

LOVE IS STRANGE

by

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INT. BEN AND GEORGE'S APT, BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The early morning sun fights to get in the bedroom through the edges of well drawn shades.

BENJAMIN HULL("Ben"), early 70s, is in bed awake. Next to him lies GEORGE GAREA, early 60s, turned on his side, still asleep.

Ben is still. The only movement is in his eyes, shimmering with expectation.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE'S APT, BATHROOM - DAY

George, handsome, well groomed and with an impeccable white shirt, is in front of the mirror tying the knot on his tie. He tries once and, not happy with the result, repositions the tie around his neck, and tries it again. Voices can be heard in the background.

Ben enters dressed in a suit and a bow tie - the man has style. He's looking in the bathroom for something he might have lost. He looks on top of a pile of magazines by the toilet.

GEORGE

What?

BEN

My glasses. I can't find my glasses.

Ben looks around the sink where George is, briefly interrupting his concentration with the tie.

GEORGE

Oh, no. Not today. Please.

Ben walks out, without his glasses. George hasn't gotten a good knot on his tie yet.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

ZLATA, the housekeeper, Polish and in her 40's, comes in from the kitchen bringing a big vase of flowers, which she places on the coffee table.

The living room is spacious, high ceilings, comfortable furniture. There's a piano in the corner, art on the wall, a dining table for 6 people and an umbrella holder by the front door.

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Ben is rearranging books and objects around, while looking for his glasses. EUGENIA, early 30's, ZLATA's pretty younger sister, is dusting off the book shelves. She finds a pair of reading glasses - EUGENIA speaks with a heavy Polish accent.

EUGENIA

I find Mr. Ben.

Ben comes to look.

BEN

Yes! Thank you, sweetie. Where's the list?

EUGENIA

(in Polish)

Zlata, you have the list.

ZLATA

It's in the kitchen.

Ben goes into the kitchen.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE'S APT, KITCHEN - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Ben is reading a small list on a piece of paper. Zlata is cutting up more flowers by the sink.

BEN

I think 40 will do. Maybe Eugenia can go to the grocery for you?

Ben opens his wallet and realizes he only has a couple of single dollar bills.

BEN (CONT'D)

And the lasagna?

ZLATA

I've just put it in the oven.

Ben can't resist; he goes to take a peek inside the oven.

BEN

Looks delicious.

George comes in, in a suit and a tie, his face and hair perfectly fresh.

GEORGE

Let me see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He can't resist and also goes to peek at the lasagna in the oven.

BEN
(to George)
Honey, do you have any cash?

GEORGE
(to Zlata)
It's not too early to be heating this up?

ZLATA
Close the door! I know what I'm doing.

Zlata slaps his hand. George closes the oven.

GEORGE
So how do I look?

Zlata opens a big smile and gives George a hug and a kiss.

ZLATA
Fabulous. Both of you.

BEN
It's almost eleven, George. We have to go.

GEORGE
I'm waiting for you.

BEN
Sure. I need some cash for Eugenia.

ZLATA
You smell so good too.

George takes out his wallet.

GEORGE
Thank you.

Before George can ask how much, Ben grabs two 20 dollar bills and leaves them on the counter. George is used to these kind of dynamics, and simply folds the wallet and puts it back into his pocket.

BEN
Let's go. Thank you Zlata.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE

We'll be back around 1:30.

BEN

Honey said she'd stop by before the ceremony, but I don't know where she is.

GEORGE

(laughing)

Honey and her monsters.

ZLATA

It's okay, I'm here.

INT. BENJAMIN & GEORGE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY
(CONTINUOUS)

Eugenia is still cleaning. Ben looks around, moves the vase of flowers on the table by a few inches.

BEN

Eugenia, I left some money with Zlata for the things we still need.

EUGENIA

Okay. I go to the grocery on 14th.

BEN

No. Go to the nicer one, the one on 23rd. This is a special occasion.

Ben gets the keys on the table and moves towards the door.

BEN

Do you have the papers?

GEORGE

Yes. I have them. Let's go.

EXT. STREETS OF CHELSEA - DAY

Ben and George are on the streets trying to catch a cab. A couple of OCCUPIED ones rush by as George still tries to convince them to stop.

BEN

We should've left earlier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE

It'll be okay.

George keeps waving as OFF DUTY or busy cabs fly by.

BEN

(impatient)

They're full, George.

GEORGE

Let's go to Seventh. Come on!

George starts to trot towards the Avenue.

BEN

Wait!

Ben tries to follow, but after a few fast steps, he is too tired, or too old to run. He simply walks towards the corner.

BEN

I don't want to get all sweaty.

8

INT. 6BC BOTANICAL GARDEN - DAY

8

A lush community garden in the middle of the city, surrounded by NYC buildings. Friends and family of all ages are gathered for the ceremony, standing and sitting in a small clearing to the side. The MARRIAGE OFFICIANT, a very enthusiastic man in his 40's, is standing in front of the audience, with George and Ben next to his side, smiling, paying attention to every word.

OFFICIANT

Welcome everybody, it's really wonderful to have all of you here in this oasis in the middle of Manhattan. And thank you George and Ben for asking me to do this. And thank you two for allowing me to do this. I want you to know that it's an honor for me.

George dries out a few drops of sweat on his forehead with a handkerchief.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICIANT

And for everybody who's here, I would like to ask you to get rid of everything that's in your head about anything else, and concentrate only on this moment, and the ceremony, and these two people who we're about to join together.

Sitting on the chairs, in the audience, are Ben's nephew ELLIOT and his wife KATE, in their 40s. She reaches for his hand.

OFFICIANT (O.S.)

Try to stop thinking about your jobs, your marriage, your schoolwork, what you have to do tomorrow and what you forgot to do today. Let's just focus all our energies, and all our love on these two men here: George and Ben.

A cell phone rings, with a cutting edge rap song, interrupting the speech. There's laughter all around. Kate pokes her 15 year old son JOEY, who immediately silences his iPhone.

OFFICIANT

I'd also like to ask the audience here to be part of this ceremony today. You are already a part of the community that made this love possible. You have made this moment possible.

Right behind them is ROBERTO, dark skin, Dominican-American, early 40's. Sitting next to him is his partner TED, a good looking all American man, early 30's. And HONEY (late 50s), an old friend of the couple's, in an elegant dress, conservative but also a touch glamorous.

Roberto shoots a picture with his phone, while Ted fights a yawn - maybe from a sleepless night.

OFFICIANT

And so I ask all of you, if you would commit to support and honor these two individuals in their life, and in their love, and in their marriage together...

(CONTINUED)

George raises his eyes up above, as if silently thanking God, as Ben, standing next to him, absorbs each word with a smile.

OFFICIANT

...through the bad times and the good times, through rain and shine, in sickness and in health...

There are a few other FRIENDS and COLLEAGUES, and last, but not least, MINDY, Ben's nervous looking older niece, who's already crying, next to her boyfriend JOHN, a friendly looking man her own age.

OFFICIANT

Will you make that commitment today?

Smiles all around. Honey has an enthusiastic response, while Mindy raises both arms, sending good vibes. Roberto raises his iPhone, registering the moment on filming mode.

ALL AUDIENCE

Yes!

OFFICIANT

Now, under the training that we get, there's something I have to ask, and the answer may seem obvious but still, it is a very important question: are both of you making this decision of your own free will?

Somebody in the audience laughs, and it's contagious. George looks at Ben, both wanting to laugh.

GEORGE

Yes.

BEN

Yes.

OFFICIANT

All right. We are gathered here in the presence of these witnesses today, with the purpose of uniting in matrimony...

George reaches for Ben, and they hold each other's hands as they look in each other's eyes, and smile.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICIANT (O.S.)

...George Esteban Garea and Benjamin Arthur Hull. Let me remind you that the contract of marriage is not to be entered into lightly, but thoughtfully and seriously and with a deep realization of its obligations and responsibilities...

INT. BEN AND GEORGE'S APT - DAY

The party is going. PIANO MUSIC can be heard in the background. Honey walks around with a TRAY OF COOKIES.

HONEY

(with a deep Texas accent)

Please, take one. I made them, they're delicious!

She goes around to the grand piano, where GUESTS are gathered around George, who is playing and singing *BABY YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES*.

GEORGE

(singing)

*Well now it takes more than a
robin to make the winter go
And it takes two lips for fire to
melt away the snow
Well it takes two hearts that are
cookin' to make a fie grow
And baby you've got what it takes.*

Ben sits next to George, sharing the piano seat and the song - they sing very well together, very much in tune with each other. It's a delight to see.

BEN

*You know it takes alot of kissin'
to make a romance sweet
Oh it takes alot of lovin' to make
my life complete
Oh well it takes somebody special
to knock me off my feet
And baby you've got what it takes.*

There's laughter all around. George keeps on playing, and the two sing together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE & BEN

I said ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

Aha ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

*Because it takes alot of effort to
stay away from you*

*And it takes more than a lifetime
to prove that I'll be true*

*But it takes somebody special to
make me say I do*

And baby you've got what it takes

C'mon say that again honey

You've got what it takes [x5]

George jazzes it up on the piano for a grand finale - he's a true musician. The guests applaud. The dogs bark. Kate starts clinking her glass.

KATE

Guys, guys. Quiet everyone. Quiet!
I just wanted to say something--

ROBERTO

(already tipsy)
Not now! Encore, guys, encore!

Ted discreetly pulls his shirt, trying to shush his partner.

ROBERTO

This better be good.

KATE

(in good spirits)
It is. It is.

Everybody has quieted down now.

KATE

When I met my husband Elliot
here...

ELLIOT

Is there another one?

Laughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KATE

When I met Elliot, you all know my Elliot..., but when I met him, he was walking around with a camera, making these amazing videos with people he met on the streets, creating scenes out of the most ordinary situations - I'm sure you've all seen them. Anyway, I was trying to finish my first novel and I immediately thought we'd be such a great pair: two independent spirits, committed to our art, but alas, he wouldn't pay any attention to me. He had no time for romance. Actually, he had no time to eat - he was always hungry, so I started to invite him over for left overs, which was actually food I had made specially for him... but he thought they were leftovers. One day he called and said he was starving, so I told him to come over, but this time I had no food - just a bottle of wine, and that's when he finally started to pay attention to me.

Laughter. Zlata and Eugenia come from the kitchen.

GEORGE

Zlata, Eugenia, come here, get your glasses.

KATE

We started to go out, and one day he said he wanted me to meet his Uncle Ben. I asked why, and Elliot said since his mother had passed away, his uncle was his favorite person in his family.

MINDY

Thank you, Elliot.

KATE

Not including siblings, Mindy.

Laughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KATE

I said okay, let's meet the uncle, but I kept postponing, 'cause I didn't want to meet anyone: I just wanted to spend time alone with Elliot. So finally we came here one night - you guys had just moved into this apartment, and I met Ben, and George, who had made a delicious spaghetti bolognese for us, and we drank wine and sang and drank some more - it was just wonderful. When we left, Elliot said: "I wanted you to meet them, because they've been together for more than 20 years...". So I understood...

Kate gets emotional, tears up.

KATE

Oh my God, I'm gonna cry.

Everybody is quiet, listening. Mindy starts to cry again, but Kate swallows her tears. Elliot comes over and puts his arm around his wife.

KATE

I understood at that moment that Elliot was proposing to me...

(to Ben and George,
raising her glass)

because you guys... Your love, your dedication and your commitment to each other are an example to be followed. May this marriage, may this love, last forever and beyond. To Ben and George!

Everybody raise their glasses and toast.

EVERYBODY

To Ben and George!

BEN

And to Petra!

EVERYBODY

To Petra!

ELLIOT

To Petra Von Kant!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Ben and George, on the piano seat, look at each other and kiss. Some applaud, some whistle, a noisy crowd.

FADE OUT.

INT. ST. GRACE'S SCHOOL / AUDITORIUM - DAY

FATHER RAYMOND is sitting alone in the back of a large auditorium where a choir rehearsal is taking place. His eyes are closed, his head tilted down, as if in prayer. In the background, the voices of the chorus sing the powerful Miserere, by Allegri.

Up on stage, BOYS and GIRLS sing together, wearing their own casual clothes, under a modern sculpture of Christ on the cross. They sing in Latin; *Tibi soli peccavi et malum, coram te fecci: ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas cum judicaris* (Having sinned against none other than You, having done what You regard as wrong, You are just when you pass sentence on me).

