CUT

"Don't Go Into The Pilot Light"

Written by

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ACT ONE

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

EXTREME CLOSE UP: COFFIN

SLOWLY PULL BACK. It’s a dark afternoon. A PRIEST (50’S) stands behind the coffin. Continue to pull back to reveal a CROWD of people sitting in rows of chairs, many dressed in black, some dressed in marine uniform.

To the side of the coffin is a picture of PHIL URMICH (56), a now deceased former marine; the cause of this funeral.

PRIEST
We gather here today to celebrate the life of Phil Urmich. I personally knew him threw his work with Urban Eating, the government organization which employs ex-convicts. He was a true friend, and will be dearly missed...

His voice fades as we pull into:

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

The room is empty, yet CHAOTIC CLAMORING can be heard nearby as the priest’s voice disappears entirely.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The camera stops, as we land in a anarchic kitchen. Machines are running amuck, open ingredients are spilled over, and the EMPLOYEES only seem to be at each other’s throats.

KATHARINE BURRESS (30’s) enters, furious at GEORGE ILLES (30’S) Who’s too busy grilling to pay attention--

KATHY
You human piss bag!

GEORGE
What’s the matter with you?

KATHY
You took my soufflés out of the oven early!
GEORGE
I had to, my chicken needs a while to cook and I needed a rack.

KATHY
Where is it now?

GEORGE
In the freezer.

WHY?

GEORGE
I don’t know, they were your soufflés to keep track of in the first place--

KATHY
Screw your chicken, we have four other trays already! We don’t need any more!

GEORGE (CONT'D)
My chicken’s perfect! No one was gonna eat your soufflés anyway! They’re at a funeral, they want chicken!

ISAAC REED (Mid 20’s) enters. He’s lengthy and clearly mixed with some odd number of nationalities. His struggle to effectively understand others keeps him on his toes socially.

Having caught wind of the argument, Isaac tries to break the tension.

ISAAC
Ladies, you’re both moderately pretty. What’s the problem?

KATHY
George put my soufflés in the freezer.

ISAAC
(Can’t believe his ears)
What? Okay, Kathy, go get your souffle out of the freezer, and remember your peaceful words. George, I’m 28 and I have chronic chest pain. Make life a little easier for me, would you?

ISAAC (CONT’D)
(To rest of kitchen)
What else is new?
JENNIFER WALKER (60’s) enters, a short business woman who cares for her work while she tries to control the people around her.

JENNIFER
(To Isaac)
Is everyone still alive back here?

ISAAC
For now, but ask me in a few minutes and the story could be different.
(To staff)
Hey everybody, stop whatever work you’re pretending to do. We’re gonna have a quick meeting.

The STAFF all gathers around, somewhere less than a dozen people, all of them somewhat grimy and tired. Each of them has a colorful logo with “Urban Eating” written on it, sewn into their uniforms.

JENNIFER
Well, I know these are probably hard times for you all, but I wanted to thank you for volunteering your time.

KATHY
Wait, we’re not getting paid?

JENNIFER
No, I assumed that Isaac told you; he volunteered you all to work Phil’s funeral.

They all look at Isaac. ELENA REICHART (Early 30’s) is present, and thoroughly upset. Though sharp-minded and admirably competent, she can’t help but feel mouthy--

ELENA
Why would you do that?

ISAAC
Because we’re under a spotlight right now, and I don’t think any of us deserve to lose our jobs. I just wanted to make sure we made a good impression.

A beat. Then, suddenly--

ELENA
Bullcrap! Tell the truth!
ISAAC
Honestly? Eighty-five percent of you are entirely incompetent and would be fired in a heartbeat if it were up to me! I was just trying to cover my own back! Is that so bad?

ELENA
Yes!

GEORGE
What about the other twenty-five percent?

ISAAC
Oh my--the other twenty-five percent of you are stupid!

MARC MERRICELLI (Late 30’s) Stands in the group. He’s fairly hefty and somewhat unkempt, but carries a kind lighthearted disposition. He speaks to Jennifer--

MARC
So, about getting paid, would a glass of peanut boudoir change anything?

He slides a glass of Pinot noir across the table...

JENNIFER
I don’t know whether you should be arrested for bribing a government official or for misuse of government property.

