

"Lives" Pilot

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TEASER

EXT. LATENIGHTER INN - NIGHT

A pair of feet stumble hurriedly down the cement walkways that runs around the exterior of the second floor of the hotel. The feet find a door. The sound of a plastic card sliding in and out. The door opens and the feet stumble in.

INT. LATENIGHTER INN - ROOM 207 - NIGHT

MICHAEL KEITH, right hand gripping a bleeding wound on his stomach, pushes the door shut with his left hand. He limps painfully to the bed as quickly as he can and sits down on the edge.

EXT. LATENIGHTER INN - NIGHT

More feet rushing. Boots. Men in dark baggy clothes run down the walkway.

INT. LATENIGHTER INN - ROOM 207 - NIGHT

MICHAEL glances at the door, then reaches for a syringe that sits on a black cloth bag on the night stand.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Small favors and all that.

He sticks his arm and pushes the fluid in. He pulls out the syringe, flicks it across the room, and lies back on the bed.

EXT. LATENIGHTER INN - NIGHT

The feet keep running and the men come closer to Room 207.

INT. LATENIGHTER INN - ROOM 207 - NIGHT

MICHAEL lies on the bed, waiting.

MICHAEL
C'mon. C'mon. Fall asleep.

EXT. LATENIGHTER INN - NIGHT

The dark men stand outside Room 207. One steps back and prepares to kick the door.

INT. LATENIGHTER INN - ROOM 207 - NIGHT

The door bursts inward and the men rush in. MICHAEL smiles.

MICHAEL
(whispers)
Too late.

His eyes close.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. 1324 EAST GRANDVIEW - BEDROOM - DAY

MICHAEL's eyes pop open. He is lying in a bed in a well-furnished room. There's a comforter pulled over him and a woman, mid-thirties, lying beside him. Without moving, MICHAEL's eyes scan the room. He looks at the woman again and notices the wedding ring on her finger. He glances down at his own left hand. A matching ring.

Quietly he slides out of bed, walking across the room to the full-length mirror next to the closet. He reaches down and pulls up his undershirt. No wound. MICHAEL smiles.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. 1324 EAST GRANDVIEW - HALLWAY - DAY

MICHAEL walks softly down the stairs, looking around the house, taking it all in.

INT. 1324 EAST GRANDVIEW - LIVING ROOM

MICHAEL walks across the room to the mantle above the fireplace. Several photos dot the mantle. There is one of MICHAEL and the woman he was in bed with. The couple is sitting on a dock, holding hands and smiling. In another, MICHAEL is dressed in a tuxedo, kissing the upstairs woman, who is in a wedding dress.

MICHAEL
(softly)
We're married.

INT. 1324 EAST GRANDVIEW - KITCHEN

MICHAEL takes a bowl from the cupboard and pours a bowl of cereal. He opens the refrigerator to get the milk. He stops at a female voice behind him.

CRYSTAL
(sleepy)
I didn't even hear you get up.

MICHAEL closes the refrigerator door and turns around awkwardly.

MICHAEL
I was trying not to wake you.

CRYSTAL
You didn't.

She sits down at the kitchen table. MICHAEL pours his milk and puts the milk back in the refrigerator.

CRYSTAL
Listen, can we talk about something
for a moment?

MICHAEL sits down across from her.

MICHAEL
Sure. What's on your mind?

CRYSTAL
I've been giving it some thought
and I really want you to go to the
seminar.

MICHAEL
Seminar?

(CONTINUED)

CRYSTAL

Jake! Did you completely forget about it?

MICHAEL

(softly to himself)

Jake...

CRYSTAL

What?

MICHAEL

Uh, nothing. Look, I'm sorry. It just slipped my mind for a moment.

CRYSTAL

It's just, I know I've brought it up a hundred times, but it would just make me feel better if you went. Even if you think the whole thing is stupid and a waste of time, it would still let me know that you put our marriage first.

MICHAEL slides his hand across the table.

MICHAEL

I'm going to start trying to do that.

CRYSTAL smiles.

CRYSTAL

You seem different today.

MICHAEL

I am.

CRYSTAL

I like the change.

FADE OUT

TEXT: "TWO WEEKS EARLIER"

INT. WILLIAMS BROTHERS ACCOUNTING - MICHAEL'S CUBICLE - DAY

MICHAEL, now with a full beard and dressed in a faded white shirt and plain tie, sits at his desk, blowing at a pencil on his desk, causing it to roll back and forth. The cubicle is a mess of papers. A balding man in his mid-forties sticks

(CONTINUED)

his head inside the cubicle. This is KYLE BEGGS, MICHAEL's boss.

BEGGS

Yo, Keith. Meeting. Conference room three. Five minutes. Be there.

BEGGS ducks out. MICHAEL sighs and pulls out a journal from a desk drawer. He speaks softly as he writes.

MICHAEL

Beggs continues to speak in broken English, like the mutated offspring of a hoodlum and a commando. I would offer no objection to his communication preference if he were either of these. But Beggs being who he is, I feel nothing but annoyance at his existence. More to come.

MICHAEL puts the journal back in the drawer and gathers his papers for the meeting.

INT. WILLIAMS BROTHERS ACCOUNTING - MEETING ROOM THREE

MICHAEL sits with half a dozen other men in collared shirts and ties. While the others are alert and focused, MICHAEL is slouched down in his chair, his tie half undone. At the head of the table, BEGGS stands and speaks, waving his arms emphatically.

BEGGS

Second class files should be placed in the cinnamon folders. Third class files should be placed in the vanilla folders.

MICHAEL raises his hand.

MICHAEL

What's the difference between vanilla and white?

BEGGS

(annoyed)

It's a tone thing, Michael. Don't question the system. Just follow it and let it work.

MICHAEL rolls his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

BEGGS

Fourth class folders go in the
burgundy folders.

MICHAEL scratches something on his notepad and slides it
across the table to another man, BRAD KING. BEGGS notices.

BEGGS

What, what is that? Pass that here.

BRAD exchanges a look with MICHAEL, then slides the pad up
to BEGGS. BEGGS glances at the pad and reads it aloud.

BEGGS

"Why do we use food words for
color? What's next? Chocolate?" No,
Mr. Keith. We in this office have
never used chocolate and will never
use chocolate. We don't wish to
risk the racial comments that might
arise from such usage of said
color.

MICHAEL

But we can use vanilla?

BEGGS gives him a warning look. MICHAEL holds up his hands.

MICHAEL

Hey, I'm just asking. And what in
the world is manila, anyway? Who's
idea was that?

BEGGS

You can leave this meeting now, Mr.
Keith.

MICHAEL

(sing-song)

Thank you.

MICHAEL gathers his papers, grabs the pad, and leaves.

INT. WILLIAMS BROTHERS ACCOUNTING - MICHAEL'S CUBICLE - DAY

MICHAEL sits at his desk, carefully adding layers to a
castle made of paper clips. BRAD comes in.

BRAD

So what was that all about in
there? If Beggs gets set against
you, he can make your life
miserable.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I don't care about pencil pusher on a power trip. He's a meaningless little nothing of a man.

BRAD

And you're different because...?

MICHAEL

Because I'm going to get out.

BRAD

(rolls his eyes)

Here we go again.

MICHAEL

No, I'm serious this time. I'm quitting this job, packing my car, and heading off for the road trip of a lifetime.

BRAD

Traveling all across America until what?

MICHAEL

Until I see everything I never thought I'd see.

BRAD

Until you run out of money is more likely.

MICHAEL

It's still worth a shot. I mean, do you really want to sit at that desk for the rest of your life, running papers for a guy like Beggs?

BRAD

If it pays the bills, yes. It's a good job we have here. I make enough, I can set something aside for retirement and still have enough to do the things I enjoy.

MICHAEL

The entertainment industry is the new opiate, man.

BRAD

Yeah, well, it's better than sitting here, dreaming of some trip

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRAD (cont'd)
you'll never go on. Talk it up all
you want, Mike. Deep down, you're
going to be here for the rest of
your life, just like me.

INT. 1324 EAST GRANDVIEW - BEDROOM - DAY

Present. MICHAEL stands in front of the full-length mirror, adjusting his tie. CRYSTAL walks up behind him, sliding her arms around him, looking over his shoulder at him in the mirror.

CRYSTAL
You know something?

MICHAEL
What?

CRYSTAL
Some days I love being married to
you. I mean, I know we've been
having trouble for a few months,
but the way you're acting this
morning, it makes me feel like we
really have a chance, you know?

MICHAEL
Yeah.

CRYSTAL gives him a kiss on the cheek.

CRYSTAL
I love you, babe.

MICHAEL
I love you too.

CRYSTAL goes to the closet, searching for clothes.

CRYSTAL
Don't you need to be at work soon?

MICHAEL
I can afford to be a little late.

CRYSTAL smiles, then goes into the bathroom. MICHAEL takes a glance at the closed bathroom door, then pulls out his wallet. He leafs through it, until he finds a half dozen business cards that say "Jacob Ross, Senior Broker. Wesson Brokerage." MICHAEL smiles.

EXT. WESSON BROKERAGE - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

The building is large and impressively built. It has a twist of artistry in its architecture that suggests the builders were men of wealth.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - LOBBY

Well-dressed people in expensive suits hurry around, off to various meetings and appointments. MICHAEL strides in confidently, as a senior broker should. He glances around the lobby, then walks to the directory next to the reception desk, scanning down the list until he finds "Ross, Jacob. 527". The RECEPTIONIST glances up at him.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Ross, are you alright?

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah. I'm fine. I just like seeing my name on the wall.

He smiles and she returns it. MICHAEL takes a mint from the bowl on the counter, then walks to the elevator. The doors slide open to an empty elevator. He steps in.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - ELEVATOR

The doors almost shut before a young woman, running across the lobby, calls out.

CAITLIN

Hold that door!

MICHAEL punches the button, the doors slide back open, and CAITLIN steps on. She's a gorgeous blond in her mid-twenties. She smiles a knock-out smile.

CAITLIN

Thanks.

The doors slide shut and the elevator moves.

CAITLIN

(flirtatiously)

So how you doing, Jake?

MICHAEL

(politely)

I'm good. Yourself?

(CONTINUED)

CAITLIN

C'mon, Jake. We're alone. You can drop the act.

She steps closer to him. MICHAEL steps away awkwardly.

CAITLIN

What's wrong with you today?

MICHAEL

Look, I'm sure you're a very nice girl.

CAITLIN

(in disbelief)

What?

MICHAEL

And I'm sure someday you'll find a really nice guy out there and-

CAITLIN

How can you talk like you don't even know me? How can you act like you don't remember all the nights we've spent together?

MICHAEL

Look, I'm a married man. Why don't you go and ruin someone else's life, eh? I'm happy with my wife.

CAITLIN

That's not what you said last weekend.

MICHAEL

Well, I was a different person last weekend.

CAITLIN takes a step toward him.

CAITLIN

I can make you feel exactly like the man you were last weekend.

The doors slide open.

MICHAEL

No thanks.

MICHAEL exits the elevator.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - HALLWAY

As the doors slide shut behind him, MICHAEL gives his head a shake, trying to block out what just happened. He walks down the hallway, to the janitor's closet.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - JANITOR'S CLOSET

MICHAEL closes the door behind him and rubs his face.

MICHAEL
(to himself)
So his marriage is falling apart
and he's having an affair. Great.

The door opens and a young woman, TESS, enters.

TESS
Jake? I thought I saw you sneak in
here. You okay?

MICHAEL
Yeah, I just... I think I'm making
some mistakes in my life.

She steps up close to him.

TESS
I can make you forget about all
your troubles.

MICHAEL groans.

TESS
I'm so hot for you right now.

MICHAEL grabs her by the shoulders.

MICHAEL
(firmly)
I'm not hot for you. Not now, not
ever. Jacob Ross is married to
Crystal Ross and she is the only
woman he will ever want to be with.
Clear?

TESS looks like she's going to cry. MICHAEL storms out of the janitor's closet.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - MEN'S BATHROOM

MICHAEL is at the sink, splashing water onto his face. He grabs a couple paper towels and dries off, taking a long look at himself in the mirror.

MICHAEL

Jacob Ross, you are slimiest piece of scum I've encountered so far. I've only got one day to clean up your life, and maybe that's not even what I'm here for, but I'll do what I can. Maybe I can help you remember all the decent things you were supposed to be. Maybe I can make you realize how much you love Crystal. Maybe I can make you see what commitment means. Maybe not. We'll just have to see.

From the stall, there's a male voice.

MAN

(O.S.)

Jake? You okay, bud?

MICHAEL

Uh, yeah, uh, I'm fine. Just rehearsing some lines.

MAN

Oh, you're in a play?

MICHAEL

Yeah...

MAN

That's cool.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - HALLWAY

MICHAEL comes out of the bathroom, looking very awkward. He shakes his head and walks off to find his office.

INT. MICHAEL'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Past. The house is a mess, piles of junk mail stacked everywhere, cat dander floating in the air. MICHAEL comes in, carrying a briefcase. His mother, NANCY, sits at the couch, watching a game show on television.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY
How was work, Michael?

MICHAEL
Oh, you know, another day, another dollar.

NANCY
(not really listening)
Uh huh.

MICHAEL
I think I'm going to go away for a while. Take a trip of sorts.

NANCY
That's nice.

MICHAEL
I might not come back and I might never see you again.

NANCY
Yeah.

MICHAEL
I just feel like doing something significant with my life.

MICHAEL glances around the living room.

MICHAEL
Heaven knows there's got to be something more significant than this.

NANCY
Sure.

NANCY mutes the television for a moment to scream at BILL, MICHAEL's father, in the kitchen.

NANCY
Bill! Bill! The set needs adjusting again.

BILL
(O.S.)
Fix it yourself, then!

NANCY
Get in here and fix it right now!

MICHAEL sighs and heads upstairs.

INT. MICHAEL'S PARENTS' HOUSE - MICHAEL'S ROOM

The decorating looks like that of a fifteen-year-old boy. Movie posters line the walls, mostly old westerns or fantasy films. MICHAEL enters. He tosses the briefcase on his bed and sits down at his desk with a sigh. He picks up a pen, tapping it on the desk absentmindedly, thinking. A beat. He tosses the pen and leaves the room.

INT. MICHAEL'S PARENTS' GARAGE

It's a three stall. One stall is absurdly cluttered with junk. There's a couple of bikes with a tarp tossed over them, trash cans, leaf blowers, broken equipment, all that kind of stuff. The middle stall contains a 1980s Subaru with wood paneling and a cracked windshield. In the far stall is MICHAEL's car - 1988 Chevy Celebrity. It's dark brown, with major holes rusting through the rear bumper. The car looks like it should have been retired years ago.

MICHAEL enters, carrying a backpack. He's whistling. MICHAEL goes to his car, tosses the backpack in the back seat, and climbs in. He sighs.

MICHAEL

The man sat in his car, knowing a great journey lay before him. The trappings of his former life were quickly shed and a new spirit arose within him. That spirit was adventure.

He slides the key in and cranks it. The car sputters. He tries again. More sputtering. He tries goosing the gas while turning the key. The car sputters again, then gives a hard cough, and smoke starts pouring out from beneath the hood. MICHAEL scrambles out of the car, and pops the hood. The garage fills with smoke.

EXT. MICHAEL'S PARENTS GARAGE

The door slides halfway up in it's track and MICHAEL rolls out underneath the door, smoking pouring out around him. He slides the door up, letting the smoke clear. Once he can see, MICHAEL re-enters the garage. Once glance beneath the hood tells him he's going nowhere soon. MICHAEL starts screaming and kicking the car.

INT. THE FRIENDLIES PUB - NIGHT

MICHAEL enters, exchanging a nod with RICK, the bartender.
MICHAEL approaches the bar.

RICK
The usual?

MICHAEL
In the three years that I've been coming here, have I ever ordered anything other than creme soda?

RICK
(grins)
Nope.

MICHAEL
(shrugs)
Why start now?

RICK
Okay, one creme soda, no ice, coming right up.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

RICK goes into the back room for a moment and returns with a can of creme soda. He sets a glass on the counter and pours it for MICHAEL. MICHAEL hands RICK a dollar.

RICK
So, how's life been?

MICHAEL
Oh, I can't complain.

RICK
I've always viewed life as a spectrum, with really good at one end and really bad at the other. It's been my experience that "I can't complain" lies right smack in the middle.

MICHAEL
I mean, look at me. I've got nothing to complain about. I've got a job. I've got food. I've got a place to live. Who wouldn't want that?

(CONTINUED)

RICK

Mike, there's nobody who wouldn't want those things. But there's nothing wrong with wanting more.

MICHAEL

Shouldn't I just be happy with what I have?

RICK

Not necessarily. Or at least, you don't sound happy with what you have.

MICHAEL

I'm not.

RICK

So what's missing?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Purpose, love, something to give my life to and someone to share it with. All those bloated poetic things people toss around without ever really meaning.

RICK

But you do, mean it?

MICHAEL

(smiles)

I do tonight.

RICK

You know, Mike, I've been thinking about you lately.

MICHAEL

Oh yeah, Rick? What's on your mind?

RICK

You see that man over there in the corner?

RICK points. MICHAEL turns to look.

RICK

He's a very good friend of mine. He helped me out years ago, back when I was really messed up. When no one else cared enough to toss me a dime, he helped me get back on my

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RICK (cont'd)
feet. You might consider talking to
him.

MICHAEL takes another glance at the man in the corner.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - JACOB ROSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Present. MICHAEL sits at JACOB's desk, reviewing his
accounts. The phone rings. MICHAEL grabs it.

MICHAEL
Jacob Ross.

SMITS
(O.S.)
Ross, why aren't you in my office?

MICHAEL
Should I be in your office?

SMITS
You forgot about the appointment.

MICHAEL
(playing along)
Oh, right. The appointment. I'm
sorry. I'll be right there.

MICHAEL glances down at the caller id on his phone. It says
"SMITS, LEWIS. 555-5334." MICHAEL hurriedly scratches down
the number.

MICHAEL
Just give me a moment to pull
things together here.

SMITS
Make it quick.

SMITS hangs up. MICHAEL taps his computer, bringing up a web
browser. He quickly does a search of the company's website,
finding SMITS office number.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - SMITS' OFFICE

MICHAEL opens the door without knocking. MR. LEWIS SMITS
sits at his desk, arranging papers in a folder. He's a short
man, though well-built for a man in his mid-fifties.

(CONTINUED)

SMITS

Ross! Have a seat!

MICHAEL complies.

SMITS

So, give me a progress report. How are things going today? I need my report, Ross. You know how upset I get without my report.

MICHAEL

Right, well, things are going pretty well, although there was one thing...

SMITS

Go on.

MICHAEL

Well, I was going over my files and I noticed that a lot of the numbers don't line up.

SMITS

No you didn't.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry?

SMITS

You didn't notice. I pay you not to notice. We've had that arrangement for years and it has always worked to serve both of us. You're not trying to threaten me, are you?

MICHAEL starts back-peddling.

MICHAEL

Uh, no sir. I mean, um, I'm just saying that, uh, that if I can notice the inconsistencies just by briefly scanning the files, then it would be just as easy for government auditors to find those, uh, inconsistencies.

SMITS starts laughing.

SMITS

That's what I like about you, Ross. You've always got your eyes open. I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SMITS (cont'd)
knew it was a good idea to bring you into the fold. Which actually brings me around to what I wanted to discuss with you.

MICHAEL
Uh, what would that be, sir?

SMITS
From time to time, we broker more than just stocks and bonds, Ross.

MICHAEL
Drugs, sir?

SMITS
(laughs)
No, not drugs. What do I look like, some monkey from the south side? What age are we in?

MICHAEL
Sir?

SMITS
Age. What age are we living in?

MICHAEL
The modern age?

SMITS
The information age, Ross. Information. The golden key that unlocks the universe. Sometimes information, the simple act of knowing something, can be very powerful. Do you understand?

MICHAEL
I think so, sir.

SMITS
There are some who pay very well to have this power before others.

MICHAEL
Such as letting people know what we're going to sell before we sell it?

SMITS

(nods)

Exactly.

MICHAEL

Like insider trading.

SMITS

Bah! The media with their cute little labels. It's business, Ross. Just plain business. And I want you to be a part of it.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. THE FRIENDLIES PUB - NIGHT

Past. MICHAEL, glass of creme soda in hand, approaches the mysterious man. The man extends his hand.

FAIRCHILD

Good evening. My name is Wallace Fairchild. Won't you have a seat?

MICHAEL shakes his hand and sits down.

MICHAEL

My name's-

FAIRCHILD

Michael Keith. I know. I've been waiting for you.

MICHAEL

Did Rick tell you my name?

FAIRCHILD

Rick? No. Rick told me nothing more than that he had a friend who could use a little help.

MICHAEL

Is this some kind of scam?

FAIRCHILD

No, Mr. Keith, this is no scam. When you tried to submit an episode of National Geographic for your

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FAIRCHILD (cont'd)
science project in the second
grade, that was a scam.

MICHAEL
(confused)
How do you know about...

FAIRCHILD
Oh, I know lots of things about
you, Mr. Keith. I know that your
favorite band is the Turtles,
though you only listen to misery
rock around your friends. I know
that you have a tattoo of half a
dove on your left calf. It's only
half a tattoo because it was too
painful for you to finish. I know
your birthday, your favorite color,
and your greatest fear.

MICHAEL
Death?

FAIRCHILD
Mediocrity.

MICHAEL
If you know so much, then who was
my first kiss?

FAIRCHILD
I can't tell you that. It hasn't
happened yet.

MICHAEL
So is it that you don't know, or
that you're not going to tell me?

FAIRCHILD
I can't tell you anything about the
future, Michael. That would be
breaking the rules.

MICHAEL
I'm pretty sure stalking someone is
breaking a lot of rules, bro.

FAIRCHILD
I'm not stalking you. I'm
evaluating you.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

For what?

FAIRCHILD

For destiny. For purpose. For something more than the ordinary little lives we insist on being content with.

A beat.

FAIRCHILD

You're not like other people. You know this. You've known this for a long time. You were meant for something more. This is that something more.

MICHAEL

Is this the part where you recruit me to be a mule for some cartel?

FAIRCHILD

(smiles)

Nothing of the kind, Mr. Keith. You were looking for a way to change your life. You got it.

MICHAEL

I think I've heard that-

FAIRCHILD

You despise the ordinary. You resent the necessity of living the same life in the same place every day. What if I told you it didn't have to be like that? Would you be interested?

MICHAEL takes a gulp of his creme soda.

MICHAEL

Keep talking.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - SMITS' OFFICE

Present. MICHAEL is thumbing through a file.

SMITS

It's a simple meeting, really. All you do is go to this office and give these gentlemen those files.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
Couldn't you just fax them?

SMITS
(shakes his head)
No. Nothing electronic. Nothing
that can be traced.

MICHAEL
This is kind of old school
cloak-and-dagger stuff, isn't it?

SMITS
You don't have to teach the old dog
new tricks if the old tricks still
work.

MICHAEL
Why not send a messenger boy?

SMITS
Because I want to send someone I
can trust. Look, Ross, if you don't
want to do it, just say so. Give me
the file, walk out of this office,
forget about this conversation, and
keep doing exactly what I pay you
to do.

MICHAEL takes a long look at the file, then sighs.

MICHAEL
I'll do it.

SMITS
(grins)
Atta boy.

INT. WESSON BROKERAGE - JACOB ROSS'S OFFICE - DAY

MICHAEL sits at his desk, looking through the folder again.
WILLY COX, mid-thirties, enters and MICHAEL snaps the folder
shut, sliding into a desk drawer.

WILLY
Hey, buddy. How's life?

MICHAEL
It's alright. Can't complain.

(CONTINUED)

WILLY

Yeah? Things going good?

MICHAEL

As always.

WILLY

So I was talking to Caitlin...

MICHAEL

Oh? Caitlin?

WILLY

Yeah. You blew up at her on the elevator this morning, remember?

MICHAEL

Oh, right. Caitlin. Yeah, I don't know, man.

WILLY

What's not to know? She's gorgeous, man.

MICHAEL holds up his ring finger.

MICHAEL

Kind of committed, man.

WILLY

Never stopped you before.

MICHAEL

Well, you know what? Maybe I'm tired of being such a jerk. Maybe I'm tired of treating my wife like garbage and working the girls around here like their some pinball game, fired up for my amusement. Maybe I'm tired of taking payments under the table from Smits and all the others for all this stuff.

WILLY

(glances around)

Shh! Keep it down, man. Look, we all put in our time for Smits and we're all compensated for it. Caitlin was right, man. There is something wrong with you today.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
You have no idea.

INT. THE FRIENDLIES PUB - NIGHT

Past. MICHAEL is leaning forward in the booth, his glass empty.

FAIRCHILD
Every night you will fall asleep
and every morning you will wake up
somewhere new, somewhere different.
A change every day. New adventures,
new places, new faces. Just the
kind of life you always wanted.

MICHAEL
What's the catch, Fairchild?

FAIRCHILD
Well, obviously there are a couple
of things you should know before
going into this. First, once you
start, there's no real way to end
the process. New life every day,
pretty much for ever.

MICHAEL
Not seeing a problem with that.

FAIRCHILD
No one ever does, at the beginning.
But eventually you tire of the
constant changing. Nothing is
stable in your life. Nothing is
steady. Nothing is reliable. No
friends, no relationships, nothing
you can depend on to be there after
your eyes close.

MICHAEL
It's not like I have too many
relationships to hang onto now.

FAIRCHILD
But you might some day.

MICHAEL
Not likely. What's the other catch?

(CONTINUED)

FAIRCHILD

In each life, there is joy and there is pain. There are choices made and mistakes happen. There is no life that is beyond improvement. Each life that you enter will have its own set of problems to encounter. Everyone is dealing with something. Your job is to help them deal with it. Each day, in each life, there will be something you need to do. Your presence in that life will have a purpose.

MICHAEL

And what if I don't do it? What if I don't make the change or do the job that I'm supposed to? What if I just take this as an opportunity to live a hedonistic lifestyle, having my fill of all my carnal desires?

FAIRCHILD sits back with a grin.

FAIRCHILD

Because you're not that kind of person, Michael. Don't forget, I know who you are.

A beat.

FAIRCHILD

So what do you think?

MICHAEL

I'm in.

FAIRCHILD

Good. Then let us depart. There is much to do tonight.

They head to the street. On his way out, MICHAEL holds the door for a mesmerizingly beautiful young woman.

KATE

Thank you.

MICHAEL

No problem.

He stares after her. FAIRCHILD taps his arm.

(CONTINUED)

FAIRCHILD
Are you coming?

MICHAEL
Uh, yeah.

They leave.

EXT. THE FRIENDLIES PUB - NIGHT

There's a light rain falling down on the deserted streets as MICHAEL and FAIRCHILD leave the pub.

FAIRCHILD
(points)
I'm packed just across the street here.

MICHAEL takes another look behind him, at the pub.

MICHAEL
(aloud)
And I knew, at that moment, that I was standing at the great turning point of my life. Stranded here between two options, two choices, one a shot in the dark, the other guaranteed. The one painfully momentary, the other a promise for a lifetime. My heart felt torn, twisted, conflicted. Two paths in the woods, my friend. Two paths in the woods.

FAIRCHILD
Do you do this often?

MICHAEL
No, just when weird things happen.

FAIRCHILD
If I were you, I would prepare for weird things to become the norm.

MICHAEL
Duly noted.

They get into the car.

EXT. LA ROUGE CAFE - DAY

Present. MICHAEL and WILLY sit at wrought iron table on a veranda, sipping tea and munching on sandwiches.

MICHAEL

You know, I feel like it's been a while since I've really done what I wanted to do.

WILLY

Until today, I think you've been doing exactly what you wanted to do.

MICHAEL

But I mean, like when I was a kid. I never thought I'd grow up to be this kind of person.

WILLY

Hey, don't go all Freud on me. Just relax and enjoy life for what it is. That's always worked for you in the past.

MICHAEL

Do you think I'm happy with my life?

WILLY

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

Like, if there was one thing I could change, what do you think it would be?

WILLY

I don't know, man.

A beat.

WILLY

Honestly, I think if you could change anything in your life, you'd get a divorce.

MICHAEL

What? Really?

(CONTINUED)

WILLY

I mean, it's your life and stuff,
but you just don't seem happy with
her. Ever since Ben died, you-

MICHAEL

Ben?

WILLY

Yeah. It really tore Crystal up
when your little boy died. It tore
both of you up, I guess. You just
dealt with it in different ways.

MICHAEL

Different ways...

WILLY

Sure. Crystal started going to
church and all that stuff.

MICHAEL

And I...?

WILLY

And you started messing around with
Caitlin. Look, dude, you act like
you don't have a clue what I'm
talking about, like all of this is
totally new to you.

MICHAEL

Maybe it just never sunk in before.

WILLY

Well, whatever it is, it's weirding
me out.

MICHAEL stares off across the street, to the bookstore on
the other side.

MICHAEL

You ever think about heaven?

WILLY

I just told you, all this deep
stuff is weird, man. Just lighten
up.

MICHAEL

(repeats)

Do you ever think about heaven?

(CONTINUED)

WILLY

Why?

Gives a nod toward the bookstore.

MICHAEL

Because she's walking into that bookstore right now.

WILLY turns to look. It's the beautiful young woman from the pub.

INT. LITERARY GENIUS BOOKS - DAY

The quintessential bookstore. Cozy, yet spacious, filled with all kinds of books and kind, classy-looking people. Paradise. MICHAEL enters, looking around for the girl. He strides casually through the shelves, glancing down each aisle. A shelving attendant stops him.

ATTENDANT

Can I help you find something?

MICHAEL

No, I'm just looking for my friend.

He moves to the next row of books. Then he sees her. In the back of the store, three arm chairs and a small table are clustered around a faded rug. The girl sits in the far chair, looking through a book of poetry. He walks up slowly, nervous, yet determined. Before he can speak, she glances up.

KATE

Do you think there's such a thing as true love?

MICHAEL sits down in the chair next to her.

MICHAEL

I guess that depends on your definition of true love.

KATE

True love. Real love. Lasting love.

MICHAEL

Well, if you're talking about finding that one person that makes you feel soaring thrills every moment for the rest of your life, then no, I don't.

(CONTINUED)

KATE
(disappointed)

Oh.

MICHAEL
Do I believe there's a higher kind of love than the butterflies that flutter around in puppy love? Yes. Do I believe that love can be the most powerful thing in the universe, denying all sense of logic? Absolutely.

KATE
So is that true love?

MICHAEL
I don't know. True love is more than just feelings. Its commitment, its choosing to put that person first, no matter how you feel about them at the moment. It means leaving everything to be with that person.

KATE
You know, this might sound silly, but since you're a complete stranger, I doubt it matters, but I mean, when I was a girl, I always expected that someday a dashing young knight would come into my life, conquer my dragons, and sweep me off my feet. Pretty silly, eh?

MICHAEL
I guess so.

KATE
(smiles sadly)
I never really stopped believing that.

MICHAEL
Madame, your knight will come.

MICHAEL extends his hand.

MICHAEL
I'm Jacob, by the way.

She shakes his hand.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Heather.

MICHAEL

Heather... It's nice to meet you,
Heather.

KATE

It's nice to meet you, too.

MICHAEL

Mind if I ask what you're reading?

KATE

Poe.

MICHAEL

The moon never beams...

KATE

Without bringing me dreams...

MICHAEL

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

KATE

You know Poe?

MICHAEL

When I was in high school, I was
determined to learn just enough
poetry to impress girls.

KATE

Did it work?

MICHAEL

I don't know. You tell me.

She laughs.

INT. FAIRCHILD'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Past. FAIRCHILD enters, followed by MICHAEL.

FAIRCHILD

Mind your step. It's a bit slippery
here in the hall.

MICHAEL

Where are we going?

(CONTINUED)

FAIRCHILD

To my basement, of course.

MICHAEL

Your basement?

FAIRCHILD

Naturally. Where else would a mad scientist like me keep his laboratory?

MICHAEL

This is beyond weird.

FAIRCHILD

Oh, this is just the beginning.

INT. FAIRCHILD'S HOUSE - LABORATORY

The two men walk down a long, winding metal staircase.

MICHAEL

So how is this going to work?

FAIRCHILD

First I'll extract all the blood in your body. Then I'll electrocute you. And finally I cast an incantation on you, eternally binding your soul to the service of the dark powers.

MICHAEL

Serious?

FAIRCHILD

You take a pill.

MICHAEL

Oh. Cool.

They reach the bottom of the staircase and FAIRCHILD leads MICHAEL across the room to a lab. There is every kind of medical device conceivable. FAIRCHILD pats the medical chair with his hand and MICHAEL sits down.

FAIRCHILD

I've just got to run a couple tests on you before we begin.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

See, I knew there was something you weren't telling me.

FAIRCHILD

Relax. Its just blood pressure and such. This process is rather rigorous on the body.

FAIRCHILD runs the tests on MICHAEL in montage. Finally, MICHAEL stands next to the chair, while FAIRCHILD types on his computer.

MICHAEL

Do I check out?

FAIRCHILD

Certainly.

FAIRCHILD swivels around on his stool and tosses MICHAEL a pill bottle.

FAIRCHILD

Bottom's up.

MICHAEL

I've never understood what that means.

FAIRCHILD

Just take the pill.

MICHAEL grabs a water bottle from the table and takes the pills. He looks at FAIRCHILD.

MICHAEL

Now what?

FAIRCHILD nods to the chair.

FAIRCHILD

Have a seat.

FAIRCHILD stands as MICHAEL sits down.

MICHAEL

Why?

FAIRCHILD

Because this is going to hurt like nothing else.

With movement surprisingly quick for a man his age, FAIRCHILD lashes out at the straps dangling from the chair, quickly strapping MICHAEL in until he can hardly move.

MICHAEL
What are you doing?

FAIRCHILD
Trust me. It's better this way.

MICHAEL
Let me out of here or I'll have
you-

The pills kick in. MICHAEL's body goes rigid, then he starts thrashing about in the chair. He goes rigid again, his body arched forward, and he screams.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. LITERARY GENIUS BOOKS - DAY

MICHAEL and KATE sit at a small table by the window, sipping steaming cups of coffee.

KATE
So what do you do for a living?

A beat.

MICHAEL
Oh, uh, sorry. I'm a stock broker.

KATE
Really? Do you enjoy it?

MICHAEL
I don't know.

KATE
Either you do or you don't.

MICHAEL
It's not really my full-time job.

KATE
So you're a broker on the side?
Then what's your real job? Are you
an out-of-work actor?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

No, I'm terrified of being in front of people. I wonder if Jacob is too...

KATE

What?

MICHAEL

Oh, sorry. Just a weird thought. Let me ask you a question. What was the first thing you thought when you saw me?

KATE

I don't know. It was weird, like I knew you, but couldn't quite remember your name. Yet I know we've never met before.

MICHAEL

Like deja vu?

KATE

Yeah.

MICHAEL

Yeah. You say that every time.

KATE

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

We've been having this same conversation every day for the past two weeks. Sometimes we're in a coffee shop. Sometimes we're waiting at the bus stop. Once we were on an airplane. Once we met at an amusement park. But every day we meet. Every day we have this same conversation, and every day I tell you this.

KATE

You're one of those mental cases, aren't you?

MICHAEL

Your name isn't Heather. It's Katherine Graham, but you go by Kate. Your favorite color is orange, though you tell people its

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL (cont'd)
pink. You're a dog person and you hate sushi. You have a scar on the back of your right shoulder from the time your Dad took you hiking in the Rockies. You have two brothers and a sister. Sometimes you wish your family was a lot closer, but that's not really possible for you now. You used to work in a department store, until you grew tired of being another face in the crowd. Then you took the same pill I did and every day you wake up in a new bed, a new life, a new task to perform. Just like me.

KATE
Who are you?

MICHAEL
My name is Michael Keith and I'm the guy who haunts you.

KATE stands up.

KATE
I'm leaving.

MICHAEL
(nonchalant)
You say that every time, but you never do. Kate, please sit back down.

KATE
Why?

MICHAEL
Because I'm the only person you can be real with. I'm the only person who can understand what you're talking about and what you're going through.

KATE
You don't know. There could be others like us.

MICHAEL
Not so far as I know.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

How would you know? I mean, how did you know I was...

MICHAEL

Because no matter where I wake up or who I am, you're always there. I don't think it's random chance that our paths cross in different worlds every day.

KATE sits back down.

KATE

So what do we do now?

MICHAEL

There's something I want to talk to you about later, but right now I need some advice on the life I'm living.

KATE

Sure. What's up?

MICHAEL

Now that's the Kate I know. Okay, so this guy, Jacob Ross-

KATE

Your host.

MICHAEL

Sure, I guess. He's married.

KATE

So you're married.

MICHAEL

What? Haven't you ever been married?

KATE

Think about it. You're somebody else's husband.

MICHAEL

Yes. I mean, no. I mean, I'm her husband, but only for today.

KATE

Yeah, see, isn't that ever weird to you?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I never really gave it much thought.

KATE

Raises a lot of interesting ethical questions, doesn't it?

MICHAEL

I'm not sleeping with someone else's wife.

KATE

Yeah, but see, that's the weird part. She's not someone else's wife. Not today.

MICHAEL

But she was yesterday and she will be tomorrow. And who I am, the real me, the person inside this body, isn't married to her.

KATE

So no sugar.

MICHAEL

No sugar.

KATE

Understood. You were saying?

MICHAEL

(sighs)

Jacob Ross is scum.

KATE

Well, he is a man.

MICHAEL

(ignores her)

He's married. As near as I can tell, they had one child, a little boy, but he died.

KATE

Ouch.

MICHAEL

Yeah. His wife went to church and he went to other women. He's having at least two affairs at work.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Player.

MICHAEL

Married player equals scum.

KATE

So what are you supposed to do?

MICHAEL

I don't know. I think Jacob wants a divorce, but I refuse to believe that is my purpose in this life.

KATE

Then what is it?

MICHAEL

I think he's breaking the law.

KATE

You're supposed to turn yourself in?

MICHAEL

I don't know. There are two options. His marriage is a mess and I really feel like I could do a lot to repair that damage.

KATE

That's a little hard to do from behind bars.

MICHAEL

Exactly. But putting him in prison is the right thing to do.

KATE

What exactly is it he's doing?

MICHAEL

Cooking the books at the brokerage, insider trading, information brokering. That kind of stuff. Really white collar, but really damaging and really illegal.

KATE

Sounds like the right choice is pretty clear.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

(sighs)

Yeah. I just hate to see Jacob hurt Crystal even more.

KATE

She'll find about everything someday. We're girls - we always do. It's only a matter of time. If he comes to her and tells her about the illegal stuff and the cheating stuff, she'll be mad and she'll be hurt, but it'll still be better than if she finds out later.

MICHAEL

So your advice is to tell her everything?

KATE

(nods)

Yup.

MICHAEL

Great. Hey, what are you supposed to do?

KATE

Oh, I saved a kid from getting mugged this morning. I'm pretty sure that's all I'm supposed to do.

MICHAEL

So Heather is just blowing off whatever plans she had for the day?

KATE

Hey, I did what I was supposed to do. Now it's time for a little 'me time'.

MICHAEL

Lucky.

KATE

Hey, if you want, I can go with you to the police station.

MICHAEL

Thanks. I'd appreciate it.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

You realize at some point I'll be calling in that favor.

MICHAEL

What do you mean?

KATE

Well, if we see each other every day, like you say, then we'll probably need each other's help from time to time.

MICHAEL

So you're suggesting we be like a team, traveling lives by night?

KATE

Yeah. It could work.

MICHAEL

You know, every time I suggest this, you laugh.

KATE

Well, yeah. It has to be my idea.

MICHAEL

Figures.

MICHAEL finishes his coffee and glances at his watch.

MICHAEL

I think Jacob needs to get back to work. I've got an illegal trading deal to record, confessions to make, and self-incriminating statements to make. It's going to be a busy afternoon.

KATE

Good luck. I'll stay here with Poe.

MICHAEL grins.

INT. WEST MEN'S PRISON - CELL 494 - DAY

Past. MICHAEL, still bearded, lies on a cot in Cell 494, a prisoner of the state. His eyes blink open and he sits up, looking around him, amazed.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

It worked.

MICHAEL stands up and walks over to the bars, sliding his fingers around them, feeling their texture.

MICHAEL

Impossible.

FAIRCHILD

(O.S.)

Afraid not.

MICHAEL glances to his left and sees FAIRCHILD standing outside the cell, dressed in a prison guard uniform.

MICHAEL

Fairchild. Is this your idea of a joke?

FAIRCHILD

My sense of humor is far more refined.

MICHAEL

Then what? Are you one of those sociopaths who captures people and imprisons them?

FAIRCHILD

Oh, Harrison Mansfield isn't my prisoner. He's a prisoner of the state of California.

MICHAEL

Who's Harrison Mansfield?

FAIRCHILD

Why, that's you.

MICHAEL

I'm Michael Keith.

FAIRCHILD

Not today you're not. It's your first new life.

MICHAEL

In prison?

FAIRCHILD

I don't control the jumps. I'm like a watch maker. I just set the thing in motion, sit back, and watch.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Some people say that about God.

FAIRCHILD

Yeah, and some people eat their own poo. Doesn't mean they're intelligent.

MICHAEL

Touche. Point taken. So what am I supposed to do, just sit here and rot?

FAIRCHILD

In every life there is a purpose. In every day that you experience, there will be something you're supposed to change, something you're supposed to do.

MICHAEL

So you just hang out, watching?

FAIRCHILD

Oh, I have other responsibilities, but I figured I'd guide you through your first day.

MICHAEL

Heartwarming.

FAIRCHILD

Having second thoughts?

MICHAEL

It's just not what I thought it would be.

FAIRCHILD

It never is.

INT. WEST MEN'S PRISON - CAFETERIA

MICHAEL sits at a table with a few other prisoners, quietly eating his food. He watches the other prisoners, trying to observe while making himself as small as possible. Across the cafeteria, he watches a scrawny young man get up, put his tray away, and walk out.

Then he sees four other prisoners, large, mean-looking men, get up and follow the scrawny young man. FAIRCHILD sits down beside MICHAEL.

(CONTINUED)

FAIRCHILD

A lot of evil things happen in prison, some even more evil than what brought these men here in the first place.

MICHAEL chews his food thoughtfully, staring at the door.

FAIRCHILD

So the question is, Michael. Do you do the right thing... or not? Everyone knows what's about to happen, but you're the only person here who's even considering doing the right thing. That's the trouble with the world today. We're all too focused on ourselves to see the pain in the lives of others or to consider how we might ease that suffering. So we sit, and we watch, and we're just grateful it's not us. For most, that's good enough. But what about you, Michael? When there are no rules, no requirements, no real consequences, will you still do the right thing?

MICHAEL finishes what he was chewing, takes a drink, sets his fork down, gets up, and heads to the door.

FAIRCHILD

(softly)

Atta boy, Michael.

INT. WEST MEN'S PRISON - RECREATIONAL ROOM

The room, with its tables full of puzzles and boardgames, is empty except for the scrawny man and the four large men who followed him. The large men have backed the scrawny man into a corner and the leader of the group is speaking.

DRAKE

Everyone has to pay their dues, Tony. You don't pay your dues and there are consequences.

TONY

(shakes his head, afraid)

No, no. I won't do it, Drake. You can't make me do it.

(CONTINUED)

DRAKE

Oh, you'll do it. The only question is whether you'll have any teeth when you do it.

TONY

No. You don't have that kind of control. I'll... I'll tell the guards and-

DRAKE

They don't care about you, Tony. Nobody is listening and nobody cares. So either do the deed or we'll tear you apart.

TONY

(fearful, yet firm)

No.

DRAKE

Too bad.

DRAKE steps toward TONY, who tries to dash out. One of the thugs grab him and holds him while DRAKE slaps him. MICHAEL stands at the door. FAIRCHILD walks up behind him.

FAIRCHILD

Where's the justice in the world, Michael? Where's the grace, the mercy, the love, the hope, all the things we thought we could depend on? What happens when the government doesn't provide it, when society doesn't provide it, when even our own families don't provide it? Where do we turn? What is the answer, Michael?

MICHAEL

(turns to look at FAIRCHILD)

We do it ourselves, just like God intended.

MICHAEL walks into the room, grabbing a folding chair and folding it in one smooth motion as he approaches the men. They don't notice him. As he gets closer, he accelerates, raising the chair and slamming it down across the back of DRAKE's neck. The man crumbles. MICHAEL, riding the adrenaline of the moment, swings the chair at another thug. But the thug catches the end of it, pulls the chair down, and grabs MICHAEL's left arm. Another steps in and grabs MICHAEL's right arm. DRAKE slowly rises.

(CONTINUED)

DRAKE

I'm gonna tear you apart,
Mansfield.

DRAKE starts laying punch after punch into MICHAEL's stomach. Behind FAIRCHILD, the other prisoners come to watch. No one moves to help MICHAEL.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Present. MICHAEL approaches the building, the folder in hand. He slides his hand into his jacket pocket and takes out a micro-cassette tape recorder. He turns it to record and slides it back into his pocket. With a sigh, he enters the building.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - THE OFFICES OF JAY WESLEY

MICHAEL strides in confidently. He stops at the receptionist's desk.

MICHAEL

I'm here to see Mr. Wesley.

RECEPTIONIST #2

And you are?

MICHAEL

I'm Jacob Ross, from Wesson
Brokerage.

The woman's eyes widen.

RECEPTIONIST #2

Ah, Mr. Ross. I'm sorry. Mr. Wesley
is expecting you.

MICHAEL

Wonderful. Thank you.

He takes a mint from the bowl on the desk and enters JAY WESLEY's office.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - THE OFFICES OF JAY WESLEY - MAIN OFFICE

JAY WESLEY, mid-forties, rises as MICHAEL enters and smiles, extending his hand.

WESLEY

A pleasure to see you, Mr. Ross.

MICHAEL shakes his hand.

MICHAEL

The pleasure's all mine, Mr. Wesley.

WESLEY

Please have a seat.

Both men sit down.

MICHAEL

This is my first time doing this sort of thing, so would you mind if we double check everything? Mr. Smits wouldn't be pleased if I made a mistake.

WESLEY

(smiles)

Lewis Smits is a very exacting man. It's a good trait to have in business.

MICHAEL

It certainly is. It was the Henderson Electric, Willis, and Sempkin accounts you wanted information on?

WESLEY

That's right.

MICHAEL

Maybe I'm a little absent-minded here, but what exactly will this information do for you? I mean, I've never really understood how this all works.

WESLEY

It's simple, really. Smits lets me know who's selling what and that gives me the chance to sell if the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WESLEY (cont'd)
company is going to drop after his
sale. It also gives me the option
to buy the stock from him on the
side without competing with the
open market. It's really an
efficient little deal we've got
worked out here.

MICHAEL
That work pretty well for you,
then?

WESLEY
So far.

MICHAEL hands WESLEY the folder.

MICHAEL
Do I need to sign anything or give
you a receipt or something?

WESLEY
Rather conscientious, aren't you?

MICHAEL
Just want to be sure I'm doing my
job right.

WESLEY
You can leave now, Mr. Ross.

MICHAEL
Oh. Thanks.

MICHAEL gets up and leaves. WESLEY thumbs through the
folder, smiling.

INT. 1324 EAST GRANDVIEW - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MICHAEL enters, wiping his shoes on the mat. CRYSTAL comes
in from the kitchen.

CRYSTAL
(surprised)
You're home.

MICHAEL
(nods)
Yup.

(CONTINUED)

CRYSTAL

On time.

MICHAEL

Why are you acting like that's so unusual?

CRYSTAL

Who are you and what have you done with my husband?

MICHAEL

(echoes)

Your husband.

CRYSTAL puts her arms around him.

CRYSTAL

Yup. My husband.

MICHAEL

Could I talk to you about something, babe?

CRYSTAL

Sure. What's up?

MICHAEL

We better sit down.

MICHAEL leads her into the living room.

INT. WEST MEN'S PRISON - INFIRMARY

Past. MICHAEL lies in a bed, bandages covering a good portion of his body. His face is purple and swollen from the beating. There is an IV attached to his arm. FAIRCHILD approaches the bed.

FAIRCHILD

How you doing, kid?

MICHAEL

I've been better.

FAIRCHILD

You'll be worse, before it's over.

MICHAEL

That's encouraging.

FAIRCHILD sits down in the chair beside MICHAEL.

(CONTINUED)

FAIRCHILD

It's a funny thing about life.

MICHAEL

What?

FAIRCHILD

Pain. See, a lot of people take the pill and start switching lives, convinced they'll be able to escape the pain that they feel. And it's not just switching. We all try to kill pain in our own ways. Music, sex, drugs, money, power, abuse, they're all faulty supplements trying to fill that hole we all find inside ourselves. The trouble with jumping around between lives is that you soon discover that jumping from one life to the next simply moves you from one person's pain to another person's pain. It always there because we all feel it.

MICHAEL

You should have been a priest.

FAIRCHILD

(chuckles)

In another life, Michael. In another life. We make choices in life and no matter what choice we make, we sacrifice something. People seem to forget that and then they get bent out of shape when life asks something of them. You could've sat at that table today. You could've kept eating your lunch and never bothered to think about that poor man. But you didn't. You made a choice. You stepped up and did the right thing. And now you're lying in bed, bruised and broken.

MICHAEL

Is that some twisted way of saying we're all better off if we just let other people suffer alone?

FAIRCHILD

No, because you would've found the guilt more unbearable than the pain

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FAIRCHILD (cont'd)
you feel now. I just wanted you to realize that doing the right thing isn't always easy or fun. Most of the time, it doesn't even feel good. It means giving up something. It costs. It requires and offers little in return.

MICHAEL
Then why do it?

FAIRCHILD
(smiles)
I don't know, Michael. What do you think?

A beat.

MICHAEL
Well, how is doing nothing going to help fix this mess of a world? All that's required for the success of evil, yadda, yadda, yadda.

FAIRCHILD
Good to see those blows didn't knock out your sense of humor.

MICHAEL
Oh, no. It's still fully intact. But could you do me a favor?

FAIRCHILD
What's that, Michael?

MICHAEL
Now that I've learned this great lesson and everything, do you think you could slip me a bit of morphine?

FAIRCHILD
I'll see what I can do.

INT. 1324 EAST GRANDVIEW - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Present. MICHAEL and CRYSTAL are sitting on the couch. CRYSTAL is crying.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Crystal, I am so sorry. I'm so sorry.

He folds her into a hug and she cries into his shoulder.

CRYSTAL

Why? Why did you do it?

MICHAEL

I was feeling so much pain, I didn't know how to deal with it. I should have talked you to. I should have opened up. I know that now. I'm so sorry.

At the doorway between the hall and the living room, KATE steps up and knocks softly on the doorway. CRYSTAL looks up, then glares at MICHAEL.

CRYSTAL

Who is this?

MICHAEL

(holds up his hands)
Just a friend. She's here to take me to the police.

KATE

Ready?

MICHAEL

(to CRYSTAL)
I've got to go now. I need you to do a couple of things for me, okay?

CRYSTAL

What?

MICHAEL

I need you to keep on loving me. Tomorrow I'm probably not going to remember a lot of what I said or did today and I need you to remember how much I love you. Deep down, I really love you. There's just a lot of pain clouding that right now.

CRYSTAL

I can do that.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
And Crystal, I need you to pray for
me. Every day. Pray.

CRYSTAL
(nods)
I will.

MICHAEL
(glances at KATE)
I have to go now.

A beat.

MICHAEL
I love you.

CRYSTAL
I love you too.

MICHAEL rises and walks to join KATE.

EXT CITY STREET - KATE'S CAR - NIGHT

MICHAEL gazes thoughtfully out the window as KATE drives.
KATE clears her throat.

KATE
So you mean any of that back there?

MICHAEL
What do you mean?

KATE
Like everything you said to
Crystal, about being sorry and pain
and all that.

MICHAEL
I said what I thought Jacob would
say if he were being real. He is
living under so many layers of
pain, he's not even connected to
reality.

KATE
Do you love her?

MICHAEL
Jacob does.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Do you?

MICHAEL

(sighs)

No.

A beat.

MICHAEL

Didn't you ever wonder why I always remember you, but I have to tell you about me over and over again every day?

KATE

I didn't want to bring it up. Male power trips and all that.

MICHAEL

The truth is, I'm so in love with you, nothing could make me forget you.

KATE

And you can say that in completely safely because this time tomorrow I won't remember a thing.

MICHAEL

Isn't life ironic?

KATE

Cruel is what it is.

MICHAEL

That actually reminds me of what I wanted to talk to you about.

KATE

Seems like as good a time as any.

MICHAEL

I've been doing some research into psychology and stuff.

KATE

You think I'm a head job?

MICHAEL

Not likely. Or we both are. But the human mind is a wonderfully resilient thing. It can remember

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL (cont'd)
things even after we've forgotten them. Like some people think that Alzheimer's patients don't lose memories, they just lose access to them. The memories are still there. There just isn't a way to connect to them.

KATE
Which leads to what?

MICHAEL
Cognitive milestones. Markers. Memory cues.

KATE
Deja vu?

MICHAEL
Exactly. Something happens to your mind every night that causes you to forget everything I tell you. But what if those memories are still there? What if you could access them?

KATE
And you propose?

MICHAEL
A code word, effectively. A word or a phrase that you mentally associate with me to the point that every time you hear that particular word or phrase, you remember.

KATE
It's worth a shot.

MICHAEL
Now we just have to settle on a word.

KATE
(abruptly)
Love.

MICHAEL
Love?

(CONTINUED)

KATE

I might not remember much about the past, but I'm pretty sure this is the first time you ever told me how you felt about me.

MICHAEL

How do you know?

KATE

Girls don't forget stuff like that.

MICHAEL sits back in his seat.

MICHAEL

(softly)

Love.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

KATE's car pulls into parking lot.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Past. MICHAEL saves a little girl from being hit by a car.

INT. POLICE STATION - QUESTIONING ROOM - NIGHT

Present. MICHAEL sits at a table with two officers, talking. He slides them the tape and a couple folders.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOM 223 - DAY

Past. MICHAEL breaks in through the door and rushes across the room to snatch a gun from a little boy who is playing with it. MICHAEL tosses the gun out the window, gives the boy a hug, and leaves.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUED

Present. MICHAEL is photographed and fingerprinted.

EXT. GRAY STREET BRIDGE - NIGHT

Past. MICHAEL stands in the pouring rain, talking down a jumper.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUED

Present. MICHAEL gives his statement to a typist.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Past. MICHAEL, dressed as in the opening scene, stands with the dark men in baggy clothes, exchanging money for bags filled with white powder. One of the men steps in and rips open MICHAEL's shirt to reveal a wireless microphone. MICHAEL shoves one of the men, but gets a shot in the stomach from the other. MICHAEL bolts for his car, dives in, and squeals away.

EXT. LATENIGHTER INN - NIGHT

MICHAEL stumbles down the cement walkway to Room 207.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUED

Present. MICHAEL stands between two officers, who are waiting to take him to his cell. KATE is holding his hand.

KATE

This is really brave, you know.

MICHAEL

It's only for a couple hours more.

KATE

True.

MICHAEL

So I'll see you tomorrow?

KATE

Yeah.

She gives him a quick kiss.

KATE

Good night, Michael.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
Good night, Kate.

MICHAEL walks away between the two guards. KATE watches him go, a small smile playing across her lips.

FADE OUT

END PILOT