It's a very democratic group: different ages, races and attitudes. Each face has a story, and together they give extraordinary power to the music.

In front of them, George conducts with passion for the music, moving his arms, mouthing some of the words that he knows by heart.

In the back of the auditorium, Father Raymond continues to pray, invisible to the people on stage.

INT. ST. GRACE'S SCHOOL / OFFICE - DAY

The small administrative office of Father Raymond. He is reading from a piece of paper, a computer in front of him.

FATHER RAYMOND

"All who serve in the Archdiocese should: believe in God, support belief in Jesus Christ, engage in prayer, respect ecclesiastical authority, possess a basic knowledge of the Catholic Church, not take a *public position* contrary to the Catholic Church, demonstrate a *public life* consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church--

George is sitting across his desk. Both men look tense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE

(interrupting)

Father. You're not going to read me the whole Witness Statement, are you?

Father Raymond hands him the piece of paper.

FATHER RAYMOND

The *Christian* Witness Statement, George. You signed it when you took this job.

GEORGE

Father, how long have we known each other?

FATHER RAYMOND

I wish I didn't have to do this, George.

GEORGE

Twelve years. Twelve years, Father.

FATHER RAYMOND

You must understand that...

GEORGE

Understand what?

FATHER RAYMOND

That day when you announced you were getting married, at the spring semester meeting?

GEORGE

You've all known this whole time that Ben and I have been living together.

FATHER RAYMOND

Word got out to the Archdiocese. And then someone showed the Bishop pictures of you and Ben in Petra - on Facebook, of all places.

GEORGE

I wouldn't have done it any differently, Father.

FATHER RAYMOND

I'm not saying you should have, George. But the Bishop wasn't happy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE

What about the students? I've known them since they were kids. I know their parents. They've been to my house, and played on my piano. They've sung with Ben and me.

FATHER RAYMOND

George, you understand I signed the same Witness Statement, right? We all did it here. Believe me: I wish I didn't have to do this, but it's not a choice for me.

GEORGE

I need to talk to the students.

FATHER RAYMOND

Of course. I could go talk to them with you; or maybe you prefer to go on your own? It's up to you.

GEORGE

What about regionals next month?

Father Raymond picks up a print out email from his desk, and reluctantly shows it to George.

FATHER RAYMOND

The decision is effective immediately.

GEORGE

Oh.

George takes a moment to process what's just happened. Silence.

FATHER RAYMOND

Let's pray, George.

George stands up, ready to leave.

FATHER RAYMOND (CONT'D)

It's important that you don't question your faith.

GEORGE

Thank you, Father. I believe in Jesus Christ as my savior, and that won't change. But at this moment, I need to pray on my own.

EXT. ST. GRACE'S SCHOOL - DAY

St. Grace's Church and Catholic school in Manhattan.

The School and Church are located on a quiet street in Chelsea, lined with trees, off the main avenue. There's barely any traffic. A small group of HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS in school uniform hang out outside, chatting and smoking cigarettes.

The door opens and out comes George, carrying a backpack and a heavy shopping bag.

He passes by the students without saying a word.

It's hot outside. George walks down the street alone, sweating, passing the shopping bag from one hand to another. Busy New Yorkers pass by him, not noticing he has to stop for a moment, placing the heavy bag on the ground, cleaning the sweat off of his face. After a moment, he picks it up again, and continues on his way, disappearing down a busy avenue.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE'S APT - NIGHT

George is pacing nervously by the piano, holding a pen. He uses an old fashioned calculator that's on top of the piano, as he scribbles something on a piece of paper.

GEORGE

Let's not forget that the real estate agent gets a first month commission. The coop board gets one month also, and charges a 5% administration fee.

MINDY

A month?

Roberto, Ted, Honey, Mindy, Ben and Kate are sitting in the living room. Roberto and Ted are both in police uniforms. They drink soft drinks, water and beer for Roberto and Ted, but this time, it's definitely not a party.

GEORGE

Yes.

MINDY

That's ridiculous! Why do they have to charge an administration fee?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBERTO

They just want to discourage rentals in the building.

MINDY

I hate coop's.

HONEY

But it's so hard to find a condo in Manhattan.

TED

Nowadays it's not.

GEORGE

Anyway, I'm just trying to explain that renting wouldn't help us, because...

George is still finishing his calculations.

MINDY

You've been to my house, right? You know how much my real estate taxes are? 3000. That's for the whole year!

BEN

It's Poughkeepsie, Mindy.

GEORGE

Renting would leave us owing about a thousand a month. If we can find a studio for 1,500 dollars, which isn't easy, we'd start our month at almost 3,000. That's including the Cobra insurance.

KATE

And you can't afford that?

GEORGE

Well, between my private lessons and Ben's pension...

George is interrupted by a knock on the door.

MINDY

Why did you guys have to go on such a fancy honeymoon?

Ben gets up and walks towards the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

Mindy!! That's none of your business.

MINDY

Of course it is. Otherwise I wouldn't be here.

ROBERTO

Shush, Mindy.

MINDY

I'm just saying... there's nothing wrong with Provincetown.

Ben opens the door. It's Elliot.

ELLIOT

Sorry I'm late.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Anyway, we'd still have to pay one month's rent to the agent and one month to the coop board right away. That's 4,600 right there out of our pockets.

BEN

Come in. We're all in here.

Elliot seems surprised to see everybody there. He notices the serious mood.

ELLIOT

Everything okay, Uncle?

BEN

Yes, we just want to talk to you.

George stands to greet him.

GEORGE

Sit down. We just want to talk to you all. We invited you all here tonight, because you are our family.

BEN

Do you want something to drink?

Elliot goes to sit next to Kate. She gives him a kiss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELLIOT

Water, please. Are you going to tell us you're getting divorced already?

ROBERTO

Ha! That's what I thought also.

GEORGE

No. We have to sell the apartment. We've already found a buyer, so very soon we'll have to move out.

Ben returns with water for Elliot. He and George sit together on the piano seat with their backs to the instrument. They face their guests.

GEORGE

It won't take long for me to find another job, and for us to find an apartment. But in the meantime...

BEN

It's just for this transition phase. Probably just a week or two.

GEORGE

We need a place to stay.

Elliot looks around at the Guests, and at Ben and George. Nobody says anything.

ELLIOT

Wait a minute. Did I miss something?

BEN

The last weeks have been tough on us, Elliot. Losing the job, looking for health insurance... We just need a breather.

GEORGE

Believe me, moving out is the last thing we want to do.

BEN

And it's just temporary. We'll find a new place very soon.

ELLIOT

(angry)
Uncle Ben, how did we get here?

INT. CORRIDOR OF BEN AND GEORGE'S APT - NIGHT

Outside Ben and George's apartment, the guests say their goodbyes to the hosts.

ELLIOT

I'm sorry if I was a bit rough,
Uncle. I've had a bad day.

KATE

Let's go, Elliot.

TED

Think positive, Ben.

HONEY

I love you guys. I'll call during
the week.

ROBERTO

Hey buddy, thanks for the beer.

MINDY

Good night, sweetheart.

BEN AND GEORGE (O.S.)

Good night. Good night.

The door shuts. The Guests walk down quietly towards the elevator for a moment. Roberto and Ted stop in front of another apartment, down the corridor.

ROBERTO

We're here.

They start to say their good-byes, with hugs and kisses.

HONEY

I feel bad that I can't help out,
but you guys have seen my
apartment.

MINDY

It's okay. They can stay with me
for as long as it's necessary.

HONEY

I just had this feeling that they
were hoping they'd stay with one
of us, here in the city. Didn't
you guys see the look on their
faces?

Yes, they saw that look on their faces. All but Mindy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MINDY

What are you talking about?

HONEY

I'm just saying... They don't want to go live Upstate. George and Ben country boys, all of a sudden? I can't see that.

MINDY

It's temporary!

ELLIOT

Honey is right. Maybe there's something else we can do.

MINDY

I thought we had it all figured out already!

HONEY

Shhh, Mindy. Quiet.

MINDY

Why are we even having this conversation? I'm the only one with the extra bedroom.

ELLIOT

It's not that, Mindy. It's Poughkeepsie.

MINDY

When was the last time you were there?

ELLIOT

Doesn't matter. George has his private students here. Ben has his galleries.

ROBERTO

And they'll need to look for a new apartment.

HONEY

It just doesn't make sense that they go live 2 1/2 hours away.

MINDY

It's an hour and a half, actually.

TED

Not by bus, it's not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MINDY

By car.

HONEY

They don't drive!

MINDY

They can very well learn how to.

HONEY

Are you really serious, Mindy?!

MINDY

Shut the fuck up, Honey. You're not even family, so you don't get to decide anything!

They realize at this moment that they can't let their friends go live with crazy Mindy.

TED

Pshhh... Quiet. They're right there.

KATE

Elliot, let's go. I still need to do some work tonight.

ROBERTO

Since we're all here, why don't you come inside for a minute?

Roberto puts his key on the door, opens it. Kate holds Elliot's hand, signaling that she wants to go.

KATE

(whispers)
It's almost 10 o'clock.

ELLIOT

Honey, we need to figure this out.

ROBERTO

Come in, please.

TED

Come in.

Reluctantly, Kate follows her husband Elliot. They all go inside.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE'S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

In the kitchen, Ben is washing the drinking glasses used by the guests. He washes thoroughly, slowly, taking this moment alone maybe to reflect, almost meditative.

George comes in quietly carrying two plates. He leaves the left over cheese on the counter and pours the left over crackers in the trash. He gives Ben a kiss on his cheek, then leaves.

After Ben finishes washing the last glass, he turns the water faucet off and proceeds to wrap the leftover cheese in plastic wrap, and then puts it inside a zip lock bag. He turns the water on again, and washes this last item - the plate that carried the cheese.

Ben turns the water off, finally, and looks around. All is clean.

INT. CORRIDOR OF BEN AND GEORGE'S APT - NIGHT (CONT.)

George leaves the door to his apartment ajar and walks down the corridor, carrying a full trash bag. As he passes by Roberto's apartment, he seems to hear voices coming from inside. He continues down towards a door at the end of the corridor. He opens it and throws the bag down the chute. On his way back, he stops in front of Roberto's apartment for a moment. He can't make out what people are saying, but he can definitely hear voices: a woman's voice, and then a man's voice - an argument coming from inside the apartment. He knows it's Kate, Elliot, Roberto. He feels sad that it's come to this.

George goes back inside his apartment, and shuts the door behind him.

The empty, silent corridor with its cold light.

FADE OUT.

EXT. PARK SLOPE - DAY

A busy corner in Park Slope, Brooklyn. Old ethnic restaurants share the street with hip cafés. Young couples walk by with their kids, as an Older Indian couple open the doors to their store.

On the street, a couple of teenagers on skateboards rush by noisily, crossing the screen.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The spacious living room of this Park Slope apartment is bright, with big windows that face a tree-lined street. The apartment is just high enough so that the leaves of the trees filter the sun, and cast shadows inside the apartment in this early fall afternoon.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

We have the crew, plus 4 actors
and 25 extras, so you tell me how
or where we are going to
accommodate this crowd if we can't
close the street at 7.

Elliot is on the phone, sitting at a desk by the window, with papers scattered around: a budget sheet, a couple of actors' 8 x 10, Polaroids of locations, a shot list.

ELLIOT

(...) You told me we had the
permit already!

Joey shows up at the desk.

JOEY

Dad. Dad. Can I talk to you for a
second?

ELLIOT

James, hold on.
(to Joey)
What's going on, Joey?

JOEY

That geography presentation I have
to do.

ELLIOT

Which one?

JOEY

The one on sustainable
development. I told you.

ELLIOT

Oh, that one. Yeah?

JOEY

Vlad and I are doing it together,
as a team. They're painting his
house, so I told him to come here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLIOT
(the phone calls his
attention)

No, no, no. It was from 7pm to
5am. That's what I requested. Hold
on a second.

JOEY
Do you need the living room all
afternoon?

ELLIOT
Joey, I'm sorry but this is
urgent. Can you give me just a few
minutes? I'm sorry, Son.
(back on the phone)
You know as well as I do that two
hours will make all the
difference, because if we have to
wait till 9 to close the street...

