Texas Toast

by

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(Based on a true story)

A young man struggles to find meaning in his life as he grapples with a series of obstacles and coincidences.

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INT. CAR IN INNER-CITY DETROIT - DAY

A memory. Grainy image from inside an OLIVE GREEN CHEVY CITATION looking out onto the bombed-out shell of Cass Corridor during the mid-1980s. It's a cloudless Summer day.

The MOTHER (mid-40s), drives with a concerned look. Her son, DAVID POLLACK (16), rides shotgun as they pass a HOMELESS MAN sitting on an open windowsill of an abandoned building with pants around his ankles.

They reach ground zero of the devastation, the corner of Woodward and Cass.

Standing on the corner in complete contrast to this degradation, dressed professionally in a cream blouse and mauve skirt, is a strikingly beautiful young woman (20) with shoulder-length brunette hair. She could be TANYA, who we'll meet later. Her arms are outstretched to her sides, palms turned upward. Her eyes are closed and her head tilted upward at the same angle as her palms, toward the sun, as she smiles in ecstasy. She looks like an angel.

We only get a glimpse of her as she passes by the driver's side. The son tracks her all the way to the rear window. He turns to face his mother, whose eyes are fixed on the road ahead.

He is about to say something, but then changes his mind and faces forward.

INT. CAR ON OUTSKIRTS OF AUSTIN TEXAS - DAY

The son, 10 years older, drives a 1989 FORD PROBE. David is not a small or weak man, but his geekiness makes him seem that way. He is dressed professionally in a shirt and tie.

He has the same concerned look as his mother. He drives defensively, dodging trucks and SUVs that dwarf his low-visibility compact car. The larger vehicles either don't notice him or don't respect him enough to care.

A woman, who nearly runs him off the road because she didn't initially see him, finds it funny.

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE NONDESCRIPT OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

David parks his car in a cavernous space amongst the larger vehicles. There are no reserved spaces for compact cars.

INT. DAVID'S CUBICLE - DAY

David enters his cubicle at the end of a row. The cubicles are situated in a windowless office bullpen. His desk is a little cluttered, but there seems to be an organizational method to it. A couple of DILBERTS are pinned to the walls along with various work-related reference material. His IN-BOX is nearly empty.

Across from him in her cubicle, sits HAILEY JOHNSON (mid-20s), the California product of an NFL offensive lineman and Hollywood starlet. Blond, attractive, a few extra pounds, but her frame carries it well. When they speak to each other, it's in a lowered tone of voice so as not to get overheard.

David sees Hailey checking the CLOCK.

DAVID

Yeah, I know. It's becoming the new normal.

HAILEY

You know why, don't you?

DAVID

Sleep apnea?

HAILEY

Sorry, the diagnosis is much more dire than that. David, I'm afraid you suffer from having expectations. You think the world should be fair. Reward the good, punish the wicked, marginalize the incompetent. Life doesn't work that way and it's crushing your spirit. The sooner you get beyond that, the happier you'll be.

DAVID

Happy?

HAILEY

Well, not disappointed anyway. Lose your expectations, give up hope, and you will find a kind of contentment within mediocrity.

DAVID

I have much to learn from you O wise one.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

But if I succumb to becoming a mindless drone, what's to stop me from blowing my brains out?

HAILEY

Prozac silly -- and gun control.

DAVID

Keep your voice down, this is Texas. Dem's fightin words and you ain't packin' hoss.

HAILEY

I'll just blame the Prozac.

David's PHONE rings. He checks the caller ID and reluctantly picks up the receiver.

DAVID

Hey Colt.

(beat)

Yeah, I did. I got it right here.

(beat)

Sure, I'll be right there.

David hangs up the phone. He turns to Hailey with a look of dread.

HAILEY

Remember my advice.

DAVID

Shouldn't someone care, like a designated driver or something?

HAILEY

Go ahead, learn the hard way.

INT. COLT'S OFFICE - DAY

The offices are on the periphery of the building. They have windows. COLT DAVIS (mid-30s) is a good ole boy sporting REMINDERS on his walls and in his DISPLAY CABINET of all his accomplishments (college degree, certificates, company awards, sports trophies), important connections and prized possessions (house, family, car, dog).

Note: Spelling is indicative of Colt's accent.

David knocks and enters with a THICK PROPOSAL.

COLT

(leaning back in chair)
Hey buddy. Good to see ya. Grab a seat. So how's it goin'?

David sits in the guest chair.

DAVID

(trying to be sociable) Pretty good. Pretty good.

COLT

Good, good.

(gesturing to proposal) So whadya think?

DAVID

(struggling for positive)
Well, um, it's certainly thick and
colorful. Some prospects would
definitely respond to that I think.

(getting down to business)
But the thing is it didn't really
address many of the questions in
the RFP. It was really more of a
dump from the Response Database,
which wasn't meant to be used in
that way. Plus we're agreeing to
terms and conditions that are in
total contradiction to our company
policy. Not only would this screwup our inventory control
procedures, it would trigger sales
tax...

COLT

(still amicable)

Yo David, spare me the sermon. Where I come from in Sales, we do what we got to do to get the business and smooth over the details later.

DAVID

(earnest, leaning forward)
But this isn't Sales. It's
Contracts and Proposals, and the
proposals we send out are
automatically converted into
legally-binding contracts upon
acceptance.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID (CONT'D)

That's why this RFP requires someone with signature-authority. We can't take this to a VP.

Colt matches David's lean. He's ready to set the record straight.

COLT

I think I know what this is all about. You're still smart'n about Hal giving me this job over you. You don't think I deserve it.

DAVID

(sitting bolt upright)
No Colt, really that's not it at all. I totally respect...what you accomplished in Sales. You were one of the best out there, a star. I can see why Hal would bring you in over me. It's just that there's a different approach to what we do here where we balance the needs of the customer with the needs of the company and that requires a more contractual and precise mind-set. You can't get away with 'sure no problem' and smooth it over later. It's in writing.

As Colt speaks, he taps the desk and points at David for emphasis.

COLT

I know exactly what this job requires. I know exactly how to do it well. Better than you. I'm here because this department needs a new approach. I got picked because you developed a bit of a reputation buddy. You're mister push back, mister we can't sign up for that. We lost good business because of you.

DAVID

(hackles up, leaning)
No, we lost bad business because of
me and my win-rate is by far the
best in the department.

CONTINUED: (3)

COLT

(voice louder)

Get this in your head. There's no such thing as bad business — and your win-rate is what it is because you no-bid a lot. You're cherry-pickin'.

The glove are completely off. David matches Colt's volume and increases the pace of his delivery, punching words verbally for emphasis.

DAVID

I only no-bid when sales doesn't do their job getting into the business early-enough to give us a chance. A rep shows up and wants to dump a turkey in my lap that's spec'd for a competitor, even to the point of listing brand-names. We're the third bidder and I'm getting sunshine blown up my ass about how great an opportunity this is. Don't sell me, sell the customer. If I lose the deal, it's my fault. If I push back, I'm a jerk. Our job here isn't to be popular with Sales and that's something you need to get into your head.

Colt matches David's speed.

COLT

What you need to understand is you've got an attitude-problem and I'm here to fix it. That proposal your holdin' is the template for how things are going to look for now on.

DAVID

(bolting out of chair)
It's full of spelling and
grammatical errors! You didn't
even bother to spell-check the
thing! It's crap! It's crap on so
many levels!

COLT

CONTINUED: (4)

COLT (CONT'D)

Where I come from, you don't talk back to the boss. Now I'm going to give you a chance to make it up to me. First, you're goin' to cease no-biding. That's right bubba, from now on everythin' that hits your desk gets a decent shot. Second, you're going to take this proposal over to Roger and talk him into signin' it. He trusts you.

DAVID

He trusts me because I wouldn't do that to him.

COLT

(slower and scary)
Buddy, I'm starting to lose
patience here. Now I'm a
reasonable man and I can forgive a
lot, but at some point real soon
you need to decide who's side
you're on.

DAVID

The company.

COLT

Yeah, me too.

INT. DAVID'S CUBICLE

David enters his cubicle in shock.

HAILEY

I'd ask you how it went, but --

DAVID

You know, this was once an honorable profession.

HAILEY

There you go again with the caring.

DAVID

Yeah, old habits I guess. I'll need some quality time with Colt and a lobotomy to purge myself of that thought-crime.

INT. ROGER'S EXECUTIVE SUITE - DAY

ROGER WATERSTON (50) is a fit, smart, thoughtful VP. He hammers something out on his computer with speed and intensity. The phone rings. He hits speaker and keeps typing.

ROGER

Yeah Meg.

MEG'S VOICE

David from Contracts and Proposals is here needing a signature.

ROGER

Of course, send him in.

David half-enters the door looking awkward, sheepish. He's hoping to get sent away. Roger stops typing and swivels in his chair to greet David with smile.

DAVID

Hey Roger, if this is a bad time, I can come back later.

ROGER

(waving him in)

Not at all David! Come in! Come in! How the heck are ya?

DAVID

(shaking extended hand)

Good, real good.

ROGER

Say, you play basketball? I like to play a little pick-up on the lunch hour when the weather's nice.

DAVID

Well, my D's solid and I'm a decent passer, but I can't shoot worth a damn.

ROGER

(laughing)

You can play for the other team. So what do you have for me?

DAVID

(handing it over)

It's a big one.

ROGER

It certainly is! A monster! Not really your style.

David shifts his feet and avoids making eye-contact.

DAVID

Well, you know what they say. The bid that makes it to the bottom of the stairs, wins.

ROGER

This sucker would crash right through the stairs! I could do reps with this. Is this Colt's brilliant idea?

DAVID

(wincing)

Um, yeah.

ROGER

Well, for some people quantity is quality. Anything I should know before signing?

DAVID

(word-salad)

Well, not really, I mean, um, like not really in that, you see, it's just, there's the possibility, you know I should get back to you on that.

David snatches the proposal out of Roger's hands and dashes out of the office to Roger's complete bewilderment.

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE NONDESCRIPT OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

David drives up in a 1995 BEIGE TOYOTA 4RUNNER. He intentionally parks it away from the other cars.

Hailey drives up at the same time in her 1987 HONDA CIVIC and spies David getting out.

She approaches. They both stare at his acquisition throughout the conversation that ensues.

HAILEY

New wheels?

DAVID

Well, basically. Two years-old to take advantage of the depreciation.

HAILEY

Why this?

DAVID

I was tired of getting run off the road by all the other trucks. This one's tall, so it's easily seen and will get more respect. And it's a real SUV, so it's rugged-enough to go anywhere. Not that I plan to go anywhere, but I could if I wanted to. It makes me feel like I'm in control -- which I realize is a total lie, but I just need to believe that right now.

(beat)

Plus, Consumer Reports likes it.

They stare at it some more.

HAILEY

Does it come in pink?

DAVID

(thinks about it)

Champagne.

HAILEY

Even better. It's effervescent and celebratory -- like me.

David looks at her while she looks at the car. Hailey's effervescence is applied like makeup.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE BULLPEN

Colt walks into Hailey's cubicle and sits on her neatly organized desk.

David pretends to be working away, but listens in.

Colt barely conceals staring at Hailey's ample, but conservatively-covered bosom.

COLT

Hey Hailey, how's it going?

HAILEY

Can't complain. And you?

COLT

I'm doin great, real great. Been thinkin -- I didn't give you a good-enough listen on that idea you had about routing RFPs or somethin. I'm going to give you another shot at talkin me into it -- like say over lunch?

HAILEY

Oh, it was just a silly idea. I've moved on.

COLT

You know, you give up too easy. If you want to get ahead in this world, you need to go for it. Don't take no for an answer. Whatever it takes, that sorta thing.

HAILEY

I guess I'm just not that ambitious.

COLT

Shame. Waste of talent if ya ask me.

Colt wanders over to David's cubicle. The stack in David's in-box is slightly higher than last time.

COLT (CONT'D)

Hey sport, how'd it go with Roger?

DAVID

(not looking at Colt)

Struck out.

COLT

That's a disappointment. You've been disappointin me a lot lately. That's not good. You need to be lookin toward your review. Hand it over. I'll get Mary to sign it. How are the new RFPs lookin?

DAVID

(hands over proposal)
Not a bad one in the batch.

CONTINUED: (2)

COLT

That's what I like to hear. There may be hope for you yet. And don't forget...

DAVID

(monotone)

Just get the business and smooth over the details later.

Colt pats David on the shoulder and wanders off. David waits until Colt is out of earshot and leans over to Hailey.

DAVID (CONT'D)

That was a good idea.

HAILEY

The only way it gets implemented is if I sleep with him. Think I should?

DAVID

(a tinge of resentment)
Your coke-head boyfriend in Sales
might object.

HAILEY

Oh I've since moved on to the cokehead boyfriend in Med School, who I will nurture until he graduates and dumps me for the trophy wife.

DAVID

Then why the hell are you with him?

HAILEY

(indignant, defensive)

Because he's pretty!

(turning on a dime)

So what are you up to this weekend?

DAVID

(caught off guard)

Well, um, I'm heading to Wichita Falls to ride in the Hotter Than Hell One Hundred, but I'm just doing the fifty.

HAILEY

Why?

DAVID

Why not the hundred?

CONTINUED: (3)

HAILEY

No, why do it at all?

DAVID

Because -- it's -- fun?

HAILEY

And you question my life-decisions?

EXT. WICHITA FALLS PARKING LOT - DAWN

A rear door of David's 4Runner swings open. The rear seats are folded down. David crawls out of his "bedroom" feetfirst, clad in Lycra, and stretches.

EXT. HOTTER THAN HELL STARTING AREA - MORNING

David now stands astride his BIKE in a colorful sea of Lycra, aluminum and carbon while waiting for the race to start. He reaches for a WATER BOTTLE and realizes he forgot to fill them. He shakes his head. He looks up at the cloudless sky.

EXT. HOTTER THAN HELL STARTING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

David is already beginning to perspire the starting gun goes off far in the distance. Everyone takes a step forward and stops. It's motionless wall-to-wall Lycra for as far as the eye can see.

