

BEST FRIENDS FOREVER

by

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COLD OPENING

INT. MARK & ANNIE'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

A BEAUTIFUL, MID-CENTURY HOUSE IN THE SUBURBS. SOON, THE INTERIOR DESIGN WILL BE SLEEK AND TASTEFUL, BUT RIGHT NOW THERE ARE MOVING BOXES EVERYWHERE. SURVEYING THE SCENE WITH A HUGE SMILE IS **MARK DANSON** (35). HIS WIFE **ANNIE** (32, ASIAN), HIS SON **WALLY** (11, WEARING A CIVIL WAR-ERA SASH AND SWORD) AND MARK ALL HOLD MOVING BOXES.

MARK

Look at this place - it's like heaven.

No, it's better than heaven. Heaven doesn't have a Trader Joe's within walking distance.

WALLY

It's the suburbs, Dad. It's where dreams die and meth labs are born.

ANNIE

Wally! If I sassed my father like that, you know what he woulda done? He'd have sold me to some 80 year-old guy for a few bags of grain.

ANNIE LUGS HER MOVING BOX INSIDE. MARK PUTS AN ARM AROUND WALLY AND GESTURES TOWARDS THE LEAFY STREET BEYOND.

MARK

Wally, I want you to imagine something. Imagine you're sitting in business class on your way to yet another soul-crushing corporate downsizing, and you open up "U.S.

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

News and World Report" and you see that *
#6 on their list of Top 100 Places In *
America to raise a family - number six! *
- is the town where you grew up! Well, *
what would you do, Wally? What would *
you do? *

WALLY *

Upgrade to one of the five better *
places? *

MARK *

You'd move your family to your old *
hometown! Wally, you don't understand *
how great this is gonna be! (POINTS *
OFF) Two blocks that way is the park *
where I used to play - and now you're *
gonna play there! (POINTS THE OTHER *
WAY) And three blocks that way is *
this wicked empty lot where me and my *
buddies used to ride bikes and now *
you, Wally, you too will ride bikes! *

WALLY

People don't ride bikes anymore, Dad.

MARK

(LOOKING OFF) That redhead kid right *
there - he's riding a bike! *

REDHEAD KID (O.S.)

Nice sword, dickweed!

WALLY

(QUIETLY) It's a scabbard.

MARK

The main thing is, we're gonna get to
spend a ton more time together--

WALLY

(POINTING OFF) What about that creepy
pink house? What went on over there?

MARK LOOKS OFF. HIS EYES WIDEN.

MARK

Oh my God. That's where the Merwalds
used to live. *Roland Merwald* - he was
my age - and his crazy parents. Gosh,
they were odd...

WALLY

You think his crazy parents still
live there?

MARK

Oh, I doubt it. This was years ago.
They're probably dead by now-- (THEN)
Oh God! It's him! It's Roland's dad!

WALLY

He doesn't look dead.

MARK

Ah, jeez. He's coming over.

WALLY

You have fun with this, Dad.

WALLY GOES INSIDE. MARK'S TRAPPED! UP WALKS **HANK MERWALD**, 63. *

HANK *

Saw the moving truck. Thought I'd say
hello... *

MARK *

Hi, Mr. Merwald. *

HANK *

How do you know my name? Are you CIA? *

MARK *

It's me, Mark Danson. I went to
school with your son Roland? *

HANK *

Oh yeah. You're the kid who broke my
window with the football. *

MARK *

Wow. You remember that... *

HANK *

You never paid me back. *

MARK *

I was 11. *

HANK *

How old are you now? *

MARK *

Thirty-four. *

HANK *

You owe me 280 dollars. *

MARK

So, what's Roland up to these days?

HANK

Why don't you ask him yourself? I think he's in his room.

MARK

In his room... here? He's in town?

HANK

Ohh yeah. He's in town.

ROLAND (O.S.)

Mark Danson!

JUST THEN, **ROLAND MERWALD** (35) RUNS UP. ROLAND HASN'T SHAVED TODAY. NOR DID HE YESTERDAY.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

No way! Mark Danson, back in the jungle! This is so great! We're neighbors again!

MARK

Yes! Wait - you still live here? With your parents?

ROLAND

You're g-damn right I do! (THEN) Hey, what are you doing later? You wanna ride bikes?

ON MARK AND ROLAND, WE FREEZE-FRAME:

SMASH TO:

MAIN TITLES.

ACT ONE

SCENE A

EXT. MERWALD HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER

ROLAND LEADS MARK OUT TO THE LOVELY BACKYARD - SERENE, BEAUTIFULLY LANDSCAPED. THERE'S A GAZEBO, THE WORKS.

ROLAND

My mom's gonna go ape-crap when she sees you.

MARK

Oh, Gosh, it's been forever. I doubt she'll even--

LOIS MERWALD WALKS UP. AT 60, SHE'S STILL A MILF.

LOIS

Mark Danson! Come here, you beautiful boy!

MARK HUGS LOIS DUTIFULLY. SHE KISSES HIM... ON THE NECK? HUH?

MARK

Wow. Neck kiss. Okay. Good to see you, Mrs. Merwald.

LOIS

Mrs. Merwald is my mother-in-law who craps in diapers. Call me Lois. Cheez wiz you've gotten handsome!

ROLAND

Mom! You're embarrassing him. Mark's self-conscious about his looks, you know that.