MARC
Okay.

He slides the glass back towards himself. Jennifer notices that the nearby Pinot noir bottle is more than half empty.

JENNIFER
Did you use all of that in the food?

MARC
I admire a woman who can ask the tough questions.

He removes the glass from the table all together, placing it elsewhere.

JENNIFER
It’s just one, really.
Marc discreetly takes the glass and sips it.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
Nonetheless, Isaac’s right: You need to make a good impression. A lot of people want this to fail, so bring your best.

ANNIE BAUTISTA (20’s) stands next to Isaac. She’s a capable young Western Asian woman with perfectionist behaviors and a clear concern for others. She whispers to Isaac

ANNIE
I thought this was our best.

ISAAC
Shh.

ELENA
Who’s gonna make the decision?

JENNIFER
Someone who wants you to fail. I gotta go.
(To Isaac)
Good luck.

She walks out.

ISAAC
Well on that note, we need George and Marc setup. Annie, I need you in the reception area to organize everything they bring in. Everyone else: try and look alive; after all you’re not in the casket. Good?

They nod.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Good.

They break. The camera follows Marc and George out to--

EXT. PARKING LOT – CONTINUOUS

They take tables and boxes of utensils, etc. out of the truck.

MARC
Jennifer’s crazy.
GEORGE
You say that like she’s the only one.

MARC
I don’t mind crazy people, I mind crazy people with power.

GEORGE
So you gotta job set up if this tanks?

MARC
I know I’m not gonna get a job with four years for assault on my record,

They walk into--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MARC
...so I’ve started thinking about which crime to commit so I can go back to jail. So far I’m considering running on the White House lawn and flashing the president, or raising a pack of wolves.

They walk into--

INT. RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE
Bro, that’s not illegal.

MARC
Then my next day off is gonna be very interesting...

We pan over to the open doorway, and push into--

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

A LITTLE BOY (4) and LITTLE GIRL (4) are seated next to each other. The girl begins to stick out her tongue, trying to touch her own nose.

LITTLE BOY
Can you touch your nose?
LITTLE GIRL

Nope.

LITTLE BOY

I bet I can.

He maneuvers his tongue out, towards his own nose, then lands in on the tip of the girl’s nose. She giggles, covering her face with her hands.

He continues to aimlessly point his tongue at the sky, until a RAINDROP suddenly falls on it.

We leave them and return to--

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

Annie is inside with Marc and George. Marc closes the doors.

Annie notices a raindrop hit a window. She becomes alarmed, and walks into--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She walks up to Isaac, who is busy cleaning.

ANNIE

How do you like bad news?

ISAAC

Far, far, away.

ANNIE

It’s raining.

ISAAC

That’s not funny.

ANNIE

I’m not lying.

ISAAC

That’s not funny.

ANNIE

What do you want me to say?

ISAAC

That you’re making this up!
ANNIE
I would argue with you, but the weather would make it a pretty short conversation.

ISAAC
Don’t tease me.

ANNIE
I don’t have to, God’s already doing it.

ISAAC
I know your kidding, but that sounds on par with the rest of my life.

ANNIE
What do you need me to do?

ISAAC
Go to the reception entrance and start greeting.
(Yelling to staff)
Okay, we have a change of plans, I need--

He looks at Elena, then Kathy, both of whom appear to be displeasing choices.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Someone who is better at socializing.
(To Annie)
You should probably just grab Marc.

She walk off.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Go kill ‘em!
(A beat. Then, realizing after she’s gone)
Figuratively!
(To Kathy)
I should probably go make sure.

KATHY
(Over)
Yep.

She takes over his station, Isaac goes to yell out to Annie:

ISAAC
Forget what I said!
ANNIE
(Over)
You got it!

Isaac returns, murmuring--

ISAAC
Little eager.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

Marc and Annie walk towards reception area doorway. They wait to greet the incoming funeral attendees.

MARC
You’re not, proud or anything, are you?

ANNIE
I’m not whorish.

MARC
No, I know--wait, you’re not? Well then why do you have bruises on your neck?

ANNIE
Those are burn marks from when I was eight.

MARC
Oh, I’m--stupid.

