



← BILLY'S CHOICE →

Written by

Fork in the Road

FADE IN:

INT. HI-RISE CONDO ORNATE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tables display lamps, jewelry, and other items while a hand-printed sign shows "ESTATE SALE CASHIER" with an arrow pointing at a BROKER (61) keeping an alert eye on all of the pilferable goods.

LAUREN (42), a middle-aged nerd with a Tolkien-inspired tattoo on her arm and green dye in her blond hair, browses a rack of women's dresses.

Lauren's half-Japanese children, daughter CHARISMA (17) and son LOGAN (14), search through boxes of curiosities.

Charisma finds a "Spawn" issue #1 comic book sealed in a collector's bag.

CHARISMA

Mom, isn't this the one Dad was always looking for? It's one dollar like all the other ones here.

BROKER

William was the collector of the couple. With no children, and no relatives interested in comics, we priced everything to move.

Lauren sniffs away the threat of a tear, takes the comic from Charisma, hands a dollar to the Broker.

LAUREN

Well, now your dad's legacy is you two... and a complete collection.

BROKER

Poor William and Brianna, they left no legacy at all.

INT. HI-RISE CONDO ORNATE LIVING ROOM - DAY

The same room, but as it was lived in. Dining table off to the side has the remains of a meal for two, couch pointed at a huge and expensive TV with a monstrous sound system.

BROKER (V.O.)

But at least they died together doing something they enjoyed.

BRIANNA (36), a statuesque blonde who's spent half her life as a trophy wife, bursts into the room, frantic and shivering. Shaking hands can't keep a cell phone at her ear.

BRIANNA

We need an am-am-ambulance! There's so-something in the cocaine!

(violent cough)

William isn't breathing! He-he has to breathe! Se-send --

She trips, falls hard, claws for the phone.

BRIANNA

Send -- Address? Right. Address. We-we-we're at four --

Violent coughs rack her frame until she pukes all over the phone, her eyes grow wide as she gasps for air.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Through the window and down to street level, Lauren lays on the sidewalk, bloodied, winter coat ripped, screaming through a Deadpool-logo facemask into her own cell phone.

LAUREN

It was a fucking hate crime! They thought Bill was Chinese...

She sobs when she turns to a somewhat chubby man laying in a pool of blood, beaten beyond recognition. This was BILL (44), beloved husband to Lauren, father to Charisma and Logan.

LAUREN

... and beat him to death. How does this happen in broad daylight?!

INT. CITY APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

A combination kitchen/diningroom/livingroom barely big enough to hold a folding card table. Ribbons flutter from a window air conditioning unit.

Lauren opens the microwave, gingerly pulls out an N95 mask.

LAUREN

I don't like you heading out to the store. Or anywhere, really.

She waves the mask to cool it, hands it to American-born-Japanese Bill. His Superman T-shirt stretches to cover him.

BILL

It's just once or twice a week to ship online orders. Can't just shut down since I can't get the landlord or the city or the insurance company to help with the rent.

Lauren hides something behind her back.

BILL

Other than that, we can seal the apartment in Saran Wrap.

LAUREN

Bill... do you think yourself worthy to accept this rare and invaluable artifact?

Bill nods gravely, holds out his arms with reverence. Lauren produces a canister of Clorox wipes, presents it to him. She watches imperiously as he stows it in a backpack.

LOGAN (O.S.)

I'm taking a history test!

BILL

Sorry, big guy!

(quieter)

I know. Every doorknob. Wish I could just stay home with you.

INT. HI-RISE CONDO BEDROOM - DAY

A green screen separates a computer desk from the rest of a well-appointed bedroom.

At the computer sits fit and trim American-born-Japanese WILLIAM (44) wearing an expensive shirt, tie, jacket, and pocket square. And nothing but boxer shorts below the waist.

WILLIAM

I sympathize, sir, really I do.

Brianna slinks behind the screen, tries to distract William.

WILLIAM

But I can't approve a business interruption policy after the state already ordered a lockdown. My hands are tied.

Outside the webcam's range, Brianna tempts William with a bondage rope. The boxer shorts show that William is tempted.

WILLIAM
I have to go now.

INT. INSURANCE OFFICE - DAY

Gray-haired EXECUTIVE (61) meets a late-30s William at the entrance door, walks him to the branch manager's office with brand-new window lettering "WILLIAM KAZAMA".

William is overwhelmed, obviously taken by surprise.

EXECUTIVE
You've earned this, William. Over the years, you've saved this company a lot of money.

Employees in half a dozen cubicles CLAP for William.

INT. COMICS & GAMING STORE - NIGHT

Hobbyist shop for comic books, role-playing games, and collectible card games. The store is closed, but a late-30s Bill (a bit less chubby) and shop owner MAX (68) hang signs for "Magic: The Gathering -- Battle for Zendikar -- Coming October 2015."

BILL
So, I uh, heard back from the bank.

Max stops struggling with a poster, turns to face Bill.

BILL
They were dumb enough to give me the loan.

Max drops the poster, pats Bill on the shoulder.

MAX
You have no idea how much this means to me.

BILL
I couldn't let you sell this place to a stranger.

Max sniffs. He's definitely not tearing up.

BILL
Retire in peace... but you aren't out of the woods yet, old man.

Bill pulls out a poster for Max's retirement party on Halloween, with Max badly Photoshopped onto a Florida beach.

INT. HI-RISE CONDO LIVING ROOM - DAY

William, mid-30s, lugs boxes full of collector-bagged comic books from the bedroom onto the dining table. He pauses to thumb through many issues of the "Spawn" comic series.

BRIANNA (O.S.)

Just let me know when you have all that childish stuff in the storage unit. I made plans for dinner.

William sighs, grabs another box.

INT. CITY APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

Bill, only a little chubby now at 34, plops a box of Halloween decorations onto the small table. A 4-year-old Logan marches in carrying scissors and a scrap of paper.

LOGAN

I made a bat for Halloween!

Bill immediately recognizes the purple bat on the paper. Charisma runs in from the bedroom like only a 7-year-old can when they think their little brother is in trouble.

CHARISMA

OH! MY! GOD! Dad is going to kill you!

She holds up what's left of "Spawn" #1, with the cover's spooky purple bat cut out.

Bill calms himself with visible effort.

BILL

No, Charisma. People are more important than things. Even if this "thing" was a Spawn issue number one in perfect condition.

He takes the scissors from Logan, who dashes off and fishes some Scotch tape out of a kitchen drawer.

BILL

Logan, we need to talk about touching other people's things.

EXT. RECEPTION HALL DRIVEWAY - DAY

William's tuxedoed BEST MAN (25) lifts heavy suitcases into the back of a limo marked "Brianna & William Just Married!"

As he lifts the final suitcase, a GROOMSMAN (23) wheels over a bellhop's cart with several more bags.

BEST MAN

How many things does she need for this trip?

EXT. IN FRONT OF RESTAURANT - DAY

A similar limo with a banner "Lauren & Bill Just Married!" with the happy couple already inside. Before this reasonably fit 26-year-old Bill can close the door, his best man and Lauren's brother JASON (29) pretends to hold up a microphone.

JASON

Bill, you've just married your high school sweetheart. What are you going to do next?

He moves the non-existent microphone in front of Bill.

BILL

I'm going to Disney World!

EXT. LINE OF STOREFRONTS - DAY

Commercial street with two connected shops, one a retail insurance office, the other a comics & gaming store. Both have "help wanted" signs in their windows.

Nervous Japanese youth BILLY (16) stands in front of them in a dress shirt and slacks, his gaze moving from one sign to the other.

BILLY

Come on, Billy, you got to make a decision. Intern where the money is and have a legacy, or work at the place you love and live longer?

Billy inhales deeply, blows steadily, and nods. He's made his decision, takes a step forward into his new life.

FADE OUT.