MARK DEFLATES A LITTLE. ROLAND LEADS HIM FURTHER DOWN THE WALKING PATH. *

ROLAND (CONT'D) *

Anyway, back here is my outdoor art studio, when I want to play with natural light. In fact, I'm working on a portrait right now-- *

THEY COME AROUND A CORNER TO REVEAL AN EASEL AND A STUNNINGLY GORGEOUS **NUDE MODEL** STANDING JUST BEYOND. SHE SEEMS UNFAZED BY MARK'S PRESENCE. *

MARK

Ho! Wow. You are super naked. There's not a damn thing wrong with you, is there? (THEN) If now's a bad time-- *

ROLAND *

Mark, Cosette is fine - she's French. *

ROLAND SAYS SOMETHING TO COSETTE IN FLUENT FRENCH. COSETTE LAUGHS AND LAUGHS. MARK AWKWARDLY SMILES AND NODS. ROLAND TURNS TO HIM, FULL OF EMOTION. TAKES HIM BY THE SHOULDERS. LOOKS HIM IN THE EYE. *

ROLAND (CONT'D) *

Mark, I just want you to know - anything you need, ever, and I am there for you. Y'hear me? *

MARK *

Yeah, Roland. Thanks. *

ROLAND *

Man, it's good to have you back. *

ROLAND GIVES MARK A TIGHT, HEARTFELT HUG... THAT GOES ON WAY TOO LONG. JUST WHEN IT SEEMS LIKE IT CAN'T GO ON ANY LONGER: *

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Should I ask Cosette if she wants in
on this?

MARK

Probably shouldn't.

CUT TO:

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*
*
*
*
*

SCENE B

*

INT. MARK & ANNIE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

MARK AND ANNIE UNPACK BOXES.

ANNIE

What's the big deal? Where I'm from,
everybody lives with their parents
until they get married.

MARK

Yeah but this is America. We move out
after college and we don't eat goat.
(THEN) I wonder if he got hit in the
brain with a pipe or something. He
used to be so smart.

*

ANNIE

He's chillin' in his backyard with a
smokin' hot naked chick. Sounds like
he's still smart.

ANNIE SIDLES UP TO HIM, SEDUCTIVELY.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, back home there's
a ritual couples perform to drive out
evil spirits from a newly-purchased
dwelling. It's kinda like burning
sage, only much dirtier.

MARK

I like it. How 'bout, 9:15: bedroom,
9:20: naked, 9:30: applause?

ANNIE

How 'bout right here, as soon as
Wally goes to sleep.

SHE PLANTS A HUGE KISS ON HIM. MARK SMILES, DELIGHTED.

MARK

Living room sex? Ohh yeah. This is
gonna get weird, isn't it?

ANNIE

Super weird.

THEY START TO MAKE OUT... AND THE DOORBELL RINGS. MARK OPENS
THE DOOR TO REVEAL ROLAND, HOLDING A COVERED DISH.

MARK

Roland! Just stoppin' by, huh? No
call or anything...

ROLAND

You must be Annie! What a pleasure.
Mark told me you're from the
Philippines, so I took the liberty of
whipping up some Kare-Kare.

*

HE HOLDS OUT THE COVERED DISH. ANNIE'S EYES LIGHT UP.

ANNIE

Shut the F up! Nobody in America's
ever heard of this stuff!

ROLAND

I spent a pretty magical summer in Manila
as personal chef to the Minister of
Defense. Making it was easy - finding
high quality oxtail was the hard part.

MARK

Oxtail's not goat, right?

WALLY ENTERS. HE'S NOW IN FULL CIVIL WAR REGALIA.

MARK (CONT'D)

Oh hey - Roland, meet my son, Wally.

Wally, this is Roland Merwald. We were buds when we were your age.

ROLAND

Handsome scabbard, officer. First Massachusetts?

WALLY

Indeed!

ROLAND

So you're a buff, then.

WALLY

Huge buff!

MARK

Massive, massive buff.

*

*

ROLAND (CONT'D)

You know they're re-enacting the Battle of Chickamauga out in Galena this weekend. If you're interested--

MARK

Just a buff! He hasn't crossed over into re-enactor territory. Yet.

(THEN, DARKLY) Yet.

CUT TO:

SCENE C

*

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

MARK, ANNIE, ROLAND & WALLY FINISH THE LAST OF THE KARE-KARE.

ANNIE

That was the best Kare-Kare I've ever eaten. It punched me in the mouth with flavor.

ROLAND

Well you know what they say - *kung di madaán sa santong dasalan, daanin sa santong paspasan.*

ROLAND AND ANNIE LAUGH UPROARIOUSLY. MARK'S JUST LIKE, "WHA?"

MARK

So, Roland... painter, huh? Is that what you do for work?

ROLAND

Pff - once art becomes work, you may as well just crawl into the grave and wait, am I wrong? No, we were just having fun.

MARK

You paint naked ladies for fun.

ROLAND

I wasn't painting her, Mark. I was painting a portrait of her. Although I did paint her later - but that was for fun. And with chocolate.

MARK

(TO WALLY) You should probably go to bed.

WALLY

No, I'm good.

MARK

(TO ROLAND) So what do you do for a living?

ROLAND

Isn't it funny, the way people say "what do you do for a living?" when what they really mean is "what do you do for a working?"

MARK

Okay, what do you do for a working?

ROLAND

I've arranged my life such that I'm able to only take jobs that interest me. So I guess you could say what I do for a living is... live.

MARK

So... you're unemployed.

ANNIE

Mark, jeez.

ROLAND

It's okay, Annie, I get this a lot.

Especially from white guys. (TO MARK)

It's true - right now, none of my
adventures are "for profit." (THEN)

Who's up for *Lambanog* cocktails?

