kids.

JORDEN

I'll make sure to remember that next time I'm paying for your car.

JESSICA

You're such a fucking dick sometimes.

She gets up and begins to storm out.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm going to bed. Enjoy the rest of the evening. Asshole.

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - EVENING

Two glasses clink together, both filled with beer.

LIZZIE

I'm so proud of you! You did such a great job!

BRIAN

Thank you! I'm just glad he liked it.

LIZZIE

I told you he would, didn't I? You killed it!

They swig their beer.

BRIAN

I'll need you to call Laurie and tell her that.

LIZZIE

Why is that?

BRIAN

So she remembers that--nevermind.

LIZZIE

So where is Laurie?

BRIAN

She's at a movie with Isaiah.
She's out with the man of her
dreams.

LIZZIE

That makes two of us.

Lizzie smiles and her hand grazes Brian's leg. Brian gets a
little awkward.

BRIAN

Should we take this rare
opportunity to try and find you a
date?

LIZZIE

Why bother? All the good ones are
gone.

BRIAN

I'm sure there are still a few good
ones out there.

LIZZIE

Oh, there are. They're just all
married or gay.

She smiles at him.

BRIAN

It's too bad I'm gay, then.

She laughs, and some music turns on.

LIZZIE

C'mon, let's dance!

BRIAN

I don't know--

LIZZIE

C'mon, you can't be the only black
guy in history that can't dance.

BRIAN

Oh no, I can dance. I've just seen
you dance, and I didn't want to
make you feel bad.

She pulls him up by the arm and takes him out to the dance floor, where they begin to dance together to a fast, fun song.

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - MONTAGE

We see a couple of quick shots, moving us forward into the night. They're dancing to short fun songs, they keep drinking, they're doing shots, they're dancing again, a little freer, a little sloppier. A very young looking student at the university tries to hit on Lizzie. More dancing.

EXT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - LATER

Brian and Lizzie burst out of the front door into the cool night air. Brian loses his balance and leans on a trashcan.

BRIAN

I can already feel how much my back is going to hurt tomorrow.

LIZZIE

Oh my god, that was so much fun! Thank you so much for doing that with me.

BRIAN

I can't believe it's already 9 o'clock. Laurie is going to kill me.

LIZZIE

You want me to call her and explain? You were doing me a public service. I really needed that after my breakup. Just a fun night to get out of my own head.

Brian looks at his phone. It says "TWO MISSED CALLS." He looks up and smiles.

BRIAN

No, it'll be fine. I told her I was out at a happy hour, she knows where I am.

LIZZIE

Well, good. She's got nothing to complain about. She's got an amazing man coming home to her, whereas I have nothing.

BRIAN

I wouldn't say that. I'm sure if you go back inside, that kid would be more than willing to go home with you.

She laughs--a big, loud, drunk laugh that Brian responds to with a smile. She leans in, swaying a little bit.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Are you going to be OK getting home?

LIZZIE

Oh yeah--I'm just up the street. I'll walk it.

BRIAN

No don't do that. It's late. I'll drop you off.

LIZZIE

I know I'm supposed to say "No it's OK" but I'm not going to.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - OUTSIDE OF LIZZIE'S HOUSE

Brian pulls up in front of the house.

LIZZIE

Thank you so much for the ride. I really appreciate it.

BRIAN

It's no problem.

Lizzie begins to rummage in her very large purse.

LIZZIE

Now if I could only find my keys.

BRIAN

Have you thought about getting a bigger purse?

(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Then you wouldn't need keys, you
could just live in there.

LIZZIE
A-ha!

Lizzie removes her keys only to immediately drop them between
the driver and passenger seat.

BRIAN
Whoops, I got it.

Brian reaches his hand down between the seat, but can't feel
anything. He has to look down, and really stretch under his
seat to grab them.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Got them! Here you--

As soon as his face comes back up, Lizzie plants a passionate
kiss right on his lips. They hold the kiss for a few
seconds. Finally, Brian pulls away and just stares at her,
shocked. There is a long, awkward silence. When Brian does
finally speak, it's a little high pitched, and much more
enthusiastic sounding than normal.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Alrighty then, I'll see you
tomorrow.

LIZZIE
I'm sorry--I'm drunk.

BRIAN
No, no problem. I was just caught
off guard. So I'll see you
tomorrow.

Lizzie is starting to feel very embarrassed now.

LIZZIE
Oh Jesus, I'm so stupid. I'm so
sorry.

BRIAN
What are you talking about? It's
not even a problem! You were just
thanking me for grabbing your keys.
I'll see you tomorrow.

LIZZIE

I really like you Brian. I know I shouldn't. But I can't help myself.

BRIAN

Lizzie--stop. Really. It's fine. Everything will be fine.

LIZZIE

Are you sure? This won't be weird?

BRIAN

It's fine. Tomorrow. I'll see you tomorrow.

Lizzie leaves the car. Brian starts the ignition, and sits there for a while, staring straight ahead. He turns off the ignition.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

He's sitting in front of his computer reading an article about putting together a resume and slowly piecing one together in Word. He gets up from his chair and walks around, stretching out. He drops to the ground and does some push ups. He grabs the bar hanging in his doorway and does some pull ups. He grabs his phone and dials...it rings as he does some lunges, and finally goes to voicemail.

VOICEMAIL

Hi, this is Karen, I'm not available to take your call at the moment...

In the background of the recording, we hear Chad chime in, in happier times.

VOICEMAIL (CONT'D)

...probably because I'm hanging out with my sexy boyfriend...

The Karen on the recording laughs. Chad looks anguished---a happy memory he may never get back. Karen's voice jumps back on the recording.

VOICEMAIL (CONT'D)

...I may be with my sexy boyfriend. Or I may be with Chad. Either way, leave a message. *beep*

CHAD

Hey Karen...I know you're probably busy packing or whatever, but I just wanted to call and see how you were doing. I don't know if you've heard, but I quit lifeguarding. Trying to get my shit together. I just miss you a lot...

INT. KAREN'S CAR - LATER

Karen is in her car, listening to the voicemail Chad left.

CHAD

...I'm not used to spending so much time in front of a computer indoors, y'know? It makes me all antsy. Like I want to run, or swim or something. Anyway, you were always good at helping me through stuff like this. I hope you're well. I love you. Bye.

INT. LIZZIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Brian lays in bed, shirtless, eyes open, and staring straight up at the ceiling. He's wide awake. Lizzie, naked, but covered by a sheet, lays next to him, snoring gently.

He looks down at her and notices the snoring. He very slowly gets out of the bed and picks his clothes up off the floor. He pulls his phone out of his pants pocket. It says "FIVE MISSED CALLS." He puts on his pants, and leaves the room.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - LATER

Brian walks quietly into the house. Laurie is sitting on the couch working on her laptop. She glances up to see him.

LAURIE

Hey! Where were you?

BRIAN

Out for some drinks.

LAURIE

It's not Thursday.

BRIAN
No, with my co-workers.

LAURIE
Who all went?

BRIAN
Oh you know...a couple different people.

LAURIE
What was the occasion?

BRIAN
I had my presentation today.

Laurie looks up.

LAURIE
You had a presentation? On what?

Brian's irritated by the question.

BRIAN
The new motto to promote the brewing program.

LAURIE
Oh yeah, the beer thing, right? And it went well?

