

"All Or Nothing"

FADE IN:

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE

A furnished office with plaques and other awards adorning the four walls.

MICHAEL PENNINGTON (35), a handsome man with curly hair and glasses, sits cramped behind a large oak desk that is covered in stacks of paper and folders. He studies a sheet in front of him, stopping every few seconds to scribble down notes.

He takes a large sip from his coffee mug. Rubs his droopy, tired eyes. He returns to his document.

Another man with a wrinkled shirt and shaggy hair steps into the door. GEOFFREY PENNINGTON (29) holds in his arms another stack of papers that teeters back and forth, about to fall.

Michael jumps up.

MICHAEL

Let me help you.

Geoffrey grabs the stack of papers with both hands. Steadies them.

GEOFFREY

I've got them. I'm good. I'm good.

Michael plops back into his seat.

MICHAEL

And what do I owe my brother today for this surprising visit? The break room's power out again?

Geoffrey saunters over, drops the stack of papers onto the last bare place on Michael's desk.

GEOFFREY

Just thought I'd drop by an early Christmas present.

MICHAEL

What is this?

GEOFFREY

The Roberson account. Mister Mayfield said he needed these contracts read and noted by tomorrow morning.

MICHAEL

You're kidding? He said the same thing when he dumped this load on me last night. There's no way I can get all of this done.

GEOFFREY

Sure you can. You're "Michael Pennington. Master of pressure." You've turned out quality stuff in less time than this.

Michael sighs. Runs a hand through his curly hair.

MICHAEL

Yeah, in college. But this isn't a term paper. If I don't get this finished then we lose the account. That's millions of dollars.

GEOFFREY

Bummer.
(checks watch)
I'm late. Got to get moving.

MICHAEL

Where you headed?

GEOFFREY

Break, of course.
(as-a-matter-of-fact)
I guess I'll see you at the hospital later?

MICHAEL

I doubt it. I've been so busy I haven't even had a chance to get up there at all.

GEOFFREY

(concerned)
You haven't been to the hospital yet? You do know they've called the family in --

MICHAEL
I know. I know.

GEOFFREY
Michael, mom needs us -- and the
family needs you.

Michael takes his glasses off, rubs his eyes.

MICHAEL
I'll do my best. I can't promise
anything but I'll try to be there.

That seems to be a good enough answer for Geoffrey, as he
smiles and strolls towards the door.

GEOFFREY
Now if you don't mind, there's a
honey bun and a cup of coffee
calling my name.

This manages to get a small grin out of Michael as he watches
his brother exit the room.

INT. PHILIP MAYFIELD'S OFFICE - DAY

A huge room complete with two fully stocked bookshelves on
either side and an oversized, and over-expensive, desk in the
middle of the room. Out of the window, which serves as the
back wall, looms a beautiful view of the city landscape's
towering buildings.

PHILIP MAYFIELD (50), a plump and balding man in a tailored
suit, stares at his computer screen intently.

There is a knock at the door.

MAYFIELD
Come in.

Geoffrey self-consciously slides through the door.

GEOFFREY
Mr. Mayfield, you wanted to see me?

MAYFIELD
Sure son, sure.
(motioning)
Take a seat.

Walking over, Geoffrey takes a seat opposite Mayfield. Geoffrey is sweating bullets. He shifts nervously in his seat.

GEOFFREY

Listen, if this is about the copy machine, I didn't know it was broken. I thought it made that squealing noise every time you --

Mayfield waves him off.

MAYFIELD

Its nothing like that. I can assure you.

Geoffrey breathes a quick sigh of relief. Mayfield grabs a fat file from his desk. Opens it up and studies its contents.

MAYFIELD (cont'd)

I just got done reading your report on the Jasmine Corporation down on the south end. I was pleasantly surprised.

GEOFFREY

(surprised)

Why, thank you sir.

MAYFIELD

Some of the best work I've seen since -- well, your brother.