He looks away, disconcerted. Annie tries to inconspicuously pull up the collar of her chef coat to cover her neck. Liar.

ANNIE
Why’d you ask?

MARC
Just wondering. Never sure what people would do, or allow to be done to them in order to keep their jobs. I just wanna make sure that when I lose mine, it won’t be because I couldn’t squeeze into a C cup.

ANNIE
I don’t think that’s ever been the reason for anything. Ever.

Marc laughs, slightly relieved of embarrassment.

MARC
I don’t know when you’ll figure it out, but you’re not the kind of person that’s easy to forget. That’s concerning in a job where almost everyone’s disposable.
Annie’s silent. The tone is apparent. She snaps out of it as the doors fly open. People begin flooding through. Marc and Annie briefly greet those coming in. Jennifer enters, Annie leaves Marc alone to follow her.

ANNIE
(concerned)
Hey, Jennifer.

JENNIFER
Is everything all right?

ANNIE
Yeah, minus the dead guy, everything’s fine. It just seems that everyone’s worrying about this whole job situation and I was wondering if I should be too.

JENNIFER
Dear, you should be a lot of things for this job, but worried isn’t one of them.

Marc walks up, joining the conversation.

ANNIE
That was quick.

MARC
Yeah, I started high-fiving some of them to save time, but I think that may have undercut the tone of the funeral.

JENNIFER
Marc!

MARC
I told one short Mexican woman to jump high for it and then everyone felt the need to stop shaking hands.

    (Half a beat)
I mean how was I supposed to know she was a senator?

Jennifer glances over Marc’s shoulder, and sees a very offended MEXICAN WOMAN.

JENNIFER
That was the secretary of agriculture!
MARC
Well tomato farmer, tomahto farmer.

JENNIFER
What were you thinking?

MARC
That’s her job!

JENNIFER
(To Annie)
This is your competition.

ANNIE
I feel better.

JENNIFER
Yeah.
(To Marc)
Now I don’t know what inspired you
to this level of idiocy--

Marc holds up his hand to inject his point of view, but we see his palm, strawberry red from his aggressive high-fiving.

MARC
I’m--

JENNIFER
(re: idiocy)
But you better stop it. If you get fired, no one else will hire you.

MARC
I know that.

JENNIFER
Then you should know that you’ll probably end up back in jail.

MARC
Yes!

JENNIFER
At a U.S. Pen.

MARC
Pen? As in Penitentiary?

JENNIFER
No, as in Pennsylvania, our beautiful Keystone state. Yes as in penitentiary!
MARC
Why didn’t you say that I could go
to a pen if things didn’t work out?

JENNIFER
You mean why didn’t I tell you your
actions have consequences? I’m
sorry, I assumed you learned that
sometime before you dropped out of
kindergarten!

She takes a breath to cool herself down.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
Look: cuts are being made left and
right, and I don’t know what may
come next, so you are in charge of
ensuring your own future. Can you
do that?

We see the stress emerge in Marc’s eyes

MARC
(a half beat, then,
candidly)

No!

We leave their conversation and pan across the room to find
Isaac talking to the priest--

ISAAC
Well, do you think there is
anything you can do?

PRIEST
About the rain? No, I’m afraid
that’s out of my control.

ISAAC
Don’t you have some sort of
procedure for things like this?

PRIEST
Yes, we come inside.

ISAAC
I just need more time.

PRIEST
So did Mr. Urmich.

ISAAC
Wow,
(aside)
(MORE)
ISAAC (CONT’D)
Really playing that card, aren’t we?

PRIEST
What?

ISAAC
This isn’t going to take long, I just can’t handle these people.

PRIEST
(gesturing to those attending funeral)
They seem perfectly fine, I’m sure they’ll understand.

ISAAC
Not those people,
(gesturing to staff)
It’s those people. I thought I was relatively happy, borderline sociable, but it’s 12:07 and I’ve thought about killing five out of my nine employees.

PRIEST
You’re rehabilitated convicts, correct?

ISAAC
Yes, the thing is--

Elena breezes by with large silverware and unknowingly sharply grazes Isaac’s arm.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Mother!

PRIEST
(Correcting)
Father.

ISAAC
Geez.
(Re: the thing is)
We just haven’t got the swing of things and we need more time.