HE REACHES INTO A GROCERY BAG AND PULLS OUT A CRAZY-LOOKING
BOTTLE OF FILIPINO LIQUOR, A FEW ORANGES, AND AN UNIDENTIFIED
PLANT. ONCE AGAIN, ANNIE'S EYES LIGHT UP.

ANNIE

You beautiful bastard! (THEN) Wally,
go to sleep - your mama's gettin'
drunk!

CUT TO:

SCENE D

*

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

WALLY'S GONE TO BED. MARK, ANNIE & ROLAND SIP ELABORATE, FRUITY COCKTAILS. ANNIE'S A BIT TIPSY.

ROLAND

Man. Lotta memories in this house.
Old Man Carlin used to live here.

MARK

Oh my God, I remember him. With the
all-white eye!

ROLAND

Yep. I used to walk his dog for him.
Came over one day, found his body
right... here. Ninety-six years old.
(BEAT) Dog just tore him to pieces.
Grisly, grisly scene. (THEN, BRIGHTLY)
'Nother round?

MARK

Ooh, I got a big day tomorrow...

ANNIE

Mark's meeting with a VC guy who's
gonna write him a big-ass check!

ROLAND

VC?

MARK

Venture Capitalist. It's for a
startup software company I'm doing.
Out of the garage, actually.

ROLAND

I've partied with a lot of Venture
Capitalists. I've also partied with a
lot of Viet Cong, which is why I ask.
Guess it's just you and me, Annie.

ANNIE

(DELIGHTED) Set 'em up, bitch!

ROLAND CROSSES TO THE COUNTER TO MIX UP ANOTHER ROUND. BEAT.

MARK

Ah, what the hell. I can stay up and
drink with the big kids.

SMASH TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

MARK IS PASSED OUT ON THE COUCH, SNORING. MEANWHILE, ANNIE
AND ROLAND ARE ON THEIR 3RD OR 4TH *LAMBANOG* COCKTAIL.

ANNIE

You met the Dalai Lama?!

ROLAND

I was his massage therapist. Poor guy -
held all his tension in his shoulders.

ANNIE SMILES. LOOKS AT ROLAND FOR A BEAT.

ANNIE

No offense, but... how does a dude
like you stay single this long?

ROLAND

Ha. Believe it or not, the only girl
I ever really loved was... Mark's
sister.

ANNIE

Alexis? You could do so much better than her. She's kind of a whore.

ROLAND

Well. When we were kids she was enchanting. And I guess I was just really turned on by the idea of being Mark's brother. Not in a gay way. But very, very turned on.

ANNIE

Totally get it.

ROLAND

I better go. It's late. (BEAT) Mark's a lucky guy, you know that?

ANNIE

I tell him every day.

SHE SMILES. AS ROLAND CROSSES TO THE DOOR, HE LOOKS AT MARK.

ROLAND

He's also got a hair-trigger bladder. Before I go, you wanna soak his hand in warm water?

CUT TO:

SCENE E

*

INT. FANCY OFFICE BUILDING - LATER THAT MORNING

MARK STANDS BEFORE A PRETTY YOUNG **SECRETARY**.

MARK

Mark Danson to see Barry Tarkanian.

SECRETARY

You... you're here to see Barry?

MARK

Yes. He was going to write me a six-figure check and justify my decision to leave a high paying job with good benefits. (BEAT) I'm about five minutes early.

SECRETARY

Barry... um, Barry stepped out.

MARK

What do you mean he "stepped out"?

SECRETARY

He had some investments go poorly, so um, he threw a chair through that window over there and then he... stepped out.

SHE GESTURES TO THE CORNER OFFICE, THROUGH WHICH WE CAN SEE A LARGE BROKEN WINDOW CRISS-CROSSED WITH POLICE TAPE.

MARK

No. This can't be happening. NO!

POP OUT TO:

EXT. FANCY OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

FROM OUTSIDE THE BUILDING, WE SEE MARK STEP UP TO THE GAPING HOLE IN THE WINDOW AND YELL:

MARK

Noooooo!!!!

AND WE:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE H

*

INT. MARK & ANNIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

ANNIE CONSOLES MARK, WHO LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEEN HIT BY A BUS.

MARK

This is HORRIBLE! I went into crazy debt to start this business! We're gonna wind up living in the streets, eating squirrels.

ANNIE

My sister in Manila did that for a year. She lost ten pounds and her skin never looked better.

MARK

It was a sure thing! (THEN) I have to find a new investor or I'm dead.

ANNIE

I know this wasn't the plan, but if push comes to shove you could always go back to your old job, right?

MARK

(BEAT) I didn't tell you about my last day of work, did I?

POP TO:

A YOUTUBE VIDEO

SHOWS A CONFERENCE ROOM FULL OF GUYS IN SUITS:

MARK

--no, Sharon, I won't calm down! I'm
tired of never seeing my family and I'm
tired of flying around the world laying
people off and-- (TO BOSS) --I'm tired
of you, Glen. You're horrible. (THEN)
Well guess what, folks? For my final
corporate downsize, I'm downsizing
myself! I found an investor and I'm
starting a business of my own! I am
outta here, losers!

*
*
*
*
*
*

MARK EXITS. THEN, HE COMES BACK. PICKS UP HIS BLACKBERRY.

MARK (CONT'D)

Forgot my BlackBerry.

POP OUT TO:

OUT OF VIDEO - INT. MARK'S HOME OFFICE / GARAGE

MARK IS SHOWING THIS TO ANNIE ON HIS COMPUTER MONITOR.

MARK

The intern had a camera phone. (THEN,
IMPRESSED) Wow. 310 hits.

ANNIE

I believe in you. You'll figure
something out. And if you don't, I
can always sell my body. That's how
my sister bought her condo.

