



Get To Living

By

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Inspired by true events

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EXT. COUNTRY CLUB SWIM MEET - DAY

**Graphics Card:** "Chapter 1: The Hero's Journey"

Swim meet hangs in the balance. Hordes of enthusiastic swimmers surround the pool, chanting in support of their teams. ADAM (8), a shy, nervous kid anxiously grips his kick board on the starting block. People behind him, there's nowhere to hide.

ADAM  
(to his coach)  
I can't do this.

COACH  
Yes you can Adam. I promised your parents, we're all counting on you.

STARTER  
Our final event, the kick board relay.  
Swimmers, take your mark, get set...

Hear starting gun. Adam anxiously dives in. Frantically kicks as crowd chants his name. Struggling, his sister, DANA waits.

DANA  
Adam, kick harder, we're losing.

Nearing the wall, Adam hands the board to Dana, reaches for the ledge. His hand slips, he sinks in deep water. Panic ensues. Splash! Lifeguard lifts Adam to safety. Crowd silent. Adam walks to his towel and hides.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERNEATH THE TOWEL - DAY

Find Adam ashamed and alone. Hear the buzz of the meet. The edge of the towel lifts and a friend joins him inside this makeshift tent.

ADAM  
I don't want to go out there Kate.  
Everyone will laugh at me.

KATE  
We don't have to. No one will make fun of you. I promise. Or they will have to deal with me.

ADAM  
(slight smile)  
Thanks, I'm good right here.

KATE  
Lucky for you, I have nothing better  
to do. We can read my new book.  
"Knuffle Bunny"... it reminds me of  
your dad when he tried to babysit.

Kate opens the book and the two friends start reading aloud,  
giggling, as his embarrassment starts to lift.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

ADAM (now 11) waits at his desk to present his 5th grade book  
report to the class. His right leg vibrates in anticipation.

The teacher calls him to the front of the class. He rises,  
places a collage board on the easel. It features vintage  
baseball news clips and images. He begins his presentation.

ADAM  
(shyly, no eye contact)  
My story continues the legend of  
Shoeless Joe Jackson after the events  
of the movie "Field of Dreams," he was  
a baseball player who magically  
reappeared in Iowa after this poor  
farmer hears voices and built a ball  
field. But in my story, there was more  
to it...

ANNOYING CLASSMATE  
Whoa, like zombies. Sweet.

All the kids laugh.

TEACHER  
Settle down. Adam worked hard on his  
story. Give him your attention.

ADAM  
More like ghosts than zombies...

CLASSMATE  
Like baseball playing ghosts? That  
sounds stupid.

KATE

If you'd be quiet and listen!

TEACHER

That's enough talking. All of you.

Growing more uncomfortable in the spotlight, Adam feels beads of sweat noticeably beginning to form on his forehead. His papers fall to the ground and he struggles to collect them.

ADAM

Umm, as I was saying. My story is what happened when Shoeless Joe disappeared back into the corn...

CLASSMATE

Man, look at him sweat. Oh my god, he's melting, he's melting!

Everyone but Kate laughs. The laughter drowns out the scene as Adam desperately tries to dab away the moisture.

TEACHER

Okay, children, that's enough.

CUT TO:

EXT HOME DRIVEWAY BASKETBALL HOOP - NIGHT

A basketball bounds off the rim on a cold winter night. A single spotlight reveals Adam (now 14) collecting the rebound and dribbling to the top of the key.

ADAM

Bears down one. 15 seconds left...

ADAM fakes left, drives right. Elevates, release, swish!

ADAM

It's good, Bears win, AHHHHH...

Adam runs around and dives into snow, but he's not alone.

KATE

Nice shot champ. But I would have blocked it for sure.

Embarrassed, he quickly rises and brushes off snow.

ADAM

I doubt that very much.

Kate picks up the ball and shoots. It goes in.

ADAM

My mom said your dad got a new job and you're moving.

KATE

He was transferred to Chicago so we have to start at a new school soon.

ADAM

I'm kind of glad you're leaving. It's tough to always have to carry you. It's a real burden.

KATE

Is that right? Funny boy.

ADAM

So, will you guys come back and visit?

Adam grabs the ball and dribbles away. Roles reversed.

KATE

I don't know. But you can always call me if you're bored, or need a reminder that you suck at everything.

ADAM

Yeah no, but I'm sure you'll be calling me every day. Maybe I'll call you back, if you're lucky.

KATE

Wow, a girl can dream can't she?

Kate grabs the rebound. Pauses. Stares directly at ADAM. In many ways this interaction was an end to their childhood.

KATE

Take care of yourself Adam. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something. I mean it.

ADAM

I know. I know.

KATE

Let's be honest. Your odds of being a writer are way better than basketball player.

She passes it back to Adam.

KATE

Try not to miss me too much Sawyer.

She walks into the night. Gone. All he can do is watch.

He walks back into the garage where the reflection of a car window captures the turmoil and sadness on his face.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT OFFICE PARKING LOT & CORRIDOR - DAY

Present day. Adam (late twenties), a creative director at Franklin Morris Agency (FMA) sits in his parked Jeep Wrangler. Music begins, a song like "Oh Baby" by LCD Soundsystem.

**Title Card** - "Get To Living", roll opening credits.

Wearing headphones, we follow Adam on his walk from the parking lot through the corridors of the building and into the FMA agency office.

CUT TO:

INT. FMA CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Inside a conference room, BEN BRADY (early 40s, account director) and ROBERT PARKER (55, head creative) are deep in conversation. Ben, noticing Adam, jumps up to get his attention. Music fades out.

BEN

Adam, I know you're jamming, but  
thought you'd want the chance to walk  
Rob through the latest plan.

Adam steps into the conference room and puts his bag down.

ADAM

Okay, umm, where did you leave off?

ROBERT

I've got the basics.

BEN

Tell him where we landed.

ADAM

Well, every year it's the same song and dance with this show. Exec on stage. Roll video. Product comes out, cue a bunch of talking heads. So we thought, what if we flipped the script?

ROBERT

Not sure I'm tracking...

ADAM

(suddenly nervous)

Top of show. A dramatic opening video. A tone-setter. Dark and moody. Intense, tight detail rich shots with big bold messages that build with the music. Until the screen can't take it anymore...

The sound of glass breaking.

ADAM

A vehicle smashes through the screen, a live DJ pops up, the show begins. Every product in the pipeline drives on in a fashion show style event. With no words spoken. The biggest runway show ever and the cars are the stars.

ROBERT

Interesting idea, but I can tell you right now our clients won't buy it.

BEN

Why? It's bold, completely unlike anything we've ever done before. The media will for sure eat it up.

ROBERT

(ignoring Ben)

Did you even read the brief Adam?

ADAM

(a bit defensive)

Of course, the challenge was to think differently this year, which...

ROBERT

Yes, but it also outlined strict financial parameters. Did you miss that part? Where's my panel discussion?

BEN

We went a different direction.

ROBERT

Adam, I'm disappointed. You should know there is no magic budget here.

BEN

I think we should pitch it and let them scale us back. Why censure ourselves?

ROBERT

Not your call. Sorry to be the buzzkill here, but I need you guys to try again. Let me know if I need to bring in other voices to help, the clock is ticking!

ADAM

No need, we'll figure it out.

ROBERT

Great. I've got to run to another meeting. But we should regroup, sooner rather than later, please.

Robert exits. They watch in stunned silence.

BEN

Man, fuck him. The idea is solid.

ADAM

No, this is my bad Bennie. Sorry.

BEN

No need to apologize. But, dude, you need to fight harder for your vision. Don't give up so easily.

Adam leans back in his chair. Exasperated.

ADAM

I know Robert only cares about HIS ideas, he literally told me that once after a pitch.

BEN

Bro, there's more creativity in your left nut sack than he has in his entire body. You need to grab the controls, or this FMA machine will chew you up and spit you out!

ADAM

I might need an escape hatch.

BEN

No way man, it's your time to shine. Let's grab David, and talk through how to salvage this shit sandwich.

Collecting their computers, they exit the room.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. OFFICE/PARKING LOT/DRIVE HOME - DAY

**Music track:** a song like "Warm Hug Waves" by EMBRZ.

Inside the agency. Adam, Ben and DAVID (28, designer, stylish young black man) at work in a conference room. Music out.

ADAM

So the fashion show is out. We take the 'TED Conference' approach. Different speakers on day 1, a dinner event. Morning of day 2 is all product immersion and we wrap with the live audience panel discussion and maybe a surprise music performance?

BEN

As long as it isn't Kid Rock, I like it. Checks all the boxes from the RFP.

DAVID

Sure does... I can work with this.

ADAM

Appreciate you guys jumping in.

BEN

Stop. Even the Dream Team lost to a bunch of college kids in '92 before they figured their shit out.

DAVID

Best team ever. Robert should dig where we're heading...

ADAM

Yeah, because it's basically his idea. I'm bummed we killed our runway idea.

BEN

We'll find a way to sell that down the line... trust me boys.

DAVID

A hundred percent. Either way, we drink beers on Thursday...

BEN

(high fives David)

Hell yes we do. GTL baby. Thursday Night Football is back, rocks and wings, let's freaking go...

ADAM

Game one. A new season and god willing, a brand new way for the same old Lions to disappoint us again.

DAVID

No way man, this is our year!

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. ADAM'S HOUSE - DAY

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 2: The Roommate"

Adam opens the front door to his modest home. A sofa. TV. Bookcase filled with books. Wall art of Detroit themed photography. Kitchen trash everywhere. Leftovers, coffee grounds, tissues, napkins, etc. The prime suspect, STELLA (10 year-old American Bulldog), is face deep in a jar of peanut butter.

ADAM

Stella! No. Bad girl. We talked about this, trash is off limits.

Stella rolls over, tail wagging, happy to be caught.

ADAM

Oh hell no, you're on my shit list.  
Outside, let's go!

Adam lets Stella out the back door into the yard. Notices missed calls and messages. Presses play, starts cleaning.

CELL PHONE VOICEMAIL

Monday, 7:55 am... (nothing, click)  
Monday, 8:02 am... (nothing, click)  
Monday, 8:12 am... (nothing, click)

Adam stops cleaning, looks at his phone on the table.

ADAM

Dear god, make it stop.

Next message plays. A voice from his recent past.

LISA

Hi Adam, it's Lisa. I forgot a few things in the move. A dress, some shoes. Should be in your closet. Would you drop them off at my condo ASAP? Please. I won't bother you again. Promise. Thanks. Bye.

End of messages. Stella is barking to come inside. Staring at Adam through the glass.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Adam walks into his bedroom and collapses on his bed. Stella follows dutifully and lies on top of him.

ADAM

You are killing me Stell. Help a brother out. You're not letting me out of this walk, are you?

On that trigger word, Stella hops down and races to the front door, barking with excitement.

ADAM

Okay, okay, I'm coming. Patience.

Adam grabs her leash and some bags and the duo head out.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

**Music:** a song like "It's Ok It's Alright" by Emmitt Fenn.

Adam and Stella on a walk. Stella pulling him. She squats to go to the bathroom on a lawn in front of its owner, an older gentlemen, who nods disapprovingly.

Down Main Street, Stella passes a golden doodle being led by an attractive blonde. Before Adam can say anything, Stella and the other dog decide they are done with this interaction. They continue their journey through a local park. Scene ends on their street with Stella racing ahead of Adam, leash in mouth, easily beating him to the front door. Adam is winded.

ADAM

Damn, you win again, good girl.

The two enter his house. Door closes. Music fades out.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Find Adam hard at work at his kitchen table. It's late. A pile of crumbled up sketch book paper is strewn everywhere. Stella is sleeping nearby on her dog bed.

ADAM

(adding to the pile)

Fuck me, Stella. Everything I write is derivative trash.

Camera cuts to his computer screen which rests on a blank white page, with the headline - "TBD" by Adam Sawyer. Pulling up his email, he notices a note from Robert.

**Email message:** *Adam, I appreciate the quick turnaround on the pitch deck. Let me know when I can expect to see something.*

ADAM

(talking to Stella again)

Girl, there is zero chance of us ever escaping Robert at this rate.

Stella is unmoved. Adam stares intently at the blank page, nothing. He gives up and closes his laptop. Frustrated.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCAL SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

The Vine Tavern. A dingy sports bar with cheap drinks, pool tables, darts, cheap food and many TVs. A safe haven for disgruntled Lions fans each fall.

BEN

Love this time of year. Football season. Escaping the fam every Thursday night. Let's fucking go!

DAVID

Hell yeah Benny. But first things first, Adam, what's up with Lisa?

ADAM

Oh that, I showed up at her place and guess who answers the door?

DAVID

No way. Tank top, swole as fuck Brad? Do you think they were...?

David makes a gesture simulating a sexual act.

ADAM

Wow, thanks.

BEN

Best thing that ever happened to you. You've got an entire city of eligible women, down for a ride on the A-Train. Choo Choo!

Loud, exaggerated train whistle and motion.

DAVID

Hell yeah you do!

ADAM

That's a lot to process. We need to focus on the game, wings and beer.

BEN

That's the spirit. I'm on it.

Ben gets up from the table to find their waitress.

DAVID

Man, I can't believe Robert shit on round two today. He's got balls calling it "boring" after we basically followed his lead. I nearly fell off my chair when Benny told me.

ADAM

We gave him exactly what he asked for and it still didn't matter...

DAVID

Keep your head up. Control what you can control. You still writing?

ADAM

Kind of. I've been trying to get started on a short story, but FMA is killing my creative spirit.

DAVID

Don't let it. You've got a book or a script in you. I just know it.

