

# Collateral Beauty

by

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This is a fable...

... remember those?

Collateral Beauty

AN OLD FIGHT FILM

Grainy... being projected onto a white wall... Caesars Palace... 1982... 14th round... no volume...

Mancini tags Duk Koo Kim with a right. Kim reels back, Mancini misses a left but then connects with a very hard right. Kim flies into the ropes then down to the canvas.

And the boy from Seoul somehow manages to unsteadily rise to his feet... and he looks right at the camera... and the picture pauses right there.

Consider Kim's eyes... now looking right at us. Because it's so clear... he's already dead... so it goes...

CLOSE ON A DOMINO

in a hand. As it is very carefully laid down next to a line of others...

WHIT (V.O.)  
What happened to him was awful.  
Worst thing ever.

The hand grabs another domino and slowly places it at the end of the line...

WHIT (V.O.)  
I swear they've done studies... and  
that came up as the worst thing  
that could happen to anybody.  
Ever. For real.

We pull back to be in an office... a nice one. And we now see the man building this domino maze...

HOWARD INLET

40s, polished, accessible, the kindest eyes... but clearly remiss of something crucial... life.

WHIT (V.O.)  
It's the ultimate vulnerability,  
the collective nightmare, all that.

Pull back further to see this domino maze spans the entire office. Every shelf, most of the floor, the entire desk -- right over his closed powerbook -- up and across the couch, across the coffee table... it's eerie.

WHIT (V.O.)  
I have a daughter. Twelve years  
old. And, well... I'm not even  
going to finish the sentence.

INT. THE STANDARD GRILL - DAY

A power lunch in process. Two OMNICOM EXECUTIVES and Whit YARDSHAM, 40s with strong genes that are just now yielding to a lifetime of abuse.

WHIT  
So it makes it harder. What I'm  
about to say... because we all know  
what he's been through.

Whit has a winning smile that needs whitening and a hard-to-find heart that needs to quit smoking.

OMNICOM EXECUTIVE  
Terrible.

Holiday decorations line the walls, Christmas tree illuminates the corner, snow falls outside.

WHIT  
Horrible. Like I said... studies.

THE OTHER OMNICOM EXECUTIVE  
Tell us what you were about to say,  
Whit. No judgement. We've all  
established our sympathy here.

And Whit leans forward... shifting his gaze between them with each word...

WHIT  
He. Has. Left. The. Building.

EXT. HOWARD'S OFFICE - DAY

They peak through a slit in the closed Venetian blinds... watching Howard build his domino maze.

CLAIRE  
The cleaning lady won't go in there  
anymore. She's afraid she's going  
to knock one of them over and  
then...

She lets it hang... she is CLAIRE WILSON, mid 30s but dresses younger... lies younger... wishes younger. And she's an absolute killer accounts manager.

SIMON  
How long has it taken him to build  
this one?

SIMON SCOTT, 30s, African-American. He's the agency's general counsel. And it doesn't matter the room... Simon's always the smartest one in it.

CLAIRE  
Five weeks.

And from behind them...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE (O.S.)  
It's like he's a Japanese teenager.

They quickly turn to see Whit holding up a bottle of champagne.

INT. YARDSHAM INLET/CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As Whit gathers water glasses...

WHIT  
Seventeen dollars a share.

Off their disbelief...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I swear on my daughter. I told them we weren't worth even half of that.

They just look at him.

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I'm kidding. Obviously.  
(beat)  
They've been going on acquisition tear with that Swiss hedge fund behind them now...

SIMON  
(correcting him)  
Danish.

Making sense of it...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
It's bubble money... market share at any cost. This happens every fifteen years.

CLAIRE  
Seventeen dollars a share would be...

She does math in her head. Simon's already ahead of her.

SIMON  
Six million for you. Three million for me. About twenty-six million for Whit and Howard each.

Then right over Whit...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
(re: Champagne bottle)  
Don't you dare open that!

WHIT  
Seventeen dollars a share, Simon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON  
And he still controls fifty-one  
percent of the voting shares, Whit.  
We went through this with Wieden  
Kennedy last year.

WHIT  
But Wieden Kennedy only offered  
eleven dollars.

SIMON  
He doesn't care.

And off that, we...

CUT TO:

HOWARD INLET

riding his bicycle through midtown traffic... no helmet... in  
December... still in his suit...

SIMON (V.O.)  
He doesn't care about money.

AND HOWARD INLET

walking into Stuyvesant Park Dog Run and taking a seat.

SIMON (V.O.)  
He doesn't care about this firm  
anymore.

AND HOWARD INLET

walking into a nondescript Hell's Kitchen walk up.

There's barely any furniture. A table in the kitchen, a  
mattress on the floor...

SIMON (V.O.)  
He doesn't care about sunshine or  
snow.

... an old film projector standing alone in the middle of the  
large living room next to a small chair.

... AND HOWARD INLET

sitting at his kitchen table writing something by hand... a  
letter of some sort....

SIMON (V.O.)  
He doesn't care about anything.

Howard lifts up an envelope, writes just one word on it and  
slips the letter in.

And as we see the envelope... deciphering that single word  
written on it in large block letters... "LOVE"



CONTINUED:

BUTCH WOMAN  
You're going to grow estrogen  
titties.

And before MORTY can respond, he notices someone else in the theater...

MORTY  
Can I help you?

Whit just sits in the back row... smiling...

WHIT  
You guys are actors. That's so  
cool. I'm a creative too.  
Advertising.

They all just stand there and regard him.

WHIT (CONT'D)  
What play are you putting on here?

The butch woman's name is...

BAILEY  
A modern day translation of "Works  
and Days." It's Greek.

WHIT  
What is it... like a musical?

MORTY  
It's a fable.  
(and then)  
Remember those?

Whit smiles...

WHIT  
Exciting.

And she finally speaks to him...

THIS SPECTACULAR WOMAN  
Not yet. We need financing. Are  
you rich?

WHIT  
Not yet. I mean I was. But then I  
got divorced, so...  
(beat)  
But soon I'm going to be really  
rich. What's your name?

THIS SPECTACULAR WOMAN  
Aimee.

WHIT  
Aimee what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THIS SPECTACULAR WOMAN  
Moore.

He just smiles... immediately in love...

WHIT  
Aimee Moore.

MORTY  
I don't mean to be rude considering  
you're a stranger off the street...  
but we need to rehearse now.

Whit stands...

WHIT  
Of course. I'll be back.

Looking right at Aimee...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I promise.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - MORNING

Morning rush, holiday season. Zombies marching in lock step  
down 8th Avenue... phones against their ears, Starbucks in  
their hands. Yellow cabs performing a symphony of horns.

And Howard Inlet... on his bicycle... in his suit... on his  
way for more domino maze building.

But he stops at the corner of 54th, curbs his bike and drops  
that letter into the mail box.

After a moment, a BIKE CAB emerges -- the kind tourists ride  
in -- stops. A HEAVY-SET WOMAN in her 40s jumps out of the  
carriage and takes a picture of the mailbox.

Then she gets back into the bike cab and instructs to the  
bicyclist to keep following Howard.

EXT. YARDSHAM INLET BUILDING - MORNING

Howard places his bike on the rack, doesn't lock it. Simon  
sees him and heads over...

SIMON  
Morning, Howard.

Howard nods. They head for the building...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
I'm glad I caught you, there's  
something you should know.

HOWARD  
Hospira fired us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON  
 No. That's not it.  
 (beat)  
 Omnicom wants to buy us. \$17 a  
 share, Howard.

Simon waits for a reaction but gets none. Howard just stands there.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
 Wait, Hospira fired us?

No answer from Howard. Then Simon pulls him aside...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
 Look -- we'd be crazy not to take  
 this deal.

Howard just smiles and repeats the word...

HOWARD  
 Crazy?

SIMON  
 You know what I mean.

And Howard takes a beat, then...

HOWARD  
 My father founded this agency,  
 Simon. And I'm not selling it.

As he heads for the building...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 Not for seventeen, not for a  
 hundred.

INT. THE YARDSHAM INLET ADVERTISING AGENCY - DAY

We move quickly through full-floor office... to the refrain of ringing phones being answered by...

ASSISTANTS  
 (answering the phones)  
 Yardsham Inlet... Yardsham Inlet...  
 Yardsham Inlet...

Move quickly...

CLAIRE'S OFFICE

Decorated impeccably. The walls are covered with famous Bob Gruen black & whites... Lennon in that New York City T-shirt, Ramones in front of CBGBs, Led Zeppelin in front of the plane.

Claire inspects a new mini sequin dress with the tag still on it then shouts out...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE  
Meredith!

MEREDITH, mousy, 20s, peaks her head into the office.

As Claire holds the dress up to her body...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Can I still pull this off?

Meredith is suddenly a deer in headlights...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
It's okay -- wardrobe honesty.

MEREDITH  
(exhaling)  
I mean -- not over thirty.

And as Claire throws the dress at Meredith with...

CLAIRE  
I hate you -- it's yours.

Meredith takes the dress... biting back a smile as she goes.

And Claire sits down at her computer. We catch a glimpse of the monitor...

A picture of a good looking man with a cut jawline, in his 30s, a profile of sorts. We scan the profile with Claire...

"Steven B. Education -- Princeton undergrad, Masters in Journalism at Columbia. Hair -- Neutral Dark Blonde. Eyes -- Emerald Green. Height -- 6 feet 5 inches. Body type -- Meso/Ecto. Heritage -- Norweigan, German." Strange dating site.

And as Claire takes in the profile a bit more then closes the powerbook altogether, we...

MOVE ON

back through the bullpen...

ASSISTANTS  
(answering the phones)  
Yardsham Inlet... Yardsham Inlet...  
Yardsham Inlet...

... and land in...

WHIT'S OFFICE

Signed sports paraphernalia everywhere, framed pictures of Whit with local/minor celebrities... Jim Cramer, Rex Ryan, Giuseppe Cipriani.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Whit types into his keyboard... a huge Apple Thunderbolt monitor anchors his desk and shows us the current instant message thread.

The dialogue box he's messaging with reads "Eloise Yardsham."

Bling -- "I know you legally get a week with her over the holidays but we can't make her go if she refuses." This upsets Whit who just stares at the words, sadly shaking his head. Until he types -- "You poisoned the well! You poisoned the well! You poisoned the well!" He then deletes each word and types... "I guess not."... sends that instead.

Bling -- "So you'll agree to let her come to Harbour Island with Raymond and I then?." Whit types "Only if you promise to drown." He then deletes each word then types... "Yes."... sends that one instead.

Bling -- "Thanks. Don't worry -- she'll come around eventually." He types "Not if you have your way. Well poisoner! Well poisoner! Well poisoner! Label whore!" And then he deletes each word then simply types "):)"...

And as Whit sends that one instead, we...

MOVE ON

back through the bullpen...

ASSISTANTS (CONT'D)  
(answering the phones)  
Yardsham Inlet... Yardsham Inlet...  
Yardsham Inlet...

... and landing in...

SIMON'S OFFICE

which is empty... but we move inside nonetheless. Past a meticulously organized desk and framed pictures of Simon and his WIFE and TWO ADORABLE CHILDREN, 3 and 6 years old.

However, the office isn't empty after all. Find Simon on the floor... leaning against his desk and in serious pain.

And Simon lurches forward and vomits blood all over the white papers in the garbage can. So it goes. As we...

MOVE ON

back through the bullpen...

ASSISTANTS  
(answering the phones)  
Yardsham Inlet... Yardsham Inlet...  
Yardsham Inlet...

... and landing in...

HOWARD INLET'S OFFICE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Where Howard blankly looks at the incredible domino maze in front of him, decides it's finished... then casually tips over the last domino in line.

And he simply turns and leaves the office... not even bothering to watch the maze fall.

INT. HALLWAY - NOON

Howard waits for the elevator. Whit joins his side. It's immediately awkward...

WHIT

Hey.

Howard slightly nods.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Um... Hospira fired us today.

Nothing from Howard.

WHIT (CONT'D)

You don't care, okay.

As the elevator doors open...

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

They ride in silence, until...

WHIT

Cavs coming to town. Christmas showdown. LeBron back in orange.

Howard doesn't say anything.

WHIT (CONT'D)

I don't give away your ticket, I just go alone.

(beat)

Sometimes people try to sit in your seat but I don't let them. I mean, 3rd row center court, so...

More silence. Whit nervously swallows... this is obviously hard for him...

WHIT (CONT'D)

I guess what I'm trying to say is... your seat is waiting for you.

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

As Whit and Claire check out the Christmas windows...

CLAIRE

"I miss us."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHIT  
I didn't say that.  
(beat)  
I swear it's harder running into  
him at the office than when I see  
my ex-wife at The Core Club.

And he turns to her...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
Claire, Omnicom said I'd get to run  
creative after they buy us. You  
know that's always been my calling.

This makes her laugh...

CLAIRE  
The board said you could never  
engage with creative again after  
the Lululemon fiasco.

WHIT  
That was an inspired campaign, it  
was hysterical. Canadians just  
don't understand sarcasm.

They walk some more.

CLAIRE  
Here's what I never understood --  
if your fathers built the agency up  
together -- why does he have fifty-  
one percent of the voting shares  
and you forty-nine?

WHIT  
Dad thought it was for the best...

As he lights a joint... right there on Madison Avenue...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
... who knows why?

He stops out front of La Perla...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
We have to go in here.

INT. LA PERLA - DAY

As Whit points out various lingerie displays to the SALES  
WOMAN...

WHIT  
That one. That one too.

SALES WOMAN  
(to Claire)  
You're a lucky woman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE  
 You're kidding, right?  
 (daggers for eyes)  
 Do you really think I would ever--  
 these are for interns and bottle  
 girls and Russians born after 1990.

Sales Woman is a little stunned. Whit just smiles at her...

WHIT  
 Gift wrap them all please.  
 Separate boxes and cards... thanks.

And he turns to Claire...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
 And it's not how you think. I love  
 them... each and every one.

Waiving that off...

CLAIRE  
 Please Whit. You may use sex with  
 younger women as an ego delivery  
 system -- but don't confuse it for  
 love.

He considers that, then...

WHIT  
 I had lunch with the CEO of  
 Novartis last month and he told me  
 the craziest story. They were  
 conducting a phase 1 for a  
 cholesterol lowering drug using  
 rabbits, right? Certain rabbits  
 were dying while others were  
 thriving and it had nothing to do  
 with the statin they were  
 researching. They were completely  
 stumped. Do you know what it was?

She doesn't.

WHIT (CONT'D)  
 Well, they kept all the rabbits in  
 this big room and at night the  
 cleaning lady would hold them. But  
 she was short, so...

CLAIRE  
 ... the ones in the higher cages  
 were dying.

He slowly confirms...

WHIT  
 Love, affection, touch... as  
 important as food and water.

As Sales Woman holds up a silk thong...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SALES WOMAN  
Did you want this one too?

WHIT  
In red if you have it.

Then right back to Claire...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I'm in the high cage... with no  
cleaning woman to hold me at night.

She regards him for a beat, then...

CLAIRE  
I just felt my soul cringe.

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

As Claire attempts to hail a cab...

WHIT  
I did something.

She looks at him.

CLAIRE  
You have something on your face.

She wets her finger and rubs it off.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
You're like a six-year-old.

WHIT  
And you're like a mother... I mean  
one who has no children.

She immediately stops... that stung. And he repeats what he  
said before...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I did something, Claire. I hired  
someone.

CLAIRE  
You hired someone? What does that  
mean?

WHIT  
Eloise caught me cheating by hiring  
a private investigator. A woman  
named Sally Price.

CLAIRE  
Okay, so...

WHIT  
So... I hired her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE  
Hired who -- stop using pronouns,  
Whit. Only idiots use pronouns.

WHIT  
Sally Price. I hired her.

CLAIRE  
You hired the woman who caused your  
divorce?

WHIT  
I caused my divorce... she just  
documented it.

This surprises Claire...

CLAIRE  
Wow, that was actually enlightened.

WHIT  
Well, I have hidden depth.

A cab pulls over... Claire opens the door but doesn't get  
in...

CLAIRE  
Okay Whit -- why did you hire Sally  
Price?

WHIT  
To follow him-- Howard. To follow  
Howard.

Off that, Claire closes the door, sending the cab off then  
looking over to him... dead serious.

CLAIRE  
Now why would you do something like  
that?

WHIT  
To... you know... find dirt on him.

CLAIRE  
There is no dirt on Howard.

WHIT  
Seventeen dollars a share! And he  
won't sell.

(beat)  
The stock is at eleven and it's  
only going down because Howard is  
the only one who can grow this  
agency... but instead all he does  
is play with dominoes all day.

CLAIRE  
His kid died.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WHIT

I know! I know his kid died. And I'm sorry that happened. I cried. You saw me at the wake... I completely lost it. You saw me completely lose it.

(beat)

It's the most horrible thing I've ever seen or heard about or dreamt or anything. I've known Howard my whole life--

CLAIRE

And yet you hire a private investigator to "get dirt" on him--

WHIT

He won't sell!!! What are we supposed to do? Claire -- these are our lives here, our careers, millions of dollars.

(beat)

He won't work, he won't sell, he won't talk to me anymore. What are we supposed to do?

And as that hangs...

EXT. HOWARD INLET'S HELL'S KITCHEN WALK-UP - NIGHT

As Claire heads up the steps holding a tupperware container full of food.

INT. HOWARD'S WALK-UP/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Claire knocks on the apartment door.

CLAIRE

(speaking to the door)

Howard. Hey... I made my shrimp orecchiette and had extra, so...

She knocks again then places the tupperware by the door...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

(speaking to the door)

Okay -- I'll leave it here in case you haven't eaten.

The apartment door down the hall opens and the SUPER, man in his 50s, steps out.

SUPER

You know him?

She nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUPER (CONT'D)

He's late on rent. Two months. He rarely leaves the apartment and I don't have a working number for him.

CLAIRE

He doesn't have a phone... anymore.

Super nods. Then...

SUPER

And don't leave food there no more. He doesn't eat it. It just ends up by the garbage cans and attracts rats.

And that hits Claire... breaks her heart a bit. But she quickly shakes it off...

CLAIRE

How much does he owe?

Reaching into her purse...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I'll um... write you a check.

EXT. SIMON SCOTT'S UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Classic minimalist decor. A beautifully adorned Christmas tree overtakes the corner of the living room.

Simon slowly sips on a tea... then...

SIMON

Is she good?

He sits across from Whit and Claire.

WHIT

She caught me cheating.

Waving that off...

SIMON

That doesn't mean anything. Helen Keller could've caught you cheating.

CLAIRE

Wait Simon -- you actually think this is a good idea?

SIMON

What else are we supposed to do?

WHIT

Exactly!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Whit looks at a picture of Simon on the desk.

WHIT (CONT'D)  
(re: picture)  
When was that taken?

SIMON  
I don't know. Last year.

WHIT  
God -- you've lost a lot of weight.

Simon vacantly nods... deep in thought.

WHIT (CONT'D)  
Did you cut out white carbs?

SIMON  
No.

And Simon chews his lip... considering this all aloud...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
This private investigator won't  
find anything that would pass for  
moral turpitude... not with Howard.

WHIT  
SoulCycle?

SIMON  
No. But she might be able to find  
some proof concerning legal  
capacity.

WHIT  
What does that mean?

SIMON  
If your detective can prove  
Howard's crazy -- we may be able to  
sell to Omnicom.

And they sit in silence, the weight of this all pushing down  
on them, until...

CLAIRE  
This doesn't feel right.

And Simon... deep in thought...

SIMON  
Well, Claire -- a child's body  
turns on itself which causes a man  
to hate the world which somehow is  
now forcing us to discredit him.

Looking her dead-on...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON (CONT'D)  
"Right" left a long time ago.

INT. 72 IRVING PLACE/COFFEE SHOP - DAY

SALLY PRICE  
He writes letters.

Claire, Whit and Simon now sit across from SALLY PRICE. We remember her as the woman who was following Howard.

SIMON  
Letters? What kind of letters?

SALLY PRICE  
It may be the strangest thing I've ever come across.

WHIT  
I don't understand. What's the big deal about writing letters? I write letters.

CLAIRE  
No you don't.

WHIT  
(he shrugs)  
I email.

Sally holds up a key...

SALLY PRICE  
Cost me eight hundred dollars to get this cut. And stealing mail directly from a post box is a federal offense.

SIMON  
So you have the letters?

She nods.

SALLY PRICE  
Eight days -- three letters.

CLAIRE  
To who?

SALLY PRICE  
Not who.

CLAIRE  
Huh?

SALLY PRICE  
He doesn't write letters to people. He writes letters to things.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHIT  
What kind of things?

She now holds up the letters... each envelope has only one word on it ... "Death"... "Love"... "Time"... all with stamps...

SIMON  
Those aren't things... they're abstractions.

Sally confirms and hands out the letters.

SALLY PRICE  
He writes letters to abstractions.

Claire reads aloud the letter in her hand...

CLAIRE  
(reading)  
"Time -- they say you heal all wounds... that you're so abundant and so scarce at the same time... that you're what we want the most and what we use the worst.  
(beat)  
They're wrong. You're nothing more than petrified wood. You're dead tissue that won't decompose... you're nothing."

She looks up...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Wow -- that's depressing.

WHIT  
Yes -- depressing as dirt.

As he jumps to his feet in excitement...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
But also proof! Proof that he's insane.  
(beat)  
I mean who writes a letter to time?

Simon looks up from another one of the letters...

SIMON  
These are therapeutic... bordering on inspired... not to mention completely sympathetic.  
(beat)  
It won't work.

WHIT  
Oh come on, Simon! This is exactly what we need.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON  
I don't think so.

He looks over to Sally...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
Anything else?

SALLY PRICE  
After work he usually goes to  
Stuyvesant Park Dog Run even though  
he doesn't own a dog. He just sits  
there for hours.

WHIT  
But does he write letters to the  
dogs?

She just looks at Whit for a beat, then back to Simon with...

SALLY PRICE  
Then he goes to his apartment and  
doesn't leave until morning.  
(beat)  
No wi-fi, no cable, no phone.

Simon gathers up all the letters and stands.

SIMON  
Maybe... maybe there's something  
here. I'm going to read these  
tonight and think on it.

He goes. And they all sit in silence, until... Claire sadly  
shakes her head and utters...

CLAIRE  
Dead tissue that won't decompose.

And as that hangs, we...

CUT TO:

INT. WHIT'S MIDTOWN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Expansive view, skins, black suede... Japanese electronic  
music blares. Find Whit nursing a drink and surfing the  
internet... specifically Facebook... specifically a twelve-  
year-old girl's page... "Isabel Yardsham."

Sipping his drink, Whit sadly looks over the pictures of his  
daughter with her friends and her mother and her mother's  
boyfriend. He's a bit heartbroken.

And he focuses on her status update... "Hey Christmas Break;  
why aren't you here already? Come find me. Now!"

Whit lightly laughs, holds on it for a beat then suddenly  
stands up. Something's suddenly come over him... an idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHIT'S CLOSET

As Whit rummages through piles of old video tapes. He finally finds the one he's looking for... labeled... "Roche -- Vyvanse."

And off of that, we...

CUT TO:

GRAINY IMAGES

of an old fight film playing on a white wall... Duran vs. Buchanan... 1972. Pull back to be in Howard's apartment and land on Howard... sitting in that chair next to the projector... the colors and shadows just dancing on his face...

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She leans up... checks caller ID and answers the phone...

CLAIRE  
Whit, it's three in the morning...

INTERCUT WITH

Whit... pacing on his balcony...

WHIT  
I've figured it out.

CLAIRE  
Figured what out.

WHIT  
I told you I was creative.

CLAIRE  
Figure what out.

He ponders the Christmas lights draped over the balconies from the building across the way...

WHIT  
Don't you hate Christmas lights?  
Don't they remind you of how alone  
you are?

CLAIRE  
Whit!

Snapping back his attention...

WHIT  
Meet me in the screening room in  
thirty minutes.

INT. YARDSHAM INLET/SCREENING ROOM - NIGHT

Russled out of bed, Claire and Simon now sit in the big plush leather chairs. Whit stands in front of them.

WHIT

About a year ago I took over the creative for Roche's new psychostimulant drug. I put together this completely inspired campaign but the company ended up punting with some bullshit run-of-the-mill walking-in-the-park spot with what might as well be cartoon birds landing on the shoulders of this Stepford couple--

SIMON

Whit! It's four in the morning.

Whit nods then smiles with...

WHIT

I kept Mexico.

With that, he hits a button on the remote and a Mexican commercial plays on the screen... bad acting and in Spanish.

MEXICAN COMMERCIAL

A TEACHER shouts at his classroom filled with CHILDREN.

TEACHER

(in Spanish/subtitled)  
Shut up all you stupid students!  
You never learn! All you do is  
talk! You are so stupid!

A SHAGGY MONSTER calmly heads into the classroom and walks up to the front. The students don't react at all.

MONSTER

(in Spanish/subtitled)  
You know, you don't have to be this  
angry all the time.

TEACHER

(in Spanish/subtitled)  
Who the hell are you?

MONSTER

(in Spanish/subtitled)  
I'm your anger.

Teacher regards the monster then sighs...

TEACHER

(in Spanish/subtitled)  
You always get the best of me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONSTER  
(in Spanish/subtitled)  
It doesn't have to be that way.

TEACHER  
(in Spanish/subtitled)  
How? I've tried everything.

MONSTER  
(in Spanish/subtitled)  
It's called Vyvanse... talk to your  
Doctor.

TEACHER  
(in Spanish/subtitled)  
Thank you, Anger.

They share a smile... then...

MONSTER  
(in Spanish/subtitled)  
I look forward to you killing me  
soon.

It pauses...

WHIT  
Pretty amazing, huh?

CLAIRE  
It's serviceable with bad Mexican  
acting -- what's your point?

WHIT  
Howard writes letters to time and  
shit. Yet that's not crazy enough  
to oust him. But what if--

Finishing the question for him...

SIMON  
-- time and shit answered the  
letters?

Whit points over to Simon.

WHIT  
Yes! In person.  
(beat)  
Now that would be undeniable.

SIMON  
And how would we make that happen?

WHIT  
We hire actors.

Claire attempts to piece it together...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAIRE  
We hire actors to play Love and  
Time and... what was the other one?

SIMON  
Death.

WHIT  
Yes. And they approach Howard with  
like answers to the shit he wrote  
in his letters.

Chewing on this...

SIMON  
It's not bad.

CLAIRE  
C'mon! Simon, it's nuts.

SIMON  
Think about it. Howard is just  
dropping these letters into a  
random mailbox with no return  
address. Nobody could possibly  
know they came from him.

WHIT  
A-men!

SIMON  
(thinking aloud)  
So when say, Time, approaches him  
and discusses the contents of the  
letter--better yet, with the actual  
letter in hand -- what else would  
he think?

CLAIRE  
(in disbelief)  
Really?

Simon just shrugs...

SIMON  
At that point there's a good chance  
he'll seek help and we'll have our  
legal capacity.

And then... shaking her head... not sold...

CLAIRE  
And where would we even get these  
actors?

INT. THE HEGEL THEATER - DAY

On the stage, Morty sips his coffee then looks up to Aimee  
with...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORTY  
Are you sure this is soy?

AIMEE  
I'm going to kill you, Morty.

MORTY  
I swear it tastes like milk.

And he notices...

MORTY (CONT'D)  
Look, he's back.

Aimee and Bailey now look to the back of the theater to see Whit sitting with Simon and Claire...

MORTY (CONT'D)  
And he brought friends this time.

INT. HEGEL THEATER - LATER

The actors now sit on the edge of the stage... feet dangling. The ad execs now sit in the front row... looking them straight on.

MORTY  
You want us to gaslight your boss?

SIMON  
I'm sorry, I'm not familiar--

MORTY  
To gaslight -- to make someone think they're crazy.

WHIT  
He is crazy!

Simon throws Whit a look and he shuts up.

MORTY  
It's from a Patrick Hamilton play turned into a 1944 movie. "Gaslight."  
(beat)  
Charles Boyer marries Ingrid Bergman in hopes of institutionalizing her in order to get her jewels. His plan is to make her think she's going crazy by -- among other things -- re-lighting all the gaslights in the home right after she blew them out for the evening.

SIMON  
Well, this is a bit different. We love Howard.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON (CONT'D)  
Whit here has known him since  
childhood and this has been an  
untenable situation for everybody.

CLAIRE  
He's not well and that's causing  
damage to our agency and himself in  
the long run.

WHIT  
How much will it cost to get this  
play up and running?

MORTY  
Fifteen thousand.

WHIT  
We'll pay you each ten.

AIMEE  
No. This sounds horrible.

SIMON  
It's completely legal and it's out  
of love.

AIMEE  
Still... it's wrong. It's...

She just shakes her head... allowing it to trail off...

BAILEY  
What does he write in the letters?

SIMON  
We made copies for you.

MORTY  
Twenty each.

AIMEE  
No! I won't do it.

MORTY  
Pay us each twenty.

AIMEE  
Morty--

BAILEY  
I get to be Time!

MORTY  
Bailey, just let me--

She jumps to her feet...

BAILEY  
Aimee, this is actually an amazing  
opportunity.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BAILEY (CONT'D)

This is acting in the purest form!  
We come here and rehearse for a  
play we're most likely never even  
going to get off the ground--

MORTY

We are going to get it off the  
ground if you just let me negotiate--

BAILEY

I'm Time! I get to play Time. I'm  
so perfect for that role.

AIMEE

Didn't you hear them? This poor  
man lost his child--

BAILEY

And he's reaching out to the cosmos  
for answers! We get to become  
those cosmos.

MORTY

Pay us each twenty.

BAILEY

This is amazing -- can I do my own  
hair?

AIMEE

It isn't clean.

BAILEY

Then don't do it. We can find  
someone else. There are a million  
actresses out there who would kill  
for that role.

AIMEE

What role?

BAILEY

I don't know.

Turning to Simon...

BAILEY (CONT'D)

Who else did he write letters to?  
I'm playing Time!

And Whit... eyes pasted on Aimee...

WHIT

We'll pay you each thirty.

MORTY

Deal.

SIMON

Whit!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

As Whit speaks to Simon but never takes his eyes off Aimee...

WHIT

All good, I got this tab.

Simon looks the troupe over. They're game... save for Aimee who still seems to be struggling with this.

SIMON

You'll be signing a confidentiality agreement. Like I said, this is totally legal. But if you tell anyone about it... especially Howard... you'll be in breach and we can sue you.

And Simon thinks for a beat, then...

SIMON (CONT'D)

The best way to do this is to split you up, give you a quick but comprehensive education on Howard and go over the letters. Bailey you'll work with Claire, I'll be working with Morty and Aimee...  
(clearing his throat)  
You'll work with Whit.

She doesn't respond. Still seems unsure. Whit looks over to her...

WHIT

Please do this. The only reason we're here is because I saw you on eighth avenue and followed you.

CLAIRE

Don't worry, he's harmless.

AIMEE

It's legal?

SIMON

Completely legal. You're going to approach Howard and claim to be the abstractions in the letters and have a conversation with him. Each one of you will do that no more than two times. And that's it. Thirty thousand dollars. Cash. Each.

And she considers this, then...

AIMEE

Who would I be playing?

As Whit looks her head-on then smiles...

WHIT

Love.

INT. JIMMY'S CORNER - NIGHT

Dive bar in midtown. Ad exec hang out. Move to a back table and find Claire, Simon and Whit.

Glasses are compiled in front of them... they've been here awhile. They're drunk.

CLAIRE

The creative was brilliant... hysterical. Everybody agreed. And the campaign was complete with advancing narrative spots that were even funnier.

(beat)

But Autozone management is by the book, run by numbers, all that.

WHIT

They all are.

She agrees with a raise of her glass.

CLAIRE

So Howard took me in with him... this was my first year.

(beat)

And he pitched his heart out, I've never seen anything like it.

SIMON

There was nobody better.

CLAIRE

Nobody. But Autozone wasn't buying. They wanted comp numbers, focus group analytics. Howard explained that sometimes that's not how it works. You know he said that thing he always did about funny--

WHIT

-- "Sometimes funny is just funny."

CLAIRE

Right.

She smiles... suddenly finding herself in fond reminiscence.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

"Make them think it was their idea."

SIMON

Love that one.

WHIT

Wait... what about... "Logic is piss..."

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHIT (CONT'D)  
 (trying to remember)  
 Something about logic--

CLAIRE "Stop pissing on my good with your logic."  
 SIMON "Stop pissing on my good with your logic."

WHIT (CONT'D)  
 Yeah...

They all take a moment to appreciate these Howard refrains, then...

CLAIRE  
 So... at the end of the day  
 Autozone wouldn't sign off on the  
 campaign.  
 (beat)  
 Howard was completely defeated...  
 he told them they should just go  
 with Ogilvy as he put on his jacket  
 to go.

And she takes a big sip of her martini... dramatically taking a beat, before...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Only it wasn't his jacket, it was  
 one of the Autozone execs coat and  
 it was three times Howard's size.

They all start to laugh...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
 He looked like a little boy wearing  
 his father's overcoat. And  
 everybody started laughing... I  
 mean the room really began to lose  
 it. It was such needed comic  
 relief.  
 (beat)  
 And Howard looked at everyone and  
 simply said "See? Sometimes funny  
 is just funny."

WHIT  
 That campaign made them billions.

CLAIRE  
 It was only until a few days later  
 that I realized he put on the wrong  
 coat on purpose.

WHIT  
 He was always doing shit like that.  
 He was a stealth. He was ruthless  
 and kind at the same time.

SIMON  
 He was adman ambidexterous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They all look at Simon.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
It's true. In this business you're either managing the concept or the client... but Howard managed both with such ease.

As Claire sadly looks into her martini...

CLAIRE  
He wasn't ruthless at all. He was only kind.

WHIT  
We're talking about him in past tense... like he's dead.

And now looking up to catch their gaze...

CLAIRE  
He is dead.

After a moment...

SIMON  
She's right.  
(beat)  
The man we're talking about is dead.

And as that hangs...

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Howard Inlet rides the F train...

MORTY (V.O.)  
"Death -- you travel with so much mythology... "

Howard's gaze spans the ads splayed on the roof of the subway car and finally lands on a one sheet for a life insurance company. A HAPPY FAMILY in a park.

MORTY (V.O.)  
"... inspire such fear... come with so many references."

Howard reads the thought bubble over the father's head -- "I do it because I love them."

MORTY (V.O.)  
"But you're a paper tiger to me..."

And the thought bubble over the mother's head asks "What's your because?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORTY (V.O.)  
 "... you're just pathetic and  
 powerless middle-management."

As Howard vacantly looks away from the one-sheet...

INT. SIMON SCOTT'S UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Morty sits with Simon. He finishes reading the letter.  
 Simon begins to cough.

MORTY  
 (reading)  
 "You don't even have the authority  
 to make the most simple trade."

The cough gets worse... it's dry and escalates into a  
 breathless wheeze.

Grabbing a tissue and violently coughing into it...

SIMON  
 As you can see this isn't a fan  
 letter.

As Morty notices the tissue Simon holds is splattered with  
 blood...

MORTY  
 Are you okay?

And Simon... catching his breath...

SIMON  
 No.

So it goes...

EXT. BROOKLYN/BOERUM HILL RECREATION CENTER - NIGHT

Howard Inlet stands across the street from an ugly modern  
 building with Christmas lights strung up on it.

He looks on as a WOMAN heads into the center and the door  
 closes behind her.

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
 He only goes to work and the dog  
 park. That's it. So we're going  
 to have to approach him at one of  
 those two places.

As Howard takes a moment then crosses the street.

INT. YARDSHAM INLET/CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Bailey and Claire sit at the conference table, Howard's  
 letter to Time is posted on the wall via an overhead  
 projector.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAILEY  
So I'm thinking I come to him  
angry... like pissed off, like I  
have a bone to pick.

CLAIRE  
Don't do that.

BAILEY  
But that's the truth choice.

As she points to the letter on the wall...

BAILEY (CONT'D)  
See? He calls me petrified wood  
and dead tissue.

CLAIRE  
I don't want you antagonizing him.  
Just... talk to him. Enough for  
him to realize he's not well.  
(beat)  
Then it'll all be over.

Bailey shakes her head...

BAILEY  
I don't play false. It's true to  
my character and it's my choice.

CLAIRE  
No! It's not your choice. This  
isn't your big break, this isn't  
your whatever -- role of a  
lifetime.  
(beat)  
You don't understand, this is a  
necessary evil, this is something  
that needs to happen... for Howard.

Claire motions to the bullpen that exists on the other side  
of the partially closed venetian blinds...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
This agency is enabling him, that's  
why he refuses to sell. It  
protects him... protects this dead  
routine he's created. It's all  
just...

Searching for the right words... then finding them...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
... petrified wood.

Bailey considers this then just shakes her head...

BAILEY  
Well, I don't need to be taking  
direction from some Lady Peter Pan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Claire just regards her...

CLAIRE  
Lady Peter Pan? What does that  
even mean?

BAILEY  
C'mon, your face is so pumped up  
with Restylane, I'm surprised  
there's even room for tears.

And that's it... Claire SLAPS Bailey and shoves her back.  
Bailey shakes that off...

BAILEY (CONT'D)  
Feel better?

CLAIRE  
No!

With that, Claire RUSHES her. Bailey easily parries to the  
side and uses Claire's momentum against her.

As she calmly SLAMS Claire down on the table and pins her  
there.

Claire struggles... flailing her arms and desperately trying  
to scratch Bailey's eyes out. Bailey just holds her down...  
avoiding all blows.

BAILEY  
Stop it!

Claire continues to thrash about...

BAILEY (CONT'D)  
Just stop! Stop fighting me!

And finally Claire does... out of breath and tears in her  
eyes...

CLAIRE  
Let go.

Bailey does.

And Claire... catching her breath... wiping away her tears...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
See?  
(re: her tears)  
There's room.

EXT. BOERUM RECREATION CENTER - NIGHT

As Howard walks to the window and looks in.

HOWARD'S POV/REC CENTER ROOM

Some sort of meeting is taking place. Nine PEOPLE sit in a circle. A support group of some sort.

A MAN slowly takes out a large framed picture of a TEENAGE BOY from his brief case and shows it to the room.

And the man speaks, his tears begin to flow and we begin to get an idea of what this could be.

AIMEE (V.O.)  
The letter to love consists of only  
one word.

And outside in the cold, Howard slowly pans the room, until he lands on a WOMAN who decided not take off her OVERCOAT.

Overcoat anchors this room. Overcoat runs this meeting.

AIMEE (V.O.)  
"Goodbye."

INT. TOCQUEVILLE - NIGHT

Aimee sits across from Whit at this over-the-top romantic French restaurant. She looks down to Howard's letter to love in her hand and reads it aloud.

AIMEE  
See? "Dear Love -- goodbye."

Looking into her eyes... completely transfixed...

WHIT  
Did you have a rough childhood?

AIMEE  
What?

WHIT  
I want to know about you.

Taking her hand...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I wanna know the real you. The  
mean things your mother said to you  
and the eating disorder you  
overcame Junior year.

She pulls back her hand. But he doesn't give up, looks her straight-on with...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry I'm making you  
uncomfortable. But -- and I swear  
this is an honest statement --  
you're the most beautiful woman  
I've ever seen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AIMEE  
Well, evolution favors the helpless  
by making them beautiful.

WHIT  
I don't get it.

She just shakes her head...

AIMEE  
It's nothing. Something someone  
said to me once after I let him  
down.

WHIT  
I'll cut him.

She laughs.

AIMEE  
You're a funny little man.

WHIT  
Does humor turn you on?

AIMEE  
I let a lot of people down.

WHIT  
That would be impossible.

AIMEE  
I don't know. It's just people  
have all these expectations... and  
for some reason they place them on  
me. They... mistake me for many  
things.  
(In fact... )  
You're mistaking me right now.

WHIT  
For what?

AIMEE  
Something you want.

And that holds for a moment, until... she guiltily turns away  
with...

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
What we're doing is cruel.

WHIT  
What he's doing is cruel.

And Whit violently shakes his head... animated...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
We want to sell. At the price  
they're offering -- we need to  
sell.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WHIT (CONT'D)

(beat)

Look I don't blame Howard for any of this and I'm sorry, I truly am -- but the rest of us don't live on Planet My Kid Died.

He takes a moment... trying to calm himself...

WHIT (CONT'D)

He's spiting the world, he's committing ad agency suicide... he's bringing down a ship that he's not the only one on.

As that lands...

AIMEE

What am I even supposed to say to him?

WHIT

Well, you're Love. And he wrote you a letter saying "goodbye," right? So maybe you approach him by not accepting that. By saying he can't get rid of you that easily.

Getting lost in her gaze...

WHIT (CONT'D)

That we don't chose who we love or who loves us back.

(beat)

And that means we're powerless to you as long as we're alive... because you're the fabric of life.

AIMEE

Who's the fabric of life?

WHIT

You... Aimee...

Finally breaking his gaze and looking away...

WHIT (CONT'D)

... love.

And it takes a beat for her to register that. Then...

WHIT (CONT'D)

Just say you're with-in him... that you're with-in everything... whether he likes it or not. So "goodbye" isn't a choice. And once he accepts that... maybe -- I don't know -- he'll get to live again.

And as that lands, Aimee Moore just considers this funny little man for a long moment... then utters...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AIMEE

Wow.

WHIT

Yeah, I totally have hidden depth.

INT. SIMON SCOTT'S UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Move through the dark apartment... it's night. Land in the bathroom off the kitchen to find a shirtless Simon on the floor... half asleep with his head on the toilet seat. He leans up, vomits some blood in the bowl and rests his head again.

Suddenly, his phone lights up, he vacantly checks it then answers.

SIMON

(into phone)

Whit...

INTERCUT WITH

Whit... walking in his apartment... Manhattan, a carpet of lights on every side of him...

WHIT

Steve Marcus from Omnicom just emailed me from Prague. They want an answer, they need to close this before the end of the year. It has something to do with their fiscal calender, I don't think I can hold them off much longer.

Simon leans up, wipes his mouth, then...

SIMON

Ask for nineteen a share.

Whit laughs...

WHIT

Nineteen bucks a share... are you nuts?

SIMON

They'll never go for it but it'll make it a negotiation which will buy us some time... not much.

(and then)

We have to do this now.

INT. THE HEGEL THEATER - DAY

Our three actors sit in the first row... our executives sit on fold up chairs on the stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHIT

So, it looks like we need to go into production sooner than we thought, it's time to pull the chord and take the stage.

MORTY

(aside to Aimee)

He just referenced film, skydiving and the theater in the same sentence.

SIMON

Do you have any questions?

BAILEY

(back to business)

Is it too over-the-top if I wear a huge clock around my neck like Flavor Fav?

They just look at her...

BAILEY (CONT'D)

Kidding.

MORTY

I don't think I should wear all black.

SIMON

Agreed. We need to stay grounded.

AIMEE

What are the rules?

WHIT

Rules?

AIMEE

Yes, since I'm playing Love... do other people see me or only Howard?

Whit and Claire share a look... they don't know. But Simon jumps in.

SIMON

Only Howard. That's important.

MORTY

Okay, what if we're like at a restaurant. How are we supposed to order if only Howard can see us?

CLAIRE

Wait, what?

MORTY

I mean the waiter can't see us so how are supposed to order?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON  
You won't be at a restaurant.

BAILEY  
But what if we were?

Looking over to Simon...

BAILEY (CONT'D)  
I mean we need to know the rules.

WHIT  
Hey! Doing this was my idea, mine.  
(beat)  
I'm the Creative Director on this  
account -- not him!

So now Bailey looks to Whit.

BAILEY  
Okay. So if the rule is only  
Howard can see us then what do we  
do if someone else enters the scene  
and acknowledges us for some  
reason?

Whit thinks on that for a beat, then...

WHIT  
I don't know -- stop pissing on my  
good with your logic.

And now Simon takes over.

SIMON  
Okay -- let's just say the rule is  
that whoever you want to see you  
can see you.

AIMEE  
Me Aimee?

SIMON  
No. You Love.

WHIT  
Wait. Now I'm confused.

Simon's had enough... as he loudly announces to the group...

SIMON  
The rule is whoever Love wants to  
see her can see her. So Howard is  
the only one that can see her  
unless she decides differently.

MORTY  
So the abstractions have the power  
to be seen by whomever they want  
whenever they want?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SIMON  
Precisely. There's the rule -- now  
can we move on?

They all nod... that makes sense.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
Look, you're playing people.  
You're going to be dressed normal  
and speak normal and act just like  
ordinary people. Because that's  
what the manifestations of the  
abstractions that Howard wrote to  
would be. Right?

As they digest that...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
What we're selling is that you  
exist in his head, he made that  
distinction by writing the  
letters... only now you are  
actually contacting him, talking to  
him, returning the very letters he  
wrote you to him.

Now Claire steps forward with...

CLAIRE  
And you're going to have to use  
your heads. We have no idea how  
he's going to react or if he's  
going to believe it or not.  
(beat)  
You will be on your own out there.

MORTY  
"On s'engage et puis on voit."  
(explaining off their  
looks...)  
Napoleon's battle cry "Engage and  
then see."

AIMEE  
I just have one more question?  
(beat)  
Who's going first?

As that hangs, we...

CUT TO:

SONNY LISTON

fighting Cassius Clay, 1965. An old fight film, grainy and  
playing on the wall. Pull back to be in Howard's dark  
apartment. Clay takes a right then the projector turns off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

And Howard stands, stretches then moves into the bedroom...  
time for sleep. And we...

CUT TO:

A DOMINO

placed next to another. Pull back to be in Howard's office.

And Howard places another domino next to that one...  
beginning a new maze. And we...

CUT TO:

A FINNISH SPITZ

running in spastic circles around a bulldog who doesn't give  
a shit. Pull back to be at Stuyvesant Park Dog Run on a warm  
winter's day.

And Howard vacantly watches the dogs frolic about. Until...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

They grieve.

Howard looks over to see Morty.

MORTY (DEATH)

Dogs. They grieve and fully  
understand death. Science says  
they don't but science is wrong.

Howard nods.

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)

You called me a paper tiger.

HOWARD

I did?

MORTY (DEATH)

Yes. In the letter you wrote me.  
You claimed I was pathetic.

Howard just sits there... looking at him.

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)

Do you remember writing that?

HOWARD

I don't... know what you're talking  
about...

MORTY (DEATH)

A letter. You wrote it.  
Mentioning something about a paper  
tiger, middle management, making a  
deal. You don't remember that?

Howard doesn't answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
Howard? It wasn't that long ago--

HOWARD  
I do. I remember writing that.  
Who are you?

MORTY (DEATH)  
Well, who did you write the letter  
to?

Once again, Howard is silent.

MORTY (CONT'D)  
Howard, who did you wri--

HOWARD  
Death! I wrote it to Death.

Morty smiles and hands him the letter...

MORTY (DEATH)  
Nice to meet you.

And Howard Inlet. Looks down to see it then looks back up...  
blank, no reaction at all.

Until... he simply stands and starts walking. But Morty  
finds his side with...

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
I know. People write letters to  
abstractions all the time...  
Einstein's letter to God sold on  
Ebay for two million dollars.  
(beat)  
I'd assume most don't get personal  
responses but you are.

Howard doesn't respond... just quickens his pace...

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
Because I wanted to tell you that  
you're wrong. I didn't want to  
make the trade. It was my call. I  
wasn't just some "powerless middle-  
manager" following orders like you  
may think.

Howard stops walking and faces him... not angry... just  
confused...

HOWARD  
Who are you?

MORTY (DEATH)  
I already told you.  
(beat)  
Now, I don't tell you how to do  
your job...  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
so I'd kindly appreciate it if you  
didn't tell me how to do mine.

Howard just stands there... stunned.

Suddenly an 8 YEAR OLD BOY, wearing a winter coat, turns to  
the woman he's with...

8 YEAR OLD BOY  
Who's that man talking to?

The woman takes the child's hand and quickens their pace.  
And we notice this woman as Sally Price... our private  
investigator.

8 YEAR OLD BOY (CONT'D)  
(pointing to Howard)  
But Mom -- that man wasn't talking  
to anybody.

Sally leads the boy away from Howard as if he were a crazy  
man having an argument with a street sign...

WOMAN  
(to the little boy)  
Don't worry about that... sometimes  
people are silly.

Howard registers that exchange between "mother and son" then  
turns back to Morty who simply shrugs

MORTY (DEATH)  
(re: "woman" and her  
"son")  
They don't see me until it's their  
time.

Off Howard's blank stare...

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
But it's not your time, Howard.  
(beat)  
I just wanted to return the letter  
and clear these things up.

And off that -- Howard SLAMS him with a RIGHT CROSS...

Morty's head SNAPS back, blood splurts from his nose and he  
immediately goes down. Howard calmly walks off.

And on the ground... wiping the blood from his nose and  
shouting after him...

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
I really am Death, Howard.

INT. HOWARD'S HELL'S KITCHEN APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Howard looks out the window to the street below. Void of  
any emotional tell... void of any life...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORTY (V.O/PRE LAP)  
I honestly think he believed it.

INT. SIMON SCOTT'S APARTMENT/OFFICE - NIGHT

And Morty... nursing his swollen nose with a cloth... completely buzzed off that strange performance...

MORTY  
See, that wasn't selling your character to an audience who have paid to suspend their disbelief... that was pure, there wasn't any safety net, there were stakes, I'm beginning to understand the high of the grift, he believed it--

He looks up to Claire, Whit and Simon all standing over him...

MORTY (CONT'D)  
-- and who in tarnation was that little boy?

As Claire walks Morty to the door...

CLAIRE  
Our private investigator found him.

And before he goes, Morty emotionally looks them all over... tears almost in his eyes...

MORTY  
Wow -- I should be paying you people.

And he goes. Whit turns to Simon...

WHIT  
What now?

SIMON  
Howard needs to tell someone what just happened to him today... hopefully it'll be one of us.

WHIT  
Then we can sell?

SIMON  
Not that easily... but it'll be the beginning of the process.

CLAIRE  
I just want to get this over with.

And she looks at both her conspirators straight on... throwing off her guilt and waiting for theirs in return.

But Whit just lowers his eyes to his feet and Simon just looks away.

INT. HOWARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Howard surveys the new domino maze... growing quickly.  
There's a knock on the door.

HOWARD  
(shouting at the door)  
Iris, I'm busy.

SIMON (O.S.)  
It's not Iris.

He looks up to see Simon standing there.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
I wanted to let you know that we're  
not going to pursue Metwest  
Insurance anymore. They're all but  
committed to Hudson and I don't  
want our guys chasing them around  
the proverbial table.

And Simon notices Howard's hand is swollen with his knuckles  
scabbed up.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
What happened to your hand?

HOWARD  
So you see the scabs on my hand?

SIMON  
Of course. Why wouldn't I?

Howard just ponders his hand, then...

HOWARD  
Nothing. Closed a cab door on it.

SIMON  
You okay?

HOWARD  
It's fine. Just swollen.

Simon just regards Howard... concerned.

SIMON  
Not the hand... you?

And Howard looks him dead-on...

HOWARD  
I'm not the one who's lost thirty  
pounds in five months.

Simon holds his look.

SIMON  
Cut out white carbs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

Have you?

It's a weird moment. Simon's not sure what Howard knows... and it creeps him out.

INT. SIMON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Simon sits across from Claire.

SIMON

I don't know. I couldn't read him. If he thought he talked to Death yesterday -- he sure wasn't going to tell me. I even acknowledged his injured hand.

CLAIRE

He's gotta tell someone. Whether he thinks it happened or that someone was playing a practical joke or it was in his head--

And from the doorway...

VOICE (O.S.)

You're not going to believe this..

They both look to see Whit standing there...

WHIT

Omnicom agreed to nineteen dollars a share.

And off that, we...

CUT TO:

A WOMAN NAMED ROBIN

who looks right at us...

ROBIN

They told me Trevor had packed his little suitcase, that he said he was going home. I was furious. But he was sleeping so I couldn't talk to him. I mean what nurse promised this dying five-year-old boy he could go home?

Pull back to be in that community center room...

ROBIN (CONT'D)

He had barely any white blood cells left, he was so fragile... who could be so cruel... who could do that?

... those nine people... sitting in a circle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
So of course, I was frantic. I was shouting at the staff, trying to get to the bottom of it.

Wiping the tears from her eyes...

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Well, Trevor had finally woken up and I go to him. I mean his little blue suitcase was at the foot of the bed -- right? So I look at him and I ask... "Who told you that, sweetie? Who told you that you could go back to our house?"  
(beat)  
And do you know what he says?  
"Nobody, mom. I'm not going back to our house... I'm going home."

And then...

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
He died four hours later.

And they all look up to see someone standing in the doorway...

HOWARD  
Hello.

He connects eyes with the group monitor... the woman who never takes off her overcoat. And he says...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
I'm Howard.

And she holds his look for a beat, then...

OVERCOAT  
Hi Howard.  
(and then)  
Are you looking for Smallest Wings Support Group?

HOWARD  
Yes.

OVERCOAT  
Then come in and have a seat.

He does. Slowly and unsure about it. Then...

OVERCOAT (CONT'D)  
Howard, did you lose a child?

Howard sits there... still. Blank. Frozen. This is a long beat. Until...

HOWARD  
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OVERCOAT  
Boy or girl, Howard?

HOWARD  
Girl.

OVERCOAT  
And what was her name?

Howard once again sits there... vacant... lifeless... the question hangs...

HOWARD  
This is probably a mistake.

He stands...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

OVERCOAT  
It's okay Howard. You don't have to answer. You don't even have to talk.

And frozen, Howard scans the room... takes in the faces... until finally returning to her pleading gaze...

OVERCOAT (CONT'D)  
Stick around.

So he slowly reclaims his seat...

EXT. BOERUM BROOKLYN - NIGHT

The meeting has let out. Howard takes to a quick pace as the others congregate outside. He doesn't talk to them... he doesn't want to know them... he hates being one of them.

But someone matches his quick stride...

OVERCOAT  
Why did you decide to come in tonight?

He stops walking, faces her, doesn't say anything.

OVERCOAT (CONT'D)  
Yeah, I've seen you outside... always trying to be so stealth... always looking in. I was going to come out one night and invite you in but I guess I didn't want to blow up your spot.

This makes him smile...

HOWARD  
"Blow up my spot?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OVERCOAT

Yeah.

HOWARD

You didn't want to break up my jam.

OVERCOAT

Exactly.

And they stand there... looking at each other. Just the tiniest moment of silence. Until...

HOWARD

What's your name?

She takes a beat... still looking at him, then... holds out her hand.

OVERCOAT

I'm Madeline... nice to meet you.

And what she says next is by rote... a name, rank and serial number... delivered quickly and robotic.

MADELINE

My daughter's name was Prudence. She died of a rare form of brain cancer known as Glioblastoma Multiforme or GBM for short. She was six years old.

He sharply nods. And then...

MADELINE (CONT'D)

What was your daughter's name,  
Howard?

He just looks at her. Once again a deer-in-headlights.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Okay fine, don't answer. I'm not going to torture you.

As they resume walking...

MADELINE (CONT'D)

But you do know at some point you're-- forget it, I don't need to teach you remedial grieving.

HOWARD

Thank you.

MADELINE

Was it the holidays?

HOWARD

Excuse me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADELINE  
Why you decided to actually come  
inside tonight. We get a lot of  
first-timers during the holidays.

HOWARD  
No. That's not it.

MADELINE  
Then why tonight?

HOWARD  
Because I'm trying to fix my mind.

MADELINE  
You lost a child, Howard... it'll  
never be fixed.

HOWARD  
Yeah. But lately there's been  
some... very strange activity.

He just shakes his head...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
I just found myself coming in  
tonight. I don't know why. It  
was...

He searches for the word... looking right at her... then  
finding it...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
... magnetic.

And she doesn't avert his gaze... actually holds it  
effortlessly. Then...

MADELINE  
I hope you come back.

... breaks away from him and disappears into the night.

INT. THE DEAD POET - NIGHT

Upper west side bar and grill. Christmas songs and drunks.  
They share table by the back.

Morty's nose is now fully swollen and bruised.

MORTY  
Did he say something today?

SIMON  
No.

Morty holds up a big manila envelope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORTY  
Signed contracts and  
confidentiality agreements.

Simon takes the envelope.

MORTY (CONT'D)  
He believed it. I'm telling you.  
(beat)  
You should send me in again... I  
don't know if Bailey can handle it.  
She's not as good as she thinks she  
is.

Motioning for the check...

SIMON  
Don't be a small actor, Morty.

A moment of silence between them, until...

MORTY  
He did choose the right three --  
didn't he?

Simon looks at him... confused.

MORTY (CONT'D)  
Love, Time and Death. They father  
everything else -- don't you think?

Simon just shrugs.

MORTY (CONT'D)  
I mean that's all there is when you  
think about it -- that triad  
defines our existence.

As the bill gets laid down and Simon grabs it...

MORTY (CONT'D)  
Everything else is secondary in  
comparison -- betrayal, resilience,  
fear, enlightenment, faith,  
failure, happiness, paralysis --  
they're all just children to one of  
those three.

And Simon... taking that in...

SIMON  
Love, Time and Death.

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE - NIGHT

They take to a slow pace up Amsterdam Avenue... walking in  
silence for a beat, until...

MORTY  
Will this be your last Christmas,  
Simon?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Simon just looks at him.

MORTY (CONT'D)  
You are dying -- aren't you?

Not missing a beat...

SIMON  
We're all dying.

MORTY  
Yeah... but you're doing it now.

SIMON  
That's none of your business.

MORTY  
No, I suppose that would be the  
business of your family and co-  
workers.  
(beat)  
But you haven't told them.

And Simon... capitulating... spitting out the words with  
restrained vitriol.

SIMON  
Yes -- this will be my last  
Christmas.

MORTY  
What is it?

SIMON  
Blood disorder. Nonsecretory  
Myeloma.

And so it goes...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
I won battles with it when I was  
sixteen and again when I was twenty-  
five.  
(beat)  
But it never went away... it just  
regrouped and got stronger--

MORTY  
-- like a terrorist organization--

Simon laughs in agreement...

SIMON  
-- my ISIS of cancer.

They keep walking... more silence.

MORTY  
Fight it again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON  
(resigned)  
War's over.

He just shakes his head...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
Got three opinions. Good docs too -  
- one of them German.

MORTY  
Affairs in order?

With a slow nod of confirmation...

SIMON  
Affairs in order.

Morty accepts that... it's all making sense to him now.

MORTY  
Yeah, you didn't strike me as the  
type of person to do something this  
base out of greed.

SIMON  
If it's so base then why are you  
doing it?

MORTY  
Greed.

Simon smiles. Then...

SIMON  
My ownership in Yardsham Inlet is  
worthless at anything under fifteen  
dollars a share. Nineteen's on the  
table... for who even knows how  
long. Wynona graduates high school  
in eleven years.  
(beat)  
It's bad enough I'm turning my wife  
into a widow and causing my  
daughter to be fatherless...

As he stops walking and turns to Morty with...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
... but I am not going to leave  
them nothing.

And Morty... holding Simon's look... then clearly assuring  
him...

MORTY  
He. Believed. Me.

INT. HOWARD'S OFFICE - MORNING

Howard wheels his bike into his office and lays it against the wall. He moves for his desk, but stops when he notices there's someone already sitting in it.

BAILEY (TIME)  
The new maze is coming along quite nicely.

HOWARD  
Thank you.

BAILEY (TIME)  
Don't take all the credit. We do it together.

Howard sizes her up. The plaid flannel, the tattered Chuck Taylors, ink sleeve and metal bits thru the lip and nose.

HOWARD  
I don't think you're in the right place.

BAILEY (TIME)  
I'm in precisely the right place, Howard.

She opens his letter to Time and reads...

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
"They say you heal all wounds..."  
(looking up from the letter)  
But I cause those same wounds so it's a wash.

And Howard... now realizing what she's quoting from. As she looks back down to the letter and reads...

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
"... that you're so abundant and so scarce at the same time..."  
(looking up from the letter)  
False! From my perspective I'm neither abundant nor scarce. Because there is no beginning, no end, everything is simply bugs trapped in amber... I'm just an illusion.  
(right back down to the letter)  
"... you're what we want the most and what we use the worst."  
(looking back up)  
Now that is profound. I swear I'm not being facetious, Howard -- it's the best part of the letter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Howard holds her look for a beat then quickly turns to go with--

HOWARD  
(to himself)  
... don't have to engage.

But before he can leave, Claire rushes in with...

CLAIRE  
Howard, Questerre Energy wants us  
to present the new campaign to them  
and they asked that you be there--

She looks around for a beat... confused... her eyes passing right over Bailey as if she weren't there...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
-- who were you talking to?

He doesn't answer. Just looks over to her.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry for barging in... Iris  
wasn't at her desk.

Howard quickly shifts his gaze over to Time just sitting there... in his chair... at his desk. Then back to Claire. He's frozen.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Howard? Are you okay?

TIME  
(to Howard)  
Ask her. Go ahead. Ask her if she  
can see me.

This is a crucial moment. And it hangs. Howard unsure what to do.

CLAIRE  
Howard? Are you--

HOWARD  
I'm fine!

And Claire now has to hide her tinge of disappointment. Then he simply states.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
I'm not going to Calgary.

CLAIRE  
That's what I figured. But I  
thought I'd ask.

He forces a smile... and she goes. Time holds up the letter then places it on Howard's desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BAILEY (TIME)  
Can I continue addressing what you  
wrote me?

And he just looks at her and utters...

HOWARD  
"Bugs in amber. No beginning, no  
end, everything is simply bugs  
trapped in amber... time is just an  
illusion." That's what you just  
said.

She nods. And he steps toward her...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
Kurt Vonnegut wrote that. In  
Slaughter House Five he defined  
time as "bugs trapped in amber."

And now she's frozen...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
Who are you?

BAILEY (TIME)  
You know exactly who I am... what I  
am.

And he takes another step... almost threatening...

HOWARD  
You're lying.

BAILEY (TIME)  
Maybe I said that to him... to  
Vonnegut. Maybe he wrote it down.  
(with a shrug)  
Maybe it sold books.

He registers that...

HOWARD  
So I wasn't that far off by calling  
you petrified wood?

She smiles. Because she saved it. And because this is a  
conversation now...

BAILEY (TIME)  
No. I don't suppose you were.  
(and then)  
Why did you write me?

He just laughs... sits on the couch and rubs his temples.

HOWARD  
Not to have this discourse.

She stands... moves slowly across the office...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BAILEY (TIME)  
You wrote me because you need me.

He shakes his head... eyes pasted on the ground...

HOWARD  
I don't need you.

BAILEY (TIME)  
You need me to heal the wound I  
created. You need me to do what I  
do.

As she moves to him... with growing courage...

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
I create then I destroy then I  
create then I destroy. That's what  
you're doing here -- isn't it?

She opens her arms and motions to the ad agency around  
them...

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
It took you years to build this  
agency... and now you're destroying  
it.

As he pulls away from her...

HOWARD  
I don't have to engage.

And she looks him dead on... imploring...

BAILEY (TIME)  
Work with me. I can help heal you.  
It's what I do.

And Howard holds her look for a definitive moment, until...  
he turns and he goes.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Thunderstruck and confused, Howard just stares into the  
mirror. A blinking contest with himself. He's so still.  
His reflection... so still.

But in a lightening-quick moment, he simply SLAMS his face  
forward into the mirror. The mirror splinters.

He's now looking at the splintered reflection of himself...  
his forehead pasted with shards. He wipes the shards away  
and sure enough... there's now blood.

And Howard Inlet then does the strangest thing... he rips off  
his watch, throws it in the urinal and gets the hell out of  
there.

INT. CENTRAL PARK — DUSK

They meet at a bench off the reservoir like spies.

CLAIRE  
He almost did it. He almost told me.

BAILEY  
I can't believe he actually called me out on the Vonnegut reference.

They're both buzzed off the surreal act they just put on. Both having a one-sided conversation.

CLAIRE  
It was on the tip of his tongue. I was praying he'd just tell me. Then it would've been over.

BAILEY  
(paraphrasing)  
"I said it to Vonnegut. He wrote it down. It sold books."

CLAIRE  
God -- I want this to be over.

BAILEY  
God -- it was a brilliant save.

As Claire takes a seat next to her on the bench...

CLAIRE  
That was the worst thing I've ever done.

BAILEY  
That was the greatest thing I've ever done.

CLAIRE  
(washed over with guilt)  
I went to Middlebury college. I mean how does one go from an MFA in poetry... to this?

BAILEY  
(washed over with pride)  
I feel high. Do you feel high?

And they sit in silence. Allowing the park to live around them. Until Claire vacantly notices...

CLAIRE  
Baby carriages.  
(beat)  
They're everywhere.

Bailey nods... it is Central Park on a week day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
It's like they're attacking me.

Now Bailey looks over to Claire... who seems to be having a moment.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
I stand in the baby food aisle in  
Trader Joe's, read the labels,  
share sisterly smiles with the  
young mothers rolling their carts  
by.

And now some tears...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
I'm so sick of living for myself.

BAILEY  
Have you consider--

CLAIRE  
Don't you dare suggest a pet.

Bailey shuts up.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
I want a baby. I want a child.  
(beat)  
I know it doesn't seem like it but  
I can be very nurturing.

BAILEY  
Then go to a sperm bank or do  
whatever rich executive women do  
when they want a baby.

Claire shakes her head...

CLAIRE  
What happened to meeting someone?  
What happened to falling in love  
and getting married?

BAILEY  
How old are you?

CLAIRE  
Don't do that -- my mother does  
that -- don't point out obvious  
math to me.

BAILEY  
Look, I'm just saying... when we  
were younger we blinked and weeks  
went by -- now we blink and years  
go by.

CLAIRE  
Comforting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Bailey just shrugs...

BAILEY  
Sometimes we find our lives haven't  
been lived according to the  
schedule we set when we were twenty  
or six or whenever it is that  
presumption is built.

CLAIRE  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to lay  
this on you.

As she stands to go...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
You did your job today, you're a  
good actress.

BAILEY  
Off to Trader Joe's?

CLAIRE  
Cute.

BAILEY  
It's a current, Claire, that's all  
it is. Swim against it or swim  
with it. Your choice.

As Claire holds Bailey's stare... registering that with a  
sigh...

CLAIRE  
Life...

But Bailey shakes her head...

BAILEY  
(no...)  
Time.

CUT TO:

INT. F TRAIN - NIGHT

Howard sits at the end of the virtually empty car... a  
bandage now on his forehead.

And she timidly approaches him... nervous as hell.

AIMEE  
Um... hi.

He vacantly casts his gaze onto her. She tries to say  
something but the words don't fall. Instead, tears.

And Aimee... now full on crying. He just looks at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AIMEE (LOVE) (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

As she shakily holds out the one word letter.

LOVE  
I'm so sorry for doing this.

Howard takes the letter, glances down at the three words and just shakes his head in frustration.

HOWARD  
I can't believe this.

She's crying. He's angry.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
Are you kidding me?

She's a mess... tears flowing... stumbling over her words.

AIMEE (LOVE)  
I... um... look... you said goodbye  
and um...

As he stands and moves down to the other side of the car. She collects herself, sucks in a breath, walks over, grabs the pole and stands over him.

AIMEE (LOVE) (CONT'D)  
We don't chose who we love or who  
loves us back. And that means  
you're powerless to me as long as  
you're alive... because I'm the  
fabric of life. I'm with-in you...  
I'm with-in everything... whether  
you like it or not.

And he looks up... locks into her beautiful eyes...

AIMEE (LOVE) (CONT'D)  
So "goodbye" isn't a choice. And  
once you accept that... maybe -- I  
don't know -- you'll get to live  
again.

And here's a moment. Eyes locked. She saved the performance... her monologue resonating inside of him. Because this look she's holding from him is so earnest, so childlike.

Because she can see real emotion behind Howard's eyes.

And for the first time... so can we...

HOWARD  
Kill yourself.

... or not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

And the train stops. And Howard exits it. And so it goes.

EXT. BROOKLYN/BOERUM REC CENTER - NIGHT

The group lets out. Madeline, in her overcoat, walks quickly into the night. Now she has someone by her side.

HOWARD  
What'd I miss?

MADELINE  
People crying because their kids  
died.

HOWARD  
Can I... will you...

He's having trouble getting the words out. She stops and faces him.

MADELINE  
What happened to your head?

HOWARD  
I threw it into a mirror.

She nods, strangely just accepts that.

And as she considers him... with his bandaged hand and bandaged forehead and dead eyes... this broken man...

INT. THE R TRAIN - NIGHT

Aimee collects herself. Whit now sits next to her.

AIMEE  
I completely screwed it up.

WHIT  
See that's not how I see it. Love  
could easily be weepy and  
apologetic.

AIMEE  
I was better at the end.

WHIT  
I bet you were great.

She vacantly nods. Still looking into a distance that isn't there... very sad and introspective. Which is precisely the weirdest time to try to kiss someone... which is precisely what Whit tries to do.

As she pushes his face away...

AIMEE  
Inappropriate...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

                  WHIT  
Yeah...

                  AIMEE  
... and gross.

INT. THE HEGEL THEATER - MOMENTS LATER

Actors on the stage. Ad execs in the front the row.

                  CLAIRE  
He believes it.

                  SIMON  
Are you sure? Because we need to  
be sure, Claire.

And Aimee... distant and almost regretful...

                  AIMEE  
He believes it.

Looking away...

                  AIMEE (CONT'D)  
I saw it in his eyes.

As Simon accepts that.

                  SIMON  
Okay, then we're close. He's  
beginning to unravel. But that's  
not enough. We need to push on.

                  AIMEE  
No.

                  CLAIRE  
Excuse me?

They all look over to Aimee now.

                  AIMEE  
I said no. I won't do this  
anymore.

As she casts her gaze on our three executives...

                  AIMEE (CONT'D)  
                  (to Whit)  
You've known him your whole life.  
                  (then to Claire)  
He was your mentor.  
                  (then to Simon)  
He gave you ownership in the agency  
when he didn't have to.

Simon and Claire glare at Whit...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHIT  
So I told her some stuff.

Aimee continues...

AIMEE  
This is how you thank him? This is what you do to a man who's so obviously suffering... a man who... he lost his child! You should be ashamed of yourselves.

MORTY  
Aimee, in all due respect, you have no idea why they're doing this.

Morty shares a quick look with Simon, then back over to Aimee with...

MORTY (CONT'D)  
So stop making assumptions and stop judging.

AIMEE  
It's not right.

As she storms out...

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
I won't be a part of this anymore.

Simon turns to Morty...

SIMON  
She signed a confidentiality agreement. We can't have her--

MORTY  
She won't. She knows better.

Simon nods. Then...

SIMON  
Okay, here's the situation as it stands -- for us to prove legal capacity, we need Howard to verbalize his narrative.  
(looking to Whit and Claire)  
Preferably to one of us.

CLAIRE  
But he's not talking about it.

SIMON  
That's why we need to turn up the volume.

And suddenly Whit now moves for the door...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON (CONT'D)  
Whit, where are you going?

Whit turns to them... flustered.

WHIT  
I... have to... I... excuse me...

He just shakes his head and quickly leaves.

CLAIRE  
(sighs)  
And then there were four.

Morty just shakes his head...

MORTY  
This whole production is falling  
apart.

Simon pushes on...

SIMON  
We need to amp this up. We need to  
get Howard to talk about it now.

MORTY  
Well, he has to at some point.

CLAIRE  
Something like this doesn't just  
happen to someone without telling  
someone else about it.

As that hangs...

INT. HOPE & ANCHOR DINER - NIGHT

He sits across from her. Coffees in front of both of them.  
Silence between them. And they hold this moment, until...

MADÉLINE  
So I assume you're part of the 79%?

Off his confusion...

MADÉLINE (CONT'D)  
Of couples who get divorced after  
losing a child.

He confirms with a slight nod.

MADÉLINE (CONT'D)  
Me too.  
(and then)  
Do you still love her?

He thinks about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD  
 I don't know love anymore.  
 (inside of a strange  
 smile...)  
 I told her to kill herself tonight.

She doesn't understand. But she still returns his smile.  
 And then...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 Do you still love him?

MADLINE  
 I do.  
 (and then)  
 There are one of two paths somebody  
 will inevitably take after losing a  
 child... total disconnection or  
 over engagement.

HOWARD  
 Over engagement?

She smiles...

MADLINE  
 Therapy, Bikram Yoga, showing up to  
 work before daylight, writing  
 classes, dog fostering--

HOWARD  
 -- chairing Smallest Wings support  
 group, never taking off your  
 overcoat.

MADLINE  
 Precisely. My husband went the  
 other way... total disconnection.  
 (and then)  
 I mean he claimed he still loved  
 me. But the weight of our new  
 world was too heavy to live under.  
 The day our divorce was final, he  
 sent me this...

She reaches into her bag, takes out a card...

MADLINE (CONT'D)  
 Yes, I keep it in my purse.

... and slides it over to him...

HOWARD  
 (reading it...)  
 If only we could be strangers  
 again...

As she smiles at the thought...

MADLINE  
 So now we are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He hands it back to her and she puts it back in her bag with...

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
Most romantic gesture he ever did.

After a moment of silence...

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
So I take it I'm going to be doing most of the talking?

HOWARD  
Please.

She nods. Thinks for a beat, then...

MADELINE  
Okay, I was going to tell a story in group tonight. I didn't get a chance because Ginny went on forever. I'll tell it to you.

She sucks in a breath...

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
Prudence was minutes away from... they were actually preparing her so we could say goodbye. My husband was trying to calm my parents. They both were completely losing it. I think he was shock... like he didn't understand what was actually happening.

(beat)  
But I did. And I was strong. Stoic. Sitting there in the waiting room at Maimonides Hospital. And there was this woman sitting across from me... might've been seventy, looked like a bag lady. She asked who I was about to lose. And I told her.

She sips her coffee... pocketing whatever emotion was seeping out.

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
And she looked at me and said... "Just be sure to notice the collateral beauty." I mean she said it so casually.  
(beat)  
In the next room, my six-year-old daughter was being taken off life sup-- and this woman says... collateral beauty.

HOWARD  
People don't know what to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MADELINE

But she did. I mean it wasn't out of sympathy or awkwardness. It was out of... experience.

And she takes another moment...

MADELINE (CONT'D)

About a year later something started to happen to me. I would be walking or on the subway or whatever and I would just burst into tears. Now, random crying jags by a woman who recently lost a child aren't unexpected... but this was different. These weren't Prudence tears.

(beat)

No, these were tears born from something else. From this kind of profound connection... to everything. And I realized... it was the collateral beauty.

HOWARD

There is no collateral beauty.

MADELINE

There is.

She reaches for his hand... but then stops.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Howard, there is.

HOWARD

I'm going crazy.

MADELINE

It'll never bring them back and it'll never make it okay. But it's there-- what do you mean you're going crazy?

HOWARD

You know how I told you I came to the meeting to fix my mind?

She nods.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Well it didn't work.

MADELINE

I don't understand.

HOWARD

I'm having conversations with...

He stops short...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MADELINE  
You're having conversations with  
who?

HOWARD  
It's not a who. It's... they're...  
you're going to think I'm crazy.

He just shakes his head and looks away.

MADELINE  
Howard...

He doesn't respond.

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
Howard...

As he finally looks back to her...

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
Try me.

And off that, we...

CUT TO:

THAT DOMINO MAZE

MADELINE (O.S.)  
"Dead tissue that won't decompose."

Pull back to be in Howard's office. Madeline sits on the  
couch, looking down at the letter to Time in her hands.  
Howard leans against the wall.

HOWARD  
Yes.

MADELINE  
And how long after you mailed it  
did this woman show up?

HOWARD  
Few days. Death came first.

MADELINE  
Death came first?

HOWARD  
Yes. He paid me a visit at the dog  
park.

MADELINE  
So Death is a him?

HOWARD  
Turns out yes.

And she looks at him for a moment, then...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELINE  
You have a dog?

HOWARD  
No.

Madeline stands and slowly takes in the office...

MADELINE  
How long did it take you to work  
again? After...

HOWARD  
Oh, I don't work anymore.

MADELINE  
But you still come in every day?

He just takes a moment, then shrugs with...

HOWARD  
This place is all I have left.

She nods... now looking over Howard's new domino maze that's  
beginning to take over the office.

MADELINE  
And how long did it take you to do  
this?

INT. THE HEGEL THEATER/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Simon splashes water on his face. He's clearly weak and  
attempting to keep it together. From the doorway...

VOICE (O.S.)  
Who won this round...

He turns to see Morty.

MORTY  
... you or the porcelain?

Simon somehow manages a smile.

SIMON  
I thought you all left.

MORTY  
They did. I had to shut down.  
You need help getting home?

SIMON  
No. I'll be fine.

Morty nods. Then...

MORTY  
I googled you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Simon pulls away from the sink...

SIMON  
You did?

And they head into...

THEATER

Empty and dark.

MORTY  
Came from nothing. Put yourself  
through Duke then Columbia Law  
while fighting cancer.

As Simon heads for the door...

SIMON  
I have to go home, Morty.

MORTY  
Successful, married a wonderful  
woman, loving father, active in all  
the progressive philanthropies.  
(beat)  
You lived well. You lived right.

Without looking back, Simon throws a wave and opens the  
door...

MORTY (CONT'D)  
But friend -- you're not dying  
right.

And now Simon turns.

SIMON  
Don't tell me how to die.

MORTY  
First of all, I'm going to guess  
your wife already knows... but  
denial can be stronger when shared.  
(beat)  
Secondly, you're not protecting  
them, you're only denying them  
what's rightfully theirs.

SIMON  
And what's that? Pain...  
atrophy... infirm...

He confirms...

MORTY  
Shared, yes.  
(and then)  
Don't steal process... don't leave  
them with only event. That is not  
your unique passing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

And Simon just stands in the doorway of the theater...  
glaring at him... with obvious fury and vitriol. Then...

SIMON  
Stick to acting... friend.

So it goes. As we...

CUT TO:

AN OLD FIGHT FILM

Grainy... being projected onto a white wall ... Caesars  
Palace... 1982... 14th round... no volume...

HOWARD (O.S.)  
I never was a big fan of the fight  
game.

Mancini tags Duk Koo Kim with a right.

HOWARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
But I found these in the storage  
locker when I moved into this place  
and hooked it up.

Kim reels back, Mancini misses a left but then connects with  
a very hard right.

HOWARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
For some strange reason, they  
calmed me.

Kim flies into the ropes then down to the canvas.

HOWARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
And this one jumped out at me.  
Mancini vs. Duk Koo Kim, 1982.  
Tragic fight.

And Kim somehow manages to unsteadily rise to his feet... and  
he looks right at the camera...

And it pauses right there... on Kim's eyes... now looking  
right at us... And we pull back...

Howard and Madeline. Sitting on the only chairs in Howard's  
living room. Howard brings down the remote. Madeline looks  
down to the letter in her hand...

MADELINE  
You say...  
(reading)  
"You don't even have the authority  
to make the most simple trade."

He collects himself, then...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

When we realized she was dying and there was nothing we could do about it... I prayed.

(beat)

Not to God, not to the universe... but to Death himself. I offered up a trade. Her for me. Take me. Keep her.

He just shrugs...

HOWARD (CONT'D)

... guess he didn't want to make the trade.

Silence. The paused frame of Duk Koo Kim looms over them. Howard now fixes his gaze on it.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

(re: Duk Koo Kim)

Look at that. He's completely conscious and able to comprehend... you can see it right there. In his eyes.

MADELINE

See what?

As Howard just sits there... looking deep into Kim's grainy eyes on the screen...

HOWARD

That he's alive just enough to know he's dead.

EXT. BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Aimee emerges from the DeKalb stop and heads down the street. But she notices somebody behind her.

AIMEE

Whit! What are you doing?

He's in an emotional state.

WHIT

Following you. I couldn't just let you walk out of my life... and I want to see where you live.

She keeps walking...

AIMEE

Oh, man...

As he catches up to her...

WHIT

I don't care. Tell me what to do. I'll do whatever you say.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHIT (CONT'D)  
 (desperate)  
 I'll give it all up. All the money  
 I stand to get, everything. I'll  
 confess to Howard what we've been  
 doing... just don't keep walking  
 away from me.

And he desperately blurts out...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I love you!

And now she stops walking... turns to face him...

AIMEE  
 You don't love me.

WHIT  
 I do. Since meeting you I've had  
 trouble with some pretty basic  
 things like focus and appetite and  
 sleep.  
 (beat)  
 And I replay every nuance of our  
 interactions in my head like a  
 detective looking for clues and  
 you've invaded my dreams.

And he nods... considering her... falling snow framing her  
 like an angel. As he declares for the world to hear...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
 I have found love -- and she lives  
 in Bushwick!

She shakes her head...

AIMEE  
 It's not love, Whit. It's just a  
 trick. It's a biochemical cocktail  
 attacking your shit-show of a  
 brain.

Stepping to him...

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
 It's the way my laugh or my smile  
 or my something is bringing to your  
 subconscious the way a somebody  
 failed to love you when you were  
 five.

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
 There is love out there, Whit...

As she turns and goes...

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
 ... but this isn't it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

... and disappears into the night. As we...

CUT TO:

STUYVESANT PARK/DOG RUN

Completely empty at night. Frozen dirt, dog shit and a small fence.

MADELINE (O.S.)  
She didn't accept your goodbye.

Pull back to be with Madeline and Howard. Sitting on a cold bench. Madeline glancing down to the letter to Love in her hands.

MADELINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Maybe she was an angel... and you told her to kill herself.

He shakes his head... not likely.

HOWARD  
Freud said we cling to certain hallucinatory objects as a form of coping psychosis. That -- after all is said and done -- the only real role of the human brain is to rationalize suffering.  
(beat)  
And that's what's obviously happening here.

Now she shakes her head...

MADELINE  
Why can't they be angels? It is Christmas after all.

HOWARD  
Because if there are any angels here... it's you.

And she smiles.

MADELINE  
Tell me about your wife.

After he takes a moment...

HOWARD  
She was always better than me at the important things. Keeping the marriage exciting, making a guest feel welcome, dealing with my parents, taking on new interests. So when it came time for us to take on mourning together... she just got too far ahead of me on the learning curve...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
and I couldn't keep up. Her  
patience was... unending.

And that hangs. And they just sit in silence.

INT. YARDSHAM INLET/CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Whit heads into the conference room to find Simon and Claire waiting for him.

CLAIRE  
Where were you?

Whit's a mess.

WHIT  
Brooklyn.

SIMON  
You look terrible.

WHIT  
Then I look how I feel so let's  
give a cheer for congruency.

CLAIRE  
Are you drunk?

WHIT  
Yes.

And Simon steps forward with...

SIMON  
I spoke to Steve Marcus at Omincom--

WHIT  
You what! Steve Marcus is my  
contact--

SIMON  
He called me, Whit!  
(beat)  
Christmas is four days away, they  
needed an answer and he kept  
getting your voicemail... which he  
said is some sort of poem.

Looking away...

WHIT  
Rumi.

SIMON  
Yeah, I'm taking this deal over,  
Whit.

CLAIRE  
What did you say, Simon?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON  
I took the deal.

Off their reactions...

SIMON (CONT'D)  
Nineteen dollars a share.

CLAIRE  
What about Howard?

SIMON  
Omnicom is aware of Howard's mental capacity and said they'll do the deal if we can prove Howard's capacity to vote is unfit.  
(beat)  
So I contacted every member of the board. I explained the time sensitivity and severity of the situation and they set an emergency competency meeting for Thursday.

As that lands...

WHIT  
So we have to prove Howard's crazy by Thursday.

SIMON  
That's correct.

CLAIRE  
But he hasn't told any of us about this, he hasn't sought out professional help, we have no proof.

SIMON  
We're going to get proof this week.

WHIT  
How?

And as that question hangs, we...

CUT TO:

THAT ENORMOUS CHRISTMAS TREE

Illuminating Rock Center... posing for hundreds of tourist phones... to the soundtrack of ringing bells...

MIDTOWN

Where the lights from the holiday windows spill onto the sidewalks... where families stroll down 5th avenue while eating sugarcoated nuts... where New York City becomes America's favorite small town...

And where Howard Inlet now walks with Madeline...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADELINE

You need to talk to them, Howard.

He looks down to notice that they're walking arm in arm. As he looks back up to her...

HOWARD

It's not collateral beauty.

MADELINE

I don't care.

(and then)

Yell at them, reason with them, challenge them... engage.

And Howard Inlet... holding her look... considering her plea... registering her altruism. Until...

HOWARD

I'm sorry. I made a mistake. I'm sorry to have done this to you.

INT. STRANGWAYS COFFEE - MORNING

One of many hipster coffee shops that have mysteriously sprung up from the industrial Brooklyn ground.

Small, mismatched reclaimed wood, baristas with impossibly creative facial hair.

She walks in and Whit stands from his table.

WHIT

Thank you. Thank you for meeting me here.

As she sits across from him...

AIMEE

Whit, I've taken out five restraining orders in my life -- the first when I was sixteen -- I'm quite the pro at it.

WHIT

And I believe that, I mean I can completely tell why. But this isn't about my torturous love for you.

As he leans forward and whispers...

WHIT (CONT'D)

We need you. One last time.

(beat)

This whole thing is coming to a head and it's all going to be over by Christmas. But we need just one more final...

Searching for the right word...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHIT (CONT'D)  
... scene from each of you.

She shakes her head.

AIMEE  
I'm done.

WHIT  
What do you want? Money?

And he lights up a joint, right there.

WHIT (CONT'D)  
I'll give you a hundred thousand  
right now. If it works, I'll give  
you a million.

AIMEE  
I don't want your money.

WHIT  
Then what do you want?

AIMEE  
You... to go away.

Ouch. After he sits with that for a moment...

WHIT  
I... don't think I can do that.

And she sighs... considers him. Then...

AIMEE  
You have a daughter -- right?

He nods.

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
Tell me about the day she was born.

WHIT  
What?

AIMEE  
Tell me what that felt like for  
you.

He gets uncomfortable. Looks around.

WHIT  
I don't know. This is weird.  
We're in like industrial Brooklyn  
and you want me to--

AIMEE  
Shut up, Whit.

He does. And as she breaks into the smallest smile...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
... now talk.

He thinks for a moment.

WHIT  
It was... amazing. Scary. But not when I saw her. She was so small and helpless. And they gave her to me to hold and looked down and I felt something I've never felt before.

(beat)  
It was like this new emotion I couldn't name. And then I realized...

He shakes it off... embarrassed...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
... forget it.

AIMEE  
No. Finish.

WHIT  
It's dumb.

AIMEE  
This is the first time I've felt attraction toward you since we've met.

WHIT  
(immediately)  
Okay, I realized I wasn't just feeling love... but that I had somehow become love.

She swoons just a tiny bit. But he waves it off with...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
She won't talk to me now. Blames me for the divorce. And she should...

That hangs... until he sadly looks away with...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
Isabel hates me and I completely deserve it.

And she leans forward...

AIMEE  
I'll make you a deal.

He looks back to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
 If you promist to take that  
 embarrassing lack of self-awareness  
 and that delusional  
 determination... and use it on  
 winning your daughter's  
 forgiveness... instead of  
 misplacing it on me...

With a raise of an eyebrow...

AIMEE (CONT'D)  
 ... then I'll do it.

INT. THE HEGEL THEATER - MORNING

Morty and Bailey and Aimee now sit in the first row. Simon  
 and Claire and Whit are now on the stage. The exact opposite  
 positions of how this all started.

SIMON  
 It appears we're now on a strict  
 deadline.

WHIT  
 Ticking clock.

CLAIRE  
 And we need one more performance  
 from each of you.

WHIT  
 The fat lady needs to sing.

SIMON  
 You're going to have to illicit an  
 emotional response from Howard.

WHIT  
 A climax as it were.

CLAIRE  
 Shut up, Renwick.

SIMON  
 Shut up, Renwick.

MORTY  
 But he hasn't told anybody about  
 our visits?

SIMON  
 No. And it doesn't look like he's  
 going to.

From the doorway...

SALLY PRICE  
 You're going to approach him in  
 public...

As she walks into the theater...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALLY PRICE (CONT'D)  
You're going to need to illicit a  
physical reaction from him....

As she lifts up a camera...

SALLY PRICE (CONT'D)  
... and I'm going to capture it  
all.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD'S OFFICE - MORNING

Howard blankly stares at a piece of paper laid on his desk in  
between the dominos.

INT. WHIT'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Whit looks up from some paperwork to see...

HOWARD  
You won't win.

Howard holds up the legal notice.

WHIT  
This is the first time you've  
talked to me in over a year.

HOWARD  
You won't steal this agency away  
from me in order to sell it.

WHIT  
We grew up together. Our  
fathers... we used to be friends.  
(genuinely)  
Why won't you talk to me anymore?

And Howard... growing furious...

HOWARD  
You don't have any right! None of  
you do... you called the board?  
The board loves me!

And Whit... breaks into a smile.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
I own 51% of this agency and I say  
if we sell-- why the hell are you  
smiling?

WHIT  
Because you're angry.  
(beat)  
And that means you're getting  
better.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Howard gets in and presses "L." But the elevator goes up.  
Confused, Howard looks up at the numbers... 34... 35... 36...

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

Simon sits with the SECURITY HEAD... who manipulates the elevator via a master system.

SIMON  
This is great. I appreciate this.  
(laughing)  
These practical jokes are really  
getting out of hand.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The doors open to reveal the roof of the building... the helipad. He hits the help button but nothing happens.

Howard then looks to see someone standing right in the middle of the helipad... well, someone may not be the exact way to describe her... not to Howard... and not at this moment in...

BAILEY (TIME)  
Hello, Howard.

Howard slowly walks out to the...

HELIPAD

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
I was hoping we could talk.

And he stops... regards her standing in the center of the helipad's giant "H". Then... takes a step toward her...

AND ACROSS THE ROOF

from behind some potted plants... Sally Price lifts her camera and starts snapping away...

ON THE HELIPAD

where Howard stops. They now face each other. A weird stand-off of sorts. Howard doesn't say anything.

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
You're not running away?

He just nods and she smiles...

CUT TO:

EXT. YARDSHAM INLET BUILDING - DAY

As Howard quickly leaves the building and negotiates the crowded work force down 8th Avenue...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, she's at his side...

AIMEE (LOVE)  
Hi, Howard.

Not breaking his stride...

HOWARD  
You're not going to cry again --  
are you?

AIMEE (LOVE)  
You don't like it when I'm sad.

HOWARD  
Aren't you always sad?

AIMEE (LOVE)  
No. I can be other things.

ACROSS THE STREET

Sally Price jogs, keeping up with them... snapping pictures  
all the while... like a gifted paparazzi...

AND HOWARD

rips a right onto 53rd street. As she once again catches his  
stride...

AIMEE (LOVE) (CONT'D)  
... like exciting and unpredictable  
and warm and sexy and mysterious  
and inevitable and unexpected and  
home.  
(beat)  
I can be home, Howard.

Turning to him with...

AIMEE (LOVE) (CONT'D)  
Remember?

And off that, we...

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND CENTRAL SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Howard waits alone for the train. He notices someone  
standing next to him and he simply nods. Morty nods back.

HOWARD  
Are you here to take me?

As Morty holds up a MetroCard...

MORTY (DEATH)  
No, Howard. I'm here to ride the 6  
train with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AND OF COURSE...

Across the tracks... Sally Price... snapping away...

While we cut briefly back in time to the...

ROOF/HELIPAD

Picking up where we left off... Howard face to face with Bailey... in the center of the "H."

HOWARD  
Christmas is this weekend.

BAILEY (TIME)  
That's right. If the calender were a novel -- Christmas would be the climax.

He follows her. They reach the edge...

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
Calenders are a funny thing to me. How do I explain this to you -- it's like watching someone trying to capture air.

HOWARD  
Bugs in amber.

She just shrugs... why not.

BAILEY (TIME)  
I especially like the calenders we make ourselves... the ones where we post milestones onto what otherwise is simply velocity bound by the speed of light.  
(beat)  
We start the instant we're born...

As she motions to the city beneath them...

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
... everybody has a birthday.  
(beat)  
Anniversaries... major accomplishments...

And she turns to him when she says...

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
.... tragedies.

And Howard doesn't say anything.

BAILEY (TIME) (CONT'D)  
What's the most important date on the Howard calender?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The question hangs. For a long beat.

HOWARD  
I don't have one anymore.

BAILEY  
And at what date did that happen?

And they look over Manhattan in silence... until...

HOWARD  
You said that you build then you  
destroy.

BAILEY (TIME)  
Yes, I did.

Stepping to her... angry...

HOWARD  
Well, you screwed it up...

Across the way, Sally Price excitedly snapping away...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
You did it in the wrong order.

BAILEY  
Say the date, Howard.

Now he pushes her... she stumbles... right near the edge of  
the building...

HOWARD  
You were supposed to destroy me  
first.

He steps to her. One good kick and she's flying off the  
building.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
You were supposed to destroy me  
first!

Sally Price now brings down the camera, a little nervous...  
is he going to throw her off the roof?

And Howard towers over her... losing control.

But Bailey doesn't show any fear... just holds his vicious  
glare. Until...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
November 3rd.

With that, she slowly stands, collects herself then goes  
with...

BAILEY (TIME)  
Goodbye, Howard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

While we...

CUT TO:

53RD STREET

Howard walking with Aimee.

Howard... AIMEE (LOVE)

He doesn't answer. Keeps walking.

Howard... AIMEE (LOVE) (CONT'D)

Howard  
What?

AIMEE (LOVE)  
Do you remember me?

HOWARD  
I don't know what that means.

AIMEE (LOVE)  
Do you remember experiencing me?  
(beat)  
The idea of me at first... when you  
met your wife. Then the real me  
when you married her.

He walks faster... she's now jogging to keep up.

AIMEE (LOVE) (CONT'D)  
Then when you became me... the day  
your--

And he snaps... immediately grabs her and pushes her up  
against the window of a Starbucks.

HOWARD  
Don't!

But Aimee doesn't back down. She just looks him head-on and  
finishes her thought...

AIMEE (LOVE)  
-- your daughter was born.

And Howard... holding her against the wall with shaking  
hands... taking in her fearless gaze... then finally letting  
go and exhaling with...

HOWARD  
Yes. I remember.

AIMEE (LOVE)  
What do you remember, Howard?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

A moment. As Howard looks down to his feet... shrinking into himself... then back up to her with...

HOWARD  
I remember it all.

AIMEE (LOVE)  
Tell me.

He just shakes his head...

HOWARD  
No. Not you.

AIMEE (LOVE)  
Then who?

As that question hangs, Howard goes...

CUT TO:

Morty

standing next to Howard... waiting for the train...

MORTY (DEATH)  
Two twins are in the womb. One's a boy, the other's a girl.

HOWARD  
Is this a joke?

MORTY (DEATH)  
No, Howard... it's a story.

As he continues...

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
These twins are happy, they're fed, it's warm in there and they feel safe. Until one day the boy says; "it's not going to be like this forever, you know. At some point we're going to have leave here." His sister agrees, it's something they both inherently knew. His sister thinks aloud "Who knows what the heck happens after birth? It could be cold or lonely or even worse... there could be nothing there at all."

The train pulls into the station but neither of them move...

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
And the boy thinks about that... and he says... "We need proof."  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
 We need proof there's life after  
 birth." "We'll never get it." His  
 sister points out, "All we have are  
 these silly hopes and stupid dreams  
 that there's something out there...  
 something that's going to love us  
 and take care of us."

CUT TO:

THE 6 TRAIN

They now ride in silence. Until Morty turns to him with...

MORTY (DEATH) (CONT'D)  
 Finally the boy points to the chord  
 that feeds them, that nourishes  
 them -- this chord that they can't  
 possibly conceive is attached to  
 anything else -- and he says...  
 "All we have is this."

Sitting next to them, a passed out DRUNK wearing a very dirty  
 SANTA costume, stirs awake.

MORTY (CONT'D)  
 "We'll never have proof of anything  
 else, so we'll just have to depend  
 on this until our time comes."

The drunk smiles over to Howard.

DRUNK SANTA  
 Merry Christmas.

Howard doesn't say anything back. And Morty sighs...

MORTY  
 And she agrees. And so it goes.

HOWARD  
 That's nice. Hopeful.

Morty nods.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 Let me do you one better.  
 (beat)  
 Every choice we make creates a  
 different outcome. So the choice  
we didn't make also has an outcome.  
 That outcome has to exist  
 somewhere... call it another  
 universe. So we all exist in all  
 these universes... too many to  
 count... thus we're being born and  
 dying all the time -- multiverse  
 theory, Andrei Linde, neo-  
 biocentrism.  
 (beat)  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

"The smallest sprout shows there is really no death; And if there was, it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it, And ceas'd the moment life appear'd. All goes onward and outward-nothing collapses: And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier." -- Walt Whitman, poetry.

(beat)

The human soul is intrinsically pure. And death destroys the physical body, but not the soul because it's eternal. So the soul takes on another body in order to re-enact the cycle. This is not linear and lessons within each rotation are to be built upon in order to achieve some form of final enlightenment. It's finite and infinite at the same time, if that makes sense -- which it doesn't. So birth and death are actually just a simple doorway... the same doorway -- palingenesis, reincarnation, samsara.

(beat)

If you're good... you go to a good place -- all of religion.

(beat)

A falling star flares up for a brief moment only to disappear into the endless night forever... bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life... merrily merrily merrily, life is but a dream... there is a time when one must join the great majority... after sunset fadeth in the west... Luca Brasi sleeps with the fishes... from dust were ye made and dust ye shall be -- analogies, euphemisms, metaphors, idioms.

And now he's singing...

HOWARD (CONT'D)

"Seasons don't fear the reaper ... nor do the wind, the sun or the rain. Valentine is done... here but now they're gone. Romeo and Juliet... are together in eternity. C'mon baby... don't fear the reaper."

As Howard stops singing on the dime and looks to Morty with...

HOWARD (CONT'D)

-- Blue Oyster Cult.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MORTY (DEATH)  
Looks like you did me more than one  
better.

Howard nods.

HOWARD  
All of it says you're a function of  
perception. That you're just a  
necessary evil -- that in itself  
being a misnomer. That we  
shouldn't hate you or fear you.  
And most importantly...

As the train slows into the station...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
... that we shouldn't blame you.

MORTY (DEATH)  
Something like that.

HOWARD  
Here's the thing...

As Howard stands...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
Not. Good. Enough.

... and heads for the opening doors with...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
Because I'm not holding her fucking  
hand right now.

CUT TO:

SIMON SCOTT'S BATHROOM

Where Simon lays against the toilet after another bout of  
blood-letting hematemesis... very sick and very weak.

He hears a voice on the other side of the door we don't hear.

Simon musters up all his strength to stand, collect himself  
then open the door to reveal his wife standing there.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)  
"They say that time in heaven is  
compared to 'the blink of an eye'  
for us on this earth.

She smiles... wondering what he's doing. But he steps to  
her, with purpose, with love. Now she loses that smile and  
just looks at him... confusion quickly turning to fear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And as he takes hold of her shoulders, centering her for the blow...

CUT TO:

AND IN CLAIRE'S BEDROOM

where Claire sits at her computer, studying...

THE PROFILE OF THAT HOT DUDE WITH THE CUT JAWLINE

His stats under the picture...

"Steven B. Education -- Princeton undergrad, Masters in Journalism at Columbia. Hair -- Neutral Dark Blonde. Eyes -- Emerald Green. Height -- 6 feet 5 inches. Body type -- Meso/Ecto. Heritage -- Norweigan, German."

As she manipulates the mouse to click on the next page and we now see more of the website labeled... "Heredity Choice."

A WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

"Sometimes I think of Adam running through a beautiful field of wildflowers... "

"Steven B. \$17,475 per 10 Million Purified Motility. IVF treatment only."

A WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

"He's so happy... completely caught up in what he is doing... "

And off that, we...

CUT TO:

IN SALLY PRICE'S OFFICE

where Sally sits at her desk. There is a knock on the door.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

"But then he looks back -- like he used to do when he ran ahead of me in airports or malls or wherever. "

And as she opens the door to reveal two NYPD OFFICERS...

CUT TO:

WHIT'S APARTMENT

where Whit lies on bed looking over pictures of his daughter, Isabel. But she's younger in these pictures... and he's in these pictures with her. One at a Knicks game... one on a boat... one at her birthday party...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)  
 "And he smiles. Because the blink  
 of his eye was the rest of my  
 life..."

And as he clicks back to the one on the boat -- him shielding  
 her from the heavy ocean spray -- and narrows his focus on  
 it, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. BOERUM RECREATION CENTER - NIGHT

A woman, named BEVERLY, finishes reading from the piece of  
 paper in her trembling hands. This is the voice we've been  
 hearing...

BEVERLY  
 "... and I'm right there behind  
 him."

She brings down the paper and wipes away a tear...

BEVERLY (CONT'D)  
 Anyway... it's a first draft.

Madeline smiles at her then looks over the room...

MADELINE  
 Does anybody else want to say  
 anything?

And a throat clears... the newest member of this support  
 group slowly nods. And now all eyes are on Howard Inlet.

And he just starts listing...

HOWARD  
 Sundays. Pancakes. This tiny red  
 ball. Lionel Richie's "All Night  
 Long." A Minnie Mouse umbrella.  
 Chalk on sidewalk.

His eyes moving through the circle... his gaze touching each  
 of them as he continues...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 Barbie's wet hair. Spoiled apple  
 juice. Lies of nightmares.  
 Clapping hands. Purple suede boots  
 that smelled horrible. The Secret  
 World of Og. Yellow plastic tea  
 cups. Daisy stickers everywhere.  
 A jar full of acorns.

... finally landing his gaze on Madeline... and holding it  
 there...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 Laughter -- so much laughter. Sea  
 shells.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 A limerick about an old man with a  
 beard. Penelope Peapod. Crumbs.  
 A strange obsession with puddles.  
 Broken crayons.

As he takes a moment, exhales...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 There's more, but...

... and just shakes his head.

And Madeline -- with no expression at all -- strongly holding  
 his look. Then quietly whispering...

MADELINE  
 Thank you, Howard.

EXT. SIMON SCOTT'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Simon heads out of the building to greet Morty.

SIMON  
 Thanks for coming up here.

Morty just shrugs. Simon looks terrible.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
 I just told my wife.

MORTY  
 How'd it go?

SIMON  
 She knew.

As Simon hands him a check.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
 Denial can be stronger when shared.

MORTY  
 Good luck with the hearing.

And Morty turns to go, but...

SIMON  
 Hey. I wish I could be here to see  
 the play.

Morty just shakes his head...

MORTY  
 After all of this... the play's  
 dead.  
 (and then)  
 But you never know...

As he goes...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORTY (CONT'D)  
 ... nothing is ever really dead if  
 you look at it right.

INT. BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN - MORNING

Aimee opens the door of her building and stands in the doorway.

AIMEE  
 Hey.

He stands on the street...

WHIT  
 Hey.

He holds up a check...

WHIT (CONT'D)  
 I got your money.

As she takes a seat on the stoop.

AIMEE  
 I don't even want it.

He hands her the check.

WHIT  
 You did your job, you deserve to  
 get paid.

She regards the check for a beat then looks up to him standing over her.

AIMEE  
 Did Howard... is it over?

WHIT  
 We won't know until later today.  
 (beat)  
 I'm going to pick up the pictures  
 now.

She nods.

WHIT (CONT'D)  
 Will I ever see you again?

AIMEE  
 Yes.

And he sets to go. But turns around one last time to clock her... to commit her to memory...

WHIT  
 Do you promise?

And she smiles...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AIMEE  
Yes, Whit. I promise.

EXT. THE HEGEL THEATER - MORNING

Bailey looks over the check in her hand then looks up to Claire.

BAILEY  
It was an amazing role. I don't know if I'll ever get cast in something that exciting again.

CLAIRE  
You weren't cast. You were just...

As she looks away and allows it to trail off...

BAILEY  
What do you think acting is, Claire?

Pocketing the check...

BAILEY (CONT'D)  
It's a lie that tells the truth.

And Claire just smiles then turns to go...

CLAIRE  
There it is -- good luck with your big career.

But Bailey stops her with...

BAILEY  
"Healing is not a science but the intuitive art of wooing nature."

CLAIRE  
W.H. Auden.

Bailey confirms. Then...

BAILEY  
He had so much poison trapped inside of him. To the point where he was writing letters... and not even to people.  
(inside of a shrug)  
So we came along and we opened him up.

And Claire... considering that...

BAILEY (CONT'D)  
We wooed nature, Claire...

As she pockets the check...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAILEY (CONT'D)  
... because it was time.

EXT. MARKET DINER - MORNING

Breakfast spot in Hell's Kitchen. Simon and Claire greet Whit out front of the diner.

SIMON  
Did you get in touch with her?

WHIT  
No. I called her all morning then I went to her office but nobody answered.

CLAIRE  
What are we going to do?

Whit breaks into a smile...

WHIT  
Then I broke in.

CLAIRE  
Wait -- you... broke in?

As he holds up an envelope...

WHIT  
The pictures were on the desk.

CLAIRE  
Were they already--

WHIT  
Photoshopped? Yup.

Claire and Simon gather around him...

SIMON  
Let's see.

And Whit takes the pictures out of the envelope and we go close onto...

A PICTURE OF HOWARD

on the roof of the building... standing near the edge... face contorted... shouting at the guard rail... Bailey is not in this picture.

PULL BACK

to see this picture being projected onto a large screen. We're in...

YARDSHAM/INLET BOARDROOM

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BOARD, six men and women (40 and 60 years old) share the large oval table with Whit, Simon, Claire... and Howard.

MARK, 60s, Chairman of the Board, speaks.

MARK  
Howard... what are you doing in  
this picture?

HOWARD  
I'm on the roof.

MARK  
We can see that. But it appears  
you're shouting at someone.

A new picture appears on the screen... Howard shouting at a Starbucks window...

MARK (CONT'D)  
As it does here. Who are you  
addressing in these pictures?

Howard just looks away... as the pictures keep coming...

MARK (CONT'D)  
Howard?

HOWARD  
It's not who.

... on the roof with Bailey... walk and talk with Aimee...

MARK  
I'm sorry?

... on the subway with Morty...

MARK (CONT'D)  
Howard, did you say something?

... only our actors aren't in any of the shots.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Howard, we're here to give you a  
chance to be heard.

And Claire can't watch anymore. As she looks to her feet, wipes away the beginning of a tear...

HOWARD  
I'm not talking to people in these  
pictures.

As new pictures get projected throughout...

MARK  
Well, that's obvious.

And now Whit can't take it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WHIT  
 Can we just... ? Howard? Can't  
 we... this is... it's over. It's  
 time. We need to sell. It's not  
 your fault. Nobody blames you.  
 But it's time. There's nothing  
 here for any of us anymore.  
 (to the board)  
Haven't you seen enough?

Simon holds strong... stays professional.

SIMON  
 Whit... this is the process.

Mark presses on...

MARK  
 Howard. It's the opinion of your  
 colleagues that you're no longer  
 fit to run this agency. That you  
 need help.

And Howard... still as can be...

HOWARD  
 (re: slide projector)  
 Turn it off.

The room goes silent. He says it louder...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 Turn it off!

Claire reacts... rips the plug out of the projector... tears  
 in her eyes.

And Howard stands...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 My colleagues think I need help?  
 My colleagues? These people here.

He looks over to Claire...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 Everybody is so idealistic when  
 they come into this business. But  
 you were a special case, Claire. Do  
 you remember what we used to call  
 you?

She does, mouths the words as he says them...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 Jolly Green Giant... yeah. You  
 were so young and fragile.  
 (beat)  
 To see you grow has been one of the  
 highlights of my career and I mean  
 that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You're the best account manager in the world -- do you know that?

She just looks down... wiping away a tear...

HOWARD (CONT'D)

But that doesn't do it for you anymore -- does it?

(beat)

I'm keeping you from the next chapter. And I shouldn't do that. Because Whit's right... it's time. And you're going to make an incredible mother.

As he looks over to Simon.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Nobody sees anything when they're wrapped up in their own lives, Simon. But I don't have a life. I have dominos.

(inside of a shrug...)

So... I see...

Simon slowly nods. He understands.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I've told you a hundred times... you're the smartest person I've ever met. But you're also sick again. I don't think there's a fight in you this time and I'm so sorry.

Whit and Claire share a confused look...

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You need this money. They need this money.

(beat)

And perceived morality is a luxury you simply don't have... and I'm proud of you for doing this.

And now Howard casts his glare on Whit.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You asked me why I won't talk to you anymore, Whit? Because I'm so mad at you. I'm so disappointed in you. And I'm not talking about the comedy with women half your age or hiring whoever you hired to follow me around and take these pictures. No...

Shaking his head...

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Shame on you. Shame on you and how dare you?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 How dare you just accept it like  
 this? How dare you not fight?  
 She's all you have in this world.  
 And it sickens me to see you take  
 it lying down. You don't need her  
 permission and you don't need her  
 forgiveness. You're her father.  
 (beat)  
 Just. Show. Up.

As Howard turns...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 You all have my blessing...

... heads for the door...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
 ... sell it all.

... and goes.

EXT. YARDSHAM INLET BUILDING - DAY

Sally Price waits outside of the building. She looks completely spent and exhausted.

When she sees Whit, Claire and Simon head out of the building, she rushes over...

SALLY PRICE  
 Look, I'm sorry I went AWOL and I  
 didn't want to disturb the meeting.

WHIT  
 What happened to you?

SALLY PRICE  
 I was in jail the whole night.

CLAIRE  
 For what?

She just looks at them for a beat, then...

SALLY PRICE  
 Mailbox tampering.

They react.

SALLY PRICE (CONT'D)  
 Yeah, security camera on the Tasti  
 D-Lite across the street. You know  
 -- to stop those rampant fat-free  
 yogurt heists. Anyway, I'm really  
 sorry.

SIMON  
 It's okay. Howard's agreed to  
 sell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She exhales.

SALLY PRICE  
Good, so you didn't need the  
pictures after all.

CLAIRE  
No, we used the pictures. It was  
excruciating.

Sally's confused...

SALLY PRICE  
But how?

WHIT  
I broke into your office and took  
them.

SALLY PRICE  
You broke--

WHIT  
I'll buy you a new door, I'm a very  
rich man now.

SALLY PRICE  
But... how did you doctor the  
pictures?

WHIT  
I didn't. You did.

SALLY PRICE  
No, I was arrested before I could.

They just look at her... confused.

SALLY PRICE (CONT'D)  
I didn't doctor those pictures.

And off their confusion...

CUT TO:

EXT. MADELINE'S GREENPOINT BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

She opens the door. Howard stands there. It's snowing.  
And...

HOWARD  
... it's Christmas eve.

She nods.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
You're alone.

MADELINE  
By choice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And then...

                          HOWARD  
Can I ruin that?

And she smiles and she lets him in.

INT. MADELINE'S GREEN POINT BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Howard looks the place over. Small, warm, comfortable. He locks in on a crude child's drawing that's hanging on the wall. It's of a woman holding her daughter's hand, under the caption "Best Mom Ever."

And she finds his side...

                          MADELINE  
Did you keep yours?

He shakes his head.

                          HOWARD  
No.

He turns to face her...

                          HOWARD (CONT'D)  
You've been crying.

                          MADELINE  
I was watching a video I took of my daughter. She's dancing with her father in it.  
(and then)  
Can I show it to you?

He violently shakes his head.

                          HOWARD  
No.

She moves to her bag on the counter and removes something from it. As she returns...

                          MADELINE  
My daughter's name was Prudence. She died of a rare form of brain cancer known as Glioblastoma Multiforme or GBM for short.  
(beat)  
She was six years old.

Stepping closer...

                          MADELINE (CONT'D)  
What was your daughter's name, Howard?

                          HOWARD  
Please don't do this...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And now we see it in her hands... the card her husband sent her. And as she hands it to him...

MADELINE  
If only we could be strangers  
again...  
(and again...)  
What was your daughter's name,  
Howard?

He shakes his head...

HOWARD  
I can't.

She moves to the table, picks up the remote control and goes back to him.

MADELINE  
Howard...

As she hits play on the remote... we don't see it... but we now hear a father and daughter singing Lionel Richie's "All Night Long."

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
... say her name.

And now for the first time since we've known Howard Inlet...

HOWARD  
Prudence.

... we see tears.

And now we see the video... the father and daughter dancing and singing... Lionel Richie's "All Night Long"... he's spinning her around and around... it's Howard Inlet.

MADELINE  
How did she die?

Now he's crying. The words barely escaping his mouth...

HOWARD  
Brain cancer... Glioblastoma  
Multiforme...

And she takes him into her hold...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
... she was six years old.

And we move past them... to the mantle... the framed pictures on it... Howard and Madeline on their wedding day... Madeline holding baby Prudence shortly after she was born... Howard and Madeline smiling with Prudence in front of her birthday cake... six candles on it... and so on...

EXT. 11TH AVENUE - NIGHT

Whit, Claire and Simon all stare at new construction... a half-built residential behemoth made of iron and glass.

CLAIRE  
I don't understand. I was here  
yesterday giving Bailey her check.

And we recognize this space as precisely where the Hegel  
Theater stood.

SIMON  
There has to be an explanation.

WHIT  
Could they have built all this  
like... this morning?

They just look at him.

WHIT (CONT'D)  
Maybe they like worked through the  
night. I mean I have a friend who  
develops buildings in Dubai and  
they put those things up in like  
three days with slave labor and--  
shut up, Whit.

And he does.

And they all stand there... completely stunned. Until Simon  
just starts to laugh.

CLAIRE  
What, Simon?

Just shaking his head...

SIMON  
Make them think it was their idea.

And we...

CUT TO:

MANHATTAN

Album Leaf's "Wet The Day" drives us from here...

Spring has taken hold of the city... time has passed...  
jackets have been traded in for t-shirts... and we land...

THE BIRCH WATHEN LENOX SCHOOL

Upper west side... school just let out... we see Isabel  
Yardsham walking with her friends. We're with...

WHIT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

across the street. He's nervous. He tries to muster up the courage to cross over to her but he can't. He just shakes his head in frustration and is about to give up, but...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
She's beautiful.

And Whit turns to see standing next to him...

WHIT  
Aimee.

AIMEE (LOVE)  
I promised you'd see me again.

As she points to Isabel...

AIMEE (LOVE) (CONT'D)  
There I am.

He looks to his daughter then back to Aimee... but she's gone.

And now Whit crosses the street...

WHIT  
Isabel.

She sees him, rolls her eyes and turns to her friends...

ISABEL  
Ughh... it's my dad. I'll meet you there.

ISABEL (CONT'D)  
I don't want to talk to you, you know that. Go away.

WHIT  
No.

ISABEL  
No?

WHIT  
No. That's right. I'm your father and I don't need your forgiveness or your approval to be here for you. So I'm just going to show up. Here. Every day. Until you...  
(he thinks about it...)  
... smile.

She considers that...

ISABEL  
So you're going to stalk me?

WHIT  
Well, yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ISABEL  
Well, that's creepy.

WHIT  
Well, I don't care.

ISABEL  
Well, what if I get a restraining order?

WHIT  
Well, I didn't think about that.

ISABEL  
Well, maybe you should.

And he blurts out...

WHIT  
I love you.

This kind of stops her dead in her tracks.

ISABEL  
Mom says you butcher that word.

WHIT  
I used to. But not anymore.  
Maybe, I don't know.  
(beat)  
Look, it's true, I love you. And nothing can change that. If you never speak to me again or if you get a restraining order... it's simple truth. So... deal with that.

And she considers that, softening for a beat. But...

ISABEL  
Whatever.

As she walks away...

ISABEL (CONT'D)  
I'm going to get a restraining order... mom will pay for it.

Shouting after her...

WHIT  
Yeah? Well, for your information they're free.

But she stops and turns to him with...

ISABEL  
Just so you know -- tomorrow's a half day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He notes that. And as she goes, we...

CUT TO:

INT. STORK AND CRADLE - DAY

Pan PREGNANT WOMEN preparing for their birthing class... many with HUSBANDS at their side. Land on Claire. She's a far different woman than the one we've known... her hair is longer and back to its natural color... she's in an oversized Middlebury sweatshirt and make-up free. And she's pregnant and she's at peace.

And Claire can't but overhear the other PREGNANT WOMEN next to her.

PREGNANT WOMAN

No. You want to use coconut oil under your eyes for it's antibacterial properties.

THE OTHER PREGNANT WOMAN

I use coconut oil on my neck.

A STUDENT enters the room and Claire locks eyes with her... it's Bailey.

PRENANT WOMAN

Sea kelp extract is better for the necks because the hyaluronic acid tightens the collagen.  
(checks her watch)  
She's late again.

Bailey simply nods, Claire nods back and suddenly it's not Bailey... just another pregnant woman.

THE OTHER PREGNANT WOMAN

She's always late. I have a 5 o'clock colonic after this then have to rush uptown for a Perlane injection that I may now have to cancel.

As Claire simply smiles, leans back and closes her eyes as...

PREGNANT WOMAN

There's just never enough time...

INT. SLOAN KETTERING CANCER CENTER - DAY

Simon lays dying. He's tiny now, barely conscious and his family is at his side.

Suddenly, Simon leans up... but his family doesn't react. He's now sitting upright on the bed while they're still crying over the empty space he left behind.

And across the room stands Morty... who smiles wide. Simon returns the smile. No words are spoken.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And as Simon slowly gets out of the bed and walks toward Morty, we...

CUT TO:

STUYVESANT PARK/DOG RUN

which is empty... and we...

CUT TO:

HOWARD'S OFFICE

which is empty... move to find one lone domino laying on the floor, then...

CUT TO:

HOWARD'S APARTMENT

which is empty... move to find those canisters of old fight films... resting on top of a heap of waste in a large garbage can, then...

CUT TO:

PROSPECT PARK

This is a simple tableau. A man and a woman walking in the park. It's a spring day. They're holding hands.

The man is Howard Inlet. The woman is Madeline.

Album Leaf gives way to Damien Jurado... "Cloudy Shoes."

We're seeing this from above... an overpass...

And Howard glances up to see... standing on the overpass looking down over them... Time, Love and Death.

He blinks... and they're gone.

And so it goes...

While we...

FADE TO BLACK.