

TRAFFIC LIGHT
"Pilot"

by

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Based on the Israeli format "Traffic Light" created by Adir Miller

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ACT ONE

INT. ADAM'S CAR - EVENING

ADAM, 33, an editor at a Men's magazine, drives home through the streets of Chicago. (Think Paul Rudd). He dials his cell.

ADAM
(INTO PHONE) Hey, Mike. What're you up to?

MIKE
(ON SPEAKER) You know, kicking back, enjoying a fine cigar, livin' the good life.

ADAM
You're in your car, aren't you?

INT. MIKE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MIKE, 33, a lawyer, is, in fact, parked a few blocks from his home, smoking a cigar in his car. (Think a less angry Vince Vaughn in "Old School").

MIKE
Yup. Parked two blocks from the house. As soon as I get home, Lisa puts me to work on the second shift.

QUICK POP: Mike runs after his naked 3 year-old son, dripping with water from the bath. Mike slips in a puddle, falling on his butt as his wife LISA runs by with a basket of laundry. Post-work, pre-bedtime chaos.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Kids change everything. You'll see, Adam. It's great but-- you'll see.

Mike looks over to his mini-DVD player on the passenger seat. "Iron Man" is on pause. He's been watching it every day after work in fifteen minute chunks.

INT. ADAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ADAM
Would you stop with that "you'll see" stuff? We're just moving in together.

QUICK POP: A REALTOR shows Adam and his girlfriend CALLIE an empty brownstone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM (CONT'D)

She's been practically living at my place for months. It's not that big of a deal.

QUICK POP: Adam sweats bullets as he signs the mortgage. "30 years fixed" seems to gyrate on the page.

MIKE

(SPEAKER) God, I love your innocence. I really do.

ADAM

It still amazes me that a guy who can survive in a cut-throat legal environment has lie to his wife about traffic so he can enjoy a cigar and watch "Batman."

INT. MIKE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MIKE

Finished "Batman." Watching "Iron Man" now. It's very good. (THEN) Look, marriage is a negotiation. Especially after you have kids. I negotiate with some of the most evil bastards in the world. It's exhausting. The last thing I want to do is negotiate some more when I get home. I've had to cede some territorial jurisdiction.

INT. MIKE AND LISA'S HOUSE - ANOTHER TIME

Lisa and Mike unload the groceries. Lisa pulls out a bottle of green dish soap.

LISA

What's this? Why did you buy this?

MIKE

There wasn't any red soap so I bought the green.

LISA

You're not authorized to make that decision.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - BACK TO PRESENT

MIKE

I need to clear out a little space for myself and this is just a lot easier. You'll see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SFX: BEEP.

ADAM
(SPEAKER) Hold on, that's Ethan.

INT. ADAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Adam clicks the phone over.

ADAM
On with Mike. I'll call you back.

ETHAN
(ON SPEAKER) Conference me in.

INT. ETHAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ETHAN, 33, an EMT, drives. Ethan's perpetually single but has a guileless honesty that's charming. (Think a younger Owen Wilson).

ADAM
(SPEAKER) We're all on.

ETHAN
Carl's here. Say hi.

ADAM/ETHAN
(SPEAKER) Hey, Carl.

REVEAL: Ethan's bulldog, CARL, rides shot gun.

INT. ADAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ETHAN
(SPEAKER) We're going on a
(SPELLING IT) W-A-L-K.

ADAM
You're driving Carl to his walk?

At the mention of the word "walk," Carl jumps around.

ETHAN
(SPEAKER) Carl prefers a park on
the south side. And would you
please spell the "W" word?

INT. MIKE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MIKE
If you treated your girlfriends
half as well as you treat your
dog, I wouldn't be the only one of
us married.

INT. ETHAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ETHAN
What are you talking about? I
treat my girlfriends like
goddesses.

QUICK POP: Ethan, naked except for a chef's apron,
carries a souffle to his current girlfriend, SHERRY.

MIKE
(SPEAKER) Yeah, for like three
weeks.

ETHAN
I'd rather have three weeks of
wonderful than a lifetime of
nothing special.

ADAM
(SPEAKER) Did you just quote
"Steel Magnolias?"

ETHAN
More of a paraphrase but, yes,
Sherry and I watched it the other
night. I found it very moving.
And, for the record, we're about
to hit the one month mark. (THEN,
EXCITED) Yes!

ADAM
(SPEAKER) Wow. I've never heard
you so excited about a
relationship.

ETHAN
I was referring to the green light
I just caught at Lincoln. But
yeah, Sherry's most cool.

A string of green lights stretch in front of Ethan.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Hey, so I saved this rich guy's
life the other day...

QUICK POP: Ethan, in his EMT uniform, defibrillates a man
in a restaurant. When he pops to life, the man's wife
hugs Ethan. Over her shoulder, Ethan winks at a woman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ETHAN (CONT'D)
As a thank you, he gave me floor
seats for the Bulls on the 27th.

ADAM
(SPEAKER) Awesome.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MIKE
Yeah, awesome-- but unfortunately,
that's the day of Ben's thing.

ETHAN
(SPEAKER) That's the 27th?

MIKE
Yup. All the way up in Madison. No
way we could do both.

INT. ADAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ETHAN
(SPEAKER) Classic Ben. Worst
roommate ever.

ADAM
What are you talking about?

ETHAN
(SPEAKER) Need I remind you of the
constant blaring of Chumbawamba.

Adam tries to make a changing traffic light.

ADAM
It was the late 90s-- everybody
blared Chumbawamba.

SFX: POLICE SIREN. Adam pulls over.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Damn. I thought I made the yellow.

ETHAN
(SPEAKER) What?

ADAM
I'm getting pulled over. I'll see
you guys tomorrow.

MIKE
(SPEAKER) No, keep us on. I want
to hear this.

ADAM
All right. Don't say anything.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET/INT. ADAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

A female COP approaches the car.

COP
Do you know why I pulled you over?

MIKE
(SPEAKER) Don't admit anything.

COP
Who's that?

ADAM
A friend.

MIKE
(ON SPEAKER) I'm his lawyer.

ADAM
I'm sorry, Officer. I guess I got distracted. I'm moving in with my girlfriend tomorrow.

COP
Weak excuse, but hey, that's great. You getting her a present?

ADAM
Should I?

COP
Sure. It's a big deal.

MIKE
(SPEAKER) Told you.

ADAM
It's not that big of a deal. She's been staying over almost every night for months.

COP
Underline almost there. Trust me, it's a big deal. Get her a present. Make it special. Call it a "new life together" present.

MIKE
(SPEAKER) This is good stuff here, Adam. I hope you're listening.

ADAM
What should I get her? Like a necklace or something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COP

No, get her something you could use together at your new home-- but no kitchen stuff. Something fun like Wii or Guitar hero.

ETHAN

(SPEAKER) Do you think I should get my girlfriend a present for our one month anniversary? I'm kind of in uncharted territory.

COP

Is that another guy? How many people you got on this phone?

ADAM

(SHEEPISH) Three. We're close. We've been through a lot together.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

SFX: The beeps of another call on Mike's line.

MIKE

Wait. That's Lisa. See you guys tomorrow. Don't give him a ticket. (CLICKS OVER) Hey, honey. Yeah, traffic's hell. (BEAT) The traffic guy on the radio? You can't trust that guy. (EXAMINES CIGAR) Okay, probably about twenty minutes.

Mike hangs up. There's a tap on the window. He rolls it down to reveal a GUY about Mike's age, holding a cigar.

GUY

Got a light?

MIKE

Of course.

Mike hands him his cigar lighter. The guy lights his cigar, blows out a satisfied puff of smoke, then:

GUY

Can I borrow "Iron Man" when you're done?

MIKE

Sure.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL a line of about three or four cars parked behind Mike, each with an arm out the window, holding a cigar. Behind them, at an intersection, a traffic light turns to RED.

END OF ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT TWO

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - THE NEXT DAY

Ethan, Mike, and Mike's wife, LISA, 33, help Adam and his girlfriend CALLIE unpack while eating pizzas. Adam hands Callie a present. Mike and Ethan take note.

CALLIE

You got me a present?

ADAM

For our new life. Something we can do together.

Behind Callie, Mike gives Adam the thumbs up. Callie opens it. It's a Wii game.

CALLIE

You are a very thoughtful man.

Callie kisses Adam. Mike pulls a picture out of a box. It's of the 1999 University of Illinois baseball team.

MIKE

Wow. Takes me back.

LISA

Look at how young you all look.
Look at Ben's hair.

They laugh.

MIKE

There's nothing like being on a team. The bond you feel-- it's bigger than anything. (OFF LISA'S LOOK) Other than family.

CALLIE

I didn't know you were on the team, Mike.

MIKE

(SCOFFING) Of course I was on the team!

LISA

He was the equipment manager.

MIKE

And thus a vital part of the team.

CALLIE

But you didn't actually play...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

No. Although I did get to play in our last game when we were seniors.

ETHAN

Adam, Ben, and I went to the coach and insisted he let Mike suit up.

CALLIE

Like in Rudy!

ADAM

I'll admit there was an influence.

MIKE

Doesn't matter how I got in, though. When history called, I stood tall.

EXT. COLLEGE BASEBALL FIELD - FLASHBACK

Mike approaches the plate with all the swagger of Babe Ruth about to call his shot. In the batter's box, he stares down the pitcher with steely resolve until... a wicked fastball beans Mike right on the helmet. He hits the dirt like a sack of equipment.

EXT. COLLEGE BASEBALL FIELD - FLASHBACK - MOMENTS LATER

A groggy Mike is carried off on a stretcher by paramedics. Mike whispers in the ear of a paramedic. They change course and carry Mike down the first base line. They lower the stretcher, Mike touches first base, and raises his arms in victory to the greatest applause he'll ever get in life.

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - BACK TO PRESENT

MIKE

And let the record show I am still the holder of the school record for career on-base percentage.

CALLIE

That's a real record?

ADAM

We decided to let him have it.

INT. ADAM'S WORK - THE NEXT DAY

Adam is at his desk in the swank offices of the men's magazine where he works. The magazine's publisher, MARTY, an incredibly well-off man in his 50s, enters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY

Hey, just read that piece you wrote on the "Five Ways your Boss Manipulates you." Good stuff. What was the third way again?

ADAM

Oh, that's the one where your boss constantly refers to the tough economic times to make you feel insecure about your job.

Marty sits on the edge of the desk.

MARTY

Man, these are tough days for print media. Magazines getting taken down like (SNAPS) that. Did you hear about "Gourmet?" So sad. I'm hanging in there for now, but I just don't know how long I can keep all six of my magazines up and running.

Panic comes across Adam's face as Marty picks up a desk photo of Callie.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Oh, hey. Heard you and your girlfriend just bought a new place. Congrats. You didn't overpay, did you?

Adam makes a sheepish expression: "maybe a bit."

MARTY (CONT'D)

Doesn't matter. Callie makes some money, right? What does she do again?

ADAM

She works for a non-profit--

MARTY

Ouch. Listen, I was wondering if I could ask a favor.

ADAM

Yes. Absolutely. Anything.

MARTY

My son's having his Bar Mitzvah in a few weeks. My ex-wife's been turning him against me so I'm trying to win him back. I promised I'd throw him the best Bar Mitzvah party he'd ever been to. Gonna be tough-- the last kid had the Kings of Leon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ADAM

Well, how can I help?

MARTY

The kid's a nut for those crazy
wrestlers on TV.

ADAM

(EXCITED) I did an article on one
of them a few issues ago.

Adam pulls out a magazine with a large wrestler, dressed
as a clown holding an electric saw, on the cover.

MARTY

Yeah, that's why I'm here, smart-
guy. Remember the big manipulation
prologue? Here's the pay-off. My
kid's obsessed with the Sawing
Clown. Do you think you can get
him and a few other wrestlers to
do an exhibition performance at
the party?

ADAM

Absolutely! I totally hit it off
with the Sawing Clown. I even
helped him shop for an engagement
ring for his fiancée.

INT. TIFFANY'S CHICAGO - FLASHBACK - A FEW MONTHS AGO

Adam admires a diamond setting with the SAWING CLOWN.

SAWING CLOWN

I don't know, man. I think the
cushion cut diamond with the
princess setting is a little more
classic. And I'm not sure how I
feel about the white gold. There,
I said it.

INT. ADAM'S WORK - BACK TO THE PRESENT

MARTY

I don't understand why my kid
likes these guys. It's all acting.
They're like overfed drama nerds.

ADAM

They're really sensitive about
that. You'll want to be careful.
They consider themselves athletes.

MARTY

Yeah, a lot of athletes out there
wearing clown make-up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY (CONT'D)

All right then, I'm counting on you and, um, I'm gonna go buy the last issue of Gourmet. You want one?

EXT. PARK - SIMULTANEOUS

Ethan and SHERRY walk their dogs.

ETHAN

Are you sure you want to break up with me? We're having fun.

SHERRY

I don't want to break up with you. I have to break up with you.

ETHAN

Why?

SHERRY

Ethan, google the question "why do people break up with Ethan?" The first link that comes up? "Won't commit."

ETHAN

Have you tried other search engines? Google isn't the be-all and end-all, you know.

She laughs, despite herself.

SHERRY

Ethan, you're a great guy, and you never lied to me, but I'm looking for something that at least has the potential to become long term.

He sighs, knowing this is not something he's ready to give, then looks over at his dog playing with Sherry's dog.

ETHAN

Carl's gonna be so disappointed. He liked you. (BEAT) And so did I.

SHERRY

(KISSING HIM ON THE CHEEK) Bye Ethan. (CALLING HER DOG) Pickles.

Sherry walks away. Her dog follows. Carl walks over to Ethan and looks up at him.

ETHAN

(TO CARL) Don't judge me.

INT. AMBULANCE - LATER

Ethan, in his EMT uniform, talks on his phone.

ETHAN
Sherry broke up with me.

ADAM
(SPEAKER) Oh, how'd she do?

ETHAN
Total pro. Really nice. No scenes.
A friend's gonna pick up her
stuff. I'm gonna have to give her
a ten. Cool girl.

ADAM
(SPEAKER) Smart girl. (THEN) You
good?

ETHAN
Yeah, just a little surprised, I
guess. Should have seen it coming
though. She has a birthday coming
up. I usually get dumped in
periods of reevaluation.

ADAM
(SPEAKER) Buddy, as a friend, I
gotta say: as we get older, the
ven diagram of women worth dating
and women willing to "take things
day by day" is gonna get smaller
and smaller. You ever think about,
you know, maybe trying out a real
commitment? See how it feels?

ETHAN
I know how it feels. It feels like
the sweater my Aunt gave me. It's
too tight, it's itchy, and it
smells like a farm.

ADAM
(SPEAKER) What?

ETHAN
Doesn't matter. Single's my
natural state. You and Mike were
always the relationship guys. Me
and Ben were the single guys. I
gotta get back out there. Can you
go out tonight?

ADAM
(SPEAKER) I think I can make that
work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ETHAN
Cool. Calling Mike.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Mike is in the car with Lisa. The phone rings. The dashboard display reads: "Ethan calling."

MIKE
Hi, Ethan. Lisa's in the car. Say
hello. Her car's in the shop.

ETHAN
(ON SPEAKER, FLUMUXED) Oh. Hi
Lisa. (BEAT) Okay, Mike, I'll call
you later.

Ethan hangs up. A beat, then:

LISA
Why did you tell Ethan I was in
the car?

MIKE
I was being polite.

LISA
(SKEPTICAL) Uh-huh.

MIKE
What?

LISA
The way Ethan hung up so fast-- it
made me feel like he wanted to
talk about something you couldn't
talk about in front of me. Like
you're keeping some secret.

MIKE
That's ridiculous. Ethan's crazy.
Fifty percent chance that was a
pocket call.

LISA
Okay, as a fun experiment, next
time one of the guys calls, don't
tell 'em I'm here.

Mike looks at her and doesn't blink.

MIKE
Fine. No problem.

Mike turns to look out his window and shows his real
feeling: yikes. The phone rings again. Mike answers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE (CONT'D)

Hi, Mom. Say hi to Lisa. Her car's in the shop. (OFF LISA'S LOOK)
What? Mom's not one of the guys.

MIKE'S MOM

(ON SPEAKER, FLUMUXED) Oh. Hi Lisa. (BEAT) Okay, honey, I'll talk to you later.

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT EVENING

Mike paces as Ethan grills a hamburger for his dog.

MIKE

You hung up too quickly. Now Lisa's suspicious.

ETHAN

I'm sorry. I freaked out. I can't keep track of what Lisa's allowed to know.

MIKE

Nothing. She's allowed to know nothing. Especially not from you. (THEN) Look, I'm not trying to bang cocktail waitresses here. I'm just trying to carve out a little Mike time. And to do that, I have to be able to control the information.

ETHAN

That's why I got off the phone so quickly.

MIKE

I'm sorry. You know who the real enemy is here? Technology. And I've invited it into my house like we were friends. Stupid, stupid cell phone! Stupid email! Our dads never had to deal with that. My marriage has coincided with the greatest erosion of male freedom in human history.

ETHAN

I'm calling Adam.

Ethan looks around for his phone.

MIKE

It just sucks. My car was the last place I could completely relax and be myself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ETHAN

You know what really sucks? That you can't do that in your own home.

MIKE

Ooh, single guy-- thinks he's deep. Trust me, one day you'll be experiencing everything that I am right now-- and I'm gonna love it.

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: A large TV screen. A game of Wii Sports boxing is underway. A character that looks like Callie delivers a series of jabs to a character that looks like Adam.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Adam and Callie, playing the game.

CALLIE

Come on, you're better than this.

ADAM

Your character looks too much like you. It's weird. I can't hit her.

CALLIE

She's animated!

The phone rings. It's Ethan. Adam pauses the game and picks up.

ADAM

(INTO PHONE) Hey, buddy.

ETHAN (O.S.)

Where are you, man? We're still going out, right?

ADAM

(LOOKING AT CALLIE) We'll see.

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ETHAN

(INTO PHONE) What do you mean, "we'll see?"

ADAM (O.S.)

All right, talk to you later.

Ethan hangs up, perplexed.

ETHAN

What the hell was that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

He's asking permission.

ETHAN

Permission?

MIKE

Well, not 'permission' exactly.
It's more like he's looking for
her blessing...

ETHAN

What?

MIKE

Right now, on the north side of
Chicago, a very subtle domestic
dance has just begun...

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

Adam hangs up the phone and carefully puts it down so as
to give him time to think of his approach.

MIKE (V.O.)

He wants her to say 'go out with
your friends' without him actually
having to say 'I really want to go
out with my friends.'

ADAM

That was Ethan.

CALLIE

Oh?

ADAM

Yeah, he and Mike are hanging out.
They're gonna go get some beers.

CALLIE

Nice.

ADAM

They want me to join them. Could
be fun... But, you know...

MIKE (V.O.)

She doesn't want him to go. But
she doesn't want to straight out
say that.

CALLIE

You should go... if that's what
you want to do.

Adam tries to think of a good way to respond to this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE (V.O.)
I'm gonna be honest. I think our
boy is out-matched.

ADAM
No, I'll stay. We just moved in.
We're having fun.

She snuggles into him.

CALLIE
I love living with you.

ADAM
I love living with you too.

While still hugging Adam, Callie moves the wii joystick
and knocks out Adam's character on the wii game.

ADAM (CONT'D)
A sucker punch? Really? That's how
you're gonna play?

Callie does a playful little victory dance.

EXT. HOT DOG PLACE - THE NEXT DAY

Adam, Mike, and Ethan wait in line.

MIKE
Here's where you made your
mistake. You framed the issue
wrong. You can't say that you want
to go out with your friends
because you think it'll be fun.

ADAM
I can't?

ETHAN
No, you can't.

ADAM
How would you know?

ETHAN
Mike explained the whole thing to
me at the bar last night. It's
actually sorta fascinating.
Apparently, what you need to do is
act like you don't want to go out.

MIKE
Exactly. You have to act like
going out is a burden, like you're
only doing it because one of us
really needs you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Adam considers this.

ADAM

I don't know, man. We're just starting out, I don't want to build our relationship on lying.

MIKE

It's not lying. It's more like a face-saving gesture for both parties. Everyone walks away with dignity. It's like international diplomacy. (THEN) Alright, topic change. I'm gonna be driving Lisa to and from work for the next couple of days. When you guys call, if I cough twice, that means that Lisa's in the car. Everybody got that?

They get to the CASHIER, a woman in her late 20s.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(TO CASHIER) Three specials.

ETHAN

(TO CASHIER) I like that shirt, Jenny. It makes your breasts look really good.

CASHIER

(BIG SMILE) Thank you.

The cashier goes to grab their order.

MIKE

It's amazing that you can get away with that.

ETHAN

Get away with what? Making her feel awesome? Every girl I know is insecure about her breasts.

MIKE

I could never get away with that. It's weird.

ETHAN

It's only weird if you make it weird. Your vibe has to be "I'm not trying to sleep with you-- I've already got a lot planned for the day-- but I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to acknowledge the beauty of your breasts." Boom. You're done. "

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Who was that masked man making me
feel good about my breasts?"
That's your vibe. You don't linger
because that's when the creepy
starts slipping in.

The cashier returns. She hands the orders to the guys.

CASHIER
(SMILING TO ETHAN) On the house.
(TO MIKE AND ADAM) Four seventy-
five, each.

Mike smiles at the cashier.

MIKE
Your breasts really do look good
in that shirt.

The cashier doesn't say anything. Mike's smile takes on a
weird expression.

CASHIER
Four seventy-five.

Mike hands her the money and she walks off.

MIKE
(TO ETHAN) I lingered, didn't I?

ETHAN
Yup. You let the creepy slip in.

INT. IKEA - LATER

Adam and Callie shop for stuff for their place,
surrounded by other couples. Adam points to a table lamp.
Callie scrunches her face: that would be a "no."

CALLIE
I'm sorry I'm being so picky.

ADAM
Nah. A lamp for the side table?
Who doesn't have four hours for
that?

CALLIE
(LAUGHS, THEN) But it's fun,
right?

ADAM
Totally fun.

CALLIE
(CONVINCING HERSELF) I mean, I
know I'm being a little domestic
here. But don't worry.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALLIE (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna turn into some sort of obsessive home decorator all of a sudden. I just want a nice lamp.

ADAM

I know.

Adam gets a text from Ethan: "Wanna go out?" Adam sighs.

CALLIE

What's the matter?

ADAM

Ethan. He's a mess. Completely shattered over Sherry breaking up with him.

CALLIE

I had no idea.

ADAM

Yeah, he's totally depressed. Wants to go out and "talk."

Adam puts a disdainful spin on the word "talk."

ADAM (CONT'D)

I can't take it anymore. He's called me six times today already. All he wants to do is talk about how depressed he is. It's a bummer. (RE. TEXT) I'm just not gonna respond.

CALLIE

You have to go out with him.

ADAM

No, all I want to do is hang out with you and find the perfect lamp for the side table.

CALLIE

Ethan needs you.

ADAM

(ACTING FRUSTRATED) Fine. I'll take the hit for friendship.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - LATER

Mike's in the car with Lisa. The phone rings. The display reads: "Adam calling."

LISA

(TO MIKE) Remember, I'm not here.

Mike answers the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

Hey, buddy. What's up?

Mike COUGHS TWICE. Lisa checks him out. The cough seemed a little weird.

ADAM

(SPEAKER) Oh, damn. I'm getting pulled over again. Call you later.

MIKE

All right, buddy, good luck.

Mike hangs up and smiles at Lisa. She looks at him suspiciously.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What? I didn't say you were here.

The phone rings again. This time it's Ethan. Lisa looks at Mike: go on, answer it. Mike doesn't know what to do. He answers the phone and immediately coughs twice.

ETHAN

(ON SPEAKER, FLUSTERED) Oh. Hey, Lisa.

LISA

(TO MIKE) Really, you're using signals now?

MIKE

(BEAT, TO LISA) Your breasts look really great in that shirt.

END OF ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ACT THREE

EXT. RESTAURANT - THE NEXT DAY

Adam and Mike sit at a table. Ethan sits down.

ETHAN
(HANDING ADAM A CHECK) The rest of
my share for Ben's thing.

ADAM
It's gonna be awesome. I already
confirmed the band--

ETHAN
No Chumbawamba.

ADAM
I can't make any promises.

ETHAN
(SIGHS, THEN TO MIKE) Where were
you last night?

MIKE
Where was I? Doing major damage
control with Lisa. You blew the
coughing code.

ETHAN
The coughing code was stupid.

ADAM
He's right. You have to be more
subtle. Find a way to organically
mention her name in conversation.
That's what I do. Like "hey, Lisa,
could you pass me a tissue."

MIKE
With all due respect, Lisa's no
amateur, all right? I can't take
chances with subtlety. We're gonna
have to put a temporary lock down
on our telephone communications.
Unless I tell you otherwise,
assume Lisa's in the car whenever
you call. Everybody got that?

ETHAN
Yeah, unless you say otherwise,
we'll assume Lisa isn't in the
car.

MIKE
No! Assume she is in the car--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

We know, Mike. He's just messing with you. (GETTING UP) I have to go pick up the wrestlers. I'll see you guys later.

EXT. AIRPORT - LATER

Adam stands with two enormous WRESTLERS.

ADAM

What do you mean, the Sawing Clown's not coming? He promised.

WRESTLER #1

I don't know what to tell you, man. I called him up last night and he was all like, "we'll see." "We'll see?" What's that even supposed to mean?

Adam sighs. He's screwed.

WRESTLER #2

(EXPLAINING) His fiancée didn't give him permission to go.

WRESTLER #1

Permission?

WRESTLER #2

Well, not permission exactly. More like her blessing. You'll see. You get in a serious relationship and things get complicated.

INT. MIKE'S WORK - A LITTLE LATER

Mike sits at his desk as Adam paces.

ADAM

Mike, I don't know what I'm gonna do. My boss is a manipulative nut job. I need this gig.

Mike leans back in his chair and enjoys his role of "advice giver." He tries to affect a manner reminiscent of Don Corleone in the opening scene of "The Godfather."

MIKE

It is good that you should come to me. For on this day I believe I have a solution for you.

ADAM

Come on, don't mess with me. I'm in a serious bind here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

Adam, I really think I have a solution. No one's ever seen this Sawing Clown guy out of costume, right? (OFF ADAM'S NOD) I'll be the Sawing Clown.

ADAM

(WON'T WORK) C'mon...

MIKE

We'll get a clown costume. Already got a power saw. I'll google some of his moves. We're good.

ADAM

I don't know. He does these drop moves that are pretty athletic.

MIKE

Adam, do I have to remind you of who holds the record for the all-time highest on-base percentage in Illini history?

ADAM

You're really willing to do this?

MIKE

It's what friends do. Besides, we'll have a great story to tell our old teammates at Ben's thing.

ADAM

But I should assume you don't want Lisa to know about this, right?

MIKE

(MULLING IT OVER) Hmmm. Tough call. Helping a friend-- so I could probably get away with it. But the car phone thing's altered the balance of power a bit. Let's go with not telling her. That's the safer call.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - THE NEXT DAY

Mike and Lisa are in the car on the way to work. The phone rings. The display reads: "Adam calling."

MIKE

Hey, Adam. What's up?

A beat, while Adam waits for Mike to tell him Lisa's not there. No go. He's got to make small talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM
(ON SPEAKER) How are you doing?

MIKE
I'm great. You?

ADAM
(ON SPEAKER) Great.

MIKE
Great.

ADAM
(SPEAKER) Cool. Well I just called
to see how you were doing.

MIKE
Cool.

Mike looks over to make sure Lisa hears how innocuous
this all is.

ADAM
(ON SPEAKER) Cool. Talk to you
later.

MIKE
Talk to you later.

Mike hangs up.

LISA
That's what you guys talk about on
the phone? (LAUGHING, OFF MIKE'S
NOD) That chimp who can do sign
language has better conversations.

Mike pulls up to Lisa's office.

LISA (CONT'D)
My assistant's gonna give me a
ride home tonight, honey, so I'll
just see you back at home.

She kisses him and gets out. Mike waits a beat for her to
walk away, then immediately calls Adam back, thrilled at
the success of their plan.

MIKE
Dude, that was amazing.

ADAM
(ON SPEAKER) Worst conversation
I've ever had. Almost fell asleep.

In the background, we see that Lisa has forgotten
something and heads back to the car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIKE

You get the stuff for the
wrestling?

Lisa opens the car door and gets in. Mike doesn't know
how to stop Adam.

ADAM

(ON SPEAKER) Yeah, I got the
perfect tights. I'm pretty sure
they'll fit you...

Mike gets more desperate as Lisa looks on, aghast.

ADAM (CONT'D)

(ON SPEAKER) Oh, and you're gonna
have to snag some of Lisa's
lipstick-- red to match the wig.
The other guys are pretty big so
you might want to wear a shoe with
some heel--

In desperation, Mike coughs twice. A beat, then:

ADAM (CONT'D)

(ON SPEAKER) What's up, Lisa?

Lisa is dumbfounded.

LISA

I... I just... I... We'll... I...

Unable to string a sentence together, Lisa walks off.

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - LATER

Adam is hanging pictures in the new place. Callie enters.

ADAM

Hey, how'd it go with Liz's dog?

CALLIE

Had to pull him off a beagle, but
otherwise, uneventful.

ADAM

You're a good friend. I hope she
doesn't expect you to walk her dog
every time she has to work late...

Adam's phone rings. It's Ethan.

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ETHAN

(ON PHONE) Think you can get out
for some Monday Night Football?

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

ADAM
(ON PHONE) Ethan, don't say that.
You have plenty of things to live
for...

Callie looks over, concerned.

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ETHAN
(ON PHONE) Yeah, like Monday Night
Football. I got a call into Mike.
You going?

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

ADAM
(ON PHONE) You've got to get a
hold of yourself, Ethan. You'll
meet someone else. I promise.

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ETHAN
(ON PHONE) Yeah, probably tonight.
Say "maybe" if you're gonna go.

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

ADAM
(ON PHONE) Maybe. Bye.

Adam hangs up.

CALLIE
Poor Ethan.

ADAM
You know what? I'm sick of it. He
wants to go out again. But I'm
putting my foot down. No.

CALLIE
You really need to be there for
him. It's important.

ADAM
I've been there for him enough. I
want to spend some time with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALLIE

I want to spend time with you too,
but-- You know what? I'll go with
you. We'll both comfort Ethan.

Adam tries to hide the fact that this is not the outcome
he was looking for.

ADAM

I don't think that's necessary.

CALLIE

He sounds really bad. I'm worried
about him.

ADAM

He's not that bad.

INT. BAR - A LITTLE LATER

Adam, Mike, Callie and Lisa comfort Ethan, who pretends
to be heartbroken while sneaking peaks at the game.
Callie rubs Ethan's shoulders.

CALLIE

Poor Ethan.

Ethan looks over forlornly at an attractive woman.

ETHAN

Poor Ethan.

END OF ACT THREE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT FOUR

INT. BAR - A LITTLE LATER

The gang comfort Ethan, who's really getting into it now.

ETHAN
This morning I woke up and found
one of her t-shirts and I just sat
there and cried for two hours.

CALLIE
(RUBBING HIS SHOULDERS) Ethan...

Lisa pulls Mike aside toward the bar.

ETHAN
And then I looked in the mirror
and I realized what I was doing. I
was becoming my father. (TO
CALLIE) Could I have a tissue?

She reaches down to grab one in her purse. Ethan looks at Adam and winks: "how good am I?"

ANGLE ON: Lisa and Mike sit at the bar. She kisses him.

LISA
I'm glad you asked me to join.

MIKE
Of course. Ethan's really hurting
and we need everyone here to
comfort him.

LISA
Please, you know I don't buy this
whole charade for a second, right?

MIKE
(SIZING HER UP) What charade?

LISA
How long have we been married?

MIKE
(BEAT) What charade?

LISA
Uh-huh. Still, it's fun to be out
with everybody. It's been awhile.

Lisa picks up a quarter, eyes it for a beat, smiles, then bounces the quarter off the bar into Mike's beer glass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LISA (CONT'D)

Drink.

Mike laughs and starts to drink, but stops mid-chug.

MIKE

You know, when we were in college,
I never once wondered how many
germs were on a quarter.

LISA

The alcohol kills it. Drink.

Mike does.

LISA (CONT'D)

And what was that craziness you
were talking to Adam about in the
car? I know you guys are close but
you don't have some cross-dressing
fetish club going, do you?

MIKE

No, no. No. Adam had to help with
his boss' kid's bar mitzvah by
getting this wrestler to perform
at the party. The wrestler dresses
as a clown. He didn't show up so I
agreed to sub in as the clown.

LISA

I worked out a lot of possible
explanations in my mind. I have to
admit that wasn't one of them. Why
didn't you just tell me?

MIKE

That's a very complicated
question. I guess I didn't want
you to worry.

LISA

Should I be worried?

MIKE

No, of course not. You've seen
professional wrestling-- it's just
acting. (THEN) And maybe I also
thought you'd be mad that I was
out doing something frivolous
instead of helping you at home.

LISA

Why would I think helping a friend
was frivolous?

MIKE

I don't know. Sometimes I still
get confused by the rules.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mike tries to bounce the quarter into Lisa's glass. But it bounces off the edge. Lisa laughs. Mike reacts.

LISA
You always sucked at this game--
you know that, right?

MIKE
I don't know why but I keep
thinking I'm gonna get better.

She kisses him. He tries to bounce another quarter but it bounces off the glass again.

INT. LARGE PARTY SPACE - THE NEXT DAY

The Bar Mitzvah party. A frenzy of crazed 13 year-olds and their parents. A wrestling ring is set up. Adam stands with Marty, his boss, surveying the scene.

ADAM
Mazel tov. Your son became a man
today.

MARTY
(CHUCKLING) Poor bastard.

INT. LARGE PARTY SPACE/BACKSTAGE - SIMULTANEOUS

Mike is backstage getting ready, dressed as the Sawing Clown. He approaches the two other wrestlers.

MIKE
Okay, Let's work out our moves
here. I've been studying the
Sawing Clown's work and I thought
I'd start with the "circus drop"--
give the kids a good opening.

WRESTLER #2
What are you talking about?

MIKE
Come on, guys, I know I've never
technically "wrestled," but I've
done some acting.

WRESTLER #1
(STIFFENING AT THE WORD) Acting?

MIKE
In college, I understudied the
Tailor in "Fiddler."

WRESTLER #2
We're not actors. We're athletes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

(LAUGHING) Sure you are. I was an
"athlete" in college too.
(EXITING, CONVINCED THEY'RE
KIDDING) Remember I'm starting
with the "Circus drop."

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - SIMULTANEOUS

Ethan is at home. There's a knock on his door. It's
Sherry, smiling through tears. She hugs him.

SHERRY

Callie called me. I had no idea
how much you cared about me.

She smothers a bewildered Ethan in kisses.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna let you become your
father.

INT. LARGE PARTY SPACE - MOMENTS LATER

Wild cheering as Mike enters the ring. Mike loves this,
acknowledging the crowd by firing up his power saw. The
crowd goes wild. The bell rings. Mike approaches the
other wrestler, gives him a wink, and is immediately
smashed to the ground. In the wings, Adam winces.

MIKE

Hey, what are you doing?

WRESTLER #1

Acting.

The wrestler does a drop on Mike as the crowd goes wild.

INT. LARGE PARTY SPACE - MOMENTS LATER

Mike's carried off in a stretcher as Adam runs alongside.

MIKE

Did you hear that applause?

ADAM

Yeah, buddy, you were awesome.

Mike raises himself on the stretcher to acknowledge the
crowd. He raises his fist in victory but winces in pain.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

Nah, still paying you back for getting me in that game.

ADAM

That was mostly Ben.

MIKE

I know.

EXT. PARKING LOT - THE NEXT DAY

Mike and Lisa, Adam and Callie, Ethan and Sherry get out of a rented mini-van, about to go to Ben's thing. The guys are dressed in suits. They look up, and are moved:

Their POV: a nice high school baseball field/stadium. A brand new sign reads:

BEN HUBBARD MEMORIAL FIELD

Ben Hubbard 1977-2005

This is "Ben's thing." Adam, Mike, and Ethan have raised money to build a new stadium at Ben's high school and dedicated it to him.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

A fairly large crowd is assembled for the dedication. A marching band gets ready in the outfield. Adam and Callie, Mike (a new cast on his arm) and Lisa, Ethan and Sherry admire the new field. Adam takes Callie's hand. Mike tries to take Lisa's hand but can't with the cast. Ethan takes Sherry's.

ETHAN

(TO SHERRY, A LITTLE SURPRISED)
I'm really glad you're here.

Adam and Mike head off to greet Ben's parents.

CALLIE

Wish I got the chance to meet Ben.

LISA

He would've liked you.

Callie takes this in. Down the field, Ethan has his arm around Sherry, introducing her to some former teammates.

CALLIE

Ethan seems really happy to be with Sherry. Weird. I thought for sure that whole thing at the bar was a charade.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LISA

Me too!

CALLIE

He was milking it so much. I just called Sherry to mess with him.

LISA

Ben definitely would've liked you.

ANGLE ON: Mike and Adam talk to Ethan.

ADAM

So Sherry, huh? Are you and her--

ETHAN

Don't make me label it or I'm gonna run.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - A LITTLE LATER

Adam, Mike, and Ethan are at a mic near the pitcher's mound. They're in the middle of speaking about Ben.

ADAM

Ben and I played baseball together here in high school. And then at the University of Illinois. He was a lot better than me. Ben was a great athlete, a brilliant if uneven student, and a great son. He was also an eccentric guy and that made him all the more interesting.

Adam exchanges a look with Ethan and Mike.

ADAM (CONT'D)

When we were still freshman at Illinois-- and Ben and I had just met Mike and Ethan-- the four of us decided to drive to Chicago for the weekend. Ben insisted we take surface streets the whole way. I thought that was crazy. There must be ten thousand traffic lights between Champagne and Chicago, I said-- it'll take us twice as long to get there. Ben insisted. On the Interstate, he said, you know what you're gonna get: a straight line and a lot of fast food. On a road with traffic lights, it's a different story.

EXT. PARK - ANOTHER TIME

Ethan, in his EMT uniform, attends to an injured player at a women's beach volleyball tournament, surrounded by her concerned and beautiful teammates.

ADAM (V.O.)
Sometimes the light is green-- and
you enjoy the open road, wondering
what might be out there for you.

INT. ADAM AND CALLIE'S BROWNSTONE - ANOTHER TIME

Adam and Callie put a new lamp on the side table.

ADAM (V.O.)
Sometimes it's yellow-- you slow
down, get your bearings, and ask
yourself if this is someplace
you'd like to stop.

INT. MIKE AND LISA'S HOUSE - ANOTHER TIME

Mike and Lisa put their 3 year-old son to bed.

ADAM (V.O.)
And sometimes the light is red--
you take a moment, look around,
and know that where you are is
already pretty great; is, in fact,
exactly where you need to be.

Mike smiles at Lisa: this is a good life.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - BACK TO PRESENT

ADAM
Of course a trip that should've
taken three hours, took ten. But
on that trip the four of us formed
a lifelong friendship. We miss Ben
every day, but he left us with
many gifts. (LOOKING AT MIKE AND
ETHAN) The biggest of those gifts
is our friendship.

The crowd applauds as the guys move to their women. Adam
meets up with Callie.

CALLIE
Great speech. (FIXING HIS TIE) And
you look hot in your suit.

She kisses him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

I need to tell you something...

CALLIE

Before you do, I need to get this off my chest. Remember the other day when I said Liz had to work late and I needed to walk her dog? (OFF ADAM'S NOD) Liz didn't have to work late.

ADAM

Really?

CALLIE

She doesn't even have a dog. (THEN) It's just that I've never lived with anyone before and we were doing all this shopping and hanging pictures and it all just felt so domestic-- I kinda freaked out a little bit and I just needed a few hours to myself. I know I should have just told you the truth but I didn't want to make you feel weird and I'm sorry.

ADAM

Being honest: that makes me love you like a thousand times more.

CALLIE

A thousand?

ADAM

Give or take a hundred.

She kisses him.

CALLIE

What was it you wanted to tell me?

Adam thinks a beat: should he confess?

ADAM

I'm happy we're living together.

Mike, Lisa, Ethan, and Sherry approach. Behind them, the marching band starts to play a spirited version of Chumbawamba's "Tubthumping (I get knocked down)."

ETHAN

Great guy. Crappy taste in music.

INT. BAR - A FEW DAYS LATER

Mike and Adam are at a bar. Adam calls Ethan as Mike practices bouncing quarters into his glass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM
(INTO PHONE) We're at the bar. You
gonna join us?

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ethan, phone in hand, is on the couch with Sherry.

ETHAN
(INTO PHONE) We'll see.

Ethan absentmindedly pulls at the collar of his sweater.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

ADAM
(INTO PHONE) What do you mean,
we'll see?

Hearing this, Mike stops bouncing the quarters.

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ethan looks over at Sherry.

ETHAN
(INTO PHONE) We'll see.

Ethan hangs up and turns to Sherry.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Poor Adam. He's really depressed
about his job.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Mike smiles, smug and content.

MIKE
He's asking permission.

END OF SHOW