

Solitary Man
by
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Producers: Steven Soderbergh
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8/25/08

OPEN IN:

A NEW YORK APARTMENT

Spacious. Modernist furniture. Some black lacquer.

A man's voice is heard. From his tone, we can tell he's used to people listening when he speaks.

BEN (V.O.)

The day I turned thirteen...

TRACK into...

THE BEDROOM...

BEN KALMAN sleeps.

BEN (V.O.)

...Actually, it was the night I turned thirteen, after the party and the envelopes and speeches and all that...

An alarm buzzes. Ben slowly sits up. It is a rare unguarded moment. He doesn't let anyone see him like this: untucked, groggy, wearing all of his 55-plus years on his face. It takes him a long moment to reach for his bathrobe and put it on.

BEN (V.O.)

...My father came into my bedroom, put a hand on my shoulder and said, "Ben, a lot of guys are gonna tell you a lot of shit. But what I'm gonna tell you applies across the board. Business, personal, whatever, what-have-you...

He reaches into a bottle of children's aspirin, swallows one without water, and moves to the...

BATHROOM

Ben checks himself in the mirror. Pulls his robe tight. Slicks his hair with his hands.

BEN (V.O.)

"Son," he said, "fuck 'em where you find 'em, and leave 'em where you fuck 'em..."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben clears his eyes, splashes water on his face.

BEN (V.O.)

He was either a hundred per cent
right or a hundred per cent wrong.
I'm still not sure which.

Ben takes one more look at himself in the mirror and leaves the bathroom as Johnny Cash's version of Solitary Man begins to play.

CUT TO:

CITY STREETS

CREDITS roll and the song continues as Ben moves through the Upper East Side streets of Manhattan.

This is Ben as the world sees him: almost sixty but fighting it hard, he walks with the authoritative air of a man who usually gets his way.

Note: Throughout, Ben always wears black Armani, black slacks, black jeans, black sweaters, black shoes. And if his hair isn't quite black, it's certainly not gray either. He and his Madison Ave. colorist makes sure of it once a month.

CUT TO:

RIVERSIDE PARK...

Amidst the Bicyclists and joggers competing for space on the paths that run along the water, is a basketball court crowded with KIDS, PARENTS, BALLPLAYERS.

SUSAN PORTER, twenty-seven, with big understanding eyes and a great laugh, stands with her eight-year-old son, SCOTTY. The two of them are looking up at...

SCOTTY'S BASKETBALL...

Which is caught between the rim and the backboard of a basketball hoop.

A TEENAGER jumps up, knocks it through the hoop and hands it back to Scotty.

Susan nudges her son.

SCOTTY

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns to Susan.

SCOTTY

If Grandpa was here, he'd have gotten it for me, right?

SUSAN

He'd have tried.

SCOTTY

Is he really coming this time?

She is about to answer when she sees Ben entering the park.

SUSAN

There he is. Dad, Dad!

Scotty sees him too. Fist pump.

SCOTTY

Yes! Grandpa, over here! Come here, Grandpa!

But Ben doesn't seem to notice them. He moves past, toward a bench on an opposite court.

As he walks by, he quietly speaks to Susan.

BEN

Don't call me that.

SUSAN

What?

He keeps walking. Susan and Scotty move with him, trying to keep up.

BEN

Don't call me Dad. And you, don't call me Grandpa. Not now.

SCOTTY

What should I call you?

BEN

You can call me Dad.

SCOTTY

No. That's what I call my dad.

BEN

Okay...Call me Captain Ben.

Susan turns her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SUSAN

Where's this one?

Ben gestures behind him.

BEN

Back there. You know what, don't look. You'll screw me up.

Now Susan stops and does an obvious scan of the park.

SUSAN'S POV: A tawdry looking DYE JOB leans against the park's fence. She might be staring at Ben.

SUSAN

The Miami blonde?

BEN

I saw her checking me out as I walked through the fence. Here, take my arm. Maybe she'll think we're married.

Susan recoils.

SUSAN

Yuk. Daaaad.

BEN

I told you not to call me that.

SUSAN

How's it supposed to help you if she thinks you're my husband?

BEN

She's about 29, right?

SUSAN

Yeah.

BEN

At that age she's realistic, but still plenty vain.

SUSAN

Which means...?

BEN

She might have an affair with a married man, but there's no way she's gonna fuck a grandfather. Oh, excuse me Scotty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He reaches down, picks up the little boy and gives him a big hug.

SCOTTY

Can you put me on your shoulders
Captain Ben?

BEN

Sure.

Ben tries to mask the effort it takes him to smoothly lift the boy onto his shoulders.

When Scotty finally ends up safely perched, Ben whips around to show off for the fence leaning Girl.

SUSAN

Too late "Captain." Miami left
three minutes ago.

Ben's face shows disappointment. And a hurt back.

CUT TO:

SCOTTY SWINGING...

...Between Ben and Susan as they walk along Broadway towards Artie's deli.

BEN

I'm bushed. I have to go home,
take a nap.

SUSAN

A nap.

They let go of Scotty who walks ahead of them, just out of earshot.

BEN

Jordan called me over at midnight.
By the time we finished and I got
back to my place--

SUSAN

You're pathetic.

BEN

What'd I do? I was sleeping.
Phone rings, she's using her
bedroom voice--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN

You're pathetic because you're dying to tell me about it. You're not going to take a nap. You don't take naps. You just want me to know you got laid.

BEN

It's not like I'm detailing the positions we did it in.

A beat. Susan waits for it.

BEN

She was on top. Then I was. Then she turned over and--

SUSAN

It's not normal for a man to speak to his daughter this way.

BEN

That's your husband talking. He's provincial. You're a grown women.

SUSAN

Gary didn't say anything. I just--

BEN

You can handle it.

SUSAN

That's what you say about Jordan, right, to justify the fact that you're going to toss her in a dumpster when you're done.

BEN

She's got the power in this one. Not me.

SUSAN

No. She's got something you need. It's different.

And Ben smiles, real warmth behind it. Susan smiles too.

BEN

Why are you the one I can't con?

SUSAN

If you don't want me to reveal you to the world, you're coming inside, say hi to mom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

No. I can't stay.

SCOTTY

Aw...

SUSAN

So just say hi and go.

BEN

Your mother doesn't like it when I
leave.

SUSAN

Never stopped you before.

Ben doesn't answer. He just puts his hand on Scotty's
shoulder and, using the boy as a shield, enters...

P.J. BERNSTEIN'S DELI

Scotty breaks away from Ben and Susan and runs to the
back of the restaurant into the arms of NANCY KALMAN, a
mid-fifties woman who has kept it together without
surgery, Botox or excess make-up.

She notices Ben. Reacts. Her words may be sharp; her
manner is not. She's actually glad to see him.

NANCY

Ben. I'm surprised you have the
time to drop in. What's the
matter, no more divorcees left to
bed on the east side?

BEN

That's not fair--

NANCY

You're right. I left out the
widows.

She turns to Scotty.

NANCY

Sit down honey.

Scotty scoots in next to her.

SUSAN

Hi, Mom.

Susan bends over, kisses her mom and drops into a chair.
Nancy gestures toward Ben.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NANCY

Why is it still good to see him?
 (to Ben)
 Why is it still good to see you?

BEN

Cause you don't have to live with
 me anymore.

NANCY

Well, join us.

Ben hesitates.

BEN

Just a quick hello, can't stay.

But as he says this, Ben's SPIES a TWENTY-YEAR OLD GIRL
 alone at an adjacent table. Furtively tries to make eye
 contact.

BEN

Well...I'll sit for a minute.

Ben takes a seat that gives him a clear view of the
 Twenty-Year Old Girl.

Nancy laughs.

NANCY

You're too old for that one Benny.

BEN

(covering)
 What are you talking about?

NANCY

Deny. Always Deny.

They exchange a smile. There is an easiness to the way
 they interact.

A waiter comes over to take Ben's order.

WAITER

Can I get you anything?

BEN

I'll have a cheeseburger.

NANCY

Have a turkey burger, Benny.

BEN

I'll have a cheeseburger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NANCY

It's only a matter of time until I
get that phone call.

BEN

You've been expecting that call
for thirty years...

Ben, catching himself, glances to make sure the Young
Female Diner hasn't heard his age. She is reading a
magazine and not paying any attention to them.

SUSAN

Dad, I'm taking Scotty to the
Natural History this weekend.
Gary has to work, so if you want
to come along with us--

BEN

Can't.

Scotty looks up from his Gameboy.

SCOTTY

Why not?

A beat.

BEN

I'd like to, Scotty, but...

Ben hesitates.

BEN

Oh...You're gonna love this,
Nance.

NANCY

Out with it.

BEN

I'll be up at our alma mater this
weekend.

Both women react.

NANCY

No.

SUSAN

No way.

NANCY

They finally convince you to come
see the Kalman Pavilion?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN

Nope. Jordan and I are taking her daughter up for her college interview.

NANCY/SUSAN

You're what?

BEN

I'm introducing her to the dean.

NANCY

How'd you get roped into that?

SUSAN

Doesn't she have a father?

BEN

Apparently he has a life.

NANCY

So why can't she take the girl herself?

BEN

Because of my 'relationship' with the dean.

NANCY

Do you even like this Jordan?

No answer.

The women work the tag team into high gear.

SUSAN

You're a sixty year old--

BEN

I am not--

SUSAN

--Close enough, dating a girl because of her father's connections.

A Waiter places food on table.

NANCY

You needed your independence, right, that's why you left? Now you're a kept man.

Ben finally catches the eye of the Twenty-year-old Girl, smiles at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BENS'S POV: The Twenty-year-old Girl smiles back at him, the way one smiles at a kindly older person on a park bench. No heat.

Ben glances back at Nancy who seems to be looking right through him.

NANCY

Ben?...

BEN

I've got to go.

Ben gives Scotty a kiss on top of his head.

BEN

I'll get you a check next week,
Nance.

NANCY

What about your burger?

BEN

Better for me that I don't eat it,
right?

NANCY

Okay, Benny. Okay. Have fun up
there.

Ben turns and walks out the door. Nancy, Scotty and Susan look to each other.

CUT TO:

JORDAN'S BEDROOM...

...Which could be the centerpiece of an Architectural Digest spread.

BEN

I'm not going.

JORDAN LANGER, late 40s, beautiful, but in an uncompromising way, lies in bed. Ben stands over her.

Jordan's daughter, ALLYSON LANGER, great looking, eighteen, with a cool Dalton detachment, leans against a wall. She is holding a box of tissues in her hand.

JORDAN

You promised.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

I promised to go with you.

JORDAN

But I'm sick. I can't go.

BEN

So we'll reschedule--

JORDAN

Allyson can't reschedule her college interview just because I have the flu.

BEN

I tried to get you to take the shot--

JORDAN

--I hate shots.

BEN

--And now you have the flu--

Allyson cuts in.

ALLYSON

--It's fine, Mom. I'll fly up there myself. In fact, I'd like that better.

BEN

You see. She doesn't even want my company. I'd cramp her style--

Allyson speaks under her breath.

ALLYSON

Stomp on it you mean.

Jordan sits up with effort, turns to Ben.

JORDAN

That's exactly why I want an adult up there with her. Her style needs some cramping. Otherwise she might come home pickled.

Allyson snorts.

ALLYSON

I stopped getting drunk in eighth grade, Mom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JORDAN

Doesn't matter. You are not going up there alone. Give me a minute with Benjamin please.

Allyson hands her mother the tissues and leaves. Ben tries not to let his eyes follow her out.

BEN

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

JORDAN

Didn't you retire from thinking?

BEN

And we're sure her father can't go with her?--

JORDAN

--He's in Macau, closing on some factory or something. Besides, he makes her too tense.

Jordan blows her nose. Coughs.

BEN

She's not going to be more relaxed with me. She doesn't even like me hanging around you.

JORDAN

What she likes doesn't matter. What's best for her does.

BEN

That's what my mother used to say as she tucked me into a giant purple snowsuit the first day of November every year. I'd sweat through the thing on the bus to school, and everyone thought I wet my pants.

If Jordan even hears this intimate admission, she does not acknowledge it.

JORDAN

Ben, she puts on this big independent act because she thinks she's supposed to, but I know her. Please do this for me.

Jordan forces herself out of bed, crosses to her desk, takes a piece of paper out of the printer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JORDAN

Before I forget, I just got the confirmation emailed to me. I printed it for you. They're sending a guy out tomorrow morning.

BEN

And it's all prepped?

JORDAN

It is. So think of it like a family weekend. First you'll go have the meeting my father arranged, and then you'll take my daughter up to her college interview.

It's an order. Jordan holds out the piece of paper. Ben takes it.

BEN (PRE-LAP)

Location isn't the only thing that matters, of course...

CUT TO:

FOUR WAY INTERSECTION, SOMEWHERE IN NEW JERSEY - DAY

CLOSE ON: An artist's rendering of a state-of-the-art car dealership. A giant red sign in the foreground of the image says 'Kalman Motors.'

BEN

...But anyone can see, this is a hell of an open point.

PULL BACK from the mock-up to reveal...

