

The Living

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

RAY, 40s, leaves the building. Hint of grey in the brown crew cut. He wears a suit and tie; briefcase in hand. His weatherbeaten eyes are red and watery.

He stops at the edge of the sidewalk, lost. He turns back toward the building, where a bronze sign reads: Daubermire Corp.

With a sudden swing of his arm, he hits the sign with his briefcase.

BANG! People on the sidewalk jump.

BANG! Grabbing the briefcase with both hands, he continues to beat the sign rapidly; grunting, spitting, growling.

INT. BAR - DAY

Ray sits at the bar with a bottle of Heineken. His SERVER brings him a plate with a burger and fries.

RAY
Thanks.

SERVER
Another beer?

RAY
Yeah.

SERVER
You done at the office for the day?

RAY
Yeah.

He picks up his steak knife and slips the blade under the knot of his necktie. He saws the silk tie off his collar and throws it into the trash can behind the bar.

INT. RAY'S CAR - NIGHT

Ray is driving drunk, singing with the radio.

Police lights come up behind him.

RAY
Fuck. Fuck!

He pulls off to the shoulder, but the cop car keeps going past him.

Ray sighs in relief, turns off the radio and straightens up.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Ray pulls into the parking lot of his building. There's a mess of activity: police cars, ambulances, and a crowd of onlookers.

He parks and stumbles out, jacket and briefcase in hand.

He stops for a moment to see what the hubbub is, but can't see anything.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - NIGHT

As he gets off the elevator, he hears a ruckus. Voices are bickering in the hall.

Two COPS are talking to a beautiful woman in the doorway down the hall.

She is SILA, 30s, and she is screaming, crying; some in English, some in a foreign language.

COP #1
I know you're upset. I understand,
but I need you to calm down.
Screaming isn't going to get us
anywhere.

Confused and somewhat bemused, Ray stops and stares at this scene. The police notice him.

COP #1
You have business here?

RAY
Just going home.

COP #1
That's your place?

Ray nods.

COP #1
So keep going.

COP #1 indicates for COP #2 to follow Ray.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ray enters, drops his things on the floor and heads to the kitchenette.

He opens the fridge. Nothing good.

He goes for the cupboards, takes out a jar of peanut butter and digs in with his hand. He drops to the floor, sitting against the cabinets, licking crunchy spread off his fingers.

There's a KNOCK at the door. He ignores it.

Another KNOCK. He turns to look at the door, frustrated.

KNOCK, KNOCK...

He gets up and opens it.

Cop #2 (TAYLOR) is standing there.

RAY

Yes?

TAYLOR

How are we doing tonight, sir?

Ray shrugs.

TAYLOR

My name is Officer Taylor.

Ray nods. A beat.

RAY

Oh. Ray.

Ray puts out his hand, covered in peanut butter. The cop doesn't take it.

TAYLOR

Ray, I'd like to ask you some questions about the incident.

RAY

Which is that?

TAYLOR

Sir?

RAY
Which incident?

TAYLOR
Maybe we could talk about it
inside.

He nods, and opens the door wider.

After a second, Ray finally steps aside to let him in.

The cop pulls out a notebook and pen. Ray sits down at the
kitchen table.

TAYLOR
What's your full name, Ray?

RAY
Raymond Harrison.

TAYLOR
Middle name?

RAY
No.

TAYLOR
How long have you lived here?

RAY
About four years.

TAYLOR
What kind of work do you do?

RAY
None.

TAYLOR
You don't work? How do you support
yourself?

RAY
I lost my job today.

TAYLOR
I'm sorry to hear that. What was
your business?

RAY
Loss prevention.

TAYLOR
Loss prevention. Which company?

RAY
Lots of them. I worked for
Daubermire. It's a contract firm,
they'd hire me out.

The cop writes. Ray looks down. That cop's shoe is touching
the carpet.

RAY
What's the--all this? What are
you?

TAYLOR
How many drinks have you had today,
Ray?

RAY
A couple.

TAYLOR
Yeah. How'd you get home just now?

RAY
I walked.

TAYLOR
From where?

RAY
Couple blocks.

TAYLOR
From where?

RAY
From here.

TAYLOR
Where were you before here?

RAY
Oh, where was I drinking?

Two more seconds of this shit and Taylor's baton is going
right into--

RAY
Chippie's. Or Chappie's.
Chippie's or Chappie's. Chappie's.

TAYLOR
How long were you there?

RAY
Dinner. Plus beer...times...six.
Plus two.

TAYLOR
Equals?

RAY
Two hours. Little over.

TAYLOR
Is this the first you've been home
all day?

RAY
Since this morning.

TAYLOR
What time was that?

RAY
Seven-fifteen.

TAYLOR
How well do you know your neighbors
across the hall?

RAY
I don't.

TAYLOR
At all?

RAY
No. I see them here and there, but
I don't...that's none of my
business.

TAYLOR
You don't talk to your neighbors.