GEOFFREY

I don't know if it is that good but I appreciate the compliments.

Mayfield leans up in his chair and stares Geoffrey in the eye.

MAYFIELD

This is why I want to offer you a promotion. A little token of this company's appreciation for your excellent work.

Geoffrey's eyes grow wide. He's dumbfounded.

MAYFIELD (cont'd)

I know its a little unorthodox to be handing out promotions when you've only been with us a short period of time, but I think its the right move to make to better our future.

GEOFFREY

(excited)

I'm stunned. I don't know what to say. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

MAYFIELD

I can't lie by telling you that this decision was made totally on your excellent work as of late. Truth be told, this company is going through a bit of a financial bind this year. We're going to have to make some layoffs in order for ends meet.

An expression of both confusion and concern spreads over Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

What do you mean "layoffs to make ends meet"? What position am I getting?

MAYFIELD

Head over pre-market research.

GEOFFREY

Pre-market research? That's my brother's job. You're laying off my brother?

MAYFIELD

Mr. Pennington -- Your brother -- has been at this company for nearly a decade. While he was essential in building up this business, his large payroll has also taken part in tearing it down. Its a job that we needed a younger person with the qualifications to fill. A younger person with a lighter pay load --

(motioning)

-- You.

Geoffrey is in shock. His jaw is nearly on the floor.

GEOFFREY

No. I can't take his job.

MAYFIELD

The thing is, someone is going to be fired. You can either take your brother's job -- or you can lose yours.

Mayfield stands, straightens his coat before heading towards his door.

MAYFIELD (cont'd)

Now, if you don't mind. I have a luncheon I'm running late for.

Geoffrey stands, following Mayfield to his office door.

MAYFIELD (cont'd)

I take it you accept my proposition?

GEOFFREY

It doesn't look like you've given me much of a choice.

Mayfield exits his office, and Geoffrey is about to do the same, but Mayfield turns back.

MAYFIELD

But as our new head of pre-market research, I have your first assignment. You have to relieve your brother of his position.

Geoffrey literally goes white. A grin spreads over Mayfield's lips as he turns and strolls away.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE

The room is completely dark except for the glow of a desk lamp, which casts eerie shadows on Michael's face and the slowly dwindling pile of folders and papers on his desk.

Michael finally sits up from his studying, closes the folder. He checks his watch. It reads: 10:34.

Rising, Michael grabs his coat, which is draped over the back of his desk chair, and exits his office.

INT. BAR

The bar is completely empty except for Geoffrey sitting on one of the bar stools and a BARTENDER who is rhythmically drying glasses.

Geoffrey downs the last of his beer.

BARTENDER
How 'bout another?

GEOFFREY
Sure. Couldn't hurt.

The bartender grabs a fresh pitcher of beer. Refills Geoffrey's mug.

BARTENDER
Something seems to be bothering
you, son.

GEOFFREY
Getting advice from the bartender --
seems a little cliché, don't you
think?

BARTENDER
(chuckling)
You could say I'm somewhat old
fashioned.

Geoffrey gulps down his entire beer. Wipes his mouth with the sleeve of his shirt.

GEOFFREY
I have a major dilemma at my job. I
was offered a promotion today but
it means the firing of someone
close to me.

BARTENDER
People get hired. People get
fired.

GEOFFREY
Yeah, but in this case those people
is my brother.

INT/EXT. MICHAEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Michael's black suburban cruises through the city streets.

GEOFFREY (V.O.)

A brother with a family to support.
Insurance and a mortgage to pay.

Michael takes out his cell phone. Dials a number.

MICHAEL

Hey baby. Listen, I'm on my way to
the hospital -- what?

(A beat)

When did this happen?

(A beat)

Oh my God...

INT. BAR

BARTENDER

Your brother seems to have a lot
going for him.

GEOFFREY

He does.

BARTENDER

And what do you have?

A beat.