Joey waits quietly for a moment next to his dad. But
soon, the BUZZER rings.

Joey opens the entrance door, and VLAD, his buddy, is
standing there. Vlad is 16, Russian, only one year older
than Joey, but more developed, bigger. Whereas Joey still
has boyish looks, Vlad already looks like the man he'll
be one day. He comes in, carrying a backpack, and a
SKATEBOARD.

VLAD
I found the book on the Amazon
Rainforest. There's some really
cool old pictures, with naked
natives and everything.

JOEY
Nice.

ELLIOT (O.S.)
...it means the crew won't be
ready until 11, or 12, do you
understand? (...) No! That's not a
possibility.

VLAD
Your dad is home.

They both look at Elliot sitting by the desk in the
living room, still busy on the phone.

JOEY
I know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD

Let's go to your room?

JOEY

Not yet.

VLAD

Okay. Can I get some water?

JOEY

Yeah.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vlad enters, and sees Eugenia at the sink, doing dishes, pretty as ever.

VLAD

Hi there.

EUGENIA

(Surprised)

Oh hello. I'm sorry. I didn't see you there.

VLAD

I'm Vlad.

EUGENIA

My name is Eugenia.

Vlad's staring. He makes her a little uncomfortable.

EUGENIA (CONT'D)

I work for Mr. And Mrs. Hull.

VLAD

Are you Russian?

EUGENIA

Yes.

Vlad reaches his hand out. Eugenia dries her hands on the towel and they shake.

VLAD

(in Russian)

Very nice to meet you, Eugenia.

EUGENIA

(in Russian)

Nice to meet you too.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, BEDROOM - DAY

Kate is sitting on her bed, with her laptop on a pillow. The door is ajar, and Joey enters.

JOEY

Mom.

KATE

Yes?

JOEY

Vlad is here. We have to do our presentation on Sustainable Development today.

KATE

Oh wow. I can't wait to see it.

JOEY

I think we're going to the library.

KATE

But isn't Vlad here?

JOEY

I told you, yes.

KATE

So why don't you guys just stay here?

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Joey's bedroom is small, with a bunk bed and a small desk by the window with a computer. There's a bookshelf full of books, photos and some quirky objects. On the wall a faux vintage poster of the Titanic (the boat, not the movie).

And there, propped up on the lower of the beds, with an open book lying on his chest, is Ben. He is shirtless, and wearing only his boxer shorts underwear. His eyes are closed, his head tilted to the side - he has fallen asleep, his reading glasses dangling from his nose.

The door opens, and Joey comes in, followed by Kate. Both take in the unexpected vision of the old man's nearly naked body.

KATE

(whispering)

Wake him gently.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOEY

You do it.

KATE

(impatient)

Oh, c'mon, Joey...

She moves gently towards the bed and gives Ben a tentative poke. He opens his heavy eye lids slowly.

KATE

Uncle Ben. Uncle Ben, hi. Sorry to wake you. Joey wants to ask you something.

JOEY

Mom!

Kate steps back and gently pushes Joey closer to Ben.

JOEY

Uncle Ben, my friend Vlad is here. We need to do a presentation for school, and there's nowhere for us to study.

BEN

(dazed)

Who?

Vlad steps in from behind Joey, curious to finally see the old man in person.

BEN

Ah, Vlad, it's so good to meet you. I've heard a lot about you.

VLAD

Hi.

BEN

I'm sorry, I guess I've fallen asleep.

He sits up, but still doesn't move to get dressed.

BEN

What time is it?

VLAD

2:05.

BEN

So what is this presentation about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ben looks at Joey, who's looking at his mother, who's looking at him. Nobody says anything.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The desk in the living room now has been taken over by Kate, and her computer. Elliot is nowhere in sight. Only a few pages of notes neatly piled up next to the computer, while Kate seems concentrated, writing away.

BEN (O.S.)

Did I tell you that my gallerist friend is a big fan of yours?

It takes Kate a moment to register that someone is talking to her.

On the other side of the room, Ben has created a makeshift studio, with an easel and a drawing pad. He has a few photos tacked to the wall beside him, and a box of charcoals that he is sketching with.

BEN (CONT'D)

Did I tell you?

KATE

A fan of mine?

BEN

She loves your book.

KATE

That's nice.

Kate, after this brief exchange, is back to the computer, trying to finish that one sentence interrupted a moment ago.

Ben puts his charcoal back in its box.

BEN

I need some tea. Do you want some?

KATE

I'd love some, thanks.

Ben walks towards the kitchen.

BEN

You remember her, right?

Kate types the rest of the sentence before pausing again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATE

Who?

BEN

Ada. My gallerist friend.

Ben goes into the kitchen

KATE

When did I met her?

BEN (O.S.)

That group show I had? She's the owner of the gallery.

KATE

In the Lower East Side? Yes, I met her, I think.

BEN (O.S.)

Tall blonde.

(pause)

Swedish.

KATE

Yes, I met her.

BEN (O.S.)

She's very nice.

KATE

And pretty.

BEN (O.S.)

Gorgeous, that's the one. Last week I stopped by the gallery and she was reading your book. I screamed. I absolutely screamed.

KATE

Oh yeah?

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, KITCHEN - DAY

Ben washes a couple of dirty dishes. He cleans the kitchen top with a paper towel. He opens the top cabinet, and takes his time selecting two mugs amongst the large selection.

BEN

She had no idea you were my niece.

KATE (O.S.)

That's funny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The kettle on the gas burner starts to steam. As the speed of the releasing steam increases, the vibrations become louder, whistle, and Ben turns the oven off.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kate is concentrated on her writing, typing and drinking tea.

Ben is now sitting on the couch, blowing invisible steam from his cup, carefully taking tiny sips of tea, pensive.

BEN

You know my favorite story of yours? The one about the old high school friend who shows up at the diner.

Kate keeps on typing, trying to avoid another long interruption.

BEN

She sees him, but I don't remember why she can't be sure it's her friend.

Kate doesn't take the bait. She's still typing.

BEN

The worst thing about getting old is the memory.

(pause)

It only gets worse with time, let me tell you.

Kate can't let this go on much longer. She stops typing once again.

KATE

She can't see him because he's outside and it's snowing.

BEN

Of course! He's in the car, right?

KATE

She's not really sure if it's him.

BEN

Because of the blizzard.

(pause)

And then there's that awful hit and run at the end.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATE

Right.

BEN

That was shocking. I really lost my breath at that part. How she knows it's him, her old friend, even though she never really saw him. So beautiful, Kate, really. It's such good writing.

Ben drinks some tea and it burns his tongue.

BEN

Ouch. It's hot.

Kate downs her tea. She glances at the computer screen, unable to actually write anything.

BEN

Which is your favorite?

KATE

I don't have a favorite.

BEN

That's just like me with my paintings. I don't have a favorite either. George does. He loves that one that hangs in our bedroom. Or used to hang in our bedroom. I gave that to him--

KATE

--on his 40th birthday, I know. I love that one too...Maybe you can start a new painting soon.

BEN

That's the hardest thing, to be honest with you, Kate. I brought all my stuff, but...

KATE

What?

BEN

Well... It's just that... I can't really work if there's someone else around. I can't concentrate.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door opens, and Elliot comes in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He is coming from work, with a messenger bag and some envelopes in hand. He sees Kate in bed, asleep in an awkward position with a book on top of the covers and the reading light on. He comes to pick up the book, places it on the bedside table and turns the light off.

Kate opens her eyes, awake, and sees Elliot going into the bathroom.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Elliot is washing his hands in the bathroom sink. He looks at himself in the mirror for just a brief moment, and seems disappointed at his own image. He looks down at his hands again, and washes them thoroughly, letting water run through them.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elliot comes from the bathroom wearing boxer shorts and an old T-shirt. He finds Kate reading the book in bed, pencil in hand.

KATE

How was it?

ELLIOT

Good.

KATE

And Jeremy?

He gets into bed, gives his wife a kiss on her cheek and turns the other way to lie down under the covers.

ELLIOT

Better than we could've ever expected.

KATE

See, I told you.

ELLIOT

I know.

KATE

I called to see if you were coming to dinner.

ELLIOT

You did?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATE

Left a message.

ELLIOT

I didn't even have a moment to
check my messages.

KATE

That busy?

ELLIOT

Yeah, but we got it all in the
can.

KATE

That's great.

ELLIOT

I'm exhausted.

Elliot is trying to fall asleep, while Kate keeps reading next to him. He turns around, ends up facing her but talks with his eyes closed, afraid the light would disturb his sleepiness.

ELLIOT

Sleep baby.

Kate doesn't respond.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Sleep.

Kate underlines a passage on the book. Elliot finally opens his eyes, looks at her.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

What's going on, Kate?

KATE

Unlike you, I didn't have a very
productive day.

ELLIOT

Is it Joey?

KATE

Joey? Joey hardly said a word to
me today, but if you were around
more, you'd see that that's the
norm.

ELLIOT

What is it, Kate? The neighbor
again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KATE

No, Elliot. It's your uncle. When it's loud music, it's easy to tell them to turn it down. But if it's Uncle Ben chatting away, it's a lot harder to tell him to shut up.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

A tiny hole-in-the-wall law office. A LAWYER is sitting at his desk, typing on his computer.

LAWYER

Your mortgage was for \$480,000, on a 30 year fixed rate.

George is sitting on the chair in front of him. He is holding a manila file folder with a bunch of loose papers in it.

GEORGE

Yes, but we bought it for \$600,000.

LAWYER

In 2007, is that correct?

GEORGE

Yes, when it went co-op.

LAWYER

And we're getting \$750,000 now. That's robust.

GEORGE

I thought so.

LAWYER

You're lucky things have gone up since '08. Many people who bought when you did have lost money selling.

GEORGE

But that's why I'm trying to understand why we are only seeing....

He opens his folder and looks through a few pages, searching for the number.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Why we are only seeing \$17,535 in profit?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAWYER

Well to start with you have to take into account the closing costs, which I told you about previously.

GEORGE

Can you just remind me.

LAWYER

There's the 1% New York City transfer tax, the .04% New York State tax, plus the 6% to me, that's \$60,000 right there.

GEORGE

I understand all that. But from my calculations...

He looks down at his paperwork.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

....that should still leave...

LAWYER

Don't forget your co-op, also, has a flip tax of 25% on whatever profit you make, if you sell before 5 years, so that's another...

GEORGE

But this is 5 years!

George bangs his fist on his lap.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's been five years. We bought in 2007 and it's 2013 now.

LAWYER

But Mr. Garea, you didn't actually close until January, if you remember, so that was 2008, and they go by the calendar year, so you would actually have to sell in 2014 to avoid the flip tax.

GEORGE

This is really like Kafka.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAWYER

If you had been able to pay a little more of your principle, either as a down payment, or with your mortgage. As of the sale..

The broker looks at his computer screen.

LAWYER

...\$12,996 is what you had paid off of your principal, Mr. Garea

GEORGE

After we paid \$1,900 dollars every month to the bank?

LAWYER

That's because of the amortization schedule. Your payments in the beginning are largely going towards the interest, and only a smaller part towards the principal. I hope someone explained that to you previously.

GEORGE

It just never sounds very fair to me.

LAWYER

Look at it this way: you've lived in a nice apartment for 20 years, five of that...

(he catches himself,
laughing awkwardly)

...or nearly five, as an owner, and now you sold it at a profit. You're getting...

(looking at his
screen)

\$17,535 dollars, which is all yours.

George looks completely at a loss, like a bag of heavy stones.

LAWYER

Listen, I won't charge you for today, if that is any help. We'll call it a courtesy.

ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family is sitting at the dinner table, finishing their dinner. Elliot, Kate and Joey have their plates empty, while Ben still works on his meat, very, very slowly.

JOEY

Ours was about "mixed farming" which is when farmers manage a mix of different crops and animals.

ELLIOT

And why is that eco-friendly?

JOEY

Nobody says eco-friendly anymore, dad.

KATE

It's eco-efficient now.

JOEY

No, we say "sustainable". Sustainable agriculture.

ELLIOT

I see.

Kate looks at Ben, still cutting his meat. Elliot looks at Kate, looking at Ben, then at his own empty plate. Joey also looks at Ben's plate, then up to the ceiling, impatience starting to boil in him.

ELLIOT

So why is mixed farming sustainable?