Ben striding with purpose across a large undeveloped lot.

A step behind him is an automotive company exec, PETE HARTOFILIS.

PETE

Nice traffic patterns.

BEN

Nice? Outstanding! With my private banking relationships, I'll be up and running in no time. And this zip code spends. Daughter graduates high-school, get her an SUV with six airbags.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)

Son moves into his own place, put him in a two-seater with some zip--

PETE

Your old flagship--

BEN

--Was north of here. Twenty-five miles. The name's still strong in this community--

PETE

--Our research certainly shows that the name is known in this community. But the negative numbers...

BEN

I'll sponsor the little league, the soccer, the school car washes. Negatives will disappear.

PETE

Mr. Kalman, I'm going to speak freely. Out of respect. I'm recommending that you get your dealership. Because the numbers make sense. Because my first job was in the finance department of one of your places. Because I grew up watching your commercials, 'I'm Ben Kalman, New York's honest car dealer.' And because you probably inspired me to go into this business in the first place.

BEN

Well, Pete, I'm honored to know--

PETE

--But I don't think my recommendation is going to do any good. The dealership development committee is not in the habit of granting open points to people who have brought the sort of public embarrassment to the industry that you did.

BEN

You get that recommendation sent up to the committee, I'll worry about getting them to sign off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETE

Fair enough.

BEN

Good. Let me show you where the service area will be.

They move off to another section of the lot.

CUT TO:

FOUR WAY INTERSECTION, SOMEWHERE IN NEW JERSEY - LATER

Ben leans against his car, cell phone to his ear. The mock-up loosely rolled beneath his armpit.

BEN

...It went as well as it could have, Jordan. Now, remind your father to speak to the three guys from Detroit, the younger ones who weren't there when I had my...

JORDAN (ON PHONE)

Should I lay his clothes out for him too? Or do you think he can handle it?

BEN

Okay, alright, Roger that, Colonel.

JORDAN

Good. Dismissed. Hey, I like this.

This puts Ben on comfortable terrain.

BEN

Well, we'll have to put you in a leather bomber and nothing else.

JORDAN

Now I can't wait for you to get back.

A beat.

BEN

Yeah. About this weekend...I'm sure Allyson doesn't really want me around, and--

Total tone change from Jordan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN (ON PHONE)

Of course she does. Just like my father wants to use fifty years of goodwill and connections, as well as his position on a board of directors, to get an admitted grifter a new dealership, after he almost tanked an entire company's reputation.

A beat.

BEN

I'm on my way to the airport.

JORDAN (ON PHONE)

Believe me, she'll feel so much better with you there to guide her through the process.

CUT TO:

JFK AIRPORT

Ben and Allyson wait in line to check in.

ALLYSON

Just turn and leave. I can see how bad you want to.

He looks to her.

ALLYSON

Go to Foxwoods for the weekend. Or Amagansett's great off season. Or wherever. Stay out of sight. C'mon, it's what you were hoping for the whole time.

A moment of relief plays on his face.

ALLYSON

Just try not to catch anything you'll give my mother later. I don't want to have to take care of her.

Ben considers it. Shakes his head.

BEN

No. I don't lie to your mom.

She almost lets him get away with it. Then can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSON

I call bullshit, Ben.

BEN

What?

ALLYSON

It means, ask me where I was the other night for drinks.

BEN

I thought you don't drink.

ALLYSON

I said I don't get drunk. Ask me.

BEN

Okay. Where were you drinking the other night?

ALLYSON

The bar at the Warwick.

No reaction on Ben's face.

BEN

What night was that?

ALLYSON

The night you hope it wasn't, when you were in the back booth with that Eastern European web special?

BEN

Oh. That was Eva. She's my niece. She was in New York on business. Why didn't you come over and say hi?

Allyson spools it out.

ALLYSON

I was on my way to. But that's when I saw you slip your hand under her skirt. I thought maybe you'd dropped something, but then she started squirming in a way that made me think, no, he didn't drop anything...

Allyson gets to the front of the line, hands her ID to the AGENT.

BEN

...So that's Gin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALLYSON

Huh?

BEN

It means you win the hand.

ALLYSON

I don't play cards.

A beat.

BEN

Well, you didn't sell me out.
Thanks.

ALLYSON

I'd cheat on her if she were my
girlfriend. So have a good
weekend, Ben.

Ben doesn't move. He just stands there and watches as Allyson bends down to hand her suitcase to the agent.

ANGLE ON: A pair of BUSINESSMEN checking into first class appreciate her assets.

ANGLE ON: Ben. He doesn't like it. Caught, the Businessmen look away.

BEN

Nope. Still coming with. I'm
gonna do this for you. Not for
your mother. For you. I know the
school. I know the dean. I
missed Susan's college tours, and
I regret it. I was too busy back
then...

The Agent hands Ben back his ticket. They start walking.

ALLYSON

Yeah. Mom says you used to always
be on MSNBC and CNN. That you had
dealerships in every town in
Jersey, Long Island and
Connecticut.

BEN

Slight exaggeration.

ALLYSON

How'd you fuck it up?

BEN

You never googled me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALLYSON

You want me to believe what's online? Okay. I was just giving you a chance to--

BEN

I'm flying up there with you.

She doesn't answer.

BEN

I promise not to ruin your time. I'll show you around during the day, walk you to the interview so I can shake hands with the dean, smooth it all through for you. At night, I'll crash at the hotel and you can do whatever you want. And this time, I won't tell anyone.

Allyson stops, thinks about it for a second. Meets his eyes. Something changes between them.

ALLYSON

And you won't treat me like a kid, right?

BEN

No snowsuit.

ALLYSON

What?

BEN

Forget it. Yeah, you're not a kid.

ALLYSON

Fine.

A half-smile comes to her face. And to his. They move to board the plane.

CUT TO:

BEN'S ALMA MATER

The sun hits a rolling green campus in New England. FRISBEE GOLFERS, HACKY SACKERS, and DREADLOCKED STONERS share the quad with some actual SERIOUS-MINDED STUDENTS.

Ben, black framed shades accenting his normal black on black, and Allyson, walk across the grass.

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CONTINUED:

BEN

First time stepping back onto this quad since the day I finished.

ALLYSON

You never even came up for homecoming? Not even the year after you graduated?

BEN

Year after I graduated I was moving six cars a month, on my way to my own shop. I wasn't going to miss a Saturday to spend it with a bunch of losers reliving glory they never had. When I was gone, I was gone.

Ben stops for a moment, looks around. His eyes land on a BENCH. He looks at it for a second longer than he should.

ALLYSON

Ben?

BEN

That bench. It...Surprised it's still right here.

He shakes the memory off, and points into the distance.

BEN

Admission building is that way. Some kid was supposed to meet us, show us the way.

They head off in that direction.

ALLYSON

I thought you were an involved alumni.

BEN

Alumnus. And that just means I've written some big checks.

ALLYSON

Then how do you know the Dean and stuff?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

They come to see me. Well, they used to when they knew they would walk out of my office with an endowed chair in the English department, or the ground breaking money for an arts center.

ALLYSON

What about now?

BEN

They pay a courtesy call if they're in town to see someone else.

ALLYSON

That's nice.

BEN

It's insurance. For when I can write the checks again.

A FRISBEE is about to hit Ben in the legs. He grabs it out of the air. Looks to throw it back.

An IRATE STUDENT comes running towards him. Screaming.

IRATE STUDENT

HEY ASSHOLE. Let the big dog hunt, let the big dog hunt.

Ben doesn't get it.

BEN

Let the?--

IRATE STUDENT

Put the frisbee down. We're Frolfing. That was my drive. The hole is over there.

He points to a maple tree 400 yards away.

IRATE STUDENT

You would've cost me a stroke if you threw it the other way. Already cost me a few yards by catching it.

BEN

It almost hit me. I was trying to help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

IRATE STUDENT

Yeah, well thanks but no, grandad.

The Irate Student sticks out his hand for the Frisbee. Ben almost gives it back. A slow smile comes over his face.

BEN

No. You called me an asshole.
Now I'm gonna earn it.

Ben takes the Frisbee and whips it in the other direction. It sails high and gets stuck in a big oak tree.

The Irate Student gets in Ben's face.

IRATE STUDENT

You motherfucker--

BEN

--'Ey. There's a woman present.

Short beat.

IRATE STUDENT

Dickwad.

Ben hardly moves. He turns his hips slightly, and lets his RIGHT FIST go.

It lands in the Irate Student's stomach. The student doesn't go down though. Just stands there. Then he puts Ben in a ONE HANDED HEADLOCK. Ben's sunglasses fly off his face.

Ben tries to free himself. Can't. The Irate Student grinds Ben's head under his arm a moment longer.

The Student lets Ben go and pushes him away.

IRATE STUDENT

Like some arthritic punch was
gonna take me out?!

Ben catches his breath, smooths his hair and turns to Allyson who has been watching with an admixture of horror and amusement.

BEN

I used to have a pretty good
right.

He turns back to the Irate Student who is now standing inches from him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

IRATE STUDENT

What the fuck were you thinking,
man?

BEN

Well, you know, standard boxing
strategy: go to the body, weaken
you, then go the head.

Ben throws a ROUNDHOUSE PUNCH that catches the Irate
Student flush. This time he falls.

BEN

Seems like a sound strategy.

The Irate Student rears up and takes Ben down to the
ground. They wrestle. Lots of grunting and groaning.
Neither gains a clear edge.

ANGLE ON: Ben is on the bottom. The Irate Student is
about to punch him in the face when a big beefy hand
comes down and lifts him off.

The hand belongs to SGT. JOHN HAVERFORD, Campus Police.
He is an enormous man, about Ben's age, who almost busts
out of his uniform. He speaks with an accent that's
Boston by way of Ireland.

SGT. JOHN

Let's stop all this.

Ben scrambles to his feet. The Irate Student is silent.
So is Sgt. John.

BEN

Officer. Ben Kalman. Dean
Gitleson is expecting me--

SGT. JOHN

IDs.

Ben and the Irate Student hand ID to Sgt. John.

SGT. JOHN

Someone want to tell me what
happened here?

BEN

Misunderstanding. I'm willing to
forget it if he is.

IRATE STUDENT

Willing.

Sgt. John hands the student's ID back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

SGT. JOHN

Good. Get out of here.

Ben reaches out for his ID. The Sgt. pulls it back.

SGT. JOHN

Not so fast. I want to know what you're doing on my campus.

Allyson answers.

ALLYSON

Escorting me for my interview.

SGT. JOHN

She your daughter?

BEN

She's not my daughter. She's too old to be my daughter.

This is not the right answer.

SGT. JOHN

Too young to be anything else that won't get you arrested.

ALLYSON

He goes out with my mother.

SGT. JOHN

He tell you to say that?

ALLYSON

No.

Sgt. John holds out a hand.

SGT. JOHN

Let me see it.

Allyson takes out her driver's license. Sgt. John stares at it for a long moment.

SGT. JOHN

Eighteen.

Sgt. John doesn't like it. But there's nothing he can do about it.

He gives the ID back to Allyson, takes one more long look at Ben's license.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

SGT. JOHN

Kalman. You're the donor. The art center and all that.

BEN

I support the school every way I can.

SGT. JOHN

So you're also the guy who sold my cousin in Connecticut on a leased Jeep that turned out to be financed. Cost him nine grand on the back end.

BEN

I had some unscrupulous managers. I take the blame for not watching them closer.

SGT. JOHN

You do anything else untoward on my campus, you'll take more than the blame.

Sgt. John marches away. Allyson looks at Ben.

ALLYSON

Wow. Smooth.

Ben leans down to pick up his sunglasses. As he comes up with them, an earnest looking student, DANIEL CHESTON, approaches.

CHESTON

Mr. Kalman. I'm Daniel Cheston. I am the Vice President of the student senate. Dean Gitleson sent me to find you. Are you okay, sir?

Ben takes a deep breath.

BEN

Better than that, Cheston. I'm great. I hadn't thrown a punch outside of a gym in years. Whoo!

CHESTON

The dean is ready for you. We should be getting over there.

CUT TO:

THE DEAN OF ADMISSIONS...

EDWARD GITLESON, who is a career fund-raiser in an academic's clothes. He waits on the front steps of the imposing admissions building, BRADLETON HALL..

The Dean takes in Ben's appearance.

DEAN GITLESON
Rough morning, Ben?

Ben doesn't give him anything.

BEN
This is Allyson Langer.

After a moment--

DEAN GITLESON
Hello, Allyson.

ALLYSON
Hi.

BEN
She has my highest recommendation,
Edward.

Beat.

DEAN GITLESON
I can hardly imagine a better
endorsement.

BEN
Mmm-hmm.

DEAN GITLESON
Allyson and I are going to go
inside and chat for a while. And
then she'll go on the group tour.
Meanwhile, Mr. Cheston has
volunteered to get you
reacquainted with the grounds.
Thought you might want to see the
Kalman Pavilion. You can pick
Allyson up right here a little
after two.

Allyson and the Dean head inside the hall. Ben and
Cheston watch them go.

BEN
You have anything better to do
than show me around, Cheston?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHESTON

Um...

