

STRIKING OUT

Written by

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ACT ONE

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

DUNCAN and KATE, both late 20s, walk out of a movie theater, passing by a poster of the movie featuring Tom Cruise.

DUNCAN

I'm beginning to think Tom Cruise is an actual vampire. He looks exactly the same as he did twenty years ago. You don't look that way at his age without drinking unicorn blood or having sex with a vampire.

KATE

I'd let him bite me. Not like romantically though. More to just experience that sort of "I'm eternally thirty" vibe.

DUNCAN

You couldn't be romantic with Tom?

KATE

What? No way. I can't have those Scientology guys watching me 24-7.

DUNCAN

That would be pretty creepy.

Duncan's phone PINGS.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(checks his phone)

Damn.

KATE

What?

DUNCAN

I didn't get the Burger King commercial. I thought I nailed it.

KATE

Sorry, Duncan. I've seen you eat a Whopper. You're pretty good at it. You ask me, they're missing out.

(beat)

You think Tom Cruise eats Whoppers?

DUNCAN

I don't know. Do vampires eat meat?

KATE
Good point.

They walk on in silence. Duncan looks downcast, and Kate picks up on it.

KATE (CONT'D)
You wanna hang out at my place
tonight? Watch old cartoons?

DUNCAN
That sounds cool, but I think I'm
just gonna call it a night.

Duncan hails a passing cab. Gives Kate a quick kiss and a hug.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(as he gets in cab)
See you tomorrow?

KATE
Yeah, sure.

She watches the cab pull away. Wistful.

INT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Duncan watches a Road Runner cartoon on TV. Wile E. Coyote tries to shoot off a cannon at the Roadrunner, but the cannon EXPLODES in his face.

Duncan has no reaction, but picks up his phone and types.

INSERT PHONE SCREEN as Duncan types.

DUNCAN
(as he types)
"Why doesn't Wile E. Coyote take
all that money he spends on crappy
Acme products and just buy himself
a Whopper?"

He hits send. Turns off the TV and night stand light.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kate is in bed. Watches the same cartoon as Duncan.

Her phone BUZZES. Smiles as she reads Duncan's text. Does a quick reply: "Wile E. Coyote must also be a vampire."

INT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Eyes peak out from under a pillow at a BUZZING clock.

INT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Duncan stares into an almost empty fridge. One jar of olives and another of mustard is all to be found.

He closes the fridge in disgust.

INT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - DEN - MORNING

A shirt hangs off the back of a lawn chair in this threadbare room. The only piece of "furniture" is a card table.

Duncan picks up the shirt. Smells it for cleanliness. It sort of passes the test, so he throws it on.

EXT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The front door opens slowly. Duncan pokes his head out and looks around.

He pulls a "RENT DUE" notice off the front door, and throws it onto a pile of "RENT DUE" notices building on the floor.

He quickly exits and runs to the stairs, trying to avoid--

WOMAN (V.O.)

Where's my rent payment?

Duncan's landlord, Mrs. Delgado, 50s, walks quickly towards him, but he races down the stairs.

DUNCAN

(over his shoulder)

Sorry Mrs. Delgado, but I get paid tomorrow and I'll have your rent!

MRS. DELGADO

You've been saying that every week for the last two months! You pay by tomorrow or you're out!

DUNCAN

Will do! No worries!

MRS. DELGADO

Two months you owe me!

Duncan grimaces as he runs for his car.

EXT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A two-bit joint in a strip center. The sign out front reads: "PRINCE PETER'S PIZZA PALACE".

INT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - DAY

A mass of KIDS race around the arcade. It's LOUD. Like screaming teenagers at a Taylor Swift concert loud.

In the dining area, Duncan sports a big smile. A big fake one, for this crappy job in this crappy kids' pizza place.

Dressed in an outlandishly cartoonish prince outfit, he waves to the out-of-control children. They ignore him, and he couldn't care less.

Except for one stocky six year old GIRL who runs up to him.

GIRL

Are you really a prince?

DUNCAN

(faux English accent)

Indeed I am. Prince Peter, at your service. And who might you be, young maiden?

The girl delivers a swift kick to Duncan's shin.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Son of a--

He catches himself. Forces a smile to the onlookers.

One of them, a semi-attractive COUGAR who is already four Chardonnays in, smiles seductively at Duncan. He fidgets uncomfortably as she approaches.

COUGAR

I've been waiting years for my Prince Charming to come along, and voila! Here you are!

DUNCAN

Sorry to disappoint, but Prince Charming is off today. I'm Prince Peter, as indicated by the extremely large and obnoxious sign out front.

COUGAR

Well, I'm sure your peter is very charming just the same.

Duncan is both disgusted and intrigued.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Prince Peter! A word, please!

PHIL, 40ish, an overweight manager in an ill-fitting shirt and too-short tie, motions Duncan over.

DUNCAN

(to Cougar)

Sorry. My master beckons. Have another Chardonnay. Or three.

Duncan saunters over to Phil.

PHIL

You're here to entertain the kids, not fraternize with the drunk moms!

DUNCAN

C'mon, Phil! These kids don't want to be entertained by me - they just want to run around, scream, and destroy stuff. Eat crappy pizza. I'm really here to just entertain the moms.

Duncan glances over to a couple of MOMS. They wave and giggle.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

AKA, the people who actually pay for this spectacular crap fest that some people ironically call a restaurant?

PHIL

Just stay away from the moms, okay? This is a kid-friendly joint!

DUNCAN

(as Phil walks off)

The amount of alcohol you sell here would say otherwise!

Duncan tosses his crown on a nearby table. KATE walks up, dressed in an elaborate Princess outfit. Shakes her feet.

KATE

A kid just puked on my slippers.

DUNCAN
 (looks at her shoes)
 Gross. Is that pizza or cake?

KATE
 Does it matter?
 (beat)
 Why are we doing this, Duncan? Why
 are we putting up with these dip
 shits? Let's just quit and runaway
 to Mexico and drink margaritas on a
 beach somewhere.

DUNCAN
 But then how would I not pay my
 rent?
 (beat)
 Can we runaway after my audition
 this afternoon?

KATE sighs. Sits in a nearby chair.

KATE
 How much longer are you going to
 keep doing this, Duncan? Really.

DUNCAN
 What are you saying?

KATE
 Quit the acting biz. Am I not being
 clear enough for you?

DUNCAN
 Crystal. So even my best friend
 doesn't believe in me.

KATE
 I'm just trying to help. How long
 you been here in L.A.?

DUNCAN
 Six years.

KATE
 Uh-huh. And how many roles have you
 landed in that time?

DUNCAN
 Four.
 (off KATE's look)
 Okay, three.
 (MORE)

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

But I was almost cast as a dead lab technician on "CSI" a couple of weeks ago, so I'm getting closer. I can feel it.

KATE

(points her finger)

Yet here you are working in this dumpster fire of a restaurant to pay the rent.

DUNCAN

Hey, you have all those little fingers pointing right back of you. Besides, I have to keep working somewhere. I'm already a month behind on the rent as it is.

KATE

What did you do with last month's rent?

DUNCAN

Paid for a transmission repair on my car.

KATE

Good call, since you'll probably have to live in it when you get evicted.

PHIL (O.S.)

Prince Peter! Princess Esmerelda!

Phil walks up.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You're needed in the party room to cut the birthday cake - so get your royal asses in there pronto.

Duncan groans, drags himself towards the party room.

DUNCAN

Every time you speak, a tiny part of my soul dies.

PHIL

Boo hoo! Go cut some cake!

Duncan looks over to Cougar, who downs another Chardonnay. She winks clumsily at Duncan, then passes out and CRASHES to the floor.

DUNCAN
Wish I could join you, lady.

I./E. DUNCAN'S CAR - URBAN STREET - DAY

Duncan, still in his Prince Peter outfit, speeds his dinged-up Toyota Corolla through Los Angeles. KATE sits in the passenger seat.

KATE
Why the hurry?

DUNCAN
Don't want to be late for this audition.

KATE
What's it for?

DUNCAN
Um... a pharmaceutical company.

KATE
So, erectile dysfunction.

DUNCAN
It's a job, okay? I'm doing whatever I can to make this work.

After a block in silence, Kate blurts out:

KATE
I spoke to my father.

Duncan stops at a red light. Grips the wheel tightly.

DUNCAN
About...

KATE
He agreed to find a job in his company for you.

DUNCAN
What? Why didn't you ask me about this first?

KATE
Because I thought--

DUNCAN
--Well, that's the problem. You thought.

(MORE)

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

You didn't ask what I wanted. And what I want is to not give up on my dreams just yet.

KATE

How much longer are you going to entertain this fantasy?

DUNCAN

Fantasy? Where is this coming from? And oh, by the way, you're in the exact same position I am?

KATE

Not really. My dad pays my rent, so I have a little more flexibility--

DUNCAN

I can see how you'd be sympathetic to my situation.

They drive along a little further.

KATE

So you'll think about it, then?

Duncan stewes as he drives.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Several FAMILY MEMBERS gather around a hospital bed, where EUGENE "POPPY" NEWCASTLE, 85, lay unconscious.

Duncan's father, JEFF, 50s, small-town dignified, stands at the foot of the bed. His wife, SARAH, perpetually tan and perpetually 49, stands at his side.

JEFF

He looks so peaceful.

Poppy's eyes suddenly open and he lets out a SCREECH. The family members jump back, horrified.

SARAH

Holy shit!

And just as quickly, he lapses back into an unconscious state. Permanently.

The "BEEP BEEP BEEP" of a heart monitor suddenly flat lines. Poor Poppy is gone.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Jeff stands in the corridor as other family members compose themselves and talk on cell phones. He types out a text on his phone.

INT. CASTING AGENCY - LOBBY - DAY

A crowd of ACTORS sit around a small room. Each a budding DiCaprio waiting to be discovered. It won't be for this.

Duncan is still in his prince costume. Others give him a curious glance. He reads a piece of paper. Mumbles some lines to himself.

DUNCAN
(to himself)
You've got this. You've got this.

Duncan's phone PINGS.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
Damn it!

He looks over to person next to him, but it's not KATE. Instead, it's just another ACTOR.

ACTOR
Are you an idiot? Who leaves their phone on in an audition?

Duncan ignores the Actor as he reads the text from his dad.
"CALL ASAP RE: POPPY"

DUNCAN
(under his breath)
Damn it.

He thinks it over, then throws the script aside and leaves the room. As he exits, a CASTING ASSISTANT steps in the room.

CASTING ASSISTANT
Duncan Newcastle?

The Casting Assistant waits, but no one budges.

CASTING ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
Duncan? Hello?
(beat)
Curtis Andrus?

CURTIS stands and walks towards the Assistant.

EXT. CASTING AGENCY - DAY

Duncan paces back and forth on the sidewalk as he listens on his cell phone. Kate sits nearby on some steps.

DUNCAN
(into phone)
I'll get a flight as soon as I can.
Give my best to mom. Love you, Dad.

Duncan hangs up. Turns to KATE.

KATE
Sorry about your grandfather.

She wraps up Duncan in a hug.

KATE (CONT'D)
That's so sad.
(as they break the hug)
And right during your audition. If
that isn't a sign, I don't know
what is.

DUNCAN
Nice.
(beat)
What am I supposed to do now?

KATE
Go home, Duncan.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO**EXT. AIRPLANE - AFTERNOON**

Duncan's sad face is pressed against a plane window as the jet pulls away from the terminal.

INT. AIRPLANE - CONTINUOUS

Duncan turns his attention to the person on his right, a LITTLE OLD LADY, 70's. She flips through a magazine.

DUNCAN

You heading to Texas too?

The Little Old Lady puts in headphones to avoid the conversation. Duncan sighs.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - AFTERNOON - ESTABLISHING

A small, homey, establishment in a podunk Texas town. Any of its citizens would be proud to be on display here. After they died, of course.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - VIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An open casket at one end. The soft sounds of piped-in organ music plays. Family members visit, most of them in their dressy blue jeans and western shirts.

The tears and sadness from the day Poppy died has been replaced with laughter and the sharing of fond memories.

Sarah scans the room. Jeff and their daughter SYDNEY, early 20s and edgy, chat nearby.

SARAH

Where is he? He said he would be here by two.

JEFF

Will you stop? He'll be here when he gets here. And can you do me a favor? Will you not bug him about his job situation? Not today.

SARAH

I don't know what you're protecting him from. Four years of film school at Southern Cal.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Three months of stand-up comedy school. And what does he have to show for it? Three acting gigs and a hundred thousand of student loan debt. Which apparently we'll be paying off until--

(points to the coffin)

--we're in one of those. And incidentally, if I go first, don't put me in a cheap casket like your dad's. I'd like something a little more upscale.

SYDNEY

What does it matter? You won't know. You'll be dead.

SARAH

Oh, believe me, I'll know. I'll be up there watching everyone laugh at me because your cheapskate father put me in a pine box just to save a few bucks.

JEFF

Can I put you in one now?

SYDNEY

How do you know you won't be watching from the other place?

SARAH

Sydney, really. How can you even say that?

SYDNEY

(under her breath)

Pretty easily, actually.

DUNCAN (O.S.)

Say what?

They all wheel to see Duncan, haggard-looking, approach. In jeans and a flannel shirt. He gives his dad a big hug.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Hey, dad. How you doing?

JEFF

Tired, but managing. Thanks.

SARAH

Come here, you.

(after a hug)

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)
Look at you. Couldn't you even
dress up for a viewing?

SYDNEY
This is dressed up for him.
(to Duncan re: his clothes)
Did the homeless guy put up a fight
when you stole these off him?

Duncan grits his teeth, walks away.

SARAH
Where are you going?

DUNCAN
To talk with someone who doesn't
have anything bad to say to me.

Duncan walks over to the coffin. Leans over, gives Poppy a
quick examination. It's a bittersweet moment.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
Hey, Poppy. How's it going? That's
stupid. You're dead. So... not
good, I'm guessing.
(beat)
But, for a dead guy, I have to say
you're looking pretty sharp. The
formaldehyde is working wonders.

SAM WINKLE, 60, a silver-haired devil in a seer-sucker suit,
walks up stands next to Duncan. Pats Duncan on the shoulder.

SAM
Sorry for your loss, buddy.

Duncan turns. From his reaction it's clear he doesn't
recognize Sam.

DUNCAN
Thanks... um...

SAM
You don't know me, do you?

DUNCAN
Busted. Were you a friend of my
grandfather?

SAM
(shakes Duncan's hand)
Sam Winkle. I was your
grandfather's attorney. Can I have
a moment of your time?

DUNCAN

Depends. Is this gonna cost me anything?

A few feet away, Sarah, Peter and Sydney watch the exchange.

SARAH

Why is Sam talking with Duncan? Is he in some kind of trouble?

JEFF

Why would you assume that? Why is that always the first place you go?

SARAH

Hello? It's Duncan.

JEFF

You're an awful person. Sam isn't even a criminal attorney.

SYDNEY

He's not? So why did he help me...

JEFF

Why did he help you what?

SYDNEY

What?

(points)

Look! It's Aunt Cora!

Sydney runs off.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - AFTERNOON

Sam and Duncan sit on a bench.

SAM

Question. What was your favorite memory of your grandfather?

DUNCAN

Oh man. My favorite memory of Poppy. There's so many.

FLASHBACK

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

YOUNG DUNCAN throws a ball down the lane. FRIENDS cheer when he knocks over a single pin. Poppy watches with pride.

DUNCAN (V.O.)
Probably all the times I spent at
his bowling alley. Got all the free
games I could bowl...

Young Duncan and his friends eat at a table in the grill. An
African-American woman, ANNIE MAE, drops drinks off.

DUNCAN (V.O.)
All the burgers I could eat in the
grill...

Duncan and his friends play pinball games.

DUNCAN (V.O.)
Even free pinball games.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

DUNCAN
Captain Fantastic is still the best
pinball game ever.
(a light comes on)
And I just realized why so many of
my friends wanted to hang out with
me at the lanes. But Poppy never
complained. He was just happy I
wanted to come and visit him.

SAM
You were the only one in your
family who ever did.

DUNCAN
At least the only one who did it
willingly. How did you know?

SAM
Because he told me the same thing
several times, especially when I
was drafting his Last Will.

Duncan has a blank look on his face.

DUNCAN
I don't understand.

SAM
Your grandfather didn't have a lot
when he died. His house, some money
in the bank. Life insurance.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

That stuff he left to your dad and your Aunt Cora. But Ten Pin Alley... that was his pride and joy, and he specifically wanted you to have it when he died.

DUNCAN

No way. Really?

SAM

There is a catch, though.
(off Duncan's curious look)
He didn't leave it to you outright, but in trust, with me as the trustee. You don't want to be involved, you don't have to be.

DUNCAN

That's a catch? I can continue acting and still make money from the alley? Do you understand how a "catch" works?

SAM

Here's the "catch," genius. You don't want anything to do with it, the alley gets sold and the money goes to his alma mater.

DUNCAN

What? That doesn't make sense! He went to a vocational school!

Sam's patience is at an end. He stands to go.

SAM

Duncan, there's a reason Poppy wanted you to have this. Think about that and get back to me.

As Sam walks away:

DUNCAN

But I don't know the first thing about running a bowling alley.

His dad suddenly appears behind him.

JEFF

What the hell do you need to know? It's bowling. People pay you a stupid amount of money to throw a heavy ball down a lane. Most of the time they don't even hit anything!

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

It's just a less stressful way of working out.

DUNCAN

You consider that working out?

JEFF

You do have to walk like four steps and throw a heavy object. So, yeah.

Duncan looks unsure about it all.

DUNCAN

You knew about this?

JEFF

Dad may have mentioned it in passing a couple of hundred times.

(beat)

Look. You don't have to be some financial wiz to make this work. That's why you have a bookkeeper to keep track of things. You just sit around, make decisions as needed and make money. Not a lot of money, but enough to pay the rent and put food on the table. It's steady income. Something you currently don't have.

DUNCAN

You make it sound like a great gig.

JEFF

Let me ask you something. What do you think is harder? Getting an acting gig competing against a hundred other actors for ten seconds of air time in a toe fungus commercial? Or trying to survive in LA by playing a prince in a kid's pizza joint?

DUNCAN

That's not really a choice--

JEFF

Damn right it's not.

Duncan is sullen.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE**EXT. TEN PIN ALLEY - DAY - ESTABLISHING**

An old aluminum-sided building. A neon sign over the front door bears the name of the lanes. The parking lot is almost deserted.

INT. TEN PIN ALLEY - DAY

Sam, Jeff and Duncan look over the small time establishment. It's pretty quiet for a business that thrives on noise. Only a few elderly patrons take up lanes.

Duncan looks disheartened.

DUNCAN

Weird. It's like I remember it, but totally different.

SAM

How's that?

DUNCAN

It looks the same, but there always seemed to be a lot of people around, no matter the time of day. Now it's so quiet--

SAM

You could hear a pin drop?

DUNCAN

Spare me the bowling jokes.

JEFF

Good one.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Is that Duncan Newcastle?

Duncan turns, and grins from ear to ear as he spots a grey-haired African-American, ANNIE MAE, now in her 60s.

She swoops in like she's going to give him a hug but instead slaps him upside the head.

DUNCAN

Owww! What was that for?

ANNIE

You owe the alley two hundred
thirty-eight dollars and seventy-
three cents!

DUNCAN

What? How do you figure that?

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - GRILL - DAY

An old King Edward cigar box is dropped on a counter.

Annie opens the box, and tons of old grill order receipts are
stuffed inside. She grabs a handful and waves them in
Duncan's face.

ANNIE

These are all the lunches you had
that you never paid for.

DUNCAN

You saved all this shit?

Annie pops him in the head again.

ANNIE

Language, young man!

DUNCAN

Jesus! Poppy never told me I had to
pay for those meals!

ANNIE

Did you ever ask him if you had to?

DUNCAN

No...

ANNIE

Uh-huh. So you owe two hundred
thirty-eight dollars --

DUNCAN

Think we've established the amount.

SAM

Plus interest.

ANNIE

Plus interest.

DUNCAN
 (to Sam)
 You're supposed to be on my side!

SAM
 Not until you agree to take over
 for Poppy.

ANNIE
 Hold on. Are you telling me that
 this puddin'-brained degenerate is
 the new owner of Ten Pin Alley?

SAM
 With some conditions, yes.

As they talk, JORDAN CROMWELL, 27 and as attractive a person
 this alley has likely ever encountered, walks into the grill.

ANNIE
 Lord have mercy! We're doomed!
 (spots Jordan)
 Ms. Cromwell! You're not gonna
 believe this!

Duncan wheels and his face lights up.

DUNCAN
 Jordan?

JORDAN
 (as she hugs him)
 Duncan! Oh my gosh! What are you
 doing here?

Jordan catches herself as soon as she says it.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
 Oh. Right. I'm really sorry,
 Duncan. Poppy was so awesome. Loved
 working for him.

DUNCAN
 Thanks.

JEFF
 You two know each other?

DUNCAN
 Dad, really? My senior prom date?

PETER

That was like ten years ago. I can't even remember what I ate for breakfast this morning.

DUNCAN

That doesn't sound good. You should get that checked out.

(to Annie)

You running this place now?

JORDAN

Your grandfather ran the business. I was -- am -- the bookkeeper.

ANNIE

Now Miss Cromwell, you know that's not true.

(to the others)

She was in charge for the past year while Poppy was ill.

(waves at Duncan)

Now this damn fool is going to take his place?

DUNCAN

Miss Annie, nothing's been decided.

ANNIE

Hmmph.

JEFF

(to Duncan)

We need to go. Your mom wants us home for dinner and you know how she gets when you're late for her paella.

DUNCAN

Man, I hate her paella. She never gets the rice to shrimp ratio right.

(to Jordan)

You coming to the service tomorrow?

JORDAN

Of course.

DUNCAN

Good. Let's catch up afterwards.

INT. NEWCASTLE RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Newcastles sit around the dining table. Duncan pushes his paella around the plate like a little kid.

SARAH

Duncan. Quit playing with your food. You're not five anymore.

DUNCAN

You really went to town on the shrimp. Gotta give the rice some love too, you know.

SARAH

Don't be silly. That recipe has been used in this family for five generations.

DUNCAN

Well, we're Irish, so I guess that explains all the potatoes in the recipe.

SYDNEY

But the Jameson's gives it a nice finishing touch.

The family eats in silence for a moment.

JEFF

(to Duncan)

Given any more thought to running the alley?

DUNCAN

To be honest, I haven't really been able to process it. I mean, why me?

JEFF

I think it's pretty clear. You're the only one who ever showed any interest in the place. Poppy never forgot that.

DUNCAN

It's just weird, you know? Poppy was always pushing me to follow my dreams. So if he knew my dream was to be an actor, why is making me choose between that and the alley?

Everyone chews on that for a second, until:

SYDNEY

Maybe he's seen you act.

Duncan frowns. That hangs in the air for a moment, until:

SARAH

Maybe you could do some acting here in your spare time. Some community theater or commercials for the Channel Twenty-Four. Help build your resume.

JEFF

That's actually a good idea, Duncan.

Duncan considers it as he pushes his food around.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A small crowd of MOURNERS surround Poppy's casket. A MINISTER drones on with some passages. Duncan's mind is elsewhere.

It's Texas and summer, meaning it's hot and humid. Duncan's shirt is soaked. His face is a mixture of tears and sweat.

Jordan stands on the opposite side of the casket from Duncan and catches his eye. Gives him a sympathetic nod.

Duncan wipes his forehead with his shirtsleeve. Returns the nod and adds a look: "Can you believe this?"

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

The service over, the mourners file away, some stopping to offer their condolences to Jeff and his sister, CORA.

Jordan approaches Duncan. Grins over his sweat-stained shirt.

JORDAN

Nice look.

DUNCAN

Yeah, I guess. Just wish Poppy could have died in March.

JORDAN

Or have been buried in a mausoleum.

DUNCAN

Exactly. Who wouldn't want that?

He watches the crowd head for their cars.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
You coming over to our place for
the reception?

JORDAN
Of course. You want a ride?

DUNCAN
That'd be great.

INT./EXT. JORDAN'S CAR - STREET - DAY (MOVING)

Jordan drives, while Duncan sits as close as possible to the A/C vents. Fans his underarms with the cool air.

DUNCAN
This is one thing I don't miss
about living in Texas. A/C is like
a luxury there. I have it -- I just
don't need it.

JORDAN
Sort of like your virginity?

DUNCAN
Ha ha. NO. Not like that at all.

JORDAN
It's great seeing you again. Just
wish it were under different
circumstances.

DUNCAN
Me too.

JORDAN
How's the acting thing going?

DUNCAN
(shrugs)
Ok, Mom.

JORDAN
Sore subject?

DUNCAN
Kind of. It's been tough. I do have
a recurring role as a prince. It's
a children's production.

JORDAN

So I hear.

(off Duncan's look)

Sydney came by the alley a few weeks ago with some friends. Caught me up on things.

Duncan looks frustrated.

DUNCAN

Remind me to kill her later.

JORDAN

She also said you were dating someone? Katy?

DUNCAN

Kate. And I don't know if you'd call it dating so much as co-existing.

JORDAN

Sounds complicated.

DUNCAN

Not really - I think we both know we're not fully committed yet. She's working harder at it than I am, though. She had her dad offer me a job with his company.

JORDAN

And that's bad because...

DUNCAN

Because she's essentially saying "you're dream to be an actor ain't working so take this office job instead."

JORDAN

What's his company do?

DUNCAN

Makes pillows.

JORDAN

Ooooh. Sexy.

DUNCAN

Exactly what I don't want to do for the rest of my life.

JORDAN
 So you're mad at her for putting
 you to a choice, which is the same
 thing Poppy's doing, right?

Duncan considers it.

DUNCAN
 Damn. You're brutal.

JORDAN
 Sorry for the reality check.

Duncan's phone CHIMES. He looks at the caller ID and sees
 that it's KATE. He presses ignore.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
 You need to take that?

DUNCAN
 Nah, I'm good.

A car brakes in front of Jordan and she SLAMS on the brakes.
 Duncan's head CRASHES into the dashboard.

JORDAN
 Oh my gosh! Duncan, are you okay?

Duncan holds his head in his hands. Groans loudly.

DUNCAN
 What the hell?

JORDAN
 I'm sorry! That car just stopped--

DUNCAN
 --Am I bleeding? If I am, lie about
 it, 'cause I really don't like
 blood.

JORDAN
 Let me see.

Duncan pulls back his hands. A big red welt is imprinted
 across his forehead.

A car HONKS behind them.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
 You're fine. No blood. Yet.

They drive away. Duncan rubs his head furiously.

EXT. NEWCASTLE RESIDENCE - DAY

Jordan parks in front of Duncan's house. Several people are already there and mill about by the front door.

As they get out of the car, Duncan's phone PINGS with a message from Kate: "CALL ME ASAP. VERY IMPORTANT!"

DUNCAN
 (to Jordan)
 You go on in -- I have to make a quick call.

JORDAN
 Okay. You need anything - a hug, a bandage for your head...

Duncan feels quickly at his forehead. Realizes he's been played.

DUNCAN
 Nice one.

Jordan nods, gives him his space as he punches at his cell phone. Waits for an answer.

INTERCUT CALL:

EXT. DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Kate answers her phone. Frantic.

KATE
 Duncan?

DUNCAN
 What's going on?

KATE
 I'm so sorry to bother you, of all days, but your landlord is tossing all your stuff out of your apartment!

DUNCAN
 Shit. I'm being evicted?

KATE
 I tried to stop them, but...

Kate watches as MAINTENANCE WORKERS haul stuff out Duncan's apartment. They throw a box of stuff to the ground.

KATE (CONT'D)
(to the workers)
Hey! Careful!

They ignore her.

KATE (CONT'D)
What do you want me to do?

Duncan thinks about it. He looks to the house. Jordan speaks with Sam Winkle. She looks back to Duncan. Gives him a sweet smile and a thumbs up.

DUNCAN
(to Kate)
Keep it. Sell it. I really don't
care anymore.

Duncan hangs up. Drifts into the crowd of people there to celebrate Poppy's life.

END OF SHOW