

The Beaver  
by  
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FADE IN:

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - DAY

WALTER, mid 40's, vacant, lies in bed fully dressed in a suit and tie.

The voice we hear belongs to THE BEAVER. He has a crisp English accent.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
This is a picture of Walter Black,  
a hopelessly depressed individual.  
He wants you to know he's tried  
everything.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

CLOSE ON a shelf of SELF HELP TITLES. Walter pulls down DUMPING DEPRESSION.

CLOSE ON a medicine cabinet full of prescriptions. Walter pops some pills.

WALTER CHANTS and pounds as part of a drum circle.

WALTER SOBS on a park bench.

WALTER HITS himself with a belt but refuses to show emotion.

WALTER POPS more pills.

WALTER READS from THE RAINBOW INSIDE.

WALTER LAYS on a couch, speaking to his therapist.

WALTER STARES into a hypnotist's pocketwatch.

WALTER POPS a whole handful of pills.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON a night stand where a copy of SIX STEPS TO A NEW YOU lies open. In bed beside it, Walter sleeps.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But, mostly what he does is sleep.

An ALARM goes off. He slaps it dead.

CUT TO:

WALTER GETS into bed. It's still daylight. Kids play outside.

WALTER SLEEPS on a couch, mid-afternoon.

WALTER SLEEPS at his desk.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 He prefers to call it siesta. He  
 dreams of islands with bright  
 buildings and wandering dogs.

WALTER SLEEPS in his car.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Places where the pursuit of slumber  
 is a local custom.

WALTER SLEEPS in a fast food restaurant. A WORKER pokes him.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Rather than a sign of intractable  
 clinical depression.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE

Walter sits at his desk. He stares at a photo of his family.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 Two things keep Walter from  
 sleeping forever.

CLOSE ON the photo. Walter, the wife, two boys. More on them  
 later.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 One is his family, which sleeps  
 only at night and regards those who  
 do otherwise with suspicion.

NEW ANGLE reveals that the room is full of people.

On the far wall, THE VP, late 30's, sharp, motions to a  
 chart. All the lines aim down. All the eyes turn to Walter.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 The other is that he's the CEO of a  
 once-proud toy company-

FLASH TO:

INT. FINE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

DAVY CONYERS, former CEO sits across from an ESCORT. Davy  
 starts to CHOKE.

THE BEAVER  
 - whose founder died unexpectedly,  
 and left Walter in charge.

Davy goes face down on the table. THUD.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 Walter's since led them to the edge  
 of bankruptcy.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA

HENRY, adorable, fragile-looking third grader, sits alone  
 staring straight ahead while other kids TALK and play.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 What he's done to the company is  
 just the start. His depression is  
 an ink that stains all who touch  
 him. A black hole that swallows all  
 who get near.

A wad of mashed potatoes SPLATS next to Henry. Other kids  
 LAUGH. If Henry notices, he doesn't show it.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Henry, his youngest, has become,  
 what his teachers call, 'hermit  
 like'.

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM - EVENING

PORTER, 18, cute but wild haired emo teen, sits at his desk,  
 reading. The books around him have titles like: DNA=DESTINY?

He stares into a notebook labeled JOURNAL OF SIMILARITIES.  
 It's some sort of list with fifty something items like:  
 Fingernail Digging, Whistle Breathing, Finger-Chin Tap.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 Porter, his oldest, has begun to  
 openly lobby for a divorce...

We push past Porter towards his wall where there's a deep,  
head sized dent in the drywall. We close in on the hole.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

PUSH IN on the refrigerator, where photos of two different  
 middle aged bachelors are stuck with magnets.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 ... and leave hints that his mother  
 could easily find a replacement.

INT. BOOKSTORE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

MEREDITH, late 30's with late 20's looks, WEEPS among women  
 who practically have Soccer Mom tattooed on their foreheads.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 Meredith, his wife, has clung to  
 hope that he'll one day wake up,  
 snap out of it.

She reaches into her purse for a tissue, but ends up with another of Porter's bachelor photos. She puts it back, takes a napkin from one of the ladies.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM

Walter is laying in bed, dressed as we first found him.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 But he hasn't. And she's finally  
 decided that he is a weight she and  
 the kids can no longer carry.

Meredith appears in the doorway. Walter looks over at her. He gets it.

QUICK CUTS:

CLOSE ON the self help books being packed into a box.

CLOSE ON the medications being swept into another box.

CLOSE on the boxes being loaded into a packed trunk. The lid is closed, revealing a car stuffed to the gills.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 She does the only thing left to do-

INT. WALTER'S CAR

Walter gets in. He looks into his side mirror and sees Meredith CRYING in the driveway behind him. He turns.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 - and says the only thing left to  
 say.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Their eyes connect. It's awkward. Do you wave when you're being thrown out? He begins to massage his eyebrows with his thumb and forefinger.

Finally, he puts the car in drive. She crosses her arms, swallows her tears. As she watches him drive away...

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 Goodbye.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY

Porter sits across from JARED, a confused athletic type.

JARED  
C minus!

Porter grabs a paper off the desk, waves it at Jared.

PORTER  
Jared, you're failing the class.  
And this writing sample could  
probably get you committed in  
several states. You really think  
you can suddenly hand in an A paper  
and get away with it?

JARED  
But I can get a fucking C-!

PORTER  
Excellent. Good luck to you.

Porter starts to leave.

JARED  
What about Hector? You just got him  
an A in Family Development.

Porter starts to massage his eyebrows exactly as we saw  
Walter do. Realizing it, he suddenly stops and disciplines  
himself by SNAPPING a big rubber band on his wrist.

Frustrated, he takes out his Journal of Similarities  
notebook. As he adds Massaging Eyebrows to the list...

PORTER  
I've never written anything for  
Hector. If he told you different  
he's a liar.  
(closing his notebook)  
But hypothetically, if I had  
written Hector an A paper, it  
certainly wouldn't have been right  
out of the box. Hypothetically, he  
would have come to me a long time  
ago, and we would have raised his  
grades incrementally. And he would  
have been responsible for  
memorizing the facts in the papers  
I wrote so that he wouldn't miss  
test questions over the same  
information. And if that had  
happened, then yes, he might have  
turned in an A paper and he might  
even be making a solid B in a class  
he used to be failing.

(MORE)

PORTER (CONT'D)

So, if someone else was asking me to do this for them, to not only write them a paper, but to do it as *them*, with their voice, at their skill level, then I would say that they could either do it my way or they could take their chances buying some piece of shit off the internet.

Jared thinks this over.

JARED  
150 every time?

PORTER  
(sing-song)  
Responsible regulars receive reduced rates.

Porter slides a book across the table. Jared SIGHS. He opens it, puts \$150 in and slides it back. Porter nods and stands.

JARED  
I gotta pass this class to graduate you know?

PORTER  
Wilkins, from your team last year? The one who thought the words igneous and ignorant were interchangeable? Where's he now?

JARED  
Playing for OSU.

Porter nods.

PORTER  
You'll get the grades. All you have to do is make people believe they're yours.

Porter walks away.

NORAH, cheerleader outfit, the kind of girl you're either hopelessly in love with, hopelessly jealous of, or both, breaks away from friends to catch up.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Norah glides in beside him.

NORAH  
Hey.

Porter's look says they don't normally talk. He keeps moving.

PORTER  
Hey?

NORAH  
What? I can't say hey to you?

PORTER  
You can, you just never have.

NORAH  
Well, I'm... sorry.

PORTER  
Really? I'm not.

Without warning, Porter stops at his locker. She takes a few steps before realizing it. She comes back. He seems annoyed.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Seriously, what do you want?

She's taken aback by the hostility. A beat.

NORAH  
I... need you to write something.

Porter LAUGHS.

PORTER  
I knew it. Is this what passes for undercover around here? You're the fucking valedictorian. He really thinks I'm going to fall for this?

NORAH  
Who?

PORTER  
Mumphry, or whichever vice principal sent you. You tell him I'm insulted.

Porter closes his locker, starts away. She grabs him.

NORAH  
Hey! Will you hold on for a second?

Porter grudgingly stops.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
No one sent me. I really need help.

PORTER  
You have a 4.0. I'm eight places behind you in the class rank. I copy off you in calculus. Why on Earth would you want me to write you a paper?

NORAH  
It's not a paper.  
(quiet)  
It's... my graduation speech.

PORTER  
 Look, I don't usually say this, but  
 save your money. No one pays  
 attention to those things.

He starts to go. She grabs him again.

NORAH  
 Yeah, well, my parents will be  
 paying attention, so... I hear, not  
 that I'm saying you write other  
 people's papers, but if you did, I  
 hear you really make yourself sound  
 like them. Get in their heads.  
 That's what I need.

Porter considers this. A long beat.

PORTER  
 I'd need some samples and-

She quickly hands him a paper from her bag.

NORAH  
 I have this now and I can get you  
 more by tomorrow.

Porter looks at the paper.

PORTER  
 I see one i dotted with a heart and  
 we're done.

He starts away.

NORAH  
 You really copy off me in calculus?

Without looking back...

PORTER  
 Don't forget to bring cash.

INT. SUBURBAN - DAY

Meredith waits in SUV gridlock outside the elementary school.  
 She scans the crowd but can't find Henry.

Suddenly, the passenger door opens and, seemingly from  
 nowhere, petite Henry hoists himself in.

HENRY  
 You passed me again.

MEREDITH  
 I was looking.

Henry shrugs. His demeanor is very quiet, flat. As she starts to drive...

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
How was your day?

Another shrug.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
Did you talk to anyone?

HENRY  
I guess.

MEREDITH  
New person or old person?

HENRY  
New.

MEREDITH  
Good. What did you talk about?

HENRY  
(matter of fact)  
He said I was a ball licker and I told him I wasn't and he threw me in the dumpster.

Meredith is aghast. Henry shows no emotion.

MEREDITH  
What! Did you tell your teacher?

HENRY  
She got me out of the dumpster.

Meredith suppresses her urge to cry as if she's been trained, calms her voice, and says something that sounds rehearsed.

MEREDITH  
This is why the doctor wants you to focus on coming out of your shell. When you spend so much time alone, the other kids see you as a target.

Henry nods as if he's also heard it before. A silent beat.

HENRY  
Is Dad gone?

She looks at him, trying to measure how he feels about this question. Henry gives nothing away.

MEREDITH  
He's not gone dear. We just agreed that it's better for us all if we don't live together anymore.  
(beat)  
How does that make you feel?

Henry shrugs.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - EVENING

Walter comes out with two large bags of CLINKING liquor. When he gets to the car he realizes there's no room for them.

CLOSE ON Walter's trunk being opened.

CLOSE ON a dumpster. Boxes are tossed in. We see that they're the ones full of self help books and medication.

Clothes follow. Files. Awards. Yearbooks. A set of golf clubs.

NEW ANGLE shows Walter emptying the final items out of the backseat. He throws them in the dumpster.

Walter stares at what he's done, his life mixed in with the garbage. He looks sleepy.

He leaves, then stops, slowly comes back, eyeing something.

ANGLE ON the garbage reveals a half buried BEAVER PUPPET, its large plastic eyes staring out from under some refuse.

Walter squints, then reaches for it. It turns out to have a large bushy tail and big happy grin. He holds it up.

He and the beaver seem to stare blankly at one another for a long time, as if each reading a story in the other's eyes.

CLOSE ON the trunk again as the two large bags full of liquor are tossed into the now empty space.

A beat, then....

The beaver puppet is tossed in too. The lid SLAMS down.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

ANGLE ON the bed as we hear the DOOR OPEN, the BOTTLES being set on the ground.

Suddenly Walter falls into bed with his shoes on. He pulls a pillow over his head. He sleeps.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The room is a wreck. Sheets, clothes, empty bottles.

ANGLE ON a bottle of sleeping pills, opened and half gone. We follow a trail of the little pink pills until we come to...

WALTER, sitting on the floor shooting whiskey straight, the beaver puppet now on his left hand. He's WEEPING.

On the TV, Alan Thicke is having a heart to heart with Kirk Cameron in a GROWING PAINS episode..

ALAN THICKE

(on tv)

This is a very special place Mike.  
My father built this cabin by hand.

KIRK CAMERON

(on tv)

Wow! No tools or anything? Cool!

This seems very profound to Walter. Still CRYING, he LAUGHS along with the audience and moves toward the TV, hugs it.

WALTER

(drunk)

Beautiful.

He takes a shot of whiskey and then pours some on the screen as if pouring it down Alan Thicke's throat.

WALTER (CONT'D)

There you go.

ANGLE ON the TV again as Walter continues pouring whiskey on the screen. Alan and Kirk hug.

Something breaks in Walter. He drops the bottle.

A long beat as he looks around the room, his face suddenly blank.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM

Walter has fashioned a necktie into a noose around the shower rod.

He SOBS as he steps up onto the edge of the bathtub, knees bent, and tightens it around his neck.

He takes a few deep breaths and closes his eyes. A long beat.

He inches his feet to the very edge of the bathtub and then, finally, lets them slip off.

His weight drops onto the noose, but it suspends him for barely a second before the whole rod comes down, dropping him into the tub backwards with a tremendous CRASH.

His feet hang out of the tub, the rest of him invisible, motionless.

SILENCE.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

ANGLE ON the shower rod as it DRAGS across the carpet.

Reveal Walter, still fastened to the rod by his tie, trudging toward the balcony. Drops of blood dot the back of his shirt.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY/INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Walter puts a chair next to the railing, climbs up. He takes rickety steps up until he's balanced very tenuously on the edge of the railing.

He looks down, a solid ten stories.

The tie pulling at his neck, the shower rod hanging behind him, BANGING against the balcony in the breeze, he looks resigned. A GUST of wind almost tips him forward.

He takes a breath, seems to decide he's ready. He raises his arms as if to swan dive.

And then suddenly, he catches a glimpse of the beaver puppet on his left hand. He eyes it as if he'd forgotten all about it. He brings it close. They stare one another down.

As he stares, he starts to tip forward, about to fall, but at the last moment, he overcorrects and instead tips backward toward the room.

He falls over the chair and through the open door, CRASHING into the dresser before falling backward onto the ground.

A quiet beat until we notice that the shower rod has gotten wrapped around the TV and is slowly pulling it toward the edge of the dresser, just above the seemingly unconscious Walter.

A beat, and then the TV tips off, landing flat on Walter's head with a MEATY THUD.

SILENCE.

CUT TO:

INT. BLACK KITCHEN - NIGHT

Meredith, Porter, and Henry eat at the table. The awkwardness indicates this is not a regular thing.

PORTER

Don't get me wrong, I'm glad you kicked him out. But the whole eating at the table in response to family drama thing? I mean, how long do you see us keeping this up?

MEREDITH

I don't know. How about until we start treating one another with some respect? And asking each other about our day. And you two start saying yes ma'am and no ma'am. And helping with the dishes. And-

PORTER

Maybe I should get a paper route too.

A long beat then...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Meredith, Henry, and Porter sit with their dinner in their laps watching *The Daily Show*. Only Jon Stewart speaks.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Walter blinks awake on the floor. The TV is flat against his face, literally sitting on his head. Between it and the carpet his field of vision is narrow.

Suddenly, he raises his left arm so the beaver puppet is all he can see. A long beat, then...

THE BEAVER

Hello, mate.

When The Beaver speaks, we recognize the crisp accent from the narration.

Walter's lips still move, so there's no confusion about where the sound actually comes from, but for a hand puppet, The Beaver is strangely animated.

When Walter speaks, it's in his own tired, groggy voice, so that despite one of them being a puppet, they seem to be having a real back and forth conversation.

WALTER

Who are you?

THE BEAVER

Bloody hell. Look at you. Stone drunk and flattened by a television.

(MORE)

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

Quite an obituary you're working out for yourself, yeah?