JOEY

Cause that's when crop residues are used to feed the animals and the... the excrements from animals are used as nutrients for the crop.

KATE

Eewwww. Your uncle is still eating, Joey.

JOEY

I'm sorry.

BEN

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben wasn't paying attention to the conversation, lost in his thoughts while cutting the fat off his meat with an obsessive focus.

JOEY

Can I be excused? I still need to study tonight.

KATE

You don't want dessert?

ELLIOT

What do we have?

KATE

Strawberries and frozen yogurt.

JOEY

No thanks.

Joey gets up, takes his plate to the kitchen sink and leaves.

Ben takes a bite. Elliot looks at Kate, looking at Ben, chewing slowly...

INT. ROBERTO AND TED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Roberto and Ted's apartment is the same size as their ex-neighbors, but a very different decor. Where Ben and George's was thoughtfully put together, with style and art, this one is simply functional. Where in the other one the piano commanded the space in the living room, in this one it's the giant flat screen TV.

The TV is on, and Ted has a small control in his hand which commands the screen. He's setting up his new Apple TV, going step by step. George is sitting next to him, eating a bowl of ice cream. Ted has a bottle of beer in front of him.

TED

It's all through the wi-fi. This little box over there connects directly with our Netflix account, iTunes and with YouTube. Here let me show you.

Ted sips his beer, then manipulates the controls while the screen changes with different images.

TED

Have you seen this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A huge dragon, a slave in a leather harness, a sexy princess - a *Game of Thrones* style show on TV.

GEORGE

No, what is this?

TED

You've never seen this? *Game of Thrones*! It's my favorite. Look, that's King Baratheon and Queen Cersei. She hates him. Look, and that's Ser Jaime, with whom she has an affair.

GEORGE

He's sexy.

TED

He's her twin brother and they're lovers but it's okay because it's like medieval times in the future. I'm so glad you haven't seen this, because you and I are going to watch it together.

GEORGE

Oh, are we?

TED

I have the whole first two seasons on my computer.

GEORGE

So your computer has to be on.

TED

No, not at all. It's all sync'd through the Cloud.

GEORGE

What's the Cloud?

TED

The Cloud is like an imaginary hard disk. It has all your info so all your different gadgets can be synch'ed through the wi-fi.

George is not listening. He's tired. He stares at his empty bowl.

GEORGE

Is there any more ice cream, Ted?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TED

Yes, I think so.

The door opens, and in comes Roberto in his police outfit, with his police woman buddy, DOREEN, both coming from work. He carries a bag of groceries and a six pack of beer.

ROBERTO

I'm hungry!

TED

Look, baby. I got it hooked up.

DOREEN

Hey guys!

Without ever letting go of the mini control, Ted stands up and high fives Doreen - she's clearly one of the guys.

TED

Doreen!

ROBERTO

Hey George, you've met my friend Doreen, right?

George stands up to shake her hand, as she drowns herself on the couch.

DOREEN

Hi George.

ROBERTO

Babe, come help me in the kitchen?

TED

In two minutes.

Roberto disappears into the kitchen. Ted keeps playing with the remote.

George sits again, and Doreen taps him on his thigh, friendly.

DOREEN

So how are your two new daddies treating you?

GEORGE

Oh I can't complain.

DOREEN

I've always liked this couch. I've taken good naps here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GEORGE

It's a good bed too.

DOREEN

If I drink too much... Maybe I'll
sleep with you here tonight.

ROBERTO (O.S.)

Adams or Corona?

DOREEN

(screams)
Whichever is colder!
(to Ted and George)
You guys?

TED

I think I'll have wine.

GEORGE

(to Ted)
What happened to my ice cream?

TED

Did you mean to ask me if I would
get you some ice cream, George?

GEORGE

Yes. I think because you're from
Manhasset, you don't understand
the subtlety.

TED

No, I understood perfectly well. I
just prefer when people are
direct.

A beat of silence. Doreen takes the remote control from
Ted's hands.

DOREEN

Go help Roberto. I'll finish this
for you.

TED

Do you even know how to?

DOREEN

Show me some respect, soldier.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED'S APARTMENT / KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ted takes out the groceries from the bag, while Roberto
gets a heavy tupperware out of the refrigerator.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He opens it, sniffs it out and shows it to Ted.

TED

That's not enough. Who else is coming?

ROBERTO

Just Linda.

TED

Should I invite Marco?

ROBERTO

Sure. I'll add some chicken to the curry, and what else?

They're briefly interrupted by Doreen's voice coming from the living room.

DOREEN (O.S.)

(...) your iPhoto as screen saver?

TED

(screams to the other room)

Sure!

(back to ROBERTO)

I can make the basmati with broccoli, and a big salad.

ROBERTO

Perfect.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sitting alone at the dinner table, away from everybody else for privacy, George talks on the phone. He looks on as Doreen takes her boots off and drinks beer, making herself comfortably at home.

GEORGE

(on the phone)

...it seems like they're just starting dinner now. (...) No, tomorrow I have a student in the morning....

George keeps talking on the phone, and he sees Doreen going to open the door. From afar, he now sees Doreen hugging and kissing a newcomer: her partner LINDA, who arrives with a BABY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Me? I've eaten already. (...) I stopped at the diner and had some matzo ball soup. (...) No, no grilled cheese, I swear.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben is alone by the large window in the dark living room of his nephew's apartment. All around is quiet, the whole apartment seems to be asleep - only the light from the street outside, and a quiet conversation that Ben is having over the phone.

BEN

(on the phone)

I made beef stew tonight. (...) I *think* they did. They ate the whole thing, but they didn't say anything. (...) No, they're very nice, but sometimes when you live with people, you know them better than you care to - that's all.
(...)

The large, empty and dark living room. Silence. Ben stays by the window, his profile catching the outside light.

EXT. ROOFTOP ELLIOT AND KATE'S BDG - DAY

Ben is behind his standing easel on this Park Slope outdoor rooftop. Around him, there are only tree tops and neighboring rooftops, the sun and a nice breeze. Ben, wearing his dirty painters's apron, is sketching away with a thin paintbrush on a new canvas.

He looks up and back down to the canvas.

And in front of him, standing proud as a statue, is Vlad wearing a tank top and holding HIS SKATEBOARD, the model of Ben's new painting.

Ben uses his fingers to blur and fix a couple of lines, redrawing details on the canvas.

The noisy metal door to the rooftop opens with a CLANK. Ben raises his eyes above the canvas, to see that an out of breath and very surprised Joey is standing between him and his subject Vlad.

JOEY

What the fuck, Vlad!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD

I'm posing for your uncle's new masterpiece.

JOEY

(to Vlad)
That is so gay!

An awkward silence, as Ben continues to paint.

BEN

People have been modeling for painters for centuries now. All kinds of people.

Joey looks at Vlad one more time, to see that his friend continues to "pose", enjoying his 15 minutes of fame.

VLAD

He doesn't mean homosexual, Ben. He just means stupid.

BEN

Don't worry Vlad. Joey and I understand each other.

Joey walks behind Ben and looks over his shoulder at the painting.

JOEY

You're not a good artist anyway.

BEN

I know you don't mean that, Joey.

JOEY

But I do. If you were, you wouldn't have to crash on a bunk bed in your nephew's house!

Joey walks away. A door in the distance CLANKS shut.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY
(CONTINUOUS)

Kate is writing at the desk in the living room. Joey comes in.

KATE

Did you find him?

JOEY

He's on the fucking rooftop with Uncle Ben.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATE

Hey! Watch your language.

Joey goes into his bedroom.

Kate takes a deep breath, a sip from her tea and tries to go back to her writing. But soon Joey storms out of his room.

JOEY

I'm going out.

KATE

And Vlad?

JOEY

Uncle Ben is making him pose for a painting.

KATE

He's what??

JOEY

You heard me.

KATE

Joey, wait a minute. I suggested to your Uncle Ben that he take his painting to the roof. It was my idea. Don't you see? I need to work here.

JOEY

I need to go.

And he leaves.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

In the dark stairwell of the building, Ben is carrying his painting box and canvas, while Vlad comes from outside helping him with all the rest: easel, skateboard and the box of paintings. Suddenly, he stops.

BEN

You okay there?

The bottom of the easel got stuck on the door. Vlad gives it a little kick, and the door closes with a CLANK.

VLAD

We're good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben tries a switch on the wall, but the main light doesn't go on.

BEN

Oh well.

It's dark, and Ben is careful step by step.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kate is concentrating on work, typing away on her computer, when Vlad comes in loaded with Ben's easel, painting materials and his skateboard.

Kate stops writing and goes to Vlad.

KATE

Vlad, what were you doing up there?

VLAD

I was helping Ben with his painting.

KATE

Weren't you supposed to be studying biology?

VLAD

It's going to be all about this book on seasons and migrations, and I know the book pretty well.

KATE

But if you flunk the test tomorrow, what am I going to tell your mother when she calls and asks if you and Joey were really studying or just playing here?

VLAD

I don't flunk.

Ben arrives, in his paint splashed apron, carrying the canvas with him.

VLAD

Ben, where should I leave this?

BEN

Just leave it there. I'll take care of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATE

Listen, Vlad, when you're here,
you're my responsibility.

Kate makes sure Ben is listening to this as he picks up
his easel on the floor.

KATE (CONT'D)

So if you have a biology test
tomorrow, you should be studying
with Joey, instead of taking art
lessons on the roof.

VLAD

Where is Joey?

KATE

He went to the library.

VLAD

I guess I'll go meet him there.

KATE

I think that's a good idea.

Vlad gets his skateboard and backpack, and heads to the
door.

KATE

Do you want to take some food,
some water or anything?

VLAD

I'm okay. Thank you, Mrs. Hull.
Bye, Ben. I'll see you soon.

BEN

Bye Vlad.

KATE

Okay, Bye.

Vlad leaves. Kate goes back to her desk, while Ben takes
the rest of his stuff into the bedroom.

Kate is quietly typing away.

BEN (O.S.)

I didn't know they were supposed
to be studying.

Kate turns and sees, to her surprise, Ben on the couch
with a book. She keeps on typing, trying to write.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

Joey got very upset. He called Vlad "gay" in quite an offensive fashion.

KATE

Kids have broadened the meaning of the word "gay" far beyond sexual orientation, so don't get offended.

BEN

I didn't, really. I guess it just means 'stupid' now.

KATE

I think you're right.

BEN

I don't know if Joey felt left out, or what in the world was going through his mind.

Kate stops typing, and closes her laptop and stands up, gathering all of her things, impatient.

KATE

They're teenagers. And is it really appropriate to be using Joey's friend as a model?

She walks towards her bedroom, carrying her laptop, notebooks and pen.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

A very steamy bathroom, one can hardly see anything inside. Someone is quietly taking a very hot shower. The water gets shut off, but the person still stays inside the box for a moment, as if enjoying the last drops from the shower - a quiet meditative moment.

Finally, the box opens, and Ben grabs a towel. He starts to dry himself off.

INT. MINDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A small house with bland worn out furniture, and dog toys scattered around the place. It's quite dark inside, and there are three DOGS of different breeds, each lying lazily in his/her own cushion. They pretty much own the place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The phone rings. Mindy enters. She has a slight dazed look on her face, maybe from a nap - or a couple of martinis. She has to get around one of the dogs to get to the phone, and knocks her foot onto the table.

MINDY

Ouch! Son of bitch. Ouch, oh!

(on the phone)

Hello? (...) Oh hi, Kate! How are you? (...)

As she listens, she sits on the couch and grabs a cigarette from a pack on the coffee table.

MINDY (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Oh, I'm good. Everything is great - amazing, actually. Yes, I went to see this chromotherapist up in Kingston.

She lights the cigarette.

MINDY (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Chromotherapy! (...) The guy talks to you for 15 minutes, then he floats his hand all over your body and he feels whatever type of energy you're lacking - physical, emotional, spiritual. It's hard to explain. But he feels the energy levels and then prescribes colored lights to restore your balance. I was just taking a nap under a greenish light he gave me. You wouldn't believe it, but I feel like I'm a different person. I have much more energy, and (...) Hun-hun, I know. And how's Uncle Ben? (...) Uh-hun, I know. It must be hard for him. (...) I know, I see.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT - NIGHT

Ben, in a bath robe, his hair still wet, is standing outside the closed door to Kate's bedroom. For a moment he hears her voice, then knocks on the door.