BEN

Go do it.

Cheston is conflicted.

CHESTON

Don't you want to see the pavilion?

A beat.

BEN

Because my name's on the building?

CHESTON

Yeah.

Another beat.

BEN

No.

Ben takes a couple of steps, as if testing his knee.

CHESTON

You're walking a little funny. Should we get it checked out at the school clinic?

BEN

I don't do doctors. Not anymore.

CHESTON

Do you at least want to get yourself cleaned up? You can use my room.

Ben thinks about it for a moment.

BEN

Alright. Thanks. I will.

They turn and walk off into the distance.

Before they go out of frame, ANOTHER FRISBEE comes sailing very close to Ben.

Ben sticks out a hand, looks like he might catch it, but then lets the Frisbee FLUTTER by.

CUT TO:

CHESTON'S DORM ROOM

Ben is pulling a T-shirt over his body. Although it is a little snug, it fits.

BEN

Got a girl, Cheston?

CHESTON

Cheston's my last name. First name is Daniel.

BEN

Shouldn't be. Million Dans. Anyone can be Dan. You get to be Cheston. Now about the girl--

CHESTON

Haven't found the right--

BEN

Can't get laid, huh?

CHESTON

I didn't say that.

BEN

Everything about you says it. Look at this room. If you have time to put hospital corners on your bed at college, you're spending your days the wrong way.

CHESTON

I am making the most of my--

Ben cuts him off.

BEN

You had a high school girlfriend right? You were both on the... model UN together or something--

CHESTON

We were the assistant directors of the community service outreach--

BEN

And then she went to school and met some junior who stormed the admin building or the provost's house--

CHESTON

--How'd you know he was a--?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

--They're always juniors. And you're still stuck trying to figure out how you lost...Laurie?

A beat.

CHESTON

Diana.

BEN

Okay. Well lemme tell you something, Cheston.

Ben points toward the door to Cheston's room.

BEN

Out there exists nothing but possibility.

CHESTON

But Diana was--

BEN

--Just the same as the other girls on this campus. Like all young men you greatly exaggerate the difference between one young woman and another. G.B. Shaw said that. Hundred years ago. Still true.

Ben crosses to Cheston's door. Opens it.

BEN'S POV: STUDENTS walk the dorm's halls. A REDHEAD and FRIEND laugh.

BEN

Look at her, Cheston. And her. What's wrong with either of them?

CHESTON

Well, for one, they're not interested in me.

BEN

Because you don't know how to speak to them. Watch.

Cheston is worried about how this will turn out.

CHESTON

No time. We have to pick up Allyson. We're almost late as it is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ben, not listening, walks out the door into the...

HALLWAY...

Ben approaches the redhead, JOANNE and the friend she was laughing with, KELLY.

CUT TO:

CHESTON'S DORM ROOM

Cheston watches.

CUT TO:

HALLWAY

CHESTON'S POV: Ben walks over to the young women. He smiles at them. Says something. They laugh, tell him something.

Ben turns, begins walking back to Cheston's room. Surreptitiously gives him a thumbs up sign.

TRACK WITH: BEN INTO...

CHESTON'S DORM ROOM

Ben walks in, shuts the door.

CHESTON

What'd you say?

BEN

Doesn't matter. We're 'hanging' with them tonight.

CHESTON

Tonight. I have to--

BEN

You have to go to a party. Where those women, and plenty of others just like them are going to be. Someday you will be my age. And you will not want to have looked back on today with regret--

CHESTON

That's why I'm gonna study tonight--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Nobody regrets taking a night off
from the books to chase some ass.
Especially twenty-one year old
ass.

CHESTON

G.B. Shaw say that too?

CUT TO:

THE QUAD

Ben and Cheston walk at a brisk clip.

BEN

Hold up.

Ben has stopped. He is standing at a series of benches.
He walks to one in particular. Sits down. It's the
bench he stopped at before. From the look on his face
it's clear the Bench has meaning for him.

BEN

Yep.

CHESTON

I didn't say anything.

BEN

I know. I'm saying something.
Only saps relive this shit. All
the same, I'm glad this bench is
still here.

Ben takes in the view from the bench. Spreads his arms
wide across its top. Then gets up.

BEN

Onward.

Cheston doesn't know what to make of it. But he follows
Ben as he moves on.

CUT TO:

BRADLETON HALL

Ben and Cheston arrive to pick up Allyson. They are
late, and the tour has broken up. Allyson stands with
TED, who looks to be about three years older than she is,
with spring-break-ready abs and arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Sorry we're late. I tried your cell--

ALLYSON

No prob. This is Ted. He gave the tour.

Ted sticks out a hand.

TED

Hey.

BEN

Right.

TED

I told Allyson to come by our house tonight, we're having a party. It might give her a good idea of the social culture we have here on campus.

Ben already hates the guy, but there is nothing he can do.

BEN

Sure. If she wants to go. Sure. Which house is it?

TED

D.U.

This means something to Ben.

BEN

Okay.

ALLYSON

Great. See you later, Ted.

Ted imitates Ben. Thinks Ben won't catch it.

TED

Right.

CUT TO:

A RAUCOUS FRAT PARTY...

...Not out of hand, but active. Ben and Cheston stand by the keg, filling STUDENTS' cups with beer. Ben's eyes scope the room. He LOVES what he sees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHESTON

I told you those girls weren't going to show up here.

BEN

Doesn't matter. Look at that one. And that one. We are in it now. Mixing in. We're mixing.

CHESTON

We're standing by a keg. Pouring. We're pouring.

BEN

And you want to be over...there. Yeah?

Ben points to a refined looking GIRL in the corner.

CHESTON

No. I uh...

BEN

Your eyes keep moving to her. Go over, say something.

CHESTON

She uh...

BEN

What?

CHESTON

Not the kind of person you just go up to at a party. She's serious. Studious.

BEN

She's here though. She has a drink in her hand.

CHESTON

Her brother is a member of the house, so she came by. But nobody hooks up with her.

BEN

If you're not going to go over there, you're going to have to listen to a story. Now, this is a little raw, but it has the benefit of being true, so I'll ask for your indulgence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHESTON

Granted.

Ben pours himself a Styrofoam stein of amber, pulls from it, begins.

BEN

This was the first year of college. I wasn't what you'd call one of the elite around here. Certainly wasn't invited to join this place.

Ben gestures to the Frat House.

BEN

I was one of the ones actually had a job, help me pay my way--

CHESTON

Me too--

BEN

I know. I saw your wardrobe. Anyway, I wasn't a total innocent, but I was intimidated by some of what I saw. Especially the girls. There was this one girl, sat in front of me in Freshman Composition. Name was Jennifer Angel. Really. And every day I would stare at the back of her neck. Sometimes, if she turned to glance out the window, I'd catch a glimpse of her face. She was smart. And real clean looking too. Cheston my man, I wanted to get with her in the worst way. But I couldn't figure it. Couldn't screw up the courage to even ask her out. To me, she was untouchable.

The whole time Cheston is staring at the girl across the room.

CHESTON

Untouchable.

BEN

One afternoon, I'm tending bar at some event, and this prick on the squash team orders a shot of Jack to help him loosen his hurt back.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN (CONT'D)

I ask him how he hurt it and he says: "Jennifer Angel". "How?", I ask him. And Cheston, his answer was like a Joe Frazier left to the belly. "I was fucking her," he says, "hard. But she keeps begging me to do it harder. Harder. Harder. Finally, I'm nailing her so fucking hard that the bed collapses, and I twist my back all up when we hit the floor."

CHESTON

Jesus.

BEN

'At's right. I actually had to catch my breath, you know, right there in front of the guy. My face turned red hearing about it, and I'm not exactly the blushing kind. But you know what? Turned out to be great. Knowing how she liked it, that she liked it, freed me to talk to her. And the next week, it was my bed that almost broke. That's what you need to learn. Some fella has a story like that on every single one of them. Might as well be you.

Cheston appears rocked by the story, but he also begins moving in the direction of the Girl. Ben watches him.

ALLYSON (O.S.)

I thought you were gonna let me do whatever I wanted by myself.

Allyson stands with Ted. She's all DOLLED UP for the evening. Ben notices, takes his time answering.

BEN

I was and I am. Close your eyes. When you open them I'll be gone.

CUT TO:

JAMES J. MCCOUNS...

A local coffee shop/diner.

A few STUDENTS pay their checks and leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY MCCOUNS JR. is wiping down the counter. Jimmy is roughly the same age as Ben. He hears the door open, speaks without looking up.

JIMMY

We close in five minutes, so
whatever you order, it's 'to go.'

Ben has entered.

BEN

Was a time I could sit here all
night.

Jimmy still doesn't lift his eyes.

JIMMY

I didn't run the place back then.
My father must have liked you,
some reason.

BEN

If by 'some reason,' you mean
because I saved your ass in every
math class you ever took--

JIMMY

--I remember the ass saving, but I
remember doing most of it, not in
class maybe...

BEN

Well, if there was just one of
them, I could've handled it--

JIMMY

But there were three of 'em if I
recall--

BEN

Yes. There were.

Now Jimmy makes eye contact. A moment between them.

JIMMY

You know I called you when you got
in that trouble a couple years
back. That secretary of yours
wouldn't put me through.

BEN

Well, she was under orders. I got
the message. I appreciated it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIMMY

Didn't expect a call back. Just wanted you to know.

BEN

I always knew, Jimmy. And I hope you know--

JIMMY

Of course--

BEN

No. Let me say it. That wasn't the only unreturned call. I'm sorry for it. If there was anyone from this place I would have wanted to see, it would have been you. But when I was gone...

JIMMY

You always said you'd never come back. Like you always said I'd never leave.

BEN

You had the business.

JIMMY

Yeah. And now you're here. Is there something you need?

Ben sits at a stool.

BEN

Any chance I can get a sandwich? To stay.

JIMMY

Usual?

BEN

Can you call it that after thirty years?

But Jimmy is already putting bread in the toaster.

CUT TO:

ALLYSON AND TED...

...At the very upscale OAK BAR in the Fairmont Copley Plaza.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They are sitting close to one another. It's clear they've been drinking for some time. And that Ted is working it hard.

ANGLE ON: Ben, who stands at the Bar's entrance. He can see and hear Allyson and Ted. They do not notice him.

BEN'S POV:

TED

...Yeah, and I told the lacrosse coach that I played attack in Junior High, was All County attack in High School, and there was no way I was playing D for him.

ALLYSON

So you're playing on the front line now--

TED

--He cut me, but that's not the point of the story. I stood up for myself. Went after what I wanted. And that's what I always do...

Ted slurps his Jack and Coke.

TED

...I see what I want, and I take a run at it.

Ben has heard plenty. He walks over to Allyson and Ted, moves between them and slides the bartender a credit card.

BEN

For their drinks.

He looks to Ted.

BEN

You regaling her, young man? I think you are. You look regaled, Allyson.

Nothing from Ted but a small smile on Allyson's face. All the encouragement Ben needs.

BEN

Stories of what? Glory? Or its putative compatriot, noble failure?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN (CONT'D)

I say putative because, and this is from a man who has failed in Starburst colors, there is nothing noble in failure. Do you not agree, Ted?

Ted doesn't know he's out of his league. Goes with the College Man approach.

TED

My parents named me after Theodore Roosevelt. And he said, "It is not the critic who counts, but the man who fails while daring greatly--"

BEN

--Yeah, but that guy didn't actually fail. It's why we know the quote. He became President. See, he bumped up against failure, found a way to succeed. That's not what I glean from your lacrosse story.

Allyson looks to Ted, anticipating some sort of snappy response. Gets nothing.

Ben turns to the bartender.

BEN

Scotch for me.

TED

I'm gonna go to the bathroom. I'll be right back.

Allyson and Ben watch Ted walk away. They Crack Up the moment he is out of sight.

BEN

On campus he seemed like one thing, right? Then you get him here...

ALLYSON

...Well, he's not from the City, but he's cute. You going to stop me from--

BEN

--No. If that's what you want to do, you do it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALLYSON

You going to report in to my mother?

BEN

I already told you I wouldn't.

ALLYSON

I don't even care what she thinks. But for some reason, I care what you think. What do you think?

A beat.

BEN

How honest a conversation are you looking to have here? I can just drift off to my room now, leave you with Ted.

ALLYSON

I want your read on the situation.

BEN

He's a waste of time. You'll go through a lot of trouble for very little reward.

ALLYSON

You mean, up in the room?

BEN

Do I have to draw it for you? A guy like that with a girl who looks like you? He's gonna go simple. You'll get up there, begin the proceedings, his face'll flush at the sight of it, or, if he's strong, at the taste, and he'll be gone. What do you get from the transaction?

ALLYSON

Transaction?

BEN

That's what it is. Obvious what he gets. What do you get?

ALLYSON

I need another drink. Here he comes. What should I do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BEN

Nope. You have all the information now. You decide.

She takes a moment, then speaks quickly, before Ted arrives.

ALLYSON

Send him home. Act like a guardian.

Ted comes back to the bar. Goes for his drink.

BEN

Finish that one, and I think you should be on your way.