WALTER

Leave me alone.

THE BEAVER

You know what your problem is, Walter? You don't know when to give up. Chicken Soup, Seven Habits, How To Win Friends. Which one has the chapter about dropping a TV on your head?

WALTER

Please, just let me rest.

THE BEAVER

Library for losers, that's what you've got mate. Books, pills, promises, resolutions. You were hugging Alan Thicke for God's sake.

WALTER

I'm sick.

THE BEAVER

Now on that we agree. The question is, do you want to get better?

WALTER

Of course, but-

THE BEAVER

Yeah, yeah, I know, you're depressed. Lethargic. Anhedonia. Family can't even stand you anymore and yet you can't seem to snap out of it, yeah?

A beat. Walter nods slightly despite the TV on his head.

WALTER

Yes.

THE BEAVER

You're going about it all wrong, mate. These books and pills and shit, they're cotton candy. You get a little sugar rush and then, hello, you realize you're still the same stupid fuck who tries to hug televisions and hang himself from shower rods. Your problem is you've seen too many home improvement shows. You think you knock out a wall, change the drapes, everything will be back in order. Doesn't work that way. This thing, it's like back hair. You cut it, it just grows back thicker.

(MORE)

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

You want things to change, really change, you got to nuke it. Forget home repairs, Walter. If you want to get anywhere you've got to blow up the whole goddamned building.

WALTER

I don't know how to do that.

THE BEAVER

Well, I do Walter. I do. And I can help you if you let me.

WALTER

I... yes... please.

THE BEAVER

It's not going to be easy. You understand? You have to trust me.

WALTER

Yes. Please. Just, just... blow it up. Blow it up.

Walter is starting to WEEP again.

THE BEAVER

Come on now, stay with me. You can't just toss a bunch of dynamite and run. We gotta bring everything down clean so when we're done, we can put something new in its place. You understand? Now, do you still have your laptop, or did you rubbish it?

A long beat.

WALTER

Who are you?

THE BEAVER

I'm The Beaver, Walter. I'm here to save your goddamned life.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GYM - AFTERNOON

Porter is in the stands reading GENETIC PSYCHOLOGY TODAY as Norah is practicing with the cheerleaders on the floor.

The COACH calls a break. Norah splits from the others, grabs her bags and moves up to where Porter is.

He closes the magazine. She looks at it.

NORAH

(reading)  
Genetic Psychology Today?

He puts the magazine into his bag.

PORTER  
Bookstore was out of US Weekly.

He digs her sample out of his bag. He hands it back. She's surprised.

NORAH  
You don't need it anymore? I brought others-

PORTER  
I'm not doing it.

She's stunned.

NORAH  
What? Why?

He starts speak, but stops suddenly. He hears something. A faint WHISTLE each time he exhales.

He mashes at his nose until it goes away, then SNAPS the rubber band on his wrist and continues.

PORTER  
Because that's an excellent paper. You're an excellent writer. Which means that the only reason for me to do this would be because you can't be bothered to do it yourself. I'm sure shaking pom poms and being anorexic is a full schedule, I bet if you put your mind to it, you can work this in.

He stands, gathers his things.

NORAH  
Wait a minute.

PORTER  
You know, it's one thing to get by on your looks when it's all you've got. But for someone like you it's just lazy. If you're stuck for a topic, maybe you should just go with that. Short skirts, nose jobs, and get someone else to do it. Worked for me, kids!

He starts to go. Norah looks floored. The Coach yells from the gym floor.

COACH  
Norah! Let's go!

NORAH  
Hold on!

She SLAMS her bag on the ground, starts pulling out papers. She slaps them on the ground.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
(angry)  
Does that look lazy to you?

Porter stops. Turns. She keeps pulling more, stacking them.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
I write 10 page papers in an hour  
and half for easy A's.

The stack keeps growing, heading for War and Peace territory.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
Do you have any idea how many times  
I've tried to write this stupid  
thing?

She throws a last set on top.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
That's 428 pages of lazy. That's  
six months of lazy. That's 63  
different opening jokes, famous  
quotes, and follow your rainbow  
inspirational bullshit of lazy!

The whole squad is watching from the floor. Porter is clearly uncomfortable.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
(starting to tear up)  
I've worked harder and longer on  
this stupid pointless speech with  
less to show for it than anything  
I've ever done in my life. And if  
you don't want to take my money  
because of some insecurity based  
bullshit, then fine. But don't you  
dare call me fucking lazy.

She hurls her bag at his feet and heads down the stairs, returning to the wide eyed squad. As she goes...

NORAH (CONT'D)  
Asshole.

Porter looks stunned, embarrassed. He eyes the stack of papers by his feet.

The faint WHISTLE in his breathing returns.

INT. SUBURBAN - DAY

Meredith scans the elementary kids again. She reaches the TEACHER at the end of the line. She rolls down her window.

MEREDITH  
I'm sorry. He just blends in. I  
must have missed him again.

TEACHER  
No, Mr. Black already got him.

MEREDITH  
Walter?

TEACHER  
Said he sent you a text? Quite a  
character.

That doesn't sound like...

MEREDITH  
You're sure it was Walter?

Someone HONKS. The teacher moves on. Meredith checks her  
phone. Sure enough, there's a text.

EXT. DRIVEWAY / INT. GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Meredith wheels into the driveway, opens the garage door.

As it rises she sees Henry, bent over a workbench surrounded  
by wood, sawdust, and tools.

When he sees her, he looks up, beaming. He seems like an  
entirely different kid.

As Meredith gets out he runs toward her.

HENRY  
Mom, mom. You gotta see what we  
did! Come on!

She's stunned by his excitement. He takes her hand, starts  
pulling.

MEREDITH  
Okay, okay.

As he's dragging her toward the workbench...

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
Where is your father?

Henry doesn't hear her. Instead, he picks up a simple, but  
impressive, wooden box. He hands it to her.

HENRY  
You put your memory in it.

She looks it over, impressed, confused. It strikes her as a  
little nice to have come from her garage.

MEREDITH  
Where did this come from?

HENRY  
We made it.

MEREDITH  
You and your dad?

HENRY  
Me and The Beaver.

MEREDITH  
The beaver?

Just then, Walter steps from the house into the garage, a smile as rare and bright as Henry's on his face. He seems genuinely excited to see her.

But before he speaks, Walter raises his left hand revealing the beaver puppet.

The Beaver does the talking.

THE BEAVER  
Hello, love. Was just about to call you. Any idea where Walter stuffed the power sander you gave him two Christmases ago?

Meredith is stunned into silence.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
No? No trouble. We'll make do.  
(to Walter)  
Give her the thing.

Walter hands her a 3x5 sized card with a message printed on it. He then moves past her and joins Henry at the workbench.

Meredith looks at the card.

MEREDITH  
(reading)  
Hello. The person who handed you this card is under the care of a prescription puppet designed to-  
(looking up at Walter)  
Walter, what the hell is going on?

Walter and Henry begin sanding by hand.

THE BEAVER  
Just some male bonding, love. The boy here practically demanded a gentlemen's club, but I won him over with the promise of power tools.

Henry LAUGHS. Meredith can't help but gape at the rare sound.

MEREDITH  
I mean, what...

She moves closer to Walter, lowers her voice.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
What are you doing here? We agreed.

THE BEAVER  
Did Henry show you the box? Kid's a natural. I thought we'd nail a 2x4 to the wall, call it a shelf, but the boy, he's tongue and groove this and miter saw that. I think his head might be made out of wood.

He KNOCKS on Henry's head as the boy continues to LAUGH, but this time it's not enough. Meredith wants answers.

MEREDITH  
Walter. Seriously.

Walter and The Beaver look at one another. The Beaver turns to Henry.

THE BEAVER  
Henry mate, why don't you run inside, see if you can find that varnish we were talking about.

Henry drops his sandpaper and takes off like a shot. Walter and The Beaver turn to Meredith.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Did you read the card?

MEREDITH  
Yes, but-

THE BEAVER  
Read the card.

She raises the card again.

MEREDITH  
(grudgingly reading)  
Hello. The person who handed you this card is under the care of a prescription puppet designed to help create a psychological distance between himself and the negative aspects of his personality. Please, treat him as you normally would, but address yourself to the puppet until such time as it is no longer necessary. Failure to do so will jeopardize his hard won therapeutic gains. Thank you.

She looks up.

THE BEAVER  
There you go.

MEREDITH  
Is this some kind of joke?

THE BEAVER  
Hardly, love it's-

MEREDITH  
Will you stop with the puppet!

Walter looks at The Beaver. The Beaver nods. Walter takes a breath, lowers the puppet. His voice is much closer to the tired monotone we heard earlier.

WALTER  
Happy?

MEREDITH  
No, Walter. I'm very confused.

WALTER  
Meredith, this is a breakthrough.  
He says that if I stick with it we  
can knock down-

MEREDITH  
Who says?

A long beat as Walter thinks about this one. He looks to The Beaver for guidance. Finally...

WALTER  
Dr. Macy.

MEREDITH  
Dr. Macy? I thought you quit seeing  
him.

WALTER  
I went back.

MEREDITH  
So this is some kind of... program?

Walter raises The Beaver again.

THE BEAVER  
I'll field that one. The answer is  
yes, Meredith, that's exactly what  
it is. I know it seems radical, but  
that's because it has to be. In  
cases like Walter's, cases where  
all else has failed, it's proven  
quite effective.  
(MORE)

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

But for it to work, he's got to really commit to cleaning psychological house and starting over, and you could go a long way toward facilitating his progress if you could just work with him on this.

Meredith thinks on this for a second. She looks past The Beaver and right at Walter.

MEREDITH

And he really thinks this will work?

Walter slides The Beaver back into her eye line.

THE BEAVER

Absolutely. It's very big in Sweden.

She's about to say more when Henry comes back from inside.

HENRY

I can't find it.

THE BEAVER

Not a problem, mate. What you say we get this mess cleaned up? We'll worry with the varnish next time.

HENRY

You're not leaving are you?

THE BEAVER

Don't worry, I'll come round this weekend, we'll finish it up.

HENRY

No, you have to stay for dinner. Mom, let him stay for dinner.

THE BEAVER

That's all right mate, I'll-

Meredith looks at Henry's pleading expression.

MEREDITH

It's okay. You... it's okay. For dinner.

Henry CHEERS. Meredith is still stunned by his demeanor.

Walter turns to her. He looks like he wants to say something, but can't. He just nods, then turns The Beaver to Henry.

THE BEAVER

Right then. Let's clean up the garage so we can make a mess in the kitchen, yeah?

HENRY

Yeah!

Walter joins Henry as Meredith stares, unsure whose transformation to be more shocked by.

INT. FOYER - EVENING

Porter enters, reading from the giant stack of papers that Norah threw in front of him. He stops. He hears LAUGHTER.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Porter steps in to see Walter using The Beaver to toss a salad, grabbing fistfuls in its jaws with little GROWLS.

Henry and Meredith LAUGH at this as they cook.

PORTER

What - the - fuck.

They all look up. Meredith stops laughing. Before she can say anything Walter turns The Beaver toward Porter.

THE BEAVER

Ah, there he is.

Walter moves as if he might hug Porter. Porter recoils, but when Walter gets close, he simply hands over one of his cards.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

We were afraid we'd have to start without you.

Porter reads the card silently. He looks up.

PORTER

This a joke, right?

THE BEAVER

No, son, it's a fresh start.

Porter gapes at The Beaver for a moment, then looks past him.

PORTER

Have you completely lost your mind?

THE BEAVER

Well, I know it looks a little-

PORTER

I'm not asking you, nut job. I'm asking mom.

Meredith starts to say something but Porter cuts her off.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 It takes you years to finally get  
 rid of him and you let him come  
 back the next night with a talking  
puppet  
 (beat)  
 I knew you were weak, but Christ.

MEREDITH  
 Porter-

But he's already walked out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The TV is on the Daily Show again.

NEW ANGLE reveals that Porter is the only one eating in front  
 of it.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Walter, Henry, and Meredith are at the table. As they eat,  
 Meredith is clearly still smarting from Porter's words.

She focuses on the memory box which sits just in front of her  
 plate. As she handles it, she tries to put on a smile again.

MEREDITH  
 I can't believe you guys made this.  
 You never, I mean Walter never...  
 I'm sorry I'm not clear on how I'm  
 supposed to... address you.

THE BEAVER  
 You're doing fine, love.

MEREDITH  
 I mean, the tools were always on  
 your Christmas lists, but I just  
 assumed it was a hobby you'd never  
 actually start. I had no idea you  
 knew how to...

She indicates the box.

HENRY  
 He's a beaver, mom, that's what  
 they do.

THE BEAVER  
 Spot on, mate.

Walter holds The Beaver towards Henry. He exchanges a high  
 five with The Beaver's tiny paw.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 But you know, Walter wasn't half  
 bad himself at one time.

HENRY  
 Yeah? Who taught him?

THE BEAVER  
 Well, I suppose he taught himself.  
 He was about your age, yeah? Cub  
 scouts. He and his pop were  
 supposed to make a race car for a  
 contest. Only his pop wasn't  
 around, so he had to do it himself.

HENRY  
 Where was his dad?

INT. LIVING ROOM

Porter hears this question and MUTES the TV. He looks toward  
 the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - INTERCUT

Meredith gives Walter a look.

Walter absently drags lines through his food with his fork as  
 he thinks. We hear a faint WHISTLE in his breaths like the  
 sound Porter disciplined himself for making earlier.  
 Finally...

THE BEAVER  
 He was in an accident. Passed away.

HENRY  
 You mean grandpa? From the  
 graveyard?

THE BEAVER  
 Right-o. Anyway, Walter had  
 grandpa's tools, but not a clue how  
 to use them. Every time he hammered  
 or sawed or chiselled on his block  
 of wood it just got uglier and  
 uglier. By the time he was done it  
 looked like he'd taken something a  
 dog had chewed up and screwed  
 wheels on it.

Henry LAUGHS. Meredith is listening, not touching her food.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 Now all these other kids' cars, the  
 ones they'd built with their dads,  
 they were things of beauty. And  
 then here was Walter's, aerodynamic  
 as a billboard, ugly as sin.  
 (MORE)

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
So you know what the other kid's  
called it?

Henry shakes his head.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
The Turd.

Henry loves it.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
If you'd seen it, you'd think that  
was generous. Funny part is, when  
they actually got down to racing,  
The Turd could not be beat. All  
those sanded and shiny opponents,  
The Turd left them in the dust. Won  
the whole contest, that little  
mess.

HENRY  
Sweet.

THE BEAVER  
Well, the other kids didn't think  
so. They teased him about it  
endlessly. Turd Master, that was  
his new name.

Suddenly this resonates with Henry.

HENRY  
What did he do?

THE BEAVER  
Got some books and some wood, and  
he taught himself all there was to  
know about those tools. How to make  
things precise, neat, clean,  
smooth. Worked until he was better  
than most of the other kids'  
fathers. And when the next year's  
contest came he turned in a car  
that looked like it belonged in a  
bloody museum.

HENRY  
Did he win?

THE BEAVER  
Didn't even race. See, by then it  
didn't matter how good his car  
looked. All the other kids saw was  
that it was Walter's. They called  
it The Turd II.  
(beat)  
So he told them to piss off and  
took it home.

We see Porter listening closely, unconsciously drawing little  
lines in his food just like Walter.

HENRY  
That sucks.

THE BEAVER  
Indeed, mate. Indeed. But Walter  
doesn't have to worry about those  
kinds of things anymore. You know  
why?

HENRY  
Why?

THE BEAVER  
Because he's got me.

Walter goes back to eating. Meredith watches Henry.

HENRY  
Dad, can we make a turd?

THE BEAVER  
Anytime, mate. Anytime.