EXT. HOTTER THAN HELL STARTING AREA - LATER

David reaches the starting-line where the large digital stopwatch shows that a half-hour has passed since the gun. His face, neck and arms are glistening. It has thinned outenough that he can begin to pedal.

EXT. HOTTER THAN HELL WATER STATION - LATER

David pedals hard. Sweat drips off him. He reaches the first water station going a little too fast and brakes hard with both calipers and both heels, skidding and startling the staff.

EXT. HOTTER THAN HELL NEAR THE FINISH - AFTERNOON

The sun is now high overhead. David's pace has slowed. He's drenched in sweat and drinks regularly as he struggles forward.

A cyclist passes him going slightly faster, riding smoothly. David takes notice and narrows his gaze. He rises out of the saddle, gives a few hard pumps on the pedals to increase his pace, then sits down to maintain.

David manages to pass the other cyclist. The other cyclist follows suit and passes David.

Now both are out of the saddle and pushing hard.

David can't manage to pass, but he's close on the guy's heels, drafting. He strains hard and looks to be in some pain, but is equally determined.

They reach a neighborhood. A sign reads: "One mile to go." They enter into a series of 90 degree turns, zigzagging.

The other cyclist shows off his superior skills by leaning hard into the turns. He pulls away from David.

DAVID

(breathing hard)

Must be one of the hundred-milers.

David backs off the pace significantly. He's in agony and wobbly as he reaches the finish line. We can see the heat rippling off the road.

EXT. WICHITA FALLS PARKING LOT - LATER

David, walking with great difficulty and looking out-of-it, reaches his 4Runner. He looks down at his dry, red, salt-encrusted arms.

DAVTD

I stopped sweating!

In a panic, he drops his helmet and bicycle, reaches under the rear of the car and pulls out a cooler of ice-water. He dumps the contents over his head and staggers to the Agricultural Center where the refreshment stand is located.

INT. AGRICULTURAL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

David enters the non air conditioned metal building and encounters a wall of heat.

POV. We hear David's irregular heartbeat.

We spy the refreshment stand.

We stagger toward it.

We wait in line behind a couple of people, swaying to and fro as they order their refreshments.

We reach the counter and the middle-aged, big-haired refreshment lady behind it.

DAVID'S VOICE (sounding out of it) I'll have a supa-size...

Arms go forward to break the fall as the side of our head lands on the top of the counter with a thud.

Eyes close, everything goes dark.

The refreshment lady bellows...

REFRESHMENT LADY'S VOICE

(twangy)

We got another one!

Our eyes open and in our peripheral vision, our hands are seemingly suspended in mid-air. Below, our feet drag along the ground as we move backwards, away from the refreshment lady.

INT. FIRST AID TENT - MOMENTS LATER

David is on a stretcher in a large, wall-less first-aid tent. An aid-worker, GINNY (30), approaches.

GINNY

(as if to a child)
Hi, I'm Ginny. What's your name?

DAVTD

'm David.

GINNY

David, you're experiencing a condition called Heat Stroke. You're really dehydrated and we need to get fluids into you right away. We're going to give you an IV of saline solution in your arm.

DAVID

I fing I beesokay fi gie somefing coleta drin.

GINNY

Sorry David, you're too far gone for that. We need to poke ya.

INT. FIRST AID TENT - LATER

David now has an IV in his arm. Ginny turns the valve to release the solution. She unpackages a THERMOMETER.

GINNY

Now David, we need to take your temperature.

David opens wide and sticks out his tongue.

GINNY (CONT'D)

Sorry David, in cases of Heat Stroke we can't get a reliable reading from there.

David lifts his arm to expose his armpit.

GINNY (CONT'D)

No, not there either. I'm afraid we need to take it from your anus.

David surveys the wall-less tent. For the first time we notice that there are LYCRA-CLAD PEOPLE laying on their sides with IVs in their arms, shorts pulled down and THERMOMETERS sticking out of their butts. David gives Ginny a look of horror.

GINNY (CONT'D)

It's the only way David.

We stay on David's face as Ginny walks out of view.

We know when she pulls his shorts down and when she sticks the thermometer in his anus by his changing facial expressions.

GINNY'S VOICE

(sing song)

Now clench!

The IV BAG is fully collapsed. Ginny returns to check on David.

GINNY

You can unclench now.

(reading the thermometer) Well, your temperature's back to normal, but I'd like to give you another bag just to be safe.

DAVID

No, really I'm good. I feel fine.

GINNY

You sure?

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID

Absolutely. I'm good to go. I'll be sure to drink plenty of fluids on the drive back.

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - DAY

David is driving down a landscape-less Texas Panhandle highway with a super-sized soft drink.

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE NONDESCRIPT OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

David pulls his 4Runner into a space next to a 1997 CHAMPAGNE 4RUNNER.

INT. HAL'S OFFICE - DAY

HAL MERTON (55) sits in his office looking toward the entrance. A desk plaque reads: "Director". Hal's an amicable man with sad eyes.

DAVID

(entering)

Hey Hal, thanks for scheduling me in.

HAL

Good to see you David. What's on your mind?

DAVID

So -- you remember how when you came in six months ago, we talked about how I might either move up or move on to another department? I know you wanted to groom me to move up, but I'm ready to move on.

HAL

Well, we do need to talk then, don't we? I definitely want to keep you. You're extremely productive and you've done a lot to improve the department. I appreciate you and want to know what I can do to convince you to stay.

DAVID

I certainly appreciate that, but it's just that the department is going in a new direction that I'm not comfortable with.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I can't sign on to Colt's vision which I'm concerned is not in the best interest of the company.

HAL

Look, Sales really wanted him in there and Sales drives the company. You don't go against Sales.

DAVID

Yeah, I'm learning that. But he's focused on short-term gain at the expense of long-term pain. He'll be long-gone before the fallout hits and we'll take the blame.

HAL

Give him a chance. He might surprise you.

DAVID

Seriously doubt that. Look, I'm very unhappy and I just don't think I can do what he wants me to do.

HAT

How about a shift in duties? There's this new internet stuff that everyone's excited about and you know how to program it with that HTML. We need a departmental web site. You would like that.

DAVID

Hal, I put together complex multimillion dollar proposals for Fortune 500 companies. Switching to working on an intranet web site would seem like a demotion.

HAL

Think of it as a realignment. I'm moving the department to a more customer-facing format, which you won't be ready to step into for at least twenty years...

DAVID

Excuse me? Twenty years?

HAL

Well, yes. You see David, this is a young company and it's time for it to grow up. Someone like you, who is certainly talented and capable, just doesn't get into the position you're in at more established companies. I certainly want to keep you here, just in a more supportive role until you're ready to more fully step into it.

DAVID

But I've been destroying the competition and all the business I've won has been problem-free!

HAL

Which makes you a great person to groom.

DAVID

That's...no...I -- no way. No how. Sorry, but I'm definitely moving on to Product Marketing.

HAL

David, I really can't support that. I really think your place is here. You'll come to understand that in time. Just give me a chance to convince you.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE BULLPEN

David storms into his cubicle and falls into his chair. The stack in his in-box is still higher.

HAILEY

There's always the internal...

DAVID

(cutting her off)

We're serfs. We don't leave unless they let us. And if we're any good, they won't. You know damn well those job postings are bullshit. Looking for someone who's organized, a good communicator, shows attention to detail, and whose first name is Gary.

HAILEY

My bad.

The emergency warning system goes off.

ALARM SPEAKER VOICE

(repeating)

Tornado warning. Proceed immediately to the nearest shelter.

People begin emerging from their cubicles. Colt bursts out of his office.

COLT

There's a funnel cloud headin this way!

David, Hailey, Colt and others are crammed into a windowless concrete-walled stairwell. All show concern -- except for Hailey, who just seems mildly amused.

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE NONDESCRIPT OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The staff emerges from the building to stare across the parking lot to the other side of the highway where a building's roof has been torn off. The staff stare in silent awe -- all except Hailey, who just seems mildly amused. Finally the silence is broken.

COLT

Man, that was close.

HAILEY

(matter of fact, hopeful?)
-- Yep. Maybe next time.

Hailey turns and prances inside to the confusion of the others -- except David, who almost breaks out laughing.

INT. COLT'S OFFICE - DAY

A knock on the door.

COLT

Come on in!

David half-enters.

DAVID

Hey Colt, did you see that report last night about the force five that hit Jarrell?

COLT

Yeah, that's terrible.

DAVID

Yeah, so they're calling for volunteers to help clean up. A few of us want to go help out tomorrow.

COLT

Well, ah, are you sure that you're on top of...

DAVID

It's a humanitarian effort.

COLT

(defensive)

Yeah, sure, of course.

DAVID

Okay, cool.

David closes the door and we watch Colt fume.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

David, Hailey and CHRISTINA GAIL (30) are among the volunteers assembled to help in the cleanup effort. They receive a talk from the cleanup coordinator at a high school gymnasium.

CLEANUP COORDINATOR

You will receive bags and gloves at the site. Are there any questions about that?

Christina, taking copious notes, raises her pen.

CLEANUP COORDINATOR (CONT'D)

Yes.

CHRISTINA

Will there be different bags for different purposes, like biological materials?

CLEANUP COORDINATOR

That is an excellent question.

Christina is clearly pleased with herself.

CLEANUP COORDINATOR (CONT'D)

Jarrell is a farming community.

More animals than people were
killed by the tornado. We believe
HazMat has found and dealt with all
the carcasses, but if you run
across a dead cow or pig, don't
touch it. Just flag down someone
in a vest and we'll send in a
team. Are there any questions
about that?

(beat)

Okay then. Now to get to the cleanup site, we turn right out of the parking lot and head down the road for about...

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - DAY

David, Hailey and Christina are driving to the designated cleanup area on a road that goes through grassland. Christina is riding shotgun and holding hand-written instructions.

CHRISTINA

Okay, so we go straight on this for about a mile and a half, then turn left at the T.

The road suddenly becomes rough and the field on either side changes to brown topsoil. After a few moments David looks around with a quizzical expression. Finally...

DAVID

Are you sure this is right?

CHRISTINA

I wrote it down just like he said. I took careful notes.

HAILEY

Yeah, that's consistent with what I remember. Do you remember something different?

DAVID

No -- it's just not what I was expecting.

HAILEY

What do you mean?

DAVID

Well -- in the news report, they showed a map of Jarrell and -- I'm pretty sure we're supposed to be driving through a subdivision right now. There's nothing here but plowed-under field.

CHRISTINA

I think we just have to trust the instructions. I took careful notes.

HAILEY

If we don't reach a T soon, then we can turn around and go back for clarification.

DAVTD

Yeah, maybe I remembered it wrong.

They drive on for a few moments. Then the road suddenly becomes smooth again.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(realization)

Wait a minute.

David stops the car.

CHRISTINA

(alarmed)

What are you doing?

David puts the car in park and unbuckles his seat belt.

DAVID

I just got to check something really quick.

CHRISTINA

(lecturing)

We're not supposed to stop until we see someone in a yellow vest. He was very clear about that. I wrote it right here when he was covering transportation...

David exits the vehicle.

CONTINUED: (2)

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

(calling after him)

You're not supposed to be doing this! He was very clear!

HAILEY

Give it a rest Christina. He'll be right back.

EXT. JARRELL SUBDIVISION - MOMENTS LATER

David runs back to the point where the road changes. Where the road changes from rough to smooth, so does the field, from dirt to grass.

We pull back from the two-dimensional and rise high above the car to reveal the track the tornado made.

It had completely ground-down everything in it's path, from the road to the fields to the foundations of the decimated houses in the subdivision, so that *nothing* stuck out vertically. It is complete devastation.

EXT. CLEAN UP AREA - DAY

David, Hailey and Christina stand in a field near the carcass of a house where just part of a bathroom still remains intact. They wear KITCHEN-TYPE RUBBER GLOVES and each carries a HEAVY-GAUGE TRASH BAG as they pick up pieces of the shattered town.

EXT. MONTAGE OF CLEANUP

We see a montage of the cleanup effort, the surrounding devastation, and the expressions of people trying to deal with what happened.

EXT. CLEAN UP AREA - LATER

David, looking around in disbelief...

DAVID

They didn't even have a chance. If you were in this thing's path, you were gone, toast.

CHRISTINA

It's all in God's hands. It was just their time.

DAVID

(irritated by remark)

Was it now?

Hailey picks up a dirty RAGGEDY ANN DOLL that's missing an arm.

HAILEY

(to herself)

I had one of these.

DAVID

So they were all wicked and God got pissed and smote them like in Sodom and Gomorrah? They all had it coming? Every single one?

CHRISTINA

(defensive)

Maybe he missed them so much, he wanted them back with him!

As Hailey is placing the doll in her bag...

HAILEY

(to herself)

I hope he feels ambivalent about me.

DAVID

So it would appear we have two scenarios for God's hand in all of this. Scenario A, where God's a raging vindictive *smiter* -- or scenario B, where he kills because he's *lonely*. Or I suppose he could be both, like a co-dependent alcoholic or a bi-polar psychopath. Hi, I'm God and I'm finally ready to admit I have a problem.

CHRISTINA

(eyes wide)

You're going to Hell.

DAVID

What, for talking back to the boss? Why is it no one in authority can take constructive criticism? Hell, I'm happy to tell God off, even if that means I go to Hell. That's right, I'll wear damnation like a badge of honor. You really want to get in good with an omnipotent baby-killer?

CONTINUED: (2)

CHRISTINA

You know, I think I'm going to get a ride back from someone else.

Christina walks away toward the center of activity.

DAVID

(calling after her)
Wouldn't want to risk getting
smited by association, now would
we?

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - DAY

Hailey rides shotgun.

HAILEY

Atheist huh?

DAVID

Can't decide. If I embrace atheism, I have to give up my hatred of God. Can you hate something that doesn't exist?

HAILEY

I hate no one -- with a passion. Sounds like a zen koan.

DAVTD

Besides, I believe in past lives, so I can't exactly be an atheist.

HAILEY

Why past lives?

DAVID

When I was in eighth grade, there was this out-of-control kid. He had this phobia. Couldn't handle a closed collar. Tore all his undershirts open, right down to the sternum. I was sure he'd been hanged in a previous life. I don't know why I was so sure.

HAILEY

Maybe you were the one that hanged him. Well, I guess atheism's off the table.