RAY
No. I hear 'em fuck sometimes.
(laughs)
Sorry.

TAYLOR
Do you ever hear them argue?

He shrugs.

TAYLOR
Is that yes or no?

RAY
Yeah, sometimes.

TAYLOR
Does it seem serious?

RAY
They always fuck afterwards, so,
no.

TAYLOR
Have you noticed any unusual people
around the apartment building
recently?

RAY
No.

TAYLOR
Anyone who may seem threatening?

RAY
No.

TAYLOR
Any vandalism or theft?

RAY
No.

Ray gets up and gets the jar of peanut butter from the floor.
He sits back down and starts eating it with his fingers
again.

TAYLOR
At or around seven o'clock this
evening, your neighbor, Alexander
Vernon, fell from the roof of this
apartment building. He was killed
on impact. His wife, Sila, said
he's been withdrawn for the past
several weeks. But of course you
don't speak to him. Correct?

RAY
No. That's right.

TAYLOR
We're collecting statements and
asking for everyone's cooperation.
I'm going to give you my card, and
if you see anything, or can
remember anything that might help
us, you'll give me a call.

Ray nods. Taylor holds out his card, sees that Ray has no intention of taking it with his peanut buttery hands, and sets it on the table.

He leaves.

TAYLOR
Have a good night.

RAY
You too.

Ray sits there for a moment, smacking his lips with the peanut butter. He wipes his fingers on his dress shirt.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ray is asleep on his stomach in the middle of the floor. He wakes up, and we just know he's in a world of hurt.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

He tosses through the medicine cabinet and the drawers below the sink. Whatever he's looking for isn't here.

INT. 7-ELEVEN - NIGHT

Ray puts a bottle of Advil and a Red Bull down on the counter. The CLERK rings him up. It must be 2 or 3 a.m., but these two miserable fucks don't care.

EXT. RAY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ray walks up to the front entrance, finishing off his Red Bull. There's somebody, barely visible, standing by the door - a woman - smoking.

Ray averts eye contact and goes for the door, but--

SILA
What did the police talk to you
about?

He stops, turns toward her.

RAY
What?

A beat. He recognizes her as his neighbor, the crying widow.

RAY (CONT'D)

Oh. He asked me some questions.

SILA

Did you know my husband?

RAY

No. I'm--I didn't. Are you okay?

SILA

No.

RAY

Can I have one of those?

She gives him a cigarette. He holds it for a few beats with no way of lighting it. When he motions for a lighter, she hands him her burning cigarette to light his own.

He takes an amateur's drag and hands back her cigarette.

RAY

Where are you from?

SILA

Lithuania.

RAY

Oh.

SILA

Do you know it?

RAY

It's...by Russia.

SILA

No.

RAY

Was your husband from Lithuania, too?

SILA

No.

RAY

Do you...have family here?

SILA

His family.

She notices something about him.

SILA
You don't smoke, do you?

RAY
I don't.

SILA
Why did you ask for one?

RAY
I don't know. I wanted an excuse
to ask you your name.
(long silence)
What's your name?

SILA
Sila.

RAY
I'm Ray.

SILA
What do you do, Ray?

He hates this question.

RAY
Nothing. I don't do anything.

She eyes him. He shrugs and tosses the cigarette.

SILA
You don't work. And you don't
smoke.

He nods. That sums him up.

SILA
Did you see the pavement?

She jerks her head toward the distance. Ray looks quickly.

RAY
No.

SILA
They didn't clean the sidewalk.

RAY
I'm sure they will.

SILA
They think it's a crime scene.
It's going to scare people away.

Ray looks back once again.

RAY
The police don't clean up things
after they're done. The property
owner will probably hire a hazard
company.

SILA
What does it mean?

RAY
They, they clean, when there's a--
something like this happens in a
public place, there are companies
that come to clean it. It's
expensive, though.

She nods.

RAY
Listen, I should--I've got to be
getting in. Thank you for the
cigarette. Um...

SILA
Go.

RAY
Yeah. Goodnight.

He goes inside.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ray is asleep, slumped in a chair in front of a TV playing
late night fare.

KNOCK, KNOCK at the door. He awakens.

He opens the door, and there's Sila.

RAY
Yeah? Hi.

SILA
I need your help.

RAY
What's wrong?

SILA
I want to hire you.

Before he can ask...

SILA
I need someone to give me a ride
tomorrow. Will you take me?

RAY
Where?

SILA
It's in town. I can pay you.

RAY
No, it's not that. I just don't
know if I--I've got a few things I
have to take care of.

SILA
Please. I have no one else.

He's considering it, and...

RAY
How much time are we talking? You
know what--I--yeah. Yeah. Okay.
I'll do it.

SILA
Meet me downstairs at 9 o'clock.

She leaves.

RAY
A.M.?

Ray shuts the door and heads back to his living room. He
sees a clock on the wall -- 4:25. He groans.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Ray leans against the building, half asleep. A hundred yards
away, police tape blocks off the spot where Alexander Vernon
died.