HE LAUGHS. SHE KISSES HIM AND EXITS. SOFTLY, TO HIMSELF:

MARK

What the hell am I gonna do...?

MARK BURIES HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS. BEAT, THEN:

ROLAND (O.S.)

Who wants to jam?! I brought the
key-tar!

REVEAL ROLAND, STANDING OUTSIDE THE WINDOW. WITH A KEY-TAR.

MARK

Roland? Not a good time. You wanna
hang some time, gimme a call. We'll
put something on the books.

ROLAND

The books?

MARK

The books. Our calendars.

ROLAND

You want to make milk come out of
God's nose? Show him your calendar.

MARK

Dude. I can't do this right now! My
investor just jumped out a window.

ROLAND

A high window?

MARK

A very high window, yes! I had the chance to follow him, and stupidly, I didn't.

ROLAND

Mark, I often find that if you sift through the ashes of a setback, you will find the soft green shoots of opportunity. Whaddya say we brew up a pot of coffee, shake out the sillies with a quick 45-minute prog-rock session, then knock out a good, long, brainstorm-slash-hang?

MARK

(EXPLODING) ROLAND! I don't have time to jam, or hang, or jam-slash-hang. I need to find a Venture Capitalist who'll write me a six-figure check before my next mortgage payment is due! Oh, sorry - "mortgage," that's a thing adults have, who don't still live with their parents.

ROLAND

My apologies. Forgive the unwanted intrusion. It shan't happen again.

ROLAND SALUTES, THEN LOWERS HIMSELF UNTIL HE'S NO LONGER VISIBLE IN THE WINDOW. MARK SHAKES HIS HEAD. AND WE:

CUT TO:

SCENE J

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INT. MARK & ANNIE'S KITCHEN - A FEW DAYS LATERMARK ENTERS, HOLDING A BRIEFCASE.

MARK

Okay, good news! A partner in Barry's firm is interested, but he needs to hear a detailed pitch of the business plan by Monday. I'll have to cram like a madman all weekend, but--

RESET TO:INT. MARK & ANNIE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUSMARK COMES AROUND THE CORNER INTO THE LIVING ROOM, ONLY TO FIND ROLAND, ANNIE AND WALLY PLAYING TWISTER. HE STOPS.

MARK

Roland. You're back.

ROLAND

I hope that's okay. I know it wasn't on the calendar, but Wally and I struck up a conversation out on the street during which we learned we both share a fondness for the games of Milton Bradley.

ANNIE

Of course it's okay! In fact, Roland, you should stay for dinner!

WALLY

Yeah! Dad, can he?

MARK LOOKS AT WALLY - WHO, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THEY MOVED TO THE SUBURBS, HAS A BIG SMILE ON HIS FACE.

MARK

Absolutely. Roland, please, stay.

We'll order pizza or something.

ROLAND

Order pizza? We may as well fill our mouths with feces.

MARK

Let's definitely not do that.

CUT TO:

SCENE K

*

EXT. MERWALD BACKYARD - EVENING

ROLAND STOKES A COAL FIRE IN HIS BACKYARD BRICK PIZZA OVEN.
PULL BACK TO FIND LOIS POURING CHIANTI FOR MARK & ANNIE.

LOIS

Roland trained under one of the great
pizzaioli in all of Naples.

MARK

Of course he did.

LOIS

He had a woman there. Beautiful. Very
sexually experimental from what he
tells me. Willing to do any number of
different--

MARK

Got it.

LOIS

He dumped her. Just like the others.
God I want grandkids.

MARK

You can be Wally's unofficial
"grandma."

LOIS

Nah, he's a little too weird.

AS LOIS SMILES GOOD-NATUREDLY, THE SOUND OF DEAN MARTIN
CROONING "THAT'S AMORE!" KICKS IN AND WE SEE A SERIES OF
QUICK DISSOLVES:

QUICK DISSOLVES:

- ROLAND THROWS A PERFECT DISC OF DOUGH INTO THE AIR.
- ANNIE LAUGHS WITH HANK & LOIS AS THEY DRINK CHIANTI. MARK CHECKS HIS BLACKBERRY. SIX NEW E-MAILS... OY.
- WALLY TOSSES A PIZZA, TRYING TO EMULATE ROLAND.
- MARK WATCHES AS WALLY AND ROLAND PLACE TOPPINGS ON A PIZZA. WALLY LAUGHS AT SOMETHING ROLAND SAID. HE SEEMS REALLY HAPPY. AND SLOWLY... MARK BEGINS TO SMILE.

OUT OF DISSOLVES

ROLAND STANDS WITH WALLY, HOLDING A PIZZA ON A HUGE SPATULA.

ROLAND

A great pie is like a great human
being. Pliable yet firm. Complex.
Utterly unique. We'll call this one
the "Wally."

MARK WATCHES THIS, TOUCHED. HANK SIDLES UP TO HIM.

MARK

Hey, Hank.

HANK

Please. Call me Mr. Merwald.

MARK

(BEAT) Your son's an interesting guy.

HANK

For a lotta years I thought, "I'm
gonna kick that fella out on his ass,
make him get a real job." But then I
realized, hell, I went in to the same
"real job" every day for 45 years,
and y'know what? It kinda sucked.

MARK

They sorta do suck, don't they?

HANK

They sorta do. At least he's had a life. (THEN) Still, I wouldn't mind if he found a place of his own someday. Him living here really cuts into my "bang Lois" time. Man, before that kid was born we used to--

MARK

Got it.

HANK KNOCKS BACK A SWIG OF CHIANTI. THEN:

HANK

By the way, did you bring that 280 bucks you owe me?