DAVID

And I can't sign up for God.

HAILEY

You're kind of stuck.

DAVID

Yeah, I need to figure something out. Holding an inconsistent world view is starting to bug me. What about you? What do you believe in?

HAILEY

Nothing.

DAVID

So you're an atheist.

HAILEY

No, that would be something. Believing in things only sets you up for disappointment.

INT. TOPLESS BAR - NIGHT

David sucks down a beer, watching a pole dancer. He looks comfortably numbed by the alcohol. As the song ends, an attractive young woman in a bikini, CINDY (22) approaches.

ANNOUNCER

Let's give a big hand, or whatever else you've got that's big, for Daniella!

CINDY

Hey darlin', what's up?

DAVID

My Johnson, if you give me a table dance.

CINDY

(extending her hand)
Sure thing! I'm Cindy.

DAVID

(shaking her hand)

David. Pleased to make your acquaintance Cindy.

ANNOUNCER

And now on the main stage, give it up for Clarissa!

Cindy takes off her top as Jesus Jones: 'Right Here, Right Now' begins playing. She dances over David.

DAVID

Man, I haven't heard this song in years. I was a Junior in college when the Soviet Union fell apart.

CINDY

Yeah, me too -- in high school.

DAVID

When it came out, the hairs on the back of my neck would stand up. was a whole new world all of the sudden. Things were going to be different. We were drunk on optimism. Plus we'd won the war and there was the patriotism from that. But then the recession hit and that sobered us up real quick. It's like when your favorite team wins the championship and you're like, "We won, we won!" But then after a while you're going, "So, now what?" The euphoria dies down, the moment's passed, and you're back to your daily grind -- which you do very well by the way.

CINDY

Thanks.

DAVID

But nothing's really changed.

CINDY

I just like the beat.

DAVID

Yeah, and the guitar kicks ass.

EXT. SOMEONE'S BACKYARD - DAY (DREAM)

POV. We approach a collection of CAGES with NESTS inside. The cages sit on top of a LOW STONE WALL.

As we reach the collection, we see an OWLET on the ground in front of its cage.

We bend down to scoop the owlet into our hands.

Once cradled in our hands, it looks up at us, fixes us with an intense stare from its big eyes.

In a baritone voice and without moving its beak, it says...

OWLET

You are not what you think.

EXT. PINE FOREST - DAWN

David lies asleep clothed and wrapped in a PENDLETON blanket in a clearing of a pine forest. He is surrounded by a tenfoot-diameter string with SMALL RED COTTON POUCHES tied onto it. He awakes and sits bolt upright, breathing heavily with a disoriented freaked-out expression.

An ADULT OWL flies directly overhead as David cranes his head to track it.

INT. DAVID'S CUBICLE

David sits at his cubicle, motionless. The stack is still higher. MORE DILBERTS line the walls. He is mesmerized by a NEWSPAPER CLIPPING of a black and white photograph that's pinned to his wall. It looks to be a large blackish bubble.

Colt walks up behind David. During the conversation, David never takes his eyes off the picture.

COLT

So David, I need to get a status check on your bids to make sure we're on -- what's that?

DAVID

It's a picture of the first atomic test, taken a split second after it went off. The anniversary was the other day.

COLT

Why would you put that on your wall?

DAVID

I've never seen anything like it. It's just so beautiful and terrible, all at the same time.

COLT

(spooked)
Yeah -- okay.

DAVID

(absentmindedly)

What was it you wanted again?

COLT

Nothin'.

Colt heads back to his office. Once out of earshot...

HAILEY

You know, I've got some open time. I could take a few...

DAVID

(still staring at photo)
It's not your problem.

HAILEY

(irritated)

I know that. I'm trying to be a friend here.

DAVTD

(turning toward her)
Sorry. Really, thanks for the
offer, but taking a few bids off my
plate isn't going to prevent the
inevitable at this point.

HAILEY

You know, the company offers free counseling -- and they're doctors, so they can prescribe drugs. They can even authorize a leave of absence. It's all confidential.

DAVID

Only your manager need know. (beat)

My problem isn't a chemical imbalance and it can't be solved by counseling. I can't do my job because I can't bring myself to do it the way Colt wants me to. And Hal won't let me leave, so I'm trapped.

HAILEY

Maybe it's time to look for a job outside the company?

DAVID

Yeah, I guess. It's just that I saw myself as a lifer. I was going to work my way up to VP, maybe even president of a business unit.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID (CONT'D)

Tell my grand kids I helped build the company. I know I shouldn't, but I actually care about the place.

HAILEY

Yep, that's where you went wrong. I guarantee you, despite all the hard work, the company doesn't give a damn about you. Yours is an unrequited love.

INT. TOPLESS BAR

David watches a pole-dancer in his expressionless alcoholnumbed state.

A short, plump and not particularly attractive woman approaches from the side so that David doesn't notice.

PLUMP DANCER

Is this seat taken?

DAVID

(caught off guard)

Well, um...

PLUMP DANCER

Thanks.

Instead of sitting in the chair next to him, she parks her not inconsiderable weight on his knee, causing some pain.

DAVID

You know, I actually have a reconstructed knee, so...

PLUMP DANCER

Sorry.

She shifts to his other knee, still causing some pain.

PLUMP DANCER (CONT'D)

I really appreciate you letting me be here. I've had a really shitty day. My boyfriend ran off with the rent money and my landlord's being a total dick about it. You miss just a few fucking days and he wants to serve you with a goddamn eviction notice! (MORE)

PLUMP DANCER (CONT'D)

You seem like a really nice guy and I was hoping you'd let me give you a table dance.

DAVID

Well, I...

PLUMP DANCER

I'm really sorry, but I'm not getting off your knee until you say yes. Please, I really need this.

DAVID

(irritated)

F...fine.

She begins to take off her top as the next song begins. David stops her with a raised hand.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Please, I prefer the mystery.

Top half-off, she looks at him a little confused. Mystery? That lasts just a moment because she really doesn't care.

She begins her waddle of a table dance. David is looking everywhere but at her. He's clearly not enjoying this.

INT. TOPLESS BAR - MINUTES LATER

David is reaching for his wallet as the song ends and has the twenty out as she concludes.

PLUMP DANCER

Thanks.

She snatches the twenty and quickly makes her escape.

Seconds after she leaves, another woman, LINDA (early 30s), trailer-park attractive with a 1980s hairdo, marches up to David, wild-eyed and indignant.

LINDA

(angry, intense)

Look, I know you don't have any reason to believe me, but if you let me give you a table dance, I swear to you, you won't regret it.

DAVID

(frightened)

Um, okay.

The song has already begun. She rips off her top, climbs unto David, and relentlessly dry-humps him to his complete astonishment.

She refuses to let up until he eventually shutters.

She climbs off with a satisfied smirk.

Note: The song could be something consistent with the aggressive nature of the action (such as More Human Than Human) or contrasting, which could make it more funny (such as Like A Virgin).

Shell-shocked, David gingerly reaches into his pocket, pulls out his wallet and gives her a twenty.

LINDA

(pleased with herself)
So, did I keep my word?

DAVID

(frog in throat)
Yes, well done.

She leaves wearing a big smile. David carefully stands and heads for the door, moving like a very old man.

As David slowly exits in the background, the following conversation takes place.

BERT, a well-to-do loud-mouth rancher in his 60s with a significant beer belly and a girl seated on either side, calls out to Linda.

BERT

Hey Linda, why won't you do that for me?

LINDA

(playful)

Cause you're an asshole.

Bert cackles at this.

BERT

Careful, that's foreplay in my book.

LINDA

Book? I didn't know you knew how to read.

BERT

Yeah, I'm a devotee of Hustler, strictly for the articles. Come on Linda, give Big Bert a dance.

LINDA

Bert, you goin' senile on me? Last time I gave you a table dance, you had a heart attack!

BERT

Best heart attack I ever had! Baby, you play your cards right, I'll make you wife number three.

LINDA

Let's not rush the nuptuals loverboy. I'm still smart'n from my ride as wife number two.

BERT

You were one hell of a ball-bust'n bitch. I been bit by rattlers with less venom. God, I miss ya.

INT. DIANE'S LIVINGROOM - EVENING

We are in a home of someone who's never had a lot of money, but knows how to make a place comfortable and inviting. There's plenty of RELAXED SEATING with SNACKS on the COFFEE TABLE.

Seated around the livingroom in a rough circle are an ODD ASSORTMENT OF PEOPLE.

A large HEAVYSET WOMAN (45), dressed like a man, sporting bad knees and other physical issues, is on the love seat with her much smaller and skinnier lesbian lover latched onto her.

HEAVYSET WOMAN

It was the thirteenth century, but I remember it like it was yesterday. I was a Knights Templar. We were attacked and I was killed in battle. When I went to the other side, I was told that I had some unfinished business and I had to go back. I woke up in a small chapel where I'd been lying in state for three days.

(MORE)

HEAVYSET WOMAN (CONT'D)

Waking up after you've been dead for three days, and been run through no less, is the worst feeling you can imagine. I had to fight off rigor mortis! And to make things worse, they had stuffed my mouth full of anis as a preservative. I was choking on it and trying to spit it out. Couldn't get the taste out for days. And that's why I can't stand the taste of anis.

DIANE (mid 50s), the discussion leader, chimes in.

DIANE

Wow, that was an intense life! It's interesting how our current predispositions are shaped by events from our past lives. Thanks so much for sharing. Can anyone else recall a past life experience that affects this life?

(beat)

Okay, well it's book discussion time and I see everyone brought their copies. Who wants to get us started?

David, holding a copy of The Celestine Prophesy...

DAVID

Sure, I'll go. So the concepts are interesting and all and the story flows just fine, but that's got to be the clunkiest book I've ever read. SNL could do a skit on the James Redfield School of Creative Writing. And I just don't know that I buy these insights. I mean, starting off with coincidences -- I can't think of any significant coincidences in my life.

DIANE

Have you been open to experiencing coincidences? Have you ever tried setting an intention?

DAVID

Well -- open, but not actively open. Not like looking for it.

CONTINUED: (2)

DIANE

You should try that. Actively set an intention that you'll be open to any coincidences that come up for say — a week. Then report back to the group on the results.

HEAVYSET WOMAN

We should all do that -- like a research project. I mean, we research past lives, why not coincidences?

DAVTD

Sure, I'm game.

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - LATER

The door opens and David gets in. He puts his key in the ignition, then pauses. He releases the key, sits up straight in the seat, places his hands on the steering wheel, and takes a deep breath.

DAVID

Okay, here goes. To anyone who may be listening, I, David Pollack, hereby set the intention to be open to any and all coincidences that come my way for the following week. There. Done. Bring it on.

He looks around for a few moments, half expecting something to happen.

Then he reaches down and turns the ignition.

INT. TOPLESS BAR - NIGHT

David is seated in a lounge chair sucking down a beer. He looks particularly numb.

An attractive woman, TANYA, 30, with kind eyes, approaches. She has a quizzical look like she's trying to place something.

TANYA

Hi, my name's Tanya. You look familiar.

David, in customer-mode...

Yeah, you look familiar too. How about a table dance?

This catches her off guard and she hesitates. Not providing the usual enthusiasm...

TANYA

Uh...sure.

Her reaction catches David a little off guard too.

She awkwardly takes off her clothes and begins to dance for him to Stabbing Westward: 'Save Yourself' (more on that song later).

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

David is spent and a little uncoordinated.

He sloppily undresses as he lurches toward the bed.

As his sleepy head hits the pillow, his eyes pop wide open.

INT. MEDICAL BILLING OFFICE - DAY (MEMORY)

SUPER: Seven years earlier - Detroit

David and another college intern sit in front of early 1980s era computer terminals in a windowless room.

Tanya practically prances into the room, Tigger-like, in a state of effervescent goofy ecstacy. She immediately captures the young men's attention, who are completely taken by her.

TANYA

Hi guys, you'll never guess what happened to me Saturday night. I scored tickets to the Van Halen concert and was rocking out in the mosh pit, when I got pulled on stage and they started playing one of their new songs with the cameras rolling! So I'm thinking oh my God, this is it. I'm going to be like that girl in the Springsteen video who's now famous, um, what'sher-name. So I'm busting some serious moves, looking all music video-worthy.

While she says this, she acts out her dance moves, then Sammy Hagar's reaction.

TANYA (CONT'D)

And Sammy's totally into it! He's squatting down, checking out my ass -- when the bean burrito kicks in -oh yeah. So you know how when you're dancing and you're twisting around and you don't have a lot of fine-grained flatulence control? This one came ripping out like a Mack Truck's air brakes. And because Sammy's head is so close to my ass, it gets picked up by his mic and comes roaring out the speakers! My eyes are bugging out and he falls over backwards like he's been hit. He and the band bust out laughing so hard, they can't even finish the song! There's no one I can blame this on, so I just go all dainty and say "Oopsie". And Sammy goes "Gotta love the Detroit chicks. They catch you looking and blast one right in your face." And the crowd goes nuts with the whooping. Now, instead of being the next what'sher-name, I'm that chick who farted in Sammy Hagar's face. So I got that going for me, which is nice. Oh, and I got invited to the afterparty and that was a lot of fun. Moral of the story - never scarf a bean burrito before a concert. Never. I know that now. Anyway, I got to get back to it. Talk to you quys later.

After she prances out, the two young men just look at each other, exhale exaggeratedly, and roll their heads/eyes in that "she's totally awesome" way.

EXT. 1950'S RANCH HOUSE - DAY

David's 4Runner stops across the street from the ranch house. Again "Save Yourself" is playing on the radio. Daved turns off the car and gets out.

About a HALF DOZEN DIRT BIKES are strewn about. The bikes' owners, men in their early twenties, sporting PROTECTIVE CLOTHING, drink beers and lounge on the porch.

David, uncertain, double-checks the address on the slip of paper, then approaches the house.

DAVID

Hi, does Tanya live here?

One of the guys in the crowd grins. With some swagger in his voice...

ONE OF THE CROWD

I wish we had a Tanya here, but no, sorry.

DAVTD

(processing this)

OK, thanks.

David turns back toward his car, hesitates for a second and begins to turn back, then thinks better of it and continues to his car.

INT. TOPLESS BAR - NIGHT

David sits up in a lounge chair scanning the room. Save Yourself plays yet again. A server approaches.

SERVER

Can I get a beer for ya honey?

DAVTD

Sure, I'll have a Shiner. Hey, is Tanya dancing tonight? She...she's my favorite.

SERVER

I haven't seen her, but I don't know her schedule. She might come in later.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

David scans the PHONE BOOK under the private investigators section. The TV in the background shows a muted news report of George W Bush as Governor, signing a bill.

He picks up the phone and dials.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

Discrete Investigations.

Hi, I'm trying to find a woman I used to know and ran into the other day.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
Can you give a rundown of how you know this woman and why you're trying to find her?

David speaks rapidly, sounding manic.

DAVID

I knew her seven years ago Sure. in Detroit. We worked in the same office and were friends. I was at a strip club the other day and she approached me because I looked familiar. I was a little drunk and didn't remember her at the time and I didn't believe her. But when I got home I remembered that I knew her and her full name came back to The thing is, I figured she was just trying to get a table dance and so I wasn't as considerate as I wish I was and I'm embarrassed about that and want to apologize for my behavior. Also I think she might be in some kind of trouble and this coincidences means I'm supposed to help her...

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
Really, you can stop there. That's
all I need to know. I won't be
taking your case. Women in that
line of work don't want to be found
-- especially by guys like you.

DAVID

(alarmed)

No, you don't understand. She...

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
Oh I understand perfectly. I won't help you.

A CLICK and David stares at the phone in shock.

DAVID

Asshole! Sanctimonious prick!

CONTINUED: (2)

He throws the receiver at the wall.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Oh I understand perfectly. Arrogant shit.

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - MOMENTS LATER

David gets in the car, still highly agitated. He starts the car and drives off. He turns on the radio. Save Yourself is playing again.

DAVID

(exasperated)

What is the deal with this song!

He changes the station. It's Save Yourself.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Yeah? Fuck you!

He turns off the radio and rips off the knob.

EXT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - CONTINUOUS

From behind the car, the knob flies out the window.

INT. DIANE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

David sits in one of the comfy chairs, agitated. Diane enters carrying a tray with a pot of tea and two cups.

DIANE

I went with Chamomile.

DAVID

Yeah, good call.

INT. DIANE'S LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

David and Diane hold their cups of tea. David finishes the story.

DAVID

...so I figure that means I'm supposed to help her. Maybe we're supposed to be together. But I keep running into obstacles.

DIANE

Yeah, these things can be tricky to interpret. It's like astrology.
(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)

You read your forecast and go, "I know that that's going to be." Or maybe you try to influence it in the direction of a desired outcome. But then it turns out to be something completely different. It seems you can't game the system. You just have to work with what it gives you.

DAVID

And if you try to fight it?

DTANE

Like fighting a brick wall. It just causes pain.

DAVID

I can't always get what I want -but if I try sometimes, I might just find I get what I need?

DIANE

There you go. Where there any follow-up coincidences?

David looks to the floor.

DAVID

(mumbles)

Um..maybe.

DIANE

Yeah, you see after a big earthquake, there's usually aftershocks. The follow-ups can clarify the message if you go off on the wrong track. Look, just stay open. It'll become apparent.

EXT. DREAM - DAY

POV. We ascend the steps of an ACROPOLIS-TYPE STRUCTURE WITH COLUMNS. The scene is faded white by the intense Greek sun. At the top of the steps stands Tanya, dressed as a Greek Goddess, TOGA flowing in the wind, puffy clouds moving overhead. We stop a dozen or so steps before reaching the top. She looks down on us with those kind eyes and a compassionate smile.

TANYA

It would never work. You like four seasons and I like it hot all the time.

A SHIP'S HORN blows in the distance. We turn to see a CRUISE SHIP beyond the base of the steps and turn back to Tanya.

TANYA (CONT'D)

You'd better hurry or you'll miss the boat.

INT. CRUISE SHIP - MOMENTS LATER (DREAM)

Still POV, we encounter a cabin steward.

CABIN STEWARD

Sir, your baggage is in Lost and Found.

Cabin steward motions toward a hallway with a room at the end. The door is open.

We head down the hallway and enter the room.

Various bags can been seen strewn about, our gaze goes from bag to bag, but we focus on none.

We see a door to another room. The door is ajar a foot or so into the darkened space beyond. A silhouette of a bag catches our attention.

We head toward the door.

Something ominous can be sensed on the other side -- a presence. As we approach, a HISSING sound grows louder.

As we push open the door to shed light on the baggage inside, the presence violently slams the door, throwing us back with a jolt.

INT. DAVID'S CUBICLE - DAY

David sits at his cubicle, staring at his monitor, motionless. The stack is so high, it looks unstable.

Colt marches in, peeved. He hovers over David.

COLT

Hey buddy, we need to talk.

David doesn't bother to turn from the monitor.

(monotone)

Sure Colt, what's on your mind?

COLT

I'm hearin' rumblin's from Sales that submission deadlines are bein' missed. You know as well as I do that missin' a deadline is *never* acceptable. What's the status of your bids?

DAVID

I'll have a report to you in an hour.

COLT

The fuck you will. Look at me when I'm talkin' to you.

David swivels his chair and faces Colt with a blank expression.

COLT (CONT'D)

I got a meetin' with Mary in an hour. She's asking some damn uncomfortable questions and I need answers. The mushroom treatment you've been givin' me stops now.

DAVID

I'll have the report in a half hour. That's the best I can do.

Getting in David's face.

COLT

Not *one* minute after, and it better be good, or it's your ass buddy.

Colt storms to his office and slams the door. The stack on David's desk falls over. David pays no attention.

David swivels his chair back to his computer, switches to his word processor and begins typing.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE BULLPEN - MONTAGE

David picks up copies at the NETWORK PRINTER.

David inserts copies in the MAILBOXES of each of the staff.

David fills a FILE BOX with personal effects.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE BULLPEN - END MONTAGE

Hailey returns to her cubicle and sees what David is doing.

HAILEY

So that's it then?

DAVID

Yep, I've run out of rope.

HAILEY

What are you going to do now?

DAVID

I don't know. Find myself, maybe. My investments have done well. I'm not in a hurry.

HATTIEY

Well, good luck in your quest. Don't be a stranger.

DAVID

Thanks. We'll -- grab lunch or something.

HAILEY

Sure.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

We see David carry his box through the building, then out the lobby. Passers by look at him with surprise.

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY (IMAGINATION)

As he approaches his car, the COMPANY SIGN becomes unhinged, swings for a few seconds, and falls.

Then the company collapses into itself.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

David looks dejectedly at his DUCT-TAPED PHONE. The muted TV in the background shows a news report of George W Bush giving a stump speech.

David dials a number.

DAD'S VOICE

Hello?

Hey Dad, it's David.

DAD'S VOICE

David! How are you doing?

DAVID

I'm good, I'm good. H..how are you?

DAD'S VOICE

Things are fine here. The remodel is almost done. It's coming together nicely. What about you?

DAVID

Yeah, so -- I just wanted to let you know that I quit my job.

DAD'S VOICE

(alarmed)

What? Well -- can you get it back?

DAVID

No, no -- it's a done deal...and it's a good thing. My boss kind of had it in for me and my director wouldn't let me transfer, so I just needed to get out.

DAD'S VOICE

Well -- okay then. Do you have another job lined up? Is there a plan?

DAVID

(looking panicked)
Oh yeah sure, of course. I
wouldn't quit without a plan. That
would be stupid.

David desperately looks over at his bicycles.

DAVID (CONT'D)

So the plan is -- so you know how I know databases and HTML, the web language?

DAD'S VOICE

Yeah?

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID

Well, I was thinking that I could sell bicycles over the internet. Everyone's getting rich with the new economy and I thought I'd jump in before it's too late.

DAD'S VOICE

Okay -- that sounds promising. Do you have a business plan put together?

DAVID

Business plan? Oh no, business plans are old economy. They just slow you down, and before you know it, someone else is already established. You just need to produce it, generate interest, raise capital and build market share as fast as you can.

DAD'S VOICE

Well -- okay, I didn't know that. David, my head is spinning. Can I call you back when this has sunk in a little?

DAVID

Sure, sure. Well, actually no. You see, I'm heading out on a two week road trip. I figure I need a break first. Hit the reset button and all. I'll...I'll call you when I get back.

DAD'S VOICE

Sure, okay David. We'll talk then.

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - MONTAGE

David drives through the flat featureless expanse of the Texas panhandle.

David drives along Colorado's front range.

EXT. GAS STATION PAY PHONE - EVENING

David holds a piece of paper and the receiver to his ear.

RETREAT CENTER MANAGER

Dorje Khyung Dzong

Yes hi, do you take drop-ins?

RETREAT CENTER MANAGER
Can you give me an idea of what you want to do?

DAVTD

Sure. I'd like to rent one of your retreat cabins for a week.

RETREAT CENTER MANAGER What's your background with meditation?

DAVID

Never done it. I just want to dive right in.

(long beat)

Hello?

RETREAT CENTER MANAGER
Meditation really wouldn't benefit
you without proper instruction.
We're really set up for more
advanced practitioners. You should
start with an introductory weekend
program and take it from there.

EXT. GARDEN OF THE GODS, CO - DAY

David mountain bikes.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

David runs toward us in swim trunks.

As we turn to follow him, we see him jump off a twenty foot cliff into the Colorado River.

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - DAY

Various scenes of Colorado countryside as David drives through.

EXT. MESA VERDE - DAY

David takes a tour of the ruins.

EXT. SANTA FE - DAY

David discusses a PICTURE with one of the vendors in an art fair.

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - EVENING

David drives through the featureless expanse of West Texas with the fading sun in his rearview mirror.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

David dials his duct-taped phone. The picture from the Sante Fe Art Fair hangs on the wall.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Austin Shambhala Center

DAVID

Hi, do you offer an introduction to meditation class?

WOMAN'S VOICE

As a matter of fact we've got an introductory weekend program that starts tomorrow night. We were full, but I just got a cancellation a few minutes ago. Do you want to sign up for that?

DAVID

Yeah sure, that sounds good.

INT. DAVID'S 4RUNNER - DAY

David drives to the edge of the parking lot of his old office and stops.

It's still there. The parking lot is mostly full.

He looks at it for a few moments and drives off.

INT. SHAMBHALA CENTER - EVENING

David sits on a meditation cushion surrounded by the other participants in a packed shine room.

They listen to a talk given by a man in his 60s, PROGRAM DIRECTOR (DIRECTOR), who wears a jacket and tie. Director's demeanor is a mixture of serine and playful.

DIRECTOR

So, deep in the core of our being we are all basically good. No one was born an ax murderer.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

We may become ax murderers by building up layers of confusion that obscure our true nature and then act on that confusion. But there are no people who are fundamentally ax murderers. Even ax murderers are basically good, if not highly confused.

The participant laugh. David raises his hand.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Yes.

DAVID

But we're not all born into the same circumstances. I mean, at a basic level, boys are born with more testosterone than girls and therefore tend to be more aggressive, and from that more likely to become ax murderers.

DIRECTOR

True, you find a lot more boy ax murders than girl ax murders, and there are definitely challenging circumstances that some people are born into that would make them less likely to connect with their basic goodness. But we live in a freewill universe. We all have choice. No one is fated to become an ax murderer. Another way to look at basic goodness is that everything is basically workable. In fact, anything and everything can be used as an opportunity to wake up rather than engage in confusion.

(beat)

Let's say you're trying to meditate and your mind wanders off. I'm sure that doesn't happen with this group, but I understand there are people who have trouble staying one-pointed for a whole minute, much less an hour.

Laughter from the participants.

CONTINUED: (2)

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

So imagine you're one of these unfortunate people and you smell a fart from the person in front of you. That fart can bring you back to the present moment. That fart can wake you up. You can choose to appreciate that fart. In a way it's a gift -- a little fruity wake-up call.

A large roughneck in his 40s with beard and tatoos (BEN), who appears completely out of place in this group, looks over his shoulder with a wry smile and says to the participants behind him...

BEN

Yer welcome. More gifts to come. Had seconds on chilli.

A few chuckles from participants.

DIRECTOR

That might be too much of a good thing Ben. We strive for moderation in all things here.

BEN

Hard to resist when the chilli's so basically good Doc. But I'll work on moderating my intake so I don't encourage my neighbors to embrace confusion and become ax murderers.

Laughter from the participants.

DIRECTOR

Good to know the talk took Ben.

BEN

I'm workable.

More laughter.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

The room is small and nicely appointed. There are two meditation cushions across from each other. SUE CHALMERS (early 40s), sits on one of the cushions, making notes. Sue is a fleshy jovial woman with a sparkle in her eye and a bit of twangy-punchy sing song in her voice.

A knock at the door. Sue sets down her notes.

SUE

(singing out)

Come in.

A limping David enters with ESCORT (30).

ESCORT

Sue Chalmers, this is David Pollack.

SUE

Thank you.

Escort exits and closes the door behind him.

SUE (CONT'D)

Please sit down.

David sits on the cushion.

SUE (CONT'D)

Did your leg fall asleep?

DAVID

Yeah, I'm having a lot of difficulty with that.

SUE

That's because your knees are popping up. You need to sit higher. Here, try this extra cushion.

David adds the extra cushion. Sue stands and moves to David's side.

SUE (CONT'D)

Now, let's have a look at your posture. Hands resting on thighs, strong back, soft front, eyes down, chin tucked slightly in. Sit a little forward to get your knees down, but don't lean forward. Good, that's it. How does that feel?

Sue returns to her seat.

DAVID

Feel's better. I'm not struggling with keeping my back straight.

SUE

That's because your knees are down. So besides correcting posture, we have these interviews to check in on how things are going. So, how are things going?

DAVID

Okay, I suppose. I'm sure it will go a lot better when my leg stops falling asleep, so thanks for that.

SUF

That's what I'm here for. We never got a chance to talk before the program. So, what brings you here?

DAVID

Well, I'm in the process of shopping for a belief system and I just quit my job and I'm working through some resentment about my boss and thought that meditation might help.

SUE

(chuckling)

Well, okay then! That's quite a groundless state of affairs you got there!

DAVID

Yeah, it all just seemed to come to a head, like this big crescendo.

SUE

That's not at all uncommon for people walking through our door. David, I got some good news and I got some bad news. The good news is that your instincts were right. Meditation is a great way to work with sticky thoughts and emotions. The bad news is that this process takes time and, given your recent experience, may be particularly difficult for you early on. I imagine it's been hard to focus on your breath with stuff bubbling up?

Yeah, I've been able to focus on the technique for maybe five minutes. The rest of the time was spent stewing about my boss or struggling with my posture.

SUE

That's pretty typical for beginners. The extra cushion should help with your posture, but as far as your thoughts and emotions, all I can tell you is that they will subside with time. Just remember that emotions are thoughts we give a lot of emphasis to. Try not to feed them with a story line or they'll grow big and strong.

DAVID

(a little anxious)
Do thoughts and emotions ever build
up to the point where you just -wig out, right there on the
cushion?

SUE

(big smile)

That's a common fear for people starting out. Don't worry, it almost never happens.

DAVID

Actually I think I may be a special exception.

SUE

(laughing)

But of course you are my dear!

DAVID

But I think my mind is actually getting worse. Thoughts are getting louder and coming faster.

SUE

That's also very common. Your mind has always been that way. You're just noticing it now and it seems really chaotic all of the sudden. That's actually a good thing, noticing. That's progress.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (4)

SUE (CONT'D)

That state of mind you're noticing is called Waterfall Mind because your thoughts are coming fast and turbulent like a waterfall. If you keep meditating, eventually it becomes a fast moving river, then a slow moving river, and finally a lake.

DAVID

Anyone ever drown?

SUE

(laughing)

Almost never happens!

There is a double-knock on the door.

SUE (CONT'D)

That's the signal that our time is up.

David gets up.

DAVID

Well, thanks, this was helpful.

SUE

Any time, David.

As David leave, Sue sings out...

SUE (CONT'D)

Oh and remember, when you lose your mind -- come back.

DAVID

Huh?

SUE

(chipper)

To your breath, when your mind wanders. It's a saying. We have bumper stickers.

DAVID

Ah.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

The phone rings. The caller ID reads: Raymond Pollack. David is there, he sees who's calling, he stares at the phone dejectedly, he is not answering. The ANSWERING MACHINE kicks in. "Hi, you've reached David Pollack..."

TNT. CAFE - DAY

David and Hailey sit at a table, having lunch. Hailey is dressed professionally, David casually.

HATLEY

So, what's it like?

DAVID

What's what like?

HATLEY

Life on the outside? Freedom?

DAVID

I keep thinking of going back.

HAILEY

(as if to a sad puppy) Ahhhh, you miss your cage.

DAVID

I'm like an addict out of rehab. They say that recovering addicts who go back to their old stomping grounds are much more likely to backslide. Too easy to slip into old habits.

HAILEY

Thinking of moving away?

DAVID

Yeah, I found the place too -- on the internet. I did a search.

HAILEY

Only you would do that. I thought the internet was only good for buying things and surfing porn?

DAVID

That's its main purpose, but it turns out there are other things you can do on it.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I entered all my preferences and one place stood out.

HAILEY

So where is this Shangri-la?

DAVID

Asheville, North Carolina.

HAILEY

Never heard of it.

DAVID

Yeah, me neither. It was apparently a major destination for the rich and famous back in the early part of the century. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote some of his novels there. The Vanderbilts summered there in this gigantic home they built.

HAILEY

(not especially impressed)
Sounds quaint -- and sleepy.

DAVID

It also has the most temperate climate east of the Rockies.

HAILEY

Tired of Texas summers.

DAVID

And Michigan winters.

HAILEY

When you run into Goldilocks, tell her I said hi.

INT. MEDITATION INSTRUCTION ROOM - DAY

David and Sue sit in their usual places.

SUE

So what's on your mind?

DAVID

Well, I've been going to the sittings throughout the week and sometimes we read this chant and I wanted to know more about it.

SUE

Which one is it?

DAVID

It's the one that says no to everything.

SUE

Ah, the Heart Sutra. Otherwise known as the heart attack sutra because it gave all these advanced practitioners heart attacks when it was first given at Vulture Peak Mountain.

DAVID

So I'm not the only one who's ever struggled with it then?

SUE

(laughing)

At least it didn't kill you. We should probably add warning labels.

DAVID

Why is it denying everything? Isn't that nihilistic?

SUE

It's denying concepts. It's denying attachment to this idea of a self that's separate and independent and permanent. It's refusing to buy into the illusion that is the dream we're all experiencing. It's pulling the rug out from under us, but when we fall, we find there's no ground to hit because that's just a concept too.

DAVID

What's the mantra saying?

SUE

Om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha. Every mantra has bookends. That's what the om and svaha are. Om is a seed syllable. It's like a good throat clearing. (MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

SUE (CONT'D)

And svaha translates to "So be it." It's like saying, "Yep, that's a keeper." They're like the bread of the sandwich and we want to get at the meat. Gate means "gone". Para means "completely". Sam means "beyond" and "bodhi" means awake --which is another word for Buddha or one who is awake. So it works out to, "Gone, gone, completely gone, completely gone beyond. Awake!"

DAVID

So what we trying to do here is go completely beyond concepts and attachments to wake up to the ultimate nature of reality?

SUE

You got it, bubba.

DAVID

So -- basically we need to drop all our baggage.

SUE

Exactly! Well done!

Sue playfully punches David in the shoulder. David winces.

DAVID

(concerned)

Okay, well -- it's just that -- I think I maybe afraid to even *look* at my baggage.

SUE

Bingo! And that's what gave those 500 arhats heart attacks! They were freaked out about the prospect of dealing with their baggage! Most people don't even realize they have baggage, let alone that they're afraid to look at it. You're on your way.

INT. SHAMBHALA CENTER - DAY

It's another program. The director gives a talk in front of the same cast of characters.

DIRECTOR

One way we hide from our basic goodness is by cloaking ourselves in habitual tendencies. We do the same things over an over, have the same conversations. It's safe because it's predictable, like wrapping yourself in a cocoon of activities and behaviors you can control. We build up so many patterns, routines, defense mechanisms and rituals to protect ourself that life becomes stale. After a while that cocoon begins to feel dark and smelly -claustrophobic. Eventually you can't stand it and want to break out. You want to experience the sunlight and fresh air of originality and genuineness, of being open again. Like when you were a child.

(beat)

So this is all very conceptualsounding. Does anyone have any examples from their experience of cocoon that they'd like to share?

PARTICIPANT #1

I always bring a book on the plane to shield myself from talking to the person siting next to me.

DIRECTOR

Yes, there's a lot of unpredictably in airline travel, so we come up with our strategies to gain a sense of control.

PARTICIPANT #2

I schedule every minute of my life, even my vacations.

DIRECTOR

Exactly. Scheduling can be a useful activity, but it can also be taken too far so that there's no room for anything spontaneous, which could take us out of our comfort zone.

CONTINUED: (2)

PARTICIPANT #3

I have the same conversation with my husband every evening. We don't so much talk as go through the motions. We could have much of what we say pre-recorded and just press play instead.

DIRECTOR

It becomes a ritual for maintaining connection, but it's not really working if you're not connected. But being connected takes effort and involves risk, so we go the safe and boring route.

BEN

After I'd get back on shore, I'd go to a bar, get drunk and pick a fight over somethin' stupid like Cowboys versus Oilers -- that is, back when Houston had a team.

DIRECTOR

Oilers fan I take it.

BEN

No, Cowboys.

Director is caught off-guard.

DIRECTOR

But -- you're an oiler and you're based out of Houston.

BEN

Exactly. Easier gettin' in a fight bein' a contrarian.

DIRECTOR

How's that working for you?

BEN

Gettin' kinda old actually. The thrill is gone and I miss breathin' out my left nostril.

DIRECTOR

I think you may be on to something.

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN

Thinkin' 'bout tatooin' a butterfly on my ass as a reminder to keep outta my cocoon. Would make for some interestin' shower time on the rig.

Laughter from the participants.

DIRECTOR

Moderation Ben.

BEN

I'll keep it to one cheek.

More laughter from the participants.

DIRECTOR

Anyone else?

DAVID

I think I have something. So when I'm driving, sometimes it gets too quiet and I feel this impulse to turn on the radio -- you know, like for a distraction. Except, not long ago the radio broke. But I'd still get this impulse and try to turn it on. And then I'd remember, "Oh yeah, the radio's broken." And I kept getting the impulse, except over time I'd catch myself earlier and earlier in the process until it was just a thought. And then after a while it wasn't so much of a thought anymore.

(beat)

But then I fixed the radio.

Laughter from the participants.

DIRECTOR

Yeah, I'm pretty sure that qualifies. Our cocoons get built up by our nervous habits, which can be hard to break.

INT. HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOUSE - MONTAGE

David, wearing a HABITAT FOR HUMANITY TEE SHIRT, nails DRYWALL.

David, hands GLOVED, brings INSULATION up the RAMP through the back door.

David installs insulation in the attic.

David carries what is left of the insulation down the stairs, making sure to hold the fiberglass away from him.

David opens the back door and steps onto the ramp. The ramp collapses and David falls to the right. David screams in pain.

INT. SHAMBHALA CENTER - DAY

We are at another program. Ben (in C.U.), irritated by a remark from one of the participants, says darkly, half under his breath...

BEN

You don't know what the hell yer talkin' 'bout.

Ben could snap the fellow participant like a twig. Participant #4 is intimidated, but won't back down.

PARTICIPANT #4

(defensive)

Well -- okay then, enlighten me. What's wrong with my take on it?

BEN

You talk like there's someone lookin' out over everone -- like there's some grand plan *God* set out for us that we can't know or change. That's bullshit. I ain't no puppet. No one pulls my strings.

(beat)

Imagine yer on a rig -- not that you could cut it on one, but let's say you could. You're workin' the drill with yer best friend and a section a pipe comes loose and crushes him. He's dying in your arms crying for his momma. You gonna tell him it's just God's way? The last son 'm bitch told me that got a punch in the mouth for his trouble.

DIRECTOR

Ben, you're going to need to find a more constructive way to grieve for your friend, one that doesn't involve violence.

BEN

Hell I know that Doc. Why do you think I drive four hours to Hippyville to do these programs? I either git hold of this or I wind up in jail or worse.

Ben's anger turns to anguish as he briefly shows his heart.

BEN (CONT'D)

I don't want to hurt nobody really. Hell, I'd submarine those fights I picked. I just hurt so much on the inside that it comes out all twisted on the outside.

Ben, realizes that he just bared his soft side and panics.

BEN (CONT'D)

Now don't nobody hug me!
(defusing with humor)
Except Sue over there. She's my
type.

Sue just chuckles silently.

INT. SHAMBHALA CENTER - LATER

It is the reception after the program. Everyone is holding plates and glasses as they eat, drink and chat.

Sue sidles up to Ben. She's feeling frisky.

SUE

I know you. You're all hard on the outside and soft on the inside.

BEN

Well girl, you're wrong about that.

SUE

Oh yeah? How?

BEN

I got soft places on the outside too.

SUE

And where would those be?

He wryly points to his lips.

BEN

Right here.

Sue lets out chortle, rears back, and playfully punches Ben in the shoulder. Ben winces.

BEN (CONT'D)

Okay, there too.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

David's arm is in a BRACE. Half the livingroom is in BOXES. He studies the phone book under movers. A TV in the background shows a muted swearing in ceremony for George W Bush's second term as governor.

David focuses on the ad for Three Guys Moving, which reads: "Three guys for the price of two."

DAVTD

Perfect.

He dials the number.

MOVER #1

Three Guys Moving.

DAVID

Yeah hi, what's your rate for loading a fourteen foot truck?

MOVER #1

Loading and unloading or just loading?

DAVID

Just loading. I'm leaving the state.

MOVER #1

Any stairs?

DAVID

Half a flight outside my door.

MOVER #1

That would be seventy dollars.

DAVID

Okay, that will work. Are you available the Tuesday after next in the afternoon?

EXT. TOPLESS BAR - NIGHT

David drives up to the parking lot. He parks the car and stares at the entrance for a moment.

He unbuckles his seat belt, opens the door, then closes it and sits there a while longer, looking pained.

Finally he opens the door and gets out.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

David and Sue are in their usual positions. David is struggles to begin.

DAVID

So -- you know -- there are addictions to drugs and alcohol and sex and work and things like that.

SUE

Sure.

DAVID

What about -- being addicted to acceptance?

SUE

(smiles)

I guess it's better that than being addicted to rejection. Too easy to O.D. Acceptance is harder to come by.

DAVID

Except I found a guaranteed supply of acceptance -- and from the beautiful people where it's most prized -- but you have to pay for it.

SUE

(amused)

Well of course, my dear. But does it make you happy?

Yeah, that's the thing. It did at first, but the more I seek it, the more miserable I get.

SUE

That would be the suffering of change, the root of all addiction. You find something that fills a void. That experience makes you happy. You try to repeat the experience, but it's not quite the same the next time. Its richness gradually fades, like a copy of a copy of a copy. That makes you grasp for it even harder. And if you manage to see through the veneer for what it really is, then it's just awful. Unfortunately for you, you're too smart to be fooled by that mirage. But the memory of that first positive hit is strong, and you think that maybe you can convince yourself it's real just one more time. But you never can.

DAVID

(looking queasy)
Wow, you really nailed it.

SUE

Yeah, I have some insight into that one. You see, that was my marriage. Almost shot the guy when I caught him with another woman.

(thinking back)

I knew before I caught him I just

I knew before I caught him. I just refused to see it.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE BULLPEN - DAY (IMAGINATION)

Note: This scene should play like a bad soap opera with overacting and mood music that changes with the action.

David confidently walks toward Colt's office, trailed by Roger, Hal and two FBI AGENTS.

Colt exits his office before they arrive with a look of surprise.

COLT

David, what are you doin' here? What's goin' on?

I got the goods on you, Colt. You forged Roger's signature on that bid. That's fraud. And it had terms and conditions that would damage the company. That's corporate sabotage. Plus, I got our little conversation about your new approach on tape. You're going down, buddy.

HAT

I had no idea. I am so disappointed in you, Colt. David, I was so wrong not to pick you for the job. You are mature beyond your years and have excellent integrity.

Colt, eyes wild, whips out a Colt 45 six shooter and levels it at David.

COLT

I may be goin down, but I'm takin your ass with me.

Just as he finishes his line, Hailey runs from behind Colt and tackles him with a bone-rattling hit to "oooh"s from the crowd. The FBI agents rush in and apprehend Colt.

HAILEY

Daddy was an NFL lineman. Take him away, boys.

The FBI agents escort Colt away with Roger and Hal trailing. As Roger calls back to David...

ROGER

David, next time we play basketball, you're on my team! Same for you Hailey when we play flag football!

HAILEY

(calling back)

I only play full contact!

DAVID

(to Hailey)

You're my hero.

Hailey takes the pin from her hair and shakes it out.

CONTINUED: (2)

HAILEY

No David, you're mine. Just so you know, I dumped the Med School junkie if you're interested.

DAVID

Oh really?

They kiss as the scene collapses into a heart shape.

INT. SHAMBHALA CENTER - DAY

David snaps out of his daydream as the gong is struck. Everyone stands when the Director enters the room and then sits down as he does.

DIRECTOR

Good morning.

PARTICIPANTS

Good morning.

DIRECTOR

In Level One, we were introduced to basic goodness. In Level Two, we learned about the cocoon we use to shield ourselves from basic goodness. Then by Level Three, we begin to develop fearlessness by examining the habitual tendencies that make up our cocoon.

We gradually zoom in on David's increasingly tense face, zooming further to one of David's eyes.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

We get in touch with our heart as a way of staying out of the cocoon and relating with the world in a healthier, more genuine way. Now, during this weekend, we'll go further and let the world touch our heart. We'll allow ourselves to be raw and open and let everyone in --loved ones, friends, strangers, even people we've had difficulty with.

As the director finishes the last sentence, David's pupil constricts.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

David talks on the phone in a room full of sealed boxes, PLASTIC-covered furniture and virtually *nothing* else. Just one open box remains, which has the phone cord running into it. He's curled up in the fetal position.

SUE'S VOICE

Hi David, is everything okay?

DAVID

Oh sure -- well I mean, I'm basically fine, but my wrist has been bothering me.

SUE'S VOICE

Is that why you didn't make it in this morning? I'm sure we can figure out an accommodation to make your wrist more comfortable. We can get you caught up on this morning's talk if you want to finish the program.

DAVID

No, that's okay. The other reason is that I'm moving as you know and - I'm terribly behind on packing. I thought I could squeeze the program in, but it turned out I was overly optimistic about that.

SUE'S VOICE

Okay David. Well, we'll miss you. Just remember, when you lose your mind --

DAVID

(smiles)

-- come back. I have the bumper sticker.

SUE'S VOICE

With a bumper sticker like that, you can't go wrong.

INT. RYDER OFFICE - MORNING

The office is small with a COUNTER and a few CHAIRS for waiting. A short plump woman in her 50s with big hair and too much makeup (MARGE) runs the office.

David enters with a PRINTOUT.

Hi, I have a reservation.

MARGE

Would you be David?

DAVID

That's me.

MARGE

Yes, I'm sorry, we don't have your truck.

DAVID

Excuse me?

MARGE

Our logistics guy is on vacation this week, so we don't have your truck.

DAVID

(processing this)

But — he's a *logistics* guy. His job is to plan for things in advance. He knew he would be on vacation — so he *logically* must have planned for that — and so my truck should be here. I reserved it two weeks ago, exactly as your brochure recommended.

MARGE

Yeah, well, it ain't here.

DAVID

(beginning to panic)

But the movers are coming this afternoon!

MARGE

Don't you worry. I got somethin' even better for ya, no extra charge! Come, you'll like it.

Marge leads a shaky David out of the office.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

They turn the corner of the office and encounter the largest TRUCK in Ryder's fleet, a brand new gleaming behemoth of yellow paint and chrome.

MARGE

Ain't she a beaut!

DAVID

(astonished)

That thing's huge!

MARGE

(proud Texas mama)

Yeah! Biggest in the fleet and still has that new truck smell!

DAVID

I can't drive that thing, it's a monstrosity! I think you need a truck drivers license for something like that. Don't you have anything smaller? Maybe just one size up from what I ordered?

David just castrated himself in Marge's eyes. She looks him up and down suspiciously.

MARGE

No, this is all I got. I'd have to send you to another location.

DAVID

That's fine as long as it's not too far away and I can get what I ordered.

MARGE

I'll get on the horn and see what I can do.

INT. RYDER OFFICE - LATER

Marge gets off the phone, sporting a less-than-positive expression through all that makeup.

MARGE

Look, I called everyone within 30 miles. No fourteen footers to be had. Not even sixteen footers. The best I can do are eighteen footers fifteen miles up the road on thirty five.

David ponders this for a moment. Then, resigned...

DAVID

Well, if that's the best you can do. The movers show up in three hours.

EXT. RYDER LOT - MORNING

David pulls his 4Runner into a gravel lot with a single wide for an office and a collection of RYDER TRUCKS that have long since seen better days.

David gets out, looking apprehensive.

The MANAGER, a tobacco-chewing red neck in his 40s with stained tee shirt barely covering a shed, exits the office with a set of keys.

REDNECK MANAGER

You Pollack?

DAVID

Yeah?

REDNECK MANAGER

This is her.

He motions to a nearby scraped-up hulk with bald tires. David walks over to face it from the front.

DAVTD

It's listing to the right.

REDNECK MANAGER

Naw, that's the lot.

DAVID

Got anything newer?

REDNECK MANAGER

Nope.

He tosses David the keys and heads back to the office.

EXT. RYDER LOT - LATER

David'a 4Runner is on the CAR-TRAILER. He struggles to put the straps over the wheels, but they won't go all the way over because he has 17-INCH WHEELS.

He does his best to get the straps to hold the wheels down.

INT. RYDER TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

David starts the engine, which sounds rough, but gradually roars to life.

He puts it into gear with a clunk and the truck begins to lurch forward with a whining sound. He tries the brakes and his foot goes halfway down before there is any stopping power and a loud squeal. His eyes grow wide with fear.

EXT. RYDER LOT - MOMENTS LATER

The Ryder truck exits the lot, lurching side to side as it pulls the 4Runner on its trailer.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - LATER

The Ryder truck stops in front of David's house to a loud squeal.

David turns off the truck, which shutters and dies.

He gets out and walks to the front to survey it.

It is listing slightly to the right. David shakes his head and walks toward the back of the truck.

INT. LIVINGROOM - AFTERNOON

The doorbell rings.

David answers the door to reveal THREE GUYS MOVING, who happen to be three skinny college-age guys.

MOVER #1

Hi, we're Three Guys.

DAVID

So you are. Come on in.

Mover #1 speaks for the group. He is theatrical in his delivery. The other two mimic what he conveys as a sort of mime chorus.

MOVER #1

Before we can start, there's the delicate matter of our fee. I would prefer not to ask up front, but unfortunately we've been stiffed recently.

DAVID

Of course.

David pulls out three twenties and a ten.

DAVID (CONT'D)

So the way I've organized the boxes...

MOVER #1

(cutting David off)
Please sir, we are professionals.
We have done this many times before and we have developed a proven system that will insure that the loading of the truck is conducted in as expeditious and balanced a manner as possible. If you will agree to stand at the entryway and provide direction according to my queries, this process will go

DAVID

(after pondering this)
Fair-enough. I defer to your expertise.

MOVER #1

Now, where are the bedrooms?

INT. LIVINGROOM - LATER

The final box is being taken out.

smoothly.

DAVID

Wow, just over thirty minutes! You guys are blazingly fast.

MOVER #1

We know our craft. Come, let us bare witness to the fruit of our labors.

They exit together and head up the stairs to the waiting truck.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

David and Mover #1 approach the truck as the other two movers finish ratchet the retaining strap and climb off the truck.

The result is a fairly haphazard assemblage of David's possessions, organized loosely in the truck. David stares in horror.

Mover #1 makes cute gestures for a tip.

David turns and glares at Mover #1 like he's shit on a stick.

Mover #1 gets the picture and exits stage right.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

David lays on his back in his sleeping bag, hands folded on his chest as he stares at the ceiling.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - MORNING

David climbs the steps carrying his sleeping bag, not looking well-rested.

He loads the bag into the 4Runner, which is already on the trailer, attached to the Ryder truck. Two mountain bikes are mounted on a rack on the 4Runner's trailer hitch.

He checks the tightness of the straps, which still do not go all the way around.

INT. RYDER TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

He gets in the cab and starts the engine, which gradually roars to life.

He clunks the transmission into gear and the truck slowly lurches forward.

INT. RYDER TRUCK - LATER

The Ryder truck heads down a road divided by a raised median. David sees the realtor office on the other side of the road. It is located at the corner.

POV. Surveying the area, we see that the best way to reach the office parking lot is by turning left on the block before, and making successive rights through a neighborhood. End POV.

David begins to make a left.

INT. RYDER TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

David slowly makes a right. He looks back through the side mirror to make sure the 4Runner makes the turn okay.

As the 4Runner disappears behind the truck and David looks forward, there is a loud BANG along with what sounds like METAL PIPES CLANKING.

David, eyes wide, slams on the squealing breaks and clunks it into park.

DAVID

EXT. RYDER TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

David jumps out of the cab and runs to his 4Runner. It is unharmed with just some LEAVES and TWIGS scattered on it. He embraces the hood of his car.

DAVTD

Ohhhhhh thank you thank you thank you thank you.

A woman runs out of the house David is stopped in front of.

WOMAN

Oh -- my -- God!

DAVID

It's okay, it's okay. The car's okay.

WOMAN

Have you seen the other side of your moving van?!

DAVID

No?

David walks around to see the other side.

The BROKEN LIMB of a Texas Live Oak lies next to the van. FLASHING that helps to attach the wall to the roof, hangs from the truck in a ribbon of twisted and crumpled metal.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Oh -- my -- God!

WOMAN

Now you see?! Are your things ruined?

DAVTD

I don't know.

David goes around to the back of the truck, unlocks the latch and tries to pull up the door. It jams halfway.

He strains with all his might, but it just won't open any further.

He ducks inside. Sunlight streams in through the gash. Some STABILIZERS have fallen down, hitting his headboard and stabbing a few boxes. There are also MDF WOOD CHIPS strewn about, but his possessions seem largely intact.

David exits the truck.

DAVID (CONT'D)

It doesn't look too bad.

WOMAN

My poor tree.

DAVID

Sorry about that. I just didn't see it.

WOMAN

Well, no one does. That branch has been smacked enough times by trucks, it was only a matter of time before it came down. You're going to have your insurance pay for an arborist, right?

DAVID

I'll certainly talk to them about it.

INT. REALTOR OFFICE - MORNING

David is shown into a room with people around a CONFERENCE TABLE.

DAVID

Hi guys, sorry I'm late. I had an accident on the way over here. I'm fine and I think the contents of the truck are mostly fine, but I'm going to need to make some phone calls.

DAVID'S REALTOR

That's fine David. We're still waiting on some documents to arrive.

David steps out of the conference room and the OFFICE MANAGER shows him to a TABLE with a PHONE.

He sits down and begins scanning the RENTAL AGREEMENT. His eyes light up at a section. Reading to himself excitedly.

DAVID

"In the event of an incident that renders your rental vehicle inoperative, a Rapid Response Team will be deployed with a replacement vehicle to swap out the contents." That's perfect.

EXT. REALTOR OFFICE - MORNING (IMAGINATION)

The sound track to RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES blares in the distance.

David runs out of the office to see a CHINOOK HELICOPTER, the source of the music, carrying a BRAND NEW 14 FOOT RYDER TRUCK toward the parking lot.

It hovers over the parking lot and lowers the truck to the ground.

The lift gate to the back of the truck rolls up and four members of the RAPID RESPONSE TEAM, dressed in black with NAVY SEAL TYPE COMMUNICATIONS HEADGEAR, jump out and unhook the truck from the four cables, which then ascend.

The driver of the truck then rapidly maneuvers to back up to the damaged truck.

A SPECIAL JACK is used to force the jammed gate all the way up.

The Rapid Response Team rapidly transfers the contents from the damaged truck to the replacement, yelling "hut hut hut" the whole time.

EXT. REALTOR OFFICE - MINUTES LATER (IMAGINATION)

The Rapid Response Team hooks the lift cables from the chinook to the damaged truck.

David approaches.

DAVTD

Thank you Rapid Response Team. You really saved the day.

RAPID RESPONSE TEAM LEADER No trouble good citizen. Whenever there is a moving crisis, wherever a customer is in need, we'll be there. It's what we live for. Farewell and safe travels.

He tosses David the keys and the Rapid Response Team enters the damaged truck. It ascends as David happily waves goodbye.

INT. REALTOR OFFICE

David dials the phone.

AUTOMATED SYSTEM
Thank you for calling Ryder.
Please select from the following options. Press one for reservations. Press two for billing. Press three for reporting an incident.

David presses three.

AUTOMATED SYSTEM (CONT'D) Please have your reservation number available to give to the next available incident response representative.

HOLD MUSIC starts playing. It only lasts for a few seconds.

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP Incident Response. My name is Yolanda. May I have your name and reservation number?

DAVID

Yes, my name is David Pollack and my reservation number is four two nine seven six eight seven three.

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP How may I help you Mr. Pollack?

DAVID

I was in an accident. I'm fine, but the truck is significantly damaged. A tree branch sheered off the upper right section of the cargo area of the truck. I'm going to need a replacement.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

In the rental agreement, I read where you have a Rapid Response Team and I need you to deploy them to swap me out.

There's a pause on the other end of the line.

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP Mr. Pollack, we first need to send someone out to assess the situation and attempt to repair the truck.

DAVID

Oh no, that's pointless. I swear to you there's no way this truck can be repaired. It's far too badly damaged. Stabilizer bars have been knocked down and the flashing that connects...

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP Mr. Pollack, you'll have to trust me on this. Our repair people have been known to work miracles.

EXT. REALTOR OFFICE - MORNING (IMAGINATION)

David stands in front of the office in total astonishment. The truck and the miracle worker are unseen. SOUNDS of TWISTING METAL, CLANKING and POPPING.

Next to David is heard...

YODA'S VOICE (slow, strained)

Of me -- much -- they ask.

INT. REALTOR OFFICE

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP You have to give our repair person a chance to fix your vehicle before we can take any further steps. We're required to do that as part of our process.

DAVID

(resigned)

The only way this vehicle is getting repaired is if this guy has magical powers, but I understand procedures are procedures.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I guess we'll just have to work the process.

David's realtor pokes his head out of the conference room.

DAVID'S REALTOR

David, all the documents have arrived. We're ready when you are.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

David sits at the conference table, looking at one of the DOCUMENTS. He's a little exasperated.

DAVID

But my place appreciated in value. I expected to make some money with this sale.

DAVID'S REALTOR

Well, you will. After taxes, commissions and fees, this is the amount you'll receive.

David looks up at his realtor with an expression that says "Seriously?".

INT. PASTRY SHOP - AFTERNOON

David enters, shell-shocked. He approaches the counter.

Behind the counter stands a somewhat androgenous woman (30s), dressed feminine, but in a manner that doesn't show off her shape. She speaks from the back of her throat, tucking in her chin as the words come out.

ANDROGENOUS WOMAN

You look like you could use a pastry.

DAVID

(monotone)

Yes, I require comfort food.

ANDROGENOUS WOMAN

Are you in the mood for quantity or quality?

DAVID

Quantity. I need to fill a hole in the pit of my stomach.

ANDROGENOUS WOMAN

The eclairs are filling.

DAVID

I'll take two.

David hands her a twenty as she hands him the ECLAIRS in a PAPER BAG. He shoves one into his mouth as she makes change.

With his mouth full...

DAVID (CONT'D)

Locating a pastry shop across from a realtor was a master stroke.

ANDROGENOUS WOMAN

Same guy owns the liquor store and adult video emporium.

DAVID

He has the bases covered.

EXT. PASTRY SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

David exits the pastry shop scarfing down the other eclair. Something across the street catches his attention.

He crosses the street without checking for traffic.

A CAR comes to a screeching halt and honks. David's attention remains on the other side of the street.

In the realtor lot, a work truck is parked about twenty yards from the Ryder truck Near the damage to the truck stands a squat man in his 40s (HERMAN). As he giggles ("tee hee hee hee hee hee"), his shoulders bounces up and down.

David approaches the man.

DAVID

Greetings and salutations. Would you be the miracle worker Ryder promised could fix this calamity?

HERMAN

(slight lisp)

Tee hee hee hee. Yeah yeah, that would be me! Tee hee hee hee hee.

DAVID

Most excellent. For you see I am behind schedule and if you could proceed to work your magic, I would certainly appreciate it and be on my merry way.

Yet more giggling. Herman has a thought and his eyes grow big. Herman is incapable of concealing any thought or emotion. It immediately registers on his face in pronounced fashion so that the observer knows exactly what he is thinking. In other words, poker is not his game.

HERMAN

(like an excited child)
Want to see what they give me to fix this?

DAVTD

I would be most curious to see the specialized portable equipment you been intrusted with that could fix - this.

HERMAN

(playing along)
Then follow me, good sir.

He skips the twenty yards sideways like Quasimoto, motioning David to follow. David, spirits lifted, jogs along.

As David arrives, Herman demonstrates that there is nothing up his sleeve before reaching deep into his cab, holding for a dramatic moment, and then triumphantly produces a roll of DUCT TAPE.

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Ta da! Tee hee hee hee.

David jumps up and down and claps like a small child who has been shown a particularly good magic trick.

DAVID

Wow, that's impressive. Well, don't let me get in your way.

HERMAN

(wild-eyed)

I can't fix that! It's a disaster!

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID

(fake surprise)

Well gosh, do you think we should call Incident Response and inform them that this incident has been officially declared a disaster?

HERMAN

Yes, I most concur. Tee hee hee hee hee.

Herman tosses the duct tape in the cab, pulls out a BRICK PHONE and dials.

DAVID

(actually serious)

Don't forget to remind her about the Rapid Response Team.

HERMAN

Yeah yeah, the Rapid Response Team. Tee hee hee hee hee.

Herman's reaction confuses David. As the phone is answered, Herman composes himself.

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Hey Yolanda, it's Herm. Yeah, it's not even close to repairable. It's going to need to be swapped out — and the customer is asking for the Rapid Response Team.

Within moments, Herman's sanguine expression is replaced by shock and horror.

HERMAN (CONT'D)

What?! I can't tell him that! Here, you talk to him.

Herman shoves the phone at David with a look of dread. David cautiously takes the phone.

DAVID

Hello?

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP

Mr. Pollack, I need you to drive the truck to the nearest motel, call me from there with your room's phone number, and I will have a mover call you to arrange for a swap-out in the morning. CONTINUED: (3)

DAVID

I don't understand. What about the Rapid Response Team?

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP Mr. Pollack, there is no Rapid Response Team in your area. Even if there was one, because this was your fault, you wouldn't qualify for it anyway.

DAVID

(pleading)

No, you don't understand. You see...

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP Mr. Pollack, no amount of arguing is going to change the result. You need to drive the truck to a motel and call me from there.

DAVTD

(dread)

But the closest motels are a few miles down I35 and I don't know that the truck can handle it. You're really underestimating the damage here.

RYDER INCIDENT RESPONSE REP I'm sure you'll be fine. Call me when you get there.

The line goes dead. David stares at the phone.

He and Herman then stare at each other in a shared moment of dread.

HERMAN

Here, I'll help you get the flashing off.

EXT. REALTOR OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Herman and David heave the detached flashing into a dumpster.

They return to the Ryder truck. Herman turns to David and juts out a hand, looking like he's sending a man on a dangerous mission. David take the hand.

HERMAN

Good luck.

DAVID

Thank you.

David enters the cab, brings the truck to life, and drives it off the curb into the street.

As he leaves the curb, the damaged cargo wall sways excessively.

INT. RYDER TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

David has just crossed the overpass to interstate thirty five and makes the left turn unto the on-ramp.

DAVID

Okay, I'm committed. Here we go.

He gives it some gas and the truck begins to accelerate.

The speedometer creeps above thirty, then thirty five, then forty.

As he accelerates, the cab begins to increasingly shake.

All the while David's mantra is...

DAVID (CONT'D)

Come on baby.

When the speedometer reaches fifty, the cab shimmies violently.

DAVID (CONT'D)

АААААНННННННННН

David backs it off to forty five. Cars whiz by, some honking.

INT. PASTRY SHOP - AFTERNOON

Herman enters, carrying a LIQUOR BOTTLE in a PAPER BAG in one hand and a VCR TAPE in a PAPER BAG in the other.

He goes to the counter and surveys the contents.

HERMAN

Nice bonbons.

ANDROGENOUS WOMAN

Thanks. Most men don't notice.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

David sits by the phone watching an old movie. The phone rings.

DAVID

Hello?

A man with a hearty Chicago accent (DAN) speaks.

DAN'S VOICE

Is this David Pollack?

DAVID

That's me.

DAN'S VOICE

Dan with Dan's Moving. I understand you need my help.

DAVID

Well, I need someone's help.

DAN'S VOICE

No, you need my help. Yolanda gave the job to me. I will be the one helping you.

DAVID

(sulking)

Yes, so it would seem.

DAN'S VOICE

There was some confusion as to the size of the truck. Is it an eighteen footer?

DAVID

That's what they gave me because of a screw-up, but I reserved a fourteen footer. All my stuff would have fit in that just fine.

DAN'S VOICE

Okay, my rate for a fourteen footer on late notice is two hundred.

DAVID

Two hundred! I paid seventy for three guys! How many people are you bringing?

DAN'S VOICE

Just you and me kid -- wait a second, you didn't use Three Idiots Moving?

DAVID

(stewing)

I didn't know they were *idiots* until I saw how they packed the truck.

Dan breaks out in a belly laugh. He can barely stop laughing long enough to explain...

DAN'S VOICE

They're theater majors! They only act like movers! Wherefore art thou oh stereo? On the plus side, at least it'll be easier to transfer your things because they pack everything loose and backwards!

More belly laughter.

DAVID

(flat)

Yes, that is good news.

(attempt at power play)

Anyway, the office opens at eight thirty, so I'll expect you at nine.

DAN'S VOICE

(stern)

I'll see you at ten. And bring cash. The last guy gave me a bad check.

The line goes dead. David's pride is crushed.

He holds the phone for a moment and considers, then begins dialing.

HAILEY'S VOICE

This is Hailey.

DAVID

Hey Hailey, it's David. Are you doing anything after work?

INT. MOTEL ROOM - EVENING

David and Hailey sit cross-legged on the bed, eating CHINESE TAKEOUT while David finishes the story.

DAVID

And this guy is holding all the cards. He charges what he wants and shows up when he wants. I have no hand.

HAILEY

What a complete mess, but that's what happens when you hold onto expectations. It seems to be a recurring theme with you.

(has a realization)
Hold on -- you were planning to leave today?

David senses where this is going and is uncomfortable.

DAVID

Uh, yeah.

HAILEY

Without saying goodbye?

DAVID

Well -- yeah.

HAILEY

I'm...

Hailey stops herself, eyes wide, alarmed by what she almost said. David is also surprised.

DAVID

You're...

Hailey's eyes turn to rage.

HAILEY

Don't -- say -- it.

DAVID

...disappointed?

HAILEY

You bastard!

Hailey takes a swing at David, which lands on his chest, knocking David backwards off the bed. Remember, daddy was an NFL lineman. David is hidden by the bed while Hailey rants.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

First you leave me to fend for myself against those backstabbing misogynists at the company! Then you say your going to leave the state so I've got no one but crazyassed Texans to hang out with! Now you were going to leave without even saying goodbye?! You were the only one who showed me any respect! Not anyone else at the company, not my boyfriends, not even my own damn family! Just you! I let my guard down and allowed myself to believe in you! So thanks pal, you fucked-up my whole belief system!

Hailey storms out of the motel room and slams the door.

After a few moments, David uses the bed to pull himself up to a sitting position (and into view). He looks dazed and in some pain. He tries to recover his senses.

There is a knock at the door.

David looks at the door with some fear and hesitates before pulling himself up off the floor, wincing.

He heads to the door and opens it.

It's Hailey, mascara smeared, half-angry, half-embarrassed.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

I forgot my purse.

David is at a loss for words. Embarrassed, he steps out of the way, holding the door as Hailey moves past him and grabs her PURSE on the bed.

But instead of walking past David out the door, she walks to him and gives him a hug.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I hit you and yelled.

DAVID

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I've only been thinking about myself -- and saying goodbye is something I tend to avoid. It's just too awkward a process. I guess that's something I need to look at.

HAILEY

Well, we won't say goodbye then. We'll say until next time, even if that next time is not in this lifetime. One advantage of you being a Buddhist is we get to be friends over and over again.

DAVID

I like that. You know there's this lady at the Shambhala Center who's good about sorting out belief systems. I think you guys would hit it off.

HAILEY

(has a funny thought)
I don't know -- can she take a
punch?

DAVID

And give one back.

HAILEY

Then I like her already.

Hailey stops hugging David, takes a step back, grabs David's shoulders and fixes him with a stare.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Promise me you won't take any more crap from people. You're being too much of a pushover lately.

DAVID

This from a woman who lets people treat her like a doormat.

HAILEY

Yeah, well, maybe that's something we both need to work on.

DAVID

Agreed. I...I'll miss you.

CONTINUED: (3)

HAILEY

Yeah, take care of yourself.

Both want to say more, but they're too afraid.

Hailey smiles at David and leaves. David watches her go, then closes the door.

He sits on the bed and looks out the window, where the rear of his 4Runner can be seen sitting on the trailer. The 4Runner has the BUMPER STICKER, "When you loose your mind, come back."

He contemplates this for a few moments, focusing on his posture and breathing.

Then he pulls a BUSINESS CARD out of his wallet, picks up the phone and dials.

SUE'S VOICE

Hello?

DAVID

Hi, it's David. If this is a bad time...

EXT. SUE CHALMERS' HOUSE - EVENING

Sue opens the door of her suburban ranch house. A gaggle of twelve year old girls dance, giggle and gossip in PARTY HATS in the livingroom as TEENYBOPPER MUSIC plays. DOGS BARK from the backyard.

David stands on the porch with his 4Runner parked behind him on the curb.

DAVID

Look, I can see that you're in the middle of something, so...

SUE

(laughing & sweeping arm)
Get in here! Welcome to Casa de Chaos!

INT. SUE CHALMERS' HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sue and David sit across from each other on chairs in her study. The door is closed, but muffled sounds of music and twelve year old girls can be heard. Dogs scratch at the sliding glass door.

SUE

It's good to see you. So what's on your mind?

DAVID

I'm afraid.

SUE

Can you be more specific?

DAVID

I'm afraid of what coworkers Sure. would think if I stood up for what I believe. I'm afraid of being a failure and disappointing my parents. I'm afraid of the emotional fallout of saying goodbye. I'm so afraid of dealing with my own shit, that I tried to rescue someone else from hers. so afraid of rejection, that I can't tell someone I love her and instead look for acceptance from strippers. I'm afraid that if I drop my defenses and let everyone in, I'll get burned and go crazy. And I'm starting to think that this move to North Carolina might be an attempt to run away from all of that.

SUE

Wow. Well, you can run, but I can promise you all of that is going to follow you to North Carolina. Until you address those fears and the habitual tendencies you use to protect yourself, karma's going to keep whacking you upside the head. Karma's kind of relentless that way.

DAVID

So I just have to face them down? That fearlessness stuff you guys talk about - I don't know that I'm cut out for that.

SUE

David, fearlessness isn't about suddenly dropping your fears and diving gung-ho into the thick of it. That would be insane.

(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)

Of course you're going to be afraid. There's no magic phone booth you can enter and jump out as Superman. Fearlessness is about acknowledging your fears and being willing to lean into them. lean in as far as you can handle. If you keeping doing it, you find you can go a little farther each time. It's a deliberate, gradual process - like building a muscle. You've made great progress already just by acknowledging your fears and habitual tendencies. How refreshing it is to understand what you're afraid of and recognize the tricks you use to avoid it?

DAVTD

Yeah, I can see that. It's like finally working up the courage to look at the monsters under your bed, and while they're for real and looking back at you, they're not as big as you imagined.

SUF

That's why they call this the Path of the Warrior, because you need to be brave to go down it. But that doesn't mean you lose your fear. You just work with it. Think you can do that?

DAVID

(riffing on Ben)

I suppose I'm workable.

(beat)

Anyway, thanks for taking time away from your daughter's birthday party to sit down with me. This was really helpful.

SUE

Any time David.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - MORNING

David's Ryder truck carefully negotiates the curb onto the original Ryder lot.

David gets out and begins to unhook the trailer.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

David pulls the truck away from the trailer, stops, shuts off the engine, which stutters and dies, and gets out.

As he walks around the truck, Marge comes out of the office, very judgemental. She holds a set of keys.

MARGE

Oh dear Lord, just look at what you've done. Your going to be more careful with my replacement truck, aren't you?

Upon hearing this, David snaps. He's full-on furious.

DAVID

You pushed me on this barely drivable piece of shit from the Ryder boneyard! And if your incompetent logistics guy hadn't fucked up my reservation in the first place, I wouldn't have hit that tree! This truck is a foot and a half taller than what I ordered! Take that tone of yours and shove it up your ass!

Wide-eyed, Marge wheels around and runs back to the office as she tosses the keys over her shoulder, landing in David's hands.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(calling after her)

Don't I need to sign something?

As she reaches the door.

MARGE

(panicked)

Not necessary!

Marge slams and locks the door.

David wanders past the office and turns the corner.

Parked where the behemoth used to be is a LATE-MODEL 14 FOOT RYDER TRUCK. A sly grin creeps onto David's face.

He enters the cab, inserts the key and turns the ignition. The engine effortlessly jumps to life. David's face erupts into a full-blown wicked smile.

EXT. WHERE THE OLD TRUCK IS PARKED - MOMENTS LATER

From behind the Ryder office can be heard Johann Strauss II's best-known waltz, THE BLUE DANUBE (used in the docking sequence in 2001, A Space Odyssey).

The music gets closer. Then the truck bursts into view, moving at a decent clip -- in reverse.

David pirouettes around the lot, still in reverse.

INT. NEW RYDER TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

David navigates using the side mirror as he steers while the radio blares.

INT. RYDER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

From the front window of the Ryder office, Marge peers through the closed blinds in shock.

MARGE

Sweet Jesus.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The new truck backs up to the old truck, lift-gate to lift-gate, stopping just shy as the music stops.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - LATER

David leans against the new truck, arms folded.

A small pickup truck enters the lot.

It stops in front of David. A large blond man in his 30s of Viking stock (DAN), too big for that truck, exits.

DAN

Mr. Pollack I presume.

DAVID

And you must be Dan.

As they shake hands, Dan's iron grip crushes David's hand.

Freeze frame. A narrator with a strong baritone voice speaks in dramatic fashion.

NARRATOR

Dan

RAPID HISTORICAL MONTAGE - DAY (IMAGINATION)

As the narrator speaks, shots of Dan's hearty Viking lineage to reinforce the image of a manly man.

NARRATOR

-- son of Lars -- son of Bjorn -- son of Olaf -- son of Hrut -- son of Thor.

Lars: Dan as a meat packer in the 1950s.

Bjorn: Dan as a cattle driver in the 1850s.

Olaf: Dan as a blacksmith in the 1400s.

Hrut: Dan raiding a village in Viking garb.

Thor: A cartoon depiction of the Nordic god of war stands on a mountain, hair waving in the breeze, wielding his mighty war hammer.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Dan looks at David's wrist-brace with concern.

DAN

I'm going to need help with the larger items. Are you up for that?

DAVID

(protesting)

Oh yeah sure, I'm good.

DAN

Well, okay. Let's have a look then.

Dan surveys the outside of the damaged truck. Chuckling...

DAN (CONT'D)

Wow, you sure nailed that tree.

DAVID

Yeah, and as you can clearly see, I would have missed it if I'd been driving the fourteen footer I ordered.

DAN

So you would have.

Dan walks to the back of the damaged truck, climbs onto the bumper and rolls up the lift gate until it jams halfway as David had experienced.

With one swift action requiring little strain on his part, Dan forces the lift gate all the way up to the sound of stabilizer bars falling down. David cringes.

DAN (CONT'D)

Jeez, what a cluster fuck of a pack. How far are you going?

David hesitates. He knows he's going to hear it.

DAVID

North Carolina.

DAN

Are you kidding me? Your stuff would have been ruined by the time you got there!

DAVID

(a little testy)

You know, I've had a really crappy last couple of days. I just want to fix this and move on without the commentary.

DAN

You bet. Let's get started then.

INT. TRUCK CARGO AREAS - MONTAGE

Various stages of the transfer.

With the exception of shots where they moves large items together, the same two lines are repeated each time, where David suggests a box or item and Dan, highly focused on what he's doing and somewhat irritated by the interruption to his concentration, shakes his giant blond head...

DAVID

This?

DAN

No.

When they move the larger items together, David struggles to keep up.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - LATER

The old truck has been moved away. David and Dan admire the result of their labor with Dan's arm around David's shoulder. The contents are packed perfectly-tight with three feet of bed to spare. No gaps exist, floor-to-ceiling.

DAVID

I'd take a picture, but I packed my camera.

Dan nods his giant blond head in recognition of a job well done. Nothing is said for a few more moments.

DAN

Well, let's get you hooked up and headed out.

Dan notices the straps that don't go all the way around the wheels.

DAN (CONT'D)

Are you kidding me?

DAVID

(hysterical)

I have oversized tires! I couldn't get the straps all the way around!

DAN

Let me show you something.

They walk over to Dan's truck. Dan pulls out some spare strap from the bed and shakes it for emphasis.

DAN (CONT'D)

See?

Face palm.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - LATER

Dan is cinching down the last strap. He notices the TWO MOUNTAIN BIKES on the back of the 4Runner.

DAN

Why do you have two mountain bikes?

DAVID

I just bought the orange one and haven't gotten around to selling the blue one.

DAN

I was thinking of getting into mountain biking. I'd take it as my fee.

DAVID

It's just that I was hoping to get three hundred for that.

DAN

Hey, I saved your ass with the wheel straps. I didn't have to do that.

DAVID

Good point -- and you did a great job with the transfer. You're a true artist. It's yours. I'll even show you a few tricks so you don't kill yourself.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - LATER

David demonstrates some mountain biking moves and techniques.

EXT. RYDER OFFICE - LATER

David shakes Dan's hand.

DAVTD

You know, hitting that tree actually turned out to be a good thing. I'll take that as an auspicious coincidence.

DAN

Sure, I'll buy that. Just don't hit any more.

DAVID

I might just have to thank Yolanda for forcing you down my throat. She was looking out for me and I didn't appreciate that.

DAN

(chuckling)

I don't think she'd know how to handle a kind word from a customer.

DAVID

Then I'll definitely have to do that just to mess with her.

INT. RYDER TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

David gets in the cab, puts on his seat belt, and starts the truck. He puts it into gear and drives forward.

RYDER TRUCK - MONTAGE

David drives down the highway with a serious reflective look.

Back and forth from the exterior of the truck to David's contemplation in the cab.

The truck passes the "Austin City Limits" sign.

It passes the "Welcome to Dallas" sign.

The Sun sets as the truck reaches the "Welcome to Arkansas" sign.

David pulls off the highway and just sits in the cab, taking measured breaths.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE BULLPEN - DAY

Rick sits on Hailey's desk back in harassment mode.

RICK

No more duckin' me Hailey. We really need to grab some lunch and discuss what your role in this department could look like going forward.

Roger walks up and surprises Colt.

ROGER

Hi guys.

Colt jumps off of Hailey's desk and switches into sales mode, extending his hand.

RICK

Hey Roger, great to see ya! What a pleasant surprise!

Roger shakes Colt's hand.

ROGER

I hope I'm not interrupting anything important.

RICK

No no, not at all. What can I do ya for?

ROGER

I came down to take a look at that ExxonMobil bid that went out a little while ago.

RICK

Really? Um, why that one? Why now?

ROGER

Oh, just a little spot check.

RICK

Sure, let's head over to my office and we'll talk about it.

ROGER

Is it in your office?

RICK

Well, no.

ROGER

Where is it then?

RICK

(flustered)

I don't know why you're -- It's probably in the filing cabinet. But you see it was David's bid and he left things in disarray when he quit all of a sudden, so I can't be sure...

HAILEY

(blurting out)

That's a lie!

This surprises everyone, including Hailey.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

(defensive)

Well -- it is. You and Sushil were the ones who worked on it. David only reviewed it and argued with you about its merits.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAILEY (CONT'D)

And you tried to bully him into getting sign-off, but he couldn't go through with it, so you took it back.

RICK

Hailey, that's a pretty serious accusation you're makin'. I'm a little hurt here. I...you don't know all the facts. I think you're -- projectin' or somethin'. I really think we should take this offline.

HAILEY

Everyone heard you and David shouting about that bid. I was sitting right here when you took it back and told him he needed to be thinking about his review. What happened with that bid is on you.

ROGER

(remaining chipper)
So, where's the filing cabinet?

RICK

(deer in headlights)
Um, well, it's over here.

Roger heads in the direction that Rick indicates while Rick trails him. As they walk toward the filing cabinet, away from Hailey...

RICK (CONT'D)

(lowered voice)

Roger, you're not gettin' a clear picture here. You gotta understand that I gave Hailey a less than stellar review last time and she's a little sore about it.

INT. COLT'S OLD OFFICE - DAY

Hailey sits in Colt's old chair. The decor is noticeably more pink. She spins round and round, arms out, looking up in ecstacy, much like the young woman in the opening Detroit scene. David, the guest chair, grins.

HAILEY

Wheeeeeeeee.

DAVID

You remember we had a little conversation about respect?

Hailey stops spinning and fixes David with a mock serious stare.

HAILEY

You disrespect me for spinning and I'll fire your ass and run you down with my pink car.

DAVID

Champagne.

HAILEY

Don't test me Poindexter, I got the turbo.

DAVID

So this is how it's going to be. You get a little power...

HAILEY

Turbo is not a little power. That sucker roars. I still can't believe I got this job. It really should be yours.

DAVTD

Politically impossible. Sales hates my guts. Besides, you'll do a better job -- as long as you set expectations and hold your ground.

HAILEY

And I can count on you to hold my feet to the fire on that if I don't?

DAVID

If you promise not to run me down with your pink muscle car.

HAILEY

Deal. So how long do I have you?

DAVID

After I help you whip the department back into shape and implement our vision, Roger's got an idea for a liaison position that sounds interesting.

CONTINUED: (2)

HAILEY

Well, let's not be in too big a hurry to check those boxes -- Really I could kiss you, but it'd be sexual harassment.

DAVID

(perking up)
I won't tell.

MONTAGE DURING CREDITS

Snippets of scenes to show off various characters.

Possible snippets include:

Christina driven home by the Cleanup Coordinator, explaining to him how she knows David was violating protocol because she took careful notes.

David and Colt playing golf, barely pretending to get along.

Linda, looking freaked, holds Bert's hand as he's wheeled out of the nightclub on a gurney.

Herman plays poker with Androgenous Woman at his side. Upon seeing his hand, Herman breaks out in a huge smile, then looks confused and hurt when the other players immediately fold.

Dan and Marge look at the damaged truck with Marge scolding and Dan breaking out in a belly laugh.

Hailey and Sue playfully punching each other in the shoulder.

Ben offers to show Director his new ass-tattoo. Director waves him off.

David and Hailey duck into a closet at work.

Tanya, at the Van Halen concert, rocks out in the mosh pit. Then a hand comes down as she excitedly reaches for it.

POSSIBLE SONGS FOR THE MOVIE THAT I WROTE

Show Some Common Decency (opening credits when David dodges larger vehicles)

I'm not looking to get run over Keep your tire tracks off me I'm just asking for a little favor From your over-sized U.V. eeeee eeeee

Show some common decency

Bigger is not just better That's a Texas fallacy There's not enough room for all together When everyone's so greedy eeeee eeeee

Show some common decency

Those with greater power
Aren't off the hook, completely free
You would make us cower
Don't shun your 'sponsibility eeeee eeeee

Show some common decency

You're Just a Company (when David quits and walks out with his box)

Our's was a love could never die Two hearts would beat as one The well so deep could not run dry But now I'm moving on

I gave all I had for you You didn't care 'bout me Return my love you couldn't do You're just a company

(Start refrain)
You're just a company
You're just a company
Didn't care 'bout me
You're just a company

You're just a company You're just a company Didn't care 'bout me You're just a company (End refrain)

So naive I must have been I placed my faith in you Could not conceive taking on the chin You made me for a fool

I'm stronger now and wiser too This thing did not kill me I once was lost and oh so blue The truth has set me free

(Refrain)

CONTINUED: (2)

Want to believe in meritocracy? I'll tell you what to do When the boss is the word "me" That's when it will be true

Fairness is as fairness does And might don't make it right When they cut off your escape clause Are you ready to take flight?

(Refrain)

So I'm leaving you today To restart my life, no more delay Got no one, no one else to blame For playing delusion's game

It's Perfect, Whatever I've Found (closing credits)

I thought I knew my way through life I surely had a plan But fate cuts through those like a knife Now I'm back where I began

(Start Refrain)
I'm stubbing my toe as I stumble forward
Not even sure what I'm heading tor-ward
Blind as a bat, navigating by sound
It's perfect, whatever I've found
(End Refrain)

I thought I had no baggage on me Been on my back this way Ignoring that load, I can't ever get free I'm dropping that baggage today

(Refrain)

No longer have my head in a cloud Open to whatever lies ahead Keeping my feet firmly on the ground From fantasies will not be mislead

(Refrain)

In my heart, I've learn to trust A touchstone that is true It naturally just knows what's just This truth you always knew

(Refrain)