PRIEST
I agree. I’ll see what I can do.

ISAAC
Thank you.
The priest begins to walk off, but stops, turning to Isaac--

PRIEST
Do yourself a favor, come to
confession...and communion...and--
eh, I’ll just get you a pamphlet.

They depart. Isaac walks towards the kitchen, but is stopped by ERIC ANDELMAN (Early 30’s) A tall, wiry man with ambition, but lacking in confidence.

ERIC
Hey, sorry to bother you, but do
you know when the food will be
ready? My guy’s starving.

ISAAC
I’m sorry. The food should be ready
in just a few minutes, but I’m sure
I can find your son something to
snack on while he waits.

ERIC
Oh, no. It’s not my son, it’s my
boss. I probably should’ve said “my
man”.

(Then, realizing)
Nope, that probably wouldn’t have
been great either.

ISAAC
That’s okay.

Eric looks away from Isaac to break the awkwardness, and
glances across the room. His eye lingers for a moment, until
he returns to Isaac--

ERIC
Can I be straight with you?

ISAAC
As long as your man’s all right
with it.

ERIC
My boss is Ron Haener. He wants to
get re-elected to congress, and he
needs a strong platform. Right now
he has plenty of reasons to openly
oppose the Urban Eating Program.
And unless you prove him wrong,
he’s got a plenty of satirical
phrases prepped for attack ads.
ISAAC
Like what?

ERIC
(Thinking, listing)
Brothel sprouts, Heinous Amos, Home
Slice--

ISAAC
No, I meant reasons to oppose Urban
Eating.

ERIC
Well everyone loved Urban Eating in
concept, but now people are
starting to lose their jobs, and
the program’s starting to sound
like something that was a great
idea with terrible execution. Like
the south, or outdoor showers.

ISAAC
Fantastic.

Isaac looks down, taking the news like a blow to the stomach.
He looks up to Eric curiously--

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Home slice?

ERIC
I think it’s supposed to be Pizza
delivered by the slice to people’s
homes.

ISAAC
Oh.

The camera leaves them and pans across the room to find
Jennifer. She walks over to RON HAENER, (50’s) a passionate,
slightly jaded first-term congressman running for re-
election. Ron shakes hands with several YOUNG SOLDIERS as
Jennifer approaches--

JENNIFER
You have a sec, Ron?

RON
(To soldiers)
Excuse me, gentlemen.

He and Jennifer move away from the soldiers to speak
privately.
RON (CONT'D)
What’s wrong?

JENNIFER
Nothing. Why would something have to be wrong?

RON
Oh, I don’t know. The sky’s blue, grass is green. Any number of reasons, really.

JENNIFER
Nothing is wrong.

RON
Then why are you keeping me?

JENNIFER
From the combat Ken Dolls? I think you’ve already got their vote.

RON
I know, but I need voters in their age bracket. People that make fewer racial slurs, have unrealistic ambitions--

JENNIFER
And no political knowledge.

RON
Yes! That’s my demographic!

JENNIFER
Then why are you de-funding my people? They’re almost harmless!

RON
They’re also the easiest way to waste money since getting liposuction in the winter.

JENNIFER
They’re getting you more votes in a day than they are losing you in a year.

RON
You know that’s not true.

JENNIFER
No, I don’t.
RON
Yet we’re still talking like either of us is going to change our minds.

JENNIFER
Ron.

RON
Jennifer, face it. You don’t have a chance and I clearly don’t have enough of a conscience to stop this. For what it’s worth, it’s only a little personal.

JENNIFER
Adorable.

RON
Yeah, I know.
(Half beat)
Hey, I gotta run to the restroom, do me a favor and keep the boys company.

JENNIFER
They’re monolith sized Beach Boys, what would I have to say to them?

RON
Tell them about the seventies. To them, the thought of the U.S. losing a war is as fictional as greek mythology. It’ll be fun.

The camera follows Ron into--

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS
He bumps into Annie as he walks down the hall.

ANNIE
Sorry about that, sir.

RON
Don’t worry about it.

ANNIE
Can I help you with anything?

RON
No, I’m fine, thank you. I’m just headed to the restroom.
He gestures to the nearest door.