BRIAN
Yeah, they liked it.

LAURIE
Really!

BRIAN
Why is that a surprise?

LAURIE
I dunno. I just thought it was silly. You don't think it's a little silly?

BRIAN
I think the kids will like it.

LAURIE
Was there a reason you couldn't pick up the phone?

BRIAN

I'm sorry. It was really loud in there, I just didn't hear it ring.

LAURIE

Why would you need to hear it? When I'm with you, it's normally in your hands and being stared at.

BRIAN

Well...sorry. It's not like you've never come home late.

Laurie ignores this comment.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I'm headed to bed--you staying up?

LAURIE

I have work to do. I couldn't get it done earlier, since my husband was out drinking.

Brian turns to walk upstairs.

BRIAN

Goodnight.

INT. MANY DIFFERENT BLAND OFFICES - MONTAGE

Chad is wearing the same suit he wore earlier to the wedding.

LOBBY #1 - He shakes hands and meets with a woman in a dress suit. Chad's body language is loose, smile bright. The woman in the suit shakes her head no.

LOBBY #2 - He shakes hands with a man in a short sleeve dress shirt and tie. His body language is a little stiffer, as though he's trying to mimic.

LOBBY #3 - Chad shakes hands with a man in a polo shirt. He's totally stiff, and he's sweating. The man in the polo shirt shakes his head no.

Several management types shake their head no.

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - LATER

All three guys are sitting in their usual spot by the window, a pitcher of beer already in front of them.

CHAD

So, do you guys have resumes and cover letters and stuff I can look at?

JORDEN

What the fuck?

BRIAN

Sure, bud. So you're pretty serious about this job thing, huh?

CHAD

As a heart attack.

JORDEN

Have you applied to any?

CHAD

A ton, bro. But it's not really happening for me. Normally it's easy--I can go chat to a few people and they're always so willing to help. That hasn't really happened so far. These people have kind of been dicks.

JORDEN

Well, if they hire you these people will need more than a smile. They'll be paying you to actually provide something every day. Something that you might not actually want to do, but will have to do anyway.

CHAD

I dunno. It's hard. Maybe I'm just being stupid. Karen was too good for me anyway right? She was always going to be a big shot, and I was always going to be...whatever I am.

JORDEN

Hey--listen, you know I don't always agree with your whole "only do what makes you happy" thing. But I think in trying to win back Karen you're taking, real, adult steps towards making yourself a better man. Don't quit now.

BRIAN

I'll email you my cover letter and resume. But I think you've been right all along. Do what makes you happy. We are always forcing ourselves to do stuff we hate, and for what? Because of some sense of "responsibility," or because it's "right." Well, the only thing that's actually right is being with people that make you happy.

JORDEN

That's fucking stupid. Ignore him, Chad.

CHAD

No, I get it. Karen makes me happy. I'm going to fight to get her to stay.

BRIAN

Good. Everyone deserves to be happy, if they choose to go after it. Fuck all the rest. That's what I've started doing and I've never been happier.

JORDEN

Pff. "Fuck all the rest" is ridiculously fucking selfish. Chad, here's what you do. You love Karen, so you only make decisions for her. When you love someone, you've got to know what's best for them, and that's all you focus on. That's the bottom line.

INT. NEW HOUSE - EVENING

A realtor walks Jorden and Jessica through a gigantic, brand new house.

REALTOR
....and that's the tour. I'll leave you guys here to chat a little bit.

JORDEN
Do you see what I'm talking about?

JESSICA
Jorden--this is a nice house, but we don't need all this.

JORDEN
What do you mean we don't need this? You're constantly complaining about not having enough room for the kids. Not having enough room to cook. Did you see that kitchen?

JESSICA
I saw the kitchen, and the whole house is beautiful. But we can't afford this.

JORDEN
Yes we can! If I get this promotion, we can do it.

JESSICA
But we don't *need* to do it. You've been killing yourself already.

JORDEN
I've been killing myself to save up for a house like this.

JESSICA
Why? What's wrong with the house we have?

Jorden sighs and sits down on a nearby chair.

JORDEN
When I was a kid I never had my own house. I never had a yard.
(MORE)

JORDEN (CONT'D)

I moved from complex to complex with my folks, my mom and dad always trying to follow work. I never had many friends--kids don't want to come over and play in a concrete alley. My parents were never around, because they were working all the time. They did that for me. They sacrificed themselves--they never owned their own home, or took vacations. They did that so I could own a home, and have a gorgeous wife, and my beautiful kids. What kind of man would I be if I didn't work just as hard for you?

Jessica sighs deeply.

JESSICA

I obviously love the house. But I don't love never seeing you. The kids need a dad around more than they need a house. But, if you can promise me that once you earn this promotion, and we get this house, you'll be home more often, then OK.

JORDEN

Yes! Of course! OK!

INT. BATTERYTECH OFFICE

Chad is still dressed in the same black suit and white shirt he wore to the wedding. No tie. He's sitting in a chair, facing a desk. There's no one else in the room. He's sweating a bit.

A middle-aged latino man walks in wearing khakis and a polo shirt.

MAN

Hi...Chad, is it?

CHAD

Yes sir.

MAN

Come this way.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The man is reaching out to Chad for a handshake, which Chad takes.

MAN

My name is Fred Gonzalez, nice to meet you.

CHAD

Nice to meet you, sir.

FRED

You coming from somewhere or headed to somewhere, Chad.

Chad looks confused.

CHAD

Uh...headed to...my future at BatteryTech?

Fred gestures to Chad's suit.

FRED

What's with the get-up? You've got some red carpet to walk?

Chad laughs uncomfortably.

CHAD

Oh, no sir. This is just the only suit I own. I wanted to make a good first impression.

FRED

Well, it mostly worked. You've made an impression.

Chad smiles, and almost looks a little relieved. Fred looks at Chad's resume.

FRED (CONT'D)

So it says here you don't have any job experience in battery sales--or sales of any kind, for that matter.

CHAD

Yessir, that's right.

FRED
Are you sick or something?

CHAD
What? No. Why?

FRED
Because you look a little pale and clammy.

CHAD
Oh...just nerves, I guess.

FRED
Something about me makes you nervous?

CHAD
No, I've just applied a lot of places and haven't had much luck. Starts to make me feel like I don't know up from down.

They are quiet for a moment.

FRED
Really? Do they know something about you I don't?

Fred laughs. Chad chokes out an awkward, forced laugh as well.

FRED (CONT'D)
I'm going to be honest with you, kid. There's not much to this. People will call or email us and ask for batteries. They pay us. We put a battery in a box and send it to them.

CHAD
What kind of batteries? Like, double A and triple A?

FRED
Well, yes. But also laptop batteries, car batteries, phone batteries--batteries for flashlights and medical equipment and radios...all sorts of things.

CHAD

And would I be talking to these people that ask for batteries?

Fred looks at him closely.

FRED

No. You'd be a warehouse attendant. When the order is placed, you'd see the items ordered, go to the shelf where those items are located, and put them in a box.

CHAD

And then I send the box?

FRED

No, someone else manages shipping. You just grab the batteries and put them in the box.

CHAD

That's it?

FRED

That's it.

CHAD

I can do that.

FRED

Almost everybody can. But, do I think you will work hard? Do I think you pay attention to detail? Do you seem like someone I'd like to have to see every day?