MARK

Actually, um--

BEFORE MARK CAN ANSWER, WALLY WALKS UP.

WALLY

Dad? You got a minute?

HANK

This isn't over.

HANK CROSSES AWAY, MAINTAINING EYE CONTACT WITH MARK FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

MARK

What's up, buddy?

WALLY

*

I thought about what you said. About
this being a great place to grow up.
And... I think you may be right.

*

*

MARK

Really? That's great!

WALLY

So if it's cool with you, I'd like to
go to that Civil War Reenactment this
weekend.

MARK

That's... great.

WALLY

I know you have to cram for that
Venture Capitalist meeting... if
you're too busy, I can go with--

MARK

No. Roland? No. I'm not too busy.

WALLY

But I thought you said--

MARK

I said I'd go, goddammit! (THEN)
Buddy.

CUT TO:

SCENE 1

*

EXT. CIVIL WAR RE-ENACTMENT BATTLEFIELD - DAY

SIMULATED WAR IS HELL-LIKE. MARK (IN A FAKE BEARD) AND WALLY (DITTO) RUN SCREAMING FROM A HORDE OF REBEL SOLDIERS.

MARK/WALLY

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!

THEY DIVE OVER AN EARTHEN EMBANKMENT AND TAKE COVER WITH A GROUP OF FELLOW UNION SOLDIERS. NOW "SAFE," MARK FURIOUSLY SCRATCHES AT HIS NECK AND CHEST.

MARK

Gah! This authentic hand-stitched wool uniform is so mother-freakin' ITCHY!

WALLY

I know! Imagine the fortitude of the men who braved the real swamplands of Chickamauga!

WALLY, LOVING THIS, GOES OFF TO LOOK AROUND. AN VERY OLD UNION SOLDIER HOLDS OUT HIS GROSS-LOOKING CANTEEN TO MARK.

UNION SOLDIER #1

Slake thy thirst before we charge the Confederate dogs.

MARK

Nope, I'm good.

THE GUY WALKS OFF. MARK TURNS AWAY FROM THE OTHERS, SNEAKS HIS BLACKBERRY TO CHECK E-MAILS... THEN NOTICES ANOTHER SOLDIER GLARING AT HIM.

UNION SOLDIER #2

Hey! No phones, asshole!

SEEING MARK'S PHONE, VARIOUS SOLDIERS YELL HISTORICALLY ACCURATE CURSES: "WHAT IN TARNATION?!" "LOYALISTS, TAKE UP THINE ARMS!", ETC. MARK HAS TO THINK FAST...

MARK

"Phone"? I know not of which you
speak! This looks not like any
gramophone I've ever laid eyes upon!
Rebel Spy! *SEIZE HIM!!*

HE DRAMATICALLY POINTS AT THE SOLDIER WHO CALLED IT A
"PHONE." THERE'S A LONG BEAT. IS IT POSSIBLE THAT *WORKED?*

UNION SOLDIER #2

Gramophone hasn't been invented yet,
asshole.

SMASH TO:

EXT. CIVIL WAR RE-ENACTMENT BATTLEFIELD - SECONDS LATER

NOW A RUSHING HORDE OF OF REBEL SOLDIERS AND UNION SOLDIERS
CHASE MARK AND WALLY.

MARK/WALLY

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!

AS THE ANGRY RE-ENACTORS GAIN ON MARK AND WALLY, A BEARDED
UNION SOLDIER RIDES UP ON A WHITE HORSE. YEP - IT'S ROLAND.

ROLAND

Hop on!

ROLAND REACHES A HAND DOWN. MARK REACTS IN DISBELIEF.

MARK

You brought a horse?

ROLAND

This is my fourth Chickamauga. Gotta
re-enact like you mean it! Hyyah!

AS THEY GALLOP OFF, IN A CRESCENDO OF NOISE, WE:

CUT TO:

SCENE M

*

INT. MARK'S PRIUS - DRIVING - LATER

TOTAL SILENCE. WALLY STEAMS AS MARK DRIVES. BEAT.

MARK

If it's any consolation... we kinda
united the two sides back there.

MARK SMILES. WALLY DOES NOT.

WALLY

Dad? You don't have to like the stuff
I like - just don't make fun of it,
okay? You're worse than the kids at
school.

MARK

(CONCERNED) School? What's going on
at school?

WALLY

Nothing. Never mind. I've been doing
just fine as an outcast without you
making it worse.

MARK REACTS -- *WOW*, THAT STUNG. THE ANGLE WIDENS TO REVEAL
THE OCTOGENARIAN UNION SOLDIER FROM EARLIER.

UNION SOLDIER #1

God damn this war for turning father
against son. (THEN) I'm the third
house on the left.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE P

*

INT. UNKNOWN OFFICE - OUT OF TIME

TIGHT ON MARK, IN A SUIT, AS HE ADDRESSES SOMEONE OFFSCREEN.

MARK

Danson Software is founded on three
core principles. One: Ease of user
interface. Two...

HE HESITATES FOR A LONG, LONG BEAT... THEN EXPLODES IN ANGER.

MARK (CONT'D)

Dammit! You can't even come up with
two! You are so screwed!

THE ANGLE WIDENS TO REVEAL WE'RE IN MARK'S HOME OFFICE.
IT'S A TWO-CAR GARAGE THAT'S BEEN CONVERTED INTO A KICK-ASS
WORKPLACE - BIG FLAT-SCREEN COMPUTERS, GLASS DESK, ETC.

MARK (CONT'D)

Why did you do this? *WHY?! It's*
'cause you're stupid!

MARK STARTS PUNCHING HIS OWN SKULL.