The door opens, Sila comes out. She's not looking good, but
still looks better than him.

RAY
Morning. Ready?

She hands him a set of keys.

SILA
We'll take his car.

INT. ALEX'S CAR - MORNING

Driving through Oak Park, Chicago. She just looks out the window. Silent, until...

SILA
Did you sleep?

RAY
No.

SILA
Me either.

RAY
I never sleep much. Never have,
anyway.

SILA
You'll live longer.

RAY
Who knows.

SILA
Alex would have slept 12 hours a
day if he had the time.

RAY
Do you want any coffee, or
anything?

SILA
No.

RAY
Which, um, which part of town are
we going?

SILA
Berwyn.

She digs in her wallet and hands him a business card. He reads the address.

RAY
Okay. Yeah, I know it.

She takes out her cigarettes, offers him one.

RAY
No, thanks. Your--

She lights up, he cracks the window.

SILA
My what?

RAY
No. Nothing. I was thinking out loud.

She stares at him. And, god, does she know how to stare.

RAY (CONT'D)
I was going to tell you your English is very good. How long have you lived in America?

SILA
Twelve years.

A beat.

RAY
Do you like it?

SILA
No.

RAY
Sorry. Most of the--

SILA
Do you like it?

RAY
As opposed to what? It's okay. Better if I was a millionaire.

SILA
Anywhere is better if you're a millionaire.

RAY
Are there a lot of millionaires in Albania?

There's that stare again.

SILA
I don't know.

RAY
Lithuania. Are there a lot of
millionaires in Lithuania?

SILA
I didn't ask.

He nods.

RAY
I think I'd fit in there.

She looks him up and down.

EXT. L.B. SPORTS - DAY

A big-box sporting goods store, with a Starbucks next door.
They park and get out.

INT. L.B. SPORTS - DAY

As they enter, Sila breaks away from Ray.

SILA
I'll be a minute.

RAY
Take your time.

Ray drifts over to a row of punching bags. He browses the merchandise, fiddling with things, all the while stealing glances at Sila on the other side of the store.

He sees her approach an older heavy-set man in an employee polo. The man seems pleasant enough. Sila removes her sunglasses and starts to cry. They speak, but Ray can't hear it.

She says something that makes the man's jaw drop. He holds her.

Ray keeps watching, not noticing the young L.B. CLERK nearby.

L.B. CLERK
Can I help you find anything, sir?

RAY
No. Thank you.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Ray is sitting at the window of the Starbucks next to L.B. Sports. As he has his coffee and muffin, he sees Sila walk out carrying a cardboard box.

EXT. L.B. SPORTS - DAY

Ray runs out to meet Sila at the curb.

RAY

Sorry. I wanted to give you some space. Are you okay?

SILA

Can we go to one more place?

RAY

Sure.

INT. ALEX'S CAR - DAY

In the rearview mirror, Ray eyeballs the cardboard box in the backseat. Some items poke out the top; notebooks, a shirt.

Ray is about to turn into Wunsch & Sons Funeral Home. Suddenly, Sila pulls at the steering wheel.

Ray hits the brakes, straightens them out and pulls off to the shoulder.

RAY

Jesus Christ! What are you doing? What are you doing?!

SILA

I changed my mind. I can't go there now.

RAY

Okay. So you tell me "I changed my mind. I can't go there now." You don't grab my steering wheel in the middle of the road. What the hell's wrong with you?

They're silent for a bit.

RAY

Do you want to go there, or not?

SILA
I want to go home.

RAY
Okay.

He drives off.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Sila gets out and takes the cardboard box. She leans her head in the open doorway.

SILA
Thank you.

RAY
Are you going to be okay?

She nods.

RAY
Okay.
(he turns off the car)
Listen, I have to run some errands,
but thank you for letting me use
the car this morning.

SILA
Take it for the day. Leave the
keys under the seat when you bring
it back.

RAY
Are you su--

She shuts the door. After a beat, Ray turns the car back on.

INT. UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE, WAITING ROOM - DAY

Ray fills out paperwork on a clipboard with his fellow jobless.

INT. UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE, CUBICLE - DAY

Ray sits across from a staffing AGENT who studies Ray's resume.

AGENT

Daubermire sounds like it's just another one of those firms that provides a service, not a product. It's tough to get the market cornered on a service.

RAY

Sure.

AGENT

Nothing specialized. You were in the military.

RAY

Navy.

AGENT

What did you do for them?

RAY

Supply and logistics. That should be on there.

AGENT

Yeah. Well, you're pretty much exclusively security-oriented. I don't get much of that.

RAY

Well, criminal justice. I could handle anything para-legal.

AGENT

Not likely. But, I might be able to get you something at Eckle Sweets. It's seasonal, and I think you'd be a good fit for it.

RAY

I'm not familiar with them.