GEOFFREY

I have nothing. I still live with
my mother. The old bat's about to
die anyway. They've already called
in the family.

The bartender nods to himself. Goes back to washing the
glasses.

BARTENDER

Seems like you're about due for a
break in life. You deserve to take
that job. You know the old saying,
"all is fair in love and business."

Geoffrey looks up from his daze.

GEOFFREY

I thought that was love and war?

The bartender looks over with a sly smirk.

BARTENDER

Business is war.

The bartender is cleaning the dirty glasses. Geoffrey helplessly stares at his empty mug.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM

A group of people huddle together. The group consists of Michael, his WIFE, their SON (3) and DAUGHTER (5), AUNT MARTHA and several other men and women.

Everyone is crying. The children sit quietly, both with confused looks on their faces.

Geoffrey slowly enters through the door way. There seems to be a nervous strut in his step.

The children are the first to see him. Both immediately run over. Geoffrey bends down to greet them with a hug.

DAUGHTER

Did you bring us something, Uncle Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY

Not today kids. I'm sorry.

By this time, the others have noticed Geoffrey's entrance. Michael walks over.

GEOFFREY (cont'd)

(to Michael)

How is she?

MICHAEL

Mom passed away about an hour ago. She was already gone by the time I got here.

Michael hugs Geoffrey. He immediately begins to cry. Geoffrey just stands there holding his brother, shocked.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Rain pours down. The Pennington family, all dressed in black and holding umbrellas, stand and watch as a LARGE CASKET is lowered into the ground.

A PRIEST reads a Bible verse.

Michael has an arm around his wife and an arm around his two children.

Geoffrey stands a few feet away admiring this seemingly picture perfect family.

EXT. BACKYARD, MICHAEL'S HOUSE - DAY

A spacious, green yard enclosed in a white picket fence. A children's jungle gym is erected in one corner of the yard. A long picnic table has been placed at the center of the yard.

The Pennington family sits quietly around the picnic table, which is covered with dishes full of food: Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans, etc.

AUNT MARTHA

Will you say grace, Michael?

Michael nods.

MICHAEL

Let us bow our heads.

Everyone at the table bows their heads. Everyone except Geoffrey, who watches his brother as he prays.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Dear God, we bless you for this food that we are about to receive. And for the hands that prepared it. Lord, even though this is a time of sadness we still know that my mother is in a much better place now. All we can do is continue to thank you for your blessings and everything you will continue to do for us. Amen.

Hands reach out all over the place as food dishes begin to make their rounds.

EXT. BACKYARD, MICHAEL'S HOUSE - LATER

Everyone's plate is nearly empty. Michael's son tugs on his wife's coat.

SON

Can we go play now mommy?

WIFE

Yes. But be very careful. We don't want any broken bones.

The two kids rise from the table and run toward the jungle gym.

Michael and his wife watch the kids as they play. They smile.

Geoffrey approaches them from behind.

GEOFFREY

Michael?

MICHAEL

(turning)

Yes?

GEOFFREY

Can I speak with you for a moment?
In private.

Michael looks at his wife, who nods.

MICHAEL

Sure.

Michael stands, follows Geoffrey a few feet away where they are out of ear shot.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Is something the matter?

GEOFFREY

I didn't want to do this here, but it may be the only chance I get before tomorrow -- I got a promotion.

Michael's face lights up.

MICHAEL

That's great! And to think you've only been working there four months.

GEOFFREY

See, its not that simple. I've been promoted to your job.

MICHAEL

(confused)

Okay...I'm not sure I understand.

GEOFFREY

Mister Mayfield said that revenues have been low and they had to make some cutbacks. I either had to take your job and fire you -- or turn it down and lose my own job.

Michael takes a step back. He's obviously floored by the statement.

MICHAEL

Are you trying to tell me that you took the job? And you are firing me?

GEOFFREY

I haven't made the best of my life so far and this job has been the only thing that's turned me around. Mom's dead, Michael. This job is all I have left.