ANNIE
Sir, that’s a utility closet.

RON
Then I hope they don’t mind a mess.

He laughs, meaning to end the encounter. The two ineptly shuffle past each other. We follow Annie into--

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

She sees Elena as she walks out of the kitchen. Elena looks over Annie’s shoulder and notices Ron walking down the hall.

ELENA
Hey, did you just talk to Ron?

ANNIE
Who, him? I guess. Why?

ELENA
What did he say?

ANNIE
He said he was going to the bathroom, and that was about it.

ELENA
Did he seem happy or upset?

ANNIE
I assume he’ll feel relieved.

ELENA
Did he...notice you?

ANNIE
No, we just talked, he left--

ELENA
No, notice you. Wink at you, feel the need to cross his legs in the middle of talking or show the slightest feeling of attraction.

ANNIE
You mean flirt with him? I can’t do that!
ELENA
Well you could’ve, but you missed that chance.

ANNIE
He’s fifty and our boss!

ELENA
For now! But if you consider it, it wouldn’t take much--

ANNIE
No! What’s wrong with you? You’re sounding like Marc!

ELENA
(Over)
Harsh.

ANNIE
You make me feel like I’m doing something wrong when people aren’t attracted to me.

ELENA
We just need you, okay. But I get it.

Annie takes a beat, taking it in.

ANNIE
But why didn’t he? I’m nice enough. I’m definitely young enough.

ELENA
No. No, don’t do this to yourself. You always read into things too much.

Isaac walks in on the conversation.

ISAAC
What’s happening? Why are you both here talking?

ELENA
Annie’s upset because Ron didn’t seem attracted to her.

ISAAC
(To Annie)
Did you flirt with him?
ANNIE
No.

ISAAC
Then what’s the problem?

ANNIE
I guess I just thought that with with someone like him I wouldn’t have to try.

ISAAC
That’s ridiculous; I mean, you look-

Isaac stumbles on his words. Elena’s face lights up in instigation as she sees Isaac at a brief loss.

ELENA
She looks like what?

ISAAC
Nothing. She doesn’t look like anything.

ANNIE
(Offended)
Thank you.

ELENA
(To Isaac)
I thought you were asexual.

ISAAC
I am not asexual, I am experimenting with being alone!

ELENA
For your whole life?

ISAAC
I’m very committed.
(Re: to Annie)
Your looks are not important, your work is. So please, just take every other problem you have and hide them as far away as possible.

Elena and Annie walk off screen. Simultaneously, Kathy leads several staff members in emerging from the kitchen with trays of food.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Yes! Perfect!
He briskly glides over to Kathy, pleased to catch a break--

ISAAC (CONT’D)
You guys finished quicker than expected. How many health codes did you have to break?

KATHY
None that I know of.

ISAAC
Do you know any?

KATHY
No. I’m still not sure if the five second rule is a law.

ISAAC
I can live with that.

We see Marc in the background, searching around the room. Isaac notices.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
What are you looking for?

MARC
Oh, it’s nothing. But on a separate note, I did hear you mention something “hiding”. Would you happen to have been talking about a small boy, about
   (gesturing obscurely)
   yea big?

Isaac comes in closer, speaking cautiously.

ISAAC
Did you lose a kid?

MARC
It’s not like he ever belonged to me or anything. But yes, he’s gone.

ISAAC
Marc, this is the second catering I’ve been to, and somehow the second time this has happened.

MARC
I know!

ISAAC
Then how is that possible?
MARC
I don’t know. Kids just have a certain charm. I can’t resist ‘em.

ISAAC
Please never repeat that.

MARC
I know he’s somewhere.

ISAAC
So do I, but his parents don’t and they’re the ones we have to be worried about.

MARC
Well I don’t see them looking for him, and maybe that’s the real problem.

ISAAC
You can get a little more preachy once there isn’t a lost child.

MARC
I don’t know where he went. You know this isn’t my fault.

ISAAC
No I do not.

MARC
(Over)
And that his parent’s will try to press charges.

ISAAC
It’s fine. You won’t go to jail for some blunt-witted misadventure. What am I saying? That’s exactly why you’d go to jail.

MARC
That’s what I’m saying! I can’t be left alone in tense situations like this!