KATE (O.S.)

Come in!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Sorry, I didn't want to interrupt.

KATE

Yes, Ben?

BEN

I wanted to talk about earlier.

KATE

Oh no, it's fine.

BEN

Are you sure?

KATE

Yes, I'm talking to Mindy.

(a voice on the
phone)

She wants to know when you're
going to visit her in
Poughkeepsie.

BEN

Ah, send her my love. We can talk
tomorrow.

KATE

Okay.

Ben shuts the door. He stands still for a moment, taking
in what he's just heard, and then walks away.

INT. WAITING ROOM / AFFORDABLE HOUSING, CITY HALL - DAY

Ben and George sit in a typically bureaucratic waiting
room amongst other NEW YORKERS in search of a solution to
their housing problems. The light is dim, and the mood is
downcast.

Ben watches an old-fashioned TV set that hangs from the
corner of the ceiling, showing a day time soap opera.
George is searching through the files he has in a satchel
on his lap.

A door opens and a SOCIAL WORKER, a woman in her 50s,
enters.

SOCIAL WORKER (O.S.)

(to both men)

Mr. Garea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE

That's me. This is Mr. Hull. I'd like him to come with me.

SOCIAL WORKER

(cool, efficient)
Right this way.

She motions them both to follow her.

INT. OFFICE / AFFORDABLE HOUSING, CITY HALL - DAY

The Social Worker searches for and separates brochures, applications and other paperwork from piles on her messy desk.

SOCIAL WORKER

These apartments are city sponsored and are currently accepting applications. Tenants are selected by a lottery, but first you need to meet the criteria for the specific development. Each one has its own.

She hands some paperwork in their general direction.

SOCIAL WORKER

I only have one, I'm sorry.

BEN

We can share.

SOCIAL WORKER

The city itself does not rent the apartments. If you get selected, this will be a private real estate transaction between you and the real estate developer, understand?

George is trying to. Ben less so.

SOCIAL WORKER

You need to contact the developer or the marketing agent directly - you'll see the phone numbers and other info on the list I just gave you.

GEORGE

I have a question.

George pauses, quite suddenly. The Social Worker looks up from her paper work, expectantly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE

We're married. We would be applying together.

First time he says "married". It feels funny to say that. George and Ben both look at the Social Worker searching for a reaction, and see no reaction at all: she's a NYC Social Worker after all.

SOCIAL WORKER

Okay.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

So, for example:

(reads from the list)

One bedroom in Ft.

Greene/Wallabout. Rent \$511.00.

Minimum income \$19,509, maximum income \$23,240. Would that be for both tenants?

SOCIAL WORKER

Yes. Both, together. Anything you find interesting there, check to see if you meet the criteria, and if you do, you'll need to ask for an application directly from them. Remember to include a self addressed envelope with your request.

GEORGE

Okay.

George takes a look at some of the lists she gave him. A moment of silence between them.

SOCIAL WORKER

That's all I have for now.

BEN

Sounds like a good start.

SOCIAL WORKER

Typically demand exceeds supply for those apartments, so we suggest that you enter multiple lotteries, and use other means for pursuing housing such as classified ads, online listings, brokers, and word-of-mouth.

GEORGE

Thank you very much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SOCIAL WORKER

Use common sense and beware of deals that sound too good to be true.

GEORGE

Thanks.

The Social Worker observes Ben getting up from his chair.

SOCIAL WORKER

Sir. Can I ask a question?

BEN

Yes?

SOCIAL WORKER

How old are you?

BEN

I'm 71.

SOCIAL WORKER

Because you might want to try the DFTA also?

GEORGE

DFTA?

She hands him yet another piece of paper.

SOCIAL WORKER

Department for the Aging.

BEN

They have a whole department just for us? Isn't that encouraging...

George doesn't know if he should laugh or cry.

SOCIAL WORKER

They have a list of affordable senior housing. It usually has a waiting list, but it's worth a try.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

George comes into an almost surreal scene in front of him:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ted, wearing a medieval warrior hat, Roberto, Doreen, and Marco's boyfriend, VINNIE, heavy set, with a beard, wearing a heavy metal band T-shirt, are sitting around the dinner table, which is covered with Dungeon & Dragons paraphernalia: the game's navigation maze, miniature snakes, monsters, vampires and medieval warriors; polyhedral multicolored dices, different manuals and, of course, lots of beer, popcorn and bags of Doritos. There's also a bottle of Tequila.

TED

Hey George, do you want some beer?

ROBERTO

Tequila?

GEORGE

I'm kind of hungry, actually.

ROBERTO

We're still waiting for Marco.

DOREEN

Don't you guys think George would be a great Lycanthrope?

VINNIE

A Cockatrice.

DOREEN

He'd be a perfect Lamia.

George strikes a pose as what/who he thinks Lamia is.

GEORGE

(sexy)
Lamia!

They laugh. Roberto laughs a little too much, his face flushed from the alcohol.

GEORGE

You guys seem to be having fun.

TED

Come play with us, you'll love it.

GEORGE

It looks very complicated.

DOREEN

Have a beer and just watch - best way to learn this game.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE

I will, but I think I'll eat a little something first.

ROBERTO

There's curry in the fridge.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED'S APARTMENT / KITCHEN - NIGHT
(CONT.)

George puts a plate in the microwave, and enters two minutes on the timer.

He picks up a paper towel and cleans the counter, waiting for his food, as he listens to chatter coming from the living room.

DOREEN (O.S.)

I'm going to roll a perception check.

(dice rolling)

31.

TED (O.S.)

You see a door.

DOREEN (O.S.)

I got a 31! All I see is a door?

TED (O.S.)

It's a spooky door.

ROBERTO (O.S.)

That's fucked up.

DOREEN (O.S.)

I open the door.

TED (O.S.)

Wait! Strength check.

DOREEN (O.S.)

On a door?

TED (O.S.)

It's a heavy door.

DOREEN (O.S.)

Is it locked?

TED (O.S.)

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOREEN (O.S.)

Whatever.
 (dice rolling)
 D29.

The microwave beeps next to George. He picks up a hot plate of curry.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The guys continue to play the game in full force. Vinnie jumps from his chair.

ROBERTO

I have dark vision. Can I see what's at the end of the hallway?

DOREEN

You cannot, because...
 (with excitement)
 It's a Vampire Queen.

ROBERTO

(pretends a fright)
 Uh! What's her challenge rating?

DOREEN

Her challenge rating is 18.

ROBERTO

18? That's kind of high for a Vampire Queen, don't you think?

DOREEN

I said 18!

ROBERTO

C'mon! Okay, you're the DM but you can't do that.

DOREEN

Yes I can. I'm the DM; I can do whatever I want.

ROBERTO

Bitch.

Roberto picks up a baton from the table.

ROBERTO

I'm going to use the wand of wounding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOREEN

No way!

Doreen is fast and takes the baton from Roberto's hand.

ROBERTO

Give me that!

Roberto grabs Doreen, who hugs the baton tight, so Roberto can't take it away from her. She's laughing, but Roberto is seriously upset.

TED

Stop!

Frustrated, and drunk, Roberto ends up pushing Doreen, and grabbing the baton and cleaning out the table, effectively messing up the whole game.

TED

Oh c'mon baby!

There are boos and protests from Doreen and Vinnie.

They don't even notice as, in the background, George crosses the room towards the door.

He opens the door and Marco is there in a camouflage raincoat. He is closing an umbrella, dripping wet.

MARCO

George! You don't want to go out there, my friend. It's really coming down.

George passes by him.

GEORGE

Thank you. I'll be fine.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kate and Elliot are washing dishes, while Ben is still at the table, slowly eating his dinner.

We can hear the rain falling heavily outside.

ELLIOT

Do you think he's old enough to enjoy the Louvre?

KATE

He's obsessed with the French Revolution.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLIOT

But he doesn't need to go to Paris
to learn about the guillotine.

KATE

It's a group of eight boys and
girls, and they need two more so
they can get the discount.

ELLIOT

Is Vlad going?

KATE

Yes.

ELLIOT

Of course.

KATE

Of course.

ELLIOT

How much is it?

KATE

Eighteen hundred, hotel included.

The buzzer rings, interrupting the conversation. Kate
shuts the water and looks at Elliot, confounded by the
intrusion.

ELLIOT

Speak of the devil.

KATE

Who?

ELLIOT

(looking at his
watch)

10PM. That would be Vlad.

The buzzer rings again, as Kate reaches for the intercom.

KATE

Who is it?

GEORGE (O.S.)

(through the
intercom)

It's George.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben opens the door, and George comes in, all wet from the rain outside.

BEN
What happened??

George gives him a hug, a very tight hug, and starts to cry.

GEORGE
I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

BEN
Stop it. Don't be silly.

They hug each other tightly, George now crying like a baby.

Elliot observes the scene from a distance. Kate wants to step forward to help out, but Elliot stops her from moving.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joey is at his desk in front of the computer. Elliot comes in.

ELLIOT
Son, I need to ask you a favor.

JOEY
What is it?

ELLIOT
Do you mind sleeping on the couch tonight?

JOEY
C'mon, Dad.

ELLIOT
George is here. He's upset, and it's raining. It's only for tonight.

JOEY
Why can't he sleep on the couch?

ELLIOT
Because. Please, son.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kate reads to the light of her bedside lamp. Elliot is under the covers, asleep beside her.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The back pillows of the couch are thrown on the floor, and Joey is already asleep under a blanket.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben is in the bottom bunk. George is in the top. They are talking very quietly, intimately.

GEORGE

I talked to the Principal there at PS-216, who seemed very nice and smart. He really wants to bring back a music program.

BEN

Do they have the budget for it?

GEORGE

Not right now, but he seems like he might be very good at raising money. He has a very attractive personality.

BEN

That doesn't really help us much right now, does it?

GEORGE

I haven't finished my story. Can I finish it?

BEN

They don't have a job for you, isn't that the end?

GEORGE

No, it's not. You're such a pessimist.

BEN

I'm being realistic.

GEORGE

Let me finish!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Okay. Go ahead.

GEORGE

Thank you. They have all kinds of kids there: lots of black and latin, but also white, a few Asians. This really cute girl, Filipino, I think she was. She played Frere Jacques for me on her flute.

BEN

George, why don't you come down here so I can hear you better.

GEORGE

It's a bunk bed.

BEN

So?

GEORGE

You told me Joey was already losing his patience with you. Can you imagine if you broke his bed trying to shag your husband.

BEN

I have missed having your body next to mine too much to have it denied to me for reasons of bad engineering.

George sits up, and moves to the edge of the bed. He awkwardly maneuvers himself on to the ladder and down the side.

Ben is squished as far as he can be to the wall, waiting for George with the sheets pulled back.

George gets into the bed with him.

They take each other in for a long moment.

GEORGE

Do you ever blame me for all of this?

BEN

Why would I blame you? We did it together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE

But I knew what might happen. I knew more than you what we were risking.

BEN

All I know is that after 39 years it's hard to fall asleep without you. This situation we've gotten ourselves in is really fucking with my sleeping patterns.

INT. PIANO STUDENT'S HOME - DAY

A YOUNG GIRL plays at the grand Steinway piano, in this upper middle class apartment. Even though the metronome on top of the piano is giving a certain rhythm, the Girl seems to be following no one in her interpretation of this Prelude by Chopin.

George walks around the Girl, and the piano, listening carefully. And as soon as the Girl finishes...

GEORGE

What happened?

The Girl looks at him somehow surprised at his reaction

GEORGE

What was that?! That wasn't what we talked about last week.

GIRL

Interpretation.

GEORGE

Yes, and I insist that it is crucial to let the music take you someplace, to be surprised by it, even to allow yourself to be overwhelmed sometimes. That is as important as knowing the difference between a semitone and a half-step. But at the same time, you have to stay focused on the instrument you're playing, and listen. Always - listen! What is the metronome telling you...

(clap his hands)

...tik - tok - tik!! You-ha-ve-to-fol-low! You can't just create your own rhythm to Chopin. Let's do it again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Girl is back at the Prelude. George paces back and forth for a moment, listening, then sits on a bench behind her. He sees when the Girl's MOTHER shows up quietly, discreetly, peeking from the corridor, smiling at George and listening.