AGENT

Cereal.

RAY

It's a security job?

AGENT

No, assembly. Cereal boxes. I'll send them over your information, and we'll see what they say. Fingers crossed.

Agent offers his hand.

RAY

Right.

Ray shakes it.

INT. BAR - DAY

Ray is a few drinks in. There's a game on: Bears/Packers. Bears FANS are seated down the bar.

The Bears fans scream obnoxiously. Ray is annoyed.

They scream louder. The Bears QB is sacked and they groan.

At this, Ray stands up and applauds heartily. When the fans look daggers at him, he sends daggers right back.

INT. BAR, BATHROOM - DAY

Drunk Ray finishes taking a leak and dials on his cell phone.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Hi, this is Nicole. Sorry, I missed your call; I'm a busy gal. Leave your number and I--

He hangs up.

EXT. OVERPASS - DAY

Ray walks on the shoulder overlooking Eisenhower Expressway. Traffic thunders on down below.

He stops, looks down at the loud stream of cars and trucks. For a moment, he lifts his body just enough that his feet leave the ground.

A truck charges by, and he sets himself down again.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

It's drizzly. Ray comes out with a bag of garbage. He takes it to the dumpsters.

Something catches his eye. By the side of the dumpster is a familiar cardboard box. It's the box that Sila picked up from the sporting goods store that morning.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Ray comes in carrying the box. He sets it down near the small sofa in the den area.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Ray lays the personal effects out on the floor.

A cell phone, calendar, appointment book, pictures, name tag, receipt and a pair of sunglasses.

He takes the receipt over to the counter, sets it down, and takes a beer back to the couch.

He sits down with the appointment book and flips through it. Dentist appointments, shopping lists, scribbles, names of restaurants, movies and concerts. He gets to this week and sees an alpha-numeric code under "Thursday."

Ray closes the book and picks up the name tag.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Ray cuts through the parking lot, passing the dead man's car on the way to his own.

INT. RAY'S CAR - NIGHT

Driving out of Oak Park, toward Berwyn again.

INT. L.B. SPORTS - NIGHT

Ray enters the brightly lit store, browsing. He passes Cubs jerseys and weight benches.

INT. L.B. SPORTS - LATER

Ray looks at running shoes. A young clerk, MIKE, approaches.

MIKE
Help you find anything?

RAY
No, thank you.

MIKE
All right. Name's Mike if you need anything.

RAY
Thanks.

Mike walks on.

RAY
Actually, Mike?

MIKE
Yeah.

RAY
Do you have any other sizes?

MIKE
For which pair?

RAY
These Asics.

MIKE
Sure. What size?

RAY
Eleven and a half.

MIKE
Just one second.

INT. L.B. SPORTS - LATER

Ray is seated, and Mike laces up a new pair of trainers.

MIKE
These are pretty good. Good and
breathable. Are you more into
indoor running or outdoor?

RAY
Outdoor.

MIKE
A lot people are using treadmill
shoes for sidewalk running. That's
a great way to roll an ankle.
Okay, give me your left.

He fits the shoe. After a hesitation...

RAY
Did you know Alex Vernon?

Mike is taken aback.

MIKE
Yeah. Yeah, I did. It's
a...terrible...

RAY
I was an old friend of his. Why I
was asking.

MIKE
God, I'm sorry. He was a good man.

RAY
I hadn't talked to him in a long
time.

MIKE
Are you a musician?

RAY
No.

MIKE
Oh, I thought maybe you were a
bandmate.

RAY
I didn't even know Alex was in a
band.

MIKE
Yeah. He used to talk about it a
lot. Him and his guys did shows in
town. Used to try to get a lot of
people from work to go to one. I
never did, though. You can walk
around; see how that feels.

Ray snaps out of it, rises, walks a few feet.

RAY
Pretty good.

MIKE
Did you want to see any others?

RAY
No. Thanks. These will be fine.

He sits down. Mike starts taking the shoe off.

RAY
Was he ever...did he seem morose?
Was he upset?

MIKE

He was really professional. If he had problems, he kept them to himself.

RAY

Did he get angry easily?

MIKE

You know, not at me. He liked things to run smooth. Go along, get along. I don't know, man. What do you really know about people?

INT. L.B. SPORTS, CHECKOUT - LATER

Mike bags up the shoes, hands them to Ray.

MIKE

You know, Alex was a good man. Always fair. If you happen to see his wife, tell her that we're all thinking about her.

RAY

Thank you.

He starts to leave, but pauses.

RAY

Do you know how I could get a hold of his bandmates?

MIKE

I never met any of those guys. I think they're probably in the city, but I don't know. They played at The High Note a lot.

Ray nods.

RAY

Thank you.

MIKE

Take care.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ray gets off the elevator with the shoes in a bag. He digs in his pocket for keys and finds two pair. He stops in front of his door for a second, but then keeps walking - to Sila's.

He knocks.

Sila comes to the door looking unrested.