ISAAC
So naturally, it was best to involve a child.
MARC
Look, you’re making a lot of sense right now and I don’t have time for that. Can I just please go back to looking for him?

ISAAC
Find the kid if you can, but please, multitask.

MARC
Yeah, of course. I’m like a multitool, And not just because I’m from Switzerland and am not allowed in airports.

Marc walks off, assisting the rest of the staff. Isaac notices Eric entering the hallway from outside. Isaac, fairly pleased with himself, goes over to Eric--

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

ISAAC
Hey, the food’s almost ready. You can tell your boss if you want.

ERIC
Sure, sounds great.

Eric walks past Isaac.

ISAAC
What?

ERIC
I didn’t say anything.

ISAAC
Oh, sorry. I thought I just--

Eric notices Isaac’s chef coat stuck on the handle of the closet door.

ERIC
You got a little--

He points to his uniform.

ISAAC
Oh, thanks.

Isaac tries to tear his chef coat from the handle. Eric assists him from behind.
The two tear the door open, and Ron and Jennifer spill out of the doorway, both only partially clothed.

ISAAC (CONT’D)  
Aaagh! Please no! Just--aggh!  Oh! No! No! No!

ERIC

JENNIFER
It’s okay--

ERIC
NO!

Eric kicks the door shut.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Eric and Isaac are both in shock. Isaac takes a large breath in disbelief, and leans his back against the closet door.

ERIC
What was that? I mean biologically speaking.

ISAAC
You still think this job isn’t beneath you?

ERIC
You know, I’m starting to reconsider.

ISAAC
Aren’t we all?

A half beat.

ERIC
Are you going to let them out?

ISAAC
No, I am going to wait three minutes and then address. That way I’ll seem like I care without actually having to. Best of both worlds, really.

ERIC
And that works?

ISAAC
First time I did it, it turned out a woman was giving birth. That actually got progressively worse as time went on. Let’s hope it goes better this time...

JENNIFER (O.S.)
Isaac. Open the door. You have no reason to be afraid.

ISAAC
I have at least two reasons to be afraid until you button your blouse.
JENNIFER (O.S.)
I think the button might have fallen out there.

Isaac opens the door. Jennifer comes out, Ron reluctantly follows.

ISAAC
Come, one and all. It’s okay, everyone’s ashamed here, sir.

They slug along through the hallway, Isaac opens the door leading into the kitchen for those accompanying him.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
After you.

RON
Thank you.

ISAAC
No kidding.

Isaac follows them into--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A few employees still remain sporadically spread throughout the kitchen.

ISAAC
Hey guys, would you mind giving us a sec? I can help--

The employees drop everything, walking out almost instantly.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Did not have to tell them twice. Master negotiator.

A beat. Ron’s clearly discomforted by the blunt awkwardness of the situation.

RON
So.

ISAAC
Ron Haener, correct?

RON
As fate would have it.
Ron reaches out to shake Isaac’s hand. Isaac declines via a
scrunch facial expression. Ron rescinds his hand.

ISAAC
I know you don’t want this to be a
story.

RON
Yes, exactly. It doesn’t need to be
a story. It was a dumb mistake and
I couldn’t regret it more. And I
really think we would all be better
off if we didn’t mention this to
anybody. While I can’t guarantee
your job, I’m sure you can be taken
care of.

ISAAC
Is that what you think any of this
is about? Money?

RON
No. I--

ISAAC
(Over)
I am not selling out to some first-
term congressman who can’t keep it
in his pants long enough to get re-
elected!

JENNIFER
Isaac!

ISAAC
I know, I regretted it as soon as I
said it. Now it’s just flashing in
my head like strobe lights.
(Back to Ron)
But the point is, I don’t want the
money. And it’s not because I’m
already rich; I’m not. It’s because
it’s not worth it.

RON
I know you need it. Just let me
help you.

ISAAC
No, see, you’re right, I am broke:
My landlord thinks I’m paying him
in weed, but really, it’s just
oregano and basil!
(MORE)
The only reason he doesn’t notice the difference is because he’s eighty-seven and lost his sense of taste! My kitchen sink is four feet away from my toilet. I literally crap where I eat! And yes; sometimes simultaneously.