TED

But me and Allyson--

BEN

--Are done for the night. You made your 'run' at it. Now chalk it up as another noble failure. And go.

Ted looks to Allyson, whose face is in her drink. He downs his drink, departs. Allyson and Ben watch him leave.

BEN

We should probably call it a night too.

ALLYSON

Yeah.

CUT TO:

TABLE AT THE BAR

Some time has passed. Ben and Allyson have moved to a corner table.

ALLYSON

I didn't really want to. With Ted. It just sort of seemed like something to do.

BEN

I know how that is.

ALLYSON

Is that what the Russian was?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

No. She was something worth doing.
It's different.

Allyson laughs. Takes a long drink. Her manner becomes more relaxed with each moment that passes between them.

ALLYSON

Has it always just...been good.

BEN

You mean...

ALLYSON

...You know...when you're...Ok,
I'll say it. My first time I was
fourteen.

BEN

Uh huh.

ALLYSON

Well...the thing is...didn't hurt.
But it wasn't that great either.

Allyson pauses for a moment.

ALLYSON

And..

Ben makes a hand motion for her to continue.

ALLYSON

It never feels that great really.

BEN

You've never had an--

ALLYSON

Of course I have. But only by
myself. What you said about what
would have happened in the room is
right. I would have ended up
staring at the ceiling all night
while he slept like a log. At
least in New York I could go home.

BEN

It's always like that?

ALLYSON

None of the guys I've been with
really know what they're doing, I
guess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

Can't you tell them what to do?

ALLYSON

How? I don't know what to say.

Ben thinks for a moment. Puts a hand on Allyson's shoulder. Draws closer to her.

BEN

You hardly have to say anything. Just take charge, move him how you want to, take his hands and put them where they feel right.

Ben drinks, motions the bartender for another, and another for Allyson.

BEN

And if that doesn't work. Show him, you know, yourself. I promise he'll never forget you.

ALLYSON

It'll make me seem like a whore.

Drinks arrive. Allyson stares into hers.

BEN

You're thinking about it wrong. When you're with a guy you like, don't you want to know what makes him feel good?

A beat.

ALLYSON

Does my mother know what to do?

BEN

Allyson--

ALLYSON

No, tell me.

BEN

Sure she does. But...

ALLYSON

But not like the Russian, right?

BEN

It's not her fault. She's just older. Her body's changed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN (CONT'D)

There's a thickness as they get older.

ALLYSON

A thickness. She's stick thin.

BEN

No one over forty is stick thin. Not really. Trust me.

ALLYSON

But she can get you off--

BEN

Let's not talk about her. We're all sensual creatures Allyson. We want pleasure. We want to know how to give others pleasure. But we shy away from it. We become timid. Only that leaves us wanting. Always. When I'm with a woman, I make it my business to solve her. Not out of the goodness of my heart. But because it will make her want to solve me. Do you understand that.

Ben leans into her. She does not back away.

ALLYSON

My God. You must've been an amazing car salesman.

On Ben:

BEN

I was the best.

CUT TO:

BEN'S HOTEL ROOM

Ben and Allyson enter. They are all over each other...

Ben presses Allyson against the wall.

Allyson turns it around. Now Ben is against the wall and her hands are moving down his body. Then she takes his hands and puts them where she wants them.

BEN

That's it. Show me. No shame in it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And they are down on the floor.

As they get deeper into it...

ALLYSON

If my mother saw us right now,
she would shit.

BEN

Shhh...

ALLYSON

She'd shit--

Allyson laughs.

BEN

She can never find out.

ALLYSON

God no. But she would shit.

Ben laughs too.

BEN

Yeah. She sure would.

ALLYSON

I can picture her face.

BEN

Me too. It'd almost be worth it
to see it.

Allyson makes a shocked face, imitating her mother.

BEN

Stop that.

ALLYSON

Ooh, you liked it. That's sort of
twisted, Ben.

They laugh together as the clothes keep coming off...

DISSOLVE TO:

BEN'S HOTEL BEDROOM

Ben and Allyson almost asleep, in Ben's hotel bed.

BEN

That smile looks like trouble.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSON

It is.

And they are back at it.

CUT TO:

MORNING

Light comes in the windows of Ben's suite, waking him.

He sits up. Looks.

Allyson is gone.

Ben reaches for his cell phone. Dials.

INTERCUT WITH:

LOGAN AIRPORT

Allyson stands at an airport Starbucks. She answers her phone with one hand as she mixes Splenda into her drink with the other.

ALLYSON

Hello.

BEN

Allyson.

ALLYSON

Hi. You looked like you needed the sleep. So I...

BEN

Yeah. Neat turn. I'm usually the one hoping the door shuts quiet, so the sleeping girl doesn't trap me for breakfast.

ALLYSON

Don't read anything into it. Into any of it actually. This happened and now we move on and my mother won't know the difference.

BEN

Okay. That was--

ALLYSON

Fun. We had a fun night. Thanks for coming up there with me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSON (CONT'D)

I'll tell her that I decided to head back before you because I had some homework to catch up on.

BEN

When we run into each other at the house...

ALLYSON

You think I never cheated with anybody and had to see their girlfriend at school? Don't sweat it.

BEN

You sure you don't play cards?

ALLYSON

Don't worry about anything. I'm cool.

Ben means it...

BEN

Yeah. You are. Safe trip.

ALLYSON

Bye.

Allyson throws the wooden stirrer in the trash and heads to her gate.

Ben lays his head down on his pillow. But his eyes are wide open.

PETE (PRE-LAP)

...So the committee has met.

CUT TO:

AUTO EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

Ben sits across from Pete the Auto Exec.

PETE

The official vote will come down next week. But I wanted to give you a head start on getting all the zoning in order...

Ben extends a hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Great, Pete. Great. Kalman Motors on the uptick. I look forward to working together.

PETE

As do I. You actually found a heckuva location, one that needs just the kind of dealership you've proposed. If they hadn't approved you, I would have recommended finding another dealer to open in that very spot. Now, let me show you how many cars we're expecting you to floorplan for the first couple of quarters...

Pete turns his computer screen for Ben to take a look.

CUT TO:

SETTE MEZZO RESTAURANT

Ben, Jordan and Allyson are mid-meal at the cash-only East 70s pasta joint.

If either Ben or Allyson are uncomfortable, they are doing a good job of concealing it.

JORDAN

...So this is a celebration all around, isn't it. Your new dealership on track and the fantastic news you just gave us about Allyson. Again, Ben, I can't believe that you were able to get the information so soon. Fantastic. Just fantastic.

BEN

(false modesty)

Well, the Dean reached out. I mean he called me.

JORDAN

It's nice of you to say that. I'm sure you've done quite a bit of lobbying.

ALLYSON

Really, mom? You think he had to pull that hard on the strings to get me in? It's not like my grades are so bad or anything--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN

I know how those things are.
You're a suitable enough
candidate, but without Ben...I
can't imagine what you promised
the Dean you'd do if he took her--

BEN

No, he was very impressed, wanted
to make sure he'd be seeing
Allyson in the fall.

JORDAN

We are so lucky to have you in our
lives Right, Al?

Allyson almost chokes on it.

ALLYSON

--Sure, Mom--

JORDAN

(to Ben)
I don't tell you often enough. We
are. Lucky.

BEN

Just glad it all worked out.

The waiter comes to clear their plates.

CUT TO:

JORDAN'S APARTMENT

The three of them enter.

JORDAN

Let's have an after dinner drink.
Allyson you can have a soda. Or,
since you are going to be a
college girl, a little wine, if
you want.

ALLYSON

I'm going out. I'll see you
later.

JORDAN

A drink with us first.

The phone rings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN

I'll get that.

She disappears into the other room to take the call. Ben turns to Allyson. They speak quickly and softly. Urgently.

BEN

Have you gotten my messages?

ALLYSON

Are you crazy?

BEN

Well, it's hard to talk here, and--

ALLYSON

That's right. We can't talk. Please, Ben. You know what it was in Boston. Please. It was a kick. Really really fun. And so now I can check two things off my list, the spite thing and the daddy thing.

BEN

Daddy thing.

ALLYSON

I didn't even know it was on my list, or that I had a list. But now I know. Come on. I hoped that was gonna be one more difference between you and the guys my age--that you wouldn't "go simple." That you wouldn't be all clingy and stuff.

BEN

Not looking to hang all over you. Just thought we could get some time together.

ALLYSON

Ben. You need to forget about it.

Then both stop for a moment and listen. Jordan can still be heard talking on the phone in the other room.

ALLYSON

I appreciate that you took the time to take me up to school. And that you spoke to the dean on my behalf.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALLYSON (CONT'D)

And I appreciate the advice you gave me. It's already worked.

BEN

Which advice?

ALLYSON

You taught me to ask for what I want. The last guy I was with, it was easy. I just gave him a blow job first, before anything else. And then another one. So he could last when we finally did it. And then I got on top of him and told him exactly what to do. It was awesome. Awesome.

BEN

You're making it up.

ALLYSON

Why would I make it up?

Ben speaks even more quickly, hoping to finish before Jordan reemerges.

BEN

To put me off you. To put distance between us. I use that trick all the time. But only when I'm afraid I might actually feel something for someone.

ALLYSON

Well, I'm not. I just did what you told me to do when you were trying to get me up to the room.

BEN

I wasn't trying to. It happened.

ALLYSON

I've got to go--

And at top volume...

ALLYSON

Mom, I'm not gonna have a drink. I have to meet my friends!--

Ben cuts in.

BEN

--Not yet. Allyson. I'm a pretty cool customer.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN (CONT'D)

You know that's what I do most nights, is find someone to take home. And I never think about them again.

ALLYSON

You mean most nights you're not with her--

BEN

--That's beside the point. But I can't stop replaying our time together. And not just in the room. When we were talking we were really listening to each other. Really connecting. I forgot that you were eighteen. You forgot that I was--

ALLYSON

No. I didn't.

Jordan enters from the other room. Sees the tension between them.

JORDAN

Everything alright?

BEN

Of course.

ALLYSON

We slept together, Mom, in Boston.

Jordan can't process.

ALLYSON

Yeah. That's right. We did. Lucky, huh?

On Ben's face...

SUSAN (PRE-LAP)

Oh, Dad...you didn't...

CUT TO:

SUSAN'S APARTMENT

It's night. Ben stands with Susan in the entrance just by the front door. No lights are on.

BEN

Ask me was it worth it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN

What?

BEN

Ask me was it worth it.

SUSAN

No.

BEN

Well, it was.

SUSAN

Are you actually going to gloat
about throwing away--

BEN

Not gloating. Stating something.
Which is, yes. From standing here
now, looking at it, it was worth
it. It was a night and a half,
Suze. The way a eighteen-year old
body responds--

A voice comes from the darkness.

GARY

No. No way, Ben. You can't keep
dragging her into--

SUSAN

Did we wake you, honey? I'm
sorry--GARY, Susan's husband, approaches. He's early thirties,
thin, with a slight Chicago accent.

GARY

Forget that. I cannot have you
listening to this crap anymore.
I've told you it's unhealthy, the
shrink told you it's unhealthy--

BEN

Gary, stay out of my relationship
with my daughter.

GARY

My wife.

SUSAN

Well, I'm both.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GARY

Sure, now you are. Cause you're what he has. But before he blew up his life, what were you to him? Really.

SUSAN

Gary!

A beat.

BEN

Well that's a ballsy thing to say, Garr. Logical. Also, bitter and small. I'd always hoped Susan would look to find a big man.

GARY

I take care of her. I'm here for her. Always.

BEN

You are a hell of a provider. Good. But me and her, we've got something else. We bleed the same.

GARY

Susan, let's go back to bed.

SUSAN

I'll meet you there in a minute.

GARY

But--

SUSAN

My dad needs to talk to me. I'll be in soon.

Gary glares at Ben, heads back towards the bedroom.

SUSAN

He's right about a lot of stuff, you know.

BEN

Guys like Gary are always right about a lot of stuff. That's why they have clients who pay them \$450 an hour, and partners who fast track them and all that crap. I've never said you didn't pick a smart husband. He's just not much of a risk taker.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN (CONT'D)

That's why I'm impressed he had the balls to come at me just now. Of course, he didn't have the balls to stand his ground, stay toe to toe.

SUSAN

You didn't used to talk like this.

BEN

Well, I used to shield you. I don't bother shielding anyone anymore. No point to it. Sitting in a jail cell makes that sort of thing clear.

SUSAN

You weren't in jail, you paid a fine, settled.

BEN

I spent a night there. And before I made my deal I spent plenty of nights thinking about what it would be like.

A beat.

SUSAN

We can have this conversation another time. But you came here at this late hour for a reason.

A long beat.

BEN

The thing of it is, my rent...Close as I am to getting another dealership, and then rolling 'em up again, I haven't gotten it done yet. And as far as income streams go..

SUSAN

Gary handles the checkbook. Well, I handle it, but he goes through it. And it's his money. The money he earns by not taking risks.

Susan goes to a drawer. Takes out a check. Endorses the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SUSAN

Mom gave me this as a present,
half her commission on a classic
six. I was going to cash it
tomorrow. Take it, it'll cover
two months or so. But that's all
I can give you.

Ben hesitates for a moment. Takes the check and puts it
in his pocket.

BEN

It's only for a short time.

SUSAN

I know.

A long beat.

SUSAN

Look, I'm gonna head back to
sleep. I have an early morning
with Scotty, we're going to the
circus.

BEN

Do you want me to come too?

SUSAN

No. Gary's taking the morning
off, so...

BEN

Okay. I love you, pumpkin.

SUSAN

Good night dad.

She waits as Ben opens the door and walks out into the
hallway.

CUT TO:

FOUR WAY INTERSECTION, SOMEWHERE IN NEW JERSEY

SUPERTITLE: Two Months Later.

A New Car Showroom has been built where before there was
only the empty lot. It looks exactly like the image on
Ben's mock-up.

Ben stands watching as the new automobiles are loaded off
of giant car trucks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He sees Pete Hartofilis standing with another suited man, GEORGE VINYARATEN. Game face on, Ben strides over to them.

BEN

Pete, Didn't I tell you this was a kick ass location!

PETE

Ben. Hi.

Ben gestures to the man next to Pete.

BEN

Ben Kalman.

GEORGE

I know who you are, 'Ben Kalman, New York's honest car dealer.'
It's a real pleasure.

PETE

Meet George Vinyaraten. It's his dealership.

GEORGE

Welcome to Vinyaraten Motors.

BEN

Has a certain ring to it.

A beat.

PETE

Now, Ben, I told you that I loved this spot.

Ben holds up a hand.

BEN

I'm not here in protest. I need a job.

GEORGE

You want to come work for me?

BEN

I can sell the shit out of a car. Always could.

GEORGE

There's no doubt about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETE

George, could you step away for a moment, leave me with Mr. Kalman.

George extends a hand once more.

GEORGE

A great pleasure.

And he moves off.

PETE

Ben, I'm not even sure corporate would let you BUY a car from us. You really crapped the bed on this one. Understand, I saw the paperwork. It was prepared. You were in. I don't know what you did, exactly, but now there's no way...no way.

BEN

Bring me into your house, Pete. I'll leave you a real nice parting gift.

Pete understands the offer being put on the table.

PETE

I can't do it.

Ben nods, walks away, looking back just in time to see: A giant sign is being hung atop the dealership. It reads, VINYARATEN MOTORS.

CUT TO:

GINO'S RESTAURANT

Midtown. Expensive old style Italian across from Bloomingdales.

TRACK past the bar, where SINGLES in Wall Street attire drink and FIND...

Ben and PAUL GERRARD finishing espressos at a table in the back. Gerrard is fifty-five, shaved bald, wearing a five-thousand dollar suit.

Ben puts down his espresso and gestures toward the bar, which is between their table and the front door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

...Count three down from the one who looks like an Eskimo. Tan pants. I'm gonna say...divorced three years, has the kids with the dad tonight, and is going to play it for all it's worth.

GERRARD

FBI should hire you out as a profiler.

BEN

If they were smart they would. Double their clearance rate.

He nods in Tan Pants' direction.

BEN

Not that hard. Look. No wedding band. But she showed pictures on her phone to the bartender. The way he reacted, photos had to be of her kids. Next, she did one shot and ordered another. This is why I was so strong on the lot. I'd know just what kind of vehicle to put her in, and I definitely know what she's looking for tonight.

GERRARD

I imagine you do.

Ben waves a WAITER to the table.

GERRARD

Ben. I've always enjoyed our dinners. But I can't let you out of here tonight without turning the conversation in a different direction.

BEN

Yeah, yeah. We will, we will.

The WAITER comes to Ben's side.

BEN

Send two of whatever she wants to the lady in the tan pants. Tell her I'll be over there in a minute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The waiter leaves to do it. Ben keeps his eyes on the bar.

GERRARD

You've been a private banking client for--

Ben holds up a hand.

BEN

One sec. Gotta watch it.

ANGLE ON: The Waiter makes the approach. The LADY IN TAN PANTS takes a moment to get it, but then smiles over at Ben. He nods back.

BEN

Okay. Now I can listen without being distracted.

GERRARD

The reason institutions like ours have private banking clients in the first place is so that our highest net worth individuals don't have to deal with financial minutiae in the middle of their busy days--

BEN

You're kicking me out of the bank.

ON: Gerrard, caught.

BEN

After all these years. It's why you didn't touch your penne segreto.

GERRARD

The bank usually sends a letter. I wanted to tell you in person.

BEN

If I can say this nicely: Fuck you, Paul. I don't expect your sympathy, but I've earned your belief. I've done nothing but win at business since I'm twenty-two years old.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GERRARD

You had my belief. That's why, when you got into your jam, we continued to keep you and your family in the private bank. Continued to steer deals your way.

BEN

I call bullshit.

GERRARD

You call what? What is that?

BEN

It's what they say. Point is, you pretend you stick by clients through 'difficult times,' but you're just looking for the right moment to get the deficit off the books.

GERRARD

We are not the ones who changed. You used to wake up at three in the morning to review business plans and sales reports. Now you're finding your way home through a haze of women and booze--

BEN

You never objected to the women when some were falling off into your lap.

GERRARD

They were an amusement six years ago. Which was fine. Now you can't even get through a meal without jumping up--

BEN

I was just yanking you with the stuff about the girl at the bar. I know all that because she's a mother from Scotty's class. Carol Soloman. I'm not really rolling her out of here. Just saying hi.

GERRARD

Yanking me?--

A hint of humility comes into Ben's voice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BEN

C'mon, Paul, give me a year to get it going again. This cripples me. I need the credibility the bank gives me, the access, the backing--

GERRARD

We have to do this. It's finished, Ben.

Ben sees the MAITRE-D. Yells out to him.

BEN

Jason. Check over here! Right away.

The Maitre-D comes to the table with the check, leans in close so as not to embarrass Ben.

MAITRE-D

About your house account...

Ben hands the check across the table to Gerrard.

BEN

He'll pay it. Least he can fucking do.

Gerrard hesitates for a moment, then reaches into his pocket.

GERRARD

I really do wish you all the best.

BEN

Sure. Because what does that cost you?

Ben stands, pushing his chair into the table harder than necessary, and walks toward the door of the restaurant.

CUT TO:

BEN'S BEDROOM

Light comes in around the edges of Ben's blackout shades. He slowly opens his eyes. Next to him, Carol Soloman, the Lady In Tan Pants still sleeps.

Ben reaches to his bottle of children's aspirin, takes one. His movements wake Carol. She watches him recap the bottle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROL

Baby Aspirin, huh? Have you had an incident, or are you just cautious?

BEN

I seem cautious to you?

CAROL

Not the first word I'd use.

BEN

I don't actually know for sure. Guy saw something on an EKG once. Wanted to run some tests.

CAROL

What did they see?

BEN

Never went for 'em.

CAROL

I couldn't live like that. And if you were my husband--

BEN

Well, thank God for all involved...

She slaps him, mostly playfully.

BEN

What do I want to know for? I just want do the things I want to do, and only the things I want to do, until it happens. Whatever it is going to be.

CAROL

You seem to have infected me with a little of that spirit. Shit. How did I end up here with the grandfather of my son's friend?

BEN

Because you're in your late thirties, Carol. In your twenties you'd have held out for a dissatisfied father of your son's friend.

She slaps at him again. This time a bit less playfully.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAROL

Who talks like that?

BEN

Everyone. But most people only say this shit to themselves. I let it fly.

CAROL

And you think that's a good thing?

BEN

What I think is: conversation's not our long suit. Let's just get dressed.

CAROL

Fine with me.

She begins getting out of the bed

BEN

And, although it shouldn't need to be voiced, let's not tell Susan about this.

CAROL

Don't worry, that's the last thing I want.

BEN

Hey, can you get a look at that clock?

CAROL

The clock.

BEN

The one in the drawer on your side. I threw it in there last night, so it wouldn't wake us up when the alarm went off.

As she's going to the drawer.

CAROL

Isn't that the idea?

BEN

I was drunk. What time is it?

CAROL

Early.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN

Good.

CAROL

Yeah. I don't have to get the kids until two. So I have three hours.

BEN

Fuck. It's eleven?

CAROL

Thirty.

BEN

Fuck.

Ben scrambles out of bed.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE OF ESPN ZONE

Susan stands with Scotty and Gary on the sidewalk in front of the Times Square arcade and entertainment complex. They are saying goodbye to a few MOTHERS and KIDS of Scotty's age.

Ben comes half-jogging up to them as the last of the Moms and Kids leave.

BEN

Happy Birthday, Kiddo.

Ben pulls Scotty into a hug. Susan shakes her head at Ben. Gary can barely look at him.

As Ben and Scotty separate...

SCOTTY

You missed the party, Captain Ben.

Gary bumps an eyebrow at Susan "Captain Ben?" Susan shrugs, "tell ya later."

BEN

And I'm sorry about that. I had a last minute business meeting. But I'm here now!

SCOTTY

Yeah, but the party's over. You didn't get to sing happy birthday. You didn't get any cake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARY

Capital work there, Ben. Every time I lower the bar of expectations, you limbo right under it.

Ben ignores him. Speaks to Scotty.

BEN

So we'll have our own after-party. And we'll make it even better than this party.

SCOTTY

We will?

BEN

Definitely.

He turns to Susan.

BEN

Are you heading back to the apartment?

Susan doesn't respond, she looks to Gary, who has hailed a cab.

GARY

C'mon Scotty, Susan, let's go.

Susan grabs a HUGE BAG of gifts, puts it in the front seat of the taxi. Then she hustles Scotty into the back seat, in between Gary and her.

SCOTTY

Can he come over? Please, mom!

Susan shuts the door, shouts out the window.

SUSAN

There's no room in the cab.

BEN

We can squeeze. Move the presents to the trunk.

Susan speaks softly enough that Scotty can't hear, but her anger still comes through.

SUSAN

If you want to come, get yourself there. And you better have a present and a cake with you too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

And the car drives off, leaving Ben standing there with his hands in his pockets. He turns to head towards the subway.

CUT TO:

SUSAN'S KITCHEN

Ben, Scotty and Susan stand around a Carvel cake with nine candles in it. Ben lights the candles and he and Susan begin to sing. Gary enters the room at the sound of the singing and joins in for his son.

As soon as Happy Birthday ends, Gary walks back out.

Ben hands Scotty a knife and helps him cut the first piece.

SUSAN

We're going to save that for after dinner.

SCOTTY

But it's my cake.

SUSAN

You already had cake today.

BEN

It's his birthday. Let him have a bite at least, so I can watch.

Ben cuts off a small bite for Scotty, puts it in his grandson's mouth. Scotty makes a big show of enjoying himself. Susan can't help letting a smile come.

CUT TO:

SCOTTY'S ROOM

Susan stands at the doorway watching Ben and Scotty. The two of them sit right next to each other on the floor of Scotty's room, playing Madden on PS3.

SUSAN

This is the last quarter, guys.

SCOTTY

We just started this game. No way.

SUSAN

How many have you already played?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCOTTY

This is the last game of the regular season. But we're only playing three minute quarters so we'll be done really soon.

BEN

(with Scotty's enthusiasm)

Really soon.

SUSAN

Half-hour more and that's it you two. We have to go to your other grandparent's house.

SCOTTY

But I want to stay with Grandpa. He said I could call him that in private.

SUSAN

Well, daddy's parents are expecting us, so we have to go.

Ben makes some moves with his controller.

BEN

Touchdown!

SCOTTY

Hey, no fair. I was talking to my mom.

BEN

Snooze you lose young man.

And they are back to the game. Susan watches a moment more then shuts the door.

CUT TO:

FRONT HALLWAY

Ben stands at the door. Susan helps him on with his coat.

BEN

Bye, Scotty. See you this week.

Scotty gives him one more hug.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN
I'll walk you to the elevator.

CUT TO:

BUILDING HALLWAY

Susan and Ben stand by the elevator doors.

BEN
I'm glad we have a minute alone.
I need to ask you for another
small loan.

SUSAN
You are out of your mind. Gary's
right. You've actually lost it.

BEN
What?

SUSAN
I'm not giving you more money.
Especially after today's
performance.

The elevator comes. Ben lets it go without him.

BEN
You telling me Scotty didn't have
a great time?

SUSAN
No. He has a better time with you
than anyone. That's the problem.
He thinks you're magic.

BEN
That's how he should think of his
grandfather.

SUSAN
No. He should think of his
grandfather as consistent,
reliable.

BEN
Consistent is boring. His other
grandparents are consistent and he
doesn't even want to go to their
house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN

But when he needs them, he knows that they'll come running. And it makes him feel safe.

BEN

That's an illusion. You know that. No one can really protect anyone. You saw what happened to me. All those so-called important pals I had lined up over the years went running for the hills--

SUSAN

I'm not going to go back and forth with you about this. You missed his party. He had a long face on the whole time, kept looking at the elevator every time it opened, thinking that you were going to come walking out. Mom and I must've tried your cell six times--

BEN

I didn't mean to miss the party. My alarm didn't go off and--

SUSAN

It's not what you mean to do. It's what you do. And you know whose fault it really is? Mine. I let him have these hopes. Just like I did when I was his age. But I won't anymore. If you let him down again, that's it. I can't put him in a position to get hurt. Not when you can totally prevent it from happening.

BEN

What are you gonna do, cut me off from seeing my own grandson? I love that little boy.

SUSAN

It's not fair for you to dart in and out at your own whim to the extent that he can't even have fun at his own birthday party. Either be in his life or don't.

Susan pushes the elevator button and neither one says another word.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The elevator arrives. Ben slowly gets in.

CUT TO:

NANCY'S APARTMENT...

The apartment is huge, but has a warm, classic style.

Nancy hands Ben a glass of red wine, sits across from him.

NANCY

It's good for the heart.
Antioxidants.

Ben moves the wine to the side.

BEN

Important as the future health of
my circulatory system is, Nance,
it's not at the top of my list at
the moment. The truth is: I
can't give you anymore checks.
Not for a while.

Nancy takes it in.

NANCY

Hmm-hm.

BEN

And...And I need to ask you to
float me some cash.

NANCY

Benny, I'd never let you starve.

BEN

Which is thoughtful considering--

NANCY

--But I can't support you--

BEN

--How many meals I bought you over
the years, how much cash went
from me to you--

NANCY

Stop. You're not one of those
guys. You didn't even make me
take you to court.

Ben opens his palms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

You put in the years. What was I gonna do?

Ben gets up, wine in hand, goes to the window and looks out over New York.

BEN

What am I supposed to do?

NANCY

What people do. What I did. Move forward. You're not who you were. I'm not either--never thought I'd sell real estate. Turns out I'm good at it. And I like it. And I like my wine class and playing bridge with my friends on Wednesdays.

Ben gestures out the window.

BEN

And you still have the best view in the city...

NANCY

That's why I never sold it.

Ben glances back at her.

NANCY

Or did you think I was holding vigil that some day you'd return, and I wanted everything to be the same for our reunion.

BEN

You made it pretty clear you weren't when you shacked up with Mark, the orthodontist--

NANCY

He's a financial--

BEN

He had the affect of an orthodontist.

NANCY

It lasted three months. I know you'd rather I joined a convent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

I just find it interesting that you haven't changed the furniture. Not a chair. Or a couch. Not even a cushion.

NANCY

Couch still comfortable?

BEN

Most comfortable couch I've ever sat on.

NANCY

Yeah, I don't make it a habit to change what works. That's your move.

No answer from Ben for a long moment.

BEN

Is that what you think? That it was working?

NANCY

For a long time. Until you decided that nothing was working for you.

BEN

I didn't decide. Things happened. Events took place.

NANCY

You've never been the kind of person "things happen" to. You make things happen. Always have. You built your business yourself, destroyed it yourself. Same with our marriage. You can blame anyone you want: me for having the audacity to get older each year, your general managers for "engaging in practices" you didn't know about, the D.A.'s office for being politically motivated, but until you figure out how you actually got in this position, you'll never find your way out of it.

Ben almost speaks to it. Almost unburdens. Instead, he just takes a sip of the wine, looks back over the city.

CUT TO:

BEN'S APARTMENT

Ben, in his bathrobe, sits on his couch. He is unshaven. PACKING BOXES are scattered across the floor. His buzzer rings.

CUT TO:

BEN'S NEW APARTMENT

Ben, in his bathrobe, sits on his couch, watching television.

This apartment, a studio with a bed in the corner, is much smaller than the old one.

His cell phone rings. He doesn't answer it. His land line rings. He doesn't answer that one either.

And then a knock on his front door. He considers his options then gets up.

Standing at the door is TODD THE BUILDING MANAGER, cut in the Kevin Smith mold, plenty of attitude. Ben does not ask him in.

TODD

Mr. Kalman.

BEN

Todd.

TODD

Mr. Kalman, you're three weeks late and it's only your second month. When I let you move in here with questionable financials you convinced me I could trust you.

BEN

You can.

TODD

I need that check or I have to start removal proceedings.

BEN

By tomorrow afternoon. My own sense of honor won't let me default on--

Ben is cut off by a VOICE coming from down the hall. We recognize it as Susan's before we see her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN

Carol Soloman? You had to fuck a friend of mine, someone I see at school everyday? Then mock her in the morning, never call her, never even return her calls. You had to put me in that position? You're priceless, Dad.

BEN

Ho-ho-hold on--

By now Susan is standing at the door with Ben and Todd, who does not make it more comfortable by leaving.

SUSAN

Scotty has a play date at Sean's house, that's Carol's son, and when I get there to pick him up, she sits me down in their kitchen and tells me the story. Says her nanny is going to bring Sean to the next playdate because it's too awkward otherwise.

BEN

What'd she expect, that I'd pin her, take her to the prom? Tell her to grow up.

SUSAN

It's not about what she expects. It's about what I expect.

BEN

You expect me to be chaste? To never have sex again now that your mother and I are divorced.

SUSAN

No. I expect you not to fuck my friends.

Ben turns to Todd.

BEN

Do you think you could let us--

Todd, enjoying it, takes his time answering.

TODD

By tomorrow. Certified or cashier's. Or you're gone.

Todd leaves, smirking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

Do you want to come inside,
Pumpkin?--

SUSAN

No. Was she really your only
option? Couldn't you have just
called a hooker if you needed it
that bad?

BEN

I can't afford to anymore. The
good ones cost too much.

Susan laughs, but as a reflex, not with any joy.

BEN

You used to love my stories.

SUSAN

I liked that you'd treat me as
your friend.

BEN

I still do.

SUSAN

But now we're both old enough to
know you shouldn't.

Ben lets this settle for a second. Then meets her eyes.

BEN

You're not a kid anymore. It's
time to realize you can't change
your daddy.

SUSAN

I'm still your child. And it's
time you realize you're still my
father.

A beat.

BEN

So what do you want me to do?

SUSAN

I want you to get help. See
someone. Maybe try medication.
Something. Just until you get
your balance back.

BEN

No. You know I'm not doing that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SUSAN

Well, then, if you really won't help yourself, I need you to leave me, my friends, my family alone.

BEN

I'm sorry to hear that.

SUSAN

But not sorry enough to do something about it.

A long beat.

SUSAN

You're actually going to let us walk out of your life?

BEN

You're making the choice. Not me.

Susan hesitates for a moment.

SUSAN

Fine. If that's the way you need to hear it. I am making it. Stay away from us.

She turns and walks away.

On Ben...

CUT TO:

A NEW ENGLAND NEIGHBORHOOD

It's late at night. No traffic on the tree-lined street. A SEDAN rolls to a stop and parks in front of a...

MODEST HOUSE

Ben, now cleaned up a bit, gets out of the sedan, walks up the driveway to the front porch.

He hesitates for a moment at the front door. Knocks. Takes a beat. Looks through the pane of glass. Takes another beat. Rings the bell. Steps back as he hears footsteps.

JIMMY (O.S.)

Yeah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

It's Ben. Ben.

Door opens. Jimmy is in his robe, clearly just awakened. He steps aside and gestures Ben into the house.

JIMMY

Anne's still sleeping so...

BEN

Of course.

Ben steps lightly as he enters.

CUT TO:

JIMMY'S KITCHEN

Jimmy takes two beers out of the fridge, hands one to Ben.

BEN

Thanks. Had to get out of the city. Didn't even know where I wanted to go. I just put it in drive. Stopped here. I know you weren't expecting me.

JIMMY

We're friends, right?

Ben takes a pull on his beer.

BEN

Thanks.

A beat.

JIMMY

I gotta serve breakfast in the morning, so...

BEN

Of course.

Jimmy points to a room at the other end of the house.

JIMMY

Blankets are in the playroom. A Pillow too. Use that couch.

Ben nods and Jimmy begins walking down the hall toward his bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Hey, Jimmy...

Jimmy turns back. Ben hesitates for a long moment. This isn't easy.

BEN

How you fixed for help. At the deli..?

JIMMY

Really?

Ben shrugs.

CUT TO:

JAMES J. MCCOUN'S

Ben, wearing an apron, fits a pound of Roast Beef into the meat slicer.

BEN

Jimmy, come help me set the thickness on this thing.

Jimmy comes over, sets the dial for him.

BEN

Hey, thanks for the job.

JIMMY

I've needed someone since the kid quit last semester. Besides--

BEN

I know. Friends.

Ben turns on the machine. Before Jimmy walks away they both notice a KNOCKOUT come through the front door.

BEN

How the hell do you get your work done with all these distractions here.

JIMMY

I look for a second and then I go back to what I gotta do.

BEN

Uh huh. And you've been married how long?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY

Twenty-four years this April.

BEN

And all that time, you've never had so much as a picnic with any of these girls?

JIMMY

I'm married to Anne.

BEN

Yeah I know. I just said that. But not once? Not once?

JIMMY

Four times. Early eighties. But that was before I was married.

BEN

And nothing since then?

JIMMY

It's not exactly like they're begging me for it. These girls take economics. Micro and macro. They know what fifty-eight K a year gets ya. They're looking to hook up with guys their own age, or rich assholes. No offence.

BEN

How could that offend me?

Jimmy grabs a hero roll, slices it in half, makes a sub as he talks.

JIMMY

You want to know the secret, why it don't bother me.

BEN

Yeah.

JIMMY

Truth, it wasn't easy in the beginning. First couple years after I took over for my dad,-- honest, I'd dream about these girls all night.

Ben takes the sliced roast beef out of the machine, puts it on a mayo'd piece of white bread, adds lettuce, tomato and the second piece of bread.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIMMY

But then, as they started coming back after they graduated, to homecomings and ball games, and sat at the same tables, and ordered the same food, I saw: they don't stay like this. None of 'em. They put on years, pounds, lines, everything. And I got one like that at home. And I can talk to her. I know her. I'll always know her.

BEN

And now you never look at these girls and want to fuck 'em.

JIMMY

No. I want to fuck all of them for a minute. Some for a month. But I can let it go.

BEN

Not me. I don't know how I didn't get up here sooner. Everywhere my eyes land I see soft targets. Some of these girls are real special, James.

JIMMY

Ah, in the end, it's all the same. It's supposed to be young men who confuse the differences between young women--

BEN

Yeah, Shaw. I use it to mean something different sometimes.

Ben plates the roast beef sandwich and walks it around the counter.

As he moves into the dining area, the front door opens and Allyson enters with a group of GIRLFRIENDS.

She does not see Ben at first, and works her way to a table in the rear of the diner.

Ben tries to keep his back to her as he delivers the sandwich.

On his way back behind the counter though, they make eye contact. Allyson, playing it as cool as she can in front of her new Friends, gets up from her seat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALLYSON

Ben. This is weird, Ben.

BEN

I didn't chase you up here.

A beat.

ALLYSON

I don't even know what to say.
I...

BEN

Nothing you have to say.

ALLYSON

This is really weird.

Now the Girls at Allyson's table are watching the conversation. A few other tables are paying attention too.

BEN

Let's go out front for a sec.

CUT TO:

SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF JAMES J. MCCOUN'S

Ben and Allyson walk out of the restaurant. Light snow falls.

BEN

I needed to get out of the city.
Jimmy gave me a job. That's the
reason I came up.

ALLYSON

This is the best job you could
get.

BEN

It's a job.

ALLYSON

But you had to have other options.

BEN

Your mother was very thorough in
eradicating them.

Allyson takes this in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSON

You must be so mad at me.

BEN

I'm not, actually. You had an opening, took it. Got a hard, clean shot in on your mom. Boxing glove can't get mad at the fist.

ALLYSON

So you're alright...

BEN

It is what it is.

There's really nothing more to say. They stand for a moment longer, then Allyson turns toward the restaurant. Just before she opens the door...

ALLYSON

I didn't do it to get at her. I did it because I wanted to.

Almost a smile from Ben.

BEN

Me too.

Allyson, and then Ben, walks back inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

JAMES J. MCCOUN'S

It's another day. Dinner crowd is thinning out. Ben works the counter.

The front door opens and Cheston enters. He's with an attractive girl, MAUREEN. The two of them, in winter clothes lightly dusted with snow, take seats at the counter.

Ben sees them.

BEN

Cheston.

CHESTON

Mr. Kalman. Great to see you. I had heard you were here. I wanted to give this back to you.

Cheston hands Ben the shirt that got messed up fighting over the frisbee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

You even washed it. Thanks.

CHESTON

De nada.

This is obviously an inside joke to Maureen. She repeats it...

MAUREEN

De nada...

And the two of them laugh. Ben likes it.

BEN

You seem to be doing just fine, young man.

CHESTON

Well, I told you I was a good student. This is Maureen.

BEN

Hi, Maureen. What can I get you?

MAUREEN

Black and White shake, please.

BEN

On its way.

Cheston holds up two fingers.

CHESTON

Dos.

Again, laughs.

MAUREEN

Dos.

BEN

And these are on the house.

CHESTON

Thanks. Hey, we're having a little house party Thursday night. You want to come by?

BEN

You, having a party? Aren't there classes the next day?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHESTON

So I sleep late and miss a class.
Is that really such a big deal?

BEN

Not if you're sleeping late with
Maureen it's not. I'd love to
come to the party. *Gracias por la
invitacion.*

Not much laughter.

Ben turns on the blender.

CUT TO

BEN...

...Walking along the street outside James J. McCouns.
The snow has picked up now. He wears a long black woolen
coat. STUDENTS and LOCALS move along the street too, but
in small clusters, together, talking and laughing.

Ben watches it all as he walks.

CUT TO:

MODEST HOUSE - PLAYROOM

Ben gets ready for bed. Takes his shirt off, his pants.
Sits down. Breaths out.

His cell phone rings. He looks at the number, almost
doesn't answer.

BEN (INTO PHONE)

Yeah.

INTERCUT WITH:

Jordan is in the back seat of a chauffeur driven Town Car
parked outside the Whitney.

JORDAN

I'm going to speak quickly and
clearly so that we don't
misunderstand one another,
Benjamin.

BEN

That would be fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN

It has been explained to me that you are on Allyson's campus.

BEN

I'm at the school, yes. I got a job up here.

JORDAN

You are to leave that campus tomorrow. I will not have my daughter's environment threatened. This is her college experience. I want her to remember it fondly.

BEN

Did she complain to you?

JORDAN

That's an irrelevant question.

BEN

Well I've never approached her, never tried to--

JORDAN

You're mistaking this for a conversation. I don't want to have to tell her father about everything that's transpired. But I will. And, as you know, he has a wide ranging group of contacts. And a far reach.

BEN

So you're asking me to come back to the city--

JORDAN

I for one, don't care where you are. As long as you're not there. Tomorrow, Ben. Get going. Or this file moves from my desk to Allyson's father's.

The phone goes silent. Ben turns it off, lies down on his couch.

CUT TO:

CHESTON'S HOUSE

Belle and Sebastian's Dear Catastrophe Waitress plays on an Ipod Hi-Fi set up on the lid of an old vinyl turntable.

Cheston's ROOMMATES, MAUREEN and a good sized group of other STUDENTS are hanging out talking over the music. Drinks, cigarettes, a Bong.

Cheston and Ben, each with a bottle of beer in hand, lean in close to one another on Cheston's couch.

At various points during the conversation, Ben makes eye contact with a TALL GIRL who has BLONDE STREAKS in her hair.

BEN

...So now I'm thinking that maybe Allyson wasn't trying to get a rise out of her mother so much as she was trying to get my attention through her mother. You see what I mean?

CHESTON

Trying to understand behavior through Jungian archetypes is a slippery slope, Ben...

Ben realizes something.

BEN

You were sneaking in some studying this afternoon weren't you?

CHESTON

I still have to do well. I told her I was crashing out after a morning wake and bake.

BEN

Well played. But back to Allyson. See, I just know there was a message being sent.

Cheston closes his eyes for a moment.

CHESTON

Did you get, like, caught up in her or something.

BEN

I might have.

CONTINUED:

CHESTON

But your counsel to me was to remember that--

BEN

I say a whole bunch of shit, kid. Some of it's even true.

Ben starts moving his head to the Belle and Sebastian.

BEN

Is this new? It's great.

CHESTON

No. It's old. Really old. I was in ninth grade when it came out, I think.

BEN

Good though. What is it?

CHESTON

Belle and Sebastian. Scottish seven-piece.

Ben takes a moment, scopes the whole scene Cheston's working.

BEN

Nicely done, young man, nicely done...

And then he gestures toward Maureen, who is lounging across the room.

BEN

...All around.

CHESTON

Well, being a Junior is nothing like being a Sophomore.

BEN

That's for sure. But being a sophomore is better than being a senior. Cause it's all in front of you.

Belle and Sebastian fades out and the IPOD shuffles to Hoodrat Friend by The Hold Steady. Ben still keeps the time with his head.

He downs his drink, gets up, and goes over to the Tall Girl with Blonde Streaks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN
Lumberjack, right?

TALL GIRL
What?

BEN
That's your Sunday morning
breakfast. The lumberjack
special. Two two and two. Cakes,
eggs, bacon.

TALL GIRL
You're the guy who works at
McCouns. I kept trying to figure
out who you were.

BEN
I'm the hash slinger.

TALL GIRL
Okay.

Ben tries to find his in.

BEN
I noticed the breakfast for two
reasons. First because you've got
the same hair Bancroft had in Mrs.
Robinson. And she always drove me
nuts.

No real sign of encouragement, or its opposite.

BEN
And, I loved the fact that you had
the guts to just eat, you know,
fuck what people think, you're
gonna be you, right?

TALL GIRL
Wow. That's way more thought than
I put into it. I just like
pancakes.

BEN
Uh huh. Cool.

Music keeps playing.

BEN
Great band, right.

TALL GIRL
They're my favorite.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN

I remember when it first came out.
Like around '95. I said to
myself, Belle and Sebastian,
they're the future. And I
listened to it that whole year.

TALL GIRL

Well, this is The Hold Steady
playing now.

BEN

Oh.

TALL GIRL

Yeah. Good talking to you. I'll
um...I'll see you at McCouns.

She walks to the other side of the party, joins a couple
of her Friends, who try not to look over at Ben.

Ben heads for the cooler to get another drink. Maureen
is getting a refill too. Ben falls into a much more
natural rhythm with her.

BEN

Cheston's terrific, isn't he?

MAUREEN

No, he's superific. He thinks
you're some kind of arch Doctor
Phil.

BEN

Doctor Phil. No way. I'm much
more cutting edge than that. He's
mainstream. And a bozo. I'm like
Bill Clinton.

MAUREEN

What is it with men your age and
Bill Clinton?

BEN

Men my age!

Ben really gets rolling now. The preceding failure a
memory. He begins walking to a quiet corner. Maureen
follows.

BEN

It's just a good analogy. Like
him, I'm strong of jaw and big of
heart.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BEN (CONT'D)

And although no longer on the front lines, a statesman, who can tell you just what to say and do to get the job done.

She laughs, warmly.

MAUREEN

Is that what you told Cheston? How to get it done? He's pretty closed mouthed about the specifics.

BEN

Well I never reveal confidences. I want you to know that too. I'd never tell him anything you said either. Or anything I saw. Or anything that happened.

MAUREEN

What's going to happen, Ben?

Ben closes the distance between them a bit.

BEN

That's not actually the question of the moment.

MAUREEN

No?

BEN

The question of the moment is this: are you getting enough from the transaction?

MAUREEN

The transaction?

BEN

Yeah. Between the two of you. Look, you have jokes, that Spanish gimmick or whatever it is, you can wear each other's clothes, study together, but, how can he be getting it done for you where it matters? It's obvious that you get it done for him. But what do you get from the transaction.

She leans in to him. Speaks as quietly as she can, but with fire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MAUREEN

You are a scumbag. Way worse than Clinton too. He actually tried to do some good. Shit. Cheston thinks you care about him.

BEN

I do. This has absolutely nothing to do with him. He'd never find out. Never. Listen, I'm not asking you to stop being with him. I think it's a nice little thing for both of you. But what I'm talking about is something else. And the very fact that you're still standing in with me here, tells me that you know it too.

MAUREEN

I'm still standing here because I'm deciding whether to throw this drink in your face or not. But I don't want Cheston to know what you tried to do. So instead, I'll just ask you to walk away.

BEN

Hey, nothing personal.

He turns to go. She grabs him by the shoulder.

MAUREEN

That's it, actually. Since you asked. That's what I get. Something personal. Besides 'getting it done' upstairs, which he does, Cheston and I reach each other. He's tender. Funny. Sweet. Smart. He's a million things that you aren't.

BEN

I was once. It doesn't last, honey.

And Ben heads for the door. On his way he grabs another beer, drinks it down in a gulp.

THE QUAD/SUSAN'S BEDROOM - INTERCUT

Ben careens across the quad, obviously starchy. He walks past the Bench. The one he stopped at before. He lingers. Runs his hand across the top of the bench. Takes out his cell phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARY

Hello.

BEN

I want to speak to my grandson.

GARY

He's been asleep for...six hours.
Jesus, do you know what time it
is?

BEN

Late. I'm sure it's late. Wake
him up. He'll want to talk to me.

Ben hears the sound of the phone being passed across the
bed.

SUSAN

Dad. You can't do this. You're
drunk.

BEN

I need to talk to him. I have
things to tell him. Important
things. Rules. What to do. What
not to do. I can teach him. Who
else is going to?

SUSAN

No.

BEN

This is important stuff. I don't
want him to fuck it all up. I'm
not gonna be around forever and
when I'm gone who will he have to
show him?

SUSAN

This is hard for me. But I'm
hanging up, dad.

BEN

Okay, okay. I called past his
bedtime. I shouldn't have. But
I'm sitting here on the Bench, you
know, where I met your mother. I
have to walk past this fucking
bench three times every day. I
try not to look at it. But I
always do. We sat here, talked
from three in the afternoon until
the sun came up again.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN (CONT'D)

How can I be on this bench and not want to talk to her, to you, to someone. To Scotty.

SUSAN

I'm sorry--

BEN

Tomorrow. I'll call back in the morning.

SUSAN

He won't be available then either. He thinks you're on a long trip where there are no phones. Which you are.

Ben puts the phone back in his pocket.

CUT TO:

MODEST NEIGHBORHOOD

Ben walks toward Jimmy's house.

Five doors down from Jimmy's place, Ben passes a parked LINCOLN TOWN CAR. He doesn't notice that...

A man, NASCARELLA, gets out of the Lincoln and begins following him.

Nascarella comes up behind Ben and PUNCHES him in the kidney.

Ben goes straight down.

Nascarella stands over him.

NASCARELLA

I'm gonna tell you a few things.
Then I'm gonna do a few things.
First, you're not being robbed.

Ben, breathing heavy, tries to get up on hands and feet.

NASCARELLA

Just stay there.

Ben rolls over to a sitting position.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NASCARELLA

Second, my name is Nascarella. I'm giving you my particulars, so you understand that you can forget going to the cops about this. I had thirty years in and left with a gold shield. Plus I squared things with the campus officer when he was giving me a copy of a report he wrote up. Seems you've thrown the first punch before. Just like tonight.

BEN

The fuck do you want? I paid all my Vegas debts. AC too.

NASCARELLA

Good. Nothing to do with me. I run security for Allyson Langer's father. And the third thing I gotta tell you is: leave. As soon as you can. You were told once. You ignored it. Are you gonna ignore me?

Ben meets Nascarella's eyes.

BEN

No. I'm not. I'll go.

NASCARELLA

You mean that? Really? That's a promise?

BEN

Yes. I'll leave first thing in the morning.

NASCARELLA

Not sure you'll be able to get on your way that quickly.

BEN

What?

NASCARELLA

You can get up now.

Ben gets himself to his feet. The moment he does, Nascarella is on him. Even if he wasn't drunk, Ben couldn't do much against the man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Nascarella throws punches like a technician. He attacks the ribs, stomach, kidneys and drops Ben back down to the concrete with a shot to the face.

NASCARELLA

Don't ignore me. No broad is worth it.

Nascarella turns and walks back to his car.

Ben slowly tries to stand, can't. He falls back again.

JIMMY (PRE-LAP)

We gotta get you to a hospital.

CUT TO:

JIMMY'S FRONT PORCH

Ben sits on the top step. He's bent over, and has a homemade ice-pack on his face.

Jimmy sits next to him.

BEN

No. No hospitals. Just want to lie down.

JIMMY

Uh uh. I won't let you close your eyes until we get you checked out.

Ben forces himself to sit up straighter.

BEN

You won't let me?

JIMMY

No. You could have internal shit going on. Could've hit your head on the ground. We need a doctor.

BEN

We. We need one?

JIMMY

Yeah.

BEN

Jesus Christ are you just too fucking good to be true. Why the fuck do you care if I get looked at or not. And don't say, 'we're friends.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY

But we are.

BEN

I hadn't seen you in thirty years.

JIMMY

Doesn't change anything.

BEN

See, that's where we're different.
I never put much faith in that
whole racket.

JIMMY

The friendship racket?

BEN

Yeah.

JIMMY

You had more pals then you knew
what to do with when you were
here.

Ben wobbles for a moment. Steadies himself with his arms.

BEN

Look, there's a place for friends.
Know where? In the midrange.
Because that's where everyone's
comfortable. When you're just
like them. Right in the middle.
But in the highest moments, the
lowest, you're alone. When I was
on the cover of Forbes, I was
there by myself. When I was on
the cover of the times business
section in handcuffs, I was by
myself again.

JIMMY

That's not--

BEN

Please.

Ben tries to take a deep breath. Winces. Coughs.

BEN

At the top, they pull at you,
smile at you, but they, all of
them, would kill you, literally
kill you, to take your place.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN (CONT'D)

And on my way to that court house--
you think anyone wanted to know
what was really going on in my
head, take a real peak in there?
No. It was just me.

JIMMY

I remember Nancy. No way she
treated you like that.

A long beat. Not even Ben can argue against that one.