The Chopin Prelude soars. The girl plays it well. George listens with attention to the music, and seems moved by it.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Dear parents,
By now you have all heard of my joyful news, and of my sad news. To be able to finally marry my partner of almost 40 years, Benjamin Hull, in a small ceremony here at the New York City Hall was one of the happiest moments of my life. Unfortunately, later I found out that I could no longer continue to teach music at St. Grace's.

INT. ST. GRACE'S SCHOOL/CLASSROOM (DOCUMENTARY STYLE) - DAY

A PRIEST drawing numbers of an equation on the blackboard, teaching math to a class.

At their desks, the UNIFORMED STUDENTS, some paying attention, some absent-mindedly looking out the window, others making notes.

The Chopin Prelude continues to play over these scenes.

GEORGE (V.O., CONT.)

Most of you, and everyone at the school, knew that I was gay and that Ben was my life-long partner. I have always had nothing but support from all of you, so I would like to thank you, and also to emphasize that I understand that what happened is not the fault of St. Grace's and its leadership.

INT. ST. GRACE'S SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Students in the hallways, at their lockers, some running, while others conferring with a teacher, and with each other.

GEORGE (V.O., CONT.)

Above all, I urge you to take this opportunity to have a conversation with your children about whether or not justice was served here.

INT. ST. GRACE'S SCHOOL/GYMNASIUM - DAY

A basketball court; the boys sweating, playing, competitive.

INT. ST. GRACE'S SCHOOL/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Students get ready for a dress rehearsal. They put on their gowns, and walk up the steps of the chorus.

GEORGE (V.O., CONT)

The last thing I want them to take from this is that they should hide who they are, or what they think, if they believe it will get them into trouble. Life has its obstacles, but I've learned early on that they will always be lessened if faced with honesty.

The students arrange themselves on the steps, playfully at first, but gradually become solemn and organized, as the new CONDUCTOR seems ready to start the music.

INT. CORRIDOR OF BEN AND GEORGE'S APT - NIGHT

George walks the same corridor of his old apartment, towards Roberto's door.

GEORGE (V.O., CONT'D)

I believe the world is a better place if people aren't lying. In the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "Love does not delight in injustice, but rejoices with the truth." Yours sincerely,
George Garea.

The Chopin Prelude ends as George opens the door, and goes inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT / JOEY'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

The entrance door opens and Ben comes in. He notices that the living room is mostly dark and quiet, except for a reading light that was left on in a corner.

He heads to his/Joey's bedroom. The door is closed.

Ben opens the door to the bedroom. He sees Vlad and Joey sitting next to each other on his bed, with some books on their laps, which they quickly hide however they can.

JOEY

(shouting)

Can I have some private time,
please?

Ben shuts the door. He realizes he's arrived at a bad moment.

Back in the living room, Ben looks around and heads to the kitchen.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben opens the door and finds Elliot pouring some more red wine for Kate, seemingly having "a conversation."

BEN

I'm sorry, I didn't think...

ELLIOT

Come in.

Ben enters.

ELLIOT

Do you want some wine?

BEN

Why not.

KATE

How was your day?

Ben can feel the tension still in the air between them.

BEN

Nice. George went to church and I
saw a wonderful movie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATE

What did you see?

BEN

The Gang's All Here.

ELLIOT

No way!

BEN

Do you remember?

ELLIOT

(sings)

*But the thing that led to love,
was her polka dot gloves,
while the band played the polka
dot polka.*

They laugh. It helps clear the air.

KATE

What is that?

BEN

A Busby Berkeley musical.

ELLIOT

It's like an acid trip with Alice
Faye and Carmen Miranda. The
dancers hold these huge bananas...

(demonstrating)

...right here on their hips, like
they have huge penises.

BEN

Oh, not really. It's not like
that.

ELLIOT

Yes it is. It's totally phallic.

KATE

I know that scene!

BEN

They have a wonderful new print.
And I have to say Elliot, I was so
happy when they came out with VHS,
we could watch all those old
movies again, and I'm glad I
showed them to you. But watching
this in the big screen, it's
something else. It's not even the
same movie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLIOT

I'd love to see it!

KATE

Let's go tomorrow night?

ELLIOT

Yes! No, shit. I can't tomorrow.

Kate swallows her frustration with a big sip of her wine.

KATE

Well, maybe I'll go on my own.

Ben sips his wine, looking at his nephew, and at Kate.

ELLIOT

(to Ben)

Is Joey asleep?

BEN

I think he and Vlad are still studying.

KATE

Vlad??

ELLIOT

(to Kate)

What is Vlad doing here?

KATE

Not studying.

ELLIOT

I'm going to go check.

BEN

Don't go.

ELLIOT

What?

BEN

Last year you two were complaining that Joey didn't have any friends. You were worried he was too antisocial, you even took him to see a therapist.

KATE

So?

BEN

Now he has a friend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELLIOT

It's a little strange.

KATE

There's nothing strange.

ELLIOT

It's his only friend, and the
guy's a lot older.

KATE

He's 16, he just looks older.

ELLIOT

They're like Yogi Bear and Boo-
Boo.

Ben laughs at that, but Kate doesn't think it's funny.

KATE

Don't be ridiculous.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elliot knocks on Joey's bedroom door, and the door opens
almost immediately. It's Vlad, and he steps out, carrying
his backpack and skateboard.

VLAD

Good night, Mr. Hull.

Elliot watches as Vlad walks to the main door, and
leaves.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben is in bed, tucked under the sheets with a book, only
his reading light on. After a moment, he believes he can
hear a faint lament coming from above. He puts the book
to rest on his chest.

BEN

Joey?

Joey is lying on his bed above.

JOEY

Huh?

BEN

Are you awake?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOEY

Yes.

BEN

Can I ask you a question?

JOEY

What.

The fact that they're not face to face, in the semi darkness, makes this easier to ask:

BEN

Have you ever been in love?

JOEY

I'm not gay!

BEN

I didn't mean to imply that, Joey.

JOEY

So what do you mean?

BEN

Love. You know what love is.

Silence.

JOEY

There was this girl once.

(he proceeds
cautiously)

I was 14. We were on vacation in Saint Croix. That's in the Virgin Islands.

BEN

I remember when you guys went there.

JOEY

There was another family renting a house on the same beach as ours. They had a daughter, she was 16 and I used to watch her go windsurfing every morning.

BEN

Did you go windsurfing too?

JOEY

No, we had jet skis. But I used to watch her from the beach, and one day I saw her watching me too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

On the jet skis?

JOEY

Yeah. I saw her looking at me.

BEN

Do you know her name?

A long pause. The silence is intimate between them.

JOEY

No. We never said hello to each other.

BEN

Oh.

JOEY

But I think we'll see each other again. They're from New York City.

BEN

And if you do, would you say hello to her this time?

JOEY

I don't know.

BEN

I think you should.

Ben turns his reading light off. All is quiet, the room is dark.

EXT. ROOFTOP ELLIOT AND KATE'S BDG - DAY

On a used palette, full of different colored spots, some green paint is mixed with a little brown. The result is a dark green, so the brush adds a little cream, and the mix become the perfect color for the Park Slope outdoors.

Ben sits on his portable stool, painting the canvas on his easel.

The painter starts to fill up the contours of his picture with green and blue.

It is a breezy, quiet afternoon.

The Skateboarder at the center of the painting seems to be done, and the trees, rooftops and sky around him start to gain life with brush strokes of color.

EXT. ROOFTOP ELLIOT AND KATE'S BDG -- END OF DAY

The light has changed, it's later in the day now. Ben applies subtle brush strokes to the canvas in front of him. With his finger, he rubs the fresh mix of green and brown on the painting, for effect. He takes a step back to look.

Ben looks at the sky. A wind blows, sending dead tree leaves flying through the air.

INT. STAIRWELL - END OF THE DAY

Ben opens the door from the roof to the stairwell loaded with his painting materials, carrying his canvas, a box and the easel all at once. The security door to the roof shuts and suddenly Ben can't move. The bottom of the easel is stuck in the door.

He looks down to see the stairwell of the building looming underneath. He tries to pull the easel past the door, but it doesn't move. Little drops of sweat start to show on his forehead.

He gives up trying to do everything at once, and places the canvas on the floor, then he kicks the door with his foot. He is now able to get the easel past the door, which closes with a loud clank.

He leaves the canvas behind, and carries the easel and the rest with him down the stairs.

It's still a lot to carry, and the place is dark. He stops midway. A drop of sweat rolls down Ben's forehead. He gets nervous, and takes a deep breath. His eyes get foggy, he has a hard time focusing them. The air gets rarer. Ben feels faint, and takes a deep breath. The stairs seem to move from under his feet.

First the easel drops, then the box, which opens and all the painting materials roll down the stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

In the waiting room of the hospital, Roberto, in his policeman uniform, Kate and George are crowded around the DOCTOR, all ears on each word he says.

DOCTOR

The shoulder is a ball-and-socket joint;

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

the ball of the upper arm bone fits into the socket in the shoulder blade, and is kept there by the rotator cuff. He had what we call a full thickness tear, or a complete tear.

GEORGE

Can he paint?

DOCTOR

No. I don't want him to even comb his hair for a while.

GEORGE

Poor Ben.

KATE

His legs are okay?

DOCTOR

Legs are fine.

KATE

It was so hard to get him to stand up, and move. I thought he had broken his leg, he was in so much pain.

DOCTOR

He dislocated the shoulder, which means his arm came out of the socket, and that is very painful, so any action, any movement with the body, makes it even worse.

ROBERTO

What about surgery?

DOCTOR

I wouldn't recommend it right away. First he needs to rest. We're going to put his arm in a sling, and he should just let it rest for a couple of months. Then we'll try some strengthening exercises and physical therapy. Now, George, when was the last time he had a full cardiac checkup?

GEORGE

We have our regular checkup every year.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DOCTOR

You have to take him to see a cardiologist.

GEORGE

Why?

DOCTOR

It's not okay for anyone to be having fainting spells, especially not at his age.

ROBERTO

I thought he'd just fallen down the stairs.

DOCTOR

No, he fainted.

GEORGE

He's felt dizzy before.

DOCTOR

And shortness of breath?

GEORGE

Maybe. I think so. Did he complain to you, Kate?

KATE

No. Doctor, finish, please.

DOCTOR

A heart condition would explain the dizziness and the fainting spells, and nowadays heart surgery is so advanced... Anyway, I'm not going to speculate here. I'm an orthopedist, I'm not a cardiologist.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ben, a large band-aid above his eye, his right arm on a sling, is propped up on the couch with two pillows, reading a book.

Kate comes from the kitchen with a glass of water, and some medication.

KATE

Here. You should take this now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Oh, thank you.

KATE

I have to leave, but there's a plate of pasta for you in the microwave.

BEN

Thank you, Kate.

KATE

Are you sure you're going to be okay?

BEN

Oh yes, I'm fine.

KATE

Okay, then.

Kate grabs her purse, makes sure she has everything she needs and walks to the door.

KATE

Bye bye now.

BEN

Bye.

The door closes behind her. Ben is alone in the apartment. With some difficulty, he moves on the couch to reach the medication and water. He drinks a couple of sips, and takes a deep breath before slowly returning to his previous position. He picks up the book and starts reading again.

EXT. STREETS OF BROOKLYN - DAY

Kate approaches a corner with a stop light. She waits for a couple of cars to rush by, but crosses the street right after, without waiting for the light to turn. She continues to walk fast, in a hurry to get somewhere on time.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Kate crosses the street in a hurry and rushes inside the gates of this private High School in Brooklyn - an old big building, a place that exudes tradition and solid education.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

A small room with books and files everywhere. Kate is sitting on the guest chair in the Principal's office. The PRINCIPAL leans on her busy desk while talking to Kate.

PRINCIPAL

I don't want you to worry too much, it's not a very big deal. We deal with similar problems every day here. But it is serious.

KATE

I'm shocked. He's such a serious kid, and such a good student. And so is Vlad.

PRINCIPAL

There's been some rivalry between the two senior classes. It started between two students, but then it trickled down to everything from who's the most popular to who's the smartest. Maybe it's something related to this, but I don't really know. Did you notice anything different?

KATE

No. Maybe. Actually, now that I know this...

PRINCIPAL

What?

KATE

Last night he watched a DVD with me. It was my pick - a French movie, and Joey usually would never sit for the whole thing. He seemed very interested and stayed until the very end. We even had a conversation about it after. That was sort of unusual.

PRINCIPAL

Vlad has confessed that he took the books out, and gave them to Joey, but your son denies having them.

KATE

Vlad seems to have great influence on my son. Joey doesn't have that many friends.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRINCIPAL

Have you noticed any new books in the house?

KATE

I haven't paid attention. I'm trying to finish my new book. And Elliot's Uncle Ben is staying with us, sleeping in Joey's room. It's a bit of a complicated situation.

PRINCIPAL

Well, I don't understand why they would steal these books, they're all French literature books.

KATE

I have no idea.

PRINCIPAL

Truth of the matter is that the books need to be returned to the library. You can tell your son we won't ask any questions now. But if they're not returned, Joey will not be able to graduate. Do I make myself clear?

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, LIVING ROOM - END OF THE DAY

Ben, with his right arm in a sling, is lying on the couch, trying to read a book; it is a hard cover French edition of Cyrano de Bergerac. He doesn't seem comfortable, can't concentrate.

Ben puts the book down, and raises from the couch with some difficulty.

The sunset light comes through the window of the living room. Kate's desk is empty, neatly clean. All is quiet.

Ben goes to Kate's desk, and punches a number on the land line telephone.

BEN

George

(...)

After the operation, I think it's better if I go stay with Mindy.

(...)

Yes, George.

(...)

But it's really not fair with Elliot and Kate. And poor Joey.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)

(...)

You'll come on the weekends.

(...)

We should have an answer from those places soon.

(...)

Why not?

(...)

Of course I trust you. But I want us to have options.

The door suddenly opens and Kate and Joey come in. Joey runs into his bedroom, without even saying hello, clearly upset. The door slams shut.

Ben, still on the phone, looks on as Kate goes inside her bedroom and shuts her door behind her.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE'S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

A tense dinner at the Hull home tonight. The family is sitting around the table, their plates empty after dinner. Ben is the only one still eating. It's only pasta, but having his right arm on a sling and trying to use the left hand only doesn't help.

ELLIOT

This is the last thing I expected from you, Joey. The last thing. You're not a boy anymore, you're a man. You're lucky this happened in high school, so the principal can call your mother. In the real world, you would've gone to jail.

JOEY

But I didn't steal anything.

A cell phone rings. It's Elliot's, and he picks it up.

ELLIOT

(on the cell)

Hello.

KATE

Ben, some more water?

BEN

Yes, please.

Kate serves Ben water, then herself. For a long moment, there's silence at dinner. Ben is slowly eating his food, Joey plays with his fork, and Kate is observing Elliot, who listens to the caller on the other end of the line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLIOT

(on the cell)

No, let's just go with what we have. I don't want to make changes at this point.

Still more silence.

KATE

(to Elliot)

Can you do this later, please?

ELLIOT

(on the cell)

I can't really talk right now, let me call you back in half an hour.

KATE

Thank you.

Elliot hangs up his cell phone, and is lost for a moment.

ELLIOT

Where was I?

Ben looks around, mouth full of pasta - nobody but him seems to remember. He chews and swallows.

BEN

Jail.

ELLIOT

Yes. You have a father and a mother who taught you all that is right and wrong. There's no excuse for this. Look at your mom. Look at her! Do you think your mother deserves to be called in the middle of the day to hear that her son is involved in some kind of robbery? I mean, what's going to be next, carjacking?

Joey doesn't answer. He's done with dinner, he's ready to get up. But Uncle Ben's plate is still full of pasta.

ELLIOT

Do you have anything else to tell me?

JOEY

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLIOT

If there's something else, I'd rather hear it from you now, than later from the principal or someone else.

JOEY

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

ELLIOT

When guys your age steal things, there's usually drugs involved.

JOEY

No!

ELLIOT

Is Vlad involved with drugs?

JOEY

Dad... no.

KATE

How are you feeling, Ben?

BEN

Oh, I'm fine. It's a bit challenging to maneuver the silverware, but I'm fine.

ELLIOT

(to Joey)

You don't sound very sure. Is he?

JOEY

Not that I know of.

ELLIOT

Not that you know of?? You're together all the time! The only way I can understand why a boy like Vlad would steal a bunch of books in the French language is if he were high.

JOEY

I'm done here, can I get up please?

KATE

(to Joey)

You don't want any dessert?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOEY

I'm full.

ELLIOT

Answer me!

JOEY

I don't know, Dad! I'm not Vlad!!

They all want this dinner to be over. Silence at the table.

JOEY

Can I go to my room, please? I still have work to do.

ELLIOT

We haven't finished eating.

Joey looks at Ben's plate, the only one still eating. Ben becomes self-conscious.

BEN

It's okay, I'm almost done. I'm sorry...

KATE

(to Joey)
Okay then. You can go.

Joey gets up and leaves.

ELLIOT

Unbelievable.
(to Kate)
You're too nice to him.

KATE

You don't even know.

Kate gets up and starts cleaning the table, taking the dirty plates to the sink. Elliot follows, and looks for a clean container for the leftover pasta.

Ben stops eating, and puts his fork down.

BEN

I know where the books are.

Elliot is rinsing dirty dishes in the sink, while Kate is dumping bits and pieces in the garbage.

BEN

I said, I know where the books are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Elliot and Kate stop what they're doing, and turn to Ben, who looks down at his plate, not able to face them right now.

BEN

I've been in the house by myself, unable to work, to paint or do anything. I was looking for something to read, and I found these books under my bed, so I picked one up.

KATE

Ben! Why didn't you say something?

BEN

I didn't think much of it. They were just books.

ELLIOT

Are those *the* books?

BEN

The one I picked up was *Cyrano de Bergerac*. My French is a little rusty, but I got most of it. I know the book so well...

KATE

Frankly, who cares, Ben?

ELLIOT

Those are the books.

KATE

(angry, to Ben)
You've been listening here the whole time, you should've said something!

ELLIOT

Calm down, Kate. He didn't know.

KATE

You think I'm too nice to Joey?

ELLIOT

Oh please, Kate.

KATE

Well, let me tell you: you're too nice to your uncle, Elliot. And it's very easy being nice when you're not the one who's around all day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Kate drops the plates in the sink, and walks out. Elliot follows her.

Ben, alone at the table can hear them knocking on Joey's bedroom door. He can hear the door opening and then a loud BANG - the door slams shut. Kate's and Elliot's loud voices, muffled. And Joey's shouting, his voice full of teenage emotion.

The rest of the food remains untouched on Ben's plate. He feels bad, and can't really eat anymore. He can hear the door slam open, and everybody's voices loud and clear now.

JOEY (O.S.)

Because we're the only ones who
will ever learn French and read
those books in this stupid school!
Including the dumb ass teacher!

KATE (O.S.)

That is so arrogant.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Not even! It's just plain stupid.

Suddenly, Joey bursts in the kitchen, his face red with rage, his voice trembling with anger.

JOEY

What the fuck, Uncle Ben?!!

Elliot comes right after, and grabs Joey by the arm.

ELLIOT

Don't talk like this to your
uncle.

JOEY

You guys talk like this all the
time!

ELLIOT

Say you're sorry.

Joey is almost crying. Kate comes in, holding some books.

ELLIOT

Joey, you know you won't graduate
unless these books are returned.

JOEY

I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

ELLIOT

The trip to Paris this summer?
Forget about it.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A party at Roberto and Ted's. The apartment is crowded with people - men and women, friends of the couple - chatting, drinking beer, laughing and being social.

George sits on the couch, alone, with a drink in his hand, observing the scene. He sees in the corner of the room TWO MEN having what seems to be a heated conversation, which quickly turns into an argument. Some people around them look on, and they realize that this is not the place nor the time to be having this conversation. They rest their case for a moment. One of them, IAN, attractive, early 30's, goes into the kitchen. The other one, a MAN IN HIS 40s, is clearly upset. He suddenly turns around and walks out the door. George witnesses the whole scene from the couch.

Ian comes back from the kitchen with two beers, and walks around looking for his friend. He looks and looks but doesn't find him. Disappointed, he ends up on the couch, next to George.

IAN

Would you like a beer?

George notices a countryman in Ian's heavy British accent.

GEORGE

No, thank you.

IAN

I got an extra one for my friend,
and now I can't find him.

GEORGE

I think he left.

Ian realizes George was witness to his scene with the guy. He places one of the beers on the coffee table in front of him, and keeps the other one, drinking a sip.

IAN

We had an argument.
(pause)
I'm Ian by the way.

GEORGE

George. I'm a friend of Roberto's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IAN

Who's Roberto?

GEORGE

Well, I think this is his party.

IAN

Oh, right. I don't know anybody here.

GEORGE

That's Ted over there. The cute one. He's Roberto's boyfriend.

IAN

Yes, I met Ted. Not my type.

GEORGE

They're both cops believe it or not.

IAN

Really? Gay cops.

GEORGE

We call them the Police Women.

Ian laughs.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Terrible, isn't it? But they are actually both very nice. Roberto is not here yet, he's still at work.

Pause. George has a sip of his drink. Ian looks on at the people coming and going for a moment.

GEORGE

Where are you from?

IAN

Chippenham, originally. Near Bristol.

GEORGE

South London, myself, but moved to New York when I was a teenager.

IAN

Did you come alone?

GEORGE

With my mother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

IAN

I mean to this party tonight.

GEORGE

Ah. Yes.

IAN

Do you live in Chelsea also?

GEORGE

For the moment, yes.

IAN

I live in the Village. I was on my way to have dinner with my friend, and he said let's stop by this party first. I said sure, and now he left, and... well, here I am.

GEORGE

You must be hungry.

IAN

What?

GEORGE

I said, you didn't have dinner, so you must be hungry.

IAN

Starving. You?

GEORGE

Yes. Hungry as Rodolfo.

IAN

Rodolfo?

GEORGE

From *La Boheme*. The opera.

(pause)

Sorry, I don't mean to be pretentious.

IAN

Rodolfo the poet, of course. He's so hungry and poor that he burns his own manuscript for fire.

GEORGE

That's right.

Another pause. Ian looks at George, looking at the scene in front of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

IAN

Should we go eat?

GEORGE

Right now?

IAN

Why not. I don't have to stay here. Do you?

GEORGE

Well, I...

IAN

Sorry, you don't even know me. It's just that I hate to eat alone. Don't you?

GEORGE

No, on the contrary. I'm never bored with myself, whereas people sometimes can drive me crazy.

Ian gives no response - does that mean George wants to be alone? He takes a sip of his beer, and George looks at him.

GEORGE

Don't get me wrong. I love people. It's crowds I have a problem with. I prefer to relate one on one, than to just stand there with a drink in your hand, and a smile on your face.

IAN

I know what you mean.

(pause)

Are you waiting for Roberto?

GEORGE

Not really. I don't think Roberto will miss me when he gets here.

IAN

Oh, you're waiting for someone else!

GEORGE

It's not that romantic of a situation.

IAN

So what are you waiting for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GEORGE

I'm waiting for the orchestra to play its last note, so the curtain can fall.

IAN

Are you high?

GEORGE

Hardly. Before I started talking to you, I was about to doze off.

IAN

That's not the best place to sleep.

GEORGE

And yet, you're sitting on my bed.

George looks at the people coming and going, as Ian looks at him. A moment of recognition in Ian's face.

IAN

You're homeless!

GEORGE

(laughing)

Yes, it's a long story. It starts with me marrying my partner of 39 years and getting fired. We're looking for a place we can afford, but I won't bore you with details.

IAN

Well, I happen to have, right here in my pocket, the key to a rent controlled apartment on Morton Street in the West Village, soon to be vacated.

GEORGE

How come?

IAN

It's a long story. Should we go eat?

George, a bit reluctant, looks on to see that Ted is in the middle of a loud group, drinking and laughing. The party goes on, and they won't miss him.

IAN

C'mon. I don't feel like staying here, and neither do you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Ian gets up and walks away.

Already close to the door, Ian stops and turns. He sees that George is coming after him.

INT. APT. IN THE WEST VILLAGE - NIGHT

A small but very comfortable, cozy living room of an old apartment in the West Village. The place feels well lived in, very quiet, functional, with personality. George looks around, and Ian picks up a few items that were out of place.

IAN

My uncle used to live here before me, so after he moved back to England, I got the lease from him. That was 20 years ago, and I've been very happy here. I love this place.

GEORGE

So why are you leaving?

IAN

Because of work. I got a job with the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City.

GEORGE

That's an amazing place.

IAN

You've been there. So you know it doesn't get much better than that for an archaeologist. Do you want something to drink?

GEORGE

Just water.

While Ian goes away to get some water, George looks at the books and pictures on the shelves along the wall. Pictures of Ian in a Mayan city in Central America, in Paris, and Ian with the older guy seen at the party, in a romantic embrace on a beach.

Ian comes back with water, sees George looking at the picture.

GEORGE

That's the guy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IAN

Yes, John. We've been going out for about a year. I told him about Mexico tonight, and he wasn't happy.

GEORGE

You're a heartbreaker.

IAN

On the contrary. When I first met him, I was so in love, I didn't want to leave his side. Unlike many gay men, I've never been afraid to show my feelings. So I think I scared him off a little. He never wanted to commit, really, and kept pushing me away. It's no coincidence that I interviewed for this job in Mexico. Now he finds out that I'm leaving and he decides that I'm the man of his dreams? It's so typical, and so disappointing, frankly.

George goes to the window, to see the view.

IAN

Do you know how much I pay here?

GEORGE

No idea.

IAN

I'm even embarrassed to say. Eleven hundred. They can't raise the rent too much. It's controlled by the city.

GEORGE

Bless this city.

Outside, the faint light of old lamp posts illuminate a large, beautiful internal patio - one of those old-fashioned buildings. A sense of peace fills George, and he smiles.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

A SINGER sings in Latin a beautiful, solemn piece of music. He is accompanied by a PIANIST and a few OTHER MUSICIANS on this elegant stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The small theatre has an intimate feeling, the audience is composed of music lovers of all ages: MUSIC STUDENTS and OLD TIMERS mixed with NOVICES who came to listen to Durufle's music for the first time.

Amongst them are Ben and George, dressed in jackets and ties - Ben with a bow tie, stylish even if his arm is in a sling (a dark blue sling that goes with his dark blue tie).

The music takes a romantic turn. Ben looks at George - he knows that's his favorite part. George keeps his attention on the stage, but brings his hand down to George's side, as they discreetly hold hands.

EXT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

A small crowd of serious CONCERTGOERS come out from the side door to the Concert Hall. Ben and George are amongst them.

They walk down the street, George is humming the music.

BEN

So what did you think?

GEORGE

Not bad, though she was milking it a little.

BEN

Did you think so?

GEORGE

With a piece as romantic as that you don't need to embellish.

BEN

I don't know. I loved it. I kept thinking about him and his beloved Isabella.

GEORGE

That's not true, though. That whole he-wrote-it-to-convince-her-parents-to-let-him-marry-her, that's a myth, you know.

BEN

I'm not like you, though. I prefer a little embellishment.

INT. JULIUS BAR - NIGHT

George and Ben are on stools at the bar. George tries to catch the BARTENDER's attention, with no success. They are a little out of place among the mostly young and hip PATRONS.

More YOUNG PEOPLE start to arrive, chatting, flirting, moving around.

The Bartender comes to help Ben and George.

GEORGE

Finally.

BARTENDER

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. You guys look very thirsty. What can I get you?

GEORGE

Scotch on the rocks for me. Vodka tonic with half a lime and no ice for the gentleman here.

Ben smiles, George knows him well.

GIRLS flirt with GIRLS who dance with BOYS who flirt with BOYS.

The Bartender brings the two drinks.

GEORGE

How come it's so busy here tonight?

BARTENDER

Thank God it's Friday!

GEORGE

(to Ben)
The kids have taken over our spot.

BEN

Good for them.

BARTENDER

Are you guys new in the neighborhood?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Are you kidding? There was a famous "sip in" that happened right here, in this bar, to challenge the New York State regulation that prohibited bars from serving homosexuals.

BARTENDER

Sure, we have a clipping from *The New York Times* framed here somewhere.

Ben points the finger to himself.

BEN

1966. Me and four other guys. We came here accompanied by five reporters, and when we were denied service, we denounced the State Liquor Authority.

BARTENDER

Oh my God! You're the guy?

BEN

I'm one of the guys.

BARTENDER

Wow. This round is on me, fellows.

The Bartender goes to help other Patrons. George and Ben pick up their drinks, and turn their backs to the bar. They try to hold it in, but soon start to laugh.

GEORGE

You're such a liar!

BEN

What?!

GEORGE

You'll do anything for a free drink!

BEN

But I knew the guy who did the sip-in.

GEORGE

Frank?

BEN

That was his claim to fame.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE
(raising his
eyebrows)
I thought his claim to fame was
something else.

BEN
Oh, that too. God bless him.

George raises his glass.

BEN
Here's in memory of Frank.

They toast and drink up.

BEN
And to Ivan.

GEORGE
And who is that?

BEN
The angel from Chippenham who got
us the apartment.

GEORGE
It's Ian.

BEN
Ivan, Ian, doesn't matter. I'll
drink to him, the handsome
stranger.

GEORGE
Do I hear some jealousy in your
voice?

BEN
I have wondered what you've been
doing with all your free nights
without me.

GEORGE
That's not for me, Ben. You know
that.

BEN
For all these years?

GEORGE
For all these years.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN

Amazing. I'm sorry I can't say the same to you, George. But at least I've always been honest.

GEORGE

Sometimes I think that ignorance would have been a lot easier.

BEN

I'm sorry, George.

George takes a long sip, observing the young people around them.

GEORGE

(softening)

But now that I think about it, some things you couldn't have hidden even if you wanted to.

BEN

What are you talking about?

GEORGE

I'm talking about the time you got crabs.

BEN

Oh, thanks for reminding me.

GEORGE

And a black eye, that night in Rio.

BEN

That was a crazy motherfucker trying to rob me!

They laugh. George raises his glass.

GEORGE

To all the strangers!

BEN

Particularly the ones that bring us a rent controlled apartment in the Village. Cheers.

A toast, and the party goes on.

The CROWD drink and flirt, swaying to the beat of the music, a happy bunch.

EXT. WEST VILLAGE - NIGHT

Ben and George walk silently side by side on the quiet streets of the West Village at night.

As they're about to cross the street, Ben stops for a moment, taking a deep breath. George notices it, and holds his arm.

GEORGE

Are you okay?

BEN

Felt a little dizzy.

GEORGE

Too much to drink.

BEN

Yes. I'm fine now.

George lets go of Ben's arm, and they cross the street.

Side by side, they walk on a side street towards 6th Ave.

BEN

George.

GEORGE

What?

BEN

Remember we used to go to Castelli and Mary Boone, and you'd say that one day we'd go there to see my one man show?

GEORGE

And we will.

BEN

No, we won't, George.

GEORGE

How do you know? Nowadays you read about a new "hot artist" every week.

BEN

Okay, maybe it will happen but not in my lifetime.

GEORGE

How do you know? It's all a matter of taste, and trends.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Some new curator might look at one of your paintings one day and think it's the greatest thing.

BEN

I just would like to know. Is that disappointing to you?

GEORGE

Not at all. I say it because I believe it's a real possibility, but it's not important to me. I love your paintings, and I don't really care what other people think.

BEN

I guess I did make a couple of good ones, didn't I?

They arrive at the Subway Station by the Waverly Diner on 6th Avenue.

BEN (CONT'D)

We've had our ups and downs, George, and I know I wasn't always the best husband to you.

GEORGE

I'd rather be your husband, Ben, than anyone else's in the world. And if I had a chance to go back in time, I would live the same life all over again. I wouldn't change a thing.

George takes Ben's hand, and they walk down the Subway Station.

INT. SUBWAY STATION / 6TH AVE - NIGHT

There's minimal traffic this time of night inside the station. Even then, maybe out of habit, George and Ben find a dark, private corner to say goodbye, next to an empty ticket booth.

It's time for them to separate for the night. They reach out to embrace each other, made only slightly awkward by the sling on Ben's arm.

BEN

Ouch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE

Sorry.

BEN

Careful with my arm.

A YOUNG COUPLE walks by, without noticing them.

They walk towards the entrance to the trains. Ben passes through the turnstile with his card.

BEN

Good night George.

GEORGE

Night, Ben.

George watches as Ben waves and disappears down the platform.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STREETS OF WEST VILLAGE - DAY

George walks alone on the not so crowded streets of the West Village, crossing South on 7th Avenue.

EXT. STREETS OF WEST VILLAGE / COURTYARD BLDG. - DAY

George turns the corner into a very quiet, tree lined street in the Village.

He arrives at the old brick building, and goes through the gate.

EXT. COURTYARD BLDG. - DAY

The sun reflects on the freshly watered garden, which is nicely landscaped and well taken care of. The old building surrounding this central courtyard is low, only 5 stories high. The place is quiet, and has a sort of a monastic feeling.

As George crosses the yard towards the entrance to the left, he doesn't notice a young man coming from the other side.

JOEY (O.S.)

Hey, George.

It is Joey, carrying a shopping bag and a skateboard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE

Joey! I didn't see you.

JOEY

I was waiting over there.

GEORGE

Let's go up. I want you to see the new place.

INT. APT. IN THE WEST VILLAGE - DAY

The same apartment seen before, but now with George and Ben's furniture spread around, their books and objects on the shelves, Ben's painting on the wall, and George's piano occupying center space in the room.

Joey is by the window, looking at the courtyard below.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Here.

George brings in two glasses of ice tea.

JOEY

This place is so nice.

GEORGE

I know, thank you. I got lucky.

JOEY

And really close to the river too. The new park is awesome.

GEORGE

It's changed so much. When I first moved to New York, that was a no man's land. Look at it now.

Joey drinks his ice tea, as George goes to sit on the piano seat, with his own tea cup.

They remain in silence for a few moments, an awkward intimacy between them.

JOEY

George, I'm sorry I didn't go to the service.

GEORGE

The service?

JOEY

Uncle Ben's service.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE

Oh, it's okay. Funerals can be strange. Especially for people your age.

JOEY

I wanted to remember Uncle Ben like I remember him now. I've never even been to a funeral before, and I was afraid that if I'd gone to his, that would always be what I remembered when I thought about him.

GEORGE

That makes a lot of sense to me, Joey. I hope you didn't come all the way here just because you felt guilty about it.

JOEY

No. Actually, I came because I wanted to give you something.

Joey goes into the shopping bag he brought, and takes out a painting. It is The Skateboarder, the painting that Ben made of Vlad.

George walks closer to the window, where the light is brighter and he can see better the unfinished painting. As if holding a piece of Ben in his hands, his eyes tear up.

GEORGE

Wow, that's very nice.

JOEY

I picked it up at the top of the stairs the day Uncle Ben had the accident on the roof. It was funny because everything fell down to the bottom of the stairs, including Uncle Ben, as you know, but the canvas was neatly placed on top, as if he had had the time to save it before coming down.

GEORGE

You know that's very possible. His paintings meant everything to him. I think that when he realized he couldn't use his arm after the operation, he gave up. The heart was just a consequence. Is that the view from your roof?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOEY

Yes, it's South.

GEORGE

Is that you here?

JOEY

No.

GEORGE

I didn't think so.

JOEY

That's my friend Vlad. He's a friend who used to come over a lot when Uncle Ben was living with us.

GEORGE

You sure you don't want to keep this? It'd be a nice memento.

JOEY

No, it's his last painting, it's unfinished. You can look at it and always imagine what he would've done with the colors here.

GEORGE

Nice. Very nice. Let me get a hammer, so you can help me hang it on the wall.

EXT. COURTYARD BLDG. - DAY

JOEY'S GIRLFRIEND sits on a bench in the middle of the courtyard, with a skateboard by her side, playing with her smart phone. She sees someone approaching, and gets up. Joey comes to greet her. He holds her hand, and they start to walk away, each holding their own skateboard.

INT. APT. IN THE WEST VILLAGE - DAY

George watches the young lovers from the window.

After a moment, he turns around and sees himself alone in the apartment. He walks to the Skateboarder painting, looks at it and tilts it a tiny bit, making sure it's squared on the wall.

EXT. MORTON STREET - DAY

The quiet street is covered by an arc of trees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joey's girlfriend drops her skateboard on the asphalt, jumps on board, and rolls towards the river. Joey comes surfing by, and catches up to her. They roll side by side, towards the setting sun.