HENRY  
Let's do it tomorrow.

INT. HENRY'S ROOM

Walter tucks Henry in. He kisses him on each cheek, one with  
his lips, one with The Beaver's.

HENRY  
Good night, Beaver.

THE BEAVER  
Good night, mate.

Walter flips out the light.

INT. HALLWAY

Walter joins Meredith. They move down to Porter's doorway.

MEREDITH  
Porter, your dad's leaving. You  
want to say goodbye?

Porter gets up from his desk, walks toward the doorway like  
he might say something. Instead, he SLAMS the door in their  
faces. Loud MUSIC quickly follows from within.

Meredith moves to reopen it, but Walter grabs her arm.

THE BEAVER  
He's a teenager, love. We'd only  
have to worry if he liked us.

She lowers her arm. A beat.

MEREDITH

Do you have far to go? I mean, you can stay on the couch if you need to.

THE BEAVER

That's all right. The hotel is actually closer to the office. We've got a big day tomorrow.

He gives her a quick kiss on the cheek and starts down the stairs.

A moment before something occurs to her. She steps to the top of the stairs.

MEREDITH

You're supposed to go to work like this?

THE BEAVER

(without looking back)  
Bright and early, love, bright and early.

She watches him go, suddenly concerned.

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

Porter is walking around on his cell, Norah's pages in hand.

NORAH

(filter)  
Hello.

PORTER

Norah. It's Porter. Listen, about what I said earlier-

NORAH

Are you going to help me or not?

PORTER

Well... I've been reading your stuff, and I think maybe if we talked more about what you're trying to say-

NORAH

Fine. Come by after school tomorrow.

PORTER

Um-

She hangs up. Porter puts the phone down. He looks satisfied, mildly upbeat.

Then he looks out his window and sees Walter getting in his car. Walter looks up, sees Porter, and raises The Beaver to wave goodbye.

And like that, Porter goes south. He sits on his bed to think and finds himself instinctively massaging his eyebrows as we saw before. The faint WHISTLE in his breaths returns.

He catches himself doing these things and, in a flash of frustration, pounds on his head with his fists.

Unsatisfied, he pulls a poster from the wall revealing the large dent we saw earlier and begins POUNDING his head into the drywall.

EXT. BLACK HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the outside of Porter's wall where his blows force cracks in the stucco. With each hit, chips fall away until we finally hear a heavy THUD followed by SILENCE.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Walter is jogging. Pull back to reveal that he's holding The beaver in front of him as he does, almost a hood ornament.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - MORNING

Walter showers. He soaps himself and The Beaver.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Walter stands in a towel BLOW DRYING The Beaver.

QUICK CUTS:

WALTER PRESSES a suit. The Beaver guides the iron.

WALTER STRAIGHTENS his tie.

WALTER COMBS The Beaver's fur.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Walter regards himself and The Beaver in the mirror. He looks like a Brooks Brothers model... with a beaver on his hand.

He stares at The Beaver for a long beat. He looks nervous. Finally...

THE BEAVER  
Trust me, mate. Today will be  
different.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

A wide shot shows rows of cubes. No one's here yet. There's a small card in the center of each desk.

CLOSE ON a single desk. The card is the same therapeutic caution card Walter gave to Meredith and Porter.

NEW ANGLE inside of a pair of cubes, the card in the center of the desks.

NEW ANGLE inside of an office. The same situation.

NEW ANGLE as EMPLOYEES begin to stream in. A couple get to their desks. They pick up the card. They look at one another. WTF?

EXT. OFFICE - MORNING

As people stream in, we see a large sign on the front door. It reads: ALL HANDS MEETING - CAFETERIA 9AM - NO EXCEPTIONS.

They MURMUR about this as they pass.

INT. CAFETERIA - 9AM

EMPLOYEES take seats and TALK, many of them holding and discussing the cards.

THE VP walks in, also carrying a card. A SKEPTICAL MAN grabs him.

SKEPTICAL MAN  
What the hell is this?

The VP looks as confused as everyone else.

THE VP  
I... have no idea.

SKEPTICAL MAN  
This is layoffs, isn't it?

Suddenly the room goes QUIET as everyone looks at The VP for his answer.

Then, from the front of the room...

THE BEAVER  
No one's getting laid off.

All the heads whip around to find Walter standing before them, The Beaver raised and held forward.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Get rid of you all and I've no one  
to boss around, yeah?

Thundering SILENCE.

ANGLE ON Walter and The Beaver. He clears his throat.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Good Morning. I assume you all got  
the cards informing you of the new  
arrangements here, but if not,  
allow me to briefly explain. As you  
know Walter Black ascended to CEO  
here nearly two years ago, not  
through any particular skill or  
merit, but because the hooker our  
founder took to dinner did not know  
the Heimlich maneuver. It was a job  
Walter was ill prepared to handle,  
and his deteriorating mental health  
since then has led to lapses in  
focus, judgement, and eight  
straight losing quarters that leave  
us facing impending bankruptcy.  
That is why, as of now, he is  
resigning.

Quiet MURMURING.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
And putting me in charge.

Now the MURMURS become LOUD CHATTER and DISMAY.

ANGLE ON The VP who takes a chair, bewildered.

ANGLE ON Walter and The Beaver. Walter motions for quiet.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Five minutes, mates, then you may  
tear me to shreds if you like.

A modicum of SILENCE returns.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
As my first order of business as  
CEO I want to take this opportunity  
to announce some significant  
reforms and goal realignments.

GROANS.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
First, I am rolling back the  
cumbersome approval process  
instituted by my predecessor.  
(MORE)

## THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

The truth is, he had no idea what he was doing and he reacted to his fear by attempting to micromanage people and projects that were outside his area of expertise. As of this moment I am ceding control of all individual projects back to the teams themselves. No more endless meetings and waiting for the CEO's blessing. You will all be free and entrusted to do the jobs you were hired to do.

This is the first thing they've heard that sounds good. Still, they're highly dubious of the source.

## THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

Second, we have lacked anything resembling a strategic plan as Walter has pursued and abandoned countless ill conceived new product lines and handicapped them by alternately interfering in their development and sleeping for large portions of the day. As of this moment, we will cease work on all but our two core lines, Action Jack and Princess Stephanie. These are high value properties that have grown stale through mismanagement and neglect. We will revamp and revitalize them, and then we will relaunch them at the International Game and Toy Manufacturers Expo in six weeks.

Significant GRUMBLING.

## THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

That's a bloody difficult timeline, but I've prepared a schedule that you'll find in your email when you return to your desks which demonstrates how, by focusing on these two lines exclusively and eliminating bureaucratic delays, it is indeed achievable. It has to be. The bottom line is that the expo provides the only near term opportunity for the significant boost in orders that we require to right our ship.

A beat as he lets them digest this.

## THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

Lastly, you're all highly intelligent people, so I can imagine that you have a healthy degree of skepticism regarding my ability to lead under these... circumstances.

Significant AGREEMENT.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 So I'm offering you the following deal. You will give me two weeks. At the end of that time anyone who does not see significant improvement and chooses to resign will receive eight full months severance and a glowing letter of recommendation. No questions asked, no exceptions.

ANGLE ON the crowd. This is quite an offer.

ANGLE ON Walter and The Beaver. He waits for quiet. Then...

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 Understand one thing my friends. This will become a great place to work again. You have my word on that.

From the back...

MAN  
 And, who exactly are you supposed to be?

THE BEAVER  
 Bollocks. Did I forget to introduce myself? Apologies.

CLOSE ON Walter's lips. He subtly bites the right corner of his lower one before he says...

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 You may simply call me The Beaver.

CUT TO:

INT. NORAH'S ROOM

CLOSE ON Porter's lips. He's biting his lower one exactly like Walter as he takes in the room.

It's like a trophy case. Awards, medals, ribbons, plaques everywhere, although for a head cheerleader, there's nothing particularly feminine: no posters, no pink, etc.

PORTER  
 (regarding the walls)  
 This is... impressive.

She shrugs it off. Her attitude is all business.

NORAH  
 So, what do you need to know?

PORTER

Right. I guess the first thing we have to figure out is what you want to say.

NORAH

Well, that's kinda the problem. I have no idea. I mean, I've been on this track, you know, school, sports, Stanford for like, ever. I haven't really had to think about what's next, it's just been... obvious. So, I don't really know what I'm supposed to say to people who don't have all that figured out yet.

PORTER

I see. So, your basic overachiever needs help addressing the little people speech. Have a nice summer, good luck in community college. Stuff like that?

NORAH

You think you've got me all figured out, don't you?

PORTER

(looking around)  
I'm piecing it together.

NORAH

What I'm trying to say is that good grades haven't suddenly given me this brilliant insight into what everyone should do with their lives. If anything it's the opposite. I mean, when they were expelling me from junior high no one was asking for my advice, but get a few A's and now I'm supposed to have all the answers?

PORTER

I'm sorry, I must have misheard you. It sounded like you said expelled.

NORAH

That surprises you?

PORTER

Depends on what it was for. If it had anything to do with Freeing Tibet, then no, it doesn't surprise me at all.

NORAH

How about graffiti?

PORTER  
Let me guess: Stanford Rules in big  
block letters.

NORAH  
More of an unauthorized mural. I  
was going through an 'angry rebel  
artist' phase.

PORTER  
(shaking his head)  
Sorry. Not possible. Does not  
compute.

NORAH  
Yeah, well, it's in my file. So,  
see, you don't know everything.

PORTER  
And where's all this angry rebel  
artist stuff now?

NORAH  
I don't know. It was a long time  
ago. Why?

PORTER  
Why? Because when the student body  
president, chess club champion,  
cheerleader, valedictorian tells  
you that she used to make defiant  
masterpieces you kind of want to  
see one.

She just looks at him, unsure.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
You still have something don't you?  
Come on. Just one look and I'll  
write you a speech you could run  
for president with. Please.

She hesitates.

NORAH  
How about if you just agree to stop  
being an ass?

PORTER  
Be easier to get you elected.

She starts to turn away.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Okay, okay, okay. I'll be good.  
(hand on his heart)  
Promise.

INT. HALLWAY

Norah and Porter stand at the bedroom door next to her own. In addition to the knob, there's a padlocked latch.

She dials in the combination. CLICK. As she opens the door...

NORAH  
We have to be quick.

Porter suddenly isn't sure what he's getting into.

INT. NORAH'S BROTHER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They step in to find a bedroom eerily similar to Norah's own. Trophies, awards, ribbons, plaques. They aren't carbon copies, but there's a strong feeling of *deja vu*.

Porter takes this in, confused.

PORTER  
Whose room is this?

NORAH  
Used to be my brother's.

She motions toward the one thing that makes this room distinctly different from hers: a painting on the far wall.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
Well, there you go.

Porter looks it over. It's not bad. Kind of frenzied. Impressionistic. Interesting.

PORTER  
You did this?

NORAH  
Yes, yes, it's very funny. So now you've seen it. Let's go.

PORTER  
No, I mean, it's... really good. Really.

She's not sure how to take this.

NORAH  
Well... thanks.

He goes back to looking at the painting. A beat, then she goes to the closet, opens it.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
Actually, I never understood why he hung that one.

She pulls out several canvases, settles on one. She holds it up.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
This was always my favorite.

Porter steps over. The style is similar, but it's brighter, more aggressive.

PORTER  
Wow.

He starts to thumb through the others.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
These are great. Where did you learn to do this?

NORAH  
I didn't. I mean, I wasn't serious about it or anything. It was just a phase. You know, my brother was Mr. All American so I went out of my way to be all artsy and rebellious. It was stupid.

She starts to put the paintings away.

PORTER  
Why do you keep them in here?

NORAH  
I don't. I didn't keep any of these. I threw them out. The whole thing was just to be weird and piss off my parents. Brian, he's the one who pulled them out of the trash.

PORTER  
He must have really liked them.

She closes the closet.

NORAH  
I don't know about that. I mean, he was always encouraging me, telling me how great I was, how talented I was, but it felt like a big mind game, you know? Like he'd read some psychology book that told him that if he pretended to like them I'd give it up.

She walks back to the painting on the wall.

NORAH (CONT'D)

See, my parents, they were always trying to get me to quit, especially after I started painting walls instead of canvases, and Brian, he was always so concerned about them, telling me how my getting into trouble was tearing them up and stuff. So I always figured this was just his hyper smart way of trying to get me in line.

Porter hesitates.

PORTER

Where's your brother now?

Norah looks at him as if the question surprises her, as if she thought it was something he already knew. A beat.

She walks to the corner and grabs the edge of a large desk. Suddenly, she HEAVES and it GRINDS away from the wall.

She stares at the floor in the corner. Porter steps over. There, painted onto the wood floor is the beginnings of what might be a mural.

NORAH

I got the idea from this magazine. Floor murals. It was sort of my way of making him admit that he didn't really like my stuff, that he was just trying to manipulate me. It was like, you like my shit, well, here you go...

She indicates the floor. Porter nods, but his face says he doesn't quite get it.

NORAH (CONT'D)

I was grounded, everybody was gone. And then he came home. Caught me. He didn't really get mad. He just looked at it for a long time and then he walked out. So I'm following him screaming, 'Don't you like it? Aren't I talented? Aren't I great?' But he won't say anything. He just goes straight to his car, this is like 10 o'clock at night, and as he's backing out he smiles and shakes his head and then, really calmly, he says 'Don't worry. We'll get it up before they get home.'

A long beat as she stares at the beginnings of the painting, mesmerized. When she speaks, her voice is on the edge of cracking.

NORAH (CONT'D)

The weird thing was, there was no rain, no ice, no drunk driver. I mean, the car didn't even look that bad. It looked like something you could have walked away from.

A beat, then she pushes the desk back into the corner.

PORTER

I'm sorry.

NORAH

When we went to get his car there was all this floor fixing stuff in the back. Strippers, sanders, varnish. I remember my parents and I, we all stared at it, and I kept waiting for them to say something, to ask me something. I wanted them to. But they didn't. They didn't say a word. And then the next time I came in here -

(she pats the desk)

- this had been pushed into the corner. I mean, it's not like they couldn't figure out what happened. I guess they just felt like words weren't going to change it.

Porter starts to say something when suddenly NORAH'S MOTHER appears in the doorway.

NORAH'S MOM

What are you doing in here?

She sounds more hurt than angry. Norah doesn't miss a beat. When she answers the emotional waver is replaced with upbeat confidence.

NORAH

I was just showing Porter some of Brian's awards. He's on the math team with me.

Norah's mom steps in.

NORAH'S MOM

Oh. Did you know Brian?

PORTER

Um, no, ma'am. Not really.

NORAH'S MOM

Oh.

An awkward silence. They're all looking at the desk.

NORAH

Well, we've got some studying to do.

Norah pushes Porter towards the door. Her mom doesn't say anything. At the door Norah looks back.

Her mom is still just staring at the desk, transfixed.

Norah turns to Porter.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
 (quiet)  
 You should go. I'm sorry. Do you  
 have enough to work with?

PORTER  
 I'll figure it out.

Norah nods and turns back toward her mom.

NORAH  
 (brightly)  
 Hey mom, do you know where that  
 scholarship notice is? They wanted  
 a picture and bio, but I don't have  
 the address.

As Porter exits, Norah's mom finally looks up, nods.

INT. PORTER'S CAR / INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - SPLIT SCREEN

On the right half of the screen, Porter gets into his car and sits behind the wheel.

On the left half of the screen, Walter sits behind his desk so that the tableaux almost match.

CLOSE ON both their faces as they fall into what almost look like identical pensive trances. They each begin to tap their chins with their index fingers.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 This is a picture of Walter Black,  
 a hopelessly depressed individual.

Slowly match pull backs on both until The Beaver becomes visible in Walter's frame.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Who becomes a beaver.