SILA
Yes?

RAY
Hi.

SILA
Hello.

RAY
I didn't want to leave your keys in
the car.

She takes them.

RAY
And I wanted to know if you need
anything. I'm out running errands
all the time, and I can pick
something up if...if you want.

SILA
No. Thank you.

RAY
Okay.

SILA
Thank you.

She closes the door on him and Ray walks away.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

He tosses his new shoes on the couch. He starts picking up Alex's belongings off the floor and putting them back in the box, when there's a KNOCK at the door.

He opens it and sees Sila.

SILA
Do you want to get a cup of coffee?

INT. IHOP - NIGHT

Ray and Sila are seated in a booth with coffee. A server brings French toast for Ray.

RAY
Do you want to try some?

SILA
No.

He chows down.

SILA
Is it good?

RAY
It's great.

He motions toward her with the plate. She eats a forkful, and nods in agreement.

SILA
So. You're unemployed.

RAY
Mm-hmm.

SILA
What do you want to do next?

RAY
For work?

SILA
Of course.

RAY
I don't care anymore. What do you do?

SILA
For work?

RAY
Of course.

SILA
I work at National City.

Ray nods. Silence.

RAY
Do you like it?

She shrugs. More silence.

SILA
I can't find his favorite suit.

Ray looks on.

SILA
Alex's.

RAY
Alex's.

SILA
He never needed a suit, but he had one anyway. He always had one good outfit. He wore it when he wanted to impress people. He liked nice things. I can't find it anywhere.

RAY
What kind of suit was it?

SILA
I don't know.
(she knows...)
It was gray. It had a notch lapel. Two buttons. He spent all that money on it, but it sat in the closet. Now it's gone.

RAY
Do you think he gave it away?

SILA
No. They asked me if I had a suit for him to wear. I wanted him to wear that one. I guess it doesn't matter. They say they're going to give me his ring back if I want it. I have to make these decisions, and I can only do it once.

RAY
Do you want it back?

SILA
I think so. Have you ever been married?

RAY
No.

SILA
How old are you?

RAY
I'm 48.

SILA
Why aren't you married?

RAY
I was going to try. I was engaged
once.

She folds her hands, leans in. He stares at her; she motions
for him to go on.

RAY
Uh...this woman, Nicole. We dated
for a few years, and, so, I
proposed to her. And, um, it just
didn't work.

SILA
Why not?

RAY
It really wasn't a good fit. I
didn't like it anymore. I wasn't
good at it.

SILA
"It?"

RAY
Yeah, living with somebody,
sleeping with somebody, having
dinner every night with somebody.

SILA
That's what most people want.

RAY
That's what she wanted. I hope she
finds it. I think she's seeing
somebody now; probably. I'm sure
he's good to her; probably. Are
you taking care of yourself?

SILA
Who else will?

RAY
No, I just mean, are you eating,
are you sleeping okay?

SILA
No. I miss it.

RAY
Him?

SILA
Yes, him. But "it," too. Living with somebody, sleeping with somebody, having dinner with somebody. If I couldn't sleep, I would tell him about it. He'd listen with his eyes closed and fall back asleep. Now I just lie on the couch, until I see the sun come up and I drift off for a few hours.

RAY
When I was in the Navy, I had a plank bed in a little cubby hole, with a curtain that you could pull closed. I've never had such a good sleep. You ought to try a hammock.

She takes another forkful of French toast.

SILA
Why?

RAY
You can feel it wrap around you. 'course, we did hot bunking. We'd sleep in shifts, so my bed was always warm from the guy before me.

SILA
So, you don't like to sleep in a cold bed?

RAY
No, it's terrible.

SILA
Then you understand.

With a sip of his coffee, he concedes to her point.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Back home, Ray and Sila get off the elevator. They stop in front of Ray's door.

SILA
Thank you for the coffee.

RAY
Any time.

She studies him for a second; his shoulders, his height.

RAY
Well. Let me know if y--

SILA
Wait for a second.

She walks away, enters her apartment. A few seconds later, she comes out with a long black topcoat.

SILA
Here. Try it on.

Reluctantly, he does. It seems to fit.

SILA
It's nice. Keep it.

RAY
Oh. Oh, no, I can't.

SILA
Please.

RAY
It's a gorgeous coat, and thank you, but I would just feel like--

SILA
I don't want it. If you don't want it, you can throw it away.

A beat. He realizes he can't win this one.

RAY
It's, really, it's beautiful.

SILA
Wear it to a job interview.

Sila doesn't take her eyes off the coat. She touches it, grips the lapel. She hugs him. Ray is surprised and doesn't fully hug back.

She breaks the hug and walks away.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MORNING

Ray sits at the table with a coffee, pen and some paper. The box of Alex's belongings is at his feet. He's scrolling through Alex's cell phone.

Ray is writing down all of the phone numbers and their corresponding names.

"Barry: 708-334-9665, Doug (work): 708-619-5250," etc.

He gets to a number that's unidentified. He dials it with his own cell phone...

VOICE #1
Domino's Pizza. Is this carry out
or delivery?

Ray hangs up. He keeps scrolling through numbers, passing "Sila," coming to another unidentified number.

He dials the number on his cell...

VOICE #2
Drake Hotel. This is Sondra. How
can I help you?

RAY
Sorry. Wrong number.

He hangs up, writes down "Drake Hotel" on his sheet.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Ray is on his laptop. He Googles "The High Note, Chicago," and studies the map for a second.

INT. RAY'S CAR - DAY

Ray drives up the side streets of downtown Chicago, checking a printed copy of the map. He pulls into a half-empty lot outside of a bar/club.

The sign says "The High Note - Live Music and Spirits."

INT. THE HIGH NOTE - DAY

Ray enters the empty club. There's a darkened stage at the far end of the place, with a sizeable floor in front and a bar to the side, where two BARMEN are chatting.

One barman eyeballs Ray.

BARMAN
Can I help you?

RAY
Yeah. Maybe. I'm trying to find a band. All I have is a name.

BARMAN
Our booking manager's in charge of all that. Paul. He's not here yet today.

RAY
Okay. Do you have a number for him?

The barman gets a schedule from under the counter and hands it to Ray.

BARMAN
That's him at the bottom there.

RAY
Thank you. Do you work during the shows?

BARMAN
Yeah.

RAY
Does the name Alex Vernon ring any bells?

The barman starts to shake his head, but nods after a second.

BARMAN
Yeah, sure, bass player, right? He's in a blues band called Polaris.
(points on the schedule)
There you go. October 24.

RAY
Polaris. Can I keep this?

BARMAN
Sure.

RAY
Appreciate it.

INT. DRY CLEANERS - DAY

Ray waits in line.

CLEANER

Next.

RAY

Hi, pick up.

He digs a receipt from his jacket, hands it over.

CLEANER

Vernon.

RAY

Yes.

The cleaner disappears in a rack of bagged clothes.

CLEANER

One item?

RAY

Should be.

CLEANER

This is the only one I've got.

He comes back with a suit.

CLEANER

That's 12.50.

He pays.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

He opens the plastic garment bag and pulls out the suit.

It's gray, notch lapel, two buttons, just like Sila said.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - DAY

Ray tries the jacket on in the mirror. It fits well enough. He admires himself, stroking the lapels, and notices something.

Inside the breast pocket is a credit card.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ray is on the phone, with the card.

TANYA (O.S.)
Customer Service, this is Tanya.
How may I help you?

RAY
Hi, Tanya. I lost my card for a few days, and I just want to see if there have been any recent charges.

TANYA
Can you confirm the last four digits on the account?

RAY
Yes, 4-0-7-7.

TANYA
One moment. I am showing a charge dated the fifth, that's still pending.

RAY
Really? What was the charge?

TANYA
That was the Drake Hotel in Chicago. Would you like to dispute it?

RAY
No. No, that's right. Thank you for your help.

TANYA
My pleasure. Good-bye.

Ray hangs up. He thinks for a moment.

He goes and gets the list of Alex's phone numbers, dials one.

CONCIERGE
Drake Hotel.

RAY
Yes, I'd like to check on a charge from my credit card to the hotel there.

CONCIERGE
Do you have a confirmation code?

RAY
No, I don't think so. Well...what
would it look like?

CONCIERGE
It's a six-figure alphanumeric
code.

Ray thinks. He flips through Alex's date book, stopping on
Thursday. Scribbled in the box is CGV506.

RAY
Try C-G-V-5-0-6.

CONCIERGE
Yes. Is this Mr. Vernon?

RAY
It is.

CONCIERGE
We still have you booked for a
single room Friday evening. That's
on your Master Card.

RAY
That's right. Thank you.

He hangs up.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Ray jogs down the side of the street in his new shoes.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Ray, sweaty and huffing, comes up to the building. He
stretches his legs, touches his toes, touches the pavement.
He looks down the sidewalk to where it happened.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

His shoes lie tossed by the door. The shower is running.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Wearing a towel, Ray picks up the suit in its drycleaning
bag. He picks a tie from his closet.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL, LOBBY - EVENING

Ray enters the lobby, wearing Alex Vernon's gray suit. He approaches the front desk, where a young CONCIERGE stands.

CONCIERGE
Hello, sir.

RAY
Hello. Checking in.

CONCIERGE
Welcome to the Drake. Name,
please?

RAY
Alex Vernon.

The Concierge types it up.

CONCIERGE
Vernon, yes. I think I spoke to
you on the phone the other day.

RAY
That's right.

CONCIERGE
It looks like your room's already
been checked in.

RAY
Has it?

CONCIERGE
Yes. The extra key has been left
for you.

He swipes the key to activate it, and hands it over.

CONCIERGE
Room 1102. Do you have any
luggage?

Ray takes the key, tenuously.

RAY
No. Thank you.

As Ray leaves he looks back at the concierge, who catches the glance. Ray smiles and nods.

He walks toward the hotel bar at the other end of the lobby.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL, BAR - EVENING

Ray stands in the pay phone stall. He's dialing on his cell phone, and watching the hotel's front desk, which is in view. The concierge is still there, and is joined by CONCIERGE #2.

Upon seeing the second worker, Ray picks up the pay phone and dials. He simultaneously presses SEND on his cell phone.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL, FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

The phone rings; the Concierge answers.

CONCIERGE
Good evening, Drake Hotel. Hello?

The second phone rings; Concierge #2 answers.

CONCIERGE #2
Good evening, Drake Hotel.

RAY
Yes, room 1102, please.

CONCIERGE #2
One moment.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL, BAR - CONTINUOUS

Ray waits as the line rings.

DENISE
Hello?

Ray listens, but doesn't speak.

DENISE
Hello? Is that you?

Ray hangs up.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ray gets off the elevator and walks to Room 1102. He hesitates several times, but slides his key card and opens the door.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL, ROOM 1102 - NIGHT

The room is dimly lit. Ray quietly closes the door. A woman, DENISE, comes in. She's pretty, early 30s. Seeing Ray, she's startled.

DENISE
Jesus. Who are you?

RAY
This isn't your room.

DENISE
Yes, it is. You're in the wrong place. How did you get in? Who are you?

RAY
This isn't your room. This is Alex Vernon's room.

DENISE
Yes, I'm with Alex. He's my husband.

RAY
No, he isn't.

DENISE
Excuse me, this is none of your business, and I want you out of here. Go talk to your supervisor. He's going to hear from me, you can bet on that.

RAY
I don't work for the hotel.

DENISE
I don't give a shit who you are. Get out now, or I'm calling the police. My husband's coming back--

RAY
He's not your husband.

DENISE
My husband is coming back--I'm calling the cops. And they better get here before he does, because he is going to kick your ass.

RAY
Alex is dead.

She freezes.

DENISE

What?

RAY

Alex committed suicide.

DENISE

No.

RAY

He jumped off the roof of his apartment building Wednesday night.

DENISE

Oh, he w--

She sits on the bed.

RAY

He wasn't your husband. I know that.

DENISE

You don't know anything about me.

RAY

No. I know his wife. You're not her.

DENISE

Who are you?

RAY

I'm a friend of Sila.

DENISE

Who--

(long beat, shifting)

Oh. Oh, that...that fucking asshole. That fucking asshole. That dickless, pathetic fucking asshole. He didn't want to tell me himself.

RAY

I found his appointment book, and I went looking--

DENISE

Oh, shut the fuck up! "He's moving away." Or, "He loves his wife." Or "She found out." "He's dead." Give me a fucking break. You are disgusting. I hope you know that. You are disgusting. How can you-- can't you be an adult? Is anybody a fucking adult?

She starts to cry.

DENISE

(nodding, quietly)

He told you I was here. His wife found out, so he told you I was here. It's off.

She falls apart.

DENISE

Is he dead?

Ray nods. She sobs.

RAY

I'm...I was hoping you could tell me a few things. I just want to know.

DENISE

Get out. Get out right now.

RAY

If can tell me anything.

DENISE

I'm not telling--you--I don't have anything to say to you. Or that bitch. Get out!!

Ray turns to leave. As he reaches the door...

DENISE

I'm not a bad person.

He turns back.

RAY

I didn't think that you were.

She wipes her eyes.

DENISE
Did he leave a note?

RAY
I don't know.

A beat. She shakes her head.

DENISE
Why?

RAY
That's what I want to know.

He leaves.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Ray stands where Alex must have stood, looking out. A large part of the roof is sectioned off with police tape.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ray gathers all of Alex's things and puts them back into the box.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ray sets the box down and closes his apartment door behind him. As he picks the box up again, he looks up to see Sila standing a few feet away.

She looks at him; she looks at the box. Finally...

RAY
I just wanted to know who he was.

SILA
What did you find out?

RAY
Nothing.

SILA
That was lucky. The funeral is tomorrow. I'll need a ride.

He nods. She starts walking away.

SILA
I won't bother you again.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ray sits at the table, eating from a pot of stew, looking very blank and lost. He swigs from a glass of whiskey.

He digs in his pocket for his cell phone. Pauses. Dials.

NICOLE (V.O.)
Hello?

RAY
Nicole?

NICOLE (V.O.)
Ray?

RAY
Hi.

NICOLE (V.O.)
What do you want?

RAY
I want to make sure you're okay.

NICOLE (V.O.)
Why?

RAY
Because I do.

NICOLE (V.O.)
You called me last night, too,
didn't you? I don't want you to
call me. Do you understand?

Her voice is assertive, but not aggressive. Even a touch sympathetic.

RAY
Would you ever tell me if you
needed help? If you needed someth--
if you--would you ask me?

NICOLE (V.O.)
No. I don't think I'm the one who
needs help.

RAY
Yeah...

NICOLE (V.O.)
If you need help, then...then you
should find somebody to help you.
(MORE)

NICOLE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Somebody else. Okay? Let me worry
about me.

RAY
You know, I--there was never anyone
else.

NICOLE (V.O.)
I'm not doing this Ray. Okay?

RAY
I'm sorry I didn't take better care
of you.

NICOLE (V.O.)
Then take care of yourself.
Goodbye.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - DAY

Ray finishes his tie and puts on his black suit jacket.

INT. RAY'S CAR - DAY

Ray and Sila drive. She stares out the window, but glances
over just long enough to recognize Alex's sunglasses sitting
in the console. She takes them.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH, SANCTUARY - DAY

A funeral with full mass. Ray sits in the back pew, while
Sila is in the front.

The PRIEST gives a Latin blessing.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH, FELLOWSHIP LOUNGE - DAY

People drink coffee and eat fruit. Ray sips his coffee
standing up, as he watches Sila clasp hands with mourners at
a faraway table.

He sees a group of people gathered around a photo board, and
makes his way over. They're looking at family pictures.

Slowly, the people part, and Ray sees the face of Alex Vernon
for the first time: A young boy; a smiling child; a long
haired teenager; a goofball son and brother...

Ray finally rests on a photo of a grown up Alex with Sila.

A loving husband.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Behind the church, Ray takes a walk. Sila comes around.

She joins him in his walk. They stroll amid old gravestones, barely legible. They come to a stop, he a few steps behind her.

Sila starts to cry.

She takes out Alex's sunglasses, turns to Ray, puts them on his face, puts her hands on his chest and kisses him.

As they break, she looks into the dark glasses with despair.

SILA
I'm so sorry.

She hugs him, weeping into his shirt.

EXT. APARTMENT, ROOFTOP - AFTERNOON

The door opens and Sila comes out onto the roof. She's nicely dressed. She slowly paces toward the police tape.

INT. ERSKINE SECURITY, RECEPTION - AFTERNOON

Ray sits, thumbing through a magazine. A heavysset BOSS in a tie comes out to greet him.

BOSS
Ray?

RAY
Yes.

BOSS
Come on back.

Ray greets him with a phony smile and handshake.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, ROOFTOP - AFTERNOON

Sila ducks beneath the police line and walks to the edge of the building. She stares out as if in a trance.

INT. ERSKINE SECURITY, OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Ray is engaged in a conversation with the boss, unheard.

INT. ERSKINE SECURITY, RECEPTION - AFTERNOON

Ray nods at the receptionist and makes his way out the door.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, ROOFTOP - AFTERNOON

A woman's feet step up on the ledge of the building. As she pushes off, an elegant shoe falls to the rooftop surface.

INT. RAY'S CAR - EVENING

Ray drives home. He looks optimistic for the first time.

Police lights come up behind him.

RAY
Son of a bitch.

He pulls over, but the police car passes him.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Ray pulls into the parking lot, which is once again filled with police cars, ambulances, onlookers.

He parks, gets out, and looks on towards the mess.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ray sits on the floor against the cabinets, lost in space. There's a heavy KNOCK at the door, and the sound of police radios.

Ray doesn't move. More KNOCKS. He just stays put.

EXT. OAK PARK - DAY

Some time has passed. The sun still rises. The trains run. Traffic is as heavy as ever on the Dan Ryan.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ray is plugging away at something on his laptop. He takes a break, goes over to the countertop coffee maker and pours what's left into his mug.

He pulls out the filter of used grounds and throws them in the trash.

He pauses; sees something in the trash. He pulls it out, but we don't see it. A magazine page? A flyer, perhaps?

EXT. THE HIGH NOTE - NIGHT

Jazz music emanates from the building on the Windy City sidewalk.

INT. THE HIGH NOTE - NIGHT

Inside, Polaris is on the stage. A five-man band, they are just wrapping up a hot number.

People mingle and enjoy themselves.

Ray is seated at the bar, Heineken in hand. He's once again in his own clothes. There's no trace of Alex Vernon on him.

The band wraps up, everyone applauds. The lead GUITARIST takes the mike.

GUITARIST

Thank you. Some of you may have seen Polaris before, and you might notice we're a man short. We lost one of our boys not too long ago. Our bass player, Alex Vernon. He was a good man and a good friend and, Alex...we miss you. Our man, Dave Backelrich stepped in on bass.

Scattered applause.

GUITARIST

So we're going to carry on. But this next one is special, because it was written by Alex, and it's one our favorites. We love you, buddy, and this one's for you. It's called "Sila."

The saxophone and cymbals ease into an entrancing slow-dance jazz tune. With spirit, it picks up. Ray listens at the bar, but his mind is very, very far away.

FADE OUT.