CHAD

Sir, I promise you...

Fred looks at him one more time.

FRED

I can't explain it, but I like you. You remind me of my nephew. But he's an idiot, and I had to fire him, so I hope you work out better. Start tomorrow.

Chad is ecstatic. He pumps his arm in jubilation, but Fred is reaching for a handshake. They awkwardly switch hand positions back and forth until they get a handshake in.

CHAD

Dude, I promise you will not regret this.

FRED

Let's get you a polo so you don't show up tomorrow looking like a butler.

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

Brian is walking the aisles, grabbing ingredients and whistling to himself. He glides through with his cart to some music in his head--almost like the cart is a dance partner.

INT. LIZZIE'S KITCHEN - LATER

Brian is still whistling, but now he's chopping vegetables. His phone RINGS. He picks it up.

BRIAN

Hey, babe.

We HEAR unintelligible babbling.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

No, it's going to be another late night for me, I think.

More unintelligible babbling.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Well, what do you want me to do about that? We've got a huge tour coming up and we need to be ready. Jessica said she'd watch him, it's not a problem.

More unintelligible babbling.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Listen, I have to go. I'm at work, I have to go! We can talk when we get home. OK. Bye.

He hangs up his phone.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(mutters to himself)
Bitch.

INT. LIZZIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Brian plates a piece of salmon, some scalloped potatoes and spinach on a plate. He pours a glass of white wine and walks out to the dining room.

INT. LIZZIE'S DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brian places the plate and the glass of wine on the tiny little dining room table.

The front door opens, and Lizzie walks into her home. Brian turns and smiles.

BRIAN
Ah, finally! I almost had to give
away your table. But I held it for
you--I knew you'd make it,
mademoiselle.

Lizzie makes a little half-scream, half-squeal of surprise.

LIZZIE
This smells amazing!

Brian walks over with the glass of wine, and hands it to her. He takes her purse and coat.

BRIAN
Come, sit.

He tosses her stuff on a nearby chair.

LIZZIE
I don't want to sit.

She moves in close and kisses Brian deeply.

BRIAN
You haven't even tasted the food
yet.

LIZZIE

It's OK--it looks like it reheats well.

They continue making out and collapse onto the nearby couch.

INT. BATTERYTECH WAREHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Chad is wearing khaki shorts, and his gray polo. He sneaks into a corner and makes a call. He gets a machine.

VOICEMAIL

...I may be with my sexy boyfriend.
Or I may be with Chad. Either way,
leave a message. *beep*

CHAD

Hey, Karen. I know you must be busy packing and stuff. And I know I've probably been calling too much. But it's been a few weeks, and I know there's only two more before you leave, but I was really hoping to talk to you before you go. Please. I miss you...I don't even have the words. I feel hollow. I've been making some changes in my life, and....well...I don't know. I just need to talk to you. Please call me. I love you.

Chad hangs up his cell. Fred comes around the corner.

FRED

You OK?

CHAD

Yeah.

FRED

Break's over.

Chad's phone rings. A photo of Karen drinking from a huge two foot margarita, like the ones you find in Vegas, appears on the phone as her caller ID.

CHAD

Can I get five more minutes?
Please.

FRED
You get five. Hurry up.

CHAD
(on the phone)
Hello?

KAREN
(over the phone)
Hey.

CHAD
Hey, babe. I'm so happy to hear
your voice.

KAREN
Where are you? I hear an echo.

CHAD
I'm at work. I got a new job, at a
warehouse.

KAREN
You got a new job?

CHAD
Yeah...like I said, I'm making some
changes.

KAREN
Well, that's good. Good for you.

CHAD
How have you been? What have you
been doing?

KAREN
The same, I guess. Working.
Packing. Looking for places to
live in Pittsburgh.

CHAD
Oh. How's that?

KAREN
Honestly? It sucks. It's been
really hard to dive into this
without you.

Chad's eyes soften, and he smiles a little.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I'm just so used to having you as my sounding board, you know?

CHAD

I totally know. I haven't bought groceries since you left. I've already gained five pounds living off of Taco Bell.

Karen laughs. Chad uses the laughter to make his move.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Come over for dinner.

KAREN

No.

CHAD

C'mon, please? Just a dinner. Nothing weird. A farewell dinner.

KAREN

I don't think it's a good idea.

CHAD

Why not? You said yourself you missed me.

KAREN

That's precisely why it's not a good idea. I haven't stopped loving you, Chad. You're just not good for me. You're the Taco Bell of boyfriends. You're delicious and comforting, but my metabolism can only handle that in my twenties. I need to find a boyfriend that's more kale salad.

CHAD

Does that mean you're seeing someone already?

Karen hesitates.

KAREN

No.

CHAD

Then what's the big deal? One dinner. I'll make you pasta. You love pasta. I just want to have a little bit of closure. I thought we were fine--and then I propose and out of the blue ten years of my life goes up in smoke. Just one dinner.

Karen is quiet for a long time.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Hello?

KAREN

OK. Just one.

Chad exhales in relief.

CHAD

Yeah? Sweet! I promise you won't regret it. How's tonight? Tomorrow?

KAREN

I can't. I'm flying to Pittsburgh to look for apartments. Next week is better. Friday?

CHAD

Next Friday it is. I can't wait. I love you.

KAREN

I--I'll see you there. Bye.

Chad hangs up the phone. And screams out of excitement. It reverberates loudly throughout the warehouse.

COWORKER

Hey, shut the fuck up.

CHAD

Sorry. Sorry everybody.

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - A FEW DAYS LATER

Jorden, Brian and Chad are all sitting at their table in the corner, beers in hand.

JORDEN

So it looks like we're going to try
and put a bid on that house.

CHAD

Sweet! I've got news too--Karen
agreed to come over for dinner
Friday. I bought a ring.

Chad takes out the ring and shows it off.

CHAD (CONT'D)

It's Friday. This is it. This is
my chance.

BRIAN

I don't know, Chad. I think it's a
bad move.

CHAD

What are you talking about, man?
She's the love of my life.

BRIAN

I'm just saying--you put yourself
out there, and she rejected you.
Is that what you want? A lifetime
with someone that tears you down?

JORDEN

Brian, what the holy fuck are you
saying. You're an idiot.

BRIAN

What? Sometimes what you thought
was happiness was wrong. Happiness
moved away, right out from under
you, when you weren't paying
attention. Sometimes the best
thing to do is move on and find
someone that appreciates you for
you.

JORDEN

Says the guy with the porn
collection and an office wife. I'm
proud of Chad. He's been working
his ass off. He got a real job, and
is trying to do the right thing for
once.

CHAD

I'm trying. I'm glad you're on board, bro. Maybe you'd be willing to come over and help me move a few things to prep?

JORDEN

What do you need to move?

CHAD

Furniture. I sold all my old shit and bought brand new furniture and a ring. My house looks like the cover of one of those catalogues.

BRIAN

Wow.

JORDEN

See? That's what I'm talking about. Maybe I'll finally be able to take the kids over without needing to get them tetanus shots afterwards.

CHAD

So you can help?

JORDEN

Yes. The only thing stopping me would be work.

CHAD

So that's a no. What about you, Brian?

BRIAN

Although I'm morally opposed to you guys getting back together, I will come over and help.