BEN

Nope. Nancy was legit. And I was
legit with her. When I couldn't
be anymore, I left.

JIMMY

And where's that left you? Don't
you see?

BEN

It's fine.

JIMMY

But even in jail, that's
considered the worst, isn't it.
Solitary? No companionship--

BEN

Solitary wouldn't be a problem for
me. It wouldn't be any different.

JIMMY

I'm sorry to hear that, Ben. I
really am.

Ben gets to his feet. Steadies himself. Jimmy grabs him
by the arm, leads him to the front door.

Ben puts a hand out to grab the railing. They stop
moving.

JIMMY

For what it's worth, when you were
on the cover of Forbes, felt like
I was on the cover. I saved it
and everything.

Ben says nothing for a long moment. Then.

BEN

I believe you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JIMMY

Good. Let's get inside then.

Jimmy turns to head in. Ben takes a step toward the door then BUCKLES, falls to a knee.

BEN

You know something, I think that guy might've busted my rib.

Ben coughs once more. It doesn't sound good. A little blood comes up with it, dribbles out of the corner of his mouth.

BEN

Damn.

Jimmy catches Ben just as he passes out.

CUT TO:

HOSPITAL ROOM

Two nights later. Ben, taped around the chest, lies motionless.

Susan sits in a bedside chair, hands in her lap.

After a moment, Ben STIRS and opens his eyes.

BEN

Susie.

SUSAN

Hi Dad.

BEN

Hi. I can understand myself now.

Ben struggles to lift his head from the pillow.

SUSAN

They lowered the dose of painkillers. Had to keep it high so you wouldn't move too much, cause more internal damage. You're going to be okay.

BEN

You came. To see me.

She takes his hand in hers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN

Yeah.

BEN

You're gold, Suze, gold.

Ben puts his head back down.

BEN

How long can you stay?

SUSAN

For now. I have to head back in the morning. You rest. I'll sit with you 'til then.

BEN

I'm sorry about Carol Solomon. I know I shouldn't have--

SUSAN

Shhh. Forget about that now. Rest.

BEN

Thanks, Pumpkin.

Ben closes his eyes and Susan sits back in her chair, never letting go of Ben's hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

MORNING IN BEN'S ROOM

Susan is gone and Ben is woken up by an Eastern European NURSE, who tends to his bandages.

NURSE

You're healing quite nicely.

BEN

Still hurts like a beast.

NURSE

It will be sore for some time still. The doctors will be in after their rounds. They spoke to your doctor back in New York, and while you were under sedation they ran a series of tests. I know they want to discuss those results with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

What kind of tests? How did they know who to speak to?

NURSE

You told them and signed consent forms when you came in.

BEN

I don't remember.

NURSE

You wouldn't. The alcohol and shock to your system was pretty extreme.

BEN

What kind of tests?

NURSE

They did a series, as I said. Concentrating on your heart.

Ben looks around the room.

BEN

Am I still connected to any of this?

NURSE

Just the IV.

BEN

Disconnect it, please.

NURSE

That's against doctor's orders.

BEN

Well, I'm leaving. And I can't drag that thing behind me.

Ben gathers his energy and sits up.

CUT TO:

MODEST HOUSE

A taxi slows in front of Jimmy's house.

Ben gets out and struggles up the driveway.

He sees Allyson waiting on the porch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSON

I've been calling the hospital every morning. They said no visitors except family. And then today they said you left. So I thought I'd wait here for you. I hope you don't mind.

BEN

I've never had a problem with it. Your father might not be thrilled though.

ALLYSON

I told my dad if anything else happened to you, I wouldn't ever talk to him again. He knows I'm serious because I once didn't talk to him for nine months. He won't chance it.

Ben eases himself down into a chair.

BEN

Only daughters have that kind of power.

ALLYSON

Yeah. And it's almost enough to keep him around.

BEN

Right. You have that 'daddy thing.' I remember.

Ben's phone rings. The caller ID reads "Mass General Hospital." Ben hits ignore.

ALLYSON

Do you want me to come in for a while?

BEN

You know what, I think I need to rest.

ALLYSON

You sure?

BEN

Yeah. Do me a favor though?..

ALLYSON

What's that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

Help me up.

She grabs him by the arm and guides him into the house.

CUT TO:

PLAYROOM

It's morning. Ben opens his eyes to his cell phone ringing. Caller ID: "Mass General Hospital." Once again, he hits ignore.

CUT TO:

JIMMY'S FRONT PORCH

Ben exits the house, a purposeful expression on his face.

CUT TO:

CHESTON'S HOUSE

Ben rings the bell. He has a department store bag in his hand.

After a moment, Cheston comes to the door.

CHESTON

Ben.

Ben hands Cheston the bag.

BEN

I treated you wrong, kid. I'm here to make it right.

CHESTON

Really.

BEN

Yep. You gave me back my shirt. But I never gave you back the one I borrowed. And that's wrong.

Cheston looks inside the bag.

CHESTON

This isn't my shirt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Well, that particular shirt is in a box in New York somewhere. But I picked one out I thought would look good on you.

CHESTON

Thanks.

A beat. Then Ben gets to it.

BEN

It's possible there have been other ways I treated you wrong.

CHESTON

I know. She told me. She didn't want to, but I saw something was bothering her...She said you were drunk, that I shouldn't be mad. It was just sad, but that's who you are.

Ben nods.

BEN

See, she might actually be a Good One. I forgot to tell you about the Good Ones. They're different than all the others. And rare. When you get a Good One, you don't want to fuck it up.

CHESTON

I figured that lesson out on my own.

Ben smiles.

BEN

Yeah, Cheston, you would. Because you're a good one too.

CHESTON

Thanks for the shirt. I have to--

BEN

Go ahead. Hit those books.

Cheston nods at Ben, goes back inside.

CUT TO:

JAMES J. MCCOUNS

Ben, mostly healed by now, and Jimmy, are closing up as the last customers leave.

JIMMY

I'm taking Anne to the North End for dinner tonight. Daily Catch. You want to come with?

BEN

I think I've intruded enough in your home. You go take your wife out, have a wonderful time. And leave a sock on the door if you need some alone time afterwards.

JIMMY

The sock. That's right. I forgot about that.

BEN

You also forget about the time me and Nance intentionally 'forgot' to put the sock out, just so we could see your face when you walked in on us.

JIMMY

That I remember. You had a puny little--

BEN

Hey--

JIMMY

Ass. I was saying a small ass back then, when we were kids.

The men laugh with each other, remembering.

Jimmy throws some dishes into the washer.

BEN

You know what, go. Let me finish out. Do the dishes. You have a great night.

JIMMY

You don't have to make that offer twice.

And Jimmy grabs his stuff and leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

JAMES J. MCCOUNS

Some time has passed. Ben dries the last of the dishes, puts them away. He grabs his jacket, walks out the front door and locks it.

QUAD

Ben makes his way across the quad. The first signs of Spring are about.

It's fairly quiet, although there is a twilight Frisbee golf game going on.

Ben watches the kids throw a few, then continues walking.

Suddenly, he stops. He sees...

NANCY, SITTING ON THEIR BENCH.

She smiles at Ben. He returns it. No mixed feelings. He's really glad to see her.

She motions for him to come sit down. He does.

BEN

Hi Nance.

NANCY

Let's save 'hi' for a sec. I just want an answer. No equivocating.

BEN

Okay.

NANCY

When was the first time a doctor sent you for a heart scan?

Ben reacts.

BEN

Hospital called you?

NANCY

They called Susan.

BEN

You have the results?

NANCY

I do. Now answer me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Doctor Steinberg ordered that test about six years ago.

NANCY

How long after that did you start cheating?

BEN

That day.

NANCY

Uh huh. And you never went for the test, did you?

BEN

Nope.

Silence from Nancy.

BEN

Look. I can't use that as an excuse. It was a factor, but everything was building up anyway.

NANCY

Building up how?

BEN

I was turning invisible.

NANCY

Invisible?

BEN

You couldn't understand, Nance. Thirty years ago, when I walked into a room, the room changed. Just 'cause I showed up. Out of college, self-made, great shape, TV commercials, all of it.

NANCY

I remember. I was right there next to the camera when you shot them.

BEN

Then you remember what I was like back then: A lion. And that's how people treated me. But it started to change the past ten or twelve years. I'd walk into a room and only the older crowd would notice.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN (CONT'D)

Because they knew who I was. But
to everyone else: invisible.

NANCY

You were never invisible to me.

BEN

Doesn't count. You were my wife.

NANCY

It's what happens, Bennie, we get
old.

BEN

Hey. I accept that it's
biological. But I can't accept
that it happened to me. When
Steinberg thought he saw something
on my EKG, I got nervous at first.
He told me to go get that heart
scan, to see how much blockage
there was. I walked out of his
office with every intention of
getting it checked out.

NANCY

Instead...

BEN

Instead I went to some bar and
grill on Lexington Ave, had a
couple to calm myself, and took
the first young lady who said
'yes' to a suite at the Carlisle.

A beat.

BEN

That was the first time I ever
stepped out on you.

NANCY

What'd it do for you?

BEN

The truth--it did plenty.

NANCY

And then..?

BEN

And then I felt horrible. I'd
broken something. The only thing
that had ever counted. Me and
you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN (CONT'D)

It was over after that between us. Even if you didn't know, I did. I knew we could never make it work again after that.

NANCY

So you not only cheated, you wouldn't even give me the chance to forgive you.

BEN

Would you have?

NANCY

I don't know. I think so.

BEN

I figured you'd see it on my face, know straight away. But you didn't. Nothing happened. So I kept going.

NANCY

Of course.

BEN

And then, not long after, I was at my shop in White Plains. And I saw all those cars sitting there in the lot. And I thought, why am I 'New York's honest car dealer?' So I got the guy who inspected the floorplanning for the car company and we worked it out. He'd pretend I had more cars on the lot than I really did, and I'd send him on vacations all around the world. I also let my managers know that I wouldn't be checking their work as closely as I had in the past, freed them up to work whatever they wanted. And again. Nobody seemed to notice. For years.

NANCY

And the whole time you knew that your heart could blow at any second, so you wouldn't have to pay the price. Why didn't you go get the test to find out for sure?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BEN

I'm going to give some doctor that kind of power over me, to tell me the where, when and how? No way. You know how it is at our age. The best thing a doctor says is: 'the survival rate is high.' Or, 'it's a good cancer.' Or, 'we got it early.' I decided I didn't want to hear any of it. And I certainly wasn't going to let them put me on a bunch of beta blockers and other crap to slow me down, level me out. I was going to live, on my own terms, right up until the fucking thing in my chest exploded.

NANCY

And the screwing around and the stealing, it all made you feel alive, like you were cheating death, didn't it.

BEN

Worked for a while.

NANCY

Well you can't cheat it, Benny. No one can. It's gonna get you no matter how many nineteen year olds you talk into your bed.

BEN

I know that now. I really do know.

NANCY

Well, I am going to share these results with you. Since I have the information, you need the information.

Nancy takes a MANILLA ENVELOPE from her bag.

NANCY

The cardiologist at Mass General said you have the heart of a forty-year-old. No calcium deposits. No blockages.

BEN

None? But the EKG...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

NANCY

The EKG was inconclusive. That's why Steinberg ordered the test. The scan's in that envelope. With the report.

Nancy hands the Envelope to Ben.

NANCY

All else being equal, you're going to be around for years and years. You better figure out how you want to live them.

Ben sets the envelope down on his lap, unopened.

NANCY

I thought a lot about how I want to live driving here, and what I came up with is: with the guy I met on this bench. The guy who gave me my daughter. But I don't know if that guy still exists. If he doesn't, I have to move on, for good. Because I know this ride isn't meant to be taken alone.

BEN

Why would you give me that shot?

NANCY

For the same reason I chose you when we were here. You weren't like everyone else. You were smarter. You worked harder. You weren't some rich kid full of shit and your father's wing tip shoes. And you were kind.

BEN

But it was a lie. In the end, I was just as bad as all of them.

NANCY

No. You just stopped believing you were different.

Ben listens hard, moved.

BEN

I hurt you. And Susan. I'm sorry.

They look at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

NANCY

I'm parked right over there.
Happy to drive you back to New
York if you're ready. Happy to
let you sleep on our couch while
we figure it all out. And as you
know, it's a damn comfortable
couch.

Nancy smiles. Ben returns the warmth.

BEN

I knew that's why you kept it.

NANCY

Hey--that couch is all I'm
offering for now.

BEN

Understood.

Nancy stands.

NANCY

Take a minute. Read those
results. Think about what you
really want.

She walks away, gets into her car, which is parked at the
edge of the quad.

Ben takes the Heart Scan Results out of the envelope,
reads them.

He looks up. Sees Nancy in her car. Smiles at her.
Leans forward to get up.

And then he notices, crossing right by him, a BEAUTIFUL
YOUNG GIRL. His eyes follow her as she approaches the
campus bookstore.

Ben looks back to Nancy.

Looks back to the Girl.

Looks back to Nancy.

Back to the Girl.

And then, after one more moment's thought, he stands.

We...

CUT TO BLACK