Ben returns with a WAITRESS (cute, mid twenties).

WAITRESS

Gentlemen. Hello. It sounds like we are celebrating more than just the return of football season tonight.

BEN

Yes we are! Adam, here, is 100 percent single and ready to mingle!

WAITRESS

Congratulations. Should I put in another bucket?

BEN

Now you're talking. Two buckets, a few dozen wings, and we might as well throw in four shots of Fireball while we're at it.

ADAM

Oh no. Are we doing this tonight?

DAVID

Don't listen to him, yes we are! Tonight is a celebration.

The waitress leaves. The attention turns to the game.

BEN

Men, how are we feeling about the Giants on Sunday? Are you on the hook to watch with your parents?

Hear cheers of football fans reacting to something on tv.

ADAM

Of course. I can't miss another year of my Dad screaming at the TV and spewing his conspiracy theories.

DAVID

I can see it now. Big John with a Miller Lite in his recliner. Throwing imaginary flags at the screen.

BEN

Holding, interference, you stink!

ADAM

It's like you've been there before.

The waitress returns with their drinks.

WAITRESS

Here you go. And the four shots of Fireball. Is there anything else you need right now?

BEN

Yes, we need you to drink one of these shots with us.

WAITRESS

Oh, I thought Adam was having two?

DAVID

Nope. Football is a team game, everyone has to play their role.

WAITRESS

(looking around)

Well, if you put it that way, guess I can't say no. Cheers boys...

They all slam the shots. Waitress departs.

BEN

I think she digs you. Ask her out.

DAVID

You do like waitresses. Wait, where did you meet Lisa again?

ADAM

Fuck you guys.

The laugh. Patrons erupt with a touchdown on screen.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Early morning alarm clock. Adam wakes to the POV of a 90 lb. blanket on his chest, hungry eyes staring down at him.

ADAM

Good morning Stella. Hi. Not awkward at all. Okay, off, please.

Stella hops down. Adam slowly shuffles into the kitchen, pours dog food into a bowl. Stella devours it.

ADAM

Whoa. Easy tiger. Not having any emergency vet appointments. If you choke, it's in god's hands.

Adam brews himself a cup of coffee. Sits down at his laptop. Scrolls through email, one message stops him. It's from Kate.

ADAM

(reading Kate's email)  
 "Adam! It's been too long. I ran into your Mom at Nino's so you probably heard I'm back. I'd love to catch up. We might stop by for the Lions game on Sunday so hopefully I'll see you there."

Phone rings. FaceTime. He reluctantly answers. Split screen.

ADAM

Hi Mom. Way too early for FaceTime.

MOM

Oh, hey there. I wanted to confirm you were coming on Sunday for the game.

ADAM

Of course, I wouldn't miss the full Dad Lions experience for anything in the whole wide world.

MOM

Excellent. You're not going to believe who I ran into?

ADAM

Hmm, was it Kate Martin?

MOM

Yes! How did you know?

ADAM

She sent me an email. Which is completely out of left field since we haven't spoken since the incident.

MOM

What incident?

ADAM

That's a story for another day mom.

MOM

Alrighty then! Well, I invited her over for the game and pickle so bring your paddle.

ADAM

Lovely. Are you sure she's ready for the full Lions game-day experience with the Sawyer family?

MOM

Maybe your father will settle down with her in the room.

ADAM

Doubtful. Need me to bring anything?

MOM

Just your A game.

ADAM

Always do. Bye mom.

Hang up, split screen ends. Opens door, Stella races outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING THE PARK - DAY

Saturday morning. Stella in hot pursuit of a tennis ball. Adam, David and Ben following their weekly boot camp workout.

BEN

Get some Stella. Look at her go, doesn't move like an old dog.

ADAM

She handles your insane early morning workouts better than we do.

Stella returns with the ball, playfully drops it. Adam picks it up and throws it off into the distance.

ADAM

Find it girl.

DAVID

That was fun Bennie. And by fun, I mean not fun at all.

BEN

Keep pressing play, boys.

DAVID

If you say so. Any plans for today?

A tired Stella returns and lays down in a puddle.

ADAM

Nice, you're walking home, I have no plans, still trying to get this writing project off the ground.

DAVID

Great to hear that you started. Big news.

ADAM

You're using the word "started" very loosely here. I think I'm still debating what to call this monstrosity. Maybe I'll just make it about Stella and call it a day.

BEN

I'd be down to hang with you boys but Holly has us booked solid. Anniversary dinner tonight. The twins have a soccer tournament at the crack ass of dawn in Lansing where I will be sitting in a chair, listening to the Lions, pretending to give a shit about 8U soccer. With any luck, we lose every game and don't have to go back next weekend.

DAVID

I'll pray for the swift demise of your children's athletic hopes and dreams.

BEN

I appreciate you man.

ADAM

I sometimes forget what an actual adult you are. Makes sense given your advanced age...

A common refrain from Adam and David relating to Ben.

BEN

Age my ass. I'm in my damn prime.

ADAM

Yeah you are. What about you D?

DAVID

Steph and I have a wedding in Grand Rapids.

ADAM

Lucky. Who's getting married?

DAVID

It's Matt, a friend from art school. He and Kim are finally doing the thing.

ADAM

Isn't she the one who went to State with Lisa? That must be why...

DAVID

Yep, that's her. So we get to ride the party bus with your ex and MAGA Brad.

BEN  
 (checking phone)  
 Alright boys, I'm being summoned.

DAVID  
 Yeah me too. Adam, have a good one.  
 I'll send photos.

ADAM  
 That's okay, I'm good. Later boys.

David and Ben depart. We find Stella rolling in mud.

ADAM  
 Seriously? You're killing me.

Adam grabs her leash and they start walking. A squirrel runs by and Stella pulls him out of the frame.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOM & DAD'S HOUSE - DAY

**Graphics card:** Chapter 3: "Game Day"

Adam opens the gate for Stella, who races off in search of her furry friend, Louie. His mom appears. They embrace.

ADAM  
 Hey Mom. Stella has been bouncing off  
 the walls to see Louie.

MOM  
 Good. Maybe she will tire him out.

They start walking to the back patio.

ADAM  
 So, what time is Kate coming over? I  
 need to mentally prepare myself.

MOM  
 I think she and her friend will be  
 here around halftime.

ADAM  
 Friend? What friend?

MOM  
 I believe his name is Todd.

ADAM

Huh, interesting. Okay, time to rip this Big John band-aid off. Deep breath...

MOM

Ha. You know he likes it when you're here, and I like the break.

Adam and his mom walk into the house.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY

The house hasn't changed much in decades. Country style. Old family photos adorn the walls. Painted white cabinets. Jean's glass collection on display. Front and center, seated in his favorite recliner, John Sawyer is game ready. Adam enters.

ADAM

Hey Dad, what are they saying about the Lions' chances this season.

DAD

The usual. Defense is weak. No depth. Offensive Line is unproven, these analysts don't know anything.

New year. Same gripes.

ADAM

Sounds valid. We do have new faces.

DAD

We'll be fine. Never bet against Dan Campbell. But players nowadays only care about money. Not like in my day.

MOM

Do you know how much they are paying Goff? Over fifty million dollars a year to play football.

ADAM

If they win, he's worth it. Fair market value today. You don't have to like it but...

DAD

I don't like it. Regular people like us can't even afford to go to a game.

ADAM

When was the last time you went to a game?

DAD

Doesn't matter. The point is the owners pay them millions and they get hurt, or always complain. Bunch of prima donnas...

ADAM

Yet, here we are, spending an entire Sunday watching them as we will do for the next six months.

DAD

Jean! Will you bring me a beer?

ADAM

No worries, Dad. I'll get it.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. PARENT'S HOUSE PATIO - DAY

Adam seated in a screened in patio with his Mom, protected from the sun. A ceiling fan rotates the stale air of a late summer day. The two of them eat turkey sandwiches with chips and a pickle at a picnic table with its Honolulu blue cloth.

ADAM

So Mom, what's the good word?

MOM

You tell me and we'll both be rich. How's FMA treating you?

ADAM

Same old, same old. One fire drill after another. I can't wait for this show to be over.

MOM

You're such a talented writer, it's not too late to make a change.

ADAM

I just need to get my shit together.

MOM

Language.

ADAM

Sorry.

Stella paws at Adam from below.

ADAM

No Stell. How's your pickle game? Are you guys playing a lot?

MOM

Couple times a week. Although your father complains. You know how he can get, "Jean, that was your ball. Jean, too high. Jean, scamper!"

ADAM

Are we playing today? I'm good if you want to cancel.

MOM

Nonsense. We have a court reserved at 5:00 and dinner afterwards. You're in!

ADAM

I better start stretching then if I'm going to take you down.

MOM

Ha. No, you're on my team because Kate and her friend are playing.

ADAM

Lovely. By the way, how often are you talking to Kate anyway?

Jean smiles, says nothing.

MOM

Go watch the game with your father, I'll be in soon.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENT'S HOUSE FAMILY ROOM - DAY

The big game. Adam is awoken by a familiar sound.

DAD

WHAT? HOLDING! How do you not see that, he's holding him like crazy.

ADAM

Whoa... what happened?

DAD

Good morning sunshine. Same old Lions, playing down to the other team's level. But these refs are awful. Holding every play, not called...

ADAM

It can't be all bad, we're winning.

DAD

You watch. I bet you they find a way to lose. Mark my words.

ADAM

We're good. Just need a stop, go into the half with the lead.

3rd and long, Giants RB breaks through...

DAD

NO. Tackle him. Oh my god, you stink. LOOK, another blatant hold the refs missed. God, they hate us.

ADAM

I'm sure it's nothing personal.

Halftime. Jean walks into the room.

MOM

What happened? Giants score?

DAD

Yes Jean. We're getting screwed and our big money players are doing diddly squat.

Needing an escape hatch, Adam is saved by the sound of Stella and Louie barking. He gets up and walks out into the yard.

MOM

That must be Kate. She texted they were on their way.

DAD

Who? Oh Kate. Yes, I forgot.

MOM

Promise me you will behave. The referee can't hear your yelling.

DAD

I'll try, but if we lose this game, the season is over.

MOM

It's week one...heavens to betsy.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARENT'S HOUSE BACKYARD - DAY

Outside in the yard, Adam finds two dogs greeting a visitor.

KATE

Stella, I've missed you my sweet girl.

ADAM

She is usually a good judge of character. I'm not sure what's happening now.

KATE MARTIN (now 28, athletic, dark long hair, naturally pretty) clad in athletic-leisure wear.

KATE

You're still such a dork. How are you my friend, it's been too long.

They embrace. First time in forever.

ADAM

Never better. Living the dream with my best girl here. You know how we roll.

KATE

I do remember.

A man approaches, bottle of wine in hand.

KATE

(noticing)

Oh, hey babe. Adam, I'd like you to meet my boyfriend, this is Todd...

TODD STRYKER (late 30s, white, preppy, dressed in country club attire), enters the yard. They shake hands.

ADAM

Boyfriend? Okay, breaking news, nice to meet you Todd.

TODD

You as well Adam. It's good to finally put a face to the name.

ADAM

(unsure to Kate)

You too...? Somehow this is my fault.

KATE

Yes it is. Whatever dude. We're hopefully, sticking around for a bit, right hon?

TODD

Well, we'll see how it goes with the new plant. Chicago is OUR home now.

Todd gives Kate a half hug and cringy forehead kiss.

KATE

Sure hon, but I'll take any excuse to come back. My agency has an office in Detroit... and it helps when your guy is their biggest client.

ADAM

Where are you working now?

KATE

Howard Worldwide. Heard of them?

ADAM

I have, one of the big four in the D. We should head inside before Jean starts wondering if I ghosted again. I'm warning you, the Lions look like shit and Big John is in rare form.

KATE

I love it, Todd, you will get such a kick out of Adam's parents.

The three of them and dogs head inside for the 2nd half.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENT'S HOUSE FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Fast forward to the 4th quarter. Adam, Todd, Kate, Jean and John gathered in the TV room. Lions are down 4 points.

DAD

Here we go. Take it right down the field, use clock, score, Lions win.

KATE

This is so fun, watching the Bears on Sundays has been soul-crushing.

TODD

Hey now. Remember where I'm from.

The Lions are driving to take the lead. 4th down. The Lions QB passes into the end zone as the clock expires. A collision. the pass is incomplete. Giants win 28-24.

DAD

What, that's interference! This team is cursed, that ref hates us! I bet he called the infamous Dan Skipper game in Dallas. Cheaters!

ADAM

Dad, I doubt NFL refs are holding personal grudges against an entire football organization.

DAD

You don't know anything.

TODD

I'm with you John. You gotta throw that flag. He was all over him.

DAD

Jean, you guys go on without me. Same old Lions. They stink!

John storms out of the room. They watch him go.

MOM

Well alrighty then! He just gets crazier every year.

ADAM

One game in a long season.

KATE

Jean, are you sure it's okay to crash your pickleball party?

MOM

Yes. I am counting on you two.

TODD

Fantastic, but I have to warn you, Katie can be a bit competitive.

KATE

Speak for yourself. I'm just happy to be back with my favorite people.

MOM

We're thrilled to have you, and you too Todd. Kate was always family to us so that makes you family too...

TODD

Well I am honored. Thank you.

ADAM

(stretching)

Are we doing this or what? I'm not getting any younger over here.

KATE

(standing up)

No, you're not! You are going down Sawyer...

MOM

You too never change. Okay, I'll grab my gear and we can go.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB PICKLEBALL COURT - DAY

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 4: The Match"

Mid point with Adam and his mom battling Kate and Todd in the non-volley zone (kitchen). A dink from Jean lands on Kate's side. Her return is too high. Adam smashes it down the middle of the court.

KATE

Nice shot Adam. Sorry babe.

TODD

Don't say sorry. Hit better shots!

Switching places, Adam tosses a ball to his mom.

MOM

Okay, I have eight-eight, two.

KATE

Adam, I'm surprised. You're not terrible at this.

ADAM

Easy! I've been beating you in sports since we were five.

TODD

Are we going to talk or play? Serve it up Jean.

MOM

Eight, eight, 2nd serve.

Jean serves to Todd. His return pins Adam deep. He attempts a lob with Jean now in the non-volley zone.

ADAM

Oh no. Mom, look out.....

A gust of wind stymies the return, hanging it in the air.

TODD

Arrrrrrrrrrrr.....

Todd smashes the ball over the net directly into Jean's face.

KATE

Oh my god, Todd.

Jean crumbles to the ground, face in hands. They gather.

ADAM

Mom! Are you okay?

TODD  
I'm sorry, it was an accident.

Kate and Adam lift his mom up. His mom removes her hands.

KATE  
Jean, what can I do?

MOM  
I'm fine. It was an accident. I just  
need a quick break.

They walk her to a nearby bench to sit, she grabs a towel.

TODD  
Again, Jean, my apologies. We can take  
as long as you need.

KATE  
Or we can stop playing Todd, jeez.

MOM  
No, no, no. You go on. We have the  
court for another half hour.

TODD  
That's the spirit. What do you say?

KATE  
(exasperated)  
I'm done. You guys go ahead.

ADAM  
Are you sure Mom?

MOM  
No, you boys play. Kate and I need to  
catch up.

Todd jumps on the opportunity.

TODD  
Sounds good. Adam, what do you say?  
Play to 21? Score is 8-8. My serve.

ADAM  
Sure, why not.

TODD  
I'll go easy on you.

**Music track:** a song like "Stir Fry" by Migos.

Todd grows more arrogant and demonstrative with each point he wins. Until, mercifully, Todd ends the game. Song fades away.

TODD  
(fist pump)  
Let's go. Yes, that was fun.

They meet at the net, exchange paddle taps.

ADAM  
Not sure fun is the word I would use.  
Massacre maybe...

The four of them start walking to their cars.

KATE  
Jean, thank you for having us today...

MOM  
Aren't you staying for dinner?

KATE  
I wish, maybe a raincheck?

MOM  
Of course. Todd, great to meet you.

TODD  
My pleasure. And I'm sorry about...

MOM  
I'm tougher than I look, I've survived  
35 years with Adam's father. That's a  
lot of Lions losses and sleepless  
nights due to his snoring!

ADAM  
You deserve a medal.

The group arrives at their cars.

TODD  
(Extends fist bump)  
Adam, thanks for the match.

ADAM  
Anytime.

KATE  
 (hugging Adam)  
 Great seeing you, I've missed this.

ADAM  
 I don't blame you. I'm pretty great.  
 Let's catch up soon.

KATE  
 Yes! Let me know when you're free.

Todd honks the horn impatiently. Time to go.

KATE  
 Okay, okay. I guess we're leaving  
 right now. Bye!

They speed off in Todd's BMW, leaving Adam and his mom.

ADAM  
 Something is off with that guy.

MOM  
 Hmm, I wonder if your issue is in some  
 way related to his relationship with  
 Kate... could that be it?

ADAM  
 Very subtle. No, it's not that.

MOM  
 Keep telling yourself that champ. Now,  
 let's hope your father has calmed  
 down.

Scene fades away as they walk away from their camera.

CUT TO:

INT. FMA OFFICE CUBICLE - DAY

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 5: The Detour"

Monday morning. Scene begins with Adam at his desk feverishly working on the revised pitch deck post Robert. Seated near him is David. Ben arrives with news.

BEN  
 Heads up boys. Mary on the strategy  
 team just told me heads may roll this  
 week. Here we go again.

DAVID

But that shouldn't impact us, right?  
Our shit is locked down.

BEN

You never know. Who stays or who gets  
voted off the island is a crapshoot.  
Damn this agency life sucks at times.

ADAM

Have you heard which teams are on the  
chopping block?

BEN

Nope. But whatever happens, we drink  
beers on Thursday, big game this week.

What they fail to notice is Robert walking in their  
direction. He arrives and taps Adam on the shoulder.

ROBERT

Hey Adam, can we talk for second?

ADAM

Oh sure, no problem. What's up?

ROBERT

Let's head into the Inspire Room.

No words exchanged, Adam and Robert start walking.

ROBERT

Shoot, forgot my notebook, go on ahead  
and I'll meet you in there.

CUT TO:

21A INT. FMA CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 21A

Adam nods, turns to enter the conference room. Inside, he  
finds an unfamiliar face, papers neatly organized.

ADAM

Oh, hi. I'm sorry, I didn't know  
someone had this room. We can go  
somewhere else.

ALISON DAWSON

Actually Adam, you're in the right  
place. I'm Alison Dawson from FMA  
Corporate. Come in, take a seat.

He walks into the room, sits. Robert returns, sits down.

ADAM

Are we here to talk about my raise?  
Because I'm here for it...

Alison begins coldly reading from a document.

ALISON DAWSON

Adam, as you may have heard, in recent weeks FMA has had significant revenue losses across the agency. This situation has forced the company to reevaluate our organization and make some very difficult decisions. Unfortunately, one of those decisions relates to your employment with FMA. Effective immediately, we've eliminated your position and terminated your employment.

ADAM

Really Rob? Why me? Why now? Weeks away from a show I've been killing myself on... as you know.

Robert shifts nervously in his chair. He stares down at his notebook, which is blank. Nothing.

ALISON DAWSON

We want you to know that these decisions are never made lightly and never personal.

ADAM

That's funny, this feels very personal. I've never had a bad review, what are we doing?

White noise as Alison goes over details, Adam lost in thought. The nightmare ends. Adam rises to find a FMA security team member standing with Adam's belongings.

ADAM

Man, you guys are efficient. The body's not even cold yet. Did you pack my snack drawer? I'm not leaving without my Kind bars.

Exiting, Adam makes brief eye contact with Ben and David, not so subtly hanging around the receptionist. Adam shakes his head, walks out. Door closes behind him.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. ADAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Darkened bedroom. Adam and Stella sleeping late. The phone rings, waking them up. His mom. FaceTime again.

MOM

Hi Adam. Why is it so dark? Why aren't you at work right now?

ADAM

No, I'm at home. I lost my job. But don't freak out...

MOM

(freaking out)

Oh no! What happened?

ADAM

Long story short. We lost a chunk of business, needed to trim people. My salary fit the target number. Hashtag blessed.

MOM

I'm sorry. But you are so talented, smart and handsome. You can do anything you set your mind to.

Off camera, we hear a new voice.

DAD

Jean, what happened? Is that Adam?

MOM

Yes dear, Adam lost his job.

John enters the split screen.

DAD

Sorry to hear this son.

ADAM

Thanks. I'll figure something out.

MOM

Well, let us know if you need help.  
Maybe you should reach out to Kate's  
friend Todd?

ADAM

Not sure I would want to work with  
him. That sounds painful.

DAD

Suck it up buttercup. Unless you want  
to move in with us again. I can find  
some things for you to do around here.

ADAM

As much fun as that sounds, I'll pass.  
Listen, I've got to get this girl  
outside, don't worry, it'll work out.

MOM

Sorry, but we'll never stop worrying  
about you.

DAD

Speak for yourself Jean.

ADAM

Goodbye.

The call ends. Adam and Stella slowly rise to start the day.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCAL SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Thursday Night Football at the Vine.

BEN

Week 2. Leave it all on the field  
boys.

ADAM

What's the vibe been like at FMA?

DAVID

Strange. Like nothing happened. I did  
hear of a few others - Natalie in  
production, Pat on the strategy team,  
and that crusty old fart, Hurley, in  
accounting. Just gone.

ADAM

Damn, the whole thing feels completely random.

BEN

Yeah, they pulled a few of us account leaders together for a pep talk. Get this, Robert is taking over your role on the show. Can you fucking believe that shit?

ADAM

Get out of here. A mountain of recycled ideas heading your way.

DAVID

End of an era. The three amigos.

BEN

You should know I told a few clients - Gary, Fred and Robin. They were surprised. Anything you need, you...

ADAM

Thanks. I've been thinking, maybe this is a good thing. Yeah the timing sucks, but I was drowning at FMA.

DAVID

Positivity is good. You've said you wanted to carve out time for more creative writing, now you can.

ADAM

True. I just need to figure out how to survive on zero income. But FMA did give me TWO whole weeks of severance. TWO WEEKS for six plus years of loyal service.

BEN

Well, we need to keep clients happy because I can't afford to be job hopping after knocking up the old lady again.

ADAM

What the fuck! That's incredible man. Was this planned?

DAVID

If I know you, the sex part was meticulously planned. Damn freak.

They all laugh.

BEN

Ha. You know I can't help myself after a few cocktails. Holly took advantage of me in my drunken state. Here's the kicker...

DAVID

Oh shit, brace yourself...

ADAM

You came clean about your history of genital warts?

DAVID

She hacked your web history and discovered your fetish for babysitter porn?

BEN

Negative. My super-powered seed has finally planted a boy!

The table erupts in celebration.

DAVID

Oh hell yeah! Let's go sports fans!

ADAM

Nice work man. I am proud of you. And we thought God was punishing you for your behavior at State.

BEN

I know right. Tonight, I'm buying. Better call Jean to pick your unemployed ass up. GTL tonight.

ADAM

(playfully throws peanuts at Ben)  
That's hurtful man.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - DAY

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 6: The Process"

Time is 8:42 AM. Adam rises from bed. He sprawls out on the floor and proceeds to perform a set of push-ups. In mid rep, Stella sits directly on Adam's back forcing him to crash down to the ground thanks to the added dead weight.

ADAM

Stella. Do you mind? Off!

He rises from the ground, sits on his bed with his laptop. The blank white page is still present. He starts typing.

ADAM

(reads aloud as he types)  
 Summer in the old neighborhood is spent outside. A simpler time. When life felt like a never-ending daydream. A cup filled with promise.

He stops. Closes laptop. Puts his face into his hands.

ADAM

Fuuuucck me. Come on Sawyer.

Adam presses play on Spotify. **Music:** a song like "Clearest Blue" by CHVRCHES plays. He gets out of bed and grabs his sneakers, which pleases Stella.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING IN THE PARK - DAY

Music up. Adam opens the door to his Jeep and Stella bounds out of the car, chasing a fleeing rabbit. Cut to them sitting on a bench overlooking a flowing stream. Stella also sits on the bench, partly on his lap.

ADAM

You really don't understand the whole concept of personal space.

She looks at him, looks away. Adam is writing in his sketch book a list of themes or ideas. Zoom in to see highlighted examples: "Underdog basketball team wins improbable state title", "Giant sea monster destroys Detroit ad agency," "Man and his super-powered dog save world from alien invasion." As each theme appears on screen, a short animated example accompanies it in the background.

We also see the words "GTL" artfully sketched among scribblings. Animation ends.

ADAM

Alright, Stell, some viable contenders here. We made progress this morning.

Stella looks at him, tilts head inquisitively. She sniffs his sketchbook as if she was making her preference known.

ADAM

Nice try, I'm probably not doing the dog with super powers concept.

Music back up. The dynamic duo walk towards the car.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Adam scrolls through LinkedIn. His outfit changes every few seconds to connote passage of days. In each case, he fills out a similar "form/application" attaches a resume and clicks submit. We watch him repeated this cycle over and over again. Rejection emails. Growing more and more frustrated.

ADAM

(to himself)

This system is broken. Fuck me.

Next, we see Adam writing, hard at work on his story. We zoom into his screen and follow him as he types the words "THE END" at the bottom of the page.

ADAM

(raises arms in the air, loudly)

Let's freaking go people!

The burst of enthusiasm attracts unwanted attention from patrons inside the cafe. He shyly focuses back to his screen, opens a new browser tab and searches for novel editing services. The search yields a list of potential options. As he clicks on the first option, an incoming ZOOM call appears. Headphones on, just as a pretty girl moves behind Adam in view of his MacBook's camera. Adam accepts the call.

BEN

Damn bro, there is some serious talent around you. We may need to start working remotely.

Beyond the girl in view, we see other attractive people.

DAVID

Yeah, let us know if you need wing men. How's the hunt?

ADAM

The hunt is a never-ending series of dead ends. And this is a sacred, creative place. You don't fish where you eat.

BEN

Since when? I can name five girls you caught from the FMA pond.

DAVID

Yes, mistakes were made. In your case, they had names.

BEN

Kara, Anna, Julie, Missy, Sandy...

ADAM

You guys suck. Are we done here? This short story isn't going to edit itself, and I'm meeting Kate soon.

DAVID

Have fun brother.

BEN

Fifty bucks says you don't talk to the girl in the LuLu gear...

Call ends. Music back up. See Adam turn and make brief eye contact with Lulu girl. He smiles. She smiles. Reveal her target is the young man who walks past Adam to join her.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT HAPPY HOUR - DUSK

Kate and Adam are seated at a table on a restaurant patio. She is dressed in a stylish blouse/skirt combination. Cocktails on the table. Adam is casual.

KATE

I'm sorry the FMA layoffs happened to you. How's it going?

ADAM

Super fun. Not at all frustrating to be constantly rejected by these faceless recruiters and their form emails. Kate, I am a real person with real feelings.

KATE

Oh my god, so many feelings. But any leads?

ADAM

I have a few initial interviews lined up, nothing serious. But I'm not sure this agency life is for me anyway.

KATE

Really? Tell me more.

ADAM

It's the same B-S. We're just a number. I started writing again.

KATE

Oh, before I forget, Todd and I were talking about the account and your name came up.

ADAM

Really? How so?

KATE

Sounds like the Stryker team is antsy about the dealer show and wants fresh ideas. I'll see if Jack Howard is open to a meeting, cool?

ADAM

Thank you. Wow. Now I feel awful for all the times I have talked negatively about you since we were kids. Like so many times Kate!

KATE

Uh huh. Nice try. Let's talk about you. Whatever happened with the girlfriend? Lisa? Are you two still a thing?

ADAM

You knew about her? It ended in spectacular fashion when she shackled up with her trainer.

KATE

You do know how to pick them. How's Stella? What's it been, five years since the Ferndale block party?

ADAM

My shining moment. Stella is good. The best decision I ever made in college. Definitely taking full advantage of me being home so much.

KATE

That's a low bar... but I bet she loves it. I do need to hear more about your writing project.

The waiter has returned to check in.

ADAM

It'll be quick. Do you want any apps? Nothing too expensive but I'd happily spring for chips and salsa.

KATE

We have dinner plans, but you can buy me a drink before this sausage party with Todd and his friends.

ADAM

Two more please. It's more of a short story right now. Or a novella. But it's early in the development process.

Camera slowly begins to pull back, music track is introduced, we watch Adam and Kate continue their conversation.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Zoom interviews. Find Adam dressed in jacket, button down shirt, as we cycle through a montage of virtual interviews, the vantage point stays the same.

STARKS REP

Describe a situation where you successfully collaborated with a team to achieve a common goal?

XP REP

How do you handle conflicts or disagreements in a team setting?

MCNABB REP

Give an example where you had to prioritize tasks and manage time effectively within a project?

STARKS REP

What role do you take within a team, and why do you feel it suits you best? Be specific please.

XP REP

Describe a time when you had to delegate tasks to others. How did you ensure a successful outcome?

MCNABB REP

In a case where you had to take a leadership role on a group project, what challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

XP REP

What makes you special? No offense, but we are very selective about who we bring onto the team, why you?

Throughout this exchange, we focus on Adam and his reactions and expressions. We never hear his answers.

CUT TO:

EXT. ADAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Weekend montage sequence (chilly, autumn).

**MUSIC:** a song like "Surfing in Iceland" by Goth Babe.

1) Adam working outside. 2) Adam raking big piles of leaves while battling Stella attacking his rake. 3) Adam dragging tarps of leaves to the front curb with Stella pulling it in the opposite direction. 4) Adam at his kitchen table writing deep into the night as he notices the mountain of unpaid

bills. He picks them up and leafs through them. 5) Images of Kate from their recent encounters. 6) Adam staring at the ceiling in a bout with insomnia as Stella sleeps soundly.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Music fades back. Find Adam with his laptop open at the kitchen table. 5:30 AM. Cup of coffee. Scrolls through email. The messages appear next to him for us to read.

EMAIL FROM XP REP

Thank you for your interest in the Creative Director role. We are reaching out to let you know that we have recently filled the position. Please feel free to check out our careers page.

ADAM

Awesome. 0 for 1.

He scrolls down to find another message.

EMAIL FROM MCNABB REP

Good evening Adam, we have heard back from the team and have decided to pass. They are targeting candidates with stronger qualities in presenting and communication.

ADAM

What the actual fuck?

Next, a note from Starks.

EMAIL FROM STARKS REP

Hi Adam. I wanted to let you know that the CD position has been put on hold until the manager decides what direction they'd like to move forward in. As soon as it re-opens, we will contact you.

Adam shuts his laptop. Addresses his sleepy roommate.

ADAM

Batting one thousand Stella.

He notices the pile of bills again, many now with "past due" notations. He picks them up, quickly tosses them down.

ADAM

I can't deal with this mountain of unpleasantness. Nope. Not today people I owe money to. Back to the grind.

He opens his laptop again, finds where he left off in his story, opens file now called "Road Trip" and starts writing.

CUT TO:

INT. VINE TAVERN - NIGHT

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 7: The Life Line"

Thursday Night Football with Ben and David.

BEN

The boys are back in town. How's the progress going, A-Train?

ADAM

The writing part is better. But the job search has been one dead end after another. Plus the lack of income and my dwindling savings account is a bit concerning at the moment.

DAVID

Any luck with Howard? I thought Kate was hooking you up?

ADAM

Still waiting. Jack, her boss, has been out of town.

BEN

Sorry man, we've got you tonight.

ADAM

Appreciate it. I was planning on drinking water on my walk of shame to loserville.

BEN

Hang in there.

Adam's phone buzzes on the table. The incoming call is from Kate. He reaches for the phone and stands up.

ADAM  
I gotta take this.

DAVID  
(pretending to answer the call)  
Hi Kate. Oh no, sorry to hear about  
Todd. Do you need me to come over?

Adam gives him the middle finger, walks out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. VINE TAVERN LOT - NIGHT

A chilly early fall evening in a crowded Vine parking lot as Adam walks from the front door into the night air.

ADAM  
(mimics an Indian accent)  
Thank you for calling AT&T customer  
service, how may I help you?

KATE  
Yes, I'd like to report this loser  
friend who has been stealing data to  
watch cat videos...

ADAM  
Clearly innovative and not a crime. Hi  
Kate.

KATE  
Hola señor. I have news. Good news and  
bad news actually.

ADAM  
Not sure I'm down for more bad news.

KATE  
The bad news is Todd's company is  
threatening to put the Howard account  
out to bid. That's where Jack has been  
the last couple of weeks.

ADAM  
Ouch, that's harsh.

KATE

Terrible and now I'm caught up in the middle.

ADAM

Does Howard have a chance to salvage things? Wait, you said there was good news too?

KATE

The dealer sales meeting is the Hail Mary. It needs to be flawless. Jack wants you to come in on Monday to talk. What do you think?

ADAM

How would this work?

KATE

If all goes well, they would probably put you on contract for the show, with a chance to go full time later on.

ADAM

Ok, normally, I would want time to think it over, however, given my present circumstances, count me in.

KATE

Sweet! Thank you Adam.

ADAM

You know I live to serve. Actually, I'm down at the Vine right now with Ben and David if you need an escape.

KATE

Wish I could. Tell them I said hi. So 9:00 am Monday. Buckle up buttercup.

ADAM

Sounds good. Thanks Kate. Bye.

Hangs up, deep breath. Opens door, crowd noise.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD WORLDWIDE OFFICE - DAY

Find Adam seated outside of a corner office. A well-groomed gentleman in his mid 60s paces inside on a phone call.

JACK HOWARD  
 (waving Adam in)  
 Hamp, I hear you and I appreciate the honesty. You have my word, we will right the ship. Alright. See you soon.

Jack hangs up the phone, puts his hands over his face.

JACK HOWARD  
 For the love of god. Welcome Adam.  
 It's nice to meet you, sit down.

ADAM  
 You too. I've followed your work and FMA was always jealous of your budgets. Nice to finally meet you.

JACK HOWARD  
 Detroit is such a small town. How much has Kate shared?

ADAM  
 Honestly, very little. A Stryker sales meeting in Las Vegas, it's all hands on deck because we're starting from a blank page.

JACK HOWARD  
 Good. Here's the deal. They don't know what they want. Todd, our day-to-day client says one thing, his dad gets involved, and throws cold water on it.

ADAM  
 Oh man, how can I help?

Jack sits back down at his desk.

JACK HOWARD  
 I need someone to set the creative vision. Who can dig into their story and find the thread that ties it together... and fast, like yesterday.

ADAM  
 Cool. I'm familiar with Stryker. They mostly make commercial vehicles of all sizes, just now dipping their toes into fleet management software and other services.

JACK HOWARD

That's them. Listen, it's going to be a slog getting this across the line. It will be a chance for us to get to know each other too.

ADAM

Perfect. Whatever you need.

JACK HOWARD

(standing back up)

Fantastic. I have to hop on another call. Angela in HR will get you squared away on contract. Oh, I almost forgot, in a week or so, we need to head to Chicago to meet with Stryker.

ADAM

Umm, yeah, no problem. I'm in.

They shake hands and Adam exits the office.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. HOWARD WORLDWIDE OFFICE - NIGHT

**MUSIC:** a song like "Places We Don't Know" by Kasbo

Find Adam in the conference room reviewing the Stryker website and materials. Sketching ideas in his notebook. To show passage of time, lighting shifts from bright-to-dark. Outfits change as a variety of people roll in and out of the room before we land on Adam and GAIL (mid 50s, tall, producer type). Music fades back.

ADAM

So here's what I'm thinking. Stryker is caught between two worlds - on one hand, they've been around forever and their customers trust them. We can't walk away from that. But, the world is changing, and they are dangerously close to falling behind.

GAIL

Good call. They've admitted as much in our early discussions.

ADAM

We know what they have in the product pipeline. But where they fall apart is everything is disconnected. Their products, the services they offer, this new software side of the business. It's confusing. The space is going to electric vehicles, and there will never be a better time than now to reposition and rebrand themselves. I think we lead with that... and use this event as a 'coming out' party.

GAIL

I like it. What you thinking?

He shows Gail a few logo concepts for the new entity.

ADAM

One company. One integrated set of products and services. All delivered under one umbrella ... Stryker Pro.

GAIL

Nice! I like pitching big transformations, but where would it fit in the context of this show?

ADAM

I have some ideas, but let's keep going. We need to make sure the EV story is easy to understand.

Pan out as Adam and Gail continue their brainstorm.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

End of a long day as Adam enters to find Stella looking sad and ashamed, she couldn't hold her pee any longer.

ADAM

Oh girl. I'm so sorry. It's my fault.  
Let's get you outside.

He opens the door, Stella slowly walks outside. Adam presses play on new voicemails on his phone.

## MESSAGE 1

This message is for Adam Sawyer on behalf of United Rocket Mortgage. Your account is over 30 days past due... please rectify this...

Message erased. End of messages. Stella scratches at the door. He opens it and she returns to her dog bed.

ADAM

Do you want dinner?

Stella doesn't react. She looks sad. Not her energetic self.

ADAM

Remember, in a few days, you get to go to Grandma's for some quality time with Louie. That should cheer you up. Sorry I've been gone so much.

Stella's tail moves for a second. Adam lays down beside her, checking his phone. Soon both drift off to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Team gathered inside the conference room dedicated to the Stryker brand. See large presentation boards positioned around the room as Adam, Jack and team review creative.

ADAM

Jack, all the research points to the same place - they have a branding problem. They walk the line between who they've always been to customers and who they want to be in a world where innovation and change is moving at lightning speed. For Stryker to move forward, we need to give them a push. A new identity, a new story, all connected in a way their customers and prospects can understand. We lead with Stryker Pro.

JACK HOWARD

I like the thinking, this feels in line with my conversations with Hamp. How do we bring something like this to life at a sales event?

ADAM

So we've given them a bunch of ideas, right. But we haven't shown them how it all comes together. We need to show them what's possible. How the message comes to life. From the first invitation. Website. To the event. With workshops that let people get hands-on experience with their software. Intimate Q&A sessions with experts. Drive activations that put the audience behind the wheel of future products, everything leads to the theater presentation where we bring it home...

JACK HOWARD

Okay, this feels good, you have my attention. Keep going. How do we propose we sell this thinking...

ADAM

As Gail mentioned, every time we pitch to them, the conversation is derailed by one thing or another. So we skip the preamble and take them inside the event - from walking into the hotel to the receptions, drive event, workshops, entertainment, down to the theater show. Everything their guests will see, hear and feel over the three days they spend with us in Las Vegas. We need to capture their imaginations. And the way to do that is through a virtual reality based experience.

JACK HOWARD

That's interesting and not something we've ever done. We don't have that person to build it here. Plus, we don't have time to do this by Friday...

ADAM

Let's use Friday's meeting to get them excited about the direction and get them on board with the new brand. I have a designer friend who owes me a favor. He and I did this a few times at FMA for clients who couldn't visualize things, it works.

JACK HOWARD

It's risky. If this branding initiative falls flat, we're back to Defcon 5 but screw it! We need to bring them a new approach. Walk me through what we will show on Friday.

Adam, Jack and team continue the wall walk.

CUT TO:

INT. CHICAGO OFFICE OF STRYKER - DAY

Graphics card: "Chapter 8: The Pitch"

Jack, Adam and Gail on one side of the table, across from members of the Stryker team. Head of the table sits Todd, his colleague MEGAN (white, blonde, early 30s, attractive), and the venerable HAMPTON STRYKER (early 70s, short grey hair, dressed for success). Adam walks to the presentation screen.

ADAM

We're excited to share with you today a new direction for the Stryker brand... one that...

TODD

(interrupting)

Hold on. Sorry Adam. Before you start, there are some things I think we need to clear up. Dad, why are we here today? What's the point of this dog and pony show?

HAMPTON

Todd, we're here today because they have ideas on how to use this event to get customers excited about us again.

Todd leans forward. Getting more animated.

TODD

I get it. And nothing against any of you on the Howard side. But wouldn't it be better for us to invest this money in products because that's what customers care about. Not marketing!

HAMPTON

(rising irritation)

Sure Todd. But I've given you millions for that. We need to better market our brand. No one cares about a legacy leader in commercial vehicles outside of Chicago. Look at our sales!

TODD

I do! If you want better sales, put a better product on the road.

No one dares to speak or make eye contact. Members of the Stryker team bury their heads in their laptops.

HAMPTON

(borderline irate)

Todd, this is the same line of bullshit you've been feeding me for years. These people have good ideas. Listen to them for Pete's sake. Go on son, we don't have all day here!

After a few uncomfortable seconds, Adam resumes the pitch.

ADAM

As I was saying, today, we're excited to share with you...

TODD

(interrupting again)

Hold on! This is bullshit. Dad, if you let me do my damn job, none of this crap matters.

HAMPTON

Todd. Jesus Christ. Shut the fuck up!

TODD

(slamming the table)

No Dad. You shut the fuck up! For once, listen to the people who actually talk to our customers.

Hampton knocks off a stack of pitch documents from the table.

HAMPTON

I don't need to listen to you. I know what we need because I built this company with my bare hands.

Hampton points at Adam.

HAMPTON  
Finish your pitch, god damn it!

Adam is paralyzed. Sweat beads begin to form on his head.

JACK HOWARD  
Should we take a break?

TODD  
You know what? I don't need this right now. I've got enough to do!

Todd stands and walks out of the room.

HAMPTON  
Todd, stop it. Grow up. Don't you walk out that door, son!

Hampton races after Todd. The room is dead silent. Adam sits.

MEGAN  
I apologize that you all had to witness that exchange. But what you just saw needed to happen. It's been brewing for some time.

JACK HOWARD  
No problem. We understand.

No one speaks. Only sound is the muffled screams of Todd and Hampton in a nearby room.

MEGAN  
Let's sit tight for a few minutes, see if cooler heads prevail.

Clock on the wall. The time moves from 9:05 am to 11:35 am.

GAIL  
So, has anyone seen any good movies?

The question ignites conversation until Hampton re-enters.

HAMPTON  
Hey folks. I'm sorry. We've got a few fires to put out. Let's break for now and we'll regroup at dinner tonight.

The pitch is over. The Stryker side quickly makes their leave. The Howard contingent start to pack up.

JACK HOWARD

Wow. Welcome to the team Adam!

ADAM

(sarcastically)

I think that went well. It might be my best pitch performance ever.

GAIL

Holy crap. They nearly threw hands.

JACK HOWARD

I need a damn drink.

ADAM

Will we be presenting this tonight?

JACK HOWARD

Who knows. I'll reach out to Hamp in a few hours, but they need to figure their shit out. Dear god.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE BAR/RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The bar inside an upscale Chicago steakhouse. Adam sees Todd and Megan hiding in a nearby booth, deep in conversation.

ADAM

Guys, Todd and Megan are here. Should we head that way?

GAIL

Hell to the no.

JACK HOWARD

Let's pretend we didn't see them.

Adam notices Todd's hand is massaging Megan's thigh.

GAIL

There is no one I'd rather endure a painful client dinner than you. Any word from Mr. Stryker?

JACK HOWARD

Nope. Left a message. His text back said, "we'll talk tonight."

Adam's phone buzzes. Caller ID reads "MOM" as he sends the call to voicemail. He doesn't notice the new arrivals.

TODD

(walking up)

There they are, my favorite merry band of marketers.

MEGAN

Hey everyone. Good to see you.

TODD

Listen, my Dad and I agreed on a way forward. We're going to focus on crushing this meeting and go from there. Let's regroup in the morning on the details. Sound good?

JACK HOWARD

Sounds like a plan to me.

TODD

Excellent! Come on, let's head upstairs. The big guy is waiting.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT VALET AREA - NIGHT

Following dinner, the group assembles outside awaiting Ubers. The Howard team, Todd and Megan are left. Adam's phone rings. Mom again. Ignore. A text message appears in the air.

MOM

(text message)

Hey, call me when you can.

Their Uber arrives. Gail, Jack and a few others enter.

ADAM

Take it. I'll catch the next one.

GAIL

Are you sure? I can hang back.

ADAM

No worries. I've got to make a call.  
Go, get out of here.

They depart. Only Todd, Megan and Adam remain.

MEGAN

Adam, how do you like Howard? Todd  
mentioned you were new.

TODD

He's new to the Howard team, but he's  
bounced around a bit.

ADAM

That's not entirely true. But, so far,  
so good. The people are nice.

TODD

Happy to see you back on your feet! I  
heard the FMA layoff deal was brutal.

The next Uber pulls up in front of the venue.

MEGAN

That's me. Adam, nice chatting with  
you. See you tomorrow.

Megan hops into the back seat, slides over, door open.

MEGAN

Todd, do you want to share a ride?  
Your place is on my way.

TODD

Sure do. One sec Megs.

Todd extends his hand to Adam.

TODD

Adam, good job today. I know it didn't  
go as planned. You guys have to trust  
me. The old man, god love him, he has  
lost a step. Its time for a new  
regime. I expect you to have my back  
as we move forward.

ADAM

Uh-huh. Sure. Is something up with you and Megan? That's not cool man.

TODD

Random, what are you're talking about?

ADAM

Yes you do.

TODD

(pulling Adam in close)

Listen to me closely because I am only going to say this once. Stay out of my business. You're here now because I said so as a favor to Kate. Things can just as easily change and you will be back on the unemployment line. You see nothing. You say nothing. Good boy!

Todd gives Adam a playful light slap on the cheek, slides into the vehicle and closes the door. Car drives off.

ADAM

Strike two mother fucker.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Now inside his hotel room, Adam presses the call button.

MOM

Adam, thank god, there is something wrong with Stella.

ADAM

Oh joy. What did she get into now?

MOM

Nothing. She seems uncomfortable. Panting. She won't eat or drink.

ADAM

That's not good. How long has she...?

MOM

We noticed it last night. Louie has been trying to get her to play, but she has no interest. I think we might need to take her to the vet. Okay?

ADAM

My poor baby. Yes, please do. We land around 5 pm and I'll head your way.

MOM

Good idea. We will let you know if something changes.

ADAM

Thanks Mom. I'm sorry. Keep me updated, and give my girl a hug. I'll be there as soon as I can. Love you.

MOM

Love you too. Safe travels.

Hang up. Adam walks into the bathroom, he bends down, splashes water on his face, stares at the reflection.

CUT TO:

INT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Graphics card: "Chapter 9: The Gut Punch"

Find Adam seated in a sterile exam room. Stella is hooked up to an IV. Older doctor with white hair, dark glasses enters.

DOCTOR

No easy way to say this, Stella is in what we call cardiogenic shock. This means her heart can't pump enough blood. She's struggling to breathe. We have her on pain medicine and fluids.

ADAM

How did this happen? I don't understand. She seemed fine.

DOCTOR

There are a lot of reasons why dogs experience cardiogenic issues. Most likely, there was an underlying illness.

DOCTOR (CONT.)

If we caught it earlier, there may have been a way to aggressively treat it. Given her age, I can't promise she would even survive a surgery. The humane thing would be to let her go.

ADAM

(emotions rising)

No! There has to be another option.

DOCTOR

I wish there was. The best thing you can do is to ease her pain, and be there with her at the end. She will know you are there. I promise.

The doctor walks out of the room, leaving Adam and Stella. He moves closer to her head and sits down.

**Music:** a song like "Heavenly" by Cigarettes After Sex.

ADAM

Hey. What have you done now? I thought we agreed to be good for Grandma.

Her glassy eyes stare back at Adam.

ADAM

I'm sorry. This is my fault. I've been so fucking wrapped up in my own shit, I didn't notice.

He hugs her tightly.

ADAM

I can't lose you. Come on Stell. You have to get better. Don't leave me.

Her paw rests on Adam's arm, their eyes meet. This is it.

ADAM

(realizing the truth)

Okay. I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. We'll do this together. Stella, you are the best dog I will ever have. I loved every moment with you. Don't be scared, I'm with you. I'll always be with you.

Hold on them together. Eventually, a knock on the door and the Doctor steps inside. Music fades back.

DOCTOR

Hey Adam. How's the patient?

ADAM

The strongest girl I know. Is it time?

DOCTOR

Yes. She's really suffering.

ADAM

Okay. I don't think I'll ever be ready.

DOCTOR

I've been doing this for 35 years, it's never easy. I promise you it will be painless for her. She will just drift off to sleep.

The doctor produces dispensers with the formula that will euthanize Stella. Adam hugs his dog tightly.

ADAM

(whispering in her ear)

It's okay girl. I'm with you. We're going to take away your pain.

DOCTOR

Here we go. I'm going to inject a sedative to keep her calm.

The doctor takes the needle and injects Stella.

ADAM

I love you Stella.

DOCTOR

And now I will administer the pentobarbital, this will gently put her to sleep.

ADAM

You were a great dog. Goodbye.

With Adam holding her, after a few quiet seconds, the doctor checks her vital signs. He looks down at Adam.

DOCTOR

She's gone. I'm so sorry for your loss. Stay as long as you need, ok.

ADAM

(through tears)

Thanks doc.

The doctor rests his hand on Adam's shoulder and exits. Sit on Adam holding Stella. Mom and Dad enter. Adam falls into their arms. Music and the scene fades out.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Adam wakes up in an empty home with evidence of Stella everywhere he looks. Her dog bed, leash hanging on the front doorknob, favorite stuffed animals, her dog bowl with uneaten food still in it. White hairs on the couch.

**Music:** a song like "Superstar" by Beach House

He walks into the kitchen, opens freezer door to discover red Kong toys, filled with frozen peanut butter. He moves to the kitchen table and opens his laptop, pulling up the most recent draft of his story. He navigates to the title page that still reads "TBD" and navigates to where he left off, staring blankly at the copy on screen.

Checking email, he finds a message from Jack.

**Message:** *Team, let's regroup to brainstorm next steps. If you have time, please come to the meeting with ideas on how we move forward. Enjoy the weekend. -Jack*

Directly preceding that message is a new email from an editing service.

**Message:** *Adam, attached is the feedback from our editorial team on your most recent draft. You have enough here to take this from a short story to a novella. Keep it up. I know it might seem like there is a lot to tackle with these notes, but know that you have the foundation set. Now you just need to redecorate the walls and make it the complete story.*

Adam opens the attachment which reveals an inordinate amount of red marks and notes in need of his attention.

Music up. He stands and walks to the window overlooking the backyard. More evidence of Stella everywhere he turns.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Music fades away. Adam is watching the Lions win a game with his parents. Louie sadly lies at his feet.

MOM

Finally something to be happy about!

DAD

Great win. If they keep playing like that, we might run the table.

MOM

So exciting. Adam, do you want me to get dinner going? I figured you would want to get home...

ADAM

Yeah, I have to work tonight. The constant fire drill is getting old.

DAD

Have they told you anything more about keeping you on full-time?

ADAM

No. We're in survival mode, just trying to land the plane.

MOM

Well, they would be lucky to have you, my fingers are crossed.

ADAM

Thanks mom. Not sure how I feel to be honest. I like the people, but the job, I don't know...

DAD

Why they call it work. Not supposed to be fun. Look at how many years I toiled away for a paycheck.

ADAM

(standing up)

I get it. I'm going out to get some air, guessing you still have a ball...

MOM

Your father refuses to throw anything away.

DAD

Not true! You never know when you will need something. I was right again!

CUT TO:

EXT. PARENT'S HOUSE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 10: The Line"

Single spotlight illuminates the court as Adam shoots a worn out basketball like he did thousands of times as a youth. The ball bounces away to someone approaching from the street.

KATE

Nice one. I can see your game is the same as I remember.

ADAM

Funny girl.

KATE

I was in the area and wanted to see how you were holding up.

ADAM

I'm fine. The entire situation was way worse than I ever imagined. I've been kicking myself. Like I should have noticed she was hurting, maybe we could have extended her life.

Kate passes the ball back to Adam.

KATE

You can't do that to yourself. It's not your fault. These things happen with bigger, older dogs. You gave her the best life, I hope you know that.

ADAM

I do. I thought it would get easier, but the house feels empty. I hate this so much. I miss her...

Adam stops himself, takes a deep breath, holding it together.

KATE

Give it time. And give yourself time to grieve. Promise me?

ADAM

Yes Sen-sei. You know you could have just called or sent one of your long ass text messages...

KATE

You know me so well. I have news and I wanted you to hear it from me before word gets out. Todd and I are engaged.

She flashes the biggest diamond ring Adam has ever seen. It stops Adam in his tracks.

ADAM

What? When did this happen?

Kate takes the ball from him, shoots it, roles reversed.

KATE

After your Chicago trip, Todd flew me out for our anniversary. We went to the top of the Hancock Building at sunset, and he was down on one knee.

ADAM

Damn, didn't see that coming.

KATE

I know you two haven't hit it off yet, but I do hope you will get to know him. He can be very sweet.

ADAM

I believe that.

KATE

What's that supposed to mean?

ADAM

It means you deserve someone who is more than just some rich, spoiled a-hole.

Kate tosses the ball hard at Adam, staring at him.

KATE

I know you are hurting so I will give you grace, but that's not fair. You should be happy for me.

Adam steps closer to her.

ADAM

Kate, do you think I enjoy this? We've barely spoken since that block party night where I poured my heart out to you... and you rejected me. Now you're back and it's the same song and dance.

KATE

Adam, you were WASTED that night. And I was there with someone. Remember? What did you expect me to do?

ADAM

You told me that you were scared of ruining our friendship. I don't get it. Like you are using that as an excuse. Just give me a chance...

He places his hands on her waist. They lock eyes. He makes his move, leaning in, she resists and pulls away.

KATE

What are you doing? I tell you Todd and I are engaged, and now you decide to take your shot? Fuck off!

She turns her back for a second, before facing him.

KATE (CONT.)

Listen, Todd makes me happy. Is he perfect? No. But, who is, you?

ADAM

Kate, I'm the only person being honest with you about him. Trust me, he's not who you think he is.

KATE

At least Todd isn't afraid to go after what he wants!

ADAM

Yes, I've seen what happens when Todd goes after what he wants.

The statement only makes her irate all over again.

KATE

What are you talking about!? You're acting like a crazy person tonight. If you have something to say, spill it.

ADAM

(pausing for a beat)

What's the story with him and Megan because they looked awfully cozy in Chicago. How well do you know her?

KATE

They've worked together forever. So you are reaching for something that isn't there. Trust me, I would know if something was going on!

ADAM

If I were you, I'd maybe start paying attention then. Here, it's your shot.

He passes the ball back to Kate. She lets the pass go and the ball bounces aimlessly into the darkness.

KATE

You're too late Adam. I'm sorry. I really am. Stop waiting for life to happen for you. I'll see you around.

Kate walks into the darkness. Adam simply watches her go.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD WORLDWIDE OFFICE - NIGHT

**Music:** a song like "Casio" by Jungle.

Sunrises-to-sunsets in Detroit. Now after hours. See Adam working alongside David on the VR activation. Pizza boxes everywhere. They are designing a virtual walk-through of the Stryker Summit. Camera shows a preview on David's computer.

DAVID

So have them click here, and the program will automatically guide the viewer into the world. Just make sure they can hear the audio narration... it's some of your best VO work. "In a world where..."

ADAM

This is so much cooler than I thought.  
I owe you one for saving my ass.

DAVID

Just one? Dude, this is the fun stuff.

ADAM

Amen to that.

Music picks back up as the camera slowly reveals it's just the two of them in the office. Everyone else is gone.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Music fades out. Jack, Adam and Gail are standing the conference room as Jack removes the VR goggles.

ADAM

So that's the experience. We position it as something that could only come to fruition through the spirit of collaboration between our two teams.

GAIL

So we play to their massive egos.

ADAM

Exactly! But we show them how this event is different. How we are engaging their audience on multiple sensory levels, all the surprises and fun little details, the show, how we invite participation, and how we leave their dealers more excited than ever about the future of Stryker.

JACK HOWARD

Wow. That's all I can say. It's breathtaking. Great work team. This is solid. What a difference since the last version too.

GAIL

Just huge. And kudos to your friend. That's some serious talent.

ADAM

Thanks. We're ready. Now all we need is for them to sit still long enough to enjoy it.

GAIL

Yeah, that too.

JACK HOWARD

Leave that to me. I'm in Hamp's ear. We will have their complete attention, I promise!

Jack exits.

GAIL

Hell yes! Nice work.

ADAM

A team effort! We take the win! Hey, I'm late for something... can we regroup in the morning on his notes?

GAIL

Sure thing. Oh that's right, it's date night. I'll pray for you.

ADAM

(hurrying out of the room)  
I appreciate you G-money.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 11: The Saddle"

Adam seated at a quiet table at a casual restaurant. The scene evolves into a montage of bad first dates, cutting from the girls to his reactions.

GIRL #1

(cute blonde sits down)  
Hi Adam, it's nice to finally meet you! A little about me, I'm...

GIRL #2

(attractive black girl)  
Recently separated, I have a kid.

GIRL #3  
 (stylish Asian executive)  
 Looking for someone who isn't  
 threatened by my success because that  
 is not attractive, okay...

GIRL #2  
 My ex and I still live together. FYI.  
 It's not weird. He's cool with me  
 dating...

GIRL #1  
 What's your position on gun control  
 and abortion? Because these are deal  
 breakers for me...

GIRL #3  
 So tell me Adam, you're cute, why are  
 you single? I don't want to waste my  
 time if this isn't going anywhere!

GIRL #2  
 Do you have a job or not? I don't  
 understand what you do...

Cut back to Adam who starts to answer the question, but  
 decides to change the subject.

ADAM  
 Do you want to get out of here?

See Adam and the sequence of girls all rise from the table.

CUT TO:

INT. VINE TAVERN - NIGHT

The three friends gathered again at their usual table.

BEN  
 Damn Adam, what the fuck?

DAVID  
 Dude, you know how this movie ends.

BEN  
 Let's break this down. On one hand,  
 you got a little stank on your hang  
 low.

DAVID

Okay, some batter dipping for the old corn dog...

BEN

You were driving miss daisy, and with a full tank of gas...

DAVID

Digging up the sand crab, hiding the pickle...

BEN

Riding the bony express. Assault with a friendly weapon. All aboard the bushwhacking express.

ADAM

Dear god, please make it stop.

BEN

I can do this all day. Putting the sour cream into the burrito.

DAVID

Whoa, that's too far. You're a dad of two girls for chrissakes.

ADAM

Guys, give me some credit. I've got it under control. I'm just hanging out.

DAVID

Bro, we've seen you "hang out" before.

BEN

Yeah man, I agree. You are on thin ice, temps are rising, and you suck at swimming.

DAVID

How much of this is Kate related?

Ben and David exchange a knowing glance.

ADAM

Zero. Where's that coming from?

BEN

The worst kept secret in SE Michigan is the torch you carry for Kate.

ADAM

Maybe, but I'm pretty sure she hates me right now.

DAVID

Why do you say that?

ADAM

I may have crossed a few hundred lines plus she's engaged to the rich douche.

DAVID

Not much you can do about that.

BEN

I may be new to the party on this issue, but why didn't you and Kate ever get together?

ADAM

I sort of tried once and she turned me down. I've been paying for that block party performance ever since.

BEN

To quote Wayne Gretzky, you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take. Maybe that was MJ? Or Kobe?

DAVID

The great one, nice pull Benny. Fatherhood and age hasn't slowed you one bit.

BEN

I will drink your skinny ass under the table at any age.

DAVID

Ha - this is true.

ADAM

Trust the process boys.

The waitress delivers another round.

BEN

Well, here's to Adam dating again. Keep your arms and legs inside the cabin at all times, it's going to be a bumpy ride.

ADAM

Something we can agree on, and the fact that you guys are assholes.

BEN

GTL baby!

CUT TO:

INT. STRYKER CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 12: The Big Event"

Final client presentation. Howard team is assembled. The VR goggles have been placed on the table as side conversations are happening throughout the room. Hampton enters. Adam stands and walks over to the big screen. He pauses for a brief second and begins.

ADAM

As Jack alluded to, we are proud to share with you something that's only possible through great collaboration between our teams. It's an important point because everything you will see inside the attendee experience was directly influenced and inspired by your team. By your brand. And where you are planning to go in the near and long term. So, today, we're going to show you more than what's possible. We're going to immerse you in the actual attendee experience.

ADAM (CONT.)

What your dealers will see, hear, and feel over three days in Las Vegas. Workshops that give people hands-on exposure to your software, intimate Q&A sessions with your experts, a driving engagement where your product portfolio shines, and a business meeting where we tie it all together. This is the Stryker Solutions Summit...

The members of the Stryker team put on the VR goggles.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE THE VR WORLD OF THE EVENT - DAY

Inside the virtual world of the event experience.

**Music:** a song like Sultan + Shepard "Under the Surface."

The virtual experience includes: 1) A fly-through into the lobby of a resort, transformed with Stryker branding. 2) Outdoor welcome reception at night. 3) Guided fitness and wellness classes, networking events. 4) A Home Screen with three paths - Track, Workshops, NextFest. The TRACK path teases a driving experience. The WORKSHOP is about small group learning sessions. NEXTFEST takes the viewer inside a massive immersive, 360-degree, floor-to-ceiling video experience. Mix in reactions from our headset wearers. VR ends on the main stage of a theater and a montage of panel discussions, vehicle drive ons, a holographic character interacting with a presenter before lights dim and a reveal moment begins. LED panels split open...

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER STAGE - NIGHT

Transition from the virtual world to the live event as a vehicle drives through the split LED panels on stage.

HAMPTON

(exiting reveal vehicle)

Ladies and gentlemen, here it is, the  
all-electric Stryker eBus!

Jack is seated in the front row in conversation with an unknown businessman.

HAMPTON

Once again, we are changing the game  
by giving our clients more tools to  
increase profitability and efficiency.

Big applause, audience reactions from this statement. See a glimpse of Adam standing backstage on a headset.

HAMPTON

And we're not done yet. This is just  
the beginning. We will lead the  
industry in the electrification of our  
business. Now, it's my pleasure to  
introduce the man who will spearhead  
this revolution, my son, Todd  
Stryker...

Todd fist bumps Megan, struts on stage. Shaking hands triumphantly with his father. Music and applause up.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The show over. Adam collapses on his hotel bed, rolls onto his back. Phone rings. Chicago number, caller ID says "maybe Todd Stryker" - Adam answers it.

ADAM

Hey Todd, what's up?

Nothing. Dead air until he decides to speak.

TODD

No. That won't do at all. Here's what's going to happen. I am hanging up the phone and I will call you back so we can try this interaction again.

Click.

ADAM

You fucking gotta be kidding me.

He sits there, staring at his phone. It rings again.

ADAM

(sarcastically)

Good evening, you have reached the working phone of Mr. Adam Sawyer, how may I be of service kind sir?

TODD

That's more like it. Meet me in the Sky bar in 10 minutes.

The expression on Adam's face is immeasurably pained.

ADAM

I would, but we have a wrap party with the crew tonight.

TODD

You can be late. I'll see you soon.

Todd hangs up.

ADAM

Fuck me.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - NIGHT

Adam steps onto the rooftop lounge. Seated alone in a quiet section the bar is Todd, on his phone, he waves Adam over.

TODD

(talking into his phone)

Chad, book the meeting. I'll make sure the old man is there. Listen, I'm in his ear, we're locked and loaded. Hey I've got to go, let's squeeze in one more game before ski season. Chow.

A waiter arrives with his martini.

TODD

Excellent James. Will you get my friend here something.

WAITER

What would you like to drink sir?

ADAM

(scanning drink menu)

Oh man, I don't know.

TODD

How can you not know? I've been thinking about this drink all day!

ADAM

I'll just take a Guinness, thanks.

TODD

Kind of lame. If you're going to sit at the big boy table, maybe consider a grown up drink.

ADAM

I'll keep that in mind. What's up? Is Jack joining us?

TODD

No, I just wanted to congratulate you on the show. Our dealers and the sales team seem pleased with the experience.

ADAM

That's good news, I'm glad everything was well received.

TODD

Don't get me wrong. It hasn't been perfect. With quite a few hiccups.

The waiter delivers a pint of Guinness.

ADAM

There are always things to fix and improve upon before next year's event.

TODD

Yeah, I doubt that's the way this is going to play out. I wanted to let you know myself that we are putting the account out to bid. Old Hamp is giving Jack the news as we speak. Fact is, we made massive promises on that stage and we need an agency partner with bigger creative chops than you can find in Detroit. No offense of course.

ADAM

A bit of a buzz kill given the blood, sweat and tears we just poured into this event.

TODD

Adam, it's the nature of the game. You gave it your best shot and you failed. There's no shame in that. I know Katie has been irritated with me for weeks over this whole deal.

ADAM

Jesus man, how long have you been plotting our demise?

Todd takes a healthy drink and sets his glass down. He pauses for a moment, staring holes through his guest.

TODD

Don't flatter yourself. This story was written well before your sorry ass showed up. I nearly fell out of my chair during your corny as fuck VR presentation.

ADAM

Jesus man, why are you are such an asshole?

TODD

(mocking tone)

Did I offend your creative sensibilities? Here's a truth bomb: you are nothing more than a small time fish in a big ass pond. You will be lucky as hell to find another lame as fuck Detroit agency to employ your talentless ass.

ADAM

You don't know me.

TODD

(taking a healthy sip)

So, cards on the table. You don't like me. I don't like you. And we both love Katie. Isn't that right, Adam?

ADAM

Dude, you're way out of bounds. She is my oldest friend. I just want her to be happy and to find someone who doesn't treat her the way you do.

TODD

Interesting. Let's unpack that. Do you think she would ever choose someone like you? A few weeks ago you were an unemployed loser. She thinks you're a fucking joke. Or to quote her directly, "a loner, too scared to take a chance in life." Sound accurate?

ADAM

Fuck you. Todd, at what point will she realize you are sleeping with Megan? You're not even good at hiding it.

TODD

Whatever you think you saw, you didn't. More importantly, pay close attention here, you can't prove shit.

TODD (CONT.)

And if you try to insert yourself in my business, I promise you on the soul of my someday soon dead dad that I will fucking bury you. I will make it my mission in life to keep you from ever working in this industry again so you can live out your days exactly as you do now... sad and alone!

ADAM

(calmly standing up)

Whatever. Go ahead, do your worst. I'm done with this shit.

Todd's phone rings again. Caller ID reads Megan.

TODD

Noted. If you don't mind, the work wife has needs. So many needs! Enjoy your little wrap party. C

Adam walks away seething in anger. He presses the button to the elevator and steps inside.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. BEN'S HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 13: The Loner"

Opening of the front door of Ben and Holly's colonial home.

HOLLY

(reaching for a hug)

Hi Adam, so good to see you again.

ADAM

I guess it's true. You and Benny are doing number three, and a boy?

HOLLY

Thank the lord.

Ben and David approach from the other room.

BEN

There he is. The man, the myth and the legend...

DAVID  
No date? You riding Han Solo?

ADAM  
They crashed and burned.

BEN  
Already? That's a new record.

DAVID  
Come, let's find you a beverage and a quiet place for reflection.

The trio walk into the next room where they are greeted by the visual of two surprise guests - Kate and Todd.

ADAM  
Oh Jesus, dude, why is he here?

BEN  
Who? Todd? You can blame Holly. She invited Kate. Didn't think they would actually come...

DAVID  
Are you okay?

ADAM  
He and I got into it after the show. Just keep me far away from him.

BEN  
Done. This way, drinks are on me.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK PATIO OF BEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

David, Steph (attractive black girl, late 20s) and Adam are standing by a fire pit. Hear music playing. People talking.

**Music:** a song like ODESZA - "Wide Awake"

DAVID  
The short story you wrote is sweet. No joke. It's really good. And it felt like there was more meat on the bone. What's the next step?

STEPH

Oh my god, David shared a few pages with me, I am loving it.

ADAM

Thanks guys. I've been working with some editors, that's helped a ton. And I'm still waiting on the results of a few contests. We'll see. I actually don't hate what I'm writing anymore so there's that I guess.

DAVID

You are doing it man! I'm proud of you. Any word from Howard on what's next? Is that what you even want?

ADAM

Nothing since Vegas. I don't know. It's the same client-agency crap. Not much different than FMA.

STEPH

What will you do then?

ADAM

That's the question of the day.

DAVID

Well, we're still young, unlike Ben! Maybe this writing project is your path.

ADAM

I have to finish it first. Then find someone to publish it, people to buy it. And figure out how to pay my bills. The easy stuff!

Kate joins the group around the fire.

STEPH

Kate! It is so good to see you again. I hear congratulations...!?

KATE

Hey, thanks. Good seeing you again.

ADAM

Where's the hubby? I hope you didn't leave him alone with Ben.

KATE

He can take of himself. What are you guys talking about?

DAVID

Just celebrating this guy.

KATE

Yes, I hear the show was a big success.

ADAM

Really, he said that?

STEPH

David, now I'm freezing. Can we go in? Kate, find me later to catch up.

David and Steph walk inside. Adam and Kate remain.

KATE

Hey, are we good? Feels like you've been avoiding me lately.

ADAM

Kate, we're always good.

KATE

How was Vegas really? Todd isn't giving me much and shuts me down when I probe for intel.

ADAM

Yeah, I'm sure he can't say anything given your role. And I'm not the person to talk with about Todd or Stryker, maybe try Jack?

KATE

Did something happen?

ADAM

Just the typical last minute changes and late nights...

KATE

How was Todd on-site? He said you guys met for a drink. What did you talk about?

ADAM

I told him he was crazy to marry you.

KATE

I'm serious.

ADAM

(pausing for a beat)

He said Howard is losing the business. The decision was made before the show. It's bullshit Kate. We crushed the shit out of that program.

KATE

Damn, I was afraid that was going to happen. Anything else?

ADAM

I don't know Kate. It's can't help you navigate your relationship. Like I said before, keep your eyes open.

KATE

I don't even know what that means. Adam, if you know something...

ADAM

(pausing for a second)

We could start with his threatening my job if I told you about him and...

At that precise moment, Todd enters.

TODD

Hey kids. What are we talking about? I was instructed to find any stragglers, the tournament is about to begin.

ADAM

Perfect timing as usual.

KATE

Okay. Adam, we can continue this another time. After euchre!

Kate walks into the house. Adam begins to follow her to the door. A hand grabs his arm.

TODD

Adam, it is good to see you. How are you holding up?

Not letting go of his grip. Leaning in closer.

TODD (CONT.)

I trust you are not spinning any fictional tales to our girl.

ADAM

Whatever dude. Get out of my face.

Still not letting go.

TODD

Don't fuck with me Adam. You won't win. But you already know that. Yeah you do. Yep, there he is. I see him. My good boy. Go fetch me a drink.

Adam returns his stare, Todd lets go, walks away. Music out.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

Euchre tournament. Montage sequence shows flashes of games. See Adam paired with David. Kate and Steph high fiving after winning a trick. Todd drinking scotch after scotch, laying down two black jacks to end a game. Scene shifts to a different table. Ben and Holly paired together.

BEN

What's trump again?

RANDOM PLAYER

Hearts.

HOLLY

(starts singing)

Playing with the queen of hearts...

BEN

Wow. Nobody asked for that. But I do think this Jack will do.

He lays down the Jack of hearts to much frustration.

HOLLY

Nice Ben, you are so dramatic!

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

Hear people having fun. Cheering. People drinking, talking.  
Cut to a scoreboard. Voices quiet down.

HOLLY

Okay people. Last round. Tied in first place at 35 points, we have Todd and Adam. Kate and Steph at 34, and Ben with 32, who clearly cheated. At Table 1, Todd and Steph versus Adam and Kate. Good luck.

Adam sits across from Kate, Todd and Steph across from each other. Todd picks up the deck of cards, shuffles, and deals.

TODD

First jack has the honor...

The jack lands on Kate.

TODD

Katie it is... be kind my dear.

KATE

Screw that, let's do this Adam. No mercy, sweep the leg.

Kate shuffles and deals the cards. Shift from closeups of faces to an aerial view of the score. 6-4, Todd and Steph lead. Kate lays a king of spades and reaches for the cards.

TODD

Not so fast Katie. What's the name of the game? EUCHRE, boom baby...

KATE

Dick move Stryker.

The score is now 8-4. TODD collects cards, shuffles.

TODD  
Hey, hey, let's keep it civil. It's a friendly game, right Adam?

ADAM  
Just deal the cards man. We're good Kate...

TODD  
That's the fighting spirit champ.

Todd deals the next hand. A nine of diamonds is the face card. After KATE passes, the decision goes to Steph.

STEPH  
Hmm, decisions, decisions. Go big or go home, umm, pick it up Todd.

TODD  
Are you sure? So, diamonds it is.

HOLLY  
(singing voice, off cam)  
Shine bright like a diamond...

BEN  
(voice off cam)  
Holly...stop, for the love of god.

Game resumes. Adam takes first trick. Steph takes second trick. The third trick is won by Kate. Steph takes the fourth trick. Two tricks apiece.

TODD  
Sweep the leg Stephanie! No mercy!

Steph leads a queen of clubs. Kate drops a nine of clubs. Todd throws his nine of diamonds. Adam makes his play.

ADAM  
Well guys, I hate to do this but what's the name of the game Todd?

Adam lays down a queen of diamonds.

ADAM  
I believe it's called Euchre...

The score is now 8-6.

TODD  
Dumb move Stephanie.

STEPH  
I thought you had SOMETHING.

Slamming his drink glass on the table.

TODD  
Clearly I didn't...

KATE  
Calm down. It's a friendly game.

ADAM  
(collecting the cards)  
Yes, a game that just got a hell of a  
lot closer sports fans.

By now, a crowd of people have gathered to watch.

TODD  
Whatever. Just deal the cards.  
Scoreboard, you're still losing.

ADAM finishes shuffling the cards and deals. The up card is  
an ace of clubs. ADAM looks at his cards and sets them down.

STEPH  
I pass...

KATE  
Pass...

TODD  
I will also pass. Go ahead buddy, take  
it, I dare you.

ADAM  
Don't mind if I do, and I'm going  
alone.

TODD  
Really? You're not that guy. I'll tell  
you what. Let's do this. Stephanie,  
drop your cards.

STEPH  
What? Why?

TODD  
I insist. Let's end this right now.  
Mano-o-Mano.

Steph and Kate both lay their cards face down.

STEPH  
Are we measuring dicks next?

TODD  
What do you say big guy? A thousand  
dollars on this hand? How confident  
are you? Because I think you're full  
of shit...

KATE  
Todd, no, stop it.

TODD  
Shh. Quiet Kate. Let him speak for  
himself. He wants to talk shit, this  
is what happens.

The room is silent. Adam pauses before answering.

ADAM  
You're on.

DAVID  
Whoa. Adam. Are you sure? Not worth it  
man. We can walk away.

ADAM  
I'm good. Let's do this.

Game resumes. Everyone is quiet. Todd lays down the ace of  
spades. A quality lead. Adam drops the king of clubs. Up 1-0.

TODD  
Luck. Let's see what you've got.

Adam places three cards on the table - jack of spades, jack  
of clubs, and ace of clubs.

TODD  
Fuck you.

Todd is forced to give up the nine and ten of trump, along  
with the ace of diamonds.

ADAM

I'm not great at math, but that makes it four to zero.

BEN

Plus a grand. Holy shit!

Adam lays down the final card. Queen of clubs. Game over. Final score is 10-8. The place goes wild. Todd loses it. Knocking over the cards and his chair as he springs to life.

TODD

This is bullshit, you cheated! You had nothing all night and suddenly you deal yourself a laydown loner. No fucking way dude!

ADAM

Sucks to be you. For the record, I take cash or Venmo. Let me know if you need time to gather the funds.

Todd stands and pulls out a wad of bills, peels off 10 one hundred dollar bills, flinging them onto the table.

TODD

Chump change. Don't spend it all in place. Sounds like you will be unemployed again soon.

Todd storms out of the room to the front door. Time to go.

KATE

(hurriedly to follow him)  
Oh my god. Todd! We have to go. Ben, Holly, thank you, I'm so sorry!

HOLLY

Don't worry about it. Fun night.

BEN

(hugging Kate)  
I fucking loved it. That was the most intense euchre game in history. Bring him any time!

TODD

(off camera)  
Katie... let's go!

ADAM

Hop to it Kate. Don't want to keep him waiting. See you Monday.

KATE

Okay. Happy Thanksgiving everyone.

Kate leaves as guests rush to congratulate Adam.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD WORLDWIDE OFFICE - DAY

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 14: The Aftermath"

9:00 AM Monday morning. Adam standing outside of Jack's office waiting for his phone call to end. Jack waves him in.

JACK HOWARD

Adam, we couldn't have pulled this off without your efforts.

ADAM

No problem, happy to help.

JACK HOWARD

However, as we feared, Stryker is putting the account out for bid.

ADAM

Oh man. I'm sorry.

JACK HOWARD

Well, the good news is we're on the short list, only thanks to Hamp. But it does make things a little dicey when it comes to your role.

Adam feels the dread growing inside. Same old story.

JACK HOWARD

It doesn't make sense to add a full time CD on an account we may not have anymore. Plus, this client would like a different voice creatively speaking if we were to move forward.

ADAM

That's weird. Where do you think that directive is coming from?

JACK HOWARD

Todd. No doubt.

ADAM

Not surprised. He's not a fan. I appreciate the opportunity.

Adam stands to leave.

JACK HOWARD

Adam, hold on. Remember the gentleman I was hosting at the Summit?

Flashback to Jack and the man in the front row, walking the hotel together. Sitting at a dinner.

ADAM

Vaguely. We were pretty slammed.

JACK HOWARD

His name is Andrew Toney, he leads the fastest growing AI software company in North America. Do you know why I invited him to crash our event?

ADAM

No, not really.

JACK HOWARD

I invited him because I knew this account wasn't salvageable. Hampton is stepping down after the holidays and Todd is taking over. They will announce it soon.

ADAM

Holy crap.

JACK HOWARD

I gave Mr. Toney a front row seat to observe our team in action and, as of this morning, Howard just became their new agency of record.

ADAM

Whoa, that's amazing!

JACK HOWARD

Listen, we have a good team. I'm not firing them just because ONE client can't get their head out of their ass.

JACK HOWARD (CONT.)

However, we do need to hit the ground running come January 1 and I want YOU to lead the creative. What do you say?

ADAM

Really? That sounds amazing, the timing of it couldn't be...

He stops himself. Long pause. Sits down again.

ADAM (CONT.)

...NOT at all what I want to do.

He puts his face into his hands. Jack sits down next to him.

JACK HOWARD

I hope it wasn't us. I promise not every client is as bat shit crazy as the Stryker family.

ADAM

No, it's nothing like that.

JACK HOWARD

What is it then? How can I help?

ADAM

I just don't think this agency life is good for my mental health. I've been working on something, maybe it's a book, or a movie, but I need to see it through. It's my story.

JACK HOWARD

Adam, that's fantastic. There have been many days I wanted to leave this behind, maybe open a recording studio, but I never did. When you reach my age, having regrets sucks.

ADAM

That's what scares me Jack. I can see myself 20 years from now doing the same thing over and over again for Todd Stryker and his many variants.

JACK HOWARD

Hear me out. Help us get this account off the ground. Set your own hours, work remotely. Whatever you need.

ADAM

Can I think about it and get back to you?

JACK HOWARD

Absolutely. Our door is always open.

Jack and Adam shake hands.

CUT TO:

INT. THE VINE TAVERN - NIGHT

**Graphics card:** "Chapter 15: The Great One"

Adam at the usual table. Phone buzzes with text messages. The messages appear in air to follow along.

**Message 1:** *Yo, can't make it tonight. Holly and I have a school concert. Sorry. Ben*

The waitress delivers a bucket of Rocks. Another new message.

**Message 2:** *Hey man, Jenny has me tied up on this dealer training piece. David*

A surprise guest walks to his table and sits down.

KATE

So this is the famous Vine Tavern.  
Where are the guys? David invited me  
and said Steph was coming too.

ADAM

Interesting. That's news to me.

KATE

Should I leave? You look busy!

ADAM

My sanctuary has an open door policy.

The waitress arrives to get Kate a drink. As she is ordering, Adam picks up his phone, sends a quick text.

**Message to David:** *Dude. WTF.*

**Instant Message to Adam:** *Wayne Gretzky!*

Adam puts his phone down.

ADAM

Looks like Ben is also tied up so you are stuck with me. Unless Todd is on his way? In that case, check please!

KATE

Haha. Todd is in Chicago taking on a larger role in the business.

ADAM

That guys sure knows how to fall upwards, doesn't he?

Kate leans back in her chair. Exhausted by it all.

KATE

Not getting into this with you again, to be honest, both of you suck.

The waitress delivers her drink.

ADAM

So, are you on Jack's dream team?

KATE

I don't know. Am I staying in Detroit or going back to Chicago?

ADAM

What's waiting for you there?

KATE

You know the answer.

ADAM

Sadly, I do.

KATE

What were you going to tell me in Ben's backyard?

ADAM

(pauses for a second)

Kate, he's not a good guy. I know the type of person you are. Someone who is warm, sometimes funny and kind. Someone who genuinely cares about people. He is none of those things.

KATE

We've built a life. A good life.

ADAM

Is it real? Sure you have material things, but since when has that been what motivates you?

KATE

It doesn't. Adam, I've scratched and clawed at Howard to get to this level, you know the agency world is nothing more than a political boys club.

ADAM

I am painfully aware. But you're better and smarter than 99 percent of the people there. You don't need his protection. You don't need him.

KATE

I know. But I thought Todd and I had something special. It felt like a fairy tale. Now, I'm not sure.

ADAM

Why do you say that?

KATE

(pausing for a beat)

After the party, we didn't say a word on the way home. Todd was hammered and passed out, I was so mad at him. The next morning, he gets up and leaves for the Bears game in Dallas on Thanksgiving Day. Without a word. Who does that?

Kate delivers a sigh that comes with irritation.

KATE (CONT.)

And there was something about the way he acted. He was such an asshole at Ben's house. It's been messing with my head ever since.

ADAM

You can't blame yourself.

KATE

But I do. I'm usually a good judge of character. At least I was.

She stops and takes a sip from her cocktail.

KATE (CONT.)

Do you want to hear something funny. When we were little, I told my mom I was going to marry you. You were it!

ADAM

No way. I don't believe you.

KATE

(taking a drink)

I did. How crazy is that!

ADAM

Clearly I carried a torch for you back then and perhaps over a decade plus of failed relationships.

KATE

And drunken nights at block parties!

ADAM

Yeah, sorry about that. I don't regret saying what I said though. I would just do it differently if I had...

KATE

What do you want right now? Cards on the table. Hit me loner boy.

ADAM

What? Don't play games. I want you to be happy. Like always.

KATE

(getting annoyed)

You know what I mean Adam. I hate when you open up but then stop yourself. Or worse, you decide to cross the line at the absolute worst time. No more excuses, what do YOU want!

He says nothing. Kate moves to stand up. He stops her.

ADAM

YOU. I want you. It's always been you. You can be so damn annoying at times. And you still you scare the living shit out of me. Kate, I ride the struggle bus 24-seven. I'm a damn mess. Who lost my best friend when Stella died. I can't lose you too.

She is listening intently, but not saying anything.

ADAM (CONT.)

And I'm the idiot who declined Jack's job offer. Which is insane! I have a mountain of debt and no future income. Most days, I feel like a loser and a deadbeat. That's not a good foundation for anything. And the only thing that gives me any joy or any hope is this book or whatever the fuck it becomes, if it even becomes anything.

He stops talking. She leans in, close enough so their conversation in this very public place is private.

KATE

Thank you for sharing. It makes me happy that we are finally being honest. Adam, you are my best friend. You will never lose me. No matter what. But, I can't give you anything more than that. I'm sorry. I have to figure out my life with Todd. We are engaged to be married. We've booked a honeymoon, we've made deposits on venues. I have a dress. This wedding is happening.

ADAM

Is that what you want? Kate, it's your turn to be honest.

KATE

I don't know. I need time. I need space. Adam, I'm happy you are finally following your passion because I believe in you. I always have.

ADAM

This is just like my parent's driveway and the block party. I pour my heart out and you let me. It's not fair.

KATE

(standing up to leave)

No, it's not. I'm sorry. Honestly, I should just go. I'm going to go. Okay. Please don't hate me.

ADAM

Don't leave, Kate, stop, please.

KATE

(a bit emotional)

Listen, I want to hear about your book, maybe we can talk this weekend.

Kate quickly walks out. The camera rests on a dejected Adam as sits by himself while other patrons are enjoying the game and engrossed in conversations. He picks up his phone to send a text, before dropping it back on the table. He pushes the bucket of beers away and stares blankly down.

CUT TO:

EXT. KATE'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

**Music:** a song like "Slow Show" by The National.

Find Kate parked in the garage of her downtown loft. Engine running. She picks up her phone and presses the call button. Her first call to Todd is forwarded to voicemail. A few seconds later, she tries again. Voicemail. Now irritated, she tries for a third time. This time he picks up. Music dips.

TODD

(hear loud music)

Jeez Kate? Is there an emergency?

KATE

Hey Todd, no, I haven't heard from you. Just wondering how things were going? Wait, where are you?

TODD

It's hard to hear. We're having a team outing at this new club. Everything is good. We're just blowing off some steam.

In the background, we hear a female's voice.

MEGAN

Todd, dance with me. It's our song!

TODD

One sec, Kate are you there?

KATE

Oh, I'm here. Tell Megan I said hello.  
Give her a hug from me.

The background noise is getting louder.

TODD

I'm sorry, Kate, I can't hear you.  
You're breaking up. I'll call you  
tomorrow, okay? Love you...

KATE

Oh, are we breaking up? I'll be  
waiting here with bated breath.

The phone call abruptly ends. Focus on Kate's reaction as she is finally coming to a realization.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVING TO ADAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Music back up. Adam driving home. Close-up of his face, reflects sadness and defeat. Music builds as he turns down the same route he and Stella ran at the end of every walk and pulls into his driveway.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Music fades out. Adam seated at his kitchen table. Dejected, he picks up the mounting pile of mail. Hidden among them is a letter from the Robert Jordan International Writing Awards. He opens the letter.

ADAM

(reading aloud)

Dear Mr. Sawyer. The proud and long-standing mission of the Jordan Program is to change as many writers' lives as possible.

ADAM (CONT.)

It is with great pleasure to inform you that your novella has been selected as the winner of this year's Best Debut Award. We couldn't be happier to award you with a publishing contract to make your vision a reality.

Stunned, pacing around, he picks up his phone.

ADAM

Mom! I know it's late. Everything is fine. Listen, you won't believe this!

Audio fades out as we linger on his recounting of the good news to his mom on the phone. Joy and relief wash over him.

CUT TO:

INT. KATE'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Late Saturday morning. Kate is on the patio of her luxury downtown loft. Detroit skyline view. Patio door opens.

TODD

Hey babe! Man, it is good to be home. What's with all the suitcases lined up by the stairs, going somewhere?

He leans in for a kiss, which is not reciprocated.

KATE

Nope. They're not for me.

TODD

Hmm. That's strange. Hey, I know I just rolled into town but Chad and I are heading out soon to watch the Iowa game. Do you want to come?

KATE

Wasn't Chad with you at the club the other night? I thought I heard his voice. Or was it just you and Megan?

TODD

No, he was there. We're working together again on a few marketing pieces. You okay? You seem agitated.

KATE

I wonder why. Tell me Todd, how long have you been sleeping with Megan?

TODD

What are you talking about? Where is this coming from? Did Adam say something? He's such a dick.

KATE

(calmly)

Todd, I'm not an idiot. I know how to use Google. I think it took me about 20 minutes of pouring through her social media accounts. You should really tell her to put that shit on lock down. She's a dumbass.

Defiant, annoyed, under attack, he counters.

TODD

Jesus Kate. I didn't fly back at the crack ass of dawn just to be berated by you. Listen, I'm going to let you cool off, we can discuss this later.

He turns and begins to walk away.

KATE

Hey, before you go. Those suitcases by the stairs, they are for you. Pack your shit and get the fuck out. We're done. Your engagement ring is on the dresser.

TODD

(pauses, before slow clapping)

Wow. So dramatic! Good for you. Here's what is funny. You act like Megan is the only one. That's hysterical. Just remember one thing. Everything you see here. This place. Everything you have is mine, because of me. You own nothing. You have nothing. You are nothing! Good luck with that sweetie.

KATE

Thanks love. How sweet.

KATE (CONT.)

One thing though, if you were thinking of doing anything to hurt me, or Adam, or anyone on the Howard team, I have digital copies of everything you've been up to stretching back years! Information I'm betting would be of interest to your dad and the board. I'm sure they would love to know how the "chosen one" spends his free time and their corporate dollars!

TODD

Bitch! You wouldn't dare!

KATE

Yep, I think I would. And I'm pretty sure your daddy likes me better than you. I mean who could blame him! So please feel free to close the door behind you... bye, bye!

Todd slams the patio door. Settle back on Kate's face as she closes her eyes for a few seconds, opens them again.

KATE

Dickhead.

CUT TO:

INT. VINE TAVERN - DAY

A few weeks have passed. Sunday before Christmas. Adam's parents put together a celebratory event during the last Lions home game of the season in a special VIP room. Attendees include David, Steph, Ben, Holly, Mom, Dad, Gail, even Jack Howard. The Lions game is on TV.

MOM

John, see this is fine. It's nice to shake up the routine.

DAD

Uh huh. All I know is we are losing and I can't hear the TV with everyone talking...

ADAM

Here you go, Dad. I found you a Miller Lite. Hang in there.

Adam hands his Dad a beer and sits down.

BEN

There he is! The man of the hour.  
Should we do some shots?

HOLLY

Ben! No! This is a family party. But  
congratulations Adam. We are so happy  
for you.

ADAM

Thanks. We still have a ways to go to  
turn this story into a book people  
will actually read.

DAVID

I love it. Can't believe I know an  
actual author. This is weird.

ADAM

You're weird. Stop it, please  
everyone, let's just watch the game.

STEPH

Is Kate joining the party?

Everyone is glued to Adam now, waiting for the response.

ADAM

I don't think so. She's gone radio  
silent on me. It's been weeks.

STEPH

(glances at David)  
Give her time. She'll come back.

DAVID

Chin up my friend. I'm sure there's a  
good reason. When is the next draft  
due to the publisher.

As Adam begins to answer, the audio of his voice is replaced  
by the sound of the football game on TV. See his dad react  
negatively to something on the screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. ADAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Late that night. Adam is pulling his trashcans from his

garage to the curb. Houses on his street are illuminated with Christmas lights. It's cold. Like so many of the nights he spent in his parent's driveway. We hear an approaching voice.

KATE

Damn Sawyer, your house looks kind of pathetic. You might want to consider some Christmas lights, maybe a basketball hoop, so I can beat you in horse like the old days...

ADAM

Oh my god, you scared me.

KATE

(in full view)

Sorry.

ADAM

I thought you were ghosting me. I've texted, I've left messages...

KATE

I know. My bad. I ended up taking over the new account at Howard and we've been slammed with preparations.

ADAM

I literally just heard that news from Jack and Gail. Congratulations, it's a big job.

KATE

Thank you. I've also been looking for a place to live because I broke it off with Todd. You were right about him. I'm sorry it took me so long to realize it.

ADAM

(processing this news)

Damn, wow. Good for you. That's great news. Listen, it's cold out here and I've got to prep for a meeting with my editor, can we catch up soon?

He begins to back away as she starts to move towards him.

KATE

Adam. Stop. I don't want to catch up with you later. Because what I want more than anything in the world is for you to tell me about your book. Every single detail of how you are going to bring this story to life. I can't believe something this amazing is happening for you and I wasn't there for it. That's not okay.

They stare at each other. No words. Emotions rising.

KATE (CONT.)

I also realized something. It's not like I haven't thought about you. But there was always something in the way. We moved away. We reconnected. Then life sort of just happened. But I never stopped caring for you. It's part of what I think made me excited to come home.

ADAM

Kate, you should just go. I'm tired and I can't go down this road again. Don't do this...

KATE

(stepping closer)  
Do what?

ADAM

(emotions rising)  
Break my heart. Leave me standing here again. Don't...

KATE

Shh... quiet.

They lock eyes, inches from each other.

ADAM

You're not afraid this will ruin our friendship like you were before?

KATE

Oh no, I'm terrified.

ADAM

I know, me too.

KATE

(hand touching his cheek)

What is it that Ben always says? GTL.  
I had to ask him what it meant at his  
house. GTL. GET TO LIVING. Adam, isn't  
it about time for both of us...

She kisses him. Hold on their tight embrace. Camera pans from them to the clear winter sky and bright stars. End scene. End film. Roll credits.

**Music:** a song like "Saltwater (2015 Rework) by Nora En Pure.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. MID CREDITS SCENE - DAY

Music fades out. Full screen.

**Graphics card:** "Seven Months Later"

Adam lies on a blanket at the park. Staring at perfect clouds above. Hear a familiar voice.

KATE

Oh no. Get back here. Incoming....

At that moment a pit bull puppy pounces on Adam's chest, washing over him with slobbery kisses.

ADAM

Ruth! No! Stop it. Where's mom?

Kate lays down next to Adam. An engagement ring is visible on Kate's finger as is a hard copy of a book titled, "Travels with Stella" by Adam Sawyer.

KATE

Not bad Sawyer. Don't get me wrong,  
this view is nice. But, our girl needs  
to run. Come on, I'll race you to the  
pond. Ruth, let's go!

Kate and Ruth spring to life and race away. Adam in hot pursuit.

ADAM

(voice off camera)

Not today Martin, you better run!

The three of them run happily into the distance.

**Graphics card:** "Get To Living"

End mid credits scene. Continue rolling credits.

**Music:** a song like "Sweet Disposition" by Sonnenkino.