Then, suddenly, they both seem to wake at the same moment.

When Porter realizes what he's been doing, he SNAPS the rubber band on his wrist and starts his car.

When Walter gets with it, he turns to The Beaver, nods.

NEW ANGLE shows full screen on Walter's office and whips around to reveal THE VP and others sitting across the desk.

They close their notepads and seem satisfied. The VP looks at Walter, nods back.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Employees are working, hustling.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
At work his reforms foster a fresh  
level of focus and energy.

INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Walter sits at a table with other employees.

Walter takes a bite of his sandwich, then takes another using The Beaver. They chew in unison though The Beaver's bite simply falls in pieces onto the table.

The employees look at one another with uncertain expressions.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
And for every person who points out  
that he's begun to feed lunch to  
his left hand there's another to  
remind them that production has  
already increased by 35%.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Employees are gathered around the table. At the head, only The Beaver is visible, talking.

The camera sinks down to reveal Walter under the table.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
For every person who worries that  
he's begun to conduct meetings from  
under the table, there's another to  
point out that he's come up with an  
exciting scenario for the Action  
Jack line. At the end of those  
first two weeks, not one person  
resigns.

INT. SUBURBAN - DAY

Meredith pulls up outside the school. This time when Henry opens the front door, several other KIDS open the rear doors. They all get in together, TALKING, LAUGHING.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Henry and the other kids are all working on various wood projects.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
Things are different at home too.

Suddenly, Walter enters with The Beaver. The kids drop what they're doing and flock to him. He acknowledges them all, but goes out of his way to lavish attention on a smiling Henry.

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Porter reads Norah's papers. He thinks. Starts writing.

INT. GARAGE - EVENING

Kids working around him, Walter, eyes his project, thinks, continues working. The Beaver grips the hammer in his mouth.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
And eventually, what seemed strange  
becomes common.

Pull back to reveal that they're working on a miniature desk for The Beaver.

INT. KITCHEN

Henry, Meredith, and Walter eat at the table. They're smiling, laughing.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
What seemed impossible becomes  
real.

Porter takes a plate, but stops in the doorway, watching Walter put food in The Beaver's mouth. Disgusted, he leaves.

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

Porter's food sits on his desk, untouched. Instead, he's on his bed POUNDING his head into the dent.

He takes a moment, looks into the hole. He can see cracks in the wall going all the way out. He seems inspired by this, presses on.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

CLOSE ON Porter rubbing the knot on his head when HECTOR walks up, excited. He hands Porter a newspaper clipping. The headline: LOCAL MINORITY WINS ESSAY SCHOLARSHIP.

Hector holds out his fist for a bump. Porter complies, but he's already distracted.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
Until it becomes hard to remember  
how things were before.

Norah and the cheer squad come by, though now she's the only one not in uniform. He smiles. She smiles. The squad GIGGLES.

Porter opens his locker as Hector is still going on.

His phone goes off. He gets a text: ANOREXIA CROWD THINKS UR CUTE BUT NEED TO DROP FEW LBS

He smiles.

INT. OFFICE - SEWING DEPARTMENT - DAY

Walter works with a WOMAN at her machine. She holds fabric up to The Beaver, takes measurements.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - DAY

On top of Walter's desk, there's now an identical, smaller desk for The Beaver.

The way it's set up, you can't see Walter's arm. Just two CEO's at identical desks and now in identical suits.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Walter and Meredith are drinking wine by candlelight.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
Walter hasn't just made a fresh  
start with himself-

The Beaver is talking. She's LAUGHING.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
- but with the people he loves.

A long quiet beat. She smiles. Hold on her smile, then...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walter and Meredith are kissing. The Beaver undoes the buttons on her blouse. She looks nervous.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
When they kiss it's like the first  
time. Like it's all brand new.

CLOSE ON her face as Walter kisses her neck and then moves down. She looks aroused. Then surprised. Then she closes her eyes, slams a pillow over her face and SCREAMS into it.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Meredith lays in bed looking toward the bathroom.

NEW ANGLE shows Walter's silhouette in the shower. He soaps his own head, then the Beaver's, as we've seen before.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
Like they're different people all  
together.

ANGLE ON Meredith, her smile cracking into a look of mild concern.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Employees around the table. The Beaver talking. They all nod.

NEW ANGLE reveals conference call equipment on the table.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
At work, they decide to schedule  
his meetings with outsiders as  
conference calls. It isn't that  
they aren't behind him, they just  
aren't sure they can explain what  
they're seeing.

INT. FOYER - EVENING

Meredith opens the door revealing PARENTS of one of the kids. They start to come in, but she steps in front of them, closing the door a fraction. She holds up a finger.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
And Meredith starts to feel the  
same way.

Meredith summons one of the kids who's playing with The Beaver in the background. When he gets to the door she opens up just enough to let him out.

Off the Parents confused expression...

INT. GARAGE

Henry works hard as the other kids play.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
Even Henry begins to worry her. His  
interest in woodwork starts to seem  
more and more like an obsession.

INT. GARAGE - LATER

Henry continues working hard, now all alone.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Next to the original coffee table, is a second, identical  
coffee table.

EXT. YARD

An enormous bird house is swarmed by birds.

INT. KITCHEN

Meredith looks at a long list of various types of wood.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
His birthday wishlist contains  
nothing but wood.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walter lays in bed, face down. Meredith rolls over, blinks  
awake. She finds herself staring into the large, wide open,  
plastic eyes of The Beaver.

END MONTAGE:

INT. BOOKSTORE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Meredith is surrounded by the Soccer Moms.

MEREDITH  
Have any of you ever tried... role  
playing?

SOCCER MOM 1  
Jim tried to dress me up like a  
secretary once.  
(MORE)

SOCCKER MOM 1 (CONT'D)  
 But then he just started screwing  
 his real secretary and I got the  
 house.

ANN, the Alpha mom in the bunch weighs in.

ANN  
 It's not healthy. Dressing up like  
 a cheerleader doesn't solve  
 anything, it just covers up the  
 fact that something is seriously  
 wrong underneath.

No one wants to follow that. Ann looks at Meredith.

ANN (CONT'D)  
 Why? Are you seeing someone?

All the heads turn.

MEREDITH  
 Well... actually, Walter and I have  
 been... working on things.

The other ladies look surprised. Ann looks disappointed.

ANN  
 And how's that affecting the kids?

MEREDITH  
 Well, Henry's doing great. Mostly.  
 And Porter, I don't know. He's a  
 teenager.

The other ladies nod in understanding.

ANN  
 So you and Walter, you're trying  
 some sort of role playing therapy?

MEREDITH  
 Well, mostly Walter.

SOCCKER MOM 2  
 And is it better... I mean... you  
 know, in bed.

MEREDITH  
 Well... yeah. I mean, that's good,  
 but it's not really about that. I  
 don't know.

This intrigues the others, but Ann cuts them off.

ANN  
 Well, just be careful. People don't  
 put on a disguise unless they've  
 got something to hide.

This seems to land for Meredith. She sips her drink.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meredith is lying next to Walter, The Beaver on the pillow between them.

MEREDITH  
Did you talk to Dr. Macy today?

THE BEAVER  
Indeed. Says we're coming along brilliantly.

MEREDITH  
That's great. Did he give you any sort of, you know, like a timeline? For when the treatment might be over?

Walter rolls away toward his night stand and grabs a small eye shield. He places it over The Beaver's eyes.

THE BEAVER  
Nothing specific.

MEREDITH  
But do you think, like a week? A month?

He flips out the light. In the dark.

THE BEAVER  
It's a process, love. When the time is right, we'll know.

Walter flips over, burying his face in the pillow. Meredith is left staring at The Beaver.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Meredith wakes with a start. She hears soft BANGING. She gets out of bed.

INT. GARAGE - LATE NIGHT

Meredith opens the door to the garage revealing Henry, working away on a project. She shakes her head.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Meredith returns, flips on the light.

MEREDITH  
Walter. Walter, wake up.

Walter rouses, pulling the mask off The Beaver's eyes.

THE BEAVER  
What's wrong, love?

MEREDITH  
You need to talk to Henry. He's  
down in the garage again.

THE BEAVER  
Well, tell him to come to bed.

MEREDITH  
I've told him, Walter. I tell him  
everyday. He pays no attention to  
me. He needs to hear it from, you  
know...  
(indicating The Beaver)  
... you.

INT. GARAGE - LATE NIGHT

Walter comes out in his pajamas, walks over to Henry, looks  
over his shoulder. Henry looks up at Walter and The Beaver.

HENRY  
You couldn't sleep either?

THE BEAVER  
Actually, mate, I was sleeping  
quite well. You know you can't be  
out here this late.

HENRY  
I just had this idea. It's gonna be  
really great.

THE BEAVER  
Well, let's have it be great in the  
morning, yeah?

HENRY  
Just ten more minutes, please. Just  
let me finish this last set of  
cuts.

The Beaver considers this.

THE BEAVER  
I let you have ten more minutes,  
you have to promise, no more  
working when your mother's asked  
you not to. Not at night. Not  
during breakfast. No bringing your  
tools to the dentist. Agreed?

Walter puts forward The Beaver's paw. Henry shakes it.

HENRY  
Agreed.

Walter starts to go.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Will you stay? I like working with  
you around.

Walter stops.

THE BEAVER  
Sure.

Henry smiles, goes back to work. Walter watches him for a moment. He turns to a table and grabs his own piece of wood.

Walter and The Beaver begin to noodle on the wood. A chip here, chisel there.

HENRY  
Will you talk to me? I like it when  
you talk.

THE BEAVER  
What would you like to talk about?

HENRY  
Doesn't matter. Just talk.

Walter continues to work away.

THE BEAVER  
Very well. You're quite easily  
entertained, aren't you?

Suddenly Walter freezes. He looks at Henry. There might as well be a giant light bulb over Walter's head.

Walter turns back to his block of wood with a feverish energy. A beat.

HENRY  
You're not talking.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Walter comes racing into the room, heads straight for the closet. Meredith sits up in bed.

MEREDITH  
Did you talk to him?

Walter comes out of the closet in the midst of changing into a suit. He heads into the bathroom.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
Walter?

THE BEAVER  
 Huh? Oh. Yes. We had a good chat.  
 He'll stick to the schedule.

MEREDITH  
 What are you doing?

Walter comes out, mostly dressed, a tie loosely slung around his neck. He wrestles into some shoes.

THE BEAVER  
 I've had a breakthrough, love. I've  
 got to get to work.

MEREDITH  
 Now?

THE BEAVER  
 Not a moment to spare.

He starts for the door, then pauses. He comes back to bed to kiss her goodbye.

But this time Walter stands back and only kisses her cheek with The Beaver.

And then he's gone. Meredith looks after him with heavy concern.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

Walter works feverishly at a workstation. The VP is the first one in. He spots Walter.

THE VP  
 Sir? You're in early.

Walter looks up. He raises The Beaver.

THE BEAVER  
 Ah! Just the man I was hoping to  
 see. Come over, mate. We're going  
 to need to get going on this right  
 away.

The VP takes a seat next to Walter. Walter hands him the piece of wood he was working on. It's been roughed out into the crude likeness of a beaver.

The VP looks at it. He's not sure what it means.

THE VP  
 It's... a beaver?

THE BEAVER  
 It's the future. It only occurred  
 to me last night that I've been  
 focus group testing it for weeks.  
 (MORE)

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

This is what we've been looking for.

The VP looks at the crude block again.

THE VP

This?

The Beaver directs his attention to the monitor.

ANGLE ON the monitor where we see various schematics for a beaver toy with a toolkit.

THE BEAVER

It's a talking beaver woodworking set. You get the basic tools, a block of wood, and a talking beaver to work along side you.

The VP looks it over.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

You should see the kids mate. They go crazy for the stuff. They're into the video games and cell phones sure, but you give them a hammer, a saw and a block of wood, I'm telling you, it comes natural. And as for the beaver, I don't want to brag, but there's not a one of them who wouldn't take me home if they could.

THE VP

So... you're talking about a new product line? For what, Christmas?

THE BEAVER

Christmas? I'm talking about right now. Today. This morning.

THE VP

But that's impossible. You said yourself, the only way we can get the new Jack and Stephanie lines ready is by-

THE BEAVER

Forget Jack and Stephanie. This is it, right here.

THE VP

But sir-

THE BEAVER

Action Jack and Princess Stephanie can only hope to take us where we've been. This has the potential to open up a whole new world of opportunities. I'm as sure of it as I've ever been of anything.

The VP looks at The Beaver, then back at the screen.

THE VP  
I guess there could be an ancillary market in more tools. Maybe precut lumber pieces. Sort of like Lego kits, but made of wood and you work them into shape on your own.

Walter looks excited. The Beaver musses The VP's hair.

THE BEAVER  
Exactly! Now you're talking!

THE VP  
But this would mean... I mean, if we could even get one ready, this is all we'd have for the expo.

THE BEAVER  
This is all we'll need.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The Beaver is at the head of the table sitting behind his little desk, but this time it's The VP who does the talking.

He points to a cleaned up version of the beaver kit schematic and a chart.

THE VP  
Replicating The Beaver as a core item along with endless project kits would seem to have great appeal and taking a conservative view of the Lego model's numbers, we're talking about an exponential return.

The staff looks around. They're intrigued, but unsure.

THE VP (CONT'D)  
It's risky, no doubt, and if we come up short with the beaver we go to the expo empty handed, which, in all likelihood, would result in a failure to remain solvent.

No one likes this. The Beaver speaks up.

THE BEAVER  
Friends, this is our future. Do we want to continue doing the things that have previously resulted in our minor success and hope that they're enough to survive, or do we break with the past and embrace something new, something different, something better.  
(MORE)

## THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

The question is not whether or not this can work, the question is whether or not we're bold enough to take it on.

Everyone looks around, thinking, considering, deciding. A long beat, then...

QUICK CUTS:

PRINTERS SPEW copies of the beaver schematics.

MONITORS SHOW diagrams of the toolbox being manipulated.

WORKERS MEASURE The Beaver himself to get dimensions. The Beaver nods toward The VP.

THE VP nods back and then looks around as people hustle about. He looks proud.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Porter is sitting across from a panic stricken Hector.

PORTER

What the fuck do I always say Hector? Read it before you turn it in. It was about your own family for God's sake.

HECTOR

I just figured since it was personal there couldn't be no test questions on it. It's your fault. If it hadn't been so good it won that award, wouldn't be no big deal.

PORTER

Your own dad turned you in?

HECTOR

My grandma, she was so proud, she was talking to me about all this stuff you wrote, stuff about her and my granddad, back in the war, and then all of a sudden she could just tell I didn't know nothing about what she was saying. And she just starts crying. So my dad, he call the principal, said he don't want me to get the scholarship. Wants it to go to someone who really respects their family history.

PORTER

Look, Hector, this is your problem, you understand. My name stays out of it.

HECTOR  
 Man, they're already talking about  
 expulsion if I don't tell them  
 where it came from.

PORTER  
 Tell them you bought it off the  
 internet.

HECTOR  
 It's a personal essay about my  
 family. You can't just get those on  
 the internet.

Porter considers this for a second.

PORTER  
 Okay. I'll make a dummy website.  
 Paper writing for hire. You give  
 them the web address, tell them you  
 sent your money in, got your paper  
 back, that's all you know. They can  
 look all they want, it won't come  
 back to me.

HECTOR  
 I don't know man. I feel like shit  
 as it is. If you'd seen my grandma-

PORTER  
 Look! I'm sorry you didn't read  
 your own essay, but giving me up  
 isn't going to change that. I  
 trusted you and you broke the  
 rules, so I'm counting on you to do  
 the right thing here.

Porter sees Norah come in.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 I gotta go. I'll send you the fake  
 site address by tomorrow. Okay?