MARK (CONT'D)

Stupid, stupid-- OW!

THAT LAST PUNCH REALLY HURT. MARK RUBS HIS HEAD, THEN LOOKS
UP TO SEE ANNIE STANDING IN THE DOORWAY, IN A NIGHTGOWN.

ANNIE

If your business tanks, I at least
wanna be able to park cars in here.

MARK CHUCKLES. ANNIE PUTS AN ARM AROUND HIM. LOOKS AT THE
COFFEE POT SITTING ON HIS DESK.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

That coffee smells gross.

MARK

It's authentic Civil War coffee, made with real chicory. Stuff's worse than slavery.

ANNIE

You okay?

MARK

My skull hurts. (THEN) Wally said something today. Jarred loose an old memory. (BEAT) Roland and I were actually really good friends - maybe even best friends - from about 6th grade to 8th grade. But then, when we got to high school... I kinda blew him off.

*
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*
*
*

ANNIE

What do you mean you blew him off?

MARK

I wanted to become one of the "cool kids." You know, "re-invent" myself. First day of freshman year, I walked into the cafeteria, found the coolest group of kids I could - the ones with Vanilla Ice haircuts, and Jams - and sat with them. Roland ate lunch alone that day... in a kilt.

*
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*
*

ANNIE

(LONG BEAT, THEN) You ever do that to me, I'll kill you with my shoe.

MARK

I know you will, honey. (THEN) But then I see him after all these years, and he just greets me like I'm still his best friend...

ANNIE

You need to apologize to him. First thing in the morning.

MARK

I got my pitch tomorrow. Can't I do it after?

ANNIE

You wanna drive the evil spirits out of this house with me, or you wanna do it alone, in the shower? Your call.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE R

*

INT. ROLAND'S ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

ROLAND'S ROOM IS AWESOME. IT'S LIKE THE ULTIMATE "BACHELOR LOFT": FLAT SCREEN, WET BAR, ETC. MARK GAWKS AT PICTURES OF ROLAND POSING WITH CLINTON... TRUMP... SLASH...

MARK

Wow. Your room has really changed.

ROLAND

One's room should be a sanctuary.

This is where I decompress.

MARK

Decompress from what?

ROLAND

Oh hey, I finished that painting!

Check it.

ROLAND GESTURES AT A CANVAS RESTING AGAINST THE BASE OF THE WALL. IT'S A PERFECT RENDERING OF THE STUNNINGLY GORGEOUS NUDE MODEL FROM THE OTHER DAY... BUT IT'S JUST HER FACE. HUH.

MARK

Um, actually, I came by to... well, I came by to, um, apologi--

SUDDENLY ROLAND LOOKS INTO MARK'S EYES, CONCERNED.

ROLAND

How late did you stay up last night?

MARK

Technically... I'm still up.

ROLAND

Oh, Mark. All-nighters are terrible for your circadian rhythms. Life's like driving - you gotta pump the brakes or you'll spin out. Promise me you'll take a Power Nap today. Two to four p.m., that's mandatory.

MARK

Oh, no. My presentation is at four. Can't do that.

ROLAND

Then Power Nap earlier, but for God's sake Power Nap. I do every day - it's the cornerstone of a balanced existence.

MARK

Roland, what is it with you? I don't have the kind of life that affords me the luxury of a daily nap! You understand? Especially not today - I gotta squeeze out every last ounce of time I've got between now and that presentation.

ROLAND CHUCKLES SAGELY TO HIMSELF.

ROLAND

It's so funny the way people perceive "time."

MARK

Funny how? How is it funny?

ROLAND

You don't need more time, you need better time. Martin Luther King had only 39 years on this earth, which is four more than Mozart had, which is two more than Jesus had. (BEAT) You think those guys didn't take the occasional Power Nap?

MARK

I'll sleep tonight, Roland. Okay?

That work for you?

MARK TURNS TO LEAVE. ROLAND SCOOTs BEHIND HIM...

ROLAND

If you refuse to Power Nap, at least let me do one thing--

ROLAND DEFTLY SLIPS HIS HAND UP THE BACK OF MARK'S SHIRT.

MARK

What are you doing?! You're handling me!

MARK SQUIRMS, BUT ROLAND SOMEWHAT FORCIBLY IMMOBILIZES HIM.

ROLAND

I can see by the way you're holding your shoulders that you have a knot beneath your scapula-- (FEELING AROUND) Yep, there's the culprit.

ROLAND APPLIES SOME PRESSURE. SUDDENLY MARK'S FACE IS PURE ECSTASY.

MARK

Oh! Oh. Ohhhh... GOD IN HEAVEN that
feels good.

ROLAND

Yeahhhh. Breathe into it.

AS ROLAND CONTINUES TO RUB MARK, WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROLAND'S ROOM - LATER

CANDLES HAVE BEEN LIT. SOOTHING EASTERN MUSIC PLAYS FROM IPOD SPEAKERS. WE PAN UP FROM MARK'S NOW-BARE FEET, WHICH ROLAND EXPERTLY RUBS, ALONG HIS BODY (NOW FACE-DOWN ON ROLAND'S BED) UP TO HIS FACE. HE'S DEAD ASLEEP. DROOLING. COMATOSE.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE 5

*

OVER BLACK:

ROLAND (OVER BLACK)

Mark. Mark. Hey, buddy, wake up.

FADE UP ON:

INT. MARK'S CAR - AFTERNOON

MARK'S EYES POP OPEN. HE LOOKS DOWN TO SEE HE'S WEARING A BUSINESS SUIT - PERFECT TIE, CRISP WHITE SHIRT, ETC...