JORDEN

How noble of you.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Chad and Brian finally move the last couch into place. The living room looks mostly empty now--just a really nice couch and a coffee table. Brian collapses onto the couch while Chad walks off to the kitchen.

BRIAN

Jesus. Why does all your furniture feel like it's made of brick and mortar?

Chad grabs two beers and tosses one to Brian.

CHAD

It's probably the steel frames.

BRIAN

Seriously though, this is nice stuff. Your living room looks like a Crate and Barrel. Well, half of one, anyway.

CHAD

Yeah bro, she's always wanted this kind of stuff. She's going to love it.

BRIAN

You don't think she'll think this is a little...empty?

CHAD

That's the whole point, man! She'll see that I've changed. I got rid of all the old furniture I've collected from alleys and friends. I was never thinking of her. I did what I wanted. Now I've got stuff I know she'll like, and the rest is empty--it's all room for her to decide how she wants to live here. I've got a job, I'm buying real furniture--I'm a man she'll want to stay here for.

BRIAN

Well, you know how I feel. I'm just worried you're beating a dead horse. But for your sake, I hope it works out. You certainly seem to have more drive than I've ever seen. You've even been wearing a shirt every day!

CHAD

Thanks, bro. Any last minute advice before I start?

BRIAN
Wicker. Rooms like this always
have it. You need more wicker.

CHAD
Really?

BRIAN
I gotta sneak out.

CHAD
Already?

BRIAN
Yeah. Working on putting a little
surprise for Laurie together--so if
she calls you don't tell her I
left.

CHAD
Oh, nice bro. No problem.

INT. BATTING CAGE - CONTINUOUS

Lizzie is in the cage, swinging at some high arc softballs
and hitting every third one or so. Every time she swings and
misses, she starts to laugh uproariously. Another pitch--
swing and a miss.

BRIAN
I thought you said you'd done this
before?

LIZZIE
Shut up! I'm used to hitting fast
pitch.

Another pitch, a swing, and a little tiny dribbler.

BRIAN
I stand corrected.

LIZZIE
Shut up!

INT. ARCADE - A LITTLE LATER

Lizzie and Brian stand firing little plastic guns at an
arcade game screen.

BRIAN
At your three o'clock!

LIZZIE
What?

BRIAN
Your right, on your right!

They put their guns down...they've lost.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
There were guys on your right!
That's your area!

LIZZIE
At my three o'clock, huh? Marine?

BRIAN
I'm a Captain in the Video Game
Reserves.

Lizzie laughs.

LIZZIE
Dork.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Brian and Lizzie are having sex in the backseat of his car, in the mini-golf/batting cage/arcade parking lot. Lizzie rolls awkwardly off of Brian in the limited space in the car.

BRIAN
Oh my god. That was amazing. I
haven't done that since high
school. We should do this more
often.

LIZZIE
Well, that's what happens when you
can't take a girl back to your
place, I guess.

There's an awkward silence as Brian doesn't know how to respond.

BRIAN
Listen...

LIZZIE

No, I know, I know. I'm sorry. I guess I think the dinners at home are a lot sexier than having sex in the backseat of a car.

BRIAN

I get it. I'm sorry. It's just difficult right now--I need to find the best way to break it off with Laurie and preserve a relationship with my son. I love him, and I don't want him to be effected by this. You deserve better. Let's set up a day next weekend, and I'll make you a full four course meal!

LIZZIE

Will you spend the night?

Brian's eyes get a little dodgy.

BRIAN

I'll definitely see if I can make that happen, OK?

Lizzie leans in seductively.

LIZZIE

I promise I'll make it worth your while.

INT. CHAD'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Chad opens a package of spaghetti and dumps it in boiling water. There's a knock at the door.

CHAD

(shouted)
Come in!

Karen walks into the house holding a bottle of wine. Chad smiles and comes over when he sees her.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Hey! You look amazing!

He moves in to give her a kiss, and she backs away. He redirects and gives her a kiss on the cheek. His enthusiasm is dampened.

CHAD (CONT'D)
It's good to see you.

KAREN
Are you moving? Or did you have
someone move in?

CHAD
What?

KAREN
This place is so empty. And who's
furniture is that?

CHAD
That's mine.

Chad takes the bottle of wine from her hands and walks back
to the kitchen.

KAREN
So what's for dinner?

CHAD
Pasta, I told you. Spaghetti.

KAREN
Where did you order it from?
Vitelli's? Olive Garden?

CHAD
It's homemade.

Chad hands Karen a glass of wine.

KAREN
Homemade? You've never cooked
anything in your life. Literally.
I've been with you for ten years
and I've only ever seen you eat
protein bars and take out.

CHAD
I told you--I'm serious about this.

Chad hands her a wicker basket. It's filled with french
bread.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Bread?

KAREN

Is this a wicker basket filled with bread?

CHAD

Yes. Classy, right?

Chad sets the bread basket down.

KAREN

Well, look at you, Chaddy Homemaker. You're going to get yourself all self-improved for the next girl I guess.

CHAD

I guess. Excuse me a second, I need to get the sauce ready.

Chad turns back to the stove.

KAREN

I have to say, I am a little bit impressed right now. I never knew you had it in you.

CHAD

I wish I had started cooking at home years ago. It's not so difficult.

Chad opens up a bottle of store-bought spaghetti sauce and dumps it in the empty pot on the stove.

CHAD (CONT'D)

It's just so much better for you fresh.

INT. CHAD'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The lights are dimmed. Chad and Karen are sitting on the couch, drinking wine and chatting. Empty plates sit on the coffee table in front of them. There are candles lit everywhere.

KAREN

I can't believe you went and bought all these candles.

CHAD
Can I tell you something? I
didn't. I stole them from Laurie.

Karen laughs.

KAREN
What? Why?

CHAD
I tried! I did try to buy candles.
But every time I got anywhere near
the candle section of a store I'd
start to gag. They're so gross.
Dryer sheets, cinnamon and rosemary
aren't supposed to go together.

Karen laughs again.

CHAD (CONT'D)
So what did you think of dinner?

KAREN
It was actually pretty good. You're
more than just a pretty face.

CHAD
I've been saying that for years!

Chad notices a speck of spaghetti sauce on her cheek.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Oh, hey, you've got something...

He gestures to his own cheek. She gesture to her own face
and can't find it. Chad licks his finger and rubs it off her
face.

KAREN
Gross!

CHAD
Sorry! Just trying to help.

They're quiet for a beat.

KAREN
You seem to be doing really great,
Chad. I'm happy for you.

CHAD

I appreciate that. I'm not doing that well--just trying to keep one foot in front of the other. How have you been? Are you excited to move?

KAREN

I don't know. It's hard. I've been here for so long. All of my friends are here.

CHAD

Well...this is your home. Of course leaving is going to be hard. You have no idea what life there is going to be, and you're giving up a lot of great things here.

There's an uncomfortable silence.

CHAD (CONT'D)

I meant like your job and friends and stuff.

KAREN

I should get going.

Karen gets up and heads to the door. Chad gets up to follow.

CHAD

No, I'm sorry. Please stay.

KAREN

No, it's been great. Really, it has. The last few weeks have been so tumultuous. There's been so much upheaval. It's been really nice to spend an evening with you that felt so...normal.

CHAD

I wasn't going for normal. I was going for new and improved.

KAREN

That's not what I meant. Clearly there have been changes. But the time with you feels normal.

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

New furniture, new job--all of that stuff is external. You are still you. And I do still love you.

Chad hesitates for a moment. He moves in for a kiss. She pulls away for an instant and looks at him. She then immediately dives back in for a kiss. They start to make out. He picks her up and they start to move toward the bedroom.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE TRAILER - EVENING

Jorden sits in a darkened trailer, at his desk, typing on his keyboard, when his phone RINGS. He glances at the phone, and then at the time.

JORDEN

Fuck.

He starts to shove papers into his bag. He struggles to find his keys as the phone continues to ring. Finally he picks up the phone.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Hey baby, I'm almost done!

JESSICA

You said you'd be here by now.

JORDEN

I know, I'm sorry. I'm just wrapping up.

JESSICA

Well, hurry. We're supposed to meet the realtor in half an hour. And then we need to talk about what we're doing for Abby's birthday.

JORDEN

Yes. I'm out the door. I promise.

As he says this he finishes a keystroke, turns off his monitor and heads for the door. Before he can get there, Mr. Lentz walks in.

MR. LENTZ

Jorden! How are you!

JORDEN

Just on my way out the door, Mr. Lentz.

MR. LENTZ

Oh. Well, let me hold you up for a second, if you don't mind.

JORDEN

Actually I do have to get going--

Jorden moves towards the door again.

MR. LENTZ

I completely understand. It will only take a minute.

Jorden stops.

MR. LENTZ (CONT'D)

I wanted to see how we were doing on the Performing Arts Center. I thought it was going to be ready for the start of the school year.

JORDEN

When I started we were two months behind schedule. Now we're one month behind schedule.

MR. LENTZ

Good. I trust that you will continue to gain ground and get this building ready for the school year.

JORDEN

Truthfully, sir, I'm not sure. We've still got a lot of ground to cover in not a lot of time, and there are only so many hours in the day. Maybe if we can start paying guys for double shifts...

MR. LENTZ

Do you know why I'm giving you this shot? Because you showed me that you are a doer. You didn't make excuses--you made solutions. Make a solution. I'll show you. What's one of your issues?

JORDEN

We need some fixtures installed, and we're waiting on our electrician. His kid got sick and he had to take some time off.

MR. LENTZ

Let me stop you right there. I'm not interested in whys. I'm interested in whats. We pay a man to do a job. He's not here. Why are we waiting to pay him? Get a new man.

JORDEN

But he's the best there is. His kid is sick. He's going to need this job.

MR. LENTZ

Listen, I understand. I get it. You're looking out for him. But you're on the other side of the wall now. If you want to manage people, you have to remember one simple rule--put the good of many over the good of a few. It's true that firing this guy will hurt. But it's also for the greater good.

JORDEN

Greater good?

MR. LENTZ

The bottom line. Think bigger, Jordan. If we don't get this building done on time, we have to cancel our donor dinner. If we don't have donors we cannot attract the best students and professors. If we can't attract the best people, we won't be able to grow. Without growth, there's no construction, no building, no nothing. Without construction, everyone here is out of a job. Cut one now---save more down the road. It's a miserable job, but that's management.

(MORE)

MR. LENTZ (CONT'D)

You have to know what's best for
people, even if they don't know it.
You understand?

Jorden nods.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Brian walks in and sees Laurie on the couch, working on her
laptop.

LAURIE

How was it?

BRIAN

How was what?

LAURIE

The move? You were helping Chad
move furniture around, right?

BRIAN

Oh, right. He bought some heavy
shit.

LAURIE

Is that what took so long? It's
been eight hours.

BRIAN

Oh, no. I figured you were busy,
so I went to the U and had a beer
and watched the game.

LAURIE

Ah. Did you eat? I was thinking
we could--

BRIAN

Yeah, I ate. I'm actually pretty
gross from the move. I'm probably
just going to shower and go to bed.

INT. CHAD'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Chad and Karen lay in bed together, spooning. Chad's face is
buried in Karen's hair.

CHAD

I can't believe how much I missed
being suffocated by your hair.

Karen smiles and rolls over to face him.

KAREN

Me neither.

She kisses him, a peck on the lips.

CHAD

I love you.

KAREN

I love you too.

CHAD

So I was thinking tomorrow we could
go get that dresser you liked. And
then maybe we could start bringing
your stuff back in. Sort of like a
proper housewarming.

Karen's face goes flat.

KAREN

What?

CHAD

I mean, we can totally do whatever
you want...I just thought it would
be cool to start getting you
settled here.

KAREN

Chad, I'm moving to Pittsburgh,
remember? This doesn't change
anything.

CHAD

How does this not change anything?
You said you still loved me.

KAREN

I do. But I also have a great
opportunity that I'm not going to
throw away.

Chad sits up.

CHAD

But...

KAREN

Come with me.

CHAD

What?

KAREN

Come with me. To Pittsburgh.

CHAD

I can't go to Pittsburgh. I just got a job here! And all this furniture. I--we--have a house here. Our life is here. All of this is for us. You were right--I was being too selfish. But look at what I've done here, for us. And you're still going to just throw it all away so you can have the job you want. Maybe you're the selfish one!

Karen shoots up, angry.

KAREN

Selfish? Whatever happened to (adopts Chad impression) "find your bliss, bro."

CHAD

How can this be what makes you happiest? You said you loved me, you missed me--how is throwing me away what makes you happy?

KAREN

It's not! But believe it or not, I also know that I have things I want to do that have absolutely nothing to do with you. I want us to be partners as we live our lives together, side by side.

Chad is quiet. Karen, now mostly dressed, walks up to Chad closely and speaks quietly.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I never minded that you were a lifeguard. If that's what makes you happy, then you should do it. And they do have water in Pittsburgh, y'know.

CHAD

But you said you wanted me to change!

KAREN

I wanted any change! You wanted everything exactly the same, like you wanted to repeat our twenties forever.

CHAD

I thought I did everything right. The job, the house...

He reaches out to his nightstand and grabs the ring.

CHAD (CONT'D)

...I even got the ring.

Karen's face looks pained. She feels for him.

KAREN

I didn't ask for any of those things. You're still only giving me what you want--not what I want.

CHAD

What I want is you.

KAREN

Then you can have me. In Pittsburgh.

Chad goes silent again.

KAREN (CONT'D)

And as long as you stay here, in this house, in this town, I know what you want.

She kisses him on the cheek.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Bye, Chad.

MONTAGE - OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS

- We see Karen load the last box into her car and drive off.

- We see Chad glumly going about his job in the warehouse.

- We see Jordan talking to several different contractors and firing them.

- We see Brian and Lizzie making out in a car, but Lizzie looks less into it.

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - DAY

We see Chad sitting alone at the bar drinking a beer. He takes out his cell phone and sends a text.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Jordan is talking to a random contractor.

JORDEN

Listen, whatever you're about to say, I don't care.

Jordan's phone RINGS. It's Jessica. He hits "Ignore."

JORDEN (CONT'D)

This building is getting done on time, and if that means I need to fire every single one of you and replace you with people who will get it done, then that's what I'll do.

The contractor walks out of the room as Jordan's phone beeps. He whips out his phone and sees a text from Chad that says "Happy Hour?"

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - CONTINUOUS

Chad is still sitting alone at the bar when his phone beeps twice in quick succession. Jordan sends "Work." and Brian sends "Sry bsy"

Chad sighs and finishes his beer. He gestures to Katie for another one.

INT. JORDEN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jessica is walking through the living room picking up various toys and clothes that are lying around. Jordan is trying follow and talk to her.

JORDEN

I'm sorry! How many times can I say it?

JESSICA

I don't know! Keep going, and I'll tell you when to stop!

JORDEN

Jess--

JESSICA

You're the one who wanted to buy this stupid house we don't need. You're the one who talked me into it. And then you don't even show!

JORDEN

But--

JESSICA

This is the *third* time you've stranded me at that office without showing up on time. The kids were tired and hungry and doing there best to behave in that stupid office and for what?

JORDEN

I told you, Mr. Lentz--

JESSICA

I don't care about Mr. Lentz! Fuck-

-

Jessica realizes she's shouting and brings herself down to a harsh whisper.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

--fuck Mr. Lentz.

Jessica stops moving and plops down on the couch with a huge handful of clothes she's picked up.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
I can't do this anymore.

Jorden reaches for the handful of clothes.

JORDEN
Here, I can do it.

JESSICA
No. Not the laundry.

She gestures to herself and Jorden.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
This. I can't do this anymore.

JORDEN
What is (imitates gesture) *this*?

Jess reaches for Jorden's hand and he sits next to her.

JESSICA
I love you, Jorden. You know I do.
You and our kids are my world. But
more often than not, I feel totally
alone. I am not supposed to be a
single parent.

JORDEN
Not this again.

JESSICA
Don't do that.

JORDEN
I feel like this is all I ever hear
from you. "Woe is me!" "My life
is so hard!" You think I have it
any easier? Life is hard. Raising
a family is hard. We're supposed
to be in this together.

JESSICA
So then why am I raising these kids
by myself?

JORDEN
Because *I'm* the only one paying for
anything.

JESSICA

Oh please. You're such a martyr. You're the one who told me you wanted me to stay home with the kids. You're the one that just has to have the huge house we don't need. Why do you do this to yourself? Why does everything need to sit on your shoulders?

JORDEN

Because it's the only thing I know how to do!

Jessica is taken aback.

JESSICA

What does that mean?

JORDEN

Working--making money. It's the only thing I can do for you. You know how to do everything. You're gorgeous and so kind and loving. You're a wonderful mother and our kids--

Jorden's voice breaks slightly.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

--our kids are perfect. You deserve everything I can give you. The nicest house, the best schools, the best clothes. You deserve the best, and my job is to provide it for you.

Jessica is quiet for a while. She stares at him intently.

JESSICA

Cut the bullshit, Jorden. We don't need the nicest house or the best clothes. Our kids need a dad, not a paycheck.

Jorden stands up quickly, angry.

JORDEN

I don't know how to be a dad. I don't know how to be a husband.

(MORE)

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Every time I come home, I feel like the world is spinning out of control. I don't know what I'm doing and I hate how that feels. At work--I have answers, and I'm in control. Here? I'm just flailing.

Jessica softens.

JESSICA

Baby. What do you think I'm doing? I'm flailing too. That's what adults do. You just keep flailing wildly until you find something that works.

ABBY

Mommy?

Abby wanders out into the living room in her pajamas and clutching a stuffed tiger.

JESSICA

Oh baby, what are you doing out here?

ABBY

I had a bad dream.

JESSICA

Oh Abby-bear. Poor baby. Why don't you go back to your room. I'll come in with some water and tuck you in, OK?

ABBY

Can Daddy come?

JESSICA

You want Daddy to tuck you in?

Abby nods vigorously.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

OK. Daddy will be in there in a moment.

Abby walks back down the hall. Jessica turns and looks at Jordan, then snatches the phone out of his hands.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Go flail.

She kisses him on the cheek.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abby is sitting up in bed with a book in her hands. Jordan walks in with a glass of water. He sets the water on her nightstand.

JORDEN

Whatcha got there?

ABBY

Tree book!

JORDEN

Tree book?

Jorden takes it and looks at the cover. It's "The Giving Tree."

JORDEN (CONT'D)

You want me to read this?

Abby nods. Jordan sits on the edge of the bed.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

The Giving Tree, by Shel...

ABBY

No, daddy. Here.

She curls up in the corner of her little bed, where it meets the corner of the room. She gestures right next to her at the head of the bed.

JORDEN

Oh baby, I don't think that's a good idea. Daddy doesn't want to break your nice bed.

ABBY

Here, daddy.

She gestures again to the same place. Jordan scoots his massive frame to the spot. She nestles in next to him, and rests her head on his shoulder. He looks down at her and smiles.

JORDEN
The Giving Tree, by Shel
Siverstein.

INT. LIZZIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lizzie and Brian sit on the couch drinking wine and eating the dinner he made. His feet and legs are draped across her legs. They look comfortable.

LIZZIE
Do you love me?

Brian is caught off guard.

BRIAN
You know I do. You're my best friend. You're an incredible lover. And you make me feel like I walk on water. And I hope I do the same for you.

LIZZIE
You do. Which is why this is so hard.

Brian sits up.

BRIAN
What?

LIZZIE
I'm moving back to Texas. My mom isn't doing very well, and she needs someone to take care of her. My sisters are all married with kids and lives they can't just up and leave. I'm still young...and single, technically.

BRIAN
That's not fair--you know how complicated things are for me. I have a son--

LIZZIE
That's not how I meant it. I just mean that it's easier for me to go than any of my sisters.

BRIAN

Can't you pay for care? An in house nurse? A home or something?

LIZZIE

Are you joking? I'm not going to put my mother in a home! Family is family--there's nothing more important.

BRIAN

When is this supposed to happen?

LIZZIE

Two weeks. I put in my notice this morning.

BRIAN

Jesus, Liz. This is how you tell me? It's already done? We don't get to discuss this? This affects me too, y'know.

LIZZIE

So does your marriage.

Brian goes quiet. He sips his wine, but his mind is elsewhere.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I don't like it any more than you do. But I have to go. It's my mother.

BRIAN

I'm coming with you.

LIZZIE

Are you serious?

BRIAN

You're right. My marriage is affecting our relationship, and that isn't right--for anyone. My wife deserves to be happy, just like I do. There's no reason for it. You are the best thing that's ever happened to me. You are my happiness. I want to be with you.

Lizzie is overjoyed She throws her arms out and wraps Brian in an embrace.

LIZZIE
I love you so much.

BRIAN
I love you too. I can't wait to start a brand new life with you.

INT. BRIAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Brian walks slowly into his living room, but turns the corner to see Laurie is sitting on the couch with Isaiah sleeping in his head in her lap. She spots him.

LAURIE
Hey. Where were you?

BRIAN
What? Work. I told you, remember?

LAURIE
It's eleven o'clock at night. I called your work. There was no answer.

BRIAN
I just went and grabbed a beer and watched the game afterwards. I figured you'd be watching your shows or working or whatever.

Isaiah starts to stir.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Hey buddy!

ISAIAH
Hi dad!

BRIAN
Why don't you brush your teeth and get your PJs on and I'll come up and tuck you in.

ISAIAH
OK.

Isaiah runs off.

BRIAN
Laurie, we need to talk.

LAURIE
Yes, we do. Let me go first
though, because I think I know what
you're going to say.

BRIAN
OK.

LAURIE
I haven't been happy in a long
time. Maybe since Isaiah was born.
I've tried a lot of different
things to pull myself out of this.
I've tried diving into work, I've
tried new hobbies, I've tried
eating....nothing changes. I'm
just...unhappy.

BRIAN
I've noticed. And I...

LAURIE
No, let me finish.

Laurie takes a big deep breath.

LAURIE (CONT'D)
I went and saw a therapist.

BRIAN
A therapist?

LAURIE
Don't sound so surprised.

BRIAN
I can't help it...I am. You're
usually much more of the "don't
touch me I'm fine" type.

LAURIE
Yeah. Well...I've seen him a few
times now. He suggested I talk to
you. I want you to know that I'm
sorry.

BRIAN
What? Sorry for what?

LAURIE

Sorry for how I've been treating you the last year or so. You are a good man, and you've taken such wonderful care of Isaiah and I. And I've been pushing you away. And maybe that's why you've been staying late and avoiding me.

Brian is quiet. He doesn't know what to say.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I think that's part of the sex thing too. I was just spending so much time trying to fix myself that I shut out everyone else besides Isaiah, especially you. But Dr. Martin says that you've been there for me, and if I let me guard down a little bit, you'll be there to help. I don't have to do it all alone.

Brian is just staring at her.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Hello? Feeling a little exposed here.

Laurie's eyes well up.

BRIAN

Yes, oh, sorry. I'm just a little floored. This is all coming out of left field for me. Yes, of course you don't have to do it all alone.

He moves in to embrace her. It's a long hug--like they haven't seen each other in a very long time.

LAURIE

I love you, Brian.

BRIAN

I lo--

He stops himself and looks at Laurie. He smiles reassuringly.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
You're going to be fine. We're
going to be fine.

INT. BATTERYTECH WAREHOUSE - DAY

Chad is boxing batteries on a large table in the warehouse. He looks terrible--eyes bleary and bloodshot. He's not paying attention to what he's going.

COWORKER
Hey man, that's not the right stuff
for that order.

CHAD
What?

COWORKER
You grabbed the wrong cable.

CHAD
Dude, who really gives a shit.

COWORKER
My guess is whoever ordered it
gives a shit.

CHAD
Whatever, man. Fuck you. This job
is a waste of time.

COWORKER
You gonna fix it?

Chad shrugs. His coworker comes over and starts to fix it himself. In doing so, he accidentally nudges Chad, and hungover and off balance, Chad falls to the floor. The coworker laughs out loud but reaches out to pick him up.

COWORKER (CONT'D)
Sorry buddy.

Chad jumps up and shoves his coworker hard.

CHAD
Fuck you, bro.

They start to get into a scuffle when other coworkers run in to break it up.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Fred walks into his office with Chad lagging behind. Once inside, he closes the door.

FRED
What's the matter, son?

CHAD
What? Nothing.

FRED
You look like hell. And Javier said you've been screwing up orders left and right.

CHAD
Whatever, man. Just not sleeping well, I guess.

FRED
And you missed three days last week.

CHAD
I've been sick.

FRED
Hungover?

Chad turns sharply and looks at Fred.

CHAD
None of your goddamn business, bro.

FRED
That's where you're wrong. It *is* my goddamn business "bro."

CHAD
Man, back off...

FRED
What's with you? You act like a bratty fifteen year old.

Chad is quiet for a long time.

CHAD
My girl left me.

FRED

I'm sorry to hear that. But what does that have to do with starting a fight *in my warehouse*.

Chad continues to sit silently and stare straight ahead.

FRED (CONT'D)

Son, you're a good kid and a hard worker. But you can't keep acting like this. You go through feeling the way you feel, and acting like the world needs to change around you to fit how you feel. That's not the way it works.

CHAD

How does it work then?

FRED

For me? I stopped trying to make myself happy a long time ago. I surround myself with people I care about and who care about me--my wife, kids, friends--and I make them happy. I try to take care of them, and I trust that they will take care of me.

Chad sits quietly.

FRED (CONT'D)

And it's for that reason I'm doing this. You're fired.

INT. JORDEN'S HOUSE - EVENING - A FEW DAYS LATER

Jessica is in the kitchen making dinner. Jordan is sitting on a nearby chair. Abby is in his lap. He's reading to her.

JORDEN

...five little monkeys jumping on the bed...

His phone rings. Caller ID identifies it as Mr. Lentz.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Abby, get down please. Daddy needs two seconds to talk on the phone.

Abby climbs down and Jordan picks it up.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Mr. Lentz, what can I do for you?

MR. LENTZ

I need you to come in and give me a status report on the Arts Center.

JORDEN

With all due respect sir, it's Sunday. I can be there first thing tomorrow morning--as early as you'd like.

MR. LENTZ

That doesn't work. I fly to the East Coast tomorrow morning. I'm meeting with some donors and I want to give them an update on their new building.

JORDEN

I understand that--can I give you an update here over the phone?

MR. LENTZ

No! I want you to walk me through it. I need to see it for myself.

JORDEN

Sir, I haven't had a day off in two months. I just want to spend some time with my family.

MR. LENTZ

You're wasting my time. You said you wanted this. You said you were ready to step to this side and make decisions that were for the greater good. I'll see you within the hour or I'll find someone else who will.

Jorden hangs up the phone. He looks at his wife, who's heard his side of the conversation. Abby is sitting in the chair with her book.

ABBY

OK, Daddy.

She holds the book up at him.

JORDEN

I'm sorry baby. Daddy has to go.

Abby looks stunned for a second. She starts to breathe heavier, and begins to sniffle. Her eyes well up with tears.

ABBY

No!

JORDEN

Baby, please, I promise we'll finish when I come back.

ABBY

No, you stay. Why can't momma go?

JORDEN

Because Momma doesn't work there, momma works here with you. I have to go to work to help Mr. Lentz.

Abby's tears are starting to get out of control. More of her words are scattered between sobs.

ABBY

I don't want momma!

Abby's tears and crying have already transformed into a full on tantrum. She's wailing. She can't stop. She's beet red, and tears are streaming down her face. Jordan looks helpless--he's heartbroken. Jessica comes over and picks her up.

JESSICA

Oh baby, it's OK.

INT. JORDEN'S TRUCK - A LITTLE BIT LATER

Jorden is beginning to back out of his driveway. He can see Abby, still crying, but calmer now, in the window. Jessica comes running up with Abby's stuffed tiger.

JESSICA

Wait!

Jorden stops his truck and rolls his window down.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Thank you. I appreciate you trying.

JORDEN

Yeah. Lot of good it did. I just broke my little girls heart.

JESSICA

She's OK. She asked me to give you this.

Jessica hands her the little stuffed tiger. Jordan looks at it.

JORDEN

She told you to give it to me? I haven't seen her without this in her hands....ever.

JESSICA

She says that this tiger always helps her, and she knows you need to go help a man at work. She wants you to give the tiger to Lentz so that you won't have to go help him anymore.

Jorden sits there for a moment. He takes the tiger in his hands and looks at it. He looks up and sees Abby's little tear streaked face standing in the window, looking out at him. His phone rings. It's Mr. Lentz. He picks it up.

JORDEN

Hello?

MR. LENTZ

Are you on your way?

JORDEN

Nah. I quit.

MR. LENTZ

What--

Jorden hangs up the phone and tosses it next to him. He shuts down the truck and climbs out.

INT. UNIVERSITY BAR AND GRILL - DAYS LATER

Chad sits at his usual spot at his usual table. He is alone, with a pitcher of beer in front of him. Jordan walks up.

JORDEN
You're here early.

CHAD
I was just about to say the same
thing, bro. Don't you have work?

JORDEN
I quit my job.

CHAD
What?

JORDEN
I quit.

CHAD
You just quit.

JORDEN
Yup.

There is silence for a beat.

CHAD
What about the house?

JORDEN
No house. For a while at least.
And Jess may get a part time job.
But we're pretty happy.

Jorden smiles, a huge, full smile we haven't seen before.

JORDEN (CONT'D)
What have you been up to?

Chad gestures to his beer, and takes a swig.

CHAD
This, mostly. Karen's long gone.
I got fired.

JORDEN
Ouch. So Karen's still pissed?

CHAD
Not really. She said she still
loved me. But she wouldn't stay.
(MORE)

CHAD (CONT'D)

She wanted to keep the job out there. She asked me to go with her. Can you believe that?

JORDEN

Why didn't you go with her?

CHAD

What? Why would I? We were happy here. I have everything I need to make me happy here. My friends, my place, my bar...I'm happy.

JORDEN

You sure?

There's a pause.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

I've been treating life like it was something I could overpower. Like happiness was a place I could get to--a goal to be achieved. But it's not--life is a process, and happiness is finding a way to enjoy the ride.

CHAD

What the fuck are you even talking about, bro?

JORDEN

You've been so caught up trying to do all this stuff for Karen, right? New furniture, new job, a ring...why?

CHAD

Because that's the stuff she wanted, man. She talked about it all the time.

JORDEN

No! What's the one thing she wanted more than anything.

CHAD

To take the job in Pittsburgh.

JORDEN

And what's the one thing you want more than anything?

CHAD

Her.

JORDEN

Fuck you, you're lying. You didn't want her. If you wanted her, you could have her right now. You didn't want her. You wanted here. You wanted her here. Those aren't the same thing.

Chad thinks about this, and hangs his head after a second.

CHAD

Shit.

Jorden's phone rings. It's Brian on the Caller ID. He picks it up.

JORDEN

Where are you? You're late.

INT. AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

Brian is standing in an airport terminal.

BRIAN

I'm not going to make it, unfortunately. In fact, I was calling to say goodbye.

JORDEN

(on the phone)

Goodbye? What the fuck are you talking about?

BRIAN

I'm doing it man. I'm finding my bliss. I'm running away to Texas with Lizzie.

JORDEN

What the fuck? Lizzie? The girl from work? Does she know that?

BRIAN

Yeah...we've been together for the past few months.

JORDEN

Together? You're fucking married man. What about Laurie?

BRIAN

She'll be fine.

JORDEN

What did she say when you told her? Or did she find out?

Brian is silent.

JORDEN (CONT'D)

Does she not know?!

BRIAN

I'm making calls now. I'll call her from Texas.

JORDEN

You fucking asshole. Stay there. Don't fucking move.

Jorden hangs up the phone.

CHAD

What's going on?

JORDEN

We gotta go. I'll explain on the way.

INT. JORDEN'S TRUCK - A LITTLE LATER

Jorden is speeding through traffic to get to the airport.

CHAD

He's been banging that chick?

JORDEN

Focus. He's going to destroy his family because he found a girl that laughs at his jokes. We've got to find a way to get in there and stop him.

INT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Brian is starting at the phone, sitting in a seat in the terminal. Lizzie is right next to him, reading a magazine. She notices Brian staring at his phone.

LIZZIE
What's the matter baby?

BRIAN
Nothing. I just have one more call to make.

Brian gets up and walks some distance away. He dials.

LAURIE
Hello?

BRIAN
Hey.

LAURIE
Hey! Are you already on your way?

BRIAN
What?

LAURIE
You said you had a trade show to attend. Right? Or is that not today?

BRIAN
Oh, right, right. Yeah. I'm at the airport now.

LAURIE
I wish you didn't have to go.
(adopts a sultry tone)
Last night was a lot of fun.

Brian smiles wistfully.

BRIAN
It was. We haven't had a night like that together in...I don't remember when.

LAURIE

Well we'll have to make sure there are more on the horizon. Hold on, Isaiah wants to say hi.

BRIAN

No, I should...

ISAIAH

Hey dad!

BRIAN

Hey buddy! How was school?

ISAIAH

It was good. We won at basketball today at recess.

BRIAN

Alright! Did you use that jump hook I taught you?

ISAIAH

No. I forgot. Where are you going?

Brian laughs. He's getting a little emotional.

BRIAN

Uh--

ISAIAH

Will you bring me back something from your trip?

BRIAN

Sure buddy.

ISAIAH

Will you be back soon? I miss you when you leave.

Brian has a tear roll down his face.

BRIAN

Hey buddy, put your mother back on the phone. I have to go.

ISAIAH

OK. I love you Dad!

BRIAN
Love you too buddy!

LAURIE
Hello?

BRIAN
You know, they just told us our
flight was cancelled.

LAURIE
Oh no!

BRIAN
Yeah, something about a storm in
Chicago, really causing problems,
causing delays. So I'm going to
head home and get this figured out
later.

LAURIE
Oh great! At least we get to have
you home.

BRIAN
Alright--I'll see you in a bit.

LAURIE
Great.

BRIAN
And Laurie? I love you.

LAURIE
I love you too.

He hangs up, walks back over to Lizzie and looks at her with
a mix of sadness and regret. She looks up and knows. She
starts to cry.

BRIAN
Have a safe flight. I love you.

Lizzie and Brian embrace.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - LATER

Brian is walking through the terminal to the exit, dragging
his wheeled luggage behind him.

JORDEN

Brian!

Brian turns to look at Jordan and is immediately levelled by Chad, who was brings him down with a pretty solid tackle.

CHAD

You can't do this, bro.

Brian stands up.

BRIAN

I'm not! I broke it off. I'm headed home.

JORDEN

Oh yeah? What happened?

BRIAN

I guess I just realized that I'd rather my son be the most important person in my world--not me. I don't need to make myself happy. If he's happy--I'm happy.

JORDEN

Maybe you're not such an idiot after all.

PA ANNOUNCER

Now boarding, flight 667 to Pittsburgh.

CHAD

Alright guys, that's my cue.

BRIAN

What? Where are you going?

JORDEN

Well, we had to buy tickets to get in here and stop you from ruining your life, you selfish prick. And Chad decided there was a trip he wanted to take after all.

CHAD

I want to show Karen that she is the most important part of my life--home is wherever she is.

(MORE)

CHAD (CONT'D)
Even if that is Pittsburgh, the
most depressing place on earth.

INT. JORDEN'S TRUCK - A LITTLE LATER

Jorden and Brian headed back home from the airport. He pulls
in to Brian's driveway. Brian gets out of the truck.

JORDEN
Good luck in there.

BRIAN
Thanks.

Brian closes the door. He looks back in the window.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Same time next week for happy hour?

JORDEN
Maybe. Let's play it by ear.

Brian smiles, and turns to walk inside. Jorden backs out to
head home.

FADE OUT.