Porter stands to leave. Hector doesn't say anything.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 Okay?

HECTOR  
 Yeah. Okay.

Porter moves quickly over to Norah. She smiles as he nears.

PORTER  
 Hey.

NORAH  
 Hey.

PORTER  
Was your coach upset?

NORAH  
He just told me not to miss anymore workouts. He thinks you're a bad influence.

PORTER  
I told you you didn't have to give me a ride.

NORAH  
Don't worry about it. I wanted to.

PORTER  
So... um, are you busy tonight?

NORAH  
Are you about to ask me out?

PORTER  
I'm not sure. My plan was to get a feel for the situation. If it seemed like you weren't into it, I was just going to say that I had worked up a beginning for the speech and that we should get together and make sure you think I'm on the right track.

NORAH  
And if it seemed like I was into it?

PORTER  
Actually, I just kind of discounted that possibility. I think I was going to casually ask you if you wanted to do something without making it sound like I'd been up all night planning something elaborate.

NORAH  
Have you been planning something elaborate?

PORTER  
I have like maps and stuff.

She smiles.

NORAH  
You can pick me up at 7. I have to be home by 12. And I do want to see what you have of the speech.

PORTER  
(surprised)  
Um..okay. It's a date.

Coyly, as she goes...

NORAH  
We'll see.

INT. WALTER'S BATHROOM/ PORTER'S BATHROOM - INTERCUT

QUICK CUTS of Walter and Porter getting ready.

THEY BOTH carefully comb their hair.

PORTER SELECTS from several T shirts.

WALTER BUTTONS a very nice shirt.

PORTER PULLS on jeans.

WALTER SLIDES into very nice pants.

PORTER CHECKS his face in the mirror, smiles.

PORTER  
(to himself)  
Please, don't fuck this up.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S BATHROOM

Walter checks the Beaver in the mirror, shows its big grin.  
He turns The Beaver towards himself.

THE BEAVER  
Just let me lead, we'll be fine.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM

Walter emerges from the bathroom pulling on a sharp suit jacket.

THE BEAVER  
Almost ready, love? Reservations  
are for eight and I still need to  
slip on my suit.

Meredith emerges from the closet in a stunning dress.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Bloody hell, woman. Look at you.

She grins, walks toward him.

MEREDITH  
You look pretty good yourself.

THE BEAVER

Oh, you haven't seen anything yet.  
The girls whipped up something  
special for me. We're talking full  
on tux, love. Just give me a minute  
to pop it on and we're off.

Meredith realizes that Walter is talking about dressing The  
Beaver. Her face loses some spark. A hesitant beat.

As he starts for the closet she stops him.

MEREDITH

Walter, come on. I mean, it's our  
20th anniversary.

THE BEAVER

Of course dear. That's why I  
thought a tux was appropriate.

MEREDITH

No, I mean, maybe this would be a  
good time to try, you know,  
bringing the other Walter back.

THE BEAVER

Oh, dear, I don't think that's a  
good idea. The doctor said very-

Meredith turns serious.

MEREDITH

I do not want to celebrate 20 years  
of marriage with a puppet. I'm  
sorry, but I've been very patient,  
very supportive. Is it so much to  
ask that you give me one night?

Walter considers this. He SIGHS.

THE BEAVER

Compromise?

INT. CLASSY RESTAURANT - EVENING

Walter and Meredith step in. We see that he still has The  
Beaver on his hand, but its not dressed, and not held up.

When the hostess looks up at him, Walter looks nervous,  
unsure. Then, with his own voice...

WALTER

Black. Party of two.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - EVENING

Porter is driving as Norah reads some pages.

NORAH  
 This is amazing. Really. My parents  
 are going to flip.  
 (beat)  
 I don't deserve credit for  
 something like this. I'm just gonna  
 tell people you wrote it.

PORTER  
 Trust me, as long as I get a  
 diploma and get out of here, the  
 credit is all yours.

She looks at him.

NORAH  
 You know, if I was leaving the west  
 coast for Rhode Island I don't  
 think I'd be in such a hurry.

PORTER  
 You clearly haven't met my family.  
 It's gonna be hard enough to make  
 it 10 more weeks without putting my  
 head through a wall.

NORAH  
 What do they...beat you?

PORTER  
 Yes. With stuffed animals and  
 handmade furniture.

NORAH  
 What?

PORTER  
 Nothing.

He suddenly pulls the car to stop. He backs up, turns so that  
 the car is left facing the street. He turns off the engine.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 Well. Here we are.

Norah looks around. It's not a great part of town. The road  
 is pot-holed, empty, dark. There's a freeway on-ramp in the  
 distance. Other than urban decay, not much to see.

NORAH  
 Well, look, I appreciate your  
 confidence, but usually if you're  
 going to 'park' with a girl, you  
 want to find a view with more stars  
 and less homeless.

He twists the rear view mirror so that she can see behind  
 them. It's the side of an abandoned hospital building.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
Mmmm. Still not doing it for me.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORTER'S CAR

Norah beside him, Porter opens the trunk revealing a nest of various spray and regular paints.

PORTER  
(nervous)  
Ta-da.

Norah just stares at them blankly.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
The neighborhood really isn't as bad as it looks. According to the web there were less than two murders per square mile here last year. And this place got closed for dangerous levels of asbestos, so it's not like anyone is going to bother us.

She's still just looking at him. He pulls out some of the paint.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
The guy in the store was a little suspicious so I had to get some colors that didn't seem, like, vandalism related. Can you do graffiti in Robin's Egg?

A long beat. Finally...

NORAH  
Porter, this is sweet and all, but, really, I told you, I wasn't really into any of this, it was just a stupid thing I did to get attention.

PORTER  
Sure. I know. It just seemed like you really had talent. I hate to see you give it up just because -

Porter suddenly realizes there's no good way to finish that sentence.

NORAH  
(almost daring him to finish)  
Just because?

PORTER  
Because, you got in trouble once.

NORAH  
So this was your elaborate plan? To take me out to vandalize a building that's empty because it causes cancer?

PORTER  
It sounds less romantic when you say it that way.

NORAH  
And what did you think we would paint? Norah + Porter 4ever?

PORTER  
I don't know. What were you starting to paint on your brother's floor?

Norah's face goes cold. A beat, and then she walks away, gets in the car, closes the door. Porter stands there a moment holding cans of spray paint.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Porter slowly opens and then gets into the driver's side. They sit in silence for a moment.

NORAH  
You know, I don't need you to like, fix me, okay?

PORTER  
I wasn't trying, I swear. I just, I wanted to do something you'd remember.

NORAH  
I think you'd rather I forget this.

PORTER  
Look, I know I'm not exactly your type, so I figured that my best shot was to just try to be really different.

NORAH  
Porter, your best shot is to be yourself.

PORTER  
Now, see, that just shows that you don't really know me.

NORAH  
 I mean, it was a nice thought, I  
 guess, but it's... too much. You  
 know? Just stop trying so hard.  
 You're already in.

Porter looks up, then over at her. A beat as he digests this.

PORTER  
 I am?

She nods, then starts to lean in ever so slightly. He  
 hesitates. Is this what it seems like?

NORAH  
 (reading his mind)  
 Yes. This is where you kiss me.

He nods slightly, moves in, kisses her. They wrap their arms  
 around one another. He begins to rub her back.

As he does, his right hand drifts up towards her hair, and  
 then, slowly, unconsciously, he begins to spin a lock of it  
 around his index finger.

Suddenly, his eyes pop wide open and he jerks away as if he's  
 been shocked.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
 What? What?

PORTER  
 That thing. That thing I just did.

NORAH  
 What did you do?

PORTER  
 With your hair!

He angrily hits himself in the head a few times. As he  
 does...

PORTER (CONT'D)  
 That's new. That's a new one.

NORAH  
 Porter? Porter, you're kinda  
 freaking me out.

Porter puts his head in his hands.

PORTER  
 That's 58.

NORAH  
 What are you talking about?

He looks like he wants to explain, but can't find the words.

Norah is totally lost. Her face says she's decided this was all a big mistake. She's about to say so when her phone rings. She looks at it, picks it up.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
(bright)  
Hey mom.

Disgusted with himself, Porter gets out of the car, walks away. Norah makes a motion like 'where are you going' but he's gone. She stays on the phone.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
No, we're still studying. Just getting back to the library. Um, okay, I guess. Actually, we might be back early. Yeah. We don't have as much to go over as I thought. Okay. Yeah, I'll call you. Love you. Bye.

Norah hangs up. She SIGHS. She takes a long beat deciding what she wants to do next.

EXT. PORTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Norah opens her door gets out. When she turns she sees Porter standing by the side of the building. In Robin's Egg he's written:

FOR AN AWKWARD TIME CALL PORTER BLACK

She can't help but smile. She walks toward him. They both stare at the wall.

NORAH  
I know you're new at this, but you usually want to avoid using your full name.

A beat.

PORTER  
I'm sorry.

NORAH  
What was that back there?

Porter shakes his head. He looks at the rubber band on his wrist. Toys with it.

PORTER  
How may little ways do you think two things can be alike before you have to start worrying about the big ones?

She has no idea what to say to this. He turns to her.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
This is like, the worst first date  
ever, isn't it?

NORAH  
Yes.

She takes the spray can out of his hand.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
So far.

She walks up and starts to paint out his name.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
We're going to cover this up, and  
then you're going to buy me  
something to eat in part of town  
where no one was murdered this week  
and then I'll get back to you.  
Deal?

Porter is about to answer when suddenly a spotlight hits  
them.

They turn to see a police car idling in the street. A long  
beat, then...

The police car flips on its red and blue lights.

INT. CLASSY RESTAURANT

Walter and Meredith are eating. It's silent. Awkward. Walter  
keeps The Beaver in his lap. He looks nervous.

The WAITER steps over.

WAITER  
How is everything?

Walter looks at Meredith. He nods.

MEREDITH  
Excellent. Thanks.  
(beat)  
You know, now might be a good time  
for the...

WAITER  
Yes ma'am.

The waiter departs. Meredith smiles at Walter. SILENCE.

MEREDITH  
I was listening to the radio.  
Apparently it's supposed to be  
really hot this weekend. Well, not  
really hot, but hot. Above average.

Walter nods. They've been reduced to talking about the weather.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
How's work? Are you making the schedule?

WALTER  
It's good.  
(beat)  
Busy.

Now Meredith nods. Walter's face says he's trying. He doesn't look depressed. More deer in the headlights. SILENCE.

The waiter returns and places a wrapped gift on the table.

MEREDITH  
Thank you.

She pushes it across to Walter.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
Go ahead.

He reaches out to unwrap it, using his free hand and The Beaver. Inside is a memory box, similar to the first one we saw, but significantly more ornate.

WALTER  
It's very nice. Thank you.

MEREDITH  
Henry helped me. Which means, I bought the wood and Henry made it.  
(beat)  
Look inside.

He opens the box. It's full of old photos.

ANGLE ON the photos. They're all shots Walter and Meredith in younger, happier times.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
I was looking through some things. I just thought... it's important to remind ourselves, you know, how it was. How it should be.

He flips through. Shots of them smiling, laughing, holding babies. Shots of them in Halloween costumes, at Christmas parties, on vacation. Him with her on his shoulders.

As he looks, Walter starts to tear up and CRY. For a moment, it's just a quiet sentimental WEEP. But it quickly expands into a more hiccupy-breakdown-SOB.

Other diners stare.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
 Walter. Walter, it's okay. Hon,  
 look at me. Walter.

But he's inconsolable. He just keeps staring at the last photo, her on his shoulders, both of them laughing.

He's worked up a solid cry now. Everyone is staring. Suddenly...

He raises The Beaver. Just the act of doing so helps him choke back the tears. He lets it take over.

THE BEAVER  
 Is this what you want? Is this progress? Christ, woman, he's suffering from depression, not amnesia. You think the problem is that he just doesn't remember these things? Remembering has nothing to do with it. He can remember what it was like to play little league. That doesn't mean he can go sign up for a team!

The sight of The Beaver has the other diners really locked in. Meredith is mortified.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 He can't go back. Don't you see that? This is all in the past, and dredging it up... we all know where this leads. We know where Walter goes. You want the rest of your life to be like tonight? That's Walter. That's the best he can do. He's not going back to that.

Suddenly she doesn't care who's watching.

MEREDITH  
 What does that mean?

Her cell phone is RINGING on the table.

THE BEAVER  
 It means we've turned over a new leaf. We've got a fresh start. We-

She's not planning to answer, but when she sees the name, she picks up immediately.

MEREDITH  
 Porter?

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION

Porter and Norah sit in chairs against a wall. She's CRYING. He tries to console her. She jerks away.

NEW ANGLE reveals NORAH'S MOM AND DAD marching up to them. They stare down at Norah.

NORAH'S DAD

I don't even know what to say. I'd hoped we were past this sort of thing.

He doesn't sound upset, but numb. But, for Norah, this is worse. A long beat.

PORTER

Sir, this is a big misunderstanding. It was completely my-

NORAH'S DAD

Let's go.

Norah gets up, walks away with them. Porter keeps watching, hoping she'll at least look back, but she doesn't.

PORTER

Norah. Norah, I'm sorry.

Norah's mom gives him a glare, but Norah never turns.

As Norah's family nears the front, Walter and Meredith come in. Porter can't hear, but he sees Walter raise The Beaver and start talking to the SERGEANT at the front.

Norah's dad overhears this. He stops, asks a question. Then The Beaver and Norah's father get into a conversation with Walter pointing in Porter's direction.

Norah's father looks at Walter like he's crazy. He starts to walk away.

Norah and Porter's eyes finally meet. Her look is not sympathetic. It's like she doesn't even know him.

And then she's gone.

Porter drops his head, begins to POUND it against the cinder block wall. As he goes in for another shot...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

Porter pounding his head into his own wall.

EXT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

We hear the THUDS as the stucco breaks away. Porter's actually breaking out. Through a tiny hole, we can actually see in.

Suddenly his eyes appears in the hole, looking out.

PUSH IN on the hole as his eye disappears and then his head comes back for another blow, causing more stuccos to break loose and the hole to widen ever so slightly.

Another blown and then suddenly his head disappears followed by the faint sound of him collapsing, unconscious.

We hold on the hole, looking into the room from outside.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SUBURBAN - AFTERNOON

Meredith waits outside the school. Henry opens his door, leaps in. But when the back doors open Meredith stops the other kids cold.

MEREDITH

Sorry guys. Not today. Not this week.

They stop mid entry, back out, close the doors. She looks at Henry. He doesn't seem to have noticed any of it.

INT. GARAGE

Henry is working. Meredith opens the door. A moment as she considers things.

MEREDITH

That's enough for today.

HENRY

But, mom, I just got started.

MEREDITH

No more.

He thinks about protesting, but gives up. He puts his stuff down, walks inside.

The way he moves, quiet, uncaring, he's instantly back to being the old Henry. Meredith looks distraught.

INT. KITCHEN

Meredith is on the phone.

MEREDITH  
Dr. Macy? It's Meredith Black.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Porter is at his locker. Hector walks up.

HECTOR  
Look man, we have to talk.

Porter sees Norah coming. She's back in her cheer outfit.

PORTER  
You got the website, right?

HECTOR  
Yeah, man, but you don't  
understand. My grandma, she's all-

Porter closes his locker, starts toward Norah.

PORTER  
Just stick to the story, you'll be  
fine.

He takes off. Hector throws his hands up in frustration.

Porter catches up to Norah.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Hey.

NORAH  
(cold)  
Hey.

Porter reaches into his bag.

PORTER  
I, uh, finished the speech. A draft  
anyway. I can always make changes.

She stops, takes it.

NORAH  
(flat)  
Thank you. I'm sure it's great.

She looks at him as if she's not sure why he's still there.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
I don't actually have any cash on  
me, but if you can wait until  
tomorrow...

He looks insulted, confused.

PORTER  
 Look, Norah, I'm so sorry. I don't  
 know if he told you but I called  
 and explained everything to your  
 father and-

She looks around. Looks at Porter.

NORAH  
 Yes. That's fine. Don't worry about  
 it.

PORTER  
 So, we're okay.

NORAH  
 (still flat)  
 We're fine.

PORTER  
 Well, maybe we could-

NORAH  
 Look, we're just on very different  
 paths, okay? In a couple months  
 we'll be on opposite sides of the  
 country anyway, so let's just stop  
 now while it's easy.

PORTER  
 That actually sounds harder than  
 just, you know, seeing what  
 happens.

NORAH  
 No, Porter, you know what was hard?  
 Seeing my parents faces like that.  
 Going back to that house. Bring all  
 that stuff back up, and for what?

PORTER  
 Norah, listen-

NORAH  
 I have to go.

She sees some other squad girls and joins up with them,  
 blends in, disappears.

INT. KITCHEN

Walter enters from the garage. Meredith is waiting at the  
 table. His original card is the only thing in front of her.

THE BEAVER  
 Hello, Love.

Meredith doesn't say anything. She just stares at him.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
What's the trouble?

She looks at the card.

MEREDITH  
I talked to Dr. Macy, Walter.

THE BEAVER  
Oh?

MEREDITH  
Walter, he says you haven't been there in almost a year.

THE BEAVER  
Well... that's... I-

She picks up the card.

MEREDITH  
What is this? What are you doing?

Walter says nothing.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
Dr. Macy says you're sick, Walter. Very sick. He said that this sounds like some kind of mania. He says-

THE BEAVER  
Dr. Macy, Dr. Macy. Who gives a damn what Dr. Macy says? Why don't we go down to the office and see what they say, Meredith? Let's see if they think we're sick, yeah? Or let's see if they think maybe Walter is better than he's ever been. Let's ask Henry what he thinks. Let's ask Henry if he feels better about himself when I'm around, if he's made any new friends, if he's happier since I showed up. Ask yourself, Meredith. Ask yourself if you can remember how things were. See if you can remember the person you threw out of here and then tell us why you're so worried about getting him back.

MEREDITH  
So what are you saying, Walter, you just want to live like this forever? Walking around with a beaver puppet on your hand?

THE BEAVER  
What would be so wrong with that? I'd say it's been a pretty smashing success so far.

Meredith is stunned. She just shakes her head.

MEREDITH  
Walter, you need help.

THE BEAVER  
Help, help, help. Everybody wants him to get help. See the expert. Read the book. Take the pill. Well, Walter finally helped himself. You understand? That's what I'm here for. He doesn't need anyone else.

MEREDITH  
Walter, listen to yourself! This is insane! You're talking about a fucking puppet!

THE BEAVER  
No, you're talking about a puppet. We're talking about a success!

She looks at him, heartbroken.

MEREDITH  
Who is 'we' Walter?

Off his look...

INT. BATHROOM

Walter splashes water on his face with his free hand. He stands up and looks himself in the mirror.

Slowly, he raises his left hand until he and The Beaver are both staring into the mirror.

THE BEAVER  
I know it's hard, mate, but you can't let yourself get mixed up. You've done what you needed to. You've put the past behind you. You're moving on, and we're doing great. She's the one who's got to let go. And if she can't then... you've got to let her go.

Walter looks troubled by this suggestion.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
I know, I know, but trust me, it's for the best. What we talked about, blowing it up, starting fresh, a clean slate, well this is what it takes. Anything less and we're back on the road to that hotel room. Is that what you want?

Walter shakes his head.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 You're free, mate. You've broken out. All you have to do now is keep moving. Keep moving and never look back. If it's meant to be, they'll follow. But that's up to them. It's out of our hands.

Walter stares at The Beaver for a long beat. Finally, he makes the slightest of nods.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM

Walter steps in. Meredith is sitting on the bed. She looks up.

THE BEAVER  
 Understand that we love you more than anything. But you're the one who needs help. This notion of what used to be, it poisons everything, and until you realize that and let it go, it's just going to continue to make you miserable. We've put it behind us and we're not looking back. We hope you can do the same. But make no mistakes. I'm not going anywhere.

Meredith stares at him. SILENCE. She gets up, slowly walks over, looks into Walter's eyes. She kisses him on the cheek.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM

WALTER SITS stoically, The Beaver raised beside him.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM

MEREDITH PACKS clothes into a suitcase. When she moves the suitcase she sees the memory box.

She looks at it for a moment. Then she drops it in the trash.

CUT TO:

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

PORTER SWEEPS books into a box. He pauses over the notebook labeled JOURNAL OF SIMILARITIES we saw in the beginning.

NEW ANGLE shows the list now numbers in the low 60's.

He tosses the notebook into the box.

As he's about to go, he stops, goes to his wall. He yanks down the poster he uses to cover his hole. He puts it in the trash, leaves the hole exposed.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE

Henry is loading pieces of wood into the back of the suburban when his mother comes out with bags. She looks at him. He looks at her. She can't bear to tell him no.

Porter comes out, tosses his things in. Without a word he gets in the passenger seat, puts on his belt. He's ready.

As Meredith and Henry are finishing up Walter steps into the garage. He stands by the door.

Henry rushes over to him.

HENRY  
Why aren't you coming with us?

THE BEAVER  
Another time, mate. Another time.

HENRY  
But I want to stay with you.

Walter and Meredith exchange glances. These words clearly break her heart.

THE BEAVER  
You go with your mum, we'll get it all sorted, yeah? You'll see, everything will be good again real soon.

MEREDITH  
Henry. It's time to go.

He turns and walks to the car, the same distant, emotionless walk he's shown us before. Meredith gets in. Henry climbs in. She starts the car.

Then, just as she's about to back out, Henry leaps out, runs to Walter. He throws himself around him, tears streaking down his face.

HENRY  
I love you, Dad.

This hits Walter someplace deep. He's moved to the verge of tears himself. He has to swallow hard to get words out, and when he does, the accent is shaky. Still, it's The Beaver who does the talking.

## THE BEAVER

I love you too, mate. I love you  
too.

Finally, Henry releases him. The Beaver reaches down, musses Henry's hair. Henry turns, runs back to the car.

Once he's in, Meredith puts it in gear. She pauses a second, she and Walter sharing a final glance.

Her expression says she can't believe he's really just watching them go. It's a pleading glance.

But then, like that, it hardens. He wants her to let go of the past, that's exactly what she's about to do. She turns around, watching the driveway as she backs out.

The suburban hits the street, turns, and it's gone. As soon as it clears frame, the garage door starts to come down.

Walter watches it until it noisily closes. Then, SILENCE.

CUT TO:

## INT. KITCHEN

Walter looks at the dining room table, empty except for his original card.

CUT TO:

## INT. HENRY'S ROOM

Walter stands looking at all the projects, both finished and abandoned. Everything is made of wood.

There are coffee tables stacked three high. Rocking chairs. The very beginning of what might have become a boat hull.

He picks up a small item near the wall. It's a beaver figure, like the one Walter roughed out and took to work, but much more polished, refined.

CUT TO:

## INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM

Walter stares at the memory box in the trash, the pictures spilling out. He can see the top of the one with Meredith on his shoulders.

CUT TO:

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

Walter stares at the hole in the wall.

EXT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

From outside, we look through the hole and see Walter staring back at us.

As we start to pull back he walks closer until it looks like he'll lean down and put his face to the hole.

Instead, he reaches Porter's bed and simply falls onto it.

As he disappears from frame we're left looking into Porter's empty room until the camera pulls back and the hole becomes just a pinprick of light in the wall.

And then the lights go out.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BIG BOX STORE

A REPORTER is on mic, a small queue of people in line to enter the store behind her.

REPORTER

Christmas in... May? That's what some retailers are calling it with Mr. Beaver Woodchopper kits selling out in numbers that remind many of the Tickle Me Elmo phenomenon. Davyco, the company behind Mr. Beaver says they're doing all they can to keep pace with demand, but admits there have been shortages. Interestingly, you may recall that Davyco, which had earlier success with 90's fads Action Jack and Princess Stephanie, lost its founder and CEO Davy Conyers in a highly publicized restaurant choking incident while in the company of a paid escort and since then the company has been in steep decline, hovering on the verge of bankruptcy earlier this year. But thanks to Mr. Beaver, it looks like that won't be happening anytime soon.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - EVENING

Walter flips off the TV as the report ends. He turns to The VP who's sitting across from him holding a snifter of brandy.

Their voices indicate that they're a bit on the tipsy side.

THE VP  
It's like a hundred million dollar  
ad campaign for free.

They both LAUGH. The VP takes a sip of his brandy.

We see that Walter also has a snifter. It has two straws. He puts one to his lips, one to the Beavers, and drinks.

The VP shifts in his seat.

THE VP (CONT'D)  
Speaking of, we've been getting a  
lot of media requests for you.  
We've been declining obviously, but  
if we set up a big conference call  
we could milk the PR a little  
without really exposing too much.

THE BEAVER  
Conference call? Don't be  
ridiculous, mate. Who's the biggest  
request we've had?

THE VP  
I don't know. All the morning  
shows. CNN. CNBC.

THE BEAVER  
Today show then. Set it up.

THE VP  
Sir, the Today show is... on  
television.

THE BEAVER  
Why are you acting like we've got  
something to hide, mate? The case  
is just the opposite. We've got a  
story, not just about the rebirth  
of a company, but of a man. That's  
a powerful tale and we should be  
looking to tell it wherever they'll  
listen.

THE VP  
It's just hard to predict how  
people are going to... react.

THE BEAVER  
How did you react?

THE VP  
Well, I was pretty shocked at  
first.

THE BEAVER  
Of course you were. But I've  
convinced you it's for the best,  
have I not? And the rest of the  
staff? How many people have we  
lost?

THE VP  
None.

THE BEAVER  
So what makes you think I can't  
convince them?

The VP thinks this over.

THE VP  
It would certainly be a story.

THE BEAVER  
Damn right. And who better to tell  
it?

The VP nods. He's coming around on this. A beat.

THE VP  
I have to tell you, in the  
beginning, I think a lot of us  
thought this was the beginning of  
the end.

They LAUGH.

THE VP (CONT'D)  
I don't know how you did it, but-  
He raises his glass. Walter reciprocates. CLINK.

THE VP (CONT'D)  
I'm damn glad you did, and frankly,  
proud to have been part of it.

They both take a drink. A quiet stillness settles. They  
regard one another for a moment. Then...

THE BEAVER  
I'm going to tell you something.  
Something I haven't told anyone  
else. But it's something that I  
think you're ready to hear.

The VP looks honored to be entrusted.

THE VP  
Okay.

THE BEAVER  
The truth is... I'm not a puppet.

The VP smiles, waiting for the punch line.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
 I'm afraid I'm quite serious, mate.  
 I'm as real as you or Walter.

The VP is struggling, still hoping this is a joke. He feels obligated to say something.

THE VP  
 I... don't understand.

THE BEAVER  
 Well, imagine Siamese Twins, but instead of being cut apart, we've been put back together. You see? We're a part of a system, something that's fully integrated, shared. He's part of me and I'm literally a part of him. We make one another whole. And now that that's happened, now that we've been joined, we couldn't be separated if we wanted to.

The VP has given up waiting for the other shoe. He just looks uncomfortable.

THE VP  
 I see.

THE BEAVER  
 I understand, believe me, it's hard to swallow. Neither of us has the slightest clue how it happened. It would appear that when I breathed life into him, he breathed life into me. I suppose I just wanted you to know it's not an act, it's not a gimmick, it's not a stunt. I'm real, alive, fused. And that's not going to change. It's not going to be undone.

The VP nods.

THE VP  
 Okay.

A long beat.

THE BEAVER  
 You don't believe me.

THE VP  
 It's not that, sir, it's just very... strange. I'm sure you believe-

THE BEAVER  
 Pull me off.

THE VP  
Excuse me?

THE BEAVER  
Come up here and pull me off of  
Walter's hand.

THE VP  
That's really not necessary, sir.  
If you say-

THE BEAVER  
Come up here and pull me off his  
goddamned hand.

The VP sits stunned for a moment. Finally, he puts down his snifter, moves to the desk. He's struck by the size of Walter's bulging left forearm.

He looks at Walter for a beat, then puts his hands on The Beaver. He makes the faintest of tugging motions.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Oh come on. Pull.

The VP sighs. This time he pulls a little harder. The Beaver doesn't budge.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Come on dammit! Stop being a pussy!  
PULL!

Now this is getting on the VP's nerves. This time he yanks. Still nothing.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
That's the way. Come on!

Suddenly, the VP wants to prove to Walter that he's delusional. He really gets into it.

He leans back, he GRUNTS. Nothing.

He changes his grip, puts a foot on the desk to brace himself. He STRAINS.

THE VP  
(as he pulls)  
Jesus. What did you, glue this  
thing?

THE BEAVER  
(calm)  
Not a glue on Earth that can do  
this, mate. That's what I've been  
telling you.

The VP manages to pull Walter a few inches out of his chair, but The Beaver doesn't move at all.

Now he's frustrated, maybe a little creeped out. He begins to grab The Beaver every which way as he struggles to pull it off like a dog with a sock in its mouth.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Hey! Hey, not my nose, dammit! Let  
go of my arm you asshole!

Finally, when he's applied all his effort, something lets go and the VP flies backward across the office and into the wall where he collapses.

He looks at his hands. Nothing but a couple tiny tufts of fur.

He looks across the office. There's Walter and The Beaver, as connected as ever. He hasn't moved it a fraction.

The VP has no idea what to think. He's simply dumbfounded.

Walter gets up from behind the desk, walks over to him. He extends his right hand, helps the VP up.

An awkward SILENCE when the three of them are face to face.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
You okay to drive?

THE VP  
(beat)  
Yes sir.

THE BEAVER  
Good.

The VP nods. He turns to go.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Don't forget mate. Today show. Set  
it up.

The VP hesitates. He nods again. And he's gone.

When he's alone, Walter and The Beaver slowly turn, face each other. Off their stare down...

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - LUNCH

Porter slides next to Norah as she's selecting food.

PORTER  
Hey. We need to talk.

NORAH  
Now's not a good time.

PORTER  
Yeah, well, I've called, texted,  
im'd, and it never seems to be a  
good time.

NORAH  
Maybe you should take that as a  
hint.

As she walks away towards the registers...

PORTER  
I read an article about your  
brother.

She stops. Turns. Waits.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
He really was an amazing guy.

NORAH  
That's what you wanted to tell me?

PORTER  
You said you'd been headed to  
Stanford forever. You never said  
that's where he was planning on  
going too.

NORAH  
So we're going to the same school.  
Big deal.

PORTER  
Please. The same school. The same  
classes. The same clubs. If they'd  
let you on the football team you'd  
have identical transcripts.

She heads for the registers again. He follows.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Look, I understand that you feel a  
certain... responsibility, for what  
happened. But it's not your job to  
replace him.

As she's paying...

NORAH  
You don't have a fucking clue what  
you're talking about.

PORTER  
All I'm saying is if you don't want  
to see me, you don't want to talk  
to me, that's fine. But do it  
because that's really what you want  
to do, not because you think it's  
what you're supposed to do.

NORAH

Where did you get this idea that I'm not doing what I want?

PORTER

Oh come on. One day you're this rebel painter and then your brother dies and suddenly you're making a beeline for valedictorian and Stanford?

NORAH

It's called growing up. You should try it.

She takes her food, walks away. He falls right into step.

PORTER

It's called denial, Norah. You guys keep his room hermetically sealed while you build a carbon copy right next door. You feel guilty so you drop your own life and try to take over his. And as long as you never step out of the footprints, everyone gets to go on pretending it never happened. But you meet somebody and you threaten to live your own life, even for a second, and you freak out. I'm sorry about what happened. I don't know how many more ways I can say that, but I'm not your problem, Norah. Your problem is that you have no idea who you really are, and you don't seem the least bit interested in finding out. You can take all his classes, and give his speeches, and go get his degree if you want, but sooner or later you and your parents are gonna have to face the fact that none of that is going to bring your brother back.

She stops suddenly, turns and SLAPS him. Hard. Drops her tray and puts him on the ground, hard.

The whole room looks up. People stand, crowd in. Some OHHS. They're all waiting.

She looks down at him. She's teary eyed, but her voice is pure anger.

NORAH

You want to hear from the real me?  
Fuck off.

She walks away and is immediately embraced by the squad. Porter just sits there until people lose interest, move on.

He SNAPS the rubber band on his wrist.

INT. TODAY SHOW STUDIO

ANGLE ON The VP standing by a monitor watching the back and forth between MATT LAUER and The Beaver.

The VP looks like he's nervous enough to gnaw off a finger.

MATT LAUER

And so what was their reaction the first time you showed up for work like this?

THE BEAVER

Well, I'm sure they thought I was crazy. And justifiably so.

NEW ANGLE shows Matt and Walter on the actual set.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)

Wouldn't you?

MATT LAUER

But that's not how you saw yourself?

THE BEAVER

Not at all. Mozart was said to occasionally feel obliged to meow like a cat, but he seemed to get on all right. Walter's approach was unconventional because conventional approaches proved worthless. What's important is not how someone looks or speaks, but what results from their actions and words. I think the overwhelming success of what was recently a failing company says all it needs to about Walter's judgement.

MATT LAUER

And this all began as a way of dealing with depression?

THE BEAVER

Sometimes, Matt, we reach a point where in order to go on, we have to wipe the slate clean. Put the problems, failures, and fear of the past behind us and begin again from scratch.

MATT LAUER

Well, I think the obvious question is, why would you choose this particular way to attack that problem?

## THE BEAVER

Because sometimes the thing that's holding you back is the very idea of who you are. We begin our lives believing that anything is possible and then slowly we let the walls close in until all we can see is this very narrow range of possibilities. We say things like 'oh I'm not the kind of person who could do this or that, who could look this way or that way, who could say these things or those.' We start to see who we are as a box that we're trapped inside, and however we try to escape; resolutions, therapy, drugs, classes, it simply reels us back in. And I believe the only way to truly break out is to get rid of that box all together. If thinking and acting and being a certain way, a certain 'person', has resulted in unhappiness, why would you keep doing it? Taking your future into your hands and starting over isn't crazy. Crazy is being miserable and still doing the same things day after day. Walter had made a mess of his life, and until he freed himself from his failures, he was cut off from the potential for the wonderful things you see happening to him now. And I'd suggest to you that there are many others out there being crushed under the weight of the boxes they've put themselves in. And whether those people pick up a puppet or not is beside the point. What's important is that they find a way to start over from a point where they really and truly believe that anything is possible. Because it's been my experience that if you can do that, what follows will only confirm the notion.

Matt thinks on this for a moment. He seems surprised, impressed.

NEW ANGLE shows the VP watching, stunned.

MATT LAUER

(on monitor)

Well, I want thank you for joining us this morning.

The VP can't believe they've pulled it off. He looks elated.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. TODAY SHOW STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Walter stands and shakes hands with Matt Lauer.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
This is a picture of Walter Black.  
A hopelessly depressed individual.

CUT TO:

EXT. TODAY SHOW STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Walter and The VP step out and are immediately mobbed by the crowd.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
Who becomes a beaver.

QUICK CUTS:

WALTER AND THE BEAVER on Good Morning America.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Who becomes a phenomenon.

WALTER AND THE BEAVER on CNBC.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
It turns out that in fact, there  
are a lot people out there. People  
looking for answers, for help, for  
change.

WALTER AND THE BEAVER on LARRY KING.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
And they're desperate enough to  
listen -

WALTER AND THE BEAVER on A DAYTIME TALK SHOW. The audience  
CLAPS wildly.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
- even if it's a puppet doing the  
talking.

INT. TOY STORE

A shelf labeled MR. BEAVER WOODCHOPPER KIT has a sign reading  
SOLD OUT.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
Retailers find that not only are  
they constantly out of Mr. Beaver's  
woodchopper kits-

A rack of stuffed puppets is being picked over by a crowd of people.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 But that there's a sudden,  
 seemingly insatiable, interest in  
 plush stuffed puppets.

EXT. STREET - DAY

We see several people walking down the street, briefcase in one hand, beaver puppet on the other.

INT. BUS - DAY

We see various people with various puppets. An Alligator. A Pig. A Bear. There's an older woman with an Octopus.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 Armed with the ability to make a  
 fresh start people suddenly find  
 themselves able to do all sorts of  
 things they'd previously thought  
 impossible.

QUICK CUTS:

A WOMAN stands across a desk from a man. She's yelling at him with the aid of an Elephant puppet on her left hand.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Some find the courage to finally  
 tell off their bosses.

A MAN is across a table from his girlfriend. He's talking to her with a Dog puppet.

THE BEAVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Others get the strength to leave  
 troubled relationships.

The GIRLFRIEND responds by raising her own puppet to speak.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

We see an ELDERLY MEXICAN WOMAN and pull back to reveal Hector. We pull back further to reveal that Hector is wearing a Kangaroo puppet.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
 And some even start their new lives  
 by confessing to the crimes they'd  
 committed in their old ones.

Pull back further to reveal the PRINCIPAL. As Hector finishes he looks to the elderly woman. She nods approvingly.

The Principal gets a look of sinister satisfaction. He turns toward the far wall.

REVEAL Porter, sitting in a chair, sold down the river by a puppet.

INT. BOOKSTORE COFFEE SHOP

Meredith's group of women are meeting. Meredith sees a man reading the paper.

ANGLE ON the paper. A headline reads: ECCENTRIC CEO INKS BOOK DEAL.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
So while Walter is signing a deal  
to write exactly the kind of book  
he'd once thrown away.

Meredith looks away and finds herself staring at the bags under ANN's chair. She freezes.

ANGLE ON the bag to reveal a small plush puppet sticking out.

ANN sees Meredith looking and slyly scoots the bag further under her chair.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Porter stands in front of his locker with a trash can. He pulls everything into it.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
Porter is told that he not only  
won't walk at his own graduation,

Norah walks by. She stops as if she wants to say something, but decides she can't. She moves on.

INT. ANN'S KITCHEN

ANGLE ON a table where a single opened envelope and a one page letter are sitting.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
But that Brown apparently takes  
academic fraud quite seriously.

ANGLE ON the floor where Porter lies as if he's been shot.

EXT. NEWSTAND - DAY

Walter and The Beaver are on the cover of several magazines.

Others feature only The Beaver.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Walter and The Beaver sit across from TERRI GROSS.

The Beaver talks and moves expressively, but Walter himself looks bored.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
And then one day, Walter starts to  
tire of himself all over again.

INT. TV STUDIO

Walter is giving a local interview. His head is on the table, as if sleeping, only The Beaver is upright.

The Beaver SLAPS him on the head. Walter sits up.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Walter's staff is around the table. At the head, The Beaver talks away, but Walter is nowhere to be seen.

ANGLE ON Walter under the table. He's bleary eyed, surrounded by toy beavers from the Woodchopper kits.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Walter lays in bed. The Beaver tugs at his hair.

THE BEAVER  
Come on you miserable wanker! Get  
the fuck up!

INT. TALK SHOW SET - DAY

Walter and The Beaver are on stage with a host, taking questions from the audience.

ANGLE ON a monitor as a woman asks a question. The caption reads: WANTS HER MOTHER TO STOP RUNNING HER LIFE.

ANGLE ON The Beaver. Walter's not even in the shot.

THE BEAVER (V.O.)  
He's the tail on a dog, ignored and  
irrelevant, unless he happens to  
knock something over.

The Beaver dispenses advice. The audience is rapt.

INT. DRESSING ROOM

Walter and The Beaver glare at one another in one of those mirrors surrounded by light bulbs.

Neither says a word. They just stare one another down.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM

Walter walks in and drops several big bags of luggage. Exhausted, he collapses on the bed without changing clothes.

END MONTAGE:

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Walter wakes, still in the same clothes. He looks over at The Beaver who is on the pillow next to him, eyes covered with the eye mask.

Walter carefully turns to his night stand and with his free hand he grabs his cell phone. He scrolls to Meredith, dials.

He puts the phone to his ear, waits. Then...

MEREDITH  
(filter, groggy)  
Hello.

A long beat.

WALTER  
(whispering)  
Meredith. It's me.

MEREDITH  
Walter? What's going on?

WALTER  
I... I don't-

Suddenly, Walter's left hand rises off the pillow, the Beaver's head jerking around, startled.

THE BEAVER  
What's going on? What's-

The Beaver shakes the eye mask off, looks at Walter on the phone.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
What are you doing? Who are you talking to?

MEREDITH  
Walter? Walter, talk to me.

THE BEAVER  
Hang up. Hang up right now.

The Beaver and Walter look at one another.

MEREDITH  
Walter please-

WALTER  
I have to go.

He hangs up. A long SILENCE. Then...

Walter SMASHES himself in the face with The Beaver.

A moment as Walter stares, shocked, at The Beaver.

THE BEAVER  
What the hell are you thinking?

Instead of answering, Walter suddenly grabs the Beaver and WHACKS it against his night stand. A brawl is on.

If this plays with any humor at the start it very quickly disappears. This isn't Liar Liar. Walter is truly self destructive and the damage he does is real.

The Beaver hoists a lamp, SMASHES it over Walter. Blood trickles down his forehead.

Walter puts The Beaver against the door jam, SLAMS the door on him repeatedly. He/They SCREAM.

They tumble into the dresser, knocking it over.

Walter PUNCHES The Beaver into the wall head first, leaving small holes in the drywall.

The Beaver picks up the phone and CLOBBERS Walter across the face with it. Walter is reeling.

Walter falls backward into the wall. Pictures fall.

The Beaver grabs Walter by the throat, presses him against the wall, choking him.

Walter struggles, turns red. He's literally, successfully, denying himself oxygen. The veins pop out. The eyes roll.

He slumps and releases his own throat, crumbling into a pile, unconscious.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Walter wakes, GASPING slightly.

The blood has begun to dry in lines running down his face. His eye is badly swollen and darkening.

He raises The Beaver. One of its eyes is smashed. Lots of fur is missing. One arm is torn slightly. A moment.

THE BEAVER  
Bloody hell, mate. Look at us.

Walter doesn't say anything.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Haven't I delivered exactly what we talked about?

Walter nods.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
I know it's hard, but you have to trust me. We've done the right thing at every turn. We've come so far, mate. There're so many good things ahead. Now is not the time to start looking over your shoulder, yeah?

Walter thinks about it.

WALTER  
I miss them.

THE BEAVER  
You think I don't? But they want you to go back to something that's poisonous, destructive. Open that door again, even a crack, and you'll end up right where you started. I know you don't want that, no matter how much you miss them. And I'm not going to let it happen.

Walter nods.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
We're a team, Walter. The only ones we can really count on are each other. I told you it was going to be hard, yeah? But look at what we've done. And we're just getting started.  
(beat)  
What's important is that you know I'm always going to be here for you. Today, tomorrow, forever. Forever, yeah?

Walter looks at The Beaver. He nods, wipes his face. A deep breath.

WALTER  
I don't think I can sleep anymore.  
Maybe we should work on something  
for a while.

THE BEAVER  
Sure mate. Sure.

INT. GARAGE

Walter and The Beaver work at the bench. SAWING. SANDING.  
HAMMERING. GLUING.

Something is taking shape. A box, but it's longer and  
skinnier than the memory boxes we've seen before.

They work on a lid. They round the edges. It's incredibly  
elaborate, impressive, artful.

They step back, regard the work.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Walter has opened the garage door. He's resting on the  
concrete facing out where the sun is just beginning to rise.

ANGLE ON Walter and The Beaver, quietly, reverently staring  
at the dawn.

Over his shoulder we can see the workbench and the finished  
box, lid up.

After a moment, The Beaver turns back toward the workbench,  
then looks at Walter. The bench. Walter. Something sinks in.

THE BEAVER  
Walter?

Walter doesn't look away from the sunrise.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Walter. Don't.

Nothing.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
Walter, you have to listen to me.  
You will be lost.

Walter gets up. He turns and heads back inside.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
You think you'll get them back? It  
doesn't work that way. There is no  
going back.

Walter presses the button. The garage door starts to come down, blocking out the sun.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
It won't even be like before. It  
will be worse Walter. Much worse.

Walter walks over to the box. He holds The Beaver over it. It's a perfect fit. They've made a little coffin.

THE BEAVER (CONT'D)  
You're going to end up alone,  
Walter. All alone. Don't do it.  
Don't.

Walter stares at The Beaver for a long beat. It seems like he might be convinced. Then...

WALTER  
I'm sorry.

Suddenly he flips on the TABLE SAW. He puts his left arm on the table and grabs the saw handle with his right.

THE BEAVER  
WALTER!!!

He pulls the saw forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

We stare at the innocuous looking garage door, just like the others on the street, as we hear The Beaver's SCREAM and the sound of the SAW digging in.

Then... SILENCE.

A man walks by with his dog, oblivious.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

We hear the BEEP BEEP BEEP of a large truck backing up.

EXT. LANDFILL - DAY

Reveal a garbage truck backing up to a garbage pile. It lifts its rear, dumps its load.

As the garbage cascades out we see that among the usual bags and detritus there are dozens of discarded puppets.

INT. BOOKSTORE

A shelf with copies of THE RESET BUTTON by Walter and The Beaver are marked 90% off.

INT. TOY STORE

The shelf with the Mr. Beaver Woodchopper Kits is now fully stocked, ignored.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

The VP appears on CNBC.

THE VP

Absolutely, Mr. Beaver provided us with a much needed revenue boost, but I think in my tenure it's going to be time for us to return focus to the products and brands that got us going and made us great.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

ANGLE ON the television where the same DAYTIME TALK SHOW HOST who earlier had Walter on is addressing her audience.

DAYTIME TALK SHOW HOST

(on TV)

While we standby the message we were trying to communicate, it's clear that the messenger was not well and I want to make clear that we do not endorse any of the tactics he may have discussed here or elsewhere. If anyone feels like they might hurt themselves please call-

ANGLE ON the couch, revealing Porter sprawled, barely conscious. He changes the channel.

Meredith walks in. She stands in front of the TV. Turns it off. He doesn't seem to notice.

MEREDITH

Come on. Get up.

He doesn't budge.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)

You don't have to go in if you don't want to, but I'm not leaving you here to sleep all day.

She walks over, starts to physically pull him up. He remains limp.

PORTER

Mom.

She drops him. He goes horizontal again. She looks exasperated.

MEREDITH

Porter, please.

A long beat. He slowly gets to his feet. He raises his arms as if to say, happy?

MEREDITH (CONT'D)

Good. Get some shoes on.

PORTER

I'm up okay? But I'm not going.

She looks at him. Considers this. Henry comes in, excited.

HENRY

Are we going?

A beat. She decides Porter is a lost cause.

MEREDITH

Yeah.

Henry takes off toward the garage. Meredith looks at Porter one more time.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)

Do something. Go outside. Take a walk. See that girl. Steal a car. I don't care. Just get out of the house, okay?

He nods. She heads for the garage.

Porter stands still as we hear the Suburban rumble away. Then he heads for the stairs.

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

Porter walks in. He heads straight for his bed, falls into it, pulls a pillow over his head.

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL

Walter, wearing hospital issue white, is seated across from DOCTOR BANKS. They're working with a prosthetic hand.

Walter raises it, looks at it. He seems pleased. The doctor seems pleased.

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL - LATER

Walter is in group, surrounded by other patients in white, each with varying grips on reality. DOCTOR BANKS is at the center of the semi-circle.

Walter raises his prosthetic to talk. Before he's called on a NURSE enters.

NURSE  
Walter? Family's here.

Walter beams.

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA

Walter sits across the table from Meredith and Henry. Henry passes across a gift bag.

Walter looks at it, surprised. He opens it up. He pulls out a small hand-carved replica of a brain.

HENRY  
Mom says yours got broken.

Walter LAUGHS.

WALTER  
Thank you very much. This will come in handy.

A beat.

HENRY  
So, are you crazy?

Meredith begins to protest, but Walter's up to it.

WALTER  
Maybe. But we're working on it.

HENRY  
Does that mean you can come home?

He and Meredith share a glance.

WALTER  
We're... working on it.

A beat.

MEREDITH  
They... said you're doing well.

WALTER  
Eat, sleep, talk, don't hurt yourself. Not the toughest gig.

Despite the circumstances Walter seems relatively upbeat, together.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
How's Porter?

Meredith rolls her eyes.

MEREDITH  
He won't do anything. I'm trying to get him to take community college for a year, but he won't even talk about it. He just lays there.

Walter nods, considering this deeply.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)  
He's got to do something. We can't go a year like this.

WALTER  
Sounds like he was too busy to come along.

She suddenly finds herself staring at the prosthetic hand.

MEREDITH  
He's just... he'll come around.

Walter nods. A long silence. Walter begins to run his hand over the contours of the brain. They all find themselves staring at it.

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL - LATER

Henry and Walter hug goodbye. Meredith and Walter follow suit. He's escorted through a door, waves goodbye.

As Meredith and Henry walk away a Doctor falls into step.

DOCTOR BANKS  
Mrs. Black? I'm Doctor Banks. We spoke on the phone?

She nods, but doesn't stop walking.

DOCTOR BANKS (CONT'D)  
Well, as I said, we're very pleased with Walter's progress. He's on medication, but we've got the dosing at a low level and he's responded very favorably. No signs of delirium or suicidal ideation. And he's been very active in group and with the other patients. Frankly, he's well liked.

Meredith nods, but she's still walking. If anything, she's walking faster.

DOCTOR BANKS (CONT'D)  
 As I said on the phone, I think  
 that with some supervision and  
 regular therapy there's no reason-

They reach the doors. Meredith cuts him off, pulls out her keys. She hands them to Henry.

MEREDITH  
 Henry. Here. Go wait in the car.  
 I'll just be another minute.

Henry looks at her, takes the keys, walks out.

Meredith turns back to the doctor.

DOCTOR BANKS  
 As I was saying, I'm comfortable  
 releasing him to your care if-

MEREDITH  
 Doctor, I'm... I don't think we're  
 ready for that.

The doctor nods, takes this in.

DOCTOR BANKS  
 I understand. When you are ready, I  
 think it would be beneficial for  
 him to have his family around him.

She thinks it over.

MEREDITH  
 How long will you keep him?

DOCTOR BANKS  
 Well, it would be several months  
 before we could sign him out under  
 his own supervision, but-

MEREDITH  
 That's fine. We'll work on figuring  
 out what to do with him after that.

A beat as he grasps the situation. He hands her some papers.

DOCTOR BANKS  
 In case you change your mind.

She takes the papers, puts them in her purse. She heads out.

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL

Walter is seated on a couch with other patients facing a TV,  
 but Walter's eyes are on the window.

ANGLE ON the window where he can see Meredith getting into the suburban. She backs up, drives on.

ANGLE ON Walter as he raises his prosthetic hand, regards it.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

A DOORBELL rings.

INT. FOYER

Meredith opens the door to reveal Norah. They look at one another.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY

Meredith KNOCKS on Porter's door. No response. She tries the handle. It's locked.

MEREDITH  
Porter? Porter are you up? Your  
friend is here. Norah.

A long beat. Then suddenly the sound of his radio BLARING.

Meredith turns to Norah. Norah smiles. She understands.

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Porter sits on his bed, staring at the door. He's clearly conflicted, but he doesn't move.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Meredith and Norah are walking away when suddenly the music stops. Norah and Meredith pause, look back. Porter's door opens. He sticks his head out.

A long beat as Norah and Porter look at one another. Then, without a word, she turns and heads back towards his room.

Meredith watches, satisfied, then heads downstairs.

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

Porter sits on his bed. Norah sits across. There's a bit of a breeze outside, and even though the poster is once again over the hole in the wall, it RATTLES occasionally as the wind comes through the small opening to the outside.

They can't seem to decide who should start. Finally...

PORTER  
So how was graduation?

NORAH  
Honestly? I'd say the fact that you weren't allowed to be there worked out in your favor.

He just nods.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
I wanted you to know, I didn't end up using your speech. At the last minute I got this idea that it was more important for the words to be mine than to be good.

A beat. Then quietly...

PORTER  
Well... you still owe me 150 bucks.

She smiles, the first break in the ice.

NORAH  
You were right, you know? About no one really paying attention. When I finally decided that I had to write the thing myself I thought I suddenly had this great insight that was going to knock everyone's socks off. It was all about how every time you breathe you get two atoms that were breathed by every person who's ever lived. Julius Caesar, James Dean, Queen Elizabeth. You've heard that right?

He nods.

NORAH (CONT'D)  
So anyway, that meant that two of the atoms in everyone's breath also came from my brother. And even though he was gone, he was still this tiny part of us all.  
(MORE)

NORAH (CONT'D)

And what he'd want us to remember was not that his name was on two atoms in every breath, but that every breath was our chance to put our own signature on a trillion little pieces of the future.

PORTER

Not bad.

NORAH

Yeah? Well, let me give you some advice, should you ever find yourself giving a speech to a thousand eighteen year olds dying to go party. Dead people and atoms? Probably not the topics you want to lead with.

PORTER

No?

NORAH

I mean, I can't tell you how many times I pictured all of that playing out, you know? Me on stage, giving this amazing speech, everyone in awe, my parents weeping, and even my brother, like, sitting on some cloud, looking down and smiling.

(beat)

But it wasn't like that at all. I mean people clapped, but mostly because it was over. Durban, the third time's the charm senior, he got the real ovation.

PORTER

And your parents?

NORAH

Oh, very happy. Very proud. We have roughly 4000 photos of the event.

A beat.

PORTER

And your brother?

NORAH

Not a cloud in the sky.

Porter nods.

NORAH (CONT'D)

I know you think that I've been trying to replace him somehow, and I'm sure that's part of it, but the truth is, I didn't know him that well when he was alive.

(MORE)

NORAH (CONT'D)

He was always something I was trying to separate myself from, not get closer to. And by the time I realized how stupid that was, he wasn't around. So I didn't become this overachieving valedictorian to bring him back. I did it because every time I did something he'd done, every time someone looked at me and saw a little bit of my brother, it felt like we were getting closer. Like I was finally getting to know him, even though he was gone. But the flip side is that after eighteen years I feel like I know my dead brother a lot better than I know myself. And I guess I just wanted to say... I'm working on it.

A beat, then she stands.

NORAH (CONT'D)

Anyway, I should go. We're doing some packing.

PORTER

(as he stands)

Really dying to get to Stanford, huh?

NORAH

Well, no, actually. It's not that kind of packing. I ended up deferring Stanford for a year. I figured I'd take some time, drive around, see if that's really where I'm supposed to be. Or something like that. Like I said, I'm working on it.

Porter's surprised.

PORTER

Wow. Good for you. How are your parents with that?

NORAH

(beat)

We're all working on it.

She starts to go and then stops, reaches into her purse and pulls out some papers.

NORAH (CONT'D)

Oh. I almost forgot. I wanted to give you this.

He takes the pages.

PORTER

What is it?

NORAH  
It's your speech.

PORTER  
Oh. Well, this is just a print out.  
I've still got it on my drive.

NORAH  
I know. I just thought... I mean, I know your whole deal was that you could sound like anyone, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized, this isn't me talking. It's you. You wrote it. I just wondered if you'd ever really sat down and read it.

He's not sure what to say. She looks at him, smiles. She hesitates, then steps over, kisses him. It's short, sweet, but it says what it needs to.

She walks out. He looks at the pages in his hand. The wind RATTLES the poster on his wall.

He takes a seat on his bed, unfolds the pages. As he begins to read...

PORTER (V.O.)  
Faculty, students, families, I'm here today because I'm supposed to tell you something about tomorrow. I'm supposed to remind you that it's the first day of the rest of your life, and inspire you to seize the infinite array of possibilities that have suddenly become available. I'm supposed to tell you that you can do anything you dare to dream as long as you just listen to your heart and follow your rainbow. But I can't do that. Because it's not true.

CUT TO:

INT. NORAH'S BROTHER'S ROOM

We see the walls covered in trophies, awards.

NEW ANGLE reveals that Norah and her parents are packing the things into boxes.

PORTER (V.O.)  
The truth is, there are people out there in big government buildings and insurance agencies whose job is to predict the future. They don't know you or me, don't know a thing about our hopes and dreams, and frankly they don't care.  
(MORE)

PORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 But still they're hunched over  
 their computers, crunching numbers,  
 and without ever having asked you  
 what you want to be when you grow  
 up, they know not only what kind of  
 job you'll have, and how much money  
 you'll make, but whether you'll be  
 married or have kids, where and how  
 you'll live, and even roughly when  
 you'll die.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL

We see Walter in the ward. He's playing a game with other patients. They LAUGH.

PORTER (V.O.)  
 And when you look at all their  
 statistics, all their data, all  
 their predictions, the future looks  
 less like something you get to  
 write than something you simply get  
 to show up for.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL

We see Meredith and Walter visiting together. It's tender, quiet. They hold hands.

PORTER (V.O.)  
 So instead of deluding you, instead  
 of offering you cliches and  
 platitudes, I'm just going to give  
 it to you straight. Most of us will  
 be average. That's why they call it  
 average, because the majority of us  
 end up there. And according to the  
 statistics, this is what the future  
 holds for the average person in  
 this class: You'll die before  
 you're 85.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL

Meredith stands talking to the doctor at the door again. Again she leaves alone.

PORTER (V.O.)  
 You'll be married, but you'll also  
 get divorced. You'll suffer from at  
 least one major medical problem.  
 (MORE)

PORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
You'll work out of an office, live in a modest home, and never make more than 100 thousand dollars a year. Doesn't really sound that exciting does it? Certainly doesn't sound like the life they promise in most graduation speeches.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE

Henry is happily back at work, surrounded by lumber if not people.

PORTER (V.O.)  
But what if I told you that the person described in that scenario was not someone from this class, but Albert Einstein. Because while he may have been one of the most famous minds in history, according to the numbers, he was as average as they come. Life expectancy, job, pay, house, all right down the middle. So how come average is probably the last thing you think of when you hear the name Einstein?

CUT TO:

INT. NORAH'S ROOM

Norah is packing her own things.

PORTER (V.O.)  
It's because even if all the statistics, all the predictions, all the numbers are true, they don't really tell you anything about what your life will be like. What it will be worth. What it will mean. The formulas, equations, scores, and data, they're just pieces of the story.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORAH'S DRIVEWAY

We see her and her parents loading her car up with her stuff.

PORTER (V.O.)  
And if you put them all together, they don't really tell you who you'll be because people are more than the sum of their parts.  
(MORE)

PORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I can't stand here and tell you  
that anything is possible, because  
it isn't.

CUT TO:

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

ANGLE ON all his books on genetics.

NEW ANGLE shows him packing them up. He rests on a box, looking down, toying with the rubber band on his wrist. He eyes his Journal of Similarities list.

PORTER (V.O.)  
Your name is already written in a  
big book somewhere and certain  
things, whether you like them or  
not, have already been jotted down  
next to it. And maybe those things  
can't be changed. But what your  
name will ultimately mean, what it  
will cause others to think of, to  
remember, to feel, that is  
something that's not yet written,  
something that cannot be predicted.  
It's something that only you can  
control. You don't have to believe  
anything is possible for tomorrow  
to be the first day of the rest of  
your life. You just have to believe  
that when all the math is done,  
there's still something that can't  
be accounted for. That thing is  
what makes you, you. And all you  
have to do now, is create it.

CUT TO:

EXT. PSYCH HOSPITAL - DAY

Porter sits alone on a bench, nervous. He keeps eying the entrance. Finally, he gets to his feet, heads in.

INT. PSYCH HOSPITAL

Porter and Walter sit across from one another. Walter looks peaceful. SILENCE.

PORTER  
So... you're going to be okay?

Walter nods, shrugs.

WALTER  
I think so.

PORTER  
You think so?

Walter smiles.

WALTER  
They're just doctors son. They  
can't see the future.

PORTER  
But they have a good feeling,  
right? They feel like you're  
probably going to be okay.

WALTER  
It's not up to them.

A long beat. Porter works up to asking the question he really wants the answer to.

PORTER  
What about me? Am I going to be  
okay?

Declarative, and without hesitation...

WALTER  
You're going to be fine.

Porter scoffs.

PORTER  
First, Grandpa and now you. I mean-  
Again, definitively.

WALTER  
You're going to be fine.

Porter's tone changes. He's not combative. He really wants the answer.

PORTER  
How do you know that?

Walter waits until Porter looks him in the eye.

WALTER  
Because it's up to you.

Another long beat. Then...

Porter reaches down, pulls the rubber band off his wrist. He puts it around his father's prosthetic.

They look at one another.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN - DAY

Porter gets into the back seat, closes the door. He's emotional, unsure what he's feeling.

NEW ANGLE reveals Henry sitting beside him, whittling quietly on a piece of wood. Finally...

HENRY  
Are they coming?

PORTER  
Yeah. Just have to finish some paperwork.

EXT. PSYCH HOSPITAL

The front door opens. Meredith and Walter come out together.

Walter takes a moment to look around, and then out of nowhere Henry comes streaking across the grounds, wraps himself around Walter's leg.

He hoists the boy onto his shoulders. They walk on.

EXT. NORAH'S DRIVEWAY

Norah's parents wave goodbye as she drops her loaded car into gear, pulls away.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Norah pulls onto the road, rolls down the window. Wind in her hair, she hits the gas.

INT. PORTER'S BEDROOM

Porter's not here. The room is missing things, even if we're not sure what they are.

What we notice is that on the far wall, where the hole was, is Norah's painting, the one she said she always liked.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Porter sits outside, alone. Thinking. Waiting. Watching.

VERY SLOWLY PULL BACK to reveal he's sitting on a fully loaded backpack.

Suddenly, a huge smile spreads across his face as he spots what he's looking for.

NEW ANGLE as Norah pulls up in her loaded car. She presses a button. The trunk opens.

NEW ANGLE as Porter throws his bag in the trunk.

NEW ANGLE as Porter hugs his family.

WALTER (V.O.)  
This is a picture of Walter Black.

Henry gives Porter a wooden compass. He pats his younger brother on the head.

WALTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
A once hopelessly depressed individual.

Porter and Norah get in the car.

WALTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Who had to become a beaver.

INT. NORAH'S CAR

Porter puts the compass in the middle of the dash. The two of them look at one another. They LAUGH.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

The car starts. The windows come down. Porter and Norah each stick an arm out to wave goodbye as they drive away.

WALTER (V.O.)  
Who had to become a phenomenon.

ANGLE ON the family. They raise their arms, wave goodbye.

WALTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
So that ultimately this could just be a picture-

ANGLE ON Walter's prosthetic waving goodbye, Porter's rubber band around its wrist.

WALTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
- of Walter Black.

FADE OUT.