...AND HE'S SITTING IN THE PASSENGER SEAT OF HIS CAR! AND SITTING IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT... IS ROLAND! WHAT THE HELL??

ROLAND

Man, you were out. You gonna tell me you didn't need that?

MARK

What-- where am I? What time is it?

ROLAND

It's 3:45. I wanted to give you a moment to clear your head before you walk in there.

MARK LOOKS OUTSIDE - THE CAR IS PARKED RIGHT OUTSIDE THE FANCY OFFICE BUILDING FROM EARLIER. HIS EYES WIDEN.

EXT. FANCY OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

FROM HIGH ABOVE THE BUSY CITY STREET, WE PULL BACK FROM MARK'S PRIUS TO HEAR:

MARK (O.S.)

Noooooo!!!!

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SCENE T

*

INT. MARK'S CAR - DAY

ROLAND AND MARK, AS WE LEFT THEM.

MARK

I slept for *seven hours*?!

ROLAND

(NODS) In Singapore I had to register
my hands as an anesthetic.

MARK

You changed my clothes? (FEELING
AROUND) You changed my underwear?

ROLAND

I worked in hospice for two years.
Nothing I haven't seen.

MARK

This is a disaster! My notes, my
PowerPoint - it's all back at home!

MARK SCREAMS IN FRUSTRATION! HE STEPS OUT ONTO...

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

...AND PACES NERVOUSLY AS THE CITY BUZZES AROUND HIM.

MARK

I could not be more dead. If there is
a God, he'll let another Venture
Capitalist fall out of the sky right
now and kill me.

ROLAND GRABS MARK BY THE SHOULDERS.

ROLAND

Mark! Focus. Just clear your mind,
take a deep breath and tell me: what
is your company about?

MARK

I can't do this, Roland.

ROLAND

I know you can do it. When we found
that dead raccoon, who poked it with
a stick to make sure it was dead?
You. When we were Joe Montana and
Dwight Clark in the NFC Championship
Game, who made "The Catch"? You.
You're clutch, Mark. You always have
been.

MARK LOOKS UP. ROLAND SMILES. A CONNECTION.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

There must be a reason you decided to
chuck a stable, well-paying job to
strike out on your own. People don't
just do that. So tell me: what's the
reason? You already know the what.
Tell me the why.

BEAT. ROLAND IS LOOKING MARK RIGHT IN THE EYES. THEN:

MARK

I wanted to create something. Not just a profitable company, a software system that would simplify people's lives. So that it wouldn't just be all about work. So that people could focus on what's important to them. Like their friendships, and their families.

LONG BEAT. MARK MARVELS AT WHAT JUST CAME POURING OUT OF HIM.

MARK (CONT'D)

Whoa. That sounded pretty good.

ROLAND

Power of the Power Nap. (BEAT) Makes me glad I chloroformed you. (OFF MARK'S LOOK) Kidding! Now get in there and kick some ass.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE W

*

INT. CAR - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

MARK DRIVES THROUGH SUBURBAN PARADISE. THE LEAFY TREES... THE KIDS ON BIKES... AND ROLAND AND LOIS POWER WALKING, LAUGHING HARD AT A JOKE ONLY THEY ARE IN ON. HE PULLS OVER.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

MARK GETS OUT OF THE CAR AND WALKS UP TO ROLAND AND LOIS. HE REACHES INTO HIS WALLET, PULLS OUT A CHECK.

MARK

Mrs.-- um, Lois? Give this to Mr.

Merwald. He'll know what it's for.

HE HANDS HER THE CHECK. SHE LOOKS AT IT, THEN AT HIM.

LOIS

You caved. I'm disappointed.

SHE CROSSES AWAY. BEAT.

ROLAND

So? How'd it go?

MARK

Oh, y'know. I won't have an answer till tomorrow at the earliest.

ROLAND

I didn't ask you about the result. I asked you... how'd it go?

ROLAND LOOKS AT MARK. MARK KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT HE MEANS.

MARK

It was amazing. Best presentation of my life. I nailed it.

ROLAND

Nice. Slap it out.

MARK AND ROLAND EFFORTLESSLY BREAK INTO AN ELABORATE HANDSHAKE. THEN:

MARK/ROLAND

Double Trouble!

MARK

Wow. I forgot about that.

ROLAND

Some things are hard-wired.

BEAT OF SILENCE AS THEY START WALKING TOWARD ROLAND'S HOUSE.

MARK

Roland, you probably don't remember,
but I was pretty awful to you back in
high school.

ROLAND

Oh, I remember. In fact, I just got
out of therapy for that. (BEAT, THEN)
I'm kidding! I mean, yeah, it stung,
but whaddya gonna do? You were a kid.

MARK LOOKS AT ROLAND, WHO'S GENUINELY AT PEACE WITH THE WHOLE THING. BEAT.

MARK

How do you do that? Just forgive like
that? I was such a dick to you.

ROLAND

It's called letting go. You should
try it.

THEY LOOK UP - THEY'VE ARRIVED IN FRONT OF ROLAND'S HOUSE.

MARK

Listen man, here's the deal. My kid doesn't connect with anyone, but he seems to connect with you. If having the same Best Friend is the one thing he and I have in common... I guess I'll take it.

ROLAND

Cool beans. (THEN) I'm crazy jealous of you, Mark. Y'know that?

MARK

You're jealous of me?

ROLAND

Hell yeah. You got a wicked hot wife and an amazing kid who both love you to death. I mean I haven't been in love since... gosh, since your sister. You've got a great life - you've got it all.

JUST THEN, A LONG BLACK LIMO PULLS UP, MUSIC PUMPING.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

That's my ride. (THEN) Hey, speaking of your sister - I heard she got divorced?

MARK

Yes. About a year ago.

ROLAND

If I were to ask her out, would you
be upset?

MARK

(EYES NARROWING) Why do you ask?

THE LIMO DOOR OPENS TO REVEAL **THREE STUNNING SUPERMODELS**, AN
ASIAN FELLOW IN A THAI LEISURE SUIT, **SCOTTIE PIPPEN**, AND
MARK'S SISTER **ALEXIS**. ROLAND GETS IN.

MARK (CONT'D)

Alexis?

ALEXIS

Hey bro! Welcome home! I've been
meaning to call you since you moved
back to town, but y'know - so busy!
Chat soon, okay?

MARK

(BEAT) Is that Scottie Pippen?

BUT THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT. MARK WATCHES IT DRIVE OFF.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE Y

*

INT. MARK & ANNIE'S HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING - QUICK POPS

- BEDROOM: MARK TIES THE PERFECT KNOT ON HIS TIE AND SLIPS A SPIFFY SUIT JACKET OVER HIS CRISP WHITE DRESS SHIRT.

- KITCHEN: MARK FILLS A STAINLESS STEEL MUG WITH COFFEE.

- HALLWAY: MARK WALKS WITH PURPOSE TO A DOOR, THEN ENTERS...

- THE GARAGE/HOME OFFICE. HE BOOTS UP HIS LAPTOP, CHECKS HIS E-MAIL. HIS BLACKBERRY BUZZES WITH AN ALERT:

INSERT SHOT: THE BLACKBERRY READS: **"7:30-7:40 - SPEND QUALITY TIME WITH WALLY."**

CUT TO:

SCENE 2

*

INT. WALLY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MARK ENTERS TO FIND WALLY SURROUNDED BY AN ELABORATE SET OF CIVIL WAR FIGURINES.

MARK

Heya, Wall. Thought we'd spend some quality time. Whatcha up to?

WALLY

Hand-painting my new Ambrose Burnside figurine.

MARK

Ooh. Okay. Wanna do something fun?

WALLY

I find this fun.

MARK

Oh yeah, yeah. Totally.

WALLY REVEALS A MINIATURE CANNON.

WALLY

Actually, you might find this kinda interesting. It's a miniature replica of the Griffen Artillery Gun used at Chancellorsville. Wanna go outside? Test this bad boy out?

MARK

Yeah, what the hell? (THEN) Wait.

MARK TAKES OUT HIS BLACKBERRY, HOLDS IT UP, SMILES... THEN TURNS IT OFF. AS HE TOSSES IT ONTO WALLY'S BED, WE:

CUT TO:

SCENE AA

*

EXT. FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

MARK AND WALLY PRIME THE ARTILLERY GUN, WHICH IS POINTED AT A LARGE, THICK, TALL HEDGE THAT'LL ACT AS A "BACKSTOP."

MARK

You're sure the bush'll stop it?

WALLY

Totally. Ready... aim... fire!

MARK IGNITES THE CANNON AND IT FIRES. IT KICKS HARD, KNOCKING MARK BACK WITH A LOUD BOOM! THE BALL TEARS THROUGH THE HIGH SHRUB LIKE TISSUE PAPER. A LOUD WHISTLING SOUND THEN THE CRASH OF GLASS BREAKING ABOUT 100 YARDS AWAY.

WALLY (CONT'D)

That sounded like Mr. Merwald's window.

MARK

Yep. It sure did.

REVEAL A **REDHEADED KID** PARKED NEARBY ON HIS BIKE.

REDHEAD KID

That was AWESOME! Wanna ride bikes?

WALLY

(BEAT) Didn't you call me a dickweed a few days ago?

REDHEAD KID

I'm not gonna ask twice.

WALLY SHRUGS, GRABS HIS BIKE AND TAKES OFF WITH THE KID. MARK WATCHES THEM RIDE AWAY. THIS IS EVERYTHING HE EVER DREAMED OF - SAFE STREETS, WIDE-OPEN SPACES...

MARK

My boy is riding bikes. My boy is
riding bikes.

...AND OUT OF NOWHERE, ROLAND APPEARS NEXT TO MARK, LOOKING
ON WITH SATISFACTION.

ROLAND

Quite a moment.

ROLAND PUTS AN ARM AROUND HIS OLD/NEW BEST FRIEND.

MARK

You're touching me.

ROLAND

I get it. You wanna ride bikes. I'll
break out the Schwinn's.

MARK

No. Roland, no Schwinn's. I got work
to do--

JUST THEN, HANK MERWALD APPEARS, MARCHING TOWARDS THEM
HOLDING SHARDS OF BROKEN GLASS. HIS FOREHEAD IS BLOODY.

MARK (CONT'D)

Run!

AS MARK AND ROLAND TAKE OFF RUNNING, WE:

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. MARK & ANNIE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

MARK LIES ON THE FLOOR, EXHAUSTED, BARELY ABLE TO SPEAK.
ANNIE LIES NEXT TO HIM, SATISFIED, WRAPPED IN A BLANKET.

MARK

Those evil spirits are gone. I mean
they are gone.

ANNIE

I think I heard a few of 'em
clapping.

HE LAUGHS. JUST THEN, THE DOORBELL RINGS.

MARK

What the hell?

ANNIE THROWS ON A ROBE AND HEADS DOWNSTAIRS. BEAT, THEN:

ROLAND (O.S.)

Who likes *kara-oke*?!

ANNIE (O.S.)

Bring it, bitch!

MARK

You gotta be fucking kidding me.

AND WE:

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW