

The Group Decision
by
Ben Graham & Ian Lawler

1942 W. Liberty, #1, Ann Arbor, MI 48103
bdgraham@umich.edu, ilawler@comcast.net
(734) 769-9489, (734) 846-9713

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The room is immaculate, everything in its proper place. DAVE, a clean-cut young man, lies awake in bed. He exhales loudly. His alarm clock sounds. Dave waits for three beeps before turning it off. There is a post-it note marked, "Wake" stuck to it. He sits up and gets out of bed. A few seconds later, a different alarm clock sounds. After three beeps he turns it off. This one is marked, "Glasses." He puts on his glasses and heads for the bathroom.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Dave stands in front of the toilet. An alarm clock beeps three times. Dave turns it off and lifts the toilet seat. There is a note on the alarm clock marked, "Pee."

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - MORNING

MARGARET, a demurely attractive young woman, exits the bathroom wearing pajamas buttoned up to her neck and a robe that leaves everything to the imagination. She shuffles down the hall as a teakettle begins to whistle.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Margaret runs into the kitchen and takes the whistling kettle off the stove, wincing at the sound. She sighs in relief and pours a cup of tea. She gingerly takes a sip and pauses to savor the silence.

INT. ARTURO'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Upbeat flamenco music blares as coffee sloshes into a mug, spilling onto the counter. ARTURO takes a man-sized gulp and gasps in exhilaration. He is a handsome man with dark features and an easy grace. He dances from the kitchen into the living room.

INT. ARTURO'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM MORNING

Arturo sets his coffee down and throws open the blinds, holding his arms out wide as the sun envelops him.

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM MORNING

A television screen displays a bustling city street. A headline appears over the images.

A hand instantly changes the channel. An anchor is now giving the business report. A stock ticker appears on the bottom of the screen and the hand changes the channel again. A commercial boasts about an exciting new product. A phone number appears and the hand turns off the TV. OLIVER, a husky man, stands in front of the TV. He sighs dejectedly and walks to the couch. He sits down and dons a sleep mask. He fumbles for the remote and clicks the television back on to reveal the demon from the final scene of Disney's "Fantasia." "A Night on Bald Mountain" blares menacingly from the TV and continues into the next scene.

INT. TOM'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM MORNING

A mountain of toilet paper fills the room. The music swells as TOM, in the same pose as the demon, rises up behind it. He is a small, rodent-like man with beady eyes and a twisted expression. The music grows louder and faster as he frantically unravels more and more toilet paper into the giant mountain of crumpled tissue. The music reaches its climax and stops just as Tom finishes a roll. He pauses, unsure of what to do next, then plunges into the paper mountain.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Dave's face and upper body are entirely covered in suds. A dry-erase board hangs on the shower wall, along with several laminated post-it notes. Dave reaches over and checks off "Upper Body BE THOROUGH." He reaches the last line of his checklist. It reads, "OPTIONAL: Self-gratification." Dave slyly looks over his shoulder to make sure that he is alone. He moves the dry-erase board aside to reveal a laminated picture of Martha Stewart. He bites his lip in wanton desire.

INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - DEN MORNING

SARAH, a pretty twenty-something, thoughtfully chews her hair as she looks at one of the many inspirational posters covering her den walls. She catches herself and brushes her hair away from her face. A bachelor's degree in psychology hangs on the wall, next to a framed card reading, "Thanks for all your help!" signed by Dave, Margaret, Arturo, Oliver, and Tom. Tacked next to the card is a picture of Sarah standing behind these same people. Sarah looks at the picture and smiles. She sits down at her desk and picks up a piece of bright yellow paper and a pair of scissors. She begins to cut the paper into equal-sized pieces. Each piece is an identical reminder: "H.U.M.P. day: Hugs, Understanding, eMpathy, Perseverance! 5:30 Wednesday."

INT. VARIOUS APARTMENTS MORNING

In rapid succession, Margaret, Arturo, Oliver and Tom all pick up identical small red pieces of paper as they leave their respective homes.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM MORNING

Dave is well-groomed in a shirt and tie. He picks up his own red piece of paper and examines it. It reads: "Saturday morning Ca.R.To.O.N.S! Caring, Respect, Tons Of Nurturing and Support! 10:00 Saturday."

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - BRIAN'S BEDROOM MORNING

The room is a mess. Brian, a good looking but disheveled young man, lies sprawled out in his bed. Dave is waving his red reminder in Brian's face. Brian snores loudly. Dave begins to hit him on the nose with the reminder. Brian moves his mouth up to the reminder and begins to sensually rub his lips on it.

BRIAN
(still asleep)
Oh yeah, keep doin' that.

DAVE
Hey, wake up.

BRIAN
Who's your daddy?

DAVE
Brian...

BRIAN
That's right.

DAVE
Brian!

BRIAN
Say my name.

DAVE
I need you to get up for me, Brian.

BRIAN
Oh, baby.

Dave shakes Brian.

DAVE

Wake up!

Brian wakes up with a start.

BRIAN

What?

DAVE

Here. Take this.

Dave hands the reminder to Brian.

BRIAN

I'm not in your group.

DAVE

I know that. But you're my ride and I need to get there on time today.

BRIAN

You got it.

Brian promptly falls back asleep.

DAVE

Brian!

BRIAN

What?

DAVE

You have to get up now.

BRIAN

Not yet.

DAVE

We have to be out the door in seven minutes and twenty-three seconds.

BRIAN

Wake me up in five.

EXT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING MORNING

Dave exits the building looking dapper and well-groomed. Brian follows behind him, his hair unkempt and his shirt half-on. Dave checks his watch.

DAVE

I'm going to be late again.

BRIAN
Well, maybe you should think about
getting your own car.

DAVE
You know I'm not very comfortable
with driving.

BRIAN
Yeah, I remember.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BRIAN'S CAR DAY

Dave sits in the driver's seat. He is inspecting his mirrors.

DAVE
Okay, left mirror, check. Rearview,
check. How's your mirror look over
there, Brian?

BRIAN (O.S.)
Just go, Dave.

DAVE
Parking break, disengaged.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Please, Dave.

DAVE
Now that's strange. The parking
break is off but the light is still
on.

BRIAN
For the love of God, man! Get me to
a hospital!

Brian is sitting in the passenger seat, holding both hands
over his neck. They are stained red with blood.

DAVE
I'm not going anywhere until you
put on your seat belt.

BRIAN
Fine.

As Brian puts on his seat belt, a geyser of blood erupts from
his neck, spraying all over the car.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. BRIAN'S CAR MORNING

Brian is driving. Dave sits in the passenger seat.

BRIAN
Hey, you'll have to take the bus
home if that's cool.

DAVE
That's fine.

BRIAN
'Cause I'm gonna be... busy later.

DAVE
Okay.

BRIAN
Real busy.

DAVE
Busy. Got it.

Brian is squirming with excitement. Dave doesn't notice.

BRIAN
(bursting)
Why am I so busy, you might ask?

DAVE
(flatly)
Why are you so busy, Brian?

BRIAN
Well, if you must know, I've got a
hot brunch date.

DAVE
Fantastic.

BRIAN
It's this really cute actress I met
at my audition yesterday. Not too
bright, though.

DAVE
Sounds perfect for you.

BRIAN

So if it turns into a bunch of awkward silences, I'll bail on her and come pick you up.

DAVE

How likely is that?

BRIAN

Not likely, my friend!

DAVE

Uh-huh.

BRIAN

Not likely at all.

DAVE

Okay.

BRIAN

No awkward silences here, baby!

DAVE

I guess not.

Brian nods knowingly at Dave. Dave stares blankly. They drive in awkward silence.

EXT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - MORNING

Brian's car pulls into a parking spot.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - MORNING

DAVE

It's 9:52. I'm not going to get everything set up in time.

BRIAN

Don't you just put out some food or something?

DAVE

No, Sarah brings the food. I have to set up the chairs and make the coffee.

BRIAN

And how long does that take?

DAVE

For one person, anywhere between
twelve and thirteen minutes.

BRIAN

And for two people?

DAVE

Who is the other person in this
scenario?

Brian makes a "Tah-Dah!" gesture to Dave.

DAVE

Okay, but no messing around.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM MORNING

Dave is frantically setting up and organizing. In the
background, Brian coasts past, atop a coffee cart.

DAVE

How's that coffee coming?

BRIAN (O.S.)

Great!

Brian rolls past in the opposite direction, this time with a
coffee filter on his head. Dave straightens a sign on the
wall. It reads, "Obsessive Disorders: Yes I can, but NO! I
don't have to." Satisfied, Dave returns to his previous task,
separating blue and pink sugar packets.

DAVE

I'm just about ready for that
coffee.

BRIAN (O.S.)

Comin' right up!

Brian rolls past again, still wearing the coffee filter hat,
and now holding two Styrofoam cups over his eyes. He veers
out of control and crashes into a stack of chairs. The
chairs, as well as the cart and its contents, scatter across
the floor. Dave glares at Brian.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Dave begins to help Brian with the mess.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 No, no. You go ahead and finish.
 I'll take care of this stuff.

Dave goes back to his other tasks. Brian finishes picking up the cups, and begins gathering the packets of coffee.

OLIVER (O.S.)
 Folgers, Folgers, Folgers, Sanka,
 Folgers, Folgers, Taster's Choice!

Brian looks up, open-mouthed and bewildered. Oliver stands over him.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
 Folgers, Folgers, Maxwell House,
 good to the last drop, Folgers,
 Fol-

A hand suddenly claps over Oliver's eyes. A hyper-masculine voice speaks in a Spanish accent.

ARTURO
 Come with me, you fool!

Arturo pulls Oliver away. Brian sits and stares.

DAVE
 Brian! What are you doing?

Brian stands up and walks towards Dave.

BRIAN
 I was just... but then the...
 Folgers?

DAVE
 You were supposed to be picking up
 the Folgers.

BRIAN
 But-

DAVE
 Just do it, please.

Brian turns around to finish picking up. He stops dead in his tracks. The coffee packets are gone. He looks around, confused. Tom approaches.

TOM
 You lose something?

BRIAN

Yeah, there was a bunch of coffee
on the floor right here.

TOM

You sure?

BRIAN

Uh, yeah. I don't know, maybe it
got pushed under the cart or
something.

Brian gets on the floor to look.

TOM

See anything?

BRIAN

Nope.

A coffee packet suddenly drops to the floor in front of Tom's feet. Brian looks at Tom. Tom looks back at him, unfazed. Tom's shirt is filled to the brim with coffee packets. Tom casually walks away. Dave approaches and looks at the floor.

DAVE

Good job, Brian.

BRIAN

(to himself)

What is this place?

DAVE

Now just put the rest of the chairs
in the corner and then you can
leave.

BRIAN

Right.

Brian begins stacking the chairs as fast as he can. Margaret enters and approaches Brian. She speaks in a whisper.

MARGARET

May I have a chair, please?

BRIAN

What?

MARGARET

May I have a chair, please?

BRIAN

What?

MARGARET

May I have a chair, please?

BRIAN

(shouting)

I can't hear you! What do you want?

Sarah enters.

SARAH

No, no, no. We don't shout in this room. And why don't we shout?

Dave, Margaret, Arturo, Oliver and Tom snap to attention.

GROUP

(in practiced unison)

Because shouting...

They all shake a pointed finger.

GROUP (CONT'D)

Leads to pouting.

They all make a sad face.

SARAH

That's right! So let's all stack the chairs together.

BRIAN

But it's my fault that—

SARAH

Not in this room it's not!

GROUP

Bad feelings, halt!

They all hold up a hand, palm-out.

GROUP (CONT'D)

It's no one's fault. If we fail the test...

They swing a bent arm, disappointed.

GROUP (CONT'D)

We've still done our best.

They give a thumbs up.

BRIAN
Look, I really have to finish-

SARAH
Have to? Have to!?

GROUP
Yes, I can...

They all nod in unison.

GROUP (CONT'D)
But, NO! I don't have to.

They shake their heads vigorously.

SARAH
Very good, everyone! Now, let's all
take a seat.

The group members sit. Brian stacks the last chair and turns to leave. He notices that he is the only one standing. Everyone looks at him expectantly.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Well, you've done quite a good job
stacking...

BRIAN
What? Oh I was just-

SARAH
But now it's time to sit.

BRIAN
Oh no, you don't understand, I'm
not craz Uh, I mean I don't have a
prob I, uh, I don't think I would
have anything to contribute.

SARAH
Oh, I doubt that. Everyone!

The group holds out their arms.

GROUP
We welcome you! You are...

They bring their arms in and hug themselves.

GROUP (CONT'D)

Safe here.

Brian stands there, speechless. He looks at the door, then the group.

BRIAN

Oh, well, thank you. I guess I'll just have a seat then.

SARAH

Well, we're glad you're here. Everyone, let's say hello to our new friend. What's your name, new friend?

BRIAN

Uh, Brian.

GROUP

Hi, Brian.

SARAH

So Brian, why don't you share with us what you've been going through.

Everyone stares at Brian. He shifts uncomfortably in his seat. He looks to Dave for help. Dave is grinning in delight.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Okay, well, why doesn't someone else start today? Who would like to introduce themselves to Brian?

There is a faint mousy whisper.

SARAH (CONT'D)

What was that?

The whisper returns.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Ah, Margaret. Of course. Why don't you tell Brian a little bit about yourself.

The group leans forward, listening carefully.

MARGARET

(whispering)

Well, my name is Margaret.

SARAH
A little louder, sweetie.

MARGARET
(slightly louder)
My name is Margaret.

SARAH
Just a bit louder now.

MARGARET
(normal volume)
My name is Mar-

She claps her hands over her mouth in shock.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
(quiet again)
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to shout.
I have a low tolerance for loud
noises. I think maybe it has
something to do with my parents.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MARGARET'S CHILDHOOD HOME STUDY - DAY

YOUNG MARGARET and her SISTER are playing together and laughing. As they get louder they are suddenly interrupted by a loud "Shhh!" Two stuffy looking people, MARGARET'S PARENTS, scowl at them.

MARGARET (V.O.)
They were librarians.

INT. MARGARET'S CHILDHOOD HOME LIVING ROOM - DAY

Young Margaret approaches a television.

MARGARET (V.O.)
I had to be quiet all the time.

Young Margaret reaches for the power button, then glances over her shoulder. Her parents glare at her over the tops of their books. She sits down and watches the blank TV screen.

MARGARET (V.O.)
I guess I just got used to it.

BACK TO PRESENT

MARGARET

Anyway, now, I just can't bring myself to be loud.

SARAH

But...

MARGARET

But, I'm making progress, day by day, with help from trained professionals.

SARAH

That's right!

Sarah applauds.

ARTURO

Oh, no.

Arturo rises to his feet and begins to sway his hips. Sarah does not see him.

SARAH

Let's hear it for Margaret.

Everyone applauds. Arturo begins to dance more vigorously.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Oh, I'm sorry, Arturo. Everyone! Everyone, please!

The group stops clapping. Arturo stops dancing.

ARTURO

Gracias. Perhaps it is time that I introduce myself. Arturo is my name, and sadly, dancing is my game. It is both my blessing, and my... my...

BRIAN

Curse?

ARTURO

Yes, is good word. Not the word I was looking for, but yes. Curse! When I was a teenager in Spain, the village I lived in outlawed music. Many freedoms were forbidden.

(MORE)

ARTURO (cont'd)
 It was hard. It was tragic. It was... like Footloose. You see Footloose?

Brian nods.

ARTURO (CONT'D)
 Is good movie, no? Kevin Bacon teach Chris Penn how to dance, is funny. But this was no laughing matter. Dancing was my life. I lived for the dance. But I had no music. So I had to... improvise.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ARTURO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - BEDROOM DAY

TEENAGE ARTURO sits in his room, looking forlorn. Street noises filter in through the open window. He slowly begins to nod his head to the rhythm of the sounds. He jumps to his feet and begins to sway his hips back and forth.

ARTURO (V.O.)
 I realized that there was music all around me. The noises of the world became my personal soundtrack.

EXT. ARTURO'S CHILDHOOD HOME DAY

Teenage Arturo bursts through the door, dancing down the street.

ARTURO (V.O.)
 I had found my love again. I was dancing, dancing, all the time dancing!

EXT. SPANISH STREET DAY

A CONSTRUCTION WORKER is using a loud jackhammer. A SPANISH WOMAN leans out of her window.

SPANISH WOMAN
 Que ruido! That noise!

Teenage Arturo leaps onto a nearby car.

TEENAGE ARTURO
 Yes! Isn't it glorious!?

Teenage Arturo dances furiously to the rhythm of the jackhammer.

BACK TO PRESENT

ARTURO

Nothing could stop my passion for dancing. But as the years passed, I found that I could no longer control it. I simply had to dance. This proved to be problematic.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Two secretaries, TINA and MARGE sit behind a desk. Both speak in thick New York accents.

TINA

Your application looks to be in order. Mr. Abrams will see you shortly.

ARTURO

Thank you.

MARGE

He's running a few minutes behind, Tina.

TINA

Oh, thanks, Marge. It'll just be a moment. Sorry about the wait, sir.

ARTURO

Not at all. It is a pleasure to wait in the company of such exquisite administrative assistants.

Tina and Marge blush.

MARGE

Oh, you.

TINA

You are definitely Abrams material.

MARGE

Definitely.

Arturo winks at Tina and Marge. Tina smiles and begins to type. Arturo's foot begins to tap. The phone rings. His shoulders start to rock.

ARTURO

Oh, no.

Tina and Marge continue to work as Arturo dances wildly. A door opens and MR. ABRAMS steps out.

MR. ABRAMS

Mr. Albajara, pleased to meet-

Mr. Abrams sees Arturo dancing.

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)

What the shit is this? This is totally unacceptable!

ARTURO

(still dancing)

My apologies, sir. But the spirit of the dance compels me!

MR. ABRAMS

You sir, are not Abrams material!

ARTURO

Alas, I suspected as much. I bid you farewell.

Arturo dances out the door.

BACK TO PRESENT

ARTURO

Sadly, I have not worked in years. My wallet remains as empty as this once bountiful boligrafro basket.

Arturo indicates an empty basket.

BRIAN

What?

ARTURO

Tom has stolen the pens.

TOM

What? No, I-

ARTURO
Tell him, Tom.

TOM
But, I just-

ARTURO
Tell him now!

TOM
I stole the pens.

SARAH
(to Brian)
Tom is what we sometimes refer to
as, a "hoarder."

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Tom grabs a can and puts it in his cart.

SARAH (V.O.)
He tends to feel most secure when
he has more than one of something.

Tom grabs another can and puts it in his cart.

SARAH (V.O.)
Sometimes, a lot more.

Tom begins frantically sweeping cans into his cart.

BACK TO PRESENT

Tom is clutching two handfuls of pens.

TOM
I like to have a backup.

SARAH
Do you really need that many pens,
Tom?

TOM
Probably.

SARAH
Now Tom, let's think about this
logically.

(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)
What's the worst that could happen
if you don't have enough pens?

Tom contemplates.

DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BANK DAY

Tom is at the counter, talking to the TELLER.

TOM
I'd like to make a withdrawal,
please.

Tom hands the teller a form.

TELLER
Sir, this is a donation form.
You've just donated your life's
savings to the Communist Party.

TOM
What? No, I just want to make a
withdrawal.

TELLER
Oh, well then we just need you to
clearly write, "VOID" on your form.
Do you have a pen?

TOM
Yes, of course.

Tom pulls out a pen and begins to write. He frowns. His pen
is out of ink. He sets down the form and begins frantically
searching for another pen. The teller picks up the form and
drops it into a locked box.

TELLER
Oh, you've decided to go through
with the donation then? Very
generous of you, sir.

TOM
No! I didn't want to-

A very ATTRACTIVE WOMAN approaches Tom.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN
 (seductively)
 Excuse me, do you have a
 functioning pen I could borrow?

TOM
 I uh, no, I...

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN
 (pouting)
 Oh, that's too bad.

TOM
 But-

A government AGENT in a dark suit approaches Tom.

AGENT
 Excuse me. Tom Scuttle?

TOM
 Yes?

AGENT
 Lance Johnson, Department of
 Homeland Security.

TOM
 Department of-?

AGENT
 We recently received intelligence
 that you made a rather large
 donation to the Communist Party.

TOM
 But that was a mistake!

AGENT
 You bet your ass it was. No one
 gives money to those pinko bastards
 on my watch.

Behind the agent, The attractive woman sashays up to the
 teller. He produces a pen and gives it to her with great
 flourish. They embrace passionately.

AGENT (CONT'D)
 Sure, most people think that old
 Mother Russia has come around to
 our way of thinking.

The attractive woman and teller collapse to the floor behind the desk in the heat of passion.

AGENT (CONT'D)
But I don't buy it for a second.
Those red sons a' bitches think
they've fooled everyone.

A man's shirt and woman's bra fly from behind the desk onto it.

AGENT (CONT'D)
But not Lance Johnson!

From behind the desk, the attractive woman lets out a passionate moan.

AGENT (CONT'D)
(suddenly agreeable)
Naturally, sir, if you'd be willing
to sign a statement that affirms
your allegiance and loyalty to
these United States of America then
all charges against you will be
dropped.

The agent sets a form on the desk next to the discarded clothing.

AGENT (CONT'D)
(menacingly)
You do have a functioning pen,
don't you?

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM - MORNING

Tom cradles the pens tightly against his chest.

SARAH
Now Tom, there are more than enough
pens for everyone. Let's return
them to their proper place in the
basket.

TOM
No, I don't think so.

MARGARET
You can do it, Tom.

Sarah holds out her arms.

SARAH

Tom, you are safe here.

Tom slowly rises to his feet and walks to the basket like he's walking the plank.

MARGARET

Tom. Tom. Tom.

MARGARET AND SARAH

Tom. Tom. Tom.

Tom stands over the basket, holding the pens above it.

GROUP

Tom. Tom. Tom.

Brian looks around at the group. He joins the chant.

EVERYONE

Tom. Tom. Tom.

Using all his strength, Tom drops the pens into the basket and sighs as if he has just given birth.

SARAH

That was wonderful, Tom. Everyone, thank you for supporting Tom. Let's take a little break. When we return, let's partner up and work on some breathing exercises. Then we'll do affirmations. And we'll probably have to finish introducing ourselves next week to our new friend, Brian. Welcome, Brian.

Sarah holds out her arms towards Brian and the group mimics her. Brian gives a genuinely appreciative smile to all of them.

BRIAN

Um, thanks. Thanks, guys.

SARAH

Okay, back in a few minutes.

The group members mingle. Some sit, others grab a coffee or snack. Brian sits next to Dave. As they speak, Sarah circulates around the room, handing out yellow reminders.

BRIAN

That was really cool actually. That thing with Tom.

DAVE

Yeah, well, that's why we come. It's not all just memorized phrases.

Brian watches Sarah.

BRIAN

Yeah, I can see how it'd be more than that.

Dave follows Brian's gaze.

DAVE

Hey, what about your brunch date?

BRIAN

What? Oh, yeah. I guess I should call her.

Brian walks out. Sarah gives Dave a reminder. Dave walks over to the snack table and sits down. He begins to cut a cookie into quarters. Margaret approaches behind him.

MARGARET

I like your tie.

Dave does not hear her. He is carefully scraping crumbs off his napkin into the trash.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

I really like your tie, Dave.

Dave groups his cookie quarters carefully in the exact center of his napkin and picks it up.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

I think your tie is really-

Arturo laughs loudly and drowns her out. Dave turns around.

DAVE

Hey, Margaret. Cookie?

Dave holds out the cookie to Margaret, who smiles and takes a piece.

MARGARET

Bite-size.

DAVE
What?

MARGARET
Bite-size. No crumbs.

DAVE
Exactly.

Dave eats the third piece and offers Margaret the last one. She smiles broadly and accepts it. Dave dabs the corners of his mouth with the napkin and turns to throw it away.

MARGARET
I like your tie, Dave.

Dave turns back to her.

DAVE
What?

Brian enters.

BRIAN
(to Dave)
Hey, I got a callback!

DAVE
Huh? I thought you were talking to that girl.

BRIAN
I was. She got called back too. Our next audition's Wednesday.

DAVE
Well, congratulations.

BRIAN
Thanks.

SARAH
All right, everyone. Let's get started.

Margaret and the rest of the group begin returning to their seats.

DAVE
Wasn't she mad?

Sarah smiles at Brian.

BRIAN

Who?

Brian smiles at Sarah.

DAVE

The girl you stood up.

Sarah walks over and hands Brian a yellow reminder.

SARAH

Can't forget about our new friend.

Sarah returns to her seat as Brian watches her.

DAVE

So was she mad?

Brian begins reading his reminder.

BRIAN

(distractedly)

Yeah, pretty mad.

DAVE

Well, that's too bad. Sorry if I
cost you a hot date, man.

Brian finishes reading and looks up at Sarah, who is smiling
and laughing with the group.

BRIAN

Don't worry about it.

SARAH

Okay, everyone, let's quiet down.

Brian looks at Sarah, then at his reminder.

BRIAN

(whispering to Dave)

Hey, you want a ride Wednesday?

SARAH

Let's begin with some big, deep
breaths.

The group inhales loudly.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM MORNING

Dave exhales loudly. He is lying awake in bed. An alarm clock beeps three times. Dave shuts it off and gets out of bed.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Margaret takes a dainty sip of her morning tea. She looks down at her yellow reminder for Wednesday's meeting and traces the words with her finger. She looks at her English muffin, which is cut into four bite-sized pieces. She picks up a piece, pops it in her mouth and smiles.

INT. ARTURO'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM MORNING

Flamenco music blares as Arturo sets down his coffee next to his yellow reminder and dances over to the window. He throws open the blinds and spreads his arms to bask in the sunlight. The music ends and Arturo stops dancing. The clangs and sirens of the outside world filter in through the window. Arturo resumes dancing.

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM MORNING

City street noises sound from Oliver's television. He is seated on the couch, wearing his sleep mask. He haphazardly clicks through different channels with the remote control, then turns off the TV. He removes his sleep mask, sets it next to his yellow reminder and reaches for a box of cereal. Any visible text on the box has been covered with duct tape.

INT. TOM'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN MORNING

A yellow reminder lies next to a bowl. Cereal pours into the bowl until it overflows, covering the reminder. The avalanche of cereal continues, unabated. Tom's kitchen table is now covered in cereal. He continues to pour until the box is empty. Tom goes to the refrigerator. He returns to the table, precariously clutching several gallons of milk and an enormous spoon.

INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - DEN MORNING

Sarah wears reading glasses as she examines the poster she has made. It reads, "Impulse Control." She chews her hair as she reads. She realizes what she is doing and quickly brushes her hair away from her face.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM MORNING

An alarm clock beeps three times. Dave turns it off and puts on his glasses. He begins walking towards his bathroom when he is startled by a knock at his door. He stops dead in his tracks and eyes the door suspiciously. Dave goes to the door and opens it. Brian stands in the doorway, beaming. He is fully dressed and well-groomed. He wears an apron.

BRIAN

Good morning, sleepy head.

DAVE

What... Why are you up? Is the building on fire? Did you set the building on fire?

BRIAN

I've got a surprise for you.

DAVE

Should I call nine one one?

BRIAN

You're really gonna like it.

DAVE

I'll get the phone.

Brian suddenly produces a plate of eggs, bacon, and toast, complete with fruit garnish.

BRIAN

Voila!

DAVE

What is this?

BRIAN

It's a delicious breakfast.

Brian hands the plate to Dave.

DAVE
You made this?

BRIAN
A healthy start to a busy day...

Brian rubs his tummy in satisfaction.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Keeps us alert so we don't lose our way.

Brian looks around in mock confusion. Dave stares at him.

DAVE
What the hell is wrong with you?

BRIAN
Nothing. Just getting an early start on a big day. Don't forget...

Brian suddenly pulls two yellow reminders out of his apron pocket and waves one in Dave's face.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
We've got group tonight.

DAVE
"We?"

BRIAN
I mean, you've got group. But guess who's givin' you a ride!

DAVE
My insane roommate?

BRIAN
And don't worry, we are gonna be there on time tonight.

Dave stares at Brian.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
You. You're gonna be on time.

The "Pee" alarm sounds from Dave's bathroom.

DAVE
Well, right now I'm late.

Dave hands Brian the plate and runs into the bathroom to shut off the alarm before the fourth beep.

BRIAN
You don't want breakfast?

Dave sticks his head out of the bathroom.

DAVE
I've got to get ready for work. I
should be peeing right now.

BRIAN
All right. Just let me know when
you're ready. I'll drop you off
before my audition.

Brian walks down the hall leisurely munching on Dave's
breakfast.

INT. DAVE'S WORK HALLWAY - MORNING

Dave rushes down the hall to his office. A professional
woman, SUSAN, is walking towards him. She checks her watch.

SUSAN
(joking)
Thirty seconds late.

DAVE
I know, I'm sorry. My whole routine
got thrown off.

SUSAN
I'm kidding, Dave.

DAVE
It won't happen again.

SUSAN
It doesn't matter if you come in a
few minutes late.

DAVE
Doesn't matter?

SUSAN
Come in late tomorrow.

Dave stares at her in disbelief.

DAVE
What?

SUSAN
Or, if you want to, be on time.

Dave looks disappointed. Susan rolls her eyes. She clears her throat.

SUSAN
(sternly)
Or it's your ass.

DAVE
Yes, ma'am.

SUSAN
Dave, you know I've asked you not
to call me that.

DAVE
Sorry, boss.

SUSAN
Or that.

DAVE
Sorry...

Dave forces out the name.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Susan.

Susan smiles at him.

SUSAN
Now get to work.

Dave nods gravely and rushes down the hall.

INT. THEATER MORNING

Brian enters the theater and sits among the other actors. An ACTOR is on stage. He clutches his belly and launches into a monologue.

ACTOR
(in a thick southern
accent)
I'm gon' keep this baby! It's a
part of me, Daddy. And I won't give
it up. Not for nuthin'! I ain't
your little girl no more, Papa.

Brian giggles and turns around to share a laugh with someone. The other actors are enthralled in the performance.

ACTOR (CONT'D)
I'm all groweds up now. I'm...
all... groweds up.

The actor collapses, weeping. The sound of one clap at a time is heard from the audience. A middle-aged woman, the DIRECTOR, stands and continues to clap dramatically.

DIRECTOR
Bravo! Bravisimo! Such a brave
choice, young thespian. That...
That is acting.

The director turns to Brian.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
You will be next to pedal your
theatrical wares before me. Your
r sum , please.

Brian hands her his r sum .

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Begin.

INT. DAVE'S WORK DAVE'S OFFICE - MORNING

SUSAN
Stop, stop, stop. Just listen to me
for a minute, Dave. You can't let
this sort of thing upset you.

DAVE
But it's ridiculous! How can we
publish this kind of garbage?

SUSAN
He's had two best-sellers. I
thought this manuscript was
riveting.

DAVE
I'm not talking about the...

Dave spits out the next word in disgust.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Plot! I'm talking about this!

Dave holds up a manuscript covered in red corrections.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Run-on sentences, comma splices, colons instead of semi-colons, even the passive voice... is... used. He uses the passive voice!

SUSAN

Well, that's why we've got our best man on it. You're the guy we send in when no one else can get the job done. I mean, Dave, you're like the James Bond of grammar.

DAVE

Well, I-

SUSAN

I need you on top of this, double-o-seven.

Dave cocks an eyebrow. Sexy James Bond music plays as Dave looks Susan up and down. The music fades. There is an awkward pause.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Dave?

DAVE

This is where James Bond would say something sexy.

SUSAN

Yes. Yes it is.

INT. THEATER DAY

DIRECTOR

Give it to me, Brian!

The director runs down the aisle to the stage.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

I need more from you, Brian. This is an incredibly painful sacrifice for your character.

BRIAN

But it's a bar of soap.

DIRECTOR

Is it? Brian, until this moment, soap, water, cleansing has been this character's safety net. But now he realizes that no matter how clean he is on the outside, his soul will forever remain tarnished. He discovers he must find change from within. And so he triumphantly puts down the bar of soap.

The director runs back to her seat.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Dazzle me, Brian.

Brian takes a deep breath and focuses. He picks up the bar of soap and stares at it intensely. He continues to stare, not quite sure what to do. After several seconds, he casually sets it down, and looks at the director expectantly.

DIRECTOR

(disappointed)

Yes, thank you, Brian. I think that's all we need from you.

BRIAN

Oh, okay. So, I can look for the cast list tomorrow, and I should give the script to the next person before I go?

DIRECTOR

Yes, you can. And no, you don't have to.

Brian freezes as if struck by a revelation.

EXT. DAVE'S WORK - EVENING

Dave stands outside, looking impatiently at his watch. Brian's car races up and comes to a screeching halt at the curb. Dave quickly gets in.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR EVENING

BRIAN

I got the part!

DAVE
(annoyed)
Fantastic.

BRIAN
Yeah, the director said this is the
role I was born to play.

DAVE
Oh, really? And what role is that?

BRIAN
It's this super-intense

DAVE
Is it the role of the irresponsible
friend?

BRIAN
Huh? No it's-

DAVE
Mr. late guy?

BRIAN
What?

DAVE
You're late!

BRIAN
I am?

DAVE
And you promised you were going to
be on time!

BRIAN
Are you mad at me?

Dave glares at Brian.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(cooing)
Somebody's a grumpy bear.

DAVE
I'm not going to dignify that with
a response.

BRIAN
(still cooing)
Somebody just responded.

Dave sighs.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Who's a grumpy little bear?

DAVE
I'm a grumpy little bear.

They continue to drive. Dave stares ahead, brooding, while Brian makes faces at Dave in an attempt to make him smile.

BRIAN
Anyway, I'm sorry I'm late.

DAVE
Well, we probably won't start on time tonight anyway. Arturo and Tom take a long time to set up.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM - EVENING

Arturo is furiously shaking Tom. Packets of coffee, cream and sugar pour out of Tom's shirt and pockets.

ARTURO
Where is it? Where is it?

Arturo continues to shake Tom until a large coffee pot falls to the floor. Tom looks away in shame.

ARTURO (CONT'D)
You disgust me.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR EVENING

BRIAN
Hey, be sure to thank Tom for me.
He's the reason I got the part.

DAVE
Tom?

BRIAN
Yeah, I was at the audition, and it wasn't going very well. But then the director said something.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. THEATER DAY

DIRECTOR

Yes you can, and no, you don't have
to.

Brian freezes as if struck by a revelation.

BACK TO PRESENT

BRIAN

And it made me think of Tom at
group last night.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM - MORNING

Tom stands in front of the group holding the pens. Using all
his strength, he drops the pens into the basket and sighs.

BACK TO PRESENT

BRIAN

So I used him as inspiration.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. THEATER DAY

Brian struggles much as Tom did.

BRIAN (V.O.)

But I took it in a slightly
different direction.

Brian lets out a primal scream and hurls the soap to the
ground.

BRIAN (V.O.)

I think the director really liked
it.

The director hugs Brian, crying on his chest. He stands there
lamely with his arms at his sides.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - EVENING

Brian's car pulls up to the curb. Dave and Brian get out of the car.

DAVE
What are you doing?

BRIAN
I just thought I'd go in and say hi to Sarah.

DAVE
Say "hi" to her?

BRIAN
Yeah, you know. See how she's doing.

DAVE
Uh-huh.

BRIAN
What? I can't say hi to my new friend?

DAVE
Brian, we both know perfectly well what your intentions are.

BRIAN
Okay, so I want to ask her out. So what?

DAVE
She thinks you're in the group now.

BRIAN
Yeah, I know. Don't worry, I'm gonna clear all that up.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - HALLWAY EVENING

Brian and Dave enter. Brian rushes towards the men's room.

BRIAN
I'm gonna be a few minutes if you know what I'm saying.

DAVE
No, you're much too subtle for me.

Brian runs into the bathroom. Dave continues down the hall. Margaret enters the hall some distance behind him.

MARGARET
Hey, Dave. Dave!

Dave doesn't hear. Margaret begins to jog to catch up to him. Dave turns a corner and Margaret picks up her pace. She rounds the corner and crashes into Dave, who is bent over a drinking fountain. She flattens him against the wall and they grab each other to steady themselves.

DAVE
Jesus, Margaret!

MARGARET
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

DAVE
Are you okay?

MARGARET
I'm fine. I'm sorry. I'm such an idiot.

They both compulsively straighten their clothes, finishing by cleaning their glasses at the same time.

DAVE
(feigning blindness)
Where'd you go, Margaret?

MARGARET
I'm right here.

DAVE
I was joking. Because of the glasses.

MARGARET
Oh. Oh, that's funny. I think mine might be bent.

Dave takes Margaret's glasses from her and examines them. He bends one bow slightly, then puts them back on her face.

DAVE
How's that feel?

Margaret nods her approval.

MARGARET
Do you want to walk me to group?

DAVE
I'd love to.

Dave's watch beeps three times. He presses a button to stop the alarm.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(embarrassed)
But I guess I have to go to the
bathroom now.

Dave exits.

MARGARET
(to herself)
I like your tie, Dave.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - BATHROOM EVENING

Dave enters just as Brian is leaving a stall.

BRIAN
Whoo! You're gonna wanna avoid that
stall right there, my friend!

Dave heads into a different stall. Brian turns on the faucet. Nothing happens. He eyes his hands and grimaces, putting them in his pockets.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
All right, see ya, man.

There is no answer.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Dave, you all right? Dave?

DAVE
I've told you before that I don't
feel comfortable talking while
I'm... in this sort of situation.

BRIAN
Right, sorry. Okay, well, bye.

Brian waits for Dave to respond.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Right.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - HALLWAY EVENING

Brian exits the bathroom and bumps into Sarah, who is rushing down the hall.

SARAH
Brian! Hello!

Sarah sticks out her hand enthusiastically to shake with Brian. He pulls a hand out of his pocket, looks at it, then quickly puts it back.

SARAH (CONT'D)
And that's your choice. You have every right not to shake hands. You know, Oliver used to have a lot of issues with tactile defensiveness too, but he's made a ton of progress. You should ask him about it in group.

BRIAN
Actually, about the group...

SARAH
You're not coming?

Sarah begins to play with her hair.

BRIAN
No, I really shouldn't. See, to tell you the truth-

SARAH
You don't like the group.

Sarah pulls her hair closer to her mouth.

BRIAN
No, I'm just not really-

SARAH
Interested, I get it.

BRIAN
No, I am interested. But not in the group.

SARAH
(dejected)
Because of me.

Sarah begins to chew on her hair.

BRIAN

Look, you're an amazing woman-

SARAH

But you'd be more comfortable with a male group leader.

BRIAN

No. Wait. Just let me finish a sentence.

SARAH

I'm a bad listener!

BRIAN

No, you're fine. All I'm trying to say is-

Sarah's hair chewing is out of control.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

You're kinda getting spit all over your hair, there. Here, let me give you a hand.

Brian reaches to brush her hair away from her mouth. He looks at his dirty hands, cringes, and quickly pulls them away from Sarah's hair.

SARAH

I'm disgusting!

BRIAN

No, you're not.

SARAH

I'm so embarrassed.

BRIAN

Please don't be. It's okay. Here, come on. I'll walk you down there.

SARAH

Does that mean you're going?

Sarah gazes at Brian hopefully.

BRIAN

Uh, yeah, it certainly looks that way.

Brian walks with Sarah toward the classroom.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM EVENING

Dave enters. Everyone is already seated in a circle.

 DAVE
Sorry I'm late. I had to find
another bathroom to wash my hands
in. There was no water in-

Dave stares at Brian, who is looking through a book entitled
"Psychiatric and Behavioral Disorders: a Complete List."
Brian looks up and smiles weakly at Dave.

 SARAH
Dave, you remember Brian.

 DAVE
Yes. I remember Brian.

 BRIAN
Look, Sarah, the truth is...

Brian stands up, ready to come clean. He notices Sarah
pulling her hair toward her mouth.

 BRIAN (CONT'D)
Dave and I are roommates.

Sarah drops her hair.

 SARAH
Oh, well how nice! I guess you
don't need to introduce yourself to
Brian then, do you, Dave?

 DAVE
No. I guess not.

Dave and Brian exchange a long look as they both sit.

 SARAH
Well then, who would like to
introduce themselves to our new
friend? Oliver, why don't you tell
Brian a little bit about yourself?

 OLIVER
(looking at the floor)
Okay. Hi, I'm Oliver.

BRIAN
Hi, Oliver. Nice to meet you.

SARAH
Oliver, would you like to look at
Brian when you say hello?

OLIVER
Okay.

Oliver looks up.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Hang in there, baby!

Oliver snaps his head back down. Brian looks around. He sees a poster with a kitten hanging from a branch. It reads, "Hang in there, baby!"

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Sorry. That's why I don't look up.
I can't even remember when it
started. But I have to avoid words,
print, anything with letters. I
can't seem to control myself. Of
course, that just means I end up
looking at the floor a lot. So,
don't take it personally. I'm not
trying to be rude.

SARAH
We know, Oliver, we know. So Brian,
what about you?

BRIAN
Me?

SARAH
Yes, why are you here?

DAVE
Yes, Brian. Why are you here?

BRIAN
Uh, well I...

DAVE
Don't be afraid, Brian.

Dave holds out his arms. Sarah becomes very excited and follows suit. The whole group joins in.

GROUP
We welcome you. You are...

They bring the arms in and hug themselves.

GROUP (CONT'D)
Safe here.

BRIAN
Um, okay. Thanks.

He glances at the book in front of him.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
I had a troubled childhood. My dad
had...

Brian sees the word, "Narcolepsy" and contemplates.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BRIAN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - PARENTS' BEDROOM DAY

BRIAN'S DAD stands, motionless. He suddenly falls asleep and
crumples to the ground.

BACK TO PRESENT

BRIAN
Narcolepsy. My dad had narcolepsy.
And my mom had...

Brian sees the word, "Necrophilia."

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BRIAN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - PARENTS' BEDROOM DAY

Brian's dad and BRIAN'S MOM stand side by side. Brian's dad
suddenly falls asleep and crumples to the floor. Brian's mom
looks down at his motionless body and licks her lips.

BACK TO PRESENT

BRIAN
Not that.

SARAH
What?

BRIAN
Oh nothing. My mom had...

Brian sees the words, "Narcissistic Personality Disorder."

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BRIAN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - PARENTS' BEDROOM DAY

Brian's parents stand side by side. Brian's dad falls asleep and crumples to the floor. Brian's mom looks down at his motionless body and then looks at herself in the mirror. She licks her lips.

BACK TO PRESENT

BRIAN
Narcissistic Personality Disorder.
My mom was a narcissist. So,
obviously... here I am.

The group stares at him.

EXT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - NIGHT

Brian and Dave walk towards Brian's car.

DAVE
What were you thinking?

BRIAN
What?

DAVE
Your parents weren't messed up.

BRIAN
Well-

DAVE
In fact when we were in high school, didn't they publish an article in...

BRIAN
Parent Magazine.

DAVE

And since when do you sleep under the bed because you're afraid of your own reflection attacking you?

BRIAN

I had to come up with something!

DAVE

What were you even doing there? I thought you were going to tell her the truth.

BRIAN

(flustered)

I tried. Believe me I tried! But Sarah was all hurt... and crying.... and dirty hands... and I... spit in her hair-

DAVE

You spit in her hair?

BRIAN

No. It was from the chewing.

DAVE

The chewing?

BRIAN

She likes it, I guess.

DAVE

I don't care if she does like it! Look, man, I'm not sure if I'm comfortable with you dating Sarah...

DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Brian and Sarah skip down the beach hand in hand. Dave and the other group members look on in confusion.

DAVE (V.O.)

But I am telling you...

INT. CANDLELIT BOUDOIR NIGHT

DAVE (V.O.)
Do not chew on my group leader!

Brian and Sarah are scantily clad. Brian chews on her arm. Sarah's face contorts with pleasure.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

Dave shivers at the appalling image. They get into the car and drive off.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR NIGHT

BRIAN
Listen. Listen, okay? I tried to tell her I wasn't going to group. She got all upset. I just went to try and make her feel better.

DAVE
Well, she's going to be just as upset when you're not there next week.

BRIAN
Maybe she doesn't have to be.

DAVE
What does that mean?

BRIAN
I got a part in this play, right? And, just today my director says...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. THEATER DAY

DIRECTOR
Brian, your character does not clean because he enjoys it. His miserable soul is incapable of happiness. He cleans because he must. Everything he does is an obligation, a crushing obsession that must be satisfied. Can you imagine what that would be like?

Brian stares at her blankly.

BACK TO PRESENT

BRIAN

And I couldn't. But listening to Oliver tonight, I could. And I'm gonna use that in rehearsal tomorrow. And if I keep coming to group, I could probably learn even more.

DAVE

But group is for people with real problems.

BRIAN

Exactly! Think how much better I'll understand my character if I can spend time with people who actually have to deal with obsession every day.

DAVE

This isn't an acting class, Brian.

BRIAN

I'm here twice a week anyway.

DAVE

Look, I can find another ride. I didn't ask you to bring me all the time. You volunteered. But I'm not going to feel guilty because—

BRIAN

That's not what I meant. You know that's not what I meant. And I'll give you a ride no matter what. But this would really mean a lot to me, man. I mean, you know I don't exactly get leading roles most of the time. I just want it to be perfect, ya know?

DAVE

Yeah. I know how that is.

BRIAN

So...?

Dave thinks hard for a few moments.

DAVE
I guess I could give you some
insights.

MONTAGE

The theme music from "Rocky" plays throughout.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - BRIAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Brian bolts upright with a start and turns off his alarm.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM MORNING

Brian stands in front of the toilet staring at an alarm clock. He dances around like a child needing to pee. Brian stands in his shower, trying to read a checklist, which is written on a soaked piece of paper. He attempts to write on it with a pencil.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - BRIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brian is cleaning and folding laundry as Dave directs him.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - LAUNDRY CLOSET - DAY

Brian places the folded clothes into the washing machine. Dave nods in approval.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Dave opens the door of the refrigerator and frowns. One half is immaculate; the other is riddled with various scraps of food. Brian begins to clean out his half.

EXT. BUILDING WITH MANY STEPS - EVENING

Brian runs up the steps triumphantly. He reaches the top and raises his arms in celebration of his accomplishments.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - BRIAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

The room is immaculate.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

The refrigerator is full and organized.

EXT. BUILDING WITH MANY STEPS - EVENING

The music ends. Brian stands awkwardly for a moment, not knowing what to do. He shrugs, and opens the door to the building.

END MONTAGE

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

DIRECTOR

Open the door! Open the door and
let the theater in!

Several actors are sitting on the stage in a circle, their eyes closed, while the director walks amongst them.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

The theatre is cold. It has nowhere
else to go. Won't you give it
sanctuary, just for the night?

The faces of the other actors are placid and reflective, their eyes closed peacefully.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Offer the theatre a toasty seat by
the fire. The theatre is starving.
Hand it a piping hot bowl of soup.

Brian opens one eye.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Keep your eyes closed!

Brian closes his eyes.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

You and the theatre are so warm, so
close. You've made a new friend,
haven't you? It's the theatre.

The actors nod knowingly.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
All right, let's begin. Act two,
scene five, everyone.

The actors take their places. Brian and the actor stand on stage. Brian stares intensely at the floor.

ACTOR
Look at me, Pa. Can't you look at
me? Can't you look at your son?

BRIAN
No. No, I can't.

ACTOR
Why, Pa? Why?

BRIAN
I have no son!

ACTOR
Nooooooooo!

The actor runs offstage, screaming. Brian continues to stare at the floor.

BRIAN
(to the floor)
You're all I have left. Sweet
floor. You carry my burdens.

He picks up a bar of soap and begins to furiously scrub the floor.

DIRECTOR
Wait. That's not in the script.

BRIAN
Oh, sorry. It just sort of came
out.

DIRECTOR
Brilliant improvisation! I can tell
you've been hard at work on the
craft. Whatever you're doing,
Brian, keep doing it.

Brian beams.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

All right, let's go back a bit. I want you to be fully prepared for the scene in which your parents die.

Brian contemplates.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM MORNING

BRIAN

I know exactly what you mean, Tom. It's like I stop thinking about it for one second, and then I look down at the sidewalk, and there it is. My foot's on a crack.

The group leans forward to hear what happens next.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

And all I can think about is my poor mother. Her back broken. Her spine twisted. I'm sorry, Mama.

Brian bawls. Sarah moves closer to him.

SARAH

It's okay, Brian. Mama's gonna be all right.

BRIAN

Is she?

SARAH

Oh!

Sarah hugs him. Brian covers his eyes with his hands as though weeping. He peeks through his fingers. Sarah starts to pull away, patting Brian.

SARAH (CONT'D)

There, there, it's gonna be okay.

Brian dives back to her.

BRIAN

Mama!

Sarah hugs him again.

SARAH

It's okay. Take your time.

DAVE

Sarah, we're not going to have time
for the breathing exercises.

SARAH

Dave! I'm surprised at you.

Sarah strokes Brian's head.

SARAH (CONT'D)

This is your friend.

Sarah displays Brian's face to Dave.

SARAH (CONT'D)

This is your friend, Brian.

BRIAN

No. No, he's right. I don't wanna
take up too much time. I'll get
through this on my own.

SARAH

No, Brian. We will get through
this. Together.

Sarah addresses the group.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Why?

The group stands and forms a tight circle.

GROUP

Because teamwork...

The group puts their hands into the middle of the circle like
a team before a basketball game. As they shout the next line
they throw their hands up.

GROUP (CONT'D)

Makes dreams work!

Margaret is visibly uncomfortable with the loud noise. As the
group returns to their seats, Dave leans in close to Margaret
and whispers in her ear.

DAVE

Are you okay?

Margaret nods.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Kind of a loud exercise, huh?

MARGARET
Yeah, it hurts my ears. I have very sensitive ears.

DAVE
I hope I'm not being too loud.

MARGARET
No, you're always... I mean, you're never... You're not too loud.

SARAH
Okay, who's next? How about you, Arturo? Tell us about your weekend.

ARTURO
I spent a sensual evening with a smoldering temptress.

SARAH
Um, I'm not sure if this is appropriate-

ARTURO
We ate the richest foods and drank the finest wines.

SARAH
Oh, well that sounds lovely.

ARTURO
Then I laid her down upon my bed.

SARAH
Okay, who else would-

ARTURO
I gazed into her eyes and said...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ARTURO'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM NIGHT

Arturo lies in bed with his LOVER.

ARTURO
My love, get ready for a night of passion you will not soon forget.

Arturo begins to ravage her neck. A window shatters in the distance. It is followed by the sound of a car alarm. Arturo snaps his head up.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

Oh, no.

Arturo leaps out of bed and begins dancing to the car alarm.

LOVER

Arturo, what are you doing? Come back to bed.

ARTURO

If only I could, my darling. But the strange song of this crime in progress has awakened within me, the spirit of the dance!

Arturo continues to dance until the car alarm stops.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

Ah, at last. Now I may return to you, my love.

Arturo looks back at his bed. It is empty.

BACK TO PRESENT

ARTURO

The spirit of the dance is a jealous lover, my friends. Once she has claimed your heart, your bed will forever remain empty.

Oliver, staring at the floor, timidly raises his hand.

SARAH

Go ahead, Oliver.

OLIVER

I, uh, I had a date this weekend too.

SARAH

That's wonderful!

DAVE

That's great, man.

BRIAN

Nice.

MARGARET
 Congratulations.

ARTURO
 Did you consummate the
 relationship?

SARAH
 Arturo!

ARTURO
 I was just hoping someone around
 here was getting some—

OLIVER
 It's okay. The answer is no.
 Actually, things were going really
 well, but then there was this
 billboard.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

A dressed-up Oliver and DATE are walking down the sidewalk. Oliver alternates between looking at the ground and looking at her.

DATE
 I know you worry about being shy,
 but you shouldn't. I think you're
 the best listener I've ever met. I
 had a really good time tonight. Did
 you have fun?

OLIVER
 I had a great time. I'd really like
 to see you again.

DATE
 Me too.

They smile at each other as they round a corner. There is a large billboard in front of them. Oliver sees the billboard. His eyes open wide in horror.

OLIVER
 (reading the billboard)
 Cialis: Because you never know when
 the moment is right.
 (MORE)

OLIVER (cont'd)
Erections lasting more than four
hours, while rare, require
immediate medical attention.

Oliver's date recoils and looks at him in shock.

BACK TO PRESENT

BRIAN
Wait, wait. So you could've been
kissing this girl, but instead you
chose to read the billboard out
loud to her? That's crazy.

The group stares at Brian.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said
that. "Chose" is the wrong word.
Because you didn't really have a
choice, did you?

OLIVER
Well, no.

BRIAN
You were compelled to do it. It was
a crushing obligation.

OLIVER
Well, yeah.

BRIAN
That is so...

Brian trails off as he sees Dave, glaring at him.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(to Oliver)
Heartbreaking. Get over here, big
guy.

Oliver does not move.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Strong silent type, huh? Okay, I'll
come to you.

Brian gets up, walks over to Oliver and wraps both arms
around him in a bear hug.

SARAH

Come on, everyone! Hugs aren't
always just for two...

GROUP

They're for me and you and you.

SARAH

And you and you and you and you.

Sarah, Arturo and Tom rush over to Brian and Oliver for a group hug. Dave and Margaret arrive late on the outside of the hug. Dave places a hand on Margaret's back and she moves closer to him, forgetting about the group.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Margaret! Dave! Hugs aren't just
for two!

Dave and Margaret exchange awkward smiles and embrace the group.

INT. CAFE' - DAY

Brian sits at a table, drinking coffee. He is reading pamphlets on various psychiatric problems. An attached post-it reads, "I ordered these on-line. Read them. Use them. Stop making things up. - Dave." Sarah enters the caf and sees Brian.

SARAH

Brian?

Brian sees her and quickly hides the pamphlets under the table.

BRIAN

Hi.

SARAH

Do you mind if I sit down for a
minute?

BRIAN

Sure.

Brian sweeps some crumbs off the table and clears a space in front of Sarah, who sits down.

SARAH

Oh, you didn't have to do that. I was just thinking how great it was that you had a messy table.

BRIAN

Really?

SARAH

Sure. It's wonderful that you don't let it bother you. Most of the population I work with would never be able to sit at a table like this. It's very refreshing.

BRIAN

Well then...

Brian grabs the napkins off the table and tears them to pieces. Sarah smiles.

SARAH

(scolding)

Brian.

BRIAN

You like that?

SARAH

It was... unexpected.

Brian smiles impishly. He takes a piece of biscotti and smashes it down onto the table, sending crumbs everywhere.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Oh...

Brian beams. He takes a sip of coffee. He looks down at his cup, and then raises an eyebrow at Sarah. He slowly removes the lid from his cup.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(breathless)

Don't...

Brian continues to stare at Sarah. He slowly tilts the cup forward.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Is that a... tall?

Brian shakes his head.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Grande?

Brian gives her a sexy, pouting look and shakes his head again.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Extra... grande?

Brian nods.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Oh my.

Brian grins and tips his cup. Coffee begins to spill out.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM EVENING

BRIAN

Oh, man, you are not gonna believe what happened to me today.

DAVE

What?

BRIAN

Guess what I'm doing Friday night.

DAVE

I give up.

BRIAN

Hot date.

DAVE

I'm speechless.

BRIAN

Guess who else will be on this date.

DAVE

A girl?

BRIAN

But guess which—

DAVE

Brian, would you just spit it out?!

BRIAN

Sarah!

DAVE

Sarah who?

BRIAN

Sarah. "Sarah" Sarah. From group. She asked me out. And ya know, I always thought she was cute, but she's also really sexy.

DAVE

I don't want to hear about-

A knowing smile creeps onto Dave's face.

DAVE (CONT'D)

So you ran into Sarah?

BRIAN

Oh yeah.

DAVE

And she asked you out?

BRIAN

That's right.

DAVE

And now you think she's sexy.

BRIAN

Yeah, sexy and kind of... naughty. There was this napkin, and I was just like...

Brian mimes tearing.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

And then there was this cookie, and I was all, BAM!

Brian mimes smashing.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

And then I poured my coffee on the table and oh man! It was so hot!

DAVE

Yeah, coffee's hot all right.

BRIAN

No, it was like, steamy.

DAVE
Well, hot liquids...

BRIAN
No, it- Anyway, trust me, man.
Sarah is smokin' and I got a date
with her.

Brian victory dances his way to the bathroom and begins to wash his hands. Dave follows.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY EVENING

DAVE
You know who else is sexy?

BRIAN
Who's that, buddy?

DAVE
Arturo.

BRIAN
Arturo? Well, I guess. Probably
most women would like him. Latin
dancer type.

DAVE
And don't even get me started on
Oliver. Reading everything out
loud. So hot!

BRIAN
What are you talking about?

DAVE
And Tom! Always stealing. Uh-oh,
know what he just stole? My heart!

Dave swoons.

BRIAN
What the hell is wrong with you?

DAVE
Well, I've got a date with all of
them this Friday night. And Sarah.
And you. Now, *you* are sexy!

BRIAN
This Fri-?

DAVE
She wasn't asking you out,
goofball. We're all going out. It's
a group trip.

BRIAN
But the coffee—

DAVE
I know, I know. It was hot. But
trust me, she wasn't asking you
out.

Dave returns to the living room. Brian follows.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM EVENING

BRIAN
So, what about Margaret?

DAVE
What about her?

BRIAN
You didn't mention her. Is she
coming?

DAVE
Well, yeah. I guess so.

BRIAN
So, is she sexy?

DAVE
I... I don't know.

BRIAN
I think she is.

Dave is visibly uncomfortable. He tries to escape to the
kitchen, but Brian follows him.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN EVENING

BRIAN
She's got this kind of pouty
librarian vibe. Like on the surface
she's all quiet and shy, but
underneath she's just like this...
smoldering volcano of lust.

DAVE

No she isn't! She's not a smoldering anything. She's not a lusty volcano and she's not some naughty librarian in your sick little porn fantasy.

BRIAN

Whoa.

DAVE

She doesn't need you to fix the copier or plug in the cable...

BRIAN

What are you talking ab-

DAVE

She didn't order a pizza!

BRIAN

Dave!

DAVE

(winding down)
Extra sausage...

BRIAN

Take it easy, man. I was just messing with you 'cause you were messing with me about Sarah.

DAVE

Well, you shouldn't be hitting on Sarah.

BRIAN

Oh, but you can hit on Margaret?

DAVE

But Sarah's leading the group! And you're already distracting her with all your "acting exercises." I can't imagine what would happen if she actually liked you.

BRIAN

What do you mean, "if?"

DAVE

Just stay away from her.

BRIAN
Fine!

DAVE
Fine!

Dave and Brian storm off to their rooms.

INT. MOVIE THEATER NIGHT

The members of the group are seated next to each other. Brian is sitting next to Sarah, flirting with her. She laughs. Dave watches them, scowling.

MARGARET
Would you like some popcorn, Dave?

DAVE
What?

MARGARET
(louder)
Would you like- Oh!

Margaret claps her hand over her mouth.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I should be quiet in a movie theater.

DAVE
Well, the movie hasn't started yet.

MARGARET
Even so.

DAVE
Don't worry. You weren't being loud.

MARGARET
I wasn't?

Brian laughs out loud.

DAVE
(annoyed)
Now, he's loud.

Dave leans in close to Margaret.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I can't take him anywhere.

Margaret giggles quietly. She suddenly stops and covers her mouth again.

BRIAN

(to Sarah)

It's great that you're getting the group to go out like this. I think it'll do them a lot of good.

SARAH

Them?

BRIAN

Us. I mean it will do us a lot of good.

SARAH

You do? I wasn't sure if everyone was ready.

BRIAN

No, they- We totally are. It's a great idea.

SARAH

Thanks.

ARTURO

Oliver, I need you to do something for me, my friend.

OLIVER

Okay.

ARTURO

It has been many years since I have gone to see the silver screen. I fear that once the lights go down and the film begins, I will not be able to control myself. You must help me resist.

OLIVER

How do I do that?

ARTURO

Hold me down.

OLIVER

Well, I'm not sure if I can-

ARTURO

Hold me down! You must. It is the only way.

OLIVER

Couldn't you ask Tom?

ARTURO

Tom? I would tear through Tom like a buzz saw. No. It must be you. Only you possess the strength to keep me from the lure of the dance.

OLIVER

Okay, I'll try.

ARTURO

You are a good man.

OLIVER

But can I ask you a favor?

ARTURO

Anything, my brother.

OLIVER

Do you think you could tell me what happens at the beginning of the movie? I have to close my eyes when there's writing on the screen.

ARTURO

But of course. Together we shall triumph over our respective adversaries.

TOM

Arturo, could I have some popcorn?

ARTURO

You do not deserve it. But if I do not offer, I fear you will steal it anyway.

TOM

Is that a yes?

ARTURO

Take it, you weasel of a man. It is well-salted and buttered to glossy perfection.

DAVE
(to Margaret)
So, do you go to the movies a lot?

MARGARET
No, not really. They're usually too
loud for me. I don't like loud-

BRIAN
(loudly)
And then the tyrannosaurus is like,
roooooar!

Margaret cringes as Dave glares at Brian. Brian mimes giant
footstep with his hands, getting closer and closer to Sarah.
Sarah squeals as he closes in for the kill. He starts to pick
up handfuls of popcorn and eat them.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
And he's just pickin' up people
left and right and they're all
like, "Noooooo! Aaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

Margaret leans over to Dave.

MARGARET
Of course a tyrannosaurus could
never use its upper limbs like
that.

DAVE
I know, they're totally-

MARGARET
Vestigial.

DAVE
Exactly.

SARAH
You're getting popcorn everywhere!

BRIAN
Sorry.

SARAH
I don't mind it at all.

Brian looks at Sarah, then grabs a huge handful of popcorn
and crams it into his mouth, most of it flying in every
direction.

MARGARET

Gross.

Margaret begins pulling popcorn off her lap.

DAVE

You missed one.

Dave grabs a piece.

MARGARET

You should throw that away. My clothes might be dirty.

The theater lights dim and everyone quiets down. Dave smiles and puts the popcorn into his mouth.

DAVE

I'll take my chances.

MOVIE VOICE

Coming this fall, it was a time of war, it was a time of love. It was a time... of Meringue!

ARTURO

Oh, no.

Meringue music blasts from the screen and Margaret jumps.

MOVIE VOICE

While a country was torn apart at the seams, a couple was held together by the music of their hearts.

As Oliver desperately tries to hold Arturo down, Tom steals popcorn from Arturo's bucket. The preview ends and Arturo stops struggling.

ARTURO

Thank you, my friend.

FEMALE MOVIE VOICE

Introducing a new film by director, Jean Vishcosay. Winner of the Cannes Film Festival. Critics hail it as, "An incredible--"

OLIVER

(reading the screen)
An incredible triumph!

ARTURO
No, my friend!

Arturo covers Oliver's eyes.

ARTURO (CONT'D)
I will shield you from these
accursed, over-indulgent
independent film reviews.

FEMALE MOVIE VOICE
The most ground-breaking Italian
countryside family drama in
decades!

ARTURO
My god, that woman is beautiful.
You should see her, Oliver. She
wears a light sundress.

Oliver's eyebrows rise.

ARTURO (CONT'D)
The wind is blowing it against her
body. Her hair is billowing!

Oliver peeks out from behind the hand.

FEMALE MOVIE VOICE
Martin Meel hails Florette
DeChamp's performance as a-

OLIVER
(reading the screen)
Tour de force!

Arturo slaps his hand over Oliver's eyes.

ARTURO
I am sorry. I have failed you. It
will not happen again.

SCARY MOVIE VOICE
She thought she was alone in the
house.

Sarah leans into Brian.

SCARY MOVIE VOICE (CONT'D)
But there was only one way to find
out for sure.

The sound of a creaky door is followed by scary music. A woman screams. Sarah clutches Brian in fear. Oliver strains to see over Arturo's hand.

OLIVER

What happened? Was she alone? She wasn't, was she?

ARTURO

No, my friend. She fell victim to a slithering predator lurking in the shadows.

Brian snakes an arm around Sarah's shoulders. He reaches for some popcorn with his other hand, only to discover that it is all gone.

BRIAN

Hey, Dave, do you guys have any more popcorn? It looks like we're out.

MARGARET

We're out too.

BRIAN

What?

MARGARET

We're out too.

BRIAN

What?

Dave grabs the bucket and shows Brian. Brian looks at Dave's empty bucket, then down at his own.

BRIAN

Arturo, can I have some popcorn?

Arturo looks down at his bucket. It is empty. He scowls.

ARTURO

This can only be the work of one man.

Arturo's head slowly turns toward Tom, who is poorly concealing the mountain of popcorn in his shirt.

ARTURO

Tom, you are going to eat every last popped corn in your over-sized thieves' shirt.

TOM
But I don't even like popcorn.

ARTURO
Damn your weakness!

As the group watches the movie, everyone periodically leans in to grab handfuls of popcorn off of Tom's lap.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The group members exit the theater. They stand on the sidewalk. As usual, Oliver is looking at the ground.

SARAH
So, what did everyone think?

ARTURO
Two thumbs up? I think not.

TOM
I didn't like it.

DAVE
Not the best movie.

Brian stares at Sarah.

BRIAN
I loved it.

OLIVER
Yeah, it sounded pretty good.

SARAH
What? Oliver, you didn't watch the movie?

OLIVER
I didn't think it was a good idea.

SARAH
Oh, I didn't even notice.

DAVE
(under his breath)
I wonder why.

MARGARET
I thought it was too loud. I had to cover my ears.

SARAH
You did?

BRIAN
(joking with Sarah)
Well heck, Oliver and Margaret
should've just split one ticket!

SARAH
That isn't funny, Brian.

BRIAN
(suddenly somber)
I know. I'm surprised at myself.
Margaret, Oliver, I hope you'll
accept my deepest apologies.

OLIVER
It's okay, don't-

BRIAN
Sarah, can I walk you to your car?

SARAH
Uh, okay. Can everyone get home all
right?

Brian grabs Sarah's arm and leads her away.

BRIAN
They'll be fine.

Brian leads Sarah around the corner, out of sight.

TOM
I need a ride home.

OLIVER
Where are we?

ARTURO
Never have I felt more lost and
alone.

Tom, Oliver and Arturo look around, bewildered. Margaret
hangs up her cell phone.

DAVE
(to Margaret)
Your cab coming?

MARGARET
Will you wait with me?

DAVE

Sure.

Tom, Oliver and Arturo start to wander down the street together.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Oh, good night guys. See you tomorrow.

OLIVER

Okay.

TOM

'Night.

ARTURO

If we do not make it, tell the world our story.

MARGARET

(to Dave)

Are they gonna be okay? Maybe we should get Sarah.

Dave looks around.

DAVE

If we could find her.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Brian and Sarah reach Sarah's car. Sarah looks back nervously over her shoulder.

SARAH

Are you sure they're going to be okay?

BRIAN

Of course.

SARAH

I just worry about them alone in the city.

BRIAN

I'm sure they can take care of themselves.

EXT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Oliver is reading a neon sign.

OLIVER
Girls! Girls! Girls!

Artruo claps a hand over Oliver's eyes.

ARTURO
No, my friend! We must flee this
den of sinful desires! Come, Tom,
let's- Tom, no!

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

SARAH
You're right. They're probably
fine.

BRIAN
You shouldn't worry so much. You're
doing a really great job with the
group.

SARAH
You think so?

BRIAN
Well, I know you're doing a great
job with me.

Brian kisses Sarah. She pulls away.

SARAH
Brian...

Brian kisses Sarah again. Sarah does not pull away.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Dave helps Margaret into her cab.

MARGARET
I had a great time tonight.

DAVE
I thought it was too loud.

MARGARET
I had a great time anyway.

DAVE
Oh.

Margaret smiles at him.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(getting it)
Oh...

Margaret and Dave look at each other for a long moment. They begin to move towards each other.

BRIAN
Hey, buddy, don't let me intrude!

Dave sighs. An embarrassed Margaret gets in the cab and closes the door. The cab pulls away. Dave glares at Brian.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR NIGHT

Dave continues to glare at Brian.

BRIAN
What's the matter?

Dave turns away from Brian.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
I would think you'd be in a better mood. Looked like things were going pretty good back there.

DAVE
They "were."

BRIAN
Oh, man, did I mess that up? I'm sorry.

DAVE
Sure.

BRIAN
I shouldn't have got in the way. I was just so excited.

DAVE
Uh-huh.

Brian waits for Dave to say something. Dave is silent.

BRIAN

And why was I so excited, you might ask?

Dave stares ahead.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Or might be silently wondering to yourself?

Dave continues to stare.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

At this very moment?

DAVE

(acidic)

Why were you so excited, Brian?

BRIAN

(bursting)

Well, if you must know-

DAVE

Brian, I swear to God...

BRIAN

I just wanted to tell you that I kissed Sarah.

DAVE

You what?

BRIAN

Look, I know you wanted me to stay away from her, but I really like her.

DAVE

Me too. She's our therapist.

BRIAN

Yeah, but she's not actually my therapist.

DAVE

Oh really? So what the hell are you doing in her therapy group twice a week?

BRIAN

Well, I...

DAVE

Brian, what are you gonna do when she finds out you're a liar?

BRIAN

I'm not a liar. I'm an actor.

DAVE

(sarcastic)

Oh! And I'm sure Sarah will appreciate that distinction!

BRIAN

There's no reason for her to find out.

DAVE

So you're just gonna keep lying?

BRIAN

Acting.

DAVE

Lying!

BRIAN

Look, it's been going great so far. If we just keep doing what we've been doing, nothing needs to change.

DAVE

We?

BRIAN

Yeah, man. I never could have gotten Sarah without your help.

DAVE

(realizing)

No, you couldn't have.

Brian reaches over and pats Dave on the back.

BRIAN

So everything will be fine, as long as you keep-

DAVE

As long as I keep... helping you.

BRIAN
Exactly.

Dave turns to Brian.

DAVE
(sinister)
Helping you.

BRIAN
Yes.

Dave reaches over and slowly pats Brian on the back.

DAVE
(creepy)
Yes... Helping.

Brian begins to look a little freaked out.

BRIAN
Uh, yeah. Yeah, you said that.

Dave turns forward again. He grins evilly as they continue to drive.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Dave secretly works in his dimly lit bedroom. He sits, surrounded by pamphlets and art supplies. He grabs a pamphlet on menopause, then proceeds to carefully paste a new title onto it. The pamphlet now reads: "Coping with Obsessive Disorders." He scans his creation into his computer. He takes another pamphlet, this one dealing with postpartum depression. He pastes a new title onto it. It now reads: "Anxiety and You." Dave scans this as well. He prints pristine new versions of both. Exhausted, Dave puts his head down on his messy desk.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM MORNING

Dave is asleep, his head still on the desk.

BRIAN
Daaaaa-aaaaave...

Dave opens his bleary eyes. He is unshaven and his hair sticks up wildly. Brian is perfectly groomed, shaven, and ready to take on the world.

DAVE
(disoriented)
Wha...?

BRIAN
Daaaaa-aaaaave...

DAVE
Who's there?

Brian taps Dave on the head with a bright pink group reminder.

BRIAN
Dave!

Dave squints up at the dapper Brian.

DAVE
Are you Dave?

BRIAN
What?

Dave catches his grizzled reflection in the computer monitor.

DAVE
Am I Brian?

BRIAN
(sarcastic)
Yes, that's right. I'm Dave and you're Brian.

DAVE
(horrified)
Oh... no.

BRIAN
Seriously man, you better get up and get ready.

DAVE
I'm ready.

BRIAN
No, you're not. You're a mess. You haven't even started your morning routine.

DAVE
Stupid morning routine.

BRIAN

What are you talking about? I live by your routine now. It's changed my life.

DAVE

Good for you.

BRIAN

C'mon, I gotta go soon. Do you want a ride?

DAVE

I don't need your ride.

BRIAN

Okay.

DAVE

I don't need anything from you.

BRIAN

(cooing)

Someone's grumpy in the morning.

DAVE

Please go away.

BRIAN

Okay, I'll see you at group.

Brian heads for the door.

DAVE

Brian, wait.

BRIAN

What is it?

DAVE

I made- I mean, I found these pamphlets for you last night.

BRIAN

Oh, great. Thanks for the help, buddy.

Brian leaves. Dave puts his head on the desk and closes his eyes.

DAVE

(to himself)

No problem, buddy.

INT. CAFE' DAY

Brian is sitting at a table, reading one of his new pamphlets. He glances up and sees that Sarah has just gotten her coffee. Brian quickly hides the pamphlets on a chair beside him.

BRIAN

Hey, Sarah.

SARAH

Hi, Brian. Thanks for coming. I just wanted to talk to you for a few minutes before group.

Sarah sits down.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Let's try to keep things a little less messy today, okay?

BRIAN

Sure. Whatever you want.

Brian reaches across the table to hold Sarah's hand. Sarah quickly pulls it away.

SARAH

Brian, I think you're a great guy. And I'm obviously attracted to you.

BRIAN

Me too.

SARAH

And last night you were being so sweet to me and I think being at the movies with you made it feel more like we were...

BRIAN

Dating.

SARAH

Right. But you're my patient. And I'm your therapist. I could get in a lot of trouble for what happened last night.

BRIAN

I would never-

SARAH

I just need some time to think. So if we're going to spend time together we need to keep it professional. Do you understand?

BRIAN

No more kissing?

SARAH

That is... frowned upon. Professionally speaking.

BRIAN

Oh.

SARAH

So, I guess I should get going.

Sarah gets up to leave.

BRIAN

Yeah.

SARAH

Unless you had any concerns related to your therapy.

BRIAN

No. Not that I can think of.

SARAH

Well then, I'll see you at group.

Sarah begins to walk away. Brian looks down and spots the pamphlets.

BRIAN

Actually, Sarah...

Sarah walks back over. Brian quickly adjusts the pamphlets so he can see them but Sarah cannot.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I've been... Well, I've been going through a lot lately.

SARAH

(coolly professional)
Well, why don't we discuss it in group this morning.

BRIAN

I just don't know if I can tell
that many people about...

SARAH

About?

BRIAN

About my new problems.

Sarah sits across from Brian. Throughout the following, Brian begins to roll up his sleeves, unbutton his shirt, and splash water on himself.

SARAH

What new problems?

BRIAN

Sarah, I was hoping you and I might
be able to meet like this more
often. One-on-one. I think
together, together we can get
through this.

SARAH

Brian, what's wrong?

BRIAN

I'm just so hot! When this first
started I'd just get warm, ya know?
It was almost a...

Brian sneaks a peak at a pamphlet.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Cozy feeling. Sort of comforting.
And that was only once or twice a
day. But now, I feel like every
hour or two there's this inferno
inside me! I've tried eating more
soy, using motherwort- I've even
cut out spicy foods but nothing
seems to help!

Brian is now fanning himself with a very stylish, colorful
woman's fan. Sarah stares, open-mouthed.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

What?

SARAH

What is that?

BRIAN
It's my new best friend! That's
what it is.

SARAH
It's... lovely.

BRIAN
Isn't it, though? I'll tell you,
sometimes...

Brian sneaks another peak at the pamphlets.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
When my "spells" come, I just have
to excuse myself from whoever I'm
with, and try to find a place to
steam, ya know? Because, trust me,
when you feel like you're about to
spontaneously combust, you can get
pretty snippy with...

Brian begins to read.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Even the most supportive husb-

Brian looks up.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
I mean, friends, or family, or
whatever. Actually, if you could
just give me a second to do a quick
breathing exercise.

SARAH
Sure.

Brian continues to fan himself as he performs a complicated
breathing ritual. Ending with a long exhale, he holds the fan
in front of his face, then suddenly removes it, revealing a
relieved smile.

BRIAN
It's over. For now!

SARAH
Brian, we should probably get
going.

BRIAN
Wait. I wanted to talk to you about
something else, too.

SARAH
There's more?

BRIAN
It's a little harder for me to describe these symptoms to you 'cause I just started reading— I mean, experiencing this.

SARAH
Okay. Go ahead.

BRIAN
Well, I had this... delivery a few weeks ago. It was UPS or...

Brian reads for a second.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
PPD. Yeah, PPD, that was it. And when this "little package" arrived, it totally changed my life. I mean, obviously, right?

SARAH
Uh-huh.

BRIAN
The delivery man got out of his truck, wearing his uniform. You know, his "baby blues," and he walked to my door and gave me this so-called, "bundle of joy," and now I... I...

Brian buries his face in his hands. Sarah sits there, stunned, for a few moments.

SARAH
Brian, I think you're right. I think we're going to have to spend a lot more time working on these issues together.

BRIAN
(tearful)
One-on-one?

SARAH
Whatever it takes, Brian, we'll get through this together.

BRIAN
Together.

SARAH
But, I have to be honest with you.

BRIAN
What is it?

SARAH
I don't know how to tell you this,
Brian.

BRIAN
It's okay. Whatever it is, I can
take it.

Sarah takes a deep breath.

SARAH
I think you're simultaneously
experiencing menopause and
postpartum depression.

Brian stares at Sarah. He glances down at the pamphlets, then
looks back up.

BRIAN
That is unexpected.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM - MORNING

Margaret is quietly setting up coffee for group. Sarah and
Brian enter.

BRIAN
So, yeah, I guess they're not so
much "hot flashes" as they are...
warm moments.

SARAH
It's okay, Brian. You don't need to-

BRIAN
And that package, it was UPS.

SARAH
Not "PPD?"

Brian explodes in a loud, fake laugh. Margaret winces at the
sound.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Good morning, Margaret.

MARGARET
Hi.

BRIAN
(loudly)
Hey there, Margarita!

MARGARET
That's not my name.

Brian sweeps Margaret up and begins to dance with her.

BRIAN
(singing)
Wasted away again in
Margaritaville!

MARGARET
Please stop.

BRIAN
Searchin' for my lost shaker of
salt!

Dave enters, looking exhausted.

MARGARET
Help me, Dave.

BRIAN
Some people say that there's a
Sarah to blame!

DAVE
Let her go, Brian.

BRIAN
But I know...

SARAH
Brian, please...

BRIAN
That it's Dave's damn fault.

DAVE
Yes, you're very clever.

Dave pulls Margaret away from Brian. Margaret collapses into Dave's arms.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(to Margaret)
Are you okay?

MARGARET
So... loud.

DAVE
I know.

MARGARET
Touching me...

DAVE
It's over now.

BRIAN
Man, Dave, you look terrible. Are
you okay?

DAVE
I'm fine.

BRIAN
Margaret, doesn't Dave look
terrible?

MARGARET
I think he looks fine.

DAVE
I'm just tired.

BRIAN
I don't know, man. Sure you haven't
been partying like a rock star?

DAVE
Yeah, right. We get a lot of that
around here.

Rock music blares as three gorgeous, provocatively dressed STRIPPERS enter. Margaret cowers in Dave's arms. Brian and Sarah gape. Tom enters, carrying a large boom box on his shoulder. The strippers swarm Tom and begin to dance. Oliver enters, holding up Arturo, who feebly attempts to dance. All three men are in the same clothes as the previous night, unshaven and unkempt.

SARAH
Who are your new friends, Tom?

TOM

What?

SARAH

(shouting over the music)

Who are your new friends?!

Tom still does not hear her. Sarah walks over and turns off the stereo.

ARTURO

Oh, thank god.

Arturo goes limp in Oliver's arms. Oliver lays him on a nearby table.

SARAH

(frazzled)

Would one of you like to introduce us to your friends?

TOM

They're my friends!

ARTURO

Yes. Tom refuses to share his exotic new acquaintances with anyone.

SARAH

Well, I, uh... Maybe that's something we could talk about today!

Arturo reaches out longingly from the table.

ARTURO

Sexy... dancing... womens.

SARAH

Just, just rest, Arturo. Oliver, are you okay?

Oliver stares at the floor.

OLIVER

So many words.

SARAH

Oliver?

OLIVER

So many... bad words.

Oliver dons his sleep mask.

SARAH
Maybe we should get started.

Most of the group takes a seat. Arturo remains sprawled on the table. Sarah notices the three strippers standing around Tom's chair.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Tom, I'm afraid your new friends
are going to have to wait outside.

Tom clutches the strippers, who pout.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Tom...

Tom sighs. He nods to the strippers, who slink out the door.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Okay. Great. Everyone, let's thank
Tom for his help.

BRIAN
All right, Tom!

DAVE
(half-hearted)
Nice job, Tom.

ARTURO
Oh god, the pain.

Sarah glances at Arturo.

SARAH
Yes, well. All right. Who would
like to start?

ARTURO
I think I may be dying.

SARAH
On second thought! Why doesn't
everyone work on some breathing
exercises while I talk to Arturo
for a moment.

Sarah rushes to Arturo's side. Margaret gets a snack. Tom picks up his stereo and begins to fiddle with it. Brian sits next to Dave.

BRIAN
So I met with Sarah this morning.

DAVE
Uh-huh.

BRIAN
Yeah. Man, your pamphlets...

DAVE
What about them?

BRIAN
They, uh...

DAVE
They what?

BRIAN
They worked great.

DAVE
What?

BRIAN
Oh yeah. Sarah says she and I
should start meeting one-on-one to
talk about my new symptoms. We're
starting tomorrow.

DAVE
One-on-one?

BRIAN
I am a patient who is going to
require a lot of special attention.

DAVE
(to himself)
It's gonna be even worse.

BRIAN
Huh?

DAVE
Group. Group is gonna be even
worse. She won't be able to help
anyone but you.

BRIAN
And I'm the only one faking it.

DAVE
You don't even need her.

BRIAN
I know. Isn't that ironic?

Tom's stereo suddenly blares rock music. Oliver stands up in alarm, still wearing his mask.

DAVE
You have to stop this, Brian.

Margaret throws her snack away, grabs her coat, and heads for the door. She runs into Oliver, spinning him around. As Margaret exits, the strippers enter and begin to dance near Tom.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Margaret?

BRIAN
What did you say?

DAVE
(shouting over the music)
You have to stop this, Brian.

BRIAN
(shouting back)
Stop what?

Oliver, now discombobulated, begins to wander blindly around the room. Arturo rises to his feet on top of the table. Sarah tries to stop him.

DAVE
Destroying the group so you can hit on Sarah.

BRIAN
I'm not destroying the group.

Arturo begins to dance deliriously on the table.

DAVE
Are you blind? We're tanking, here, Brian. Oliver's wearing a sleep mask twenty-four hours a day, Margaret just walked out, Arturo's dancing himself to death and Tom's hoarding strippers!

BRIAN
And that's my fault?

DAVE
Everything is your fault!

BRIAN
So is that why you tried to sabotage me with your little pamphlets?

DAVE
I had to! You're out of control. You have to tell Sarah the truth or I will.

BRIAN
The truth is I like her and she likes me and there's nothing you can do about it.

DAVE
Oh really? Well, then I'll just explain to her...

Oliver pinballs off of Tom. Tom drops the stereo and the music cuts out.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(still shouting)
That you don't have any obsessive disorders! That you never had any obsessive disorders! And that you've just been faking it the whole time to get in Sarah's pants!

Sarah stares at Brian. Oliver blindly crashes into the table beside her and Arturo topples off of it.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM MORNING

Several alarms are going off. Dave is sleeping on top of his blankets.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN MORNING

Margaret sits at the kitchen table with her hands over her ears. A teakettle whistles loudly on the stove.

INT. ARTURO'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM MORNING

The apartment is silent. Arturo stands motionless in front of his window. It is a gloomy, over-cast morning. One of Arturo's legs is in a full-length cast.

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM MORNING

Oliver sits on the floor, wearing his sleep mask. He slowly lifts up one side of the mask and immediately snaps it back down. His floor is entirely covered in books, magazines and newspapers.

INT. TOM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM MORNING

Tom peeks his head out from underneath a blanket. He quickly darts back under the covers. Tom is nesting under several feet of blankets and pillows.

INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - DEN - MORNING

Sarah sits at her desk writing on an orange piece of paper. She suddenly crumples the paper and throws it in the trash, where it joins dozens of identical crumpled pieces. Sarah grabs a handful of her hair and pulls it to her mouth.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - MORNING

Brian walks out of his room, showered and dressed. He checks his watch, then glances over at Dave's closed bedroom door. He exits.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY MORNING

Dave plods down the hall, looking surly and unkempt. Susan approaches him.

SUSAN

Hey, Dave.

Dave grunts.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
You're really late today.

DAVE
Yep.

SUSAN
Traffic?

DAVE
Nope.

SUSAN
Do you... have an excuse?

DAVE
You.

SUSAN
Me?

DAVE
You told me to be late.

SUSAN
I don't remember saying-

DAVE
You said it doesn't matter if I
come in a few minutes late.

SUSAN
Well, this is more than a few
minutes.

DAVE
Whatever.

SUSAN
Are you okay, Dave?

DAVE
Not really.

SUSAN
Is there anything I can-

DAVE
No.

Dave enters his office and closes the door in Susan's face.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAVE'S OFFICE MORNING

Susan opens the door and enters.

SUSAN
What's with you lately, Dave?

DAVE
Nothing.

SUSAN
Well, something's obviously wrong.

Susan picks up a manuscript and shows it to Dave. There is a single line of red ink. It reads, "Who cares?"

DAVE
I thought that said it all.

SUSAN
Dave, maybe you should take a few days off.

DAVE
Fine by me.

Dave gets up and heads for the door.

SUSAN
Just go home and get some rest.

DAVE
You're not the boss of me.

Dave exits, closing the door in Susan's face. Susan stands there, confused. She opens the door and sticks her head out.

SUSAN
I am the boss of you!

INT. THEATER DAY

Brian is on stage with the actor.

ACTOR
No! No, Pa! You gots ta make a choice! You gots ta be a' choosin'!
What's it gonna be, Pa?

Brian is not paying attention.

ACTOR (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Brian?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Brian?! Earth to Brian!

The director runs to the stage.

ACTOR
I can't work like this.

DIRECTOR
Oh, quit being such a prima dona.
Now, Brian, I don't know where your
head is today. But I need you here
with me. This is act three!

BRIAN
And?

DIRECTOR
And our hero is at a crossroads. He
must choose whether to continue
down the selfish road of personal
gratification, or he can redeem
himself. Redemption, Brian, that's
what act three is all about. Doing
the right thing, no matter how hard
it is.

The director begins to run back to her seat.

BRIAN
I don't know if I-

DIRECTOR
Whatever it takes, Brian, we'll get
through this together!

Brian freezes as if struck by a revelation. The director
returns to her seat in the audience.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
All right, Brian, show me some
redemption! Brian?

Brian is not on the stage.

ACTOR
He just ran out.

DIRECTOR
Fascinating.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Brian enters.

BRIAN
Dave? Dave?

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM EVENING

Brian opens the door and pokes his head in.

BRIAN
Dave?

Brian turns on the light. The room is in shambles. Brian stares at the mess. He steps into the room.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dave enters, cold and disheveled.

INT. DAVE AND BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dave pauses in the doorway and sighs. He turns on the light, surprised to find everything put away in its proper place. Dave inspects his room, confused. Brian enters.

BRIAN
I'm sorry, man.

DAVE
I tried to tell you.

BRIAN
I know.

DAVE
The room looks great.

BRIAN
I was trained by the best.

DAVE
I feel like I should repay you or something.

(MORE)

DAVE (cont'd)

If you want, I could throw your clothes on the floor and smear pizza on your walls.

BRIAN

I'll take a rain check on that. Think I'm gonna hit the sack. You need a ride to work in the morning?

DAVE

No. I've been asked to take some time off.

BRIAN

That's cool. I'm taking a couple days off too. I've got some errands to run.

DAVE

Since when do you run errands?

BRIAN

I just need to... fix a few things. Hey, you mind giving me a hand in the morning?

DAVE

Sure, if you need my help.

BRIAN

Yeah, I definitely do. Good night.

DAVE

'Night.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - MORNING

Brian is driving. Dave is in the passenger seat.

BRIAN

Hey, thanks for coming with me today.

DAVE

It's no problem. Where are we going, anyway?

BRIAN

I really appreciate you helping me out.

DAVE

Sure. How am I helping, exactly?

BRIAN
'Cause I know I haven't been there
for you lately.

DAVE
Right. So what the hell are we
doing?

Brian suddenly pulls the car over. He stares at Dave.

BRIAN
We're making things right.

Brian reaches into the back seat.

DAVE
And how are we...

Brian produces a bouquet of flowers and hands it to Dave.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Um, thanks?

BRIAN
(cooing)
Someone's about to have a very
romantic day.

DAVE
And who might that be?

Brian begins to touch Dave's hair and smooth Dave's shirt.

BRIAN
Someone who looks very handsome.

DAVE
(alarmed)
Brian, why did you bring me here?

BRIAN
Don't be afraid, Dave. It's
destiny.

Dave gives Brian a nervous smile as he sneakily tries to open his locked door. He begins to panic and furiously pulls the door handle.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Look!

Brian points out the window to a nearby building. Inscribed above the door is a sign reading, "Global Soundproofing, Incorporated: Making the world quieter since 1967."

DAVE

So?

BRIAN

Just go inside. You'll figure it out.

INT. GLOBAL SOUNDPROOFING MORNING

Dave enters, holding the flowers. He is confronted with a silent sea of cubicles. He looks around, but no one is visible. Cautiously, Dave begins to walk through the room. A loud crash brings Dave to a halt. Suddenly, dozens of scowling faces pop up from behind the cubicles and angry grumbling fills the room. The noise subsides and the faces silently descend.

MARGARET (O.S.)

Sorry, everybody.

Dave spins around to see Margaret cleaning up her mess. He looks down at the bouquet and smiles.

INT. GLOBAL SOUNDPROOFING MARGARET'S CUBICLE - MORNING

Margaret finishes cleaning and looks up to see Dave. She stands up. Dave leans in close to whisper in her ear.

DAVE

I'm sorry to bother you at work.

MARGARET

It's okay.

DAVE

I brought you some flowers.

MARGARET

They're lovely.

DAVE

I was scared you might not be at group tomorrow.

MARGARET

I'm not going.

DAVE

But you have to go. That's the best part of my week.

MARGARET

Group?

DAVE

No. You.

MARGARET

Oh.

DAVE

Brian won't be there anymore. So it won't be so loud.

MARGARET

I don't like it when it's loud.

DAVE

I know. I like your glasses.

MARGARET

Thanks.

DAVE

I like your hair.

MARGARET

Really?

Dave nods.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I like your tie.

DAVE

What?

Margaret grabs Dave's tie and pulls him closer to her.

MARGARET

I like your tie.

DAVE

You do? Oh. Well, thanks. I-

Margaret puts a finger over Dave's lips.

MARGARET

You're being too loud.

DAVE
Oh, sorry. I didn't mean-

MARGARET
Shut up.

Margaret kisses him.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Marge is applying lipstick as her colleague, Tina, types.
Brian approaches.

MARGE
And how may we be of service?

BRIAN
May I please speak to Mr. Abrams?

TINA
Do you have an appointment?

BRIAN
Uh... yeah.

Brian peers over the desk at the schedule. He suddenly thrusts his hand at Marge.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Norkelchuck's the name. Sydney
Norkelchuck. Pleased to meet you.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MR. ABRAMS' OFFICE DAY

Mr. Abrams sits behind his desk. Brian sits across from him.

MR. ABRAMS
Well, Mr. Norkelchuck-

BRIAN
My friends call me Syd.

MR. ABRAMS
Well, Syd, I'll be honest with you.
My parents were immigrants. Hell,
my grandparents may have been
immigrants, I don't know. I'd love
to hire a hard working Spaniard
like Mr. Albajara. But he just
didn't strike me as Abrams
material.

BRIAN

Would you give him another chance,
Mr. Abrams? Fred? Can I call you
Fred?

MR. ABRAMS

Well... Damn it, Syd. If the
largest distributor of colostomy
bags this side of the Mississippi
says to give that poor, immigrant
son of bitch another chance, who am
I to argue? Maybe he is Abrams
material.

Brian stands and shakes Mr. Abrams' hand.

BRIAN

Thanks a bunch, Fred.

MR. ABRAMS

Don't mention it, Syd.

Brian heads for the door.

BRIAN

Oh, and Fred?

MR. ABRAMS

Yeah, Syd?

BRIAN

You ever need a deal on ass bags,
you know where to find me!

INT. GLASSES STORE - DAY

Oliver is browsing for glasses. He picks up a pair and tries
them on.

OLIVER

Brian, where are you?

Brian appears from behind an ad display. He holds up a sign.

BRIAN

I'm right here.

OLIVER

(reading the sign)
All frames, twenty percent off!

BRIAN
 (to himself)
 Not strong enough.

Brian grabs another pair of glasses and hands them to Oliver.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 Try these.

Oliver tries on the glasses. Brian grabs another sign.

OLIVER
 (reading)
 All new, super-sexy bifocals!

BRIAN
 Nope. How about...

Brian grabs a pair of thick, coke-bottle glasses. He hands them to Oliver, who puts them on. Brian holds up the sign again. Oliver squints, but remains silent.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 (to a saleswoman)
 We'll take these.

INT. WAREHOUSE STORE - ENTRANCE - DAY

Tom stands at the entrance of a huge bulk warehouse store, his eyes wide open and his jaw dropped. Brian stands beside Tom, smiling. Brian pats Tom on the back.

INT. WAREHOUSE STORE - CHECKOUT - DAY

Behind Tom and Brian is a line of employees, all pulling enormous flatbed carts piled high with boxes. Brian turns to the CHECKOUT GIRL.

BRIAN
 Hi.

CHECKOUT GIRL
 Quite a load there.

BRIAN
 Yeah, we-

TOM
 I like to have backups.

The checkout girl begins to ring up the purchases. Brian smiles at her. His smile fades as the loud beeping of a vehicle backing up is heard. Brian turns apprehensively.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM - EVENING

Dave, Margaret, Arturo, Oliver, and Tom are all seated, munching on plates of chips. Arturo's leg is still in a cast. Oliver wears his new glasses. Tom is dipping his chips in an enormous drum of guacamole on the floor beside him.

SARAH

Everyone, let's all thank Tom for the chips.

The group members mumble their thanks through mouthfuls of chips.

ARTURO

I know I would enjoy my chips more with some delicious green avocado accompaniment.

SARAH

Tom was nice enough to share his chips with us. If he doesn't feel like he has enough guacamole to go around then that's okay.

ARTURO

He has enough to feed an army of starving Mexicans!

SARAH

Arturo!

ARTURO

I apologize. Sometimes we Spanish lash out at our Latino brethren. Lo siento, Mexico.

SARAH

Getting back on track, I wanted to tell all of you that I'm sorry if I've been distracted by... well, by Brian, lately. But I want you all to know that starting right now, I'm totally, one-hundred percent here for you guys. So, who can I help first?

The group is silent.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Anyone?

The group shifts uncomfortably. Margaret tentatively raises her hand.

SARAH

Margaret! Yes, wonderful. I'm listening.

MARGARET

I stubbed my toe getting out of bed this morning.

SARAH

Ah. Well, yes. That must have been upsetting.

MARGARET

Well, not really.

SARAH

(disappointed)
Oh. And why not?

MARGARET

Well, when I looked under the bed to see what I had stubbed it on-

DAVE

We found twenty bucks!

Dave pulls a twenty dollar bill out of his pocket. Sarah chokes on her chip. Oliver briefly lowers his glasses to look at Dave.

SARAH

So, you mean...

ARTURO

I believe he is saying they spent the night together.

SARAH

Yes, I got that, Arturo.

ARTURO

Making sweet nerd love all night long.

SARAH

Arturo!

ARTURO

And they were not the only four-eyed love machines last night.

SARAH

Arturo, I... I don't even know what that means.

ARTURO

Tell her, Oliver.

OLIVER

Oh, that's okay.

ARTURO

You know you want to.

OLIVER

I had a date last night.

SARAH

And it didn't work out?

OLIVER

Actually...

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER NIGHT

Oliver and his NEW DATE walk down the street. He is wearing his new, thick glasses. They round the corner and are faced with a large billboard. Oliver squints through his glasses and stumbles, falling onto his date. They collapse against a wall together.

NEW DATE

Oh, Oliver...

She kisses him.

BACK TO PRESENT

SARAH

Well, it sounds like the two of you had a lovely-

ARTURO

He scored!

SARAH
(embarrassed)
He...

ARTURO
Did the horizontal mambo, yes.

SARAH
Arturo, that's not what I was going
to say.

ARTURO
My apologies. I am perhaps a bit
excitable today. For tomorrow I
shall join by brothers among the
working class.

SARAH
You mean...

ARTURO
Arturo has found a job!

SARAH
Well, that's wonderful.

ARTURO
Yes. It was almost a disaster, but
I persevered.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Arturo approaches the secretaries, Tina and Marge, using a
pair of crutches.

TINA
Oh, no! What happened to your leg?

MARGE
You were like Fred Astaire!

Tina produces a handkerchief and dabs her eyes.

TINA
And now you're all banged up.

Marge grabs a tissue to blow her nose.

MARGE
It's so depressin'!

ARTURO
Ladies, ladies, please.

The secretaries are inconsolable.

ARTURO (CONT'D)
Don't cry for me, Marge and Tina!

MARGE AND TINA
Oh, you.

The secretaries compose themselves as Arturo takes a seat. Tina begins to type. Arturo's uninjured foot begins to tap. The phone rings. Arturo's shoulders start to rock.

ARTURO (CONT'D)
Oh, no. Not again.

Arturo struggles to remain still, but cannot contain himself. He gets to his feet and dances on his good leg. Mr. Abrams enters and stares at Arturo.

ARTURO (CONT'D)
I am sorry to have wasted your time, sir.

Arturo begins to sadly hop towards the door.

MR. ABRAMS
Now, hold on there, son. Ladies, knock off that racket!

Tina stops typing. Marge picks up the phone. Mr. Abrams leads Arturo to his office.

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)
Mr. Albajara, Syd told me all about your condition.

ARTURO
Who?

MR. ABRAMS
Your mentor, Syd Norkelchuck.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MR. ABRAMS' OFFICE DAY

ARTURO
(confused)
Yes, of course... Mr. Nor... chuck... son. I just call him big Syd!

MR. ABRAMS

Well, big Syd told me all about it. And wouldn't you know it? My immigrant father suffered from the same damn debilitating ailment.

Mr. Abrams motions to a picture on his desk. It shows a portly man in lederhosen dancing on a table.

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)

I loved that crazy, dancing son of a bitch.

ARTURO

Of course.

MR. ABRAMS

Son, what I'm trying to say is, welcome aboard!

BACK TO PRESENT

SARAH

Arturo, that's fantastic. What a week you all are having! Tom, how are things with you?

Tom motions toward the drum of guacamole. He gives Sarah an enthusiastic thumbs up.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Wow. You know I have to say, after our last session together I was expecting today to be... difficult. But everyone seems to be doing great. I'm so proud of you guys for doing all this on your own.

The group members look at each other awkwardly.

DAVE

Well...

MARGARET

Sort of.

OLIVER

I actually...

TOM

I had some help.

ARTURO
From a guardian angel.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Definitely not an angel.

The group members turn to see Brian standing in the doorway. Oliver squints through his thick glasses.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Just a friend.

OLIVER
What? What's happening?

BRIAN
Don't worry, Sarah, I'm not coming to group.

OLIVER
Is that Brian? It's Brian, isn't it?

ARTURO
Yes, my friend. He has come to the group to tell us that he is not coming to the group, apparently unaware of the inherent irony of his actions.

BRIAN
If you guys can just give me a minute, I'd really appreciate it.

SARAH
Brian, you've wasted enough of our time already.

BRIAN
I know. I know I have. Just one minute. Please.

Sarah looks to the group for support, but they are all staring sympathetically at Brian.

SARAH
Go ahead.

BRIAN
Thank you. I just needed to tell you guys that I am so sorry. It drives me crazy that you guys have shared stuff with me.

(MORE)

BRIAN (cont'd)
Really honest, hard stuff to talk about. And all I've done is lie to you. You guys have no idea how much this group has meant to me and... you've taught me a lot.

Brian looks at them in turn, ending on Sarah.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Take care.

Brian exits.

ARTURO
I don't care what anyone says, I'm going to miss that guy.

TOM
Yeah.

OLIVER
Me too.

DAVE
I'll... still see him all the time, but otherwise I would.

MARGARET
I'll miss him.

Sarah looks at the sad faces of the group members.

SARAH
Me too.

ARTURO
Thankfully, I have a picture of him on my desk to forever remind me of his help.

SARAH
What?

ARTURO
His help. Getting my job.

OLIVER
And my date.

Tom grunts in agreement through a mouthful of guacamole. Sarah turns to Dave and Margaret, who are holding hands.

SARAH
So...

DAVE AND MARGARET

Brian.

SARAH

Huh. I guess everything has sorted itself out, then.

MARGARET

Everything?

Margaret winks at Sarah. Sarah contemplates a moment, then exits.

OLIVER

What's happening? Did she leave?
She left, didn't she?

TOM

I think she went to cry.

ARTURO

Hers was not a look of sadness.

OLIVER

What do you mean?

Arturo rises up onto his good leg.

ARTURO

She has gone after him!

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - HALLWAY EVENING

Sarah hurries down the hall.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - CLASSROOM EVENING

TOM

What's she gonna say to him?

ARTURO

It's driving you crazy, isn't it,
Tom?

TOM

Well, I mean, I'd like to know.

MARGARET

It's driving me crazy.

DAVE

Me too.

ARTURO

I must admit, I too, am on the
verge of insanity.

Oliver, still wearing his new glasses, stands up and begins
to walk in the wrong direction.

OLIVER

Well, let's go check it out.

Arturo hops over and attempts to guide Oliver.

ARTURO

This way, my intentionally near-
sighted friend.

The group members exit.

EXT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING EVENING

Sarah looks around for Brian. She gives up and heads inside.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - BATHROOM EVENING

Brian splashes water on his face. He stands at the sink,
drying his face and hands.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - HALLWAY EVENING

Sarah comes back inside and walks towards the classroom.
Brian exits the bathroom. They stand there in silence.

SARAH

That was really sweet, what you did
for everyone.

BRIAN

I was just trying to make up for
the damage I've done.

SARAH

You've done more in a few days than
I have in the last year.

Sarah pulls her hair towards her mouth.

BRIAN

Here, I got you these.

Brian pulls several barrettes from his pocket and hands them to Sarah. Sarah looks at them and blushes. She pulls the hair from her mouth and pins it back.

SARAH

See? You've thought of everything.

BRIAN

I haven't really done anything.
These are all just quick fixes.

SARAH

But they help.

BRIAN

For now. But it's just temporary.
The group needs more. They need
you, Sarah. You have no idea how
much you help them. Or how much you
teach them. Or what it does to have
you believe in them. We... The
group loves you, Sarah. You're
doing a great job. Please, believe
that.

Sarah reaches for her hair, but it is not there due to the barrettes. She blushes.

SARAH

I don't know if I can.

BRIAN

You have to.

Sarah and Brian exchange a long look. Arturo, hopping on one leg, leads Oliver around the corner.

ARTURO

Did someone say, "have to?"

Dave and Margaret, holding hands, enter. Tom appears, dragging his giant guacamole drum behind him.

GROUP

Yes you can, but no! You don't have
to.

Sarah, embarrassed, covers her face with her hands. She drops them to reveal a huge smile.

ARTURO

But seriously, in this case, you do have to.

DAVE

It's true.

OLIVER

We think you're great.

MARGARET

You're the best, Sarah.

TOM

You can have some of my guacamole.

SARAH

Thank you, Tom. Thanks, everybody.

Sarah hugs the group.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'll meet you guys back in the room. I'm just gonna walk Brian out.

DAVE

Take your time.

The group members head towards the classroom as Brian and Sarah go outside.

EXT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING EVENING

SARAH

I'm glad you came tonight.

BRIAN

Me too.

Sarah extends a hand to Brian.

SARAH

Friends?

BRIAN

Friends.

Brian shakes her hand.

SARAH

Good.

BRIAN
So, what are you doing Saturday
night?

SARAH
Brian...

BRIAN
It's okay. You can bring a
chaperone.

Sound of applause.

INT. THEATER NIGHT

Sarah is seated in the front row of the theater with the group. Brian stands on stage with his fellow actors. They take a bow. The actors all extend an arm towards the director, who stands up in the audience and waves. The other actors bow again, but Brian remains upright. He extends an arm towards the group. The other actors bow several more times, but Brian remains motionless.

FADE TO BLACK.