Michael shakes his head angrily, in disgust. With each passing second he grows more and more red.

MICHAEL

No. NO! You've always been a screw-off and a selfish jerk, Geoffrey. Who was there when you dropped out of college? Who was there to bail you out of jail after you received your second D.U.I. in a month? Who got you that freaking job in the first place?!

GEOFFREY

And you think you deserve everything? So I've made a few mistakes in my day. I wouldn't get this promotion if I didn't deserve it and you wouldn't be getting the boot if you'd get your lazy bum off a chair and do something!

Michael steps forward. Grabs Geoffrey by his collar, pulling him close.

JUNGLE GYM AREA

Michael's wife sees the confrontation brewing. She runs towards the children.

WIFE

Kids, follow Aunt Martha into the house. She wants you to help her bake some cookies.

Aunt Martha takes the children by the hand. Leads them towards the house.

SIDE YARD

Michael jerks Geoffrey by his collar.

MICHAEL

Mother was right. You were a lost cause who couldn't make a wise decision if your life depended on it.

This statement pushes Geoffrey over the edge. He SHOVES Michael.

Michael stumbles backwards, FALLS to the ground. But he is immediately back up.

Michael charges Geoffrey, DECKS him across the face. Geoffrey goes down, hard.

WIFE (O.S.)

STOP IT!

Michael is grabbed from behind by his wife.

WIFE (cont'd)

The closest person to you both has just died and you're going to fight each other like children. What is going on?

Michael points a stern finger at Geoffrey on the ground.

MICHAEL

Take a look at the man who just ruined our lives, honey. The man who just stole my job right out from under me and put us in the poor house.

Geoffrey, now with a bloody nose, pushes himself up off the ground.

GEOFFREY

Screw you, Michael. Take a look at your life. You have a huge house, a beautiful wife, two wonderful kids. And what do I ever get? Squat -- that's what. I've sat in your shadow my entire life. Not anymore. I'm taking that job.

Michael breaks from his wife's grip. He leaps onto Geoffrey, taking them both to the ground. Michael lays a fury of punches onto Geoffrey's face, throwing his head around like a rag doll.

Blood spews from his nose and newly opened wounds.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BAR

Everyone is in the same position as before.

The bartender is cleaning the dirty glasses. Geoffrey helplessly stares at his empty mug.

GEOFFREY

But is it worth it?

The bartender stops cleaning, looks over at Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY (cont'd)

Is it worth breaking up a family
just for my own greed? My brother
has earned everything he's gotten.
I can't take that away from him.

Geoffrey stands and exits the bar. The bartender watches him go.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM

Something is different about this familiar scene. There are no tears. Michael hugs his wife tightly as they, and the rest of the family, laugh at the two children dancing around playfully in the middle of the floor.

Geoffrey enters the room.

Michael is the first to see him. He walks over and gives Geoffrey a large hug.

GEOFFREY

Everyone seems so happy? What's going on?

MICHAEL

I can't explain it. The doctor said the cancer is receding. Everything is going to be alright. Mom's going to live. It's a miracle from God.

Michael laughs in disbelief. Hugs his brother again.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

(Off Geoffrey's sad look)
Is something wrong?

GEOFFREY

Yeah, I just found out before I left the office today. I'm going to lose my job.

MICHAEL

How did this happen?

GEOFFREY

Mister Mayfield just said there wasn't much room for me anymore.

MICHAEL

That's horrible. I'm sorry to hear that, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

I'll be fine. The important thing is we are all together and everything is going to be okay.

Geoffrey puts a hand on his brother's back. They begin walking back to the rest of the family.

MICHAEL

I know this isn't the greatest option, but I know some guys down in logistics. I'm sure I can pull a few strings and get you a job down there --

GEOFFREY

I'm too far in this game to start taking steps backwards. Its either all or nothing.

Geoffrey joins in the laughter as the children continue to dance.

FINAL FADE OUT.