They all groan in displeasure.

Exactly! And just the other day, I woke up, and I meant to hit my alarm clock, but my hand reached out too far and I broke a window. Killed a pigeon. I think it might have been a mentally disabled pigeon, because it had no idea what was happening the whole time. Five minutes, he just laid there on the window sill like it’s business as usual. Then he died! Blood all over my pillow. Point being, if money were important, I would’ve just started dealing. It’s not like I don’t know people.

Isaac breathes heavily for a beat or so.

This isn’t some “story”.

Eric, could you take Jennifer and check on the food?

Sure.

Eric and Jennifer leave the kitchen.

Cornering me won’t--

Calm your horses. Or whatever it is you use to smuggle drugs. I just want to talk.

I used to be like you. Young, thin, Hispanic. I even joined the military when I was about your age. Had a Sergeant by the name of Millford.

(MORE)
RON (CONT'D)
He was the type of croak you just wanted to watch die. Dirty old bigot who couldn’t stand anybody who wasn’t of his own creed.

ISAAC
What was his creed?

RON
Ugly. And one day, he came into my quarters; tore me a new one for no reason in particular. With no reason beyond the look on my face, he picked me up, threw me out into the mud. That wasn’t what bothered me. It was that he did all that because the Giants lost the night before, and he had money on the game. And I didn’t wanna be somewhere where your life could be ruined by someone who made a bad bet.

ISAAC
That’s rough.

RON
That, and I knew the Giant’s main pitcher threw worse than a quadriplegic.

(Half beat)
So I figured I’d leave. By law of nature, he thought otherwise. June fourth, nineteen-ninety. I officially received dishonorable discharge for striking a superior. Right upside the head. Not gonna lie, it felt good. But I couldn’t find a job after that.

ISAAC
Sure, but it’s not news to me that the path to success is long.

RON
Forget the path to success. The path to the moral high ground is barbaric. Jobs get tougher, the woman only get older, and more judgemental of your performance. But it’s somehow worth it.

They remain in silence over a beat or two, until we hear a sneeze off-screen.
Isaac and Ron look around, unsure. They search for the source of the sound until they find the little boy from earlier, hiding underneath a counter. His face looks sticky, with wet bits of flour around his mouth.

RON (CONT’D)
Oh my...
(then, to Isaac)
Today’s not your day, is it?

Isaac pulls him out from under the counter.

ISAAC
What were you doing under there?
Are you all right?

The boy nods his head.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Do you not speak?

LITTLE BOY
I can talk.

ISAAC
(Earnestly)
Then I’m gonna need you not to do that until you get home. Okay, can you do that?

The boy nods again. Accompanied by Ron, Isaac carries the little boy into--

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He sets the boy down to walk on his own. The enter into--

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

Isaac guides the boy with his hand. Marc becomes instantaneously exuberant at the sight of the child.

MARC
Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown!
Where were you buddy?

The boy shrugs.

MARC (CONT’D)
Gosh, he smells like sugar. Are we sure he wasn’t better off without my supervision?
ISAAC
No. Now, come one, get him back to his mom. We’ve got work to do.

They cross off-screen. We pan over to Eric and Jennifer, the latter of whom is seated, thoughtfully staring at a picture of Phil Urmich (the deceased), placed next to his coffin. Eric sits down next to her.

ERIC
How’s it going?

JENNIFER
(Still staring at picture)
Well, you know. It’s a funeral.

ERIC
Yeah, but I mean other than that.

JENNIFER
What else am I really supposed to think about? Where else is my head supposed to be when I’m sitting spit’s distance from a coffin? I’m just sitting here with nothing else to look at but “it”. Him. That’s it; my whole line of sight; just three hundred and sixty degrees of death.

ERIC
Oh. I’m sorry.
(then)
Do you act this way at funerals most the time?

JENNIFER
No, I just think I have a habit of screwing people.

ERIC
I think they have a pill for that.

JENNIFER
No, I meant to a friend.

A beat.

ERIC
I’m sorry about what I did earlier.

Jennifer shakes her head.
JENNIFER
Me too.

ERIC
Yeah.

JENNIFER
I hope you don’t have that image burned into your head.

ERIC
No, I don’t.

Eric blinks repeatedly, remembering the event vividly.

JENNIFER
Good. Truth be told, I kept my eyes closed too.

They share a laugh. Jennifer touches Eric’s arm comfortingly, but he flinches instinctively, akin to a recently abused dog.

From their conversation we pan across the room to Isaac and the staff, walking over one another to set everything in place. Annie is working next to Isaac.

ANNIE
You talked to Ron.

ISAAC
Yeah, we spoke briefly. He seemed to like me I guess.

ANNIE
What?

ISAAC
Well yes, on occasion people like me.

ANNIE
But those occasions usually involve alcohol or severely poor judgement.

ISAAC
What’s got you so upset?

ANNIE
I just talked to him and there was nothing. No banter; and only joke he made was toilet humor.

ISAAC
The most unsavory of icebreakers.
ANNIE
Isaac--I can’t. I don’t know how you do it. He just liked you.

ISAAC
I know. I don’t know, maybe he’s like me. I know we’re both a little rough around the edges.

ANNIE
…and the sides, and the middle. Really just personalities made of sandpaper.

ISAAC
Thanks.

ANNIE
I’m sorry. Marc mentioned earlier that my looks gets me whatever I want. It’s like, first I’m told that I’m amazing, then I can barely avoid being stampeded by Ron while he’s on his way to the bathroom.

ISAAC
Annie, I’ll be blunt: people like your face. They can’t resist it. (Half a beat) It’s everything you say afterwords that makes them reconsider.

ANNIE
That was nice at one point.

ISAAC
Your problem isn’t that your unappealing. It’s that you work too hard. You worked too hard with Ron, you worked too hard with this. As much as that’s needed, you just need to learn to be satisfied.

Isaac and Annie finish preparing their last tray of food,

ISAAC (CONT’D)
And we are done. Great!

GEORGE
We’re done too.

ISAAC
Fantastic!
Isaac Speaks for all the employees to hear:

    ISAAC (CONT’D)
    Now all we have to do--

He glances by one of the trays and notices a small puddle of spilled sauce on the table.

    ISAAC (CONT’D)
    I’ll be right back. I’ll grab a few extra rags just in case that happens again.

Isaac praises his staff as he praises them briefly. Starting with random staffers--

    ISAAC (CONT’D)
    Great job. Great job.
    (To Marc)
    Commit fewer felonies.
    (To Kathy)
    Smile more.

She’s clearly not amused.

    ISAAC (CONT’D)
    Or don’t.
    (To staffers)
    Great job. I’ll be right back.

We follow him into--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He enters into the kitchen, walking towards the back of the room for rags. We hear a CELLPHONE VIBRATION off-screen. Isaacs stops near the location of the phone to look for rags.

The device appears several years old; a unisex colored flip-phone.

He finds the rags and takes a small number of them in his hands. As he is grabbing them, he notices the phone, about to fall off of the counter.

He catches it before it falls, and ineptly fumbles with it in his greasy fingers as he places it back on the counter.

    ISAAC
    Who left their phone here?

He sees that he has dropped a few rags on the floor. He grunts as he crunches down to pick them up.
As he leans down, a voice-mail message plays on the phone’s speaker:

CALLER (V.O.)
Ay I ain’t heard nothin’ from you
since yesterday. I dunno if you
still held up with that kitchen gig
or somethin’, but the buyer said he
needs the drop to happen today.

Isaac stands up, baffled by what he’s hearing...

CALLER (V.O.)
He’s packin’ serious money, yo. He
ain’t the kinda dude you wanna let
go. Anyway, call me back, yo.

Shocked, Isaac closes the flip-phone, leaving it in on the counter.

He walks away from the phone slowly, in incredulity. He
suddenly stops, remembering--

ISAAC
Oh!

He runs back to the phone, takes a rag, and wipes down the
phone compulsively; scrubbing his fingerprints off like
there’s no tomorrow.

ISAAC (CONT’D)
Whew.

He walks away from the phone. With a fractionally lesser
burdened weight on his shoulders, he follow him up to the
doorway. He looks at those attending the funeral, then at his
co-workers.

BLACK SCREEN.

CARD: “The Previous Was Unfortunately Based on True Events.”

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW