

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"

EXT. MIDTOWN - MORNING

The holiday season lives best on the island of Manhattan. Ringing bells, Christmas windows, Rock Center's skating rink.

Enjoy it. Then find Whit... walking with a steaming coffee in his hand. He's lost in the holiday energy like a little boy... until he notices something that stops him dead in his tracks....

THE MOST SPECTACULAR WOMAN HE'S EVER SEEN

The most spectacular woman we've ever seen.

She's in her mid 20s, her beauty natural and relentless, Katherine Ross in 1967. She holds a cardboard tray of Starbucks. And she doesn't walk... she floats.

Whit is transfixed. He actually changes his course to follow her... almost in a trance... she heads into an old brick theater on 11th avenue...

Whit regards the marquee over the door... "The Hegel Theater."

INT. THE HEGEL THEATER - DAY

Old, dusty and dark. She walks right onto the stage and hands out the coffees to the two people waiting for her... a man and a woman.

 THIS SPECTACULAR WOMAN
 Venti Vanilla spice and grande
 white chocolate mocha.

The man, early 70s -- with a crazy gray Jewfro and permascowl -- sips his mocha...

 THE MAN
 Soy?

 THIS SPECTACULAR WOMAN
 Yes.

 THE MAN
 It tastes like milk.

 THIS SPECTACULAR WOMAN
 It's soy, Morty -- we do this every
 time.

 MORTY
 I'm sorry I don't want a heart
 attack.

The other woman, 30s, very butch, heavy ink, multiple pierces, chimes in...

(CONTINUED)

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...

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

Off his confusion...

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

He confirms with a slight nod.

MADELINE (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.

AIMEE (LOVE)
Howard...

He doesn't answer. Keeps walking.

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

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.