

IN BETTER COMPANY

Written by

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN

INT. CATHERINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Door open, HUBERT (45), fatherly silver-fox style, silhouetted against light flooding in -

SHOCKED

On the bed in the middle of the room, VISHAL (21) and AARON (26) - Hubert's longtime goofball of a boyfriend. Their bodies under covers, faces illuminated -

IN EQUAL SHOCK

Hubert flips on the light and leaves. The door stays open.

Aaron dazed. Vishal shrugs and kisses him.

AARON

Shoot.

Aaron rolls off taking the blanket with him.

Vishal SHRIEKS and rolls off the other side with a THUMP.

AARON

Vish -- Hue wait!

Aaron struggles into his clothes. Vishal peeks over the bed.

POOF

A PILLOW strikes Aaron's head.

AARON (cont'd)

Ow!

VISHAL

Don't leave me hanging.

Aaron whips Vishal's clothing over.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

What? Hue what's wrong?

CATHERINE (26) peeks in. Roommate and one of Aaron's only friends, Catherine works a 9-5 and couldn't be happier so long as Aaron's life keeps her busy --

And it does.

CATHERINE
AARON! MY BED! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

Aaron dives away and Catherine disappears.

VISHAL
Mom?

CATHERINE (O.S.)
My sheets! My poor sheets!

Aaron crawls into his clothing. Their dog, ERIK, BARKS.

CATHERINE (O.S.) (cont'd)
Goodness... Hue I'm so sorry - I
didn't know.

While putting on his WATCH, Aaron stumbles out into the -

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hubert, slumped into the couch his head in his hands.
Catherine consoles him. The watch slips off Aaron's wrist.

HUBERT
Aaron...

Vishal peeks out.

VISHAL
Dad?

Aaron twists to see Vishal grin deviously and crawl by.

AARON
I'm sorry.

HUBERT
I don't think you are.

Vishal sneaks behind the love seat. Catherine mouths 'IN MY
BED!?'.

AARON
Erik! Hush!

Aaron moves to calm Erik but Hubert rises blocking him.

Holding back tears, he reaches out. Aaron shrinks away.

HUBERT
Look at me. Look at me!

Aaron obliges. Hubert fixes his shirt.

HUBERT
It's over.

AARON
But we --

HUBERT
I don't care.

CATHERINE
What's his name?

AARON
(exasperated)
What?

HUBERT
His.

Hubert points at the love seat. Behind it, an OPEN WINDOW --

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

GABRIEL (24) and his wife SONJA (22), texting on her phone, walk by on the other side of the street.

Gabe, generally mellow, enjoys spending time with his wife and imagining what their children might look like. Sonja, ambitious and strong-willed, appreciates the formalities of their matrimony but shows far less enthusiasm for it.

A window OPENS - BARKING. Gabe stops, Sonja makes it a few feet before realizing he stopped.

AARON (O.S.)
What's wrong with you!?

Vishal slides out, FLIP-FLOP left on the window sill.

GABE
(whispering)
Sonja, look at that!

Vishal hops up, dusts off, and hobbles away.

The couple watch him go, their perplexity lit by her phone.

END COLD OPEN

BEGIN FIRST ACT

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

An unhappy plate of eggs and floppy bacon greet Gabe, ready for work in a WHITE button-up textured by streaks of gray cigarette ash.

Across the cheap plastic table, an exhausted and unkempt Sonja slides into her chair with a single HARD-BOILED EGG. Behind her, an empty living room with cheap mislaid carpet and tiny ANTENNA TV decorated by a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH.

Gabe hot-sauces his eggs and digs in.

Sonja takes a knife and WHACKS hers.

GABE
Delicious! How'd ya sleep?

SONJA
I feel like I didn't.

She removes pieces of egg shell from her breakfast.

GABE
Too early for ya?

SONJA
Too early for anyone Gabe.

GABE
I thought you'd want to hang.

SONJA
I would.

GABE
But?

SONJA
But not at 6 AM.

She digs in.

GABE
Well it's now or never.

SONJA
I'm going back to sleep after this,
don't get me worked up.

He frowns and they get back to eating.

SONJA (cont'd)
Any interest on filling that room?

GABE
Nobody good. You?

SONJA
I had a biter but... he didn't like
the area.

GABE
He's not settled down?

SONJA
I don't think so.

GABE
No need to make him jealous.

He grins at her, flops a piece of bacon in his mouth like a dork, and wiggles his eyebrows.

Her smile threatens to show.

A drop of hot sauce flips off and splatters onto his WHITE
BUTTON-UP.

Bacon still hanging, he checks for further contamination.

Aggravated, she pushes away from the table and rises, moving
through the living room -

Gabe peeks around the corner and spots her entering the
EMPTY EXTRA BEDROOM to plop down in the middle of it and
finish her breakfast.

INT. RAMEN RESTAURANT - DAY

Aaron pokes at his noodles with chopsticks and spoon.
Catherine has finished her bowl.

CATHERINE
Have you checked online?

AARON
No...

Aaron slurps sadly.

CATHERINE
You're being pathetic.

Aaron slurps more sadly.

CATHERINE (cont'd)
Have you checked anywhere?

AARON
I drove through the neighborhood
and --

CATHERINE
Our neighborhood?

Aaron nods. The noodles in his mouth fling broth across the table. Catherine shields herself.

CATHERINE (cont'd)
Hue's not big on long goodbyes.

AARON
(flippant)
I don't think I can make it happen.

CATHERINE
You'll have to.

AARON
But I can't.

CATHERINE
But you will.

He stares at his bowl.

AARON
Maybe he'd take me back...

Catherine makes a disapproving face.

AARON (cont'd)
I'll look harder. Know anyone fun?

She shakes her head 'no', tight-lipped.

AARON
You're such a hard ass.

Aaron LAUGHS, COUGHING on residual broth.

CATHERINE

You should be more careful - I'm the only friend you've got.

AARON

Catherine...

He reaches across the table for her hands.

AARON (cont'd)

You've got a heart of gold...

She presents a tight-lipped smile.

AARON (cont'd)

And a broken box-spring.

Aaron CRACKS UP.

Not to be outdone - she rises, places her mostly empty bowl on his head, and flips him off.

A WAITER approaches their table but thinks better of it.

EXT. RAMEN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The same waiter leaves after his shift. He passes Gabe waiting in a dark spot near the entrance.

Gabe checks his watch - too dark to see. Pulls out a CIGARETTE.

Tries to light it. Now illuminated, the cigarette BACKWARDS.

Flips it and tries again. One good drag.

Spots his COWORKERS. Nearly CHOKES.

Crushes the cigarette and fans the air around him. Waves at them with the other hand.

They don't seem to notice.

INT. RAMEN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Coworkers at the bar pound beers. Gabe at the bleeding edge.

One coworker, KENDRA (32), scoots near. A good ear, she haunts the water-cooler and livens office parties.

KENDRA
No wife?

GABE
No life.

His SAKE arrives.

GABE (cont'd)
She didn't want to come to another
coworker event.

KENDRA
We don't bite.

Gabe raises his eyebrows and motions to a COWORKER flashing
his chompers at a waitress.

KENDRA (cont'd)
What a monster!

Gabe CHUCKLES but stops short of actually enjoying it.

GABE
Thanks for trying Kendra, I'm just
not feeling it tonight.

KENDRA
Buy me a couple beers and I'm all
ears.

GABE
Low on funds too. Know anyone looking
for a room?

KENDRA
My my Gabe, aren't you forward?

Gabe winks and pours a cup of sake.

KENDRA (cont'd)
Is this a Sonja thing or a you thing?

GABE
She's been distant.

KENDRA
When's the last time you went on a
date?

Gabe shrugs.

KENDRA (cont'd)
You should take her out sometime,
just the two of you. Let the world
know how much you appreciate her.

GABE
I really wasn't kidding - we're as
low as they go, we can't --

KENDRA
That's not the point. Find something
you can afford and do it... Together.

Gabe downs his sake.

GABE
Any recommendations?

The music gets LOUD for the night crowd.

KENDRA
Soo likes the MOMA.

GABE
Who?

KENDRA
You should check out the coffee shop
next door too.

He covers an ear to the music and gives a thumbs up.

She pats him on the back and scoots away.

EXT. HUBERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lights on in the kitchen. Aaron sneaks up to the door.

Tries to unlock it -

But someone changed the lock.

KNOCKS.

Hubert answers the door and immediately returns inside.

INT. HUBERT'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Half-packed, Aaron throws things into nondescript boxes.

HUBERT (O.S.)

Aaron.

Aaron perks up. Nearly trips on his way to the kitchen.
Stops to tidy his hair and steps into --

INT. HUBERT'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

AARON

Yes!

Hubert holds out BILLS.

HUBERT

Since you'll be out by the end of the week, you need to call the utility company.

AARON

By the end of -- ?

HUBERT

I've written what you owe on the other side. Their number is at the top.

Aaron takes the bills.

AARON

I could've looked it up.

Hubert gives a death stare and Aaron backs out.

INT. HUBERT'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aaron sighs and tosses the bills at the couch but they flutter everywhere.

A piece of paper floats in front of his face.

He snatches and crumples it.

Chunks it across the room, hops onto the couch, and crumples himself.

END FIRST ACT

BEGIN SECOND ACT

INT. HUBERT'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aaron surfs the web, gaunt.

CLICK. TYPE. Send.

INT. CREEPY HOUSE: BEDROOM - DAY

Lacking windows, incredibly dark.

OWNER (O.S.)

And don't you worry about bringing
friends over, I'm plenty friendly.

Aaron and the OWNER step in. The overhead light TURNS ON
illuminating a mass of cobwebs and a dusty bed. Aaron's
mouth drops.

OWNER

A little bit messy but what can you
do?

A SPIDER lands on Aaron's shoulder as he peeks his head into
the closet.

Inside, ALMOND MILK cartons in bulk.

OWNER (cont'd)

Oh yeah, hope you don't mind me
keeping my milk there. I drink a ton!

The Owner laughs. Aaron steps out --

NOTICES THE SPIDER

And the Spider notices him. It winks and scampers down his
shirt.

OWNER (cont'd)

Well whaddya think!?

Aaron whimpers.

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gabe and Sonja cuddle on the floor beneath a blanket
watching TV - sufficiently naked.

The photograph, now visible, shows Gabe standing between his PARENTS - neither happy.

Gabe snuggles into Sonja.

GABE
You're so comfy.

She maintains her gaze on the TV.

GABE (cont'd)
Like one human-sized pillow?

SONJA
If you want a body pillow I'll buy
you a body pillow.

He pokes at her.

GABE
Your body is enough pillow for me.

Sonja COUGHS and ignores him.

INT./EXT. CAR/NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Aaron waits outside his car wearing a NEW SHIRT, fiddling with his phone. With the other hand, he sprays his old shirt with BUG SPRAY.

Checks the time - **12:10**

Peeks up. NOTHING.

Checks his text - "ILL B WAITING OUT SIDE AT 12."

Dials a number.

Ringling. No movement in the house.

Aggravated, he stops spraying, bags the shirt and slides back into the car. Takes off.

In the window, the blinds ruffle back into place.

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gabe rolls over.

GABE

Do you want to go to the MOMA
tomorrow? It's free on Sundays.

SONJA

(distracted)

We saw her last month.

GABE

Your mom has fewer abstractions for
sure.

Sonja TURNS OFF the TV manually - no remote. The picture
frame shakes.

SONJA

I'm sorry, what?

GABE

Tomorrow. The museum of modern art. A
date.

SONJA

I can't, I'm busy.

GABE

With what?

Sonja sneers.

SONJA

With my life.

GABE

Since when do you work on Sundays?

SONJA

This isn't work.

GABE

Well it's not play, you can't afford
play!

SONJA

What's it to you!?

She gathers the blanket to her and hops up. Gabe frantically
covers himself from the impending cold.

Sonja marches off.

EXT. LAME HOUSE - DAY

Aaron slumps against the porch.

A car SLAMS on its brakes and SQUEALS to a halt. The HOMEOWNER gets out.

HOMEOWNER
Oh my god I'm sooo sorry!

AARON
It's fine...

A FLOOZY steps out of the car, GIGGLING.

HOMEOWNER
I - we can't... Someone beat you to it.

They conjoin at the hip and giggle their way inside.

Aaron flabbergasted.

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gabe struggles into his pants.

SONJA (O.S.)
When are you going to get an actual job!?

GABE
What, you don't like living like this?

SONJA (O.S.)
Anything is better than this!

Gabe trips over his pants.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Alone at a two-person table, Aaron stares out the window.

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Both fully clothed.

SONJA
I'll stay in the extra room if I have
to, I'm not sleeping with you!

GABE
That didn't stop you before!

Sonja marches up to Gabe.

SONJA
I'm going out.

GABE
Great.

SONJA
Either look for a new job or fill the
room. You need to get your life
together before you drag me further
into it.

GABE
And how is your life going so far?

Sonja leaves, SLAMMING the front door -

But it doesn't quite close so Gabe finishes the job.

INT. CAR AT CARWASH - DAY

Aaron leans back to relax and enjoy the cascading detergents
and brush-like mechanisms of an automated wash.

BARK BARK

Erik in the passenger seat.

AARON
Thanks for coming with me bud.

Aaron pets the good dog.

AARON (cont'd)
I think I'll miss you the most.

Sighs. Pulls out his phone to read some more ads.

Punches out a half-hearted text.

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A spoon in one hand and cigarette in the other, Gabe sits at the kitchen table munching on over-frozen ice cream.

His phone VIBRATES.

Contemplates responding but flips the phone face-down.

EXT. HUBERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Aaron leans against his sparkling car.

Checks his phone. It unlocks to a text from Catherine reading: "THANKS FOR THE DOG BUT COME BACK LATER."

Inside, a silhouetted Hubert watches TV.

Another text: "DON'T FORGET MY NEW SHEETS... ASSHOLE <3".

Aaron tosses his phone in and drives off.

Inside, a MALE FIGURE joins Hue.

INT. RAMEN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

LOUD MUSIC. Gabe pounds SAKE at the bar.

FLIRTY WOMAN
Is this seat taken?

Gabe gives her a once over.

GABE
You're not married are you?

FLIRTY WOMAN
Not yet!

GABE
Well I am and she's great.

He flashes his WEDDING BAND and returns to his sake.

The Flirty Woman taken back turns to FRIENDS seated at a table. They point to someone else so she composes herself and moves to --

AARON

Also pounding SAKE.

FLIRTY WOMAN
Can I buy you a drink handsome?

AARON
Same tree, different bark.

Motions to a HOT GUY at a nearby table. The Woman GROANS.

FLIRTY WOMAN
(reluctant)
Need a wing-woman?

Aaron nods over to Gabe.

AARON
Think I've got a chance?

FLIRTY WOMAN
Married.

AARON
With kids?

FLIRTY WOMAN
Straight as a grate.

AARON
Not tonight but thanks anyway.

The flirty woman shrinks away SIGHING.

In unison, Gabe and Aaron take sips of their sake.

END SECOND ACT

BEGIN THIRD ACT

INT. HUBERT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Aaron plays games on his phone having given up on life.

Rolls over.

Sniffs. Confused.

Sniffs himself and then the couch.

AARON

Hmm...

PHONE VIBRATES.

He feels for it as he tries to place the scent.

AARON (cont'd)

White pepper...?

Checks the text.

Eyes go wide.

Rolls off the couch.

Throws on a jacket.

Grabs his keys.

Kisses the dog.

AARON (cont'd)

Bye Erik!

Bolts out. Erik BARKS after him.

EXT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Aaron taps his foot and checks his wrist. STILL NO WATCH.

GROANS, reaches for his phone and -

Gabe opens the door.

GABE

Gabe.

Surprised, Aaron gathers himself.

GABE (cont'd)
Catch you at a bad time?

AARON
I, uh, Aaron!

They shake hands, Aaron desperately trying to remember where he last saw that face.

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The two meander through exploring the sparsity.

GABE
Living room, TV, kitchen table --

AARON
No couch?

GABE
Never bought one.

AARON
You've gotta have a couch.

Gabe gives a confused look.

AARON (cont'd)
So we can chill?

GABE
Uh huh.

Head towards the empty bedroom.

GABE (cont'd)
This will be yours...

Opens the door. A BRIGHT LIGHT floods out. Aaron GASPS.

GABE (cont'd)
You know, if you take the room.

It's an empty room.

AARON
It's perfect!

GABE
We fit a queen in ours and it's slightly bigger than yours.

Aaron smiles a thousand infectious smiles at Gabe.

Gabe half-grins back unsure of how to respond.

GABE (cont'd)

Do you want to check it out or...

AARON

Nope!

GABE

There's not too many outlets if that's something --

AARON

I love it.

GABE

Not even the bathroom?

AARON

I've just gotta get out you know what I mean?

Aaron practically bounces off the walls.

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

At the kitchen table, Aaron glances through the paperwork. Gabe struts around, anxious.

AARON

Who should I --

GABE

Either one.

AARON

You share an account?

GABE

It was the first thing we did when we got married

Aaron smirks.

GABE (cont'd)

What?

Shrugs and signs the documents.

Gabe follows up.

GABE
Welcome to your new home.

They shake.

EXT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gabe leans against the doorway.

GABE
When do you think you'll be moving
in?

AARON
Tomorrow?

GABE
Tomorrow?

AARON
The sooner the better lemme tell ya.

GABE
Sonja should be here. If not, I'll
leave the key under the mat.

AARON
I'll just have to meet her then...
then.

Gabe chuckles.

GABE
She'll be ready for you.

AARON
Thanks again bud!

Aaron waves and heads towards his car.

Gabe shrugs and returns inside, grinning - an impression of
his shoulder left on the wall trim.

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gabe and Sonja at the kitchen table, lease papers
everywhere. TV blasts the NEWS.

REPORTER (O.S.)
... the robber left the scene at
about four o' clock this evening...

GABE
He seems like a pretty good guy.

SONJA
Mmhmm. Can you turn down the TV?

GABE
He didn't seem to mind the outlet situation either.

She puts the paper down.

SONJA
Well I'm glad you got it filled. I would have liked to meet him first though.

REPORTER (O.S.)	GABE
Eyewitnesses claim to have seen the robber drive off in a Hyundai...	I'm sure you'll come around.

Gabe scoots his chair closer to her.

GABE (cont'd)
Finally, some sense of financial security...

He wiggles his eyebrows and tries to kiss up her arm -
But she draws back.

SONJA
You're still working that shit job.

REPORTER (O.S.)	GABE
Back to Jacquelyn with the weather...	Yes but --

SONJA
This won't save *us*. TV Gabe?

GABE
Why are you getting mad at me? You said it was either-or.

She turns away and rubs the back of her neck.

SONJA
I did. But I thought about it some more and realized that your job is really what's holding us back.

GABE
What? It pays the bills doesn't it?

SONJA
That's not good enough Gabe.
I work my butt off and we're
still here eating off
plastic and scrounging every
penny!

JACQUELYN (O.S.)
... with torrential
downpours flooding east
county it looks like your
holiday visitors will be
here for the long haul.

GABE
Sonja I don't --

SONJA
You don't? How can you talk about
financial security if we can't even
afford a decent table -- !?

GABE
Remind me again what it is you
provide for this family!?

SONJA
And that TV!

GABE
And your cupidity!

Sonja jumps up.

SONJA
I'm sleeping in the extra room
tonight.

GABE
Tonight's the last night you
can!

JACQUELYN (O.S.)
... look forward to a change
of pace in the coming
week...

SONJA
And I plan on taking full advantage
of that.

She storms to the TV to shut it off.

GABE
For the record, I'll be getting my
bonus soon!

SONJA
Shove it up your ass, cupidity.

She bustles to the empty room and SLAMS the door.

Gabe cradles his head - the picture frame wobbles and falls off the TV.

INT. HUBERT'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aaron stacks what few moving boxes he has in a corner. Catherine observes from the couch.

CATHERINE
Toothbrush?

AARON
Check.

CATHERINE
Pillows?

AARON
Somewhere...

CATHERINE
Clothing?

AARON
Folded.

CATHERINE
Dignity?

Aaron sneers.

CATHERINE (cont'd)
And do you need another set of sheets -- ?

AARON
Alright I get it, I'm sorry!

CATHERINE
You sullied them.

Aaron throws a pillow at her -

AARON
Found it!

IMPACTING her face as the front door opens.

Catherine laughs and ERIK bolts in to tackle Aaron.

AARON (cont'd)
 I'll miss you! Yes I will! Oh yes I
 will!

Glances up. Hubert saunters off to another room.

CATHERINE
 (at Hubert)
 You want a turn?

Offers the pillow and nods at Aaron.

HUBERT (O.S.)
 You can have mine.

Erik gives chase to the voice and Aaron settles into the couch wiping down the slobber.

Catherine POUNCES on him flailing the pillow madly.

CUT TO:

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gabe, eyes red, stares down a pathetic breakfast of cereal and dry toast - a LIT CIGARETTE drooping from the side of his mouth.

On the table, the framed photograph, GLASS CRACKED.

Peeks over at the extra room, door still closed.

SIGHS.

Takes a couple bites.

Quenches the cigarette in his cereal, cleans up, and leaves.

On the table, a piece of paper stained by teardrops and ash reads: "I'M SORRY".

EXT. GABE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Aaron's car packed to the brim, he pulls up behind SONJA'S CAR, trunk popped. Door to the apartment OPEN.

Hops out and grabs the first box. Happy sigh.

Up to the apartment.

About to enter, he shifts to the side --

The two bump boxes into each other. They manage to scooch by with little room to spare.

END MONTAGE

Aaron strolls out of his room, finally done, and stretches.

Saunters over to Gabe's room and KNOCKS.

AARON (cont'd)
You guys wouldn't happen to have a couple surge protectors would you?

No response. Puts his ear to the door.

NOTHING.

GABE
What's this?

Aaron jumps. Gabe, disheveled, flips through Sonja's lease.

AARON
Uh...

GABE
Did she...?

AARON
Gabe --

Gabe SLAMS his fist against the table.

Beat.

AARON (cont'd)
I'm sorry. I didn't know.

Gabe doesn't respond. Whips out his phone and dials.

Aaron nabs a box he left out and sneaks into his room.

No answer. Gabe slumps into a chair.

CUT TO:

INT. GABE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gabe and Aaron propped on their elbows to watch TV surrounded by empty beer bottles and a fresh 12 pack.

Aaron pulls one and offers it to Gabe.

GABE
Pop top?

AARON
Twisty.

Gabe shrugs and takes it. Both sip their beers.

AARON (cont'd)
That was my nickname in college.

GABE
What!?

Aaron gets up to dance, takes off his shirt, and twirls it.

AARON
I was never a good dancer but I
always danced shirtless.

GABE
Can't say I did the same.

Aaron flings the shirt and saunters to the kitchen.

AARON
Lime?

Gabe lifts his beer as if to examine it.

GABE
I think you're right. This would be
much better with a couch.

Aaron opens the fridge illuminating himself.

GABE (cont'd)
Are you a TV dinner kind of guy?

AARON
If you mean TV with dinner then yes.

Squeezes a lime in and makes his way back before --

GABE
Eat up.

HIS SHIRT

Slams into his face SPILLING HIS BEER. Gabe LAUGHS.

END THIRD ACT

TAG

EXT. HUBERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bushes RUSTLE.

Vishal pops up near his escape window. On the sill, his FLIP-FLOP. Creeps closer --

LIGHT illuminates his face - he ducks.

Erik sniffs his way onto the porch with Hubert in tow.

Vishal peeks out, close enough now to touch the flip-flop.

Reaches out --

FIGURE BEHIND THE WINDOW

CATHERINE (O.S.)
I'm toasty, are you toasty?

Vishal, startled into action, tumbles backwards over the bushes and away from his precious flop.

Erik whips to and BARKS. The window OPENS.

HUBERT
Erik!

Erik gives chase. Vishal drags half the bush but manages to get up. Catherine sticks her head out.

CATHERINE
Vish?

Vish takes off. Hubert collects himself and jaunts to the flip-flop --

CHUNKS IT

Nails Vish in the noggin - he comes crashing down. Erik stops to bark from a safe distance.

HUBERT
Good boy.

Erik goes quiet, wags his tail, and trots back. Hue closes the door behind them.

FADE OUT