

Down Holler

by
Bo Ransdell

WGAW Registration #1304031
Bo Ransdell
Nashville, TN
(615) 400-0462

FADE IN:

INT. ATTORNEY BOARDROOM - MORNING

Separated by a crystal water pitcher, CHARLIE BERARD (31) sits with his attorney, DANIEL TODD (mid-50s), across from his soon-to-be ex-wife, AMY BERARD (29) and her attorney, CALVIN SNORDEN (late-50s). The silence in the room is deafening as the former husband and wife stare at each other.

CALVIN SNORDEN

I think my client has made it very clear that she brought far more into this marriage than did Mr. Berard. It's only fair that she should walk away from it comfortably.

DANIEL TODD

Calvin, you and I both know that what Mrs. Berard is asking for here isn't what's fair, it's what's vindictive.

CALVIN SNORDEN

That's an unfair characterization.

Charlie makes silent eye contact with Amy, who drops her head immediately. Charlie's casual dress is in stark contrast with the elegance of his wife and the professional attire of the lawyers.

DANIEL TODD

Calling the kettle black, aren't we, Calvin?

CALVIN SNORDEN

What is that supposed to mean?

DANIEL TODD

I think you know exactly what I mean.

CHARLIE

I thought me and Amy were supposed to be the ones arguing.

DANIEL TODD

Quiet, Charlie. I told you to let me handle this.

CHARLIE

Fine.

AMY

Surprise, surprise, Charlie backs down from a fight.

CALVIN SNORDEN

Mrs. Berard, please.

AMY

Sorry, Calvin.

DANIEL TODD

My client has conceded both cars, but the house was purchased with money from an inheritance and should remain in his family. The assets will otherwise be split sixty-forty, with the larger share going to Mrs. Berard. Additionally, her court costs will be covered by my client's share of the split. No alimony will be awarded based on the agreement, as well as the brevity of the marriage.

CALVIN SNORDEN

That works out very well for Mr. Berard, but where does it leave Amy in a year? Out on the street.

DANIEL TODD

Come on, she had a few grand in savings when they were married, most of which she'll get back in the split and if she sells one of the cars, she's better off than she was going in.

CALVIN SNORDEN

I ask again, what about her future?

DANIEL TODD

What about it?

CALVIN SNORDEN

How will she survive?

DANIEL TODD

Frankly, I don't care how-

CHARLIE

Mr. Todd.

DANIEL TODD

Excuse me, but I'm only looking out
for your interests.

CHARLIE

I know that. I appreciate that.
(to Amy)
You remember when we met?

CALVIN SNORDEN

I don't think that's an issue.

CHARLIE

I wasn't talking to you. Amy,
remember how much fun we had? I
know things aren't what we
expected...

AMY

Maybe if you'd bothered to hold a
job longer than a week, they would
have been.

CHARLIE

...but we are still the same
Charlie and Amy that met on the
pier two years ago. I'm willing to
agree to anything you ask, as long
as you think, for one second, about
how we felt about each other then.
We loved each other.

Amy softens.

AMY

We did.

CHARLIE

So, let's take one small step
backwards when we didn't hate each
other. Can you do that?

AMY

I suppose so.

CHARLIE

And one more step back when we
still liked each other. That's
all. Back when I loved to make you
happy.

AMY

I know you did.

CHARLIE

Good. I want you to have whatever you think is fair, whatever will make you happy. Let's end this like we started it. I trust you to do the right thing.

AMY

And you'll sign a paper saying just that?

CHARLIE

Yes. Because I know you'll do the right thing.

Amy looks at her lawyer, who nods.

AMY

I knew you'd do the right thing, too.

EXT. STREET CURB - DAY

Charlie sits on the curb, a small cardboard box in his lap containing a couple of books and a small potted plant. Over his shoulder are slung a tote bag containing his clothes and a laptop bag with his computer. An SUV pulls up. The passenger door opens.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

GLEN

You're an idiot.

CHARLIE

That's hard to argue.

GLEN TAPERT (31) wears his usual workday clothes - suit and tie, well-polished shoes. He is fit, confident, happy.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Thanks for picking me up.

GLEN

Yeah, yeah. Where to?

CHARLIE

Your place?

GLEN

What? Are you out of your fucking mind? You've met my wife. More importantly, she's met you.

CHARLIE

Just for a couple of days.

GLEN

Absolutely not. You know what she told me when I asked when we're going to try to have another kid?

CHARLIE

What?

GLEN

She said we have two. Benny and you.

CHARLIE

That seems harsh.

GLEN

I can't bring you home. I don't get laid as it is. Your very presence in my home is like some sort of sex repellent.

CHARLIE

Take me to a hotel, then.

GLEN

I can't do that. I can't believe you, Charlie. Amy was great.

CHARLIE

She was. I think she lost faith in me.

GLEN

I wonder why.

CHARLIE

Is that sarcasm?

GLEN

Your main source of income was a lemonade stand.

CHARLIE

Gourmet lemonade.

GLEN
There's no such thing.

CHARLIE
You tasted it.

GLEN
Okay, point taken. But no one is going to pay five dollars for a glass of lemonade, especially from a grown man at a booth on the street. That's for kids, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Those kids were just holding a little pity party under the guise of a business. Their lemonade was crap.

GLEN
You gotta grow up, Charlie.

CHARLIE
I am grown up.

GLEN
Right.

The SUV pulls up to a upper-middle-class home with a wide green lawn and perfectly cultivated rose bushes along the side of the house.

GLEN (cont'd)
I go in first. Two days, okay?
That's it.

CHARLIE
You got it.

GLEN
If it were just me, you know I wouldn't care.

CHARLIE
I know.

GLEN
Sorry I came down so hard on you.

CHARLIE
It's okay.

GLEN
Fuck, Charlie. What are you gonna do?

CHARLIE
I don't know.

GLEN
Wait here.

Glen exits, disappearing inside the house for a long beat.

ANNA (O.S.)
What?!

Charlie slumps against the passenger seat, clinging to the box in his lap.

EXT. GLEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Glen, his wife, ANNA (27) and their son BEN (7) gather around the kitchen table for dinner, Charlie paces their deck, stealing glances through the window as he talks with his brother, BLAKE (28). Blake sits in his home, playing Halo 3 as he talks on a Bluetooth headset.

INTERCUT:

CHARLIE
I'll be at Glen's the next couple of days.

BLAKE
What about after that?

CHARLIE
I honestly haven't thought that far ahead. I was still mired down in the whole 'lost my wife and everything I own' moment.

BLAKE
You have to get over that shit.

CHARLIE
You have no emotional investment in this conversation, do you?

BLAKE
That's an harsh characterization of how I feel about your loss.

CHARLIE
How do you feel about it?

BLAKE
Well, it sucks, you know?

CHARLIE
Fair enough. I sold you short on that one.

BLAKE
Still doesn't change the fact you're homeless. Motherfucker!

CHARLIE
What's wrong? You okay?

BLAKE
Some jackass learned how to use a rocket launcher. Lucky shot.

CHARLIE
You're playing Halo while I talk about my divorce and homelessness?

BLAKE
I'm an incredible multi-tasker.

CHARLIE
Have you talked to mom?

BLAKE
Not lately. You know how it is with her.

CHARLIE
She hasn't been feeling good.

BLAKE
Do you remember a time in your life when you asked her how things were and the response was positive?

CHARLIE
Of course not.

BLAKE
I rest my case. You lost your Xbox?

CHARLIE

Really more pissed about the house around it that I lost, but that went, too.

BLAKE

Wow. So whose ass am I going to kick on the weekends?

CHARLIE

I'm hanging up now.

BLAKE

Peace.

The connection goes dead.

Seeing him off the phone, Glen joins Charlie on the patio.

GLEN

Want some dinner?

CHARLIE

I'll grab something in a sec. Just talked to Blake.

GLEN

How's his wife?

CHARLIE

We didn't get that far. He was playing Halo.

GLEN

Right. New map packs come out Tuesday. Holy shit! You lost your Box!

CHARLIE

Again, house around it is a bigger deal.

GLEN

Sure, but that still sucks.

CHARLIE

Is Anna okay with me staying? I should really go in and thank her.

GLEN

You really shouldn't. She's not happy about the arrangement.

CHARLIE
Shit, Glen, I can go. I'll figure something out.

GLEN
Don't be stupid.

CHARLIE
I think it's finally landing on me that I'm not married anymore. I really dug Amy when we met, you know?

GLEN
She was surprisingly into you.

CHARLIE
Why is that surprising?

GLEN
Let's take stock, shall we? When was the last time you worked an honest-to-God nine-to-five job?

CHARLIE
Never.

GLEN
Right. When did you graduate college again?

CHARLIE
I didn't.

GLEN
You dropped out when...

CHARLIE
When I got busted smoking weed in the cafeteria. They were going to force me to move back on campus.

GLEN
You seeing a pattern?

CHARLIE
Besides you being a dick?

GLEN
More about you.

CHARLIE

I know, I know, okay! Yeah, I have a very different approach to life. I don't like to be told what to do.

GLEN

Nobody does. But it happens and you suck it up and you take it.

CHARLIE

That feels like a sell-out.

GLEN

It's buying in, Charlie. I gotta put Benny to bed. You okay?

CHARLIE

Fine. If it's okay, I may just hang out here for a few.

GLEN

I'll catch you after the kid's passed out.

Glen re-enters the house, leaving Charlie alone. Behind Charlie, the lights in the house go out, leaving him in darkness.

EXT. HOME - DAY

The house is modest for an older Southern home, which is to say that it is lush by modern standards. Columns stretch from the wide porch to the second floor.

The house is in some disrepair, but still grand. The lawn is spacious and well-kept, thanks to the efforts of BEN (31) and PAUL (29). They mow and rake as PATRICIA BERARD (56) looks on from the porch. She places a pitcher of water and glasses on one of the tables.

PAT

Water if you want some!

Paul turns off the riding mower, joining Ben as they approach the house.

BEN

Thanks, Ms. Berard.

PAUL

Yeah, thanks.

PAT
Thank you. The yard looks great.

PAUL
Heard from Charlie recently?

PAT
He's busy, I'm sure.

Pat stumbles a little as she steps to Ben to offer him a glass of water, and he quickly catches her.

BEN
Are you okay?

PAT
Fine. I'm fine. Just the heat, I guess.

PAUL
You should go rest. You look a little sickly.

PAT
Don't be silly. Just the heat. You boys finish up. I'll have the money on the kitchen table.

BEN AND PAUL
Thanks, Ms. Berard.

Pat retreats into the house. Ben and Paul finish their drinks and start back to work.

INT. HOME - LATER

The sound of the mower in the distance stops. From the front of the house, the sound of a door opening and closing echoes.

BEN (O.S.)
Be quiet, you're going to wake her up.

PAUL (O.S.)
She's probably dead to the world right now. Grab the envelope and let's roll.

BEN (O.S.)
Are you meeting Brian tonight?

PAUL (O.S.)

Why?

BEN (O.S.)

Cause I need some grass.

The interior of the house is dimly lit. Cool and quiet, away from the conversation in the kitchen. It's here that Pat's body lies motionless, at the foot of the stairs, body shaking with shuddering breaths.

PAUL (O.S.)

We'll work it out. Let's get out of here before Charlie's mom wakes up.

The door opens again and closes, the screen door banging once, twice.

Pat is left there in dark silence, breathing more strained, alone.

INT. GLEN'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

Charlie is asleep on the couch, mouth open, snoring. The television is on, tuned to children's programming, as Benny plays nearby.

Curious, Benny runs one of his toy cars along the edge of the couch, pausing to gauge Charlie's reaction. There is none.

Benny now uses Charlie's exposed leg as a road for his toy car, pausing as Charlie stirs briefly then returns to sleep.

Benny moves closer, staring into Charlie's sleeping face. Charlie's eyes pop open, Benny's face inches away.

CHARLIE

Good morning.

BENNY

It's almost lunchtime.

CHARLIE

Okay. Why are you staring at me like that?

BENNY

You look weird.

CHARLIE

How so?

BENNY
You drool when you sleep.

Charlie rises, wiping his jaw. Benny does not lie.

CHARLIE
Where's your mom?

BENNY
She's making lunch.

CHARLIE
Hence, lunchtime.

BENNY
What's a hence?

CHARLIE
Not really sure, to be honest with
you. Your dad at work?

BENNY
Yep.

CHARLIE
I'm glad we had this talk. Guess I
should get a shower and get moving,
huh?

BENNY
Mom says you should get off your
butt and find a job.

CHARLIE
Really? Your mom sold me weed in
college. Ask her about it.

Benny runs out of the room. Beat.

ANNA (O.S.)
Charlie!

EXT. CAFE - AFTERNOON

Charlie sits across a table from Glen, pushing food around
his plate without eating.

GLEN
What's wrong with you?

CHARLIE
I need a spark.

GLEN

A spark?

CHARLIE

You know, that thing that's going to push me to new heights.

GLEN

What were the old heights?

CHARLIE

You are so negative.

GLEN

By the way, you need to find a place to stay tonight.

CHARLIE

I thought we were good for two days.

GLEN

We were until Anna had to explain to Benny what weed was.

CHARLIE

That's pretty funny.

GLEN

No, Charlie, it's not. You have got to learn that just because you behave like a child does not give you the right-

Charlie's phone rings and he raises a finger to quiet Glen, who rolls his eyes.

It's Blake, who paces around his apartment, smoking heavily.

INTERCUT:

BLAKE

What are you doing?

CHARLIE

Eating lunch. What are you doing?

BLAKE

I just got a call from Trickum.

CHARLIE

What's up? Ben get busted again?

BLAKE

No. He found mom passed out on the floor this morning. She's in the hospital.

CHARLIE

Oh my god. Is she-

BLAKE

She's unconscious.

CHARLIE

When are you going?

BLAKE

I can't. Kelly is putting on her first show. I can't leave right now.

CHARLIE

I can't go.

BLAKE

Why not?

CHARLIE

Two reasons.

BLAKE

Hit me.

CHARLIE

For one thing, I don't have the cash for a ticket. Amy got the car.

BLAKE

I bought you a ticket. I need you to go. Second?

CHARLIE

I haven't been home in years.

BLAKE

You're my older brother, for Chrissakes. Sack up and take care of this.

Charlie sighs. No excuse will be good enough.

CHARLIE

When do I leave?

EXT. LAX - LATER

A plane ascends.

INT. AIRPLANE - CONTINUOUS

Charlie chews his nails. The PASSENGER beside him, a friendly-looking older gentleman thumbing through the local paper, watches Charlie's tics.

PASSENGER
First time?

CHARLIE
No.

PASSENGER
Always nervous, then?

CHARLIE
No. Very calm. Very cool.

PASSENGER
Oh.

The Passenger returns to his paper.

CHARLIE
It's not like I get upset easily,
you see. Hardly ever. Spent my
whole life learning not to freak
out at the little things. Not that
that was easy.

PASSENGER
Oh?

He's lost interest.

CHARLIE
Yeah. It was like growing up in a
house of human Chihuahuas. You
learned to keep an even keel.

PASSENGER
I'm sure it was tough.

Disinterest has become regret.

CHARLIE

To put it mildly. My younger brother should be doing this. Blake was always the one who handled the emergencies. I never got in his way. He liked doing it. His wife's an artist. Comic books, mostly. That's sort of cool, right?

PASSENGER

I suppose...

CHARLIE

Who cares... I make my appearance, mom comes out of the hospital, I go back to my life. In and out, nobody gets hurt.

(Beat.)

If things get bad, Blake steps in. All there is to it.

PASSENGER

I think I may try to get a quick nap.

CHARLIE

Good idea. You don't want some asshole telling you their life story just 'cause you had the bad luck to sit next to them. Guess we got lucky.

PASSENGER

Guess we did.

CHARLIE

You gonna eat your nuts?

EXT. ATLANTA AIRPORT - NIGHT

Charlie steps through the automatic doors to the turnstile of automobiles at the arrival pick-up area. He cranes his neck both ways.

He's fumbling with his cell phone when a pick-up truck flies towards him, then slams on the brakes, stopping with one tire up on the curb.

From within, Paul leans out the passenger window, Ben at the wheel.

PAUL
Hol-ee shit! Charlie!

CHARLIE
What's up, guys?

PAUL
Not shit. Throw your bag in the
back and get in.

An airport security guard eyes the truck and begins a slow stroll towards them.

BEN
Faster would be better.

Charlie squeezes into the truck, forcing Paul to ride the center of the bench seat. As he pulls his legs into the truck, the sound of several beer cans crunching beneath his feet floats out the window.

CHARLIE
These are old, right?

BEN
We started at noon, so sort of.
Hang on.

Ben points the truck to the exit, weaving dangerously around the other cars, tossing his most recent empty out the window as they hit the interstate ramp.

EXT. HOME - EVENING

The truck pulls to a halt in the circuitous driveway. Charlie exits the truck.

BEN
Want to head to the Golden Cue
later?

CHARLIE
I thought that place was condemned
before I left.

PAUL
They rebuilt it two years ago.

CHARLIE
I don't know...

BEN

Paul made out with Louise Land
there three weeks ago.

CHARLIE

I thought she was married.

BEN

She is.

Ben cries out as though in the throes of an orgasm and peels out. Charlie snatches his suitcase from the back of the truck.

CHARLIE

Jesus.

INT. HOME - CONTINUOUS

The house is dark, and Charlie wanders through the front hall, switching on lights as he goes. The walls and tabletops are littered with framed photos of Charlie and Blake. Some together, some not. Some including Pat, some not. In no picture does another male intrude.

Charlie finds his way to the bottom of the stairs where Pat was found. He pauses there, staring up the steps to the second floor.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The light from the hallway highlights the dust drifting about the room. It has been years since Charlie lived here and it shows. The room has not been opened for some time.

The bedroom light comes on, and the room is a mess. Books, comics, cassette tapes are in mounds on the dresser. The bed is piled high with clothes, none of which are Charlie's. An old rowing machine sits on its end against one wall.

CHARLIE

Storage. Nice.

INT. BLAKE'S ROOM

The light comes on in here to a well-maintained bedroom, a picture of Blake before the long-hair years hanging on the wall.

Action figures, still in original boxes, sit on shelves. The bed is made and devoid of the sweaters and abandoned exercise equipment of his own room.

Charlie flips open his cell. Blake answers. He is in the midst of yet another Halo match.

INTERCUT:

CHARLIE

You are not going to believe this.

BLAKE

You're in Trickum?

CHARLIE

Yes. What the fuck is up with my bedroom?

BLAKE

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

I mean it looks like a fucking yard sale in there.

BLAKE

You're a messy guy. Shit.

CHARLIE

What?

BLAKE

Some dude is killing me. Just me. Fag.

CHARLIE

Where's Kelly?

BLAKE

She's setting something up for the show.

CHARLIE

Shouldn't you be with her? This is a big deal, right?

BLAKE

We give each other space. It's how I don't get divorced and lose my shit.

CHARLIE

Classy.

BLAKE

How's mom?

CHARLIE

I haven't been to the hospital,
yet. I just got in.

BLAKE

Tell her I love her.

CHARLIE

I will. I'm still upset about this
bedroom shit. Yours looks like she
was going to build a shrine.

BLAKE

She likes me more.

CHARLIE

You joke, but that's how it looks.

BLAKE

I'm not joking and that's how it
is.

CHARLIE

I don't know what to say to her.

BLAKE

Fuck! There are other people
playing, asshole!

CHARLIE

I'll let you go.

BLAKE

Please. I have a little bitch to
take care of.

CHARLIE

Always a pleasure.

Charlie flips his cell closed and sits heavily on the bed
with a squeak of box springs.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

This is so fucked up.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Charlie moves through the sliding entrance doors, wearing his usual jeans and tee shirt combo. The NURSE (mid-40s) behind the desk barely glances up at him.

CHARLIE
I'm looking for Pat Berard's room.

NURSE
Visiting hours are over.

CHARLIE
I understand that, but I just got into town. She's my mother.

NURSE
You must be Blake.

CHARLIE
I'm the other one.

NURSE
Oh. Not sure if she's mentioned you before.

CHARLIE
That's reassuring.

NURSE
Do you have ID?

CHARLIE
Driver's license?

NURSE
Fine.

Charlie slips the license out of his wallet and slides it to the nurse.

NURSE (cont'd)
This is expired.

CHARLIE
I don't really drive.

NURSE
I'm not sure I can accept this.

CHARLIE
I have a Hollywood Video card, too.

NURSE
Picture ID only.

CHARLIE
How about I stick my head in my
mom's room? If she screams, I'll
go.

The nurse slips the license back to Charlie.

NURSE
337. I'll let the desk upstairs
know you're coming.

CHARLIE
You've been a delight.

INT. HOSPITAL - THIRD FLOOR

NURSE #2 (late 50's) watches with obvious distaste as Charlie passes by the Nurse's Station. He gives her his most winning smile. Her expression does not change.

Charlie pauses by room 337. He checks his watch. 8:30 pm. He gives a light rap on the door and opens it.

INT. 337 - CONTINUOUS

Pat lies back in the hospital bed, angled into a sitting position. The television is on, but her glasses are off.

CHARLIE
Mom?

PAT
Blake?

CHARLIE
No. It's Charlie.

Beat.

PAT
Where's Blake?

CHARLIE
He had to stay in LA. Kelly has
some sort of art exhibit thing.

PAT
He should have called me.

CHARLIE
He sent me, instead.

Charlie edges deeper into the room.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Can I sit down?

PAT
Of course. How was your trip?

CHARLIE
It was fine, mom. What's going on?

PAT
I just had a spell.

CHARLIE
I think you're underselling it.

PAT
You always overreact.

CHARLIE
How about we have a conversation
where we don't discuss what's wrong
with me?

PAT
Don't be so dramatic.

CHARLIE
Don't provoke me.

PAT
When is Blake coming?

CHARLIE
Soon, I hope.

PAT
See? You don't want to be here any
more than I want you here.

CHARLIE
What a lovely thing to say.

PAT
Where are you staying?

CHARLIE
At home.

PAT
Charlie, that room's a mess.

CHARLIE
I noticed.

PAT
Where are you sleeping?

CHARLIE
In Blake's room.

PAT
He always was neater than you.

CHARLIE
He's OCD. It's not a good thing.

PAT
I don't even know what that means.

CHARLIE
What have the doctors said?

PAT
Nothing specific.

CHARLIE
What have they said generally?

PAT
Nothing.

Charlie stands.

CHARLIE
This has been productive. I'm
going home and getting some rest.
I'll see you in the morning.

PAT
Your morning, or morning for the
rest of the world?

CHARLIE
Good night, Mom.

Charlie exits.

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

Smoking a poorly-rolled joint, Charlie checks his cell phone. There are no phone calls.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Charlie enters, wearing only a slight variation on the previous day's wardrobe. At least the shirt is different.

INT. 337 - CONTINUOUS

Two DOCTORS hover around Pat, who waves as Charlie enters.

PAT
Morning, sweetheart!

CHARLIE
Sweetheart? Doctor, if there's an alien pod under her bed, I think it's safe to expect a lawsuit.

DOCTOR #1
I'm sorry?

CHARLIE
What's wrong with her?

DOCTOR #2
She's medicated.

CHARLIE
Oh, she's stoned.

DOCTOR #1
We don't call it that.

CHARLIE
Any idea what happened?

DOCTOR #1
We'd prefer to talk to you about that privately.

PAT
I hate it when you people talk about me like I'm not here.

DOCTOR #1
Are you Blake?

PAT
He's the other one.

CHARLIE
Funny, I started the morning with a name.

PAT
Then you flew the coop. That's a funny word... Coop.

DOCTOR #2
Can we talk in the hall?

CHARLIE
No chance of that being this entertaining, is there?

DOCTOR #1
Are you sure your brother isn't available?

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE
So what's going on? I mean, besides my mother being high as hell?

DOCTOR #1
We need to have your mother talk to a specialist.

CHARLIE
What is it? Cancer?

DOCTOR #1
We don't think so.

DOCTOR #2
We believe that what your mother is suffering from is a problem with her immune system.

CHARLIE
Like AIDS or something?

DOCTOR #1
Just the opposite, actually. Her joints are enflamed and she's suffering substantial hearing loss.

DOCTOR #1(cont'd)
Her antibodies are attacking her
soft tissue.

CHARLIE
What does that mean?

DOCTOR #2
We're not absolutely sure yet. We
need you to sign a consent form to
continue to test.

CHARLIE
Why not her?

DOCTOR #2
She's in a heavily medicated state.

CHARLIE
So, wait til she's not medicated.

DOCTOR #2
You don't understand. If we stop
that, her pain would be
excruciating. We need your consent
to continue.

CHARLIE
Do I have to answer now?

DOCTOR #1
Sooner, the better.

INT. HOME - AFTERNOON

Charlie paces the kitchen, speaking with Blake, who is
drinking a beer on his couch in front of a massive
television.

INTERCUT:

CHARLIE
When are you going to be here?

BLAKE
Soon as I can.

CHARLIE
That's not my question, that's
mom's. She is not comfortable with
me here. I'm not crazy about it
either. The doctors made it sound
like she may be really sick, Blake.
This is not my gig.

BLAKE

Calm down. Kelly's show is opening tomorrow. I'll be down after that.

CHARLIE

Hurry, okay? This place is driving me crazy. I went to the store today and ran into my senior English teacher, the one I had a crush on. She is disgusting and old, now. I will never, ever be able to masturbate to her again. Can you put a dollar sign on that kind of loss?

BLAKE

Have you seen Ben and Paul?

CHARLIE

They picked me up. We're doing Bad Horror Movie night tonight.

BLAKE

Cool. I'll call you tomorrow and let you know how the opening went.

CHARLIE

I give a fuck how the opening goes. When you call tomorrow, the first sentence begins with 'I will be in Trickum on...'

BLAKE

You got it. Peace.

Blake hangs up.

INT. MEGAVIDEO - EVENING

Ben, Paul and Charlie wander the horror aisles of the corporate video rental store.

BEN

Immune system? Like AIDS?

CHARLIE

Doctor said it was like the reverse of AIDS.

PAUL

What's the reverse of AIDS?

CHARLIE

I have no idea. He said something about immune system and tissue. How about a Friday the 13th? Four's a crowd-pleaser.

BEN

Just saw it like a month ago.

CHARLIE

Why?

BEN

Jacob had never seen it.

CHARLIE

I thought your kid was seven or eight.

BEN

He's seven.

CHARLIE

You don't think that's young for a camp massacre?

BEN

Sooner he understands the world isn't always a fair place, the better.

CHARLIE

I'm not following you down that path. Just going to nod.

PAUL

Fuck. They don't even have Cannibal Campout.

CHARLIE

That is a classic.

BEN

Top five, for sure.

CHARLIE

What happened to Xanadu? That was the coolest video store ever. And it was in this shithole town, which made it even more cool by comparison.

PAUL

The guy who owned it got busted for
blow or something.

CHARLIE

He was a sniffer.

BEN

There is nothing here. Literally
nothing.

CHARLIE

If it was literally nothing, the
shelves would be empty.

BEN

That's the dumbest thing I ever
heard.

CHARLIE

I'm checking the comedies. Maybe
some Cheech and Chong?

PAUL

I don't think they have those here.

CHARLIE

Why not?

PAUL

You know. Drugs.

CHARLIE

I'll be back.

BEN

What about C.H.U.D.?

PAUL

I won't see it. The director was a
Mormon.

Charlie wanders several aisles away. He idly picks up the
random dvd case, flipping it over to check the descriptions,
suddenly startled by the sound of several boxes falling on
the other side of the aisle. He raises on the tips of his
toes to see over the shelves.

LAUREN's a mess. In a sundress, sandals, hair pulled back to
show off a natural beauty that almost hurts to look at,
approaching her 30s with grace, she squats on the floor,
gathering up the boxes.

LAUREN
Shit, shit, shit.

CHARLIE
You okay?

She looks up, startled.

LAUREN
I'm fine, thanks.

CHARLIE
Need a hand?

LAUREN
I'm fine.

CHARLIE
No problem. What happened?

LAUREN
I tripped. Tried to grab the shelf
for balance. Then-

She does an exaggerated pantomime of herself falling, tongue lolling. Her beauty gives way to a charming awkwardness.

CHARLIE
Sure you don't need a hand?

LAUREN
I'm good.

CHARLIE
Okay.

Lauren reaches for another box, loses balance, falls to the floor.

Charlie rushes around the aisle to help her up.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Holy shit, are you all right?

Lauren picks herself up and stands, stretching her back.

LAUREN
I swear I'm fine. Thanks, though.

CHARLIE
Yeah. Sure.

Beat.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
This sounds like a weird question,
but are you from here?

LAUREN
No. Why?

CHARLIE
It's not that big a place. I
didn't recognize you.

LAUREN
That's why, then.

CHARLIE
Okay. Cool. See you around, I
guess.

LAUREN
Guess so.

Charlie turns back to his friends, then stops.

CHARLIE
What movie are you looking for?

LAUREN
What?

CHARLIE
When you fell. The first time.
What movie?

LAUREN
Meaning of Life.

CHARLIE
Monty Python?

LAUREN
Yeah. Why?

CHARLIE
Just curious. See ya.

INT. HOME - LATER

Ben, Paul and Charlie sit in the living room, watching television. Some sort of hospital drama. Several beers, now empty, are scattered on table-tops.

PAUL
So is that nurse supposed to be
fucking the doctor?

BEN
I'm not sure if she's supposed to
be, but she is.

PAUL
Either way, this may be the best
show I've ever seen in my life.

CHARLIE
I said I was sorry. Who doesn't
have a dvd player?

BEN
Apparently, your mother.

CHARLIE
It never occurred to me. We could
have gone to your place, Ben.

BEN
No way. I don't want to see my
wife tonight. I have another hour
til she's in bed.

CHARLIE
That's sweet.

PAUL
Seriously, Joy changed after the
baby. She rags on Ben for
everything.

CHARLIE
Like what?

PAUL
Drinking, weed.

BEN
Porn.

CHARLIE
She took porn away?

BEN
Oh, yeah. Don't get me wrong, I
love Jacob, but he was like the
grim reaper. When he came home,
the fun died.

CHARLIE

You ever think about a divorce?

BEN

Hell no. You know how much Joy makes?

PAUL

She's banking, Charles. No shit.

BEN

What happened with you and Amy?

CHARLIE

I don't know, man. It's like she woke up one day and decided that nothing was funny anymore. You know that vein that pops out when you get all pissed off?

PAUL

Yeah.

CHARLIE

She had that all the time. I just noticed it one day. And when I said something to her about it, she said she had named it after me.

BEN

That's harsh.

CHARLIE

What are you gonna do?

BEN

Not a damn thing.

PAUL

That's all you can do.

Beat.

CHARLIE

You guys see that girl in the video place?

BEN

The hippie?

CHARLIE

Hippie-ish.

PAUL
I didn't see her.

BEN
She was pretty cute.

PAUL
Why didn't you guys point her out?

CHARLIE
She was looking for Meaning of
Life.

BEN
Python? That's cool.

PAUL
Why do you guys do this? You two
are or have been married. I have
nothing going on.

BEN
You live with your parents and have
a drinking and hooker problem.

PAUL
So?

CHARLIE
She was cute.

INT. 337 - MORNING

Charlie enters the room, sunglasses tucked into his button
up. His eyes are clearly bloodshot and he looks in dire need
of a couple of hours of sleep.

PAT
Look at you.

CHARLIE
Good morning.

PAT
It's almost noon.

CHARLIE
I'm still on West Coast time.

PAT
You look it.

CHARLIE
You pretty much said that already.
How are you feeling?

PAT
Fine. Any word from Blake?

CHARLIE
Not yet. I'll call him later.

Charlie plops into chair beside the bed.

PAT
You smell like a brewery.

CHARLIE
Ben and Paul stopped by.

PAT
Not in my house!

CHARLIE
They're in your house all the time,
mom.

PAT
Not with you.

CHARLIE
So, it's not them in your house,
it's me.

PAT
That's not what I said.

CHARLIE
I really don't want to argue with
you.

PAT
Then, why are you?

CHARLIE
I'm not. Have the doctors said
anything new?

PAT
No. It's nothing, Charles.

CHARLIE
How about we let them make that
call?

PAT
They don't know anything.

CHARLIE
Maybe you should let me diagnose
you then. At least I'm cheaper.

PAT
Don't be stupid. They did graduate
college.

CHARLIE
I love how every conversation turns
into a list of my failures.

PAT
If you'd had more successes we
could talk about those.

Charlie stands.

CHARLIE
And the visit ends. I love you. I
hope you feel better soon. I'll be
back tomorrow.

PAT
Don't be such a child.

CHARLIE
I'll make you a deal. I'll stop
acting like a child and you stop
acting like a bitch.

PAT
Charlie! I didn't raise you to
talk to me like that.

CHARLIE
That's true. Not sure where I
picked it up. See you tomorrow.

PAT
Call Blake.

Charlie offers a wave without turning as he exits.

INT. MEGAVIDEO - DAY

Charlie drops the dvds into the return slot. He leans over
the counter where a GOTH CHICK, 16, sits cross-legged on the
floor reading a comic book.

CHARLIE
Excuse me.

GOTH CHICK
Yeah?

CHARLIE
You rent VHS tapes?

GOTH CHICK
Why?

CHARLIE
Because I would like to rent VHS
tapes.

GOTH CHICK
No.

CHARLIE
Why did you ask me why if you don't
have them?

GOTH CHICK
I was curious.

CHARLIE
And they say the younger generation
doesn't care about learning. You
rent dvd players?

GOTH CHICK
You can just buy them, you know?

CHARLIE
I'm aware. So you don't.

GOTH CHICK
Don't what?

CHARLIE
Rent dvd players.

GOTH CHICK
You can buy them.

CHARLIE
I don't believe this. Thanks.

Charlie makes his way outside when he catches sight of Lauren
browsing the aisles.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Hey!

Lauren looks up, dvd in hand.

LAUREN

Oh. Hi.

CHARLIE

I saw you here last night.
Coincidence, huh?

LAUREN

Yeah.

CHARLIE

No bruises?

LAUREN

What?

CHARLIE

From the fall.

LAUREN

Oh. No.

CHARLIE

I'm glad to see you're okay. How
was the movie?

LAUREN

I've seen it a million times.
Funny.

CHARLIE

What's that one?

LAUREN

The Bicycle Thief.

CHARLIE

Action movie?

LAUREN

Um... No.

CHARLIE

Kidding. I know what it is.

Awkward silence.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Guess I'll just mosey, then.

LAUREN
Have you lived here all your life?
You said you didn't recognize me.
Have you always lived here?

CHARLIE
Me? No. I grew up here. Moved
away.

LAUREN
Really? Where to?

CHARLIE
California.

LAUREN
How awesome!

CHARLIE
Spoken like someone who has never
been to California. I lived in LA.

LAUREN
What's it like?

CHARLIE
I'll make you a deal. You come to
lunch with me and I'll tell you
anything you want to know about
California.

LAUREN
What if you don't know everything I
want to know?

CHARLIE
Then I'll pay for lunch, too.

LAUREN
That wasn't the deal?

CHARLIE
Not originally.

LAUREN
Okay. Let me just get this.

Lauren takes her box to the counter, looking back over her
shoulder to Charlie.

CHARLIE
(to himself)
Fuckin' smooth.

INT. GRADY'S - AFTERNOON

It's a faux-Irish pub, a lot of green and glass, girls wearing green tee shirts, with hamburgers and fries on the menu and Budweiser on tap.

Charlie sits across from Lauren, sipping on a beer and idly munching fries from his plate.

Lauren drinks a soda from a straw.

CHARLIE
I thought I was doing the right thing.

LAUREN
I can't believe she took everything.

CHARLIE
In her defence, she was kind of a bitch.

LAUREN
Why did you get married then?

CHARLIE
Honestly? I have no idea.

LAUREN
I do.

CHARLIE
You do.

LAUREN
Yep. I think it's because all the cool kids were doing it.

CHARLIE
Continue.

LAUREN
Your friend... What's his name?

CHARLIE
Glen.

LAUREN
Was he married?

CHARLIE
Yes.

LAUREN
What about your friends here?

CHARLIE
Ben was. Paul is another story.
He's got some issues.

LAUREN
So, all of your friends, the ones
that aren't alcoholic whoremongers,
were married?

CHARLIE
Yes.

LAUREN
You wanted to seem as grown-up as
they did. You watched them getting
on with their lives and you
were...whatever.

CHARLIE
You're like Dr. Phil.

LAUREN
I'm pretty smart.

CHARLIE
And nice use of 'whoremongering'.

LAUREN
Word of the day two weeks ago.

CHARLIE
Now we know what's wrong with me.
What's wrong with you?

LAUREN
Nothing. I'm awesome.

CHARLIE
You're clumsy.

LAUREN

That was one time. Just because you saw me fall one time, albeit when we first met, does not make me clumsy by nature. In fact, I took dance all through high school and I was really good.

CHARLIE

What brought you to Trickum?

LAUREN

I liked the name.

CHARLIE

Where were you before?

LAUREN

New York.

CHARLIE

State or city?

LAUREN

Both.

CHARLIE

Why?

LAUREN

I was acting. Well, I wanted to act.

CHARLIE

What stopped you?

LAUREN

Besides the fact that I was on the fast track to head waitress at my job, which the auditions cut into way too much, there were also like a million people prettier and more talented than me.

CHARLIE

I find that hard to believe.

LAUREN

Thank you.

CHARLIE

I mean the part about being head waitress. You are way too clumsy.

Lauren throws a fry across the table, pinging it off Charlie's head.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
And violent.

LAUREN
So, what are you going to be when you grow up?

CHARLIE
Really?

LAUREN
Yeah?

CHARLIE
I have no idea. I'm working on something, now. Ben's helping me.

LAUREN
I'm sure you'll be a rousing success.

CHARLIE
I can't believe you didn't become a star. You talk like a playbill.

LAUREN
I'm not sure if that's a compliment.

CHARLIE
Neither am I.

Lauren checks the time.

LAUREN
I kinda hafta go.

CHARLIE
Me, too.

LAUREN
What do you have to do?

CHARLIE
Nothing. At all. I just wanted to seem important. What about you?

LAUREN
Job interview. Make-up counter at the mall. Very prestigious.

CHARLIE
Can't keep them waiting, then.

They stand, Charlie motioning for the WAITRESS.

LAUREN
Thanks for lunch.

CHARLIE
Thanks for coming.

The waitress approaches, and Charlie hands her his card.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
So...

LAUREN
So.

CHARLIE
Can I call you sometime?

LAUREN
Not sure if that's a good idea.

CHARLIE
I didn't even ask, did I? You have
a boyfriend!

LAUREN
I don't. I swear.

CHARLIE
You just don't like me.

LAUREN
You're okay.

CHARLIE
What is it, then?

LAUREN
I'm just not dating right now.

CHARLIE
Kind of feels like you're on a date
precisely now.

LAUREN
That's a phantom limb thing. You
feel like it's a date, but it's not
really there.

The waitress interrupts a moment, stepping between them as she places his card, the slips and a pen on the table.

CHARLIE

(to Waitress)

Thanks.

(to Lauren)

You're very strange. And that's unfair, because I'm drawn to that.

LAUREN

That is tragic. Tell you what. You give me your number, and I'll call you.

CHARLIE

Don't have much choice, do I?

LAUREN

Nope.

Charlie takes the pen left by the waitress and scribbles his number on a napkin.

CHARLIE

Here you go.

LAUREN

Yep.

CHARLIE

Good luck on your interview.

LAUREN

Thanks.

Another awkward beat.

Lauren leans up and kisses him softly, quickly on the mouth. She spins and heads for the door.

LAUREN (cont'd)

Bye!

Lauren is gone.

Charlie looks into the restaurant, met by a sea of faces watching the exchange. They break into applause.

Charlie basks in it.

CHARLIE

That's right!

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Charlie relaxes on the front porch, feet up on the rails, talking with Glen on his cell.

Glen is at home, trying desperately to find a quiet corner as Anna calms Benny, who is crying hysterically.

INTERCUT between the two.

CHARLIE

You should have seen it, Glen. I was the man. Very fucking smooth.

GLEN

But you didn't get her number.

CHARLIE

I gave her mine.

GLEN

Nice.

CHARLIE

You are not going to undermine this. I was awesome.

GLEN

And yet you have no future plans or phone number.

CHARLIE

My mistake is not emphasizing the smoothness.

GLEN

I get that. I think you're like a Michael Bay movie. Lots of flash but nothing going on.

CHARLIE

That hurts. And *The Rock* is a good movie.

GLEN

No, it isn't.

(to Anna)

Are you punching him or something?

CHARLIE

Busy?

GLEN

A bit. Let me call you tomorrow.

CHARLIE

Just to recap. Me. Smooth. Kiss.
Applause.

GLEN

Great. Talk to you later.

Glen hangs up.

CHARLIE

So unsatisfying.

EXT. HOME - MORNING

Pastoral music plays as the sun rises over the house. The peaceful moment is interrupted by Ben's truck roaring down the driveway, screeching to a halt in front of the house, followed by several long and loud blasts from the horn.

Charlie emerges, a large cardboard box in his hands, hula-hoops thrown over his shoulder. He tosses the items in the back of the truck and hops in.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE

This is going to be awesome.

BEN

We should have gotten Paul in on it.

CHARLIE

Dude, it's six a.m. How long do you think Paul has been in bed?

BEN

About twelve minutes.

CHARLIE

Let's roll.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - MORNING

Ben's truck is parked at an angle in the driveway, taking up more room than it should.

The house is simple, one of many cookie-cutter homes with small lawns that bleed into one another. ROB (37) and MARGE (34) SANDERS busy themselves setting up the last of the card tables. A sign in the front yard reads 'NEIGHBORHOOD YARD SALE.' Already, cars are beginning to arrive.

There are a number of tables, several rows of knick-knacks and tchokies.

ROB
Honey, do you have the cigar box?

MARGE
Did you look under the lawn chairs?

ROB
Found it!

Ben and Charlie huddle at the rear of the truck, gathering the items that have spilled out in the bed.

BEN
Charlie, I'm starting to think this is a bad idea.

CHARLIE
What? It's genius. Trust me on this.

Rob approaches.

ROB
Charlie?

CHARLIE
Right here!

ROB
How's your mom?

CHARLIE
Doing much better, thanks. You and Mare all set?

ROB
Yes. Some of the other neighbors will be by later, but me and Marge took the first shift. We're just natural early birds, I guess.

Charlie and Ben offer inauthentic but sympathetic laughter.

ROB (cont'd)
This is all the rage in sunny
California, huh?

CHARLIE
Rob, it's like sushi out there.
You're going to love it.

ROB
I better get back and help Marge
with the last of the prices. You
need a hand with anything?

CHARLIE
We got it. Thanks, Rob. And be
sure to tell your friends.

ROB
You know it!

Rob retreats to his wife, a grin on his face. It's suburban
heaven out here.

BEN
He's like a Stepford husband.

CHARLIE
This whole place gives me the
creeps. His wife is hot, though.

BEN
No kids, either. Means she's all
prim and proper downstairs.

CHARLIE
I'm not even sure what that's
supposed to mean. Grab the hula-
hoops.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - LATER

The morning is wearing on. A few early risers begin to thumb
through clothes, books, old toys, the usual articles at a
yard sale.

The Squawk of a megaphone draws their attention.

Charlie steps into the center of the tables, wielding the
megaphone, his outfit part carnival barker, part Goodwill.

CHARLIE

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the electrifying, stupefying, one-of-a-kind Earwood Heights yard sale! Whether you're looking for a bib for baby or a ladle for the lady, you'll find what you're looking for! And, for the next ten minutes, any purchase over twenty dollars gets you a pick from the mystery bag!

There are several oohs and aaahs.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

What are you waiting for folks? This is a one-day-only, no-holds-barred sale for the whole neighborhood! What's in the mystery bag? Twenty dollars gets you a ticket and a ticket gets you a prize! Grab a box and fill it up! Let's do some shopping!

Despite the small crowd, cheers erupt.

Ben, flipping through comics at a table while sipping a beer, holds up the almost-empty can in celebration.

BEN

Hell yeah!

Charlie takes a bow and steps backwards, holding the bow until he is out of sight.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

MONTAGE:

Charlie holds court over the yard sale.

Two shoppers race to be the first inside the hula-hoops, where the promise of a discount awaits.

Ben sleeps in the back of his truck, head tilted harshly to one side.

Charlie holds a mystery bag up to SHOPPER #1, who removes a Beanie Baby with a shrug.

Rob and Marge sit back, the cigar box overflowing with money.

Charlie wipes sweat from his brow.

A folding table is folded up as all the items are sold and removed.

Ben wakes, his face deeply sunburned on one side from his nap.

Charlie swiveling his hips, the hula-hoop spinning around his waist as onlookers cheer.

Another card table goes away. And another.

The sun is sinking as SHOPPER #2, the last customer, leaves with a box of items.

Rob folds up the last of the tables as Charlie collapses on the ground.

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

Ben and Charlie sip beer as the night brings a cool breeze.

CHARLIE

Thanks for all your help today.

BEN

I am personally stunned at how well it went.

CHARLIE

Besides your burn?

BEN

Does it look weird?

CHARLIE

No. You look like Dreyfuss from *Close Encounters*.

BEN

Sweet.

Charlie's phone rings.

CHARLIE

This will be Blake telling me he is on his way and I can get back to California with a little scratch to show for my efforts.

(flips open phone)

CHARLIE(cont'd)
Charles is most definitely in
charge.

LAUREN (O.S.)
Hello?

CHARLIE
Who is this? Kelly?

INT. KATIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lauren paces on her cell phone, her friend KATIE (30) in the background watching. Katie is less freewheeling in dress and demeanor, but is easy to smile. There is a reason these two are friends.

LAUREN
It's Lauren. From the video store?
And the pub?

INTERCUT:

CHARLIE
Hey! How'd the interview go?

LAUREN
Not great. They said they'd need
someone who used make-up.

CHARLIE
That's sexist.

Ben tilts his head to listen. Charlie aides.

LAUREN
How so?

CHARLIE
I'm not sure. What are you doing?

LAUREN
Just hanging out with my friend. I
was wondering if you wanted to do
something tomorrow?

Katie listens on Lauren's end, too.

CHARLIE
Like what?

Ben hits Charlie hard. Charlie shrugs. He's not sure why he said it, either.

LAUREN
I honestly hadn't thought that far
ahead. How about a movie?

Katie gives the "thumbs up".

Ben shakes his head "no". He follows it up with the finger
in the hole "doing it" gesture.

CHARLIE
Or... I could show you around town.
I mean, if you haven't seen the
sights.

Ben offers the "okay" sign with his thumb and forefinger.

Katie seems to think. Finally, she gives a tentative "thumbs
up". She follows this with a similar "doing it" gesture.
Lauren kicks at her.

LAUREN
Yeah, that sounds great. Meet at
the Pub around six?

CHARLIE
Perfect! See you then.

Charlie hangs up.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
I am the man.

BEN
Yeah you are.

They toast with beer cans.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lauren hangs up and plops down on the couch beside Katie.

LAUREN
This is such a mistake.

KATIE
I don't know how you can say that.
You like the guy. He's into you.
You're hanging out. Where's the
big deal?

LAUREN
It's me, Katie. I'm this black
hole of happiness.

KATIE
Here we go.

LAUREN
Let's look at the track record.
Five boyfriends in six years. One
in prison, one in an asylum. An
asylum, Katie. I literally drove
him crazy.

KATIE
They don't even call them asylums
anymore.

LAUREN
Fine. Nervous hospital. Another
joined the military. One was gay.

KATIE
Those are the same thing.

LAUREN
And, last on the hit parade, I
dated a man who joined a monastery.

KATIE
That's coincidence.

LAUREN
He swore off women forever. I was
his last.

KATIE
I look at that as an honor.

LAUREN
I'm a freak.

KATIE
You are not. You're fun.

LAUREN
And this guy, he could be a serial
killer. Or, worse, he could be a
Republican.

KATIE
You don't know that for sure.

LAUREN
I should call him back.

KATIE
You should not. I thought you came
here to start over, or get your
shit together, or whatever.

LAUREN
I did. I am.

KATIE
You're afraid of being happy.

LAUREN
That's stupid.

KATIE
You are.

LAUREN
Your face is.

There is a moment of silence as they stare each other down.

KATIE
Ice cream?

LAUREN
Does it have animal fat in it?

KATIE
I think that's the only ingredient.
That and ice.

LAUREN
Perfect.

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

Ben is weaving as he comes out the front door with two fresh
beers.

BEN
These are the last.

CHARLIE
Thank Christ. I, sir, am drunk.

BEN
I can tell.

CHARLIE
And how is that, sir?

BEN
You get formal. You think Joy is
in bed by now?

CHARLIE
I have no idea, sir.

BEN
Has to be. She's great, you know?
Besides all the stupid marriage
shit, if I met her today, I would
still be into her.

CHARLIE
That's cool.

BEN
Yeah. And Jacob is the shit.
Smarter than I ever was.

CHARLIE
Is it true that parents want their
kids to be smarter and more
successful?

BEN
It pisses you off some, but,
basically, that's true.

CHARLIE
I bet you are a fine father, sir.

BEN
Not bad. Better than my dad.
Better than yours by a mile.

CHARLIE
He was otherwise occupied.

BEN
He was a loser.

CHARLIE
That's most of what occupied him.
You have to come out to the West
Coast sometime, see me out there.

BEN
Totally.

CHARLIE

Sunshine all the time. The women.
Holy shit, the women are gorgeous.
There's the chance it could all
drop into the ocean, but that's the
gamble you take.

BEN

You're a good swimmer, anyway.

CHARLIE

I am! And thank you, sir, for
pointing that out on this finest of
all nights.

BEN

Anytime.

Charlie's phone rings again.

CHARLIE

I should in no way answer this in
my current state.

He does.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Hello?

(pause)

It is.

(pause)

I'll be right there.

He hangs up.

BEN

Was it the Monty Python chick
again?

CHARLIE

It was Memorial Hospital. Mom's in
a coma.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

Coffee in hand, Charlie walks deliberately towards the pair
of doctors.

DOCTOR #1

Charlie, right?

CHARLIE
What's going on?

DOCTOR #1
I don't want you to panic, first of all.

CHARLIE
I am quite calm, sir.

DOCTOR #1
Have you been drinking?

CHARLIE
Yes, sir.

DOCTOR #2
He's in no condition.

CHARLIE
I will tell you what condition I am in no for. Why is my mother in a coma?

DOCTOR #1
We had to induce the coma. She was burning up with fever. We had to cool her down and stabilize her.

CHARLIE
This was on purpose?

DOCTOR #2
Perhaps we should wait for your brother to arrive.

CHARLIE
I think that's a fine idea. What about until then?

DOCTOR #2
She'll need someone to sign off on her tests.

CHARLIE
I can do that.

DOCTOR #1
Not in this state you can't. You can rest in the waiting area for now. Take a nap. When you're feeling more yourself, we can discuss the tests.

CHARLIE

What's the big fucking problem here? Give me the papers and I'll sign them. Do your tests. Just get her well.

DOCTOR #2

We can't do that. Just rest for now.

Charlie is growing agitated.

CHARLIE

I didn't even want to be here, Doctor Whoever. I was doing fine in LA, and I get stuck with this trip, I get stuck dealing with you two assholes, I'm the one who has to sign all the goddamn paperwork. Just give her the tests.

DOCTOR #1

You can sign the papers when you're sober. Please.

Charlie slaps the medical chart out of Doctor #2's hands.

CHARLIE

Sign that.

Charlie storms out of the ward and out of the hospital.

INT. HOME - MORNING

Passed out in Blake's room, Charlie's eyes blink slowly open to the sound of his cell phone ringing. He fumbles for it, seizing it as the ring rolls to voicemail.

Charlie brings the phone to his face and sees "Missed Call... Blake". Charlie redials and Blake picks up quickly.

INTERCUT:

CHARLIE

What's up?

BLAKE

Where the fuck are you?

CHARLIE

I'm at home.

BLAKE
Why the fuck aren't you at the
hospital?

CHARLIE
I'm going.

BLAKE
Did you just wake up?

CHARLIE
I don't like the tone of this
conversation.

BLAKE
I don't like the fact that Mom's in
a fucking coma and you're waking up
at noon.

CHARLIE
It's twelve?

Charlie checks his watch.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Holy crap. When are you going to
get here? Everybody's asking for
you.

BLAKE
I can't come right now.

CHARLIE
You can't leave me here, man. I
was supposed to be putting some
tape on this, not handling it.

BLAKE
You're going to have to.

CHARLIE
I'm on my way to the hospital.
I'll talk to you tonight. Get your
shit together and book a flight.
I'm gone this weekend.

Charlie hangs up.

INT. 337 - DAY

The room has lost its warmth. A NURSE hovers over Pat, whose face is mostly obscured by breathing tubes and monitor patches.

Charlie enters sheepishly as Doctor #2 is making notes on Pat's chart.

CHARLIE

Doctor?

Doctor #2 looks up and quickly back down to the chart.

DOCTOR #2

Mr. Berard. Feeling better this morning?

CHARLIE

Yeah, thanks. I wanted to say I'm sorry for the way I acted.

DOCTOR #2

Of course. You're under a great deal of stress, I'm sure. Have you spoken with your brother?

CHARLIE

Yes. I don't believe he's coming.

DOCTOR #2

You're prepared to pprove the tests?

CHARLIE

I am.

DOCTOR #2

I have to explain something to you. With these tests, we expect to see positive results for polychondritis.

CHARLIE

What's that?

DOCTOR #2

It's a disorder that attacks the soft tissue of the patient.

DOCTOR #2(cont'd)

Essentially, the white blood cells in your mother's body are attacking her joints, her connective tissue, anything that isn't bone.

CHARLIE

So, if you know that already, why are you doing tests?

DOCTOR #2

To see how long we can successfully treat her.

CHARLIE

What are you saying?

DOCTOR #2

I'm saying that your mother is an advanced state of this disease. Her hearing has been going, yes?

CHARLIE

Yes. She wouldn't see a doctor.

DOCTOR #2

Mr. Berard, get her affairs in order. We have your number. If anything changes, you'll be the first phone call, but, for now, you need to attend to the legalities of your mother's condition. Does she have a living will? Does she have a will at all? What sorts of arrangements does she want in the event of her passing?

CHARLIE

I don't know.

DOCTOR #2

Time you found out, then.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Charlie walks out of the sterile environment and pauses. Looking up at the sky, his legs seem to drain of strength and he falls into a sitting position on the curb.

EXT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Charlie pulls up in his mother's old sedan. It's a questionable choice.

Charlie rushes inside, a small bouquet of flowers in his hand.

INT. KATIE - CONTINUOUS

A knock comes at the door. Katie's head pops out from the kitchen, scans for Lauren and, seeing no one, answers the door.

Charlie looks momentarily confused.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, I must have the wrong-

KATIE

You must be Charlie.

CHARLIE

Yeah. I don't-

KATIE

I'm Katie. Lauren will be with you in a minute. Come in.

Charlie enters and Lauren follows behind with a mischievous smile. She points him to a seat in the apartment's cozy and tidy living room.

CHARLIE

Thanks. Is Lauren here?

KATIE

Where else would she be?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I'm Charlie.

KATIE

I know that.

CHARLIE

Are you intentionally making this difficult?

KATIE

A little.

CHARLIE

Okay. I thought I was just coming across like an idiot.

KATIE

That's a possibility, too.

Lauren walks in, wearing only her bra and panties, somewhat daring in preparation for the date, her eyes on Katie.

LAUREN

Do you have those silver earrings still? The ones with the little turtles?

Katie does not answer, but keeps smiling.

LAUREN (cont'd)

What? What's so funny?

Lauren looks slightly to her right where Charlie sits. He offers a terse and cordial wave.

CHARLIE

Evening.

LAUREN

(stiffly)

Flowers. You shouldn't have.

Lauren nods and walks away, back into her bedroom.

KATIE

That was awesome.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - NIGHT

The flowers have been left behind and Lauren sits in silence as Charlie tries to coax her out.

Lauren's dress is similar to the norm, flowing dress, loose-fitting, but Charlie can't help but notice the curves beneath.

CHARLIE

Seriously, completely, unashamedly nude. That's how we enter the world and there's no reason to be upset about this.

LAUREN

I'm not upset, I'm embarrassed.

CHARLIE

Why? You're kind of smoking hot.

LAUREN
You're not supposed to know all the
details til i want you to.

CHARLIE
I don't. There could be piercings,
or a very small tattoo.

LAUREN
Not helping.

CHARLIE
Do you want me to take you home?

LAUREN
No. Hang on.

Lauren takes three long breaths, holding each one.

CHARLIE
What was that?

LAUREN
That was me releasing.
(smiles)
Much better.

CHARLIE
You took three breaths and now it
doesn't matter that I saw your what-
nots?

LAUREN
Doesn't help if you bring it back
up.

CHARLIE
Right. Maybe I should try that. I
spent all day talking to my Mom's
attorney.

LAUREN
That sounds fun.

CHARLIE
It turns out that wills are
incredibly boring. I always wanted
a cool one. Like a video will
where I get to give away my
money... on one condition.

LAUREN
That's Brewster's Millions.

CHARLIE
I love that movie.

LAUREN
Where are we going?

Charlie pulls into a small parking lot at the base of a hill. At the top is a fenced-in area which guards several generators and power lines sag down the hill and back into town.

CHARLIE
We're here.

LAUREN
This is romantic.

CHARLIE
You're being sarcastic. Come on.

EXT. BUNKER HILL - CONTINUOUS

Charlie opens the door for Lauren, pulling her out and up the hill.

LAUREN
This feels more like work than a date.

CHARLIE
Shut up and come on.

They crest the top of the hill and it is, surprisingly, magical.

The stars are very clear, but the street and home lights of Trickum below appear to be a reflection of the canopy of lights above. Despite the fenced-off area, the grass is green and soft.

Charlie plops onto the ground, reaching out to Lauren to help her sit.

LAUREN
I'm going to get dirty.

CHARLIE
Are you really that girl?

LAUREN
No.

Lauren folds her dress beneath her legs and sits beside Charlie.

LAUREN (cont'd)
I admit, it is pretty.

CHARLIE
When we were in high school, we would come up here, drink beer that Ben's brother would buy us, listen to music. It was a lot of fun.

LAUREN
Sounds nice. Why did you leave?

CHARLIE
I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up. I only knew I didn't want it to be here.

LAUREN
So you came back for your mom?

CHARLIE
It's usually my brother's gig. But, here I am.

LAUREN
I'm glad.

CHARLIE
At the moment, me, too.

Long beat.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Want to see a trick?

LAUREN
Sure.

Charlie ruffles his hair and it slowly begins to rise from his head. Lauren laughs and claps.

CHARLIE
Your turn.

Charlie reaches over and musses Lauren's long hair. It, too, slowly begins to rise.

LAUREN
Is it the power lines?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Look at your arms.

Lauren inspects her arm, seeing the tiny hairs rise against the skin.

LAUREN

That's so weird.

CHARLIE

I think it's science or something.

Lauren giggles, her face lighting up.

LAUREN

You're a pretty nice guy, huh?

CHARLIE

I have my moments.

LAUREN

You do.

Lauren leans forward and Charlie responds in kind.

CHARLIE

I think this is one.

They are very close.

LAUREN

It is.

Their movements towards one another are hesitant, awkward. Their lips draw close and a small spark jumps from one pair of lips to another before they finally press together.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

The door opens into a dark apartment. Katie is in bed - it's very late, after all.

Lauren blocks Charlie from entering, but neither can keep their hands from each other's arms, face, waist.

LAUREN

Shhh. She's asleep.

CHARLIE

You want me to check the apartment for intruders?

LAUREN
I think it's time to call it an evening.

CHARLIE
Okay. I am definitely going.

Lauren presses close, kisses him deeply. Charlie responds wholeheartedly.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
That's not the sort of thing that gets rid of me.

LAUREN
I understand that. I think you may have drugged me.

CHARLIE
That was plan B. Never had to resort to that.

He kisses her this time.

LAUREN
Okay, seriously. Good night.

CHARLIE
Call me tomorrow?

LAUREN
I will.

CHARLIE
Early.

LAUREN
When I get up.

CHARLIE
Or before you go to bed.

LAUREN
That's tonight, though.

CHARLIE
So, call me tonight.

This time, the kiss is mutual.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
I'm going.

LAUREN
Talk to you soon.

CHARLIE
I had fun.

LAUREN
Go. I had fun, too.

CHARLIE
Walking away, now.

He finally does. She watches every step.

Lauren closes the door and rests her back against it, sighing.

A blinding light comes on, revealing Katie standing in the kitchen doorway, silently judging.

KATIE
Well, well, well...

LAUREN
Did we wake you up?

KATIE
Nope. I was waiting.

LAUREN
For what?

KATIE
I want details.

LAUREN
He's a nice guy.

KATIE
Those aren't details. Bottle of wine is already in the living room. I'll grab the glasses. Corkscrew's beside the bottle. And if there was funny business, save it til the end and don't foreshadow.

Lauren tromps to the living room.

EXT. TRICKUM TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Charlie walks along the picturesque streets of the city center, what there is of it.

The town square is quaint, solid, and utterly without pretension. The thought brings a smile to his face.

From the other side of the square, Charlie hears the sound of a car engine turning over and over, but never catching.

Charlie winds around the square and sees Paul's truck with Paul moving unsteadily from the driver's seat to check under the open hood.

CHARLIE

Paul?

PAUL

Charlie?

CHARLIE

What are you doing out here, man?

PAUL

Having truck problems.

CHARLIE

I see. Where's Tony and the rest of the gang? I thought Ben told me they were always down here at the Jukebox with you.

PAUL

They were. They sort of dared me to do the Red Dawn. You know where you pee in the tank to make the truck go.

CHARLIE

That was the radiator.

PAUL

I realized that after the fact. You think you can give me a ride.

CHARLIE

'Course I can.

PAUL

Where are you parked?

CHARLIE

(pointing)
About half a mile down there.

PAUL

What are you doing all the way down here?

CHARLIE
Just walking. Hey, isn't that
where Xanadu used to be?

Paul pauses before a boarded window.

PAUL
Yeah. My mom is the agent for it,
but no one knows what to put in
there, now.

CHARLIE
We ought to get it and reopen
Xanadu.

PAUL
I don't know. If I had to live
with my mom and dad and pay her
rent, I think that would be sort of
fucked up.

CHARLIE
Why are you still living at home,
anyway?

PAUL
Working for the city doesn't pay
that much.

CHARLIE
Guess not.

PAUL
Plus, there's the girls.

CHARLIE
You do mean prostitutes?

PAUL
Sure.

CHARLIE
Sure.

PAUL
That's pretty weird, huh?

CHARLIE
Man, you get right down to it,
we're all pretty fucking weird.
Come on, it's getting cold.

PAUL
My dad's going to be pissed when he
hears about the Red Dawn situation.

CHARLIE
It's all gonna work out, my man.

INT. 337 - MORNING

Charlie sits beside the hospital bed where Pat lies still,
still ensnared by the trappings of modern medicine holding
death at bay.

NURSE #2 (50s) makes a show of changing the sheets in the
empty bed beside Pat's.

CHARLIE
Miss? Could you come back in a
bit?

NURSE #2
Sorry, sir, but this is part of my
rounds.

CHARLIE
What if I promised that I'd do it?

NURSE #2
I don't suppose that means a whole
lot, Charles Berard.

CHARLIE
You little bi-

PAT
(raspy)
Be nice.

Charlie's jaw drops, standing quickly.

CHARLIE
Mom?

PAT
Can you get me some water?

CHARLIE
Miss, can you get the doctor. And
some water.

NURSE #2
I'll be right back.

CHARLIE
It's coming, Mom. Can I get you
anything?

PAT
Where's Blake?

CHARLIE
He hasn't been able to get away,
yet.

PAT
He'll be here soon.

CHARLIE
I know, Mom. The doctor has some
bad news...

PAT
I heard it already.

CHARLIE
When?

PAT
I heard them talking yesterday. I
couldn't move, though. Couldn't
talk. I feel so tired.

CHARLIE
Just relax. You don't have to say
anything.

PAT
They said you were here drunk.

CHARLIE
It was late. And you were probably
hallucinating.

PAT
Are you okay?

CHARLIE
I'm fine, Mom.

PAT
You know I love you.

CHARLIE
I know that. You know I love you.

Pat nods.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Good.

PAT

I'm glad you're here.

Charlie is taken aback.

CHARLIE

Thanks, Mom.

Doctor #2 enters, immediately moving to the bed and beginning his examination.

DOCTOR #2

Ms. Berard. Just sit back. This won't take but a second.

Pat reaches out and takes Charlie's hand. He looks from her hand to her face, seeing her smile weakly.

PAT

I knew you'd be here when I needed you.

Charlie squeezes her hand.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Katie comes home from work, dressed casual/professional, her hair pulled up, glasses on.

KATIE

Lauren? You here?

From the guest bedroom, the sound of a thump echoes through the apartment.

Katie follows the sound into the bedroom, where Lauren is pulling drawers from the dresser and dumping the contents into one large suitcase and a few garbage bags.

KATIE (cont'd)

Laundry day?

LAUREN

Oh. Hey. I didn't hear you come in.

KATIE

I guess not. What with all the demolition. What's going on?

LAUREN
I think I may head north.

KATIE
Oh, yeah? You need a hand?

LAUREN
Uh, sure. Want to hold the bag?

KATIE
Sounds fun.

Katie takes a black garbage bag and opens the lip wide.

KATIE (cont'd)
I don't think these are
environmentally friendly.

LAUREN
Who gives a shit?

KATIE
I just want to follow the
chronology here. You were looking
for work, met a guy, then went on a
very successful date with him.
Twenty-four hours later, you are
packing all your things and taking
a... what, bus?... back to a city
you just left to come here.

Lauren dumps another drawer into the bag.

LAUREN
Yeah, that seems about right.

KATIE
Any particular reason, or is this
the usual Thursday thing?

LAUREN
I just need to get moving, K. You
know me, can't sit still too long.

KATIE
Okay. What about your new friend,
Charlie?

LAUREN
What about him? He's a nice guy.
Maybe you should go out with him.

KATIE

I don't want to. Well, maybe a little.

(drops the bag)

I tried to do this reasonably, but that doesn't seem to be working. What the hell is wrong with you?

LAUREN

Nothing.

KATIE

Bullshit. When you called me and said you needed a place to stay, I said yes, who cares that I hadn't seen you in four years? And when you said you needed a job, I got interviews lined up for you. I didn't ask a single question, I just smiled and laughed and supported you. You walk out that door, and we're done, Lauren. Seriously. You don't tell me what's happening with you, you don't tell me what you're running from, or towards. I love you, Lauren, I really do, but I have no idea what is going through your head right now.

LAUREN

It's no one's business.

KATIE

Hmmm. I'm going to have to say 'Fuck you' to that. Fuck you, L. I opened my house to you and it is my business. You're staying with me, you're my friend, and I am fucking clueless about what's happening inside your head.

LAUREN

I guess that's it, then.

Lauren closes the suitcase and looks around the room at the piled, empty drawers and the scattered garbage bags.

LAUREN (cont'd)

I'll call when I get there. Give you an address so you can send the rest of this.

KATIE
Seriously, Lauren. Don't do this.

LAUREN
I'm sorry. I really am.

KATIE
Please talk to me.

Lauren lifts the suitcase from the bed.

LAUREN
I'll call you soon.

Lauren pushes past Katie towards the door.

KATIE
Don't bother. I'm turning these
bags into a bonfire as soon as that
door shuts.

Lauren pauses at the door.

LAUREN
I really am sorry.

Lauren exits.

KATIE
Shit.

EXT. HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

INTERCUT with Blake and Charlie as he paces back and forth in front of the hospital. Back in California, Blake is sitting alone, glum at a kitchen table.

CHARLIE
I think you need to get down here,
man. She doesn't look good.

BLAKE
I'm trying.

CHARLIE
I've made arrangements if... You
know, if.

BLAKE
Who's handling it?

CHARLIE
Stewart's family. I was sort of surprised he followed them into the business.

BLAKE
What about the will?

CHARLIE
I haven't seen it or anything, but I spoke with Mom's attorney and there definitely is one, updated last spring sometime.

BLAKE
Sounds like you have everything under control.

CHARLIE
Sounds like it. Doesn't feel that way. How's Kelly?

BLAKE
You know, she's fine.

Blake holds up divorce papers he has recently been served.

BLAKE (cont'd)
I think she may take some more time here for the show. I'll be down in the next few days.

CHARLIE
That's really excellent news.

NURSE #3 approaches, standing awkwardly beside Charlie, quietly getting his attention.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Hang on one sec, Blake.
(to NURSE #3)
What's happening?

NURSE #3
You need to come with me.

INT. 337 - MOMENTS LATER

Doctor #2 and several ATTENDANTS have gathered around Pat, scrambling to resuscitate her.

Charlie enters in a sweat, breath heaving from running up the steps to the room.

CHARLIE
What's going on?

DOCTOR #2
Nurse, I said to let him know, not
bring him in here.
(to Attendant)
More air, goddamnit, she's choking!

CHARLIE
What's happening?!

DOCTOR #2
Get him out of here!

Nurse #3 and one of the Attendants pulls Charlie back, the door shutting before him as the scramble to save Pat's life continues.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

Charlie sits in a poorly-designed chair, a cup of coffee dangling from the tips of his fingers. It is cold.

Doctor #2 approaches. He bends, squatting by Charlie, resting a hand on Charlie's knee as he speaks.

Charlie nods. Nods again. Doctor #2 rises, pats him on the back, and exits.

Charlie hurls the cold cup of coffee against the white, sterile wall of the waiting room.

EXT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Katie looks out her living room window at the rain coming down outside, sipping tea. The unexpected knock at the door makes her jump.

She crosses to the door quickly, flinging it open.

KATIE
You scared the shit out of me!

It's Charlie, and he's soaking wet.

CHARLIE
Sorry. Is Lauren here?

KATIE

Oh, no. I thought you were her.

CHARLIE

Can I leave a message? I've been trying her phone. Did she say anything to you? I don't understand why she won't talk to me.

KATIE

Please, come in.

CHARLIE

I can't. Just tell her to call me if you see her.

KATIE

Is everything okay?

CHARLIE

My mama died.

INT. HOME - DAY

The breeze is rustling the leaves as Charlie looks over the lawn, down the sloping hill to the country road beyond.

Charlie is dressed in a suit and tie, looking surprisingly professional and handsome.

He is serene, for the moment, listening to the wind blow and the leaves rattle as fall takes its first hesitant steps towards the town.

Charlie turns, looking into the house where Ben And JOY stand with their son, JACOB, all dressed in somber elegance. PAUL hawks over a plate of food, sipping a beer. Other FRIENDS and WELL-WISHERS mill about inside.

GLEN (O.S.)

You doing all right?

Charlie turns to face his friend, shrugging.

CHARLIE

Hard to judge. This is my first time.

GLEN

There was your dad.

CHARLIE

I didn't have anything to do with that one.

GLEN

It was a nice service.

CHARLIE

I would have preferred less music.

GLEN

Did she really go to that church?

CHARLIE

She went a few times, I think. I respect that they made their own instruments.

GLEN

That was pretty funny.

CHARLIE

Yeah, it was pretty funny. You see Ben and Joy?

GLEN

Just did.

CHARLIE

She looks great.

GLEN

Jacob's a good kid, too.

CHARLIE

Funny to see all four of us back here.

GLEN

Doesn't feel like a day has passed.

CHARLIE

I like that.

GLEN

Me, too.

Blake turns the corner of the porch, zipping up his pants.

GLEN (cont'd)

Hey, Blake.

BLAKE
Glen, what up? I didn't see you at
the funeral.

GLEN
I just got in.

BLAKE
Nice to see you.

GLEN
You, too.

BLAKE
(to Charlie)
You need anything?

CHARLIE
Can't think of a single thing.

BLAKE
I'll be inside.
(to Glen)
Late.

Blake enters the house, snagging up some finger food.

GLEN
Where's what's-her-name? His wife?

CHARLIE
Kelly. Back in LA. She served him
papers.

GLEN
You two have a contest going?

CHARLIE
You think I'm winning?

GLEN
You did get divorced first.

CHARLIE
I didn't think I would feel good
today, but here we are. Thanks for
coming, Glen.

GLEN
Not a problem. What's the scoop on
the will?

CHARLIE
Official reading is tomorrow.
Blake gets a lot of cash. I get
the house and a lot of cash.

GLEN
Where'd all the money come from?

CHARLIE
Apparently, Mom was an investor.
We're splitting about a mil in
liquid assets.

GLEN
Holy shit.

CHARLIE
Yep.

GLEN
Talk about coming back to LA in
style.

CHARLIE
About that. I don't think I'm
gonna.

GLEN
Get the fuck out of here.

CHARLIE
Seriously. Man, I did nothing but
odd jobs and fucking up out there.

GLEN
It's where everything happens,
Charlie.

CHARLIE
It's where everything pretends to
happen. I'm done with it.

GLEN
You're giving up.

CHARLIE
Sort of hoping for some support.

GLEN
Sorry, man. You're right. If it
makes you happy.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

GLEN

What are you going to do?

CHARLIE

I have an idea. I'll let you in on it, later. For tonight, though, I thought you might enjoy a special screening I have arranged.

GLEN

Is that so?

CHARLIE

Me, you, Ben, Paul, a case of beer and a little film I like to call *Cannibal Campout*.

GLEN

No shit?

CHARLIE

No shit.

Paul steps onto the porch, weaving a little.

PAUL

What are you two motherfuckers doing?

CHARLIE

I was just letting Glen in on our little surprise.

PAUL

Cannibal Campout, bitches. I'm going for the beer.

CHARLIE

Once some people clear out. You think you two can keep an eye on Blake for me for about a half hour?

PAUL

Where are you going?

GLEN

Do what you gotta do.

(to Paul)

Leave the man alone would you?

EXT. STREETS OF TRICKUM - LATER

Charlie finds himself back at the town square, once again standing before the shell of a building that was once Xanadu Video. He rubs the dirt off the glass facing the street, startled by a voice behind him.

MRS. DUKE

Charlie. I'm surprised you wanted to meet today.

Charlie turns to greet MRS. DUKE, 50s, Paul's mother, a stately matron of the Southern stripe. She carries herself like royalty trapped by geography.

CHARLIE

Thanks for meeting me, Mrs. Duke.

MRS. DUKE

I assume Paul is at your house?

CHARLIE

He is.

MRS. DUKE

Is he drinking?

CHARLIE

He is.

Mrs. Duke shakes her head.

MRS. DUKE

I don't know what happened to that boy.

CHARLIE

I think you did, Mrs. Duke. You and your husband. He's been stifled all his life, always bailed out when things got bad. How did you expect him to turn out?

MRS. DUKE

I didn't come here today to be insulted, Charles, and your mother would be-

CHARLIE

I know that's not why you came here.

CHARLIE(cont'd)

But, I think we can help each other out. Are you willing to bargain a little?

MRS. DUKE

What did you have in mind?

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Charlie sits at the kitchen table, Blake sitting across from him, as Paul and Ben drunkenly giggle at *Cannibal Campout* in the living room, seen from the table through a doorway.

Glen paces back and forth between the rooms, talking on his cell phone with Anne.

GLEN

Yeah, I'll be landing about noon tomorrow... I'll tell him.

CHARLIE

That would be Anne sending her condolences.

Blake nods.

GLEN

Anne sends her condolences.

CHARLIE

Tell her thanks.

Blake and Charlie share a bittersweet smile.

GLEN

He says thanks. I think you'd be really proud of him. Yeah, I think he's growing up.

Glen wanders back into the living room, strolling in front of the television and is instantly attacked by several empty beer cans.

BEN

Shenanigans!

PAUL

What are you doing?!

GLEN

That's Ben and Paul. Yeah, they're doing... They're doing just fine.

Glen makes his way outside for peace and quiet.

CHARLIE

So, when are you going back?

BLAKE

Wednesday. After the will is read.

CHARLIE

You don't really have to stay for that, you know. I can handle it here.

BLAKE

I know. I think maybe an extra day is in order. I'm so sorry, Charlie.

CHARLIE

What for?

BLAKE

For not being here.

CHARLIE

Oh. That.

BLAKE

I should have come.

CHARLIE

You had your own shit to deal with.

BLAKE

So did you.

CHARLIE

What are you gonna do?

BLAKE

Not a damn thing.

CHARLIE

That's all you can do.

They share another smile.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

You know, you could stay here for a while if you wanted to.

BLAKE

Nah. I need to get back. See if there's a way to patch things up.

CHARLIE

If there isn't?

BLAKE

I can still beat your ass at Halo.

CHARLIE

I'm older and wiser than you, you know?

BLAKE

You're also a little bit of a bitch.

CHARLIE

That's hard to argue.

BLAKE

What are you gonna do?

CHARLIE

I have some irons in the fire.

BLAKE

Paul told me about the yard sale thing.

CHARLIE

That was one of my better ideas.

BLAKE

How's this in relation to that?

CHARLIE

Better.

BLAKE

Cool.

CHARLIE

You wanna get drunk and watch the rest of the movie.

BLAKE

Sure.

CHARLIE

I love you, you know.

BLAKE
I love you, too.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Blake and Charlie sit and nod, when appropriate, as a LAWYER, 60s, reads through papers on his desk.

Through the glass of the conference room, Blake finally breaks down, sobbing and leaning against Charlie. Charlie holds Blake's head to him as the Lawyer looks up, suddenly uncomfortable.

Charlie gives him the motion to keep going.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Charlie pulls up to the drop-off with Blake in the passenger seat, both exiting as they slow to a stop and exit, grabbing bags from the truck bed.

CHARLIE
All set?

BLAKE
All set. Sure you want to stick around this dump?

CHARLIE
Yeah. I guess you reach a point where you have to stop looking for the next thing and concentrate on what you have.

BLAKE
That's deep.

CHARLIE
I saw it on a copy of Watchtower.

BLAKE
You be cool.

CHARLIE
No other way to be.

They give each other a terse hug and Charlie ends it by stepping back and shaking his brother's hand.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Give me a yell when you get back to
the coast.

BLAKE
I will. But you have to be honest
with me. Are you staying for the
girl?

CHARLIE
I'll put it like this - I am not
not staying for the girl.

BLAKE
You really like her.

CHARLIE
Liked. She's apparently gone.

BLAKE
That sucks.

CHARLIE
Yep. Have a safe trip.

BLAKE
See you online. Boom, bitch!

Blake enters the airport without a look back.

INT. XANADU - NIGHT

A lock turns in the door, swinging the dirty glass open into
a large main room, shelves still in the center, covered with
dust and drop cloths.

Charlie enters with an honest-to-goodness bell ringing over
his head, flipping on the lights. The place is a wreck,
sure, but mostly intact. Little elbow grease, some paint,
this place is ready to go.

Behind the counter is a large neon sign that says "Xanadu."
Charlie hops over the counter, tracing the plug from the sign
down, where it is dangling unplugged.

Charlie plus it in, and it blinks, unsteadily, then lights.

CHARLIE
I'll be damned.

The bell over the door jingles. Charlie looks up to see Paul.

PAUL
Holy shit. What's this?

CHARLIE
It's mine.

PAUL
What?

CHARLIE
I talked to your mom. I'm renting the place, for now. Already talked to a distributor in Atlanta. We have movies on the way, my man.

PAUL
Why didn't my mom say anything?

CHARLIE
I asked her not to. Come here.

Charlie leads Paul to a small stairwell, moving up to an upper room which is filled with boxes, a small bathroom in one corner.

PAUL
I didn't know this was up here.

CHARLIE
Me, neither, til I started rooting around. It's going to need some work. Maybe even some extra work to put in a small kitchen or something.

PAUL
I don't get it. You have a house.

CHARLIE
You don't. Why don't you work here. You can stay here for free, just make sure the place opens on time every morning. We sit around, rent some movies, watch a few ourselves, bullshit with the customers...

PAUL
That sounds like fun. I don't know what to say.

CHARLIE
Say you'll do it.

PAUL
I'd love to.

CHARLIE
There are a couple of conditions.

PAUL
What's that?

CHARLIE
You're sober the whole time you're
at work. First time a customer
complains about you being drunk,
it's off the table.

PAUL
No sweat.

CHARLIE
Good.

PAUL
What's the other thing?

CHARLIE
That's both of the conditions.
You've got to be straight.

PAUL
I will.

CHARLIE
Cool. We'll clean this up
tomorrow. You can start staying
here as soon as it's ready. We
should have the first of the movies
next week.

PAUL
This is pretty awesome, Charlie.

CHARLIE
It sure as hell is.

PAUL
Can we carry *Cannibal Campout*?

CHARLIE
Wouldn't really be our place if we
didn't.

EXT. XANADU - CONTINUOUS

A bus pulls into the square. It's late for the last run.

The doors open with a hiss, dumping Lauren back onto the streets of Trickum.

Behind the bus, Katie has been circling the square in her car. As the bus pulls away, Katie draws to the curb.

Lauren is hunched, holding the bags she took with her, her body sagging and defeated.

INT. KATIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lauren tosses her bags into the back seat and slips into the passenger seat.

KATIE
Welcome home.

LAUREN
Or at least back, huh?

KATIE
Welcome back, then.

LAUREN
Thanks for picking me up.

KATIE
Sure. So, you want to tell me why you took off, or would you rather get drunk first?

LAUREN
I think I'll get drunk first.

Lauren points to Xanadu.

LAUREN (cont'd)
It's late for that place to be open, isn't it? I've never seen lights on the square after ten o'clock.

KATIE
It's not open, yet.

LAUREN
What is it?

KATIE
Video place.

LAUREN
Think they'd give me a job?

KATIE
You should go by tomorrow and see.
Can't hurt.

LAUREN
Thanks, again.

KATIE
It's really no-

Lauren stops her.

LAUREN
Katie. Thank you.

KATIE
You're welcome. Now, I have two
kinds of wine at home. One is
awful.

EXT. XANADU - CONTINUOUS

Paul moves from shelf to shelf in the background, pulling the
drop cloths away, waving the air away from him as dust is
kicked up.

Charlie stares out the hazy front window, seeing the dim glow
of a car's taillights as they drive away.

PAUL
Are we going to rent porn? Because
that would really save me some
money.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

In the spare bedroom, Lauren sits on the bed, bags of her
things spread around her, including those she had left
behind. The drawers are still piled onto the floor.

Lauren looks over the room, missing Katie's entrance.

KATIE
I didn't change anything.

LAUREN
I'm sorry about all this.

KATIE
You don't have to be sorry about
it.

LAUREN
I'll clean it up.

KATIE
Okay. Are you going to tell me why
it happened?

LAUREN
I don't know.

KATIE
You don't know if you're going to
tell me, or you don't know why it
happened.

LAUREN
The second one.

Katie moves some of the bags away and sits beside Lauren.

KATIE
What are you sacred of?

LAUREN
I don't know.

Lauren is on the verge of tears.

KATIE
It's okay.

LAUREN
I just feel like I have to keep
going. Like if I stop, the world's
going to catch up with me.

KATIE
And then what?

LAUREN
What?

KATIE
So what if it does? What does the
world have against you? You owe
money to someone? Besides me?

LAUREN

No.

KATIE

Are you with the mob?

LAUREN

No.

LAUREN (cont'd)

It's everything, you know? Ever since Dad died...

KATIE

Hang on. When did your dad die?

LAUREN

Last year.

KATIE

Holy shit, Lauren, you never told me!

LAUREN

I didn't really talk about it with anyone.

KATIE

That's something you talk about. It's not like what happened on Survivor last week, that's a huge deal!

LAUREN

Every time I talked about it, I just missed him so much. So I didn't. And, I didn't.

KATIE

You have to let it catch up, honey. I'm here. I won't let you hold this all up by yourself.

LAUREN

I'm fine.

KATIE

You have to let some air into that. How did he die?

LAUREN

It's okay, really.

Lauren straightens, wiping her eyes.

KATIE
How did it happen?

LAUREN
I don't want to talk about this.

KATIE
How did it happen?

LAUREN
It's fine!

Lauren stands.

KATIE
You gonna run out the door, again?

LAUREN
No. It's fine.

KATIE
It's not fine.

LAUREN
Stop it, Katie!

KATIE
How did it happen?

LAUREN
He w-was asleep. I found him in his chair. I kept trying to w-wake him up and he wouldn't. I kept saying, "Daddy, it's time for bed." But, he wouldn't move. I had been at work all day, and when I touched him he was c-cold! I spent all the money just to b-bury him and I never got to say how sorry I was that I left him alone like that.

KATIE
Oh, honey.

LAUREN
Stop it! Don't 'honey' me! I just want to stop thinking about it!

KATIE
How much do you think about it now?

Lauren looks, painfully, at Katie.

LAUREN
(whimpering)
All the time.

The tears come again. Katie rushes to Lauren and holds her up.

KATIE
Okay. It's okay. You're fine.

LAUREN
I miss him so much!

KATIE
I know. I'm glad to hear you say it. You are really slobbery right now, though.

Lauren laughs through the tears.

LAUREN
I feel so gross, now.

KATIE
I'm so sorry. You promise you'll tell me when you're feeling bad, again?

LAUREN
Yeah.

KATIE
And that you'll tell me if it gets so bad you have to run away again?

Lauren nods.

LAUREN
I did come back this time.

KATIE
You did. How come?

INT. XANADU - MORNING

Despite the hour, the sky is gloomy, gray and dropping heavy rain over the town square.

Charlie sips coffee from a mug that reads 'World's Sexiest Grandma', staring out at the nearly-hidden square, obscured by the rain.

Paul cleans in the background, the store almost completely renovated. The shelves are empty, but the store is clean, lit, movie posters adorning the walls, a new cash register sitting on the counter.

Paul grabs a soda from the cooler, wiping his brow.

PAUL

What do you want me to do with this?

Charlie turns to see Paul holding an empty frame.

CHARLIE

Leave it on the counter.

PAUL

What's it for?

CHARLIE

Our first dollar.

PAUL

Oh. Right on. I'm going to grab some donuts from Harper's. You want some?

CHARLIE

Sure. Grab me a bear claw. Actually, get two. Ben's coming by on his lunch break.

PAUL

Cool. Be back in five.

Paul exits.

Charlie moves deeper inside the store, his back to the door, picking up the empty picture frame.

CHARLIE

Dollar-sized frames. That's a racket.

The bell rings over the door.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

We open next week.

He turns. It's Lauren. She's surprised, too. She was just looking for a job.

Charlie drops the frame, the glass shattering on the floor.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Shit!

Lauren rushes over.

LAUREN

Are you okay?

Charlie takes a step back from her.

CHARLIE

Fine. Long time, no see, huh?

LAUREN

I guess I should apologize.

CHARLIE

Don't worry about it. We went out one time.

LAUREN

Oh. So, you're not upset?

CHARLIE

Nope. Doing good.

LAUREN

Okay. Nice place.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

LAUREN

Maybe, if you want, we could back to Bunker Hill sometime.

CHARLIE

Maybe. Pretty busy with the opening right now.

LAUREN

Sure. Well, I'm at Katie's, if things settle down.

CHARLIE

I'll keep it mind. Take care, Lauren.

The bell rings. Paul is back with the donuts.

PAUL
Hey! Monty Python girl!

LAUREN
Hi.

PAUL
Nice to see you. Charlie's been missing you.

CHARLIE
Paul, how about you go grab some coffee, too.

PAUL
But, we have a machine right-

CHARLIE
I like the coffee from Harper's better.

PAUL
Oh. Oh! Put a scarf on the door or something if, you know, hubba-hubba happens.

Paul exits.

Lauren turns back to Charlie.

LAUREN
He's a nice guy.

CHARLIE
And single.

LAUREN
What about you?

CHARLIE
Perpetually.

LAUREN
Guess I'll be going, then.

CHARLIE
Take care.

Lauren begins to leave, pauses.

LAUREN
I missed you, you know.

CHARLIE
Not enough to stay.

LAUREN
Why did you stay?

CHARLIE
I was tired of running. Why did
you come back?

LAUREN
I ran out of places to go. Did you
really miss me?

CHARLIE
(softening)
I did.

LAUREN
Well, what if we just started at
the beginning?

Lauren moves closer, extending her hand.

LAUREN (cont'd)
I'm Lauren.

CHARLIE
Hi.

LAUREN
Hi.

They extend their hands to shake, a spark leaping from the tips of their fingertips to one another as they touch. They look down, then up.

Charlie pulls her close.

LAUREN (cont'd)
I was so afraid you'd be gone.

CHARLIE
I was waiting for you, Lauren.

Lauren kisses him.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
That's what I've been doing my
whole life.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. XANADU - DAY

The place is bustling. Paul stands behind the counter, checking out the movies and taking payment. Charlie is assembling a standee of a current action film. Ben and Joy mingle among the aisle.

JOY
Oooh. This looks romantic.

She holds a dvd box up.

JOY (cont'd)
It's got that guy you like.

BEN
I was hoping we could get Elm
Street 3. You know, for Jacob.

JOY
You show that movie to our son and
there will never be a sibling.

Ben takes the box from joy's hand.

BEN
I do like that guy.

JOY
That's what I thought.

Lauren enters with a large box.

LAUREN
Got 'em!

CHARLIE
Set them on the counter!

Paul takes the box from Lauren.

PAUL
What are these?

CHARLIE
Open the box.

Paul rips the top open and removes a dvd.

PAUL
Cannibal Campout!

Ben looks at Joy.

JOY
We have made our decision.

Lauren crosses to Charlie and kisses him fully.

CHARLIE
Hey there.

LAUREN
Hey. Katie wants to invite you to dinner.

CHARLIE
About that. I had a better idea.

LAUREN
What's that?

CHARLIE
I thought we could have her over for dinner.

LAUREN
We?

BEN
(to Joy)
Here it comes.

CHARLIE
Well, I have all this room, and Katie's apartment is pretty small, so I thought you could move-

Lauren leaps into his arms.

LAUREN
Yes!

They kiss, prompting a weak smattering of applause from the patrons, most of whom just want their movie.

The Goth Chick from the Megavideo comes to the counter, an anime flick in her hands.

GOTH CHICK
Hey, you have any more in this series?

PAUL
Not yet. We're getting them in.

GOTH CHICK
Oh, Why don't you have them now?

PAUL
Because we ordered them and they're not here yet.

GOTH CHICK
But you ordered them.

PAUL
And they're not here yet.

They've reached a stalemate.

PAUL (cont'd)
You want to go out sometime?

GOTH CHICK
Sure. You guys rent the rest of this series?

Lauren takes Charlie by the hand.

LAUREN
You want to go?

CHARLIE
Where should we go?

LAUREN
How about home?

CHARLIE
Lead the way.

Lauren pulls Charlie out of the store, the place thrumming with life and customers as we-

FADE TO BLACK.